

Sacred

Cows

Make

the

Best

Ham

burger

A collection of editorials
and essays
by JoAnn Roberts



Sacred Cows Make the Best Ham burger



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LadyLike Files

WHERE I GOT MY FEET WET.

This is the first editorial I wrote for LadyLike Magazine. Here, I displayed my ignorance about the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. I later wrote about the great DSM Debate which is included in this book. However, that point aside, this is still a good piece. This appeared in LadyLike #4, around June 1989.

FUTURE VIEW

One thing that I do a lot of lately is dream about the way it could be for us in the gender community. There are so many possible ways to get the eyes of the world opened so we can go live our lives as we choose, not by anybody else's rules. So here is my little wish list. It's my Future View of where we could be and should be going.

- Guaranteed equal protection under the law against discrimination on the basis of gender-role, not sex or sexual preference.
- A gender-oriented BBS with an 800 toll free number.
- A national gender-oriented newspaper, without sex. Start out monthly and eventually move it to a weekly.
- A national gender archives for books, articles, cartoons, other printed matter, videos, tapes, etc.
- A program to help TV and TS prostitutes get off the street. Teach job skills and provide job placement with sympathetic and knowledgeable employers.
- A voice in setting guidelines for TS reassignment.
- A proactive campaign against exploitation of our community.
- Removal of transvestism and transsexualism from the DSM-III-R. We are NOT mentally ill.
- A video tape produced by the community about the community for use on Public Television stations.
- More communication with lesbian, gay, and feminist groups so that we learn more about ourselves and each other.
- More leaders, less rulers.

This editorial appeared about June 1990 in LadyLike #7. Relationships are a special topic for me since my partner and I have struggled to integrate my crossdressing into our relationship. It wasn't, and isn't, always easy.

RELATIONSHIPS

I'd like to talk a little about relationships. I've received several letters asking about some of our Profile girls. The writers want to know how they can look so feminine and yet claim that their spouses or girlfriends don't know about their crossdressing. I wonder about that myself.

I hid my crossdressing from my wife for five years after we were married. At least I thought it was hidden. She saw all the little signs. Wondered why her clothes were rearranged. Why her makeup looked used. She had all the clues but refused to believe what she saw. If she ignored it, maybe it would go away. Hah!

How we came to an accommodation is a long story that continues to this day. It wasn't (and still isn't) easy. It takes commitment, love and communication. It also takes balance. After twenty years of marriage, we're still balancing.

My wife has a right to expect a husband the majority of the time. The fact that she accepts my crossdressing does not mean that I have carte blanche. She doesn't mind having JoAnn around but she wants Joe there more often than not. Not an unreasonable demand.

I have to laugh sometimes when I see a letter from a TV moaning about the wife that left him. He doesn't understand how it happened or why she left. One day she accepted his crossdressing, the next day she's run off with some other guy. One day they're out shopping in the mall for "her" new outfit to go to the Poconos and the next day she's filed for divorce. I laugh because I know why she left, so why doesn't he.

She didn't have a husband anymore, but someone who had become "addicted" to crossdressing. It happens. I've seen it

many times. A wife says she'll try to understand her crossdressing spouse and he takes that as permission to do almost anything he likes. Maybe it means dressing around the house all the time—she feels trapped. Maybe it means shopping for clothes—she gets one set of clothes, but he gets two. Maybe it means he starts taking hormones to develop breasts—she loses her lover. What ever the specific reason, you can be sure it was because the TV was taking her acceptance for granted.

Face it. Transvestism is a narcissistic behavior. We love the way we look when dressed. We love the way we feel when dressed. It turns us on. It is a selfish behavior and it can hurt other people, just as alcohol and drugs can hurt a relationship. Unlike those substances, though, there is a very simple "cure."

Balance is the answer. If you have an understanding lady in your life, make sure that she gets what she needs. Don't assume, ask her what she wants from you. She may only want a night out with you, straight, once a month. Or dinner with non crossdressing friends. Or a getaway weekend without any crossdressing.

It won't hurt. You won't die.

But it may just save your marriage.

This piece marks the first time I wrote about an issue larger and more important than the TV/TS community. This was sparked by the flap over Robert Mapplethorpe's photos and the NEA funding. That's an issue that's still not sorted out. This appeared in LadyLike #9, around September 1990.

POLITICAL ACTIVISM

I hope everyone enjoyed the change of pace with the Photo Album (issue #8). We'll be doing a photo album every fourth issue. It gives us a chance to use all the wonderful photos that we can't place in a regular issue.

I want to move onto a more serious subject, politics. Oh, I hear you groan, but you must listen because everything we've worked to achieve is being threatened.

Pick up any newspaper and look at what's going on around you. The National Endowment for the Arts is being held for ransom by right-wing fundamentalists because Jesse Helms doesn't like Robert Mapplethorpe's sexual images. The recording industry is being bludgeoned by the Parent's Music Resource Center (i.e. Tipper Gore, Senator Albert Gore's Significant Other) to label records with "objectionable language." Members of the rap group 2 Live Crew were arrested on obscenity charges because their album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*, was deemed obscene by a Florida State Supreme Court.

Want more? The Congress has been trying to pass an amendment to the Constitution to make flag burning a crime. The right of a woman to choose whether or not to have an abortion is under massive attack in almost every state. The Federal Supreme Court ruled that the Right to Privacy does not extend to same sex, consenting adults in their own bedroom.

Now what does all this have to do with crossdressing, you may ask? Every thing! In every case above, someone is trying to control what you see, what you hear, what you read and what you do. Your personal freedom is under an unrelenting assault

by people who know better than you do what's best for you. Your Right to Free Speech is about to be canned.

If these zealous guardians of our moral fiber succeed with the above projects, we're in deep shit. It is a short step from records and art to magazines and books. If "they" decide LadyLike has "no redeeming social value", Bang! We're gone. If "they" decide that no one has the right to control what they do with their own body, then any family of a transsexual who disagrees with that TSs choice for reassignment can stop the operation.

Come on people. Wake up and smell the coffee. Do you think that Human Rights and Civil Rights are someone else's problem? Better think again and start to do something. Ah, I knew you'd say, "Like what?" Well, how about this:

- Write letters: A personal letter is a No. 1 priority for an elected official. Make it short and personal - no form letter. Stay to one topic, like the recent Civil Rights Bill for the Disabled - TVs and TSs were specifically excluded. Explain your opinion. Ask where the official stands on the issue and ask for a written reply.

- Make phone calls: Congress work for you so you have to let them know how you feel. Call your representatives office. You'll probably talk to a staffer who will note your call in a log that the congressman will review. Tell the staffer your concern and, again, ask for a written reply.

- Start a petition: This one is tough because you have to sign your legal name. Type your statement of support or opposition of an issue on a piece of plain paper. Make 3 columns under it for Name, Address and Phone Number. You sign it first and then get your friends, relatives and acquaintances to sign it. When you meet a new person, ask them to sign it. Make copies and send to your state and federal representatives.

- Make a visit: Call your rep's home office to find out when he/she will be in town. Tell the office manager about your concern and that you would like to meet the rep personally. If possible, get a group together to meet with him/her.

Don't just sit there looking pretty—Do something positive.

After working in the aerospace industry for 16 years, my job had become sheer agony. I was driving 120 miles a day to and from work. This had to stop and it did. In October of 1990, I went to work at CDS on a full-time basis and I have not regretted it yet. Anyway, this piece ran in LadyLike #10, sometime in December 1990.

EVENING MAGAZINE

Dec. 12, 1990: A funny thing happened on the way to Christmas. After 16 years at the same company, I hated my job with a passion.

They say the best part about beating your head against a wall is that it feels so good when you stop. I stopped. I asked to be laid off and I was. I haven't felt this good in years! But that's not what this story is about.

I decided to hold off on job-hunting until after the first of the year. With a lot of free time available, I expanded my activities as JoAnn, especially in the area of college and university lectures. I did more crossdressing and more talking about crossdressing in October and November of last year than I had in the previous two years put together. One of my activities was a television show called *Evening Magazine* which originates locally at 7:00 P.M., but has national distribution. The crew from *EM* came to a Renaissance meeting and followed us to a lecture at a nearby university. The final piece was about seven minutes long and I must admit they did an excellent job. The piece treated us with respect for the education and support work we do. They even put our address and phone number into the clip. But, once again, I digress.

Days after the show aired, I had reason to call my old workplace and speak to one of the women who had worked for me. (I had managed two groups of people, all females.) She'd known about my crossdressing before I left the job and she'd had no problem with the information. After we concluded our business and began to catch up on personal matters, my friend informed me that just about everyone had seen the *Evening Magazine* piece

and I had been recognized by my voice. OHMIGAWD! I'd been "Outed" by my own devices.

A week later I received a phone call from another woman who had worked for me to invite me to the holiday lunch they'd set up for their small group. Only the people in this group were invited and they wanted me to join them for lunch. I'd been gone almost four months and they missed me! I felt good that my managerial skill had been so appreciated. But, it was the next statement that really floored me. They'd seen the videotape and were curious about my crossdressing, so, if I wanted to, they wanted to meet JoAnn.

My first reaction was to say, "Sure," and my second was to say, "No." I finally succumbed to my third reaction, "I'll let you know, but one way or the other, I'll be there." I wanted to give myself and my friends time to think this over.

Dec. 20, 1990: The luncheon was yesterday. I thought it over and talked with them about it again. I went dressed. I was very nervous as I pulled up to the building where I had once worked. I got out of the car and went to the front doors to wait. One guy I worked with walked right past me without a blink, but my heart skipped a beat anyway. Finally, they came out and off we went.

It was a wonderful luncheon. We spent about three hours catching up on gossip about work and answering questions about my crossdressing. My former employees seemed quite at ease with JoAnn. I felt so validated as a person that these women could accept me for what I am. I had found new friends where there had been only business acquaintances before.

One woman in the group is pregnant. As I left them in front of the building, another one of them whispered to me, "We'll call you and let you know when the baby shower will be." Now, how much more accepted could I feel than that!

We often invent our own devils to plague us. These people accepted JoAnn because they had known me before and knew that I was a good person, regardless of the kind of clothes I choose to wear. It doesn't matter why you dress. What matters is how you conduct yourself when you do it in public. Do it with pride and self-respect. You'll be surprised at people's reactions.

For awhile I published two magazines simultaneously, LadyLike and enFemme (at first) and later International TranScript. I pledged never to run the same material in both magazines. I broke that pledge once with the following article.

A BILL OF GENDER RIGHTS

It is time for the transgendered community to take a stand, a strong stand, against all gender-based discrimination simply because some people are different and simply because some people do not fit into current social norms of gender roles. It is time the gender-based community articulate this stand in words that clearly define exactly what our gender rights are. It is time to stand alongside other minority rights movements to declare these gender rights as follows:

THE RIGHT TO ASSUME A GENDER ROLE

Every human being has within themselves an idea of who they are and what they are capable of achieving. That identity and capability shall not be limited by a person's physical or genetic sex, nor by what any society may deem as "masculine" or "feminine" behavior. It is fundamental, then, that each individual has the right to assume gender roles congruent with one's self-perceived identity and capabilities, regardless of physical sex, genetic sex, or sex role.

Therefore, no person shall be denied their Human and/or Civil Rights on the basis that their gender role or perceived gender role is not congruent with their genetic sex, physical sex, or sex role.

THE RIGHT TO FREELY EXPRESS GENDER ROLES

Given that each individual has the right to assume gender roles, it then follows that each individual has the right to freely express gender roles in any manner that does not infringe on the freedom of another individual.

Therefore, no person shall be denied their Human and/or Civil Rights on the basis that a private or public expression of a gender role or perceived gender role is not congruent with their physical sex, genetic sex, or sex role.

THE RIGHT TO MAKE ONE'S BODY CONGRUENT WITH GENDER ROLE

Given that each individual has the right to assume gender roles, it then follows that each individual has the right to change their body or alter its physiology so it better fits a gender role. These changes may be cosmetically, chemically or surgically induced, provided these changes are supervised by an appropriate licensed professional and the individual accepts sole responsibility for their actions in this regard.

Therefore, no person shall be denied their Human and/or Civil Rights on the basis that they changed or wish to change their body, cosmetically, chemically, surgically or any combination of these, to better fit a gender role.

THE RIGHT TO SEXUAL EXPRESSION CONGRUENT WITH GENDER ROLE

Given that each individual has the right to assume gender roles, it then follows that each individual has the right to express their sexuality within a gender role.

Therefore, no person shall be denied their Human and/or Civil Rights on the basis of sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation. Further, no individual shall be denied their Human and/or Civil Rights for expressing a gender role through private sexual acts between consenting adults in any manner that does not infringe on the freedom of another individual.

This next editorial appeared in March of 1990. It was the second of my Political Activism pieces in LadyLike. Since nobody yelled at me for the first piece, I figured they liked the small dose of "serious" in my editorials. In fact, I once received a response to one of my editorials from the one of the people who works at the print shop where the magazine is produced.

POLITICAL EVANGELISM

There's a new evangelism in the transgender community: defending our right to assume different gender roles. The time seems ripe on the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, to step forward and declare our right to pursue life, liberty and happiness.

These declarations are happening all over the country. In March of '91, I sent a Bill of Gender Rights to every support group on the Resources list and to selected mainstream organizations like SIECUS and The Federation for Planned Parenthood. Almost simultaneously, the Gender Alternatives League in California issued a Gender Activist Declaration of Independence. At the International Foundation for Gender Education convention in April, a constitutional lawyer issued another Gender Bill of Rights. And, Sister Mary Elizabeth, SSE, of J2CP Information Services, formed the Interfaith Coalition for Human Rights. (Sister Mary has been active in the civil rights area for almost 15 years.)

The energy is there. The time is right. There are people willing to lay it on the line. What we need now is a concerted grass-roots effort in support of these documents and we need to create an umbrella organization that will work with state and federal legislators to secure the rights for all people. You can help by volunteering your active support. We need people willing to write letters and make phone calls to their state and federal representatives. We need people who are so fed up with hiding who they really are that the risk of exposure as a crossdresser or a transsexual is no longer fearful. We need people who do fear the loss of their Right to Freedom of Expression.

Now, some of you likely feel that your voice won't make any difference and that's true; a single voice crying in the wilderness won't help much. Sister Mary can tell you all about that. But a choir of voices singing in concert will be heard. The choir directors are here and waiting for the choir members to show up. Will you sing with us?

Let me tell you now that the song we want you to sing is Freedom For All. As Sister Mary said in a recent letter, "It is—in my opinion—time the bandaid therapy approach be abandoned and laws enacted that protect the rights of ALL human or sentient beings." We cannot expect to make any gains by asking for single-group legislation. Our goal must be to work for passage of legislation that will insure equal protection under the law for all people with out regard to age; color; class or caste; creed; economic position; education; ethnic or cultural background; gender or gender-identity; handicap or disability; marital status; medical diagnosis, illness or condition; nationality or national origin; physical attributes or appearance; psychiatric/psychological diagnosis, illness or condition; religion or religious preference; race; sex, sexual status, sexual orientation or sexual preference; social status or social upbringing. We are all entitled to live under a government of laws free of prejudice and the weaknesses of society.

If you're "Mad as Hell," and you're, "Not Gonna Take It Anymore!" then get involved. Exercise your rights or lose them. The choice is your's.

There is a theory in Megatrends that when a subject appears with a certain frequency in the media, then it has become part of "mainstream" America. That seems to be happening with crossdressing. Drag is popular once again and it's showing up everywhere. Are we becoming part of the normal landscape? This editorial appeared in LadyLike #13, around July 1992

MAINSTREAMING TRANSVESTISM

We're taking a step up in the world. Transvestism is not the "dirty" word it once was. There is this theory that says when a word or theme crops up in the media more and more often, then that word or theme is becoming main stream. So, I guess we're becoming mainstream.

It's no longer shocking to see transvestites on Donahue or Geraldo. It's almost commonplace. There's not a month goes by that some producer of some television show somewhere doesn't call Renaissance or The International Foundation for Gender Education looking for TVs or TSs to appear on a show.

In December 1991, there were no less than three serious articles in major magazines that dealt with transgendered behavior. *Mirabella* ran an article titled *Gender Bending*, wherein transvestites were said to be on the cutting edge of societal change. Then *Vogue* did a piece about drag in the theatre. Finally, *GQ* did a thorough trashing of Dr. Stanley Beiber and Trinidad, Colorado, in an article called *Sex Change Capital of the U.S.*

Crossdressing made it on prime-time television too. An episode of *Sisters* dealt with one of the sister's husbands (a doctor, I think) as a transvestite. In film, a lot of TVs and TSs thought that *Silence Of The Lambs* was a slap in the face to transsexuals (it wasn't), and *Paris Is Burning* went on to earn critical acclaim and a whole lot of money for 29-year old producer/director Jennie Livingston. Meanwhile, 1992 started off with *High Heels* from Pedro Almodovar (*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*) in which one of the lead females has a transvestite lover. For

book lovers we have *Crygender* by Thomas T. Thomas, a sci-fi thriller about a decidedly androgynous person who runs a high-tech bordello on what used to be Alcatraz.

But all is not rosy. While we're enjoying a degree of freedom of expression that we've not experienced before, that freedom is under constant threat by the "right wing" forces of conservatism. The Supreme Court upheld a state ruling against nude dancing in the Midwest citing the state has the right "to protect" citizens from such extreme behavior. The Judge Thomas-Anita Hill fiasco showed us what our government really thinks about women's rights. Kansas City was held hostage by Anti-Choice protesters from out-of-state. And, as one writer put it, "the three branches of the government could be replaced by a tub of live bait" and be as effective.

It is up to us to keep the momentum going. We have to be vigilant about our right to freedom of expression and our right to privacy. So, get involved, somewhere, anywhere. Just don't say you didn't understand what was happening.

Here's another political message, this time urging everyone to vote. Nineteen ninety-two was the first time that the TV/TS community got seriously active in politics. Even the extremely conservative TV-TS Tapestry ran a political editorial. I almost fainted. This editorial ran in LadyLike #14, which appeared in September 1992. By the way, Yaekel lost by a very slim margin.

VOTE

By the time you read this it should be pretty close to voting time. I can't and won't make any predictions, but I do know we're in for lotsa changes. A lot of factors will come to bear on the election. If Pennsylvania is any bellwether, then look out! We've had two instances here where political ingenues have knocked out seasoned incumbents.

First, after Senator John Heinz died in an airplane crash, the voters elected Harris Wofford instead of the party recommended candidate. Then, in a bid for Arlen Specter's seat, Lynn Yaekel, founder of the Woman's Way charity, beat out the lieutenant governor for the Democratic nomination in the primaries.

Can Yaekel beat Specter? Specter has beaucoup bucks, but his performance during the Thomas-Hill hearings did not sit well with women across the nation and it also didn't help that Specter's "single bullet" theory was ridiculed in Oliver Stone's blockbuster JFK I'd bet money on Yaekel.

So, are you going to just sit back and let the world go by while you read your crossdresser's magazine and the guy who lives next door to you is out blocking the entrance to a Planned Parenthood office, and the woman down the street is writing to the Parents Music Resource Center because her son, who tried to commit suicide, listens to Led Zeppelin albums and the man over on Elm Street read about the Robert Mapplethorpe photos and so he's writing to Jesse Helms to get funding for the National Endowment of the Arts stopped because he doesn't want his taxes paying for pornography? Is that what you're doing bunky? GAWD I hope not! Get out and vote!

**enFemme &
International
TranScript Files**

WHERE I REALLY GOT POLITICAL

Sacred Cows Make The Best Hamburger

I wrote this in December of 1990 and it appeared in ^{en}Femme in February 1991. Many of my CDS customers and some of my friends were called up to serve in Desert Storm. I was really frightened that the conflict might turn into a very bloody battle with a lot of "walking wounded" afterward. We were lucky this time.

DESERT STORM

I'm writing this at the end of December and you're reading this in February, so bear with me a little. For the past several months, I've been getting mail from friends, acquaintances, and customers that are now in the Middle East. During December the numbers increased dramatically. You would not believe the number of "sisters" that are in the armed forces.

In a way, it's ironic. Being a soldier seems the antithesis of femininity. Nothing could be farther removed from the softness of a silk blouse and a slim skirt than combat fatigues. And yet, many of our sisters have traded their silks for fatigues, willingly or not.

I feel a deep pain for those that serve our country now—all of them—not just my sisters. It looks from here that a desert war is unavoidable and I have it on good authority that this war will be one of the bloodiest ever. Many people will die; some of our sisters will die.

The true sorrow is that we may never know they died. We won't know because we don't know who they really are. Well, actually, we know them a little better than anyone and still we know next to nothing about them. I'm wondering how much mail will be returned with a "Box Closed - No Forwarding Address" notice and I'm wondering if that person will be one of the casualties of this war. I'll never know for sure and that saddens me greatly.

I've been guilty of poking fun at the "Weekend Warriors" in the past. I'm sure that I will never do that again. Our "Warriors" will pay a terrible price so that I can stay here and publish this magazine. It is a sobering thought.

Whether you are a Hawk or a Dove, it matters not; grieve for your sisters who are dead or dying in a foreign country. Remember them. Honor them. Weep for them.

Those that return from this war will be changed people. Try to understand that. I had a friend who went to Vietnam. He was lucky enough to come back, but he was never the same as before he left. It took a long time for him to become something even close to his former self. I know this will happen in this war too. Those of us who remain safe at home can never begin to comprehend the horrors they will have seen. It touches them deeply and, for some, irrevocably.

We have an opportunity to express a side of femininity that we most often avoid—empathy. Feel for your sisters. Feel their loss. Feel their pain and sorrow. Share it with them to lighten their private burden. No one else but another sister will be capable of comprehending their feelings. No one else but you will be able to listen, hear and understand.

As I write this, I truly hope that my prophecy is wrong. I pray it is wrong, but I know my prayer seems unlikely to be answered. Men (and I do mean the male of the species) have made war for centuries and they won't stop now. It will be up to us to comfort and support the survivors.

This is the first editorial I wrote for International TranScript, the magazine that succeeded (and failed) ^{en}Femme. I am still trying to get people in the community active on a political basis. If they knew all the stuff that was going on that will affect them, they'd be appalled, or at least I hope they'd be appalled. This appeared in ITS #1, October, 1991 and debuted at Fantasia Fair.

WHAT NOW?

Okay, so we have a Bill of Gender Rights (JoAnn Roberts, 3/91) and a Genderist's Declaration of Independence (GAL, 3/91). What good are they and what do we do with them?

These two documents are more than just words on paper as some would have you believe. They are the embodiment of a new focus within the gender community. That focus is for our community to take its place in the political process.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Our freedom to choose for ourselves is systematically being eroded by right-wing fundamentalists. Don't believe me, look at the facts. In Oregon, House Bill 2669 will enable parents to sue retailers who furnish "obscene" books, etc. to minors, i.e. those under 18 years of age. Sounds great until you realize this magazine could be considered "obscene."

In Massachusetts, a bill proposed by rep. Barbara E. Gray would require that any person who sells a book, pamphlet, printed paper... or other material which is obscene, offensive, indecent, or otherwise impure must keep all such materials out of the public view. (Are you listening Tapestry?) The effect of this bill is that you have to know that a publication is available and you have to ask for it. That would put just about all the TV/IS publications into bankruptcy.

The federal Omnibus Crime Bill enacted last year contains an amendment that threatens large sexual archives, such as that at the Kinsey Institute, and publications like Penthouse and The Village Voice. Fortunately, that portion of the law was declared unconstitutional. But that won't stop the attacks.

WHAT CAN I DO?

There are a lot of things you can do but the simplest and the easiest is to make your voice heard. All it takes is some paper, a few stamps and a little time. Write some letters. Tell your elected representatives how appalled you are at the erosion of personal freedoms and civil rights. Tell them that you want to know their position on civil and human rights for all people. Tell them that you want them to protect and preserve your Constitutional rights and civil liberties.

WHO DO I WRITE TO?

It's so simple. Every US senator can be reached at the following address: United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510. Every US Representative can be reached at: House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

Follow up with letters to your state government officials. Look in the phone book for the state capital address. Write to your state Attorney General's office and ask about pending hate crimes legislation. I did and received a personal reply from the Sr. Deputy Attorney General of Pennsylvania.

She not only told me that the Pa. Attorney General supported pending hate crimes legislation, she included a copy of a resolution passed by the National Association of Attorneys General in 1989 that "condemns all forms of hate-related or bias-related crime or violence; authorizes the Civil Rights committee to develop model state legislation for investigating and criminally prosecuting cases of hate related crime; encourages Attorneys General to work with national recognized civil rights groups which are already addressing these issues.

WHAT IF THEY FIND OUT?

Find out what? Nowhere do you need to mention transgendered behavior. I didn't. The issue is civil rights for all people. That's the only way it can work. Get involved. Now!

This editorial appeared in ITS#3 in March 1992. It was based on a newspaper article about the violence Against Women Act. Since that article, I haven't heard a word about this particular legislation.

I DON'T GET NO RESPECT

Poor Rodney Dangerfield. He always got a laugh with that line. Sadly, he was a bit before his time because, today, disrespect abounds.

A lot of the violence we see on the news and read in the print media is directly attributable, in a large degree, to disrespect for one another. If I have no respect for Black culture, then they're just niggers. Once I devalue them as people, it is easy to justify violence against them. I'm not hurting people; they're just things. The same process applies to any minority: gays, Hispanics, crossdressers, transsexuals, Republicans, Pro Choice, etc., etc.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Lately we've seen what appears to be an increase of violence against women. I say "appears" only because the media now admits that violence against women is rampant. But it's been that way for a long time.

Our culture does not value females as major contributors to the wealth of the nation. Females, for the most part, are devalued persons and, as such, are "used" by males. One has only to recall the William Kennedy Smith circus. One woman said, "If [the victim] took off her pantyhose, she knew what she was doing." Is that any excuse for the violence committed? Does agreeing to have sex mean that the male can do anything he wants to the female?

Look at the after-effects of the Mike Tyson rape trial. Tyson was convicted of rape, but Donald Trump and several Black ministers tried to make a deal with the D.A. to "buy off" his sentence by donating the proceeds from future fights to the rape victim and a charity for rape victims. What does this say about how these males value women?

TV/TS/TG SPILL OVER

Some of the discrimination and violence we experience is due to our emulation of females. (I apologize to my F-t-M brothers for their exclusion.) If women are devalued in society at large and we try to look and act like women, well then, we're devalued too.

I've always found it most curious that a large number of people, mostly males, equate crossdressing with looking for sex. The answer finally dawned on me. How often had it been said in the past of a woman, "If she didn't dress like she was asking for it, she'd never been raped!" Is that really true? No. It isn't crossdressing that's linked to sex: no one seems to accuse F-t-M crossdressers or transsexuals of trolling for sex. It's looking like a woman that's linked to sex. The more convincing you are as a woman, the stronger the conviction that it must be sexually motivated.

CHANGES IN THE WIND

There is a bill in Congress called the Violence Against Women Act. In essence, it's a hate crimes bill for women. Or, rather, to be more precise, a bill to provide additional punishment for hate crimes due to gender. Got that: gender! While the bill's title says women, the text of the legislation uses "gender."

Now, I'm sure the bill's sponsors have no idea what the use of that term means in the long run. They're probably trying to be politically correct. But, the implication of the term gender means that we, transvestites, M-t-F transsexuals, F-t-M transsexuals, transgenderists, drag queens, or whatever, may find a greater measure of protection in the future. Why not write your congressman and senators today and find out where they stand on violence against women.

It's amazing what you can find by reading the newspaper every day. That's often where I find the inspiration for these editorials. This one appeared in ITS#5, the last issue, in July of 1992. As commented in the text, the "indecent" programming amendment was thrown out by the courts, but I have faith in our system that someone will try again.

DEFINE INDECENT

The "dirty joke" goes—if it's in far enough, it's in decent. But this ain't no joke. A three-year, 1.1 billion dollar funding authorization for public radio and television was passed by Congress last month. The bill included an amendment that restricts "indecent" programming for both public and commercial television to the hours of midnight to six A.M.

The indecent programming amendment passed the Senate overwhelmingly at 93-3. Indecent is defined as "sexual or excretory activities or organs" in terms "patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards." No shit. Now, that sounds very reasonable, doesn't it? Except, I wonder, whose community will set the standards?

GENERATION GAPS

Some people have charged that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (which supplies about 1496 of the money to PBS stations) had become too liberal, thus the restrictions. Others were offended by such language as "That sucks" and "You're a frecklebutt" on network programming. Clearly the verb "suck" and the noun "butt" have indecent meanings. Or do they? Depends on your generation. To anyone over 30, they probably do, but ask a teenager and you'll find there is no indecency implied or intended. It's in your head!

The author of the amendment is Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia who said, "children are increasingly exposed to the profanity, vulgarity, violence, and crudeness that are broadcast on our television screens." Yeah, it's called the Six-o'clock News.

WILL IT HOLD UP IN COURT?

A lobbyist for public broadcasting stations noted that commercial broadcasters will be waiting at the courthouse door the day it opens if the President signs this bill into law.

But the likelihood of the television restrictions being upheld are slight based on recent events in federal court involving the National Endowment for the Arts "decency clause."

U.S. District Judge A. Wallace Tashima struck down the clause as "too vague, too broadly worded and it violated the First and Fifth Amendments of the Constitution." The clause, appended by Congress to NEA funding (sound familiar?) said grants had to be assessed on "general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public."

IN LOCO PARENTIS

What really upsets me more than anything else is the way the government keeps deciding that I and my family need to be "protected" from certain ideas or forms of expression, that I am not capable of making decisions for myself. I particularly resent it when people like Senator Byrd assumes that I cannot or will not monitor what my children watch on television, look at in books, or listen to on the radio. I do not want to abdicate my responsibility as a parent to the U.S. Senate.

It's time we put a stop to this foolishness. Send a strong message to the U.S. Government in November. Vote every incumbent out of office. Vote for term limitations. Clean house. Elect every female candidate, if only to let the good ol' boys know that their days are numbered.

If we add our votes to those of the other disenfranchised minorities, we can make a difference. Let your voice be heard!

This opinion piece was part of a multi-issue editorial in ITS#4, appearing in May of 1992. The other issue had to do with the Congress of Reps and that will be covered later in this book. (Yeah, I know this is out of order, but the layout works better this way.)

WHO DECIDES?

As I write this, the forces of "Good" are lining up to battle the forces of "Evil" in Buffalo. The people of that fair city are about to be treated to a travesty side-show of "Christian morals and ethics." Ha! Who do they think they're kidding?

Operation Rescue, the fanatical anti-abortion, anti-choice group has invaded the city of Buffalo and they intend to teach it a lesson of intolerance, ignorance and hypocrisy.

For my money, the freedom to make my own choice is always preferable to having my choices dictated to me, even if it means that some times I might make the wrong choice. Nevertheless, the choice and, ultimately, the responsibility are mine and mine alone.

JoAnn Roberts

Sacred Cows Make The Best Hamburger

Renaissance Files

WHERE I LEARNED HOW TO WRITE

This piece comes from the November 1987 issue of the Renaissance News. It's one of the first essays I wrote for the newsletter and I still think it's one of the best. The essay was prompted by a news article in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

LIVING IN A BOX

The newspaper carried a story today of an 11 year old boy who was kept in a wooden box by his step-grandmother, because she feared he was brain damaged. The boy was found to be mentally normal.

When I read the story in the October 10th issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, I almost started to cry. What an ignominious way to live! How has that poor child's psyche been damaged? What will happen to him in later life? The whole thing gave me pause to consider my life.

As I thought about that child, I realized that I, too, at one time, lived in a box. My box was made from a variety of woods; bigotry, racism, sexism and parochialism were a few. The nails holding it all together were fear, loathing, ignorance and despair. The wood was supplied, without charge, by the world around me and I pounded those self-made nails. Yes, my box was nailed shut from the inside. I hid the real me in that box for almost 32 years. The person that walked through the world was only a facade, a shadow-person built out of other people's expectations. Then one day something happened. The nails made of ignorance started to rust away. They were soon followed by those of fear.

Eventually, the nails were all gone and first one side then the other fell away from my box. I let free the real me. I faced the world for the first time and realized that I could be my own person. I could have original thoughts and feelings. I was not a puppet to be controlled.

I knew I could do almost anything I set my mind to and that ultimately, I could control my life. The key was acceptance of

myself and acceptance of the responsibility for my actions. I understood that there is a basic human dignity within everyone and that dignity deserves respect. I resolved never to apologize to anyone for being me. And, I would consider carefully any criticism of others.

So, how many of you are still living in your own boxes? Isn't it about time for you to start pulling the nails free? Isn't it about time for you to kick the boards loose? And, isn't it about time for you to face the world and yourself with the truth?

There are no barriers except those you erect yourself, so tear them down. Look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I have the ultimate control and responsibility for my life." Then believe it and get on with the rest of your life. The past is immutable, so why worry over what cannot be changed? Look forward to the future and new goals. You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish if you will only believe in yourself.

There is no one in this world more deserving of your respect than yourself. For, if you cannot respect yourself, how can you possibly respect anyone else? And, how will you ever break out of your box before you mentally suffocate?

The following editorial was the beginning of my continuing "love affair" with the International Foundation for Gender Education. I now serve as a member of its board. In many ways IFGE has improved markedly since I first wrote this, but it still needs help. This piece appeared in the February 1988 newsletter. It is edited here for space.

QUO VADIS IFGE?

With much ballyhoo and fanfare the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) was announced last year. The IFGE's stated purpose is to be an "umbrella" organization for all the TV/TS support groups in the country and around the world. And, with equal enthusiasm, a first annual convention was announced, which took place in Chicago, last March. The second annual IFGE conference will take place this year [once] again in Chicago. Great! Or is it so great? What has IFGE actually done in the last year?

I received notice of the first convention too late to change my plans for attending Mardi Gras last year. But, I wanted to support this new organization and I wanted to see it succeed. So, I sent my personal check of \$100 for a "Supporting Membership" which [was] supposed to entitle me to a subscription to the TV-TS Tapestry, the official publication of IFGE, and to discounts on special IFGE events. In addition, IFGE announced they were seeking IRS tax-exemption and would be soon accepting affiliations from groups. So, I also sent off a letter requesting affiliation for Renaissance ASAP and offered our help at the next convention in any way possible.

And then I waited. Nothing was forthcoming from Box 19 in Wayland, MA. I wrote to IFGE four times and never received a reply. My check for a "Supporting Membership" was cashed but I never received any indication that I was now a member of IFGE. The very least I expected was a "Thank you for your support" note. I offered, personally, to help with the typing and typesetting of the first conference proceedings; no reply. I offered the aid of Renaissance in planning, coordinating, assisting at the next convention; no reply. I filled out and mailed a "I

want to help" form; no reply. And, my year's subscription to Tapestry has consisted of exactly one issue.

I began to think that it was me. Maybe I made some great faux-pas. Now I don't think that's the case. In talking with sisters around the country and overseas, I find this treatment has been consistent. People have been sending letters and money up there to New England and are receiving nothing in return.

Then, in the mail, comes a letter addressed to me from IFGE. My very first official communication from IFGE was the announcement for the second conference. The flyer also has a list of groups that allegedly helped to plan the conference. I say allegedly because Renaissance is included on the list and that surprised the Hell out of me! Following on the heels of this announcement was a plea to include advertising for the Tapestry in our newsletter. The deafening silence had been broken only to announce the second IFGE convention.

Now we have a real dilemma. How can we, in all good faith, recommend IFGE to a new sister? How can we tell people to send them money, and not to expect anything in return, not even the most basic courtesy of a "thank you."

The concept of an "umbrella" organization is viable, however, this IFGE incarnation is still immature. It needs to establish clear, meaningful goals and objectives aimed at a better public understanding of transgender behavior. These are the goals we set for Renaissance and to accept anything less from a "parent" organization is self defeating. We do not need a convention organizer, thank you. Anyone can be hired to perform that function. We need an organizing body that can harness and direct the energies of the community into achieving recognition for ourselves and reaffirming our rights as human beings.

Alison Laing and I are going to Chicago in February to represent Renaissance. We hope to be able to make a contribution there and help focus IFGE on what it wants to be when it grows up. Wish us luck!

Next month, I'll outline specific ideas that I believe, if adopted, can make IFGE the preeminent organization it wants to be.

I followed the Quo Vadis piece with this one making positive suggestions for action by IFGE. This article appeared in the March 1988 Renaissance newsletter. The title of this book was derived from the phrase appearing in this piece. Also, please note Suggestion 4. It is the first public suggestion for a Congress of Reps.

HAMBURGER HELPER

I have to wonder why I am the only one who is publicly musing about the activities of IFGE. I know that other people out there are as concerned as I am, because I've spoken with them about it. It is coming from all sides, New England, Mid-Atlantic, California and overseas, as well.

I am afraid that no one wants to speak out because IFGE is the child of Merissa Sherrill Lynn. Merissa holds a special position in the hearts of this community because of her work at Tiffany and the Tapestry. These two institutions have become the "sacred cows" of the TV/TS world and it looks as though IFGE has acquired that standing by association.

I do not belittle the accomplishments of Merissa, Tiffany or Tapestry. Indeed, if not for Merissa and her work, many of us would still be in the closet and never know about our sisters and their support organizations. But, IFGE cannot exist nor survive on the energy of one person alone. Georgia Saunders was "used-up" by GGA and we are the worse for the loss. Will Merissa fall prey to the same fate?

I hope that does not happen. And, I hope IFGE can be more than just a convention organizer. I believe it can be one of the most powerful unifying tools that has ever been created in this community. Now is the time to shape it to our needs.

Last month it may have seemed to some that I made hamburger out of the "Sacred Cow." So, now let me add the Hamburger Helper by making some specific, constructive suggestions.

- Suggestion 1: The most important thing is to get the publication of the Tapestry back on schedule. To many of us, the Tapestry is our

only link with IFGE. Without it we have no idea what is going on in the rest of the world. Modern, personal publishing technology can be used to make the preparation and publication of the Tapestry more efficient and cost effective. It is crucial that this major line of communication be kept open to all.

- Suggestion 2: Set up an IFGE telecommunications network. A great many of us have access to computers and word processing software. And, there has been a proliferation of gender-oriented computer bulletin boards around the country. Couple the two capabilities through telecommunications and here is an excellent means for authors to deliver copy to the editor rapidly.

- Suggestion 3: Immediately publish in the Tapestry the By Laws of IFGE so that people will know what rights and privileges are afforded by membership.

- Suggestion 4: The governing body of IFGE should be representative of all the groups, clubs and organizations that wish to affiliate with it. The IFGE might adopt a congressional form of government, with a smaller Board of Directors functioning as a Senate, and a larger body of IFGE members functioning as a House of Representatives. The Representative would be selected by their group to speak for them at IFGE meetings. The Board of Directors could be elected from the body of Representatives.

- Suggestion 5: Have IFGE develop press kits for local groups, a kind of 'Do-It-Yourself' publicity package with prepared letters, ads and a step-by-step guide on how to make contact with the media. This would help fledgling groups to reach out for new sisters.

- Suggestion 6: Have IFGE prepare a series of "White Papers" which could be given to the public and the media, educating them about transgendered behavior. Keep the language simple and easy to understand.

- Suggestion 7: How about a workshop for those of us willing to appear on television or in the press. This program would help us develop a presentable public image and teach us how to keep an interview on track. Also useful would be a speakers' demo video tape that can be sent to television stations, so they will know what to expect from us.

- Suggestion 8: Sponsor our own Transgender Archives like the one reported in these pages two months ago (Vol. 1, No. 5). This would be an enormous task, but consider the overall benefits that would be derived by having access to a mountain of information about transgender behavior. A national electronic database would serve as well.

- Suggestion 9: Support and affiliate with a national professional organization like The Society for the Scientific Study of Sex. Participate with them at both a national and local level. Create a professional respect for IFGE and its affiliates.

- Suggestion 10: Work with the gay community to foster a better understanding of our mutual goals. Shouldn't gender preference be protected under the law as much as sexual preference?

These are just some ideas that have come to mind. I am sure that my sisters in other groups have suggestions as well. Bring those ideas to Chicago. Let the Board of IFGE hear what you think needs to be done. Then, volunteer to help do it. We will. I am certain that Renaissance stands ready to lend its full support to any program that will be of positive benefit to the entire community.

When Alison and I returned from the 1988 IFGE convention, I wrote a follow-up report. The excerpt below specifically addresses the issue of the Congress of Reps. This appeared in the April 1988 issue of the newsletter.

Alison & I proposed a "congress" of groups with a subsequent reduction of the Board and although I have not heard the results, I am certain that it was defeated, since they had already voted to increase the Board size to twenty-one [from fifteen].

There were a couple of smoke-filled room meetings among some of the group leaders, and we discussed a number of common goals. I was especially impressed by David Maxwell of CGS.

Postscript: I received a call from Wendi Danielle, Chair of the IFGE Board. *While the board did not act on our "congress" proposal, Wendi is making it one of her priorities for 88/89.*

This next piece was written for the first April Fools issue of the newsletter. This later led to the first MONAs (Meaningless, Obelized, Nonsense Awards) the following year. Some people actually thought this was a serious report. It was based on a real report by an art historian who claimed that Mona Lisa was really DaVinci in drag.

REAL MONA LISA DISCOVERED

The art world was shocked today over the announcement by Italian officials of the discovery of what is purported to be the real portrait of Mona Lisa.

Readers of this newsletter may recall that Volume 1, Number 1, carried a story about an art historian who concluded that the portrait we know as Mona Lisa is in fact a portrait of Leonardo DaVinci in drag. A computer analysis of the Mona Lisa and of a self-portrait of DaVinci showed a high degree of correlation in facial features between the two paintings.

Now the real story has come to light due to the recent discovery of a letter written by DaVinci. The letter describes in excruciating detail the agony that DaVinci experienced over the commission to paint Mona's portrait. (She was the daughter of a prominent Italian businessman.) The letter says that "...she is so ugly, I am tempted to just paint myself into the picture. Surely, I cannot look worse!"

The painting now believed to be the real Mona (see photo at right) has been known for almost a century, but was always thought to be nothing more than a perverse joke by a clone artist. (One can see why!) Now, it appears that DaVinci carried through his threat of substitution.

Authorities of the Louvre, where the ersatz Mona Lisa is on display could not be reached for comment. It is not yet known how this discovery will affect the value of the portrait there, but some estimate it will increase. You heard it here first!

One of my soapboxes is leadership, or rather the lack of it, at times, in our community. This next piece was one of the first that I wrote on "commitment" to an organization. Some of the ideas here led to later articles on leadership qualities. This piece appeared in the June 1988 newsletter.

COMMITMENT

Well, we've passed the one year mark and we continue to grow steadily each month. Our growth is occurring in two areas, membership and outreach activities.

Every month we add about 40 new names to the mailing list. Unfortunately, we also have to drop about half that many from the mailing list. We'd rather not do that but the economics of producing, printing and mailing the newsletter force us to it.

Our outreach activities are booming in comparison. Our speakers are now regular guests at both the University of Pennsylvania and the Jefferson Medical College. We have developed professional ties with the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex and we've been asked to support an advisor of Penthouse Forum magazine. One of our members will be profiled in Philadelphia Magazine, and there are the television and radio interviews. We are sponsoring a reprint of Dr. Benjamin's The Transsexual Phenomenon, and working on a special seminar, both with Ari Kane of the Human Outreach & Achievement Institute, in Boston.

For such a young organization that is a lot of activity and effort. Other groups seem awed by what we've accomplished in such a short time. Why has this all been possible? What is so special about Renaissance and its members? Commitment, that's what!

The Board knew from the start that it would have to carry the ball for awhile to get this group off the ground. The people on the Board committed their time, and some their money, to make Renaissance work. As we grew, new people made monetary commitments by joining as Full or Associate members.

About six months into our existence we had a small population explosion and doubled our membership in just two months. Volunteers stepped forward to take the load off the Board in college outreach and meeting support functions. This is what we had hoped for and expected. There are others now who share the responsibility and the commitment of the Board for the future of the group.

Is it enough? No, I don't believe it is for our long term existence. Yes, we will be around for 1989 and even 1990, but what about beyond that? Can we last through the coming decade? Only if we continue to make a commitment to keep what we have alive and dynamic can we last that long.

What kind of commitment is required, you might ask? First, any organization that hopes to make any kind of impact on society needs money to operate. When we receive our tax exempt status from the IRS, we will be able to solicit grants and funding from state and federal agencies. That will help, but the main support has to be at the grass-roots level; you, the members. Our public efforts; college outreach, advertising, television, radio, newsletter, Background Papers, etc., all depend on the private contributions of individuals. Next, we need arms and legs to extend the effectiveness of the group. There are many projects in the planning stage and member support will determine whether they succeed or not.

The future of Renaissance is in your hands. The Board's job is to plan, guide and direct the activities of the group. The successful implementation of these activities depends directly on the commitment of the members both in time and money. If you have not yet made a commitment to Renaissance, now is the time to do it. There is no reason to wait. We are here. We are working. We are successful in our present activities. Why not make an investment that will insure the future, now!

I've mentioned many times that I was a contractor to NASA for almost 16 years. This next piece was inspired by the tragedy of the Challenger disaster and the idea that the Challenger crew were real heroes. This piece also contains one of the most significant quotes I have ever discovered in all my years of reading. This commentary appeared in the November 1988 newsletter.

Heroes

On Thursday, September 29th, the Space Shuttle "Discovery" lifted from Pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center and with it went the prayers of the whole world. I sat spellbound and unable to utter a word lest my voice shatter the mood in the room. Some observers clapped as the Orbiter lifted from the pad, while others silently prayed "Oh God, please don't let IT happen again. Let them make it!"

"IT", of course, was the explosion that ripped apart the Orbiter "Challenger" and blew out the candle of life for seven fine men and women. For those of you who don't know me very well, I have been associated with this nation's space program for over fifteen years. I have met and spoken with many of our astronauts often.

I can't think about the Challenger without tears coming to my eyes. I remember openly crying at the news of the explosion and the deaths of the crew. Those people were special to me. They were my friends and personal Heroes. If you think the jet jocks in TOP GUN were cocky, you ain't met an astronaut! But, they have good reason to be that way. Every time they climb aboard a shuttle, they know that what happened to the Challenger crew could happen to them. They go anyway. It's their job.

Heroes aren't planned, they just happen. They have a job to do and they do it well; better than most, because they believe that what they are doing is worth doing correctly. We have heroes in our community, too. No, not the obvious names that probably just popped into your head. These are

people you've never heard about. I know of one here in the Philadelphia area who has gone way out of her way to educate and counsel new sisters. She most likely saved a life recently. And, I am sure that there are more like her all over the country, just doing their part, but doing it better than most because they believe in it.

I read a lot of sci-fi and my all time favorite book is a recent one titled *Armor* by John Steakley. In it, he has created a quote that I have taken to heart, thus; "You are what you do, when it counts." I am sorry, you will have to read the book to understand it better. When you do, you will also understand who our real Heroes are and you'll find them sitting right beside you at the next meeting.

After this appeared in the newsletter, I got the following letter in response to "Heroes."

Dear JoAnn,

I received the latest newsletter and was impressed by your brief commentary on Heroes. Our country and sub-set of the population needs the philosophy you have presented. To complement your commentary, I recently heard the following on excellence:

"The pursuit of excellence is an attitude. It involves wisdom and sound judgement. It is a lifetime, career-long commitment. It is a way of life. It is doing the job (your objective) right the first, every time. It is inner-directed, not the result of external pressure. It is our own self-worth — who we are- and the pride and the satisfaction that comes from being the right kind of person, not just in doing the right things."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our sisters, and the whole world, lived by your cited quote "You are what you do when it counts," or the above tract on excellence, as a way of life.

Sincerely,

L.L.

Another of my personal interests is relationships. I've been really lucky with my family and I appreciate their tolerance of my crossdressing activities. We have many inappropriate role models in our community and I wish that more folks had supportive family members like mine. This article appeared in the March 1989 newsletter.

REALITY ANCHORS

In a study performed between 1962 and 1972, Virginia Prince interviewed over 500 transvestites. One interesting result of that survey was that 50% of the people were interested in taking hormones. That is a startling figure. It also seems to be an accurate one based on Richard Docter's latest research with transvestites.

From my own personal experience I know of three close friends who are self proclaimed to be non-transsexual, yet are taking hormones. One of these people is married and one is in a serious relationship with a woman. What gives here?

There is a behavior pattern that I've observed time after time and I've been guilty of it myself. Once out of the closet, many transvestites tend to go overboard with their dressing, especially if a spouse has agreed to "try it." Everything must be done as the femme-self. All of a sudden good things are happening to 'her', and they want to keep it that way, forever if possible. Some may further reason that if they can live as 'her' full time, then good things will happen to them all the time. Ask any transsexual in a Real Life Test if that makes any sense to them.

I think part of the problem, at least, is that so much of a transvestite's life is made up of fantasy that they lose their grip on reality. They don't have, or they reject, the "reality anchors" that will keep them from making unnecessary mistakes. They are classic over achievers, pursuing every facet of femininity to the exclusion of all else. They know what they want and they want it all, now.

I listen to my "reality anchors"; my wife and children. They are aware of and support my crossdressing activities, but they also

keep me reminded that my activities affect them as well as myself. My wife says I take too many chances with public appearances. She may be right at times. I carefully weigh the potential good of each appearance against the risks to myself and family. I then try to make an informed decision; one based on the reality of the situation, and my "anchors" are part of that decision process.

As Karen said, "I'm not your mother", but I feel I have an ethical obligation to remind you that a transvestite on hormones is at risk for all sorts of physiological and possibly psychological problems. Further, if you are married and your spouse was not made a part of the decision process, then you are being terribly selfish and irresponsible (more on this subject in a later editorial).

Sometimes it requires a smack on the side of the head with a 2X4 to get someone's attention. The facts about estrogen printed below are the cold reality of the risks one takes when ingesting hormones. For transsexuals, there is no choice but to accept these risks if they are ever to achieve their preferred gender role as women. At least most transsexuals will do so under the care of an endocrinologist or gynecologist. A transvestite has a choice and it should not be made lightly.

No matter how you rationalize it, hormones are drugs and drugs are serious business.

At times, it can be difficult to come up with a catchy title for an editorial. This was one of those times. However, the subject matter is important. It was prompted by a person who was emotionally disturbed and resisted all attempts by members who tried to help. This piece appeared in the September 1988 newsletter.

PORCINE OPERAS

One has to be careful in this work of trying to help our sisters. We can easily get caught up in a "helping frenzy" where we think that everyone needs our advice and support. After a few successes in helping someone out of the closet, we tend to approach every new person with that intention. But guess what? Not everyone wants or needs our help. Many are content to march to the beat of their own drummer. They will arrive at their own chosen destinations when they are ready. Be there for them if they stumble along the way, but don't block the path.

The situation to avoid is one which can pull you under. There are people in this world who will literally suck up every ounce of energy you can muster without it ever showing any effect on them at all. They are 'takers', human vacuum cleaners, biological black holes, absorbing everything and returning nothing. Fortunately, like stellar black holes, these type of people are just about as rare. But, they do exist, in every class and in every culture. You have to be smart enough to recognize when you are dealing with this type of person and back away. Their problems run much deeper than what may appear on the surface. They don't really want help. They want attention; all of it they can get. They don't care if you get wasted.

Trying to help one of these people is about as rewarding as teaching a pig to sing. It is a waste of your time and it really annoys the pig.

This brief piece was prompted by a letter from a member of a Tri-Ess group who felt the organization needed to change but had no clue how to go about accomplishing that goal. The letter along with my response appeared in the June 1989 newsletter. Lest anyone think I am trying to revive the feud with Tri-Ess, I assure you I am not. The exercise of power is applicable to any organization.

THE EXERCISE OF POWER

I had not planned to write anything this month but I am moved to make comment on [the above] letter.

[The] letter expresses a strong sense of helplessness and the inability to change the way things are in Tri-Ess. I guess I just don't understand that viewpoint.

Any support group, Tri-Ess included, is nothing more than the sum of its parts: its members. If the majority wants an open policy, they must tell the leaders. If the leaders won't listen, their own pledge can be used against them. They are not acting in the best interest of the organization, the local organization.

The real power resides in the individual. She must decide what is right for herself. She must not delegate that responsibility. For if she does, she gives up a most precious freedom: freedom of choice.

Sometimes when I have trouble writing fiction, I just start making things up. Skip that. . . Sometimes it gets tough to come up with an editorial or an article month after month. This piece I adapted from a column that appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer, our daily paper. This piece appeared in the April 1989 newsletter.

CORE MYTHS

I've heard them so many times now it's like a litany. People keep telling me why they "can't" do a particular thing. It's their "core myth" that is the barrier to action, nothing else. A "core myth" is a personal belief we hold to be true for ourselves that makes life more difficult for us.

The most common core myths are those of failure; "I'll never be able to..., I can't do anything about..., I can't... anything." These myths may or may not have a basis in fact, but we act like they do, so they become self-fulfilling.

Everyone has a core myth and we invent our own antidotes from a neurotic need for specialness. If the core myth is "Everybody lets me down," the neurotic need for specialness is probably, "I'm an especially good people manager." If the myth is "I can't control my life," the antidote is "I am especially good at controlling things."

This need for specialness works as long as we get others to support it. We depend on other people's reactions. They have to treat us in our "special" way or else we can't feel "special". For many TVs and TSs, seeking this validation is what drives them to find peer support. But what happens, as it often does, when they don't get the "special" treatment they think they need? The absence of this validation can cause an emotional crash. I've seen it happen in our group already.

Instead of feeling special, we should work toward feeling unique. You don't need an outside validation source to feel unique. You can acknowledge that you are unique and if others don't see

that, then it's their problem, not yours. You are not limited by the recognition of your peers.

You can discover your own core myth by asking yourself, "What is it that I am not getting from the most important people in my life?" Whatever you come up with is your myth. Then ask yourself, "What am I doing to create that?" You must recognize that you create your own sense of success and failure and you must take responsibility for it. You have the capacity to get your emotional needs met, so do it. And, stop that whining!

Renaissance grew very rapidly into a large organization with chapters. A lot of people thought we'd fall flat on our faces, but we fooled 'em all. Perhaps that's because our leadership was (and is) rooted in good management techniques. This piece appeared in the July 1989 newsletter.

THE SECRETS OF OUR SUCCESS

Many people have mused, both publicly and privately, on the success of Renaissance. They want to know what our "secrets" are. We're only too glad to share them.

The first secret is hard work. Every person involved in the management of Renaissance, from the local level to national leadership, has made a personal commitment of time and energy to the group.

The second secret is good team building. This is a management skill learned through work experience. A good management team needs special talents that create synergy: the sum being greater than its parts. Those talents are:

- Facilitation — Get things done by working with others.
- Practicality — Confidence to speak out when others seem to be planting their feet firmly in midair.
- Prudent frugality — Control the purse strings and keep the dreamers from running wild with others' money.
- Creativity — Develop new and innovative ideas.
- Strategy — Project from the present to the future and provide a backup plan.
- Once the team has a few people with these qualities, the rest of the positions should be filled with team players. They help gain support for ideas and make sure that those ideas are carried out.

The third secret is to delegate responsibility. But couple the responsibility with authority. It is foolish to expect people to

accomplish anything without command of the resources needed. This concept is known as “empowering.”

The fourth and final secret is avoid some typical management “sins.” Specifically:

- Avoid autocratic decisions — Get everyone on the team involved to build consensus. Make decisions based on all the information available.
- Avoid fuzzy goals — Develop precise objectives, or tell people exactly what is expected from them. And give them the authority to do it. Don’t meddle unless there is a serious problem.
- Eliminate inconsistent behavior — Most people can deal with any style of management if they know what to expect. Keeping them off balance with erratic behavior breeds disappointment, frustration and anger.
- Wipe out abuse of privilege — Managers have the right to some perks, but overdoing it send the message, “I’m better than you are.” This leads to unproductive dissent.
- Break rigid traditions — Traditions have their place in every society, but not all traditions are necessarily good ones. Inability to change leads to stagnations.
- Avoid favoritism — Favoritism is, in a word, discrimination. It destroys morale. When only a select few have their opinions heard, confidence in leadership drops. New people may have better ideas. Give them air time and listen.

So, there they are. Not surprisingly, there are no “secrets,” just good sense and good management techniques.

This is one of the first articles I wrote about the crisis of masculinity that some crossdressers seem to go through. This piece first appeared in the March 1990 newsletter and was prompted by a PBS special with Bill Moyers and Robert Bly, author of Iron John.

FEMININITY – 1, MASCULINITY – 0

I was watching a most fascinating show on Public Television the other evening, *A Gathering of Men*. Bill Moyers was talking with Nobel laureate and poet Robert Bly. The subject was men and their feelings. Bly has been traveling the country conducting “masculinity” workshops for men. In these workshops, he helps men come to grips with their inner feelings, particularly about their fathers, through lecture and poetry.

“Women,” says Bly, “have learned to deal with pain. Like the pain of being a ‘devalued’ person, as women have been in our culture for over 2000 years. But men don’t learn to deal with pain. Men don’t show emotion.”

One comment really caught at me. Bly said that around age 30-35 men learn that all the macho images they cherished in their youth are unrealistic. It is a crushing blow to lose your heroes.

This struck me because so many transvestites knock down the closet door during that same time period. Do we recognize the truth of Bly’s words and in response decide to create “heroines” for ourselves?

For transvestites, what often follows the exit from the closet is a period of unbridled fantasy; dress, dress, dress, every spare moment. There is a period of rejection of all things masculine. The ultimate goal is to go “full time.” In the process, they abandon part of their masculinity. For many it is only begrudgingly restored for work. For some it is never recovered.

It is a shame, really, to deny part of what we are. We should try to find the balance point between masculine and feminine. We should integrate the best qualities of both into the person we are everyday of our lives. The old Chinese philosophers knew the truth: There can be no Yin without a Yang.

I didn't often get political in the newsletter, but this is one of the few times that I did. As you can see, there were a number of issues that prompted this piece which appeared in the October 1989 issue.

PARADISE GAINED OR LOST

We live in strange and scary times. Never before have we enjoyed so much freedom to express ourselves as we wish. Yet, never before, have we faced such threats to our freedom as we do now. A series of unrelated events paints the frightening picture...

In July, Congress chastised Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art and the National Endowment for the Arts because Robert Mapplethorpe's images were disturbing to Sen. Jesse Helms.

Also in July, the Supreme Court eroded the basis of *Roe v. Wade*, and threw the abortion battle into the hands of a select few-state legislators and lobbyists.

The Rev. D. Wildmond and Ms. T. Rakolta, knowing what's best for you, created Clear-TV, a fundamentalist pressure group to force networks and producers to air television shows to their liking.

Everywhere you turn, there is someone who is willing to do your thinking for you. Sadly, that is true even in our own community. Are you going to give up your right to choose? Will you sit by and let someone else care about what happens?

Silence = death.

The community at large is just now beginning to address the needs and issues of both TVs and TSs from ethnic minorities. In September of 1990, we printed a letter from a Hispanic transsexual in prison who took TS support groups to task for not caring about their incarcerated sisters. I wrote the following commentary

TRANSSEXUALS IN PRISON

Ms. Contreras is one angry woman. I cannot think of a more hopeless position for a transsexual to be in. She is being denied support, not only from within the prison system, but also from outside. No wonder she is angry.

Some will read her letter and think she deserves her plight, otherwise she wouldn't be in prison to begin with. But we who are not transsexual have no idea to what levels of desperation she might have succumbed nor what crime she committed to reach her goal of sex reassignment.

It is relatively easy when you are white and moderately educated to get through transition, but a minority sister has a different path to travel. There is good reason why many TV and TS prostitutes on the streets are minorities; they don't have the education nor access to the information, resources and opportunities we do. Many of them dropped out of high school because they could no longer stand to be beaten up day after day because the other kids thought them "fags."

There is much that could be done to save these sisters from a life on the streets and in prison, but that's a subject for another article. For now, let me say that Renaissance has a Prison Project in place. We have been sending our newsletter and other information for free to those who ask for it. The Prison Project costs us money. If you would like to sponsor a prisoner's newsletter, send \$[8] to the main office.

This is another piece on leadership. I got most of this material from a book called Taking Charge: Making The Right Choices by Perry M. Smith. This piece appeared in the December 1989 newsletter.

So, You Want To Be A Leader

It takes hard work and dedication to build and run an effective organization. But it also takes management skills and the ability to make tough decisions. Here are some recommendations from a well-known management consultant. Do you measure up?

- Build Trust. You must have complete trust in your team members. If you find you can no longer trust someone, you need to make the tough decision to remove that person or the morale of the rest of the team is at stake.
- Don't solve every problem yourself. Facilitate the problem solving process but let your team gain self-esteem by arriving at solutions themselves.
- Set standards. Don't condone incompetence or laziness. Weak links impair an organization. Replace those people who do not make effective contributions.
- Provide vision. Be an agent for change. If you are not good at long range planning, add people to your team that can. Look for the innovators.
- Be visible and available. Get to know the people in your organization. Talk with them and get feedback. Give praise where due. Don't just be visible, be approachably visible.
- Maintain a sense of humor. Take everything and everyone seriously except yourself.
- If you make a commitment, keep it. Never renege on a promise.
- Be a good communicator. You must teach your team the skills you have and share your insights and experiences with them.
- Set high personal standards of integrity. Never compromise your principles. Of all the qualities a leader must have, integrity is the most important.

This next piece is another look at the leadership issue from a different angle. A lot of people are willing to complain about what does or doesn't get done, but few are willing to take the responsibility of doing it themselves. This editorial appeared in the October 1990 newsletter.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Next month the Renaissance chapters will hold elections for officers. The big question is whether there will be anyone who wants to hold the responsibility of an officer.

Don't mistake what was said. There may be some who want the title of an officer and the presumed "glory" that goes with it, but few, if any, understand the responsibility of office until they actually hold it. Then they wonder how or why they let themselves get "roped" into the job. It is likely that those people who've held an office in another group or organization understand the responsibilities and that's why they're not applying for the job.

In a way, you can't blame people for not wanting to take an active role in the group. It is a lot of work. There are board meetings to attend. Budgets to balance. Arrangements for food and beverage at meetings. Planning for speakers. Devising activities to get people out of their cocoons. Spending two hours getting dressed for a meeting then not having time to sit down or eat while you're there. Something always needs to be done.

Officers aren't appreciated either. They take the heat for everything that goes wrong, but don't let them crow about the things that go right. Things are supposed to go right, so why praise anyone for doing what they're supposed to do?

An officer becomes an instant target. When you stand in front of the group as one of its leaders, you immediately become suspect. You're on a "power trip." You've set yourself "above" the great unwashed masses. Who the Hell is she to tell us what to do?

Officers are incompetent. Ask anyone and they'll tell you they can do that job better than *she* can. Isn't it obvious she's not the

best qualified for the position? Anyone could do it better, can't they? So, why bother.

Because... It matters to some people, particularly newcomers who are scared and still afraid of their own shadows. Your critics have forgotten what it was like to be all alone in the closet and there you were holding open the door saying, "Come out. It's okay!"

Because... There are some people who can never get to a meeting and the newsletter is their link to a world they can only dream about. Your critics never see the letters of thanks and gratitude you get for just being there, or the letters from sisters who say you've changed their lives because of something you wrote.

Because... You answer the phone at midnight and it's a 15-year-old boy who's scared. He doesn't know if he's gay or straight. All he knows is that he likes to sneak into his mother's room, grab a pair of pantyhose, put them on, and masturbate. It feels so good but it makes him feel so bad. You try to console him but he hangs up on you. Your critics don't remember being a teenager and the only person in the world who does this "unnatural" thing.

Because... You remember how liberating it was when you decided not to apologize for your transvestism anymore. You remember what it was like meeting a sister for the first time and finally knowing for sure you weren't crazy.

Because... You remember how difficult it was to find a support group and you want to make it easier on the next person who is looking for help.

Because... Now you know what it's like to have close friends that you don't have to lie to about your long nails or shaven legs.

Because... If you don't do it, no one else will and all of this was a waste of time.

Now the truth can be told. I am Louise Baltimore. Who? I intended to write a series of columns based on issues on interest to the community, but I would pose as one Louise Baltimore, a transsexual from the future. Ms. Baltimore is the creation of John Varley and if you've never read any of his science fiction, you're missing something. This is the first of four pieces written under the Baltimore name. It appeared in the December 1990 issue of the newsletter.

FUTURE PERFECT

Hi! My name is Louise Baltimore. Maybe you've heard of me? I was featured in the movie and book Millennium, by John Varley. No?

I'll fill you in then. I come from your future, about 1000 years from now. My main job is saving the lives of people who are going to die in plane crashes. We need them in the future because your time mucked up the world so badly, our genetic material is severely damaged.

So, now you're wondering what that has to do with transvestites and transsexuals. Well, one thing we have learned in the future is that people will be whatever ever it is they need to be. We have the technology not only to change the sex of a person, but to change it back as well. Yeah, we have people doing it all the time. You can read about it in any of Varley's other books.

Anyway, I caught Hell back home for telling him, but since it's out of the bag now, it can't do any more harm. It's been so long ago for me and I've switched so many times, I've forgotten what sex I started with. I like being Louise now.

Anyway, I plan to drop in from time to time and talk about things that you can do to make the world a better place for yourselves. See, it was one of you trans-persons that saved what little is left of humanity. We owe you — big time.

I know, I know. I don't want to hear about paradoxes and time-quakes. I get that from Sherman all the time. He (or rather it) is my purse-onal computer. He's useful but a real pain in the ass.

Anyway, if I read my history chips correctly, you all have this

thing about people who are different. Well, listen kids, I hate to tell you, but you ain't that far removed from apes. Did you know there's only a one percent difference in your genetic makeup between you and your great apes? That's all it takes. Hell, our genes are damaged only one hundreth of that and most of us can't even have kids. So, let's cut out the difference crap, eh!

Anyway, the one thing that binds you together is that you're human beings. Got that? Beings not Doings. It doesn't matter what you do as long as you aren't imposing your will on that of another being.

You people need to learn to live free. Get rid of that ugly baggage you bring with you everywhere. If you look past the surface, you'll find something fine and admirable in almost everyone you meet.

Vive la difference, eh!

This piece was originally written for a publication called Gender Expressions which is now defunct. I waited over a year for them to get it into print and I finally put it into the March 1991 newsletter.

BALLS

There's been a lot of talk in the gender press lately about activism. Sister Mary Elizabeth tried unsuccessfully, albeit through no fault of her own, to squash the Americans With Disabilities Act. Sister distributed petitions for us to sign and send to our congressional representatives. I'll bet the number of people who actually signed those petitions was very small. Why? Because generally transvestites have no balls when it comes to putting their asses on the line for this community.

Janet Christon, took support groups to task in Gender Expressions (Vol. II, No. 1) for fostering an underground atmosphere. Having spent the last four years nursing a support group, I disagree with her. Most TVs - still wracked by tremendous guilt - don't want to be seen in public for fear they might be recognized, laughed at, or (heaven forbid) thought to be gay. Like I said: balls, they ain't got any. It's my opinion that the "T-community" (I hate that term) is never going to have the kind of political impact that gays, lesbians, blacks, Hispanics, and women have had because no one is willing to stand up and identify him/her self as a transvestite.

**"IT TAKES BALLS TO PRETEND YOU DON'T HAVE ANY."
-ANONYMOUS DRAG QUEEN**

So why do some transsexuals chose to go public even after they literally don't have any balls? You see, it's a very simple thing. A true transsexual knows he or she can't hide in the real world. Sooner or later, someone finds out. The label never goes away; not really. The transsexuals have to learn to live with it. They must go through the real life test where almost everyone knows about them. The successful ones know the world doesn't end because people discover they are transsexuals.

Ah, but a transvestite is a horse of another color. The classic TV is a male, and his maleness is very important to him. The TV has an out, a refuge. He goes home after his support group meeting, takes a shower, puts on his three-piece suit and Presto, he has "power" again. He has regained his "respect." This is one reason why transsexuals and feminists get so pissed-off at TVs. Transvestites cheat the system. Why? 'Cause they ain't got no balls.

**"YEAH, AND IT TAKES EVEN BIGGER BALLS TO HAVE 'EM CUT OFF."
-ANOTHER ANONYMOUS DRAG QUEEN**

See, TVs are men and their maleness represents "power" and "respect," primarily to other men, of course. For some women - and a lot of transsexuals - power represents repression. Men play their macho political power games even in their transgender "support" groups. Just look at how these groups are organized. Heavy on the structure - a very male trait. If you don't believe me, just look at any organization chart. We can't help it. We were raised that way. No matter how feminine we may think we appear and act, our brains are wired for male thinking. Only estrogens can undo that wiring, but not completely and at no little risk. I have no desire to take estrogens, so I'm stuck with my wiring.

But that doesn't mean I have to act like an asshole. I can change my behavior toward women, gays, lesbians, blacks, and other minorities. I can try to be a better human being. And, I can try to act like I have some balls. But to do the really courageous stuff you need big brass balls. Those I ain't got. Not yet, anyway. Maybe someday.

**"BALLS," SAID THE QUEEN, "IF I HAD TWO, I'D BE KING."
-ANONYMOUS QUEEN**

Along the way from there to here I've had some very interesting experiences that have taught me some invaluable lessons.

Five years ago I was involved in a serious car accident. Many people have heard me tell this story in a very humorous way, but let me say that at the time it wasn't funny.

I was crossdressed and out with friends in Manhattan. On our way back to my friends' apartment, an asshole (read: male) ran a red light, hit us broadside, and flipped our car onto its roof, whereupon we slid through the intersection and came to rest on another occupied, parked vehicle.

One person was seriously injured and unconscious, another had a concussion, while the rest of us (five in all) had various cuts and contusions. Four of us ended up in the emergency room of St. Luke's Hospital. The fifth, the seriously injured one, was taken elsewhere.

I'll never forget the E.R. doctor because he treated us like trash, worse, like radioactive waste. No X-rays, not even for my friend with the concussion. I think he thought we were hookers or addicts or both. Oh yeah, I was the only TV in the bunch, the rest were GGs, my wife included. But the bastard didn't even clean the glass fragments from her foot.

Afterwards, my friends remarked at my coolness under the circumstances. I didn't panic and I didn't care that I was crossdressed. I was glad we were all still alive. Being alive seemed more important than worrying about whether or not the cops and medical technicians were going to discover I was a man dressed like a woman. Hell, I even gave 'em my legal name so my insurance would pay the hospital bill. Being alive was more important. That's when I learned the world doesn't end if someone knows I'm a TV. I haven't been the same since. I think I grew some balls that night.

**"AND THE KING LAUGHED. NOT BECAUSE HE HAD TO,
BUT BECAUSE HE WANTED TWO."
-ANONYMOUS KING**

Another incident comes to mind. I decided to take a new sister, Michelle, out on the town. This was her first time in public, i.e. outside of our support group. On the way downtown, my car developed a very flat tire. Michelle was panic stricken, "What do we do now?!" Honey, we change the damn tire, that's what. (See,

all of a sudden she had no balls.) Michelle watched for maniac drivers while I hoisted the spare and jack out of the trunk.

While loosening the lug nuts before jacking up the car, I become aware of someone standing beside me. Not one, but two guys stopped to help these damsels in distress. So, I let them change the tire for me. Besides, I'd already broken a nail. Michelle was terrified; I told her to get back in the car and shut up.

As the guys were putting the shredded tire in the trunk, I got a lecture about riding on the "space saver spare" that comes with the cars these days. What did that guy think I was, an idiot? Yep, and I looked like one too; it's called a female. Every male knows that females don't know nuthin' 'bout cars. Right?

It took balls to let those guys change the tire and more balls to listen to the lecture without blowin' my cool or my cover. I realized that women put up with this crap every damn day of their lives. No wonder they're pissed.

Fast forward to six months ago. I need knee surgery for torn cartilage. I have to make several trips to the doctor's office, to the hospital for pre-admission testing, and finally the surgery. I usually shave my whole body as I've come to loathe body hair. (Well, maybe not loathe, but at least a strong dislike.) The doctor doesn't say anything about my legs being shaved, but one of the nurses asked if I am a swimmer or a bicyclist. I answered simply, "No." No explanation offered nor needed.

Up we go to the O.R. suites. The anesthesiologist is a woman and she remarks that my nails are longer than hers. I keep silent. Then, a nurse comes over to shave my leg (singular) and discovers that I beat her to it, on both legs. Bad enough the doc is gonna cut me, damn if I'm gonna let anyone else near me with a razor. I shaved 'em the morning before I got there. Next surprise. One of the assisting nurses is the wife of an acquaintance of mine. I need this?

I'm in the recovery room, afterwards. They won't let you go home till you void your bladder. I can't, so Ron, the aide, is going

to catheterize me. Surprise Ron, I shave there too. He gives me a strange look. Ron is gay. (I can tell these things from hanging around gay bars in drag.) So I level with him: "I'm a transvestite." He's cool about it and very gentle. Together we drain a liter of fluid, and now I can go home.

I didn't get embarrassed or excited about being "discovered" and I have infallible, physiological data from the EKG and blood pressure cuff to prove it. All it takes is balls.

One more story. A long time ago when I was still in my teens, something terrible happened to me. At least I thought it was terrible at the time. (Exactly "what" is unimportant.) I prayed to God not to let this thing happen, but it did anyway. I learned that life continues, despite our best efforts to stop it in its tracks.

**"Q: WOULD YOU DATE A WOMAN WITH BALLS?
A: I DUNNO. DEPENDS ON HER PERSONALITY."**

So, back to the beginning. How is the "T-community" (I still hate that term) going to make political strides when the majority of "T-people," a.k.a. transvestites, are so damned scared of being discovered and scared of losing their power as a male that they won't even come out to a support group meeting, let alone put their legal name on a petition? Are we ever going to see a transvestite on Donahue say, "My real name is John Smith and I work for IBM. I'm a transvestite and I believe I have a basic right to dress as I please?" No. Are we ever going to make connections with gay and lesbian activists when a majority of TVs are homophobes? No.

It all comes down to no balls. TVs think they have too much to lose by coming out and everything to gain by staying in the closet. Unlike being black or female, no one knows you're a transvestite unless told, much like being gay. Maybe "outing" for TVs will be the next rage. There are probably a Hell of a lot more crossdressers in Congress than there are gays.

Talking about political activism in the "T-community" (I really

hate that term) is about as productive as talking about going to Mars. Technically, we have the capability, but it ain't gonna happen in this century. Ain't no one here got the balls to carry it off. I mean, sure, I got balls but not that big.

What we need is to do is form a coalition of organizations to fund a political action committee, a PAC. Then hire somebody with balls that big to represent us in the political arena. Some lawyer-type in a three-piece, power suit that can dish the bull with the best of 'em.

All it's gonna take is balls.

This is the second Future Perfect column. The subject is War. I wrote it because of the Gulf War and because I had friends and relatives there and I was seriously concerned about their mental health when they returned. This piece was also influenced by John Steakley's book Armor. This appeared in the March 1991 newsletter.

FUTURE PERFECT — WAR

This is Louise from Millennium. I'm from 1,000 years in the future - a future where we can change sex as easily as you might change your hair color.

As I've told you before, I've changed so many times, I've forgotten what sex I was born, but I do remember the last time I changed and why.

We were at war; the last war we fought, ever. Ironically, we were at war with our colonies on Mars. They wanted independence from Earth.

The government called for volunteers and I went. I was female at the time. I find that the most comforting for me. But to fight a war requires males, so I let them change me. It was unlike any change I had ever experienced before.

Let me say that changing sex does not alter your memories. They never mess with your memories. It is the memory of that war that keeps me in this female body now.

They didn't just change me from female to male; they made me a soldier. No, that's not right. They made me less human than that; they made me an engine of destruction, a tool of chaos, an harbinger of entropy.

As all mechanical things, the engine that I had become had no emotion, no conscience, no morals, and almost no humanity. It performed splendidly as it's programmers had planned. It destroyed life relentlessly.

When there was no life left to destroy, the engine shut itself down.

When I next awoke, I was back on Earth in Louise's body. The engine was gone, but I remembered. All the emotions that might have delayed the engine, all the thoughts that might have swayed it from its mission, now came back in a flood.

They never mess with your memories. I never fully recovered. I still have nightmares about the war. It is the contrast between that the engine and my mission now - saving lives - that keeps me sane. That, and Sherman, my purse-onal computer.

Sherman says you knew the horrors of war too. He says that many of your transgendered served and died in your wars. Those that survived were changed by it, as I was.

Killing is the most horrible experience I've ever had (remember, they never mess with your memories). They made sure I would remember what the engines had done so it won't happen again. You will never know the helplessness of being an merely an engine. They can't do that to you, not yet anyway.

We, both, honor our war dead, but we often forget the survivors. Don't. They need you too.

The following article is the third of the Future Perfect pieces I wrote. This one appeared in the April 1991 newsletter under the Louise Baltimore pen name and was prompted by the Mapplethorpe censorship flap.

FUTURE PERFECT—CENSORSHIP

Hey, it's me again. Louise from Millennium. Remember, we met here in December. I'm from your future.

Anyway, I was having this talk with Sherman, my personal computer about this book I found in some really old ruins.

The book has what Sherman says are photographs by someone named Robert Mapplethorpe. There were also some newspaper clippings—I think that's what you called them—inside it. They mentioned a court case in Cincinnati. My cousin Shirley's from Cincinnati.

Anyway, the images were unusual and strangely provocative, so I had Sherman do a library search on this Mapplethorpe person.

I was astounded at what I saw on the vid screen. Some of you people actually took a guy to court over a set of photographs?

And you lost, too! You have no concept of what is really obscene.

If you could see the state of our environment. If you could see the suffering we endure. Now, that's what I consider obscene.

Anyway, I had Sherman look up some more stuff on obscenity and found this music by Two Live Crew. Some of you took them to court also and lost that one too. You guys must be real slow learners.

Instead of being concerned about what your neighbor is reading, viewing or listening to, maybe you oughta pay more attention to what you breathe, eat and drink. Take care of your own body and mind first.

I guess some of you have a real funny concept of freedom. Like some people should be less free than others to say, write, sing, paint, or film what they feel. Which is pretty ironic considering

most of you are men who want the "freedom" to wear women's clothes whenever you feel like it. So, how do you decide who should have freedom of expression and who shouldn't?

Sherman also told me about "censorship," like this person Madonna. My mother's aunt's sister-in-law was named Madonna.

Anyway, this Madonna from your time had a video that was considered "too hot" for television because it showed a variety of sexual expressions, including crossdressing. You all sat by quietly and just let the parade go on. Life is easier if you don't get involved, ain't it?

If you disagree with that sentiment, then get off your fat ass and do something constructive. Your freedom and future are at stake. Fight for them!

I followed up the censorship piece with another Future Perfect column on choices. This one appeared in the May 1991 newsletter and is the last of the series.

FUTURE PERFECT — CHOICES

Hi! It's me, Louise Baltimore. Remember? The one from your future. Look me up in Millennium.

Anyway, I just got back from another rescue mission and Sherman and I (Sherman's my purse-onal computer) were discussing choices. See, the people I rescue from doomed airplanes have no choice. They're going to die unless I, and my team, do something. We give 'em another chance. It's not much but it's living.

We don't have too many choices left for us, what with the environment so badly damaged, but we fiercely guard and defend those we do have. Here, in the future, we believe that true freedom is the ability to make choices.

Sherman says there are lots of historical references to freedom of choice, most involving pitched political battles between opposing camps. There's always someone or some group that wants to make your choices for you. They know best.

Anyway, Sherman tells me the basis for our present societal freedom (we change sex like you'd change socks) came from your time. It was, he says, the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights (he explained that to me too) and two things happened in your community.

First, you issued your own Bill of Gender Rights, and, second, you formed a political organization to fight for those rights. I think he called it GAL (Gender Alternatives League). Cute name.

Anyway, GAL and the gender rights thing caught on like wildfire. Other organizations, SIECUS I think he called one of them, acted on a gender rights theme, and off you went to tilt at windmills. Only, your cause wasn't hopeless. The time was

ripe for change. People were beginning to understand that the testosterone-fogged brain of the male was the chief cause of conflict in your world and if men wanted to take a different, more peaceful course, well, that was just fine with them.

The gender rights were supported by women's groups too. They'd had enough of second class status. After all, they could shoulder the load as well as any male, maybe better.

By the turn of the century, gender rights had become the major issue in most political discussions and you all were winning.

I like my female body. I'm comfortable in it. It feels right for me. Sherman says it took a lot of work and support but you did it.

I can't thank you enough for that.

I promised you I'd get back to the DSM issue and here it is. Between the time I wrote Future View and this piece, I learned quite a lot about the uses and misuses of the DSM. As you will see, I have changed my mind about removing any gender classifications for the book. This appeared in the September 1991 newsletter and was reprinted in a slightly edited form in TV Guise and Cross-Talk.

APA, FRIEND OR FOE: THE GREAT DSM DEBATE

Not too long ago, Elaine Edwards from the Indiana Crossdresser's Society (IXE) tested a pet theory of hers; people will believe anything they read in the gender press. She created several false stories, had them published in the IXE newsletter, and watched the stories spread from newsletter to newsletter as if they were factual. Well, I don't necessarily agree with Edward's method, but her point is very well taken. To wit...

We have within our community a few (thankfully) misguided individuals who think they are doing us all a favor by attacking the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and its Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Third Edition-Revised (DSM).

These people charge: one, the words "transvestite" and "transsexual" are psychiatric terms, and two, the words are derogatory and defame our reputation. They even want to ban the use of "crossdresser" claiming that it has become a synonym for "transvestite." The culprits, they say, are those people who use the DSM as a means of oppressing us, i.e., transvestites and transsexuals are mentally ill, perverts, deviates, etc.

Well, kids, I'm here to tell you that it just ain't so. Just to make sure I didn't shoot my self in the foot, I went back to review the DSM myself. Here is a quote from the manual's "Introduction:"

"Neither deviant behavior, nor conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are mental disorders, unless

the deviance or conflict is a symptom of a dysfunction in the person..."

Did you understand the significance of that statement? The APA is saying if you feel good about yourself, even though you participate in a behavior that society may deem as "deviant," (statistically speaking) you are not mentally ill!

I'd also like to point out that nowhere in the DSM will you find the words "transvestite" or "transsexual." The APA has been very careful to characterize behaviors, not people. Another quote from the introduction will illustrate:

"A common misconception is that classification of mental disorders classifies people, when actually what are being classified are disorders that people have. For this reason the text of the DSM-III-R avoids the use of such expressions as 'a schizophrenic' or 'an alcoholic'... Another misconception is that all people described as having the same mental disorder are alike in all important ways."

Now, don't take my word for it. Go to the library yourself and look it up. Then decide who knows what they're talking about.

It seems to me that the APA and the professional counseling community has been greatly misunderstood in reference to the use of the DSM and some people within the gender community owe them an apology. Instead, they're girding for an all out war with the APA based on popular mythology.

The arguments proposed by these "Dona Quixotes" are logically false. They've fallen into the trap known as the fallacy of composition where properties of the parts are attributed to the whole. It goes something like this: Since some transvestites and transsexuals are mentally healthy, then all transvestites and transsexuals are mentally healthy.

Ironically, they accuse the APA of the same fallacy in reverse. It is impossible to logically prove that all transvestites and transsexuals are not mentally disordered. All it takes is one transvestite or transsexual to exhibit a psychological dysfunction due to their gender identity to prove the claim false. Q.E.D.

So what's the ruckus about? The gender-warriors want the approval of the professional community for their transgendered behavior. They want their lifestyles validated by an outside agency, the APA, so they can point to a paragraph in a book and say, "See, it says here I'm not mentally ill!"

It's so sad. First, because the paragraph is already there if they'd just look for it and, second, because they think they need it at all.

The problem, of course, is not with the APA or the majority of counseling professionals, but with those people who misuse the information in the DSM. I'm sure there is a lawyer, somewhere, who used the DSM as a weapon in a divorce proceeding against a transvestite. Somewhere is an employer who used the DSM to label a transsexual as mentally unstable and fire them.

The "enemy" is not the APA or the DSM. The enemy is that segment of society that is ignorant about transgendered behavior and who improperly back up their ignorance with the DSM.

My daddy used to say, "Ignorance is temporary. Stupid is forever." Ignorance is cured with education. Those who ignore the facts and refuse to be educated are not ignorant; they're just plain stupid. Don't be suckered into believing everything you read in these newsletters. Do some research on your own.

I don't need the APA to tell me I'm not mentally disordered. I've known that for quite some time now.

I'm going to put my efforts into educating the general public where most of the ignorance lies and I'll continue to work with the professionals to foster communication, not generate confrontation.

This is a piece that was requested by Paula Sinclair. She had written an article about "dragophobia" in the gay community and wanted my perspective on homophobia in the transgender community. This piece appeared in the March 1992 newsletter.

HOMOPHOBIA & THE TG COMMUNITY

Last month Paula Jordan Sinclair discussed homophobia in the gay/lesbian community, especially towards transgendered people. This month we look at a similar phenomena within the transvestite/transsexual community.

A support group in New York state specifically excludes homosexual crossdressers from its membership roster. Another group in California screens potential members through a complex interview/application process. A large, popular TV event in the Southwest, sponsored by an "open" support group, restricts attendance for persons with facial hair. A national transvestite support group emphasizes its "family" orientation. Each of these organizations can give you good reasons for their "exclusive" policies and none will include homophobia. So, why has segments of the transvestite community gone out of its way to exclude homosexuals and transsexuals from its membership rosters?

It's clear that homophobia was rampant in the early days of organized support groups for crossdressers. Public opinion of gay men and especially crossdressing gay men (drag queens) was very low in the mid '70s when the first groups began to emerge. Gays were seen as promiscuous and constantly looking for sex. It was also widely believed that a "straight" could be "converted" to gay through social contact and possibly sexual contact. The only image the public had to associate with a male in feminine clothing was a stereotypical drag queen.

It is not difficult to understand why early transvestite support groups limited themselves to heterosexual members only. It was a conscious effort to distance themselves from the public image of stereotyped homosexuals. Later, transsexuals (M-t-F) were added to the proscription list because they too were seen as

males who were interested in having sex with other males. (Why else does a male have a vagina constructed and live as a female, if not to fulfill a female sex-role, goes the logic.) As with homosexuals, it was thought that social contact would convert transvestites to transsexuals too. At the heart of these arguments is the concept of promiscuous sex between males and we know that if this society is hung-up on anything it's sex.

But, it's been over 20 years since the Stonewall riots and Gay Liberation has educated us about homosexuality. Aside from their sexual orientation, gays and lesbians are not that different from most anybody else, including transvestites. We now understand that all gays are not promiscuous. We now understand that most gay men are erotically attracted to a male body-image and therefore have little interest in crossdressed males. We now understand that there are gay transvestites who have the same feelings and needs as straight transvestites. And, we, presumably, understand the differences between anatomical sex, sexual orientation, gender role, and gender identity. So, homosexuality should no longer be a threat to transvestites yet, we still see traces of homophobia in 1992. Why?

Perhaps because society, in general, and a large number of transvestites still confuse gender role with sex role. According to the paper "Mexican and Mexican-American Male Sexual Behavior and the Spread of AIDS in California," by J.R. Magaña and J.M. Carrier published in the *Journal of Sex Research* (Vol. 28, No. 3, August 1991), "Mestizo Mexican males involved in homosexual behavior operate in an...environment that leads them to expect that they should play either the anal insertive or receptive role but not both. *By and large (as) a result of sharply defined gender roles in the society, feminine males are passive and penetrable, like females, (and) masculine males are active and impenetrable...*" (emphasis mine). Might not the same social strictures on gender role be at work in our community?

The dilemma faced by some transvestites, then, is how to appear feminine, yet active and impenetrable. For these transvestites, the answer seems to lie in asserting their masculinity while crossdressed, the phenomena of the "man-in-a-dress" or the

macho-transvestite. These people do not want to lose their sense of being male for fear of appearing passive and penetrable, i.e., homosexual. I am reminded of a scene with Alison Laing after one of her voice seminars. An immaculately and very femininely attired crossdresser approached Alison and commented how much he enjoyed her book. When Alison inquired why he wasn't practicing a more feminine voice, her fan answered, "I couldn't do that. People might think I'm a sissy." For this person, his voice was the last vestige of his masculinity and he wasn't about to give that up.

The preservation of macho attitudes is a hallmark of homophobia and we can see it in the TV/TS community if we look behind the facade of "protecting" group members. Arcane interview and selection processes are overt signs of homophobia, while the frequently destructive ego trips and power struggles intra- and inter-group are covert signs. Underlying it all is a deeply rooted fear of femininity, sex and of becoming more like stereotypical females, passive and penetrable.

We must actively oppose homophobia in our community and recognize the implicit sexism and hypocrisy. We must divorce ourselves from the notion that gender role equals sex role. We must work toward a community that is inclusive and cherishes diversity rather than one that is exclusive and denigrates differences. We have nothing to fear from homosexual crossdressers nor from transsexuals. They are as much a part of the community as any straight-laced, heterosexual transvestite and they have just as much to contribute to our progress toward universal acceptance by society at large.

Paula Sinclair asked me to write this next piece as a complement to an article she had written about anxieties associated with coming out to people. You'll recognize some of the material from other articles in this book. This appeared in the November 1991 newsletter.

IT'S NEVER AS BAD AS YOU THINK

When Paula showed me her article about her "bad press," I was reminded of the times when I too felt that the "worst" was about to happen. In every case, I learned that life goes on almost unchanged.

My first "worst" experience was being in a serious auto accident while dressed. Five of us ended up in the hospital after that one. Neither the police nor the ambulance personnel gave any notice to me being crossdressed, and, yes, they did know I was a male.

My second "worst" experience came shortly after I appeared for the first time on the Donahue Show. The day the segment aired in Philadelphia, we had 18 inches of snow and no one went to work that day. I was sure that when I arrived back at my office there would be a sign over my desk that said "Transvestite Sits Here." Nope. No recognition from anyone. Well, almost no one. A woman who had become a good friend did recognize my voice, but it took her two weeks to get up the courage to ask if it was me on the show. We've been best-girlfriends ever since.

My third "worst" experience came with the airing of the Evening Magazine segment they did on Renaissance last November. I'd just left my employer of 16 years and so I wasn't worried until I had reason to call back to my former workplace. I was on screen not more than 30 seconds for that show, but it seemed as if everyone who knew me was watching the show that night. Now it was "out" for certain that I am a transvestite. Did it change anyone's real opinion of me? No. In fact, my old group invited me back for a Christmas luncheon and they wanted to meet JoAnn. So I went. A month later, I was invited back again for a baby shower given for one of the women who had worked

for me. This time I went as Joe. No one said anything to me about the television show, or the Christmas luncheon.

My most recent "worst" experience was mild compared to any of the others. Joe had lunch the other day with three female friends; we'd all worked with each other at one time. Two of the women knew I was a transvestite (one was the friend mentioned in my second "worst" experience), but I had not shared this with the third woman who was slightly older than the others. Midway through the lunch I said that I had something "special" to tell her. She looked directly into my eyes and said, "I already know and I'm disappointed JoAnn didn't come to lunch today." Well, you could have knocked me over with a feather. I was really concerned that this woman would not understand, but my two friends had decided to warn her in case I did show up in drag. We've made a luncheon date for next month and she will get meet JoAnn at last.

Now, the point of all this is about acceptance. My "worst" fears about being revealed as a transvestite to my friends and co-workers were unfounded. Those who liked me before the information still like me now. Those that didn't like me before, still don't like me now. Nothing has really changed. The knowledge that I crossdress does not change the fundamental nature of who I am or who they are.

My "worst" fears have come to naught and life is better than its ever been.

Other Files

This next piece was written at the request of Merissa Sherrill Lynn, editor of the TV-TS Tapestry. She said she wanted a "debate" on political philosophy; I would supply the "Point", and she the "Counterpoint." I guess she was surprised at my input because there was no debate, no counterpoint discussion of any of the points I raised. Instead, Merissa wrote about her personal philosophy of life while I took on the larger issue of positive political action in the community. There was also a problem with my article as it appeared in Tapestry #60; it was not the final version. Here is the correct version.

POSITIVE POLITICAL ACTION: GET INVOLVED

Introduction

I am pleased that Merissa asked me to write this article for Tapestry. It gave me a chance to develop several lines of thought about political activity in the transgendered community.

The emphasis of this piece is: "Do Something!" and I'll make some suggestions for activities on a personal level, at the local level, regional level and national level and give examples of what's being done now. This article is about action—now.

Before this community will make any political headway at the state, regional or national levels, we need people who are personally committed to our cause. Let me digress here to explain what I mean by "cause" and "commitment." The issue is Gender Rights, or, more correctly, freedom from gender-based discrimination. I outlined four Gender Rights in the Bill of Gender Rights that was published in these pages and elsewhere. Briefly, they are:

- The Right to Assume a Gender Role
- The Right to Express a Gender Role
- The Right to Control One's Body
- The Right to Sexual Expression

Notice that these rights make no mention of transvestism or transsexualism. That's because while many may argue with us that we have no "right" to crossdress and no "right" to sex reassignment surgery, no one can argue that we have a "right" to a gender role. Since "gender" is a social construct, I perceive the "right" to assume a gender-role and then express that role as "Protected Speech" under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

It is important that we not get bogged down in Transvestite Rights vs. Transsexual Rights. This would be divisive and the words "transvestite" and "transsexual" will press the "hot buttons" of some legislators. If we keep the issue at the level of gender, we have a much better chance of being successful because everyone has gender and so we are fighting for the rights of everyone.

One purpose for creating the bill was a need based on a philosophy of jurisprudence practiced by our Supreme Court for the last 50 years. That philosophy is called "Legal Positivism" and it is a school of constitutional interpretation that says individual rights exist only if they are written in laws. That philosophy is why this country has spent so much time and effort creating Civil Rights legislation. We are not "guaranteed" the rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" a priori. Therefore, it is necessary to write down our rights as we see them and we have to work toward getting these rights protected by laws.

Current laws barring discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation do not protect our right to assume a gender role different than that which society assigned to us. Once the doctor says, "It's a boy" or "It's a girl," we're cast into a gender role that may not be to our liking. Attempts to change that preassigned role may bring with it dire consequences, emotionally, physically and financially.

Now, what do I mean by commitment? I see commitment in two very basic forms; time and money. Without the donation of time by individuals and money, we cannot ever hope to build the political action organization that many of us want. On a

personal level, it is your time more than your money that is needed. We'll get to money later.

WHERE ARE WE?

The political environment today is a strange place. We are caught in the middle of a pitched battle between the forces of liberalism and extreme conservatism. On the one hand, society has made a lot of progress in the last 30 years toward insuring Civil and Human Rights for selected oppressed minorities (e.g., women and Blacks). On the other hand, we see these gains being eroded by recent decisions of the Supreme Court and by the increase in hate crimes against sexual minorities. Indeed, even those gains made by women are under open and covert attack as described by Susan Faludi in her book, *Backlash*.

Meanwhile, in the last five years the "face" of the transgendered community has been transformed. We no longer hide our support groups as if they were cells of some larger conspiracy. We use the tools of technology to run computer bulletin boards and create professional newsletters to exchange thoughts and ideas. We're semi-organized with regional and national conferences. So, it is not surprising then that some of us see political activism as the next logical step.

It is time to take a seat at the table of politics, alongside women, Blacks, Hispanics, Gays and Lesbians, and it is time to participate. If we do not accept political activism as the challenge of the '90s, then, as Benjamin Franklin said, "If we don't all hang together, then surely we'll all hang separately."

GET INVOLVED PERSONALLY

You can start your involvement with the political gender movement simply by making your voice heard with your local, state and federal representatives. All it takes is a phone call or a letter stating your concerns and asking your representative for his/her position on Civil and Human Rights. I guarantee you'll receive a reply, probably from a staffer, but you will receive a reply. Now you have become a "constituent" with a voice.

Once you get that reply, write back to either commend the representative for their position or ask them to reconsider their position. A good basis for defining Civil and Human Rights has been given to our community by Sister Mary Elizabeth and the Interfaith Coalition of Human Rights (ICHR). Here is a sample letter based on the ICHR rights.

Dear Representative,

I'm writing in regard to your position on Human and Civil Rights. I am keenly aware of and concerned about the discrimination and oppression of people with difference born out of prejudice, ignorance and hate.

As a voter, I am watching politicians who are also aware of such discrimination. I urge you to work for passage of legislation that will insure equal protection under the law for all people with out regard to age; color; class or caste; creed; economic position; education; ethnic or cultural background; gender-role or gender-identity; handicap or disability; marital status; medical diagnosis, illness or condition; nationality or national origin; physical attributes or appearance; psychiatric/psychological diagnosis, illness or condition; religion or religious preference; race; sex; sexual status, sexual orientation or sexual preference; social status or social upbringing. We are all entitled to live under a government of laws free of prejudice and the weaknesses of society.

I would be pleased to hear from you on this matter of great importance to me.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

See how simple it is to take the first step? You risk nothing and have everything to gain. Follow this with a letter to your state's Attorney General. Your objective here is to find out about any current or pending legislation affecting our community, such as Hate Crimes legislation, or Equal Opportunity Employment or Housing bills. Once you know what legislation is under consid-

eration, you can write back to your representatives endorsing or opposing the new laws.

Next, find a current cause you can support and get involved with it. You'll gain valuable insight and experience that will be needed when we take on our own issues. My personal cause is the Pro-Choice movement for women, which should be no surprise to anyone who knows me well. I feel strongly about the freedom to make a self-determination about what is right for me or my partner. Give us all the information we need to make a decision, then give us the freedom to make that decision. I personally believe that if the Anti-Choice people have their way, sex reassignment surgery in this country could be in great jeopardy.

GROUP SUPPORT & LOCAL COALITIONS

The next level of activity is to mobilize your local support organization to become politically aware and involved. What you did on a personal level can be elevated to the group level. The major difference will be that your group should identify itself as an organization concerned with gender rights for transgendered people and the larger your group, the more influence you can have with legislators.

The group's activity could be on a local level or a state level. For example, Emerald City endorsed and helped pass a Seattle law that specifically includes transvestites and transsexuals for protection in equal housing and employment. Renaissance, through the work of several of its members, has endorsed the Pennsylvania Hates Crimes bill working through the state legislation now.

Another activity for a group is to get involved in an existing political coalition. Again, a lot of good experience can be had by helping others first. In Philadelphia we have the Mayor's Commission for Sexual Minorities. Until Renaissance made its voice heard, the commission had no representation for transgendered people. Now we're involved and the commission has a Transgender Workgroup, chaired currently by Kelly Harris, one of the Renaissance board members. And while we do not have specific protection for transgendered people in Philadelphia (yet) we at

least have a body that can advise the mayor on our issues.

I'm sure there are similar commissions or at least gay/lesbian political organizations in every major metropolitan city in the U.S. So, go get involved. Find out what help they need and help them. That's exactly what EON did in Syracuse, N.Y., and they have become a highly respected ally for several gay/lesbian organizations there.

In most of these cases though, our community is characterized as a sexual minority, as are gays and lesbians. Many of us, however, do not like being "lumped in" with lesbians and gays because our issue is one of gender-role, not sexual orientation. For future legislation, we should work toward protecting "gender role presentation" instead of hiding under the protective blanket of sexual orientation. Here's why. Under the pending Pennsylvania Hate Crimes Bill, for example, if someone comes to me and says, "I hate faggots" and attacks me, the bill gives me legal recourse for the attack. But, if someone comes to me and says, "I hate transvestites" and attacks me, I have no legal recourse and no legal protection.

Another important reason is the "baggage" surrounding the word "sex." This country is one of the most hypocritical when it comes to dealing with sex and sexual issues, especially in connection with politics. We have case after case of male legislators (and even some clergy) who publicly decry sexual freedom and then get caught in compromising positions with mistresses or prostitutes. By focusing on gender instead of sex, we may, hopefully, defuse attacks by the sexual hypocrites.

STATEWIDE ACTIVITY

Working at the local level is a good place to start, but it would take an inordinately long time to get every city in the country to back gender rights legislation. Plus, those people who don't live in the cities would not have protection. So, the next step is to consider state-wide legislation. As I mentioned, we have a Hate Crimes bill pending in Pennsylvania, but we need to start looking at the next level of protection for gender rights.

Kelly Harris, our board member on the Mayor's Commission lives in New Jersey and she recognized an opportunity recently when N.J. governor James Florio signed a new bill prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination in state agencies. She wrote the governor on behalf of the South Jersey Renaissance chapter, commended him for the legislation, and then educated him to the effect that transgendered people are not covered by the bill. She suggested that New Jersey form a commission similar to the Philadelphia Mayor's commission.

We'll see if she gets a response, but take her action as an example to be followed at every state level. Find out how to contact your state's Human Rights Commission or Civil Rights Commission and educate them about transgendered people. Send them a copy of the Bill of Gender Rights and tell them you want gender role protected by law.

Now, at this level of activity, it is implicit that someone has to go public. In the New Jersey example, Kelly is a transsexual and that fact is fairly well known in her area, so she has nothing to lose if the governor takes her up on her suggestion. Likewise, Paula Sinclair, a transvestite who has served on the Renaissance board since its inception, is "out" at work and in her neighborhood, so she could work for political change to an extent without personal repercussions. In Syracuse, the president of EON campaigned "en femme" for a local gay candidate. I revealed my transvestism in a letter to my state's Assistant Attorney General in order to get an appointment with him to discuss gender rights. We need more people who are willing to "go public" in order for progress to be made.

It has been suggested that transsexuals would make the "ideal" lobbyists for our community because they suffer more from discrimination than do transvestites and therefore would benefit the most from legal protection. While this may be true, I feel that transvestites and transsexuals should shoulder the burden equally. Surely there are some self-employed crossdressers, like myself, who can risk some exposure for a greater good.

NATIONAL ACTION

It is said, "If you want something done right, do it yourself." No one can really speak for transgendered people except another transgendered person (and even then we have problems). No one else but one of us can know how we feel and what we experience daily. So, it is incumbent upon this community to take action on its own behalf.

Many of us would like to see a national gender rights organization. There have been several abortive attempts to create such organizations. They suffered from two major problems: poor planning and/or no money. Both are required for a successful political action group. We can only do so much at the local and state levels with volunteer labor. To make a real impact, we need a political action committee that can scratch with the big cats in the sandbox.

Permit me to offer a plan for the construction of just such an organization: NOTAGS, the National Organization To Abolish Gender Stereotypes.

Were I to create NOTAGS, I would start by writing a Constitution and By Laws. The Statement of Purpose would read:

"NOTAGS is a non-profit corporation with the purpose of lobbying for legislation and lobbying candidates for public office in order to abolish gender stereotypes in the public and private sectors. The basic foundation of NOTAGS' principles are embodied in the Bill of Gender Rights."

The organization would consist of a Board of Governors and an Office Staff. The governors would be volunteers and the office staff would be paid employees of the organization. As the incorporator of record, I would have the right to choose the first Board of Governors and I would choose one half from within the transgendered community and the other half would be chosen from outside the community. I would mix transvestite, transsexual, male, female, gay, lesbian and straight as best I could in order to get an equal representation for all gender issues.

I would also create NOTAGS as a non-profit organization, but I would not seek a federal tax exemption. That way, the organization can receive contributions from individuals and still protect the individual's identity. The American Civil Liberties Union operates in much the same way.

The first order of business for NOTAGS would be fund raising. Without money it would have no clout. There are certainly many individuals in this community who can support the activities of a political organization. We must get to those individuals and convince them that NOTAGS is a worthwhile cause. I would suggest a campaign that lasts for one year. At the end of that year, it would be obvious to the Board of Governors whether there is sufficient financial support for NOTAGS to begin its real work — lobbying. If there is not enough support, NOTAGS would be dissolved and any contributions would be equally distributed to tax-exempt transgender support organizations. I would set a minimum goal of \$50,000.

But, let's assume the financial support is there. The governors would then hire an Executive Director to act on behalf of the board to carry out the work of NOTAGS. The Executive Director would hire an office staff, small at first, but hopefully to grow later on. Meanwhile, the board would carefully pick its first target and the Executive Director could start work.

The above plan is quick and dirty. I'm sure there are many holes left unfilled, but it is a plan for action. It would take two to three years to implement, what with fine tuning and the inevitable delays. It brings together many proponents to work for a common good and it recognizes the reality of politics: money. With the right people working together, a Constitution, By Laws and Articles of Incorporation could be crafted and filed in a few months.

I could have presented you with a "fait accompli." I could have written the documents, incorporated NOTAGS, and named myself Executive Director, but I am disinclined to do so. First, because I almost lost my family during the creation and sustenance of Renaissance during its first two years and I am not

willing to risk that again. Second, because I would be accused of self-aggrandizement and power seeking by those who have failed to create a viable organization such as I described. So, I offer to anyone with the energy, time, money and courage, my support, my counsel and my experience. I want no active role in NOTAGS, but I'd love to see it become a reality.

Anyone who has constructive comments or suggestions is invited to write me at P.O. Box 61263, King of Prussia, PA 19406-1263. I'll be happy to discuss any proactive ideas with you.

JoAnn Roberts
December 1991

The final piece in this collection is, as yet, unpublished. I am confident, however, that I will find an outlet for it in addition to this book. This is my latest and strongest take on leadership roles.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP

Ari Kane of the Outreach Institute often refers to what we call "TV/TS Support" groups as "Social Contact" groups and to a large extent she's correct. Our organizations are not like most support groups in that we aren't trying to help, for the most part, people get over serious traumatic events like rape or physical abuse. Most groups provide support to its members by letting them know they are not alone and by providing a safe environment in which to socialize and meet other transgendered people.

Because of this social nature, we tend not to give a lot of consideration to the important aspects of leadership that might be required if our organizations were more like traditional support groups. The social and "fun" aspects of our organizations do not necessarily require strong leadership in order to survive. And that's fine at a local level.

However, we now have in our community several organizations that have taken on a more serious role of education and proactive outreach to the world at large. We have created these organizations in the image of much larger groups and we've taken advantage of state and federal regulations to acquire tax exempt status so that certain doors which would otherwise be closed are now open to us.

But, we have not overcome the "social contact" mentality when it comes to selecting the leadership of these organizations. Are we choosing/electing the best qualified people? Are we looking for genuine leadership skills in our leaders? Do these "corporate" officers understand the financial and legal responsibilities they assume when elected to office in a tax-exempt organization? Or do we not understand the seriousness of the roles these individuals play in these organizations? The people we choose to lead these special organizations must be the best that our

community has to offer and they must understand the tremendous responsibility that we are handing them.

The prime responsibility to an organization must be the organization itself and not personal ego. We have created these organizations to, ostensibly, help people understand the nature of the transgender phenomenon. That must be the primary goal. If we get some personal ego strokes along the way, fine. But, we must never permit self-aggrandizement to be the driving force behind why an action is taken. Someone once said, "There is no greater treason than to do the right thing for the wrong reason." We don't want leaders who will only do what is best for themselves. We must require leaders who will do what is best for the organization even when it means a hardship for themselves.

Our leaders must understand and respect their roles as caretakers of our community organizations. Regardless of who founded what, the moment an organization is granted a tax-exemption by the government, it now belongs to the public and that means us. We must require of our leaders only the highest ethical behavior, especially since we are a much maligned minority. Any leader who feels that an organization is "their's" to do with as they will, is violating the trust we've placed in them and does not deserve to be in a leadership position.

Organizations come and go on the whim of its members. In order to build anything of permanence, leaders must inspire the respect of their followers. The best way to do that is for the leader to show respect to his/her followers first. Any person who cannot or will not respect the supporters of an organization is surely on an ego trip and not serious about the organization itself.

Any person who seeks a leadership position should be qualified for that position. We should not choose by personality, although that is important, but also by education and real-life experience. Would you invest in a multi-million dollar corporation led by a high-school dropout whose sole qualifications are he once delivered pizza for a year and he's a nice guy? No, you wouldn't, because you'd have no confidence in his qualifications to lead the corporation in a responsible way. The same criteria should apply when we choose leaders in our community.

Any person elected or appointed to a leadership position should understand their job and what is expected of them. We should set standards and goals for each job, then measure our leaders against these criteria. We should periodically review the performance of a leader and let him/her know how they're doing and have the courage to tell them where they need to change or improve their performance. We should also have the courage to be clear about the consequences of poor job performance.

Finally, it is simply not enough to hold high standards of behavior for one's self. Leaders must require the same high standards of behavior from everyone in the organization without exception. And, every rule and regulation governing the exempt organization must be followed scrupulously to the letter. We must expect no less.

Simply restated, our leadership should be the best educated, most experienced, most skilled people with only the highest standards of integrity and ethical behavior. If we elect or choose anything less, we deserve whatever it is we get.

JoAnn Roberts

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There is no one in this world more deserving of your respect than yourself. For, if you cannot respect yourself, how can you possibly respect anyone else? — Living In A Box

Last month it may have seemed to some that I made hamburger out of the "Sacred Cow." — Hamburger Helper

Trying to help one of these people is about as rewarding as teaching a pig to sing. It is a waste of your time and it really annoys the pig. — Porcine Operas

It is time for the transgendered community to take a stand, a strong stand, against all gender-based discrimination... — Bill of Gender Rights

They want their lifestyles validated by an outside agency, the APA, so they can point to a paragraph in a book and say, "See, it says here I'm not mentally ill!" — The Great DSM Debate

The freedom to make my own choice is always preferable to having my choices dictated to me, even if it means that some times I might make the wrong choice. — Who Decides

These are just a few of the reasons why Professor Marjorie Garber (Harvard University) picked a passage from JoAnn's work for her book *Vested Interests* over all the other writers in the transgendered community, and why Professor Robert Francoeur (Farleigh Dickinson University) asked JoAnn to be a Special Editor for his college text *Becoming A Sexual Person (2nd edition)*.

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