

PHOENIX

MONTHLY INTERNATIONAL[®]

Vol IV No. 5
May 1984

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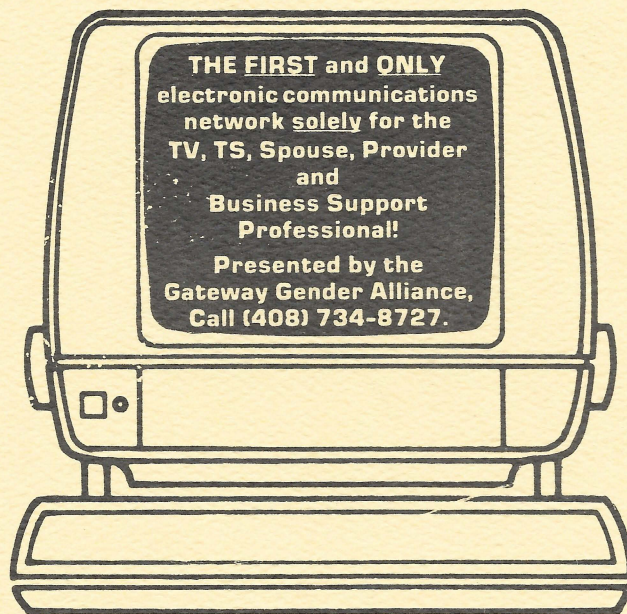


Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another,
"What! You, too? I thought I was the only one."--C.S. Lewis

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GENDERNET



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CARNIVAL IN HAITI by Michelle (IL-58)

(continued from March '84 issue)

Although the Cathedral was about fifteen blocks away the church bells could be heard ringing as I approached. I entered a pew toward the rear of the church just as the priest came out to start Mass. There were probably 300 to 400 people there. I found the service very enjoyable. The Mass was celebrated using a mixture of French and Creole, but the singing was all done in Creole. The enthusiasm and love shared by the Haitians was heart warming and I was thankful I'd decided to be there that morning. I had to smile as I thought of the look of surprise that would undoubtedly cross the priest's face when he saw a twenty dollar bill in the collection basket.

It was already getting warm as I left church. After a quick stop at Carlo's for a cup of coffee I walked back to the hotel.

I packed my other swimsuit, a black and white malliot, along with a roll of elastakon tape in my purse. I debated over whether or not I really wanted to wear that particular suit because the material is thin and I'd have to use the tape to "hide the plumbing", but I decided the pain was worth it as the suit looks very nice on me.

Karl was waiting for me, stretched out on a lounge in his swimsuit soaking up the sun, as I walked onto the deck at the Mon Joli. I walked over to him and we exchanged greeting before I left to change.

After getting the suit on I checked myself in the mirror, noting with pleasure how it showed off my shape. I've always had a feminine shape but the estrogen has added to what I already had and the effect of the two have combined forces to give me a very pleasing hourglass figure. Using the tape completes the illusion.

I re-joined Karl at pool-side, stretching out on a lounge to enjoy the sun. I ordered iced tea from a passing waiter and since Karl didn't seem to talkative I just wiled away the hours engrossed in my own thoughts. Besides, by this time he'd fallen asleep and I just didn't want to wake him.

Shortly after one Karl opened his eyes, smiled and asked if I was hungry. I said I was ready to eat if he was so we walked over to the pool-side dining area, seating

ourselves at the table we'd shared the previous day. During lunch I discovered the reason for Karl's quietude. He explained he'd just received a wire that morning from his superior at the U. N. and that he would have to cut his visit to Cap Haitian short and return to Port-au-Prince. Nothing serious, but some problems had arisen concerning the Pope's impending visit. He had no choice in the matter. After apologizing for upsetting my plans he asked if I would mind accompanying him to Port-au-Prince. After thinking it over very carefully I finally decided the benefits of such a trip outweighed the risk of discovery and consented to join him.

After leaving the pool area Karl dropped me off at my hotel to pack and check out while he did the same at his hotel. He would be back in an hour and we'd start for Port-au-Prince before the sun dropped behind the mountains.

I saw the Mercedes stop near the front door as I was paying my bill. After completing the transaction I walked, quickly, to the car. Karl greeted me with a big hug before placing my bag in the car's trunk and ushering me into the passenger's seat. He took his place behind the wheel, the lovely car came to life and we were on our way. After a quick stop for gas and at the police check-point, where his diplomatic credentials got us through with no difficulty we were on our way.

The sun was just beginning to touch the mountain tops as we settled down for the longish trip. The heavy car seemed to cruise effortlessly along the highway and I watched the paired stone columns, standing like sentinels testifying to the time long past when they stood guard at the entrances to the sugar and tobacco plantations of the Colonial French, flashed past the window.

The closer we got to the mountains the more crowded the road became with cars and busses, all carrying as many people as possible all headed to Cap Haitian for Carnival.

The festival spirit was evident in every town through which we passed. Even at this early hour the streets were packed with dancers and we had to drive slowly to avoid hitting someone. Fortunately, whenever we came to group completely blocking the street there would be a guide ready to

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lead our car through the crowd.

Just as the sun was setting we crossed the mountains and dropped onto the flatlands, stopping in Plaisance for a cold drink Karl left me while he made a phone call. In a few minutes he was back, smiling and said "Do I have a surprise for you."

"And what might that be?" I asked.

"How would you like to spend the night at the Club Med?"

Well, he was right about one thing — I was surprised and here I was, facing my moment of truth. If I hadn't been so intent on playing my little "game" I would have realized I was being maneuvered. After thinking over his offer I decided that having come this far it was a little late to turn back now so I replied "Of course. I'd love to spend the night at the Club," it didn't sound especially sincere.

The drive to Montrois was more of the same; crowded street in the villages, heavy traffic on the road. I smiled as we passed through San Marc, remembering how this adventure had started just two days before.

At Montrois I followed Karl through the orange colored arches into the main building, a three storied structure, where the manager greeted Karl by name. While we were checking in it became obvious the two of them were friends of long standing, so I suggested I go up to the room and freshen up before dinner.

Our room was large and very nice. The celery green walls, blue carpeting and white rattan furniture made it look quite homey. A large double french door, leading to a balcony, was set in the middle of the outside wall. From the balcony I took in the breath-taking view of the Caribbean where seventeen miles out in the placid water sat the Island of LeGonav. I did have a moment of guilt as I looked down at the second poorest area of Haiti (the first being on the northwest coast), but since I had been living like a native for the past two months I had, in effect, paid my dues.

Having been on the run most of the day I decided a quick bath and change of make-up was in order. I was wonderful to get the dust off my skin and the moisturizer on it. Haiti is a very hot, dusty dry country, so one feels dirty most of the time.

Following my bath I emptied my suit-

case, looking for something to wear. Had I known the week-end was going to work out the way it had I would have packed differently and brought more. As it was I had to make do with the what I had brought and I was starting to run out of things Karl hadn't seen yet. I decided on an all black, straight-skirted dress with a camisole top. I slipped on a black bra and a pair of black lace panties before stepping into the dress. I finished off the ensemble with a gold belt, necklace and earrings and black sandals. I kept my make-up to the minimum and simple. I re-styled my wig and the reflection in the mirror told me I had looked better, but what the heck, it had been a long day.

When I joined Karl and his friend it was obvious they had been celebrating Carnival in their own way and that if I wanted to catch up with them some serious drinking was in order. However, since I wasn't about to lose control tonight I ordered my usual rum punch and sipped it slowly.

Dinner was served buffet style and we decided to eat on the terrace. Remembering my caloric excesses of the previous evening I decided to eat lightly, taking only a dozen or so boiled shrimp and a few french fries. Although the other items looked equally delicious I managed to pass them up.

Following dinner we walked, drinks in hand, to the beach. I removed my sandals so I could feel the warm sand on my feet. As we walked Karl put his arm around my waist and pulled me to him so my head was resting partially on his chest and against his jaw. The stars shown like lanterns in the clear Caribbean sky; the only sound breaking the silence of the night was the surf murmuring on the beach. I tried to allow myself to be captured by the spell, but I felt a nagging worry beginning to surface: I had gotten myself into this mess, how was I going to get myself out of it?

We walked for what seemed and eternity, each of lost in our thoughts, neither uttering a word. The more I thought about my situation the more frustrated I felt for having been born the wrong biological sex and the more angry I became with myself for letting the situation progress to this point. Finally, I decided I might as well tell Karl now, while I had space to run if

need be, rather than wait until we were back at the hotel.

I took a couple of deep breaths, felt my pulse shoot past the red-line as I stopped and turned to face him. "I have something to tell you dear," I said.

"Yes, I was just thinking the same thing," he said. "Why don't we go back to the room?"

With that he took my hand in his and led the way back to the hotel. Since I had used all the energy I possessed trying to tell him the truth I just kept silent and meekly followed his lead to whatever my destiny held in store.

Once on our room I excused myself and took my suitcase to the bathroom to change into my nightwear. I took out the only thing I'd brought to sleep in — a bright red, shortie nylon, nightgown with matching bikini panties. After slipping the nightie and panties on I noted the reflection of the material in the mirror and mused to myself that at least the color was appropriate to go down in flames in. At this point I would have given anything — well, almost anything, for a nice, sexless, pair of flannel peejays.

My mind kept racing ahead to to what I could do to get out of this mess gracefully. Then I remembered something my mother said, "any woman, no matter how dumb, can outsmart any man, no matter how smart." I realized I had been thinking as a man rather than a woman.

After touching up my hair and spraying on a bit of perfume I picked up a bottle of alcohol and a bottle of hand lotion, turned off the light, opened the door and walked back into the bedroom.

The only illumination came from the outside light as it shown through the open doors of the balcony. Karl, naked and prone on the bed, motioned for me to join him. When I sat on the edge near him he pulled me to him and began caressing my legs. I let him continue until I was on the verge of losing control of my emotions.

"Not so fast," I said, "you know, it isn't everyone who has their **very own** private on-duty nurse. How about a nice back rub?"

He readily accepted and I rolled him to his stomach. In my years or nursing I don't think I've ever given a patient such a relaxing back rub. By the time I'd worked

from his ankles to his neck with the alcohol and then started with the hand lotion Karl was just about asleep. However, when he turned onto his back I could see he still had something, other than sleeping, on is mind. Something **not** included in the Nursing Practices Act by the State Board of Nursing.

It was obvious Karl was becoming more sexually excited as I continued the rub-down. Finally, as I brushed against "it" I felt a shudder run through his body. Taking matters in hand, and with a few deft strokes, my problem of being discovered vanished as I had the solution in hand, so to speak.

"I'm sorry," he said. I purred that it was perfectly all right. I excused myself to go to the bathroom and by the time I returned he was asleep. I curled up beside him and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The sun came up in a clear Caribbean sky Monday and I was up early. I'd had my bath, done my make-up and hair and was trying to decide what to wear today when Karl awakened. While he showered I put on a white silk underwired bra and matching lace panties before stepping into a white sundress with its camisole print top patterned with red and yellow sail boats. It has a jacket of matching material. Even though I knew it would be hot today I put a half-slip on under the skirt of the dress since the material was so thin, and not knowing what Karl had in mind for today I didn't want to wear anything that might prove embarrassing.

I completed the outfit with some red and white plastic jewelry and red sandals. For luck I added a red hair band. Karl finished his shower about the time I finished dressing so I took a bottle of red nail polish onto the balcony to touch up my nails while he dressed.

I really feel early morning is the best time of day in the Caribbean - the water is as calm as its going to be for the rest of the day; the air is so fresh and there's an energy you just don't see later in the day. Besides, there something neat about sitting on private balcony overlooking the Caribbean and doing your nails while watching boats from the north country with their cargo of charcoal sailing south to market their wares in Port-au-Prince.

We were back on the to road P-a-P

after breakfast. Because Karl had things do once we arrived he wanted to get an early start. The trip to Port-au-Prince, even when the highway is crowded as it was this day, is interesting because of all the voodoo cemeteries along the way. It is always a colorful drive but during Carnival it's even more so since everything tends to get cleaned and painted then.

Karl had number of stops to make once we arrived in P-a-P so when he left me at the American Embassy we agreed to meet at Tiffanys for lunch. The sun was beginning to get warm so I removed my jacket allowing the heat to bake my bare shoulders. Wearing the large, floppy hat I'd purchased in Cap Haitian I strolled leisurely along Harry Truman Boulevard enjoying the sights of the waterfront and all the activity on the streets.

I spent an hour at Carlo's sipping cokes and filling out postcards. By the time I was done and heading for the post office the sun was well up and the air was becoming quite hot. After mailing the cards I headed toward the market where there was a dress shop I wanted to go in. I'd been there once a few weeks earlier, as Michael, and had hoped I could return as Michelle to try on some of the chic, expensive things offered.

It wasn't too difficult to imagine myself as the wife of a diplomat out shopping for a new dress to wear to some official function. Couple this with the fact that I was being accepted as a real woman while shopping in an authentic French boutique and it's easy to see how I was just carried away with the whole experience.

Occasionally one finds a little shop like this in P-a-P while in fact it would be more appropriate in Petionville or Kenscott. As I entered the store a saleswoman in her late twenties smiled, greeting me in French and, in response to her question, I replied I was looking for a new dress to wear to dinner tonight — possibly something in red. She led the way to a rack of really cute dresses where I picked out one in bright red that appeared to have a hand-crocheted peasant top. Its outer skirt of delicate lace covered a silk under-skirt. I chose a gold brocade belt from the display since I didn't care for the self-belt arrangement of the dress. In the fitting room I tried it several ways deciding I lik-

ed it best with the top slightly off one shoulder. After changing back to my sundress I checked the lovely red creation for a price tag but could find none. Back in the salesroom I asked, in French, the price. The saleswoman replied it was fifty dollars. Well, I supposed I could afford that since I'd originally planned to spend at least that much on meals and lodging this week-end, and as I no longer had those items to worry about I reasoned I could afford to splurge. Now, to find shoes and a handbag I thought as I left the little shop.

A few blocks up the street, at the House of Bata, I found a pair of real leather sandals and a matching purse for about fifteen dollars.

I had an hour left before meeting Karl at Tiffanys and it was getting hot by now so I stopped at Round Point for a rum punch before continuing my window shopping. I stopped in a book store and purchased a book of Gran Moun Proverbs that I seen during an earlier trip to the city.

I had just ordered a drink at my table in Tiffanys when Karl arrived full of news, some of which he imparted to me during lunch. He had a special surprise planned for tonight and this afternoon he would show me where we'd be staying the next two days. Believe me, if you don't like surprises stay away from diplomats.

After our lunch of fish and rice we left the restaurant and I started toward the car parked at the curb. "No, Michelle," Karl said, "we can walk from here."

We crossed the street, walked another block or so before making our way through an opening in a chain link fence and following a path leading to the water. Karl helped me into the small dingy tied up to the short pier. He cast off the line, started the engine and headed out into the Bay where he maneuvered passed a number of boats at anchor and steered us toward a beautiful, black-hulled sailing yacht.

"Is this the surprise?" I asked.

"I thought you'd like it. In case you're curious it's a forty-two foot Baltic belonging to a friend of mine."

I had to admit I was impressed and almost drooling in anticipation as we pulled along side her.

Karl opened the companionway and helped me aboard. I was impressed by the quality and luxury around me and it must

have showed on my face.

"Do you have anything planned for the rest of the day?" he asked.

"I do now."

"Well, I still have some people to see this afternoon, but if you'll take me back to the car and bring the bags back you can stay the afternoon."

Needless to say I quickly accepted the offer and made the round trip from the boat to the beach and back in record time.

I quickly unpacked my suitcase, slipped into the bottom half of my bikini, took a towel from the locker, spread it on the deck and, as I lay there soaking up the sun on the deck of the magnificent vessel, the cares of my everyday world seemed very far away indeed. "Be sure and pick Karl up at six," I thought as I drifted off to sleep.

I awakened about 4:30, went below where I showered and did a close shave. While re-doing my make-up I couldn't help but reflect that having to do one's make-up constantly is probably the most time consuming part of being a woman. In cooler climates a great deal of time is consumed making-up, but in the tropics it's a never-ending chore. Oh well, I chose to be a lady so I shouldn't complain about having to look like one. A quick re-style and my wig was ready. Into the black bra, panties and sundress again and it was almost time to pick Karl up. One last check of my appearance and I was off to the pier, leaving the boat open as we'd be right back.

As I maneuvered past the last yacht I could see Karl waiting on the pier. We exchanged waves as I approached. It took but a minute to turn the helm over to him and take a seat across from him.

"Well, I see you're dressed for tonight," he said.

"Actually I thought I'd change."

"No, black is perfect for where we're going," he said as pulled along side the yacht.

Karl quickly showered and changed so it was still early when we secured the yacht and took the dingy back to the pier with him continuing to refuse to tell me where we were bound for the evening.

South of Port-au-Prince we headed up into the mountains toward Jacmal. After traveling about 15 kilometers we turned onto a gravel road and, after traveling another kilometer or so, came to a clearing

of native huts and stopped. The smell of cooking food was in the air and sounds of music and laughter all around us.

"It looks like a Bamboche," I said.

"It is."

"But, I thought they were only held on Saturday nights."

"Usually they are, but this one is special because they are have a Mange Assotor."

I should explain here that in the Voodoo religion many objects, including drums, are thought to be possessed, or can have different powers. Now, there is a certain kind of drum, called an Assotor, that is sort of the "Granddaddy" of all drums. The belief goes that when the Assotor is beaten in a specified way and at a certain time all of the Loa (spirits) can be summoned.

Since there are very few of these drums in Haiti their use is very important and is celebrated in a specific way and accompanied by a feast -- which was why we were here.

[A more complete description of this particular Voodoo ceremony would be much to lengthy and far beyond the scope of this article. While I don't consider myself an expert on the Voodoo Religion I am rather knowledgeable and I would be happy to answer any sincere questions on the subject. Simply address your questions to me in care of the Phoenix. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope please.]

The service we'd joined had been going on for almost two weeks and would end on Ash Wednesday. We witnessed a number of "possessions", all of which were similar. When a person is first "possessed" they lapse in sort of a frenzy and there is no apparent control or direction to their movements. They may stagger, fall down, or go into convulsions. The voodoo priest (a houngan) takes control of the person and directs their energies. Once the spirit is "tamed" they take on a personality which can be recognized as that of a certain loa or spirit. The houngan then communicates with the spirit, making necessary offerings or performs the required duties.

We stayed until the sky began to lighten. I'd eaten, drunk and danced more than I had in a long time. The natives seemed to enjoy having a white woman partake of the festivities as much as I'd enjoyed being there and while I was truly sorry to leave I

realized one can have too much of a good thing.

The sun was up by the time we got back to the yacht. Since President Douvalier had declared today, Tuesday, a national holiday Karl had nothing to do. We both fell into an exhausted sleep.

It was late afternoon, 4 p.m., when I awakened. I reached beside me and found Karl was already up. "Just as well," I thought. Suddenly I realized something was wrong — my wig was off. I reached for it and not feeling it I looked around the bunk. Then, I noticed it sitting squarely in the middle of the top of the built-in dresser. I was hoping Karl hadn't seen it when I noticed my passport laying next to it. [I'm certain anyone reading this article and has had a similar experience knows just how hopeless the feeling is. Also you don't really know quite what to do and begin to wonder whether or not you can run faster than he.]

Anyway, since the game was over I decided I might as well be comfortable for a while, so I scrubbed the residual make-up off, pulled on a pair of white shorts without bothering to put a top on.

Karl heard me moving about and called down "There's cold beer in the fridge. Bring up a couple of bottles."

"You mean it's safe for me to come up?" I asked in Michael's voice, surprising myself at the sound of it since I hadn't heard it for several days.

"Sure. Come on up. I'm not angry."

I got the beers from the fridge and after taking a deep breath went up on deck.

"So, that's what you **really** look like. I couldn't tell from the passport picture."

"How long have you known?"

"Oh, just since your wig came off this afternoon. That isn't too bad. You had me fooled for three days."

At this point I definitely felt I owed Karl an explanation and an apology and gave him both.

"Well, now that you know everything I'll get my things together and get out of your way."

"I didn't say you had to leave. You don't have to, unless you want to."

"Well, tonight is the big night of Carnival and I had planned to spend it with you. I'd still like to."

"By all means, please do. Besides, it would be a shame to let your new red dress go to waste," he said smiling.

It was getting late and I realized I should start getting ready. Under the shower I felt the tension leave and was truly happy everything was out in the open. Now I could at least relax and enjoy Carnival as I wouldn't have to be on guard every minute I was with Karl.

After my shower I dried, powdered and perfumed my body. After putting on my white lace bra and panties I sat at the make-up table to make myself beautiful for the night. I used smokey blue around my eyes and tawny pink blusher to set-off my tan. I stepped into my white strapless slip before dropping the new red dress over my head — making sure only my right arm went through the arm hole.

My wig had been through some very rough times lately so I spent some time and effort on it. I felt the effort worthwhile when I saw how nice it looked after finishing with it.

While slipping on my sandals Karl came down to shower. "Very nice," he said, "much better than Michael."

While Karl was showering I went up on deck to change my nail color to match my dress. It was a beautiful evening, the sun was just setting, a light wind was blowing in from the sea, with sounds of the bands coming from shore promising a night of music and fun. Since this was the last night of Carnival I knew the crowd would be unbelievable.

The sun had just set by the time Karl nosed the dinghy up to the pier. All the night's activities would be taking place downtown so we by-passed the Benz and walked the few blocks to Round Point for supper. We seated ourselves at a table in front of one of the many windows so we could watch people pass and some of the festivities, and withdrew into our respective little worlds.

Since this was my last night to eat decently for a while I decided to splurge, ordering beef shiskabab with rice and a salad. Karl had lambi and the bit I sampled was delicious. After a leisurely meal we were sipping our coffee liqueur when a large group of people, several of whom were wearing military uniforms with their

automatic weapons at the ready, entered the room. I was a little nervous, but Karl to me there was nothing to worry about. He obviously knew the central figure in the retinue but seemed surprised when the gentleman stepped away from the retinue and walked to our table to exchange greetings. We stood as he approached and I just about fell down when Karl introduced me to President Douvalier. The unexpectedness of the situation caught me totally unprepared and all I could think to do was curtsy. Since no one laughed I could only guess I had done the correct thing, and hopefully not too badly. The visit lasted only a few minutes.

We finished our after-dinner drink and left the restaurant to join the celebrants in the street. During our dinner the street scene had moved in high gear and was, by now, swarming with activity and people of all types, jugglers, acrobats, dancing bands, magicians and musicians. In one block alone I counted three bands, each with its own name, musical style and paraphernalia. The sound was deafening and people were dancing to the beat of each group of drums. The bands were up on the beds of large trucks and the speaker cabinets were mounted so high that each truck had at least one person armed with a long pole to lift the overhead wires out of the way. The scene was utterly chaotic, and yet, paradoxically, everything was orderly and organized.

Since the only way to get from Point A to Point B was to join a conga line and dance your way that's what we did. I heard later that some of the lines numbered up to ten thousand people and many of the streets had 3 or 4 going at the same time. Think of the crowd in Times Square at midnight on New Year's Eve, add the number viewing the Rose Parade and you have some idea of the absolute crush of people in downtown Port-au-Prince that Tuesday night.

Dearest to my heart were the Rubaniers, or Maypole dancers who were attired in women's clothing and wove their colorful ribbons around portable Maypoles. The Rubaniers were accompanied by guitar, marimbas and cha-chas. There were also male stick-dancers, called Battonni, like the Rubaniers, also crossdressed. The Battonni crouched in circles and perform baton-tap-

ping dances to the accompaniment of drumming and singing. The thing I found interesting was that the appearance of being women, for the performers, was for the most part the use of clothing. They didn't wear wigs or hair pieces making them easily recognizable as men. I also spotted some TVs wearing white face make-up like the Kabuki players of Japan do. There were also men dressed as the Voodoo goddess Gedé with a skirt or dress over long black pants.

The bands stopped periodically to take up a collection from the bystanders. The custom was to stand in one place and play until people gave them money — and they wouldn't budge until paid. This custom is called pay-to-go. After being paid the band would perform an encore before moving on.

We spent the night moving in and out of dance lines and milling crowds, stopping occasionally to sample the hawker's products or at one of the many sidewalk booths to try a game of chance. I located vendors selling rum flavored snow-cones and provided them with a steady business most of the evening.

There were sights and sounds enough to provide a complete article on that one evening alone. Suffice to say, we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly.

As had happened in Cap Haitian a few nights before about midnight everything came to a stop. One by one the bands and their group of followers began moving off in different directions while the larger groups broke up and moved away. Before long Mardi Gras was over. Rar would be here in a few days but I wouldn't be around to see it as I was returning to the U.S.

Karl and I walked down the almost empty street to Round Point for a last drink. The place was almost deserted when we walked in and we were able to take the same table we'd occupied earlier in the evening. In was in this setting we said our good-byes over a drink.

The trip to boat was made in silence. It was mutually agreed we would sleep in different areas of the boat and by the time I'd removed my make-up, nail polish, etc. Karl was asleep. I found there was still some beer in the fridge so I took a couple of bottles to drink up on deck while listening to the waves lap against the hull. It

was so quiet and peaceful that I fell asleep to be awakened a few hours later by the sun shining in my eyes.

I said my verbal good-bye to Karl at the dock and watched as he drove off in the beautiful Mercedes. Picking up my suitcase I walked to the staging area where the camions stop. Finding one headed north I took a seat, knowing I'd back at the compound in two hours. The ride went quickly and by the time I entered the compound it was time for lunch. After dropping my suitcase off in my room I went to the communal dining room to see what was being served. After seeing goat liver in Creole sauce and cold black bean soup I opted for a tall glass of orange juice to drink while seated in a comfortable chair on the patio overlooking the Caribbean. I let my mind wander back to how the weekend had started.

I remembered we'd been extremely busy at the clinic -----.

WHAT IS A WOMAN?

An Editorial

Now there's a question which has burned on the mind of mankind since the dawn of time immemorial. Or has it? I don't really imagine Og the Caveman had any trouble deciding what a woman was, nor did/does my father or yours. I know I don't. Well, at least I until March 13th, 1984 I thought I knew what a woman was.

As a youngster anyone not looking or acting like a "guy" was a girl. As I grew to adulthood I had to reevaluate my method of definition since it became apparent that some people not looking and/or acting like men were, in all actuality, men if one defines sex by genitalia. So, some people not looking or acting like a man had to be labeled "man" and some women not looking or acting like a woman had to be labeled "woman".

Now, in my middle years at long last, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the US Government has solved my dilemma by defining exactly what a woman is.

According to an article appearing in the March 13, 1984 **Chicago Sun-Times**, it seems that Patricia Michelle Castaneda, who underwent reassignment surgery in 1977 is not considered by the INS to be a

woman.

What brought this to the attention of the INS is that in November 1982 Patricia filed a petition with the INS to certify her husband (an alien she married in 1980) an "immediate family relative" as a way to guarantee him US citizenship. Well, the wheels of bureaucracy grind even more slowly than do those of Justice and apparently some bureaucrats do have a sense of humor, because on February 14th, 1984 Mrs. Castaneda received a Valentine's letter from the INS stating not only was she not married (wonder what the State of Illinois thinks of that?), but that she "was not and is not a woman having the capability to marry a man." and that the INS regards her reassignment surgery as "nothing more than cosmetic."

To insure Mrs. Castaneda understood their reasoning the INS clarified their definition of what a woman is, to wit: "an adult female able to bear children."

Now that we all understand exactly what a woman is perhaps the Federal Government will tell all the adult females unable, because of medical intervention (i.e. hysterectomy, D&C, etc.) and Nature, to bear children just what they should be labeled.

In light of this historic, new definition can the National Organization of Women allow adult female persons not able to bear children to continue their membership in that organization?

Perhaps I should write the INS and ask them what I should now label my mother, who at age 79 is no longer able to bear children. Or my daughter-in-law, at age 33 and unable to bear children.

To please the INS is some scientist somewhere going to have to coin a new word with which to label the "adult female unable to bear children." A challenge for another scientific clod like the one who coined the label "gender dysphoria" perhaps?

Mrs. Castaneda has filed a suit in the US Seventh District Court to resolve this matter and we can only hope that enlightened legal minds will, like the one(s) recently ruling in the Karen Ulane case, prevail.

CROSSING THE WARDROBE RUBICON by Rebecca (CA-121)

Most crossdressers are born in a closet and remain there for many years. Eventually, for varied reasons, each may emerge to face the blinding daylight only to the famous feminine phrase "Oh dear, I haven't a thing to wear."

The crossdresser may have accumulated a vast collection of clothing which may feel wonderful to the skin and fulfill the wildest fantasy but which is hardly considered acceptable public attire.

The first questions coming to mind are: "Where do I buy acceptable clothing at a reasonable price?" and "How do I select the proper clothes?" The answer to the first is locate stores receptive to the TV/TS customer or buy from a mail order house. The GGA Resource Directory is most helpful in locating outlets which can supply the needs of the TV/TS as to quality, reasonable price and size. Two of the several mail order companies falling into this category are Lane Bryant's, 2300 Southeastern Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46207 and Roaman's Clothing, 270 Market Street, Saddle Brook, NJ 07662.

In selecting clothing for use in public one must be aware of what is generally acceptable for a particular occasion. One should not, for example, wear a hostess gown to the supermarket. In addition, members of the Gender Community should take advantage of various styles and colors available to accentuate any feminine characteristics and, more importantly, draw attention away from obvious masculine characteristics.

With the aid of a mirror, or a friend, analyze your body and try to determine your most feminine feature(s). When shopping for clothing try to select those garments, or accessories, which tend to emphasize and further feminize and draw attention to that feature. If follows that that attention will be drawn away from less feminine features. If you can't (horror of horrors) find a feature you'd consider especially feminine chose the eyes. Proper make-up and clothing color selection can easily draw attention to your eyes and away from your less feminine features.

Even more important than color and style is size. A gown that's a knock-out on

the rack loses something if it hangs like a sack or bulges at the seams. Although this article deals mainly with style selection we'll touch briefly on the various size groups. The height of the average male is 5'10" compared to the 5'5" of the average female. Additionally, one needs to consider the proportions of the male and female bodies - the "standard" male shape is a inverted pear (wide shoulders, narrow hips, no discernable waist and longer arms) while the female is the reverse (narrow shoulders, pinched-in waist, and wider hips). The following are the most common size groups for the heights listed: Half sizes - 5'4" and under and slightly shorter torso; Misses Petite - 5" 2½" and under, Average - 5'3" to 5'6½", Tall 5'7" to 5'11"; Women's (fuller more mature figure, longer torso and arm proportions than Half Sizes) 5'4½" to 5'7"; Tall Misses 5'8" to 6'.

The difference between Women's and Misses is figure proportion. Women's Sizes are for the fuller, more mature figure. Misses and Tall Misses are similar in proportion except for slightly longer sleeve length for Tall Misses. If your body has the proportion and height of the "average" male then Tall sizes are probably for you. The longer sleeve length of the Tall Sizes provides for the longer arm of the male. Given equal heights the male and female differ in proportion with the male shoulders being wider, the hips narrower and the arms slightly longer. Choose the styles which maximize your feminine appearance. A piece of lace on a dress may make the dress more feminine, but not necessarily the wearer. In fact, bad selection may give the appearance of the dress wearing the wearer rather than the desired reverse effect.

Ideas differ on the desirability of wearing a dress as opposed to wearing a skirt blouse/sweater combination, but there are good reasons for selecting one over the other. It is generally recommended that short girls, of average proportions, wear solid colored dresses to give the illusion of added height while taller girls should wear skirts and blouses (of differing colors) to de-emphasize their height and avoid looking overly tall.

A skirt and blouse of different color and pattern creates a break at the waist and draws attention away from the wear-

er's height. A cinch worn with a flared skirt will make the hips appear wider and in contrast with the minimized waist adds a feminine appearance. Proper color selection is also important and will be discussed in a subsequent article. Another advantage of the skirt-blouse combination is that they may be purchased in different sizes to achieve a better overall fit for the male proportioned body.

Skirt styling is essentially up to the wearer. Full or flared skirts tend to emphasize the hips and thus help give male hips more of a female look. Gored or A-line skirts are also acceptable. Skirts with elasticized waistbands are usually less expensive and easier to get into (by the way, women tend to put skirts on over their heads since their shoulders tend to be narrower than their hips) and out of but zipper and/or button closures contribute more to a feminized waistline. Skirt length is, for the most part, determined by current fashion trend and one should consider the appearance of one's legs when deciding the amount of leg exposure they want. A long skirt with a side slit reveals a lot of leg, and possibly thigh, when the wearer is seated. Remember, when wearing heels and sitting your legs are at a higher angle to the floor than when wearing flats. Much of what has been said about skirts also applies to dress skirts.

Blouse (and dress top) styling is very important in creating the feminine image. The blouse frames the face and either compliments or ruins a well made-up face. While color is important fit at the shoulder, in the bust and sleeve length is equally important. For long sleeves the male arm length almost certainly dictates the Tall size group. Long sleeves will cover an abundance of arm hair (just as a longish skirt will cover knock-knees and, to some extent, bowed legs) and detract from the natural length of the male arm. Three-quarter sleeves are also good, but short sleeves should not be discounted. Puffed shoulders or other shaping or shirring which emphasizes the already broad male shoulder width should be avoided. Shoulder width can be slimmed remarkably by choosing a blouse having subtle vertical stripes. The stripes must be subtle because vertical stripes tend to make one look taller.

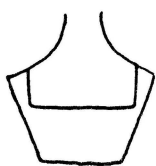
Stand-up collars, especially when made

of lace, may be very feminine but they tend to accentuate a large neck. On the other hand an open neck or plunging neckline will draw attention to that area. Good skin texture in the neck and chest area can be a real plus and open many fashion options up to one. For most a compromise between the two can be found. A necklace worn high around the neck will attract attention to that area whereas a necklace which hangs lower and worn outside the blouse draws attention away from the neck.

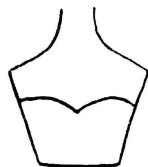
Many dresses have a top which contrasts with the skirt — different color, pattern or decorative trim. Even a change in weave can provide an effective break between the top and the skirt. A dress which is continuous from top to bottom can still have a break at the waist by adding a belt of 1 or 2 inches in width. Generally one should avoid belts or sashes more than 2" in width unless one has a feminine waistline. Wearing a waist length jacket or sweater over your dress will contribute to a waistline break.

Much moderately priced feminine clothing is made from various forms of polyester knit such as poly-interlock, acrylic, woven textured, spun, crepe-stitch, etc. In addition to having a pleasant feel and appearance they are easy to care for in that they require only washing and little or no ironing.

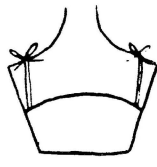
Shoe styles. It's difficult to refute the association of high-heels and femininity but one must observe what women wear in public to truly identify with them. Usually heels of three or more inches are usually worn by petite women standing barely five feet tall without them. The average heel runs from 1" to 2¾". A wide variety of quite feminine shoes are available in the 2" heel range and can be worn without driving the wearer's height into the clouds. On the other hand, a very low heel will tend to accentuate a large foot. The appearance of a large foot can be minimized by color and style selection — such as dark colored sandals, open-toed or sling pumps. The truncated toe of these styles reduces the apparent length of the foot. By the way, most "open-toed" shoes are called "sandals" in the trade. Sandals (real sandals) can also be very comfortable which makes wearing heels a lot more fun. A purse matching your shoes is a nice combination and touch.



Square



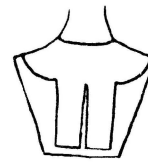
Strapless



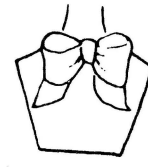
Spaghetti Straps



Scoop



Bishop



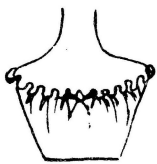
Pussy-cat Bow



"V" Plunge



Pie Wedge



Peasant Shirred



Bateau



Tuxedo



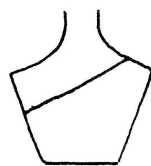
Jewel



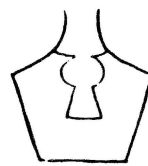
Ascot



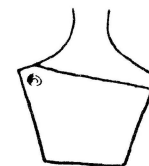
Bow



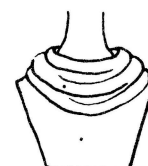
One Shoulder



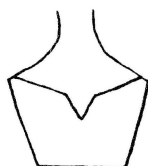
Keyhole



Asymmetric



Cowl



Little "V"



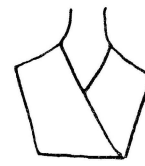
Cape



Horse Shoe



Ruffle



Surplice



Fence



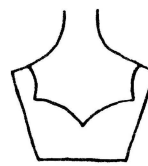
Boat



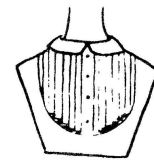
Tank Top



Halter



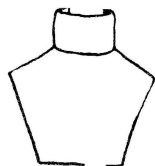
Sweetheart



Pleated Dickie



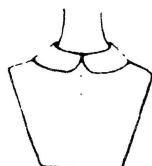
Puritan



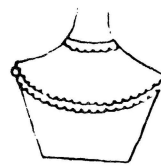
Turtle-Neck



Revers



Peter Pan



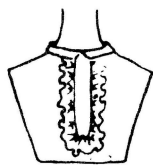
Bertha



Notched Revers



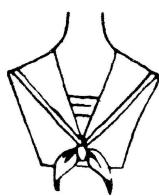
Shirtwaist Convertible



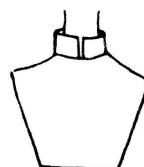
Jobot



Shawl



Sailor

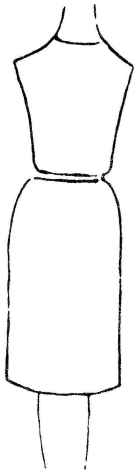


Mandarin

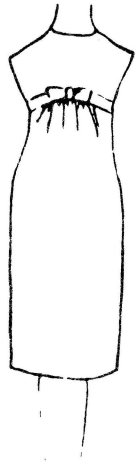


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Natural



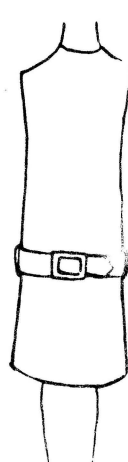
Empire



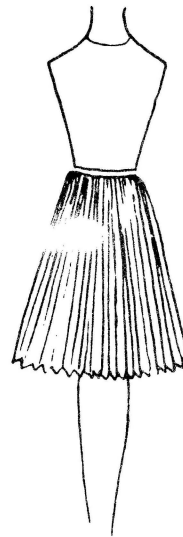
Shirred



Side Draped



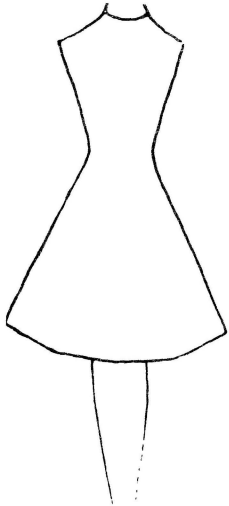
Lowered



Knife Pleats



Box Pleats



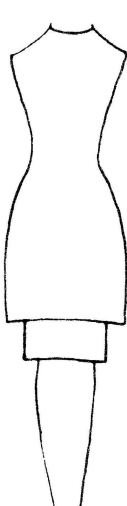
Flared



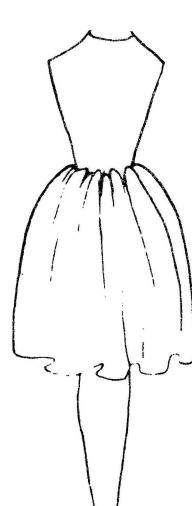
Flared Trumpet



Bell



Tunic



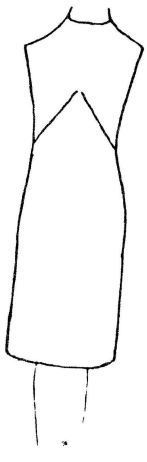
Full Gathered



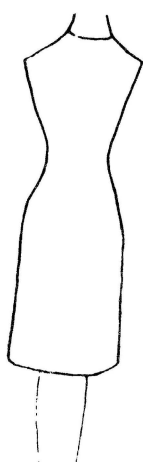
A Line Princess



Mandarin



Raised



Straight (sheath)



Belted Smocked



Blouson



Dropped Full



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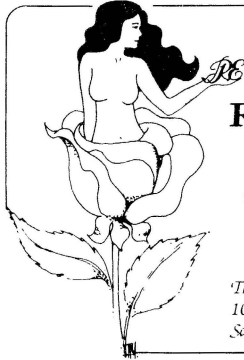
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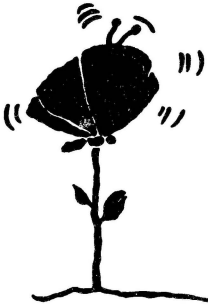
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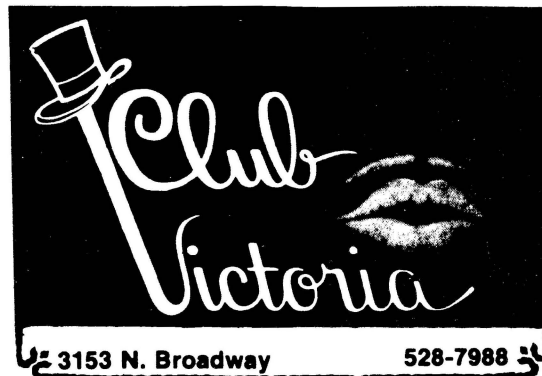
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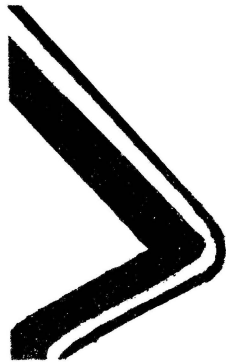
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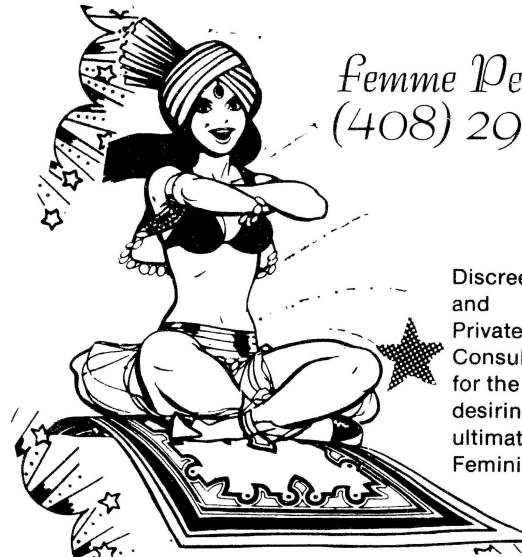
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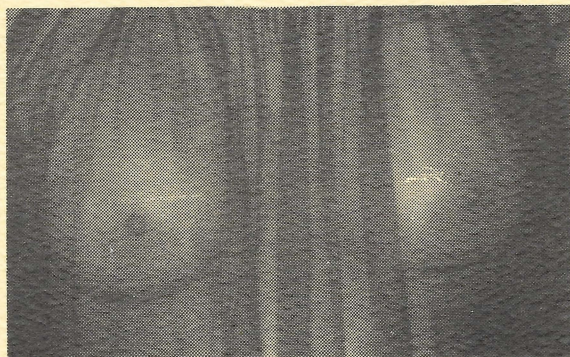
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The Transvestian®

Published monthly by

Tania Volen, Inc.

200 Main Street
Tennent, N.J. 07763-0200

201-363-8500

Annual Subscription:

\$18.00 USA

\$24.00 Canada

\$42.00 Overseas

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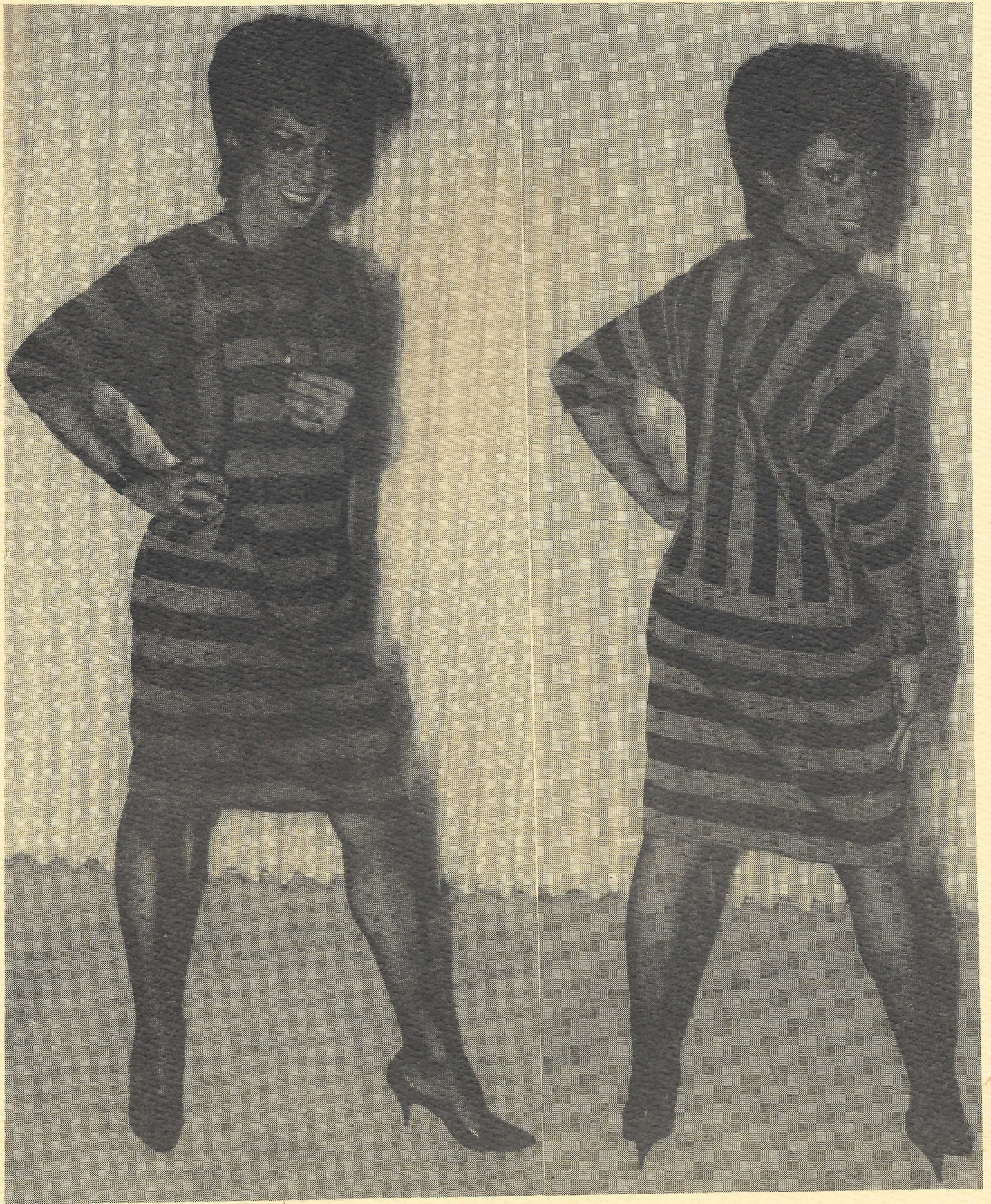
ARTICLES
fact/fiction - humorous, sad,
informational, etc.

POEMS

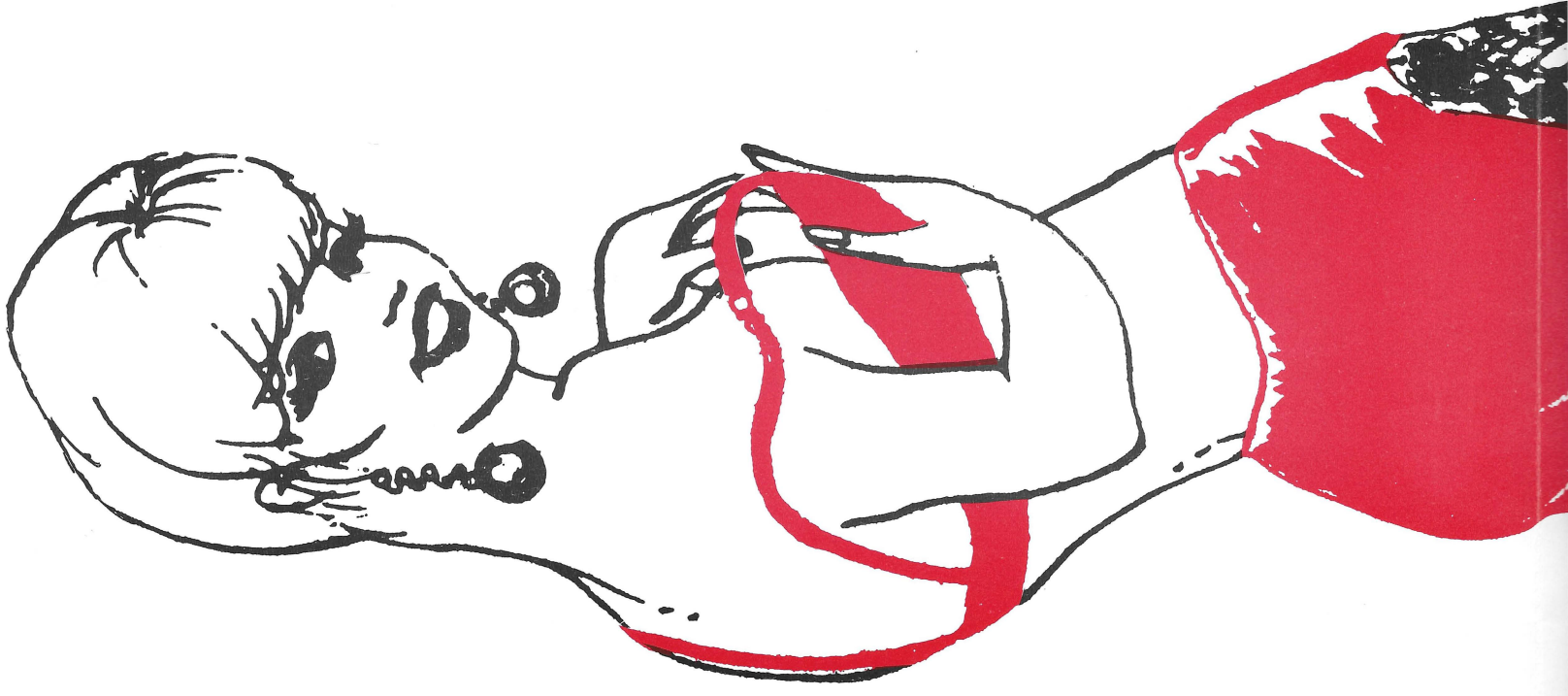
DRAWINGS, ILLUSTRATIONS
original or clip-art.

PHOTOS
Individual or group

Send items to: GGA, POB 62283, Sunnyvale,
CA 94088



Laura (CA-90)





April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

