

Renaissance News



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February, 1988

Fashionable Women

...by Paula Sinclair

Men who want to dress like women face some difficult problems. After they decide that they must express the feminine side of their personalities, or give free reign to the women inside themselves, transvestites and transsexuals must decide just what sort of women they will be.

The problem is particularly acute for the TV/TS who has spent many years in the masculine life. These males lack the long period of personality development that enables girls to grow into women. They spent that time as boys becoming men. As a result, they often adopt the essence of one significant female from their past such as their mother or sister, or they form their female personas from characteristics of many women they have known. Although these role models may be outstanding people and well worthy of emulation, they often possess one significant problem: they live in the crossdresser's memory and not in today's world.

The position of women in American society has changed drastically in recent years and seems to continue evolving at a mind-boggling pace. So, how does a TV or TS become a "Lady of the '80s" when she wasn't "sweet 16" in the '60s? One answer can come from men who know, or who claim to know, today's women intimately: fashion designers.

Several of the top names in Paris fashion recently talked about the women for whom they design clothes. They are not neces-

Memorial To Benefit Renaissance

Poets and Prophets is a Philadelphia based non-profit group with the unique purpose of bringing modern, grassroots poetry to the attention of the public. Bob Small, president of the group, has informed Renaissance that it is to be a partial recipient of funds from a memorial benefit that the group is hosting on Monday night, March 7th, beginning at 8:00 pm.

The memorial is in honor of Kelly Stevens, a transsexual poet-

ess, who was to read her works here this year. Ms. Stevens died in June of 1987.

The memorial is especially fitting since March is also Women's International History Month.

Mr. Small learned of our transsexual support activities from the *Philadelphia Gay News*.

The event will be held at the Video Box, second floor of the Middle East Club, 126 Market St. Admission is \$2.

On The Road Again...

On Dec. 9th, JoAnn Roberts and Jackie Keller addressed the faculty of the Department of Psychiatry at Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia, along with Dr. Bill Stayton. The girls kept them in a question & answer session for 90 minutes.

On January 5th, JoAnn Roberts, her daughter Anna, Angela Gardner, Donna Miller and Robyn Dormer appeared on WOR's *People Are Talking*. This is

a cable syndicated show and as a result Renaissance received calls from all over the country asking for information about the group. The Board handled about twenty five calls and where appropriate made referrals to other groups.

January ended with a radio interview on WDVT, TALK 900 AM and February starts with two lectures, one at Jefferson Medical College and one at the University of Pennsylvania.

Board Issues Background Papers

The Board has approved the release of the first papers in a series which discuss a variety of topics of interest to TVs, TSs, family and professionals.

Available now are: #1 - Myths and Misconceptions About Crossdressing, #2 - Reasons For Male-to-Female Crossdressing, #3

- PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others, and #4 - The Matter of Children.

These papers can be obtained by sending a large, self addressed, stamped (\$0.44) envelope and \$1 for each paper to our regular address. Please indicate the number and quantity desired.

sarily the women who have front row seats at the showings and buy one-of-a-kind dresses for their own use, but they are women who are very much in tune with the times.

Freedom is a characteristic that many designers ascribe to today's women. This is a characteristic that many TVs and TSs can iden-

tify with; for what gives a greater sensation of freedom than the wearing of a skirt after years of trousers? Fashion designer Kenzo said women "are more conscious of themselves, more free. They know what they want, what they can do." Azzedine Alaïa added that women

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"want to be both free and feminine." This idea of freedom allows women today the opportunity to express herself better. "I like women who have their own idea of life," said Issey Miyake, "the woman who is assured, comfortable with herself, strong inside, proud of herself, not in an arrogant way, not showing off."

But, according to Jean-Paul Gaultier, women have every reason to be arrogant if they choose. "Women can do everything men can do, and they can sometimes do it better." His ideal woman "is the daughter of the one who made women's lib. She knows her power, but she uses it in a determined way, with a jerk and a twist."

Sonia Rykiel is one of the few female designers at the top of the heap. From her vantage point she sees women today as balancing contradictions. Her ideal woman "is fragile and strong."

What does the free, fragile, capable, modest and strong woman do when confronted with the wide variety of fashion? She will take what suits her and leave the rest. "Women who have self-confidence and who are sure about their power will find clothes in which they recognize their own personality," Christian Lacroix said. Miyake said he would like his fashions to carry a tag which reads "Take these clothes as you like."

But isn't this a form of arrogance? Doesn't a woman who thumbs her nose at the latest dictum from Paris make the statement she, not a designer, knows what's best for her?

Yves Saint Laurent said that this is an appropriate role for women today. He expressed it simply, "The women choose." He admires this arrogance, because "a woman who is arrogant doesn't look like anyone else."

And what of sex in the '80s? Is it an element of women's vocabulary of self-expression? Some commen-

tators have said that the new emphasis on bare skin, on rounded hips, on full breasts, on exposed legs, forces women back into the role of sex objects. Ungaro, who seems most involved in giving women a sexy look, sees today's provocative clothes as another way women can exercise their power. "They are like female Don Giovanni," he said. "They conquer people around them." Gaultier added that today's women must follow through in the use of their sexual power if they choose to dress in a provocative manner. Otherwise, they are not truly expressing themselves but are merely following fashion. "I hate the image of servility," he said, "A lot of young girls dress like prostitutes, but inside they may be puritan, strict and reserved." Alaïa says that an open expression of sexual allure gives women the initiative. "I enjoy it when women trouble people with their clothes."

So much for theory. How does it work out in practice? One example may offer a clue. At the recent showings in Paris, Milan and New York, many fashion experts and celebrities were wearing the new short skirts. They all walked with ease and grace with their hemlines well above the knee. But, when they sat, and skirts rose to mid thigh, it was quite a different matter, separating today's woman from yesterday's.

The truly bold women ignored the expanse of exposed leg; crossing and uncrossing their legs as if they were wearing prairie dresses. Only the timid tugged at the hems or covered their legs with newspapers or purses. But the big surprise was that the true fashion mavens wore short skirts regardless of whether their legs were terrific or just okay. The secret was dark, semi-opaque tights which concealed all but the worst flaws and thereby enabled these women to forget their frailties and feel the freedom of being a modern woman.

For Your Information

For up to the minute information about Renaissance events, call 215-640-9449 any time. Our new answering machine will have brief details about activities. If you need to speak to someone, just leave a message and we'll get back to you ASAP.

Mona Lisa charms in sterling silver are available to all members of Renaissance for \$25. Non-members may purchase them for \$40. Contact JoAnn Roberts at the number above or write.

Business Report For January

Starting Balance: \$2008.67

Income:

"Voices" Registr.	\$300.00
Banquet	\$285.00
<u>Dues & Contrib.</u>	<u>\$213.00</u>
Subtotal	+\$748.00

Expenses:

Xmas Banquet	\$1055.11
Answer Machine	\$72.15
"Voices" Refunds	\$545.00
Newsletter	\$69.00
<u>Phone & Supplies</u>	<u>\$52.34</u>
Subtotal	-\$1793.60

Ending Balance \$1013.07

Coming Events:

February

20th, Renaissance Meeting To Be Announced

28th thru Mar 4 IFGE Conv in Chicago.

March

19th, Renaissance Meeting To Be Announced

April

16th, Renaissance Meeting To Be Announced

May

21st, Renaissance Meeting To Be Announced

June

2-5, "Paradise in the Poconos" weekend

The Opinion Page

Quo Vadis IFGE ?

by JoAnn Roberts

With much ballyhoo and fanfare the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) was announced last year. The IFGE's stated purpose is to be an "umbrella" organization for all the TV/TS support groups in the country and around the world. And, with equal enthusiasm, a first annual convention was announced, which took place in Chicago, last March. The second annual IFGE conference will take place this year from Feb 24 through March 1, again in Chicago. Great! Or is it so great? What has IFGE actually done in the last year?

I received notice of the first convention too late to change my plans for attending Mardi Gras in New Orleans last year (the convention began two days after Mardi Gras). But, I wanted to support this new organization and I wanted to see it succeed. So, I sent my personal check of \$100 for a "Supporting Membership" which is supposed to entitle me to a subscription to the "Tapestry", now the official publication of IFGE, and to discounts on special IFGE events. In addition, IFGE announced that they were seeking IRS tax-exemption and would be accepting affiliations from groups, eventually, so I also sent off a letter requesting affiliation for Renaissance ASAP and offered our help at the next convention in anyway possible.

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

tion; no reply. I filled out and mailed a "I want to help" form that one of our members brought back from P-town in June; no reply. And, my year's subscription to "Tapestry" has consisted of exactly one issue.

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

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

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

The concept of an "umbrella" organization is viable, however, this incarnation, in the form of IFGE, is still immature. It needs to establish clear, meaningful goals and objectives aimed at a better general public understanding of transgender behavior. These are the goals we set for Renaissance and to accept anything less from a "parent" organization is self defeating. We do not need a convention organizer, thank you. Any

number of people can be hired to perform that function. We need an organizing body that can harness and direct the energies of the transgendered community into achieving recognition for ourselves and reaffirming our rights as human beings.

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

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

On The Bookshelf

From the Oxford University Press comes word of several books in the *Kinsey Institute* series. Of particular interest is the first in the series, "*Masculinity/Femininity: Basic Perspectives*." In this volume a group of internationally renowned authorities on sexual differentiation consider the many facets of masculine/feminine behavior from seven distinct but interrelated perspectives. #504105-4, 384 pgs, 44 illustrations, \$29.95 hardback.

The next book to follow in the series will be titled "*Homosexuality/Heterosexuality*", *Concepts of Sexual Orientation*". No price stated.

"*Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*" is not the book edited by John Money, but a new title published in 1986 by two doctors in Australia. The book details a decade of their work and the medical, ethical, legal, social and personal issues for transexuals. #554462-5, 232pgs, 10 illustrations, \$28.95 hardback.

This next title is irresistible. "*Immodest Acts, The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy*". The blurb describes it as "...a vivid picture of convent life and the Roman Catholic Church during the upheaval of the counter-reformation." #504225-5, 222pgs, \$6.95.

To order any of the above book, write to the Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave, NY, NY 10157-0913.

News & Notes

Snippets and tid-bits of interest to the TV/TS community.

The Miss America pageant in Atlantic City has only 50 contestants, but still the judges have their hands full selecting a winner. So imagine the problem faced by judges of the Miss Gay America contest recently when 68 girls recently competed for the title in Atlanta.

State and regional titleholders from across the nation were joined by 12 former Miss Gay Americas for the contest held in the Fabulous Fox Theater. The contestants competed in evening wear, contemporary fashion, talent, male interview and on-stage interview. After three days of rehearsals, interviews and glamour, Cherry Lane of Little Rock, Ark., was crowned Miss Gay America for 1988.

Crossdressing made it into the *Philadelphia Inquirer* society column in December and later in the "Weekend" section. Well, sort of. Three University of Pennsylvania students were pictured wearing the cutest wigs. But they were also wearing tuxedos. It seems the guys were performing a skit at the Mask & Wig Club to kick off the club's centennial year.

We don't mean to poke fun at the club, which graciously hosted our benefit show in September. But it does seem odd that this type of crossdressing is accepted while our type isn't? But who said life is fair?

Male transvestites who want to be more like women without having an operation will be heartened by claims made recently by a sex researcher who says the sexual apparatus of men and woman are more alike than had been previously thought.

After seven years of research at Harvard University, sexologist Josephine Lowdes Sevely says that men have a clitoris that's located in their penis. She also says women ejaculate and have a prostate gland.

Sevely's claims are contained in her book entitled *Eve's Secrets*.

A federal Court in Ohio has rejected the sex discrimination claim brought by Warren Harper against school officials for preventing him from attending his 1985 high school prom because he was wearing a chiffon dress, satin heels and a fur cape. Harper's escort for the evening was his sister, Florence, who was wearing a tux.

Shortly after Harper and his sister arrived at the dance, school officials grabbed the crossdressed teenager and told him he would have to leave because he was not properly attired. Harper and his parents sued the school district, charging that the boy's civil rights were violated.

"I was making a fashion statement," Harper said after the incident. "I decided...if girls can wear makeup to look better, why can't guys? If girls can paint their nails, which makes their hands look lovelier, why can't guys?" Harper's mother explained that her son has long been interested in female impersonation and that it is his dream to become Miss Gay Ohio and later Miss Gay USA.

The federal district court ruled that Harper was not discriminated against because school officials required all students - male and female - to conform to community standards regarding dress.

- *Philadelphia Gay News*

Two researchers of human sexuality have proposed a new model to attempt an explanation and understanding of gender transpositions.

The model was reported in the November/December 1987 issue of the *Journal of Sex Research*.

Authors, R. Pillard and J. Weinrich, have proposed a two dimensional surface upon which they have placed various male (XY) and female (XX) transpositions.

When Medeleev prepared the first workable periodic table, many

of the elements were unknown. He was able, however, to predict their characteristics based on the properties of the surrounding known elements. Pillard and Weinrich hope to gain new insights into gender transpositions in a similar manner. We wish them luck!

Conference Postponed

"Voices - The 1988 Conference on Transgendered Issues" was cancelled for January 16th. The decision was reached by consensus of the Board and Conference personnel. JoAnn Roberts, who had sparked the idea for the conference, said, "Everyone involved is so disappointed. We really poured our hearts into this effort, but we didn't get a sufficient number of registrations from the professional community." "The few who did register were also disappointed", says JoAnn, "But they want us to keep them informed of any plans we make to try again. And, we will try again."

Dr. John Money, who was to be the Keynote Speaker, was not surprised when informed of the cancellation. He suggested that Renaissance might put together a symposium at a meeting sponsored by another organization. The Board took his advice and we will be staffing a panel discussion at the Eastern Region Society for the Scientific Study of Sex conference to be held in Baltimore during April of this year.

However, the Board is not dissuaded from planning its own conference for later in 1988. "We know what it takes now and we know exactly what our expenses will be," says JoAnn, "and we learned a valuable lesson in marketing."

It is hoped that "Voices" can be rescheduled for the fall of 1988.

News & Notes, Too!

More snippets and tid-bits of interest to the TV/TS community.

Scientists at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, believe they have found the single gene that determines if an embryo will become male or female.

The scientists said that their discovery doesn't answer all questions about gender development, but it does tell how differences in gender are first established in individuals. They also said that the discovery provides new clues for dealing with problems of sexual development.

During the first six weeks of development in the womb, all fetuses are sexually identical. However, fetuses which will become female have two X chromosomes, while future male fetuses have an X and a Y chromosome. The gene believed to cause gender differentiation is on the Y chromosome.

At the proper time the gene triggers the production of a protein that causes the embryo to develop male characteristics. Without the gene and the resulting protein, the embryo continues its development along a female track.

The gene was isolated by studying the genetic material of 60 XX males and XY females, so-called "sex-reversed" people. Men with two X chromosomes are sterile, but are otherwise normal. Women with XY chromosomes don't mature sexually. However, all of the "sex-reversed" men studied had the sex trigger gene, while all of the women did not.

It's time for the new year predictions from the supermarket tabloids. Amid the foretellings of California slipping into the Pacific Ocean and the like, comes the *National Enquirer's* prediction that a presidential hopeful will drop out of the race after a magazine publishes a photo of him dressed as a woman. Let's hope it's not George Bush. Crossdressers have enough problems without being thought to be wimps too.

A male ex-convict's impersonation of rhythm and blues singer Shirley Murdock was apparently so convincing that he was able to travel the country staying at the best hotels, renting limousines and running up huge clothing bills. Now, Hilton Lashawn Williams, 27, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison on bad check charges.

According to authorities, Williams traveled to six states before being arrested in Washington, D.C. for defrauding a bank in Texas. During the journey, Williams handed out copies of Murdock's latest album and said "she" was on a promotional tour. William's portrayal was so convincing that "she" performed as Murdock at the Heart Throb Cafe in Nashville, Tenn. "She" also offered to sing the national anthem, before a Sam Houston State University football game. The University's assistant director of athletics, Matt Fanly, said, "I visited with her for five or ten minutes and was not aware that he or she was an impersonator. This individual was dressed to the hilt with five times the normal amount of makeup and jewelry and wearing very expensive clothing. From that standpoint it was very convincing."

A spokesman for Elektra Asylum, Murdock's record label, said the singer was aware of the scam, but would have no comment.

—*Philadelphia Gay News*

All of New Zealand was abuzz recently when a transsexual television star was nominated for that country's version of an Emmy for "Best Female in a Dramatic Performance." Georgina Beyer, who is still legally a man, said that the nomination was a great honor because her industry peers recognized her talents as an actress and ignored her sexuality.

When she first began living as a woman, Georgina said she "fell into the trap of being a flamboyant drag queen with all the trappings

and 'street life' that often goes with it." But six years ago she landed her first serious acting role, and since then has had several parts, either as women or as transsexuals, on New Zealand television.

By the way, Georgina didn't win the award, but few seemed to care after the pleasant shock of the nomination.

Imagine the surprise of the British welder when the blonde he tried to indecently assault turned out to be a man in drag.

Stephen Flockton, 22, met Ron Hollingshead in an Exeter, England, alley and asked Hollingshead, who was dressed as a woman, for a kiss. When "she" refused, Flockton dragged her to a nearby cemetery where he tried to molest her.

"The only thing which prevents this case from being an actual indecent assault on a woman is that the victim was, in fact, a man," said prosecutor Martin Edmunds. Hollingshead appeared in court in drag to testify against Flockton. He said he had been dressing as a woman for eight years in preparation for a sex change.

Flockton pleaded not guilty and will stand trial on charges of attempted indecent assault and causing bodily harm.

The "dress for success" look adopted by many business and professional women—oxford cloth shirts, structured suits, floppy bow ties—came under attack last month by a columnist for a women's magazine in Chicago. Sherren Leigh of *Today's Chicago Woman* urged women to give up the look and use some of the "myriad of fashion options" open to them.

We agree that women's clothes are a lot more fun than men's and that it's pretty dull when women try to look like men. But we can't agree with Leigh's assessment that the success look makes women look like "men in drag." We thought it was the other way around.

Are You Mad As Hell Or Pleased As Punch ?

We've been telling you over the last several months where to buy clothing and accessories through mail-order companies. And, this month we've told about a few to stay away from. Once in a while, however, even the best of companies will botch an order. What should you do? Also, what about when a company goes out of its way to provide you service; what then?

In the case of the botched order, some of us will write a meek letter requesting that it be straightened out, but most will accept the order as is. They are too guilty about their dressing behavior to make a complaint.

Well that has got to stop and stop now! Never, never let anyone take advantage of the fact that you are transgendered. You have the

same rights as any other consumer does and you should exercise them. If you receive a wrong order, complain about it. Get it set right. If you charged it to a credit card, write or call the card company and request that the charge be removed from your bill.

As an aid in helping you develop your consumer smarts, we are providing you with the coupons below. Copy them and use them. Let both the good companies and bad companies know how you feel about their service.

Lets us know, too, so that we can spread the word around. The good guys deserve our business and the bad ones should be put out of business. But, that will depend upon you and whether you exercise your consumer rights.

I gave a compliment/
complaint slip (circle
one)to _____

about _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail to Renaissance, Box 1263,
King of Prussia, PA 19406.

Copy the coupons to the left and use them when something goes wrong or exceptionally right. Use the coupon above to keep us informed of a company's performance.

Complaint Slip

Store Name: _____

I have been a customer of this store for _____ years. I am dissatisfied with _____

If you do not make an effort to correct this I will take my business elsewhere. I feel I am entitled to a reply.

Sincerely, _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Praise Slip

Store Name: _____

I have been a customer of this store for _____ years. I am pleased with _____

Keep up the good work and I will be sure to recommend your business to my friends.

Sincerely, _____

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Subscription and Associate Membership is \$12 per year. Full Membership in the group is \$30 per year.

Renaissance is a non-profit corporation which has the purpose of providing education about transgendered behavior to the general public and professional counsellors.

Renaissance meets once a month, on the 3rd Saturday of the month, unless otherwise noted. Starting time is 9:00 PM in the late Spring/Summer, and 8:00 PM in the Fall/Winter. Regular meetings are held in the Valley Forge area. Occasionally, we will meet other places and these will be noted in the newsletter.

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