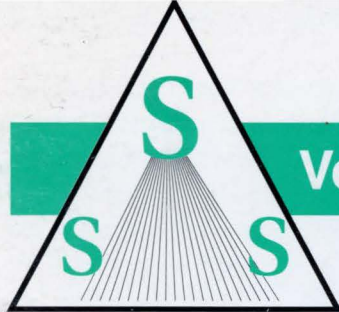


The Femme Mirror

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE SECOND SELF, INC.

The Femme Mirror

The Femme Mirror is the quarterly journal of The Society for the Second Self, Inc., a non-profit 501c(3) corporation. Address: The Society for the Second Self, Inc., 8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104, Houston TX 77036. Submissions to The Femme Mirror should be sent to: **The Femme Mirror, 8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104, Houston, TX 77036.** Letters to the Editor may be directed to Frances Fairfax in care of The Femme Mirror.

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- 1) *The Femme Mirror* will not publish the last name of any Tri-Ess member without the expressed written consent of the member, unless the surname is known to be a pseudonym.
- 2) We encourage all contributors to the Mirror to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.
- 3) We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
- 4) Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner.

Thank you. Frances Fairfax

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MOVING ???

Please Notify Membership Director
Donna Martin
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659

A Note of Thanks

A note of thanks from your Mirror Staff to all of you who contribute your articles, photos, cartoons, poems, as well as your typing and envelope-stuffing skills. Your service is enriching the lives of all your sisters. This is YOUR journal. You, the readers, are the source of its contents and the reason for its existence. Ya'll are doing GREAT! Just keep it coming now, hear?

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See Page 62 for About Our Cover Girl



Executive Director's Message

By Carol Beecroft

I originally had planned to write about one of my favorite subjects, but during the last six weeks I have received some disturbing phone calls. They troubled me to the extent that I will hold off on that other matter.

I am going to concentrate on some phone calls I have received from half-a-dozen wives over the last six weeks. These wives were distraught and perplexed - maybe even angry.

In the past we have preached and preached to crossdressers that if they were ever lucky enough to have a wife who was "understanding," they should show this unique and special person how much they do appreciate her. They should freely express their own caring and sensitive side to the extent that their wives would feel truly loved, special, highly appreciated and most secure. Such husbands should realize how most fortunate they are to have a one-in-a-million wife who has overcome all the obstacles she faced in her quest for "understanding." Believe me, friend crossdresser, this long and difficult road to acceptance and understanding, for most wives, is rocky, emotionally draining, frustrating, sleep-depriving, questioning of her own sexuality, insecure and just plain challenging to her marriage.

Many a wife finally arrives at the end of her long and difficult journey only to find that her crossdresser husband is still the same ole selfish individual he was when she started her journey.

Four of the wives complained their husbands still put them down as women. They expected that their husbands' supposed femininity would make them more sensitive to their wives' emotional and physical needs. But no, they were still the same ole

thoughtless men they were originally.

Some wives thought their husbands would be a lot more caring once they were able to share their feminine side. But it seems that although the husband talked a lot about his feminine side, he never showed the feminine qualities the wife really expected. It was so disappointing to all the wives that they were the ones who had to do all the adjusting and compromising. One wife was in tears as she related to me her disappointment at what she found at the end of her personal journey.

A disturbing bit of information given by three of the wives was the fact that their husbands had involved themselves in frequent masturbation while crossdressing. These wives were so confused, disappointed, and sexually frustrated. Sad!

What the heck is going on? If the reader thinks these unfortunate wives are the only ones with this disturbing situation, please think again. I distinctly remember receiving a phone call some years ago when a wife, who was crying when we talked, said she was trying so hard to be the "understanding wife" her husband wanted. It was so upsetting, I almost cried while she explained her situation. She said her husband hadn't changed at all. He was still selfish, put her down, and made her feel her efforts were all in vain. She simply didn't know what to do! I felt so bad for her! I tried to help, but she needed her husband's sympathy, not mine. That phone call is still as clear to me now as when I first received it some years ago.

....We who are crossdressers like to talk about our feminine side - the civilizing side - the side which would lead us to be

gentle, caring, sensitive and nurturing. But I think that, in far too many cases, it is just cheap talk by many crossdressing husbands. Such husbands make no real attempt to develop their real feminine side - a side that would allow them to be more pleasant individuals. So many men are thoughtless! And isn't that typical of most men?

Over the 29 years I have worked in the crossdressing field, I have heard from hundreds of crossdressers who said they would give almost anything, including their right arms, to acquire an understanding and accepting wife. I'm sure some of these particular individuals did find that certain understanding wife. I'm also sure many of these husbands who did succeed in acquiring that special woman found that they, too, had to make adjustments, just as their wives did. They also found, I'm sure, that they had to give up things, like their wives did. It's not a one-way road to acceptance and cooperativeness! Both the husband and the wife must make a number of changes to please the "other" spouse. Femininity involves GIVING! You simply can't ask the wife to do all the "work." You have got to make yourself WORTHY of a woman who has worked so hard to be the understanding person you have wanted. You have to be a better person, a better husband, a better father! Otherwise, who are you kidding?

So, guys, TELL your wife how much you appreciate her! Let her know in many ways how much you love her. Spend some money on flowers and a nice dinner out! Pamper her!! Show true appreciation of all the work she has done to be "understanding." Give that "right arm" to show her how great and wonderful she is. And lastly, CHANGE yourself, if necessary, so that your feminine side will shine brightly, and then you will be the type of husband an "understanding" wife deserves!!! OK? Get to it!



Sally A. Hunt, M.A. MFCG

Licensed Marriage,
Family & Child Counselor
(209) 227-0477

Individual Psychotherapy
Couples & Family Counseling
Gender Sexuality Women's Issues

Tri-Ess Helpline!

Do you have a question about Tri-Ess? Do you need help regarding media outreach in your area? Tri-Ess Executive Director Carol Beecroft may be reached at the Tri-Ess National Office in Tulare, California at:

(209) 688-9246

Carol is often available to speak to radio audiences via long-distance telephone hook-up, and she is compiling a list of members who are able to appear on radio or television, or speak before college classes.

Do you have a question about the Femme Mirror or other Tri-Ess publications and services? Tri-Ess Chair of the Board Jane Ellen Fairfax and Mirror Editor Frances Fairfax may be reached at:

(713) 349-8969

Are you interested in starting a Tri-Ess chapter? The new Tri-Ess Liaison for Chapter Support and Services, Judy Daniels, may be reached at:

(417) 831-3433

Does your local chapter have a Helpline? Ideally, each Tri-Ess chapter should operate a Helpline and list the number with the local Crisis Hotline, Gay Switchboard, Mental Health Clinics, etc. The expenses involved would vary with local phone rates and installation charges. As a second, unlisted line in a sister's home, a Helpline does not take a lot of money. What it does take is considerable dedication on the part of the sister volunteering to answer the Helpline. How about it, ladies? Does your chapter have a Helpline yet?

Radio Outreach with Jim Bridges and Gina Lance



Gina Lance added that she was in a relationship with a professional woman. She explained to Mr. Kobylt her own history of crossdressing from the age of four or five to the present, and how her story is indeed a common one.

After an hour of talk, no minds were changed at KFI Radio, but the airwaves of the 50,000 watt station were certainly buzzing with hot discussion over a nine state area!

On December 18, 1997, just days before the Christmas holidays, internationally known transformation artist Jim Bridges and his marketing director/model Gina Lance took to the airwaves of Southern California.

Invited by the producers of the Number One rated AM radio talk show on KFI 640 in Los Angeles, "The John and Ken Show," the stage was set for a forum/debate on crossdressing.

Ms. Lance, a listener to the show, had e-mailed the hosts and sent a copy of the Jim Bridges Catalog by Priority Mail, when she overheard co-host John Kobylt declare that the one thing in life that he couldn't handle were "men in dresses"!

For an hour crossdressing was a heated topic. Radio co-host ken Champeau was neutral, but his partner, John, kept the fires burning. Four female callers phoned in with their opinions, ranging from acceptance to horror. One, the happy wife of a crossdresser, explained that her husband's feminine side made him a more complete person.

Jim Bridges explained that the average age of his customers was the mid-forties, and that the majority were married on in a solid relationship. All held good, steady jobs, most as highly paid professionals.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Frances,

I am sending along an article about "Passing" which has been printed in the Fiesta newsletter. This article has raised some discussion at our chapter. Those that think they pass all the time think that any non-passer should stay home until they are of passing quality. I am not sure if I pass or not but I still enjoy dressing and getting out.

Several years ago at a California Dreamin' Convention, a couple of young girls stopped me in the elevator and asked if they bought me a drink would I talk to them about my crossdressing. I spent the rest of the evening in the main bar and never did get to the cocktail party I was headed for. I have also come out to my family, and that has done a lot to ease some of the guilt. If you have been reading the Fiesta newsletter for the past two years or so then you have seen my progress and acceptance of myself for the crossdresser that I am.

Take care and thanks for your support.

Vicky Anne

Editor -

It was interesting reading Melanie Yarborough's article in the Fall 1997 issue of the Femme Mirror on "Body Shaving."

When we speak of our "feminine side," I was born with a plus in that my body is almost completely hairless. I have my head hair and pubic hair, and a very light beard. I have no hair on my arms,

hands, legs, or chest, and so little under my arms that it's not noticeable.

When I shave with an electric shaver in the morning, in late evening I can feel some stubble, but it is not noticeable to the eye. I never have "five o'clock shadow." If I shave with a safety razor, I can shave so close that my face still feels smooth 24 hours later.

For a 72 year old, my legs, arms and hands feel silky smooth. I feel very fortunate not to have to spend time removing hair except for a quick face shave.

Back in 1943 when I joined the Navy, my buddy who signed up with me suggested I learn how to shave before we left, even though I had a smooth face.

I also enjoyed reading Debbie McKellar Donaldson's article on page 21 about her dad. I have five children who don't know of Patricia. I want to tell them, but to keep peace with my spouse, I haven't.

Also, the poem by Sue CA-2384-S on the back cover had me in tears.

With love,

Patricia OH-2977-B

Dear Frances,

As you know, I am dedicated to the normalization of men in skirts (MIS), a term plagiarized from the internet forums "Tom's Cafe" and

"Fashion Freedom." From those two sites, I have learned that on page 32 of January, 1998, GQ Magazine there is a

small article showing five men wearing dresses referring to the spring and summer fashions for men. I e-mailed them encouraging them to continue keeping readers informed on dresses for men. If you or anyone you know would like to e-mail them, their address is: GQMAG@aol.com.

Leni

Dear Frances,

I got the Mirror today and it is very good.

I am impressed with all of the coming out stories and the going out stories. People's families need to know and folks need to go some place other than bars. I'm heartened by the growing maturity of our people.

The Wife's Bill of Rights is okay by me, and I was happy to see the on-line support for the wives. Let's keep those marriages together. Melissa Dixon's article is great. I suggest that Melissa put her e-mail address in future articles to pick up the emerging politically minded crossdresser. Virginia turned 85. Good front cover photo and article on her at 85. Wow! The ICTLEP letterhead and article were splendiferous. (I'm learning words like that from watching Barney the Dinosaur with my grandchild.) Thanks for letting me tell our heterosexual crossdresser sisters what ICTLEP is doing for them. Thanks for a great magazine. It makes me proud to be Tri-Ess.

Phyllis Frye

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Frances,

I think that I've finally written an article that may be considered for publication. It is an article of advice targeted to those who tell their wives for the first time. I have submitted it for publication in the Southern Belle and have run it by some of the other board members. All had a very positive response.

As you already know, my wife Chris and I have been members of Tri-Ess for several years now. As I mentioned in my last e-mail, we began with the Chi Chapter and are now involved as outreach coordinators with Sigma Epsilon. Besides answering the information help line since May '96, both Chris and I have been very active in helping to organize a wives group.

As evidenced in our articles in the January Southern Belle, "The Wives' Group" and "There are no Elves!!", we are trying to lend our support to an already wonderful chapter.

In addition, as part of my duties as outreach coordinator I have had the honor of joining other members of Sigma Epsilon at speaking engagements at several universities. These engagements were arranged through the efforts of our recently retired president Lauren and our current vice president Dae. I'll never cease to be amazed how active this chapter is!

Since taking on the Help Line last May both Chris and I have had the opportunity of helping many potential new

members as well as their wives and loved ones. It has been a tremendous learning experience for the both of us. We have corresponded with many of these first-time callers and their wives by telephone (Chris always makes herself available to the wives and S.O.'s - I'll never cease to be amazed at her talent of being able to help them), e-mail and, most recently, by FAX! (That was an interesting telephone/fax call. - "The Miracles of This Modern Age, Sonny")

Anyway, I read over some of my correspondence and came up with this attached article. Let me know what you think.

Sincerely,

Cheryl D. GA-2843-D

Chris D. GA-9003-D

Editor -

It was interesting reading Melanie Yarborough's article in the Fall 1997 issue of the Femme Mirror on "Body Shaving."

When we speak of our "feminine side," I was born with a plus in that my body is almost completely hairless. I have my head hair and pubic hair, and a very light beard. I have no hair on my arms, hands, legs, or chest, and so little under my arms that it's not noticeable.

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Control vs. Communication

by Frances Fairfax

I have to get in my two cents worth on the question of controlling vs. communicating. There's a stirring old anthem which includes the lines,

***"On their shores, we never sought them.
Love of conquest hither brought them."***

The question of whether a behavior is controlling, defensive, or communicating, depends upon the respective attitudes of the two individuals, and on whose turf the question is being decided. On the question of crossdressing, the crossdresser's behavior is more frequently controlling than his wife's. He is asking his wife to learn about, and accommodate to, a behavior that society does not completely accept. It is also behavior that, unbridled, can spell the end of a relationship and the breakup of a family.

The crossdresser has a responsibility to his wife and children. When he fails to fulfill that responsibility, and when his behavior threatens to put the family's livelihood and the relationship in jeopardy, boundaries need to be set. In the Wives' Bill of Rights, I outlined a wife's basic territory. When a husband appropriates his wife's clothing, for instance, it is not at all controlling for the wife to say, "I don't want my clothing stretched or my jewelry missing. You have your own."

And, I have a real problem with husbands' going off on "Adventures in Genderland" in or out of town, with other women (genetic or transsexual), or (worse!) acting out his sexual fantasies with other men. I don't want to have sex with all his other partners. When his fantasizing affects my physical as well as emotional health, he is violating my space. Setting boundaries to protect my basic rights is not being controlling!

The question of discussing feelings is usually communicating, but not controlling. If it makes me uncomfortable when my husband comes to bed in a nightgown, it is not wrong for me to communicate my unease. Intimacy is a mutual thing. If I am angry when he goes to a spur-of-the-moment meeting en femme, when we have a long-planned social event on the calendar, I have every right to express that feeling. Or, if I am afraid at the pace of his escalations, why should I not be allowed to express my fear? If he takes these expressions as me attempting to control him, he is probably celebrating a pity party, or attempting to push

me into an area where I feel uncomfortable. And THAT'S controlling behavior!

On the other hand, I have seen wives disguise control as communication of feelings. "I feel that you are a pervert because you crossdress," is not a feeling, it's name-calling, and an attempt to control by shaming. The same goes for the statement, "If you loved me, you would stop crossdressing (or let me crossdress whenever I want)." Placing an unrealistic condition on your love is controlling behavior, regardless of who does it.

Setting boundaries on crossdressing is not controlling behavior if it is done in love and understanding. Again, it depends upon whose territory the boundaries are being placed. In every relationship, there is "his" territory, "her" territory, and mutual territory. It's in that mutual area where negotiation and communication take place, and conflict is resolved. Turf wars are highly destructive, but some crossdressers (and wives) just love to engage in them. When these wars begin to strike against the basic identity of one partner or the other, the relationship is headed for disaster.

Wives can set boundaries in such a way that they are controlling. The question to ask is whether they impinge upon the crossdresser's basic identity and human rights. Legitimate concerns are a setting for boundaries; "I wanna's" are not. One of the hardest questions my husband and I have to face in peer counseling is, "She says my crossdressing is evil, I'm going to hell, and if I ever crossdress again, she will leave." Such a wife has planted her boundaries right on the heart of her husband's identity. She leaves her husband with a series of unpleasant choices. He can take the crossdressing underground (deception and risk of being caught), or break out in an orgy of selfishness (risking job, alienating family and social circle), or declare a minimum position that cannot be controlled ("calling the bluff").

I love my husband, and I accept him as a man who enjoys expressing his feminine side, so I look for chances to encourage him. My husband loves me, and takes every care to see that crossdressing does not jeopardize our family life. We have defined our comfort zone together. Mutual respect and love are the antidotes for controlling behavior.

Maybe the Objective Is Not To Pass

by Vicky Anne

We all have spent a lot of time and money trying to pass as women. Every crossdresser's dream is to blend in, to be seen as a woman, to pass, to be able to go anywhere as a woman. When dressed I make every attempt to look like a woman of my age. My clothing is what would be classified as business or professional attire. The look that I want is to appear as if I just came from the office. (Sally tells me that I dress like a schoolteacher.) I would like to think that I pass well enough that I can at least go out in the evening hours, but I do not pass well enough to go out into the bright daylight and be taken for a woman. Since it is a lot more fun to get all dressed up and go out, rather than just sitting around the house or hotel room, I have always thought that passing was of utmost importance. Lately I have come to realize how wrong I have been about the objective being to pass.

The image that the general public has of crossdressers comes from television talk shows, movies or the press. These images are usually of drag queens, performers or those that run afoul of the law. Even though drag queens and performers have done much to get the idea of men wearing dresses out into the public view, these groups do not represent the views of a heterosexual male who likes to dress in feminine attire. Even though I came out to my spouse some time ago, the Drag Queen image of me dressed is what she has maintained. Because, even though I have given her all kinds of literature, this is the media image that she has used for her education about crossdressing. Every time a drag queen or crossdresser makes the news, she makes sure that I hear about it and how bad crossdressing must be.

At present, only a very few crossdressers are brave enough and have the right social situation to come out into public view. These few have the responsibility of telling the world about the rest of us. Like most other crossdressers, I am one of those who are not prepared to go completely public. To address a university class, to go on television and radio talk shows, or even to be interviewed by a journalist is beyond where I am in my coming out of the closet. So what can I do as a crossdresser to tell the world about who we are, what we do and why we do it?

I write articles for our newsletter and reach the membership of our sorority. If the article is really good, maybe, it will be picked up by other newsletters and maybe even by a national magazine or publication. But, for the most part I am only reaching those in the crossdressing community and their significant others. I have come out to members of my family and told them that I am crossdresser. In this manner I have been able to inform them about crossdressing.

Even in all of things that I have done, I have not reached any of the general public.

Because of my size, mannerisms, voice or gestures I am not able to pass close scrutiny. But maybe the fact that I can not pass is not all that bad, has a good side to it and can actually have a hidden benefit. I have only realized lately that one of the best ways of meeting the general public and educating them about crossdressing is to not pass, but to meet them on a one-on-one basis. On many of the occasions when I have been out and "read" as a crossdresser, it has lead to a discussion and, hopefully, an education of those who are open minded and willing to talk with me. For just about everyone that I have talked with, I was the first crossdresser they have met and talked with. They did not necessarily want to know personal facts about me; no name, address or phone numbers were required. I talked with them about crossdressing; why I do it, how it feels to get dressed up, where I go and what do I do when I get there, and if there are others like me. If I was able to pass really well, I would have gone right through the stores, restaurants and cocktail lounges and no one would have ever been the wiser and never would have known that a crossdresser was even near them.

Last week I stopped at Macy's to shop on the way home from the office. I found a three piece blue suit on the sale rack that I thought would fit me. The three pieces of the suit consisted of a jacket, slacks and skirt. Now the questions rose up in my mind. How would I try the suit on? Should I purchase it now and bring it back later if it did not fit, or should I just take it down to the Men's Department and try it on there?

As I looked the suit over, a young saleslady approached and asked if I needed any help. Taking a deep breath and swallowing a lot of pride, I explained that I was interested in purchasing the suit. But first, I would like to try it on. I have to give a hand to the sales lady, as she didn't blink, stutter or react in any negative manner. Either Macy's trains their employees very well or the saleslady, Rebecca, is very open minded. She asked me to wait a minute, while she went to check the fitting rooms. Since it was a week day evening, the store was very quiet and the dressing rooms were unoccupied. She put me in a large dressing room that had a full-length door.

It was a bit of a shock to me, as I had entered the store in drab attire and was now changing into a woman's suit. In order to do this I had just identified myself to the saleslady that I was a crossdresser. I hadn't given her any excuse that the suit was for my wife, who just happened to be about my size, or that I needed the

suit for a play. I had just told Rebecca that I wanted to try the suit on before purchasing it. When I came out of the dressing room with the suit, Rebecca pointed out several other items on the sale rack that she thought would look good on me. She even suggested that I should also try these items on for size. I did finally end up purchasing the suit and several pairs of slacks. I even found several items in the lingerie department that I brought down to Rebecca's area, so I could try them on before purchasing.

As I pulled my wallet out of my shoulder bag, I realized that I had several pictures of me crossdressed and I took the opportunity to show them to Rebecca. She remarked that I looked great and had very nice legs. Even though she was already open minded, by coming out to

Rebecca, I was able to educate her about crossdressing. Even though this was only one person, I hope that she will tell others that about crossdressing. In this store I was treated perfectly fine. Perhaps the next time a man wants to try on feminine clothing they will also be met with understanding and acceptance.

What this shopping trip made me realize is that whenever I have done a good job of passing I haven't been able to educate anyone about crossdressing. By not doing a successful job of passing, I have come out to those I met and allowed them to meet a real live crossdresser.

By meeting and seeing me out in public, they have had the chance to find out I am not a monster or pervert, that I am not going to attack their women and children, and that crossdressing is not a contagious disease. In addition I am sure that I was a topic of conversation long after I parted their company.

So maybe the objective is not to pass, or at least not to worry so much if you don't pass really well. If you can look like and present yourself as a women, then it just might be that you can do a lot more about informing the public about crossdressing by being read. Let the public see that there are crossdressers in their community, and that crossdressing is not just the subject of talk shows, movies and comedians.

Let them see that crossdressers are just doing their own thing and having a good time doing it, that there isn't any threat to them or their loved ones and that we can be very interesting people once they get to know a little about us.

Disclaimer

The opinions and views expressed in the Femme Mirror are those of the respective contributors and do not necessarily represent the views or official policies of The Society for the Second Self, Inc., its Officers or Board Members.

FRIENDS

Around the corner I have a friend
 In this great city that has no end,
 Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,
 And before I know it, a year is gone
 And I never see my old friend's face,
 For life is a swift and terrible race,
 He knows I like him just as well
 As in the days when I rang his bell,
 And he rang mine.

We were younger then,
 And now we are busy, tired men.
 Tired of playing a foolish game,
 Tired of trying to make a name.
 "Tomorrow" I say "I will call on Jim"
 "Just to show that I'm thinking of him"
 But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes, And
 distance between us grows and grows.
 Around the corner!-yet miles away,

"Here's a telegram sir-"
 "Jim died today."
 And that's what we get and deserve in the end.
 Around the corner, a vanished friend.

If you love someone, tell them. Remember always to say what you mean. Never be afraid to express yourself. Take this opportunity to tell someone what they mean to you. Seize the day and have no regrets.

Most importantly, stay close to your friends and family, for they have helped make you the person you are today and are what it's all about anyway. Pass this along to your friends. Let it make a difference in your day and theirs. It is the difference between expressing love and having regrets which may stay around forever.

A True Love Story

forwarded by Kori L.

This is a truly wonderful story that I wanted to share with you. Love comes in many forms in life. This is one of them.

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose.

His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In the front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell. With time and effort he located her address. She now lived in New York City.

He wrote her a letter introducing him and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II.

During the next year and one-month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A romance was budding. Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like.

When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting - 7:00 PM at the Grand Central Station in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel."

So at 7:00 he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he'd never seen. I'll let Mr. Blanchard tell you what happened:

"A young woman was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like spring-time come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose.

"As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured. Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl.

"A woman well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a

worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. I felt as though I was split in two, so keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned me and upheld my own.

"And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible, her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My fingers gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify me to her. This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful. I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my disappointment.

"I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

"The woman's face broadened into a tolerant smile. 'I don't know what this is about, Son,' she answered, 'but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!'"

It's not difficult to understand and admire Miss Maynell's wisdom. The true nature of a heart is seen in its response to the unattractive. "Tell me whom you love," Houssaye wrote, "and I will tell you who you are."

Time Out!

"A lonely crossdresser told the computer dating service that he wanted a female who was small, liked water sports and formal dress, and didn't talk too much. He was matched with a penguin."

Changes! We Don't Need No Stinking Changes!

by Rachel Miller

Have you heard cross-dressers say that society isn't ready for us? You know that's true of not only cross-dressers but gays, lesbians, bisexuals and every flavor of transgenderist. What will it take to get the public ready for us? For openers, they won't be accepting of us until we are accepting of ourselves. As long as we project cross-dressing as a problem, those who meet us will detect those feelings and likely adopt them as their own. But once we achieve self-acceptance we need to interact with the world because the only way they will ever get used to us is by seeing us and interacting with us.

Don't waste time looking for a shortcut to full acceptance by society. We have a long, difficult road ahead and must take all of the steps. Conventional wisdom advises us to give up and return to our closets. Accept the current reality because it can't be changed. That's what some would like us to believe but quite the opposite is true. I can remember a time in my life when: No Smoking sections didn't exist in any restaurants
Family planning clinics weren't even a gleam in someone's eye
All members of Congress were men
Gays and lesbians were totally in the closet

Look back through the years and see how many major innovations and societal changes have occurred in your life time. Conditions have always changed and are changing at an ever increasing rate. The question is not, will conditions change? Rather, it is how will they change?

Every significant transformation of the fabric of society has been led by a relatively small group of individuals who had a vision of something that didn't exist. They used various tactics to influence society in a way that was compatible with their vision. Most people took no action and simply went along for the ride. Your choice is to either work to influence society or do nothing but go along for the ride (remember the involved chicken and the committed pig?). If you like the way things are and don't need no stinking changes, don't do anything. But if you don't like the way things are, quit complaining and commit to achieving your vision. When you make that commitment you can begin to transform society. It may not happen in the manner you expect or when you expect, but it will happen.

Some people remember Jimmy Valvano as the hero who fought cancer. Others remember him as a man who lost his job over a point-shaving scandal. I remember him as the basketball

coach whose team accomplished the impossible. The 1983 North Carolina State Wolfpack was a good basketball team, but most people didn't expect them to get into the NCAA tournament. They got in. Even fewer people expected them to win a game in the tournament. They won several games. The experts agreed that NC State could not get to the final four. They got to the final four. Everyone knew they couldn't win the tournament. Their chance of winning was compared to the likelihood of an elephant driving in the Indianapolis 500. Houston's Phi Slamma Jamma were prohibitive favorites. Everyone knew that Houston couldn't be beaten. Everyone was wrong. NC State did the impossible. They won the tournament. They had a vision and worked hard to achieve it.

Who decides what's possible and impossible? We mostly do that ourselves. Often we listen to others in authoritative positions and convince ourselves that there is nothing we can do. So we do nothing and nothing happens. We don't have to repeat that process. If enough of us share the vision of an open, accepting society, we will forever alter the fabric of society. The experts will not give us a chance, but they've been wrong before. Just as NC State, we too can accomplish a miracle.

The inside story is that even the most powerful institutions are composed of people who are every bit as human as we are. They want us to believe that they are in total control, that their position is unassailable. The truth is — they are as susceptible to doubts and fears as the rest of us. Even deeply-rooted customs are more vulnerable than the experts and authorities want us to know.

We collectively have the power to create a more open and accepting society. We only have to learn to accept ourselves and then interact with others so they can see that in the most important ways, we are just like them. Every Tri-Ess Chapter has programs that promote that process. Only your reluctance to get involved can hold you back. Begin the trip to achieve your vision of the future and help making changes. Make a written commitment that in 1998 you will take one step beyond wherever you've been before, share that commitment with one person and give them regular progress reports. As Brenda Lee said—"Just take one, step at a time, just one step at a time." When you look back next year, you'll be amazed at how far you've come...

The Tactics of *It's Time America!*

The beauty of living in America is that we have the Constitutional right to Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Speech. Think about these freedoms the next time your support group meets. Then think about our brothers and sisters in other countries where these freedoms do not exist. Do not take our freedoms for granted.

Unfortunately, because we do not have the Constitutional right to freely express our gender identity, we can easily lose what so many before us has worked so hard to gain. We could easily find ourselves unable to have dinner together in a restaurant expressing our gender. We could find ourselves meeting in a seedy motel room, changing there, never leaving until we change back to the appropriate birth sex attire.

If we do not begin to work together to ensure that we are legally protected to express our gender identity, we could easily lose everything that we take for granted.

It's Time America! is the only nationally-organized grassroots civil rights movement seeking to secure and safeguard the rights of ALL gender variant persons. *It's Time America!* has state chapters in Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky/Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, North/South Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

Working for your rights is not as risk-filled as you may think. The twelve tactics below offer a range of possibilities for action in increasing levels of risk. Find where your comfort level is and do something. If we all work together and contribute whatever we can, we greatly increase our chances for success. The great poet Audre Lorde said, "Your silence will not protect you".

Talk about It's Time America!

Don't be afraid to get political! Discuss what *ITA!* is doing at your support group meetings. This is not about being stuffy or preachy. This is raising consciousness about civil rights - your civil rights!

Help Document the Oppression

It's Time America! is continuously seeking information on acts of discrimination, harassment and violence committed against gender variant persons. If you know a gender variant victim personally, ask them to contribute their story. This will be a sanitized version (no names of victims, employers, etc.) and the explicit permission of the victim must be given before it can be

included in the Documentation Report. *It's Time America!* will never out anyone.

Contribute Financially

If you feel that the work of *ITA!* is important, but you are personally unable to participate, make a financial contribution to help those who are out and working for the civil rights of everyone in our community.

Sign a Petition

ITA! will occasionally have a petition to sign. If you agree with what the petition says, sign it using your chosen name, your birth name or your legal name (the latter is always stronger).

Participate with Local Gay and Lesbian Organizations

Show up at their meetings, join their groups and work with them on common goals. This raises our visibility and our credibility as members of the larger sexual minority community, and it builds support for inclusivity (that means us) in broader civil rights legislation.

Sign a Postcard

ITA! may distribute postcards for a mailing campaign in support of or in opposition to specific legislation, you can sign one using your chosen name, your birth name or your legal name (the latter is always stronger). You may also use your P.O. Box for an address. *ITA!* will hold the postcard for mailing at the appropriate time.

Sign a Letter

When *ITA!* distributes a pre-written (form) letter to your representatives requesting their support for our legislation, you can sign and mail one, using your chosen name, your birth name or your legal name (the latter is always stronger).

Write Your Own Letter

Using the pre-written *ITA!* letter as a place to start, write your own letter to your representative. You should use your residence address and legal name here, because the representative's staff may check the address to verify that you are a constituent.

Telephone Your Representatives

Call their offices to voice your support for or opposition to specific legislation. Give your legal name under which you are

registered to vote, and identify yourself as a constituent. You may be asked for your address to verify your constituency.

Visit Your Representative

It's best to call your representative's office first for an appointment, but you also can do "drop-ins." Try to be flexible with appointments, because legislators are very busy people and often 'juggle' their appointments. Familiarize yourself with the relevant arguments for a particular bill or issue. Wear conservative business apparel - nothing outrageous. When you get to see your representative, be brief, be prepared, be logical and be polite. Do not hesitate to ask for their support on our legislation, and if you feel comfortable, share your own experiences or the experiences of some transgendered friends of yours. Try to convey the notion that we are everyday citizens trying to live ordinary lives under harsh circumstances. And always remember that you pay their salaries and they work for you!

Communicate with the Media

Write letters to the editors of local newspapers and magazines, or call a radio station or paper and speak with a reporter. It likely will be necessary to use your legal name, residence and telephone number.

Direct Action

ITA! does not disavow direct action by its members, but it is unlikely we will ever be forced to publicly demonstrate. If you really want to get out in the streets and in their face, join Transgender Nation.

Keep in mind that although things may be fine for you now, they could easily change in the future. As a member of a sexual minority group, you cannot take your rights for granted. Political change is longitudinal in nature and progress incremental. Consequently, we must work together today for a better tomorrow.

"It is morally wrong and politically a dead-end to leave organizing to a few motivated people, while sitting back and simply partaking. Everyone has an investment in keeping this community going. However, many only want to pass and blend, or transition and become the girl or boy next door. If that's the only goal, transgender rights will never come to pass. Striving for invisibility or settling for a well-lit closet does not earn respect. It's a one-way ticket to nowhere." ("The Three Specters Haunting the Transgender Community," *The Femme Mirror*, Fall 1997).

Being one of the "few motivated people" working for gender variant rights, I can safely say that we would truly enjoy the challenge that would be thrust upon us when each of you decides to get involved in working for your rights. While you are plac-

ing this challenge upon our shoulders, go ahead and make it really tough and get your wife or significant other involved along with you.

If you are interested in getting involved with one of the state chapters of It's Time America! or if you are interested in starting an It's Time America! chapter in your state, write a short note to me (NC-4303-D) through the Tri-Ess Mail Forwarding Service and I will forward your note to the appropriate state chapter or to the It's Time America! Executive Director.

Become a Tri-Ess Life Member Today!

Any person eligible for full membership in Tri-Ess (including Wives/Partners) may become a Life Member upon acceptance of an application, and fee payment as specified below. You will never pay annual renewal 'dues' again.

Included with Life Membership is a lifetime subscription to the *Femme Mirror*, Membership Directories, and all other material published by the National Organization. Payment may be made by check, money order, or credit card (Visa, Mastercard, or American Express). And, if you are associated with a local Chapter, they will cease 'bugging' you about your annual National renewal (although you will still be responsible for local annual Chapter membership/association fees).

Or, you can take advantage of the Life Membership 'Installment Plan' offered by National. This interest-free program allows the Life Membership fee to be spread over four payments within a 12-month period. An initial installment (one-fourth of the total fee) must be forwarded with your application. You will then be billed for the remaining payments at three-month intervals. (Credit cards may NOT be used for installment payments).

The one-time Life Membership fees are

\$500.00	Individual Crossdresser only.
\$700.00	Couple (Crossdresser with Wife/Partner).
\$200.00	Separate (Wife/Partner only, who is widowed/divorced, etc.).

"The opportunity of a lifetime!" Enroll now, join with all the other Tri-Ess Life Members in support of our wonderful Support Organization, and demonstrate your commitment. How about it?

Donna Martin, National Membership Director

Your Silence Will Not Protect You!

by Melissa Dixon

"First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me."

— Rev. Martin J. Niemoller, 1945

If you think that this doesn't apply to us, try reading it this way:

"First they came for the Drag Queens, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Drag Queen. Then they came for the Transsexuals, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Transsexual. Then they came for the Transgenderists, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Crossdresser. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me."

As members of the gender variant community we need to understand that we are not autonomous entities that just happen to be together by accident. We are actually parts of a whole and are affected by everything that happens to other parts of that whole. Furthermore, it is characteristic that some members will want to perpetuate the current state of the community by undermining attempts to bring it closer together. Benjamin Franklin once said, "If we don't hang together, we will surely hang separately."

Acts of Violence

I am confident that many of you feel that you are safe from oppression and harassment because you identify as heterosexual. I will make you a promise, the skin head punk or the good old boy who is out on the town for a night of beer drinking and "queer bashing" doesn't really care about your identification. To him you are just another "faggot that deserves to die".

The incident that I am about to share with you happened to a 35 year-old heterosexual crossdresser who lives in Chicago, IL and has been crossdressing publicly for approximately 17 years. It is part of the 1997 documentation collected by It's Time Illinois! to prove that Transgendered people are victims of violence and discrimination.

"After returning home from work he immediately changed clothes, applied some makeup and took public transportation to one of his favorite straight bars. After two beers, he decided to walk to another bar. He had just crossed the street when the surprise attack occurred from behind. There were two men, one was 6'2" or 6'3" and the second was much smaller, who acted as the lookout. Both men had been in the bar the crossdresser had just left. They fol-

lowed him from the bar and attacked him from behind."

"They first broke my face with one mean blow. The larger man pulled my head back by my hair, and slammed his fist down into my face, breaking the bone in my face. Then he rammed my face into a pole a couple of times, smashing the rest of my face."

"I was dead to the world, I mean I must have passed out. I didn't know what was happening. Luckily I must have been screaming because two people came to my rescue and chased them away."

"The attackers went back to the bar where the police found them drinking a beer. To the attackers' surprise, the police arrested both of them for assault. They did not believe that they had done anything wrong." (Good old boys out for a night of beer drinking and "queer bashing".)

"The ambulance came and took me to a hospital. I had major facial damage and trauma, but the emergency room took 4 hours before they would even look at me. It was at least four hours before they took x-rays. All they did for me was give me the name of another doctor to see and sent me home."

"The next morning, I saw the doctor recommended to me at the emergency room, who immediately sent me to another hospital. At the hospital, the doctor saw me and scheduled surgery right away. I had to have my face completely rebuilt. The doctor said that the bones in my face were so badly smashed that they "looked like the bottom of a potato chip bag."

Not only was our sister brutalized by a cowardly attack from behind, she was also denied the help she so desperately needed by the very people who should have given her that help, the emergency room staff.

It does not matter if you are leaving a gay/lesbian or a straight establishment. It does not matter if you are in a shopping mall parking lot. It does not really matter to these people, you are just another "faggot that deserves to die".

If your state has a hate crimes statute, read it. I did. I know that the South is not exactly what one would call an open and accepting area.

When I read the Hate Crimes legislation in North Carolina, I really wasn't surprised to read that the groups protected by this legislation were women, racial minorities, religious groups, etc. Then it went on to specifically exclude gays, lesbians, bisexuals, child molesters, other sexual deviants, transsexuals and transvestites. Simply stated, in North Carolina it isn't much more serious than simple assault to beat on us.

It's Time Kentuckyiana! (working for ALL gender variants in Kentucky and Indiana), with the help of the Lexington Fairness Steering Committee, has introduced a transgender-inclusive amendment to the hate crimes documentation (H.B. 298) legislation in the current session of the Kentucky State Legislature. There are small pockets throughout the country where people are attempting to protect us from senseless violence.

Caught Out In The Open

Imagine that you are going to your chapter meeting and as you are walking across the parking lot, your boss and a client are walking right at you. Nothing is said as your boss recognizes you, but when you return to work, you are called into your boss's office and summarily dismissed.

Imagine that you are getting on the elevator to ride to the floor where your chapter meeting is held. You have been very cautious, no one is around and you enter the elevator and select your floor. As the doors are closing an arm shoots through and stops the elevator doors from closing. In steps a co-worker and immediately recognizes you. Regardless of what is said during the elevator ride, you are fully aware that the office gossip will be about your crossdressing. Not only will the office gossip become an exaggeration about your personal life but it could very easily result in your dismissal.

Imagine again that you are away from home attending one of the many conferences across the United States or Canada. You feel safe and secure because you are miles from your home. You check into your hotel room and immediately change into your feminine attire and make a bee-line for the conference. As you walk across the lobby, through the garden, or down the hallway, you see your boss walking straight at you and before you can perform your famous "duck, turn and run" routine, he or she "reads" you and calls your male name. At this point it does not really matter what you do, your conference has been ruined because of the fear that at worst you will not have a job Monday morning or the entire company will suddenly become fully aware of your "private life," or at least their version of it.

Below is the story, in her own words, of a married, heterosexual crossdresser who had a very similar experience to the examples above.

"Let me set the stage; it was February 1991, Desert Storm had just begun and the Military-Political Complex was on a big testosterone high. I was in Oxon Hills, MD on a temporary duty assignment for my employer, the US Air Force; nothing to do with the previously mentioned state of current affairs, just a routine travel assignment, I thought. As was customary, I had traveled to and checked into the motel as Cissy and spent most of my non-work time in that enjoyable state. Apparently, from what I learned later, someone, also on temporary duty and staying in the same motel,

had seen me in an elevator one night returning from supper and recognized me from my having worked with them the previous fall at another Air Force installation in San Antonio.

"The first indication that I had of anything amiss, was back in the office about a week or so after the trip. I was called into my supervisor's office and told that the OSI (Office of Special Investigations) wanted to talk to me. I made an appointment and visited their office over on the main base that afternoon. I was invited into their inner sanctum and told that they had received a report of me having been seen wearing women's clothes. I replied something to the effect: "That's not any big secret; my ex-spouse told anyone that would listen about that in

1975!" They asked me if I wanted legal representation and I replied, "No, not yet anyway." They then asked if I would make a statement. I said, "Sure," but that it would take some time to prepare and that I would do it in the office where I had a word processor available rather than the yellow pad and #2 pencil they offered. They weren't much in favor of this, but finally agreed."

"After a day or so, I decided it would be better to obtain a legal opinion on what I had written, so I contacted an attorney whom I had used previously in the local area and who was not transgender prejudiced. She did make a couple of suggestions, and I turned it in. The first of many 'legal actions' soon followed. This was to preliminarily withdraw my Top Secret security clearance."

"I had been advised to expect this and had already started to collect copies of the appropriate civil service and security regulations, including the one on how to make Freedom of Information Act requests. This was a most useful document because through it, I was able to get copies of virtually all documents that were to be used against me. (The major exception was the results of any one-on-one interviews. These were all heavily censored, if provided at all.) I had also started a massive networking effort, seeking to contact anyone with similar experience, experienced attorneys in security clearance matters, the ACLU, etc. This was before the days of the Internet, massive e-mail and other electronic forums. Today, I'm sure the information flows much faster and surer!"

"A corollary action to withdrawing my clearance was the preparation of a Special Security File (SSF). This is essentially what the government makes its 'case' from; a compilation of adversarial data, prepared by the unit security monitor at the commander's direction with the end result being my termination. I haven't properly identified the enemy. The unit commander, from the South Georgia Bible Belt was, in his previous military assignment, an 'Inspector'. That is, one assigned to the Inspector General's corps—a true police mentality. As a matter of fact, there were more SSF's during his reign of command (terror?) than at any time before or since. And all of this in the face of regulations prohibiting using the 'security clearance' system as a form of punishment. One additional comment is appropriate to add at this time regarding the SSF. It was soon apparent that the 'clothing police' had no knowledge of what

they were trying to prove. They actually patterned it after a drug case, what with their data showing (assumed) frequency of dressing, etc., as though they were proving a drug addiction!"

"The results of the networking were starting to pay off. Early responses led to attorneys with experience, both on the West Coast and in Washington, DC. JoAnn Roberts from Renaissance provided the name of a NASA engineer, also a retired Air Force officer, who had fought the same battle and won (and incidentally was a friend whose background I hadn't known). Phyllis Frye was also helpful. The one avenue with never a response was the state Senate and Congressional representatives. I'm still waiting to hear from them. The local support, co-workers and supervisors were for the most part very supportive and helpful. Those asked to write letters of recommendation were very responsive and positive. If there is one thing to be learned from all of this, it is that your friends and neighbors simply don't care about your private life! I had actually learned this 15 years earlier when my ex-spouse had served as my advertising agent, so I didn't have to go through that again; it was just concern over losing my job."

"After almost a year, the other shoe started to fall. I received a letter of intent to make a permanent withdrawal of my security clearance. I was given about six weeks to make a formal appeal. I finally had, in writing the basis for their case. I had, by this time, the whole SSF. For those at all familiar with security clearance matters, the usual basis for withdrawal of clearances in cases of this nature is susceptibility to blackmail. In my case, this wouldn't hold water, as everyone really knew anyway; further 'outed' by almost a year of government investigation! So, they tried to use the crutch of mental illness; e.g., 'transgenders are perverts.' The Security regulations, in those days, had a 'laundry list' of crimes and 'sexual deviations' which lumped together murderers, child molesters, transvestites, transsexuals and a few other heinous transgressions. These have been largely eliminated in recent years."

"From the networking outlined above I had retained Dr. Frank Kameny, a paralegal advocate from Washington, DC, to prepare my appeal. This consisted of about forty pages that included a synopsis of a local Psychiatrist I had contacted at his suggestion. Dr. Diane Bailey, of New Orleans, LA, was experienced in transgender issues. I had actually met her at a support group meeting a year or two before all of this, so I knew to trust her. After about 30 minutes into our first of several hourly sessions, she asked, "How can I help you?" In addition to the personal evaluation, I obtained an academic opinion from the head of the psychology department at a local university, also stating transgendered behavior in itself was not indicative of mental illness. Dr. Kameny contacted Dr. Spitzer of DSM 3R (Diagnostic and Statistics Manual for Psychiatric Disorders) who rendered a similar opinion to the academic one also obtained. Dr. Kameny also contacted the office in the Pentagon that is responsible for updating the security clearance manuals. He obtained a statement to the effect that the regulations were currently

being updated to drop the pejorative language concerning transvestism and transsexualism."

"It took about three weeks to receive a response to the appeal. The final letter simply stated that, based on my appeal, that the clearance had been re-instated. I was congratulated by all of the civilian chain of command on my prevailing. Only the unit commander failed to look happy! Afterwards, the unit security monitor privately told me that the reason I won was that everyone knew and that I was not susceptible to blackmail! So keep that in mind when hiding out in your closet!" (The deeper you hide your crossdressing from everyone, the more susceptible you are to blackmail from a neighbor, a family member, a co-worker, your wife, etc.)

"One side issue of discrimination was that in the Fall of 1990, my supervisor put me in for a salary percentage cash award for quality of work. The unit commander disallowed this and wrote an endorsement to the effect that he was aware of other actions being taken which, in his opinion overshadowed the good performance. I appealed through the civil service grievance system and won this hands-down also."

"It is now over five years since the re-instatement. I have since been promoted; the unit commander (of that era) is doing taxes and selling insurance. He was denied the promotion to full colonel the year following his hatchet attempt on me. We had a reunion this past summer and he attended. I did not intend to shake his hand, but when he thrust it out, I said "Oh, Colonel Z! My favorite commander!" His face turned beet red!"

"As I have promised every time I have told this story, I will help you if I can. I have advised several since this took place. If you are in the uniformed military, forget it! You don't have a prayer. If you are a civilian, you should be able to easily win, whether civil service or civilian contractor. If you are with a civilian contractor, working on military projects, you do need to get the company personnel department or human resources counselor on your side. (You may contact me (Cissy G. Conley) at:

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Communication

President Lincoln was reported to have said "I don't like that man. Perhaps I should get to know him better."

Do you feel that way toward anyone in your life, or in the group? I have noticed that in many large gatherings there is a tendency for people to break off into smaller, more familiar circles of acquaintances. It is a natural human trait to be more comfortable with people and places that we are familiar with.

Many years ago, when companies still had Christmas parties, the company I worked for took the liberty of assigning employees to tables in a somewhat random order. This way the chance of sitting with others in your work group was rather remote. This method of seating spurred many new conversations and created new acquaintances in the company. After these parties, most of us no longer passed each other in the hallways muttering "I wonder who that jerk is." We could now cheerfully greet each other by our first names and have some idea of what their function in the company was. I've recently seen this same concept work in our company-sponsored classes and seminars. All those nameless, faceless hoards of people who work in other departments have now become at least somewhat familiar after having spent a day at the same table with them.

So, you say, what has this got to do with Alpha Zeta? Glad you



asked! At our next meeting, how about let's all try to talk to at least three new people, or talk to people that we haven't talked to in a long time.

It's even more important here to talk to new members to make them feel welcome.

This brings up another very important point. Talking to others is only one half of the art of successful communication.

You all know what the other half is - listening! Our children are taught to talk at a very early age, but rarely do they learn to listen until they are well beyond their teenage years. Don't you find it strange that there are innumerable courses in public speaking, but almost none in effective listening? But, we digress.

As always, we must also respect each others privacy.

When we converse with one another, don't insist on personal details if the other person seems unwilling to reveal them. On the other hand, if you feel uncomfortable revealing something about yourself, just say so, and move on with the conversation. Finally, please don't offer personal information about others in the group.

Even if you think it's O.K., you might be compromising the other person's anonymity.

(Reprinted from Cactus Flower, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter.)

Men Must Share

by Marilyn Schwartz, Dallas Morning News

As reprinted in The Femme Forum, Tau Chi Chapter

When I visit New York, I almost always find a new trend. Usually it has to do with art, fashion or food. But not this time. When I was in the Big Apple recently, I discovered that women were openly barging into the men's restrooms. The reason, of course, was the women's lines in public restrooms were impossibly long. The men's lines were nonexistent.

My first encounter with this was at the Broadway play "Master Class." At intermission I came to the restroom area and found, to my surprise, the men's line was almost as long as the women's.

"I've never seen this before," I said to a friend. "I wonder why the men's line is so long."

A man in the next line answered me. "It's because the women are in there," he said, pointing to the door. "They started griping about the long women's line and then all just rushed into the men's. Four men were in there, caught, so to speak, with their pants down. They were terribly embarrassed. The women didn't seem to mind. The men walked out and explained to the rest of the men. We formed a line."

"I'm not going in until the women come out. I'm all for women, but let them stay in their own restrooms." He did admit, however, that it was not pleasant having to wait. He got a taste of how women feel when there are long lines for them.

I smiled at all this and didn't think much more about it. A few days later, I went to see "The King and I," another Broadway play. At intermission I was in another long ladies' room line. There was no line on the men's side. Two elegantly dressed women ahead of me looked at each other and said, "Shall we?" Then they just walked over and went into the men's room. A few women in my line looked surprised, but several more joined the other women in the men's room.

About a minute later, an elderly man wearing a skullcap worn by orthodox Jews walked rapidly out. One of the women going into the men's room was a friend. She said she had never done anything like this before. But the pioneering women seemed to know what they were doing. She decided to just follow their lead.

"There was only one older man in there," she said. "I apologized for embarrassing him. He shrugged his shoulders and said it didn't matter to him. But then he rushed right out."

One more time during my New York trip, I also saw women going into the men's room. This time it was in a busy restaurant. One man who was in the bathroom when three women came in was quite mad. He complained to the manager and caused a minor scene.

I asked several people in New York about this, and they said they were seeing it happen more and more often. "It's just what my Aunt Anne always swore would happen," said Josh Gold after going to a musical event with his aunt. He says she went to the restroom and saw women going into the men's side. She hasn't stopped talking about it. She swore this was all a result of women's lib and told her nephew it's no wonder there is a breakdown in the American family.

When I returned to Dallas, I asked around to see if this is happening here. A few people said they've seen it in isolated incidents. But it's happening blatantly in Los Angeles. There is a law in Texas now that more women's toilets have to be installed in public places than men's because it takes women much longer. Until this comes to pass, I asked women if they would resort to using the men's room in protest.

Allison Street had the best answer. "It would all depend," she said, "on how desperate my need is. If men think that's too aggressive, just let them try waiting."

[Ed. Note: If this trend continues (right now, it seems to occur mostly with crowd situations, long lines and time limits), crossdressers' restroom dilemmas may eventually be solved for them!]

[Ed. Note: Fantasy fiction has never been high on the list of things our readers would like to see in the Mirror. A few individual members have submitted some neat short stories over the years, and were well received by readers. However, much of what is available out there in Genderland today would not meet our editorial standards due to offensive and demeaning content. I know you all have much better taste than that! One highly prolific source of "TV fantasy fiction" is California crossdresser Sandy Thomas. If you've heard of "Sandy Thomas novels" or are curious about that species of crossdressing literature, here's a book review from the Cactus Flower newsletter.]

Book Reviews

by Dolly

At the request of our devoted librarians, Joni and Betty, I have reviewed five new publications from Sandy Thomas. These are all personal opinions so take them with a grain of salt.

"Born to be a Bride" - This was one of the best books from Sandy Thomas that I have ever read. Instead of the usual three or four drawings in her books, this has 14. She must have a new artist, because the quality of the drawings has greatly improved. The story line shows imagination and creativity, while keeping just within the boundaries of what could really happen. I'd rate this book as excellent.

"Born to be a Daughter" - The plot of this book is a continuation of the story begun in "Born to be a Bride." It's another winner from the same author. The art continues to be good, but by now it's clear where the story line is leading.

"Journey into Womanhood" -What a change from the previous two books! This one drops several steps down the quality ladder. There are no drawings and the plot is so far beyond the believable that it's boring. The author's worst offense is that she drags this story out for 62 seemingly endless pages.

"Joining the Girls" - This book deals with high school life, so if that is what you enjoy, this may be for you. It appears to use only clip art rather than fresh drawings, so the pictures at times aren't totally appropriate. But, it's a fun story with a moralizing conclusion.

"Sissy Maid Quarterly" - This is actually a monthly magazine rather than a book. It contains photographs, drawings, and articles. The target audience is men who dress full time as maids and are then employed by women to clean and cook, etc. It appears not to be fiction. They are real people, holding real jobs for pay. I understand that each reader is probably looking for something different in the literature they pick, so some may like this. Personally, I would give it a very low ranking because its constant theme is to tell the maids that they are pretty useless and disgusting people. It urges their women employers to use the strictest and most demeaning discipline. on their maids to make sure they keep a low self image. It's hard to see how that could be healthy.

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Dignity Cruise #9 / Holiday At Sea

*Transgender Where It's Warmer
Cross-Dressers Stepping Out, Hoping to Gain Acceptance*

by Dorothy Atcheson

(From the Miami Herald, January 29, 1998, "Outlooks" column comes this account of our recent Holiday At Sea, forwarded by our sisters of the TGIC network.)

When Royal Caribbean's Sovereign of the Seas sailed from the Port of Miami en route to the Bahamas recently, a small, unusual group of passengers were aboard.

More than 20 male cross-dressers and their wives had come from all over the United States for Dignity Cruise IX, and most of the men wore women's garb for the entire trip.

"This is an opportunity for people who cross-dress to have an interface with the general public in a setting that is elegant," says Peggy Rudd, a Houston-based author and leader in the transgender community. Her husband is a cross-dresser.

"It's a chance to spend quality time with people who have faced the same life problems and understand you totally," she says. "And it's not a lesbian or gay bar, the kinds of places cross-dressers might frequent because they find acceptance there. Here they're thrust into mainstream America where people don't understand them, but question what they are and what they're doing."

Rudd, who has written five books about cross-dressers and their partners (all available through the Internet at amazon.com), started the Dignity Cruise concept four years ago to provide support for cross-dressers and education to the public.

"Amazingly, you see acceptance grow almost immediately, because people are seeing [the cross-dressers] with their wives, and sometimes with their children," she says. "And this is shocking, because people think all cross-dressers are gay."

Dr. Marilyn Volker, a Coral Gables sexologist, says this particular confusion extends even to some counselors.

"Sexual orientation and gender are two different experiences," she says. "A man can put on a dress and still be attracted to his wife, or to women. Who you're attracted to is not dependent on the clothes you're wearing. Cross-dressing is about gender. It's between your ears. Sex is between your legs."

Increased activism among the transgender community now has many gay organizations including the word transgender in mission statements and referring to the broader community as "the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community" or GLBT.

The word transgender, which means changing gender, encompasses a broad variety of people, from gay men or women who dress in drag for laughs, to transsexuals, both gay and straight, who use hormones and surgery in an effort to become the opposite sex, to transvestites or cross-dressers, most of whom are men (since women can wear men's

clothes freely in our society), and most of whom are heterosexual.

Given the range of identities and concerns in the transgender category alone, is it appropriate to lump us all under the same community umbrella?

Says Barbara, a cross-dresser from West Dade: "Like you, we're a minority group, not accepted by society, that needs support and help. We may have different sexual orientations, but we have a lot in common."

For Barbara, 63, cross-dressing provides a "high" that is not erotic, though it can be for others.

"It's just something that's inside you that makes you feel that this is what you want, this is who you are," she says.

Because cross-dressers tend to be high achievers—doctors, pilots, politicians and prominent business leaders—most are extremely closeted and live dual lives, often telling only their wives or children, and sometimes not even them.

A successful business executive married for 40 years with grown children, Barbara finally came out to her family two years ago.

"My wife insisted I see a psychiatrist," she says sadly. "She thought it was a problem that was curable. But a psychiatrist can't change who you are. You either choose to acknowledge and accept it or you don't."

"It's not something you get up in the morning and decide," adds Barbara's friend Josephine, 54, of Fort Lauderdale, whose wife loves and accepts her, though their children are in the dark—"Why give them the headache?" she says.

Like Barbara, and many others, Josephine has been secretly cross-dressing since she was a child.

"I was always interested in women's clothes," she says. "The way they feel, what they look like. It's a ridiculous situation, though, because no one understands. We're considered a joke."

Experts don't know what causes the urge to cross-dress. Theories range from the biological, that some boys get more girl hormones in the womb or have an extra X chromosome, to the psychological, that boys given too rigid a masculine upbringing might later seek solace in the feminine as an escape.

Whatever the reasons, cross-dressers are slowly gaining momentum as a group and trying to find acceptance.

"Most are coming out because they want to stop the cycle of shame and secrets and hiding," Volker says. "And in that sense it is like being gay, lesbian or bisexual. The majority of cross-dressers who come and sit on my panels look people in the eye and say, 'I never want your child to go through the loneliness, pain and shaming that I went through.'"

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Our Gender Family #10 - March, 1998

by Rachel Miller

Two A's, An F And Some Small Stones

The weekly ritual for the guys from the office is to gather at the local brew pub after work on Thursday nights. Everyone sits around drinking beer, eating burgers and ogling the women in short skirts. Suggestive remarks are common place and are usually followed by another brewski. There's the requisite off color jokes about the latest sexual conquests, a discussion of who'll kick who's butt in Sunday's football game followed by still more beer swilling. Terry has worked for the company nearly two years and often attends these soirees. The guys like him because he participates. He doesn't feel comfortable acting that way but does it in an attempt to fit in. He gets an "A" for passing as a regular guy even though he's gay.

The single girls in the neighborhood meet every Wednesday night as part of a book group. They sip a soft drink or glass of white wine and discuss the intimate details of the latest romance novels on the best sellers' list. The hostess provides soup and salad (dressing on the side please, I'm watching my weight.) There is the inevitable discussion of the latest date news and the brutish behavior of the guys who act much like those at the brew pub. There's more talk and giggling as the night progresses. Shirley appears to be one of the girls but her insides are churning because she fears how the others would react if they knew about her sexual reassignment surgery. She has hidden herself well and they don't know she was formerly a man so Shirley gets an "A" for passing as a regular girl.

Larry strolls into his favorite upscale restaurant wearing his best Donna Karan frock and spiked heels. He is tall even absent the heels with a muscular build and angular features. He makes no attempt to pad his chest nor disguise his husky voice when requesting a table. With an Adam's apple the size of a golf ball it doesn't require keen insight for the waiter to determine that Larry isn't a lady. Larry is clearly a cross-dresser and gets an "F" for his failure to pass as a regular woman.

The question is whether getting an "A" for passing as normal is better than getting an "F" for being recognized as one's true self, or are both results equally good at different times? In school, getting an "A" is the objective. We not only want to pass but want the best possible grade. An "F" is to be avoided at any cost. We learned that lesson well.

In our personal lives, anyone who is different has learned a

similar lesson—to pass as a normal member of society. I must cover any differences and strive to fit in. I must hide the truth about myself and pretend to be someone else. In many, perhaps even most instances, hiding is the most appropriate behavior. There can be incredibly negative repercussions when the truth is discovered in certain situations. We hide as a matter of survival and there is clearly a time to hide.

"The human heart has hidden treasures, In secret kept,
in silence sealed."

-*Evening Solace* by Charlotte Bronte

If we are to improve our condition though, there must also be a time not to hide. There must be a time to show our true selves. A time to let the world know that I am a lesbian, I am bisexual, I am different AND I am okay! We know when and how to hide since we've practiced diligently all of our lives. We are extraordinarily successful at this task. Now it's time to learn how not to hide. A time to learn how and when to let the world see who you really are. A time to let your grade point average slip from a perfect 4.0 (passing for normal every time) to something lower, perhaps only a 3.5, because you can afford an occasional "F" in order to remove the mountain of gender and sexual prejudice.

"The man who removes a mountain,
Begins by carrying away small stones."

-*Chinese Proverb*

Consider one of your typical hiding situations. How can you allow your true self to be seen? What are the risks you can take? Which small stones can you carry away?

Rachel Miller, P.O. Box 31475, Oakland, CA 94604

(510) 935-9594, <http://members.aol.com/rachelmill>

Note: We are on the program at Be All '98 in Pittsburgh (Marsha's home town) from June 10-14. Bring your gum-bands, red-up your rooms, be prepared to go danh-tanh (downtown) and brush up on other Pittsburghese. We will not be touring a steel mill in evening gowns so don't worry.

Marsha and I will also be very active at the S.P.I.C.E VI conference in Atlanta from July 16-18. It is a great opportunity for healing and growth and we hope to see many of you, especially couples, there.

An Opportunity for Wives, Significant Others, and Family Members of Transgendered Persons

by Mary Boenke

Dear Friends:

I am the proud mother of an FTM son, Co-chair of PFLAG's Transgender Network, involved with the recent publication of our booklet "Our Trans Children", and active with trans issues in many ways.

I am planning to edit and publish a book of collected writings by parents, siblings, children, partners and other relatives of trans persons. More than one family member, close friends and employers are also invited. It will be similar to "Different Daughters", ed. Louise Rafkin, a book by mothers of lesbian daughters and very successful in that community. My working title is "Our Trans Loved Ones". There is no such book available for trans families.

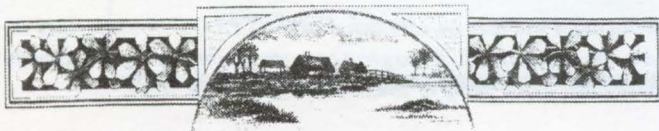
Submissions should be positive and accepting of your loved one's trans nature, but may describe the journey getting to that place of acceptance. Writings may cover anecdotes about family reactions, the struggle to learn about and understand trans issues, your emotional reactions, dealing with other family members and friends. Families of TG, TS, CD, inter-sexed and all variations of gender benders are included.

Submissions should NOT be by trans persons, themselves, though they may assist and coach others. Submissions should be approximately 1000 - 2000 words. Poems and others lengths also considered. Prior writing experience is not required; we will assist.

Send by e-mail to maryboenke@aol.com or surface mail to:

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Inquiries invited. Please call to discuss at 540-890-3957.



Grace and Lace Letter

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Passing? In Public

by Glenda Rene Jones

Jane wrote an excellent editorial in the last Mirror on a subject I have been wanting to talk about for some time - how people view the matter of passing and going out in public. At times some view going out in public as an initiation ritual. It needs examination in perspective. There are myths in this culture that we perpetrate, and at times we need to look squarely at the real world.

Jane told her story of Carolyn. I could tell a hundred like it, but one in particular is worth sharing. A few years ago I was building a department and needed a tech writer. Good ones are hard to find and I was overjoyed to run into Jennifer (not her real name). She had impeccable qualifications and a good personality. She was a pre-op, but had been living full time for over two years. She had been completely through electrolysis and had a good natural figure due to running every morning and taking hormones. To me, she passed perfectly. My wife, who had been around hundreds of crossdressers and transsexual types, agreed. I had Jennifer come to the plant for an interview. There were no problems at all. I included four women among the interview team that included taking her to lunch. Rave reviews! So I hired her. Her second day on the job it was all over the plant about the "transvestite Glenn had hired." My boss, his secretary and the head of security were the only ones who knew about her and I figured someone had spilled the beans. They didn't. Pure and simple, she was read. As it turned out, most people accepted her and she did a good job. It did, however, teach a valuable lesson.

Although I have been crossdressing all my life, (I am 64) I have been in our culture now for about 25 years. In that time I have run into a lot of "Carolyn's" - people who are sure they pass perfectly. Crossdressers almost always overestimate their ability to pass. When I first came out a lot of people would tell me about how they passed and all the places they had been. I figured, "Well, gosh, if she can pass, then I must be able to as well." Unfortunately these stories are mostly myth. So let's look at some of the realities.

First, for a man to pass as a woman around other women is, for all intents and purposes, virtually impossible. There is an important difference, however, between passing and being casually accepted. Let me provide some examples. My daughter is a hair dresser and some of her clientele are men who come in dressed as women. Sandra has been to crossdressers' conven-

tions, knows the needs of men, and does a good job. Assuming you are reasonably well turned out (and I want to get back to that in a minute), you could walk into her shop, get your hair styled, get a manicure and absolutely nothing would happen any different than if you were my wife. If you asked to use the restroom, went in, locked the door and did your thing, again, nothing would happen.

Another example is a Barnes and Noble bookstore. If a man were to walk in wearing women's clothes, minding his own business, looking at books and eventually buying some, the help usually could not care less. So could 99% of the other customers. It is very unlikely there would even be a problem using the ladies' room. If any woman in the store paid any attention to you, she would likely know you were a man. The point is that few in such an establishment would care one way or the other. If there was a chance encounter in the ladies' room, another woman is probably going to pay you scant attention and choose to ignore the situation. Some people mistake this for passing.

Around other men, the situation is a bit different. Whereas men do not fool women, they may fool a man. It is actually possible to pass as a woman around other men. As Jane pointed out in her article, men can most certainly read men in skirts as well as women. So being read is a distinct possibility. The most dangerous situation here is if a man gets "sucked in" so to speak. He thinks you are a woman, buys you a drink, hopes to get your phone number and realizes at some point you deceived him. In a busy airport with lots of security, probably nothing much would happen. In a bar, if the guy has had a few drinks, well, there could be trouble. The point again is to stay out of situations where being read could make a difference.

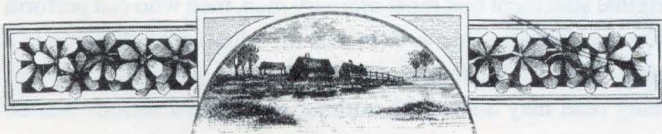
I have been out in public many times. I have come to realize that passing is a futile venture and a forlorn hope. I will readily admit that I am not one who would expect to pass. I am simply too masculine. I have met some men, notably some who were natural eunuchs, who would fool me any time of the day or night and probably fool my wife as well. These are NOT the norm and most men simply do not fit into that category. I am back to my original statement that most ordinary men, men who can perform as men, men who live as men and for whom crossdressing is a hobby, simply do not pass in any everyday sense of the word. Being read may amount to nothing or can be a serious matter.

Continued from page 27

Either way, being read is the norm.

For these reasons I am quite sensitive about the matter of going out in public. To a Tri-Ess meeting held in a private home, a church, a dedicated part of a hotel or whatever, there is usually no problem. Most places anymore crossdressing is not against the law and if a person is driving safely (and stone cold sober) getting to and from a meeting is usually not a problem. Coming and going from home may or may not be. We should gear activities therefore with that in mind. In many instances having a bunch of men around in skirts is a novelty for others and if planned well, people can go many places en femme. The bottom line is that a man in a dress is just that. He is not a woman. I will also throw in that if a group is having a dinner at a restaurant, for example, dressing en femme should always be optional. In fact, having some men in the group may be advantageous.

In my discussion above I used the term "well turned out." It deserves some explanation. Many women even though they may read a crossdresser, will still respect him if he is well done. I strongly recommend going to a professional the first few times around. Usually but not always women, these people know the techniques of making a man look really good in women's clothes. It is money well spent and gives a person a feeling of having done something well. It is like a pilot who learns to land a plane perfectly and works on smooth maneuvers until they are flawless. If one is going to do something, they should strive to do it well. I do not mean to be a wet blanket. Crossdressing is fun and some of the most interesting people I have met in my life have been in the gender culture. For all of us there is a certain pleasure that comes from allowing our femme side to be expressed. On this matter of passing, I think we need to be very realistic.



On Femininity

by Bobby G.

Today was Thursday and fashion day in the "Living Section" of our local newspaper. The headlines read, "Spring Fashion Forecast", and the pictures leaped out of the page with beautiful, young models in colorful, romantic clothing. Experts advised that Spring was the time for women to be feminine—paint your toenails a pretty pastel! Wear a sheer or frilly blouse! Is this what it means to be feminine? I don't know. I've never felt that way.

Is being feminine paint painting your face and body in bright colors?

Wearing sheer, vaporous, flowing fabrics from chiffon to silk to filmy jersey? Adding big, bold accessories to your wardrobe? Walking in tight, slim pants and bared midriffs? Sporting soft, cascading ruffles and uneven hemlines? Again I don't know, but I think not.

I think that being feminine is much more than that. Yes, soft, billowy clothes, high heels and makeup present the outward illusion for all to see. But true femininity resides deep within the person. It's a state of feeling, of being, not merely a mask to wear or a piece of clothing that hides the body. True femininity lies in how one perceives and expresses oneself, one's emotions, how one thinks and acts. Perhaps conditioning and training can give the impression of being feminine. But the transgendered person knows at a very early age of his feminine nature. It's something innate, born within the individual, not learned. And, as we know, it can't go away. Suppressed, yes. But always a part of that person's soul waiting to be freed.

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Joining the Internet

by Theresa

Hi, all. Let me introduce myself. I am Theresa and I am a member of A Rose. [Diverse-membership sister group to Alpha Zeta Chapter. Ed.] I am a 40 year old Transgenderist who is the resident computer Geekbabe here at the club! I want to explore a part of the fascinating world of the Internet!

Those readers who have a PC with a 486 and higher CPU and at least 8 MB of memory and a modem card of 14.4 bps can join the growing ranks of Transgendered people enjoying the Internet! There are many web sites available to view which pertain to the transgender community! [A dozen or so Tri-Ess sites are listed elsewhere in this issue. Ed.] Also there are many resources which can be obtained through many of these sites! One of the most over looked resources for the community is the IRC (Internet Relay Chat). This is a area of the net which is free. No fees what so ever!

To get on the IRC you must get a copy of a IRC program. There are many to choose from. The best site to obtain IRC software is <http://www.tucows.com>. This site has the most popular software for IRC and other subjects. I like to use the program MIRC or PIRCH. Both have many features! Once you have downloaded the correct software for your system you will need another program called a Winsock. This is a program usually found in the Windows system files for Windows 95 users, but those with older systems will need to download the Winsock program from Tucows also.

Using the IRC software is pretty simple. First you need to install it to your hard drive then you need to click on the icon for the program. Once inside the program you will be given a number of servers for different systems. The different systems are called Nets. There are many. I prefer Efnets and Undernet. After choosing a Net, you must choose a server in your area.

Once the server is chosen you must connect to the server. Once the connection is made there are many channels. These are individual chat rooms with specific topics. On Efnets I like to go to "#crossdress" and "#tgcafe"! To connect to a chat room you will need to put a "/" in front, then the command word "join" followed by the channel; ie: /join #crossdress

Once you are in the chat room anything you type can be seen by all persons' screens connected to the channel. These chat rooms are filled with many helpful people, so if you are new do not be worried. One or all of them will assist you! The

screen will be divided into two sections, the screen showing the words of other participants and the words you are typing.

When Theresa is chatting with Froggy, the screen will look like this:

Froggy> I am in Phoenix Arizona where are you located?

Theresa types, "I am in Phoenix too so small world! :)" and presses the enter key.

The screen now shows:

Froggy> I am in Phoenix Arizona where are you located?

Theresa> I am in Phoenix too so small world:)

One of the most fun parts of the chat room on IRC is the command "/me" which will identify you as your nick name, which you chose before entering the chat room.

Example:

Theresa types: "/me smiles and nods approvingly:)"

The screen will show:

Theresa> Theresa smiles and nods approvingly:)

This small example was shown so that you can familiarize yourself with the way a chat room looks and runs! Other commands are the "/whois" and "/nick". There are many other commands to accomplish most any task. Another feature of the IRC is a private chat with no one else but only one other person. This is done by the /dcc command. you type "/DCC" followed by the nick of the person you wish to chat with; ie: "/DCC Froggy". This will call Froggy's attention to the fact that Theresa wants to have a private chat with him. Froggy can either accept or decline the connection and a popup screen will tell Theresa what is going on.

I hope this little article will allow you access to the wonderful world of IRC. If you need any more help you can reach me at my email address: tsteward@doitnow.com. Now remember, you need for all letters in the address to be in lower case!



A Wife's Perspective

How I Learned My Husband Was A Cross Dresser

by Nancy

I will begin from the time that I first found out. In the month of November 1996, my whole world was blown up. I had known for a while that something was bothering my husband. I asked him what was wrong, but he said nothing. I knew that was not true. After 24 years of marriage, I knew not to press him to talk about it.

Then one day he said he was coming home at noon to talk to me. With the look on his face, I asked him if he wanted out of our marriage. He said no. All morning, my mind ran crazy. When he came home, he took me out and we ended up at a motel. I just couldn't imagine what was going on. He sat me down on the bed and he sat on a chair beside me, and said this was the hardest thing that he had to tell me. It was at this time that he told me that he was a cross dresser.

For months, I had thought he was going to a professional meeting once a month. In fact, he had been going to a support group meeting for cross dressers. The first question I came out with was, "After almost 25 years of marriage, was it all just a lie?" "No," was the response.

What I thought was a good stable life was blown up, into pieces. We talked for hours, and to this day, I really can't remember all that we said. I do remember that I just wanted to run away, but my husband held on to me tightly. Before we left the motel, there was one rule that we can never break. And that is, that none of our family or friends will ever know about this.

My husband had been well equipped with a lot of information about transvestites and cross dressers. He made me read some of the literature about the subject. It was not what I wanted to do at that moment, but I read through it to find out that what it was saying was just what I was feeling.

After hours at the motel, we went home, which was very hard for me as my mother lives with us. So I had to put on an act that nothing was wrong. For days, I was numb

and lost. I lost everything, including who I was. I was hurt from the lies and my trust had been betrayed. Every night we talked until we just couldn't talk anymore.

One night all my feelings came out and that is when I started to feel better. I took one day by myself and did some very heavy soul searching. How much did I love my husband? How important was our relationship? Was I happy? The first two questions were easy to answer, with a positive answer. But I found that I was not happy with me or my life. For almost 22 years I gave up everything to be a mother and a housewife, to make sure everyone else was happy.

When my husband came home we sat down and I told him that we needed to make some compromises and rules that we both would feel comfortable with. In compromises, there was going to have to be three lives we share. Michelle's life (my husband's femme name), as man and wife with family, and my life.

After a couple of weeks of me knowing about my husband's cross dressing, I went to my first support group meeting. Two days before the meeting, we decided that it might be easier if I met Michelle first. That was harder on my husband than me. He was trembling terribly. All we did was sit and talk.

That was when I realized that Michelle was my husband. There was nothing to be scared of. I was worried that Michelle would be a threat and would take my husband away. Then I figured out that she is my husband. Same thoughts, same body. I just decided, "No big deal. Michelle is just a name and the wig and the clothes are just that."

I went to the support meeting and felt terrible. They treated me as if I had the plague. I told my husband I would go to one more meeting and if I still felt the same, I would not go to anymore. Well, I went again and it was great. They were open with me and I enjoyed the whole

Continued from page 30

night. I felt very welcome. When I go, I don't see men in women's clothes, I just see human beings.

Now that a few months have gone by, we have a great relationship. People who have known us for a long time, have noticed a difference. Our children tell people that their parents are on a second honeymoon. It is really great. I have never been so happy in all ways. Now when we talk, my husband actually listens to me and not only from his ears, but from his heart. I was always afraid of saying things that might upset him, but not anymore.

When I am out shopping for clothes, I find myself looking for something for Michelle as well. We even laugh about me looking for a shirt for my husband.

With all this, you may wonder if I have forgiven my husband for the lies and betrayal. Not completely, as the hurt is very deep. There are times it comes to the surface, and I try to deal with it a little at a time until it is at rest. I don't dwell on it, as it would eat me alive. Hopefully, someday it will be all gone. I do, however, understand why he didn't tell me until now. Our love we have is very special and we are not about to give it up.

What helps to get you through this is to hold on to each other and don't let go. Be honest with your feelings, to yourself and to your partner. Once you find out how much love you have for each other, and what you both want from your relationship, you can start dealing with this together.

I find that I don't treat Michelle any differently than my husband as he is one and the same, with some female feelings and thoughts. I am very proud of myself for how far I have come in dealing with this. I usually take everything hard, to the point of making myself sick.

There are more positives than negatives in this situation. Just enjoy each other and do it together. It does get easier. Keep in mind, respect for each other plays a big part in your life together, and there is always a reason for things happening in your lives.

[Ed. Note: Michelle Renee and Nancy live in Ottawa, Ontario. Nancy's story was found on their Internet Home Page and is reproduced here by permission.]

Do You Know an Empathetic Clergy Person?

by Diane A. Zahn

I am working to assemble a list of empathetic churches/pastors/religious organizations by geographic areas and religious affiliations (OF ALL FAITHS) willing to talk with the transgender community. This list is to be provided to the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE). It is intended to support the IFGE service of providing referral lists of organizations and health care providers around the world to assist individuals in making contact with others in their own area, and as a support resource for the IFGE telephone hotline.

Nancy Nangeroni, the IFGE director, has requested that I act as a single focal point of contact as this information is gathered. Nancy notes that she is already struggling with an abundance of other IFGE correspondence, and would really prefer to have this added mail route through me as the referral list is compiled. I would therefore appreciate it if you can forward any contact information directly to me.

I would appreciate it if you could help me compile this list. I'd like to have something preliminary together by the end of March. If you know people or organizations at least willing to keep an open mind in their spiritual counsel, and can verify they are willing to participate in such a network of support please forward contact information to me. I'd like to include them on the list or write to them and contact them myself. You can contact me by e-mail at: damz@sprynet.com or surface mail at

**D.A. Zahn
P.O. Box 2176
Monroe, MI 48161**

If you have any questions or concerns about the IFGE's usage of this information, you can contact them at their mailing address:

**International Foundation for Gender Education
PO Box 229
Waltham MA 02254-0229**

Thank you for your support. If you feel so led, I would appreciate your prayers so that these efforts give glory to our Lord.

Honey - There Is Something I Want to Tell You

by Cheryl

So.... You have just announced to your wife the fact that you are a crossdresser. Was her reaction negative? Did that surprise you? Did you expect her to warmly embrace and accept you?

What did you expect?

You need to realize that it is a lot for her to digest and she has not had very much time to be able to comprehend the situation.

For a wife to even begin to understand she will have to draw upon a great degree of compassion, patience and persistence. Hopefully she will be able to keep an open mind and reserve conclusions until she is sure all of the facts are clear to her. During this process you should be aware that there will be times she will appear to be "going along" with her acceptance. However, she is collecting information and is still trying to figure out where she fits into the overall scheme of things, along with...

Why didn't you tell her before?

Why wasn't she included?

Will this need to dress proceed to levels of such magnitude that she will effectively lose you as a husband?

Do you have an ultimate desire to become a woman?

If anyone else finds out, how will this affect your lives?

How will this affect our children if they were to find out?

Do you love her more than you do this "other woman"?

Where do (we - you - I) go from here?

Believe me these are only a few of the issues she will be trying to deal with at this point.

After going to your first Tri-Ess meeting many of you begin to feel completely at ease. You begin to experience new emotions which you have never felt before. This is normal. You are beginning to accept yourself. You even experience a certain degree of confidence and the increased urge to dress begins. This also is quite a normal reaction. However, there are some points you need to consider. Your first few meetings will continue to provide an array of emotions. The emotional "roller coaster" ride usually follows this pattern:

FIRST: "First Time Meeting Withdrawal" - usually in the form of an emotional "crash". Part of this is the release of the feeling of being alone in this world now that you have met other

people who share similar likes and directions. Part of this is not wanting the emotional "high" you have experienced to be over. Part of this is wanting to experience all that you can and not having enough time to take it all in. And, part of this is having to go back into the real world (which is an important transition to make and keep in prospective). These emotions erupt as a result of releasing the mental burden of shame and loneliness which we placed upon ourselves and were afraid, until now, to share with anyone - including our wives.

SECOND: "You'll Love What I Did This Weekend" - The desire to share our experiences and expect others to understand and accept. You have to realize, that "high" you came home with is coming "out of the blue" to your wife. There is no way she can fully accept and participate in something that she doesn't fully understand. Remember - what you are trying to tell her now, at this point in your lives, YOU have known since childhood! The first normal reaction to this will probably be as I pointed out above - "Why didn't you tell me about this before?" - "Why couldn't you tell me this secret?" - "Why was I not included in this part of your life?". Consider her emotions and feelings by placing yourself in her position if she said that she had just come home from a weekend of dressing and acting like a man.

THIRD: "The Attack of the Sixteen Year Old Girl!" - When a young girl "discovers herself" you might say - "ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE". It begins with the "I'll do what I want to do, when I want to do it" routine. It progresses through the forms of outlandish fashions, heavily applied and garish makeup, risk taking ventures and finally "pushing the envelope" to the point that you are ready to drop them off at the nearest animal shelter! While YOU may not see this in yourself, your WIFE will recognize this phase you are going through. Don't worry, you will get over it - we have all suffered through these phases to some degree in our "coming of age" as cross dressers. However, be aware of the fact that while your wife understands and even expects behavior such as this coming from a daughter, it will be hard for her to reconcile this behavior coming from you.

FOURTH: "I Am 'Woman...Hear Me Roar" - OK, now that you've "been to the mountain" where do you go from here? You've developed a degree of security in yourself, you have realized a new found freedom to express yourself, you've unburdened yourself from the terrible secret you have kept all these

years, you've found others - like you - who told you "I'm OK - You're OK", most of all..... YOU'RE EMPOWERED!!

Now what are you going to do with this new found empowerment? Your next decision can be the most positive or negative move you may make for the rest of your life. If you look upon this newly found empowerment as freedom to demand acceptance from all those around you, it will only bring pain to you and to the ones you love, and become one of the most negative moves you will make in your life! If you look upon this newly found empowerment as a release of a burden that has taken up a large portion of your mind and heart, then FILL that portion of your mind and heart with renewed and increased love and respect for your loved ones. It will become one of the most positive things that will happen in both of your lives!

FIFTH: "If You're OK THEN I'm OK" - Remember, a solid marriage is based on an EQUAL partnership. To achieve equality there has to be respect for one another, the ability to share every feeling, emotion and fear with each other, and the ability to reach a compromise when one partner does not fully accept the feelings of the other. It is very important to understand that this compromise is not a one-way street. It is also important to realize that, when it comes to the subject of crossdressing, it is a compromise that must be reached slowly and with tremendous amounts of consideration, love and concern for your wife's feelings.

To begin with, you will be doing well to achieve an open dialogue on the subject. Initially, there will probably be more compromises on your part. Eventually, she may - or may not - meet you at a partial or even half-way point. How much she accepts will be based on your honesty, your commitments and your actions.

My wife, Chris is always asked what it is that makes her different from other wives. - How can she accept my cross dressing when other wives don't accept their husband's? The answer is simple..... both Chris and I place each other first. The importance of crossdressing takes a distant second place to the importance of each other's needs, feelings and love. It is only then that cross dressing can become a wonderful experience which we both can share.



Computer Humor

from somewhere in cyberspace

contributed by Bobby G

LOG ON: Making the wood stove hotter

LOG OFF: Don't add no more wood

MONITOR: Keepin an eye on that wood stove

DOWNLOAD: Gettin the farwood off'n the truk

MEGA HERTZ: When yer not keerful gettin that farwood downloaded

FLOPPY DISK: Whatcha git from tryin to carry too much farwood

RAM: That thar thang whut splits the farwood

HARD DRIVE: Gettin home in the winter time

PROMPT: Whut the mail ain't in the winter time

WINDOWS: Whut to shut when its winter time

SCREEN: Whut to shut when its blak fly season

BYTE: Whut them dang flys do

CHIP: Munchies fer the TV

MICRO CHIP: Whuts left in the munchie bag

MODEM: Whatcha did to the hay fields

DOT MATRIX: Ol' Dan Matrix's wife

LAP TOP: Whur the kitty sleeps

KEYBOARD: Whur ya hang the dang keys

SOFTWARE: Them dang plastik forks and knifs

MOUSE: What eats the grain in the barn

MAIN FRAME: Holds up the barn ruf

PORT: Fancy Flatlander Wine

ENTER: Northern fer c'mon in y'all

RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY: When ya cain't member whut ya paid for yer new rifle when your wife asks.

years, you've found others - like you - who told you "I'm OK - You're OK", most of all.....YOU'RE EMPOWERED!!

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TERMINOLOGY

by DAINNA

I believe it is CRUCIAL for all of us to have a common language when we speak of our needs for inclusion, and of our opposition to exclusion and oppression. I have been an out activist for nearly 13 years now—these are the concepts and terminology that I have found to work best when addressing issues of sex and gender in society-at-large. I understand that some of this may run counter to what you are currently doing, or believe, but again—this is what works in real life when educating people who do not understand at all:

SEX AND GENDER: A PRIMER

Educational Definitions:

Sex (the noun) - is your physical body - and specifically it is what is between your legs; it is your genitalia. Sex is how the State classifies you on your birth certificate and driver's license.

Sex (the verb) - is what you do with sex-the-noun; i.e., having sex...

Gender - is everything else that makes you who you are; it is how you act, how you react, how you pro-act, how you respond to the world around you; and how the world responds to you. Gender is your spirit, your soul; it is the innate and immutable you.

Gender Role - the "rules", the stereotypes that govern how people are supposed to act based on their apparent genitalia of birth. These are the "character roles" we are forced to play in the game of life.

In boys, "gender" is the masculine behaviors as well as the effeminate behaviors that some boys display, which for example might cause others to "know/believe" that they will grow up gay and/or transgendered. In girls, gender is the feminine behaviors, as well as the masculine/tomboy behaviors that some girls display....

Gender exists, for each and every human being, somewhere on a continuum between warrior (focused, goal driven) and caregiver (people/relationship driven), for each and every human being. Some people born with "indoor plumbing" (female genitalia) are very much warrior in their interaction with the world, some people born with "outdoor plumbing" (male genitalia) are very care giving in their interaction with the world. Virtually every person exists along the continuum between these extremes

somewhere; i.e., in some combination of these traits, whether 90%/10% caregiver/warrior; 40%/60% caregiver/warrior, 70%/30% caregiver/warrior, 20%/80% caregiver/warrior etc. etc. etc.

"Gender" is never the polite, nor the politically correct, nor the substitute word for "sex".

Stated simply, and on a different level, "sex" is what is between your legs, "gender" is what is between your ears, and/or it is your soul.

It is society's sex (n) - based gender roles and rules that cause problems in the interaction between many people. But many of these gender-role rules have changed: for example, we have eliminated the notion that a married pregnant woman had to stay indoors out of sight during the pregnancy, and that an unmarried pregnant woman had to be put into a home somewhere. We have eliminated the notion that women should not be educated, and the notion that women should not be allowed to vote, and the notion that women should not even hold jobs, and we have even eliminated the notion that women should not be allowed to hold management jobs. And many more of these rules are changing.

It is behaviors which are outside of the "current" sex-based gender-role rules, which create the problems. Even though we are, today, clear in understanding that a woman should not be denied jobs, housing or public accommodation solely because she is a woman (sex discrimination), we need to be equally clear that a woman should not be denied a job, housing, or public accommodations solely because she does not **act** like someone thinks a woman should act. Masculine appearance or behaviors in a woman should not be a reason to discriminate (gender discrimination). Equally, a man should not be denied a job, housing, or public accommodations solely because he does not seem to be "macho" enough; or because he seems to act or speak effeminately.

These gender-variant behaviors easily become the source of persecution and discrimination. Just as we, for many years, tried to "cure" people of being left-handed, and created many other problems in that effort, so today we engage in major social and personal efforts to try to "cure" people of gender-variant behaviors, and fret heavily over gender-variant appearance.

In workshops that I teach, I use this discussion point: Let's

talk about Ellen the television character (not Ellen DeGeneris) for a moment: I want you to tell me what you know as FACT about Ellen [the television character] 's bedroom activity - Nothing??? You mean to tell me they have never even shown her bedroom? You mean to tell me you have NO facts about her bedroom activity, and not even a hint that there might have been any actual bedroom activity, and yet in the name of religious righteousness many people are actively persecuting her and boycotting Disney because of her alleged bedroom activity??? Fascinating!

For that matter, what do you know as FACT about Ellen Degeneris' bedroom activity???

Haven't we yet learned that persecution based on stereotype is an atrocity? Didn't the genocide of 6 million Jewish people in Germany, or the genocide of the Aztec or American Plains Indians teach us anything about the danger of persecuting people based on **what we think they think**?

Gender needs to be defined and legally protected as a category separate from sex or sexual orientation, because few people have ever been fired, evicted, or discriminated against because of who they actually went to bed with; the actual fact of bedroom activity, if any, is almost never addressed. Men are considered to be gay if they are effeminate acting or appearing, women are considered to be lesbian if they are masculine acting or appearing. Either could be celibate, or even virgin, but if their behavior and/or appearance falls outside of behaviors and appearances established by society as the "norm" for their sex, they are labeled and persecuted as if they were homosexual.

The gay community has for several decades defined their personal actions, appearance, and behaviors as "sexual orientation". This definition is now playing into the hands and arguments of many religious leaders, who then claim that gays are asking for "special" rights based only on their bedroom activity.

But it is the daily/social behaviors and/or appearance which is the real issue. It is the stuff that some people do which then sets off other people's "gay-dar"..... It is especially behaviors - including personal appearance outside of the sex-based norms - which are at the heart of the transgender issue.

A friend of mine writes, "I certainly do know that my sexual orientation is utterly unrelated to my perception of my gender." And this is how it should be for all people. This is the battle - to separate the concepts of sexual orientation from perceived sex and/or perceived gender. For example, a small boy who likes playing with dolls and dresses should never be assumed to be gay or transsexual.....

My friend further writes, "The majority of gay men and les-

bians I know and am on close terms with do not appear to violate any gender roles whatsoever." And this is true; many GLB people do not. But then, there can be the very subtle stuff; the body language stuff, the voice inflections, the beard and haircut, the clothing..... It is sometimes the amalgam of the very subtle stuff that can/does set off people's "gay-dar"....! This then becomes perceived sexual orientation. That is, when the sum total of gender-role violations are obvious enough to be noticed by "gay-dar" and/or by rednecks, hiding behind "sexual orientation" can become a trap, especially for those who are sexually in-active for whatever reason.....

My daughter is constantly amazed, in public speaking work she does, at the people who cannot conceive of a celibate gay man, or a virgin gay man..... And the religious media especially feeds on this unfortunate stereotype about activity when they blast any "sexual orientation" other than heterosexual....

Bottom line is this, in my opinion:

The religious right argues that no one should be "protected" based on what they do in the bedroom. But then, no one actually knows what almost anyone else does in their own private bedroom, and GLB-people get terminated and evicted anyway. I don't think anyone evicted or terminated for (homo)sexual orientation was ever tried and found guilty of specific bedroom activity first; the stereotypes are automatically assigned and assumed.

The real issue is Genderism; the belief that people must conform to a set of socially-dictated behavior and appearance rules, take on a "role" in life, based on their apparent genitalia.

(Ed.Note: DAINNA is a transgender community activist based in Denver, Colorado. She may be reached by E-Mail at <DAINNA@aol.com>)

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Hey, Good Looking!

Selections from the Menu: Towards a Natural, Non-Imitative Female Voice

by Melanie Yarborough

Many in our community would like a simple "How-To" book on how to speak female, just as they might learn French or German or Spanish. But beware, says noted speech pathologist Maureen O'Connor of San Francisco's Peninsula Associates. One should not think that the best way to develop female speech is to uniformly adopt certain behaviors, and then put them on as a false persona. It's better to have a menu of female communication behaviors to pick and choose from, that sound natural.

Maureen O'Connor has been practicing speech and language pathology for the past 25 years. She studied at the University of Wisconsin and Purdue, and has worked in Albuquerque and at Stanford University. Since 1978, she has been in private practice. At a seminar at a past California Dreamin' convention, she elaborated on female voice and communication behaviors.

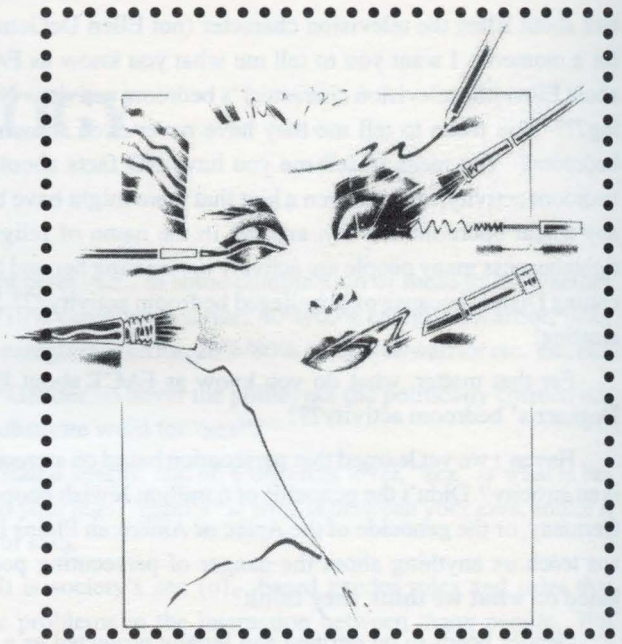
First, there is no one specific type of female voice. For example, there's Audrey Hepburn (graceful, elegant), Liza Minelli (bubbly, energetic) and Ellen Degeneres (plain, simple and likeable). All are female, but each is very different.

Two common mistakes many transgendered men make in attempting a femme voice are falsetto and breathiness. Falsetto is high, thin and tinny sounding. But there's no power to it, and you can't get melody or inflection. Speaking up there habitually is not the way vocal chords were meant to vibrate. Breathiness is associated with Marilyn Monroe or Jackie Onassis. It may sound inviting and sensual, but the balance of breath to tone is out of whack. It's far better to develop a female-sounding voice within your range, than to go outside of that range.

Feminine communication behaviors are different in basic use of vocabulary. Men tend to sound more matter-of-fact and monotone, while women are more expressive and can paint pictures with words. For example, women have a much broader color vocabulary than men, as they deal with fashion more. A man might say something is white; a woman could say it's ivory, bone, egg shell or ecru. Moreover, women have a broader vocabulary about food and other topics traditionally considered a woman's domain.

Women also use intensifiers to express emotionality. A male might say, "It's a beautiful day." A female would say, "It's such a beautiful day!" Or, a male might say, "She's pretty." A female would say, "She's so pretty."

Centuries of having to depend on the goodwill of others has



created a female vocabulary which is often more approval-seeking, even supplicating. Women use tag questions more. They'll often end a sentence with, "Isn't it? Doesn't she? Aren't you?" They even use more politisms, such as "could, would and should." And, sometimes, they'll couch a sentence in double and triple requests. A man might say, "Take out the garbage." A woman would say, "Would you please take out the garbage, if you don't mind?"

Women's nonverbal communication is just as significant. They maintain more intimate eye contact with the person they speak to, and have a more frequent social smile. They show more facial expressions and constantly give you feedback. One needs to be somewhat (but not exaggeratedly) more expressive with the face. Does your face reflect what your voice says? And men will often boom out their declarations to the world, even if only talking to one person; women will project only to the listener, and not into the space around them.

How can a person practice to develop a female voice? "There's actually a useful function for soap operas as voice partners," Maureen jokes. They're melodramatic. Repeat aloud the female lines and try to sound as she does. But don't choose a female news commentator to study. They've been trained to be Bi-Dialectical, giving a flat, neutral, more male presentation. "Internal voice" is important as well. When you think to yourself when dressed en femme, try not to speak with a female voice in your head.

Maureen reminds us that in trying to talk as a "typical" female, "All generalizations are false. There are exceptions to every rule on how men and women speak. Stereotypes are inaccurate, unjust and dangerous."

(Reprinted from the Neutral Corner newsletter.)

Tri-Ess Pen Pals

Many sisters have written over the years to express their disappointment in not receiving replies to their letters to other Tri-Ess sisters. It seems that while some sisters are wonderfully prolific pen pals, others (for a variety of reasons) are not. To assist those who would like to receive lots of letters, we have compiled a "Pen-Pal List". All you have to do is promise to reciprocate. Just fill out and sign the form below and send it to:

Carol Beecroft
P.O. Box 194
Tulare, CA 93275

"I promise the courtesy of a reply to all correspondence from my Tri-Ess sisters."

Femme Name _____

Code Number _____

Here's how to write a Pen Pal through the Forwarding Service:

- 1) Write your letter to your chosen Pen Pal. Include your picture if you wish. If you choose not to include your own return address at first, be sure you include your own Code Number in your letter.
- 2) Place your letter in an envelope, affix correct postage, and lightly pencil in the name and Code Number of your Pen Pal on the front.
- 3) Place this envelope inside another envelope and address this outer envelope to:

Tri-Ess Forwarding Service
P.O. Box 194
Tulare CA 93275

- 4) Include your return address on the outer envelope and be sure to apply correct postage. Once received at the Forwarding Service, your inner envelope will be properly addressed to your Pen Pal and sent on its way. If or when you and your Pen Pal choose to exchange letters directly is up to you. Have fun, Sisters!

If you wrote us asking to be placed on the Pen Pal List and your name does not appear above, please write us again. We are sorry, but sometimes we do "drop the ball." (Or, in this case, the name!)

NEW!!! We have a sister who wants to be a Cyber-Space Pen Pal. Kimmie (FL-4532-D) says she loves answering her E-mail and would like to have you visit her Web Site, too. Her E-Mail address is: Kimmie_CD@aol.com Her Web site is at: <http://members.aol.com/kimmiecd/index.html>

List of Pen Pals

AK-4644-F Alicia
 AZ-3954-B Rebecca
 CA-3800-M Charli
 CA-1282-V Fran
 CA-4470-S Julia
 CA-3354-N Michelle
 CA-4249-F Shirley Louise
 FL-3434-C Debi
 FL-3433-T Donna
 FL-3892-B Jeanne
 FL-2520-B Joan Ann
 FL-3720-R Karen Rose
 FL-3640-C Norma
 FL-4046-J Rita
 FL-4379-G Roni George
 GA-4158-B Franki
 IL-3623-G Nancy
 MD-4435-S Diane
 MN-3996-L Carla
 MO-3752-B Laura
 NC-3743-H Ann
 NC-3723-C Sherri
 NJ-3818-L Carol Ann
 NY-4022-B Cathy Ann
 NY-3277-H Evelyn
 NY-4502-R Fiona
 NY-4506-K Patricia Ann
 NY-3717-P Tammie
 OH-1617-H Razilee
 PA-4046-J Rita
 TN-1230-H Rita
 UT-3779-E Genevera
 VA-2642-I Madelyn
 VA-3401-W Samantha
 IN CANADA
 ON-4010-S Julie Ann
 PQ-4457-M Micheline
 OVERSEAS
 OM-4577-L Sheena

Our Holiday at Sea

by Marlene

Wednesday, January 14, 1998, I drove to Los Angeles and stayed overnight with Virginia Prince. In the morning, I transformed into my femme self and we headed to LAX. The tickets were purchased for Marlene, and when I presented my (male) driver's license (for a photo ID) I did get a bit of static from the clerk. But, when I presented two credit cards, one with my male name, the other with my femme name, they accepted the ID!

Flying en femme was a new experience, and Virginia and I carried on a lively conversation clear to Miami. We stayed at a motel that night, after meeting with a number of other members who were going on the trip with us.

On board the ship we had 37 crossdressers and wives plus 2450 other passengers and crew. We did not get underway until about 7PM. We sailed to Nassau that night (at about 16 knots!). Our ship weighed 74,000 tons, so we felt no waves at all. I had a long conversation with a French couple and later debated the merits of various computers with Fran Estes.

In the morning, Carol Beecroft and I took a walking tour of Nassau. I bought a pair of earrings, and we took a lot of photos! Nassau has some really scary traffic! (They do drive on the wrong side of the road over there! ... Ed.) Later that day I had an opportunity to do a bit of outreach with a couple that had noticed some "unusual ladies" on the ship.

That night, after a lovely meal, I took almost an hour to lose \$10 on the poker machines. I did not bring any of my male clothing with me, but I did bring plenty of dresses, and with three formal dinners, and a few other events, I had lots of opportunities to try different styles.

Saturday night we sailed to a private island, which I did not visit, as the Tri-Ess Board had its meeting Sunday morning, and Carol Beecroft and I and others had a marathon chess event that afternoon. That night



it took two hours to lose another \$10 on the slot machines.

We sailed back to Miami Sunday night. As we left the ship Monday morning, we were greeted by a hound dog sniffing everybody for drugs - all 2500 of us! We were not scheduled to leave Miami until Tuesday, so we hired a cab driver to give us a three-hour tour of Miami. He was an outspoken boat person from Cuba, and he gave us a colorful ride! We played a lot of chess that night.

The return flight got off to a rocky start. I had just gotten my boarding pass, when a young lady walked up behind me and said, "I am a police officer. Can you explain why you are dressed the way you are?" Needless to say, this was a bit disquieting! For openers, I didn't recall being obviously "read" by anybody in public for a long time. Of course, we got "read" on the boat all the time, as we were wearing those little yellow name tags. She was looking for drug smugglers, and we had a little outreach with Virginia Prince and I explaining what crossdressing was all about. It took about five minutes to convince her we had no illegal intent. Other than that, the return flight was again filled with long discussions of philosophy and science with Virginia.

I didn't get back into my male persona until tennis the following Wednesday. The next cruise will be coming up in November. Have you made your reservations yet? Don't miss the boat!

Looking Good

by Diane Liegh

I still remember my first shopping expedition en femme. I went to a store called "The Grande Dame". They were gender friendly and had even hosted club meetings on occasion. I called them and they suggested that I might be more comfortable, for a first expedition, if I came either before or after normal store hours. I agreed and set up an appointment.

I arrived on schedule experiencing excitement, anxiety, fear and probably a lot of other emotions. Once in the door of the shop, I was in heaven! I looked at every garment in the store that I thought was even close to my size. I think that I selected about 15 outfits to try on. I then went to the dressing room.

Getting into and out of new type clothes (dresses, gowns, etc.) in a small dressing room was another new, but exasperating, experience. The first dress I tried on was a floor length blue chiffon gown. Getting it on over my head without pulling my wig off, getting it down over my shoulders and finally getting all of its layers adjusted was an experience.

I finally departed the dressing room (cubicle) to gaze into the full length mirror and hear what Pat (the saleslady) had to say. As I remember, her first comment was, "Who fitted you for your bra!" It felt to me like it was not said very kindly and I felt hurt and put down. I asked why and she told me that the bra was too high on my chest and the cups were too close together, giving me a deformed appearance.

Since that time, I have tried many bras and have not found one that has shoulder straps that are long enough or cups that are far enough apart. The result of poorly fitted bras is that dresses or blouses never fit correctly. At the very least, the darts are always in the wrong place.

To get an idea of what I mean, take off your shirt and stand in front of a mirror. Now, take a yardstick and place it at your "breast point". Now make a mark on each bicep where the yardstick crosses it. Now put on your bra and breast form and repeat the exercise. If the second line is higher than the first, your bra is up too high. If the breast point of your bra is not directly over your natural breast point, most likely the cups are too close together.

I have recently began to study dress pattern-making. I have learned several things about how ladies clothes should fit. I have learned that American ready-made clothes are made to fit the mythical "average" lady and as a result don't really fit anyone.

The darts end up in the wrong places and the seams don't hang correctly.

Given all of the above, I have decided to try to alter a bra. As a first step, I have decided that I would like to gather some data on physical male measurements and physical female measurements. The purpose is to see if the relationship of various measurements for males is different than the relationship of the same measurements for females.

I would appreciate it if you would help me in collecting this data. I would actually like to have three categories - crossdressers, genetic women, and transsexuals (who have developed breasts via hormones). I do not want names and if names are inadvertently included, they will be discarded when the data is recorded in a data base. The information I would like is:

CD: __ GG: __ TS: __ Height: _____ Weight: _____

Rib Cage (measurement around rib cage just below breast tissue): _____

Breast Spacing (the distance between nipples when nude): _____

Strap length (measure from breast point up over shoulder down to center of bra band in back. If you put on a bra without putting the shoulder straps up, this would give you a guide to where to end the measurement. The reason for measuring to the breast point is to compensate for the different styles of bras and how high the cup is cut. The reason for measuring to the center of the band in back is to compensate for various band widths. _____

Current bra size: _____

Breast spacing (measured from cup point to cup point in your typical bra): _____

Strap length (measure from center of band below where strap attaches in back to point of cup in front: _____

It would be easier, and maybe fun, if the crossdresser and his spouse or SO would measure each other. I envision I will have difficulty getting measurements of genetic women, and this might help. After I have analyzed the data, I will publish the results for your information. Having a bra that places your breast forms where they should be is one more thing you can do to help you look better.

If you are willing to provide this information, please email it to dliegh@flash.net or snail mail it to: Diane Liegh; 7120 Rufe Snow Dr #106-144; Watauga, TX 76148-1862.

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Tri-Ess Membership Categories

Those desiring to support and participate in Tri-Ess have several options:

Annual Membership

This membership is intended for crossdressers and their spouses or partners. It is the basic minimum support level. Contribution is \$36/year or \$60/2 years for an individual, and \$48/year and \$80/2 years for couples. Annual members receive our publications and may participate in support programs.

Sustaining Membership

Many Tri-Ess members desire to support the Society's purposes with contributions greater than the basic Annual Membership. While any amount is welcome and helpful, the Sustaining Membership levels shown here provide an opportunity to more significantly support Tri-Ess programs and outreach. Sustaining Members receive special recognition, discounted early registration for the Holiday En Femme, and periodic special offers. Individual Sustaining Members contribute \$96/year or \$160/2 years. Sustaining Member couples contribute \$120/year or \$200/2 years.

Life Members

Life Members wish to demonstrate their lifetime loyalty and support to Tri-Ess. They receive special recognition and benefits, including discounted early registration for the Holiday En Femme and special offers. Contribution is \$500 for an individual, \$700 for a couple. Life Members can, and frequently do, make additional contributions to the work of our organization.

Friends Annual Membership

Those individuals, other than crossdressers and their spouses, who have a constructive interest in the philosophy and goals of Tri-Ess, are also invited to support the Society. These members receive our publications, with the exception of the Membership Directory, and may participate in support programs as appropriate. Contribution is \$24/year.

Friends Commercial Membership

Local and national vendors who serve our community are also encouraged to join Tri-Ess. They receive the Femme Mirror and discounted advertising rates. Contribution is \$48/year

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MY FIRST TIME OUT

by Robyn Paige VA-4725-G

Tau Gamma Web Mistress (http://www.geocities.com/~tau_gamma)

It didn't happen overnight. I had been preparing for this adventure all my life - but didn't know it. It took a stressful event in my family's life-cycle to be re-born, to understand my real self. My Significant Other always says that things are meant to be and THIS was meant to be. Through her love and understanding, I have been re-born in the image that I was meant to project.

After years (I am not THAT young, you know) of practicing a stealth-like existence, the weekend of November 7-9, 1997 was my re-birth. Through the kindness and understanding of my new sisters on the chat lines and the open arms of Tri-Ess, I was introduced to a wonderful sister who guided me through this fantastic journey. My S.O. and I made the trek into the central North Carolina area to the home of Melissa and Kath. They are two of the most giving people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. After weeks of e-mail and phone calls (and being persuaded into accepting the Tau Gamma Webmistress position) we finally met. It was as if the four of us had known each other all of our lives.

We arrived mid-day Friday. As we drove toward their home (WAY out in the country), and slowly I might add since we had to follow an oil delivery truck down this two lane road with NO PASSING lanes, a 'good-ol boy' pulled up behind us honking his truck's horn. Just what I needed! Since I had decided to make the trip dressed en-femme from the neck down, I elected not to respond to him. But the face I saw in the rear view mirror looked somehow familiar. You know how you sometimes get a feeling that you know someone but KNOW that you don't? Well that was the case. As we continued down the road, making the required turns toward Melissa's house, this person continued to follow us. Right to the address that we had been given. It turned out that it was my new sister, Melissa coming back from an errand. Talk about timing!

At her house we were introduced to her S.O., Kath, a wonderful person who totally accepted us with open arms. You must realize that neither S.O. had met each other. I had only communicated via e-mail and the phone. This first meeting quickly turned into old home week. The S.O.s went on some errands while we girls got to know each other better. You know how it goes, small talk while you fix your nails, exchanging tips and talking about anything that comes to mind. Before we knew it, the S.O.s had returned and we had become a family of four. Everyone had hit it off beautifully.

As dinner approached, it was time to dress. Southern ladies always dress for dinner, don't you know. I had told Melissa about this RED knit dress that was purchased at a thrift store for \$3 and HAD to model it. What a response! This was the first time I had worn it and the first time I had ever dressed in front of another crossdresser. Melissa looked great and so did Robyn. My S.O. went nuts. (You will have to ask Melissa or Kath about my S.O.'s reaction to my femme side.) As

some of you know, she only learned about Robyn three weeks before this and had totally accepted her. In fact, she has gone thrifting for her and bought some really nice clothes. She likes to refer to herself as Larry when she is with Robyn. Dinner was enjoyable and we all talked about the coming day's events. We would go into town and shop. (What else, might you ask?) Even though I was apprehensive, nervous and a little scared, I was exhilarated over the thought of making an appearance in the REAL world. The closet door was closing on me and I was on the OUTSIDE of it.

WOW!!

Saturday came before I knew it. After getting dressed in proper shopping clothes (jeans and a white turtleneck) we were off. Kath stayed behind to get the house ready for the Tri-Ess meeting later that day. We drove into the Raleigh-Durham area and had planned on going to a mall first. That plan dissolved when we realized that two of the three colleges in the area had home football games, and we didn't want to confront all of the football fans in their pre-game mall shopping trips. I wasn't ready for teen-agers either. Instead, we went straight to the wig shop. My own wig was what I like to call, a newbie, or training, wig. Cheap but passable enough for wearing in the dark. Previously, I had worn it for early morning walks. This day, Melissa had loaned me a straight, black, shoulder length wig. What are sisters for but to swap things? I looked OK in it but it is not me. Once at the store, I tried on a nice below the shoulder, curly wig, but it was too dark. The shop owner then had me try on a Medium Ash Brown one that turned night into day. WOW! That girl looks great! Was it really me in that mirror? When Melissa's eyes opened wide at the first sight of the wig on me, I knew that it was meant to be. My complexion brightened up and I looked 15 years younger. Isn't that what every girl wants? I had to have it and the discount was pretty good - so off I went, back into the real world, looking fantastic.

In the meantime, my S.O. had gone down to the nearby T.J. Maxx (one of her favorite stores) so we had to go find her. But first, I had to put my purchases into the car - out the parking lot. I made it to the car, deposited my goods and turned to go back to the stores. But a man and his son were coming my way. I decided to do what any red blooded girl would do, I crossed right in front of him. He didn't read me and my confidence went WAY up. Remember, I have never been out in public before, let alone during the day. Nervous, but determined, I headed toward the T.J. Maxx. A determined push on the store's front door and POOF I was in. Past the checkout line and into the inner sanctum of the store I went, with LOTS of shoppers. Off to the back of the store and then across until I located my S.O. Did you know that men don't even notice you? If you aren't real good looking, they ignore you? To my advantage! By the time we left the store, only three people had noticed and read us - an adult lady who grinned and two teenage girls who

giggled. Since it was now lunch time, we went to the car and left to find a place to eat.

Now the real fun began. Finding a place to eat which didn't have lots of football fans (you know they really don't appreciate the gender blessed) became a challenge. Every restaurant that we wanted to eat at had a crowded parking lot and after a half an hour of driving around, we decided to bite the bullet and go to an Old Country Buffet. I just knew that this part of the adventure was going to be a toughie. Going into a store had the guise of looking for something to buy. Its patrons were totally intent on focusing their attention on shopping and cared less if a couple of crossdressed individuals were amongst them. But a buffet style restaurant was a different story.

When we entered the establishment, my S.O., the wonderful person that she is, took charge and ordered our meals from the cashier. We just had to follow her and pay for our share. The cashier wished us a good meal and asked if we needed anything. We had been read, but this time I had to respond. RIGHT! All I could muster was a, "Nothing, thank you," in a low volume, embarrassed voice. Ouch! We then walked ACROSS the room, for all to see, to our booth and settled in for the meal. The other patrons around us just glanced at us, but didn't say or look as if they disapproved. My guess is that they got a kick out of it. Next it was off to the serving area to get our food. Again in full view of EVERYONE we went. Plates, silverware, struggling with the strap of my purse to keep it on the shoulder and those moments looking over the food offerings. People walked around us, staff refreshing the food, nobody really cared how we were dressed. Fully focusing on the food selections, I forgot about what was going on around me, until a staffer asked if I needed anything. I think that they wanted to hear what a crossdresser sounded like. I thanked him and glided over to our booth. Soon my S.O. and Melissa joined me and we had enjoyable time eating and conversing. None of what had transpired fazed my S.O. To her it was just lunch out with her girl friends.

Soon, a couple came in and passed us on their way to a table. A few moments later, the lady walked back past us to the food area and looked back over her shoulder toward her husband. It was then that a grin came over her face. She had used the moment to check us out. I think that she approved of what she saw. As we ate our food, I glanced at the receipt that the cashier had given each of us. His name was Larry. The funny thing is my S.O. likes to call herself Larry when I am dressed. This was a good omen. All in all, lunch was an enjoyable, yet sometimes nervous, time. I felt, at times, that EVERYONE in the restaurant was looking at ME. As we left, a staffer asked us if everything had been all right. Another chance to speak. I'll never get used to using my DRAB voice while en-femme. Outside the restaurant, we three talked while Melissa had a smoke. She had been good all day, only two cigarettes. We then left and drove back to Melissa's house to help prepare the food for the Tri-Ess meeting later that night.

Back at the home base, we jumped in and prepared some of the food platters and just chatted away about the day's events. When we had finished, it was time to change into something nice for the meeting. I wore a silky top and blue skirt and pumps. And of course, my new Do. When I looked in the mirror I couldn't

believe the difference in my appearance. I could fall in love with this gal. (OOPS - something Freudian about that comment!) Soon it was time and the first guests arrived, Michelle and her S.O. Kathy. It turned out that Michelle and I had some commonalities in our backgrounds. Also they were getting married the next weekend - congratulations! Then another couple arrived - Heidi and her S.O. and young daughter. Another open and fantastic couple. Soon Angela appeared in all of her glory, and from my home state of Virginia. The evening's group had finally assembled and I forgot how I was dressed and just had fun. It felt good to be with people like myself, people who accepted you for who you are and not what you are. This was the most comfortable time I have experienced in a long time. Robyn was in her element. She was OUT OF THE CLOSET and never to go back in. We discussed many issues from chapter goals to web page design (Thanks, Michelle, for the great ideas) to what brought us along on this journey. Before we knew it, it was the end of the evening and I had to say good night to my new sisters. I really hated to see them leave but all good things must come to an end, and I knew that it wouldn't be long before I would see them again. Well, it was just the four of us again and we stayed up for awhile to put the place back in order and just chat about the day's events. But as all good things must, we eventually had to get our beauty sleep.

Sunday morning was tough. We had to leave and return home to Virginia. With hugs all around, my S.O. and I headed down the road for our trek home. As the trip progressed, my S.O. and I talked and talked about the weekend that had just transpired. The experiences, the new friends, and Robyn's coming out adventure. For all of you out there who are lurking in the shadows, all I can say is, take that one step forward. Find that special sister (like Melissa) and go forth, young lady, go into that daylight and experience what life is meant to be. The one thing that I found out is how tolerant others are and just how special that balanced gender feeling really is. You can't truly experience that feeling by staying inside that closet. You must take that one step forward to really become whole. I did that this past weekend and I will NEVER go back into any closet again.

Thanks again to Melissa and Kath for allowing me the privilege of knowing them, for their understanding, and for allowing us to stay at their home. To all of my new sisters and their spouses for being the great people that they are. And most importantly, I want to thank my S.O. - Thank you, Honey, you are that very special person in my life.

One last word to all my sisters out there - get out there and keep those heels clicking.

Love - Robyn Paige

TRI-ESS Chapters and Forming Chapters

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Web Site: <http://www.horizon-usa.com/misc/fem.htm>**Fort Myers, FL Metro Area**

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Tri-Ess-Sponsored CDSO Online Forum for Spouses and Partners of Crossdressers Signs 50th Subscriber!

Our subscription list for support of crossdressers' wives and significant others has signed its 50th subscriber! Operated by a wife, Beverly, the listserv is a forum for all genetic women involved with crossdressers. Subscription is free. It is not limited to spouses or partners who are members of Tri-Ess. However, it is "for women only" as there are many, many forums available for transgendered men.

Now, a few words from Beverly:

Hi! Welcome to our very own support list for wives and/ or SO's of crossdressers. Just a few rules here....

1. NO postings, and NO subscriptions from crossdressers. Not your husbands or your boyfriends. This is for US.
2. No flames. If you disagree with an opinion please do so with courtesy and respect. Don't attack the person.
3. Those of you with strong, militant transsexual attachments, please move on. This list is not for you. If you'd like to E-mail me privately, I can pass on to you several addresses for support of SO's of transsexuals. There are many out there.
4. No advertisements! If you are in doubt about the acceptability of something, please forward it to me.
5. Many subscribers to this forum are uncomfortable seeing people crossdressed. For the comfort of all, transmission of crossdressing photos on the forum will not be allowed. Such transmission can be done by private e-mail, among consenting parties.

That's just about it for now. This list is still new. The rules may change along the way. If so, I will post a general announcement. If you have any suggestions, comments, or just want to talk.....feel free to E-mail me at Crencher@camtel.net.

Regards, Beverly

To subscribe to the list, send e-mail to: <LISTSERV@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM> with <SUBSCRIBE CDSO first name last name> as the message. You will receive confirmation from the listserv with complete instructions. Then, you may send a message to all the people currently subscribed to the list, by sending mail to a single address. **It's simple! It's fun!**

SIGN ON NOW, AND HELP SPREAD THE WORD TO ANY OTHER WIVES/SO'S YOU KNOW!

Chapters On Line!

Does YOUR chapter have an e-mail address? We are receiving an increasing number of inquiries in response to Tri-Ess's Internet presence as well as to ads in gender community publications. Whenever possible we refer inquirers to the nearest local chapter. A Helpline or an E-Mail address makes the referral process much more efficient. To list your chapter's local E-Mail address or Helpline number, contact Jane Ellen Fairfax at JEFTRIS@aol.com

Tri-Ess World Wide Web Sites

Alpha Omega's (Cleveland)

<http://www.ruralamerica.net/~aomega>

Alpha Pi Omega's (Nashville)

<http://mindspring.com/~apotris/webpage.txt>

Alpha Zeta Chapter's (Phoenix)

<http://tri-ess.org>

Beta Gamma's (Minneapolis MN)

<http://www.tri-ess.com>

Chi Chapter's (Chicago)

<http://members.aol.com/chitriess/trisss/chimain.htm>

Chi Delta Mu's (New York City)

<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/7396/>

Kappa Beta's (Charlotte)

<http://www.3dcom.com/tg/triess/kb/>

Phi Epsilon Mu's (Orlando)

<http://www.horizon-usa.com/misc/fem.htm>

Sigma Epsilon Chapter (Atlanta)

<http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/sigep.htm>

Sigma Mu (Springfield MO)

http://members.tripod.com/~Sigma_Mu/

Sigma Rho Delta's (Raleigh/Durham)

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Tau Gamma's (Greensboro/Winston-Salem)

http://www.geocities.com/~tau_gamma

Tau Upsilon's (Tucson AZ)

<http://members.aol.com/tauupsilon>

Theta Upsilon Gamma's (Las Vegas)

<http://www.intermind.net/theta/theta.html>

Tri-Ess International

<http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/>

NEW! NEW! NEW!

CDTRIESS Online Forum

for Tri-Ess Member Crossdressers

New Program Logs Over 50 Subscribers in First Month of Operation!

Tri-Ess has just inaugurated a new service for you! As you know, our online subscription forum for our wives has been a glorious success. In February we started a new online forum for our crossdresser members. The new program will enable us to chat about the "how-to's" of cross dressing, crossdressing activities, and personal and relationship issues. The forum will be kept strictly sleaze-free, and will focus on our needs as crossdressers. It's our own place for nonjudgemental dialogue; a place where we can access support, make friends, and have fun. Subscription is a part of your Tri-Ess membership; there is no extra charge for this service. To subscribe, e-mail Moderator Sofronia Anne Strong at sas@tri-ess.com

When you request your subscription, please be sure to include your crossgender name and your entire Tri-Ess membership number; e.g., Jane Doe TX-3456-T

It is very important that you keep your Tri-Ess membership current, so that your service will not be interrupted. This program is limited to current Tri-Ess members only. The rules of operation are simple:

- 1) Subscription is free.
- 2) The forum is limited to current full members of Tri-Ess.
- 3) The forum is for crossdressers only.
- 4) No flaming, bashing or ad hominem postings will be allowed.
- 5) No advertisements. This includes "personals."
- 6) Transmission of pictures on the forum will not be allowed. Such transmissions can be done by private e-mail among consenting parties.
- 7) Postings will adhere to reasonable standards of propriety.
- 8) No solicitation of sex or promotion of transsexualism will be allowed.
- 9) The confidentiality of all participants must be respected. Unauthorized sharing of e-mail addresses or material discussed in the forum is strictly forbidden.
- 10) No posting of Web page or Web site addresses without the prior consent of the owner or moderator. No exceptions.

Now's your chance to get up online with your Tri-Ess sisters!

SINGLE CROSSDRESSER ISSUES

by Melanie Yarborough

Crossdressers not yet in a committed relationship or married have a special set of challenges. While many desperately want to meet a woman, they despair of meeting one who'll be sympathetic and understanding of their situation. Given this, these are some of the more important issues single crossdressers should consider:

WHEN do you tell a woman you're a crossdresser?

All reasonable people agree: "Before you get serious, definitely before marriage." Any crossdresser who would withhold this information is setting the stage for disaster. Now, many crossdressers fear rejection and losing their woman if they do this. To this I respond: if you tell her the right way (more on this later) and back it up with actions, the edge can be blunted. Also, it's better to know right away if she can't accept it. Think about which is worse: losing a woman now and dealing with a few months of heartbreak and finding someone else, or being trapped in a marriage where you have to be closeted all the time. Also, not telling her creates serious long-term damage when she feels betrayed by your not having told her. Once you get intimate, a boundary has been crossed, and anything after that will be seen as betrayal. Women fear betrayal perhaps more than men do. And this can poison a relationship for years afterwards: she'll definitely think, "What else has he been withholding?"

Some take the opposite tack of "Tell her immediately." The logic is, "If she can handle it, fine. If not, it was never meant to be." But when a woman is just starting to know you, crossdressing will become one negative thing to examine against an otherwise blank canvas. But if she knows other things about you, your personality, your history, your likes and dislikes, she can get a more balanced picture. She can weigh this against the positive things she already knows about you. Now, there are some women who simply will not accept this. If you meet firm and unyielding resistance, you may have to consider cutting your losses and ending the relationship. It's better to lose \$100 today than \$1000 tomorrow. And you know the cliché, "There are many fish in the sea?" It's true.

HOW do you tell a woman you're a crossdresser?

Dropping hints to test the water is useful. You can make references to current movies, or say you knew someone who was transsexual. You'd be surprised at how this can be creatively

juxtaposed into a conversation. Her reaction gives you an idea of where she stands. Be advised that women with strongly religious backgrounds are often the least tolerant of diversity. Also, a woman with some college education may also mean a more open mind.

Where you tell her is just as important as how. Obviously, choose a private indoor place, not a busy public one. Or, a tranquil open-air park or beach without too many people is nice. When you break the news, be positive. Don't preface it with a negative vocabulary of shame like, "We've got a problem to talk about." She'll immediately tense up and brace for the worst.

It's better to be more casual, indicating that you've got something meaningful to talk about. Negative words send out signals of shame. Positive words mean unique and special. Also, use disarming body language helps: maintaining eye contact, holding your hand to your chest, using a sincere tone of voice, etc. Don't give her too much information at first! This is a lot to handle in one sitting. If you start throwing out biological and sociological theories, or your transgender life story, it's going to confuse her. Keep your words simple and to the point, and don't use our community's slang and acronyms. Reiterate that you respect her enough to feel you have to be honest with her, and that you're not gay and not transsexual.

Be prepared to make compromises.

Single crossdressers have, up to a point, the freedom to indulge. But once in a relationship, this changes. There are sudden limitations on the frequency and extent one can self-gratify. But don't consider it as having freedom taken away. Consider it as now thinking in terms of two people, not just one. Two is a more complicated number than one, but not a worse one.

Also, what might seem insignificant to you, may be significant to her. Take body shaving, for example. Most crossdressers cannot understand how anyone would have a problem with it. But to many women this can indeed be a serious issue. They like hair; they want a man. What might seem right and fair and logical to men may seem wrong and unfair and illogical to women.

Relationships always call for compromise on issues: finances, religion, tastes in food, attitudes towards raising children, likes and dislikes in entertainment, feelings towards relatives, division of chores, etc. Maybe sexual issues are a little stronger, but

Single Crossdresser Issues (continued)

they're still just another issue up for negotiation. The secret is: R-E-C-I-P-R-O-C-I-T-Y.

Issues of Security.

Having a woman over to your place presents challenges. If you live by yourself, you're used to having a wardrobe and femme things around. But you can be betrayed by a single makeup sponge, a forgotten pair of panties, or a stray copy of a newsletter. Start thinking NOW of places to hide things if need be. These can be in zippered rollbags covered up by men's clothes, the trunk of your car, or even a friend's place if just for a day or two.

And keep pictures of yourself en femme under lock and key. Time and time again I've heard of dozens of crossdressers who've been outed when they left compromising photos lying around the house. Make the last-minute "Transgender Sweep" - a quick glance of the room for any stray femme items.

Also, be prepared for excuses for being absent when you go to support group meetings or events. You may even have to skip a meeting sometimes. Don't give the impression: "I have to be at this place, but I can't tell you where." When you put an air of mystery around something, it encourages her to imagine the worst.

Communication Problems.

If you start off with the assumption, "I can't change, this is something you need to accept," there's a problem. The point of a relationship is to grow together, not to take a stand and have the other person yield to it. True, you may not be able to stop crossdressing. But you do have control of when and for what interval you do it, and to what degree she has to see it.

From having talked with several genetic women, I've learned that many women fear that crossdressing may be a THRESHOLD. Just as marijuana was feared to be a threshold to heroin and cocaine, crossdressing may be feared to be threshold to becoming gay or transsexual. You need to reassure her on both counts that you aren't. And you can't do this with just words; the suspicion may linger on. You have to do it with deeds: by being willing to be the masculine man she wants and needs.

Lies are bad for relationships. If you tell one lie, you have to tell ten more to cover it up. You'll also have to keep lies straight as contradictions get noticed. For example, if you say it's your bowling night, be prepared for questions on where the alley is, how your game went, who you were with, etc. That's a lot of things to have to keep track of, isn't it?

Crossdressers pride themselves on how they understand

women better by having walked in their shoes. Now's the time to put it to the test by really understanding a woman's point of view in the relationship and what she wants.

Start developing new interests.

One of the first things a person wants to know is, "What are your interests?". Obviously, you can't hit her with the truth yet! Evasive answers arouse suspicion: are you involved in something illegal? Before you start looking to meet someone, you should have one or two interests to be able to talk about. Yes, it may mean taking time away from dressing around the house, shopping, or support group meetings. But it will make you a more well-rounded person, and better able to have a relationship.

Use your advantages.

Single crossdressers have several advantages over married ones. No, it's not the obvious freedom to dress. It's that those single and in the community have already gone through the difficult process of coming out to themselves BEFORE getting married. By the time they meet someone, a lot of the traumatic initial self-confrontation is past. By contrast, having to do this while married or in a relationship is a lot harder.

Single crossdressers also have the benefit of learning from married ones. By asking the right questions, listening and learning, a single crossdresser can avoid miscalculations and errors many married crossdressers unknowingly make. And if a married crossdresser can share this knowledge with a single sister, they'll have done what our groups are supposed to be doing: providing support.

(Reprinted from the Neutral Corner newsletter.)

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ASPIRATIONS

by Diane Liegh

I recently wrote an article advising moderation in the path you follow regarding crossdressing. This brings up a very important and seldom studied question - namely, just where am I going? No one knows what the future will bring. What are some of the questions that I should ask myself to determine where my path lies?

Vanessa Kaye wrote in the November 1997 Sooner Belle about carving a canoe out of a birch tree. When asked how this was done, the answer was "...start with a nice straight log, then you carve away everything that isn't a canoe." She goes on to say that "I am, however, advocating that we concentrate on removing the extra layers that prevent the true femme expression."

Where does MY path lie? Twice I have been "en femme" in a mall and heard the statement "That's a man in a dress!" from a youthful girl, both times to her male companion. Is it so bad to be a man in a dress? I am proud to be a male. I treasure the activities in which I was able to participate because I am a male. I don't know when I tried on a feminine article of apparel for the first time. I only know that I enjoyed it and had to do it again. Perhaps this is the first stage of crossdressing. This may be as far as some people want or need to go. Why should we shame them by telling them that they MUST develop feminine attitudes and mannerisms? If they go out into public they can present an image to the public that others would prefer they didn't, but are they responsible for us or to us?

As time went by, I ventured out of my small closet into a larger one which included a local club. It was my choice to expand my horizons. At this stage, most of what I heard about was "passing". There was so much to learn. Makeup, hair, nails, mannerisms, walking, etc. Passing, to me, meant the ability to separate my male and female attributes so that I could select either one and be able to "fool" others that that was my actual persona.

I eventually learned that "passing" was not only hopeless but also unnecessary. I had learned as a little boy to be polite, courteous and (somewhat) considerate of others. I found myself applying the same considerations to my femme self. If I took care to present myself as a neat, clean, considerate person, I seemed to be accepted as such. In a recent article I stated that twice in one day I had been addressed as a "lady". I don't know that the person making that statement believed that I was a "lady",

but that they were willing to accept the image which I was trying to present was sufficient for me.

As my trip through genderland has progressed, I find that I tend to be more empathetic and more emotional. Many books which I have read say that a major problem women have with men is that the women want their male to listen sympathetically but all their male wants to do is solve their problem. I find that often I now just want to share a situation and have someone listen rather than have proposed solutions handed to me.

I have a difficult time, when at crossdressing meetings, deciding whether I should mention to the girl in a mini seated near me that her thighs are at a 90 degree angle and that modesty and decorum are absolutely absent. Does she care? Would she appreciate the observation in a constructive way? Is this unfeminine position of any importance to her? If she wishes to work on her presentation I am doing her a disfavor by not mentioning it. If she doesn't care about her presentation, I only antagonize her.

Vanessa goes on to say, "I am, however, advocating that we concentrate on removing the extra layers that prevent the true femme expression." The true femme expression exists only within your realm and only for yourself. I have never met Linda or Vanessa Kaye. I have read many of their articles and have the upmost respect for them, what they do and what they have achieved. I aspire to many ideals and practices which they have already achieved. I hope they keep sharing in the community as long as they live.

In my current stage, I go to conventions. I go to restaurants for dinner. I do some things and go some places. Often I get butterflies before an outing. Sometimes I get stressed by the outing. The current bottom line is that I like to dress en femme and I like to go out and be seen en femme. I also like to go and do as a male. Time will tell where my journey takes me from here, but of one thing I am sure - IT WILL BE INTERESTING.

The new or inexperienced gender traveler has a great need for situations, experiences and people to provide a data base for the decisions he makes. I thank Linda and Vanessa for the time and effort they expand. I offer my comments not in opposition, but as just another opinion which may be available to be consulted.

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Big Sister Report

by Marlene

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How to Contribute to Your Chapter Newsletter and your Mirror

By Diane V.

In order to assure that your newsletter is kept productive and stays out of trouble, here is a simple instruction manual for maintaining your newsletter:

1. Pick up pen (or pencil) and paper.
2. Enter writing chamber. (Could be office, den, porcelain facility, etc. You get the idea.)
3. And speaking of ideas, engage brain (but do not clutch!)
4. Proceed to transmit signals from brain through digital process on either right or left hand with writing instrument connected.
5. Warning! Do not exceed personal limitations, commonly diagnosed as writer's cramp, or diarrhea of the pen (similar to diarrhea of the mouth).
6. Do avoid, however, another malady known as writer's block.
7. To aid in evading point number 6, a series of ideas follows: personal experiences; shopping trips; dining out en femme; embarrassing moments; fuzz busting and fuzz-busted; other busy experiences, such as stops at Jiffy Boob; recipes for almost anything; your autobiography; personal discoveries on makeup techniques, clothing, etc., worth sharing; personal triumphs and tragedies to the extent you wish to reveal them.

How about it, Gals!!

(Reprinted from Alpha Omega's Femme Silhouette, Oct. 1966)

Poet's Corner

COPING WITH COMING OUT

Gaylyn CA-4741-H

A closet is a dark place from the inside looking out,
while the sunshine is a bright place you must do without
the things your heart insists upon, yet there is no doubt that
one fine day you'll find a way and you'll be coming out.
From the first day that you found that nylon felt so good when
you tried your sister's panties on just because you could.
For Sis was gone for the day and you knew you should take
this chance, they felt so great, as you knew they would.
Now you're hooked and full of guilt, a secret you must bear
since it's yours and yours alone, this secret you can't share.
You add to this the other things that you would like to wear.
And hide them surreptitiously - your private underwear!
What you think are your worst fears are quickly coming true
The wife has found an odd sized bra, and now she's on to you!
There are no explanations, no lie will ever do, so tell the truth
and hold your breath - perhaps she'll see you through.
If she does or is quite outraged about this weird desire, respect
this person that you're with, for she deserves her ire.
Her man of men that she has picked wears feminine attire.
A shock, no doubt, yet not so bad as living with a liar!
And if you think that you can quit this lingerie addiction
by tossing out all your stash, your entire femme collection,
it won't help and it can't happen no matter what reaction, for
the girl in you is permanent, your denial just plain fiction.
So draw some lines you both can live with on a daily basis and
keep your panties and your hose in their proper places.
You'll find, with time, serenity - and in many cases great good
fun in heels and hose as you BOTH make up your faces.

RELIGION & CROSSDRESSING

Insights From Kathy Helms

by Melanie Yarborough

Last fall, Tri-Ess Alpha Chapter President Kathy Helms spoke on the relationship between Religion and Transgenderism. As she pointed out, "This is significant because an awful lot of folks in the gender community are religious." Moreover, some on the fringe element of the Christian Right are seen as attacking the transgender community. As the focus of religious ire, we are forced to deal with these issues.

Kathy noted one tragic event, cited by IFGE's Merissa Sherrill Lynn at the Spring '95 Atlanta Action leadership convention. As it happened, two of the representatives there were coincidentally members of the Christian Coalition and Focus On The Family. They themselves were made the focus of resentment by other gender community members, who vented their frustration on them for past attacks from the Religious Right. This was, Kathy said, the equivalent of drawing a circle around these people and casting stones. What kind of community are we if we vilify and scapegoat our own members?

Warming to the topic itself, Kathy explained that religions are a way people make sense out of life. They tend to fall into the category of either MONAST or TRANSCEDENT.

Monast religions see everything as a continuum and interrelated, and aren't surprised at transgender behavior. Hinduism teaches about reincarnation, so crossdressers may have been female in a previous life. Or Native American Shamanism teaches of the Berdache and Two-Spirit people, an affirmation of the feminine spirit.

Transcendent religions by contrast see things in terms of polarity: Good vs. Evil, Black vs. White, or in our case, Male vs. Female. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all transcendent religions. To these duality-minded religions, confusion of the sexes is seen as unnatural.

The centerpiece of this argument is the Old Testament verse Deuteronomy 22:5. It says that men shall not wear what pertains to women - any who do so are detestable in the sight of God. On the surface, this is a pretty damning passage. When we hear someone quote this at us, it's the ultimate rejection;

"It's as if your own religion tells you you're trash," as Kathy puts it.

But what does this verse actually mean? Many people who

quote it have not done serious biblical study around it. Scholarly research reveals that the actual purpose, the "Framer's Intent," was a reaction by the nation of Israel to pagan polytheistic practices of their neighbors.

Other religions of that time had both Gods and Goddesses. At certain Goddess' temples, some of the male priests would crossdress and offer themselves sexually to congregants as a representation of the Goddess herself. "It was this cultic temple prostitution which was being prohibited," Kathy notes, and not the broader issue of social crossdressing. On that subject, the Old Testament is silent. Any blanket condemnation of transgender behavior stemming from this would be the commentator's own biased interpretation, not the scripture itself.

When asked about the proper response to gender-baiting, Kathy counsels, "Don't demonize people who would disagree with you - refuse to respond in kind." She also recognizes that there are some people so full of anger that they cannot be rationally talked with, and she quotes the passage, "Don't cast your pearls before swine." In other words, dialogue with those who are capable of dialogue.

It's crucial to educate yourself on religion and be able to respond with intelligent, researched arguments. One book recommended for those so inclined is "Is It Okay To Call God Mother?" by Paul Smith, available at many religious bookstores. In it, the author does a study of female similes used in describing God. For example, Tertulian says, "God is a Mother who nurtures us at her breasts."

Kathy concludes by saying, "The [traditional] concept is that God is one gender. But God shows both male and female sides. If God can do this, why can't humans as well?"

(Reprinted from the Neutral Corner newsletter.)



A Cruise to Remember

by Frances Fairfax

I know it sounds pretty scary..... on board a cruise ship with about 3000 other people, and your husband's right beside you, dressed en femme! Not only that, lots of other crossdressed men and their spouses are around, and no matter how well some of them "pass," they're all "read!" Other passengers stare, some snicker, and some macho types make remarks. Is this your idea of your worst nightmare? I'm sure that for many of you, it is!

I admit I had my misgivings about cruising with "Jane" and others en femme. A cruise ship seemed like a giant fishbowl, or like an airplane, only bigger. And that was when I was already a veteran of several large gender community conventions. But that was also several Dignity Cruises ago. It only took one such cruise, the very first one Peggy organized, to demonstrate to me and to all of us that our fears were baseless. We had such a wonderful time! And, the "civilians" on the cruise, initially curious and to some extent cold toward us, became great friends by the end! "How can this happen?" you might ask. How can you resist that urge to flee to one's cabin and hang out the "Do Not Disturb" sign for the duration? I'd like to explain by telling a bit about the cruise just concluded.

This Dignity Cruise, which was also Tri-Ess's annual Holiday En Femme convention, was one of the best ever! It kicked off with a gathering of almost all participants at a hotel the night before sailing. Dinner and conversation, old friendships renewed and new ones forged, began the process of bonding. There is something very reassuring about the company of others who share our special world. There's the visible reinforcement of the intellectual knowledge that we are not alone, and the example of the more experienced and more comfortable crossdressers and wives to encourage you.

Peggy bases the entire premise of her Dignity Cruises on the solid Tri-Ess principle that crossdressers and their spouses are ordinary people with an extra dimension, that crossdressing can and should be done with dignity and grace, that we need not and must not allow ourselves to be relegated to a sleazy back alley subculture, but are entitled to first class venues. She has booked her cruises with nothing but top-of-the-line companies, and has made sure they understand the nature of our group and are prepared to accommodate us. Thanks to her solid groundwork, everyone from the booking agents to the ship's personnel have treated us with perfect courtesy and consideration.

So what's it like? How does it work, especially once you're on board the cruise ship? To begin with, these cruise employees

are highly skilled veterans at the art of managing large numbers of people, getting them on and off the ship, serving them meals, and providing them with all manner of entertainment. Their jobs (and their tips!) depend upon giving you courteous service. I cannot recall a single instance of rudeness on the part of the personnel. The waiters even manage to get the pronouns and names right! This is no small feat, considering the crossdressers are typically in guy mode during the day, and dressed up for the evening dinner and show.

That first afternoon on board ship, once you are shown to your cabin, you are free to enjoy a buffet lunch with your friends, get familiar with the amenities aboard ship, and (once your bags are delivered to your cabin), decide what to wear at dinner. It's always great fun to be on deck when the ship sails, and since our group always chooses the late seating for dinner, you'll still have plenty of time to get ready. On this particular cruise, our departure was delayed because a few hundred passengers' flights were delayed. It's nice to know they won't sail without you in that situation!

For those who are concerned about getting motion sickness on any kind of ship, let me hasten to assure you that these cruise ships are not just any kind of ship. They are like floating Las Vegas hotels! They are enormous, their hulls are equipped with stabilizing devices, and you do not feel any motion. Only on that first night at sea, as the ship ran a bit faster than usual to make up for the hour and a half delay in departing Miami, did I feel an occasional mild fore-to-aft pitch as the ship encountered a few ocean swells. This was very late in the evening, and by then almost everyone was in bed and feeling nothing!

Even with almost everyone "dressed" for dinner and sitting together, it takes a while for the word to spread that crossdressers are on board. The reactions range from indifferent to curious to amused to shocked to miffed. The psychology of this is fascinating. Everyone on board is there to have a good time. They are in party mode, and tend to have a "live and let live" attitude. Whatever their knowledge and opinions about crossdressing, few wish to make a scene. Those who do are usually macho types who've had a few drinks, and fortified by booze, call out remarks as we pass by them. Ignoring these boors, or smiling sweetly at them, is the way to go. Our bolder crossdressers, who are used to going about in public and doing outreach, will often engage these guys in conversation and, in some cases at least, win them over. If any passengers have complained to the cruise line about our presence,

I'm not aware of it. On board, such complainers would simply be told we have the same rights as the rest of the passengers.

In the course of each cruise, there comes a "magic moment," a turning point at which the ice thaws and the other passengers almost spontaneously warm to us. Contributing to that moment are many individual encounters, from smiles exchanged in passing to long conversations over drinks. On this cruise, the magic moment came when we gathered after dinner Saturday night for a group photo. The official photographer was backed by a gallery of what seemed hundreds of paparazzi, eager to take their own photos to show friends back home, and afterwards, eager to have their pictures taken with one or more of us!

But I've jumped a bit ahead of myself. On this particular cruise, sailing out from Miami on Friday evening, we enjoyed an Italian dinner, followed by a Las Vegas-style show in the ship's Follies theater. Some tried their luck in the ship's casino, and others settled into one of the bar areas for more conversation with friends. The next morning we docked in Nassau, ready for a day of sightseeing, shopping, tours, and gambling in the local casinos. Some went ashore en femme without incident, but most reverted to guy mode. Everything was so completely casual that no one seemed to notice the rather tall ladies, anyhow. The local scenery was so picturesque, and the weather so nice! Those from colder climes began to plot how they could stay behind on the island (at least for the next few months)!

Back on the ship in the late afternoon, we were concerned to learn that one of our party had apparently suffered a heart attack and was being evaluated in the ship's Infirmary. Hastening to the Infirmary, we were relieved to see our friend in good spirits, if not good health, in a top-notch, state-of-the-art clinic. The medical staff was highly professional, and having evaluated and stabilized Robin's condition, made arrangements to have our star patient flown back to Miami's Heart Institute right away. It was very good to know that the ship's medical facility was so well staffed and equipped, and the cruise line so ready to transport someone back to the appropriate medical center.

That evening, once again we all dressed up in our finest for the Captain's Cocktail Party and the French Dinner, and the other passengers were much more aware of us. By the time of the Group Photo, a whole gallery had gathered to watch us. After the photo spree, some of us went back out to sample local nightlife and the casinos, while others took in the floor show and continued to party on board. The ship didn't sail until 4:00 AM, to allow all the stragglers to get back aboard.

The following morning found us anchored off the cruise line's private island, Coco Cay, for a long day of fun on the beach and on board. About half of us gathered for a meeting of the Tri-Ess Board of Directors before lunch, then went ashore for snorkeling, swimming, and relaxing on the white sand beaches. Others had

all day to roam the lush tropical island, gamble, shop or exercise on board, try out the ship's salon, swimming pools, and jacuzzis, or curl up in a deck chair with a good novel.

That evening saw most of us gathered for a ceremonial presentation of Tri-Ess's annual awards for Chapter of the Year, three Commended Chapters, and most prestigious, the Leader-Servant Award. Named Leader-Servant for 1997 was Leslie's husband. We had all managed to keep it a complete surprise from him, and for once, Judy was speechless!

After the awards ceremony, we went to the topmost deck's cocktail lounge for a special party hosted by Peggy and Melanie. We were joined by some new friends, some of whom were fascinated by us and wanted to know us better, and some of whom were crossdressers themselves who happened to be on the cruise! By that point in the cruise, we were being met with smiles (friendly ones!) everywhere we went. A great International Dinner and another great show capped off an evening tinged with regret that the whole wonderful experience was coming to an end.

The merrymaking was also curtailed a bit by the need to pack up all but carry-on luggage for the porters to carry off by midnight. The need for this inconvenience was clear the next morning as we watched the ship's personnel simultaneously clear us all through US Customs and off the ship, while cleaning and restocking the ship for the next load of passengers, due to board that same afternoon. Their efficiency at this is almost frightening, reducing the long process of waiting in line to a fraction of what I remember from previous trips.

We came away with memories of good times with good friends old and new, and with much less fear and embarrassment about being out in public. We were indeed on a Dignity Cruise. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Peggy for conceiving the whole idea and laboring hard and long to bring each one off so well. We are also very grateful to the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and to the officers and crew of the Sovereign of the Seas for their very friendly and professional service. They are truly a class act!

One last item: As I visited the ladies' room that last morning, I overheard a fascinating conversation.

Lady #1: (laughing) "This was really the 'La Cage Aux Folles' cruise!"

Lady #2: (also laughing) "Yes! I can't wait to tell my sister and brother-in-law! They won't believe this! Good thing I got some pictures of them."

Lady #1: "I'm writing them up in the daily journal I keep."

Lady #2: "I have one of those 'cruise journals' a friend of mine gave me, but I forgot to pack it."

Lady #1: "Well, just be sure you fill it in when you get home! This was a cruise to remember!"

I certainly agree!

5. You're probably a better lover because you're more sensitive to a woman's needs.
6. You know how a woman wants to be treated.
7. You have a bond that will enhance your communication and relationship.

So you say, "Hon, look at all these things you'll be getting along with the man you chose." It's kind of like the ads on TV - "...But look, that's not all... you also get the handy hammer ... but wait there's more ... for a limited time you can also get the onion peeler ... and if you're the 50th caller you'll also receive a finger nail clipper, hedge trimmer all in one...." - when all you really cared about was the knife set. Do you see my point? She will not see or care about any of this, because if she did she would have searched for someone like that from the beginning. Then you say, "Well, she never knew that there were people like me." It doesn't matter. The point still is the same. Don't sell something to people that they're not buying cause you'll go out of business in flames.

Now what you can do with these benefits, is to use them in jest to sort of lighten moments of tension in the conversation. Laugh about it. Let her know that you can see the way she's feeling. I always joke with my wife about it. It doesn't take anything away from what I want to do and I have a lot more fun with it. I keep telling her that I'm a lumberjack trapped in a crossdresser's body, and if she'd just get me a big saw, some flannel shirts, and leave me in the woods with a bunch of burly men then I could be everything I wanted. And she will usually respond with, "That's what I'm afraid of. You'd never come home." You see, it's about having fun, which leads me to the next mistake.

IV. Taking It All Too Seriously

If you decide to tell your spouse or Significant Other about this then I suggest you do it when you're feeling self confident, happy, maybe a little kooky, and on top of the world. Don't tell her when you're depressed and sullen. When people communicate they attempt to empathize with one another. If someone is telling a story and is smiling and laughing, what is the other person going to do? Smile and laugh! If a person is depressed and is going through rough times, what's going to happen? The person will attempt to try and feel the way you do. It's natural human nature in our attempts to communicate with each other.

So be fun, make it silly, entertain her, and she'll love it. Maybe not every day, but when she sees you dressed she will at least find humor in it and be okay. I don't know, but I think it's because they realize that the "other woman" is not a threat to their own femininity if the other woman is kind of a goof ball. But if you show too many endearing qualities, your spouse / SO will find her a threat to her relationship with you. I'm not sure if that's really true for all women, but one girl told me that one time so, I figure that I'm not that lucky to find the only girl in the world that would feel that way.

You don't want to go too far, though. Know where the lines are and stay within bounds. Silliness to a point is fun and funny, but it can get old fast, so just gauge it as you go.

V. Looking Too Sexy

Oh, this is a big one. If you look better than she does you have a

problem. Or even if she thinks you look better than she does, you have a problem. Here's why. You now become another woman, which means that she is in competition with you and immediately sizes you up. Even if she's never seen you dressed all the way, she will worry that you will look better. Use your humor. "You mean with my big feet, I'm going to look better than you!" Or, "You don't think I look like a line-backer in a dress?" Whether you do or don't is not the point. It's the fact that you still find her more attractive. And if you can make some "questionable" comments that are sincere that make her realize that you don't see what she sees, then she just may be a little more accepting.

I like to dress sexy, as we all do. The first time I dressed totally in front of my wife I went into the bathroom and closed the door. I got everything perfect because I didn't want her to laugh at me. I came out into a dimly lit bedroom and she stared at me in shock. "Oh, my God!" (long pause) I said, "What, did I put on too much eyeliner?" She laughed (key point), "No, you do your makeup better than I do, and I didn't expect to see you in a wig." I just responded, "No way, you are the most gorgeous girl I know, I could only hope to do as well." She smiled and said, "Well, how did you learn how to do all this?" I responded, "Practice, Practice, Practice and three college courses followed by a sabbatica." She just said, "I can't believe it! You look like a girl!" (This was a key line, because now she could be wondering if I could or wanted to pass and be one if I wanted to. Then the ever posing question lingers in her head. 'Does he want to change his sex?') So my response to this was, "Damn, and I was trying to be a lumberjack!" There is nothing sexy about a lumberjack in drag, no matter what camera angle you use. Furthermore, the percentage of lumberjacks that go through SRS is probably very low to nil.

VI. Moving In Too Fast

Don't unload on her, take things in time, be PATIENT. To put it into your perspective: How long have you been dressing? How long was it until you got to where you felt that you looked okay? How long did it take to accumulate a wardrobe? How long did it take for you to feel comfortable going out? You can't just give her the finished product and say, "Hey, what d'ya think about this!?" Let her grow into it at intervals that are within her comfort zone. Do it subtly. But be careful, you need to disclose everything eventually, and if you move too slowly she'll think that you are "progressing" or "growing" or "changing" when the reality is you've already been that way for perhaps years.

I have gone out in public, and this violates the advice I gave earlier, but I plan on disclosing that to her the next time we are discussing the topic. But I'll let her ask the question, and I don't ever expect her to want to go out with me dressed. I think I'd even be a little self-conscious with that because I would be empathizing with her. Furthermore, I don't think she'll want me going out on my own or with others.

She's now okay with everything except wigs, public appearances, web pages, organizing a social group, organizing a yearly event, writing a book, etc. Most of all, she was upset that I did not disclose everything from the beginning. She says she would have been understanding and probably be okay with even more. I believe her. The fact that I didn't just come right out and tell her who I has bothered her, as she felt that I didn't feel like I could trust her. I deceived her, or to use a stron-

How to Introduce Crossdressing to Your Spouse

My Personal Experience

by Michelle Johnson

Introduction

Everyone has asked me how I was able to communicate my desire to crossdress to my wife. So I thought I would just relate my personal experience and hope that it helps everyone in some way. Just realize that I'm not a licensed or certified psychologist, and your situation may be a little different than mine. Also note that I made some mistakes; such as I didn't tell her the "whole" story from the beginning, and I've agonized over it through the years. I plan to tell her everything very soon, and I know she will be hurt that I didn't tell her from the beginning. One approach is the use of humor and it's my style. Humor comes very natural to me, but if you're not like that then you need to find another strength to draw from to help you through it. Whatever your situation, it will not be easy; you will have to push your comfort zone with your relationship. Rarely will you find a woman that will accept your crossdressing with open arms and want to be your girlfriend, so to speak.

Just remember that the crossdressing aspect of your life is not why they chose to be with you. This is very important to remember and it's a continuing theme throughout this self help document. Crossdressing is not why they got involved with you nor did they choose you because they wanted a girlfriend. So when you change the basic rules and foundation of your relationship don't expect her to become overjoyed and say, "Oh, boy! I hit the jackpot! Finally, a guy that wants to be a girl! Where have you been all my life?!" . There are many exceptions to this but don't expect it to happen that way and you won't be disappointed or confused when she goes berserk.

I'm going to describe some of the common mistakes people make, that I see in my Email and through hundreds whom I have met, mistakes that we all have made. Then I'll give you my perspective on how I avoid those mistakes. It may be a different approach for you depending on your situation but the key is to avoid the mistake. Okay, enough of the psycho-babble.

I. Losing Perspective of the Basics

The most important foundations to any relationship and marriage are what? Trust/Honesty, Love, Respect, Loyalty, and a sincere desire to make the person Happy. What I'm about to say; you may not want to hear, but it's been my whole reason for being successful at communicating with my wife so far. If you're sneaking around, hiding your clothes, then you are violating her trust, and your loyalty to her. I don't think it's really any different than being adulterous as far as deceit is concerned. The key antagonist here in this situation is you, and not unlike most antagonists in literature, you will slip up and she will catch you. When that happens it will be much more difficult to talk about the subject because it will represent something else all together that I won't go into here. The reason is primarily because she will wonder if she can trust you and if you will be loyal to her. Keep that in the back of your

mind. If you have never slipped up, good for you; however, don't ever use it as leverage or positioning in a conversation, because that's a set expectation and what you signed up for in the relationship. The fact that you are loyal is not a benefit no matter what anyone else is doing and how good you may think you are. It doesn't make you any better of a person because you adhered to standards that you promised in the first place.

II. Giving Ultimatums and Making Demands

The next mistake that people fall on is that they begin to think, "Well, if she loved me then she should let me do this because it's important to me." Wrong, unless you told her before marriage or before the relationship got too far along and she said, "That's okay with me. No problem." Otherwise, she does have the right to say, "No, that's not what I signed up for." Just remember that you are the variable here, not her. You are the one trying to change the rules, so give her time to adjust. Give her a lot of room to say hurtful things to you. Don't get mad or defensive, just listen to her. Don't give the quick easy answers, just be caring, sensitive and understanding.

I mean, think about it. If she came to you and said, "Hon, I just have to have sex with other men and I want you to watch. In fact I think I want one of them to move in and sleep with us every night. If you loved me you'd let me, and if you really cared you shouldn't have a problem, and if you don't like it, well, I'll keep him in another room and you'll never see him, but I'm going to have regular sex with him. Oh, by the way, I've been sleeping with him off and on for the last 12 years."

Okay, I know some of you might like that situation. But you get the point. In this situation, if she'd told you before the relationship you could have chosen whether you wanted to deal with that or not. Now you're stuck. You say, "Well, that's a little more extreme." It's not, from the perspective of how the situation is handled and how your spouse feels. If you are crossdressing to any extent you are, in a sense, having an affair with another woman that you bring to bed with you every night whether you're dressed or not. This is what she will see. So you have to be prepared to be understanding, caring and sensitive to her wants and needs. Furthermore, you need to be able to communicate your wants and desires, and be able to work through those issues through time.

III. Selling the Concept

We all know who we are and why we think a wife or Significant Other should enjoy the benefits of our crossdressing.

1. You're more sensitive than most men.
2. You can help her with her shopping.
3. You can help her choose the correct color makeup.
4. You're into sharing, and chatting.

ger word; I lied to her by withholding something that we should have been sharing together. We are working through it all now. We're both trying to figure out what we both can live with. I'm not sure if I'll ever be able to do the things that I really want to do. I'm not sure how we'll resolve it, but the key is that every other part of our relationship is strong. I love her as much or more than the first day that I married her. She's my best friend and the person I want to be with forever. I've never felt like that about anyone before in my life and never will again. With that as a foundation I think we can build whatever we want to build. I think besides this the only major disagreement we've ever had is about what color couch to get for the family room. We don't have a lot of common interests but the one common thread we do have is that we're both romantic and passionate people that care about each other's emotional needs.

VII. Changing Personalities When Dressed

If you do dress for your spouse or SO, don't change your personality or mannerisms. Just enjoy being dressed. Let her comment that you may look like a girl but you don't act or sound like one. That's okay. She's trying to validate to herself that she is still the female in the relationship. Just respond with, "Yeah, I know, I need help with all that girlie stuff. It was all that lumberjack training that did me in." Don't try to be "Girlie" with her. Most women are turned off by that kind of stuff anyway these days. And a man trying to emulate it without any real training will look silly in her eyes. Just be you because "you" is good

VIII. Forgetting to Compromise

Just because you're married or whatever doesn't mean she owes you anything unless you discussed it up front. Anything else that wasn't disclosed before any bonds is open to negotiation. You won't get everything you want if you didn't disclose it beforehand. If you do you're very fortunate and probably should be writing this instead of me. The key is to find out what you can live with before ever entering into any discussions. Know what you want and what you can realistically settle for.

I lost two girlfriends over this, one because I tried to force it on her and the other because I wouldn't bend on anything. I was going through a phase in which I felt that if she didn't like it then I didn't care about her. This is not a good attitude to start a relationship. I was caught up in all the psycho-babble and my friends were influencing me to go through SRS and drop my girl friend. It wasn't until much later I realized that it was my problem and not hers. Anyway, it all goes back to accepting responsibility for our actions. We make choices and we have to live with the results. We can't blame other people or our family environment for any of the choices we make. That's ridiculous, and I'm not buying that from any of the liberal psychologists. I think their facts and statistics are biased and skewed on that issue.

Just be prepared to not get everything you want if you haven't talked about it at all with her. Then you have to decide if you can live with any of the compromises. If not, then you both need to move on.

IX. Making Promises / Concessions You Can't Keep

Don't do it. If you can't resolve crossdressing with your SO for whatever reason then you have to weigh the realities and importance of your crossdressing. It is unrealistic to think that you can stop doing it.

Don't promise this, because it rarely happens. Our brain is an organ that learns through stimulus and repetition. If we are continually dressing for positive stimulus then it's just going to keep reinforcing it. The old adage that says, "People become more of what they are as they age" comes to mind. What that means is that the good qualities get better and the bad get worse. Look at your parents and grandparents. Look at their patterns. Things they do well they are absolutely great at. Their faults get much worse. It's through repetition that these qualities keep growing.

The point is, don't make unrealistic concessions. On the other side, don't give ultimatums and make promises you know you can't keep. This is a tough line to follow but you have to if you want to communicate successfully with her. That doesn't mean you get your way, it just means that you've both effectively communicated.

If it comes right down to it, go your separate ways, because let me tell you, a clean break up front is better than a lifetime of sneaking around and paranoia that you're going to get caught. And you will get caught. It's just a matter of when, not if.

One girl I dated for four years, almost five. We were engaged for nearly a year and I decided to tell her. She went berserk, but I maintained my position of, "Let's put everything on the table and see if we're a match." Although I wanted to keep her more than anything, that desire to want her with me I knew would fade very quickly if I felt constrained. You are the key to unlocking all the constraints, and you have the key. You just have to figure out the best way to use it without damaging the lock.

X. Becoming Dependent on Social or Support Groups

Okay, before you get defensive let me just say that I think social and support groups are an excellent way to meet and share with others. I sat on the board of a large one in Washington D.C., so I should know. The portion of our agenda that I focused on and liked most was our direction towards total self improvement in appearance, family, and emotional stability. However, there are some land mines that you'll step on here if you're not careful, and they all sum up the last nine points in many ways.

First and foremost, when dealing with your SO, don't try to sell them on attending a meeting. This is the last thing they're going to want to do. It would be the same as her asking you to go to therapy to find out what is wrong with you. The way to present the social group to your spouse is to present it as an option. If you are at an impasse and need to share and learn from others then offer it up as one alternative. Counseling would be another alternative. Providing existing material such as the crossdressing FAQ on the web page is yet another alternative. Don't force them to read anything, just present it as another source of information and let them decide what they want to know.

But I've seen many of the people coming to my group saying, "Well, I tried to get my wife to come tonight. I don't know why she won't come. I think it would let her see that I'm not the only one and that these are really nice people." If you attend a social / support group and you haven't heard this one or haven't said it yourself (I know I'm guilty), then I would be very surprised. This is a fallacy. First of all, she doesn't care if anyone else does it or how nice they are, you are the one

she married or is dating, not anybody else. She doesn't care, nor does she see where it will help anything in your relationship. In fact, she'll be concerned that if you continue to go that you'll want to dress up more often, or whatever. And she's probably right. This is one of those things you don't want to try to sell but rather to offer if interested.

Another land mine that social groups have are that they allow a means for us to sneak around. We provide regularly scheduled meetings with facilities in which to dress. I've had people store their clothes with me and come over and dress for a get together, their wives thinking they were at a business meeting or whatnot. If I were to put a group together now, all would be welcome except those who had wives or girlfriends who did not know. That's just playing with fire as far as I'm concerned, and I don't support it.

There can be a lot of sympathizing, which can enforce some of the land mines such as giving ultimatums, etc. I have never been around a bunch a people that were so bitter about the way their wives reacted to their dressing. They took it as an insult, and felt that their wives were being unreasonable. And maybe they were, but the person should have been at home trying to work to resolve the issue rather than ranting.

Conclusion

I plan to follow up this with some more land mines and more personal experiences. I just want everyone to know although I do feel like I understand human behavior better than most, I haven't had any formal or educational experience. Most of what I've written is what I feel is just the right way, regardless of all the psycho-babble. Just look at this as one person's opinion or approach to communication. It's not the only way to do it nor is it necessarily the best way. In fact, I have made mistakes by not disclosing everything at the beginning. I can't stress this enough. If you think you are going to be seeing someone for a significant amount of time, just tell them. There's never a good time. Just find a place where you can talk away from all the daily noise and just tell them. Tell them everything. A few weeks or months of heartache is much better than that of a lifetime. Other than that, I feel that I've communicated all of my needs and wants. I may not get everything I need, but that's a mistake I made very early on.

Furthermore, the tone of this whole exercise has taken the side of the spouse / SO. If you got angry or felt threatened by any of the comments I made, you may not be ready to discuss this with the person you care about. I would suggest you read it a few times and if you still don't understand it, seek counseling. I sincerely feel that the spouse / SO is the one victimized in this whole ordeal, and we forget that because we are so scared and nervous when we try to bring it up. Then all the emotion just begins to flood through the gates, losing all form of rationality. Don't try discussing it with her if you're not strong, and confident enough to deal with it yourself. Because if you can't accept who you are, like it, and care less who finds out about it, then how in the world can you convince her to feel any differently?!

I've thought about writing a book on this subject if anyone knows a publisher who would accept this concept or an agent who would be willing to stand behind it. I do know some very good writers who will write it.

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World Wide Web Site: <http://www.dragscape.com>
 Email Michelle Johnson: michelle@imagin.net

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More Pictures from
Virginia Prince's Birthday Celebration



Drs. Vern Bullough, Virginia Prince, & James Elias



Dr. Richard Docter & Virginia Prince

Calendar of Events

APRIL

29-5/3 California Dreamin' 98, San Francisco CA. PO Box 1088, Yorba Linda, CA 92686

MAY

15-17 **SPRING COTILLION**, Sigma Epsilon Chapter, P.O. Box 272, Roswell GA 30077, (770) 552-4415, <http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/sigep.htm>

16 **SPRING FLING**, Chi Chapter, P.O. Box 40, Wood Dale, IL 60191-0040, (630) 262-8707, chitriess@aol.com

20-24 Esprit, Port Angeles WA. PO Box 1101, Renton WA 98057 <http://205.179.146.227/tg/cornbury/esprit98>

JUNE

10-14 Be All You Can Be 1998, Pittsburgh PA, PO Box 15408, Pittsburgh PA 15237 (412) 224-6015, tpbeall98@aol.com

JULY

15-19 **SPICE VI**, Atlanta GA, Dr. Peggy Rudd, PO Box 5304, Katy TX 77491, Fax (281) 347-8747, E-mail: melpg@phoenix.net

SEPTEMBER

30-10/4 Southern Comfort, Atlanta GA, SCC, PO Box 77591, Atlanta GA 30357-1591, (404) 633-6470, sccatl@aol.com

OCTOBER

TBA Fantasia Fair, Provincetown, MA

NOVEMBER

5-8 Paradise in the Poconos, CDS, PO Box 61263, King of Prussia PA 19406, (610) 640-9449, poco@cdspub.com

5-8 Fall Harvest, Minneapolis MN, CLCC, PO Box 14844, Minneapolis MN 55414, (612) 229-3613, CLCC@topcity.com

8-13 **TRI-ESS HOLIDAY AT SEA/ DIGNITY CRUISE #10**, Miami-Nassua-Coco Cay -Key West CRUISES INC., 1-800-621-6699 (Barbara Arendt), 1-800-818-7830 (Mike Sinn)

DECEMBER

TBA **PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ**, Chicago, IL. Chi Chapter, PO Box 40, Wood Dale, IL 60191, (630) 262-8707, chitriess@aol.com

Once More, But Slowly, Please

by Lois Lake, Girl Reporter

Oh my, here we go again.

I was thinking, for once, and yes, Melissa, it did hurt, thank you, that some of the feelings I have been developing this last year and a half (since I first "came out" at Kappa Beta) might be of interest to you. If not, you may skip the rest of this column, 'cause I am interested, that is.

Anyway, before I retired I was, if you can believe it, a park ranger. Now, this has always seemed to me to be a pretty macho type of work (guns, woods, leather, uniform, badges, etc.). I say this so that you will understand that for twenty years I was strongly discouraged by the bureaucracy from having, much less showing, any feelings. However, since then, I have had the distinct pleasure of not only showing my feelings, but have been encouraged by my sisters (that's ya'll) to talk about them.

For most of my life, I have thought that real men didn't hug, or talk about loving each other, or, you know, any of that touchy-feely, warm-fuzzy stuff, without a real fear of being labeled or thought to be homosexual. Oh, yeah, right now, let's deal with that issue once and for all. I strongly believe that this column is to be for everyone, and I am not now, nor have I ever been, homophobic.

.....Anyway, I woke up this morning thinking that I needed to write this column 'cause I was going to see my buddies Melissa and Heidi, and their wives, this afternoon. And that got me to thinking how good it will be to see them, and that we'd probably give each other a hug. I know, that's kind of a long thought, but I was horizontal when I had it, so it didn't hurt too much.

Then I thought, I wonder what people think when they see three fairly big guys giving each other a hug. Then, I thought, who cares? And then, is that what frightens some people, particularly the less secure wives??? Wow, a revelation!

Women touch each other all the time, I think. Hugs, cheek pecks (or air pecks), whatever. Men do not. When

we as cross dressers do it, we seem to be freeing ourselves from the strictures placed on us by society to define our proper gender role and behavior. When we break through these behavior limits, it is confusing for our spouses, and for the community at large. It shouldn't be.

I am closer to, and feel more love for, my crossdresser sisters, than I am to my oldest friends. I am closer to my sisters than I am to my blood brothers. I don't mean to say that I don't love my friends and my brothers, and their families. By the strictest test, I am willing to die for them. But I can't allow my feminine feelings to show, or my friends and family will not understand, I think. At least, that's what I think they'll think. And if they think that I've changed, whatever that change is, then somehow that will irretrievably alter our relationship, presumably for the worse.

Is this really the case? Does a display of affection between two men mean that they are gay? Does the simple fact that those same two men like to play dress-up mean that they are gay and are either fooling themselves or trying to fool everyone else? No. What an open display of affection between two (or more) men means is that they feel a certain affection for each other. It's that simple.

Webster defines affection as a tender feeling of warm regard. Is that love? Yes, and it means that if we allow ourselves to acknowledge our feelings for another person, openly and without fear, we have grown, a little, as a human being. This is not bad; this is good. I have never felt as much unconditional love from as many people as I do in Tau Gamma and Tri-Ess. People I've never met are sisters, with all that the word implies. Ours is a bond closer than that of any other, because it is a bond forged of necessity, of hope, and of trust. We need to dress, we hope to be with people like ourselves, and we depend on each other for discretion. Necessity, hope, trust. As good a foundation for love as you will ever find.

Sofronia's Story

by Sofronia Ann Strong

About Our Cover Girl

Hi! My name is Sofronia Anne. I am a transvestite.

That is not a statement I was capable of making a few years ago. I was not even capable of making it privately to myself. The story of how I came to be able to say that to you, and everyone else, is the story of how I re-created myself by learning to accept my transvestism as a blessing and a precious gift that has enriched my life.

I was born in the depth of the depression. My mother did not survive having me. I was therefore given to an aunt to be raised. She took me in, along with my father, and we made a family of five together with my uncle and cousin. Marjorie had lost a daughter, stillborn, some six months earlier. I would soon learn, from the sight of the snow white curls that cascaded onto my shoulders, and from the blue taffeta dress I wore for my piano lessons, that Marjorie had found a replacement for her lost Cynthia Louise.

She made it apparent that while Bobby was tolerated, Cynthia Louise was preferred. Life was clearly better for Cynthia Louise than for Bobby. My grandmother apparently agreed. She kept me in girl's finery during summer vacations in Iowa, introducing me as her granddaughter. Did my father object to the effemination of his son? Not at all! He said Marjorie was in charge and I must do whatever Marjorie expected of me. What Marjorie expected was that I play Cynthia on demand and the demand was frequent. Did I object? Not really! With the resilience and acceptance found in small children I came to expect that I would just be Cynthia Louise on frequent occasions. I did object the first few times, but only because Marjorie used the pretext of punishment.

"If you can't be a little gentleman then you can just be a little lady today. Little girls mind their mommies better than

boys do. They are sugar and spice and everything nice, so you can be my little girl today and make me very happy" It was even kind of fun. Marjorie made it fun and I came to accept it as part of the way we lived.

At age eight my father re-married the classic step-mother from hell. A sadistic spinster school teacher, Doris would make

my life a misery for the next ten years. She was possessive of my father, and a control freak. She was convinced that our family and her employers were bent on persecuting her and she became a reclusive paranoiac. She hit upon the idea of crossdressing me as a way of controlling my father. He would capitulate to her demands in order to prevent Doris from dragging his son out in public in dresses and tresses, a practice she could justify by reminding him that his sister had done so through all my early years. The difference, of course, was that Marjorie's crossdressing me had been to satisfy her desire for a daughter. Doris' dressing me up was to humiliate me publicly in order to punish my father and bring him to heel. Marjorie's incest was covert. Doris' treatment of me was overt incest. She combined my sessions of petticoat punishment with sadistic sexual abuse as well. I spent much of my teen years confined at home in female attire, much of the time serving as her domestic servant, liv-

ing in terror of being seen by anyone we knew. Doris allayed these fears by presenting me, en femme, to everyone we knew.

To those who inquired she informed them that I was sissy and a brat without a conscience, spoiled beyond redemption by my aunt and grandmother. She had taken on the task of reforming me and teaching me the virtue of honest work. I was somehow fascinated by the movie, Cinderella, when it appeared. I attended it in a new satin frock, of course. My identification with



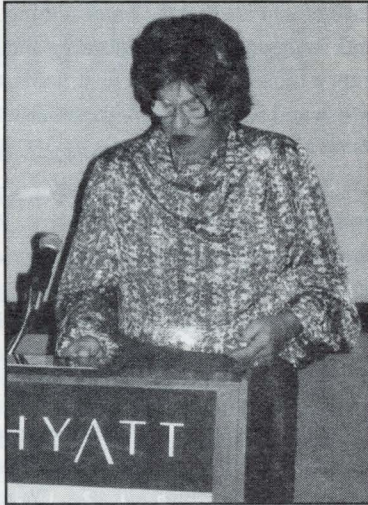
the heroine was absolute. Unfortunately, no prince came along to rescue me.

As Robert J. Rowe has said of me in his autobiography, Bert and Lori, "...Strong doesn't have to imagine the events she describes in her TV fantasy fiction stories, she only has to look to her own experience..."

I escaped at age nineteen, away to college, to play hockey, climb mountains, and study zoology. Ironically, I spent the first semester of my freshman year, crossdressed. I was that year's "Switch Pledge," a time honored campus tradition in which a freshman and a freshman co-ed are made to switch gender roles for the entire pledge period. It was during this experience that I began to first admit to myself that I was enjoying being a co-ed, wearing the girls' freshman uniform and attending chapter meetings in evening gowns. I was much aided and abetted by my "Pledge Mother." She came from a family with crossdressers in it and divined my secret. It was she who first made me admit that I loved dressing up. Even under the cover of the "switch-pledge" requirement it was rumored that I was "queer." Most switch pledges fought and objected their feminization. They played it as "dirty drag." I didn't. I did just the opposite, making myself as feminine and fashionable as I could. This was both misunderstood and resented. It also resulted in my tormentors ratcheting up the feminine fashions in an attempt to make me cry "uncle." I smiled demurely as my petticoats grew wider and my heels higher.

With Leslie's aid, and with the cover provided by being the "switch pledge," I essentially became transgendered that year, resplendent in the "New Look" fashion then in vogue, wasp waist, cone shaped bosom, petticoats and flared skirts. The following year, after Leslie graduated, I was devastated. I no longer had the cover provided by the "switch pledge" hazing. I realized it was necessary that I stop crossdressing or declare myself in public. (Christine Jorgenseon hadn't even happened yet.) I purged! It would be thirty years before I would again put on a dress and heels.

I married in 1959, after completing graduate studies in clinical psychology. I wanted to do a doctoral dissertation on crossdressing. Unfortunately there was no literature on the subject, except the outdated writings of Hirschfield and Krafft-Ebb-



ing.

Transvestism had been decriminalized by these pioneers by classifying it as pathological. It was considered a manifestation of homosexuality and of fetishism, more appropriately treated in their consulting rooms than in the courts.

So it had remained, without further research. I left school and married without doing my dissertation. Three children followed as I operated an electronics retail store and drifted into aviation, an early love. Having founded the first commuter airline in the upper Midwest in 1966, I sold the store and took to flying, from which I retired in 1972.

I had told my bride, Onnalee, of my transvestism before we were married, but the term was meaningless to her and, as I was not practicing my art, the subject was never discussed. Nursing a deep sense of shame about it, I remained in a state of avoidance.

In 1979 we bought a resort in Norderminnesoda with 130 acres of maple trees. We become the second largest commercial maple syrup operation in the state and catered to hunters, fishermen, family vacationers until 1987. After three successive crop failures in maple sap, we found ourselves bankrupt and homeless at age fifty-five. We vowed together to re-create ourselves anew. We shortly found work as apartment caretakers in Minneapolis, and by 1989, managers of a one hundred unit apartment building which we continue to manage to this day.

In the autumn of 1989 Onnalee found me at 4:00 AM, sitting in the living room having an anxiety attack. My cervical vertebrae were locked up, my head immovable. She administered two shots of brandy and a massage. Two days later, knowing perfectly well what was wrong, I called the Program in Human Sexuality of the Family Practice Clinic at the Univ. of Minn. There I was diagnosed as suffering from Childhood Sexual Abuse Syndrome.

In the course of 8 months of group therapy I laid to rest the demons of Cynthia Louise, Marjorie and Doris, and recovered my lost child. In so doing I discovered that my lost child was a little girl. I had, through my childhood experiences, discovered my second self, my femme persona and, ashamed of her, had locked her away in the dungeon of my inner self. It was remorse that had overcome me at 4:00 in the morning. It was the screams of imprisoned girl, the outpourings of her rage and resentment that I had heard in the silence of the night. As my therapy progressed and I worked through the resentment and rage I felt at my aunt and step-mother's transgressions, I discovered this wonderful girl I had locked away so unfairly and unjustly. I wrote her an apology. I promised to set her free. I promised to let her live openly and express herself fully. I agreed to accept her as an integral part of my being.

There were two critical moments in the course of my therapy. In the first, Dr. Thommen asked me if it had ever occurred to me that not all men who crossdressed were ashamed of it. NO! It was true, she said. I could wear dresses and tresses and not be ashamed of it at all. Oh, Lordgawdamighty, could that be true? (It is!)

The second big realization came also from Dr. Thommen. "Robert, have you figured out you would have been a crossdresser even if no one had ever abused you that way as a child?" O Lordgawdamighty, that can't be true! (It is!).

The girl was out of the cage, or would be soon. (Oh, Lordgawdamighty, she's going to run amok and take over my life and have her revenge all over me.) I told my therapist I had four goals, the first of which was to embrace my femme persona and give it full expression. That led me to Tri-Ess which, in turn, led to the formation of Beta Gamma chapter. On the advice of my wife, I abandoned the name Cynthia Louise and adopted the name of my paternal grandmother, Sofronia Anne Strong, who dressed my grandfather and his brother in crinolines to keep them out of the army in the Civil War.

After his death I learned from a cousin that my father also had been a transvestite. He had practiced it out of town (Chicago, Cincinnati and Sioux Falls) with banker cronies for a lifetime. Typical! No wonder he made no objection to my feminization by his sister. I discovered still later that he had been brought up as a girl to the age of thirteen. I had become convinced that my crossdressing was hereditary, which proved not to be true. Nor did Marjorie's early imprinting cause my condition. My feminine gender identity, I finally discovered is inborn, as surely as my blue eyes, syndactyly, urethral stenosis and left-handedness.

In the six years since I decided to embrace my femme persona, to let Sofronia Anne loose, I have discovered my true self, and she is very feminine and loves to express that. It has been an odyssey of self-discovery and self-acceptance. I have discovered that the first



prerequisite for acceptance by others is to accept this in myself. Only then can others do the same. I have discovered that we are special people, with a special gift and a special obligation. If we deny it and try to avoid it we are placing ourselves in great peril of our health and personal welfare.

My experiences

have taught me that the hardest thing I ever had to do in life was to look in the mirror in the morning and say, "My name is Robert, and I am a transvestite." The next hardest thing is to reach for the nail polish and foundation and be about the fine art of making Sofronia Anne a presentable person.

I have come to look on my crossdressing as an art form and myself as a work of art in progress. Rather than trying to pass as a woman, which would be an attempt at deception, I like to present myself as an artistic creation, a kind of theatrical character whom I call Sofronia Anne. I am saying, "Here is my femme persona. I have studied and practiced and worked hard at creating her. I enjoy this immensely. I hope you can enjoy it too."

I take great joy and pleasure in expressing my second self. I have also discovered that it has everything to do with my spiritual nature. Camille Paglia has said, "Whenever a man dons a woman's apparel he is committing a spiritual act." I concur. Something in my nature is lifted up by Sofronia Anne. Teilhard de Chardin said man is most godlike when engaged in creative play, and that is what is going on with Sofronia Anne.

Because of my years of abuse in childhood, and because of my experiences in therapy, I made also a commitment to intolerance. I will not tolerate the abuse of anyone by anyone at any time, ever, period! This has had to begin with myself, of course. Denial of the woman within was the first and worst self-abuse. Since I stopped that I have had to stop the lesser forms of self-abuse, of course. These I am still working at.

Onnalee refused to accept Sofronia Anne for several years after I undertook to bring her out. Although she was sympathetic and supportive, she refused to see Sofronia Anne until I had achieved a degree of self-acceptance, something she was assured of only after I had spent four days at the Holiday en Femme at Kananaskis Lodge en femme.

I am presently an officer of Beta Gamma Chapter of Tri-Ess. I serve as moderator of the Tri-Ess Forum on the internet and am on the transgender advisory board of the Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minn. Medical School. I also serve as a consultant to PHS in their Sexual Attitude Reassessment Seminars and to the Minn. Sex Crimes Investigators Assn. I have practiced the ancient dictum that the best way to help oneself is by helping others. I try to teach by the only means that work - setting examples and telling stories - parables. I have set myself a mission- Missionary to the Crossdressers. I carry out that mission through Tri-Ess and Beta Gamma.

Onnalee is President of Beta Gamma Chapter and Assistant Director of the SPICE Conference. She also serves as Editor of the Sweetheart Connection the SPICE newsletter.

Sofronia Anne can be reached at PO Box 8591, Minneapolis, MN 55408 or at the Internet address; sas@tri-ess.com. Onnalee is at spice@tri-ess.com.

Hey, Good Looking!

An Evaluation of the QUIK SHAVE Shaving System

By Diane Kaye

Well girls, I just finished evaluating the latest in shaving equipment. It is a razor holder made by Quik Shave. Now let me describe it to you.

We have all seen those cartoons of a painter holding a handle with two brushes on the end, or someone with two mop heads on the end of a mop handle. Well, when I first saw the Quik Shave, that is exactly what I thought. What I had in my hand was a double headed razor. My first reaction was, "This has got to be a joke." Being fair about any new invention, however, I decided to give it an honest evaluation before passing judgment on it. The manufacturer has a web site which I would recommend you check out before making your decision. It can be found at: <http://www.quikshave.com>

I decided to try it on my legs first. What I got was just as advertised a quick shave. Since there are two razor blades, you cover twice the territory per pass. Each head has its own swivel so they independently follow the contours of your body. This makes it nice for round legs since one head tilts to the left and one to the right, thus contouring nicely to the shape of your leg. The holder is "Y" shaped. My big concern was that I would sacrifice some flesh to this contraption. To my surprise, it shaved smoothly and quickly. Now around the ankles, I went very carefully. There is not much surface there for two razor blades any way. Bony areas also require attention. For you larger gals,

I suspect that you could shave all of the leg with this shaving system.

Now the next thing was to get the man of the house to try it on his face. The advertisements show men shaving with it on their face and head (if you like that que ball look). To be honest, using a dual blade on your face and shaving against the grain for that really close shave, requires more control and concentration. Contending with two blades around the chin and neck area seems a bit tenuous. For the cheeks, you really don't save that much time unless you have a big face. The result was that while it did a good job, one had to be careful, and there was not a great saving of time. On the neck, with one blade on each side of the Adam's apple, one stroke did the job.

For other body hair, such as the back, chest, arms, it pays for itself. Doing the back, as far as the arm could reach, was easier than with a regular razor. Same for the arms. For the chest, not



quite as good, but then it depends on the shape of the body. These are areas that are large and can take advantage of a dual bladed system. After a complete evaluation, I concluded that it offers the advantage, as advertised, of giving a quick shave.

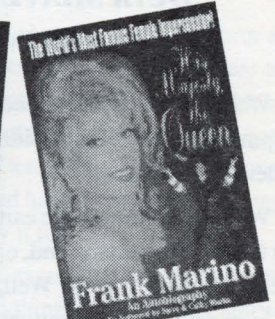
Does the time saved make a difference? Only you can answer that. Personally, I found that one blade was enough and preferable for the face, and that I could better concentrate on the one blade than I could on two blades in the face area. For the legs, back, arms, back of the neck and chest, I think it offers a distinct advantage. The longer handle coupled with the tilting heads, makes it excellent for these areas. Bottom line... it is good for those other areas and worth adding to your kit of "tools of the trade."

Good luck with our Quick Shaver.

You can order one from Quik Shave, Inc., 15455 Point N.W. Blvd., Suite 105, Houston, TX 77095, or call any time 24 hours a day at 1-888-75-SHAVE, FAX is 281-856-4440. Talk to Herbie McNinch, the President, and tell him Diane Kaye recommended his shaver.

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FEMME MIRROR
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8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104
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 Many Thanks..... MIRROR Staff

Toward a Feminine Waist

by Ricky Hunt

Be warned! I'm about to discuss the intimate details of an intimate subject that I have never before seen in a crossdressers' magazine. If you have been reading the literature for a year or so you will have acquired a vast knowledge of how to simulate almost any portion of the female anatomy. Let's start at the top and work downward. A good wig can make your hair longer instantly, without that hard-to-explain-on-

Monday-at-the-office after effect of letting your own hair grow. These days you could go so far as to pierce your ears with only minimal comment. The secrets of makeup are no farther away than the checkout counter of any large grocery store that carries "women's magazines." The only extra equipment you need is a razor. Breasts? Couldn't be simpler! A frilly bra from Wal-Mart, a couple of forms from the mail order house, and you, too, can display the alluring curve of the female breast on your very own body. Why, they even put fake nipples on the forms that show right through the fabric of a bra and blouse!

For those into tight, short skirts, learning how to use a gaff is only a phone call away on the internet, with graphic detail concerning tucking, folding and displacing such natural equipment as necessary to achieve that soft, feminine roundness desired by the crossdresser. I'm sure you have experienced the joyful femininity of a bubble bath, and stretching your legs sensuously before you to ply the razor upon them until they become as smooth and sleek as those of a fashion model. No doubt about it, you can learn to disguise almost every part of your body when you read a crossdressing magazine.

Well, almost any part. Padding can add the right stuff to the right places, shaving can remove the external evidence, but somehow I have never seen anyone advise me on how to achieve a feminine waist. I'm going to be honest here, I simply don't have a waist, I have a belly.

One of the reasons I enjoy dressing up is I can be Plus Size in a dress. I'm just plain old fat in trousers. I've tried corsets, but in order to find one that fits my upper torso I have to use about 20 pounds of fiber fill to stuff the hips, and I feel like a hippo when I'm done. Try as I might, I have never found the magical waist cincher of crossdressing stories that will push the natural padding into just the right configuration, allowing my reflection in the mirror to reveal my beautiful, feminine body.

It's a real bummer. Wearing a dress can help. Loose, one piece construction helps hide the body, and if you use large enough in-

serts your breasts will stick out farther than your belly. But I like wearing blouse and skirt combinations, especially since the sale I found where I picked up a dozen nice skirts for two bucks each. I carefully select color coordinated tops and bottoms (OK, I ask my daughter for advice!) and go through the ritual of transformation. It's not too bad sitting at the computer and studying, but when you get up and move around the fool skirt migrates. Sometimes it rides up, settling against the band of my bra. Sometimes it slips downward until it passes the belly and settles on my all too unfeminine hips. What it won't do is stay where nature deprived me of a waist.

So I offer this challenge to all of you: there has got to be a budding Edison out there that can invent a garment to give me a waist. Make your fame and fortune! This is the opportunity of a lifetime! The only stipulation I will make is this - I'm not going to be sensible and go on a diet!

Dr. A. S. Nubel

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Life Member \$500 * one time payment

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Signature: _____ Date: _____

Payment Options: Enclosed is my Check or Money Order payable in US Dollars to "Tri-Ess"

Charge my membership to VISA or MasterCard or American Express

Account Number _____ Expiration Date ____/____/____

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[The terms used herein assume the Crossdresser is male. Female Crossdressers are also welcomed. Please write Tri-Ess for detailed information]

the Society for the Second Self, inc. / 8880 Bellaire Boulevard, B2, Suite 104 / Houston, TX 77036-4621

Tri-Ess Email: TRIESSINFO@aol.com

Tri-Ess Telephone Helpline: 713.349-8969

Please mail this completed form and payments to:

Donna Martin
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659-7859

Donna Martin's Email Address
djmtris@aol.com

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Tri-Ess Supporting Membership Information - also complete reverse side

For privacy and security purposes, Crossdressers and their wives, and other members, may choose to use assumed names. Most Crossdressers adopt a feminine name. If you do not have a name, have fun. You might select one that is similar to your real name, 'Sam' becomes 'Samantha', 'Donald' can be 'Donna', or choose one that defines your femme personality, 'Hillary', 'Mae', 'Dolly', 'Marilyn', your first girlfriend, or favorite movie actress. You can use your true surname, or choose a modification of your last name. However, it is usually advisable and we recommend you create a completely different femme surname. The choice of your name(s) should be made thoughtfully to meet your personal security needs and preferences. Even your mailing name may be another pseudonym. For additional security and convenience, we encourage Crossdressers to use a US Post Office Box or similar commercial mail receiving service. Simply rent the box in your true name and list any others names, including your femme name and your mailing name, as authorized to receive mail.

If you have been a former member of Tri-Ess please give your membership number, if possible, state of residence at the time, and the femme name used for your previous membership

Previous Tri-Ess number _____ Name _____ State _____

___ For "Individual" Crossdressers (Wives may also join as an 'Individual')

___ Check here to have a Tri-Ess Big Sister' contact you by mail

Femme Name _____

Mailing Name _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip+4 _____

___ Check here to indicate a wife Joining as an Individual Please give the membership number of your Crossdressing partner _____

___ For "Couples" (Crossdresser and supportive spouse or female partner)

___ Check here if you wish to be contacted by the nearest Tri-Ess Chapter

Crossdresser's femme name _____

Spouse/Partner's name or other adopted name to be used _____

Mailing Name(s) _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip +4 _____

Optional: Telephone Number in case we need to contact you _____

Ask for: _____

Optional: Secure Email Address: _____

The "Friends of Tri-Ess" Supporting Membership categories below are intended for non-Crossdressers; individuals, organizations, vendors and other entities that support the educational aims and purposes of The Society.

"Commercial" Members receive discounted advertising rates and other important benefits, write for complete details.

- ___ Friend of Tri-Ess "Annual" Member minimum contribution \$ 24 per year
- ___ Friend of Tri-Ess "Commercial" Member minimum contribution \$ 48 per year *
- ___ Friend of Tri-Ess "Benefactor" minimum contribution \$100 * Please Specify \$ _____

Organization Name (If applicable) or Business Name (Commercial Members) _____

Mailing Name of Contact Person _____

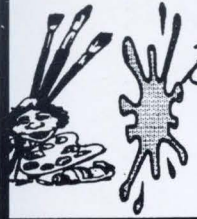
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Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip +4 _____

Bizarre Humor



By Molly Anne

CHILDHOOD MEMORYS

THIS IS THE LAST!
TIME I'LL TELL YOU!
KEEP WEARING
YOUR SISTERS
DRESSES AND
YOU WILL GO
BLIND



GEE WHIZ MOM!
CAN I WEAR
THEM TILL I
NEED GLASSES



IT'S SO MUCH FUN
TO BE A GIRL ESPECIALLY
WHEN I DO MY TWIRL!



WELL I HAD TO START
SOMEWHERE



LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I should not feel that way, you have trapped my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen; not talk or do - just listen and hear me.

Advice is cheap. Twenty-five cents will get you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same newspaper.

I can do for myself! I am not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can do for myself, you contribute to my fear and weakness; but when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, than I can quit trying to convince you and get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling and when that is clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand them.

Perhaps that is why prayer works sometimes for some people, because God is mute and he doesn't give advice or try to fix things.

He just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

So please, listen and just hear me.

If you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn and I'll listen to you.

- Anonymous