

The issue of whether a transgender support group should be allowed to remain closed, and thus exclusionary, is one which has burned in our community for many years. The proponents of universal inclusion scream, "how can we demand acceptance if we refuse to give it to ourselves?" Those who argue for isolationism demand that, "each of us must have a place in which we and our families can be at ease." "Nuts," the open door advocates shout. "Back in yours too muva!" The others respond. Then fists fly. We here in the enchanted forest which is LIFELines' home, in true elfin fashion, feel very strongly - in fact, exceedingly, urgently, pathologically - both ways. See folks, both arguments have validity. Our only wish is that the protagonists in this melodrama keep the arguments between ourselves to a minimum, so that we might get on with a unified front before the rest of this big, wide, unaccepting world. Dallas Denny, who's exploits are reported here is one of the calming voices of our community. When she speaks, as she has done before in our pages, we trust that others will listen, focus, and, at last, draw the battle lines where they belong - on the thick Washington Congressional skulls, instead of across each others' psyches.

-JHC

## "Transsexual" Challenges Tri-Ess

Dallas Denny, popularly believed to be a six year post operative transsexual woman, has sent an application to the Society for the Second Self, claiming to be a heterosexual crossdresser, and asking for full membership status. The Society ("Tri-Ess") is a "sorority" for heterosexual crossdressers. Only that limited number of transgendered individuals (and their *heterosexual* spouses), are allowed full membership status. Some chapters offer *affiliate memberships* to those who do not meet the requirements for full membership.

Denny, formerly a full member of Tri-Ess, has been an associate member of that group's Atlanta based Sigma Epsilon chapter since 1990 when she submitted her letter of resignation to Sigma Epsilon, and was told she was welcome to attend functions as a friend of the chapter.

Over the years, Denny, who has remained active with Tri-Ess, has become increasingly concerned about Tri-Ess membership requirements, which she calls exclusionary. "Not only exclusionary," she says, "but hypocritical. There are members, chapter officers, and even some members of the national Tri-Ess board, who are not heterosexual crossdressers by any common sense definition of the term. Some live full time as women, some take hormones. Yet I am identified as Tri-Ess as transsexual and denied full membership privileges. I presume it is because I've had sex reassignment surgery, but I don't recall a panty check. My genital status is my own business, and Tri-Ess'. If I say I'm a heterosexual crossdresser, then by golly, I am one. For the purpose of joining Tri-Ess, I'm a heterosexual crossdresser, and as such, I am applying for full membership privileges. If Tri-Ess denies me membership, then I'm going to insist on a clear explanation why. I don't want to hear that I don't believe in and support the mission of the organization, which is to serve heterosexual crossdressers and their partners. I do. And I don't want to hear that I'm a transsexual. Tri-Ess has no right to label me. If they want to deny my membership on the basis of my presumed genital status, then I'm going to insist on a panty check, not only for myself, but for all Tri-Ess members. And I'm going to ask why others, born male, but living a women, are allowed in, while I am not."

Denny, who founded and is director of the AEGIS, a noted clearing house for transgender issues, was also concerned by the number of Sigma Epsilon members who have approached her privately to discuss their with homosexuality and transsexualism. "Cumulatively, over five years, it was more than half of the organization," she said. "We're talking thirty or forty people. Eventually, I said, 'wait a minute. Something is not adding up here.'"

In May, Denny published an article entitled, *Heteropocrisy: The Myth of the Heterosexual Crossdresser*, in which she raised her concerns about the massive amounts of denial witness in the various Tri-Ess Chapters. That group's officials responded by asking the AEGIS Board of Directors to "counsel" with Denny for her criticism in *Heteropocrisy*, and other articles. The AEGIS Board has not yet taken action on the Tri-Ess request.

Denny received a Friends of Tri-Ess Award in 1992 at the organization's national convention. She displays the award prominently in her home office. "It's because I am a friend of Tri-Ess that I'm doing this," she said. "Supporting the organization does not require me to condone the membership policy. Let's face it: any organization which excludes homosexuals from membership can only be called homophobic; any organization which excludes transsexuals can only be called transphobic; and any which differentially enforces it's own rules is in need of reform."