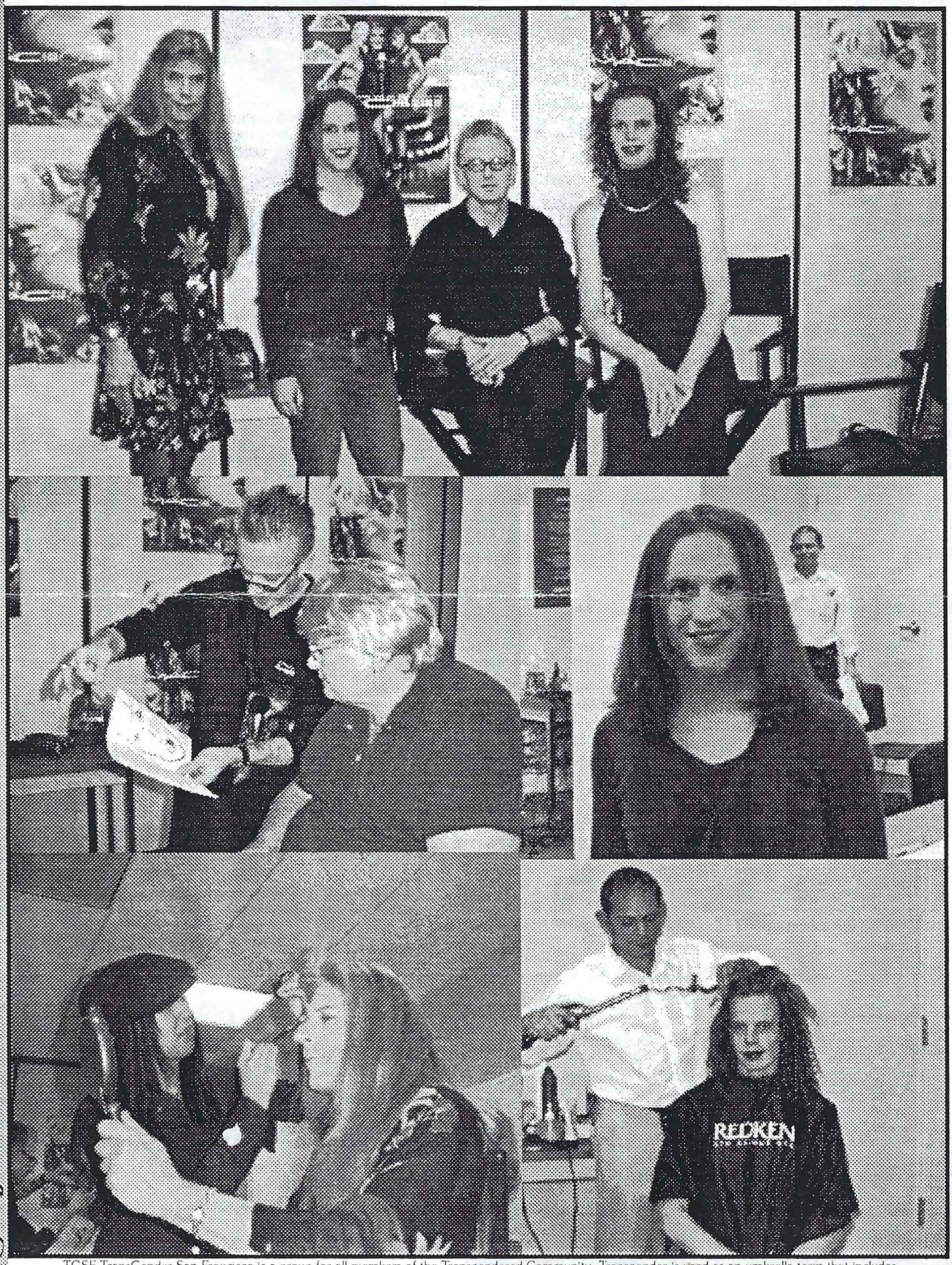
March 2003 — Dedicated to the Memory of Gwen Araujo — Volume 22, Issue 3

The Change

MAC Makovers @ Bloomies!



TGSF TransGender San Francisco is a group for all members of the Transgendered Community. Transgender is used as an umbrella term that includes female and male cross dressers, transvestites, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators, intersexed individuals, pre-operative, post-operative and non-operative transsexuals, masculine females, feminine males, all persons whose perceived gender or anatomical sex may be incongruent with their gender expression, and all persons exhibiting gender characteristics and identities which are perceived to be androgynous.

The Channel

TGSF (TransGender San Francisco, a California non-profit corporation), is a non-sexual, membership based organization serving the educational, social, and recreational needs of gender-gifted people, their spouses, significant others, family members, friends, and professionals in the helping services. For details about TGSF programs, membership, article submission guidelines and classified ads, please write to TGSF Secretary, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486.

ExCom 2002 - 2003 Officers

(Fiscal Year: May 1 - April 30)

President ..... Rachael Janelle
Vice President ..... Rachael Hill
Secretary ..... Susan Laird
Treasurer ..... Stephanie Ann Blythe
Education ..... Ally Grillo and Kara Flynn
Outreach ..... Kalani Makanani
..... and Roxy Carmichael-Hart
Social ..... Aiyana Eveningstar and Gia Luisa

Membership Report

Final 2001-2002 Membership as of:

May 24, 2002 230

TGSF (TransGender San Francisco) is a CA non-profit corporation. *Donations to TGSF are TAX DEDUCTIBLE on both Federal and California income tax returns. Talk to your tax advisor for details.*

The Channel, the TGSF Newsletter, is published monthly. Submissions should arrive at TGSF by the 15th day of the month preceding publication. Contents reflect the opinions of the contributors and are not necessarily those of TGSF. Other organizations may reprint or reproduce uncopyrighted portions of the newsletter for their members, provided TGSF is acknowledged as the source of the material. Copyrighted materials may be reproduced only with written permission from TGSF.

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From The Editor...

I really tried this month to pare the paper back to a more reasonable length (in terms of weight and postage at least), but again I find myself leaving many interesting and newsworthy events on the editing room floor, with another 30 pages not nearly enough to accommodate everything. This big fat Greek newsletter could've gone to 40 pages, and I still wouldn't have enough room.

Unless you happened across these items on the internet, you will not be reading about the gentrified gays in Boston complaining about transsexual prostitutes attracting crime and drugs to their neighborhood. Nor will you be reading about Canadian courts ordering their prison system to pay for a TS's reassignment surgery.

Unless you follow the Remembering Our Dead project, you won't be reading about the mysterious and still unsolved murder of **Nizah Morris**, a transgendered performer in Philadelphia who died on Christmas Eve from a traumatic head wound. Nor will you read about the groundbreaking and controversial work **Joan Roughgarden** is doing at Stanford, as sex and gender scientists gather to take a fresh look at the glaring holes in Darwin's theory of evolution. Also not in this issue is the United Kingdom's mandate to consider allowing transsexual athletes to compete in their current genders. Or for that matter, you will not be perusing the informative article on the discrimination and legal hassles transgenders face in Hong Kong - and the list goes on.

But the one story you won't be reading that prompts me to comment, was that of **Alice Johnston,** a TS in Atlanta who put a gun to her head and pulled the trigger. I quote from a friend of hers: "*...she was homeless and all the faith-based homeless shelters here turned her away. No place will take transsexuals, and Alice was not totally passable, it is sad to say. If there is any area where educating is needed the most, the people who run homeless shelters is top on the list. And, if there is any area that well-off transsexuals want to help without outing themselves, then donating to shelters in this country who will house TS people is a worthy cause. I know several stealth TSs who care, but being disconnected from the community makes it difficult for them to know how they can help without harming themselves. No one should needless expose themselves if they have built a quiet and secure life. But, there are many ways a stealth TS can contribute without anyone knowing.*"

Which leads me back to the big question our community seems to face: Stealth vs. Out, and which is the safer, saner course to take? Alice's suicide is tragic enough - Lordy knows we continue to lose trans persons at an alarming rate. But it was the comment about stealth TS's that struck me - those who want to help but can't, or won't, because they fear being outed. As I've written here before, I think going deep stealth is an out-of-date model for TS's. No matter how well you pull it off or how deeply you bury your past, you're still going to live your life with the fear of discovery. And what kind of a life is that? You're just trading one fear for another. A lot of us (particulary the younger ones) want to live their lives openly and freely, accepting themselves for who they are, accommodating their past, and demanding respect for taking control of their lives and being productive citizens. Granted, being out invariably sets one up for a lot of rejection and ridicule, and I -for one - can reconcile myself to that. So far, it's kept me alive and kicking.

But if you're proud and self confident, regardless of your passability, you're at least educating those around you. If others see that you consider your own gender identity to be irrelevant to day-to-day living (gee, just like them!), then tolerance and acceptance is fostered. And that's where we want to be. Living your life in stealth mode educates no one. But if you're bound and determined to fade into the woodwork, yet want to remain connected to the TG community, then at least consider the above suggestion and put your money where it may do some good.

Wendell Debele M.S. (T.C.M.) Dipl. L.Ac.

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President's Report

By Rachael Janelle

Where should I start? Beginning and endings have always been the hardest thing for me and the middle and the doing part is very easy for me. This is really about the 20th Cotillion. I loved the headline in the February 2003 Channel "20th Cotillion –Wow!" and then from the Editor, Ayme, "20th Annual Event a Success!" and the kind words she wrote in her column. Her words touched my heart. Thank you so much Ayme.

What's the problem? Let me back up a year to January 2002. My plans were to do only one Cotillion and retire. But I knew that after the cotillion in 2002 I could put on a much better event than I did and that TGSF did need some leadership or could possibly close up shop. So I took on two tasks the leadership of TGSF and Cotillion 2003. I don't need to talk about my leadership of TGSF that is in the TGSF history Book. I will tell you about my baby (Cotillion 2003).

I was committed to make this event spectacular. Working on the 20th Cotillion was a labor of love for me. I'm not going to say it was easy. I had a director resign 9 months into the planning of the Cotillion and thank God Laura stepped up and took over the director role and that Susan Laird came through with everything she said she would do and even more. I still have other major planning committee roles that did not get filled. I did take those responsibilities on, which I have no problem with, but it added a lot more work.

Also in the past year, my transition to girl has brought a lot more changes to me. Including, I've lost a lot of physical strength and I did not realize how much of my male emotional abilities I would also lose. Today I don't feel anymore boy inside, which I wanted accomplished. On the outside I may not sound or look totally girl, but on the inside I am. I carry this 20th Cotillion as I would have carried a child inside me. I cherished every moment of this past year (well not every one, but most of them). When I started labor of my baby girl (20th Cotillion) on January 25, 7:32pm and finished 11:03pm that night. It was a very proud moment for me. But I was physically and emotionally exhausted.

Kind words came in about my baby being so beautiful and awesome. I knew from past events that I would go through some post event blues, but that was ok. And the week after the event was very busy with thank you's and getting things back to individuals. I also had an appointment with my new doctor at the VA, because my old doctor whom I have been with for 11 years retired. The New doctor was cute and smart. We reviewed all my meds and he came to one called Paxil and he asked me "are you taking this one?" I said no. With that cute smile of his, he asked me what was it to be taken for. "Because I thought I was having a heart attack and went to the emergency room." "So have you had anxiety attacks before?" My answer was yes and I used to take meds before, but became addicted to the drug. The doctor reached out to touch my hand as I turned my head away with tears filling my eyes. I felt the pain of my addiction that I thought I put past me 11 years ago. The doctor said, "There a lot of women like you who have to be on this med who are taking hormones." Those words made me feel a lot better inside. He did say that the first five days will increase some of my anxiety but it will mellow out. He should have said to lock myself in a room and have no communications with the outside world and you were going to get only couple hours sleep a night for the next five days. So I started the new med the next day went to San Jose court event that night with Couple GG friends. No problems with the meds. The next day we had the Ex-com meeting planned for 4pm. I was feeling ok, but really wanted to stay outside and enjoy the beautiful day. But I did have everything together for the meeting. I got to the meeting at 4pm and passed out all the paper. On the Agenda was Cotillion which I put beside it the Good, Bad and Ugly. Everything was fine talking about the good and some not so good thing about the event. Came to the treasurer's report and it was announced that the Cotillion lost a significant amount of money.

I thought my heart was going to come out of my body and the room went silent for what seemed like eternity. It was like I just got a phone call from the doctor telling me my baby girl (20th Cotillion) is not going to live a normal life. I was devastated by what I just learned. I felt sick inside and I could not believe this. When I looked down at my agenda and saw the word ugly next to the word Cotillion. This is Ugly. Well, the meeting continued, but everyone was a little more reserved and somber. After the meeting I had planned to drop off Rachel Hill props from the cotillion with her. Her words could not even take away any of the pain that I was feeling inside. We drove away and couple minutes later I called her on her cell phone, because the pain and tears were getting worse. "I know," she said over and over "it will be ok and we will get through this". Well that night was one of my worst nights I have had in 11 years of sobriety. I made it thru the night and still had my sobriety the next day but there were moments that really scared me that night. That next day I sent an email to the active ex-com members to resign as president of TGSF effective immediately due to the financial failure of the Cotillion. A couple of the ex-com members sent back words like "I don't/can't accept your resignation" and "I believe you will regret this decision made at an emotional time. It's only money, and we'll get through this" "Times are tough but they will get better". I went to two 12th steps meeting that day and talked and dropped off all my TGSF materials off at Susan Laird's, which she was not at home when I came by.

Just trying to get thru the day with no sleep from the night before. That night I went to bed at 6:30pm slept to about 9:30 pm that night and was awake the rest of the night. The next morning I wrote another e-mail to the ex-com using words like "Shattered" "I do not have a vision for TGSF now or the Future" " Think of me as a butterfly, let me go and heal" that was only couple of words and I think you get the point. The only e-mail I received back that day was from Rachel Hill saying "Then fly you must..." She also contacted some of the other ex-com members and said " please be patient" and " we'll contact you to discuss the current state and strategize for the near future". I felt better by knowing that she would take over right now and check on what have happen regarding the Cotillion's short coming. Last year after the Cotillion it was reported that we lost a substantial amount of money and after more review we had turned a profit, I forgot about this until I stopped having this out of body experience. I did make some apologizes about some of the things I said on my second e-mail.

Later That Week...

I hope you are still with me with this. It's day seven on the new meds and I'm starting to feel more normal. One thing I want to add right here is "I'm not burned out" or overwhelmed by TGSF things, but I'm not going to say that I'm not busy with LGBT activities or other broad commitments.

I believe I have two options right now. Number One: I'm out of the TGSF building and can get in my car and drive away. Number two: In a couple weeks, I can knock on the door and ask to come back in. I have lots of events coming up in the next five weekends and I hope to have put Cotillion 2003 behind me, but unfortunately it is going to be on my mind for a while.

By the time you read this I could be back in place and no one would have even known the difference, except a couple people. I have been asked by someone to tell a different story about why I would I would leave TGSF and I said I wouldn't do that. My son sometimes has referred to me as a DQ (drama queen) and maybe this is what it is. And all of it could have been a financial error in accounting regarding the Cotillion, like last year. If I need to say goodbye I will say it now and thank every one of you who touched my heart and made me a better person. If not it was a good story to tell.

Thoughts and Feelings on Valentine Day

This is my favor day of the year. I love the quote "LOVE made the world go around."

I have notified the active members of the ex-com today that I resuming my responsibilities as president of TGSF immediately. I will need all your help, to help us work out this short-term financial situation. Let work together as a team to accomplish this task.

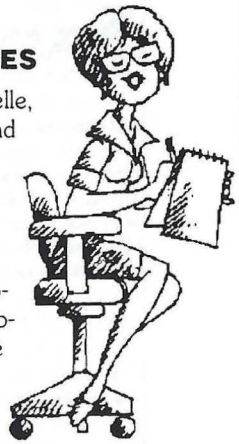
Thoughts & Decisions on February 21, 2003

Its gorgeous day today and I would love to be outside. Either walking around shoreline in Mt. View or starting to work on my garden. I need to inform all of you my future plans with TGSF. I don't plan to put my name on the ballot for any positions for the upcoming election for TGSF Executive Committee in April. It's time for me to side a side and let other individuals have the opportunity to provide the guidance and leadership for TGSF. At the end of last year I turned over the Mid Peninsula group, I start three years ago, to young dynamic T-girl who has brought a new enthusiasm to that group. I'm very happy with that decision I made regarding that group. I'm very involved with many other activities in GLBT communities this year, which I been looking forward to. I'm still looking forward to bring involved with TGSF this year and the future, but not on the Ex-com as I have for the past two years.

Love,
Rachael Janelle Light

February 4, 2003

TGSF ExCom Meeting Minutes



Start at 4:00 p.m. Present are: Rachael Janelle, Rachel Hill, Stephanie Ann Blythe, Susan Laird, and Kara Flynn. Guests: Tyler Fong, Brooke Miller, and Roxy. Request for approval of the minutes for January 2003. Approved

Presentation of the Agenda

Nomination to establish Roxy on ExCom as co-chair of Educational Outreach Seconded and approved. Roxy to update the phone list, monitor the hotline and update the website calendar. Brooke Miller welcomed to ExCom Channel: Request for funds to mail the channel, which is quite large for the month.

President's Report:

The LGBT Center of San Francisco The Center of San Francisco has accepted the resignation of Brian Chu. The Intent of TGSF is to end the support group meeting at the LGBT Center at the end of February. Kara will continue to remain the contact person between the LGBT Center and TGSF.

Felicia is holding an event at Aunt Charlie's on April 6th with funds to benefit various groups within the gender community. Decision to move the ExCom meeting to an earlier time on April 6, 2003 to allow members to attend the event as required. Food to be served between 4-5 and the show to be done between 5-6. ExCom to be moved to earlier time (2:00 p.m.), at Susan Laird's home.

Tyler and Rachel Hill asked to attend the San Francisco and the San Jose Coronations. Tickets are provided. Elections to be held at the end of April at the Blue Muse.

Cotillion 2003

The Good: Cotillion 2003 was probably the best Cotillion ever done. Scores of Mr. and Miss TGSF were very high (in the 90's) and press and the reviews of the show were very high. Technical presentation and judging on the show were very good. A great deal of interest in next year's show has been generated. Dress rehearsal went well but some tweaking of the process is suggested. The value of the entire show often resides in the participation of the members of the show and the debutantes. We must remember that this is a great moment for many people. Foothill college students who attended were suitably impressed and this event proved to be significant in its outreach capabilities. Brooke Millers' interpretation of the experience rated us very highly.

The Bad: The first e-mail received after the show the next day was a complaint. Discussion of the seating charts and table locations and initiation of possible revisions for next year.

The Ugly: We are still having difficulty getting sufficient help to put on this show. There is no end of difficulties with table seating, ticket returns, and show preparation and insufficient personnel to handle these problems. Tickets were returned unsold at the night of the show with insufficient time to resell them. Discussion is presented on how to eliminate this problem in the future and the lack of responsibility in the past. Problems with taking checks in payment are also discussed. Clean-up crew was paid to clean up and still left early without finishing the job. Penalties for time overruns due to clean up and loading out amounted to nearly _ as much as the entire rental of the Design Center, initially. Discussion of the use of the Design Center for January 2004. Difficulties with noise and talking in the bar area is also noted.

The Cotillion Budget: Presentation of costs remained nearly consistent with last year.

Vice President's Report

Pride week. Discussion begun on getting supplies and coordinating the Members for pride week. Rochelle will donate the truck and trailer for the parade. Discussion of plans to assist in the operation of the beverage booth for portions of the funds raised.

Treasurer's Report:

Cotillion: Ticket Sales totaled $11,466 in cash and checks. Expenses so far total $9994.37. Net Income from the show came to $1471.63. Bank account currently stands at a balance of $2966.79. Estimates are about $3,400 plus in outstanding unpaid debt. Outstanding debts from the show exceed the total reserves of TGSF. It appears that the budget held well, but the loss occurred in ticket sales. Some donations have been made to help offset costs, but members of ExCom will be unable to obtain Payments for credit card charges. Discussion held regarding the means to fund these costs.

Secretary's Report:

Website: Significant increase in the number of people who are visiting the website. We are in position to start preparation on the online store and it is the secretary's hope that we will be able to sell VHS tapes of the Cotillion through that venue as well as possible graphics T-shirts for the pride week. We are now operating the member's only section of the site, which contains the Channel online. Scans of other newsletters are being done to load onto the member's only section. Web access is based through e-mail addresses and the secretary must have it in the database in order for a member to use it. It is suggested that membership to raised from $30 to $35 provided that the channel is viewed online. Should a member want the Channel in print, membership would be raised to $40, to offset the mailing costs and printing fees. Motion tabled for the next meeting of ExCom.

Education: Kara

$341.48 bill presented for Cotillion. Kara agrees to hold the bill for now. SRS presentation with Dr. Kaplan to happen for sure this time. Room costs $80. The Center indicates that they will be lowering their room rentals to about half of the amount formerly charged. March 1, 2003 - Tai Kwan Do self-defense event will be held at their club for no charge to TGSF. March 15th - Voice Training seminar. April - Hormone seminar is being planned. May – open; June - Pride will take precedence over any events.

Social:

End of month event will be held at the Blue Muse.

Old Business:

Next Meetings: March 2, 2003 and April 6 (at 2:00 p.m.) and May 4, 2003

New business:

None. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

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Vice President's Report

Boy does life move fast. Just when you think you are in fourth gear they throw you a fifth. Well, more about that in a minute. First a few words about the Cotillion.

January 24th 2003 was one of the most wonderful days in my life. I am so honored to have been a part of the 20th annual Cotillion and to be chosen to carry out the duties of Miss TGSF throughout the year. There are so many people to thank and so many who filled my life with incredible amounts of love and encouragement. Thank you to my Robin who was up to her shins helping with the Cotillion preparations during the night of the dress rehearsal and the morning of the event. She jumped right in and many of you got to meet her; isn't she the most wonderful person?

Ok, now back to business. If you are reading this edition from front to back you have already read the President's report and have a 20,000ft view of our situation today. Throughout the rest of this report I will take you through the strategic plan that will bring that vision down to a "How can I help?" level.

One would think that the two weeks proceeding my crowning would have been filled with nothing but joy and elation. After all it was the culmination of a year's worth of work. But it was not. Our President and my wonderful friend was in trouble..... and it bit right to the core of my soul. She was devastated once the financials came through for the Cotillion. You see, after all the fan fare, the crowning, the convergence of the LGBT community, the excitement for each debutante, the thrill of honoring Sylvia Guerrero and Gwen Aurajo, the pride felt by those receiving the President's awards, applauding Lenny Broberg with the Joanna Coronne award, and so much more.....the Cotillion is a fund raiser. Traditionally TGSF's biggest, and some years the only fund raiser of the year. So although we were very successful at making a difference in the lives of many, we were not successful on the fund raising and Rachael was crushed. She needed to take a step back and I honor her for having the courage to do so.

Through several conversations I tried to assess her state of mind because, TGSF aside, she was my friend and I was worried about her. I am not an alcoholic so I don't pretend to know what it is like. But I do know how very proud my friend is of spending the last 11 years of her life alcohol free and I knew that if her internal strength was injured, she was at risk. Efforts were coordinated amongst a close group of people to call and e-mail Rachael several times a day until we all felt she was out of the danger zone. (It wasn't just the cotillion; there were other factors as well) It worked and I am so proud of these 7 or 8 people. Looking back I may have overreacted, but there was no way I was going to lose my friend. Many have told me since then that the hearts and souls touched by the Cotillion have a far greater value than that of the money and we should stop beating ourselves up. That may be true, but was not evident at the time.

When Rachael wrote that original e-mail directed to a close group of people, most of which are ExCom members, it was not clear if this was a passing moment or if we had lost her all together. It was a bit of a shock but that's when I knew it was time for fifth gear. Suddenly I was not only the Vice President and Miss TGSF but now the acting president as well. Fortunately I was surrounded by a group of people who pledged their support and took a serious involvement in taking TGSF into the future. Susan Laird, Kara, Kalani, Stephanie Anne, Tyler Fong, Roxy - thank you all for taking it up a notch. Quickly a conference call was set up so the group could discuss leadership, fund raising ideas, and the state of our President. Everyone was on time and gave input. There were many great ideas we will be sharing with you shortly.

Elections are coming soon and I am looking for those who want to be involved at any level. If you are interested in running for an office please e-mail me ([redacted]@aol.com) and I can help you put it in motion. It is only through the volunteer support from the membership that the Executive Committee and therefore TGSF exists, so please give it some thought. Now if you don't have the ability to step into one of the ExCom Chair positions but want to help be a part of the success of the organization, I have a suggestion. The ExCom is made up of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Outreach Chairperson, Social Chairperson, and Education Chairperson. This year we are bringing back the committee structure that works through the leadership of each of the Chairs.

As an example, the social Chairperson needs 4 to 5 people to be on the Social activity committee, the Education Chair will be looking for 4 to 5 people for her committee and so on. The President has her cabinet, but each of the others will have a sub group of participants, each helping at their own ability. This will spread the burden of the work involved over many hands and give us the power to do more than every before. It also creates a mentorship for those who may want to be on the ExCom but can't make the jump all at once. I know there are a lot of you who can help and I ask that you raise your hand and be counted. Now is the time. E-mail myself ([redacted]@aol.com) or any of the ExCom members if you have an interest or just questions. We need you and we need your involvement.

Of the large scale items, Pride week is next and we will be looking for volunteers to build the float, be in the booth, or walk in the parade. If you have not done this before, I urge you to be involved. It will be a ten-page entry into your personal journal and provide you memories that will last a lifetime. So, yes this is one of those, "...ask not what your country can do for you".... speeches. We need your help to raise funds to pay off outstanding debt from the Cotillion and purchase the things we need for our Pride Celebration float.

For the many who are already giving of your time and energy, I thank you. For those of you who give financially because you can't spare the time, I thank you. For those who have given in both ways, there is a position on the ExCom for you! Thank you everyone who came to the 20th anniversary Cotillion, we look forward to seeing you all again next January. (A Knight of Fantasy)

Warm Regards,
Rachel

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TGSF Events in March

Saturday / March 1 / 1:30pm - 4:00pm.

TGSF Education Seminar: Self Defense taught by Triangle Tai Kwon Do Club.

In light of recent violence against transgender individuals, this seminar will teach you the basics of how to defend yourself and how to avoid possibly devastating circumstances. TTKDC (Triangle Tai Kwon Do Club) will be instructing this seminar at the Eureka Valley Rec Center on Saturday,

EVRC is at 18th & Collingwood, one block west of Castro St, next to CalMart. One of their black belts will be leading the seminar, as well as a couple of other TTKDC members to assist. Participants are usually paired up to work with each other on these drills. Everyone should wear comfortable clothing and (sensible) shoes. This means no heels!!!

The seminar will focus on self-defense concepts, recognition of potential danger, conflict assessment and de-escalation techniques, and legal responsibilities of the defender. Techniques will include basic moves to evade and defend oneself, as well as elements of hapkido, which uses pressure points disable the attacker.

Parking could be an issue, so please arrive early for the seminar. There will always be time for stretching and socializing if you are too early. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kara Flynn at 650-[redacted] or email [redacted]@aol.com.

Saturday / March 1

BDeF Anniversary Dinner

The **Billy DeFrank Center** Celebrates its 22nd Annual Anniversary Dinner at the Capital Athletic Club. $100 p/p. RSVP! Join the fun as we return to the 1920's and some backroom gambling! For more information contact 408-293-3040 ext 117.

Sunday / March 2 / 4:00pm

TGSF ExCom Meeting

The meeting of the TGSF Executive Committee will be held at Susan Laird's house in Santa Clara, [redacted] All TGSF members in good standing are invited to attend. Call 408-430-2196 x1230 to make sure of starting time! Please attend! There's Cotillion debriefing and upcoming **Elections** to begin planning!

Thursday / March 6 / 7-9pm

SFSI Lecture On Transgender Therapy

Valerie Igl, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

Topics to be addressed include: What's required to get hormones and/or surgery? How can therapy help? What themes or problems might come up in therapy? Bring your questions! To allow access by those with chemical sensitivities (including the facilitator), please do not wear scented products like perfume and cologne. Thank you!

Valerie Igl is a psychotherapist in private practice in the East Bay with over 23 years of experience in the mental health field. She has facilitated a Transgender Support Group for over 2 years. Her specialties include sexual minorities (lesbian, trans, bi, S/M, poly, gay), abuse survivors, sexual concerns, recovery from addictions, disability/chronic illness, and relationship problems. RSVP is required and you can do so at [redacted]@sfsi.org. First come, first served and seating is limited. Hope to see you there!

Thursday / March 13 / 7:15pm

TGSF Mid Month - Hedwig and the Angry Inch!

Join up to see the hit Broadway smash at the Victoria Theatre, 2961 16th Street (at Mission). Gather together at 7:15pm. Show starts at 8:00pm. Tickets are $28.00. RSVP to Aiyanna at 415-[redacted] Don't miss this fun night out!

Friday March 14, 2002

3rd Annual Breast Cancer Emergency Fund Dinner

Wild and Wonderful Future Ahead!

The Breast Cancer Emergency Fund is a Charity established to provide financial assistance to low income individual's fighting Breast Cancer for basic necessities, rent, medication, etc.

This year's BCEF Dinner will be held at The San Francisco Zoo located at: 1 Zoo Rd. (off Sloat Blvd. in the Sunset). Parking is free in the SF Zoo lot. SF MUNI - L Taraval line will drop you off 1 block from the entrance. Event is at the Leaping Lemur Center (near the flamingo exhibit). $75.00 per person. Doors Open at 7:30. WINE WITH DINNER & ENTERTAINMENT INCLUDED - produced by: Mark Paladini. ONLINE TICKETS (Available after January 27th) at WWW.FRANTIX.NET Tickets will go fast like last year so please order now! Thank you for your support for this amazing organization. This can't happen with out your help and support. - Sandy 'Mama' Reinhardt (In Leather We are Family).

Saturday / March 15 / 4:00pm

Talk the Talk

A TGSF Education Seminar on Voice Therapy

Practice, practice, practice!

It's the way to Broadway, and it's the way you can develop a new voice, one that matches your new look and attitude. Here in the Bay Area we have voice coaches who can help. One such expert is Carol Freidenberg, M.S., who will be speaking to us about the therapy she offers to transgender clients, typically male to females, although she is able to work also with female to males. Come and learn how you can sound like the gender of your choice.

Suggested donation: $3 for TGSF members, $5 for non-members.

NOTE VENUE CHANGE: Location: The Women's Building, 3543 18th Street @ Guerrero, in San Francisco (the Mission neighborhood). Parking is limited; please take public transportation, such as BART to the 16th Street station. For more information call Alison Grillo, 415-[redacted] or email her at [redacted]@smccd.net.

Sunday / March 23 / 4:00pm - 9:00pm

The 5th Annual "Night At The Oscars"

Tickets $60; Location Capitol Club – San Jose

Thursday / March 27 / 7:30pm

TGSF End of Month Event

The Blue Muse 409 Gough Street, San Francisco. For more information contact Rachael Janelle.

Calendar Continues on Page 8

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT GROUP

Safe ongoing group
All gender queers welcome
Transitioning NOT required
Monday eves * East Bay near BART
FREE interview * Sliding scale $20-45/wk

Valerie Igl, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
http://members.aol.com/valigl/page/feministtherapy.htm
valigl@aol.com **510-527-5662**

Calendar of Events – March 2003

Other Bay Area Groups

Pacific Ctr for Human Growth (PacCtr)
A counseling oriented growth center sponsors all-inclusive gender support groups on every Friday at 8:00pm, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley. 510-548-8283

Rainbow Gender Association (RGA)
Meets 1st and 3rd Friday of the month 8:00pm at the New Community of Faith Church, 6350 Rainbow Drive, San Jose. Mail: PO Box 700730, San Jose, CA 95170 or call 408-984-4044.

Sacramento Gender Association (SGA)
Blue Rose Chapter meets 8:00pm the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month in Sacramento. Write PO Box 162907, Sacramento, CA 95816 or call 916-364-7212 for meeting locations. Website: www.transgender.org/sga; email: sga@transgender.org

Diablo Valley Girls (DVG)
Meets 1st and 3rd Monday of every month. 8:00pm at Club 1220, 1220 Pine Street in Walnut Creek. Write to DVG, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885 or call 925-937-8432.

DVG Rap Group (RCC)
Meets 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month, 7:00pm at Rainbow Community Center, 2118 Willow Pass Road, Suite 500 in Concord. For more information call 925-937-8432.

FTM International
A support group for Female-to-Male CDs and TSs; Holds open Informational Meetings and closed Support Meetings. Write FTM International, Inc., 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 or call 415-553-5987.

TGIF
A social group for transgenders. Meets one Saturday each month at a private home in Santa Rosa for a potluck social from 4:00pm until early evening. Space is limited - Reservations Recommended! Call Diane or Anne at 707-[redacted]

Silicon Valley Gender Association (SVGA)
A new trangender support group meets at the Billy De Frank Community Center in San Jose on the 2nd and 4th Friday of every month from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. For more information, call 408-293-2429.

Far West Women (FWW)
A support group for TGs affiliated with the GLBT Alliance in Humboldt County. Meets every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month at 8:00pm in the GLBTA Center at Fourth and "D" Streets in Eureka. For information call the Center at 707-445-9760.

Santa Cruz Trans (SCT)
Bi-weekly social/support group for gender-gifted persons serving Santa Cruz and Central Coast. 1st and 3rd Tuesdays every month at The Diversity Center, 177 Walnut Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; (831) 425-5422; 7:00pm

SCOUT (SCOUT)
Santa Cruz Organization for Uniting Transmen, meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Diversity Center (listed above); 7:30pm

The Mid-Peninsula Transgender Group (MPTG)
A support group for the LGBT community that meets at 7:30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month at the Women's Health Boutique, 1115 South B Street, San Mateo - (408) 619-2908.

Central City Hospitality House (CCHH)
288 Turk Street, SF. 415-749-2167. Facilitated TG discussion group every Monday, 5:00pm - 6:30pm.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 1:30 PM TGSF Self Defense Seminar Billy DeFrank Anniv. Dinner
2 4:00 PM TGSF: ExCom Meeting	3 5:00 PM CCHH 7:00 PM PISSR General Meeting 8:00 PM DVG	4 7:00 PM SCT	5 7:30 PM MPTG	6 7:00 PM DVG RCC 7:00 PM SFSI Lecture: TG Therapy	7 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA	8 8:00 PM FWW 8:00 PM SGA
9	10 5:00 PM CCHH	11	12	13 7:15 PM TGSF: Mid-Month - Hedwig!	14 7:00 PM SVGA 7:30 PM Breast Cancer Dinner 8:00 PM PacCtr	15 4:00 PM TGSF Voice Therapy Seminar
16	17 5:00 PM CCHH 8:00 PM DVG	18 7:00 PM SCT	19	20 7:00 PM DVG RCC	21 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA	22 8:00 PM FWW 8:00 PM SGA
23 4:00 PM Night @ Oscars in San Jose	24 5:00 PM CCHH	25 7:30 PM SCOUT	26	27 7:30 PM TGSF: End of Month Event	28 7:00 PM SVGA 8:00 PM PacCtr	29
30	31 5:00 PM CCHH					

TGSF Membership Application

Membership Year is May 1 to April 30 / $30 Single Membership; $40 Family.

Please Print / Check all that apply:

❑ New Member | ❑ Renewal ❑ Member #:_____ | with ❑ Family Member | What Year did you first join TGSF? _____

Preferred Name: _____ Birthdate (Month/Day): _____ / _____

Mailing Name: _____

Family Member's Name: _____ Birthdate (Month/Day): _____ / _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

Optional: ❑ Telephone: (_____) _____ What Name should we ask for if we need to call you? _____

Your Email address: _____ Website URL: _____

Would you like a link from the TGSF Website to your URL? ❑ Yes ❑ No

May we use photos of you taken at TGSF events in our newsletter or website? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Send Check or Money Order to: TGSF, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486, or hand to any Board Member at a TGSF Social.

Special Events!

Living Your Dream Starts March 6th!

Gold Rush 2003

The Gender Identity Center of Colorado is hosting our fifth annual conference, **Colorado Gold Rush 2003: Living Your Dream.** This exciting event is taking place **March 6 - 9, 2003**. We will be at the Red Lion Hotel in Denver again this year. The hotel management urged us to return. Since The Red Lion fit our needs so well, we gladly accepted. Our exciting program is filled with great workshops, galas, tours, and vendors.

This year the G.I.C. marks our 25th anniversary. Saturday evening is a *Celebration in Silver!* Join us for a glamorous night with dining and dancing. Phyllis Frye keynotes the evening after dinner. Thursday evening also features the G.I.C.'s Fund Raising Dinner. Dana Rivers is the featured speaker, followed by some very energetic Drag Kings.

To register go to the conference web site: www.ColoGoldRush.org, and print the registration form. There is a $40 discount for those who register for the full conference before January 31, 2003.

If you are arriving early, check out the all day seminar on Thursday. Take an in-depth look at two important subjects: "Relationships" and "Life Skills."

Check our web site for the latest information and registration. Thank you!

Susan Conder
Conference Coordinator
1455 Ammons Street, Suite 100 Lakewood, CO 80214-4093
(303) 202-6466 / Fax: (303) 202-2050
www.GICofColo.org, or www.ColoGoldRush.org
info@GICofColo.org
ColoGoldRush@GICofColo.org

Harvey Milk Institute (HMI) New ACS

Glitter Ball: Arts & Culture Series Launch Party

Saturday, March 1; 7 pm-Midnight

The Center
1800 Market St @ Octavia

Tickets: $10-$50 Sliding Scale

Join HMI as we launch our Spring 2003 Arts & Culture Series (ACS). Shimmer into the 5-hour celebration and reception at any point in the evening. Two performances: 8 & 10 pm.

Featuring: Hot Pink Feathers, where Brazilian dance meets burlesque revue; Miss Trannyshack 2002 Suppositori Spelling; Constance-Lee Cummings; QComedy darling Bridget Schwartz; & more. World Music by: DJ PussPuss.

Upcoming ACS Events

The Center's First Birthday Party

Friday, March 28 (hosted by Carol Queen) More info: http://www.harveymilk.org/Happenings/

Calendar of Events...

Continued from Page 6

Sunday / April 6th / 4:00pm

TGSF, FTMI & TG Holidays Presents: TG Fundraiser for the LGBT Community Steering Committee.

At Aunt Charlie's Lounge at 133 Turk St. at Taylor St. Phone is 415-441-2922. Food is provide by the Bar. Food at 4pm and Show at 5pm

First Prize is 2 Round Trip Tickets to any where in the USA, Bahamas, Caribbean, Mexico or Canada. And other Raffle prizes. It should be lots of fun!

Monday, May 12th — Sunday, May 18th

Esprit 2003 in Port Angeles, Washington

The Esprit Gala is the premier transgender event in the Pacific Northwest, with something for everyone: classes, vendors, shopping and casino excursions, a fashion show, a talent show, special programs for significant others, and more! For more information visit www.espritconf.com.

Saturday / May 17

GAPA Annual Banquet

Friday / May 30 / 5:00pm (Dinner); 7:15pm (Game)

Fifth Friday - Girls and Guys Night Out - Dinner and a Ballgame!

The Giants host the Rockies, 7:15 p.m. at Pac Bell Park, and Gelsey hosts the RGA Fifth Friday dinner, 5 p.m. at MoMo's. Gelsey: "Peninsula attendees can ride CalTrain and East Bay girls can use BART. View Box tickets are $25. We would like to see a good pre-season sign up for this event, so we can get an improved seating location and set the dinner arrangements. Another angle we will pursue is nominating the TG Gospel Choir to sing the National Anthem that night." Momo's is at 760 2nd Street (2nd and King), San Francisco, 94107. If you'd like to attend, please RSVP to the RGA Warm Line at (408) 984-4044.

Important Website Update!

If you want an ID/Password to access the new **Member's area** on the TGSF website, send an email request to Susan Laird: [redacted]**@hairzapper.com**.

March's Birthdays

3/00	Jennifer Stroud	3/20	Donna Freeman
3/01	Dusty Prentiss	3/20	Geri Handa
3/02	Nicole Kucera	3/21	Jackie Conner
3/08	Susan Flowers	3/21	Kalani Makanani
3/08	Erika Carter	3/22	Joyce Patterson-Rogers
3/09	Aiyanna Eveningstar	3/23	Shelly Cohen
3/09	Katherine Kramer	3/27	Kathy Ann
3/11	Lucy Ann	3/27	Telzey Ann
3/13	Joan Roughgarden	3/27	DiDi Mau
3/14	Roxanna Rochette	3/28	Evette Roque LaRay
3/19	Mina Schwartz	3/28	Marga Meyers
		3/29	Staci Maria

Many Happy Returns of the Day!

Special Events!

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun!!!!

Bring your old, tired, clothes, shoes, wigs, etc, yearning to be free to the

TGSF/I LOVE IT AUCTION

Wednesday, March 12, 2003

7-9 P.M.

Jo-An Torres will donate a portion of the proceeds of her sales to TGSF.

Update your closet and help TGSF!

I LOVE IT!

45979 Warm Springs Blvd. Suite #7, Fremont, CA

(510) 656-4738

Easy access off I-680 and I-880

ExCom Needs You!

Any current TGSF Member interested in running for a position on the Executive Committee?! Creative, Talented, and Dedicated People Needed Now!

Please contact Rachael Janelle to let her know, so she can add your name to the ballot. The deadline for submitting your name will **March 27, 2003**.

Ballots will be send out with the April Channel. The election and ballot counting will be held on **April 24, 2003** at the End of the month event at the Blue Muse.

Rachael Janelle phone: 408 [redacted] or e-mail [redacted]@hotmail.com.

PISSR

People In Search of Safe Restrooms

PISSR is committed to establishing gender-neutral bathrooms. We believe that all people, regardless of their gender identification or presentation, have the right to access safe and dignified restroom facilities without fear of harassment, judgment, or violence.

The general meetings are always the first Monday of the month: 7 pm at 870 Market Street (Flood Building), 4th floor in San Francisco.

Hey!

$10 Bucks Per Issue Gets You An Ad Like This...!

Tall, feminine, graceful closet CD seeks Big Sister to help with shopping and makeup tips. I live alone so it's helpful if you can come here, but I can certainly travel. SF Area. Call (415) 000-0000.

Up to 40 words only $10.00. Send text of ad and Check or Money Order to TGSF's PO Box, ATTN: Editor. Reach out and come out!

Significant Other Support - East Bay

Questions or concerns about your partner's crossdressing? Please call Julie at **(925)** [redacted] e-mail [redacted]**@attbi.com** or write to: Julie Freeman, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885.

Cosmetics Lingerie Fem Fashions Wigs Nails Shoes Cosmetics

Nails Wigs Lingerie

CARLA'S

Salon & Boutique

124 Race Street
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 298-6900
www.carlas.com

Serving the Cross Gender Community's needs with sensitive help and understanding.

The Current Location of the TGSF Library!!

Cosmetics Fem Fashions Shoes

Cosmetics Shoes Nails Wigs Fem Fashions Lingerie Cosmetics

Miss TGSF 2003

Ask Miss TGSF

Hi, it's me again. Sorry for the dual personality thing but it's only for another month or so while I'm in both positions. The purpose of this column is to publish some of the wonderful e-mails I have been getting from you with great questions. I have received questions about my family, my job, my position, my boobs (yes my boobs), what I did to compete for Miss TGSF, etc. All have been great (and in good taste so far). I will choose the best one each month and publish it here along with my response. If I choose yours and you wish to be anonymous just tell me in you message. Questions can be sent to MissTGSF2003@aol.com.

Rachael Janelle put on an incredible event didn't she? Special thanks to our President for outdoing herself yet again. Clap clap clap!! Also many thanks to Laura Fitler, Susan Laird, Chablis, Lenny Broberg and so many others who gave their time and energy. And a VERY special thank you to my pageant coordinator, Miss Monica. (Picture above) I am so very blessed to have met her at last year's Cotillion. Monica, a titleholder herself helped me throughout the planning stages of my competition. She taught me how to stand, where to put my hands, reminded me to keep smiling and so much more. She helped me relax when I got nervous and provided constant encouragement. She also did the fabulous make up for that night. Monica dear, you are the best and I thank you so so much.

Rachel at Gwen's Wake

MissTGSF On The Road.

This is where I will keep you up to date on where I have been and hopefully where I am going to be. Where I have been is easy. Where I am going gets a little harder due to the required publishing deadlines and sometimes I only have a 3-4 days notice. If you think it is a good idea for me to post my commitments on the events calendar, e-mail me with your comments.

Not In Our Town

Thursday February 20th

East Bay Community Foundation Conference Center, Oakland, Ca.

The Working Group and the East Bay Community Foundation brought together Bay Area Activists and community leaders to help create a more unified response to hate crimes. Participants shared solutions and strategies for fighting hate and intolerance and discussed community response to recent Bay Area hate crimes, including the murder of Gwen Araujo. A screening of "Not in Our Town", the Working Group's award winning PBS documentary about residents of Billings Montana who stood together for a hate free community, was followed by special previews from a new documentary being produced by The Working Group and KQED-TV, "Not in Our Town / California Resists Hate". The preview included interviews with student actors from Newark Memorial High School's performance of the Laramie Project.

I didn't know a person in the room and it didn't appear to be dominated by LGBT folk. Mostly it was concerned citizens who wanted to make a difference. That alone filled my heart. Probably 75 to 100 people mingled and tasted wonderful food courtesy of a local restaurant. The film itself was moving and I fought back the tears. Sometimes we get so focused on those who are intolerant, those who lash out at us that we miss the truth. The truth is that most people believe in live and let live and are just looking for safe neighborhoods and environments. I didn't make it known who I was - no tiara or sash. I was just one of the other concerned participants. After the showing, we moved our chairs into a circle for discussion and I heard stories of how people had taken the "Not in Our Town" concept to a local level and how they garnered community involvement. I listened to a women in her 60's talk about lessons of tolerance she had learned as a teacher who had gone over to East Germany to work with the children as the Berlin wall came was torn down. These children suffered from the stigma caused by their ancestors. Think about that. What Nazi Germany did stands out as one of the most well known stories of horrific acts and these children are "marked" just because of where they were born.

As things were wrapping up I asked if I could speak and the MC said, "We will have one more comment by....Rachel" (we were wearing nametags). I introduced myself and thanked everyone for taking the time to be there that night. I talked a little about my personal journey, my transition and of course about Gwen Aurajo. On the way in, there was a poster, honoring Gwen that was being signed by anyone who wanted to do so. I explained that I would be with Sylvia Guerrero and the family the next day and would be honored to present it to them. I felt not just tolerated, but embraced. I was circled by people afterwards, many with lots of questions. I made contact with the producers of the film and many others who create documentaries. I also met Jennifer Rakowski, Associate Director of Community United Against Violence who asked if I would consider going through their "presenter training" and I agreed. This group helps victims of hate crimes. There is no way I could say no. Would you have joined me if you had known? Write me and tell me your thoughts.

Honoring Gwen

Friday February 21st

Saint Edwards Catholic Church, Newark, Ca.

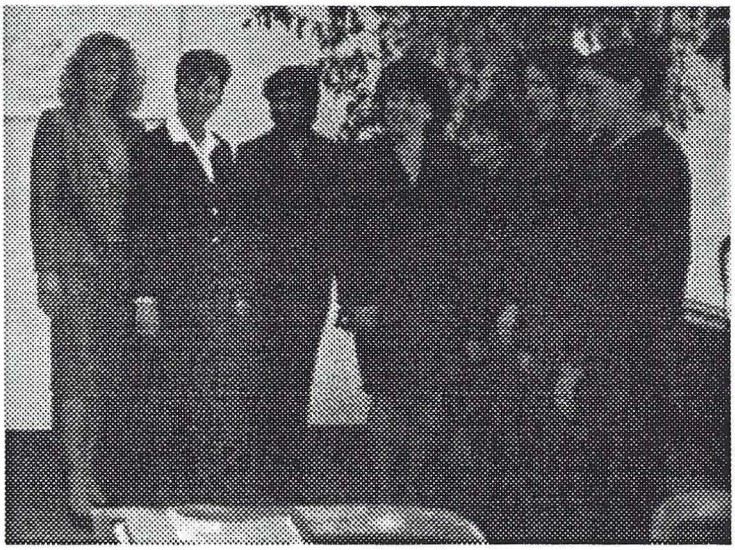
I had the great honor of being at a small family gathering, a wake, for Gwen Aurajo at Saint Edward's church, the same sanctuary where the funeral was held. Rachael Janelle, Danielle and Chrysanthemum, who have all become close to Sylvia and the family, joined me. Connie Hall, TGSF's official documentary photographer was asked by the family to be the only photographer to record this event. She was beyond honored. The pews held about 40 people on this warm sunny day. There were butterflies, balloons and flowers everywhere. This time I saw as much smiling as I saw tears. Mixed emotions for everyone. The full mass reminded me of my Catholic upbringing and of Christ's love - even if you are transgendered. The Vatican has just announced that we do not exist; yet here we are. What mixed feelings the Father who performed the mass must have felt. Sylvia was beautiful and gracious as always. Her strength continues to astound me. She joined her sister on the altar to read a beautiful poem about Gwen's life. As we moved outside to continue the ceremony I was reminded of the Angels who had been outside during the funeral, leading the group in song. Sylvia handed out 18 envelopes each containing a butterfly. February 23rd was Gwen's 18th birthday. Both Rachael Janelle and Chrysanthemum were handed an envelope as well as 16 other friends and family members. What an honor. Balloons were also handed out to the crowd. All at once the butterflies and balloons were released and for what seemed like eternity we all watched them slowly disappear. Rachael turned to me and said, "this is the way it should have been the first time...without all the media, the circus". I agreed. Gwen you have given us so much and I was honored to be a part of the growth you brought to a community.....a nation. We will miss you, but you will never be forgotten.

Thank you Sylvia for allowing me to be a part of this event.

Online SO List!

New online mailing list for wives and SOs of crossdressers and men who consider themselves to be transgendered; no topic off limits. Attitudes range from complete acceptance to really struggling. Open to women only - no crossdressers please! Women need a place where they can feel safe to discuss these issues. Write to Cheryl at [redacted]**@yahoo.com** and explain a little about your situation.

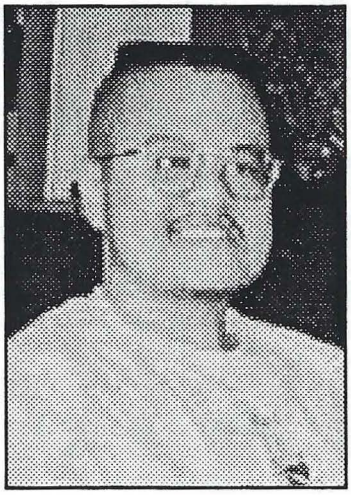
Mr. TGSF 2003



The women of the Bank of America, Santa Clara Region, Senior Management staff posing for a picture for San Jose Magazine. The picture will appear in next month's "Women in Business" edition. That's Rachel on the Left!

Newly crowned Rachel Hill, Miss TGSF 2003, with the lovely and talented Monica.

A Word from Mr. TGSF 2003



HELLO ALL,

Let me introduce myself to those of you who were unable to attend the Cotillion 2003. I am your new Mr. TGSF 2003. I am honored to represent TGSF during my title year and will continue to do so in the years to follow.

I am a female-to-male (FTM) or transgendered male; that is, I was born female bodied but now live as a male. Some may use the term transsexual, but I tend to stay away from that term as it is mistakenly used to refer to sexuality.

Gender and sex are two very different terms. Gender refers to maleness or femaleness. Sex or sexuality is to whom one is attracted.

I am a member of the San Francisco boys of Leather and hold the office of Club Materials Coordinator on the Administrative Board. I also serve on the board for FTM International and am Advertising Editor of their newsletter. I play French horn in the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra, Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra, Danville Community Band and alto horn in the Cal Aggie Alumni Marching Band-uh and Timbuktunes.

I would like to take a moment to share a bit of myself, in greater detail, with you each month. Please send e-mail to MrTGSF2003@aol.com with your questions and comments. Thank you and remember to have some "fun" in life.

Tyler T Fong
Mr. TGSF 2003

Tyler and Rachel - Mr. & Miss TGSF 2003

Transcending Transgender

Sponsored by
City of Refuge UCC Outreach Ministries

A support group facilitated by Janetta Johnson and Portia Denard; Where: City of Refuge, United Church of Christ, 1025 Howard Street, San Francisco CA 94103, (415) 861-6130. When: Every Friday, 6 pm to 7:30 pm. Food and snacks will be provided.

Announcements!

Transgender Law Center

Help with Health Insurance

If you are having, or have had difficulty in the past, getting health insurance or getting services covered, please contact the Transgender Law Center (TLC) at dylan@transgenderlawcenter.org or (415) 865-5619.

The Department of Managed Health Care is committed to working with transgender and gender non-conforming people when we are discriminated against by health insurances, specifically when

- We can't get health insurance because we are denied coverage
- We do have health insurance, but are denied transgender related services (hormones, surgery, therapy, etc.)
- We do have health insurance, but are denied services unrelated to being transgender (e.g. gyn care, broken leg, infection, etc.)

In all three of these cases, the DMHC will attempt to work with your insurance company. If you would like to work with the DMHC, please contact TLC.

Also, the DMHC wants to work on changing insurance company's policies. It would be very helpful to the DMHC to have real life examples of discrimination. So, the DMHC is collecting accounts of problems that transgender and gender non-conforming people face in the health care system. If you are willing to share your experience with DMHC, please contact TLC. I can pass on your information anonymously. Your experiences with the health care system would be extremely helpful to the DMHC in helping us better navigate the health care system.

If you want more info, definitely feel free to contact me.

Dylan Vade

New FTM Support Group Facilitated by Koen Baum!

UCSF Transgender Life Care Project

The group will meet at the TRANS space at 1145 Bush St. on Tuesdays at 4:30. There will be food provided, and the group will be facilitated by Koen Baum, a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice who identifies as a trans man. The groups are designed to address issues that many Trans people deal with and include experential and didactic exercises. There is also access to one on one therapy with Luanna Rodgers, a licensed clinician with 23 years experience in the trans community, and a full range of medical services (including T) at Castro Mission Health Center if one needs it. There is no fee for participation. If interested in participating you should call either me at [redacted], Luanna Rodgers at [redacted] or Toho Soma at [redacted]. If you would like to speak with Koen first you can reach him at [redacted]

We are excited at being able to finally provide service to the other half of the trans community. We are also gathering information in the form of a survey that will be used to expand what TRANS can do as an organization for all trans people in the future. In order to continue these efforts we must demonstrate there is a need for them.

Premieres Sunday, March 16 on HBO!

Normal

Starring: Jessica Lange, Tom Wilkinson. Directed and Written by: Jane Anderson

An official selection at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival, this HBO Films production adapted by Jane Anderson from her acclaimed play mixes humor, drama, and tenderness in telling the story of a seemingly "normal" Midwestern factory worker who stuns his family and community by revealing he wants a sex change operation.

Roy Underwood's outrageous news shocks and angers Irma, his wife of 25 years. Despite his insistence that he wants the family to stay together, she kicks him out of the house. Their adolescent daughter, Patty Ann, takes the news more in stride as she is discovering the awkwardness of her own burgeoning sexuality. However, nothing in his career as a rock roadie has prepared the couple's grown son, Wayne, for dealing with his father's decision.

As Roy begins exploring the accoutrements of being a woman (from perfume to breasts) he faces ostracism within the community and ridicule on the job. But, he also finds compassion from unlikely sources, such as his boss, who is beginning to take an interest in Irma. Ultimately, the family struggles to understand Roy's decision and he and Irma discover that love can transcend both the genders we're born with and the ones we choose.

Ends March 6th!

It's a Shee Thing

A play about a drag king who legally married her female stage dresser — in the 1890s. Elizabeth Allen tells the tale of Annie Hindle, a 19th-century male impersonator.

In Shakespeare's day, all cast members had members. The illustrious age of vaudeville took drag one step further by giving birth to the first male impersonator, Annie Hindle. A top-notch drag king who wooed the ladies into fanatical states of euphoria (and generous tipping), Hindle also had a remarkable personal life, in which she managed to legally marry another woman. Acclaimed Irish writer Emma Donoghue's play Ladies and Gentlemen — currently being produced by the Shee Theatre Company — is based on Hindle's life as a performer and as a wife (or husband, as it were).

The English-born Hindle was a woman of tremendous intelligence and audacity who often performed on New York's vaudeville stages with female impersonator Gilbert Saroney. After leaving what was believed to be an abusive marriage, Hindle fell in love with her stage dresser, Annie Ryan, and eventually married her by either tricking or bribing the priest who performed the services. Donoghue first learned of Hindle through an article she read in an 1891 issue of the New York Sun, and was immediately compelled by her story, both for its investigation of gender and for its sheer theatrical nature. uch of the play — directed by Virginia Reed and filled with song — takes place in the theater, where H: dle and Saroney worked their swapping-of-the-sexes magic.

"I'm very drawn to that early feminist idea that gender is an invention and we shouldn't let it weigh too heavily," says Donoghue during a recent phone conversation, adding that while the onstage Hindle was "a real stumper, a roaring shake-the-house-down man," her life behind the scenes was different (and calmer). In fact, the two Annies eventually lived as a bourgeois lesbian couple in the burbs. "You might have thought they lived in Greenwich Village," marvels Donoghue, "but they actually lived in dresses on the New Jersey shore."

Details: Exit Theatre, 156 Eddy (between Taylor and Mason), S.F.; 8 p.m. Tickets are $15-25. 999-8870 / www.theshee.org

Takin' Care of Biz...

TGSF Balance Sheet

(January 22, 2003 through February 20, 2003)

Assets

Cash	$1,932.79
Event Equipment	
Decorations	$1,000.00
Food Service	$200.00
Office Supplies	$50.00
Total Assets	$3,182.79

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	$2,336.50
Educational Fund	$0.00
Taxes	$0.00
Insurance	$0.00
Utilities	$0.00
Operations	$0.00
Total Liabilities	$2,336.50
Equity	$846.29
Total Liabilities & Equity	$3,182.79

TGSF Monthly Income Statement

Revenue

Membership	$90.00
Advertising	$0.00
Cotillion	$3,226.00
Donations Received	$135.00
Social	$120.00
Education	$7.90
Outreach	$0.00
Halloween Party	$0.00
	$3,578.90

Expenses

Cotillion	$2,582.00
Halloween Party	$0.00
Big Shew	$0.00
Pride Parade	$0.00
Social	$0.00
Education	$0.00
Outreach	$0.00
Newsletter	$0.00
Operations	$0.00
Donations Paid	$0.00
	$2,582.00

Net Income **$996.90**

TGSF Donations

Our Friends Who Give
as of February 20, 2003

Daisy Moore $105.00
Jennifer Anderson $25.00
Renee Price $250.00

Bless You and Thank You for Caring!

Contact TGSF!

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Vatican Schmatican!

Vatican: Transsexuals not Suitable for Religious Life

NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press Writer

Transsexuals suffer from "mental pathologies," are ineligible for admission to Roman Catholic religious orders and should be expelled if they have already entered the priesthood or religious life, the Vatican says in new directives.

The Vatican's orthodoxy watchdog, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, sent the directives to the superiors of religious orders worldwide. The leaders were told to implement the directives or turn cases over to the Congregation for handling, Vatican officials said Friday.

The directives were the latest in a series of Vatican pronouncements on eligibility for the priesthood issued ahead of a long-awaited set of guidelines for seminaries in accepting candidates for the clergy. Those guidelines, due out later this year, are expected to address whether gays also should be barred.

In the new directives, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said transsexuals should be barred as priests, monks, friars, nuns and brothers in religious orders. "When, from clear external behavior and the testimony of those assigned to formation, there emerges the prudent doubt about the presence of transsexuality, the superior should arrange for a careful medical and psychiatric exam," said the directive, which was reported Friday by Adista, a liberal Catholic news agency.

"In the case that there is a serious and irreversible pathology of transsexuality, (the candidate) cannot be validly admitted into the institute or the society, while in cases of doubt, it is forbidden to allow admission since the candidate is missing a clear and full eligibility," said the document, whose content was confirmed by a Vatican official.

Transsexuals, for the most part, feel they were born the wrong gender and undertake to change their sex, often through surgery and hormone treatments. One person in between 10,000 and 30,000 is transsexual, the U.S.-based National Transgender Advocacy Coalition estimates. The Vatican document said transsexuals are considered to suffer from "mental pathologies," a disassociation between their mind and body in determining their sex.

The Vatican distinguished transsexuals from "intersexed" people — those born with gender-ambiguous genitalia or internal organs. Earlier this week, the Vatican upheld its decision to excommunicate seven women who called themselves priests, repeating that the priesthood was reserved for men only. And in December, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments released a letter from its prefect advising against bringing gays into the priesthood.

Transsexuals Denounce Catholicism

In a sweeping statement today, the Holy Mother of Transsexuals, Mother Cybil, rejected the idea of any transsexuals becoming Roman Catholic.

"We believe that it would be very damaging to the reputation and moral integrity of any transsexuals to associate with the Roman Catholic Church," the Holy Mother stated today. "A religion that fosters and promotes pathological behaviors like pedophilia, sexual abuse and denial of reproductive rights to women is no place for people of faith like most transsexuals."

Noting that the Cult of Catholicism has promoted its program of world domination and overpopulation under a mythology that worships human sacrifice, and which also has a long history of inquisition, repression and torture, Mother Cybil denounced the current campaign that the Vatican has begun to vilify sexual minorities while avoiding its own guilt. "A cult that ignores the very basic facts of human sexuality, even to the point of insisting that its "savior" was sexually male, but not the product of sexual intercourse, obviously is in terminal denial of reality, and should not be allowed to poison the minds of our youth."

"Theirs is moral and intellectual cowardice, hiding behind pompous religiosity," Mother Cybil stated, "It is a pathology that has consumed the self-dignity of too many for too long. It must be rejected and eliminated as soon as possible for the well being of humanity."

Troy Perry of MCC rebuts Vatican smashing TGs

MCC Responds To Vatican Condemnation of TG Persons

www.MCCchurch.org

Los Angeles — The head of the world's largest Christian denomination with a primary affirming ministry to gays and lesbians has reaffirmed the church's commitment to transgender persons. "All of God's creation is good and holy, and that includes our transgender brothers and sisters," said Rev. Troy D. Perry, Moderator of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), a denomination with almost 300 congregations in 22 countries.

The MCC statement comes in response to a Vatican declaration, reported in the Roman Catholic news agency Adista, that "transsexual persons suffer from mental pathologies," have "pathological personality situations," and are to be barred from serving as Roman Catholic priests, nuns, monks, friars and brothers in religious orders.

The report, prepared by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, further instructs that transgender persons currently serving as Roman Catholic priests or in religious orders are to be expelled from their vocations.

"It is not surprising that the God who created our world with incredible diversity and complexity also created humanity with a diversity of sexual orientations and gender variance," said Perry, a veteran human rights activist and a past delegate to the White House Conference on Hate Crimes. "Metropolitan Community Churches reaffirms its long-held belief that all life is sacred and holy, and that God calls people from every human experience to vocational Christian ministry."

"Rather than condemn our transgender brothers and sisters, we should celebrate people who have often made great sacrifices to grapple with issues of gender variation and who are committed to living their lives with openness and authenticity," added Perry.

Others within Metropolitan Community Churches echoed Perry's comments. "This may raise medical questions for some, it does not raise moral questions," said Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis, MCC's Director of Clergy Development and a transgender clergyperson.

Tanis, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and author of "Transgendered: Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith" (Pilgrim Press, 2003), added, "We're learning that our world is far more diverse than we previously imagined, and that includes our chromosomal, physical and emotional diversities. This diversity is part of God's plan and is to be celebrated."

"Just as we have come to learn that there is a range of human sexual orientations, we are also learning that there is a range of human gender variance," added Tanis. "Several MCC clergypersons are transgender and have served in both local congregations and in denominational roles with excellence and distinction."

Along with its positive ministry to gays and lesbians, Metropolitan Community Churches has a long history of ministry with the transgender community. "A transgender person participated in the very first MCC service, and MCC members who are transgender have served as elders within our denomination, pastors of our local churches, and on the MCC headquarters staff," said Perry.

"It is the great sin of the Church to exclude those whom God created and loves. We call upon all faith communities to welcome all people of faith, just as God invites and welcomes all, including transpeople who are called as members, friends, clergy and lay leaders," added Perry.

Barbara J. Anderson

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Maryland Court Ruling!

Maryland High Court Acknowledges Nuanced Reality In Sexual Identity Changes

by Arthur S. Leonard

Arthur S. Leonard is a professor of law at New York Law School and editor of Lesbian/Gay Law Notes. http://www.gaycitynews.com

Another state's highest court has been heard from on the question whether transsexuals are entitled to legal recognition of their preferred sexual identity.

Rejecting the reasoning of recent appellate court decisions from Kansas and Texas, Maryland's Court of Appeals unanimously ruled on February 11 that the state's circuit courts may issue an order changing an individual's legal sexual identity, if the individual presents sufficient medical evidence to show that they have completed a permanent and irreversible change from one sex to the other.

The opinion creates an important transgender rights precedent as well as an important victory for attorney Alyson Meiselman, a crusading Maryland advocate who argued the case and whose extensive brief provided the basis for much of the sophisticated written opinion issued by the court.

The petition for recognition of a sex change filed in the Montgomery County Circuit Court bore the name of Robert Wright Heilig, identified on a Pennsylvania birth certificate as a male. Now living in Maryland, Heilig was transitioning from male to female and sought a legal name change to Janet Heilig Wright and an order that would legally change her sexual identity from male to female.

The Circuit Court judge granted the name change, but held that the court did not have authority to issue an order changing a person's sexual identity, even though there is a state statute that authorizes amendments to Maryland birth certificates to indicate sex changes upon a court order finding that a person "has been changed by surgical procedure."

Heilig had submitted her Pennsylvania birth certificate and letters from her endocrinologist, describing hormone and anti-androgen therapy that led to "hormonal castration," and from her social worker, describing her psychotherapeutic treatment and stating the conclusion that her gender identity was female. Heilig appealed the court's ruling that it lacked specific authority to order a change in sexual identity.

The Court of Special Appeals, an intermediate appellate court, affirmed the lower courts finding Heilig had failed to provide evidence that she had permanently changed her sex from male to female. The letters introduced fell short of the evidentiary requirement of sworn statements.

Writing for the unanimous Court of Appeals, Justice Alan M. Wilner found that the trial court misconstrued both the procedural situation and its substantive powers. The statutory authority of circuit courts to order amendments to Maryland birth certificates after determining that somebody has changed their sex clearly indicates the legislature's understanding that they have authority to make orders regarding a person's sex change.

But since Heilig has a Pennsylvania birth certificate, the Maryland courts' authority under that statute does not extend to her case, a fact that begs the question of what a Maryland resident born out-of- state must do to gain formal legal recognition of her new sex as she goes about her everyday life. The Court of Appeals ruled that circuit courts have inherent authority to issue orders recognizing the change, even if an out-of-state birth certificate itself cannot be changed.

A remaining important question, both for Heilig and future transsexual petitioners, is what circumstances must be proved in order to qualify for such an order, most importantly whether surgery is necessary. On this issue, Wilner refrained from opining directly, because that issue was not before the court. The Court of Appeals was limited to deciding whether the Circuit Court has jurisdiction to decide Heilig's petition.

It seems clear from the opinion, which includes a lengthy summary of current scientific information about transsexualism and a review of decisions from a wide variety of jurisdictions (including the European Court of Human Rights), that the Court of Appeals was hesitant to step prematurely into what could be a real minefield.

Wilner summarized extensive studies contending that sexual identity has a physical basis in the brain. Scientific opinion that sexual identity is not necessarily determined by genital anatomy would support the argument that a person should be entitled to a legal declaration of sexual identity without regard to whether they have undergone surgical alteration.

On the other hand, Wilner noted that in all but a very few of the jurisdictions that have authorized a legal change of sexual identity status - some 22 states and the District of Columbia - surgical alteration of genitals has been a prerequisite to legal change.

Similarly, in countries that recognize a marriage between a transsexual and another person of the transsexual's birth sex, the law premises such a marriage on the transitioning person having been surgically altered.

Thus, there is substantial legal precedent for refusing to recognize a sex change in the absence of surgery, although Wilner also notes that many of the statutes do not describe with any particularity what surgery is necessary.

Courts seem concerned that hormone treatments by themselves do not effect a permanent transformation, because the treatments must be continued to maintain the physical appearance of the desired sex, and that petitioners who have not had surgery could later "change their minds."

The Court of Appeals also refrained from taking any position on whether somebody who has obtained a court order "changing" their legal sex would have the right to marry, or to have their sex change recognized in a variety of other circumstances.

The Court of Appeals concluded its opinion by directing that the case go back to the Circuit Court so that Heilig can present evidence to show that she has made a "permanent and irreversible change" from male to female, but refrained from specifying whether the hormone and anti-androgen treatments alone would meet that standard.

Thus, the decision falls short of a complete triumph for transsexuals seeking legal recognition of their desired gender. Surgical procedures are very expensive, not routinely covered by insurance policies, and may be viewed as undesirable or unnecessary by some transsexuals who have accepted the physical and psychological fact of their gender identity.

Still, it marks a major breakthrough as one of the few decisions by the highest court of an American state to attempt a state-of-the-art scientific analysis of transgender identity, to signal acceptance of the view that anatomical gender at birth as defined by genitalia is not the sole basis for determining somebody's real gender, and to find that the courts have - even in the absence of specific legislation - inherent authority to recognize and validate a person's desired gender identity upon medical proof.

Why Is The Heilig Case Important?

Phyllis Randolph Frye

1. The Heilig case was from the highest court in Maryland. (There is only one other TG case from a state's highest court and that was the Gardiner case in Kansas. In the war of future courts that will be citing significant TG cases, Heilig is AS HIGH as Gardiner and stands in direct opposition to Gardiner.)

2. Heilig states forcefully that Maryland's lower courts cannot ignore transgender issues, especially of gender identification, even if the Maryland resident was born in another state. (Gardiner refuses to give federally mandated full faith and credit to legal documents from another state.)

3. Heilig does not set a specific test for legal gender, but defers to and lists in detail, the current medical models. (It gives very little credence to the sex = chromosomes standard as being the ONLY standard. It recognizes and gives much weight to recent mental studies.)

4. Heilig suggests that some surgery — more than hormonal transition — is required, but refuses to place full blown surgery — wherever that line is drawn — as the standard for legal gender correction. (It suggests a gray area for the courts to consider. In my opinion, with more publications of mental research in the future, with complete hormonal transition, with some surgery — either orchiectomy or metaoidioplasty as minimums — and with a lengthy period of full-time cross living — maybe two years as a minimum — a so-called non-op may be able to obtain legal recognition of gender correction. And this could also be argued for a similarly situated pre-op, the legal pressure for full-blown surgery as a condition for legal gender status would be removed, making full-blown surgery more of a decision on how to possibly live in the future rather than a condition as to having to live in the present.)

5. Heilig fully recognizes the legality of the intersexed community. (FINALLY, a very highly placed court recognizes that there is more than merely the diametrically opposite poles of ONLY male or ONLY female.)

I suggest that you download it, print it, get out your highlighter and STUDY it. When you become fully aware of how much better your life may become as a result of the future courts that use Heilig as a model, send a thank you to the lead attorney, Alyson Meiselman, at famlaw@his.com.

International TG News!

NCLR and Equality Florida Press Release
http://www.nclrights.org

Florida & Australian TG Marriage Decisions - Both FTM & Both Favorable!

Florida Court Issues Historic Marriage & Custody Decision for TG Dad

TAMPA, FL — In a groundbreaking decision, Florida Circuit Court Judge Gerard O'Brien ruled today that Michael Kantaras, a transgender man, is legally male and was legally married to his former wife Linda Kantaras, stating that the Court has carefully reviewed all the pleadings, record evidence, expert medical testimony, lay witness testimony and the appropriate statutory authority for marriage in Florida and concludes the overwhelming weight of evidence favors declaring the marriage valid. The court also awarded Michael primary custody of the two children he and Linda raised together during their marriage.

Judge O'Brien s opinion is one of a handful of decisions addressing marriages involving transsexual spouses, and one of the first in the United States to hold that such marriages are valid. The only states with similarly favorable decisions are New Jersey and California; in contrast, Texas and Kansas courts have held that marriages involving transsexual individuals are void. Internationally, courts in a number of countries have affirmed the validity of such marriages, including a very recent decision by the Family Court of Australia upholding a marriage between Kevin J., a female-to-male transsexual, and Jennifer, his wife.

After completing sex-reassignment, Michael Kantaras met and married his wife, Linda in 1989. Linda was fully aware of Michael s transgender status prior to the marriage and permitted Michael to adopt her then three-month-old son. The couple later had a daughter through alternative insemination. The Kantaras children are now ages 14 and 11.

When the couple divorced in 1999, the focus soon shifted away from the best interests of the children and onto Michael s transgender status. Linda argued that Michael should be considered legally female, their marriage deemed void, and his parental rights stripped away. The three-week hearing, which included extensive testimony from medical experts, was covered live by Court TV last January and February. "I m so relieved," said an exhausted Michael Kantaras. "Now my kids and I can get on with our lives in peace."

The court recognized that the two children in this case have a devoted, loving father and need to maintain a relationship with both their parents, said NCLR Staff Attorney Karen Doering, co-counsel in the case. This court recognized that Michael's transgender status has nothing to do with his ability to be a good parent. Michael is a loving, responsible father who also happens to be transgender.

According to NCLR Legal Director Shannon Minter, To our knowledge, this is the first transgender marriage case in the U.S., in which extensive medical evidence was presented, including testimony from three of the foremost experts on transsexualism in the country. As the Court has recognized, the medical evidence overwhelmingly favors recognizing that the law should accommodate transgender people so they can be productive, functioning members of society. This includes permitting transgender people to marry and raise children.

This is not only a victory for the transgender community, it s a victory for the Kantaras children who deserve to have their loving father remain a part of their life, said Equality Florida Executive Director Nadine Smith. We all benefit when gender stereotypes and bigotry are defeated.

Australian Court Backs TS Marriage

Australian News
www.theaustralian.news.com.au

The full bench of the Family Court of Australia has rejected a Federal Government bid to quash a transsexual marriage.

The Family Court had previously upheld the validity of the marriage between a Sydney couple known only as "Kevin and Jennifer J". Kevin was born a female and had a sex-change operation. Before his marriage to Jennifer in August 1999, he had hormone treatment and irreversible surgery. He has a New South Wales birth certificate stating he is a male, a passport saying he is a male and the couple have had two children through in-vitro fertilization.

In October 1999, the couple applied to the Family Court to validate their marriage, and the court later declared the marriage valid. But Attorney-General Daryl Williams challenged that decision on the grounds Kevin was not a man. Today, the full bench of the family court - Chief Justice Alastair Nicholson, Justice John Ellis and Justice Sally Brown dismissed the challenge. No order was made as to costs.

Report From Israeli TG

Today's edition of "First Reading", a program on books and literary issues on Israel's Educational Television, was devoted to the transgender phenomenon. The program included interviews with three people: Dr. Ilana Berger, Israel's leading expert on gender issues, FTM playwright Roni Almog, and myself.

I think it was a very good program. The approach was serious, open minded and thought-provoking, with a real attempt to go beyond the surface of things, shunning the usual tack of these programs, which even at their best tend to concentrate on the flashy sides of sex change only. The interviewer, Avirama Golan, a bright and sophisticated journalist, did not address transgenderism as an individual quirk of a few colorful people, but sought to examine the issue with a sociocultural perspective. Instead of focusing on transgenderism as some sort of freak show, she set out to explore the ramifications of the social construction of gender as part of the whole way society deals with reality, including questions such as truth, sexuality, identity and social change.

Dr. Berger's interview touched upon general information issues regarding gender, sexuality and the transgender revolution. Roni Almog read one of his poems (he is a wonderful poet) and talked about his transgender experience; my bit was a little about my experience of womanhood, the difference between biological sex and gender identity, and mostly about Jackie Kay's book "Trumpet" and "true" gender identity. The whole program was about half an hour long.

Nora

"Tranny" Hangs Up His Brown Mailbag

By David L. Beck, Mercury News

How do you say goodbye to a neighborhood you've nurtured and nannied for 23 years? Postman Dennis Allen said it to the people on his Santa Cruz harbor-area route — people he's known through all the cycles of their days — with a potluck party and a good-timey band. They said it to him with laughs, hugs, fond memories, a few outrageous gifts and maybe a tear or two. "He is that harbor area," said Donna Ruiz, watching with approval as Allen worked the room in midnight purple velvet and a piled-high black wig. "That's what it's all about: Diversified. Open. Full of fun."

As letter carrier Marcy Cayton said, "Things are definitely quieter around the post office without him. He kept things lively." Allen turned 55 in mid-December and hung up his blue shorts and brown leather bag in early January.

Halloween and his final day aside, Allen walked his route in regulation shorts, delivering the mail and spreading the gossip. "It's amazing to me that he could get the mail out on time to everybody," said Ruiz, "because he always stopped and talked." He did more than talk, neighbors say. "He looked out for us in the neighborhood here," said Bev Dyc.

He left your packages with neighbors, paid your postage-due for you and came to your parties alone or with a girlfriend, almost always in drag. He threw an annual birthday party for himself and the women on his route at a harbor-side watering hole. "Well, you know," said Allen, "it's kind of an old-timey thing. When we were growing up, we had, like, the milkman, the paperboy and the mailman, and they were always the same. You don't get that continuity in life anymore."

Allen was born in Maine, schooled in Japan, Germany, France and "one really weird foreign country, Alabama." He dropped out of Auburn University in his sophomore year and hitchhiked to San Francisco, where the Summer of Love had started without him. Drafted, he ended up in a helicopter over Vietnam.

He's been married twice. "I always tell everybody, there's plenty of women who love trannies. And I had a relationship with both of them." He prefers "tranny" to the term cross-dresser, which he calls stodgy, and says the wearing of women's clothes is his second-favorite hobby, after backpacking in the Sierra. In T-shirts and jeans he may be a "dowdy little man," said Allen. But when he dresses up, he can have a little fun, with his wigs, thrift-shop chic and size-11 pumps. Why? His short answer is, why not?

Allen joined the post office in Los Angeles in 1970, and moved to Santa Cruz two years later. He got his own route, the one he kept until he retired, in 1979. "I always told people I answer to five things," he once said. "Dennis, Dish, Snake, Sarge and 'Hey, mailman!' But I don't answer to 'Hey, mailman!' anymore."

International TG News!

Nepalese Gender Advocacy Movement

Men Who Have Sex With Men Speak Up

Inter-Press Service News Agency
by Ramyata Limbu

KATHMANDU, NEPAL Feb 7 (IPS) - In a slinky back sari and a miniscule string blouse, Kumar glid across the packed conference room in four-inch heels, as numerous heads turn. The 18-year-old tossed back long, black tresses and bats a luxuriant pair of false eyelashes, before addressing the first Nepal National Consultation Meeting for Male Reproductive and Sexual Health held here Feb. 1.

"I normally don't dress up in public," says Kumar, one of 60 or 70 men, ages ranging from 15 to 60, who gathered in the Nepali capital to identify gaps in sexual health interventions for males having sex with males (MSMs) in Nepal. "But self-realisation is extremely important as well as awareness and education on sexual orientation, health and behaviour," Kumar adds.

In the language of the subcontinent, Kumar, who used to dance in a local nightclub before opting to study hotel management, is a 'meti', a self-defined feminised male who has sex with men, and uses his feminine behaviour in public spaces to attract men for sex.

'Metis' are the most vulnerable and high-risk group of homosexuals as they have multiple 'ta' partners, men who have sex with other men or women. "Evidence from research in South Asia clearly shows that the process of stigmatisation and thus vulnerability arise from concepts of masculinity in these cultures, which lead to marginalisation, social exclusion, and abuse of the most vulnerable of MSM - those with feminised identities," explains Shivananda Khan, executive director of the Naz Foundation International.

The foundation has been involved in providing technical, financial, and institutional support to MSM collectives across South Asia since 1996 and has assisted in the development of some 27 such projects that between them have reached over 500,000 MSM.

"Studies in Kathmandu as well as anecdotal evidence from other urban areas in Nepal, clearly indicate that there are significant numbers of 'metis' across the country," says Sunil Babu Pant, founder and director of the Blue Diamond Society, the only self-help, community- based organisation that provides sexual health promotion services in Kathmandu for 'metis' and their partners. The society, through outreach workers like Kumar, provides counseling, education and support to MSMs, drop-in services, clinical referrals.

Working across 18 sites in Kathmandu during a nine-month study in 2002, the organisation has so far reached some 7,000 MSMs, 3,000 'metis' and the remainder 'tas'. During the survey, 3,000 were referred for treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

"MSMs are an extremely vulnerable group as male-to-male transmission of STD/HIV may be largely undetected because of relatively low levels of testing, the invisibility and denial of male-to-male sex, the levels of shame experienced by those involved in male-to- male sex and also the lack of sensitivity, awareness and knowledge of the medical profession in this regard which makes access problematic," stresses Pant, who struggled to found the society in 2001.

Till about a few years ago, Nepalis, even those in the medical profession, were awkward and uncomfortable discussing problems of men who have sex with men and their rights. "It's an historic moment that we've reached the stage where we can gather and talk about the needs and sexual health rights of MSMs without squirming. Everyone is entitled to live a safe life with dignity," says Dr Bala Krisha Subedi, acting director of Nepal's National Centre for AIDS and STD Control. "While it's crucial to have a better appreciation of factors like size estimation and risk behaviour among MSMs, it's important that what was once a hidden domain is now recognised and is being addressed in national policy," agrees Dr James Ross, country director of Family Health International.

Despite the chill at this time of the year, 'metis', 'tas', and 'dohoris' (a label given by 'metis' to other homosexuals whose public behaviour is normatively masculine) from urban areas around Nepal, many of them dressed in drag, turned up to discuss strategies need to meet their sexual health needs at last week's conference. These, they hope, will enable effective networking, and to explore human rights and social justice issues regarding MSMs and advocate ways to address stigma and discrimination - including changing laws discriminatory to homosexuals.

"It's a curse in many ways," says dusky-skinned Sharmila, who turned up with his partner after hearing about the meeting through the local network of MSMs "From the outside, you're male. But every instinct cries out that you're female." Since as long as she remembers, Sharmila has been dancing and singing to celebrate the births of babies and other auspicious occasions in Kathmandu's homes.

Others like 24-year-old Alex, the only son of three children, has been fighting off increasing parental pressure to get married. "Tying the knot and making some girl's life miserable is not a solution. But my parents don't understand. Once, I told them half-seriously, find me a boy and I'll get married," he recalls. "They were aghast."

TSs, Sex-Change Advocates Fight On Against Social, Registry Snub

by KEIJI HIRANO to The Japan Times, Kyodo News

Transsexuals and their supporters have teamed up to seek public acknowledgment of those who suffer from gender identity disorder and to pressure the government into allowing sex changes to be recorded in official documents.

The NAO group, which stands for No Assignment of Opposite Gender, takes its name from a character in a popular TV drama focusing on a junior high school student with gender identity disorder. The group has set up a Web site that provides information on transsexuals and the discrimination they suffer. It has also tied up with lawmakers from both the governing and opposition parties to address the challenges faced by transsexuals, said Masae Torai, a member of the group.

Torai had a sex-change operation from female to male in the United States in the late 1980s. He said that having changes of gender officially recorded in family registers is one of the group's goals.

Six people who have undergone sex-change operations, including Torai, filed civil suits in 2001 seeking to have their new gender recorded in their family registers. Three have had their requests rejected, while rulings on the others are still pending. "I believe many other transsexuals in Japan are now struggling to gain legal approval to have their gender change listed in their family register, although I have not yet had any contact with them," said Torai, a freelance writer in Tokyo.

Although courts have turned down several requests, Torai said, "I have been employed as a male part-time lecturer at the state-run Mie University, and another state-run university also plans to accept me as a male lecturer." Because their new gender goes unrecorded in official documents, many transsexuals can only get part-time jobs because such employers do not require them to submit residence certificates, Torai said, and they also cannot enjoy the social benefits afforded to ordinary married couples.

Aya Kawakami, a NAO member who lives as a woman, said, "As an association, I hope we will be able to push lawmakers and administrative bodies to allow us to register gender changes on official documents, such as family registers and medical records."

Satoru Ienishi, a member of the Democratic Party of Japan with a seat in the House of Representatives, said, "The government should allow people to alter their registered genders if they are medically identified as (having gender identity disorder) and undergo a sex- change operation. "As a lawmaker, I intend to ask the Justice Ministry and others where they stand on this issue and how they plan to tackle it." Ienishi led a group of plaintiffs in a lawsuit concerning HIV infection from tainted blood products.

Transsexuals are predisposed to identify with the opposite sex, often feel at odds with their bodies, and sometimes harbor a desire to undergo surgery and hormonal treatment to change their gender.

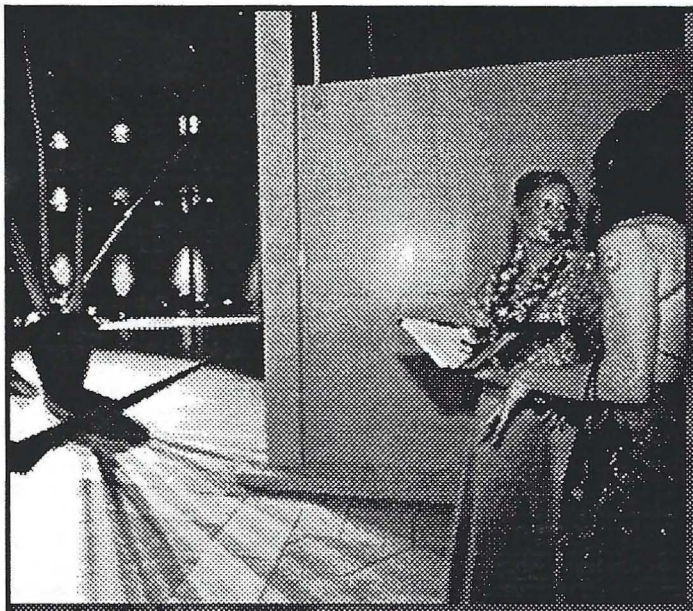
The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology introduced guidelines for sex-change operations in May 1997, recommending that patients receive psychiatric counseling and hormone therapy before undergoing the procedure. Experts estimate that there are anywhere from 7,000 to 70,000 people with gender identity disorder in Japan.

The association is planning to hand out light blue ribbons bearing the NAO logo and ask people to wear them as a show of understanding for transsexuals. Ryoko Wakatake, a member of the group, said, "I want people to wear the ribbon to show they stand by those with (gender identity disorder)."

Wakatake, a municipal assembly member in Koganei, western Tokyo, worked for the adoption of a written opinion by the assembly in September seeking official recognition of gender changes. She said, "The color of the ribbon symbolizes our hope that people with (the disorder) will be able to live under a blue sky."

The written opinion, which the Koganei assembly unanimously adopted, was submitted to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, as well as the public management and home affairs minister. "As long as transsexuals face unfairness, they feel gloomy even under clear and sunny skies," Wakatake said.

Cotillion 2003 Photos!



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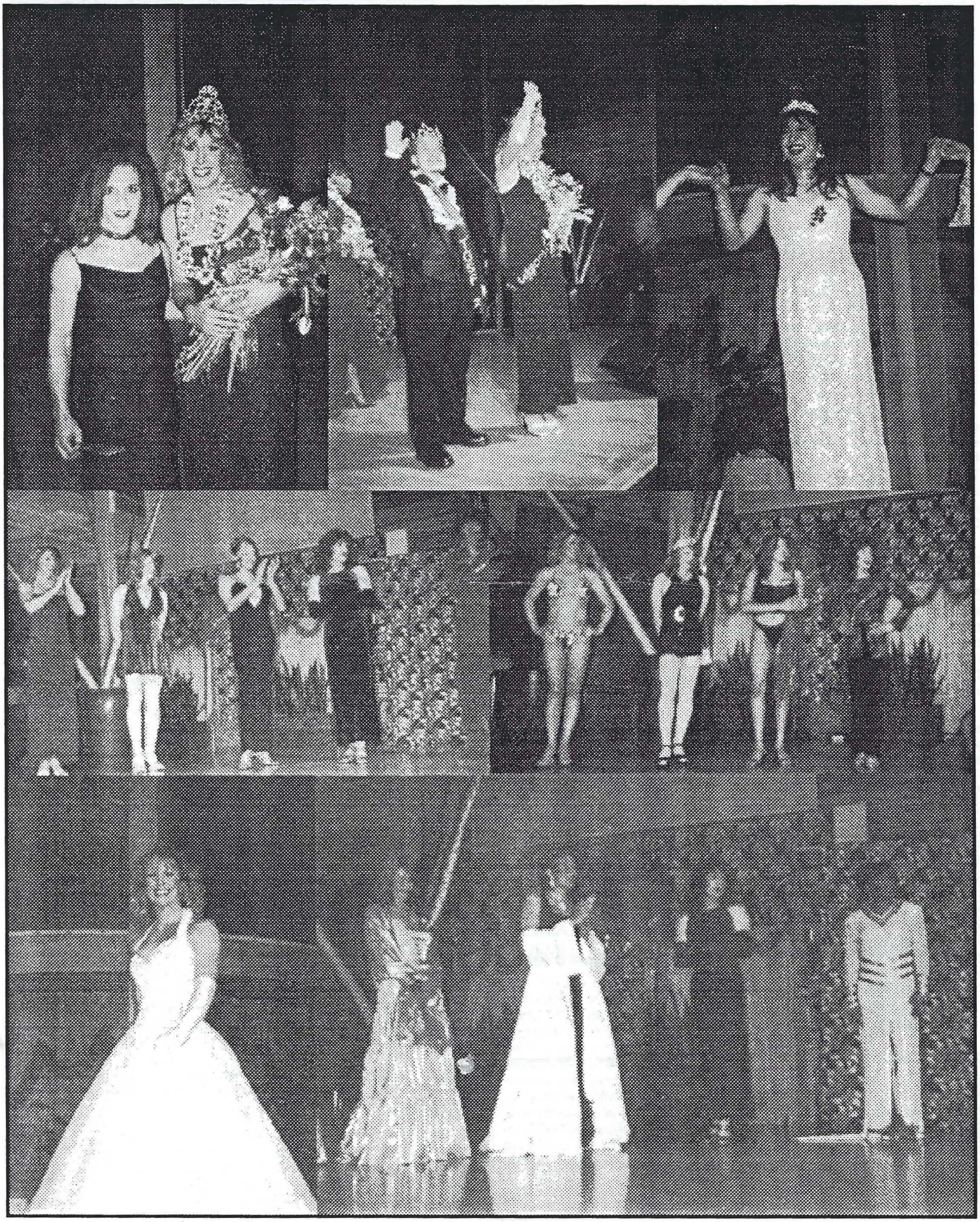

Remember Gwen Araujo!

Defendants In Death Of Transgender Teen In Court

By Yomi S. Wronge, Mercury News

The grim details of how — and perhaps why — a Newark teenager was killed will come to light today, when the four men accused of killing Eddie "Gwen" Araujo face a preliminary hearing.

The hearing, to determine whether the case will go to trial, will showcase the strategy of the Alameda County prosecutor who says the men brutally beat and then strangled the trasgender 17-year-old in a homophobic rage after Araujo's male anatomy was divulged at a party.

Defendants Jose Antonio Merel, 23, and Jaron Chase Nabors, 19, both of Newark, and Fremont residents Michael William Magidson, 22, and Jason Michael Cazares, 23, are all also charged with a hate crime. All four have pleaded not guilty and remain behind bars, although Magidson recently was granted bail and could be released if his family can post bond. The proceedings for the four men are set to run through Friday in Alameda County Superior Court in Fremont.

Defense attorneys for the accused have said the young men were deceived by Araujo, whom they knew as a beautiful 19-year-old girl named Lida. They became enraged when, after a night of heavy drinking at Merel's house, a girl followed Araujo into the bathroom and discovered the teen was anatomically male.

Araujo "perpetrated a sexual fraud on heterosexual men who, when discovering they had been having sex with a man, had their masculinity, sexual identity and self-esteem called into question at a time when they had been drinking heavily," attorney Michael Thorman, who represents Michael Magidson, wrote in court papers. But according to police reports and court documents, the defendants had discussed Araujo's gender among themselves several days before the killing. Deputy District Attorney Connie Campbell has called the case premeditated murder.

"There is ample evidence," Campbell wrote in court papers, "that this was not a spur of the moment reaction . . . but rather a cold-blooded hunt to discover the biological gender of the victim."

The hearing is likely to include graphic photographs and other forensic evidence, as the prosecutor tries to prove the defendants should stand trial. Likely witnesses include police detectives and those present at the time of the killing: Jose Merel's brother, Paul Merel, who was arrested but then released; Emmanuel Merel, 19, another brother; and Nicole Brown, 22, who is Paul Merel's girlfriend. Brown was the one who followed Araujo into the bathroom and then told partygoers that Araujo was male.

According to police reports, the defendants attacked Araujo, punching and grabbing the teen by the hair before dragging his body into the garage. They tied a rope around Araujo's neck and strangled the youth, then drove the body 150 miles north to dump it at a campsite near Placerville. It was Nabors who later led detectives to the makeshift grave. The case became a flash point for transgender activists and anti-gay protesters and is sure to draw more media attention as it heads toward a trial.

"It's really important to remember the memory of someone as courageous as this youth, Gwen, so that people understand the connection between homophobia or transphobia and what people do to act out emotions around those phobias," said Tina D'Elia, director of the anti-hate crimes program at the non-profit Community United Against Violence in San Francisco. Since the first wave of national coverage, Araujo's mother, Sylvia Guerrero, has hired high-profile feminist attorney Gloria Allred. Allred has said the family will lobby the state Legislature to include hate crimes in the list of special circumstances that make a defendant eligible for the death penalty if found guilty.

Chilling Phone Call In Teen Killing

Defendant's Girlfriend Testifies At Hearing In Transgender Case

Kelly St. John, Chronicle Staff Writer

"Just tell me," male voices demanded. "I am a girl," a voice in the background pleaded. Then one of the men said, "Something's about to go down." The chilling conversation was revealed in court Wednesday as four men accused of killing transgender teen Gwen Araujo of Newark, after finding out she was biologically male, appeared at a hearing to determine whether they should be tried for murder.

Deanna Mendez, a girlfriend of one of the men, Jason Michael Cazares, 23, testified in Alameda County Superior Court in Fremont that she was awakened at 3:16 a.m. on Oct. 4, the night Araujo was allegedly slain at a party, when Cazares called her cell phone.

They spoke for six minutes, she said, during which time she heard "chaos" and "loud screaming and quarreling" in the background. "I asked him what was going on," Mendez said. "He just told me that someone was there, and they were trying to get an answer out of this person." Finally, he told her "something along the lines of 'Something is about to go down'," and hung up, she said.

Mendez's testimony came on the first day of a preliminary hearing to determine whether Cazares, Jose Antonio Merel, 23, Jaron Chase Nabors, 19 and Michael William Magidson, 22, should face trial for Araujo's slaying during a night of partying at Merel's Newark home.

Alameda County prosecutors allege the four men brutally beat and then strangled Araujo — who was born a boy, Edward Araujo, but identified and lived as a young woman — after they discovered the beautiful girl they knew as "Lida" was biologically male.

Prosecutors say Araujo, 17, had engaged in sexual acts with at least one of the defendants going back several weeks before the slaying. All four men have pleaded not guilty to charges of murder and a hate crime enhancement. They remain behind bars, though Magidson has been granted bail of $1.6 million and could be released if his family can post bond. While one defense attorney has said the men were deceived into having sex with a young man and then became enraged when they learned the truth, rosecutors said Wednesday that they will prove the attack was a case of premeditated murder.

"These defendants, acting in concert, committed a brutal, cold-blooded murder," Alameda County Deputy District Attorney Connie Campbell told Judge Kenneth Mark Burr on Wednesday. Days before the party, Campbell said, the defendants "had discussions to try to ascertain whether she (Araujo) was biologically male. The defendants determined that they were going to ascertain the victim's true biological gender."

Mendez, who appeared as a reluctant witness for the prosecution, told the court that she has known Cazares, Merel and Magidson as friends for more than five years, and had recently developed an intimate relationship with Cazares. She said she recognized Merel as one of the voices in the background.

Several times, prosecutor Campbell had to press Mendez to confirm information she had given to police in two interviews in late October. Mendez acknowledged telling police that she had told her mother she heard someone say, "I am a girl," but said on the stand she wasn't sure.

Earlier, Lisa Munn — who described herself as Cazares' "significant other" — testified that she thought Cazares was at home when she left for work at 7 a.m. the next morning. Munn, who was living with Cazares when he was arrested, looked surprised when Mendez told the court she had had an intimate relationship with Cazares.

According to police reports, the defendants attacked Araujo, strangled her with a rope, and then drove the body 150 miles north to dump it in a grave near Tahoe. After the party, no one came forward to report the murder. Rumors circulated about the attack and eventually reached Araujo's family, which had reported the teen missing. Eventually, in mid-October, Nabors led detectives to the makeshift grave.

After Wednesday's hearing, Araujo's mother, Sylvia Guerrero, who attended the hearing with family and friends, stood outside with her attorney, Gloria Allred. Guerrero declined to speak to reporters, and Allred said it was a difficult day for her. "All Sylvia wants is justice in this case," Allred said. She added that she hopes the prosecution's witnesses — which will include friends and relatives of the defendants — will testify truthfully. "Their duty is to the truth, and not to their friends," Allred said. The hearing is scheduled to continue today, when Merel's brother, Emmanuel Merel, is expected to take the stand.

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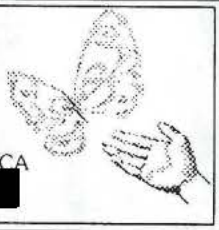

Remember Gwen Araujo!

Witness Testifies Defendants Argued About Victim's Gender

Kelly St. John, Chronicle Staff Writer

In the weeks before transgender teenager Gwen Araujo was slain, the four men accused of murdering her repeatedly debated whether her unpainted nails, surprising strength and blunt outspokenness were proof she was biologically male, a witness testified Tuesday in Alameda County Superior Court.

Nicole Brown of Livermore, an acquaintance of Araujo's, said the defendants had begun to raise questions about the petite young woman they knew as "Lida," who sat on their laps when they played dominoes; after she showed surprising physical strength during a fight in early September. Days later, Brown said the group sat around and argued about Araujo's gender for more than 45 minutes. "We were going back and forth trying to figure it out," Brown testified in Fremont.

Brown's testimony, during a hearing to determine whether the four men should stand trial for Araujo's slaying, could prove crucial to prosecutors' assertion that Jose Antonio Merel, 23, of Newark; Michael Magidson, 22, of Fremont; Jaron Chase Nabors, 19, of Newark; and Jason Michael Cazares, 23, of Fremont, should be tried for premeditated murder.

Michael Thorman, a defense attorney who represents Magidson, has characterized the slaying in court papers as a spontaneous reaction by the four defendants after they learned during the party that Araujo was biologically male.

Some, if not all, of the defendants had had oral or anal sex with Araujo, and they had "their masculinity, sexual identity and self-esteem called into question at a time when they had been drinking heavily," Thorman wrote. But Deputy District Attorney Connie Campbell has argued that the defendants decided to act in concert to determine the victim's true biological gender on the night of the slaying. Brown's testimony bolsters the case that they were not surprised when it was confirmed that night that Araujo was biologically male.

Tuesday's session adjourned as Campbell was about to question Brown about the Oct. 3 party. According to police reports, it was Brown who followed Araujo into the bathroom, discovered her biological gender and announced "it's a man" to the party. Earlier, Emmanuel Merel, 20, Jose Merel's younger brother, described to the court how he had tried to rescue Araujo during the subsequent confrontation at the party.

Emmanuel Merel, who was at the party but spent most of his time in his room, said at one point he had emerged and seen that Magidson had his arm in a choke hold around Araujo's neck. He said he had pried Magidson's arm loose. "I had to run up and take Mike's arm off of her," he said. "She stumbled forward."

Emmanuel Merel said he then tried to push Araujo out the front door, but Magidson and Nabors blocked his path. "I was stopped," he said. "Jaron and Mike were there to stop me." Moments later, Emmanuel Merel testified, Brown told him they should leave the party, so he went to his room and put on his shoes. Together, they woke up Paul Merel and walked out the front door, leaving Araujo standing in the kitchen with Magidson.

Emmanuel Merel said he had seen Brown and Paul Merel drive away in Brown's car, while he walked to a nearby 7-Eleven store and bought a pack of gum. Emmanuel Merel said he had then gone to a neighbor's house to sleep and hadn't returned to his home until 11 a.m. the next day. Merel, who had testified earlier that he had heard his brother Jose Merel among the voices shouting "Are you a man or a woman?," said Tuesday that at one point he had opened his bedroom door and seen Jose crying. He said that Jose had told him, "Lida's a man," and that he put a hand on Jose's shoulder to console him.

Emmanuel Merel testified for the prosecution but was pressed by both the prosecutor and defense attorneys about inconsistencies between his testimony in court and an earlier statement to police. Emmanuel Merel had not told police that he had tried to push Araujo out the door or that he had pried Araujo loose from a choke hold. He testified Tuesday that he thought telling that to the police might somehow incriminate him.

Emmanuel Merel also was questioned about why he had not phoned the police after he left the house, and why he had never asked his brother Jose what happened after he left, even after a police officer searched their home when Araujo was reported missing. "I didn't take it upon myself to make it my business," he said. "I didn't ask."

Woman Says She Saw Man Attack Newark Teen

By Yomi S. Wronge, Mercury News

A woman who was in the same house the night Eddie "Gwen" Araujo was killed testified Wednesday that she saw a Fremont man strike and choke Araujo, and later came across the same man and a friend as they were out looking for shovels.

Nicole Brown, who told four men that the girl they knew as Lida was anatomically male, also said she feared for her own safety the night of Oct. 3. "I thought I was in danger. I thought if I tried to help her I would be hurt," Brown said during the continuing preliminary hearing that will determine whether four men should be tried in Araujo's death. Brown said she never called police — even after learning Araujo was dead — because she feared Michael William Magidson, the man she said hit the victim.

The defendants previously had sexual relations with the victim, and that night they had set out to resolve the question of Araujo's gender, which Brown said had been troubling them for weeks. Magidson accompanied Araujo into a bathroom at the Merel home, Brown said. When he failed to emerge some 30 minutes later, the others sent Brown in. Brown's announcement that Araujo was male set off a chain reaction of chaos and violence.

At one point, Brown said she tried to soothe a distraught Merel by assuring him that sex with Araujo did not make him gay. "Any girl you meet after this it won't make a difference," Brown said she told Merel as he was crying and pacing the hall. "You'll still look like the football player I know you as."

Later, Brown said she tried to stop Magidson from beating Araujo. "Mike threw her against the wall and hit her twice in the head. . . . He choked her," Brown said, describing a gurgling sound coming from the victim. "I was yelling at him to stop."

Brown testified that she tried to get Araujo to leave but that the teen was stopped outside the home by Magidson, Nabors and Cazares. Brown said she feared for Araujo, but feared for own safety more. Brown said she saw a deranged-looking Magidson, blood splattered on his shaking hands. "The look in Mike's eyes at that point scared me," she said.

Brown left the house with her boyfriend, Paul Merel, Jose Merel's older brother. She said they circled the block once — passing the Newark Police Department along the way — and came upon Magidson and Cazares leaving in Magidson's truck. When asked where they were going, Brown said the two defendants responded, "We're going to get shovels."

Two weeks later, Araujo's beaten and bound body was found buried in a shallow grave near Placerville.

Brown's testimony comes midpoint in the preliminary hearing. She conceded that she lied to authorities more than once about important details to keep herself out of jail. She is the second witness in the hearing to identify Magidson as the primary aggressor in the attack.

Robert Beles, Nabors' attorney, said Brown's testimony places his client "on the fringe of things," which he hopes will support his contention that Nabors was a bystander. Nabors led police to Araujo's body. But Magidson's attorney, Michael Thorman, said he was not overly concerned.

"I'm not surprised by the testimony," he said, declining further comment.

Annemarie St. John

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Remember Gwen Araujo!

Chaos After Teen's Biological Sex Revealed

MICHELLE LOCKE, Associated Press Writer

Pandemonium broke out after four men learned that the flirtatious girl they knew as Lida was biologically male, a woman who helped unmask Lida's biological sex testified Wednesday. "It was chaos," said Nicole Brown.

Prosecutors say Lida — 17-year-old Eddie "Gwen" Araujo — was killed at a party in the early morning hours of Oct. 4. Brown, who was at the party, provided vivid details about what happened that night as she described how the group's doubts about Araujo's sexual identity escalated into violence, ending with the grim declaration, "We're going to get some shovels."

Brown, who was then dating Jose Merel's older brother, Paul, said she went to the Merels' on Oct. 3, and she and Araujo made a beer run, picking up an 18-pack of Budweiser. Brown said she drank several beers that night and also smoked some marijuana, prompting defense attorneys to question the accuracy of her memory. Brown said she was "blurred about the night" but was not so drunk she could not tell what was happening.

Defense lawyers also pointed out inconsistencies between Brown's testimony and things she told police earlier. Brown said she had withheld some information earlier because she was afraid. Testifying Wednesday, Brown said she was in a bedroom of the house when she heard noises and walked out to find Lida sitting in a chair pushed close to the wall while Jose Merel screamed in her face, "Are you a man or a woman?" Brown said Magidson decided to take Araujo into a bathroom and find out.

She said the two were gone for 30 to 45 minutes, during which time the other three men told Brown that it would be better if she tried to ascertain Araujo's biological sex. Brown said she went to the bathroom and could hear Magidson and Araujo talking in low voices. She said she knocked on the door and went in, finding Araujo sitting on the bathroom sink.

"I looked at her and she looked at me. I said, 'You don't mind if I check?' and she didn't answer me," Brown said. Brown said she pushed Araujo's legs apart and grabbed at the genital area. "I yelled, 'I felt something!'" Brown said. Brown said Araujo just looked puzzled and remained sitting on the sink with her head down.

Later, Brown said she saw Jose Merel, who she said had talked about having sexual contact with Araujo, crying. "I walked up to him and I grabbed him by the shoulders and I said, 'It's not your fault,'" Brown said. "I said, 'I went to high school with you. You were on the football team. Any woman that knows you after this — it's not going to matter. You'll still look like the football player I know you as. Just let her go."

Brown said she warned Araujo, "They're very angry. I think you should go now." Araujo got as far as the front yard but was walked back in by Magidson, Cazares and Nabors, Brown said. Brown said she saw Magidson throw Araujo against the wall and punch her in the head twice. Brown also said Magidson grabbed Araujo by the neck. Brown made a choking sound to indicate how Araujo sounded as she struggled to breathe.

Sitting in the courtroom, Sylvia Guerrero, Araujo's mother, closed her eyes, shuddered and then left the courtroom, her eyes full of tears.

Brown said she screamed when Magidson had his arm around Araujo's neck and Emmanuel Merel, Jose's younger brother, pulled Magidson off. Brown said she and Paul Merel left the house shortly after that. She described Araujo as saying little throughout the evening although she did say Araujo threatened to call police after the punching started.

Before they went, Brown said she saw Magidson with spatters of blood on his hands, which were shaking. Brown said she saw Araujo sitting on a couch but did not make any attempt to get her out of the house. "They were very very angry and I believed if I took her out of the house I would have got hurt," she said.

Brown said Paul Merel told her to drive around the block and as she circled back to the Merel house she saw Magidson and Cazares driving away in a truck. Brown said one of the two said, "We're going to get shovels."

Important Website Update!

If you want an ID/Password to access the new **Member's area** on the TGSF website, send an email request to Susan Laird: [redacted]**@hairzapper.com**.

Slain Teen's Last Night Recounted

Witness Testifies On Events Leading To Killing Of Transgender Youth

After a female acquaintance emerged from the bathroom screaming "It's a f— man," the party that transgender teenager Gwen Araujo attended on the last day of her life descended into a chaos that left one man with bloody hands and two in search of shovels, a witness testified Wednesday in Alameda County Superior Court. It was the most gripping testimony to date during a preliminary hearing to determine whether the evidence is sufficient to hold four men for trial on charges of murdering Araujo.

During Wednesday's session, witness Nicole Brown of Livermore described in vivid detail how events had spiraled out of control after the men learned the person they knew as "Lida" was biologically male. It was Brown who, during the early morning hours of Oct. 4, pushed Araujo's legs apart and grabbed her genital area in an attempt to settle the men's nagging questions about Araujo's biological gender. "I yelled, 'I felt something'," Brown said. "It's a f— man."

What happened next, Brown testified, was "chaos." Araujo, 17, was cornered in the house and physically assaulted, Brown said, while Brown fled the house in fear of her own safety. Moments after Araujo's biological sex was announced, Brown said she had encountered a crying Jose Merel pacing in the hallway. He was distraught, she said, because he had had "booty sex," or anal sex, with Araujo. "I grabbed him by the shoulder and said, 'It's not your fault,' " Brown said. "I said, 'I went to high school with you, and you were on the football team. Any woman that knows you after this, it's not going to matter. Just let her go.'"

Brown said she had returned to the bathroom, where Araujo was sitting on the sink, looking down. "They're very angry," Brown said she had told Araujo. "I think you should leave." Araujo walked out the front door but was stopped in the front yard by Magidson, Nabors and Cazares, who made her come inside, Brown said.

There, Magidson threw Araujo against the wall and punched her twice in the head, Brown said. "He was using his weight to toss her around," Brown said. "Then Mike got her by her neck and put her against the wall and choked her." "She couldn't breathe," Brown said, as Araujo's mother, Sylvia Guerrero, dropped her head, stood up, and slipped outside the courtroom.

After another resident of the house pried Magidson's arm off Araujo's neck, Magidson forced Araujo onto the floor, and grabbed at her underwear, repeating "If I see balls . . ." as the other three defendants looked on, Brown said. At one point, Araujo threatened to call the police, but she was mostly silent during the assault, Brown said.

Brown said during the confrontation she had tried several times to rouse her boyfriend, Paul Merel, who was sleeping. She finally awakaned him, and the two left together. "I was scared. I was in shock," she said. When asked why she didn't help Araujo leave, she said, "I thought if I tried it, I'd be hurt."

"By who?" asked Deputy District Attorney Connie Campbell. "Everybody," she said. "They were very, very angry, and I believed if I took her out of the house, I'd be hurt."

When she left, Brown said, Araujo was alive and sitting on the couch. She said she had seen Magidson nearby, and that his hands were shaking. "Mike's hands had blood on them. Sprinkles of blood," she said. He also looked angry, she said. "He wasn't the normal Mike I've seen."

After leaving the party, Brown and Paul Merel drove around the block and pulled up by the Merels' house minutes later, she said. Brown said she had seen Magidson and Cazares driving away in Magidson's truck. "We're going to get shovels," Brown recalled one of them saying.

Brown said she and Paul Merel had then driven to her Livermore home. At no point after the party did Brown phone the police. Later that morning, Brown said, she phoned Jose Merel from work. He told her the group had gone to Tahoe, she said.

"I said, 'So what happened?' He said, 'Let's just say she had a long walk home'," she said.

Brown, who testified that she had smoked marijuana and consumed about nine or 10 beers that night, was grilled by defense attorneys about the reliability of her testimony.

Outside the courtroom, Araujo's mother said it was difficult to hear from a witness that did little to intervene on her child's behalf. "No one in that house did the right thing," said Guerrero.

Remember Gwen Araujo!

Case Draws Renowned Attorney ***J. Tony Serra Widely Known For High-Profile Clients***

By Robert Airoldi, Alameda Times-Star Online

He's represented the rich and the poor. The famous and the infamous. Hells Angels, Black Panthers and members of the Symbionese Liberation Army. He's legendary defense attorney J. Tony Serra, easily recognized because of the long, white ponytail seen so often on television — and in a movie based on his career.

Among Serra's current clients is Jason Cazares, one of four young men charged with murder in the death of Newark transgender teen Eddie "Gwen" Araujo. Serra represented the late Black Panther leader Huey Newton and former SLA member Sara Jane Olson. He represented Ellie Nessler, who shot and killed the man accused of molesting her son during the man's trial in a courtroom in the Sierra foothills. He won an acquittal for Eugene "Bear" Lincoln, a Native American who had been sentenced to die for killing a sheriff's deputy in Mendocino County.

When Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, wanted to hire a new attorney, he asked for Serra, but the trial judge ruled it was too late for Kaczynski to make the change. Serra is not your stereotypical lawyer, with his long white hair gathered in a loose ponytail, his thrift-store suits and his demonstrative manner. That's what everybody focuses on at first, said Tom Orloff, Alameda County District Attorney. "But all that stuff disappears very quickly during trial," said Orloff, who as a prosecutor tried a case against Serra 20 years ago. "He is extremely, extremely glib."

Serra, who does much of his work pro bono, won't say why he decided to represent Cazares, or if he is being paid. He declined repeated requests to be interviewed for this story. "Publicity in this case is adverse to us," he said on his way out of a hearing at the Fremont Hall of Justice.

Judge Kenneth Burr is presiding over a preliminary hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence for Cazares and the others to stand trial. Serra was in Fremont twice in January for proceedings that are scheduled to resume Feb. 18. Watching him in action can be mesmerizing. He refers to himself as "a semantic warrior," Tuolumne County District Attorney Donald Segerstrom said. Segerstrom, once a defense lawyer, was co-counsel in the Nessler case 10 years ago. "He is a person who uses words to fight for other people," Segerstrom said.

This is emerging in his defense of Cazares. At one point in the preliminary hearing, a witness testified to something different from what she told police. Standing with his arms behind his back and his head tilted as if in disbelief at what he was hearing, Serra asked the witness in a symphonic voice: "Are you being candid or are you trying to serve the interest of the prosecution?"

Serra's use of language and his passion for his profession set him apart, said Tuolumne County Superior Court Judge Doug Boyack. "He has incredible courtroom presence and uses the language like no one I've ever known," Boyack said. "He has an ability to use his voice as a musical instrument, altering tone and cadence. He's very enthralling," Orloff said.

Orloff said Serra is most effective in high-profile cases where he can turn the case into a cause. What cause Serra may champion in the Araujo case is unclear at this point, but the slaying drew national media attention and became a rallying point for gay and transgender rights groups.

Serra, who graduated from Boalt School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, began his career in 1962, as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County. His stint lasted one year before he realized sending people to prison was not mentally healthy, he told the Modesto Bee in 1993. A 1989 movie based on Serra's career, called "True Believer," tells the story of a young lawyer and an older 1960s activist attorney who team up to free a man jailed for a murder he did not commit. Starring James Woods and Robert Downey Jr., it was shot on location at Folsom Prison and in San Francisco, Oakland and San Leandro.

Movie material or not, Serra is a very effective trial attorney, Segerstrom said. "His ability to take whatever is given to him and use it to his advantage sets him apart," the Tuolumne County district attorney said. "Just the way he speaks makes him a good lawyer."

Murder Defendant Described As Friendly To Gays, Released On Bail

By Matthai Chakko Kuruvila, Mercury News

Before a judge released Michael Magidson on $1.6 million in bail, supporters and the prosecutor of the Fremont resident offered widely differing portraits of the man accused of murdering transgender Newark teen Eddie "Gwen" Araujo.

Magidson's supporters described the former Fremont Christian and Newark Memorial High School student as a lover of stray animals and a friend to gays, lesbians and transgender people. But prosecutor Connie Campbell declared that Magidson was the "primary aggressor" in the beating, strangulation and slaying of Araujo, who had a sexual relationship with Magidson.

Despite the prosecutor's warnings that Magidson would be a danger to the community, a Superior Court judge on Friday ordered him to be released to the custody of a Berkeley-based alcohol and drug treatment center. The terms of Magidson's release to the New Bridge Foundation demand strict supervision, said his attorney, Michael Thorman. Magidson won't be allowed to talk to anyone but his attorney for the first three weeks of a six-month alcohol rehabilitation program, Thorman said.

Thorman said he didn't know whether Magidson would eventually be allowed visits home as a reward for successfully completing parts of the treatment. Thorman said that parties at the home of Jose Merel, where the killing took place, had involved "prodigious" amounts of alcohol.

Using a combination of cash, bail bonds and property, Magidson's family posted his bail, which Judge Dennis J. McLaughlin raised in January from $1.2 million to $1.6 million.

Statements offered by both the prosecution and the defense offer a glimpse of the ever-unfolding case of the four men who stand accused of the Oct. 4 slaying and the life of the person they knew as "Lida" — who turned out to be a biological male.

The defense portrays the discovery of Araujo's gender as a surprise that prompted a violent reaction. The prosecution claims the defendants had already had their suspicions.

Campbell said Magidson and the other defendants — Jose Merel, Jaron Nabors and Jason Cazares — had discussed Araujo's gender for several days prior to the slaying. It was not an "unanticipated confrontation," Campbell wrote to the court.

Thorman said the prior discussions about Araujo's gender meant little. "There's a big difference between having a question in one's mind and knowing and planning on the other hand," he said. "The evidence you're going to hear is that there was extreme shock, amazement and bewilderment when they actually learned of the true sexual identity."

Support For Accused

Several of Magidson's supporters offered testimonials to his comfort with gays, lesbians and transgender people. Efren Roman, a self-described gay man living in San Francisco's Castro district, said he'd had a few brief encounters with Magidson and had always felt comfortable.

"I do not fear him or believe he would be a monster or danger or threat toward the gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual community," said Roman. Other Magidson supporters — including a former girlfriend, neighbors, godmother, soccer coach and chiropractor — said the accusations didn't fit his character. Several said he was a boy who brought home a stray kitten and two dogs, raising all three. "This is not the Mike we know," Pamela Rizzo, his godmother, said of the charges. "He was not a hateful person," said Edward Cremata, the family chiropractor. If released, "No one would feel threatened by him," said Robert Olsen, a Fremont neighbor of the Magidsons.

Fight On Jail Bus

Campbell, the prosecutor, countered that Magidson has displayed his tendency toward violence even while in jail. Magidson got into a fight when a Newark resident, who'd heard about the case, confronted him on the jail bus. Campbell said that because of the case's notoriety, it was inevitable that someone else would confront him, prompting another fight. In order to secure his release, Magidson's family posted $476,000 in cash and a $300,000 bail bond. The family and a family friend also offered $1.8 million in property as collateral, which the court required to post roughly $900,000 in bond.

William Magidson, Michael's father, makes approximately $12,500 a month as a computer programmer, court records show. Campbell said Magidson remains convinced he will avoid conviction. "They ain't got no evidence," he allegedly told a friend, according to Campbell. "There's no way a jury could ever find me guilty."

Remember Gwen Araujo!

Witnesses Unlikely To Face Criminal Charges

By Yomi S. Wronge, Mercury News

When parties happened at the Merel house in Newark, the friends all joined in the fun. And when a killing took place, everyone joined in the cover-up. Four men are accused of beating and strangling a transgender Newark teen. And now some people are questioning why two witnesses who testified last week that they either lied or withheld information from police aren't facing criminal charges.

"The short answer is that you need witnesses," said Gerald Uelmen, a professor of law at Santa Clara University law school and a defense attorney in the O.J. Simpson murder trial.

Uelmen said "clearly, lying to police and helping someone cover up a murder would be obstruction of justice," but he added that prosecutors often forgo pressing charges against some who might have some complicity in a crime in exchange for their testimony against the primary suspects.

That appears to be the strategy in the Eddie "Gwen" Araujo case, in which a brother of one defendant and a female friend of the defendants testified in a preliminary hearing last week. Emmanuel Merel, the younger brother of defendant Jose Merel, said he saw one of his brother's friends assault and choke 17-year-old Araujo after discovering the teen they knew as Lida was anatomically male.

Emmanuel Merel left the house and never reported the incident to police. Another older brother, Paul Merel, also left the house in the midst of the trouble. He is expected to testify when the preliminary hearing resumes Monday.

Araujo's family and other courtroom spectators said Nicole Brown, a married Livermore mother of two who was dating Paul Merel, should answer to authorities for her involvement in the crime.

Brown testified that she helped her friends, defendants Jose Merel, 23, and Jaron Chase Nabors, 19, both of Newark, and Fremont residents Michael Magidson, 22, and Jason Cazares, 23, identify Araujo's gender on Oct. 4. Police say later that night the defendants dragged the semiconscious Araujo into a garage where they strangled the teen. They then buried the victim in a shallow grave near South Lake Tahoe. Brown said that when she left the house, Araujo was still alive but in danger.

Slowly, over a nearly two-week period, word began to seep out. Authorities said Nabors told a friend, and the story, after passing through several other people, was eventually relayed to someone related to the Araujo family. Police were notified.

A friend of Nabors' agreed to wear a microphone and record a conversation with Nabors, who led police to Araujo's grave on Oct. 16. Brown testified last week that she initially did not tell police that she saw Araujo attacked, that she heard Magidson and Cazares say they went to get shovels, or that she learned Araujo had been killed. Brown said she didn't report the crime and withheld information out of fear of reprisal or criminal prosecution, and out of loyalty to her friends.

Criminologist Frank Zimring, a Boalt law school professor and director of the criminal justice research program at the University of California-Berkeley, said even the kind of behavior Brown and Emmanuel Merel have acknowledged may not be enough to prosecute them.

Speaking specifically about Brown, Zimring said, "Unless it's pretty clear there was an attempt to egg on or cheer on the infliction of harm, this gathering storm could very well have been seen as a threat to the young lady as well."

But, he said that doesn't let Brown off the moral hook. "She should feel awful."

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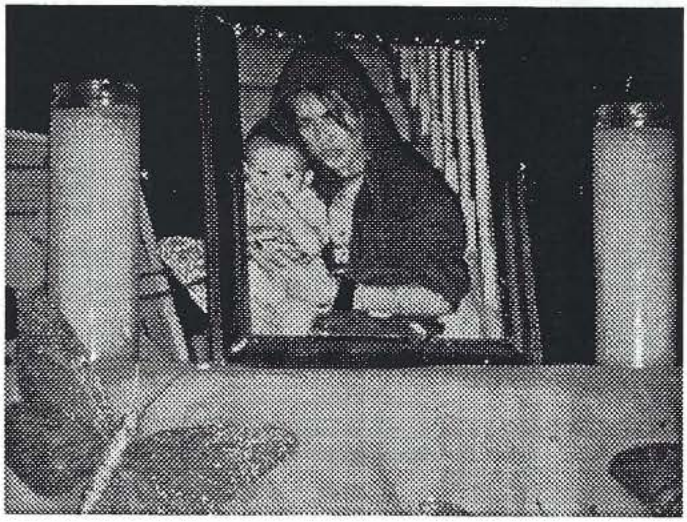

Defendant Pleads Guilty To Manslaughter In Araujo Killing

MICHELLE LOCKE, Associated Press Writer

The case of four young men charged with killing a transgender teen in a hate crime changed dramatically when one of the quartet pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and agreed to testify against his friends. Jaron Chase Nabors, 19, will get 11 years in prison under the agreement reached with prosecutors. He had faced a murder charge and a possible sentence of 25 years to life. His plea came during a preliminary hearing into whether Nabors and the other three should stand trial for the killing of Eddie "Gwen" Araujo.

"I don't think this was a good morning for the other three defendants, knowing that one has basically decided to enter a plea and testify, but it's a good day for us," said attorney Gloria Allred, who is representing Araujo's family.

Jose Antonio Merel, 23, Michael William Magidson, 22, and Jason Michael Cazares, 22, still are charged with murder in the beating and strangulation of Araujo at Merel's house in suburban Newark. The case was charged as a hate crime, an enhancement that was dropped for Nabors as part of his plea agreement.

About two weeks after the slaying, police say, Nabors led them to the body in a shallow grave in the Sierra foothills about 150 miles east of Newark. Prosecutors say Araujo was killed in the early hours of Oct. 4 after Nabors and his three friends discovered that the girl they knew as Lida was anatomically a young man.

Araujo's mother, Sylvia Guerrero, said she was pleased about the guilty plea entered Monday, which would have been Araujo's 18th birthday. "That was very comforting to come in this morning and have that happen. And what more perfect day for that to have occurred," she said. Police say Araujo was beaten and dragged semiconscious into a garage where she was strangled with a rope. But up to now, there have been few details on the exact sequence of events.

"It will be interesting and important to hear the testimony of Mr. Nabors as to what occurred — who had which role in the ultimate tragedy," Allred said. "It's going to be probably the most difficult testimony for Sylvia to listen to."

Standing outside the courthouse, Araujo's family and friends held on to "Happy Birthday" balloons that bobbed gently in the light breeze. "Happy birthday, Gwen," Guerrero said, looking up into the pale winter sky. "We love you."

[Editor's Note: *Yes!*]

Important Website Update!

If you want an ID/Password to access the new **Member's area** on the TGSF website, send an email request to Susan Laird: [redacted]**@hairzapper.com**.

Free to be Fran

Sam McManis, Chronicle Deputy Living Editor

This is the first of a two-part profile of Frank (now Fran) Bennett, a San Jose disc jockey who for decades hid the fact that she was a woman trapped in a man's body. Part 1 today focuses on her years of deception and her coming to terms with being a transsexual. Part 2, next Sunday, will detail Fran's public struggle for acceptance and her changing personal relationship with her wife, Erika, and their family. .

Happy hour at Santa Clara's Doubletree Hotel had reached a mirthful crescendo, and mike-toting KOME disc jockey Frank Bennett scoped out the crowd for just the right girl. There was a type "Uncle Frank" always sought: single, dressed like an MTV video diva, open to some harmless, suggestive on-air banter.

It was a Friday night in 1987 but, really, it could have been any year. Bennett had been an afternoon drive-time staple in the South Bay for years, first at KOME and later at KFOX. His burnished baritone oozed manliness, flexed tonal muscle. That voice was kick-ass classic rock, man, the perfect accompaniment to a rip-snorting Stones song on the commute.

In person, at promotional events, Uncle Frank's testosterone-fueled image flourished. He looked, everyone agreed, like Gregg Allman: a strapping 6-foot-2, with long, straight blond hair, scraggly beard, black leather jacket. Women flocked to Bennett, and he played his part to the hilt. After work, he could often be found at a bar, a Black Russian in one hand, a Kool Super Long 100 in the other.

But he was on air now . . . "Weird Ol' Uncle Frank in the middle of the crowd here somewhere," he cooed into the mike. "And what's your name?"

"Molly."

"Are those 4-inch heels, Molly?"

"Uh" — giggle — "yes."

"Can I just nibble on those for a few minutes?"

What loyal listeners didn't know, what Frank Bennett went to extraordinary lengths to keep hidden all those years, was that he didn't want to nibble on Molly's stiletto heels. He wanted to wear them.

Macho ol' Frank Bennett was, in mind if not body, a woman. Not "felt like a woman." He was one. Always had been. Knew it like he knew the opening riff of "Satisfaction" by his beloved Rolling Stones. Kept it a secret since way back as a toddler, when he hankered to try on his mother's black cocktail dress.

His secret life dogged him for decades. Go public as a transsexual and, Bennett feared, his world would collapse. His radio career? Over. His relationship with Erika Taylor, the woman he met in 1995 and later married? Shattered. His bond with his aging parents, grown daughter from a relationship in the '70s and Erika's 9-year-old son? Irretrievably lost. His very identity, his sense of self, was at stake.

Denial seemed easier. Bennett was hell-bent on wearing that cloak of manliness, even if it smothered him. And it almost did — in a haze of alcohol, cigarettes and deep, corrosive gloom — in his 40s. Only after decades of dressing in drag with the blinds drawn and lights dimmed, of binding his breasts after finally starting hormone therapy, of skulking off to Sacramento to publicly unveil his feminine side, of holding back full disclosure from friends and family — only then did Frank have the courage to become Fran.

This metamorphosis was far more complicated than merely the dropping of a consonant from a first name. It meant officially navigating the shifting marital waters from "husband and wife" to "wife and wife." It meant telling co-workers that the roguish guy they knew and loved all these years, Weird Ol' Uncle Frank, was no more. It meant, eventually, a long and, so far fruitless, search for another job. Down the road, it meant major sexual reconstructive surgery.

"It was move forward or die," Bennett, 48, said. "I ran from this my whole life. Had I not faced my fears, I certainly would not be here today. I might not be alive."

Get Off Of My Cloud

Tow-head little Frankie spent much of his early youth in the clouds — or in an 11th-floor Manhattan apartment, which to a kid might seem the same. Son of a songwriter father, John, and big-band singer mother, Evelyn Knight, he went to bed at night staring out the window at the beams of light coming from the Empire State Building.

There was a lot for this confused boy to ponder. Why did he feel more comfortable with girls than boys? Why did he approach playing sports with a sense of dread? Why did his mother react so strangely when he asked her that day if he could try on her party dress? Why did she say, curtly and sans elaboration, "Little boys don't do that"? Why? Why? Why? It was a child's lament.

"I felt something was amiss all along," Bennett said. "I didn't feel like the other boys. I just assumed whatever was going on in my head was . . . I don't know what it was. I came from a loving home, but I learned there was a role for me to adhere to as a boy. Little boys played with cars and hurt themselves sledding. That was the way family hummed along."

So Frank assimilated to his biological gender role. He was a happy kid, mostly. He played little league baseball and talked sports with his dad, who'd been a jock in his day. When his older half-brother, Andy, came home from his hitch in the Marines on a Harley, 11-year-old Frank tagged along on forays to Greenwich Village to hear Beat poets and listen to Joan Baez. Andy taught Frank how to play guitar and act cool.

But when puberty hit Frank with the concussive force of Charlie Watts banging on hi drum set, his buried feminine feelings resurfaced. By this time, Frank had grown his hair long and wore bell bottoms and satin shirts. Total hippie chic. Baseball was out on strikes. Frank had a new love, music. He formed a garage band, Geometric Progression, and felt sweetly transported while belting out his beloved Stones' "Get Off of My Cloud."

The quandary was, Frank was attracted to girls, but he also wanted to be a girl. Then his parents decided to move to Phoenix, thinking that perhaps a change would keep Frank from dropping out of school and moving to the Village. But the desert didn't quell Frank's sexually ambiguous feelings.

He was 14 when he went on his first date — to the bowling alley with a girl named April — and he was about the same age when he first learned

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Hart To Heart

Dreams

By Roxy Carmichael-Hart

It was all a dream, wasn't it? Was it a fairy tale? Was I Cinderella at the ball? The 2003 Cotillion couldn't have happened, could it? Yet, I look at the pictures and see myself, at my first Cotillion, dressed in my lavender gown, looking more beautiful than I have ever been. And I just wonder.

I was privileged to have been a part of the planning effort for the Cotillion and I was fascinated by the work that it takes to put on such an event. Rachael, Laura, Kat, Susan, Steele and everyone associated with the event must be commended for putting on a show that was spectacular, moving and meaningful. Especially Laura. Note to Academy Awards – how about letting Laura direct your show so it ends on time for once?

For me, the highlight of the evening and the one to which I had been building my emotions, was the Debutante and Guys Walk. I had been told that it is an incredible feeling to hear your name called and to walk on stage with hundreds applauding. But I was not prepared for the unbelievable emotional high that I received and which lasted for three days. As I gave my card to Chablis and she announced "From Fremont, Roxy Carmichael-Hart", I felt a rush inside me that I had never felt before. As I glided across the stage, threw kisses, received my rose and took my place in line, I realized what the feeling was. It was pride. Pride that I was being myself and more importantly, being accepted for being myself. I was validated as Roxy by the community. I belonged. If you have not done the Debutante and Guys Walk, please consider doing so next year. You will experience a thrill you will never forget.

It took a while to regain my composure (I even missed the Joanna Caron award so as I write this I still don't know who won!). My heartiest congratulations go to Mr. TGSF, Tyler Fong. And to my dear beautiful sister Rachel Hill, crowned Miss TGSF, I am so happy for you. I look forward to continuing to learn by your example about grace, dignity, class, strength, courage and love. And to Roxanne, my congratulations for being selected Miss Congeniality. I knew when I first met you that your beautiful smile would get your somewhere. And congratulations to all of the contestants.

As I begin my own preparations to be a contestant for the 2004 Cotillion, I am trying to put into perspective what the 2003 Cotillion meant to me. I think Ann-Louise said it best when she discussed pride in being transgendered and pride in being yourself. That is what it is all about. Being proud of and being accepted for who you are. Thanks to the support I have gotten from my sisters, I can now experience what that feels like.

I know from watching this year's contestants that I have a lot of work to do to attain the high standards that they set. But I also know that I will get the support from my sisters to help me attain those standards. I am looking forward to this year. And, if by any chance this all has been a dream, please don't wake me.

Free to be Fran...

Continued from Page 25

about transsexuals. "It was a huge thing for me," Bennett said. "There was a word for what I was feeling! I became a ravenous consumer of every book on the subject at my library."

One day, emboldened, Frank left a copy of the biography of Christine Jorgenson, who in 1952 became the first transsexual to publicly announce her sex-change surgery, on the family's coffee table. His dad glanced at the cover.

"Why are you reading that?"

"It's interesting."

End of dialogue. His parents never spoke about Frank's transgender interest, and Frank didn't press it. But the sulfurous secret ate away at the teenager. The only time he could forget was when he made forays out to the desert to get high with a group of friends, boys and girls.

"The girls were always wanting to talk to me," Bennett said. "I graduated high school with a doctorate in 'what women don't want.' But I was building my own wall. I tweaked my story so I came off as one of the guys. Be even more of a guy."

In his rich fantasy life, though, Frank already had developed two alter egos. There was "Uncle" Frank Bennett, the suave, hipster FM radio disc jockey. And there was "April," the flaxen-haired beauty whom he named, not coincidentally, after the girl he first dated. For years — no, decades — while Frank Bennett surfaced as a radio DJ, first in Phoenix and then Los Angeles and San Jose, April remained something private and shameful, let out when the strain of portraying a man became too much.

Some Girls

Uncle Frank, velvet-voiced DJ, had no problem getting girlfriends. Keeping them was another matter. For him, the '70s and '80s were a blur of superficial relationships with women. Bennett could never get close enough to let any woman learn his secret. Quick affairs sufficed, keeping the macho image intact. "The request line would ring," Bennett recalled, "and girls would say things to you that you never thought you'd hear in your lifetime, if you know what I mean."

He enjoyed the attention from women and just felt comfortable in their presence. When it came to sex, though, it was a chore, a performance to get through, a professional obligation. His feelings were jumbled: He was attracted to women and to men, but felt confused being close with either.

"I loved women's bodies — loved them so much I wanted to have one. There was an element in sex of, 'It's showtime. I have to be the guy and be memorable,' " Bennett said. "I knew, innately, it was not my real role." But he played it so damn well that no one caught on. "Frank had such a sexy voice," said Deby Lemire, a longtime friend. "His voice could lower a woman's blood pressure 10 points just listening to it."

Shelley Beeson, one of Bennett's former girlfriends, remembers being wooed by his masculinity. At 21, she fell for his rich, deep voice first, and, one Friday night, she attended one of Uncle Frank's live remotes in Sunnyvale. She wanted his autograph and loitered while Bennett schmoozed. "And then Frank sneaked up behind me, leaned down and put his mouth right up to my ear," Beeson recalled. "Then he said, in this deep, sexy voice, 'You smell so gooood. ' I was dazzled."

The two dated, but not seriously. "Oh, no," Beeson said. "Frank was a big womanizer. He had women throwing themselves at him. But there was no way to get close to him. He was making money hand over fist. He met rock stars. But you could look in his eyes and just see something so unhappy. I didn't know for a long time what was bothering him."

All that Laurie Roberts, a co-worker of Bennett's at KOME and KFOX, could recall was that "Frank was wound really tight, basically your deep-voiced, balls-to-the-wall FM rock DJ. He'd take over the studio, blast you out. One time, I plugged in the headphones after he left the studio and I damn near died. It was ear-bleeding loud."

Maintaining the macho facade sometimes became too much for Bennett. He started cross-dressing on the sly. Dressed as April, in short skirts and come-hither heels, he would make forays to Sacramento on weekends, trying to pass as a woman. "It was peaceful," Bennett said. "I felt like me. I wanted it to be this way all the time. It was depressing to go back."

Back home, self-destructive Frank would periodically surface. He would quaff too many toxic Black Russians — vodka and coffee-flavored brandy — smoke three packs a day and scarf down triple cheeseburgers. Once — only once — in 1991 did Bennett's nighttime drinking spill over to daytime. He arrived at the KOME studios too drunk to go on the air. General Manager Jim Hardy confronted Bennett about his drinking problem. "Drinking's not the problem," Bennett told him. "It's why I drink. And I can't tell you why."

Hardy suggested therapy, and Bennett started seeing Campbell psychologist Mildred Brown, who, it so happened, dealt almost exclusively with transgendered clients. "I had a complete wreck walk in here," Brown said. "He must have been 300 pounds then, addicted to everything. His denial was intense. He wanted to just pretend he was something else, just a cross-dresser, maybe, something that wouldn't turn his life upside down. I looked at 'Uncle Frank' back then, and it was a role of a lifetime. If we gave Academy Awards for role playing, this was it. It would take 10 years to finally admit to her true self."

Gimme Shelter

Even at 3 a.m., it was shirt-sleeve weather in Saipan. The Big Kahuna, as listeners of "Power 99" hit radio in Saipan and Guam knew Bennett as back in 1994, would trudge up the tallest hill on the island, all of 1,200 feet, and think about life.

Despite being tops in his time slot in the Bay Area, Uncle Frank had been laid off from KOME months earlier, replaced by Howard Stern's syndicated show. He decided to chuck it all for a tropical interlude. He wanted to get away from the Bay Area, get away from his previous self. So Saipan it was, and there the Big Kahuna would sit in the pitch dark on a mountain top, like a Buddha, staring at the roiling Philippine sea. Then came this glorious epiphany: "I'm so far away from everybody, what better time to start hormones?"

He found an American doctor on the island who prescribed him female hormones. He took five milligrams daily for eight months, feeling thrilled when he saw subtle changes in his physique — a softening of the skin, a shift of weight from waist to hips, a "tingling." It was an idyllic time, in many ways. Bennett drank less, found he enjoyed dressing the part and actually started to feel like a woman.

Eventually, his 3 a.m. "dark night of the soul" trips up the mountain had changed to late-night skinny-dipping in the sea. All the while, though, the past was close behind. He knew that Saipan was not a viable career choice for a DJ with even an ounce of ambition, so when KFOX in San Jose called in April 1995, Bennett jumped at the chance. "My only worry," Bennett said, "was how to get all my hormones through U.S. customs."

Emotional Rescue

Frank Bennett, afternoon commute jock, knew Erika Taylor, KFOX's morning co- host with Greg Kihn, only casually. They would cross paths in the hallways and staff meetings, exchange sarcastic asides. But a few months after they started at the station, they both found themselves without a place to live and holing up at the Milpitas Sheraton.

Bennett had a room on the fifth floor, Taylor the third. Taylor was in the middle of divorcing her high school sweetheart after eight years of marriage, and Bennett had lost his bachelor pad. Nearly every morning, they would meet for a late breakfast at the Sheraton and pore over the classified ads for separate rentals. "We both thought the same thing: It'd be so cool to rent a little house in the middle of the woods, but neither of us could afford it alone," Taylor, now 35, said.

After months of fruitless looking, the two decided to team up as platonic roommates and rent a cabin in the Santa Cruz Mountains with a gorgeous view of Lexington Reservoir. They got along well, shared the same slightly twisted sense of humor and had marathon Scrabble games. At a KFOX Christmas party in 1996, platonic segued into romantic between the two.

And they found they had another thing in common: Neither felt comfortable in his or her body. Taylor was morbidly obese, weighing in at almost 400 pounds. Bennett, of course, had his gender issues. Taylor knew that "something was up with Frank," and, one day, he sat her down and broke the news. He did it over a dinner in Fremont. Bennett nervously took a snapshot out of his wallet and slid it across the table. It was Frank-as-April, all dolled up. Taken aback, but not scared off, Taylor replied with one of her patented quips: "OK, then, let's go shopping."

They hashed it all out later, but Bennett swore Taylor to secrecy. He would increase his hormone therapy and painful facial electrolysis but dress as a woman only on weekends and at night, and only around the house. At home, April would spend hours preening in front of the mirror, applying mounds of makeup, choosing and discarding outfits and accessories, prying himself

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What Happens When A Little Boy Asks For A Barbie?

by Winnie Allingham
The Sex Files, Discovery Channel - Canada

Hyde (1984) documented that the gender difference in aggressiveness is largest among preschoolers, but it gets smaller with age, so that gender differences in adult aggression are small. Why would adult men be less aggressive than male children? Would this be because men become socialized and learn how to deal with their aggression? Could culture explain Hyde's findings?

"Do hormones shape human behavior? Probably they do," says Cunningham. "Do they determine it? No, of course they don't. That's a different way of thinking about the causal relationship between biology and culture. In some instances biology may play a defining role, in other instances it may really take quite a back seat. Over the life cycle we really have to think of this biocultural relationship as a fluid one. There may be points in the life cycle where biology really kicks in. Maybe other points where culture really kicks in." In other words, sometimes it's nature that affects gender, and sometimes it's nurture.

Culture is just as potent as hormones.

In terms of kids and the gender differences they display, the media cannot be discounted. In 1997, a study by Spicher and Hudak was presented to the American Psychological Association. This report studied children's cartoons, and found that male cartoon characters outnumbered female cartoon characters almost four to one, and male characters were always the center of attention in the cartoon's plot lines. "These findings are disappointingly consistent with past research showing that the portrayal of gender roles on television in general has been stereotypic, and that female characters have remained under-represented," said the researchers. Kids love cartoons, and they could very well be learning stereotypical gender behavior from the TV.

Parents reinforce gender-appropriate behavior. A lot of little boys do ask for dolls, but their parents are hesitant to purchase the toy. In a study of 300 children, researchers found that if a boy asked for a toy soldier or a dump truck for his birthday, he got it 70 per cent of the time. If he asked for a Barbie or a similar doll, he received it only 40 per cent of the time. Children would learn how to better their chances in a system like that very quickly.

"My son does like trucks," says Cunningham. "He doesn't seem to be too interested in Barbies. But it was very interesting - that whole set of choices occurred for him within a social group, so he was obviously very influenced by the toy choices of his peers. And I'm at a point where I don't care to reduce him to his DNA or say he is entirely the product of his peer group."

Gender, then, is not something that can be reduced to a single cause. We can't say that all sex differences are caused by testosterone. Neither can we say that all sex differences are caused by culture.

Cunningham shows that even the very research that's chosen to be done on the differences between the sexes is affected by our gender ideas. Hormonal and biological changes to do with child raising are so linked to the mother in popular imagination that very little research has been done on a father's hormonal responses to his child. "There has been a lot of research on a genetic/hormonal basis to mothering...But there has been almost no research done on genetic or hormonal responses in males to parenting. And there has been some interesting research in which men were asked to hold their three- month-old infant on their chest and they had their hormonal levels measured. This study shows their [hormonal] levels were raised within 15 minutes. We talk about fathering as a social role and mothering as a biological role and actually mothering is also profoundly social role, and fathering is biological."

"I go to pick my child up in the school-yard and I am always witnessing behaviors that seem to confirm those studies [on gender] and behaviors that contradict it," says Cunningham. "And you can make a choice there: ignore the variation that you are seeing, and pick the single causal theory, or you are going to step into that diversity. Obviously there is incredible variation between the sexes - and within them."

Miss TGSF 2002 (Kalani, 2nd from Left) with Mr/Miss GAPA and Friends

Free to be Fran...

Continued from Page 26

into a corset, just to take a 10-minute trip to Safeway with Taylor. "If they found out, I'd be ridiculed," Bennett said. "That was my fear."

Taylor, too, had body image and health concerns. In 1997, after every diet and exercise regimen failed, she underwent gastric bypass surgery that required six weeks of convalescence. Bennett, in love with Taylor now, nursed her back to health and down to less than 200 pounds. "I did not have a history of dating big girls," Bennett said. "But I guess I was maturing and starting to look at life from a different perspective."

Paint It Black

Over the next three years, which they now call the Androgynous Period, Frank incrementally morphed into Fran. Bennett would show up at work with manicured nails, softer skin, wearing an earring and unisex tops, hoping no one would notice. He would bind his developing breasts with an Ace bandage. Once, he explained away a curling-iron burn on his forehead by saying, "I bumped into an overhead cabinet."

"I remember one live remote we did at the Shoreline," Taylor said. "It was in the middle of summer, hot, and (Frank) wore ski gloves! Big ski gloves! He didn't want anyone to see his nails. He told people he had poison oak."

Taylor tried to push Bennett to go public, but Bennett took only the smallest of baby steps. By the summer of '99, Bennett finally mustered the courage to tell his bosses he wanted to transition as a woman at work. Over dinner at a hotel near the station, Bennett pushed aside his picked-at pasta dish and trotted out the same photo he showed Taylor. The bosses did not take it so well. They accepted Frank's choice to live as Fran but requested he remain on the air as Frank. Ratings concerns, of course.

"They said there are some factions out there who love their Lynyrd Skynyrd and don't want to hear about transsexuals," Bennett said. "I couldn't figure out at that point how to live dual lives. So I stayed Frank and kept the secret."

That fall, Bennett plunged into a clinical depression after taking his largest baby step yet. He got a nose job to further feminize his face. Gone was his father's Romanian nose, replaced by, well, something more feminine. He stared at the face in the mirror and panicked. He would be exposed now, no doubt. Rather than face his fears and transition in public, Bennett stopped taking hormones, ceased electrolysis and managed to get out of bed only long enough to do his on-air shift before the fog of depression returned.

"Those few months were so dark," Taylor said. "I almost took my leave. I felt like the wizard behind the curtain, saying, 'Do it, now. Being a woman obviously makes you so much happier.' But she was paralyzed with fear."

Through marathon sessions with Brown and all-night chats with Taylor, Bennett decided in the summer of 2000 to resume hormone therapy and to move toward living full time as a woman. He caved in to his bosses' request that he remain "Uncle Frank," keeping the deep baritone voice even if he was wearing a skirt in the studio. He agreed because, well, he was earning close to six figures a year and needed to save money for the $20,000 for sexual reassignment surgery.

So, just before Labor Day 2000, Bennett penned a letter that KFOX bosses would read to the staff a few days before the change would occur.

From: Frank Bennett / To: Staff / The purpose of this note is to settle all bets and get everyone on the same page with respect to the question, "So, like, what's up with Frank?"

Next month: Fran's debut.

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Expert Speaks Out

Helping Parents and Children Understand "Gender Identity Disorder"

by Ellen C. Perrin, M.D.

Most two-year-olds know whether they are boys or girls and can identify strangers as "mommies" or "daddies." By the age of three, children know that daddy has a penis and that mommy has breasts. They consistently apply gender labels, referring to boys and brothers as "he" and to girls and sisters as "she." They also classify personal characteristics, identifying gentle, empathic adults as women and strong and robust characters as men.

Young children also develop stereotypes regarding adult roles and careers: nurses, teachers, and secretaries are girls, while doctors, police officers, fire fighters, truck drivers, and super heroes are boys. They know that blocks, hammers, trucks and wrestling are for males, while pots and pans, dolls, and aprons are for females, and they generally avoid playing with toys associated with the other gender.

Social rules regarding the patterns of thinking and behavior that are appropriate for girls and for boys are pervasive and strongly reinforced by television, books and the expectations of both adults and children. The boy who wants to help the girls dress the dolls, or the girl who wants to be one of the space warriors, is likely to be soundly criticized by his or her friends. Those rare children who insist on gender-atypical behaviors and choices in spite of these strong cultural forces surely are expressing a strong central attribute of their personal makeup.

Parents can encourage boys and girls to enjoy both dramatic and competitive play, both stuffed animals and trucks, to be both effective leaders and cheerful followers, and to imagine a broad range of careers previously restricted primarily to one gender. It maybe particularly important to encourage girls to assert themselves and boys to be nurturing, though difficult to counter the pervasive assumptions children experience regarding gender differences in the adult world.

When parents have had concerns about boys who seem to prefer female-identified activities, or girls who prefer typically male activities, physicians generally have reassured them about these preferences. They have been interpreted as evidence of their children's greater-than-average flexibility and thought to be consistent with typical child development and adult functioning. It was hoped that flexibility in gender-role development might lead slowly to the breakdown of rigid gender stereotypes that restrict us all.

Gender Identity Disorder

In our eagerness to encourage androgyny and increased flexibility in gender-role development, we may have overlooked a critical distinction. Fixed behaviors and preferences that consistently are opposite to social and parental expectations are no more flexible than those that conform to social norms. Some boys *consistently* choose dolls over trucks, housekeeping tasks over sports, avoid aggressive play, take typically female parts in dramatic play and adore feminine heroes (such as Snow White and Cinderella).

They may draw pictures of themselves with long hair and/or wearing a dress and may state that they wish to be a girl. They often choose girls as preferred playmates. Their birthday wish may be for a Barbie doll with all the trappings. They choose — and may insist on — feminine clothing and makeup. Many are gifted in art, music, dance, and dramatic endeavors. Similarly, some girls prefer aggressive play, contact sports and boys as playmates. They may dislike or refuse to wear dresses, idolize male super-heroes, and state that they wish to be boys.

These children do not exhibit flexibility or androgyny; they exhibit instead rigidly stereotypical behavior marked by its disparity from their anatomic sex. A boy who insists on wearing makeup and women's clothing and says that he wishes he were a girl is demonstrating behavior very different from the enjoyment children of both sexes get from exploring a trunk of discarded women's clothing and taking various different roles in dramatic play.

The label of "Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood" (GID) is applied to children who feel dissonant with their assigned anatomic gender and display gender dysphoria. The current diagnostic criteria for this syndrome are presented in the DSM-IV and include displaying a strong and persistent cross-gender identification (not merely a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex).

Effects More Boys Than Girls

While GID exists in children of both sexes, health professionals see fewer girls than boys with GID for several reasons. Feminine characteristics may be seen by young children as more attractive than maleness in our culture; most of the nurturing adults in the lives of young children are women. Thus, young children identify being a girl and a woman with nurturing, safety, and warmth.

In addition, modern society allows greater latitude for appropriate behavior to girls than to boys. It is far more acceptable to be a "tomboy" than to be a "sissy." In the age of socially-sanctioned feminism, girls can more readily aspire to be engineers, lawyers, and even construction workers than can boys aim to become nurses or teachers. Boys are given more negative feedback when they engage in opposite-sex play behavior than are girls. Because men continue to be dominant in social status, both at home and at work, it is seen as more normative for a girl to prefer to be like them than for a boy to aspire to more feminine characteristics. For all these reasons a boy with "girlish" behavior isl ikely to be less well tolerated and more quickly referred to a mental health professional, than is a girl who is seen as a tomboy.

Onset of GID

The onset of the behavioral pattern described as GID typically occurs during the preschool period, often even before two years of age. Clinical referral typically occurs once parents believe that their child's preferences are no longer a transient "phase," or when the behavior begins to be noticeable to friends and neighbors and becomes a source of some embarrassment to the family.

In addition, while preferred relationships with children of both sexes are tolerated by preschool peers, social relationships may deteriorate in second or third grade as children's patterns of "sex segregation" leave atypical children isolated.

The long-term trajectory of psychosexual development in these children is of considerable interest. The sparse longitudinal data that exist suggest that about two-thirds of boys with GID will become gay men, that another 10 percent will become transgendered and may request sex reassignment through surgery or hormones, and that the remaining quarter will become heterosexual men. It has not been possible to predict which boys will take which course. Retrospective studies confirm that many, although not all, homosexual men recall "atypical" childhood play and playmate preferences and recall feelings of being "different" and marginalized, though most would not have met formal criteria for GID. No long-term data exist about girls with GID.

Is GID Really a Disorder?

In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from its classification of mental disorders. If the behaviors typical of children with GID are for most such children the immature expression of homosexuality, one might wonder why children who appear to be "prehomosexual" should deserve a DSM diagnosis early in their lives, but lose it when they become adults.

Inherent in defining a cluster of identified behaviors as a "disorder" is the presence of distress, disability, or disadvantage. It is important to consider first whether the characteristics of GID are associated with distress, and secondarily whether such distress is intrinsic to the symptom cluster or is created by the child's social environment. If the latter, could a change in the social environment alleviate the distress — and would this then make the symptom cluster no longer a legitimate "disorder"?

Empirically, children with GID are more often reported by their parents to have both internalizing and externalizing symptoms in greater number than their peers, most consistently after six years of age. Why? There is no intrinsic disadvantage caused to a boy wearing dresses and makeup, nor to a girl with short hair competing in contact sports. However, girls and boys with atypical play and playmate preferences confront stigma from peers and adults. They are isolated and teased.

Their parents too face stigmatization and may feel embarrassed, conflicted, and insecure. Their concern may lead to critical and punitive responses. Emotional and behavioral symptoms are likely to be a reflection of this distress rather than an intrinsic phenomenon. Others would argue, on the other hand, that it is some degree of intrinsic pathology within the child and/or in the family that results in the syndrome described as GID.

Practical Clinical Implications

The practical questions asked by the parents of these children are impossible to answer. Which of these children will become lesbian/gay? Should we allow him to play with dolls and use makeup inside the house, but not when he goes outside or to school? Should we join in his/her preferences or indicate our dislike/disapproval of them? How much can we and should we try to influence her/his adult sexual orientation? The response to such questions will always depend on the particular circumstances of the child, the family and the community in which they live.

No evidence to date suggests that any actions during childhood alter the developmental path toward a particular sexual orientation in adulthood. Parents of a child with GID, and the professionals to whom they look for advice in parenting, face considerable uncertainty with regard to helpful action.

Some principles seem clear. It is legitimate to help children feel more secure about their gender identity as boys or girls, perhaps preventing adult

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Boys Will Be Girls

By Nilubol Pornpitagpan, Bangkok Post

With all the discrimination Thai women have to endure on a daily basis, why on earth would a man choose to change gender? During my April vacation in Beijing, I was surprised by a topic that kept cropping up in conversations with taxi drivers. Once they learned where I came from, many of the cabbies volunteered a snippet of information they'd heard about Thailand. They spoke no English, and my command of Mandarin is pretty patchy but I caught enough to realise what they were talking about. "Men wearing women's clothes" can only mean one thing, after all!

The drivers wanted confirmation of what they'd been told about the elaborate lip-sync show at venues like Alcazar and Tiffany - practically de rigueur stops on the itinerary of Chinese package tours to the Kingdom. Perhaps the cabbie had heard from compatriots who'd been to Pattaya or Phuket or Bangkok or maybe they'd read one of the stories run by local newspapers about transsexual dancers in Thailand. In any case, the news had spread. Even a woman driver raised the subject, saying she'd heard about these shows and that the dancers were very beautiful.

Whether we like it or not, these drag shows seem to have become a sort of cultural icon of post-modern Thailand. Sorry, all you folks over at the Tourism Authority: that definitely wasn't an impression of Thailand you wanted Chinese tourists to take back home with them!

The beauty of the Grand Palace; yes. The colour and bustle of a floating market, sunny beaches, crystal-clear aquamarine seas, graceful khon performances; certainly. But drag queens? Who'd ever have thought that transvestite/transsexual performers would become, at least in China, unofficial tourism ambassadors for the Kingdom?

Transgendered people are not only more visible in our society than ever before, they're also attracting unprecedented attention in the media. Satree Lek (Iron Ladies), that film about a real-life transvestite volleyball team, did exceptionally well at the box office here and was also commercially successful overseas.

In fact, it was the very first local production to stir international interest in our film industry. Just out is Prang Chompoo ("Saving Private Tootsie"), a comedy about a group of transsexuals (on their way to China, incidentally) who get caught up in a border conflict after their plane crashes en route. Chock-full of sharp-tongued cracks, it's very likely to be another box-office success story. Then there's the matter of beauty pageants. No Thai woman has been crowned Miss World or Miss Universe in the past decade - nor even come close - but a Thai transsexual has won the Miss Queen of the Universe contest for the past three years in a row. Wow, record- breaking stuff, indeed!

Recently, I took a day off and went to see a movie in the afternoon, something I haven't done for years. At the cinema I saw not one but a whole gaggle of boys in secondary-school uniforms whose body language clearly showed that they are girls trapped in the wrong body. Their plucked eyebrows, foundation and discreet make-up was in strange contrast to their short haircuts and male attire.

Watching them, I wondered what on earth would make a boy want to be a girl in this day and age. Do these schoolboys think that being female will secure them more advantages or greater happiness in life? Perhaps because of all the media exposure transsexuals have been getting of late, these budding "she-men" think they've got a better chance of winning fame and fortune as a woman?

Certainly, stories about that colourful TV/TS kick-boxer made for more exciting headlines than one about a run-of-the-mill muay Thai champion; for journalists, the bizarre will always be more newsworthy than the mundane. But do those schoolboys realise that in Thailand many women do not get equal pay for doing the same job as men; that sexual discrimination is still rife?

Judging from the advertisements that bombard us daily, there is no longer any place in our country for plain-looking girls. (You may have seen the ad in which a delivery boy flings a newspaper into a house, barely missing a woman who's leaving to go to work. Then, as she's walking along the street, someone tossing away a bucket of waste water completely soaks her. Of course, once she starts using the advertised brand of cosmetic, everyone notices her. Moral: if a woman doesn't wear make-up, she's invisible!)

We women are brainwashed from an early age, told that in order to achieve success we must take especial care to look good at all times. We must buy this shampoo to get long, silky hair, apply that brand of lotion to ensure smooth skin, use a certain kind of face cream to obtain a pale complexion. There's even a roll-on anti-perspirant on the market which claims to have skin-whitening properties; if the ad is to be believed, this miraculous product makes women's underarms absolutely irresistible to men!

Those adolescent transsexuals I spotted at the cinema obviously pay as much attention to their looks as the average woman. But they are likely to pay a high price for feminine beauty. Quite apart from the prejudice they will encounter as transgendered people, to live life as a woman they will have to submit to the chains that bind women in this sexist society of ours.

Knowing the extent of the oppression to which Thai women are subjected, it is indeed a mystery to me why a boy would want to give up his privileged social position to become a girl.

Helping Parents Understand GID...

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transgenderism. It is also legitimate to diminish as much as possible peer ostracism and social isolation and to treat evidence of associated behavioral/emotional distress. Attempts to alter the early developmental pathway towards a homosexual or a heterosexual orientation are neither ethical nor likely to be effective.

The best advice for parents is to support their children, to foster their strengths and to model desired behavior. All children thrive when they have strong and nurturing relationships with each of their parents. In the press of increasingly busy and complex lives, parents may meet their children's concrete needs for nutrition, daily care and shelter but inadvertently fall short on meeting their emotional needs.

Parents who are concerned about evidence of distress in their children should be encouraged to focus more on the child's needs for intimate connection with each parent. The positive and nurturing qualities of both parents, and their contentment with their own gender roles, should be made evident to their children. Open discussion with the child's grandparents, aunts and uncles, and siblings usually will diminish the feelings of shame and guilt that often complicate family relationships and will help to ensure a supportive environment for the child's growth.

Families have the opportunity also to help the child learn techniques of recognizing and combating the damaging effects of stigma. For example, parents can explain that this behavior is not typical of boys/girls of his/her age, that he/she may be unfairly criticized, and provide strategies to resist teasing and ostracism. Learning and practicing at home an appropriate response to anticipated questions or taunts is like providing a protective shield for a child as he/she ventures out of the family and into a world of peers.

Discussion about a child with atypical gender role behavior can provide a helpful opportunity for parents to consider how they might feel if their child were to be gay or lesbian. Most families can come to accept a homosexual son or daughter, especially if given adequate time and support. Physicians can be influential as a source of support, information and guidance for all members of a family.

Ellen C. Perrin, M.D., is a Professor of Pediatrics and the Director of the Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at the Floating Hospital of Tufts-New England Medical Center. She is author of *Sexual Orientation in Child and Adolescent Health Care*, published by Kluwer Plenum Publishers, New York, 2002.

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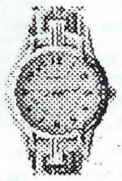

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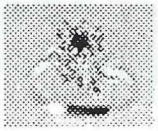

She Has The Heart Of A Fighter

TS Star Is No Damsel In Distress

by ALONGKORN PARIVUDHIPHONGS, Bangkok Post

Yolatee Khomkong has a look that even "real" women envy. With her demure yet affable manner, agreeable facial features, long, luxuriant tress and smooth fair skin, the 24-year-old, openly transsexual actress usually has no trouble "passing".

Although that will be more difficult for her now that she's caught the public eye after appearing in the recently released Prang Chompoo (Saving Private Tootsie), her first movie role.

The comic action flick has become the talk of the town because its cast includes a number of katoey (transvestites or effeminate men) and homosexuals, including make-up artist/model Ornapa Krisadee, openly gay academic Dr Seri Wongmontha and comedian Thongthong Mokjok. The movie is intended to make the point that gay and transgendered people deserve the same respect as other human beings.

"It's not one of those typical stories in which homosexual characters are portrayed in a grotesque or mocking fashion," said Yolatee, who is better known by her nickname, Som-o (pomelo).

In the movie she plays Cherry, a TV/TS who finds herself in the middle of an armed conflict when her plane crashes on the Thai- Burmese border. She subsequently falls for a young ethnic-minority soldier before finally being rescued by Thai troops.

Making the film was an unforgettable experience, she said, describing it as fun and hardship in equal measure. "During the two-month shoot we all had to stay in the jungle and didn't have [much] time for personal grooming at all."

And that must have been a real penance indeed. Apart from eating lots of fruit and vegetables, she says the secret to maintaining her looks is, well, moisturising lotion. "I like to smear white cream on my body until it won't absorb any more. It's a bit like bathing myself with lotion," she said with a giggle, covering her mouth as she does so - just like any well-bred young lady. "Normally, it takes about 10 to 15 minutes, so I smear the lotion on as I dance around the room," said Yolatee, going on to reveal that she's managed to keep her weight pegged at 53 kilogrammes for years now.

The director of Prang Chompoo, Kittikorn Liawsirikul, was anxious to make the rescue scenes in the movie as action-packed and realistic as possible. So Yolatee acquired lots of bruises from all the knocks and falls she got as she ran through the jungle set. All that she took in her stride, though. But one scene in particular did create some difficulties. "I was asked to exchange punches with my co-star [Theeradanai Suwannahom] so I had to pose like a real boxer. For that scene I had to do a lot of takes," she recalled, smiling.

She may sound lady-like but Yolatee has the heart of a fighter. Without a backwards look, she moved out of the family home at the age 17 because her parents couldn't accept her sexuality. "Why do they have to think that being katoey is weird? Why should I change to someone I am not? Wouldn't that be even more weird?".

Yolatee is the fifth child born to a Thai-Chinese family in Nakhon Ratchasima. At her all-boys school, she was regarded as a good- mannered student and on several occasions was asked to dress up for school events, mostly in female attire. She won a most-popular- student award and was voted Nang Noppamas (beauty queen) during a school celebration of the Loy Krathong festival.

"Some of the boys liked to kiss me. Some even touched my butt. But back then I don't regard this as harassment; they were just joking around. I'd stick with my group and leave school right after class let out. So I didn't hang out with any other boys," she recalled.

When her parents found out about her sexual preference, however, Yolatee was sent to study in Bangkok immediately after she'd graduated from Mathayom 3. The intention was to separate her from her gay friends. "But it was even worse [in Bangkok] because I met more katoey friends there and learned how to put on make-up and dress up properly."

After she'd turned 17, her parents summoned her home. Her father issued an ultimatum: If she didn't stop acting like a katoey, he would cut off all financial support. "He said that if I wanted to continue as a katoey then I should stay out of his face."

Leaving home without a second thought, she went to Pattaya to stay with a cousin, also a katoey, who was working in the transvestite shows put on at Tiffany. Yolatee was taken on as a dancer and because of her height (172 cms) and looks quickly attracted attention. After winning several awards at the beauty pageants put on every year at Tiffany, she was named first runner-up in the Miss Alcazar competition in 1996. Two years later she reached the apex for a TV/TS in Thailand, snatching the Miss Calypso title.

Winning this was a great source of personal pride. "It helped me gain more confidence and taught me how to lead my life in ways useful to society and the community," said Yolatee, now a senior student at Rajabhat Suan Dusit's Faculty of Communication Arts.

Her CV to date includes a role in a music video for gay-themed song Pratheung, and a guest appearance on TV series Tham Fah Ha Rak (Ask the Skies for Love). Job offers have been flowing in since the release of Prang Chompoo. "One film-maker asked me to play a lesbian. But that would be a difficult role for me; I'd have to kiss another woman, you see."

Now that she's climbing the star ladder, her life - and particularly her love life - is increasingly under the spotlight. "People see me as flirtatious and fickle. But in fact to survive in this business you need to be friendly and open-minded. I'm not looking for anyone special now. Why? [pauses] I still can't forget my first boyfriend. He was super nice."

People tend to focus on Yolatee's appearance but she'd rather get compliments for her polite, lady-like behaviour. She is anxious to maintain a positive image in order to overcome public prejudice towards katoey.

"I don't want people to see me as a weirdo," she said. "I don't think the value of a person should have anything to do with sexual orientation; it should be about inner beauty and having a good heart."

TGSF Seminar Reviews

By Kara

Dr. Kaplan presents SRS Procedure to Group

Bay Area surgeon, Dr. Kaplan, presented a seminar on SRS. He presented his expertise with repairing female genitalia, the overall SRS procedure used by Dr. Meltzer, and the SRS procedure he has developed with Dr. Laub from Stanford. He presented his technique to use part of the colon instead of disconnected penile skin. The benefit of this procedure, he believes, allows for continuous blood supply to all of the tissue involved with creating the vagina, as well as providing a secretory surface.

(I taped the seminar, but the tape is not running well when transferring to a VHS tape. I'll try finding someone who might be able to provide a better quality copy so that we can provide a tape to members interested in viewing the seminar. Also, there was a very nice college student (GG) who also recorded the seminar, so I'll try to see if her seminar turned out any better.)

MAC hosts Makeovers at Bloomingdales

Two MAC artists entertained several TGSF members with makeovers on February 9th. Ladies were provided expert makeovers by Maycher and Keith. Keith provided exceptional makeovers at the Cotillion and Maycher has been extremely helpful with providing makeup services to several TGSF members and the TG community in general. Hair International representatives Cheryl and George also provided their hair expertise to those attending. They both worked up great hairstyles with either wigs or real hair and were very warm to having TG visit their salon. They are located at 232 Stanford Shopping Center. Call 650-324-2007 to contact them or arrange an appointment.

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