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THE TARTAN SKIRT

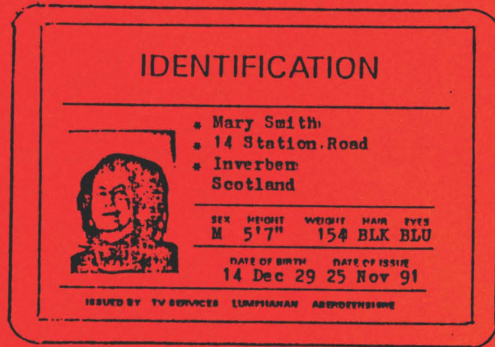


The Scottish Magazine
for the
Gender Community

New Series No. 15

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THE TARTAN SKIRT

The Scottish Magazine for the
Gender Community

Editor: Anne Forrester

New Series No. 15

July 1995

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MARRIAGE FOR TRANSSEXUALS IN BARBADOS

by Anne Forrester

Although it is not currently possible for transsexuals to marry under British law, it is possible for a perfectly legal marriage, recognised in the UK, to be conducted elsewhere. There are a number of locations where wedding packages can be arranged through travel agents - it is one of their more booming aspects of business - and in some of these countries there is no problem with transsexuals. The place of which most is known is Barbados. ("Weddings in Paradise" are also arranged in Antigua, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St Lucia and in Kenya, amongst other places, but the attitude towards transsexuals is not known in these other resorts).

Barbados law requires a few days residence before a wedding ceremony between visitors, and can take place any day except public holidays and Saturdays and Sundays. Presentation of the usual documentation is necessary - birth certificate, passport and certificates of any previous divorce of either party. In the case of a post-operative transsexual it is wise - although not mandatory - to be able to produce a letter from the reassignment surgeon confirming that reassignment surgery has been performed and that the person now functions solely as a female. Weddings involving transsexuals are perfectly legal in Barbados, and as long as one is totally up-front and honest about the situation there is no problem. (And "no problem" is a favourite Barbadian saying in most circumstances).

Arrangements are best made through a package arrangement with a major tour operator for whom this is part of their regular business, and it is known that

Thomsons in particular have been very helpful, although there may well be other operators also prepared to help. It is also wise to be totally up-front from the start, as Thomsons' representatives are interested in business, not in morality, and if they know the score they will do everything possible to ensure a smooth and trouble-free arrangement.

The package deals on offer include charter flights (excellent value and service if by Caledonian airways), hotel accomodation in any of a number of excellent hotels. The Thomson "Faraway Shores" brochure arrangements include all handling all administration and documentation, the ceremony (conducted by a local church minister - in a recent case the minister of a Barbadian methodist church), a wine/champagne toast for the bride and groom, a wedding cake, flowers and buttonholes with a bouquet for the bride, and a decorated location - usually beside the sparkling blue and gold of the beach. Extras such as a wedding video, photographer, hair garlands, music (Carribean steel band style), *etc.*, can also be ordered.

And if all that sounds too good to be true - or affordable - the total cost is probably no more - or even less - than the horrific costs of a full wedding in the UK. Thomsons' prices for 1995 range around £550 - £1300 *per person*, depending on season and resort and whether self-catering, bed and breakfast, half-board or full-board, and upon the time of year. (Prices are dearest around late spring and early summer, and lowest around early spring). On top of that, of course, you will need spending money and the wherewithall to enjoy the sights and sounds of this lovely island. (Car hire is easy and reasonably priced - and fun if you hire one of the plentiful Mini-Mokes - but public transport is also very cheap and great fun - and the island is only 21 miles long and 14 miles wide).

Formalities include meeting with the Thomsons' representative to finalise the arrangements, a visit to the

registrar to have the wedding entered formally (which is where you produce your documentation), and then the ceremony in the sun, after which you sign the register and receive your 'Certificate of Marriage' - which closely resembles the style of that used in Britain and which is legally valid in Britain as evidence of your marriage. *However, be under no illusions. British authorities will not budge from their own rules, so that a male-to-female TS will still have to wait until 65 for a pension and the law may well regard your partnership as a common-law marriage (which in Scotland, unlike England, is a well-recognised legal situation).*



WEDDING IN BARBADOS

A TS BRIDE TELLS HER STORY

by Jacquie Gavin

Sadly, marriage for transsexuals is simply not possible in Britain - but elsewhere it is a different story and dreams really can come true, with a fully legal wedding conducted by a real minister in a dream setting, in a country whose marriages are legally recognised in Britain. This is a true story. I was there, and can

vouch for it. Jacquie was the most beautiful bride I've ever seen, wearing a wedding dress that would make a princess green with envy (what am I saying ? she IS a princess !), and Stephen is the luckiest - and happiest - bridegroom there ever was. - Anne.

So you thought that dream wedding was not possible ? Well come closer and I will tell you the *real* story.

I awoke at 7:30 to the sound of the breakers lapping against the shoreline. I looked at Stephen as he lay sound asleep and smiled sweetly to myself in the knowledge of how lucky I was. I rose and wandered across the cool tiled floor to one of the large windows and drew back the curtains. To no-ones surprise it was another beautiful day - and it was my day, too. Stephen was awake by now and called me over for his morning kiss. As I lay there in his arms I could not help but think about the situation that I had been in eight years ago (*to be told in a future issue - Ed*). As the thought left my mind I turned to Stephen to thank him: he has had a hard life himself, and if there is a God or a power for good out there He surely had His hands on us.

After breakfast we rose for our morning walk along the beach in our swimming costumes. Hand in hand we strolled into the hot morning sunshine along the smooth white sand, with the occasional lapping wave to gently cool our feet. As we walked up the beach for the fifth time Alan from Manchester (another 'bridegroom in waiting') shouted over to us "ain't it 'bout time you two ad pit stop?". As we laughed we strolled the beach for another five laps before returning to our room (the best in the hotel !). Stephen decided that we should have a drink of Cola, *without* any rum this time ! However, to steady his nerve I decided to give him a game of his steadily-improving mini-golf - which I had to let him win, of course !

At 1.00 pm Anne arrived with the glowing smile that only she can deliver, and which set us both at ease in an instant.

Half an hour later the two of us were off to the salon to get my hair and makeup done in true Caribbean style. For one and a half hours I let them pamper me in their own special way, although this was a bit different from being made ready for a model shoot. As we left the salon to go back to the room we could not help notice that it was a security guard (yes, I did say security guard) who was trimming the flowers and arranging them all so sweet and beautifully !

When we got back to the room there was a touch of nerves about Stephen as he struggled to put on his bow tie. After I had tied it for him he was sent on his way to see the Rev. Colton Bennett, who was to conduct the marriage service, as Anne helped me get dressed and ready for the big moment. As the minutes gently drifted away there was a knock at the door: it was Peter the photographer, a jolly man who added to the delight of the day. At five past four (we had to be a little late - the bride's privilege) we headed down the stairway and were directed through the salon to the floral wedding arch, beside the beach. This not only astonished and delighted the salon staff and customers but totally confused Stephen. He was expecting me to appear from the side, but because of this 'diversion' I entered from the back, passing through the thirty to forty people who had come to watch our happy event. As I came up to him both Stephen's and my smile grew as wide as the island itself.

The ceremony itself was wonderful, even though I never did manage to push Stephen's ring completely over his knuckle. The Rev. Colton Bennett made the whole event joyful and so easy-going, especially when he shook my hand saying "Congratulations Mrs Gavin". Those three words took only a few seconds to say, but seem to have taken a lifetime to achieve: so why *does* Britain make these few simple words so difficult ? When I challenge Britain in the courts in the near future I hope to make this country see the light, which is now beginning to appear elsewhere through the clouds: and I shall not be doing this just for me, but for all people who are refused BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS - and at the end of the day it will be *our* day.

Anyway, enough about that for the moment: back to our WEDDING IN BARBADOS. After the ceremony we headed back to the Khus-Khus bar, me still in my wedding dress and Stephen in his 'best', where Ian (Stephen's 'best man') and Pauline - another couple awaiting their own wedding three days later - waited to raise a toast for our marriage. As Stephen and I sat there, still smiling, many people came up and congratulated us - but only after they had sent not only us, but Anne too, some admiring glances.



Anne then decided that she was going to treat us to a wonderful wedding meal in one of the best restaurants on the island - with me still in my wedding dress. The manager of the restaurant, and then the owner, came in

and congratulated us in their own special way, which made us feel even more special. As we still kept smiling and looking into each others eyes, I could not help feeling that there was an even wider smile on a very special lady who made the day even more special - thank you Anne.

After we left Anne and returned to our hotel we were congratulated again by the staff before we finally got to our room. I could not help but feel a tear in my eye, knowing that this day had to end: but



I knew that at that precise moment in time I was the happiest woman alive. Until the British government sees sense and changes its mind about 'transsexual weddings' then others will also be obliged to travel to enlightened places like BARBADOS to get married (and if you would like any further information about this then please contact either myself or Anne, through *The Tartan Skirt*).

My heartfelt thanks go to all the following wonderful people: my mother - a lady in a million; Stephen's mother and father - both know, understand and accept; my brothers and sister - what can I say ?; Stephen's brother and sisters, as with his Mum and Dad; the Southern Palms Beach Club - wonderful; The Mermaid Restaurant - a night to remember ALWAYS; the Rev. Colton Bennett - you made it happen; Thomson Holidays - we will be back Kim; Lunn Poly - again our thanks; Kerwin, the Thomson Rep - he knew, and NO PROBLEM; Diane, beauty therapist - we have only just started; Gary, hairdresser - it's my hair and I *will* do what I want with it; Ian Anderson, Stephen's 'Best Man' - we wish you and Pauline all the best for your marriage. And of course the list can not be complete without two very special people: Anne (well, everyone knows her: "If there is anything I can do, you know where I am") and about Stephen (who's he ?) - MY WONDERFUL HUSBAND, what can I say ? All I can say is that I love you, and you'd better not forget it. x x x x x

PS. During the summer we are having a church blessing in Britain, to be carried out by a lovely old priest in a beautiful country church, for our respective families and friends who could not be with us for the wedding itself, and to help us celebrate in style. (Not only that, but I get another chance to wear my lovely dress). All of our friends and 99% of our families know, understand and accept me for the beautiful woman I am. On behalf of Stephen and me I say **IT CAN BE DONE, AND DONE IN STYLE**

- IN BARBADOS.



Move over, darling

"There's not many men around at the moment. The best ones are either married or gay"

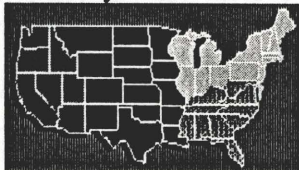
Petula Clark

TS MARRIAGES IN AMERICA

(The following item concerning TS weddings in the USA was plucked off the Internet)

As far as marriage goes the law is very unsettled about the rights of TS to marry the opposite gender of their new gender. It varies from State to State. There are a few States that recognize the new sex if you get a court order. For example in Oregon there is a specific law (ORS 33.460) that allows someone to have the court declare them to be legally the new sex. BUT there is no precedence to require any other State to recognize that new status. (There is no requirement that every thing a State does needs to be given full faith and credit by all states). I have talked this over with Justice Linde (Oregon Supreme Court, retired) and he thinks it is a fascinating Constitutional question. I might add that Justice Linde is considered one of the top three state supreme court judges of this century.

Someday I may allow myself to be the test case, we'll see.



"Full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts, records, and all judicial proceedings of every other State. And the Congress may by general laws prescribe the manner in which such acts, records, and proceedings shall be proved, and the effect thereof."
--Article IV, section 1, Constitution of the United States of America.

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OESTROGEN TO RUB IN

Traditionally, oestrogen therapy has consisted of tablets of oestradiol or Premarin, or trans-dermal patches which are stuck onto the abdomen or thighs and which release measured amounts of oestradiol through the skin over three to four days. Patches have generally been regarded as safer than tablets as the hormone does not have to pass through the liver before it takes effect, although they can occasionally cause a skin reaction in some people. Now a new form of delivery is appearing - a gel which is rubbed into the arm or the inner thigh like a beauty treatment.

Oestrogel™ consists of ethanyl oestradiol - the same hormone used in the patches - and is a gel with the oestradiol suspended in an alcohol base that evaporates as it is rubbed into the skin, leaving the hormone to be absorbed. Oestrogel has been used on the continent since 1975 and is a favourite with post-menopausal French women. However, it is not yet regularly available in Britain, at least not on NHS prescription (nor is it listed in *MIMS*, the *Monthly Index of Medical Specialities*, which is the doctor's guide to all the proprietary drugs available in the UK).

What is not clear is how the dosage is regulated. In the case of tablets this is easy as each tablet contains a stated amount of hormone, while the patches release a pre-determined amount of oestradiol each day (25, 50 or 100 micrograms). However, the amount of hormone delivered in the gel can only be controlled by the size of the 'squirt' of gel applied, and the thoroughness with which it is rubbed in.

If anyone has had a chance to try this new form of hormone therapy perhaps they would like to pass on their experiences with it. Please contact Anne Forrester at the publisher's address given on page 2. ■

SOME ADVICE FROM THE POLICE

On 12 October 1994 P.C. David Yule, Community Constable for the area of Glasgow in which the Crosslynx TV/Ts group meets, attended their meeting and a report of this was supplied by Ruth Stewart, their Chairperson. Many of the topics touched upon, and the answers given, were closely similar to those given by P.C. Norman Blakie of Grampian Police when he attended a similar meeting of the Grampian Gender Group on 21 January 1995, and are of interest to all transgendered people.



Neither officer was an official spokesperson for his force and clearly could not commit their force to any particular policy. However, the points raised will be of interest to transgendered persons wherever they live in the UK, so here is an edited report covering the questions and answers tackled at the two meetings.

Q. How do the police view transvestism ? Is it seen as a problem ?

A. *No, in itself it is not a problem unless criminal behaviour is involved.*

Q. What is the recommended police procedure for dealing with transvestites encountered at roadside car checks ?

A. *There are no general car checks as a rule, but occasionally vehicles are stopped for random checks. There are no specific police procedures for dealing with TVs or TSs in these situations. If stopped, be open and honest with the officers and do not attempt to give false information regarding your name, address or gender.*

Q. Who is responsible for determining police policy for dealing with crossdressers, transsexuals or any other minority group ? What is the most appropriate method of communicating with those responsible ?

A. *There are no specific policies in Strathclyde or Grampian at present, but all policies are determined by the Chief Constable and his senior officers, who can be approached (e.g.) by letter.*

Q. In what circumstances would crossdressers or transsexuals be likely to find themselves in conflict with the law ? How should they conduct themselves in order to minimise such conflict ?

A. *A breach of the peace could be committed in certain circumstances. Be careful where you go when cross-dressed, be careful not to cause embarrassment or distress to others, and be aware of your own vulnerability to assault and harassment.*

Q. If a crossdresser or a transsexual experiences difficulty with a hostile individual or group, what support or guidance can they expect from the police ?

A. *Any individual or minority can expect support from the police if they are being victimised. However, if a lone individual is being harassed by a rowdy group, a lone police officer may find it more expedient to remove the transgendered person for his or her own safety, and then see them safely on their way home.*

Q. Transvestites have a poor public image, largely due to ignorance and media distortion, and like any other section of society, individual police officers may have their own prejudiced opinions. In what way can such prejudice be overcome, and how can TV/Ts support groups contribute to an improved understanding of gender diversity ?

A. *Police officers' opinions are changing all the time as officers become more aware of changing attitudes in society. It is not thought that 'institutionalised' prejudice against TVs exists in the police, and the fostering of liaison*

meetings between gender support groups and the police can only benefit everyone.

Q. Who has access to information held by the police which may contain reference to an individual's transvestism? What recourse has an individual if such information is misused?

A. *No such records are held by the police. In the event of misuse of any records, recourse is available through either the criminal or civil law.*

Q. It is rude to address a genetic male presenting himself as female using a designation such as 'Sir', but police officers who encounter such individuals may wish to convey that they recognise the individual's true sex. How can biological males who are gender female have this fact acknowledged?

A. *Police officers may say 'Sir' to many people through force of habit rather than rudeness. Much will depend on individual officers and the circumstances of each case. Be polite when speaking to the officer and he or she will almost certainly be polite in return*

Q. In what circumstances might the activities of a gender support group be investigated?

A. *No records are kept on such groups, which would be investigated only if they were suspected to be a front for criminal activity.*

Q. Is there any merit in setting up regular liaison channels between gender support groups and the police?

A. *It depends on whether the groups want contact with the police, who will never rebuff any responsible group which wishes to establish better liaison.*

Q. What is the law pertaining to transvestites and transsexuals using female public toilets?

A. *In itself, this is not illegal, but if someone objects this may constitute a breach of the peace. If you have to use a public toilet while out cross-dressed and are not totally*

passable, use 'unisex' disabled persons' toilets if possible. In any event, be discrete and do not linger.

Q. What is the legal position if, while cross-dressed at home, you are seen by a neighbour who then objects?

A. *You can do as you like in your own home, subject only to the laws covering indecency.*

Q. What is the position if you are cross-dressed in public, quietly going about your own business and causing no harm, but someone objects?

A. *This would be the individual's personal opinion, and would not necessarily constitute a breach of the peace.*

Finally, some general words of advice to everyone:

- Be discrete. Try to remember that certain sections of society perceive men dressed as women to be fair game for ridicule, harassment or assault. Be aware of your vulnerability and avoid areas and places where danger may exist.
- Do not go out on your own cross-dressed late at night, or venture into lonely, dark and unlit places. The safest place to be out while cross-dressed is a busy street in broad daylight, where everyone is too busy going about their own business to notice you.
- Some crossdressers, because of their individual home or professional backgrounds may become victims of attempts at extortion. Please be assured that the police will treat any such complaint sympathetically and discreetly. Should you be the victim of an extortion attempt contact the police as soon as possible. They can help.



BUT WHY CAN'T I PASS ?

OR - CROSSDRESSING

AND THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION

by Janyne Cresap

I had just finished doing a makeover and product demonstration for the company I work for, when she asked if I had time to talk to her for a few minutes. "Why can't I pass ?" was all she really wanted to know. I fixed her blush, powdered down her shine, and brightened her eyeshadow. Small corrections indeed; the same corrections I make on women all the time ... and nobody is mistaking them for men. The makeup help I gave her was so minor that most people would probably not even notice. She looked better but she still didn't look different. If she couldn't pass before I fixed her she wouldn't pass after. People were still going to say the dreaded "oh my God, that's a man", although they might now add "great blush though".

Driving home, I thought about her and about why she couldn't pass. Her looks were not the problem: What was it then? Height? No, not that. Weight? No. Hands? They were O.K. Then it came to me, she was a man and because of that she looked like one. To be mistaken for a woman is something most men don't desire. Men go out of their way to make sure that doesn't happen. On the rare occasions in the real world when a man has to wear a dress it's a problem for him. He will do it on Halloween, or for an initiation, or a skit, or something like that ... but the idea of dressing in feminine attire and running to the car wash, dry cleaners, and grocery store is something he hates the thought of.

The reason for all this fear is that men need to be men and need all the reinforcement that they can get. When people view a man dressed as a woman they (1) See a woman. This is unacceptable to most men. To be seen as a woman and treated as such is a scary thing for the real guys. (2) See a gay man. Also not good. To be thought of as gay is just as bad as being thought of as woman. (3) See a crossdresser. Worst of all. To be thought of as a womanly man, a transsexual, or a transvestite threatens the very core of his masculinity.

Men want to be seen as men and some men wearing dresses want to be seen as men also. It is not until crossdressers have really become comfortable with themselves as crossdressers that womanliness becomes desirable. The "girl" I helped with her makeup projected her manliness. The "I think, therefore I am" syndrome. Most crossdressers do not grow up with a lot of reinforcement for their crossdressing. They feel at some level that men are men and women are women, and those who cross that line are somehow in the wrong. In other words, they haven't learned to respect the woman within themselves. They haven't visualized themselves as women but as a man wearing woman's clothing. The reality is they are people wearing their own clothing.

If we dress ourselves up and preen in front of a mirror to please the man that we are, we are being sexist. We are also being very manly, men decorate their women to satisfy their own egos all the time. When men decorate their own bodies in the attire of women some men do it to feed a narcissistic need. They remain a man looking at his favorite woman. If they decide to go "public" with their feminine identity they are seen to be men dressed as women. The crossdressers that successfully make the transition to being accepted as women have made an internal transition and have accepted themselves as womanly. I don't think this comes naturally, it takes time and the willingness to be fully feminine although male.

When I began to wear dresses and met other crossdressers the feminine pronouns came as a shock when they were directed at me. I didn't at that time have an internal "she" that I could relate with. It wasn't until I internalized my femininity and became "her" that my own personal womanliness was accepted by me. After that transition public acceptance came rather easily. The result being that even when someone sees that I am a male in feminine form I am still accepted and move freely about to do my business.

I am living more and more of my life today as a woman. I attend church, do my grocery shopping, and all of life's little chores as Janyne. Since I started this I have met and become friends with people who only know me as Janyne; they may suspect - or be damn sure - that there's a man in that dress, but they accept and really seem to like Janyne, the woman. She is the one they know and she is the one they speak to. It just feels right to me to be Janyne, I love to hear my name called out by a friend at church, or the simple "here you go ma'am, your order's ready" is right for me. The internal she and the cosmetically created image are becoming the person I am.

We walk along, with the man I also am, feeling the flow of our varied gender experiences, blurring the lines of convention, making the rigid in society nervous, and just being a person accepted and loved by God. Why can't I pass? Well, I guess I can ... but who cares? I don't need to. I don't want to fool anyone. This isn't a game anymore it's my life.

Reprinted from *Cross Talk* #66, Woodland Hills, Ca, USA. Janyne Cresap is the editor of *Alpha Bits*, the newsletter of the Alpha Chapter of Tri-Ess, where this article originally appeared.



MORE CHANGES 'AT THE TOP'

by Anne Forrester

Although we talk about 'the gender community' I often wonder if we really are a community at all, or just members of a persecuted minority, trying to stick together. The problem is that any group of people with more or less common objectives, who are trying to achieve those objectives in the face of widespread public ignorance and/or disapproval, really needs leaders to stand up front and help keep the troops all facing the same way and going in the right direction. Indeed, the definition of a leader is one who goes in front and shows others the way. So why is it that our 'gender community' has so much trouble with this? It seems that whenever someone is prepared to put themselves out and stand up to be counted on behalf of the community, all of the 'rank and file troops' standing behind her join together to shoot her in the back - and there then seems to be a strange reluctance amongst them for anyone else to come forward to fill the vacancy. Just like party politics in national and local government really, isn't it?

The trouble is, good leaders are born rather than made. A person either has leadership qualities or he/she hasn't - and most people just haven't! There are few enough real leaders around in any community, and even fewer who are prepared to give over their whole lives to help others. One British Member of Parliament was once described as "the best Prime Minister we never had"; but sadly he was representative of only a very small minority of talented 'leaders in waiting', and few organisations have that much talent to call upon.

So what has brought forth my indignation this time? Well, actually I am writing more in sorrow than in anger. At the annual convention of the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) in Atlanta this year it was

announced that its founder and Executive Director, Merissa Sheril Lynn, was resigning - and "insiders, who requested anonymity" let it be known that Ms Lynn "was forced to resign or be fired". Now the knives have been out for Merissa for a while, and she has not been the only target as she follows Ari Kane of the Outreach Institute into 'forced resignation' from leadership. Now I can understand that from time to time leaders become unpopular for a variety of reasons - one only has to look at the present British Prime Minister and American President to see two very obvious examples - but in the present case I am worried by another factor. Who will replace Ms Lynn as Executive Director of IFGE ? Well, apparently it will be Ms Alison Laing. And who replaced Ari Kane as Chairperson of Outreach ? Alison Laing. And who currently sits on the boards of both the American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS) and the large Renaissance organisation, based in Philadelphia ? Right again - Alison Laing.

Please don't get me wrong. I know Alison Laing, and she is a hard-working, efficient person who will bring lustre to any office that she may hold in any organisation anywhere. Indeed, I agree with the comment in the issue of *Renaissance News and Views* that reported this: "Congratulations Alison ! IFGE couldn't have picked anyone better". No, it is not Alison that I am worried about. What does worry me is that in the whole of the United States, with its population of some xx million, there seems to be only one person who is both able and willing to take on the leadership of the two major American gender support organisations, while serving on the boards of two others. I know Alison well enough not to suspect her of either empire building or of self-aggrandisement. No, I am sure that she has taken on her responsibilities because she was pressed to do so by those who saw her capabilities, and she saw the necessity for someone to step in and do the job. Unlike most of those who supported the removal of her predecessors, she was 'ready, willing and able'.

The really big worry is that we are seeing a situation in which different people perceived to be 'queen bees' in their organisations were removed only to create a vacuum which can only be filled by one particular person, who seems destined to become an even bigger 'queen bee' than those who she replaces. So what will happen when the troops get fed up with this leader, and seek to replace her in turn ? (Or maybe she will get so fed up with them and their eternal plotting that she will remove herself, and just let them get on with it). Are we really so bereft of 'leaders' that we have to pile everything onto one pair of shoulders ? Or is it that everyone wants to know what the community can do for them, rather than what they can do for the community ? I rather suspect that it is a bit of both, but mainly the latter.

And please don't get all smug if you live in Britain (or elsewhere); although my examples have been taken from the USA things are no different anywhere else. In Britain we see all too often challenges to and criticisms of the leadership of the few brave souls who get out there and try to help their sisters and brothers; and all too seldom do people of ability then step forward and offer to do the leading themselves. The recent sad demise of the Gender Dysphoria Trust International was due almost entirely not to any lack of organisational ability, or even of a leader, but to the lack of people willing actually to roll up their sleeves and open their purses and do something to help. And there has certainly been no shortage of snipers dotted around the British gender landscape, ever ready and prepared to criticise rather than to cooperate and help.

As a famous churchman once wrote, "I have nought for your comfort"; and indeed, I can only note the situation and sadly come to the conclusion that despite all that 'feminine feeling' of which so many in the gender community boast, most of our sisters are too wrapped up in their own fantasy land to take seriously the very feminine task of helping, caring for, nurturing and supporting others - not to mention

showing some leadership in getting the concept of gender diversity across to the rest of society. No, sniping at others may be fun - or even an outlet for some righteous indignation - but if we can't help by being constructive and doing something ourselves, then at least let us not be destructive. Better the leader we have than no leader at all. Or, as someone else once said, "If we don't all hang together, then we shall surely all hang, together!". ■

WHAT'S THAT WORD ?

- a wander through the alphabet

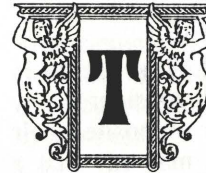
P is for **Passing**. Which is what many crossdressers - and nearly all transsexuals - try to do when going out in public. That is, they try to sink into the woodwork and be accepted for the gender that they present rather than the sex in which they may have been born.

Q is for **Queen**. Interesting, this one. Apart from its obvious meaning as the title of a female monarch my Dictionary defines it as "a boisterous impudent woman, a prostitute" or, in Scots usage, "an unmarried girl" (usually pronounced "Quine"). It also has the connotation of a rather flamboyant person who cross-dresses as part of a stage act. Take your pick.

R is for **being Read**. That is, being identified as a member of one's genetic sex, as distinct from the gender appearance one is presenting. And this is *not* the same as **Passing** (see above). If one is discrete then one can *Pass* and have no adverse reaction despite being *Read*. However, *passing* if one has been *read* is not necessarily - or even frequently - the case. ☺

"T" SPEAK*

by Angela Gardner



Many people are confused about the nature of the transgendered, and exactly what the many different terms used in the transgendered community (there's one now!) mean. A while back I was on the phone with a reporter who was interested in doing an article on transsexuals. She had a number of questions, one of which was "How long do transvestites cross-dress before they become transsexuals?" Stop the presses! Hold everything. As Ricky said to Lucy, "You got a lot of 'splainin' to do". This confusion exists in the general public and within the community itself. People are throwing words around without having a clear understanding of what they mean. The introduction of the term 'crossdresser' just added to the confusion. I don't know how many times I've heard people say "I'm not a transvestite, I'm a crossdresser". Well big guy, why are you wearing that dress?

Let's start the definitions right there. A transvestite (*ie* TV) is a person who derives a satisfaction from wearing the clothing of the opposite sex. This satisfaction may be an all-over-your-body good feeling, a relief of stress, erotic stimulation, or all of the above. The desire to engage in cross-dressed behavior is most often present at an early age and stays with the transvestite for the rest of their life.

The 'politically correct' started to use crossdresser as the "proper" term in order to avoid negative connotations that had begun to accumulate around transvestite. Middle-aged men with wives, families and an inexplicable desire to wear hair bows in wigs that would really look better without one

decided the word "transvestite" conjured images of hot (as in overtly sexual) five inch heeled hookers with boob jobs and several social diseases. Obviously the girls with bows in their wigs couldn't be related to the street-walking transvestites so the word 'crossdresser' was born. ('Girls' is a term often used by members of the cross-dressing community to describe themselves.)

Actually crossdresser is not a bad word. It's useful in describing anyone who wears clothing considered by society to be appropriate to the gender opposite their physical gender, for any reason. Thus we may say that a professional female impersonator (FI - someone who imitates a woman on stage or screen for money) who would not be caught dead in women's clothing off stage is, because he cross-dresses regularly, a crossdresser. (Most FIs would disagree with this due to their imperfect understanding of transgender terminology). He may or may not be a transvestite. Someone like Dame Edna, who cross-dresses to perform as a female character, could be described as a crossdresser, but again we have no idea if the motivation to create that character comes from transvestism or theatrical flamboyance.

A transsexual is a person who has always felt their physical gender does not match the way they feel inside. They may cross-dress to look more like the way they feel, but they don't get the type of satisfaction a transvestite would from, 'dressing up'. In fact, most transsexuals are not that concerned with clothing. Matching the body with the mind is their number one priority.

The myth that transvestism is a step on the way to transsexuality comes about, in part, from the difficulty many people experience in knowing themselves. Early feelings of transsexuality may be confused with homosexual longings or transvestite feelings. It is important to talk with qualified counselors and peers who have 'been there' to sort out exactly who you are. To further confuse the issue, some

transvestites are having such a good time being feminine and such a dull time being men that they feel they should have a sex change and live full time as females. When daytime talk fests do shows about 'sex changes' who have regrets and want to reverse the process, it's usually people who have allowed their transvestite fantasy to take them down the wrong road. These people are called pseudo transsexuals. The Harry Benjamin Standards of Care were written to help professionals in the psychological and medical fields sort out the true transsexuals from the pseudo transsexuals.

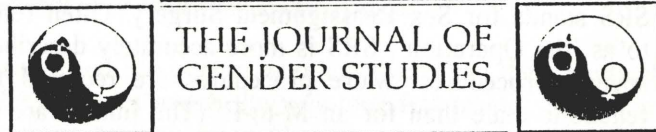
True transsexuals are gender dysphoric. Gender dysphoria is a discomfort with one's physical gender. This differs from a transvestite's feeling of excitement at being dressed up. The transvestite may not feel as good when not 'dressed', but acting like their physical gender will not be uncomfortable for them. The gender dysphoric may experience anything from slight discomfort to outright loathing of their physical gender. The treatment for a severe case of gender dysphoria is SRS.

SRS stands for Sex Reassignment Surgery. Often referred to as 'the Operation', SRS is more accurately described as several procedures. More procedures are required for a female-to-male than for an M-to-F. (The initials are often used to describe individuals who are crossing the gender border: M-to-F for male-to-female and F-to-M for female-to-male. The initials may be used for both transsexuals and transvestites, but are most often used for transsexuals).

Of course, this short article can't cover all the words used by people in and around the transgender community. For example, Drag Queens (gay transvestites who always go for glamour looks or, more commonly among younger queens, wild and trashy club looks) have their own terminology that can get so complicated I won't even try to get into it. What do you call a transgendered person who has breasts and a

penis? If she comes from a middle class background she is a transgenderist. If she is lower on the class ladder she is a she-male. Here is a case where the words describe the same thing but the connotation of 'she-male' puts that individual in a different class. Connotations can get you in trouble in all areas of the transgender community. As stated before, some crossdressers don't like the connotation of the word 'transvestite'. Drag queens don't want to be called crossdressers since they don't see the connection between their glamour and the crossdresser's desire to 'pass' (*i.e.* have people think you are a genetic female.) Of course, only the most blatant babes among us revel in being called chicks with dicks. (That one's meant to be derogatory, but I kind of like it). Just remember, like the Bee Gees once sang, "it's only words". If someone uses one of these words to describe you and you don't like it, 'politely correct' them and go on about your business. You will have the satisfaction of knowing what label you prefer.

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WORD SEARCH

See if you can find the makeup and accessory items in the word search grid below. The words run in straight lines vertically, horizontally or diagonally, in either direction. Some letters are used more than once. However, one of the items can not be found in the grid. Which one is it? (Answer on page 48).

A I S M E M U F R E P
F I N E C K L A C E O
E R Y L H O X K M T W
K M Z A B H C O A T F
R O A S R I D H Q H G
E I G S T P W L Y N S
H O N S C E S F I A P
S Y P G P A I R S J I
U I A N S O R L I G L
L R I N E A S A A A K
B R A C E L E T E S H

You are looking for:

Blusher
Bracelet
Earrings
Hairspray
Kohl
Lipstick

Mascara
Necklace
Perfume
Powder
Rings



THE FEMININE ACT*

by Rebecca Ann Petersen

The study of the subtle points of femininity in respect to the positioning of a woman's legs and feet - not from a modelling school viewpoint, but from an everyday situation viewpoint - is part of your "Feminine Act". It is **your** responsibility to observe women in your everyday life, then take this information and apply it to your own "act". No matter how great your clothes, makeup, hair, *etc.*, may be, if your Feminine Act is not together, you have fallen way short of your goal. What you are looking for, in reality, are the subtleties of what makes a woman feminine. Looks or sexy clothing have no bearing on a woman's femininity.

A man and a woman are totally different in respect to how they sit, stand and walk. I realize this is probably not news to you; however, as strange as it may be, I have seen a very high number of CDs who are dressed to the 'nines', yet all of their actions are strictly male. I also realize that you may feel more comfortable in this 'man in a dress' situation, and if this is the case don't bother reading any further.

Let's cover some fallacies that are firmly implanted in our male minds. We (males) have a confusion factor when it comes to the definition of 'sexy' and 'feminine'. **They are not the same.** Sexy clothing does not make a woman any more feminine than she already is, so how could it possibly make a male more feminine? The only place a woman sits backward on a chair, with her legs spread as far apart as possible, is in the pages of *Playboy* magazine. This pose would be construed as sexy, because sex is implied. Femininity is not implied, however. Five inch heels may be sexy, but they are no more feminine than flats. Sex appeal is by far a different subject than the concept of developing

the Feminine Act. In other words, you can be feminine without being sexy, and for some strange reason this is a hard concept for some men to understand.

The difference between men and women, in respect to the placement of their legs and feet, is worlds apart. Men tend to be more rigid and direct in leg movement, whereas women are more fluid in their actions. One of the major differences in male and female movement is brought about by differences in weight distribution. We are built differently and carry our weight in different quadrants of the body. A man carries a large percentage of his weight between the neck and the waist, whereas a woman carries hers between her hips and knees. The main physiological difference between the sexes is that a woman's hip or pelvic structure is wider than a man's. When a woman walks, she takes shorter steps than a man, and walks with a slight hip sway movement. In some (but not all) cases, her feet are pointed slightly downward.

There is a misconception that all women are light on their feet. In fact, if you were to take a man and a woman of equal weight, both in their bare feet, on a wooden floor, the woman will usually make more noise walking than the man. (If you elect to try this test with your favorite female, don't tell her beforehand what you are doing; otherwise, she will knowingly defeat the purpose of the test.) Women walk differently in heels than in flats, and this is only natural. Both men and women walk with the heel hitting the floor first followed by the front of the foot shortly thereafter. However, the time element between the heel and toe hitting is shorter for women. Some modelling courses have taught that the toe and heel were to hit the floor at the same time, even in three-inch heels. This may look good on paper, but it is next to impossible for either female *or* male; if this were true in actual practice, the heel lift would not be the first thing to wear out. These same modelling courses touted that 'fact' that women should walk in straight lines, much like the infamous roadside sobriety

test. In actual practice, a woman doesn't even come close in most cases.

Age plays an important factor in how a female walks. Teen girls and boys both drag their feet, to the point of wearing the heel down to nothing in a short period of time (and angering me to the point of screaming "pick up your damn feet !"). From teenage to old age, things are quite different. In old age, the heel dragging starts again.

As I said earlier, the average woman walks with a *slight* swing to the hips, takes smaller steps and is more fluid in action, no matter what type shoe she is wearing. The hip action is accentuated in heels, but never to the point of looking unnatural. Gracefulness may be a good definition as a concept, but being realistic, only one in ten women would be classed as graceful by its literal definition. That statement probably will not win me too many female friends, but sit in a mall for an hour or so watching women and then tell me if I'm wrong or not. Some clothing will influence how a woman walks: Give her a full skirt and you may see a bit more flamboyance, especially on the turns.

CDs that try to emulate the feminine walk, unfortunately, sometimes get a little too carried away and will sway the hips too much, like the flaming gays we have all seen. What you would hope to achieve is a fluid motion of short steps with a very slight hip sway. When a woman stops walking, her feet will be parallel, but only for a second. A woman rarely stands with both feet side by side. One foot will almost always move to a different position to offset the straight line. (Both feet side by side *is* a characteristic of most males, however.) I have tried over the years to ascertain if a right-handed woman used her right foot exclusively to offset, but with little success. It would appear, from what I have observed, that right- or left-hand dominance has little bearing on a woman's foot movement. A woman at rest in a standing position will take the right or left leg, bend the knee, and place the foot of that leg

slightly behind the other and pointed more to the side. Her hips are slightly off-center, with one side higher than the other, and the bend of the knee is influenced by heel height.

The foot of the bent leg can now achieve other actions since that leg now carries no weight, and I have noticed that the type of shoe worn will play an important part in the actions carried out by this foot. (Remember, a woman is not consciously carrying out these actions; they are second nature to her.) I have noticed that a woman in heels will take the heel of her foot out of the shoe while in the above stance, which I presume is for comfort reasons. She will shift her weight from leg to leg, depending on the length of time she is in this standing position. I have observed blackjack dealers in casinos, on their feet for eight hours *per* shift wearing heels, doing this weight shifting/shoe on-and-off routine every couple of minutes. Another favorite stance among women is to place the right or left leg further out to the side than normal and bend the ankle inward, keeping the ball of the foot and the heel in their original position. These stances are, by definition, classed as feminine; there are just as many that would be classed as masculine.

Take a good close look; are you using the right ones for the attire you are wearing? The thought that comes to mind is a gentleman I observed a couple of years ago at a CD function. I say "gentleman", for even though the clothing, makeup, hair, *etc.*, were definitely female, his stance was that of a lineman on a professional football team. He stood with both feet firmly planted on the floor, approximately 12 to 16 inches apart and completely parallel. You got the impression that he was saying in his mind "just try and get past me". Although his physical appearance was that of a lady, his Feminine Act was lacking to the point that it left no doubt in your mind that this was a man in a dress.

I mentioned previously that there was a vast difference between sex appeal and feminine actions. There should be a

third category added, but I'm not sure what to call it. For lack of a better description I'm going to call it 'female playfulness'. I have noticed over the years that some women play with articles of their apparel. The most played-with items are her shoes and a close second would be rings or other jewelry. I would guess that part of this is because her shoes are easily removed: I'm sure that if she were wearing a pair of wingtips, untying the laces and such would become too much of a bother.

The difference in sitting actions between the sexes is enough to fill a book, but I'll briefly cover some of the major differences. Some men, when sitting, literally *fall* backward into a seat. Other men will lower themselves using their arms to support their weight. A woman, however, gently seats herself using her legs for support. At the same time, in the same fluid movement her hands are tending to her purse and straightening her skirt or dress for sitting (if she is wearing one). This is quite an accomplishment when you think about it, and one that most men would have problems with.

Once seated, a man will either cross his legs - usually with the ankle of the crossed leg on top of the knee of the other leg - or both feet will be flat on the floor with the knees apart. In a very casual situation his legs can be straight out in front of him if he is in a slouched position. One of the benefits of being male is that you can do almost anything, and the worst you will be thought of is a slob.

A woman, on the other hand, has a certain amount of decorum to contend with and is not always allowed the luxury of being sloppy about her sitting habits. As a result, you will rarely see a woman's knees apart unless she is wearing pants or shorts (or is in excess of 100 years old). Most women will almost always cross their legs at the knees or at the ankles. Once her legs are crossed, that now-familiar shoe playing takes effect; I have watched women take off and put a shoe back on the crossed leg

without using their hands, with the skill that a soccer player would admire. Dangling the shoe from the tip of the foot of the crossed leg also seems to be a popular sport of a lot of women.

When a woman rises from a chair she does so in one fluid movement, and usually without the use of her arms and hands. The height of the sitting surface plays an important part in this rising process. An overstuffed sofa with a very low sitting surface presents a problem for both females *and* males; most men use their arms when rising from a sitting position; women, to compensate, use a two-step process. Just prior to rising she slides the rear end to the front of the sitting surface then rises without using her arms. Try it...and for God's sake keep those knees together!

Women also have the benefit of being able to sit in many varied positions. Some of the more popular positions are: seated with both legs tucked under you...in other words, sitting on your legs; seated with one leg under you and the other crossed over at the knee; seated with both feet on the floor, with the feet and legs as close as possible to one another - in fact, almost pressed against one another - and the knees shifted to the right or left with the feet still centered. How a woman is dressed, her age and social background, and of course just plain comfort, will be determining factors in how she sits.

An interesting point is that no matter how long or short a woman's skirt or dress is, she always seems to be pulling it down while seated. I have seen young women, with skirts so short they left little to the imagination, tugging to try to at least keep it below their hips, to the point of stretching it completely out of shape. Logically, you would ask "why did you wear the skirt if it presents this much of a problem for you?": however, common sense has prevented me from asking this question. It's like the attractive girl who wears t-shirts with clever inscriptions imprinted on the front. About the time you get to the third sentence, she is giving

you a "what the hell are you looking at ?" look. If you don't want somebody looking at your chest, don't wear things that require the general public to read them.

Most CDs have an infatuation with short skirts, and this requires special attention when sitting. Being ladylike while trying to sit in a skirt of a length of less than 21 inches is difficult: sitting with legs crossed in a skirt of 19 inches or so is drafty, to say the least. If you are wearing hip pads, they will be visible with a short skirt and crossed legs. Remember, just because *you* can't see anything detrimental from your vantage point doesn't mean the rest of the world can't. It could be wise to move a chair in front of a full-length mirror and check yourself from *all* angles.

Stockings also play a role in how you sit. Sheer-to-the-waist pantyhose will not reveal that tell-tale panty line with a short skirt and crossed legs. Thigh-high stockings, if properly fitted, should also not present a problem. If they are too short, however, you may be showing some bare thigh, which could be thought of in some circles as tacky.

Once again: we (men) have a problem sometimes with the definitions of feminine and sexy. A woman, when seated while wearing a very short skirt and showing a great amount of leg, could be construed by some as sexy. On the other hand, this may or may not be her intention. The interesting thing is that we (men) can see the same woman in a skimpy bikini and not give it a second thought. But if her hemline is two or three inches shorter than the norm, we assume she is being overly sexy.

I say this to point out what kind of image we project to the masses by our conduct. What we wear and how we conduct ourselves while out in public will either make or break us, so to speak.

It may be a good idea to take a long, hard look at how we walk, sit and stand, and maybe spend some time in

practice, if needed. The Feminine Act needs to be perfected, polished, and presented every second that you are in the feminine mode, Your actions will be one of the determining factors of your acceptance by the rest of society.

Reprinted from *Cross Talk* #65, Woodland Hills, Ca, USA.

This was edited from an article that originally appeared in the newsletter of the Sierra Silver Belles (Sigma Sigma Beta chapter, Tri-Ess), South Lake Tahoe CA, USA.


THE WAY WE WERE

We take an affectionate look at the past through the pages
of *Woman's Weekly*

**Breathe in and lose weight! Or was this
dietary advice from 1922 mostly hot air?**

AFRAID OF GROWING FAT

By A DOCTOR



*Many a girl makes herself fat by trying in the wrong
way to avoid fatness.*

WEAK MUSCLES AND BAD BREATHING

THE secret of keeping thin is breathing deeply, *not* going on a diet. When you are fit, indeed, going on a diet is utterly foolish. It is starving yourself of fuel. You are bound to lose energy and become unfit.

The right way to avoid fatness is to take enough exercise to keep the fire burning brightly. Exercise hardens the muscles and makes them active. The muscles lift up the chest and open it out at each breath. That causes a good, strong draught of air into the lungs.

It is just like holding a sheet of newspaper in front of the fire.

Once your lungs are working properly you can laugh at diets. The fat will soon be burnt up and new energy and strength will fill your body.

WHY KEEP DRAGGING IT UP ?

Why oh why must 'the media' always drag gender diversity into any and everything ? Recently a "Lancashire businessman" appeared in court accused of fraudulently obtaining monies from a building society. Apparently a straightforward piece of everyday reporting, but no. It seems that the "businessman" was a transsexual, who was "receiving treatment for what was referred to as an identity problem", so the (normally respectable and reputable *Scotsman*) newspaper reported the case under the prominent headline "Transsexual accused of loan fraud".

Now whether the individual did or did not commit the crime of which he was accused is not what concerns me, but I am concerned that it was not his name, nor his home town, nor even the nature of the alleged crime that the newspaper picked on to highlight the case. No, it was the fact that he was a "Transsexual" that was the nub of the headline. Why ? If the accused had not been a Caucasian, or belonged to any particular religious affiliation, it would have been potentially illegal to have mentioned the fact, apart from being considered insensitive. And even if he had been 'gay' (which he was not) it would have been considered an impertinent - not to say irrelevant - factor to become the basis of a headline. So why is it considered OK to draw attention to the individual's gender orientation in this way ?

Sadly, it seems that even the 'better' newspapers are capable of descending into the gutter from time to time in order to sensationalise anything to do - however remotely - with not being "normal", as that word is perceived by the bigotted majority of the population. No wonder there are ever increasing calls for curbs on the so-called "freedom of the press" that allows them callously and unnecessarily to crucify individuals in this way. ■

'SEX CHANGE' AND THE SUBWAY

- A CONCESSION OR A CON-TRICK ?

by Anne Forrester

"London Transport is proving itself to be an admirably broad church" said *The Times* recently. It seems that, following an approach from "a professional organisation dealing with trans-sexuals" London transport have agreed "to accommodate those who are in the throes of a sex change with a new Travelcard". According to this report (and another appearing the same day in the London *Evening Standard*), people living in London who are undergoing "a sex change" have a problem when using London Transport's photo-Travelcards, which provide discounted fares for regular travellers.

It seems that problems have been arising at ticket barriers when individuals produce a card with a photograph of them in one gender role while they are travelling in another. "They may, for example, head for work as a man but choose to go out in the evening dressed as a woman" said an LT spokesman, and "This has led to confusion among the ticket staff". Consequently London Transport are now prepared to issue these individuals with two separate cards, one for their male identity and one for the female identity, but with the same serial number.

"This is a serious approach to help a section of society that needs assistance. Those wishing to have duplicate Travelcards, and I emphasise we are talking about a very small number, must provide a letter from their doctor or psychiatrist. This is not something for transvestites, however. It is only for people undergoing sex change operations...not an excuse for a free for all for any blokes who feel like dressing up in high heels and a tight skirt".

So, good for London Transport. At last, a little understanding on the part of a public authority.

BUT HOLD ON ! If we are talking about transsexuals who are under the care of a psychiatrist who is working to the Harry Benjamin standards of care, we are surely talking about people who are required to undergo what is known as the 'real life test', in which they are required to live full time in the gender role of their choice, and to show that they can earn their living and survive socially in that role before they can be considered for gender reassignment surgery (what London Transport calls "a sex change operation"). So what are all these transsexuals doing going to work in one gender role in the daytime and then going out socially in the evenings in the other ? (And clearly, if London Transport has been seeing a sufficient problem to call forth this solution, we are talking about a substantial number of such people).

Something doesn't ring quite true here. If London Transport really are making this concession only for true transsexuals, and specifically "not for transvestites", then either there are an awful lot of people heading for reassignment surgery without the benefit of the 'real life test' - and so heading for potential disaster if they simply *can't* live full-time in their chosen gender role - or someone is conning someone somewhere: and if true, that could really backfire on all genuine transsexuals if it proves to be true and the 'con trick' is exposed. Or is it simply that a small number of transsexuals who can't come to terms with the real life test are also too mean to circumvent the problem of their dual appearance by buying full-fare travel tickets for their nights out ?

Perhaps I'm a bit thick, or maybe just over-suspicious, but much as I would like to think we are seeing a break-through in public acceptance of transsexualism there does seem to be a funny smell about this report. Perhaps somebody could explain it all to me. ■

WHAT YOU SEE...*

When we first encounter someone visual clues are used to identify their important characteristics, including gender. Such determinations are usually made without any conscious effort, rapidly (with a glance) and at a considerable distance - and once we have categorized someone we resist changing their 'assigned' gender. If the person is unknown or unthreatening we also tend simply to ignore them. In other words, if it looks like a duck from fifty yards away most people will conclude that it is a duck, and not even look twice.

What this also means is that the next time you're gloating about 'passing', or hear someone else regale you with how well they 'pass', remember, it isn't so much that you as a crossdresser are remarkably talented as that people are choosing to ignore you. Kind of takes the excitement out of it, huh ?

* Adapted from part of an anonymous item entitled "Virtual Reality" that originally appeared in the St Louis Gender Foundation's *Gazette*, with a comment added by Dina Amberle in *Renaissance News & Views*, October 1994.

FOOTSIE !

"Life is too short for tight shoes !"

Anon

EVERYONE HAS A GENDER:

NOT EVERYONE IS *TRANSGENDERED**

by *Kymerleigh Richards*

Publisher & Managing Editor, Cross-Talk

I have, for many years, argued the semantical point of what our community's name is - and by extension, what we as members of that community call ourselves as a whole. In the course of this ongoing argument, I have found that there is a polarization between calling it the gender community and calling it the transgender community.

Those pushing for the former term have generally argued either that they do not want to be trans-anything (usually crossdressers, who abandoned the term 'transvestite' when it came to have erotic connotations) or that they are trans-something, not trans-everything (usually transsexuals, who frequently distance themselves from 'those non-serious crossdressers'). Those in favor of the latter term have generally believed that regardless of what specific orientation one has - and there are a lot of such 'flavors' in this community - the unifying point is being transgendered, of having a conflict with societally-imposed gender roles.

The argument has erupted most recently on (surprise) the Internet, where one post-op TS has disdained both terms, saying that neither have any relevance to her. She is separatist in that she wishes to be a transsexual and not deal with any other flavor of being transgendered. (In fact, she was trying to move TS discussions off the *alt.transgendered* Usenet group and form an *f T 10 *alt.transsexual* group instead, where crossdressers would not be welcome.) At the same time, she points out that gender is a human condition

and "has nothing to do with sex reassignment surgery or wearing women's clothes". (Or men's clothes, presumably, if you are FTM.)

Turns out she was half-right. Hence the title of this editorial. No matter where you were born or what sex your genitalia identify you as, you have always had a gender. And, regardless of whether someone occasionally crossdresses, lives full-time in what society would term an opposite gender role, has sex-reassignment surgery - or does anything else that breaks the equations **born male = man** and **born female = woman** - those people are, by definition, transgendered in some way. Since the majority of the world subscribes to the aforementioned equations, not everyone is transgendered.

(This is not a question of the term 'transgenderist', which was coined by my dear friend and associate editor Virginia Prince to designate someone who lives full-time in a gender identity opposite to the one usually associated with their physical sex. Virginia has always opposed the application of that term to anyone with any 'flavor' or degree of being transgendered, and I agree. A transgenderist is a specific subset of our community, just as are crossdressers, transvestites, drag queens and kings, transsexuals, she-male prostitutes, and fetishists who may do no gender-bending past lingerie, nylons, and/or high heels. For those who object to any of the classifications I have listed, I will only say that in my opinion all of these are valid subsets of being transgendered, and if you disagree we have a letters to the editor column every month.)

To return to my main point: The only reason we need *any* kind of term to describe our community as a whole is because we increasingly have the need to define ourselves to the uneducated masses, to point out that even as each of the subsets I mentioned in the previous paragraph have their differences, there is that unifying factor which makes us all one community. And telling the unknowing that we are a

'gender community' is essentially meaningless because (a) they know that everyone has a gender and so that phrase makes them think we are trying to put them in with us, and (b) most of them think sex = gender anyway. So instead of enlightening them, we lose the battle before it is even begun.

Now, having put forward the argument in favor of 'transgender', we come to the temporarily sidetracked question of 'community'. We have published many articles on the subject in the six years that *Cross-Talk* has been in existence. And there has never been an argument in favor of separatism that stood up to any scrutiny. Virginia once put it this way: If someone lives in Oslo, Norway, they are an Osloite. But they are also a Norwegian, a Scandinavian, and a European. Each community is a subset of the next; the analogy could be continued to include being a resident of Earth, the Solar System, and the Universe, if one were so inclined. However, being part of the larger community in no way diminishes the validity of one's membership in the preceding smaller ones. So being, for example, a transsexual makes you transgendered *without* denying your transsexuality. I won't berate the point. If you don't get it by now, you either can't grasp the concept or are too much of a separatist to embrace it.

One last question to answer, though. Why 'transgender community' rather than 'transgendered community'? A point of semantics. While the residents of this community of ours are all transgendered in some way, the community *itself* is not. And that is a very important point, because if we agree on a term in order to better communicate with the great unwashed, they had better not be able to dismiss it on a technicality.

With all that in mind, I have made changes throughout *Cross-Talk*, effective this month (March 1995), to replace "gender community" with "transgender community". I have also urged our advertisers to make similar changes where

applicable, and most have done so already. Our style book, which governs the language used in articles written for us, has also been changed.

Having endorsed the term, I now call upon our community's other publications, our support groups, our leadership - and each of you who belong to this community - to begin using this term consistently (if you don't already do so). Take pride in being transgendered, because you aren't special simply for having a gender.

I hope that this day another positive step toward general understanding of us has been taken. On the other hand, this discussion may go on for *another* six years. I personally want to see us agree and move forward toward clarifying who we are. Ultimately, though, the choice is yours.

* Reprinted from *Cross Talk* #65, Woodland Hills, Ca, USA.

As you can see, Kimberleigh has made her decision and made the changes in her own publication. But what do you think? Certainly she has both logic and semantics on her side, even though 'transgender' is more of a mouthful than just 'gender'. But are we even 'a community'? Or are we more like a bunch of ostriches running around and constantly putting our heads in the sand so that we don't have to take any notice of one another? Why not write in and let us know what you think.

Anne



TO DO NO HARM

AN ANSWER TO "A WORRIED TRANSSEXUAL"

by Erin Carruthers

(with a reply by Anne Forrester)

In a previous issue of The Tartan Skirt (Issue 13, October 1994) "A worried Transsexual" pondered which should come first, concern for others - your family and loved ones - or the problem of your own gender dysphoria. In other words, if you are to follow the precept of doing no harm to others, and you know that breaking the news of your gender diversity to those you love will cause them profound distress, should you continue to hide it away in order to protect them, or should you put your own interests first? Erin Carruthers has no doubts about this, as she explains here; but because I profoundly disagree with much of what she says, and believe that for all but a very few primary transsexuals there are other factors that must be taken into account, I have also put in my own 'two pennyworth' - Anne ■

I understand "Worried Transsexual's" dilemma perfectly, She is clearly afraid of others being hurt by her change of gender role. I will take the points she made in turn.

1) She asks, can we expect brothers/sisters/parents/children etc to accept the change at all?

Yes, of course we can, but it rarely happens. It really affects nobody else's life at all, excepting one's spouse. I have no brothers or sisters alas, and my mother died 20 years ago so was spared anyway, but I have five children. The youngest was 17 at the time and took it fine. It took one daughter some time to 'come round' to it, but she seems OK now. My second daughter still hasn't accepted it but she nevertheless still comes 'home' for a couple of weeks holiday, although she doesn't speak to me

unless spoken to. However, the point to make is simply that it hasn't affected her life one iota. She has done (and is still doing) everything she would have done anyway. The other son is perfectly OK. My father is 86 years old now and we were estranged for some years before my changeover anyway. Incidentally, he is reported to have said that I was "never normal anyway". Well, of course I wasn't! It isn't natural to expect a male/female hybrid.

2) "Or should we be considerate of our loved ones and continue to sublimate our own deepest feelings?"

No, we shouldn't try to suppress what is happening to us. I tried it for 18 months for fear of hurting my wife and it didn't work: the feeling just grew worse until I was on the verge of a complete mental breakdown. This theme seems to recur throughout the article. But try to put the boot on the other foot: have our loved ones the right to hurt us by rejecting our change? My answer is an emphatic "NO"! This may seem selfish, and yes it is to a degree. But there is such opposition from Joe Public and the medical profession (to mention only two) that a transsexual has perforce to be ruthlessly single-minded otherwise he/she will get nowhere at all.

3) She ends by asking how we solve the problem of not hurting others at all but simultaneously being true to ourselves. The simple answer is "we can't". But all people are different from one another, and those close to us will vary in their ability or desire to come to terms with the situation. But at the risk of sounding cold and clinical, it really is *their* problem; we can help all we can in explaining the gender dysphoria problem, but it still comes down to the fact that it REALLY IS their problem how they come to terms with us, or not.

As far as the changeover, in my case from male clothing to female, I did this gradually in the hope that the 'shock' would be lessened. I think it worked but I'm only guessing.

Erin Carruthers

ANNE'S REPLY

I'm sorry, but I really do think that Erin has missed the point completely in her "reply" to what really is a serious problem. I will just draw attention to a few main points.

1) It is obviously wrong to claim that ones transsexualism "really affects nobody else's life". If one has a family, and the concept of 'family' means anything at all, then clearly such a profound change *must* affects the lives of the other family members in some way or other.

2) If, rather than '*wanting to be a woman*' (i.e. the 'wanabe' syndrome) the male-to-female transsexual really is a woman just wanting to be herself, then being "cold and clinical" and "ruthlessly single-minded" is most certainly not exhibiting true female traits, as any psychologist will confirm: this sounds far too much like the testosterone pushing through. Most genetic women are *much* more concerned with others than with themselves.

3) It is untrue to refer, as a generalisation, to opposition from "Joe Public and the medical profession". Yes, there are many ignorant and bigoted people out there who can't stand the thought of anyone being different from themselves - whether it be a matter of skin colour, 'class' distinction, religion, race or gender. The point is, they are not 'everyone'. Most transsexuals know a wide circle of people who are completely accepting of gender diversity, and very many members of the medical profession are extremely supportive. Because one has met some of the other sort (and we all know a few of them) does not mean that *everyone* is an enemy.

4) Erin was in a particular situation with her mother no longer alive and her father already (sadly) estranged, so she did not have a problem in this respect. Most transsexuals **do** have to consider their parents; and in any case it is never wise to generalise from the particular.

5) I think Erin is wrong in claiming that in respect of her one daughter "it hasn't affected her life". As she will not speak with Erin when at home it clearly has - and it must surely affect any child when a parent becomes estranged in this manner. I would guess that this daughter is hurting very much inside, because she just doesn't understand, and her parent seems not to care.

I know transsexuals who have been fortunate in gaining the full support of their families, but only because they really did care and took trouble not to hurt them in the telling. I know a primary transsexual who put herself through sheer hell, living a synthetic macho life and a lie for years until both her parents had passed on and she could become her true self, in order not to hurt them. And I know an older transsexual who has a fatal illness and will need her family for support when she reaches the painful terminal stages of her life. As John Dunn said "No man is an island, entire unto himself": or as the popular song put it, "People need people". We all need others, and it simply isn't realistic to say, in effect, "To hell with everyone: I'm going my own way and everyone else can just put up with it". True hermits, who live in total isolation, are extremely rare, and even monks and nuns live in communities. I do not believe that anyone can cut him or her self off from the rest of society - let alone from their close family - and survive happily for very long. It may be tough, but we do have to try to avoid hurting our loved ones and those who are closest around us, and inevitably this will mean that we will have to withstand some hurt ourselves.

Anne Forrester



MORAL - DON'T CROSS DRESS TO STEAL GUNS

There are, of course, many reasons for cross-dressing, but Mustapha Pixibelle (yes, really !) of Rabat in Morocco, recently came across with a new one.

In order to infiltrate a Moroccan army base as part of a plot to steal guns the bold Mr Pixibelle disguised himself as a cleaning lady. However, two soldiers accosted him and took him to the toilets where he was told to start cleaning them. "There were many toilets, and so dirty !" he later said, disgustedly: and when he had finished one of the soldiers kissed him tenderly and called him "mother" before escorting him off the base. Sadly, Mr Pixibelle later admitted that "Things didn't go according to plan".

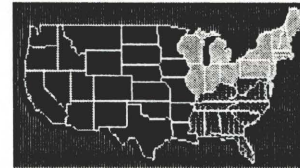


WORD SEARCH

The answer to the word search on page 27 is **POWDER**.



FROM ACROSS THE POND



- A LETTER FROM AMERICA

By *Bonnie Lynne Betz*

I'M BACK !!! Yes, Bonnie is at the helm again. I have finally returned from my hiatus and I feel wonderful. I imagine that everyone who has been following my exploits knows *why* I feel wonderful; I've finally completed my long, and sometimes fear-filled, journey and am now a complete person.

I had my Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in February - on the 14th to be exact. My surgery was performed by Dr Eugene Schrang in Neenah, Wisconsin, and my recuperation since then has been quite exceptional. I returned to work at the end of March and have been going strong ever since. I have healed well and now look forward to a happy and fruitful life as a complete woman. The highlight was receiving the official letter from Dr Schrang stating that I am now an anatomical female. *Female !* - what a wonderful word. I can now be called what I was all along, and it is official.

I never was a person to dwell on the past or re-live old times, so all I am going to say about my surgery will be condensed in this one paragraph. The surgery took almost six hours and I was 'out' for over 24 hours. I did not experience much pain in the hospital, but when I left the pain began in earnest. For two or three weeks I woke up each morning to a new experience of pain, but each day I also felt sensations of healing and I just kept pressing ahead. I soon became accustomed to the pain and one day

woke up to no pain at all - and did that feel wonderful ! Since then my life has returned almost to normal, except for the daily ritual of dilating. For those of you who do not know, the process of dilation is to keep the vagina open until it heals on its own. Basically it is like having sex every day, but with an imaginary person. After a while you even give your dilator (or dildo) a name ! I am beginning to sense some headway in this process and hope I will soon not need to do it on a daily basis. The process has left me with no real urgency to go out and have sex on a regular basis. My sensation for sex has not returned, and may never return, as my former self was basically asexual. I am attracted to men, so something may be happening: who knows ? Right now I don't care because my life is being lived to its fullest *without* the burden of a man. In a nutshell, that was my experience with surgery. Sorry, but I really am not too anxious to discuss the 'ins and outs' of that part of the transition.

Speaking of transition, I have finally arrived at my last destination on the railroad that I talked about in a previous article. The station is bright and clean and everyone is friendly, and when I walked through the station and closed the door behind me, an all-too-familiar sound occurred as the door locked behind me from the other side. I had finally found the light behind the last door, and it was indeed the sun, shining brighter than it ever has for me. The door finally closed on a chapter of my life that I certainly will not miss, and the world opened out into my new life. I am now a complete and total woman and need to take my place in the world along with all other women; and I can now contribute to the world.

I am making my contributions in everyday life. I work well with all my co-workers, and everyone has welcomed me back with sincere happiness. I had so much support from family and friends that to this day I really am amazed at how genuine people can really be when you are honest with them, and treat them honestly.

I do hope that all pre-op transsexuals have as successful a transition as I had. Now that I am so nearly totally healed I look ahead as a woman, and not as a transsexual any more. I have passed through to the other side. I *was* a transsexual, and I can never deny that fact. I was happy to be a transsexual, part of an elite group of human beings that I will always be proud of being associated with, but now I am a female through and through and have passed into another dimension of my life. It's time to look forward, and really work at having a wonderful life. My life is now being lived.

I will close this edition of 'Across the Pond' with the hope that all transsexuals have the opportunity to complete their journey, and to have the good fortune to enjoy all the things that I have enjoyed during my own journey. Through the miracle of surgery I am now the correct person I was always meant to be, both emotionally and physically. I broke the bonds of society to get out from under my burden, and now re-enter that same society as the *real* person. I am rejoining society and quietly assuming my role and responsibilities in it. I am now 'a second class citizen' in society, and proud of it ! The many people who came in contact with me can now settle back into their mundane lives, the small glitch that occurred in their life being over.

**BONNIE IS HERE
TO STAY -
AND STAY SHE WILL !**

So long for now,
from 'Across the Pond'.

Bonnie ■



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