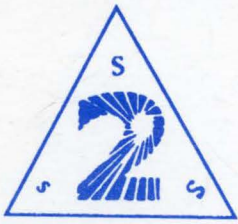


The Tri-Ess

The Femme Mirror



Femme Mirror

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The Official Publication of The Society for the Second Self, Inc.

Fall 1996

The Femme Mirror

The Femme Mirror is the quarterly journal of The Society for the Second Self, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(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**, or to Brenda Thomas, 6804 E. Highway 6 South #334, Houston, TX 77083.

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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.

- Your Mirror Staff

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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, to enrich the lives of 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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About Our Cover Girl

The Femme Mirror

by Micheline

Micheline is 44 years old, 5'11" or 1.78m tall with blue eyes and light brown hair. She lives in Quebec City. She began to dress herself in female clothing at the age of 16 and she has never stopped dressing herself a little bit more feminine day after day.

Today, Micheline considers herself a true crossdresser but she is unable to live as a woman on a daily basis. In fact, Micheline must live as a man during the day because she works as a teacher and she will not be allowed to work dressed in female clothing. So, Micheline works dressed with a three piece suit, a white shirt and a necktie.

If Micheline had the choice to do what she wished, she would go back to school with nice blouses, skirts, hose and high heels. She would wear female clothing 24 hours a day because she feels so free and so comfortable in female clothing. In fact, when she is dressed in female clothing, not only does she feel much more comfortable, but this is really the way that she likes. She really wishes to go into her classroom wearing her skirts, hose and high heels with make-up and jewels. She will certainly be one of the best dressed women in the school; this is the way she feels more comfortable.

So, when Micheline arrives at home, she often dresses herself in female clothing to live as a woman in the evening, during the weekends and on vacations. In fact, Micheline has more dresses and skirts than pants and suits, and more bras, panties and slip than briefs.

Her man side is very conservative and maybe dull, but as a woman, Micheline always has something to say and she always has a good ear for listening to everyone. Micheline is also a little bit of an exhibitionist and rather extravagant. She likes to go shopping, to dance, to watch a movie or to take a trip somewhere. Micheline is a very happy person and a good female companion.

The more Micheline is dressed in female clothing, the more comfortable she feels. She finds it more "standard" for her to live and to teach dressed as a woman than dressed as a man. Each time Micheline may dress as a woman, gives her the impression that she must live as a woman. So, not only does Micheline like to dress herself in female clothing, but she becomes a little bit more feminine day after day. Micheline is really a Shemale and she is proud of that and very happy.

Micheline has two personalities inside her body but they both are never together at the same time in the same body. When Micheline is dressed in female clothing, she is a woman; no more and no less than any woman and without any male personality. But, when she is dressed as a man, she acts as a man; no more and no less. She has no problem with her double personality and she does not intend to have one. Her two personalities may live in the same body, but they never live together at the same time. (Continued on page 6)

Executive Director's Page

by Carol Beecroft

Busy, busy, busy! There are always projects and other matters to work on. One of the projects involved working with the production manager of the Oprah Show. After about ten phone conversations with this individual, I thought that everything was nailed down for some filming of a group here in Tulare. They were to have an independent film crew to come here, but at the last minute, everything broke down.

I am not sure when you will get this issue of the Mirror, but I was told that a future program would deal with crossdressing of young children. These children and their parents will appear on the show. I hope this proposed show will materialize. I did make a suggestion concerning a topic that could be used for a future program, and the manager like what I brought out.

The September Clarion is out. (The Clarion is now a monthly periodical for Chapter Leaders.) Marlene and I finished putting it together last night and she will have it in the mail today. If you are a leader and did not receive a copy, please contact me.

There are two projects which are very important to me, and which are taking a lot of my time. One is the Library Project and the other is the Couples Groups.

It is very pleasing to not that more and more sisters are getting involved with our Library Project. As you know, we are donating a packet of four books dealing with crossdressing to various libraries throughout the country. Later on in this issue of the Mirror, you will see a graphic account of our success with the Library Project. We have had some problems.

A number of libraries do NOT return the card that we send along with Dr. Bullough's letter to the library in
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question. So I am now calling the Acquisitions Librarians to get rid of the bottleneck. In the case of the Burbank Library in Los Angeles, the Acquisitions Librarian did see the letter but never did return the postcard. After all, as I was informed, the library continually gets donations of books from various groups and cannot use many of them. I actually think this particular librarian was especially interested in our proposed donation of the book packet.

BUT, this is where I came into the picture. I called the librarian in question and had a talk with her. Initially, she wasn't too interested in our donation. Then, I asked if the library carried books dealing with homosexuality, another sensitive subject. I was told that the library does have books about the latter subject. Then I said that shouldn't her library display a balanced approach to this subject (this suggestion had been made by my local Library Director) and she quickly admitted that perhaps this was the way to go. In all cases, I make the following points:

1. Most people think we are homosexual, whereas this phenomenon is largely heterosexual in nature. Librar-

ians, so far, have been surprised at this information. I further remark that 9 out of 10 crossdressers are heterosexual.

2. I note that people have called as well as written to me, saying they have looked in their local libraries for help but found either nothing or incorrect information about crossdressing. This statement from me usually impresses the librarians that I have talked with. I point out that a library is there to provide information, and it is a shame when a person comes to a library for information but can't get help because there are no books available on the subject.

3. I tell the librarians that such books can help to save marriages when wives, particularly, can gain access to some of the books. I especially mention wives, as well as husbands, need the information to help them understand the subject.

4. I tell the librarians I have actually had professionals call me on the phone and indicate they could not find any information on the subject. I mention I have had therapists tell me they can't find any help in their library. I also mention the case of a kindergarten teacher who told me she had a little boy in her classroom who was crossdressing entirely too much there as well as in his home. The mother and the teacher were very concerned. They couldn't locate any information on the subject of crossdressing. This argument of mine seems to make a strong impression on librarians.

So we are achieving success with the program, and we don't mind putting in the time working for you on this project. All I ask is that YOU get involved in placing a book packet. There are people going into your local library each month, looking for help with the subject of crossdressing and not finding

that help! Maybe you were one of those many persons who has gone to a local library for help, but found nothing!! You can help eliminate this lack of information in your local libraries by providing a nearby library with our book packet. Please do your part and back the Tri-Ess Library Project.

The other project I am working hard with is the National Couples Group. I just received the typeset material from Brenda in Northern California. She is a big help to me! I'm ready to paste up the newsletter for Issue #3 of the Couples Newsletter. Brenda has typeset "galleys" for me, and I will hot-wax them and paste them up. I will also put in the headlines and sub-headlines. Since Brenda is moving soon, she may not be available to help me in the future, so I am looking for someone who can typeset the "galleys" for me if Brenda isn't available. Any takers?

Anyway, this project is growing rather slowly. I would like to ask all

couples if they are interested in developing a couples group in their general area to contact me.

The Couples Groups in the San Joaquin Valley as well as the Bay Area in Northern California are doing well, with frequent gatherings in homes of their members. The group in Northern New Jersey is also doing well. I have approximately 100 couples on my mailing list. I know that we have more couples, and if you would like to receive the Couples Newsletter and perhaps get involved with a Couples Group, please write me. I find that wives like the social atmosphere and also the opportunity to network with other wives. There is nobody who understands a wife more than another wife. So those who are interested in one way or another in the National Couples Group should contact me if they haven't already done so.

Lastly, we are advertising in a number of periodicals. We have to contact

The Femme Mirror many magazines just to get one or two who will allow us to place an ad concerning Tri-Ess and crossdressing. An interesting letter I received was from a reporter who related:

"I've noticed your heterosexual crossdressers ad in *Utne Reader*, as well as in the *Nation* and *Mother Jones* magazines. I am a former longtime reporter for the Tulare *Advance-Register* and now write for the Fresno *Bee*. I'm fascinated by the unexpected pairing of heterosexual crossdressers and my old home town of Tulare. I'd like to do a story about it. I would make a point of treating the topic in a nonjudgemental way. I promise." -Jim

We have also received many calls from others who have read our ads as placed by Marlene, who not only is the Director of Chapter Development but also helps me in so many ways at the Tri-Ess office.

That's it this time.

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Community

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

"Community" comes from two Latin words meaning "one" and "with." A community is a group of people who feel at one with one another because they share a common trait or interest. To preserve that sense of oneness they are willing to sacrifice private agendas for the good of the group. Within a community are people with a diversity of gifts, which they are willing to apply for the betterment of the whole community.

As yet there is no transgendered community, for transgendered people have not yet learned to value mutual support over personal agendas. That is why people gain self acceptance, but see no need to help others achieve what they have won. Genderland is aptly described in the words of Matthew Arnold: "...a plain where ignorant armies clash by night." And the night will never break until gender gifted people learn what community means.

WHAT COMMUNITY MEANS

COMMUNITY MEANS valuing "we" over "me."

COMMUNITY MEANS seeking to understand rather than to be understood.

COMMUNITY MEANS overcoming the temptation to paint my neighbor's house, even though I know I can do it better.

COMMUNITY MEANS neither speaking nor hearing evil about any gender gifted person or organization.

COMMUNITY MEANS stopping to extend a helping hand to any gender gifted person in need.

COMMUNITY MEANS grasping a helping hand and climbing out of the wallow of self-pity.

COMMUNITY MEANS pooling diverse talents to achieve common goals.

COMMUNITY MEANS accepting that my solutions may not work for everyone.

COMMUNITY MEANS unconditional acceptance and love for all gender gifted people.

- Jane Ellen Fairfax

A Few Words From Frances.....

Thanks to all of you who have sent in material for the Femme Mirror. This is your magazine, and depends upon your contributions of poetry, articles, letters, cartoons, and photographs.

Please try not to be disappointed if your story is not in this issue. Odds are that it will already be laid out for the next issue by the time you read this. If you have a particular question or concern about something you have sent in for possible

publication, please write us at:
8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104
Houston TX 77036, or e-mail at
JEFTRIS@aol.com.

We just love material sent via e-mail, or on disk. We are especially grateful to Sigma Nu Rho and Alpha Zeta Chapters, who send us their outstanding newsletters on disk each month.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Do keep those articles coming, ladies!

About Our Cover Girl

(continued from p. 3)

Micheline thinks that her manner of thinking is the main reason why she has no problem with herself. She has no conflict of personality.

She feels very comfortable with her two personalities and she is so happy.

For her, it seems normal to be a woman when she wishes to act as a woman and to be a man when she must act as a man.

When Micheline is in a restaurant, she likes it when everyone call her Miss or Mrs. She really likes it when a man opens the door for her or places her chair.

When Micheline is dressed in female clothing, she will accept invitations from men and she will conduct herself in exactly the manner that a man expects from her or from any other woman.

And when Micheline is with other girls, she will act exactly as a girl with a gang of girls, like a girl with her pals or mates. The two words "We Girls" may represent what Micheline is feeling when she is dressed in female clothing.

Last summer, Micheline had lived as a woman 24 hours a day during one full month of vacation across Canada and U.S.A. She has forgotten to bring men's clothing in her suitcases.

She has done a lot of shopping, swimming, seeing a movie, eating in a restaurant, walking on the street and some other activities as a woman.

All the friends of Micheline say that "Micheline is a very nice person," and she thinks this expression describes her very well.



Editorial Expressions

by Brenda Thomas

It seems like yesterday when Jeanette asked me to assume the duties of Editor of the Femme Mirror. Fact is, I really don't remember how many years it has been now. I first told her No! But then she explained that all I had to do was read what everyone else wrote, let Jaye do the layout work and then give it to Frances to mail off to be printed. Sounded simple: let everyone else do the work, take the credit when it was coming and blame everyone else when things went wrong. My kind of operation.

Well, then Jaye left and Jackie took over as layout designer. It was still about the same type of process, but time was becoming a factor as we approached the 70 to 80 page mark. Then Jackie departed and it sort of fell on Frances and me. Rest assured that Frances does the bulk of the work. I have been delegated to mostly doing my Editorial and "Letters to the Editor". That has been enough, along with everything else that I have been trying to do.

Well, this issue marks the end of my era. I am resigning as Editor from the Femme Mirror. It is nothing to do with anything besides:



Editor of the Femme Forum, conducting HCDA groups every Tuesday night for the last 5 1/2 years, have been on the board of Tau Chi Chapter for the last several years, plus designing and maintaining my own and Tri-Ess's Web Page (<http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/>) on the internet, and last but not least, I correspond with or interact with five Tri-Ess little sisters.

It is time for me to step down and let someone else take the reins. I have enjoyed every minute of every project. There were times when I wished I could just dump it all on someone else, but then I know that would not be a responsible thing to do. I have enjoyed meeting and hearing from all who have written.

There have been times I know that I did not always act or respond in a timely manner - NO EXCUSES - but I think I always did act or respond eventually.

I hope I continue to hear from many of you. I am not dropping out of Tri-Ess or Tau-Chi, simply stepping aside to let others step forward. I love you all...

Brenda
brenda@firstnethou.com

1. Work, since there are many more demands and obligations being placed on me and I find myself taking work home (something I never had to do before);

2. Some health problems that I need to deal with and slow down a little and eliminate some excess stress from my life, and

3. I am a little burned out. I have been assisting as Editor here, and as



Letters to the Editor

Dear Brenda,

Actually this goes to Maureen ("We Loved Lucy" - Spring 95) But I have to write this via you and "Letters to the Editor" as Maureen left an important part of her article out... her membership identification. How can I respond without it? She listed her full name, but what does that do for me? Going to the Membership Directory I find three with the name Naureen, two who do not have profiles and one that does. And I don't know which one is which.

Lucy wrote many times of "Maureen" in the several years we wrote, so I know well that Maureen does exist and does know of Lucy. Lucy and I were very close. As Maureen states in the article, many were. There wasn't anything that we couldn't share. We were very deep into sharing, and this brought about a serious problem.

I had written a very deep letter to Lucy, and covering some very deep secrets that we shared with each other. The letter was mailed before Thanksgiving, and then there was a long silence. This was rare as we exchanged letters on the average of twice a month. There were times that I would even send postage as I knew Lucy was in serious financial troubles. I had even gone so far as to pay for a year's usage of Prodigy so that we could send e-mail back and forth and so Lucy could keep up with her Packers football team.

Anyway, the letter was opened by his sister and the reply that I got, when I sent another letter inquiring as to her health, and got a nasty letter indicating that I was "sick person" and need not send further letters. The bottom line is that we never know who the mail may be opened by, so a lot of our "opening up" may be open to more than we would ever wish. Caution to those who write one another.

And please, when writing, include your membership number so we can send a reply and/or comment.

Brenda gets taken to task

Sunday, June 23, 1996

Dear Ms. Thomas:

For over three years I have been a member of Tri-Ess and an admirer of you and all the leaders of our organization for all that you do to further the cause. I, though small in comparison to your efforts, have tried to do my part in many little ways.

When I heard of and saw an excellent product to enhance our body image, made by Classic Curves of Wilmington, California, I started telling every sister about it. Not seeing her ads in any magazine, I E-mailed her at classicurv@aol.com and asked her why she did not advertise in our magazine, The Femme Mirror. Her answer greatly disturbed me.

It seems that Espy Lopez, the owner of Classic Curves, was in contact with you last year and sent to you one of her garments for inspection and expected it to be reviewed in a future issue. According to her she never heard from you.

There must have been some error or oversight, for I hear that you are a very busy person but also very reliable. In what future issue do you expect the review to appear? All sisters who do something to help our community need a helping hand.

Sincerely,
Tammie Anderson

And rightly so

Dear Tammie,

You are absolutely right! The situation was a very controllable one when it started, and for some UNKNOWN reason I procrastinated for several months, and then it got to be several more months, and at that point things became uncontrollable.

Similar to my wanting to write this note to you when I first received it, but it was late at night when I read it and I was tired so I put it off. Then, lo and behold, it has now been many more months.....

It is too late to get anything else into this current issue of the Femme Mirror. However, I promise the article, complete with photos, will all be in the next Mirror (Winter 1997).

I know this isn't what was promised, but at this point it is all I can do. I do not mind taking the heat for not doing it - it was all my doing - I do want to thank you for calling me on it. What has transpired is a lack of priorities on my part.

Brenda



What's in a Name?

by Melody Bridges

What to wear? What to wear? Decisions, decisions! Which dress...shoes...jewelry....make-up? We have all wondered about which clothes fit us best, but how many of us have wondered about which name fits us best? I think it matters a great deal to our self image and esteem.

Shakespeare said in Romeo and Juliet, "What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." It might, but how would we look at it? Suppose we called them Thornweeds. The emphasis here is now on the painful part, not the beauty. If you sent them to a significant other, would that be a sign that you want to break up instead of make up? Words paint pictures and names are words, aren't they?

How many of us really like the names that our parents picked for us? Names come and go in and out of fashion. Yesterday it was Margaret and today it's Megan. Speaking of "out of fashion", despite the fact that Christians are a minority, have you ever known anyone to name their son, Judas? That's worse than Johnny Cash's hit, "A Boy Named Sue".

Some names do lend themselves to the cruelty of other children's taunting...."Gary is a fairy,...Danny, fanny," or lewd comments about names like Peter or Dick. Have you ever been made fun of like that? What about your family name? Does it lend itself to ethnic slurs or people labeling you as belonging to a certain group? People still assume today that since my last name is "Berg" that I must be Jewish. (Actually, I'm Swedish and a Lutheran.) If you could change your name without the legal expenses, do you think you might give it some consideration?

On that same note, how many of us gave our femme names much thought? I picked Roxanne because she was a very pretty girl in my neighborhood and a Tomboy (another label). We used to

call her Rocky, and she liked that as she was very athletic.

I also always identified with Cyrano DeBergerac as I have a larger than normal nose and love poetry. The heroine in the book was named Roxanne. I thought I had picked the perfect name for my alter ego until recently. You see although Cyrano was very sensitive, he was also very self-conscious. This led to his being competitive to the point of being openly combative. Boy, could I see myself in Cyrano! I used to be one of the most brutally competitive people on the planet. "Stop the World! I want to get off!" I certainly didn't want that image I had of myself carrying over to my femme side. It was at this point that I decided it was time to paint a new picture of the me I wanted to be.

I think Thoreau said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation. They go to their graves with their music still in them." I want to sing my song while there is still breath in me. (Speaking of which, I love music and have played several instruments. You can imagine the problem I am having finding the right femme voice as I sing bass.) Music...poetry...songs...melodies...BINGO! At last,...Melody! Here was a name that expressed what I love. I could see this a being the bridge between who I am and who I want to become, a bridge between my self-image and how I want others to see me. THAT'S IT!Bridges! Melody Bridges. I can't wait for the change to show up when I renew my Tri-Ess card this fall (and there are no legal fees involved). I like myself better already and it's only been four months since I picked my new name.

Is it time you examined who you are and what your name says about you? I would love to hear how you decided upon your name. I hate snail mail so I have given Brenda permission to publish my email address for those of you with computers.

TLBerg@gnn.com

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Tri-Ess On-Line

With the growing popularity of personal computers, electronic mail and the Internet, Tri-Ess is moving ahead to establish its presence in Cyberspace. The Tri-Ess Bulletin Board in Atlanta has been joined by Kymberleigh Richards' Cross-Connection. In addition, as of press time there are seven different Tri-Ess Web Sites:

First, of course, is Brenda Thomas's Tri-Ess International Web Pages at <http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/>

Chi Chapter has another at <http://users.aol.com/chitriess/triss/chimain.htm>

The others are:

Alpha Zeta's at http://users.aol.com/jessicaphx/alpha_za.htm

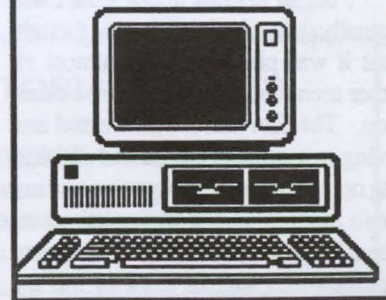
Theta Upsilon Gamma's (Las Vegas) at <http://www.intermind.net/theta/theta.html>

Alpha Pi Omega's (Nashville) at <http://members.aol.com/apotris/aponash.htm>

Phi Epsilon Mu's at <http://www.virtual-pub.com/misc/fem.htm>

Kappa Beta's at: <http://www.3dcom.com/tg/triess/kb/>

Each site has multiple pages and links to other transgender Web sites. Available for downloading is a wealth of information about crossdressing, Tri-Ess and such programs as HCDA and SPICE. (At Chi Chapter's Web site you can even read and download the entire text of the Tri-Ess information brochure!)



Fall 1996

Crossdressing and Sympathetic Magic

by Virginia Prince

All kinds of questions are raised about the behavior of crossdressing, such as what causes it, can it be "cured," what benefits does the practitioner receive and why does he do it. Many different answers have been proposed for causes, many attempts have been made by individuals and professionals to find a "cure,"—so far with no success, —and many explanations have been offered as to why people do it. This time I am not interested in any of these questions. I am, however, interested in what must underlie the behavior - its basic motivation, you might say.

Recently I went to a nite spot in L.A. called the Queen Mary, which many of you know. I went there to take a visiting crossdresser from Australia who had heard of it and wanted to meet other crossdressers. I found the noise and the smoke oppressive and retired to a small room between the bar and the impersonator stage. I left my friend to enjoy the show. I sat in there for a couple of hours while he was getting his fill just watching the various types of people go by. There was one young crossdresser with a very lithe and pretty figure. She had long hair and was wearing a very short mini skirt of gold. I watched her go back and forth and slowly realized what I was doing. I was seeing a very feminine image in a beautiful, short, gold skirt and I was reacting as most men do to the appearance of an attractive woman. Nevermind that she was probably actually a male—she didn't show any indication of it.

I began to think about what I was actually doing, which led to the thought that it was precisely what almost all other men would do in the same situation. The fact that I was dressed and living as a woman myself had no bearing on the matter. My eyes saw and my brain interpreted and my emotions reacted just as they always had. I began to realize that I had in front of me the



answer to a question that I had asked myself hundreds of times: "What is so great about women that we all try to emulate and identify with them?"

I had realized for a long time that envy was the prime factor in our desire to emulate women, but I hadn't put my finger on why that was. Why weren't we satisfied with being boys and men and doing masculine things and leaving our relations with women/ females to our sexual drives? Why should we be envious, and what were we envious of, specifically?

In trying to explain my subsequent insights to others I asked the question: "What is the first thing you do after you get in your car and close the door?" I got a lot of cutesy and irrelevant answers, but most people rather quickly came up with the statement that they put the key in the lock and turned on the ignition. That was the right answer, of course. I pointed out that although it was the burning gasoline in the cylinders that provided the energy to turn the wheels and move the car, in effect it was the spark that ignited the gasoline, that provided the energy to turn the wheels, to make the car move. So analogously, what was or is the basic motivating

force behind our envy of women that drives us to emulate them?

Then, for some reason, I began to think about primitive peoples who admire and, in effect, envy the courage of some animal or the craftiness or skill of another. They killed the animal and skinned it. Then they draped the animal's head over their own and threw the skin over their own and danced to imitate the animal. This shows that they had acquired the qualities that the animal possessed and which they envied. Or they eat the heart of the animal because that is where courage resides or the brain because that is where skill, cleverness and intelligence reside. Then there is the fact that the black rhinoceros population is rapidly declining because they are killed for their horn. The horns are more or less shaped like a large penis and protrude from the body. The Chinese admire this quality and therefore grind up the horn and consume it as an aphrodisiac. This is based on the idea that if it looks like a big or erect penis then it must have the the qualities of a big erect penis and when a man eats it he will, ipso facto, have a big penis capable of a full erection—like the horn. This idea of acquiring an admired, respected, longed for or envied quality possessed by some other animal or person is called "Magic." "Sympathy" is a feeling for or about another creature, human or animal, and identifying with it, thereby acquiring its qualities. This is a kind of magic, since it is not known how this occurs. Thus the term.

All of a sudden it came to me that that is what crossdressing is, in essence. The only thing to be cleared up is the nature of the quality possessed by women and not by men which is therefore envied, admired and desired. You all recognize it but you may not be able to verbalize it. Neither could I for a long while, but finally I came up with a term for it. It is "ATTRACTIVITY" -

defined as the ability or quality of being attractive to others.

Now, I am not referring to being sexually attractive or even to having a pretty face, but rather to more general concept which is the quality of attracting attention and interest from others. Perhaps a better definition would be to cause others to "gravitate toward" either physically or mentally. A bar magnet has a kind of attractivity for anything made of iron or nickel. Iron filings or small nails will actually move toward the magnet from a short distance away. Women have the inherent ability to be of interest and therefore are attractive to men. This has its roots in the biological sex attraction. That is all it is in animals. In humans, who have developed the ability to think and to be self aware and thus have invented gender, the sexual attractivity of animals has blossomed into a kind of general attractivity and men are attracted to women even if sexuality is out of the question.

So when we put on the visible exterior appearance of women, their "gender skin" you might say (which includes their total appearance, hair to heels, and appropriate behavior), we feel that we have acquired those same qualities she has which we don't have as men and which we therefore envy and covet for ourselves. So just like the native in the bearskin acquires by sympathetic magic those qualities of the bear that he admires, so when we wear



the female's "genderal skin" we acquire symbolically her qualities.

Now that is not to imply that we actually have her total ability or skills in this field, or that since she is sexually attractive to males this acquisition of qualities means that we are using it for the purpose of attracting other males ourselves. Unfortunately this is what the uninformed in society think is our reason for dressing. But it is the nature of males to be attracted to pretty women. So it does happen that a well put together crossdresser who really comes on as a physically attractive "girl" will get her share of wolf whistles and attempts at pick-ups just as a real female would.

The above is my current insight about why we do what we do. When dressed we take on the appearance of a woman and we feel that now we too have that elusive quality of "attractivity"- that quality that women

mal world (and in reality we do) the job of the female of any species is different from that of the male of her species. His basic job is to put his genes into as many females as possible and he makes billions of them. The female makes only a few—several hundred in a lifetime in humans—so her main concern is be selective about which males she will receive sperm from. To this end she has brain programs directing her behavior in all aspects of her reproductive activities.

All these brain programs didn't just die out when we developed (evolved) from animals to primates to humans. They are still there for us, but possibly modified somewhat during our transition from our primate ancestors to our current humanity. Thus the attraction and interaction of female with male and of male with female are basically different and are played out differently. So my term "attractivity" describes females but not males.

The Femme Mirror have and men do not and which we envy. Now, dressed as woman, we have acquired that quality to some degree, not only in actuality but in our sense of ourselves. We are now more worthy of others' interest in us as somebody it would be nice to know, to talk to, to be with, etc.

There will be those that will say that the reverse is equally true, that men have attractivity for women. The answer is, that women do have an eye for a good looking guy, but it is not the other side of the same coin. Going clear back to the animal world (and in reality we do) the job

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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, its Officers and Board Members.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The FEMME MIRROR will not publish any material that bashes any crossgendered person or support organization, nor will it publish any ad hominem argument.

Understanding Our Emotions

By Rachel Miller
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588-8

First sex.
Now feelings.
Oh my!



Opportunities for Improvement
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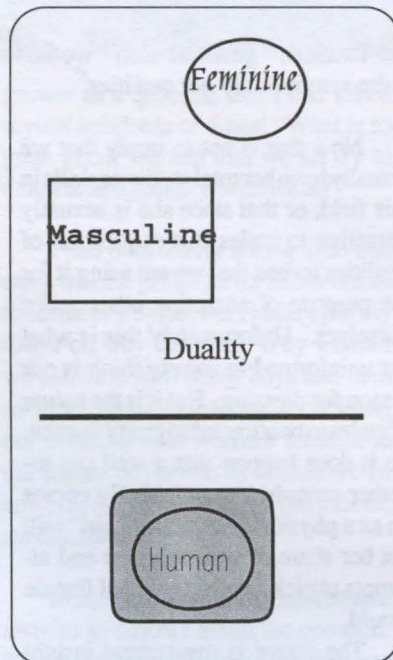
After enduring the exploration of sexuality you probably think that you're done. That's what I thought when I began my journey of self discovery. My burning question had been sexuality and with that under control I thought my task was completed. At that point that I began to realize that sex wasn't the only issue about dressing in women's clothing. I discovered that the core issue was much deeper than sex or clothes. It's about bringing all of the separate components of myself together to become a whole person.

Our letters, magazines and books often discuss the duality or polarization of our nature; the separation of feminine gender traits from the male sex. It's as though two distinct people inhabit our bodies, and we must let that 'little girl' locked inside of us get out. Many suggest that if we dress, makeup and act like women everything will be fine. I believe it is this concept of duality that gets us into trouble.

We aren't two separate people. We are one person. We become fragmented by compartmentalizing ourselves. One compartment is a man and exhibits traditional masculine traits. The other compartment strives to imitate a woman and exhibits traditional feminine traits. We learned previously that customs dictate appropriate clothing for men and women. Customs also dictate character traits. Our culture has created a firm but arbitrary link between sex and gender. That link has caused enormous problems, but it can also serve as a powerful unifying force. Our greatest

common bond is that each of us in our own way is trying to bend, shift, stretch or break that culturally enforced link between sex and gender.

We lose our common bond and diffuse our energy when we focus on alternative terminology or attach different meanings to the same words. We are actually quite close in our thinking, and it's often just words that get in the way. Terms and concepts such as androgyny, alternative gender expression, the third sex and transgendered share a common theme. They promote creating our own unique blend of traits and characteristics to become whole. All we need do is support each others right of self-expression.



This picture contrasts the separation and incompleteness inherent in the philosophy of duality with the rich fullness of becoming a whole person. It shows our masculine and feminine gender traits merging to form the person we were created to be. Striving for that joy of wholeness motivates me to make difficult changes. Be careful. That joy is highly contagious. Reading this material may cause you to become infected.

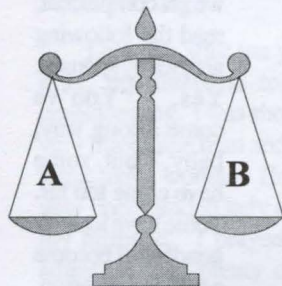
Have you ever asked yourself what it means to be a man? For all of our supposed advances in sophistication, why do key elements of the macho male syndrome remain with us? Men don't do anything that remotely suggests of femininity. That's sissy stuff, stuff for girls. We relentlessly repudiate and devalue femininity because allowing it to be part of us makes us less of a man. Our manhood is measured by power, wealth and success. Competition is our general philosophy of life. The winner is the one who dies with the most toys, and we MUST WIN! We exude an aura of daring and aggression. Show no softness or sympathy. Crush any obstacle. A real man never asks for help. He is reserved, cool, unflappable, tough, in control. He is dependable in a crisis. He never, under any circumstances, reveals his true feelings.

Sound familiar? We've all seen countless versions of that behavior model that has made emotional wrecks of men everywhere and has caused untold damage to those around us. Men suffer nearly any consequence to avoid being anything like a woman. That behavior borders on terminal stupidity.

I am a man. Society says men should be strong. I have feelings. Society says feelings reveal softness and softness is only for women. How can I be a man and have feelings? Our culture pressures me to create two separate persons. I act outwardly as a man. When I want to express my feelings, I adopt my female persona. If I don't keep them separate society shows disapproval. No wonder I've separated myself. Do I want to separate myself? No. Is it best for me? No. They say that if I show my feelings others will surely take advantage of me. So I must protect myself and never let anyone see how I feel. Isn't it strange that no matter how badly it hurts me, I still cling to that perverted macho male syndrome that lacks any semblance of balance? Why do I do that???

Integration And Balance

Society labels clothing and behavior as either masculine or feminine even though in the majority of cases they are neither. We like things to be black or white and try to make everything an either/or choice. News Flash - the world isn't black and white but an infinite variety of shades of gray. Most things are a continuous line rather than two extreme points.



A person can occupy any point and exhibit parts of A and parts of B to varying degrees. As circumstances change his balance point changes. The key is to achieve a solid balance between A and B, not to choose one or the other. **BALANCE IS THE KEY!**

Masculinity and femininity is on such a continuum. We create greater balance in our lives by integrating the dual aspects of our nature. We are part male and female, part active and passive, part dominant and submissive, part A and B. All of these parts contribute to the total and we become healthier when we stop denying or judging parts, and accept all of them. Therapists advise that striving for wholeness is the healthiest path to reaching our potential. A fundamental principle of Eastern religions and philosophies stresses oneness and balance, since the way we think, what we believe and how we act determines our health. How healthy can it be to separate ourselves into male and female compartments? How healthy can it be to only enter the female compartment secretly?

Can only women be appreciative, caring, compassionate, considerate, gentle, gracious, sensitive, soft, sympathetic? Rather than defining the

difference between men and women, these qualities should simply be considered human. Perhaps the male of the species, while wielding power and control, isn't such a healthy human after all. Maybe men should be more like women; better integrated and better balanced.

My Journey

I felt good about the results of my exploration of sexuality, and my work shifted to another difficult question, Who am I emotionally? Who is inside under the facade that I show to the world? Is my true self so hidden that even I wouldn't recognize him?

My journey began five years ago as I approached that magical age of 50. Like many men I had repressed my true feelings, but I finally began to examine them in the hope of understanding myself. As I released my carefully guarded anxieties I found that I could stop pretending to be macho. I didn't have to hide my doubts and fears. I gradually came to understand that I had feelings of softness, tenderness and compassion and that was okay. I could cry and that was okay. I could even hug another man and that was okay too. Having and expressing these feelings didn't stop me from being a man but actually made me more human. Showing these feelings was healthy and friends and family responded positively. Rather than the world collapsing around my ears, it expanded and became more fulfilling. In the past I denied these feelings because I thought someone might disapprove and ended up the loser. Now I'm finding out how we can all be winners.

I came to realize that while I am a transvestite, that term alone is too limiting to describe me. To put that part of me into the proper perspective I had to describe the complex aspects of my character. So I wrote a short piece to answer one simple but crucial question, "Who am I?"

I am a person! I am a person who has strong spiritual beliefs, who loves his

wife and is committed to his marriage. I am a person who values his family and friends. I am a person who delights in children and childlike things and knows that being a grandfather is one of the greatest experiences of life. I am a person who is sensitive, caring and compassionate. I am a person who believes in personal responsibility and is committed to working hard and doing a good job. I am a person who enjoys good food and fine wines (plus beer, pizza and ice cream). I am a person who brings humor to the workplace and elsewhere. I am a person who works at physical conditioning and enjoys long distance running. I am a person who is fond of animals, especially cats. I am a person who is discovering an appreciation of theater and the arts and who is learning to express his enjoyment of decorating, color, fabrics and textures. I am also a person who enjoys wearing clothing that society views as feminine. Most important of all, I AM A PERSON!

When I described all of those aspects of myself, it placed transvestism in a more balanced perspective. Cross dressing doesn't define who I am but it is an integral part of who I am. Have you ever tried to place transvestism into a balanced perspective in your life? Do you think you should?

Note: I produce a free bimonthly Email letter. I believe there are three levels at which we benefit from integration rather than separation, and this principle is the core of all my messages - 1. Many of us have split our lives into distinct gender compartments and we would be healthier if we became a complete person. 2. Our community exists outside of the mainstream, and we gain greater freedom to be ourselves if we are an integral part of society. 3. Individuals and organizations often act independently, and we would achieve more if we cooperated fully on joint issues.

Send an Email to RachelMill@aol.com to be placed on the mailing list.

Rachel's book, *The Bliss of Becoming One!*, is sold by IFGE and PM Publishers and bookstores (ISBN 1-56825-031-2), by credit card at 1-800-356-9315 or by check/money order for \$15.95 postpaid from Rainbow Books, Inc. P.O. Box 430, Highland City, FL 33846-0430. Phone/fax 1-941-648-4420. A free flyer is available by Email from NAIP@aol.com.

"A" Is For Abandoned

Dear Former Sisters and Brothers,

This is a farewell letter to you. Although I had hoped that Tri-Ess might help us to save what was a very lovely marriage for both of us, it was too late.

Last fall, after ten years and three kids, my husband told me of his crossdressing. I was shocked, as he is a very masculine man and does not even think like a woman. However, I am a very openminded lady and dearly love my husband. I prayed to be able to adjust. I read plenty of literature on crossdressing and really strived to be an "A" wife. Although I found most of the literature for wives to be rather condescending to women, I really tried to go along with it. I honestly tried everything I could to accomodate my husband. I even tried writing a column for his group's newsletter in an attempt to support other wives. I was told not to be so opinionated, as the "men" really want their women to be sweet and docile and didn't like to hear us complain.

My husband also hooked up with some transsexuals on the Internet who "supported" him in how to find a quack doctor to give him hormones one month after coming out, and his "friends" advocated how to lie to his wife about it. My husband had never lied to me before, and now it was fully justified by these "experts." The kids and I were at one time the love of my husband's life, and now we were only something that stood in his way. The community became his "family," and we were only obstacles that pinned him down to his responsibilities.

After spending time with several so-called transsexuals, my husband became convinced this was the route to go. Whether the gender community chooses to admit it, there is a large recruitment effort to reel others into this culture. I do not believe that all these people are true transsexuals, but they have lost their families, screwed up

their lives and need to justify their behavior, so they "support" others in doing the same. I know he is not transsexual, his therapist (who is experienced with gender issues) knows he is not, and I know deep down my husband knows he is not. There is nothing feminine about him; in fact, he still acts very much like a man. Of course, thanks to Premarin, he is impotent and is starting to look like a woman, but a real woman would not hurt so many people, especially his children. I have seen a kind, wonderful family man turn into a selfish, narcissistic male bully in a dress.

All the articles I have seen written for married crossdresser couples are always a hard sell to convince the wife to compromise. Nothing deals with the husband's refusal to compromise. As I read more and more and my husband became more and more obsessed, I began to see that, from my view, transvestism was not the benign little hobby I was led to believe it was.

I can see the trash that comes through on the Internet, and I can see this is a community of very selfish men. I really thought I could live with crossdressing, as long as it was held in a healthier perspective and my needs as a woman were also considered. I married a man and I deserve to have one. I have since changed my opinion of transgenderism. I can now see that it is not a love for women but a deep seated hatred for them.

I was led to believe that telling my kids would be a good thing. I really tried to present it in a gentle sensitive way. I see now that this was a big mistake. The real point of telling them was only so my husband would not have to be discreet anymore and could push even harder. My children have been hurt and embarrassed, and they won't bring their friends home because they do not know what Dad is going to look like. Now my kids are in therapy.

Whenever anything is mentioned regarding the husbands' overdoing things, or the kids' feeling negative, the blame is always projected back onto the wives. When I approached my husband about how he was harming the kids, he immediately retorted that it was because I was projecting a negative attitude. I honestly tried to be the sweet, accomodating wife, and do not feel that I was "projecting a negative attitude" at all. My kids, at first very accepting, are now resentful.

I tried very hard to hold my marriage together. We have had ten beautiful years together, but it has seemed as if my husband were using every ounce of his masculine aggressiveness to get "Geraldine" out even more. He deliberately tried to destroy the marriage so that he could dress more.

He is now leaving us, thanks to his buddies on the Internet. They have egged him on. They have "supported" him in destroying his marriage, and the next step, I suppose, is to help him change his name and dodge his parental responsibilities so he can "be himself."

I know this letter is bitter. Less than a year ago, we had a happy family. I tried everything I could to save it, but the community (with the exception of only a couple of wonderful crossdresser pen pals) was not very supportive. Now that the news is out, my husband is being applauded for his courage in leaving us, while his wife and kids are left to pick up the pieces.

I want out of this community. I am thankful that at least this garbage will soon be out of my home, and I can try to build a stable home for my children. Some of you refer to God. I hope you will pray for my kids. Thanks to crossdressing, they need all the prayers they can get.

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A Few Thoughts on Crossdressing

by Laurelle

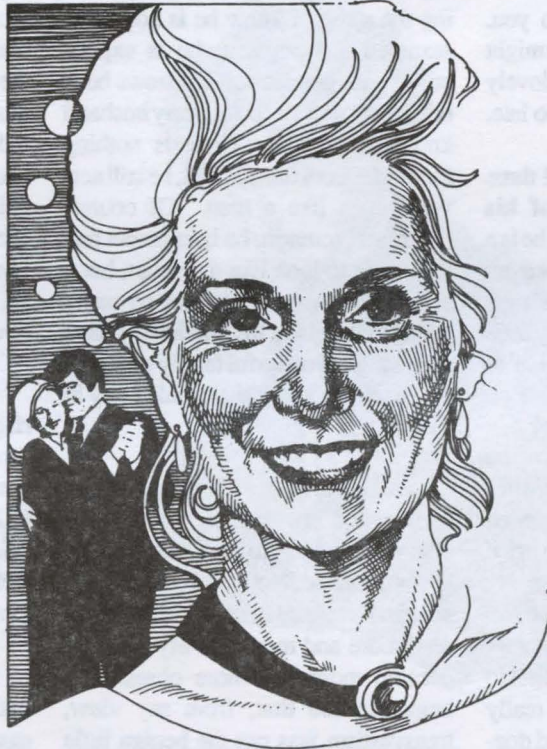
When Asked my opinion about anything, I feel a certain responsibility to investigate and analyze each situation. I want to leave no room for doubts in my mind. Also I don't ever want to leave any hurt feelings along the way. I'm a believer in a "Live and Let Live World" (as long as no one gets hurt).

I am a fifty year old woman who was married for twenty six years. The last five or six years of that marriage was spent with my crossdressing husband. We spent those years together, picking and choosing outfits, hair styling, make-up making and, last but not least, living his fantasies of being a female. I want to note

at this time that our marriage did not end due to his crossdressing. In fact, many of our closest moments and most honest conversations were during those evenings as "sisters" (so to speak). There are times that I miss those nights.

However, in my situation, being a healthy woman with sexual needs of a female, (body, mind and soul) I noticed something important began to disappear. That something was sex. Even though my husband was not gay, he seemed to be replacing his male activities with the things that females do (and none of them sexual towards me). He spent many hours before the mirror, lots of time on his make-up and wigs. His clothing had to be just so (matching and so forth). It was quite enjoyable in the beginning watching him develop, sort of like "coming of age." You know, like when an awkward adolescent becomes a young lady.

But after a while it became a bit much. It was all I could do to get atten-
Fall 1996



tion for myself other than him asking me this or that, zip me up, pull this off, etc. So needless to say I felt alone and lonely many times. I truly loved his world and felt blessed that he shared it with me, but I wanted him to share in my world also.

Now please understand, I do not think every situation ends up like mine. It was just my experience. All cases are individual. The life, or I should say, my life as a wife of a cross dresser could be a world of excitement and adventure. It could be a laugh a minute. It could add to or take away from or both. It could help to open up, create, to imagine and yes, even to believe. But for me it could also be a lonely place to dwell.

I've always believed to be a good partner one had to try hard to be many things to one another, lovers, brothers, sisters, fathers, etc. Crossdressing to me is only one form of males becoming more in touch with their feminine side. I miss the fun times we had in the

beginning when we'd search the Goodwills high and low for just the right outfit for his "sister." I miss giving him a rub down, telling him about each part of his "female body" and how lucky he was to be able to feel those feelings. It was our secret then and I liked that and will always cherish some of those beginning times.

He still crossdresses, although, he chooses not to let me see him dressed up. I usually know when he is doing his "thing." I am happy for him because I know he is in his full glory and splendor as a female. It makes me happy to know he still enjoys those special times. I also believe crossdressing has a

calming effect on him. I believe his choices for himself as far as crossdressing go have been wise and honest ones. I feel sad that he has never gone out in public as a female. we talked at great lengths about having him experience that form of freedom. We just never could get it together. I have mentioned to him the fun and freedom our "Fran" has and I continue to encourage him to venture out and enjoy his journey to it's fullest. Neither one of us were ever aware of the wide avenue out there for crossdressers.

Would I marry another crossdresser, you ask? You bet your panties I would! Only this time I'd make sure he knew who wore the pants in the family.

Happy Crossdressing to all you wonderful people out there!

Be Thankful For Your Significant Others

by Linda Williams

What would you do if you found your wife or girlfriend standing in front of a full length mirror wearing your old army uniform? Let's say she starts buying men's shoes in her size, from wing tips to hiker boots, in several colors. How about if she puts Rogaine on her upper lip in hopes of growing a mustache? Gets the name "Harley Davidson" tattooed on her upper arm? Because she doesn't wear shorts or skirts during the colder months, she lets the hair grow on her legs. In the spring she takes a weed eater to remove it! When in bad moods, she puts on one of your shirts, and magically feels better! And, if that isn't enough, when she is cooking dinner, she sings the old song by the Village People, "Macho Man!" Are these things I just described much different from what we ask our partners and spouses to accept?

On June 9 my wife Phyllis and I were married 25 years. They were not easy years, to say the least. I had my suitcase packed more than once and threatened to leave more than once, but for some reason could not bring myself to do it. It was the same old story: "I wish she could do this better or that differently." And, "if other wives do it, why can't she?" I thought, "because that's just the way it's done." And so on and so on. You get the idea. But she was there, through raising two children, through my abusing alcohol for 16 years, my being an over-the-road truck driver for 9 years, my suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder due to Vietnam, my making a major career change after almost 23 years with one company, and my steadily increasing desire to wear her clothes. Through all of this she was there.

I have heard that to be transgendered is a gift, but I believe that to have an accepting wife is an even greater gift. A word of advice to you part-time girls out there: Be thankful for your significant others. Phyllis, thank you for putting up with all my stuff over the past 25 years, and I hope you can put up with 25+ more. Over the past several months you have been the strong one, and I have pulled on your strength.

In March of this year we found out she had two malignant tumors which needed to be removed ASAP. Suddenly, the world as I knew it fell apart. I began to realize that you never know what you have until you face the reality of losing it. Today she is taking radiation treatments and chemotherapy treatments, and she has been given an 80% chance of staying in remission. By looking to a power greater than ourselves for help and guidance, we feel this gives her very good odds for a full recovery.



View From A Wife

by Teri M.

Being the wife of a crossdresser, I can relate to what you and your wife are going through now. I thought you might like to hear a wife's perspective so you may understand a little of what your own wife is going through. Though she may not agree entirely with my point of view (and who on this earth does think exactly like someone else?), I'll bet she is experiencing some of the same thoughts and feelings.

Now, before I start, I want you to know that I don't think less of you because you are a crossdresser. My own husband is a crossdresser and I happen to think he is a terrific guy! Actually, crossdressers are quite brave because they have the courage to be what they are despite society's condemnation. And crossdressers that "go public" are facing their fears head-on; how many people in this world can say the same thing? So as you read this letter, don't think that I am accusing or scolding you.

My husband didn't tell me he was a crossdresser until about three months after we married, and even then he didn't really tell me. He just said that he liked to wear women's pantyhose and shoes "occasionally." I should have figured it out myself when I came home from work and saw him with a pair of women's pumps in his hand. But even then he didn't confess; he said he bought the shoes for me. When I said I didn't wear Size 10, he only said that he "forgot my size."

I guess where much of my anger stems from goes back to when we first were engaged. Kristy made a big point of saying we should talk over "everything" before marriage so there would be no surprises that could cause problems (marriage is important to both of us) later on. Well, obviously he knew he was a crossdresser, so he purposely didn't tell me. To me that is very deceptive, and something that could definitely cause serious problems in a marriage. He should have told me!

A crossdresser really is almost like two people: the masculine side and the feminine side. Because crossdressers have a need to express this (some quite often), it is like living with two people. How would Kristy have liked it if three months after we married I had told him, "Gee, I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, but I have a guy in my life. He'll be coming over every day, morning and night, including vacations. Of course, I'll be spending money on him; you know, clothes, toiletries, etc. It will be several thousand dollars over a lifetime, but I'll try to shop sales only. He'll be a part of us for the rest of our lives together; I just can't make him go away!" Kristy wouldn't have liked it at all, but it's very similar to what crossdressers do to their wives when they don't tell them about it before marriage.

A very hard fact for wives to accept is that a crossdresser cannot and will not change, which forces the spouse to change. That is very unfair to do to someone, and puts a lot of the burden of making the marriage work on the wife.

Oh, a crossdresser can vow to give it up, and he may succeed for a while, but eventually he'll start up again. He may secretly get a locker somewhere to store his feminine clothes, and then he'll find excuses to go out. He'll find excuses (with increasing frequency) to be away from home, causing his wife to wonder what's going on; is he having an affair? Or he may travel out-of-town, where he can indulge himself. Perhaps he'll look forward to being away from home more than being home. Eventually, he'll travel more and more, which will cause rifts in the marriage.

All this will become so stressful that it is bound to cause major problems. The crossdresser, over time, will become resentful at not being able to express his feminine side at home.



Coming to Terms with Crossdressing

by Teri M.

I have finally come to terms with my husband's crossdressing. I don't particularly like it, but I have accepted it. Don't misunderstand me. I don't think, "I hate it! I hate it!" every time I see "her." "Kristy" is sort of like the neighbor next door. I don't mind her visiting, but I don't want her there all the time either.

When I first found out about it, I thought it was a passing phase, a stage. I believed this partly from ignorance of crossdressing, and partly because that's what my husband told me. I think he even believed this himself.

As time passed and I realized the truth, I was afraid. "Will he always want to do this? Is he gay? Is my marriage over?" Next I entered denial. "My husband's not a transvestite! It's a phase that will blow over soon." Several years (and several purges) later, I became angry. I thought, "Why me? How could he do this to me! I only want a normal marriage, just like everyone else!"

I didn't want to talk about it. That would only make it more real. Oh, we talked around the issue, but never really about it. By avoiding it, I wouldn't have to face it. So I refused to shop for Kristy. I wouldn't comment about her clothes (though maybe I should have. Oh, some of the things she bought!), except perhaps to make disparaging remarks and give her "the look". I guess I felt that if I did respond in an encouraging way,



Kristy would think I approved. So the avoidance continued for several more years.

Finally, there came acceptance. I'm not exactly sure when this occurred, but one day I came across an article in Ann Landers' column about an organization named Iowa Artistry. My husband seldom read Ann Landers, so he would never see this on his own. I showed him the article, and he contacted the club, which in turn led us to other clubs.

A month or so later, Kristy attended her first crossdressing meeting, and later I went along with her. What a revelation! I found that there are many wonderful couples out there, experiencing exactly what we are. To say that this helped our marriage would be a major understatement. Kristy and I were able to ask questions, all of which had been asked before, I'm sure. Since then, we have met other couples, either at club meetings or on the internet.

We had no idea there were others in our own part of the state! Now we are in the process of forming a friendship web, hoping to repay the kindness we received by helping other couples who might be going through what we did.

Looking back, the stages we went through to get here seem to parallel the stages someone goes through when they face a life-threatening (or life-altering) situation: fear, denial, anger and acceptance.

With the help of "doctors"

(crossdresser publications and meetings) who were there to talk to us and perhaps dispel many of our fears, we have gotten to a new stage of our marriage. I took a hard look at my own feelings. Was I angry with my husband for being "different," or was I really angry because I now was different; that is, I was the wife of a cross-dresser.

I realized that I hadn't changed, except to maybe be more understanding of other people, to realize that there are different people in the world. My husband hadn't really changed either; he just didn't have to hide things anymore. Our marriage is even stronger now, with many new friends. We're excited about attending the ball in Chicago, and hope to meet new friends there as well.



So that is what I mean about the burden weighing on the wife. Either she accepts it, or eventually the marriage will crumble. A wife should be the one to decide if she wants shoulder this burden, and not be thrown into it. If a wife does decide that she will try to make the marriage work, that is a giant step, but only the first of many.

A crossdresser needs to give his wife time to adjust; after all, he himself probably spent years accepting this fate. He must realize it could take his wife that many herself to fully understand and accept it. But please don't confuse "accept" with "like." While I have accepted this in my husband and understand it is something that is beyond his control (and mine), I would be ECSTATIC if tomorrow he woke up and this part of him was past. That is not to say that I won't continue to support him, but I will probably never really like it.

However, I must admit that there are good parts to this. His eye is improving on what goes together so that I can ask his opinion of whether something looks good together (although I think he is HOPELESSLY colorblind!) He is a big help around the house with household chores, probably doing more than me, and the masculine side of him is good at fixing "man" things.

I guess the only remaining thing that I worry a bit about is that Kristy is holding something back, something that I won't like. Because he never really told me everything up front, and because he writes that he hopes I will "slowly get used to" this or that, I feel he is stringing me along. He wants to shave his arms, so right now he only shaves up a little past his wrists.

The Femme Mirror
Next year will he be wanting to shave all his arms? The following year will he be wanting to shave his legs, maybe to just above the knee? I'm wondering, when I'm 40 or 50 will he spring something big on me that will be too much to bear? Will he be wanting to live out some fantasy, such as what would it be like to make love to another crossdresser? Men seem to have some fascination with two women having sex. (Crossdressers and non-crossdressers alike!) Then I will be middle-aged and facing divorce. (Unfaithfulness is unforgiveable, especially if he cheats with another man.) So my greatest advice to you is to be completely honest with your wife, because if you aren't then it could have a terrible effect on your life. I know this letter is long but I hope it is of some help.

The Case for Focused Groups

by Marilyn Frank

I was asked to speak at an open group about my experiences as a significant other to a heterosexual crossdresser.

Lynda and I have been married for 42 years. We have 3 married children and 6 grandchildren. I spoke a bit about our relationship, from when I first found out to where we are now. I spoke about the issues I had and the ones that come up at the various meetings and conventions I have attended. I also mentioned that we are members of Tri-Ess National and of a local Tri-Ess chapter.

At the conclusion of my talk, I invited the group to ask questions and have an open discussion. A clinical psychologist was present, and I invited her to either break in to the discussion at some point, or to feel free to add to what I had said at the end.

I was confronted by a very angry partner who advised me that the partners of crossdressers didn't have any

problems, but she, a partner of a transsexual, did. We debated back and forth. (I did keep my cool, and I have to admit it was difficult at times, because among her many accusations was one that I was prejudiced against transsexuals.) However, when the discussion ended, I did sit with her and explained the needs of the different groups. It is not that people are prejudiced, but that people in specialized groups better understand the needs of each other. I thought I had made a break-through, but when the members did not agree with her, she became extremely disruptive and went home.

The group was apologetic to me for the disruption. I was feeling badly, and over the next several days Lynda and I discussed this pretty thoroughly. This meeting confirmed my feelings that the crossdressers' and the transsexuals' partners should not be in the same organizations, because their concerns are different. I also observed in this group that the people were not

honest about their feelings. There should have been more questions and concerns discussed. It appeared they were interested in not hurting each other's feelings.

I do believe Tri-Ess needs to move forward into the 21st century, but at what cost?

(Ed. Note: Marilyn's experience does indeed point out the necessity of specialized groups. Transsexuals and their spouses have circumstances and needs which are distinct from those of heterosexual crossdressers and their spouses. The needs of each can best be met in their own focused groups. The Tri-Ess focus works! To "move forward into the 21st century" does not mean abandoning the principles by which Tri-Ess has served so many crossdressers and their loved ones.)

From the Other Side

(A Wife's Point of View)

by Rosie

I was encouraged (Cindy did some arm twisting) to write an article from the "significant other" point of view. I've procrastinated, not because I didn't want to write it, but because of the many choices of subjects I have to choose from.

I was told about "Jessica" on my birthday. After 27 years of marriage and having moved from my childhood home state to Arizona in October with no support system here, I spent the next few days in shock. It was the Christmas season and I knew of no doctors in town, much less, their qualifications, and I needed to talk to someone. I went to two psychologists before I found a wonderful woman that I clicked with. All I told her was, that I wanted to try and save my marriage. She suggested I keep a diary as a way to sort out my feelings. I will now share a page from it dated January, 1996.

"It has been three weeks since my husband told me he was a cross dresser. It is not getting any easier dealing with it. Today I feel trapped and tricked. We moved to Arizona for a fresh start and I left my family and friends. I'm angry I wasn't told about "the big secret" before we moved.

"My husband works at home now, something I'm not used to, so I'm never alone to sort out my feelings. Today I

applied for a job that I didn't even want just to see if getting out of the house would help. I told my husband took the job so we could get a swimming pool, but do I want to make plans for a future with him if I can't deal with his cross dressing?

"I jumped in right away. Looked at and washed his/her clothes, helped him pick out a wig, clothes, but now I'm not sure I did the right thing. I love him and he's my best friend. But how do I cope with this? He's traveling right now and all his femme clothes are with him, in a way it makes me sick in another I feel very sorry for him.

"He shaved all his body hair off; his mustache is gone. I loved his mustache and it hurts that he didn't even tell me he was going to do it. I'm very angry that we didn't deal with this in Wisconsin, and then start fresh. I'm so confused, hurt, angry. It wasn't fair of him to wait until now to tell me. I was so happy in Arizona until he told me. Why on my birthday? Why before Christmas? Why now? What now? A marriage of convenience? Separate the cross dressing as if it doesn't have anything to do with our lives? Divorce, separation, separate bedrooms? I'm very mixed up about what to do."

(reprinted from The Cactus Flower, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter)



SPICE 96 - A Gold Medal Winner

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

What a dramatic moment! The neck bowed to receive the golden award for being the swiftest, the strongest, the most elegant. The eyes glistening with joyous tears as the stirring strains of the National Anthem resound through the night. Such is the thrill of triumph. Such is the ecstasy of SPICE 96, truly a gold medal effort.

Winning the gold is never easy. You have to put together an artistic, effective program, and that's just what Peggy Rudd and her SPICE 96 Planning Board did. To achieve a smooth mount, they selected as their site the Wilmington, Delaware Hilton, in a state where there is no sales tax. Right across from excellent shopping, this elegant hotel was ideally situated. Judges look at elements of the program, but Peggy and her staff gave them such notables as Carol Cobb-Nettleton, Neila Miller, and Patti Klein. No one-tenth deduction there!

SPICE 96 was performed to the theme of "Unconditional Love." Participants themselves produced harmonizing ideas. "SPICE is about couples," came through loud and clear. Both wives and husbands must communicate, negotiate, and empathize to build and strengthen their relationships. Marriage is about we, not me. "Negotiation," proposed Peter, "must be a matter of the heart." The interplay of these basic themes got a perfect 10 for clarity.

An event should flow smoothly so that the senses never become exhausted by the intensity. This consideration is of paramount importance to SPICE, where long hours of in-depth seminars can tire the brain. At SPICE couples train hard at their relationship-building skills. But the leadership was up to the challenge, providing fun and relaxing activities. The Philadelphia Harbor Cruise got everyone into the mood with great food and hot music, plus time for conversation while the scenery rolled past. Thursday featured intense sessions on relationship-building and



children's issues. Flow was smooth, with husbands and wives taking synchronized seminars. Breaking up the intensity were no-holds-barred question-and-answer sessions. A panel of wives answered questions from husbands, and vice-versa. In this way each could come to understand the other's issues.

Friday saw husbands and wives considering the tense topic of bedroom issues. That afternoon, however, participants took off on a tour of historic Philadelphia, a wine country tour, a shopping trip, or an excursion to the Atlantic City casinos. (Talk about risk-taking!) Those who wished to remain at the hotel could attend professional-led small-group sessions. And at the end of each day, we were treated to the manifold musical talents of singer-composer Jim Richards of Vancouver, Canada. "This is the best convention I've ever been to in the gender community!" rejoiced one connoisseur of events!

When the audience gets into the act, you can usually predict a medal-worthy performance. Saturday afternoon featured a session on "What You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid To Ask." Nothing daunted, participants plied the panelists with questions about children, religion, jobs, psychological profiles of husbands and

wives, life stories and a host of other topics. After an hour and twenty minutes we had to call a halt because of time. Even our dignified presenters caught the enthusiasm. One of my fondest memories of SPICE 96 will always be that of Neila Miller leading us in a rousing rendition of "Getting To Know You." Just for a moment I thought I could hear the wheels turning in Jim Richards' head, "Now what can I do to top that!?"

As in any program, there were some nervous moments. Bedroom issues in particular can be a touchy topic. As I listened to Patti Klein's session with the men, I could easily see how a misstep could throw the whole program off the beam. So when Patti went next door to present her program to the women, I nervously kept an ear cocked for signs of distress. Instead, after a little while I heard, of all things, laughter. Then it came again - and soon again. Ah, a clean program! Everybody was fine!

Perhaps the most important element of any program is the dismount, for it is the last glance the judges have of you. An inelegant landing can ruin the most artistic choreography and negate months of training. But Peggy and her staff were not to be denied. In the "Where Do We Go From Here?" ending, the men discussed building SPICE by writing articles and building an interactive presence on the Internet. Everyone shared some little nugget of wisdom he would share with his wife to enrich his marriage. Expanding on the SPICE vision, Peggy recruited a SPICE 97 Planning Committee to bring new workers aboard, and appointed two accomplished wives to be ambassadors to GenderPAC and the Congress of Transgender Organizations. Landing? She stuck it! 9.9 and a Gold Medal!

Now, if someone will just compose a SPICE anthem!

SPICE '96

by Desiree' Liegh

I have only been aware of the gender gifted community for about three years. When I learned that SPICE (Spouses and Partners International Conference on Education) was going to have their meeting in July this year, I wanted to go so that I could learn more about the gender gifted, their spouses and their significant others.

I arrived early so that I would have plenty of time to meet others as they arrived and be rested for the harbor cruise on Wednesday night. Unfortunately, I became ill during the cruise and spent most of my energy trying to "...make it through the night." At about 3AM I couldn't stand it any longer and went to the hospital. The doctors couldn't determine exactly what was the matter so they sent me back to the hotel with a handful of reports to take to my own doctor at home. Unfortunately this little excursion caused me to miss the opening of the convention.

The morning sessions, which I unfortunately missed, contained discussions on the following topics or issues: Nature of Crossdressing; Concerns About the Children; Boundaries and Conflict Resolution; Relationship Building; Gender Differences and Communication: Sex, Gender, and Bedroom Issues.

I was able to make the afternoon sessions and the next three days of meetings. Some of the sessions were titled: Ask Your Doctor, Minister, Psychotherapist, and Friend; Secrets, Honesty and Risks; Speaking from the Heart; What You Always Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask; and closed with Where Do We Go From Here? These sessions were led by professionals in the various fields of the human and transgender community.

I was impressed with the women who attended, their openness, and their

friendliness. There were meetings for women only, for men only and for men and women together. The luncheons were segregated by sex also so that the participants would feel free to converse informally about the morning's subjects. Dinners were for everyone.

The heart of all of this was the communication between the women at the conference. All of us have a story to tell and all of the stories are different. Yet the stories are of the same subject. Living, loving and working in a relationship with a crossdresser. We talked with each other and in the sessions searching for answers and understanding. We built friendships that will last a very long time. We walk on a common ground.

One of the special features was the opportunity to meet and discuss anything with anyone in the hospitality room. I was there most evenings until midnight. I was able to talk to many learned and interesting people and expand on the subjects that may have been discussed during the days' sessions. This was also the time to get acquainted with individual women and men of the conference.

There were also social activities. We had a choice of visiting the Liberty Bell and historic Philadelphia, a trip to Atlantic City, or a drive through the countryside to see gardens and museums. Each evening after dinner there was a speaker and entertainment.

I heartily recommend the SPICE Conference to any wife or significant other of a gender gifted male. They will be able to learn about both themselves and their mates, and their relationship.

The 1997 SPICE Conference will be held in Ontario, CA July 16-20, 1997. Contact Peggy Rudd Voice Mail or Fax 713-347-8747

Partners' Corner

by Jeanette

Alycia and I went to S.P.I.C.E. together as a heterosexual, non-crossdressed couple in July. Held in Delaware this year, the spouses' and Partners' International Conference for Education is a delightful three day conference devoted to exploring couple dynamics in a safe and comfortable setting. All sessions were held simultaneously, with men and women exploring the same topics in different rooms, leaving each group to focus on their own needs. Most participants were couples, although many women can alone to deal with their own issues around crossdressing. The programs were professionally done with demonstrated sensitivity, without probing or pushing anyone to disclose anything.

It was wonderful to sit in a room and over a period of days gain an understanding of other women's reactions to dealing with their feelings as they deal with crossdressing. I felt validated to hear that I was not alone in some of my reactions, and enlightened as to learning new ways to cope. We all have so many commonalities, as we wander through genderland with the one we love, and sharing does make the journey easier.

This event provides an opportunity to focus on each person's needs, not just crossdressing behavior. However, we did have sessions with a representative group of male crossdresser leaders, provided only for our opportunity to ask questions about things that perhaps we might not have been able to ask our partners. The men simultaneously had the opportunity to ask questions of the female group leaders.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience, one to seriously consider. Join us next summer in California. We'll be there!

S.P.I.C.E. 1996

by Dr. Peggy Rudd,
Director of S.P.I.C.E.

Life is such a pleasant blend of planning for the future, and looking back to fond memories. During recent days this is exactly what I have been doing. Even as I project forward to S.P.I.C.E., 1997, there are lingering thoughts about this year's conference, a year in which a new attendance record was set and many lives were changed for the better.

We arrived in the very early hours of Wednesday, July 24, 1996, after the 2:00 AM arrival of our flight, and heavy road construction between Baltimore and Wilmington. Mel and I always book the lowest possible air fare, and in this case it was a "friends fly free" ticket on Southwest Airlines. After a few hours of sleep we opened registration in the Hospitality Suite. Later, at 4:00 P.M. the Welcome Reception officially began, but it seemed that the reception had actually been going on all day, as our friends arrived, shared warm greetings and hugs, and lingered there all afternoon.

Members of the local organizations were on hand to transport us to the Philadelphia harbor for the Dinner Cruise following the reception. The cruise was a delightful way to combine the beauty of the Philadelphia skyline, good food, entertainment, and fellowship with dear friends.

Among those present was Dr. Pornthip Chalungsooth, Clinical Psychologist and Counselor. A native of Thailand, "P.C." was available daily for individual, couple, and small group counseling throughout the conference. Having an in-house counselor was a new feature for S.P.I.C.E. and it proved to be helpful for many couples. In a questionnaire distributed following the conference, almost all participants indicated they wanted to continue having a counselor as a part of S.P.I.C.E. Also on board were two couples from Canada, who added a nice touch to the international flavor of our group.

We got off to an early start on Thursday morning with men meeting in Dover West, lobby level, and women just next door in the Dover East. The men received a warm welcome from Mel Rudd, followed by the CIRCLE OF FRIENDS. Meanwhile I extended the greetings to the women and Betsi Renya led our CIRCLE OF FRIENDS. Both programs were designed to encourage bonding, friendship, and harmony among those present. The sessions added clarity to the following questions: "Do we know what causes crossdressing?" "Is there any chance for a cure?" "What can a couple do to integrate crossdressing into a meaningful relationship?" Participants learned more about the phenomenon of crossdressing and how it has affected people's lives, both positively and negatively.

At 9:30 A.M., Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton and Dr. Gil Fairfax enlightened the men regarding their CONCERNS ABOUT THE CHILDREN. This program presented both the pros and the cons for involving children. Meanwhile some men chose to meet with Dr. Pornthip Chalungsooth in a session designed toward RELATIONSHIP BUILDING. Participants were seeking answers to the basic question, "Is it possible to integrate crossdressing and a love relationship?" This seminar focused upon some of the traditional relationship skills which can be applied by transgendered couples.

Meanwhile the women met with me for BOUNDARIES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION. Some wives and partners felt the image of the original relationship was lost. Some believed the "flirting with danger" or risk-taking behavior infringes upon their security and privacy. Spending too much money for the femme side was considered a violation of financial boundaries. We all agreed that conflict occurs in

transgendered relationships when individuals feel their boundaries have been violated. A model was introduced which can be used to resolve such conflict. Participants were actively involved and learned new skills which can be applied to their own relationships.

Each day at mid morning and each afternoon there was a 30 minute BREAK. This became an excellent opportunity to re-think the information which had been presented, and share ideas with friends.

After the break I joined the men's group to present the BOUNDARIES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION program. The men agreed that conflict occurs in transgendered relationships when individuals feel their boundaries have been violated, but took the idea one step further by asking a profound question: "What can you do when resolution seems hopeless?" Using the same model presented to the women, the participants became actively involved in conflict resolution through role playing and dialog. When the session ended, they each felt they had new skills to apply to their own relationships. This program answered the question, "How do we come to a workable compromise on those things which bother us most?" Mutuality was presented as the antidote for excessive boundary violations. All agreed that win/win is far better than win/lose.

As the conference progressed it became evident that couples liked the idea of hearing the same presenters and the same programs as their partners. This became the entry to better dialog. It was interesting to watch the interface between couples and within individuals.

Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton and Mary Fairfax helped women address their CONCERNS ABOUT THE CHIL-

DREN, and guided them as they answered such questions as, "To what degree should children be involved in crossdressing?" This program presented two different views which were intended to be the guide for parents toward the decisions of if, when, and how to tell the children.

Dr. Chalungsooth offered an alternative program for women who do not plan to have children. Journal articles previously written by Dr. Chalungsooth served as the basis for the session, and participants were encouraged to apply her presentation to their relationships.

Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton presented a program titled, **ENHANCING YOUR MASCULINITY** to the men, pointing out that sometimes masculinity is lost in the quest for femininity. Crossdressers who find the integration of the two sides of the personality are truly gender gifted, but crossdressers must become more aware of what has been called "the fear of abandonment" felt by many women in transgendered relationships. There may be a fear that masculine qualities will be lost, or women may fear the worst case scenario; the loss of her husband completely in sex change surgery. Finding the gender gift and developing self-esteem are possible within the context of transgendered relationships, but each person must be sensitive to the needs of his partner.

During the parallel program for women, Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton encouraged women to begin **ENHANCING THEIR FEMININITY**. This process involved asking some specific questions: "Is being married to a crossdresser a threat to a woman's own femininity and confidence?" "How does a genetic female feel good about herself when her partner spends more time in front of the mirror than she does?" This program was designed to help women gain self-confidence and pride in their own femininity. Participants came away



with a rekindled self-esteem and pride in being women.

Dr. Gil Fairfax, Gary Helms, Mel Rudd, and Al Laing served as panel members for a program titled, **ASK YOUR DOCTOR, MINISTER, PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND FRIEND**. This was an opportunity to get specific information from experts in the field. "What is the danger or benefit of hormones?" "Is crossdressing morally wrong?" "Are crossdressers mentally ill?" "What resources and services are available?" "What are the theories about the cause, treatment, and cure?" Participants brought their questions, and this panel guided them toward answers. It was especially enlightening for women to hear the ideas from crossdressers trained in these special areas of concern.

At the end of each day, I led the women in a program designed to gain closure. Gil Fairfax led the men in a similar program. This was the time participants in both groups began to rethink the programs of the day. "How does all of this fit together?" "How do the programs apply to our lives?" "What do we need to add to our discussions in future sessions to make the content more meaningful?" The closure concluded with a feeling check.

The Femme Mirror

Following the formal sessions there were some optional programs. Al Laing of IFGE was on hand to answer questions about the International Foundation for Gender Education. Al is especially interested in finding ways IFGE can serve those in attendance. Niela Miller was available in the adjacent conference room to help men and women interpret their dreams. This was also the time for social activities, including a visit to the book store and information services adjoining the Hospitality Suite. Participants could play volleyball or basketball, take bridge lessons from Gil, lounge by the pool, work out in the health club, or meet their friends for Happy Hour

in the Whispers Lounge, where some were sure to ask for the S.P.I.C.E. daily drink special.

Men and women met together at 7:00 P.M. for dinner. We were inspired by speakers such as Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton, Patricia Klein and Niela Miller. Each evening featured entertainment by Jim Richards of Vancouver. We called him the "I" in S.P.I.C.E., since the "I" stands for international. After dinner each evening we served drinks and refreshments in the Hospitality Suite. One evening Al Laing treated the group to a very nice wine tasting party, with a prize for the most knowledgeable guest.

Patricia Klein presented valuable information about **SEX, GENDER AND BEDROOM ISSUES**. She covered such questions as, "What is the difference between sex and gender?" "Is it asking too much of a wife or partner to bring crossdressing into the bedroom?" "What can a transgendered male do when his primary arousal is related to feminine clothing?" "Is a woman who shares her bed with a man fully dressed in women's clothing a lesbian?" "How can a man handle his partner's discomfort?" "How do you help a wife who feels threatened by 'the other woman' who is also her husband?" "How do couples find fulfill-

The Femme Mirror

ment when one is passive and the other is aggressive in bed?" "What are the different sensual orientations?" This session was not about the reproductive system, but addressed the mental and emotional aspects of human sexuality, including the following questions: "What is the role of the tactile, visual, and olfactory stimuli?" "What is the difference between the sensual and the sexual?" "Is it an insurmountable obstacle when what works for him just doesn't work for her?"

I did a similar program related to GENDER DIFFERENCES AND COMMUNICATION, which answered such questions as, "What are the basic differences between how men and women think?" "How do these differences affect communication?" "What are the roadblocks to effective communication?"

After lunch on Friday the group had a much needed break. Al Laing took a group for a drive through the countryside, Evelyn and Jim Kirkland took their group to visit the Liberty Bell and historic Philadelphia, Mel Rudd headed for Atlantic City with those who wanted to see where Miss America is crowned, visit the Board Walk, or make a contribution to Donald Trump. Others decided to stay behind for small group activities with their leaders, Patricia Klein, Niela Miller, and Gary Helms.

By Saturday the participants had begun to feel they had known each other forever. There was wonderful bonding and growth. This was also the day in which Patricia Klein presented her program on SECRETS HONESTY AND RISKS, asking such questions as, "How can a couple learn to 'manage the big secret' and stay honest?" "What risks are involved?" "When is it necessary to tell neighbors and friends?" "What if the secret is discovered?" "How do we communicate our need for a secure environment?"

Niela Miller opened up a good dialog with her program, SPEAKING FROM THE HEART. This session was designed to have each participant look into their hearts and view what they find there with total honesty. Ide-

ally each person explored their true feelings. Niela also led the group in creative movement and expression.

Diana Sexton, facilitator, Evelyn Kirkland, Frances Fairfax, and Mary Jane McCue attempted to address WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK. This panel of women answered the men's questions candidly, and the men brought their questions and fired away! The answers surprised many. Meanwhile Dr. Gil Fairfax, facilitator, Mel Rudd and Jim Kirkland presented WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK to the women.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? This profound question was answered by Al Laing, facilitator, Gary Helms, and Jim Kirkland for the men. I helped the women answer the same question.

In both of these sessions participants regarded the question, "Where do we go from here?" as the fourth and last question in a series of questions we had applied to the process of resolution during the entire conference:

1. What's going on? Tri - Ess, Renaissance, and IFGE provided good answers here.
2. Who is in charge? Have we analyzed our boundaries and learned the skill of negotiation ?
3. What does your partner want?

What do you want? Answering these questions requires knowledge of both yourself and your partner. Have we found workable, compromise plans?

4. Where do we go from here?

Participants were encouraged to set priorities in their thinking and working. Crossdressing was presented in the simplest possible terms rather than a complication of the relationship. Participants learned to use the issue of crossdressing as a lens to find the REAL problems they face. The challenge presented was to delineate them, and negotiate solutions for them. Participants were guided toward the self-awareness and self-confidence needed if we are to take these skills home where they will be applied to our lives.

This was followed by an official invitation from the California delegation to attend S.P.I.C.E. 1997 at Ontario, California, July 16-20.

On Sunday, the group met for worship with the Rev. Gary Helm. As the worship ended we started to say, Goodbye to our friends. As one person gave me a hug, she wiped a tear from her eyes and said, "The only bad thing about this conference is that it had to end, but this is my promise, I'll be with you in Ontario."

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**"GETTING TO KNOW YOU"
YOUR SELF
YOUR SPOUSE
YOUR FRIENDS**

Relationships

by Dr. Alycia Ellison, Ph.D., M.P.H., C.H.T.

A relationship that sustains the magic of love is one in which we try not to change the other nor deny ourselves. Through understanding our complementary differences we release the tendency to mold our partner into our own image. We are also able to accept and appreciate our own uniqueness without judgement or shame.

A relationship blossoms and attraction is sustained with we can both support our partners in being themselves and receive support for being ourselves. We must learn how to give support according to our partners' needs; and we must also learn how to receive support without giving up who we are. Learning to appreciate and respect our differences is essential if we are to have a mutually supportive relationship. It is this love that supports us through the inevitable periods of resistance, resentment and rejection.

This should be the keynote for all couples who strive for togetherness, for without faith and trust, how can one hope to succeed? In most beginning relationships, which in the American tradition is based upon deception, who in their right mind would accept our real self? I look at myself in the mirror first thing in the morning, and almost let out a muffled scream! "The individual I am with would be horrified!" I exclaim. The other always appears well polished and groomed... thus it goes. However, when one marries, all these pretensions go by the board and we stand forth, blemishes and all, our feelings no longer hidden.

Perhaps nowhere in human relationships is there more potential distress and stress than there is in a marriage. At the top of the list is the failure to communicate. This failure runs the gamut of issues regarding money, sex, and fidelity, for it involves trust, faith, and honor. Any breakdown, any de-



ception, call attention to this code of honor. It is of no wonder that the crossdresser who maintains a lid of secrecy on his behavior is on the road to disaster and the divorce court. For 25 years I ran into this battle and lost. Although my wife knew and initially helped, I never confided in her or "exposed" myself to her until it was too late.

For all relationships that are in trouble, they all have one thing in common. It doesn't matter what the disagreement is about or who you are. No matter how heated your argument or icy your silence; the single common thread that runs through a troubled relationship is the unshakable belief that - I am right - and you are wrong. After all, I am superior...

This is where equality and communication enters the relationship, for would you be suspicious or afraid of someone who is just as vulnerable as you? Would you be critical and angry at your partner if you knew that your partner was just as weak and helpless as you feel? What if

your mate accepted all your feelings and unacceptable parts that you thought you kept hidden, as well as you accepting all her faults and blemishes? It is this ability to communicate your fears and your failings, that results in a relationship that now is built on trust and love and a level of honesty that rises above petty hurts and anguishes in order to achieve that connection called intimacy. True intimacy involves mutuality, for it means being intimately together and intimately apart.

People enter marriage full of romantic images, expectations and dreams. Girls grow up with the idea of a hope chest and a knight in shining armor, ready and willing to sweep her off her feet and then - the "charade" ends when the knot is tied and reality sets in. The reality of marriage is a constant struggle, resulting in the "great compromise" - a struggle to confront reality when it conflicts with your hopes and dreams. What! A man - My Husband - wearing a dress? Never! What will my family think? the neighbors? our friends? It is a struggle to work through these difficult moments, and together achieve a balance of happiness in spite of the price. What makes it work is the two involved people (partners) deciding the shared life is worth the struggle of their uniquely shared lifestyle and different values, dreams and aspirations.

To my mind, there is no easy way, no automated formula for marriage and human relationship. In fact, if you evaluates the mathematics of the human equation, there are infinitely more chances of error than success. Yet for those who find the key, it is a rewarding struggle and highly positive experience. In fact, it is a wonderful journey to struggle and reap the rewards, which are richer than anyone could imagine.

Transgender Churchgoing

by Joan Ann

Can transgendered sisters feel welcome at Christian Sunday services? It seems such a gamble that I have usually attended a church service en femme only when I wanted or needed to, and felt I wouldn't otherwise get there. The first occasion must have been at Fantasia Fair in '88. It was my busy "coming out" year after half a century of closeted crossdressing through career, marriage and family into retirement as a widower with an empty nest. I'd attended the Be All You Can Be gathering in Detroit a few months earlier and had regretted only not managing to get to Sunday worship in order to offer some thanks for all the friendships, education, and activities it provided.

Before Fan/Fair a few months later, I wrote ahead to the only Catholic parish in Provincetown to ask if anyone might be scandalized to find a crossdresser at early Mass. The answer, penned on my query, came back: "You wouldn't be the only one there." So I went, first carefully dressing my best, then trying to arrive a bit late so as to slip unobserved into a rear pew.

All went well, and I wasn't the only transgender type attending. There was a group of others in a front pew. Then I went on the MCC service and church basement breakfast with some dozens of other Fan/Fair participants. On that and other occasions, though, I have always held back and tried to manage inconspicuously in a rear pew, worried about confrontational exposure. The only time I shared a pew with a sister over the next seven years was when I was leaving the hotel at Holiday En Femme '90. I met a churchgoing Arizona sister who needed directions and transportation. I could provide both, and it became a much pleasanter experience when shared.

Now Tau Lambda, a recently chartered Tallahassee chapter of Tri-Ess

has begun to make en femme churchgoing a regularly shared experience. Early this year the chapter representatives made arrangements for the group to hold its monthly meetings on a Saturday night at a United Church whose members invited us to also attend their Sunday worship service. For the first two Sundays, two Tau Lambda Chapter (TLC) sisters attended together and found a warm welcome on arrival, during, and after the service. Last meeting a third sister joined them, with continued encouraging results.

Even more important perhaps was the new ground broken by another TLC sister who influenced her organizing Quaker Assembly to include the transgendered in a statement welcoming all races, colors, creeds, sexes, sexual orientations, etc.

If you stopped going to church years ago to avoid a crossdressed confrontation, it may be time to reassess the situation. A welcome can be found. Several of Sigma Epsilon Chapter's Tri-Ess sisters have individually ap-

proach pastors or rectors and found a welcome at Catholic, Episcopal and MCC churches in the Atlanta area, even becoming active in church work. Their chapter organizer met, en femme, with the board members at an area Unitarian church in 1987 to win approval for initial meetings there. Years ago an Ohio sister, who led an important parish activity, revealed herself as transgendered and continued to serve in the same capacity through sexual reassignment surgery and beyond. With continued individual and group effort we might look hopefully forward to being a recognized and welcome part of gathering rites in ever increasing numbers of Christian communities.

Other readers probably have comparable and even more positive experiences to add that might advance the ideal of widening open participation at religious gathering rites by transgendered sisters throughout the country. It would be encouraging to read about them.

(Reprinted from Grace & Lace newsletter.)



So Why Do We Crossdress?

by Virginia Prince

So why do we crossdress? The question may seem trivial, but I don't think it is.

Let's use you, the reader of this piece, as the guinea pig. I will ask you the question. What will you answer? Well, first off you are likely to say, "Well, it's fun!" But then comes my reply, "What do you mean by 'fun'?" That word is used to describe everything from a child sliding down a slide because it is "fun," to having intercourse, sky diving, or skiing downhill at 60 or 70 miles an hour. So what does fun mean, and what do you mean by it when you apply it to crossdressing? There are so many ways of having "fun," and many of them involve taking some risks. Of course there is always the risk of your being discovered crossdressed by your wife, parents, children, the boss or the police, but you don't do it just because of the thrill of the risk, do you? So why?

"Because I feel so relaxed when I am dressed." I am sure you do! So do I and so do most other crossdressers. But why should putting on panties, heels, a wig, lipstick, etc. relax you? I mentioned the risk inherent in the behavior. Risk usually causes anxiety, and that is not very conducive to relaxation. So again, WHY?

"Well, I feel like a different person when I am 'en femme.'" No doubt, since you have changed the visible manifestations of masculinity for those of femininity, and feminine people are quite different from masculine people. But this response brings up the interesting question of "Do you feel different because you have escaped from masculinity for the time being, or because you have entered the different world of femininity?"

But that is a subordinate question. I am still after the real answer to the

"Why do you do it?" Maybe it would clarify your thinking and push you to a more basic level of inquiry if I asked the question in a somewhat different way:

"What is there about women that makes imitating or emulating them a worth while thing to do?" Note that I am talking gender here and not sex. I said "woman," not "female." Or putting it still a different way, apart from anatomy and physiology, what have women got that men haven't got?

I wish you were here so you could give me your answer, because I contend that this is a deep question that you ought to give some serious thought to. There are only five areas that humans operate in: anatomy, physiology, psychology, sociology and religion. However, the first two were put aside in the previous paragraph and the fifth, religion, really isn't involved in this kind of question. So that leaves psychology and sociology, and for the question at hand we need both because I believe it is a psycho-social matter. How you see and interpret the actions, attitudes and appearance of other people is clearly a matter of your personal psychology. But those other people are part of society and the customs, mores, expectations and laws of their society obviously affect you and the presentations that you make.

So that little excursion has, I hope, tended to focus your consideration of the question a bit more narrowly, and it also requires a brief consideration of the social position of men and women. Not their rank, wealth, influence or social position but their position relative to each other. Biologically, males mate with females, help provision them and the young and protect both. Females on the other hand bear, feed, protect and teach (by example) the young and make a home for both the male and the young. This leads to a series of customs, tradi-

tions and expectations governing the lives of each.

Since the biological roles are different the life styles necessary to sustain those roles are also different. Now we are getting somewhat closer to the answer. Because it is now clear that there are several things that women have that men do not. I am not interested for the purposes of the present inquiry in most of those differences, but I do think that one of them is the essential answer to our question.

There are two basic aspects of masculinity and femininity that everyone becomes aware of at an early age, but little is said about them in text books on either psychology or sociology, at least in the context we are investigating. Everyone knows that males are more aggressive than females, but the quality of aggressivity is thought of as pugnacity, a tendency to fight. That is included, of course, but suppose we named it more generally as initiativity, meaning a tendency to initiate, to actively start something. It could be a fight, of course, but it could also be mating behaviors, explorations, inventions, discovery or problem solving. Subdivisions of initiativity are aggression, assertiveness, domination, control of others, possessiveness and self-centeredness. All of these patterns can be seen in males of many animal species, and it is clear that in animals these qualities are intimately related to sexuality and reproduction. Males initiate active sexual behavior.

But we are primarily concerned in this investigation with the nature of women, since they are the basis for the question of, "Why do you crossdress, and what do you get out of it that makes it worth the effort and the risk?" So what is the essential quality of females and women that is the equivalent of initiativity in males? I will now save

you from further cudgeling your brains for an answer and will give you mine. Then, you can shift into your critical mode to try to prove me wrong. But remember, it is one thing to disagree with someone else's theory; but it is incumbent on you if you do to come up with a better one yourself. So give your masculine aggressivity free rein and try to tear down my theoretical structure if you can, but also be prepared to offer a better one in its place.

I have concluded that the characteristic of women that is at the root of crossdressing by boys and men, is the quality that I have named "attractivity." By this I mean the ability to attract others to her. This clearly has sexual roots in the animal kingdom because when the female gets into "heat" (meaning that she is ovulating; i.e., shedding eggs from her ovaries so that they can be fertilized by the male's sperm) she produces substances called "Pheromones" which are highly odoriferous compounds. In some species there are other indications of readiness to mate. In chimpanzees her rear end turns a bright pink called a "sexual skin." Thus she sends out both visual and olfactory signals that she is ready to receive the male. Males receive both kinds of signals and their sexual programming is set to respond to them with mating behavior. Thus it is clear that the female has made herself "attractive" to him and he approaches her and copulation ensues.

Now we all know that while gender is NOT sex it is based on sex. That is, it encompasses all the attitudes, behaviors, and activities other than copulatory that females in a given culture display. Since women are generally smaller and weaker than men they need some ability to sort of even out the playing field. What has developed in the human species, over the past 10-12,000 years (the period during which



ability to attract and, to a considerable degree, control the men around her. Although this attractivity has a biological root it has developed as a psychosocial phenomenon. That is, it is operative in all manner of non-sexual situations where men and women interact with each other.

You have all, as children, played with a bar or horseshoe magnet and iron filings or bits of iron collected from sand by the attraction of the magnet. So you have here an example of what I mean. Magnets ALWAYS attract iron, that is what magnetism is. There is no question about whether the bits of iron WANT to move toward the magnet or to line up along its field lines on a piece of paper with the magnet underneath. The magnet has the quality of attractivity for iron and certain other iron-related elements like nickel and cobalt.

What I am talking about with women is what I have come to think of as "gender magnetism." Men are attracted to most women whether sex is a possibility or not. He could be impotent, injured, even have lost his penis in an accident, but he will still look at and admire a pretty woman when she enters

The Femme Mirror of those who go through Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) still take up with females after it. The females' attractivity still works on them because its receptors are in the brain and the surgery had no effect on them.

Now over the generations women have learned what will attract men and they perform these rituals, wear the clothes, apply the cosmetics, modify their bodies and develop sexy little behaviors which attract the attention of men. All of these things together constitute the "Attractivity" of the modern woman and all modern men are caught up in it. Some of them may resent it and attempt to avoid it by becoming hermits or

joining religious orders, thus remaining celibate, but it is still there. It even affects gay men to some degree since they frequently sport more colorful clothes and more delicate mannerisms. Adopting behaviors, occupations or attitudes more commonly shown by women is an indirect way of recognizing the attractability of women and trying to acquire some of it. After all, why have drag queens been part of the gay movement as far back as you want to go?

I think the answer to the question we have been considering lies right here. The appeal of women's clothes, makeup, hairdo, shoes, etc., is that wearing these items allows crossdressers to feel themselves to be part of that portion of humanity that can be pretty. The clothes, etc., provide the sense of being attractive and in a larger sense, of having attractivity, that intangible sense of knowing that other people see and notice you. If you are a nice person others will want to be near you, speak with you, know you and give you a sense of being appreciated that you don't get as a man. You know that this works for women because in your man role YOU like to be near to, talk to, be

Men, as a sex, are basically insecure which is based on the sense of the almighty PENIS as being the proof of his manhood, the thing that separates him from those lesser creatures known as females, that thing that can grow from a small, soft, floppy little blob of skin to a long, hard, rigidly and projecting organ with just a little thought and encouragement. THAT IS, IF IT WANTS TO!! Sexologists say that the penis has a mind of its own. Some wise man once said "a man can not look down and command his flesh to rise." This is to say he may want it to erect but it may not. He can never be certain that it will behave tonight like it did last week. And if it doesn't he is nearly destroyed. And the more he tries the more difficult and unlikely it becomes. This situation is the cause of the natural insecurity of males.

Women, on the other hand are the possessors of the "ever ready vagina." It is so called because it is always there and able to do its job (receive a penis) while the penis is a "doubtful Dick." Men can become very envious of women's attractivity and the psychic satisfaction that that ability brings them.

Putting on those items which are part of the attraction package gives most crossdressers a sense of having that same ability to be attractive. I am NOT talking about or even implying sexual attractiveness for other men. That is female to male and sexual, this is women to man, femininity if you will. You must have heard other crossdressers say that they enjoy feeling "pretty" and probably have experienced it yourself. It is something that is simply denied to men in this culture.

But men have a need to be noticed, admired, accepted as they are, etc. The whole phenomenon of "Machismo" (or macho for short) is a manifestation of that need. Men do daring things, take unnecessary risks, make a lot of noise (as with motorcycles) and strive to become sports stars and in many other ways to attract attention. But men have to get it by DOING something, women get it just by BEING. When crossdressers can get nicely put together they can not only become "attractive" to others but they don't have to DO anything (other than getting all gussied up, of course). They can enjoy just BEING attractive. The magnetic anal-

ogy holds here, too, because when a piece of iron is in contact with a magnet it become a magnet itself and can attract other, smaller bits of iron.

So I think that the answer to the basic question posed in the title is here. Men love, admire, respect and envy women for their womanliness, their attractivity, and not merely for their femaleness. Whenever one puts on a uniform of whatever type, he presents to others and feels himself to be a part of the "army" or whatever activity that uniform represents. Thus he acquires the abilities, qualities and characteristics the uniform represents.

When crossdressers get all decked out in the clothing, hairdo, makeup, etc., which is the "uniform" of femininity, he feels that he has acquired and become part of that which he admires, desires and envies. This achievement is very satisfying, which is the "payoff" referred to in the beginning. It is also the reason that crossdressing is hardly ever given up unless age, illness or injury makes the feminine projection so unrealistic and unattractive that it is no longer satisfying.

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Tucson, AZ 85710
Contact: Rebecca AZ-3954-B
Phone: 520-296-3472

Las Vegas, NV Metro Area
THETA UPSILON GAMMA
P.O. Box 42401, Las Vegas, NV 89116
Contact: Denise A. Hill
Phone: 702-387-3891
E-Mail: sage@intermind.net
Web Site: <http://www.intermind.net/theta/theta.html>

Honolulu, HI Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Tracy HI-3102-R

Region 9 (International)
Quebec City, PQ Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Micheline
E-Mail: milady@cmq.qc.ca

Region 10 (Florida)

Orlando, FL Metro Area
PHI EPSILON MU
PO Box 3261, Winter Park, FL 32790
Contact: Denise FL-2746-S
Phone: 407-657-7161
E-mail: KellyFL@aol.com
Web Site: <http://www.virtual-pub.com/misc/fem.htm>

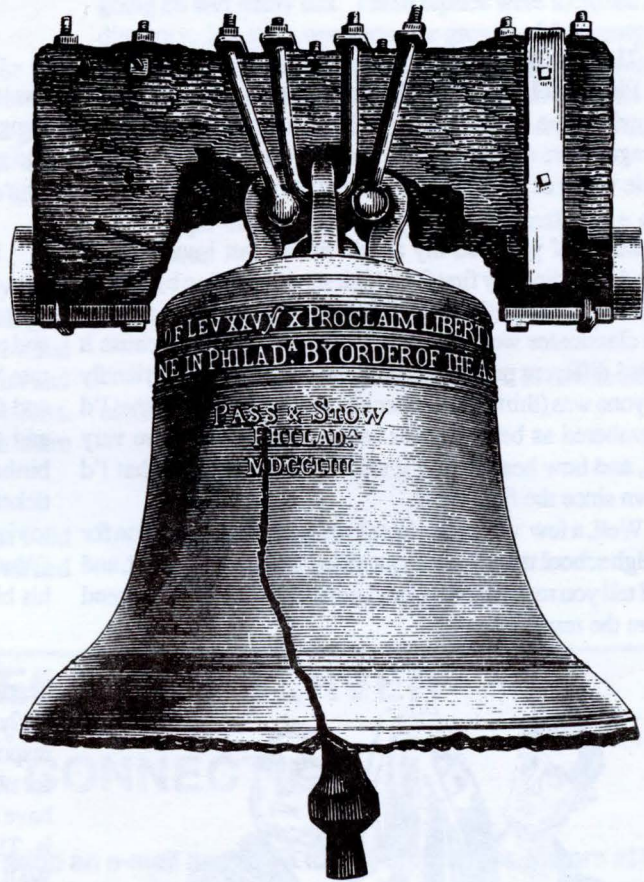
Tallahassee, FL Metro Area
TAU LAMBDA
Box 3426, Tallahassee, FL 32315-3426
Contact: Petra FL-2739-D

Fort Myers, FL Metro Area
GAMMA CHI BETA
12587 New Brittany Blvd.
Ft. Myers FL 33907
Contact: Alycia FL-4274-E
Phone: (941) 481-1861

Jacksonville, FL Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER

TransGen 96 Report

by Dee McKellar



Shortly before 11 am on Sunday, July 7, Transgen '96, the fifth annual International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, came to a close. Over 75 participants from 18 states plus Canada, England, and Australia discussed the special legal issues and needs of transgendered people of color, transgendered men, and transgendered people who are not transsexual, as well as health-care issues and international developments affecting the entire transgendered community.

Shorter seminars covered the history of same-sex marriages, Native American perspectives on gender, the rejection of transgendered lesbians by some lesbian groups, and establishment of local transgender law organizations. Highlights included major addresses by Professor Mary Coombs of the University of Florida Law School, Sharon Ann Stuart, and Phyllis Frye.

For this reporter, perhaps the most moving experience was the first formal reading of the Declaration of Gender Liberty, an outdoor candlelight ceremony punctuated by the sounds of nearby fireworks displays.

Complete reports on discussions and findings will be available in the Proceedings, scheduled for publication this fall.

Administratively, the ICTLEP named three new Moderators for specific law areas:

Employment Law - JoAnna E. McNamara of Salem, Oregon

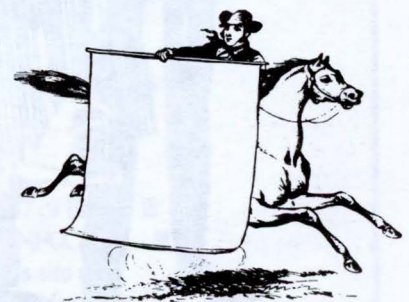
Family Law - Spencer Bergstedt of Seattle, Washington

Civil Litigation - Dana Turner of New York City

Contact information for these and other Moderators is available from ictlep@aol.com.

Transgen '97 will be held in Houston, most likely at the same hotel, probably in the middle of July. The format will be similar to this year's, with four half-day workshops and many shorter ones. Details will be announced when finalized.

Dee McKellar
Secretary-Director, ICTLEP, Inc.



30th High School Reunion #2

by Phyllis R. Frye

The Phyllabuster here:

Please feel free to post this and share. It is sent to each of you with love and with hope that you can each grow in courage, share with others and possibly open your closet door a little wider or give someone else that opportunity.

Many of you read my article in the last issue where I related attending my first 30th high school reunion by attending the reunion for the school that my elementary and junior high classmates went to while I attended another because it offered different programs. And I also related how friendly everyone was (thirty years after all), and how so many that I'd remembered as being bullies had mellowed and were very kind, and how heart filling it was to visit with folks that I'd known since the first grade.

Well, a few weekends later I went to the 30th reunion for the high school that I actually attended. It also went great, and I will tell you more about it, but I must digress to the weekend before the reunion.



The weekend before, both Trish and I flew to a small town several hours away to visit my son, his wife (we call her daughter rather than daughter-in-law) and our new, six week old grandchild. It was a very nice, warm and family sort of four day weekend.

Now the magic of it, and the reason that I write this to you, is that I lost my son from age 2 to age 20. But because I kept up the child support and kept writing him a letter each and every month for each of those years, he finally contacted me. We are now very close. We were invited to the wedding and the college graduation and to their home several times and them to our home several times. Today is his 26th birthday and for a present he asked that we send airplane tickets for the three of them to fly into Houston in November to visit us and share the grandchild as she grows and matures. (Wow, talk about a tear-for-happy in the old eye when I heard his birthday request!)

The child is wonderful, she has already grabbed our heartstrings, and we are pleased. (Usually when folks ask "What is it?" — meaning gender, of course — we always respond, "It's a baby." On further inquiry, we respond that for now the child is being reared as a girl child, but we will have to see after she grows up just what gender(s) she really is. The reply is, "Only you would answer in such a fashion." Well, it is a good answer and would save us all a lot of heartache if practiced by more parents.) We are now granny-Trish and granny-Phyllis, but we do not change diapers.

We then went to San Antonio for the reunion, but stopped for a day to visit son's mother's mother (i.e., maternal grandmother). She is very nice and cordial and invited us to wade through all of the family albums from 1972 to 1990 and watch my son grow up. It got a little teary, but it filled in a lot of gaps. I now feel much more a part of his growing up years that I had been denied.

As to this reunion, I must back you up a little on previous reunions. I'm big on attending reunions for several reasons. One is that I like people in general, and two is that I had a pretty good time in both high school and college and I want to see these folks again. But even if not for that, three is that I believe that the only way we are ever going to become free of the social crap we endure is for us to become upfront and personal to folks who know or should know us.

The ten year reunion I was in transition. So I ordered the directory update and sent letters to two dozen of my closest high school friends telling them what was going on. Some handled it, and some did not, but NONE did anything ugly or threatening in any way. When the 20th reunion came,

several encouraged me to come and said that they would spread the word so that I would not be a surprise. Trish and I had a pretty good time. Yes, there was tension. During the awards, they skipped the category of who had changed the most. Yes, many people turned away. But NONE yelled or hurt or assaulted or embarrassed us. And we made (or should I say re-made) many, many new acquaintances.

During the 25th, I was an old story. Many folks had worked it out, and we had a very good time. I got an award for who had changed the most. Even so, there was a great distinction between the 25th and the one last weekend. At the 25th there were still a lot of friendly faces, but I had to do the approach. They welcomed me, but I had to initiate.

This past weekend, the 30th, that was noticeably lacking. Folks saw me and reached out for a hug. They were glad to see me and they all knew Trish and were equally as cordial and warm to her. She had dozens of folks to visit with and did not suffer from spouse-itis which is a fear at reunions. People came up, people sought us out and wanted to share and hug and smile and be friends.

Actually, I feel closer to these people now than I did when I graduated. The cliques are gone. They have all had

something to level them out, be it divorce or death of a child or illness, or bankruptcy or divorce; who knows? They are nice folks and I enjoyed them.

In the directory we received at this reunion, each person had been asked to submit with their registration what was going on and many did. These replies were included in the directory. My story was about the growth of the transgender community and what we were doing to change law. Everyone was interested and asked so many questions — good questions of substance, not shallow like, well have you had your surgery yet?

I hope that you have enjoyed this small peice of my experience.

I hope it fills your heart even if just a little.

I hope that you share it and reprint it in newsletters and other net boards.

Love to you,

Phyllis Randolph Frye
a.k.a. "the phyllabuster"

NEW! TRI-ESS LIST SERVER AVAILABLE ON CROSS- CONNECTION

Ladies! Wouldn't you like to be able to send an e-mail message to all your Tri-Ess sisters at the same time, without having all their addresses appear on your letter? Now you can, by subscribing to Cross-Connection's Tri-Ess List Server.

To subscribe to the Tri-Ess listserv, send e-mail to: <listserv@xconn.com> with anything in the subject line (the listserv doesn't read that line) and the one-line message

SUBSCRIBE TRI-ESS MEMBER#

Replacing "MEMBER#" with your Tri-Ess national membership ID number. For example, the list moderator, Kymberleigh Richards, would subscribe by sending the message

SUBSCRIBE TRI-ESS CA-2310-R

Please note: This all must be on a single line, as shown. Don't write long messages asking to be subscribed; the automated program only knows how to read and process valid commands.

Send e-mail to <kymmer@xconn.com> to reach a live person regarding the Tri-Ess listserv.

||| Kymberleigh Richards, System Administrator |||

||| CROSS CONNECTION Los Angeles, CA (818) 786-8887 (9 lines) |||
||| Info: e-mail <archive@xconn.com> Subject REQUEST XCINFO.TXT |||

| The senders of unsolicited commercial e-mail to users at this site are |
| liable for a \$500 per message cost under USC 47, which may be found at |
| <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/47> |

It's Time America! Digest

by Sarah DePalma, National Director, It's Time America!
ita@mail.phoenix.net

Since there are many people who are receiving ITA information for the first time, let me remind you that It's Time, America! is a grassroots political and legal rights organization working on behalf of the entire transgendered community. If you would like to receive more specific information on ITA or have an interest in starting a state or local chapter, please contact us at the address listed above.

At the time the ITA bylaws were adopted, it was hoped that seats on the national board would naturally be filled in a manner representative of the entire community. Since that did not happen, our bylaws mandate that four "at large" seats be activated and a concerted effort be made to recruit transgendered men and people of color not just into the organization, but into positions of leadership.

In all of our literature, ITA says that we represent people of all colors and sexual orientations. That is not just some slogan, it is a call to action. We are a totally inclusive organization and we intend to do whatever it takes to bring those members of our community who have traditionally been marginalized into full participation with It's Time, America! We still have three of these seats available and we invite suggestions and nominations for these positions. Self nominations are also welcome.

In coordination with the International Conference of Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP), ITA proudly announces that we will be participating in a lobbying effort to take place February 22 - 25 in Washington D. C..

We wish to stress that our lobbying effort is in no way competitive with or a replacement for Transgender Lobby Days which will take place in May. On the contrary, we will be in Washington not to lobby

every member of Congress but to lobby specific members of key committees related to transgender legislation. The February date was chosen after we solicited advice from political experts across the country asking when (following the national election and the appointment of new members to Congressional Committees) was the best time to meet with our targeted members of Congress. The advice was nearly unanimous in selecting the weeks immediately before and after the Presidents' Day holidays as being the "prime time."

Unlike the ICTLEP however, ITA will not be there as part of an educational event. We will hit the ground running, appointments in hand, and a prepared discussion agenda for each member of Congress with whom we plan to speak. We expect to be at our first appointment by 9 AM and may not finish until late in the evening. Any information we gather will be shared with the leaders of the May event so that they will start their event with first hand knowledge of what to expect and why to expect it.

This means that our work begins the day after the election. Appointments need to be made with your congress member while they are still within the district and before they have left for Washington. We will discuss this further in the months ahead. For now just put February 22 -24 on your "to do" calendar and plan to join us in frosty Washington D.C..

[Ed.Note: ICTLEP will be conducting a "how-to-lobby-your-Congressman" training workshop, followed by visits to Congressional offices. If you have always wanted to know how make your voice heard in Washington, this is your chance. Contact ICTLEP at P.O. Drawer 35477, Houston TX 77235-5477; phone/fax: 713-777-TGLC(98452); e-mail ictlen@aol.com.]

ATTENTION NEW ITA START UP CHAPTERS!!

We have had numerous contacts from people interested in starting ITA chapters in their city or state. Many of you have told us that you are confused about exactly how to do this and what requirements need to be met. Well, fear not, brave souls. You have questions? We have answers.

Jessica Xavier has put together an outstanding body of material on an entire range of subjects. For those who do not know how to create bylaws, we even have these drawn up on a fill in the blank format. We have a very knowledgeable team of directors ready, willing, and able to help you get things off the ground. Just contact us at the address listed above.

AND BEFORE WE GO...

We have changed the signature on our e-mail messages and I've already had several people ask me where the quote is from. The answer is a speech written by Nelson Mandela called "Our Deepest Fear." We leave you with an excerpt from that speech.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

"We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?"

"You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure about you. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us.

"It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

"And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Lobbying Days 1997

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

As you know, there will be two efforts to present our issues to the United States Congress in 1997. The ICTLEP-ITA!'s effort is scheduled for February, and the GenderPAC effort is scheduled for May. I would like to encourage you to consider attending one or both of these two events. You will learn the ropes of lobbying Congress. You will experience a wonderful solidarity with your brothers and sisters. And, you will have the unique opportunity to inform your elected representatives that transgendered persons are among their constituents, taxpayers and voters.

The effort to win our full civil rights is of paramount importance to every transgendered person. While perhaps a single united effort is most desirable, the current situation allows us a unique opportunity to give Congress a double exposure to our issues.

Had it not been for the pioneering efforts of Phyllis Frye, the lobbying effort would almost certainly not be what it is today. In founding the first ICTLEP conference, Phyllis made the legal profession and politicians more aware of the civil rights issues of all transgendered people. The establishment of It's Time America! chapters will generate a movement emanating from the grassroots. The importance of local lobbying efforts cannot be overstated.

However, we cannot neglect any opportunity to maximize our impact at the federal level. According to Phyllis, communication with Congress is most effective early in the new congressional term when legislation is being formulated. She makes a strong argument. In my opinion, providing education at the proper time is worth a February shiver. Phyllis knows the ways of Congress, and walks their long halls with confidence. As a transgendered person, I want her there teaching and applying her well-known expertise on my behalf.

Tri-Ess will support strongly her educational effort and appoint an official Tri-Ess representative to help in her work.

At the same time, one must applaud the Congress of Transgender Organizations for building a consensus among support organizations and bringing them together to mount a powerful lobbying effort in Congress this coming May. If our lobbying effort is to be successful, it must bring together the full diversity of transgendered people. It is likely that the warm breezes of May will bring out more workers than the whipping winds of February.

Riki Wilchins, founder of Transsexual Menace, has enthusiastically worked on lobbying. She knows how to open doors and attract publicity needed to bring our case before the lawmakers. As a transgendered person, I want her, and Angela Gardner of Renaissance, and Alison Laing of IFGE, and Jamison Green of Female-To-Male International, and Marisa Richmond of AEGIS (just to name a few transgender community leaders), advocating in the halls of Congress my case for my civil rights. Tri-Ess will be a part of the diverse transgender community team, and will appoint a representative to work in GenderPAC to accomplish its worthy goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, the most important single principle is that we must not fight among ourselves. There is plenty of work to go around. There is no need to take a choice between ICTLEP-ITA! and GenderPAC. Their efforts are complementary. The February effort may well be the educational match that lights up the community lobbying effort in May. We are all working toward the same goals. In future years, the two efforts will probably combine. Winning our rights will entail a united effort over some years. Let us keep our eyes on that goal, and look together toward our eventual victory.

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:

1-209-688-9246

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.

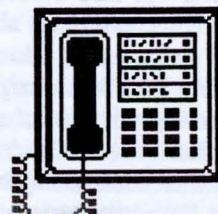
Do you have a question or message for Jane Ellen Fairfax, Chair of the Tri-Ess Board of Directors? She has a new Voice/Fax line at:

1-713-349-8969

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

1-417-831-3433

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?



GenderPAC National Lobbying Days Announced

Contacts:

Riki Anne Wilchins,
Riki@PipeLine.Com,
Allison Laing, a.l@lng.com,
Dana Priesing,
DPriesing@aol.com

GenderPAC, the new national political organization dedicated to "gender, affectional and racial equality" has announced their National Gender Lobbying Days to be held on Monday and Tuesday, May 5-6 in Washington, DC.

Last year's Lobbying Day on October 2-3, 1995, drew over 100 activists to Capitol Hill to lobby for gender rights issues, including trans-inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Bill (ENDA) and the Hate Crimes Statistics Act (HCSA), as well as issues around trans health care and the treatment of transpeople in the military.

In over 2 days of intense lobbying, activists called on the offices of nearly every one of the 503 Senators and Representatives.

National Gender Lobbying Days was originally planned for October once again. However, it became apparent that most members of Congress would be in their home states, working on re-election. After consultation with community leaders, as well as several Congressional offices, the dates was moved to May 5, 1997.

In another break with last fall's Lobby Day but in keeping with GenderPAC's commitment to "gender, affectional and racial equality," lobbyists will be asked to focus on ENDA and HCSA, but also on issues of women's rights, gay rights and marriage, and the increasing tide of racial intolerance in the US. Although this is an aggressive agenda to ask of activists, it nonetheless reflects GenderPAC's mission, and its understanding that these are shared, linked oppressions.

Everyone Welcome

Said Alison Laing, acting co-Chair of GenderPAC: "This is a chance for anyone concerned with gender, affectional or racial equality to show up in Washington and have their voices heard. We welcome all people to participate, to let the incoming Congress know that we are not going away, that no American is free until *all* of us have our rights."

Dana Priesing, Washington DC lobbyist for GenderPAC, declared "Based on my recent visits to Capitol Hill, it's clear that we made an real impression in 1995. Telling our stories humanized us: it made them see us as real people instead of tabloid television subjects. This time we'll be returning with a focused, polished and more professional approach, identifying the bills and the language important to us and working to educate everyone with whom we come in contact."

FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE on GENDER ACTIVISM

Seizing the announcement of the National Gender Lobbying Day as a chance to rally and focus the increasing tide of transactivism sweeping the country, GenderPAC has announced that May 4, the Sunday preceding Lobbying Day (Monday, May 5), will be set aside for the first National Conference for Gender Activists.

The all-day event will be strictly devoted to gender activism. High on the agenda are open discussion on national coordination of lobbying on legislative issues like ENDA, community organizing, the wave of trans-related murders, and concerns like the upcoming Brandon Teena movie "All S/he Wanted."

In keeping with GenderPAC's mission to be a "tool chest" for the community's use, informal how-to discussions will be held on such topics as:

- * Lobbying 101: How the Pro's Do It
- * How to Picket & Demonstrate: Logistics, Organizing, and Execution
- * Introducing an Employment Non-Discrimination Bill in Your City/State
- * How to Get Press Coverage for Your Actions: an Intro to the Art of Media Relations
- * The Transsexual Menace Guide to Picketing and Demonstrating
- * Adding TransInclusion to Your Company's EEO Statement
- * Fundraising: Do's and Don'ts
- * Welfare System: Where Transpeople Are & What's Needed
- * Gender, Affectional & Racial Equality: Making the Connections, Building the Bridges

Recent years have seen the rise of out-front gender activism such as the Tyra Hunter Vigil (Wash.DC), the Channel Picket demonstration (Boston), the Brandon Teena Memorial Vigil (Falls City NB), the picketing of the American Psychiatric Association (NYC), National Gender Lobbying Day (WDC), work on transinclusion with the National Organization for Women (NOW), the formation of TOPS (the national organization for transgender peace officers), and a host of other efforts.

However, until now there has been no conference where activists could join together and work on skills, consensus, coordination of effort, and the transfer of knowledge.

The event will be held at the Quality Inn in College Park, Maryland, where rooms are already being reserved for lobbyists attending Lobby Day. GenderPAC's Activists Conference will be a no-or-low cost, non-profit event.

[Ed. Note: While we maintain our focus on serving crossdressers and their loved ones, Tri-Ess supports the efforts of GenderPac, It's Time America! and other activists working for human rights on behalf of the entire spectrum of the transgender community. Tri-Ess encourages its individual members to lend their financial support, as well as their presence when possible, to such efforts as Lobby Days and to demonstrations like this one:]

Activists Rally in Support of Crossdressing Teen

by Riki Anne Wilchins
(212)645-1753, GPac@Gpac.Org

[Burlington, VT - October 5, 1996] As dozens of local supporters sprawled across the green lawn, a procession of speakers mounted the front steps of the downtown Unitarian Universalist Church today to voice their fervent support and concern for suspended crossdressing teen Matthew Stickney. The event had been called by several chapters of the group Transexual Menace.

Posters declaring "Support Our GenderQueer Youth," "Freedom of Gender Expression!" and "Liberty, Freedom, & Pleats" framed the church doors. During the event demonstrators handed out hundreds of fliers to the amused and often supportive local crowds enjoying a last warm Saturday afternoon in this normally quiet New England town.

Stickney, who identifies variously as gay, drag, and crossdressing, was suspended from Burlington High School September 9th when he wore a

dress to class. He stated it was his way of showing pride in his identity. But after he was verbally assaulted by other students, the principal claimed it was Stickney who was "creating a disturbance," and demanded he change his attire. A series of confrontations then ensued, which led to Stickney's suspension.

The case quickly attracted a barrage of national media attention as one of a growing number incidents involving transgender and genderqueer gay youth. Stickney responded by going into hiding. He has not returned to school or appeared in public since, and at the rally it was two of his high school friends who spoke on his behalf and took a black Menace T-shirt for him as a keepsake.

Said Jane Ellen Fairfax of Tri-Ess, the nation's largest crossdressing organization and a rally sponsor, "This is not about one high school student, but about everyone's basic right to express

gender without the fear of harassment, hate-speech, or punishment. Whether you are straight or gay makes no difference: wearing a dress is not grounds for intolerance or bigotry."

The event was organized by Jess Bell (Transexual Menace Vermont), Nancy Nangeroni (Transexual Menace Boston), and Riki Anne Wilchins (Transexual Menace NYC) and attracted sponsorship from a broad spectrum of local groups including the Burlington Women's Council, Outright Vermont, Bi-Net Vermont, the Vermont Coalition for Gay & Lesbian Rights, the Peace & Justice Center, and Vermont's queer newspaper "Out in the Mountains." both local television stations sent camera crews to conduct interviews.

Adding to the rally's flavor, the local Ben & Jerry's provided scores of free ice-cream coupons to event attendees.



Micheline's One-Month Trip

or,

How a Canadian Sister Spent Her Summer Vacation

On June 14, 1996, Friday afternoon, Micheline left Quebec City for a trip of one month in her car across Canada and the U.S.A. She was dressed in a white blouse, a black skirt and a black jacket, skin tone pantyhose and high heels. When she arrived in Montreal at 16:30, she decided to go shopping in one sex shop (Priape), two shoe stores, Chaussures d'Antin and Go-West, and one dress store, Creations Le Tube, where she found two nice outfits, especially a royal blue dress without sleeves and shoulders.

At 22:00, Micheline decided to leave Montreal, planning to sleep somewhere between Montreal and Provincetown in Massachusetts. Micheline is so wide awake that she decided to cross the border during the night. At midnight, she arrived at the border.

The customs officer said, "Nice evening, Madam. What is your citizenship?"

Micheline answered, "I am Canadian."

Asked the officer, "Where do you go?"

"To Provincetown, Massachusetts."

"For what reason?"

"I am on vacation; it is for my pleasure."

"So, Miss, have a nice vacation in the U.S.A."

And with that, Micheline was in the U.S.A. She drove all night and arrived in Provincetown at 6:45.

During the morning and because all the hotels were closed, Micheline visited a little bit in the city of Provincetown and she arrived at her hotel, The Roomers, at 11:30. At noon, Micheline decided to go to the beach to take a little bit of sun and to do a little bit of shopping. So, she put on her blue bathing suit covered with flowers with a dark pink T-shirt over it. She shopped

between 12:00 and 14:00 and then, she went to the beach to swim in the ocean and to sunbathe. At 16:00, Micheline went back to her hotel, and dressed in a pale blue dress for doing a little more shopping.

During the evening, Micheline chose a very outrageous white and pink dress with long sleeves, a lot of frills and a very huge bosom and a lot of feathers on her head to go to the "Debutante Ball" where she met 38 other girls

who were there for this Ball. Even if Micheline did not win any prizes because the rules of the Ball are that every contestant must wear only white clothing, Micheline was certainly the most applauded girl.

Sunday morning, June 16, Micheline went back to the beach, and after three hours of swimming and sunbathing, she went back to her hotel, dressed in a silver blouse and a leather skirt and left the hotel to go to New



Micheline's "very outrageous white and pink dress" at the Debutante Ball

York. She chose a small hotel, but the room was so small that Micheline decided to stay only one night in New York; even Micheline's wardrobe was larger than that room in the hotel. When Micheline put one of her suitcases on the bed to open it, she had no place to move in the room. From 21:00 to 01:00, Micheline walked in the streets of New York, alone but confident with her great smile, entering and exiting from many bars and meeting some guys on the streets. A young black man offered to show Micheline the main bars in downtown New York and Micheline accepted him as a guide. In a moment, the young guy said, "Aren't you, a blonde white girl with blue eyes, afraid to be with a black man like me?" "No, you are a man like any other man. Do you have a problem?" "No. You are a curious girl." "I am from the North." After that, he continued to show her some interesting

bars. Then she went back to her hotel. Monday morning, June 17, Micheline left her room at 9:00 and decided to go shopping dressed in a favorite outfit, a dress where the skirt is black and the top is white with a lot of black dots, with a yellow jacket over the dress. She went shopping at Gunit's where she bought ten dresses and one jacket: three black, one black and gold, three white, one white and gold, one blue and gold, one pink and one black and gold jacket. All these dresses are evening dresses with a lot of pearls or sequins, very bright dresses for a woman who wishes to be seen by everybody around her. She decided to continue her shopping dressed in one of her new dresses; a short white dress, sleeveless, with a white sheer jacket over the dress with a lot of sequins. She shopped in Macy's and Payless Shoe Source but didn't find anything to buy.

She continued to shop at Lee's Mardi Gras Boutique and at the Village Corset. The Village Corset has only old style girdles, but Lee's Mardi Gras Boutique is a superb sex shop, the best Micheline has seen in America. She bought a real corset that removes at least 9 inches from her waist, and an emerald necklace with matching earrings.

At 19:00, Micheline left New York for Atlantic City where she planned to stay two days to go to the Casino and to show off her new dresses. At 22:00, Micheline arrived at Atlantic City. Caesar's Palace and Bally's are full, but Micheline found a room at the Claridge. She spent the night, up to 5:00 AM, going from one casino to another: Claridge, Caesar's, Bally's, Trump's, the Taj Mahal and a few other casinos. For this night, Micheline wore a long black dress with a lot of sequins, a large opening at the front with black sheer sleeves and a lot of gold on her chest. Everybody stared at her.

Tuesday afternoon, June 18, Micheline walked on the Boardwalk in a long white dress with a lot of sequins to do a little bit of shopping. At 19:00, she decided to go eating at the buffet in the Claridge. During the waiting time in the line, many women talked to Micheline about her good taste in her dress, and they asked her permission to sit with her. So, Micheline talked with many women all the time that she was in the restaurant.

During the evening, Micheline returned to the Boardwalk to walk again with her long blue dress. A policeman came to speak to Micheline and said, "You have walked on the Boardwalk this afternoon."

"Yes."

"You were wearing a white dress."

"Yes."

"You have a very nice dress this evening. Why have you changed your dress?"

"Well, I have many dresses and I wish to show all of them."

"Atlantic City is a nice place for that."

They continued to chat at least thirty minutes. After she left the policeman, three men approached Micheline



The Femme Mirror

and asked if she worked, and how much. Micheline answered by saying:

"For three nice men like you, it will be free if we go to the Casino."

They said, "OK."

Micheline was a lucky bunny for part of the evening; she threw the dice for them.

When Micheline returned to the casino at the Claridge, one of the girls who served drinks asked Micheline, "Didn't you wear a different dress and a different wig yesterday evening?"

"Yes, I am at the Claridge and I have many beautiful dresses and different wigs and I like to change my style and my look."

"Will you come back this evening again with a new dress?"

"If you wish, yes. I will go back to my room on the 17th floor and I will be back in ten minutes."

During that night, Micheline put on a new dress at least 7 times! The girls were completely crazy and Micheline had a lot of free drinks. It was a marvelous evening.

Wednesday, June 19, Micheline drove from Atlantic City to Toronto. Micheline wore the same black dress with the yellow jacket. She left Atlantic City at 10:00 under a very huge thunderstorm, a real flood. Micheline had so much luggage that she called the bellboy and a valet to bring back her car. Everyone was very kind to Micheline and said to her: "Thank you, Miss," and, "Have a very nice day, Miss." Micheline arrived at the border at 22:00 and the customs officer asked her only her citizenship. Ten seconds later, Micheline was on her way to Toronto, arriving at Hotel Selby at midnight.

Thursday morning, June 20, Micheline went to the Metro Convention Centre in Toronto for a presentation by Corel about Word Perfect and Ventura from 9:00 to 16:00. Micheline was dressed in a bronze-black dress. After the presentation, Micheline returned to her hotel by walking on Yonge Street, where she bought six pairs of shoes. At 21:00, Micheline went to a Fetish Night at the Boots Warehouse located just under Hotel Selby. This fetish night is patronized by Xpressions, the crossdressers' club of Toronto.

Friday, June 21, Micheline drove to Detroit, but she decided to pass by Sarnia-Port Huron. This time, Micheline was delayed fifteen minutes to pass the border. The customs officer sent Micheline to the secondary inspection and when the second customs officer saw that there was nothing on his computer about Micheline when he checked her passport, he just let Micheline continue through on her trip into the U.S.A.

Saturday, June 22, during the afternoon, Micheline shopped a little bit in Detroit and met some friends. In the evening, she went to a bar for dancing.

Sunday, June 23, Micheline shopped a little bit in Detroit and bought three new dresses, two outfits for traveling and three blouses at Sears. She was very well served by a very gentle and kind salesgirl who helped Micheline to find all the clothing that she needed. Micheline had only to tell her the size, the style and the color, and she found everything for Micheline. Then, Micheline drove back to Canada. For this trip, Micheline wore her new blue ensemble, a blouse and a skirt with a lot of flowers with a white jacket over all. When she arrived at the Detroit-Windsor border, again, Micheline was delayed ten minutes and sent to the secondary inspection. The second customs officer asked Micheline to open the trunk of her car. He opened one of the suitcases, but when he saw that there were only dresses in it, he just closed it and told Micheline that she could continue her trip.

Micheline arrived at Toronto at 22:00. At 23:00, she decided to go dancing in a lesbian bar, the Rose's Bar



Just the thing to wear to a Word Perfect presentation.

Cafe on Parliament Street. For that evening, Micheline wore a white sheer blouse with a white bra and a leather skirt.

Monday, June 24, Micheline shopped all the day long with another girl, Melissa, and they had a lot of fun together. Micheline wore a colorful ensemble with a blouse and a skirt in black and white. She bought one mini-skirt, four blouses and two evening dresses. Micheline decided to continue shopping with a white sheer blouse and the mini-skirt. During the evening, she decided to go to the Bar 501 and to Colby's.

Tuesday, June 25, Micheline went to a make-up session at The Bay, a big department store on Bloor street. She wore a white blouse and a black skirt and was accompanied by Melissa. The cosmetics girl did a very excellent job on Micheline. After that, Micheline and Melissa continued to shop. During the evening, Micheline went to the Lime-light for dancing.

Wednesday, June 26, Micheline found a very nice ring at Henry Birks & Sons, but it was a little bit expensive (\$6300, but there were 25 diamonds on it). At 21:00, Micheline went to the Pimblett's on Gerrard Street; it is the best place in Toronto to meet other crossdressers. Micheline met Melissa, April, Carol, Helen and Pat.

Thursday, June 27, Micheline met an older couple. The man did not exactly know how to drive in Toronto and where to go. His wife had to go to the hospital for some exams. Micheline offered her services to be their guide in Toronto and to escort them to the hospital. They accepted, and Micheline was their guide for the day. So, Micheline began her day by driving the woman to the hospital with their car, and after that showed the man how to drive in Toronto and where to park his car. She also filled up the gas tank, and they returned together to the hospital to wait for the wife in the waiting room. It was funny because they looked like a man with his daughter, and when the wife came out of the examination room, they looked like a couple with their daughter. After a little bit of shopping with this couple,

they invited Micheline in a restaurant to have a good meal. After the meal, they left Toronto for Montreal.

During the evening, Micheline went to the Jax Bar on Yonge Street to see a female impersonator show and to the Rose's Bar Cafe for dancing a little bit. For dancing, Micheline wore a white sheer blouse and a black mini-skirt. Micheline met a woman in Rose's. She was a lawyer, and she and Micheline had a lot of fun.

Friday, June 28, Micheline shopped a little bit. She wore a long black skirt with a lot of flowers and a dark pink blouse. During the evening, Micheline was invited at to her friend Jim's apartment to have a little dinner with friends. Micheline wears a long gold sheer dress.

Saturday, June 29, Micheline just walked a little bit around the hotel and stayed at the bar. During the evening, she went to the monthly Xpressions Dinner held on the last Saturday of every month. Xpressions is the crossdresser's club of Toronto. Micheline wore a long blue and gold dress with sequins. This time, the dinner was held at the Corner Bistro.

After the dinner, eight girls decided to go to the El Convento Rico, a very fine place to dance and to see some female impersonator shows. After the show, Micheline decided to walk a little bit in the streets of downtown Toronto. Some streets were closed for the Gay Pride Parade the next day, Sunday. Micheline met three policemen in front of the Maple Leaf Garden and one of them said to Micheline:

"Hello, Inspector, is every thing OK?"

"Silence please; you know that I am on an anonymous patrol."

They began to laugh and Micheline had a most pleasant talk with them for 15 minutes.

Sunday, June 30, was the Gay Pride Parade in Toronto, and Micheline was in the parade. She wore the same outrageous pink and white dress that she had worn at the "Debutante Ball" in Provincetown. After the parade, Micheline was so exhausted that she

The Femme Mirror went directly to her hotel to plunge into her bath for at least 30 minutes; she was completely dehydrated.

Monday, July 1, Canada Day, all the stores were closed and Micheline walked in the parks of Toronto. That evening, she went with Chris, a very nice guy, to the Jax Bar where they played Bingo. Micheline won a T-shirt and a 25\$ certificate for drinks at the bar called The Sneakers.

Tuesday, July 2, Micheline shopped a little bit in two jewelers where she met, in 30 minutes, two policemen that she had met on Saturday evening. Every policeman asked Micheline how she felt, if she was having a good time in Toronto, and if she needed some help. They were very kind and polite. In the evening, Micheline went to The Sneakers with Natacha, a young black lesbian who lives in Toronto. Having finished drinking the 25\$ certificate, they went together and under a very heavy rain to the Jax Bar to see a female impersonators show. Natacha asked Michelle Dubarry, the leader of the show, if Micheline might sing for her in French. Five minutes later, Micheline was on the stage to sing in French, without any preparation, music and lyrics, a song for Natacha. Micheline chose to sing "Sous les Ponts de Paris". She was well applauded by the audience.

Wednesday, July 3 up to Sunday, July 7, Micheline was in Houston at the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP). It is the best occasion to meet many girls and to discuss the legal status of girls like us in North America, Australia, United Kingdom and across the world. For going to Houston, Micheline decided to go by airplane, and she used Air Canada. For traveling, Micheline wore a kind of small burgundy short with a panel that wraps over so it looks like a skirt, with a blouse of the same color. It was a very quiet flight and many persons around Micheline wanted to talk to her. Micheline had no problem with the customs officer and she went through all the procedures at the speed of lighting.



At the TransGen 96 legal conference with (l. to r.) Vicki Thomas, Jane Ellen Fairfax, Dana and Micheline.

In Houston, at the convention in the Ramada Astrodome Motel, Micheline met a lot of girls, and many of them are now good friends. They had a lot of discussions on a lot of topics and it was certainly the most interesting conference for girls like us. Each evening, after a day of conferences, they had a little wine and cheese for socialization. The temperature was very hot 40C (105F) in the shade and 45C (115F) under the sun with much humidity, and even the water in the swimming pool was hot. During those five days at the conference, Micheline wore at least 20 different outfits. Well, you know, Micheline always likes to put on a new dress or a new outfit! There were approximately 70 girls at this conference in a hotel of 300 rooms. They took a lot of room, but were not alone in the hotel. The other guests at the hotel and the hotel staff were very kind.

Thursday, July 4, Micheline was a lecturer for a conference about the rights of gays, lesbians, crossdressers and other transgendered people in Quebec, Canada. She thinks that she gave a good picture of the rights of these people in Quebec and she has posted the text of her conference on the Internet.

Friday, July 5, during the day, Micheline participated in many forums.

During the evening, with seven other girls, Vanessa, Tony Lynn, Deborah, Lisa, Christine, Heidi and Diane, Micheline went to the Richard's Bar in Houston to dance. When eight girls like them enter a bar, you may be sure that many persons gave them a very special glance. They had a lot of fun dancing.

Saturday, July 6, they had a big dinner where many persons who have contributed to help the community of transgenders and crossdressers, received a special award. Micheline also had the opportunity to meet the girls of the Tau Chi Chapter of Tri-Ess and the girls of the Gulf Coast Transgender Community. Says Micheline: "I must say that every person I met who was associated with ICTLEP, Tau Chi Chapter and the Gulf Coast Transgender Community was a very fine girl. I felt as if I were with a lot of friends that I had known for many years. They were warm and welcoming; we were like a great family." Micheline wishes a very big "Thank you to you" to all her new friends. Also, Micheline met many fine, charming and sweet persons from Texas and says that girls from Texas are very nice girls.

On Sunday, July 7, it was time to leave. They had a good breakfast followed by a meeting in preparation for next year's conference. During the

afternoon, Micheline went to Vanessa's house for swimming and eating a small Bar-B-Q dinner with Dianna, Deborah and another girl; whose name she is sorry to have forgotten. They had a nice time in the swimming pool and Micheline has got a sunburn. The Bar-B-Q was fine and after that, Vanessa drove all the girls back to the hotel where there they took the shuttle to the airport. Micheline wore black shorts with a blue corsair blouse.

Micheline had a lot of fun with the stewards and the stewardesses in the airplane and even took some pictures inside the airplane. Micheline arrived at her hotel in Toronto at 00:30.

Monday, July 8, Micheline left Toronto for Ottawa where she was to meet a few girls for a private dinner. Micheline wore her black dress with the yellow jacket. She was received at the home of Nathalie, where she met Helene, Joanne, Ruth, Linda and Katrina. It was an excellent dinner and an excellent evening. Micheline spent the night at Nathalie's house and left early the next morning.

On Tuesday, July 9, Micheline was back in Quebec city. That was the end of this marvelous trip and of this unforgettable summer.

My First Night Out

by Bobbie

I must tell you about my first night "out" en femme. I attended my first Chi-Tri-Ess meeting along with Sandy, my "significant other," and we had a wonderful time. It was "touch and go" for awhile as to whether or not I was actually going to go at all. First I was going and then I wasn't going and then I was going again....I vacillated all day long on Saturday and when it finally came time to go I asked Sandy what I should do. She said, "Don't ask me, Sweetie Pie, this is YOUR life, not mine." At the last moment I decided that we really should go, and I am soooo glad that we did.

When we arrived at the Holiday Inn and located the meeting room there were only a few people there but they came right over and welcomed us and made us feel right at home. I changed into my femme outfit and Sandy helped me with my make-up. As more and more people arrived many of them came right up and introduced themselves and welcomed us to the group. I even met some people who lived in the same area of Chicago where I grew up and we had a kind of old neighborhood reunion and "catch-up-on-gossip" session. Needless to say it was a very friendly atmosphere.

About 6:30 there were two separate meetings held in rooms adjoining the main meeting room. One was for newcomers, which I attended, and one was a P.A.L.S (short for Positive Attitudes Living Side by side) meeting for spouses, which Sandy attended. The newcomer's meeting was very nice. I met about 12 other people with experiences similar to that of my own and we got to know each other a little bit. Sandy's meeting on the other hand was a little bit on the dreary side as I was disappointed to learn. Apparently there were not as many people and the session was a little too focused on "hand wringing" about "the problem" and how to "deal" with it. Fortunately for

Sandy there were some other ladies there who, like her, didn't see any "problem" and who thought that the others were making a mountain out of the proverbial mole hill. I'm glad that as the evening progressed Sandy ended up having a great time and making many new friends.

The main meeting started about 8:15 or so and after the necessary announcements and regular business the entertainment for the evening began. The theme was "Beatnik Night," and several people went up on stage to entertain the crowd. Now get this... I was one of them! The entertainment director, Miranda, who is a truly lovely person inside and out, had gone around before the meeting asking for help because they had been a little light on volunteers. I said that in a pinch I would volunteer to do something if they needed another act. Well, to my amazement I was "pinched!"



I got up on stage with my knees knocking, to say the least, and did a little skit based upon a popular little Robert Frost poem about ants. Apparently the crowd liked it, or so they indicated by their clapping. It probably would have been a flop in front of a regular crowd but these people are so polite that it doesn't take much effort to get their

applause. I think that is because we appreciate each other so much. Well, anyway, my ears are still ringing with all the compliments, and it goes without saying that this doesn't hurt in boosting one's self esteem.

The other acts were much, much better than mine, by the way. There was a poet named Stacey who recited some of her works and a musician named Amanda who performed a duet with her teenage son and did a medley of hit songs from the sixties and seventies. These are verry talented people! I was just a fill-in.

The evening just flew by. There were refreshments and lots of good conversation with new friends. Then all too soon it was time for this shining little diamond to turn back into an old lump of coal and hop back into the pumpkin for the trip back to the barn. In the afterglow of the evening as we drove home we decided that the venture had been a smashing success, and when I told Sandy that I would like to do it again she quickly chimed in, "Me too!"

As I reflect back on my experience I can't help thinking about how intelligent and self assured many of my new friends are. More than any other group I have ever been with these people seem to "have it all together." The conversations were very witty and clever and most of the attendees seemed very intelligent. I was impressed and at the same time I felt very at ease. It was a great feeling. Several people expressed the fact that they felt fortunate or even "blessed" to have a transgender persona and I feel the same way. Instead of there being something "wrong" with us I think that there is something "right" with us.

Anyway, I didn't mean to bore you with all of this and run on and on but I just thought you'd like to know how I finally made out.

The Awakening Of Anne Marie

by Diana Kaye

I had only known Anne Marie for a short time. I would see her occasionally at the local meetings, but she was always quiet. She was nice enough, but never one to talk for hours on end, like some of the other sisters.

One day I read a posting in one of the news groups on the Internet from an Anne Marie. In the posting she indicated that she was from my home state. Naturally, this interested me, as I wondered if this was another person or the same one I knew. I immediately called one of my sisters and asked if she knew this person. She wasn't sure if it was the same, so I decided to take a chance and answer the posting. I immediately got a response and after several E Mails we traded phone numbers.

After this discourse, I realized the two were one and the same. I had seen her at the meetings and thought that she looked very passable, so I suggested we go out for the day and do what ladies love to do most, shop! Both of us were looking for new shoes, and both of us needed some special lingerie, so I suggested a large shoe store near her house and a transgender friendly lingerie shop in the area. She indicated that I could dress at her place, so the date was set.

Well, when I got over to her house she seemed a little nervous. After some talk, I realized that even though I had seen her at meetings, she had never gone out in public during the day, let alone gone shopping. I suggested she put on some casual clothes, minimal make up and jewelry. We got dressed and looked each other over one last time to make sure everything was in place. With a great sigh, she ventured out the door.

I offered to drive and we proceeded down the road. The first stop was the ATM machine so she could get a little spending cash. All went well there so her confidence improved. I reassured her that she looked great. On to the shoe store. We went in to this two story large building with nothing but shoes. Hundreds of shoes, men's, women's, young and old. Wow! I wanted some sexy straps and she was looking for some nice pumps. I might add that she had a closet full of shoes and clothes already, but who cares, a girl has to shop!!!

Anne Marie found hers immediately, but I, being the picky shopper, had to try on at last half the shoes in the store. Some looked great but were too

small, others I couldn't figure how to get on without getting a cramp in my leg. (I pity the poor woman who buy these). Then there were the ones I liked, but the heels were too tall for me. (I like less than 2 inch heels for my 5' 11" frame). After an hour or more, I settled on a compromise, pretty but not so sexy.

Poor Anne Marie, she was getting nervous, and began sweating. I calmed her down and said she was looking great and not to be concerned. Then I had to go to the bathroom. I seem to get this way the first hour or so when I go out. The bathroom door had a cipher lock, so I had to ask to be allowed to enter. No problem, one of the men who worked there opened the door for me, and I thanked him. A quick job and back I went. We paid for our shoes and off we went to the lingerie store.

Anne Marie had clamed down, and with the air conditioner running in the car, we both dried off. So far so good, makeup holding up, wig looks good, and clothes in place. We parked in a city garage and walked to the store. The lady there was transgender friendly and I introduced us to her. She remembered me from a earlier visit, and was glad to



see repeat customers. I found my long line black strapless bra and Anne Marie got some hose and panties. We admired some of her finer lingerie and made mental notes to return with more money at a future date.

Now it was time for lunch. We picked a nearby hotel and their lunch room. When we entered, we realized we were the only ones there. Wow, is the food bad or are we early? Well, we were seated and had ordered ice tea, so we were committed to eat lunch. The lady who seated us was nice and asked us ladies what we would like. The waiter was equally polite and asked us how everything was.

By now Anne Marie felt at ease. Here were people addressing us as ladies and treating us as such. As we talked to ourselves, I would occasionally remind her that her voice was slipping to its male tone. We giggled about it and kept on talking. On one occasion, we were talking and the lady stopped by to see how everything was. As she left, my voice slipped for a second. As if by coincidence, she stopped, and turned around. I thought to myself, "Did I get read over that slip?" Well, I guess it was just a coincidence, as the rest of the

lunch went fine. Again I had to go to the ladies room, so I asked the waiter for directions. No problem there. Then we paid and left.

Anne Marie said she had had enough for one day so we decided to go back to her place. On the way back we talked about the outing and what fun it was. We decided to do this more often. Anne Marie said that she felt much better going out with a friend, and would have never ventured out on her own. I told her that I had initially been the same way, but now I went out on my own if I couldn't find someone else to go with.

I believe that she had the time of her life, and now realized that this could be so much fun, especially when you have someone to share it with. We got to her place and were starting to park when she noticed one of the neighbors outside. Panic set in! Should we keep on going or park? She suggested we keep on going, so I did. We went down the street a few blocks and said, "What the heck! Let's go back! After all, what's unusual for two women to go up to his door?" I said that as long as he didn't particularly notice us coming and going, most people are not too observant. With the crisis over we parked and scampered inside.

A few laughs and we relaxed. Anne Marie wanted to take a picture of me and I took one of her. There is something about us crossdressers that we want to always be taking each other's pictures. I had brought a Sasson lilac colored suit with blouse that I found at a garage sale for \$5, that was too small for me. Anne Marie tried it on and found it was slightly too small for her, too. However, her sister could wear, it so I told her to keep it. After some talk about wigs, she brought down one she no longer needed that was a little bit longer than mine. I tried it on and it looked quite nice so she told me I could have it. It was a slightly reddish brown in color. With that we had exchanged gifts and established a new friendship.

We talked some more and then it was time for me to leave. We gave each other a hug and promised to do this more often. I now have a new sister and shopping companion. While driving home I couldn't help but smile about being called a lady. It made me feel really good. And better yet, knowing that I had helped a sister get out made me feel all the better. That evening I decided to write an account of our day.



Hey, Good Looking! Here's More Helpful Hints for the Cosmetically Challenged. We're trying to do our part to Keep America Beautiful (and Healthy). Special Thanks are due to Sigma Nu Rho's News Briefs and Alpha Zeta's Cactus Flower, two excellent newsletters whose material regularly appears in this and other sections of the Mirror. Thanks, Ladies!

Gaby's Gems

by Georgia Ann

Safe Use of Eye Makeup

Remember that cosmetics are foreign substances capable of causing eye irritation.

Replace mascara three or four times a year. Through contact with airborne bacteria, the wands can become contaminated and cause infections.

Throw away other types of eye makeup after a year. If your eyes tend to become red or infected, replace these items more often.

Never use saliva to moisten cosmetics.

Never share eye makeup.

Never apply eye makeup while in a moving vehicle.

Use your ring finger or little finger to apply products; the index finger tends to move the skin rather than the cosmetic.

Pat gels and cremes lightly on the skin. Apply a tiny amount of the product, moving from outer corner inward.

For eye shadow, use a cotton swab or an applicator. Dispose of cotton swabs after use and change applicators at least twice a year—three times if your eyes are sensitive.

Don't line the inside of your lower lids with pencil—the wax can block



glands. Stick to the outside of your lids.

If your eyes are puffy and irritated and you're not sure why, try this test: Choose a place behind your ear, under your arm, or along your inner arms or thigh. Wet the skin with cool water, the stroke on one of the eye products you use daily. Circle the area with a pencil and check it in 24 hours. If redness develops, you're allergic. If there's no reaction, leave it and check again in another 24 hours and, if necessary, after a third full day. If there's still no reaction, wash and repeat the process with another product.

If you suspect that the culprit is your iridescent eye shadow, there's a quicker method to test for an allergy: Dab some of the product just inside

your nostril. If your nose starts running you're allergic. (This also works with pearlized powder blusher.)

As you age; your skin becomes drier and gets irritated more easily. You therefore may develop an allergy to an eye product that you've used comfortably for years.

Wear waterproof mascara only when swimming or attending an event that may bring tears, such as a wedding. Otherwise stay with water-soluble mascara, which is easier to remove.

Use a gentle eye makeup remover every night, wiping the area from the outside in, with cotton balls. (Tissues are too harsh for this area.)

Don't color your eyes or eyebrows with permanent or semi-permanent dyes. You risk severe eye injury and even blindness.

Make sure that your nail polish is dry before you put makeup on your eyes. Ingredients in the polish can irritate and cause allergic reactions.

You can remove eye makeup with baby oil, mineral oil or petroleum jelly. Then splash with water.

Gaby's Gems by Georgia Ann

What's New in Skin Care and Makeup

Hairfree and Carefree

Any woman who has ever attempted to shave her legs in haste can attest, speed kills. To prevent nicks and cuts when you're in a hurry, the answer is simple: Don't shave. Instead, apply Nair's new Roll-On Lotion Hair Remover (\$4.39) to legs prior to hitting the shower. Roll it on (no fussing with icky creams) and wait 5-10 minutes. Then wash off the creme and the hair off. Your legs will be hair free, but also, and Band-Aid free.

Toys for the Tub

Dispassionate about your bubbles? Clever Paris designer Jean Paul Gaultier has metamorphosed his torso-shaped perfume bottle into fashionable new bath toys. Gaultier's trim-waisted bath pearls (20 for \$40) dissolve in the bath water, releasing fragrant oil that leaves skin lightly scented.

Making Your Lips Poolproof

Want to relax at the pool with a low-upkeep lip look? Try Professional's Four Lip-Sticks in a Box lip kit (\$30). It contains four waterproof and melt-proof matte lipstick pencils that work equally well as both lipcolor and liner. Obtainable in scarcely-there shades that are easy to smooth on and look simply great in or out of the water. For more information, call 800-905-1001.



Addicted To Eyes

The erotic look that turned Robert Palmer's "Addicted to Love" backup babes into '80s icons has returned. The trend took flight at the recent Gucci fashion show where makeup mentor Linda Cantello reprogrammed the power style with smoky eyes, pale skin and light lips.

Brainy Blusher

Applying blush isn't exactly brain surgery, but getting it correct can be difficult. If yours goes on too bright or streaky, you can try this new blush-bungle repair. It's a chamois-covered paddle from ooVo Beauty Hardware (\$5.50) that's just perfect for blending

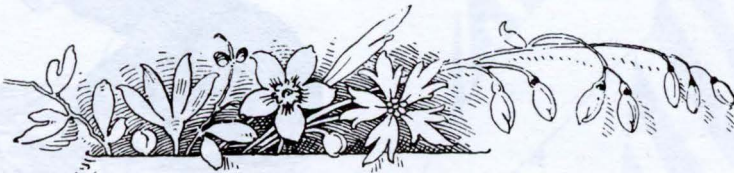
cheek color into a sheer, natural-looking finish. You can use this new makeup tool with powder or cream blush, and the paddle is washable. To order the paddle call 800-996-6686.

On-Line Beauty

There's a new exit on the information superhighway. The Clinique web site offers Internet surfers much more than simply made to order skin care advice and virtual-reality makeup tutorials. Look up <http://www.clinique.com> for clever tips on finance, travel, and food. Throughout the stores in July at Clinique counters, you could even pick up a "Woman's Guide to the Internet" starter kit (while supplies lasted).

Neutrals Are New Again

You can heave a sigh of relief if you flinched at the very thought of wearing last season's blatant, deep lipcolors. The latest hues on the runways (at shows like Calvin Klein, Jil Sander, and Michael Kors) were sophisticated new neutrals that won't be seen from a block away. Check out Guerlain's Kisskiss HydroSoft Neutral Lip Collection Lipsticks (\$19) or Estee Lauder's new Lip Shaper/Primer (\$22.50) a neutral-toned concealer/lipstick that can be used alone or to bring dark lipcolors up to date.



Ask Marylou

An Advice Column on Apparel and Its Wear and Care by Marylou Luther

Dear Marylou:

One subject you have not addressed — and should — is the hemline. Girls and women should not wear short/shorter skirts if their legs are heavy. No matter the style of the year/season, fat legs must be covered. Only slim legs look great with short skirts. Otherwise wearing short skirts is very offensive. Please comment.

The big beautiful women at Big Beautiful Women will find your weighty comments size-mologically incorrect. I agree that slim legs look great with short skirts, but I have to take exception to your use of the word “only.” With the right combination — black skirt/black opaque pantyhose — many less-than-perfect legs can look good — if not great — in short skirts.

Fortunately for your viewpoint, thigh-baring minis are no longer a fashion problem for the fat-legged because they do not exist in designer stocks for fall. To put it another way, they won't be around to offend you come July when the fall merchandise hits the stores.

While Calvin Klein is the only major designer to show only long (anywhere from mid calf to just below), long skirts and/or dresses for day are part of every major designer's hemline mix. Knee lengths are another option. While minis have disappeared into Fashion Siberia, skirts that stop an inch or two above the knees are definitely still mainstream. And pants are more important than skirts of any length in the daytime fashion lineup.

Dear Marylou:

My grandmother gave me herald brown mink stole. Any ideas for updating or renovating? (And, please, no lectures about wearing fur. I also wear leather shoes and eat meat.)

If it is in good condition wear it, as is. But instead of wearing it over a brocade sheath dress or dinner suit as your grandmother may have done, wear it atop a pant suit. If only some of the skins are okay convert your stole into neck scarves. Perhaps because of New York's exceptionally cold winter, many New York designers showed fur and fake fur scarves in their fall-winter collections. The list includes CK (Calvin Klein's secondary line), Victor Alfaro, Han Feng, Anna Siti and Jill Stuart.

Dear Marylou:

I have fat ankles. What shoe style is best for me?

Shoes with low-cut vamps will draw attention downward, away from your ankles. Similarly knee-high boots will draw attention upward hiding your ankles. You probably know this, but don't wear ankle-strap shoes or booties that end at the ankle.



Dear Marylou:

How do I know if my silver earrings are sterling silver?

In order to qualify as sterling silver jewelry must contain 92.5 percent silver and 7.5 percent copper. (The copper is needed to harden the silver, which is not as strong a metal as 14k gold, for example.) Jewelry that meets this requirement is stamped .925 sterling — the mark of quality. A spokeswoman for The Jewelers of America Inc., says that lesser qualities of silver are used and sold outside the U.S. and they are marked either .875 or .750. She says such silver jewelry will not have the gleaming finish of the .925 stamp.

Dear Marylou:

What is a currently-in-fashion slenderizing look for a well-proportioned size 16 that is 5'8"?

Body-skimming tunic tops with narrow pants (not tights) are very much a part of the current scene — a little more so than tunics with narrow skirts, which are equally flattering for you. A good rule to remember is that only one item — your choice of the top or bottom — should be loose. In this case, the tunic is the loose element. Long, easy shirt-jackets or kimonos are also good for downsizing.



Fashion Forum

Compiled by: The News Briefs Staff

Bathing in Basic Black

Noteworthy fashion is recurrently about variances or the unanticipated. While color is, literally, bursting on many fashion fronts, in the usually Technicolor world of swimwear, some of the strongest suits are coming up in basic black.

While black bathing suits are the sum and substance of minimalist chic, this season's little black suits extend beyond the basics.

While they seem deceitfully simple, there is a far more supraliminal level of design resourcefulness at work than meets the eye when one takes a first glance at the swimsuits.

Designers with savoir faire were alert to perceive that many of the foremost ready-to-wear trends could easily make the transition into the swimsuit genera. From Karl Lagerfeld cutouts to clever contrast banding at Anne Klein, current design elements are redefining those small pieces of black fabric with substantial style.

Supermodel Naomi Campbell wears Alberta Ferretti's square one-piece. This season's square-necked dress is reflected in the square-necked swimsuit. The overlays of lace and sheer chiffons that are so significant right now in dress design make a startling presentation on the beach.

Smooth and streamlined, the black bathing suit, takes fashion right down to the bare bones and looks marvelous.

Intelligent Wraps

One of the best-looking new coats come with a subconscious message: A man or woman who wears one could be in line to win the Nobel Prize.

We're talking lab coats — those neat and crisp coverups donned by doctors and scientists — have motivated lots of fashion experientialism this season.

You will notice them in greatly polished textures and hues — from a shimmering green linen Isaac Mizrahi describes as Rinsect to Gianni Versace's smooth, brightly colored leathers. From anthropology to zoology; the lab coat is the outer garment of the minute.

Fashion enchantment is not unlike a chemical reaction, and fashion's enchantment with the lab coat is certainly no exception. This it began at the close of the Fall '95 Chanel collection, when designer Karl Lagerfeld sent out model after model in personalized white lab coats. The aftereffect was thoroughly chic — and evocative, too, of all the people behind the scenes in the fashion world's houses, buttoned into their white work coats.

In a tribute to the people who worked by his side, Hubert de Givenchy, who retired recently from fashion design after a lengthy and steadily aesthetic career, traditionally took his bow after his collections in a white coat.

In a way, the significance of the lab coat restates the progression and coming of age of women in the workplace. Just as it responded to women who wear suits on the job, now the fashion world is acknowledging women who work as doctors, as chemists, as aerospace engineers — borrowing the "uniform" they wear at work and sharpening its appeal.

All this is occurring just as the fashion world pares down — though not by reason of severe minimalism, because color and texture abound. There will be fewer details this season. The focal point is now on simple shapes as garments move closer to the body, while still permitting for creature comforts and easiness.

These smooth laboratory-inspired coats make perfect sense. They are coats that look smart — in every sense of the word.



Health Matters

by Sheila Kirk, M.D.

Not infrequently questions are asked about the management of the transgendered child and about the huge problem of telling children born into a family where a transgendered person is one of the parents or a sibling. Parents in either of these situations, must be informed about the Transgendered person. They should have information that approximates that of an experienced therapist/counselor. That kind of information helps their own relationship and prepares them to assist and support the young person who is struggling with gender identity—either in herself or in a mother, father or sibling. Counseling and a great deal of reading is a must. Not to take those steps denies responsibility and opportunity to support.

The following are only a few of the questions asked but this whole area can be revisited again if there is interest in doing so.

1) *My 5 year old son has been found wearing my shoes and carrying my purse on a number of occasions. My husband is more alarmed than I am. What should we do?*

It's not unusual for boys as young as this to cross dress, sometimes to greater extent than what you describe. Many youngsters are exploring and may give up this behavior in a short while, particularly when they enter school and have more interchange with peers. You can explain to him that this behavior doesn't offend you but may not be wise when strangers or company are near.

Your husband should control his reactions as well, for this behavior does not signal transsexuality or sexual diversity—at least not at this time. Other signs should be forthcoming; e.g., more adornment, use of make-up, verbal statements that the boy is a girl and wants recognition and treatment as one, and involvement in contragender play and



roles if not avoidance of same gender behavior patterns. If progression is noted then counseling will be important. But, a word of caution. Counseling with a person experienced in Transgender activity and behavior in children and adolescents is very necessary for the right pathway to be traveled.

2) *My 16 year old daughter is in jeans and T-shirt all the time even when asked to dress more appropriate to the occasion. She strongly resists. She is always with the guys and plays football better than most of them. Her father and I were divorced when she was an infant and she has had no positive male role models. Considering these factors and her behavior, might her actions signal transgenderism?*

Your daughter has been called a "tom boy" I'm sure, and it may be that she is so androgynous that most of what she shows is male-covering what she does not want to show that is female for very private reasons. On that basis, will she marry and bear a child someday? She might, and she still could be transgendered and bending to the wishes of society and those around her in the doing. That is, until one day she breaks out of it all.

And if she is Transgendered. Shouldn't she be allowed to look into this possibility with you and at times evaluate herself, even by herself? Have you had any serious talks with her? Talks that are warm, considerate, searching and supportive? And have you considered some expert help to make the ground she stands upon more comfortable? You don't know enough about the reasons for this behavior. For instance, does she feel so much the loss of her father that she has "become" her father? You and she will need to do some real talking and exploring, together.

3) *I am married to a very loving man who is a crossdresser. He's an excellent father as well. We have 2 children, both below the age of 10. My husband even more than I worries about "giving" them any hint of his crossdressing behavior. We're puzzled on how we should approach this. Please advise.*

This is one of the hardest questions to answer. It has so many ramifications and considerations. Basically what you may need to decide together is, just what is the reason for sharing this knowledge? While it's not always an easy question to answer, you need to look at the possibility of whether your husband may ever be drawn to full time living and/or surgery. If you both feel that this potential will not take place, and that crossdressing can be planned at times where there is no chance for discovery, than why give insight into this? A basic tenet is tell only when there is need. If no real need exists, then say nothing. The question of telling children that a parent is changing gender roles is another matter and one can write about that. And, in fact, I'm doing just that in an upcoming book. Watch for it!

Feminine Types

by Alisa

4) My brother is a year younger than I am. I'm 19 years old. We are very close and I help him when he wants to cross dress. He wears my clothes and makeup and I enjoy doing these things with him. Recently, he talks of wanting surgery to change to a woman. I'm very troubled by this. What should I do?

Your closeness to your brother is all important and can make a great difference to him in the future. You both need education, perhaps counseling. You don't mention parents or anything about your family circumstances, and if your brother's spirit is known to others. It's a very complex issue. His need to explore further his feeling about changing roles must be explored, but not necessarily now. He may accept the fact that once he is out of the immediate family circle and on his own he can face this desire with a more positive hope of solution. This does not preclude the great need for you both to read and consult with an experienced professional. If you need a referral in your city, I can help, if you contact me.

Dr. Sheila Kirk maintains a professional health care referral list, and those who desire to find a psychologist or physician can contact her at the addresses below. She also conducts a teen age crossdressing study, and is writing a book about children and transgenderism. Dr. Kirk also heads a newly formed committee in IFGE that is studying ways to reach out and educate transgendered youth under the age of 16.

You can reach Dr. Kirk at her IFGE satellite office:

E-mail: SheilaKirk@aol.com
Phone: (412) 781-1092
Fax: (412) 781-1096

Mailing Address:

Sheila Kirk
P.O. Box 38114
Blawnox, PA 15238-8114

The way we choose to dress can be a vehicle for how we express our own personality. Many of us choose a pivotal female figure from our past (be it subconsciously or not) to emulate, and some of us have the desire to make ourselves over into visions of the female we seek to be close to. Whatever the reasons, dressing with style is an art form unique unto itself.

Some of the fashion types women classify themselves in are:

1. Dramatic: elegant, exotic, elaborate, ornate - not conservative, anything goes.

2. Natural: country, casual, mix and match things, simple jewelry, layering, earthy fabrics.

3. Classic: tailored, conservative but smart, avoids extremes in fabric fashions and prints.

4. Gamin: petite and youthful (which most of us aren't), little jewelry, sporty, cute and sassy, contrasting buttons, patch pockets, a tie or vest, suits her size.

5. Ingenue: another dainty, delicate size (which most of us aren't), unsophisticated femininity, Victorian, softer colors and lightweight fabrics.

6. Romantic: feminine in both style and fabric, low cut necklines, jewelry is delicate in detail, dresses with theatrical flair as long as it isn't overdone or gaudy, gently curved lines and softly draped silhouette.

These are just some of the details and ideas for the six basic types. Can you apply these to yourself or other club members?

Keep your eyes open for fashion ideas that may help you define your own personality. Whether it be magazines, television, real-life, shopping - fashion is an art, and there are do's and

don'ts. There are lines and colors that will enhance our strong points and diminish our weak ones. Again, it is an art.

Listed below are some thoughts about ultra feminine items, details, fabrics and patterns. It's almost like the contents of a candy store.

Items and details: Lightweight layering, feminine flutter, lingerie looks, bias cuts, slip dresses, empire lines, baby dolls, soft and sheer pants, pajamas dressing, sheer tunics and tops, lace edging and inserts, sheer ribbons, ties and lacing.

Fabrics and patterns: Lightweight silks and cottons, crepe, caupon, georgette (one of my favorites), fluid jersey, lingerie knits, voile, gauze, organdy, chiffon, tulle, netting, open work, burnouts, lace, shiny satins, charmeuse, lightweight pucker, romantic florals, marbleized wash, antique borders and dainty stripes.

Does this appeal to your deepest, sweetest, secret place?

I myself am drawn to ultra femininity partly because it speaks of a time before and a time after the tomboy period in a young girl's life, the delicate roots of a place I didn't come from. I mean, no matter how you cut it, we were boys, even if we did carry the tiniest seeds of femininity buried deep within. But now, by the steps we take (as members of the Metroplex CD Club), we can become the most delicate of flowers in the gardener's eye. The thing is, we are the tenders of our own gardens, and it is up to us to nurture and care for the visions we hold of ourselves. Personally, I get a kick out of taking what is basically a weed and transforming it into a flower. So again, girls, keep your eyes open, look, study, appropriate and assimilate. We will all be prettier flowers for it.

(Reprinted from the *Rose*, newsletter of the Metroplex CD Club)

Ask the Dermatologist

by Jane Ellen Fairfax, M.D.

Dear Dermatologist,

I've noticed that if I wear clip-on earrings for several hours at a time, the next day I have matching red pimples on each ear lobe. They are very noticeable and hard to explain to curious people. Pierced ears would be even harder to explain. Is there anything I can do to prevent this from happening? If not, are there any quick fixes?

- Rhonda, the Red-Earred

Renaissance Girl

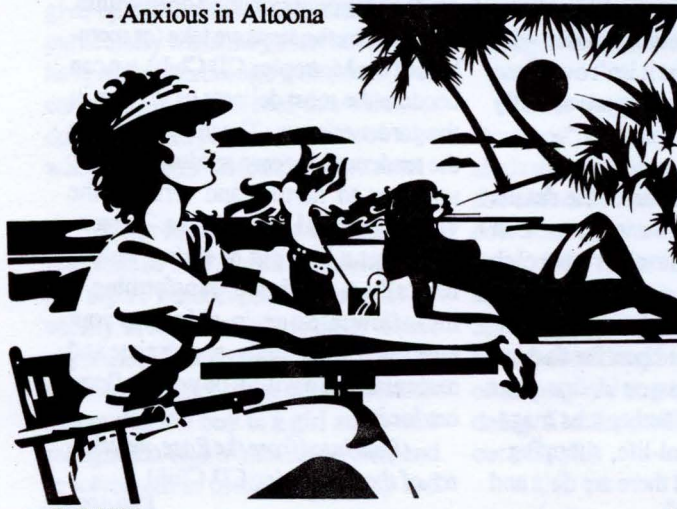
Dear Rhonda,

Those must be some clip-on earrings! If the "pimples" occur on both ear lobes every time you wear the earrings, we can probably rule out inflammatory acne papules. Compression of the blood vessels in the earlobe causes them to constrict. When the pressure is released, the blood vessels overcompensate, becoming dilated and engorged with blood. Usually, this phenomenon lasts several hours. Then, the overcompensation adjusts itself and the color returns to normal. If it lasts longer than that, you are probably suffering a significant cutoff of circulation to the earlobes. A jeweler can almost always adjust the earrings so they do not clip on so tightly. It may also be possible to apply a rubber pressure-relieving device. It's time to tell those crabs fastened onto your earlobes to let go!

Dear Dermatologist,

Like all good sun bunnies in the 60s and 70s I got quite a bit of UV exposure. Now, since I shave my legs to dress en femme and the disguising fur is gone, I have spotted a few small dark (almost black) spots on my legs. Could these be the dreaded Melanoma? How can you tell?

- Anxious in Altoona



Dear Anxious,

Only a dermatologist's visual examination can tell you with reasonable certainty what those pigmented spots are. They sound, however, like junctional moles (nevi). These are benign lesions in which the nevus cells are located at the base of the epidermis. There can be quite a number of these 1mm to 4mm dark flat moles, and they are common on sun-exposed areas.

However, because of increasing defects in the ozone layer, malignant melanoma is becoming more common. One danger signal is asymmetry. Benign moles usually have smooth clear borders. Active, potentially dangerous moles have scalloped or vague borders, or pigment streaming outward from a border. Beware if a previously flat mole rises above the surface. A uniform color is a sign of benignity. Melanomas tend to have various shades of brown, black, blue-black, white, and red. Some may not appear pigmented, but show a red color. These "amelanotic" melanomas are particularly dangerous, because their lack of pigment can imply to the patient that they are something other than melanomas. Growth or bleeding from a mole are clear danger signals that should always prompt a visit to a dermatologist.

You are absolutely right to bring up the subject of sun exposure. People who have suffered at least one severe sunburn are several times more likely to develop melanoma than those who have not. Also, there appears to be a familial factor. Anyone who has a positive family history of malignant melanoma should have a professional evaluation of pigmented lesions at least yearly. It is important to apply a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and a water-fastness of 80 minutes, at least 15 minutes before sun exposure.

A word of warning - Some melanomas show only very subtle changes. If people will do a self-evaluation of their pigmented skin lesions, they can pick up these changes and seek dermatological consultation. In this way many lives can be saved.

A Word About Bras

Usually I tell people that my territory extends down only 1cm from the body surface. A study has come out, however, of considerable significance to the crossdressing population. There appears to be a definite increase in breast cancer in women who sleep in bras, as opposed to those who wear them only during the day. It may be that constant pressure causes tissue toxins to accumulate in the breasts, where they eventually trigger malignant transformation. For transgendered people on hormones, these findings may be particularly ominous. Sleep shirts and silky nightgowns are fine, but it appears that the breasts need relief from constricting straps and underwires.

Buying A Girdle

by Suzanne

(Continued from last issue)

Girdles are available today from several sources:

1) Major department stores now have reasonably extensive selections. As recently as five years ago, it was difficult to find a good selection of girdles in a department store.

2) The old fashioned corset shop still exists and it is worth going out of your way to find one. Look in the Yellow Pages under either Girdles, Corsets, Foundation Garments, Lingerie, or Brassieres. Look for an old-fashioned sounding place, usually with a pseudo-French or campy glamorous name, or the name of the woman who owns the store. These places tend to have the widest selection of girdles. They are an endangered species and are worth patronizing.

3) Mail-order catalogs. Girdle sizing is generally done by waist size. Some girdles are sold by even waist sizes. Most are designated as

**Small (24-26),
Medium (27-28),
Large (29-30),
1-X (31-32),
2X (33-34), and so on.**

Girdles are designed to fit women whose hip size is no more than ten inches greater than their waist size. If your hips are more than ten inches larger than your waist, as mine are, what you should do is a matter of controversy. Most sources suggest that you go to the next larger size. Many women, myself included, believe that you should still choose your girdle according to your waist size, since the added tightness at the hips is less of a problem than the ineffectiveness and even discomfort of a girdle that is too large at the waist.

If a girdle is firm control, if it contains any boning or rigid fabric, or if you have never worn one before, you should definitely try it on before you buy it. Otherwise, trying the girdle on is up to you.

Don't be embarrassed about going into a store and asking to buy a girdle. Every source I've discussed the matter with says that an increasing number of young stylish women with excellent figures are buying them. Virtually every adult female can probably use one with at least one dress in her wardrobe. Before 1970, it was assumed that every woman over the age of 13 needed one to look her best. While no one is likely to make this assertion nowadays, it is still the case that virtually any woman over the age of 13, even women with excellent figures, will find that a girdle will make them look better in many of the dresses, skirts, and pants in their wardrobe.

Some suggestions for the man who might wish to buy the woman in his life a girdle:

1) I always recommend that, if a man wishes to buy a woman an article of clothing he is not sure she will like, that he ought to do it gently, tentatively, romantically, and with respect and consideration. Many women who might not otherwise think of wearing a girdle might be willing to wear one if they know that the man in their life thinks it's attractive and if he presents it to her in a romantic, unpressured way (as part of a gift, or as part of a pattern of romantic gift giving).

2) Many men who might want to purchase a girdle as a romantic gift for the women in their lives might prefer to order from a mail-order catalog. It is however, surprisingly easy and com-

fortable for a man to purchase a girdle for his wife in a department store or in a lingerie shop. My husband has done it several times and he tells me that saleswomen do not consider it uncommon or unusual. Some of the lines he has used:

1) "My wife called me at work and asked me to stop here to get her a girdle because she's having trouble with a dress she wants to wear tonight," or "because she heard you were having a sale on this particular type of girdle," or "because she's been looking all over for this particular girdle and she saw your listing in the Yellow Pages and was wondering if you would have it," and "you're near where I work," etc.

2) At a place where he might become known, by buying his wife stockings, nightgowns, etc. it would not be inappropriate for a man to mention simply that his wife liked to wear a girdle and he'd like to buy her a nice one, along with a slip or a bra that match, or whatever.

RECOMMENDED MAIL-ORDER SOURCES

(I am not a real expert on this, but these have been recommended to me):

Old Pueblo Traders
Palo Verde at 34th Street
Post Office Box 27800
Tucson, Arizona 85726-7800
(Excellent selection of classic girdles)

One Hanes Place
Outlet Catalog
P.O. Box 748
Rural Hall, NC 27098
(Source for girdles by Playtex and Bali)

Roaman's
PO Box 8360
Indianapolis, IN 46283-8360

The Single Crossdresser and Dating

by Glenda Rene Jones

Many articles address the needs of the married crossdresser. Fewer are available for singles. This article discusses how to develop relationships with understanding women and find that marvelous supportive wife.

For 18 wonderful years I was married to what we call the "super supportive wife." Many of you reading this article remember Linda either from a regular meeting or a Holiday. She was active in our community back East, in California, and in New Mexico. Being married to a supportive wife is a blessing worth thanking God for with deep humility. Three years ago she died of cancer.

I started dating a few months after Linda died. Some of my dates have been to local chapter meetings. Supportive women are out there, but finding them requires some changes in normal dating procedures. There are three general approaches one can take as a married crossdresser. All are practiced and, for some, all are viable. One is to crossdress without your wife knowing. The second is for the wife to know, but to have nothing to do with it. For a person who is already married in one of those situations, staying with the status quo probably is the best approach. For a single crossdresser, who wishes to live within a relationship, I think finding a supportive wife carries many advantages. Why take the risk that she may find out if you don't have to? Why not marry someone who will help you shop and dress? That is my approach and the only one I will consider at this time.

I will be very honest and say one of the main requirements for being a single crossdresser dating women is a thick skin. I told one woman who suggested I go for help with my problem. Many just suddenly lose interest. Plan to date more women than the average man

looking for a relationship. When you tell a woman about your esoteric interests, there is always that moment when your heart is in your mouth. Still, there are ways to make judgments that are good well above random chance. I hope to share some of these techniques and strategies.

First, let's look for a moment from the perspective of a woman you may meet. In the many years I have been in this community, I have talked with hundreds of women. Most of them were wives of crossdressers, but some were single girlfriends, or occasionally relatives. These women, who were mostly supportive, expressed some recurring thoughts and concerns. Generally they revolve around fear of discovery and social discomfiture, establishment of their own feminine role in the relationship, and the concern of whether their husband may be gay or transsexual.

Women have experienced menstruation since early adulthood. Had to put off a career in some cases to raise a family. Earned less than male coworkers of less ability. Had to wear panty hose and heels in the summer when they were darn uncomfortable. Had to be nice to an inconsiderate boss to advance their husband's career. Not to mention the pain of child birth. Ever think about that? For some guy to come along and think he is a woman just because he donned a dress simply does not compute in their minds. Imagine on top of all of that to put up with a man who wants to be macho "John" one minute and "sweet little Johnda" another.

I can summarize this article in one paragraph. Your lady will turn on to your male self and not your femme self. Forget the "sister" fantasy. Lesbians want real girls. Many women, however, will accept a husband who likes to crossdress when the subject is properly approached and divorced from fantasy.

To summarize, there are some things we as men can do to enhance our chances with the ladies:

1) Have confidence in yourself and accept rejection in stride. It's going to happen and when it does, go on to the next one. We are generally very intelligent, good looking as men, and financially above the norm. We have much to offer a woman.

2) Forget the fantasy that you become a woman by putting on a dress. Also work to reduce personality differences between "John" and "Johnda." We have some excellent role models in our sorority in this regard. Observe them when you get the opportunity. Cultivate good feminine characteristics many women like. These need not be associated with clothing.

3) Recognize your own limitations and be realistic. Men who are well turned out can usually pass to a limited extent as women in public. Don't push it, however. Men in dresses are NOT women in the eyes of real women.

4) In line with number 3) above, avoid things which compromise your male appearance. Opaque hose cover hairy legs fine. Long sleeve blouses and dresses cover hairy arms. Women can accept a crossdressing boyfriend or husband much more readily if he looks like a man when he takes his dress off.



Lady Grace
PO Box 128
Malden, MA 02148

RECOMMENDED GIRDLES:

Firm control:

Vanity Fair Tulip
Rago Lacette, Shapette, or
"It's Me"
Smoothie "Always 21"
and Classique

Sears Natural Fit
Lily of France Underscene
Triple Control
Playtex 18-Hour and
"I Can't Believe It's a Girdle"
Any girdle by Subtract, Glamorise,
or Crown-ette

Medium and Light Control:

Sears Tulip
Any girdle by Bali, Flexees,
or Olga

WEARING A GIRDLE

(miscellaneous tips and observations)

1) Girdles may be worn with or without panties underneath. There is no "incorrect" way.

2) If a woman has never worn a girdle before, she may find that it feels "different," the first time or first few times she wears one. If a woman is serious about giving girdles a try, she should have some patience, seeing if she likes wearing them after a few tries, rather than after merely one occasion of wearing one.

3) A girdle must fit right. A girdle that is too tight in the thighs, in particular, can cause severe discomfort in the course of a day.

4) Although the main reason women wear girdles is to look better in their clothes, many women find wearing a girdle to be a very pleasant experience. The held-in, held-together feeling produced by a girdle makes many women feel more organized, more alert, and more authoritative, as well as more

attractive. Many women find that girdles make them feel more feminine, and more graceful. Even a very comfortable girdle will improve a woman's posture, helping her to stand and sit straighter. (This may account, to some extent, for the improvement in alertness.)

A woman wearing a girdle will walk and sit with a charming, careful grace that is distinct from the impressions produced by ungirdled informality. In addition to the pleasant tactile feeling of a girdle, many women enjoy the Vintage feeling, the sense of dressing and moving like the truly classy Hollywood actresses mentioned earlier.

5) Many men find girdles attractive, many more, I think, than has ever been acknowledged. I have a strong impression that most men currently over the age of 40 are turned on by them, because of the associations they formed during childhood and adolescence. It appears that a significant number of men in their thirties are attracted to them too. And some particularly sophisticated young men in their twenties, with an interest in the film or literature of the early and mid twentieth century, may be as well.

In any event, I do not believe that girdles in any way deserve their reputation in some circles as matronly garments unattractive to men. As they become more common, I believe that they will lose this reputation and that they will become what they should become: a delightful garment that can help a woman look her best in her clothes and that can provide a certain romantic magic in the relationship between a man and a woman.



With this background we can now look at some of the techniques for dating and forming relationships with women supportive of crossdressing. There is a profile of women who are more likely to be accepting. It goes as follows:

- 1) A woman who is highly intelligent.
- 2) A woman who is highly independent and self-assertive.
- 3) A woman who is fully aware of and totally confident of her own femininity. A good gauge of this is whether she herself goes to pains to have beautiful hair and wears stylish and fashionable clothing.
- 4) A woman who likes the unusual and is willing to probe the established norms.
- 5) A woman who is not homophobic.

Linda, my lovely wife, fit this profile extremely well. She was highly intelligent and self assertive. She was totally confident of her femininity. Just after she died, I donated her enormous wardrobe to some women's shelters. She had tons of beautiful clothes. (Too bad we didn't wear the same size.) She had an inquisitive mind. Finally she had gay relatives and friends whom she liked although she was entirely heterosexual.

Women in this category are frequently quite lonely because they threaten many men. It is hard for many men to accept the fact that their wife is smarter than they in some areas. Respecting such women as equals goes a long way in establishing a relationship.

You will tend to find these kind of women in organizations and groups where the leadership consists of women as much as men. Groups that are tolerant of lifestyles and especially those who accept homosexuals. As an example, churches like the Unitarian Church, Unity, Religious Science and some liberal Christian churches fall into that category and supportive women there are much easier to find. Churches

or other groups that emphasize masculine superiority (churches, for example, who do not have women ministers) or do not accept the homosexual community, generally do not yield accepting women.

So how does one go about courting that future supportive person? I think the most important single factor is objectivity. She may cause your little heart to throb. Consider if she has strong ideas on male/female roles (the so-called Harriet Nelson type.) Determine if she is homophobic. If so, she probably is not going to accept crossdressing.

On the first few dates, find out how she feels on such issues as a lesbian mother obtaining custody of a child. Many such articles appear in the newspaper and getting such a discussion started should not be difficult. What are her expectations of a man? How does she feel about women's rights? Does she seem to be an open-minded person who can look at issues and see things in different lights? Again be objective. It is very unlikely that a woman with strong feelings on traditional male/female roles will accept a man who likes to crossdress.

Say you meet someone who seems to be "Miss Right." What is the next step? There is a window factor. Tell her too soon and you may extinguish the flame before it has a chance to really ignite. Wait too long and one of two things can happen: She can really get mad as the dickens when she finds out that she spent a lot time with you only to "find this out" when she could have been out with others. (A reasonable point.) Alternatively, she may try to force herself to accept it when she really doesn't feel right about it. This can later lead to her bugging you to give it up which you probably do not wish to do. It can be just a continuing sore point in the relationship.

Usually on the fifth or sixth date is the point to broach the subject. How do you tell her? Here is one way.

"Jean, we have been dating now for a month and frankly, I really like you. I think you like me too. There is,

however, something I want to discuss. A while back I joined an international fraternity composed of men and their wives and girlfriends. From time to time we get together and the men dress up as women. Since I enjoy this activity, and the company of my brothers and sisters, I wanted to see how you feel about me being in such a group."

Several things got said in a short amount of time. First, you expressed that you have positive feelings about this woman. Second, that you dress as a woman from time to time, but that you are not alone. Thirdly, this is not a gay organization if the men and their ladies participate. Finally, it is something you enjoy.

Her reaction will tell you volumes, but the bottom line is that it will always be positive or negative. A desire to know more is positive. Almost anything else, including changing the subject, is negative. A negative reaction should be noted and if present, the best thing is to simply minimize the whole thing. A suitable response here might be, "Well, I was just wondering," or, "I am sorry, I didn't mean to get you into something you apparently don't want to discuss." It is quite important to avoid "selling" her if her reaction is not positive. A negative reaction is usually the end of any possibilities. Accept that and go on.

A positive reaction should be one of answering her questions sincerely. Avoid long dissertations. Answer what she asks, but not ten more things as well. Here I strongly recommend that you give her a copy of Dr. Rudd's book, *My Husband Wears My Clothes*. (Keep a couple of copies around in case she takes it home and is always "busy" from that point on.) Once she has read the book, she will probably have many questions. In that line avoid clinical books. They may be of interest to her later, but not at first.

Try to find the focus of any of her concerns. Security concerns should be addressed openly. Point out that we have conventions in major cities every year, yet, we are very careful to not publicize real names. That everyone has a "femme" name that they use.

Discuss specific things like who should be told, how children should be involved, etc. Should the subject come up, point out clearly that you are not gay and have no intention of becoming a transsexual.

One thing I strongly recommend is that all Tri-Ess chapters have a meeting at least every other month where the men come as men. In Houston, we call it "Boys R Us." If a woman wants to meet the community it is probably the best introduction. It is important to get her in contact with other women in the community as soon as possible. I think generally the best introduction to you en femme is at a chapter meeting. It makes the point strongly that you are wearing a costume appropriate for that group activity. In short, ease her into the experience and avoid pushing too fast too soon.

Once these preliminaries are over with, several things need to be openly discussed and solid good faith agreements made. Some women are amenable to her husband making love in a slip or gown. They realize that it can turn him into a Don Juan. Other women do not want the man to wear sexy lingerie, but they will. This is an area that needs to be explored.

Supportive women are worth their weight in gold. When you find one, treat her like the Queen of Sheba. She is worth it.

Good luck.

Chapters On Line

With this issue we have begun listing E-mail and Web Site addresses for local chapters who have designated an E-mail contact. Ideally, each chapter should have at least one member "on line." 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, contact Jane Ellen Fairfax at JEFTRIS@aol.com.

Esmeralda's Song

an article by Diane Ciccotello

DAINNA@aol.com

There is this song from the Walt Disney animation of The Hunchback of Notre Dame, sung by the character Esmeralda. Esmeralda is a gypsy, who at that time were considered to be outcasts or an undesirable element. I felt strongly for the character and understood her song, "God Help the Outcasts." She sang it while taking "sanctuary" within Notre Dame's church walls.

Here is how the song goes:

God Help The Outcasts

I don't know if You can hear me or if You're even there.
I don't know if You would listen to a gypsy's prayer.
Yes, I know I'm just an outcast. I shouldn't speak to You.
Still I see Your face and wonder, were You once an Outcast too?


God help the outcasts, hungry from birth.
Show them the mercy they don't find on earth.
God help my people, we look to You still.
God help the outcasts or nobody will.

Parishioners (Chorus):

I ask for wealth.
I ask for fame.
I ask for glory to shine on my name.
I ask for love I can possess.
I ask for God and His angels to bless me.

(Esmeralda sings again)

I ask for nothing.
I can get by.
But I know so many, less lucky than I.
Please help my people, the poor and downtrod.
I thought we were the children of God.



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Send S.A.S.E. to:
T.P. Brown, P.O. Box 257, Windsor, OH. 44099
(A Tri-Ess Member Serving Her Sisters)

The Piedra Falls Incident

by Diane Liegh

My spouse (Desiree') and I had been looking forward to getting away from the steadily increasing pressures which life had been handing us. Her mother's health is failing (we cared for her all of May), her brother-in-law was killed in a farm accident in May, and she recently was forced to retire from a 23 year position of authority due to major changes in the formula of the retirement plan. I am now in the position of having to decide whether to retire now or at my normal retirement time in the future, my workplace has undergone a tremendous upheaval in terms of personnel let go, budgets cut, inventory reduction, etc.

We had hoped to visit our friend Dianna in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, but she also has some of the same problems and couldn't get away. We decided to take off on our own without a schedule or agenda of any kind. The broad goal was a leisurely drive through New Mexico and into southern Colorado. Desiree' packed for herself and Diane packed for both herself and her male alter ego. Packing for Diane was much more fun. Deciding what outfits (notice the plural) to take, what accessories to take for each outfit, and making sure I took enough panties, bras and pantyhose so that I would have clean, new, complete outfits for every day if the opportunity arose.



Desiree' and I left Fort Worth in our trusty little black Oldsmobile for a week of R & R. We left late one afternoon and headed towards Wichita Falls. About ten pm, while driving merrily along and just a wee bit over the speed limit, suddenly I noticed flashing red and blue lights in my rear view mirror. I pulled over and was informed that the nighttime speed limit was 65MPH, not 70MPH as it was in the daytime. The officer also informed me that the lights on our rear license plate were not lit. He was very polite, as was I, and he issued a warning ticket. If we had only known then that that ticket may have been meant to represent more of a warning than we understood at the time we might have turned around and gone back home.

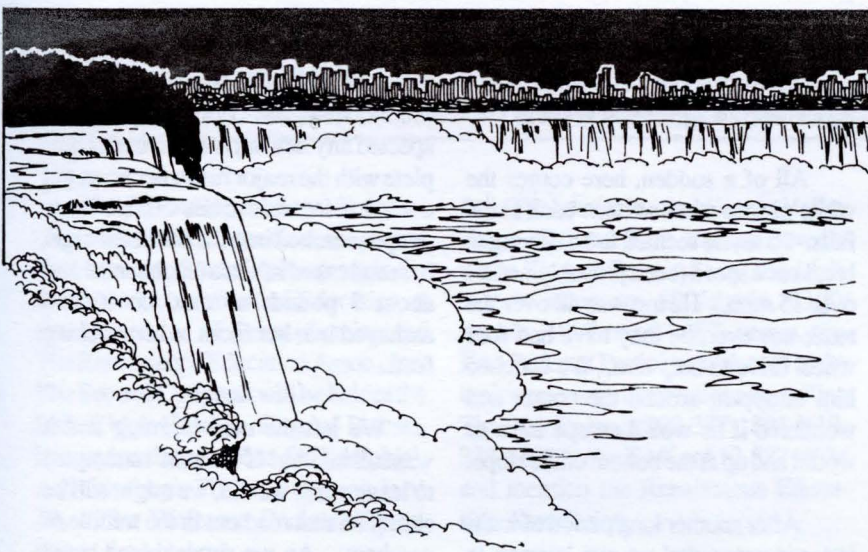
We continued on for a while and finally decided to spend the night at Childress. We found a motel, right on the highway, that Duncan Hines had purposefully overlooked. The next morning we got up, ate at a small restaurant next door and were on our way. Not too much later, I saw those same pesky flashing lights in my mirror again. Now lest anyone get the wrong impression, let me state that I haven't received a traffic citation or even a warning since I was in high school, and that was many decades ago. I pulled over and this nice officer informed me that I had been doing 72 in a 50 zone, but he was only going to write the ticket for 71!

I thanked him profusely, accepted the citation and then let Desiree' drive. We had both learned something about the current status of law enforcement (at least against us) and for the remainder of the trip drove the speed limit or less (usually). It sure was difficult to see all of those other cars zipping past us. Our lesson was well learned however and would prove very beneficial in the not too distant future.

We spent almost two full days in New Mexico traveling back roads and enjoying mountains, streams and other scenery. One afternoon while driving down a winding backroad, speed limit 45, we came around a corner and over a hill only to see a truck in the oncoming lane and a car passing him in our lane. Due to our low speed, we were able to brake enough so that the other car could squeeze back into his lane between us and the truck. Had we not been stopped twice in the last couple of days, more than likely we would have been going considerably faster and might not have been able to avoid an accident.

We decided to spend a night in Angel Fire where I had skied many years ago. Things had changed greatly since that time. We stayed at "The Inn at Angel Fire". It had recently had a major fire, gone through a bankruptcy, and was under new management. The new management was a young man and his wife that apparently had bought it and were trying to get it back into operation all by themselves. They had a long way to go before reaching a minimum level of acceptability. That evening we drove over to Red River to watch the square dancing at the community center. Desiree' and I both have square danced and thought that we just might see someone that one of us knew. We didn't see anyone we knew but still enjoyed watching the dancing fun.

The next day we went back and spent the morning in Red River just looking around. The days were warm, not hot, and the evenings were a dream - in the low 50's. We continued our travels and arrived in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, after having driven over the Wolf Creek Pass and marveling at its beautiful scenery. We then spent a day looking at property in the area with the thought in mind of possibly retiring there in the future.



Piedra Falls? Not!!!

Now we finally get to the reason for this article in the first place. The next day was sight seeing day. We had heard how beautiful Piedra Falls (waterfalls) was, so we decided to go see them. When Desiree' and I vacation, Diane gets to go along and dress for a day or two. This was the day. Diane dressed in a pretty little Tee Shirt with cap sleeves and three embroidered flowers on the front. She also wore a hummingbird pin on her right shoulder. The sleeves and neck were trimmed in pink to coordinate with her pink and white checked skorts. Hose and a pair of pink strap sandals finished off the outfit. Of course she also wore a watch, bracelet and several rings. Polishing her fingernails and toenails, putting on her makeup and doing her hair were also part of the fun. When she thought she was ready, she presented herself for a Desiree' "Seal of Approval" and off they went.

The first stop was a lake about 30 miles off of the paved road. It was a tranquil setting with the lake in the foreground and mountains in the background on three sides. There were many campsites, most of which were occupied. Desiree' and Diane both got out of the car and took each other's picture - to prove that they had been away from home. After admiring the scenery for awhile, we were on our way to Piedra Falls. We had been on a rough gravel road since leaving the highway. A few miles down the road even the gravel ran out and here we were on a plain dirt road, going up and down steep inclines and around sharp curves. For some reason, this dry dirt was slippery and the

car even fish-tailed a couple of times! Desiree' was driving, to allow Diane to bask in luxury. I guess that this would be an appropriate time to say that we were told not to go to the falls if the road was wet. Well, it hadn't rained in months so we knew we were safe. Not only had it not rained in months, there was no rain in the forecast in the foreseeable future.

We arrived safely at the falls and after about a 20 minute hike we were at the base. We passed several people who were coming down from the falls. The path was very narrow and there was no avoiding them, so Diane just said "Hi" and kept on going. In our humble opinion, this was a waterfall but was singularly unimpressive. After taking a few more pictures we started back to the car.

Imagine our surprise to first hear THUNDER and then to feel RAIN-DROPS! We dashed to the car and were immediately under way! Fate chose Diane to drive for some reason. We made it around one curve and then on a straight-away, with the road sloping toward the precipitous edge of the mountain, THE BACK END OF THE CAR STARTED TO SLIDE DOWN HILL! We had been going all of 2-3 miles per hour. We felt so helpless! Was this going to be our finish? The car finally stopped sliding. We didn't get out to look; first, because we were so scared we probably couldn't have stood up, and secondly, we weren't sure that the car wouldn't start sliding again if we moved. I think the back wheels were no more than six inches from the edge of a long, steep mountainside.

After our heartbeats slowed down to mere thousands of beats per second, and we could breathe again, we debated our course of action. We were perpendicular to the roadway and completely blocking it. There was one other vehicle left at the falls, a pickup. If it were to come speeding around the corner, it could hit us and knock us all over the ledge.

We decided we had to move. I put the car into the lowest gear it had and eased on the gas. At first nothing happened. At least we didn't go sliding backwards or spin the wheels. SLOWLY our little front wheel drive vehicle began to inch forward. I turned the wheels to try to get realigned with the road. The front wheels did turn but the rear wheels just slid sideways! Other than in the movies, have you ever seen a car going down a road sideways at 1 mph?

Finally the rear wheels caught and we were able to get straightened out with the road. We stopped and rested again. As we were trying to regain our composure, a man on a little four wheel all-terrain vehicle appeared beside us. (Our guardian angel?) He had on rain gear and had his black and white dog tied onto the platform behind him! We told him how bad the road was behind us and he assured us that it was WORSE in front of us. We had about 3 miles of this road surface with steep grades and hairpin turns. He suggested we sit right there for at least 30 minutes AFTER THE RAIN STOPPED. He opined that the road would dry out quickly and we could be safely on our way.

He and I (Diane) talked for several minutes. I didn't notice any vocal or facial expression that implied that I wasn't just what he was looking at - a damsel in distress. He then disappeared down the road from which we had just come. We sat there a long time but the rain didn't seem to want to stop.

Finally I decided to try to inch ahead. Putting the car in gear, I crept along at 1 mile per hour or less and the car still was all over the road. We stopped again and waited. I was driving with every muscle in my body. I didn't realize how tense I was until I stopped the car.



Now I have read many articles and heard many presentations about always having a survival pack with you when you go out dressed. Having male clothes to enable me to switch back into the male persona wouldn't have done much for my situation, but had we gone over the edge, it would have made it easier on my survivors. As it was, I already had a MAJOR RUN in my hose and my poor sandals were absolutely **CAKED WITH MUD**. How could I have appeared in public looking like that?

Has your mommy ever warned you about going out of the house in dirty or holey panties? Well, mine has, and I can assure you that even though I had a run in my hose, all the rest of my undies were clean and presentable. However, in times like that, what you're wearing, how you look, or what other people think just doesn't mean anything. If

you have the time, or the presence of mind to worry about that, your situation is not nearly as grim as was ours.

All of a sudden, here comes the white pickup that had been back at the falls. To us, he seemed to be driving at breakneck speed (but it probably wasn't over 15 mph.) He too was all over the road; however, he may have had four wheel drive to help him. We watched him disappear around the corner and wondered if he would escape alive or would end up at the bottom of the slope.

After another long period of waiting, we proceeded on our journey to escape the mountain. At top speeds of 3 mph we bolted down the mountain side to freedom! Along the way we saw where the truck that had preceded us had gone off the road in several places - fortunately all on the uphill side of the road. It took us between 1 and 2 hours to navigate that 3 miles of dirt road. Once we were finally back on gravel we breathed a humongous breath of relief. We still had about 30 miles to go to get back to the lodge but now we knew that **WE WOULD MAKE IT**.

When we arrived at the lodge it was raining hard. I was able to park right in front of our room, but there were numerous people sitting outside in front

of their rooms watching the (to them) welcome rain and enjoying the panoramic view. Of course they also inspected any new arrivals. Diane, complete with the major run in her hose, got out of the car in front off all those people, reached into the back seat to get her mud caked sandals (each sandal had about 3 pounds of mud on it) and sashayed into her room in her stocking feet.

We left the next morning and it was still raining! If we hadn't attempted to leave when we did, we might still be sitting on that road out in the middle of nowhere. As we drove home, mud continued to break free from under the car whenever we hit a bump all the way back to Fort Worth.

So here we are back in Fort Worth, Texas. What have we learned?

1. There is obviously some reason we are still alive. We must have some unfinished business here on earth and we can't leave until it gets accomplished.

2. Always carry a crossdresser's transfer (survival) pack to allow you to transfer back to the male persona - if you have nothing more important to do.

3. NEVER go to Piedra Falls again!

Confessions of a Party Girl

by Alisa

Yes, my name is Alisa and I am a party girl. On average, 3 out of every 4 weekends I am doing my part at the bar, on the dance floor, stepping into the straight world, flaunting and prissing my femaleness for all to see. Expressing my moods with hemlines, necklines, soft or sexy outfits is great fun and a raging delight but the real joy for this party girl lies in tapping my inner femininity, letting it flow into every gesture and fiber of my being.

Almost 5 years ago, from those first steps (after a Delta Omega meeting) I started to sense and be drawn to the importance of my feminine self being in the world. I am almost sure that these little steps led to the abandonment of my heavy guilt concerning what oth-

ers would think about me dressing up in girls clothes. We are not less human, we are richer humans because of this.

This word "passing" as in "do you think she passes?" Surely at this late date we all realize that passing should deal with most importantly, inner passing. Does she pass as a girl, a woman, a female in her own heart? Does he allow himself to love and embrace his own sweet femininity? I am sure I do not pass as a genetic female to the vast majority of staring eyes out there, but that's okay, for my power lies in the confidence I hold in my own femininity be it somewhat exotic and stork like.

Amazement still sweeps over me at moments as I sit at some restaurant or

club and realize that I am dressed in public, every stitch a female. What follows is a delicious rush as I perk up my posture, recrossing my legs, melting into a kind of feminine bliss. Perhaps it is a new freedom, so far from the silent, strong, rigid male posturing, that is part of this joy. I mean you can be as prissy feminine as you wish. People already think...you know what they probably think, so just remember what you are wearing underneath and go with it!

So I raise my glass in a graceful, demure salute to the absolute joy of our unique femininity.

See you on the dance floor!

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON SEX & GENDER ISSUES

June 19 - 22, 1997 The Park Ridge at Valley Forge, (King of Prussia, PA)

The Second International Congress On Sex & Gender Issues is cosponsored by the Human Sexuality Program in the Graduate Department of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and The Renaissance Education Assoc., Inc. The Second Congress will be held at the Park Ridge Hotel in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania (suburban Philadelphia). Activities begin Thursday evening, June 19, with a Welcome Cocktail Reception at the hotel.

Special Plenary Session speakers are Kate Bornstein, playwright and author, and Dr. Louis Gooren, Professor of Medicine at the Vrije University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Ms. Bornstein is best known for her play Hidden: A Gender and her book Gender Outlaw. She will also speak at the banquet on Saturday night. Dr. Gooren is one of the preeminent sex and gender researchers in the world. His research team made the recent finding of significant similarities between the brain structures of MtF transsexuals and genetic females.

A partial list of participants giving one of the 48 presentations or workshops includes: Dr. Randi Ettner; Dr. Carl Bushong; Phyllis Frye, Esq.; Jacob Hale; Holly Boswell; Dr. Roger Millen; Maxwell Anderson; Dr. Lee Etscovitz; Michael Saffle; Dr. Michael Gilbert; Alison Laing; Dallas Denny; Niela Miller; Dr. Mary Ann Schroeder; Dr. Bill Stayton; and Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton.

New to this congress will be a vendor area with an emphasis on publishers and professional organizations. If your organization/company would like to exhibit at the conference, please contact Ms. Dallas Denny at <aegis@mindspring.com> or call (770) 939-2128.

The Park Ridge Hotel is located in King of Prussia, Pa., about 30 minutes from Philadelphia International Airport. The hotel is served by several limousine services for which the cost is about

\$18. The hotel is located close to Valley Forge National Park and the now-famous King of Prussia Shopping Mall. Rooms rates are \$90/single, \$100/double (1997 rates) + 8% occup. tax. Free Parking. Participants should make their own room reservations by calling The Park Ridge at 800-337-1801 [610-337-1800] or by FAX at 610-337-4624 and mention the Renaissance Education Association.

Registration Fee: \$80 per person. Register before January 1, 1997 for only \$60 per person and your name will be entered in a drawing to win a complimentary room for the conference. *Note: Rooms and meals are not included in the Registration Fee.*

Make check or money order payable to the Renaissance Education, Assoc., Inc., Congress Registration, 987 Old Eagle School Road, Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087. The Saturday evening banquet with Guest Speaker Kate Bornstein, author of "Gender Outlaw," is extra cost (\$37). Please indicate if you will attend the banquet.

** CALL FOR PAPERS ** DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: JAN 15, 1997

INFORMATION FOR PRESENTERS

Major Themes of Interest:

- * Brain Sex and Gender Identity: Nature vs. Nurture
- * Gender Identity in The Third Millennium: Social and Legal Issues
- * Counseling Issues & Methods
- * Transgender Identity and the Arts

FORMAT

Three Plenary Sessions: Fri., Sat., Sun. mornings (Jun. 20-22)

Four sets of 45-minute concurrent sessions

Workshops; one and two hour formats (optional)

Each conference day will be struc-

ured to provide ample time to attend sessions and conduct general discussions. Meetings and workshops will take place between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Social and business functions will be in the evenings.

Papers

Papers offering research data and theoretical positions are welcome. Experimental work is particularly desired. Clinical material is welcome particularly to illustrate how counseling helps resolve transgender issues. Non-clinical presentations on the social and legal issues of gender and gender identity are especially welcomed.

Workshops

There will be opportunity to present significant material in workshops. Submit topic, length of time required, goals of the workshop, and facilities required for presentation. Workshops are open to all conference registrants.

HOW TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS FOR PAPERS / WORKSHOPS

1. Two copies of abstracts of papers and workshops must be submitted to both of the Program Committee Co-Chairs: Vern Bullough, Ph.D., R.N., 17434 Mayall St., Northridge, CA 91325, and Sheila Kirk, M.D., PO Box 38114, Blawnox, PA 15238-9998. Submission deadline: January 15, 1997

2. Abstracts and Workshop Descriptions should contain sufficient information to adequately judge the proposal. Those proposing a workshop are not required to submit an Abstract but rather include information about the format of the workshop, e.g., experiential, demonstration, discussion, et al., and what the workshop will accomplish.

3. Proposals should be typed on 8 1/2" by 11" paper, one side only, double-spaced. Send four (4) copies. Proposals may also be submitted by email to <SheilaKirk@aol.com>.

4. All proposals must include:

Title

Author's name, position and/or title, address of affiliation or institution, phone number.

Specific area of contribution (educator, therapist, counselor, researcher)

Objectives of presentation

Methodology of presentation

Outline of presentation content

Time needed to make presentation

A list of equipment and aids required: slide projector, overhead projector, chalkboard, newsprint pad, etc. This information should be included even though it may be tentative.

All questions on programs and presentations must be directed to Drs. Kirk and Bullough.

The Park Ridge Hotel is located in King of Prussia, Pa., about 30 minutes from Philadelphia International Airport. The hotel is served by several limousine services for which the cost is about \$18. The hotel is located close to Valley Forge National Park and the now-famous King of Prussia Shopping Mall. Rooms rates are \$90/single, \$100/double (1997 rates) + 8% occup. tax. Free Parking. Participants should make their own room reservations by calling The Park Ridge at 800-337-1801 [610-337-1800] or by FAX at 610-337-4624 and mention the Renaissance Education Association.

General correspondence only may be directed to: JoAnn Roberts, Ph.D., PO Box 61263, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

Phone: 610-640-9449

Fax: 610-648-0257; Email:

<cngsr2@cdspub.com>.

This conference is co-sponsored by the Human Sexuality Program in the Graduate Department of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and The Renaissance Education Assoc., Inc.

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!

Now, here are the Pen Pals:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| AZ-3954-B | Rebecca |
| CA-3800-M | Charli |
| CA-1765-B | Cindy |
| CA-3845-C | Elaine |
| CA-1282-V | Fran |
| CA-3354-N | Michelle |
| CA-4009-W | Paula |
| CA-4249-F | Shirley L. |
| FL-2789-S | Cynthia |
| FL-3434-C | Debi |
| FL-3892-B | Jeanne |
| FL-2520-B | Joan Ann |
| FL-3720-R | Karen Rose |
| FL-3640-C | Norma |
| FL-4046-J | Rita |
| GA-4158-B | Franki |
| HI-3562-A | Alana |
| IL-4272-L | Julie |
| IL-3623-G | Nancy |
| MN-3996-L | Carla |
| MO-3752-B | Laura |
| NC-3743-H | Ann |
| NC-3723-C | Sherri |
| NJ-3818-L | Carol Ann |
| NJ-3884-K | JoAnn |
| NJ-2548-W | Joanne M. |
| NY-4022-B | Cathy Ann |
| NY-1320-N | Connie |
| NY-3433-T | Donna |
| NY-3277-H | Evelyn |
| NY-4177-H | Joan |
| NY-3943-F | Lisa |
| NY-3717-P | Tammie |
| PA-2542-K | Jan |
| TN-1230-H | Rita |
| UT-3779-E | Genevera |
| VA-2642-I | Madelyn |
| VA-3401-W | Samantha |
| WI-3846-L | Adrienne |
| FCON-3797-B | Barbra |
| FCON-4010-S | Julie Ann |

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!)

Carol Ann's Corner

On Matters of Safety and Security

(Addressing the Alcohol Issue)

Early in the month of July, after several distasteful and truly frightening occurrences, the elected officers of Sigma Nu Rho Chapter met and passed a resolution banning the use of alcohol at all future chapter meetings.

The annual picnic was conceived as a casual get-together for the sole purpose of having some fun in the sun. No business meeting was planned. It was only by the good graces of the hotel that we had the meeting room, at no charge, so our sisters could view movies in relative comfort. A few of our sisters seemed to be selfishly bent on pursuing their own personal pleasures, in total oblivion and without compassion for the health and well-being of others. They seized the moment to voice their opposition to the ban on alcohol. While we are strong advocates of voicing opinions, on matters of safety and security, we tend to be rather one-sided. In any case, it appears that the officers have dared to open Pandora's Box.

Our antagonists first questioned whether we were a support group. I answered, "Yes, for heterosexual crossdressers—AA meets down the hall." I am not a professional therapist, but I do know that if someone has a drinking problem the correct treatment is not to encourage that person to have another drink. I believe, in all honesty, if you need alcohol to get a "high" while dressed, may I suggest that you have a much deeper-rooted problem than we can help you with. In short, you need professional help. I beg to differ with our detractors. Consequently, by banning alcohol we may have, inadvertently, broadened our support parameters.

The opposition began by citing the reason we were not allowed to smoke in the meeting room. They maintained that the consuming of alcohol constituted a negligible effect to those around them. It could be nowhere near as harmful as secondary smoke. I attempted to explain that in the case of

several of our sisters, the temptation caused by the nearness of alcohol could be far more deadly than secondary smoke. Only a cretin would smoke in front of a lung cancer patient. Would he be a better person if he drank in front of someone suffering from an alcohol related disease because he sees no physical connection? Without going into details, we have a few former and recovering alcoholics in the group. Let us show them the same love and respect that we show them as crossdressers.

The disaffected sisters appeared to be questioning whether the elected officers had overstepped their authority by instituting the ban. It is not for the membership to decide. It is we, the officers, who will be liable, and possibly sued, if someone leaves the meeting in an inebriated state, gets behind the wheel of an automobile, and kills or maims someone. The officers of this chapter are charged with its safety and security and when anything threatens these principles, time is of the essence. We will always "shoot first and ask questions later."

If the President of the United States sudden found out that we were under nuclear attack, would he wait to call Congress into session to deal with the problem? I don't dare to compare my importance with that of the President, but it illustrates my point. We can take the simile even farther. We all banded together for mutual support and security just as nations form defense alliances such as NATO. When one is attacked it is considered as an attack on all. I think this detail was very well illustrated by the sisters who gave the elected officers their vote of confidence. Thank you, one and all.

Just as a clarification, the alcohol ban extends to all general meetings that are held in fixed locations, e.g., the hotel, Carol Ann's home, etc. The ban does not apply to the Girl's Night Out where every sister is accountable for

her own behavior. Similarly, every sister is expected to pay her own bar tab.

While on the subject of safety and security, I would like to impress upon our sisters the importance of keeping your personal information, that is in our files, up to date. While I fully understand the fears of those sisters who have not supplied their phone numbers (and the application does state that it is optional), I would encourage you to do so. Our constitution and bylaws expressly forbid us to use them for any other purpose than administering the affairs of the chapter and we are strictly bound by any special instructions you may impose.

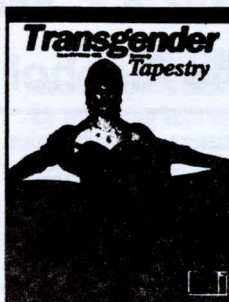
I offer you this scenario. A sister attends a meeting. All things are as they should be. Suddenly she is stricken by some unknown illness. She is rendered unconscious and is unable to speak. We call 911. At the hospital, as the sister barely clings to life, the doctors are pleading with us for information on the next of kin to give permission to perform a lifesaving procedure. Lacking this vital information we are left with no recourse but to grieve your passing. Does it sound so far-fetched? We have lost three people in the space of one year. It could happen. Does your fear of being revealed outweigh your fear of death?

All these recent episodes have started me to become concerned about our sisters' health. All those rich, calorie-laden dinners we've enjoyed on our Girl's Night Out program combined with the fatty snacks and meals at the meetings are starting to show. (I am speaking for myself.) We do not plan to abandon our present meeting offerings. (Some girls can eat anything and not get fat.) We will be introducing low-fat and no-fat foods for those of us who want an alternative. We'll attempt to do as the Lay's commercial says, "Eat like one of the guys and still look like one of the girls." I will also initiate a News Briefs column dealing with healthy recipes for our girls who like to amuse themselves in the kitchen.

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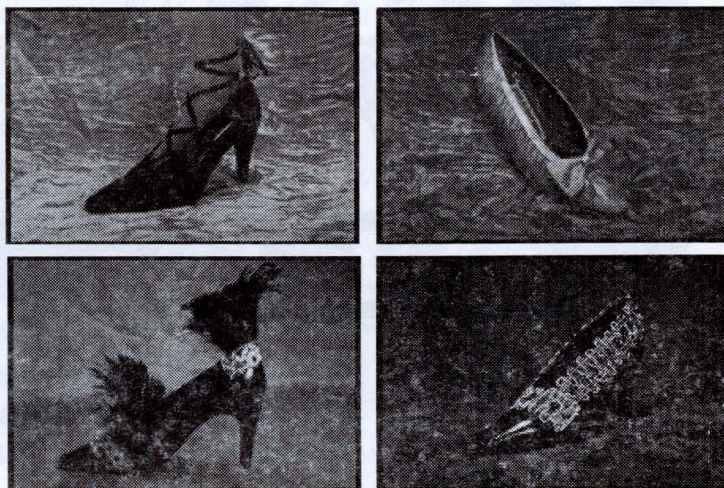


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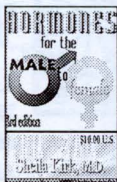
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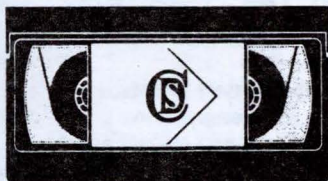
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