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for the
Gender Community

New Series No. 9
January 1994

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THE TARTAN SKIRT

The Scottish Magazine for the Gender Community

Editor: Anne Forrester

New Series No. 9

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Published and typeset by:
ADF Editorial Services

Tullochvenus House, Lumphanan, Aberdeenshire

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LIFE FROM BOTH SIDES

Do you feel that you are 'a different person' when you are cross-dressed ? I guess that most of us do, whether we are occasional crossdressers or clearly transsexual. However, even within our own community there does seem to be a degree of confusion between dressing in a female style, feeling feminine, and fully being a woman; and most of this is due to the confusion that still exists between sex and gender. OK, most of us do appreciate that sex is what is between your legs and gender is what is between your ears. However, even the experts get confused at times - and then it is little wonder that gender telephone helplines regularly get calls from people who don't know if they want a 'sex change' or are they simply mad ? Now that phrase 'sex change' is dangerous, for it assumes that one can actually change ones sex - and you can't.

Twenty years ago, in his definitive book *The Transsexual Phenomenon* even Harry Benjamin referred to 'the operation' as "sex conversion", and still today the phrase 'sex re-assignment surgery' (often abbreviated to SRS) is widely used. Now this is a pity, because sex is something that is determined by our genes. To be technical for a moment, if you have two X chromosomes (*i.e.* you are XX) then you are female, and if you have one X and one Y chromosome (*i.e.* you are XY) then you are male, and nothing anyone can do can alter that. However, even if you do have a Y (*i.e.* a male) chromosome, if you have a brain that is 'wired up' in a female manner then you may well be 'a woman born in a man's body' (or *vice versa*), which is what people usually refer to as being transsexual. Or you may simply enjoy the feminine part of your being (for remember, all of us have at least one X - *i.e.* female - chromosome), and enjoy dressing in the softer, flowing and more colourful clothing usually associated with women.

Other terms have been used to describe gender difference, and these come near to recognising the truth; so that some transsexuals prefer to refer to the various chemical and surgical treatments that they undergo as 'gender re-assignment' - or even 'gender correction'. However, in her moving article in this issue of *The Tartan Skirt* Alison Hines uses another term that I think we might all consider, when she refers to her 'gender shift' - which is something that we can each do to the extent that is right for us, as individuals. Alison also prefers to think of herself not as 'transsexual' but as 'multi-gendered'.

Now there *is* a nice thought ! Surely everyone who cross-dresses - whether they are what is called 'transsexual' or they simply feel relaxed and happy when dressed in traditional female clothes - is basically enjoying the fact that, genetically, as everyone has a female (X) chromosome, then *everyone* is potentially multi-gendered. Those of us in this community are indeed fortunate in that we have the opportunity to enjoy both aspects of our personality, and most of us can enjoy our femininity while recognising the positive aspects of our male lives.

Remember Carly Simon singing *I've looked at life from both sides now* ? Alison Hine sees this multi-gendered outlook on life as a gift, and she is right. We don't have to live our lives in a closet, nor shift from one closet to another as we discover ourselves. We who can appreciate both the male *and* the female sides of life are truly blessed.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"At each stage of learning we must give up something; even if it is a way of life that we have always known"

Anon

Information on my gender shift from Alan to Alison Hine

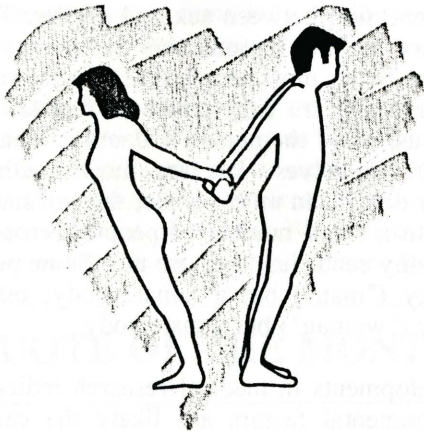
by Alison Hine

I am currently in the midst of the rather unusual process of changing my gender from male to female. I would like to try to pass on some of the more important aspects of this process so that you might better understand what I am doing, and why. I have shared this truth about myself with many people, and with almost every person this communication ultimately strengthened our relationship.

Often we make assumptions about things which appear to be obvious, and usually we are right. Sometimes, however, the obvious turns out to be wrong. So it is, I have learned, with the connection between sex and gender. The sex of a person refers to the reproductive functions and related aspects of the body; most people (excluding a small number of hermaphrodites) are either male or female. The gender refers to an aspect of the person's identity; it has to do with how we see ourselves. We are mostly either man or woman, boy or girl. In most people, the sex and gender are congruent. In a small number of people (across many cultures, for many centuries) they are not. Some people have a male identity ("man") but a female body; others have a female body ("woman") but a male body.

Recent developments in medical research indicate that prenatal environmental factors are likely the cause of this. There is growing evidence that if hormone levels in the uterus vary between certain stages of development of the fetus the resulting person's gender and sex will be incongruent. All fetuses start out female. If sufficient testosterone is present in the uterus at a critical stage the body

changes and becomes male. The gender identity appears to be controlled by a part of the brain, which develops later. If the testosterone level is lower at this stage the gender identity will become female. The reverse also happens. Hormone levels in the uterus of the mother during pregnancy can be influenced by many factors including stress, illness and drug usage. It is also possible that factors in the early development of a child can contribute to, or cause, this incongruity between a person's sex and gender. Whatever the reason, it is clear from a growing body of clinical evidence that the condition is almost never reversible. Almost always the only "cure" is for the person to live (at least part of the time; for some, all of the time) consistent with their identity. In many cases the person chooses to make cosmetic, hormonal and sometimes even surgical adjustments to the body, to make it more in harmony with the identity. Depending on the degree of gender shift they chose, these people are known as cross-dressers, transgenerists, or transsexuals. I prefer to think of all of them - and myself - as "multi-gendered".



I told you all of this because I want to be clear about the choices I have, and choices I don't have. I didn't choose to be multi-gendered. I was either born that way or it happened very early in life. Somehow I wound up with a body

and brain that were out of sync regarding gender. It's hard to describe to someone who is not that way, but if you are a woman try to imagine that you were born, exactly the person you are with exactly the identity you have...but with a male body. If you are a man, try to imagine being born with a female body. It would certainly be jarring, and highly disturbing I would think.

That is what it is like for me. When I was growing up I accepted the evidence of my body, and the feedback of the people around me, that I was male. And I tried to deny my true identity. It worked...to an extent. I developed a fairly convincing male *persona* and got through college and began to earn a living. But all the time I was despairing and unhappy, sometimes terribly so. The first time in my life that I was actually happy was when I began building my airplane. But this experience of getting in touch with my true feelings about flying, allowing myself true expression of that part of me, had a side effect; it broke down my barriers to true self-expression of other parts of me. As I fought to keep this scary stuff suppressed (for I knew that it would require major, fundamental and frightening changes in my life if I allowed it to surface) I began to feel despair again. The feeling was intense.

When I finally gave in to my true self and started acknowledging who I really am it was like the sun breaking out after a thunderstorm. Suddenly the world was transformed and I was transformed. I have not felt despair since. Sad sometimes, and sometimes angry or hurt or frustrated, and many times afraid. But never despairing. The change in my experience of life since then has been profound. I would not want to live the life I was living before I began this process. I cannot go back.

So the choices I have are not between being a male or female, man or woman. I will always be multi-gendered no matter what the shape of my body. Nothing can erase 40 years of living as a boy and man, and nothing can make my

body truly female, but nothing can remove the woman in my spirit, either. My choices are between life and death of the spirit, between being true to myself and betraying myself, between happiness and despair.



The other choices I have are about how I accept and deal with this truth about me. I can hate it, wish it weren't so, call it a curse, want to be anything but who I am. Or I can embrace it, accept myself for who I am, love myself and look for value in this special and unusual feature of my being. This is the choice I have made. I chose to see the fact of my multiple genders as a special gift, one which gives me unique experiences that few others can have. It is one which gives me special insights that I hope can be

of value to myself and others. And the process of understanding and accepting it has helped me to develop much greater levels of acceptance and compassion.

The gift has not been without cost: the years of despair, fears of rejection and ridicule, the endless hours of physical pain in changing my body, the loss of a childhood and adolescence as a girl, the loss of the possibility of creating and bearing life, the repeated confronting of my fears and sometimes terror as I've moved through the process of self-acceptance. But there has also been joy, and learning, and growth, and much love. And, for the first time in my life I am really alive.

I am aware that acknowledging this condition has until recently been quite taboo in our culture. Many other cultures have had much more positive attitudes about it, however, and fortunately our culture has begun to change. Perhaps someday we can be like the Navajo, who regarded the presence of a "nadle" as they called people like me, as a gift.

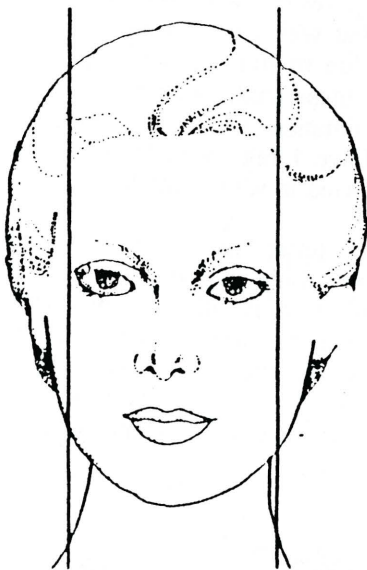
Perhaps in part due to the cultural context which has prevailed until recently, many transsexuals hate their "old" selves so much that, when they transition, they choose to "disappear". They leave their old lives entirely behind and sever all connections, starting a new life where no one knows their history at all. But I don't think this is for me. I have many friends that I would not like to lose. And I do not want to go from one closet to another, always hiding part of myself. So I have chosen the path of openness and honesty. It is a path which requires courage, to be sure. But I believe that it is the path that will bring the most happiness to me and the most value to those around me. My experiences so far in sharing these truths with my friends, my family, and many acquaintances, have all served to confirm that belief. Never have I felt more loved, more acknowledged, or more supported in what I am doing.

Despite the serious tone of this letter there is really quite a lot that I find joyful and funny about it, too. If you don't like any of this at all, and wish it would all go away, that is your right. However, I am still the same person with the same brain, the same abilities, and the same values. Most of all I hope that this process will bring about greater understanding and acceptance for everyone. Thank you for being open enough to take this in.



DETERMINING YOUR FACE SHAPE

For many purposes - especially when choosing a hair or wig style, or when considering your makeup - it is often necessary to know what shape your face is. This may sound easy but in fact it is not simple to define your face shape in accordance with the shapes generally recognised by hair-dressers and makeup specialists when you are looking into the mirror - and as you will often find these shapes referred to in the articles on these subjects in womens' magazines, here is how to do it.



First, pull your hair completely away from your face and look straight ahead into a mirror. With an eyebrow pencil, eye crayon or lipstick trace around the outer line of your reflected face onto the mirror. (Alternatively, use a full-face photograph of yourself with your hairline showing, and outline your face on the photograph, or on a tracing of it). Now draw vertical lines down the length of your outlined face, from the hairline on each side, above the forehead and in line with the

outer corner of the eye, down to the jaw. The amount of your face that is outside these lines helps you to identify your facial shape. Take your time: your face may look like

more than one shape and you should decide which is the most likely.

There are seven face shapes usually recognised, and you can decide which of these is 'you' as follows:

Triangular. There is very little of your face outside the vertical lines at the top, more at the middle and even more at the jawline.

Round. There is more of your face outside the lines near the ears, and gradually less to an approximately equal extent curving upwards and downwards.

Rectangular/Oblong. Very little to none of your face shows outside the vertical lines, and it is the same width at top, middle and bottom of the lines.

Diamond. There will be very little to none of your face outside the vertical lines, but what there is will be a little wider near the cheekbones and ears, then angling sharply in to be narrower to a more or less equal amount above and below the middle of your face.

Square. If there is a lot of your face outside the vertical lines, more or less equally from top to bottom, this is your facial shape.

Heart (Upside-down Triangle). There will be very little of your face outside the vertical lines at the jawline but more at eye level, and even more at the level of your forehead.

Oval. There will be neither very little nor very much of your face outside the vertical lines, and what there is will curve very gently from a very little at eye/ear level to slightly narrower at forehead and jaw levels, which are almost equal in width to each other.

Now, armed with a clear idea of which is *your* facial shape you can really get to terms with those articles about makeup and hair style ! ☺

LOOKING LIKE A LADY

LEARNING MAKEUP TECHNIQUES

2. Eyes and lips

by *Anne Forrester*

In the last issue we considered how to prepare the canvas for this work of art, and getting on basic colours. Now we can look at the rest - the eyes, the lips and the nails; and then think about the best way to take it all off again.

Next, the eyes

Eye makeup is often difficult - and most women who use it do tend to overdo things, so be careful. Essentially you have three areas to consider: eyelashes, eyelids and eyebrows.

The best place to start is with the eyelashes and your mascara. You have two choices to make here: colour, and whether or not to use a waterproof mascara. For most purposes you will be best choosing an ordinary - *i.e.* not a waterproof - mascara; although if you intend being out in all weathers - let alone going swimming while *en femme* - then a waterproof mascara will be essential. However, don't worry about this. They come off quite easily if you

use a suitable oil-based eye makeup remover (and we will consider taking off your makeup in a later article). However, if you have to get your makeup off quickly then you will be better sticking to an ordinary variety. As far as colour goes you will be best using brown or brownish-black. Plain black is too dramatic, and colours (such as blue or green) are really only for evening party wear, and then only for the very young.

When applying eye makeup you will usually have a problem with your left eye if you are right handed, and *vice versa*), so start where it is easiest - your right eye for a right hander and *vice versa*. You will also certainly need a magnifying (*i.e.* a concave) mirror, and these are readily available as either shaving or makeup mirrors from any chemist's shop.

Start with the mirror tilted so that with your head tilted back you are looking up at your upper eyelashes. Using the brush in the mascara tube, carefully stroke the mascara upwards, working from the inner to the outer edge of the lashes. Now tilt the mirror and your head the other way, so that you are looking down on your lower lashes, and repeat the operation there. Finally, return to the upper lashes and apply a second coat. *Do not apply more than one coat to the bottom lashes.* Next transfer the brush and do the other eye, expecting a more difficult job as you use the hand that you are less used to using normally. Here - and possibly for the other eye also - you may well find that you have more control if you rest your little finger against your cheek (like an artist's or jeweller's dop-stick, if you have ever seen one used), and use it as a support for the working part of your hand.

While the mascara dries, move on to your eyebrows. If you have very bushy eyebrows then you have a problem. It is possible to buy a special wax preparation from stage makeup suppliers or from some specialist shops for the TV/TS trade, and this can be used to cover the eyebrows

completely so that you can pencil-in a new eyebrow line. Alternatively you may be fortunate enough to be able to

Flatter your shape

CREATE WIDTH

If your eyes are close together, create an illusion of width by keeping the inner half of your lids pale. Concentrate dark shadow and eyeliner on the outer corners, winging it upwards and outwards. Finish by sweeping lots of mascara on to the outer lashes only.



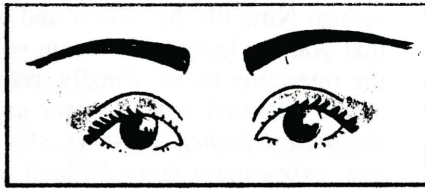
MAKE THEM BIGGER

A light colour will 'bring out' small eyes so blend it over entire area and define the socket line with darker shadow. Dust blusher over brow bone for warmth. Keep eyeliner light, drawing from centre of lid to outer corners and apply mascara to upper lashes only.



SOFTEN BULGING EYES

Disguise prominent eyes with dark shadow shaded over lids and into socket line. Apply blusher or a lighter shadow from socket to brows and blend in. Use kohl pencil along the lower lashes, smudging slightly for a soft look. Sweep mascara over upper lashes only.



LIFT HOODED LIDS

Apply pale shadow as a base over the entire eye area, then minimise your overhanging brows with warm peach or terracotta shadow, shaded from socket up to brows. Smudge eyeliner along bottom lashes only and sweep mascara lightly over outer lashes.



pluck them without too much comment from your spouse or everyday contacts. If you do, make sure that you pluck from *below* the eyebrow, not above, as the latter will

probably cause you to make irretrievable mistakes and leave you with weird shaped brows. For most of us, however, a touch of Pan-Stick and a dusting of powder should be sufficient to mask the worst of a male-type eyebrow. The hairs of the eyebrows should then be carefully coloured with a dampened compressed powder eyeshader and a fine brush, or with an eyeliner pencil. Once again brown is very much better than black for most people. Aim for a gentle curve with the top point about a third of the way out from your nose to the outer edge of the eye socket - and do make sure that the two eyebrows match in shape and length.

Next consider your eye sockets, and the space between them and your eyebrows. Eyeshader is available either as a cream or a compressed powder, and unless you have a very young skin the latter is preferable. As with other eye makeup, choose your colour carefully. The basic rule is to avoid using a colour that is the same as your eyes, and generally speaking a muted brown, pink, grey, or even charcoal black is better than anything more vivid. You can apply the eyeshadow either with a dampened brush or felt applicator (available from The Body Shop). Starting at the inner corner of the socket, work outwards and upwards, applying not too much shader and then smoothing it in with a fingertip. You may wish to use two matching colours, one darker and one lighter, and blend them into one another. In this case make sure that you blend them completely and do not leave an obvious join. If you stray too far from the outline that you want just dampen a cotton bud and use it gently to remove the surplus.

Finally, if you wish to line the inner edges of your eyelids you are better using a fine-tipped felt eyeliner pen than a crayon, as these often pull the very soft and delicate tissue inside the eyelid. Starting at the inner edges - or better still, in the middle - of the inner part of the eyelid, immediately behind the lashes, work outwards and possibly finish with a slight upturn at the outer edge of the eye. Finally, slightly

smudge the liner with your finger. Be careful to apply only a thin line on the lower lids, and you will generally be well advised *not* to line the upper lids, or you may end up looking like a startled Giant Panda !

And finally, the lips

It is usually best to leave the lips until last as it is all too easy to smudge lipstick while applying the other facial touches. You will doubtless wish your lipstick to stay smart all the time that you are *en femme*, and this is not easy. It has been calculated that the average woman will eat some three pounds of lipstick during her lifetime - and it really does seem to disappear at an alarming rate even in ordinary walking/talking mode. If you drink a cup of tea or eat a hamburger it goes even more quickly; and if you are likely to be kissed then it simply transfers itself to your partner !

So how can you produce a long-lasting finish ? Well, the first thing is to use a suitable lipstick. Some makes do last longer than others, and from time to time the womens' magazines do surveys of current makes and types with this in mind. Generally, the greasier they are the longer they may last. However, you can help the staying power.

It is often helpful, right back when you start your makeup session, to rub in some foundation on your lips, going right inside to the inner edges. (Don't worry - foundation tastes very bland and doesn't leave a lasting smell). The foundation will then sink in while you are applying the rest of your makeup. A thin dusting of translucent powder before you get out the lipstick will then help the process. Although you can apply the lipstick directly from the stick, this is neither very effective nor very economical. Your best bet is to use either a lip brush or an applicator (which you can get from most chemists' shops or from The Body Shop).

First, however, start with a lip liner pencil. This will both give you a frame within which to work and will also stop

your lipstick 'bleeding' outside the final shape. Use a colour that is a shade or so darker than your lipstick and sharpen the pencil to a good point. Now, draw an outline around your mouth. Starting at the centre of the upper lip trace a curve to the edges of the mouth and then copy this on the other side to form a 'bow': then complete the shape by drawing in a curve around the lower lip. Now this is where you can be imaginative and use a bit of artistic licence. If your lips are too thin you can carry the outline outside the normal lip line (or *vice versa* of course), and you can make the shape whatever you want it to be. Don't be constrained and think that you must follow exactly the natural line of your lips.

Now here is a tip to help that lipstick stay put for longer. Fill in the outline that you have just drawn with *the lip liner pencil*. Just fill in the frame as though in a colouring book, and that base will help the lipstick itself to stay in place.

Next, take your lip brush or applicator and load it from the lipstick in the tube before painting your lips with it. Be careful to apply the lipstick evenly over the whole surface, then take a tissue and place it between your lips, close your mouth and blot your lips on the tissue. (Another tip. Use ordinary tissues - Kleenex or the like - rather than toilet paper, which often sticks to the lips and makes a bit of a mess). Now apply a second coat and again blot your lips. Finally, to help the lasting property you may then like to paint on a sealer (*i.e.* 'Lip-coat'), and this will certainly help the staying power of your lipstick.

Now put on your wig and *voila* !: the transformation is complete.

Next time we shall finish off with painting your nails - and then look at taking it all off again. ☺

---oooOOOooo---

A 5-MINUTE BUST BOOSTER

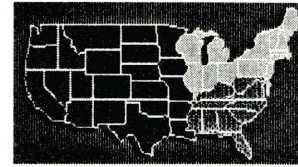
Do you want a more prominent 'natural' bust without having to resort to hormones or implants ? Then try this five-minute exercise. It will not make your bust grow any bigger, but it will firm up the underlying pectoral muscles that support the breast tissue, and give you a better shape. Use it every day and you should soon see a difference.



Place your hands together in a 'praying' position, keeping your elbows together in the front of your chest. Now pull your elbows out as far as possible until they reach chest height, then press your hands together as hard as you can and hold them for a count of 10 before returning to the starting position and repeating this 15 times. Try to do the exercise regularly every day, preferably in the morning and at bedtime. ▼▼



FROM ACROSS THE POND



- A LETTER FROM AMERICA

By Bonnie Allen

Hello again everyone, this is your gal here in the United States, looking forward to a lovely Fall after a very warm Summer in the Philadelphia area. Fall is the time of the year when you can get back to wearing all the wonderful clothes that you have put away. Actually I have found summer to be not all that bad - as long as you think of how a woman copes with it. Remember girls, there are times when you need to dress down and give up some of those luxuries such as pantyhose (*NB Tights to we Brits - Ed*) for more sensible shorts and loose fitting tops. Besides, here in the USA you stand out more in a crowd if you dress too much like a lady in the summer. So a word to the wise - if you are planning to come to the States in the summer, please bring some casual clothes.

One thing that amazes people from Europe about the United States is the casual way that women dress here. Indeed, there are times when you would be hard-pressed to tell the women from the men ! When thinking about dressing in the USA remember to think about where you may be going. The shopping malls are notorious for sloppily dressed women, and to fit in easily you should dress as casually as you can. You are guaranteed to be noticed if you dress up too much.

I thought that for my first 'official' *Across the Pond* article (after my introductory one in the last issue) that I would

divide it into sections with titles that should be self-evident.

BONNIE's BITS

Let's deal with some helpful hints and other tricks that may help you in your travels and adventures.

Color co-ordination is always a 'must' when dressing to go out. One thing that I found out is that if you are endowed with a large chest, and breast-forms make you somewhat busty, then try wearing darker blouses (*e.g.* burgundy, navy, black, *etc*) as colors like these tend to minimize the larger breasts. Also, wear skirts that are light in color, as they will accentuate your hips and make your figure more feminine.

Makeup can be difficult to apply at times, and the best rule is "More is *not* better". Be sparing with the makeup and make sure that you blend your makeup on your neck so that a line does not appear where the makeup stops and the rest of your skin begins.

Does it frustrate you when, after eating you find that you have no color remaining on your lips ? Well, try this. When using your lip liner pencil, color the entire lip surface with the liner before you apply lipstick. Lip liner pencil seems to survive eating and drinking and will leave color on your lips when the lipstick fails. It is not proper to apply lipstick at a dining table so the lip liner holds the color until you can apply fresh lipstick.

BONNIE's WORLD

These are some of the things going on in my world that I hope will help you all in your world.

Electrolysis: I am now approximately 40 hours into this and have learned a few things that I would like to pass on to

you. People talk about the 'Fast' (Thermolysis) and the 'Blend' methods, and will give you the pros and cons of each. Well, the 'fast' method is great for ridding your face of as many hairs as possible during one session, but it has the drawbacks of a tendency to develop (non-permanent) red marks on your face and you tend to have more re-growth with this method. You need to apply ice packs to your face after your session to cut down on the redness, and then you need to apply a warm salt water rinse after the ice to make sure you do not have infection and to help the healing process. I also accompany this regimen of ice/salt water rinse with a product called 'Polysporin', which is an antibiotic that also helps promote healing of the skin. (*NB. 'Polysporin' is an American trade name for what in Europe is known by the generic name of Polymyxin-B - Ed*). My electrologist also uses a new improved needle that has a better insulated end so that the heat does not transfer to your skin as much. The red marks (due to the heat from the needle causing a minor burn at the point of entry) can always be explained away as they look like a rash from shaving.

The 'Blend' method is slower, but it does a most adequate job and re-growth tends to be reduced to a minimum. One of the negatives for this method, however, is that you must hold another rod in your hand for proper earthing, and sometimes if you are not holding it firmly enough you may get a slight shock when the needle is inserted - a minor irritation that does no harm.

I prefer to have a week of the 'fast' method followed by a week of the 'Blend' method, as by alternating these I get the best results. I have a high tolerance for pain and I think that electrolysis is the only sure way to a permanent solution to your facial hair problem. For those of you who think you can not tolerate the pain, let me leave you with this thought: if you want a thing badly enough you can learn to tolerate *anything*. Always ask for a consultation first and have the electrologist take out hairs using both

methods and on several areas of your face. Faces tend to be different, and some are sensitive in different areas. Try it, you may just like it.

Pierced Ears: Many people can not have these as they are afraid of someone seeing the holes and making an issue out of it. Well, after spending several years suffering from clip earrings and the damage they do to your ear lobes I finally had my ears pierced. I found out from a good friend how to hide the holes and it is a very cheap and easy method. You can buy items called 'Pierced Ear Protectors', used to protect people who have a metal allergy from developing problems when the earring post is inserted into the ear. They are made of plastic and slide over the earring post, and the post and this protector are then inserted into the ear. Now if you take the protector and, rather than inserting it over the post you reverse it and draw it from the back of the ear through and out the front using the post of an earring as a guide, you can hide the hole with the plastic tip of the protector and cut off any excess plastic so that the protector is flush with the skin of the ear lobe...and you now have **No hole showing**. It works ! I have these protectors in my ears all the time when I am at work and no one has ever said anything about my ears yet.

One last thing, pierced ears make wearing earrings fun, not torture like wearing clip earrings. Try it, you'll like it.

BONNIE'S BITCHES

This section will not always appear unless I feel strongly about a subject. The comments are strictly mine and mine alone. If you differ, then I applaud you for exercising your right of free speech. The following commentary is on a very hot topic in the United States - Gays in the Military.

I am not homosexual, but I do know many Gay men and women and I find them most friendly and generally very caring and feeling about others, and I can see no reason

why they should not serve in the military if they wish - nor can I see where they would be a risk to anyone else. When in combat your instincts are to survive and you will do what is expected of you in order to do so. I am a transsexual and I served four years in the US army, spending a year in Vietnam. In the midst of actual combat being a transsexual had nothing to do with surviving and doing what was right and expected. I was trained to do a job and I did it to the best of my ability. Indeed, I must have done a good job because I am still here in one piece, writing this article.

However, what I do feel strongly really *is* detrimental to the military is the problem of alcoholism, which is rampant in the military and throughout all ranks - which is probably the reason why it is not an issue, because banning it would affect so many people. I do believe that a drunk or an alcoholic is more of a danger to his comrades than a Gay man or woman. Try to get a drunk to comprehend what you are saying or wanting him to do, and you will quickly become frustrated. People under the influence of alcohol can not be trusted or depended upon to do their job. If something needs to be addressed in the military, then let us start with alcoholism. 'People who live in glass houses should not throw stones'.

Well, that's me off my soapbox, and until next time I hope all of you stay healthy and well. This is Bonnie Allen signing off from *Across the Pond*. ■

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HAIR WE GO

Believe it or not, the medical profession recognises a hair disorder which they call **Un-combable Hair Syndrome**. More than 50 cases of congenital "uncombable hair" have been reported since 1973 and now a case from Cleveland, Ohio, reported in the *Archives of Dermatology*, describes an acquired case following (would you believe ?) drug treatment for alopecia - the condition of hair *loss*, in which the scalp hair normally falls out. The condition is characterised by dry and "wildly disordered" coarse hair which stands straight out from the scalp, and appears to be due to the scalp hairs being triangular rather than round in cross-section. The overall appearance of the hair is simply that of one tangled mess. So now you have your excuse if you can't tame those locks. Simply claim that you suffer from un-combable hair syndrome ! ■

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HEALTH LAW STANDARDS OF CARE FOR TRANSEXUALISM

For many years the standards adopted by the medical profession for the care and treatment of transsexualism have been the Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. A new set of Health Law Standards of Care for Transsexualism was adopted in August 1993 at the 2nd International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, held in Houston, Texas. These new Standards - which will be reviewed and amended 'by consensus' as necessary at each annual Conference on Transgender Law, embody five principles and five Standards that place very much more of the decision concerning reassignment in the hands of the transsexual her or himself than do the 'Harry Benjamin rules' - although how widely they will be adopted by health care professionals remains to be seen.

The new Health Law Standards, reproduced below, also include a form combining informed consent and a waiver of liability by the transsexual, for the benefit of the physician and surgeon concerned with treatment, and a similar form to be signed by the person's spouse if there is a marriage that is to remain intact. A copy of the full document, including these proformas, can be obtained from ADF Editorial Services (address on page 2) on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

Principle 1. Transsexualism is an ancient and persistent part of human experience and is not in itself a medical illness or mental disorder. Transsexualism is a desire to change the expression of ones gender identity.

Principle 2. Persons have the right to express their gender identity through changes to their physical appearance, including the use of hormones and reconstructive surgery.

Principle 3. Persons denied the ability to exercise control over their own bodies in terms of gender expression, through informed access to medical services, may experience significant distress and suffer a diminished capacity to function socially, economically and sexually.

Principle 4. Providers of health care (including surgical) services to transsexuals have a right to charge reasonable fees for their services, to be paid in advance, and to require a waiver of all tort liability except negligence.

Principle 5. It is unethical to discriminate in the provision of sex reassignment services based on the sexual orientation, marital status, or physical appearance of a patient.

Standard 1. Physicians participating in transsexual health care shall provide hormonal sex reassignment therapy to patients requesting a change in their sexual appearance subject only to (1) the physician's reasonable belief that the therapy will not aggravate a patient's health conditions, (2) the patient's compliance with periodic blood chemistry checks to ensure a continued healthy condition, and (3) the patient's signature of an informed consent and waiver of liability form. If the patient is married, the physician may not require divorce but may also require the spouse to sign a waiver of liability form.

Standard 2. Physicians providing hormonal sex reassignment therapy shall collect and publish on an annual basis the number of hormone prescriptions they have issued and the number and general nature of any complications and

complaints involved. The publication requirement of this Standard shall be satisfied by providing the collected statistics in writing, together with other current information on the potential risks and complications of sex hormone therapy, to all prospective patients inquiring into the physician's hormone therapy services.

Standard 3. Surgeons participating in transsexual health care shall provide sex reassignment surgery to patients requesting a change in their sexual appearance subject only to (1) the surgeon's reasonable belief that the surgery will not aggravate pre-existing health conditions, (2) the surgeon's reasonable determination that the patient has been under hormonal sex reassignment therapy for at least one year, and (3) the patient's signature of an informed consent and waiver of liability form. If the patient is married, the surgeon may not require divorce but may also require the spouse to sign a waiver of liability form.

Standard 4. Surgeons providing sex reassignment surgery shall collect and publish on an annual basis the number of sex reassignment surgeries they performed and the number and general nature of any complications and complaints involved. The publication requirement of this Standard shall be satisfied by providing the collected statistics in writing, together with other current information on the potential risks and complications of sex reassignment surgery, to all prospective patients inquiring into the surgeon's sex reassignment services.

Standard 5. Physicians and surgeons shall not divulge the name or identity of any patient requesting or receiving sex reassignment services except as explicitly directed in a notarized written request by the patient. ■



WATCH THAT WIG

Most crossdressers who go out and about while dressed are aware of the standard risks that face all women out on their own, especially from 'macho' men who regard them as natural victims and mere playthings. However, it is clear that there is now something else to worry about.

A Dundee woman who had had a party in her own home went on to a nightclub where she met a man who agreed to go home with her when she said there was a party. In the taxi he kissed her, and when they arrived an amount of drink was consumed and the man dropped off to sleep. When he woke up he saw that the woman had taken off the blonde wig that she had been wearing, and saw "her somewhat thin hair with her scalp showing through it". Thinking (wrongly, through his alcoholic/testosterone haze) that she was a homosexual man who had set him up for blackmail he ferociously attacked the woman, punching and kicking her and leaving her permanently brain damaged. The 32-year old man undoubtedly got off lightly with the two-year jail sentence he received for the attack, but his victim is irreparably damaged for life.

Now there's a lesson for all of us here. If you go out and about while dressed, and if you wear a wig (and that has to include nearly all male crossdressers over the age of 30-ish), do be careful who you invite back to your home - especially if you don't intend things to progress beyond a pleasant platonic friendship. And if you do look for more than that, then make *very* sure that the guy knows precisely who and what he is dealing with, before things go too far. The mixture of alcohol and testosterone is something that affects far too many men, few of whom these days seem to know the first thing about civilised behaviour.

DON'T BECOME ANOTHER VICTIM ■

DID YOU KNOW ?

Scotch on the rocks

Were you aware that Edinburgh is built on a series of volcanoes ? Well, don't worry too much about it. Although all seven of Edinburgh's hills were formed as a result of quite violent volcanic action, the most famous of them - Arthur's Seat - last erupted some 350 million years ago, so you should be quite safe when attending the Scottish TV/TS Group's meetings. (Incidentally, Edinburgh has also been buried repeatedly under ice-caps hundreds of metres thick - but then, so has most of the rest of northern Britain during the last 2 million years !). ■



WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT WORD 'TRANVESTITE' ?

by Anne Forrester

In an Editorial in a recent issue of another magazine it was said that "the word transvestite ... is nothing to be ashamed of". Well, as regular readers of *The Tartan Skirt* will know by now, I strongly disagree - and once again I would like to explain why it is a word that we should positively avoid, and offer a few thoughts about such 'labels' generally.

Probably most of you at some time have thought of yourself as a transvestite - or at the least have abbreviated it to "TV". Indeed, the terms "transvestite" and "TV" are almost universally used in Britain, although in America 'transvestite' is pretty well confined to those who cross dress for blatantly fetishistic or sexual reasons, and for most others it is regarded as pejorative and effectively obsolete.

What is wrong with "Transvestite" ?

Now there is nothing at all wrong with the word "transvestite" as a piece of language. It was first coined in 1910 by Dr Magnus Hirschfeld to describe a person who wears clothing usually considered appropriate for the other sex, and is derived from two Latin words, *trans*, meaning across, and *vestio* meaning clothing. Hence in theory a trans-vestite is simply one who dresses across the usual norms associated with men and women, respectively. However, as Humpty Dumpty said in *Through the Looking Glass*, "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less"; and unfortunately this is true of most people nowadays. The word 'transvestite' very

quickly took on a clinical meaning, implying someone who suffered from compulsive or obsessive behaviour and as though it were a disease or a perversion (which it most definitely is not), and in this context it is still used by 'the media' whenever reporting the behaviour of some of the more sick members of our society. For example, "Transvestite handbagged" was the headline over one report of a "6ft man...wearing a short skirt, tights, high heels and a hat", described as "a transvestite sex pest who assaulted a woman". Another recent item, under the headline "Transvestite jailed" reported the seven year jail sentence passed on "a man who dressed as a woman to carry out sex attacks on a 12-year old girl".

January 10, 1982

NEWS

Transvestite lifted skirt at city motorists
Transvestite admitted the

Transvestite handbagged
three city motorists

Transvestite jailed
special conditions

Transvestite admitted the

The other impression most people now have of the word is that of *The Rocky Horror Show* - a man dressed in a basque or a mini-skirt, fishnet stockings and 6" heels. Now don't get me wrong - *The Rocky Horror Show* is great as a piece of fun stage entertainment - but that is all it is. It most definitely is *not* a representation of real life.

Finally, of course, most people have the totally wrong impression that any man who wears womens' clothes must be Gay. In fact, no more men who cross dress are Gay than are to be found in the rest of the population - but just try convincing anyone else of that !

You see, whatever *you* may think the word 'transvestite' means, the media - and thus the general public as a whole - sees it as describing either perverts and criminals, or laughable stage caricatures, or as being a synonym for 'Gay'. So if he is not a criminal pervert, a transvestite is generally thought of as being homosexual, and in any event queer, weird and laughable, and therefore fair game for open abuse. The whole situation is summed up in the words of the wall plaque that says "*Facts are not unimportant, but it is by perceptions that we are judged*". And it is that perception of weirdo at best, most probably Gay, and criminal pervert at worst, that goes along with the word 'Transvestite' in the minds of 99% of the population.

So what should you call yourself ?

Well, perhaps we should first think whether it is necessary to call yourself anything at all. A businessman going to work in a striped suit and bowler hat does not think of himself as a separate species just because of the style of his dress. He is simply a person, like anyone else. Similarly a van driver going to work in a sweatshirt, jeans and trainers does not give himself a label based on his style of dress. So why should you want to call yourself something different if you wear a dress, nylons and high heels ? Plenty of women go about their daily lives in trousers, sports jacket, collar and tie, and often wearing a male hat and shoes, and they don't call themselves anything special as a result.

Surely there is a good case for refusing to refer to ourselves as anything other than **people**, and for taking the attitude that what we choose to wear is our own business. Whether a Scotsman's kilt crosses to the right and is worn with a sporran and kilt hose, or to the left and is worn with tights and high heels, should not differentiate him any more than if he chooses between wearing a black business suit with collar and tie, or a sweatshirt and jeans.

Unfortunately, however (society being what it is), from time to time most of those who cross-dress do feel the need for some sort of label to describe their preferred mode of dress - but why must they then insist on using the emotive "transvestite" tag ? (Indeed, why must some people sometimes be totally 'twee' and refer to themselves as "Trannies" ? Calling yourself "TV", as though you are simply a wooden box with a blank square face is bad enough; calling yourself a "Tranny", as though you are a little portable sound machine that makes a lot of noise is worse).

American practise is largely to use the term "crossdresser" which, unlike 'transvestite', implies voluntary rather than compulsive sexually-based behaviour, and to me it certainly sounds much more dignified. Furthermore, it implies an activity rather than a 'condition'. It describes what you do, and not what you are, and therefore says nothing about your state of mind or your sexual orientation. (Nevertheless I have heard it criticised as being difficult to abbreviate, as "CD" has the connotation of a compact disk. This is nonsense, of course, as both "TV" and "Trannie" have similar connotations with audio/visual entertainment equipment. In any case, why this compulsion to abbreviate everything ? A fisherman does not feel it necessary to call himself a "Fishie", nor does a tax inspector call himself a "TI").

It is all about perceptions

At present the gender community is a very much misunderstood and vilified segment of society. In common with the Gay community, crossdressers (and, to a slightly less extent, transsexuals) are a persecuted minority. So-called 'straight' individuals dislike and even fear crossdressers, simply because they are 'different': and woe-betide the non-convincing cross-dresser who ventures out and is 'read' by a gang of bored youths who are just looking for trouble. 'Queer-bashing' is still very much in fashion, and all too-easily extends to 'transvestite-bashing'.

If we are ever to shift public opinion from suspicion and dislike to at least a little tolerance - let alone approval - then we must surely begin by seeing crossdressing as rather more dignified than something out of *The Rocky Horror Show*, more serious than the Dame Edna Everedge experience, and definitely less threatening than the media image of a bunch of criminal perverts. If crossdressers can not at least call themselves by something more dignified than a name like 'transvestite', that calls up such unwanted images, or else belittle themselves as 'twee' little "transnies", then perhaps they don't deserve to be taken seriously and allowed to get on with doing their own thing.

One of the many American gatherings for the gender community is called "Be all" - which is short for "Be all you want to be". Well, most crossdressers will say that all they want to be is themselves, without being laughed at, threatened with arrest every time they go out, or with being 'bashed' if they are read. OK, cross-dressing is fun, relaxing and satisfying - but if you can't take seriously the image that other people have of you then, in turn, you won't be taken seriously by them and allowed to get on with it. In any case, as long as you are not hurting anyone else it is surely nobody else's business, is it?

Why not simply take as your motto the phrase in Jed Bland's book *The Gender Paradox*: "I am not a label, I am a person" ! ■

**Facts are not unimportant
but it is by perceptions
that we are judged**



HAVE YOU READ ?

Some Books Reviewed

Transvestism: a Guide Edited by M T Haslam. London: The Beaumont Trust, BM Charity, London WC1N 3XX. 1993. ISBN 0-9521357-0-1. £ 5.95 + £ 1.00 p&p.

The Beaumont Society has long issued a series of leaflets for crossdressers, their partners and families, but have also been aware of a need for something a bit more comprehensive and detailed for those who want to explore the whys and wherefores of cross dressing; but also something a bit less intimidating than some of the very comprehensive full-length books already available on the subject. This short (101 page) paperback is the result, with a foreword by Janet Scott, President of the Beaumont Society, and a series of chapters by eight well-known experts on everything from why crossdressing and transsexualism exist to the problems of religion, law, sexuality, and even sexually-transmitted diseases (a problem only for gay or bisexual crossdressers - and there are few enough of them).

Does the book succeed in its aim of providing facts on all aspects of the subject? Well, the answer for me is a mixed "yes - but!". You see, the trouble is that with a subject as complex as this it is almost impossible to be both comprehensive and simple. With the best will in the world, if one is to discuss seriously the why and wherefore of this subject then the use of jargon and some medico-scientific language becomes inevitable - and unfortunately, some of the authors do fall into the trap of using complex words and phrases where perhaps some more ordinary language would be more appropriate. (For example, in a book intended to "put

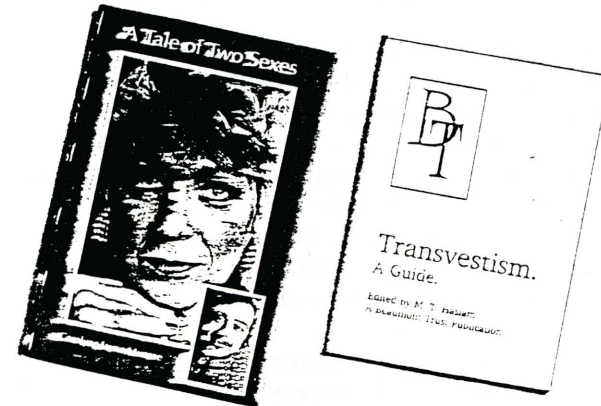
the subject across more simply", nowhere does anyone even explain what is meant by the frequently used term 'gender dysphoria'; and what do you make of a sentence like "Cognitive learning allows the choice of how we learn, to match it with our real feelings, to build stable schemas, to preserve the 'what if' factor" ?).

Now don't get me wrong. While many crossdressers who are not familiar with technical jargon may find the language a bit high-powered in places, this is probably the most down-to-earth book about the implications (as distinct from the practical 'how to' aspects) of crossdressing that I have seen so far. You want to know what matters if you want to 'pass' as a woman when going out and about ?; what is the law on going out dressed (in America and Australia, as well as in the UK) ?; what does institutional Christianity have to say about crossdressing - and why ?; how and when (or if) you should tell your partner about it ?; and even 'is there a cure' ? (the answer to that one is definitely NO). Well, all of these tricky subjects, and more, are tackled by experts who know, and the book contains a wealth of practical advice on these, and many other matters.

One final word of caution. Because it is directed at all those who cross-dress there is inevitably some discussion of transsexualism; after all, transsexuals cross-dress as well - although for very different reasons, and often in a very different (and usually more 'natural') way, to the 'transvestites' who are the targets of the book's title. (And I am still not convinced about the use of the word 'transvestite' in any other than a pejorative sense). This is not to say that all those who cross-dress do (far less should) necessarily aim at gender reassignment. However, it is good to be reminded that we are all on the same journey - even if most of us do get off the train at various intermediate stations, while a few (only) go on to the end of the line. And when it comes to the questions tackled in this book, we do all face much the same problems as one another.

Over all, even taking account of the (sometimes heavily jargon-inclined) language, I can nevertheless recommend this book wholeheartedly to all those who cross-dress (for whatever reason), and who take their interest seriously.

A.F.



A Tale of Two Sexes by Carolyne Jane Munroe. Torquay: Bonden Publications. 1993. ISBN 1-898112-00-2. £ 12.95.

Carolynne Munroe is one of the better known British transsexuals, with a high profile in her work as a radio presenter and disk-jockey; and as a result of this the media have given her a mixed (and mostly hard) time that came on top of a very difficult, and at times tragic, private life. This book tells the story of that life.

Born in the embattled and strife-torn sectarian atmosphere of Belfast where "you were either an Orange bastard or a Fenian bastard", Henry Glenn Dempster was part of a protestant family that was well-known in theatrical circles, and grew up with all the sectarian pressures experienced by the young in Ulster. Forced by family pressures to join the "Mafia-like Junior Orange Order", this was a childhood that few would envy. Being neither a convinced sectarian bigot nor a born troublemaker the young lad had a pretty

hard time of it as he sought a career in the entertainment industry, working on either side of the 'religious divide' - an indifference to Ulster politics and social pressures that brought him a tar-and-feathering, more than one beating up, being shot by British soldiers, and the burning down of a factory in which he made electronic equipment.

Not surprisingly, the bigotry of Belfast eventually drove him to the mainland, where in the south-west of England he worked in a series of posts running various entertainment complexes and performing as a DJ. During this time he met and married the woman who was to be his partner for many years, and they had a son who became in many ways the centre of Carolyne's life until his tragic early death from cancer; and it is this story of family love and tragedy that occupies a very large proportion of the book.

You will notice that I have referred so far to Carolyne as 'him' and 'he', and this is because although she had felt 'different' from an early age, the realisation of Carolyne's transsexuality came upon her only slowly, and despite it she had experienced a fairly 'rough-and-tough' life for many of her earlier years. Indeed, Carolyne's transsexuality receives little enough mention in the earlier part of her story, which is mostly concerned with life and relationships with her wife and dearly loved son; and it is this lack of concentration on her transsexuality for so much of the book that leaves me a little disappointed. It is not until the later chapters that the problems that beset Carolyne due to her growing dissatisfaction with her gender identity are mentioned in much more than passing; and even then they take second place to the other aspects of her life and that of her son.

The final two chapters of the book are not biographical but deal with "The Transsexual, Society and the Law" and with "The Medical/Surgical Aspects of Transsexuality" - chapters that combine factual information with philosophical discussion. A final "Epilogue" ends with information about

the (now defunct) Transvestite and Transsexual Support Group in London.

Her many friends know Carolyne as a very loving and caring lady who has given much help to many other transsexuals along their difficult path to realisation of their true gender identity, and this story is often heart-rending in its relation of the difficulties and tragedies that she has had to face in her own life. Personally I could have wished for more details about her own transsexual feelings during the early years, and the difficulties that she undoubtedly faced during the process of her gender correction. Nevertheless, this book is one that will interest all cross-genderists, and that will show all transsexuals the scale of difficulties that can be overcome - but that few others (thankfully) are likely to face.

A.F.

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CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

Dear Anne

I feel I must write and tell you of my personal feelings on first attending 3G (the Grampian Gender Group). Lightly I looked at why I felt the need to join a Group. What did I expect, and will it make me any happier? These were some of the questions on my mind when travelling to Aberdeen.

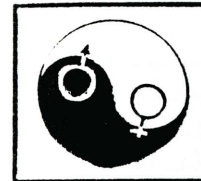
I've always been a crossdresser as far back as I can remember, but I have never shared my secret with anyone. Now, in my thirties I've decided that I must meet others like myself. The Beaumont Society brought me into contact with 3G, and my first meeting with any crossdresser was now imminent.

When I arrived I was made most welcome and was shown to a cubicle to change in. I felt very nervous, and as I dressed I couldn't get anything right: my makeup smudged and my hair looked dreadful. Nevertheless I soon composed myself and, with a healthy dose of terror, walked into a room where about ten ladies turned and gazed at me. My composure went, my deportment went, and my power of speech went! Ten seconds of friendly introductions, however, and all was well and I felt relaxed inside. An explanation of the Group's rules and aims, coffee and feminine conversation: it was heavenly and I didn't want the day to end.

A few days later I was thinking about my first encounter with 3G and realised that I should have joined years ago! However, better now than never at all. Everyone there

spoke positively on cross dressing and never ridiculed. Personally I've learned so much through meeting others - makeup tips, dress sense, female deportment, speech and colour coordination. Ultimately I'm learning to be myself - and it's great.

*Yours truly
Vanessa
(Inverness)*



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WATCH OUT - YOU MAY BE NEXT !

I'm sure that nobody in the gender community has any illusions about there being any degree of tolerance and fair play in today's society. Indeed, we are all aware that prejudice and bigotry are largely the order of the day. But did you realise that this situation may even be promoted by government itself ?

Most of you will have heard reports of the speeches made at a recent political party conference in which Ministers of the Crown turned viciously on single parents. Although there was some talk about the amount of money paid out to these people - mostly single mothers - by way of benefits, this seems to have been no more than an excuse, and most of the talk from the party rostrum was to deplore the state of single parenthood, and in defence of the traditional nuclear family: you know, *Husband, Wife and two-point-four children* - and nothing else is acceptable.

Well, it seems from recent reports of a leaked government document (*what, another ?*) that politicians' claims that single-parent families are a financial drain on the community, and that young girls become pregnant solely in order to jump the housing list (*yes, really ! And if you believe that you will believe anything*), were not only unbiased in fact but were made directly in the face of evidence to the contrary produced by the party's own researchers.

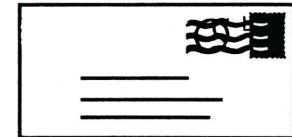
So what has all this got to do with cross-dressing ? Well, if you don't see it, then let me explain. If any political party - let alone any government - can make such a strong and vicious attack on a vulnerable minority like single parents, in clear defiance of the facts, this can only be from what

they believe to be 'high-minded moral grounds': indeed, many politicians have clearly said as much. And any government that can take such a bigoted 'moralistic' stand on the issue of single parents *versus* the '2.4 kids' nuclear family held together by a piece of paper, can make similar 'moralistic' stands on other issues; like the position of people who love someone of their own sex - or even people who like to dress in a manner usually associated with the opposite sex. Get it ?

Once a group of self-righteous 'moralistic' people (mostly men, you will notice) who have their fingers in the pie of political power decide to impose their own ideas of 'morals' on others, then anyone who is not a married heterosexual male white Protestant Christian (or, in American parlance, a WASP - White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), and does not dress every day in the City of London business uniform of dark suit and bowler hat, is a fair target for further legislation (or, as in the case of single parents) financial penalties for not conforming to *'their'* ideas of 'normal'.

There has been much talk recently of the need for a law on privacy in Britain (almost the only European country that has not already got such legislation to protect the individual from media harassment, it may be noted), and pretty well everyone in the gender community would surely agree with that need. Maybe the pressures will eventually bring such laws about. If so, then perhaps the next aim should be a law to prohibit discrimination - whether by employers, the media, or even government itself (not to mention government departments) on grounds of sex or gender orientation or preference. Wouldn't you agree ?

*Why not let us know
what you think ? Do
we need anti-discrim-
ination legislation ?
Drop us a line.*



MONTREAL

MY TRIP TO CHANGE

by Robin Dexter - as dictated by Linda Watson

(Linda Watson is a post-operative transsexual with more physical problems to overcome than most. She lives in the USA and had her gender reassignment surgery in Canada, and this is her own story of the experience - Ed) .

Like the average pre-op transsexual I was looking forward to the day when I might be able to undergo gender reassignment surgery - a future operation with promise of helping me to feel like a whole and complete person: and if the surgery was to happen it would be the first time in my life that I could feel that way. The various clinics offering the coveted surgery seemed fairy tail-like, as if in some magical unattainable land.

I had narrowed my choice of surgeons down to three when I was told of a new programme in Canada, in Montreal. Most of the clinics I had contacted were very professional, with competent surgeons who offered an array of credentials that I found both impressive and somewhat intimidating. However, there were things about the Montreal program that sounded good to me; and while Dr Yvon Ménard has impressive credentials and experience as a very competent surgeon, his total approach was less than intimidating.

I was concerned about a number of things in going out of the United States for my surgery, not the least of which was that I only speak English. However, as Dr Ménard speaks fluent English as well as French, language was not going to be a problem. Among my more worrisome concerns was the fact that I am an insulin-dependent diabetic and am also legally blind. I was divorced from my spouse a few months

before my target surgery date, and my concern for traveling without the benefit of a companion grew almost daily. I put in a call to Dr Ménard, and after we had talked my fears subsided almost immediately. I had been told by my physician that having diabetes put me in a higher risk category for surgery and that I would not heal as fast as non-diabetics. Extra healing time meant the possibility of a longer hospital stay, and I could be more susceptible to infection. In my mind I could see my carefully saved dollars just pouring from my purse, but as the conversation with Dr Ménard progressed I felt more at ease.



I was told of a place and a program that sounded almost too good to be true. I could fly into Montreal, be met at the airport, helped through customs, transported to the Montreal Trans-P.O.R.S (Post-

Operation Residence Services) Center then on to the private hospital where I would have my surgery. Dr Ménard went on to say that after my surgery I would be in the hospital for only a few days after which, as soon as I was fit, I would be taken back to the Trans-P.O.R.S. Center, which is staffed by transsexuals who know at first hand what I would be feeling; and while staying there the cost would be less than a full-service hospital stay. Dr Ménard assured me that he would be updated on my condition regularly, and if there was any problem the staff could call him 24 hours a day, and would be able to handle any emergency.

I have never really cared for hospitals, and this Center sounded more like a home than a clinic - and I could stay there for as long as I needed. The staff would even go to the pharmacy for any prescriptions that I needed. I could stay at the Center for a fraction of the cost of a hospital stay, and I thought back to what my doctor had said about possible longer healing time due to my diabetes.

As the days before my surgery came and went time speeded up, and before I knew it I was leaving for my flight to Montreal. The driver arranged by Trans-P.O.R.S. was waiting for me and I had arranged to stay a couple of days in the Center before my surgery, which gave me a chance to get the feel of the Center and of the people who would be taking care of me after my operation.

In a day or two I was admitted to the hospital and found the staff eager to answer my questions and dispel any fears. In the morning I was prepared and taken into surgery. I was asked by a nurse if I wanted to change my mind. I had been in counselling for many months and had lived, worked and socialized full-time as a woman for that time, and there was one thing I was sure of - I did *not* want to change my mind. I can say that living as a woman for all those months was my final confirmation. After the surgery, when I awoke in the recovery room my very first thought was to question if I had actually had the operation: but as I slowly regained my senses I felt the pain, and knew that I had.

The memory of the next few days is one of utter exhilaration, tempered by a little pain. The hospital staff were very attentive to my needs and handled each call with compassion and tenderness. I was sad to leave their reassuring smiles behind, yet eager to go. I left the hospital and was taken to the Trans-P.O.R.S. Center, where it was actually like coming back home. The girls here were very helpful and knew at first hand what I was feeling, so that it was as if my needs were anticipated ahead of time.

As it turned out my healing time was greatly increased as a result of my diabetes, and what took me three weeks takes the average person only ten days. However, I was never made to feel as if I was any trouble, and the girls were always there to assist me. I was counselled in proper feminine hygiene and care, many times being assisted in the process - something above and beyond their normal routine.

I was able to stay at the Center and take the time to heal properly before attempting to make my way back to the USA and home. Had I chosen to go elsewhere I would not have been ready for travel and would have run out of money long before I was able to return home, but at the Trans-P.O.R.S. Center I was not stressed nor hurried by anyone and was able to leave when I was ready.

The day came when it was time for me to leave the new friends I had made in Montreal, the driver picked me up and the girls at the Center all wished me luck and waved goodbye as I was driven away. As my flight left Montreal I did not look back - only forward to the new challenges that lie ahead. I will be meeting those challenges head on, as a woman.

NB. We would love to hear from any other post-op transsexual who has had surgery in any other centre. Ed.

----- ♂ ♀ ♂ ♀ ♂ ♀ -----

EDITORIAL NOTE: Male-to-female gender reassignment surgery is available only at relatively few highly reputable places in north America and Europe. Details of the addresses and last known charges of those surgeons of whom we have received satisfactory reports from persons who have undergone surgery at their hands are available for £ 1.50 or US\$ 3.00, post paid from:



**3G Resources, c/o ADF Editorial Services
Tullochvenus House, Lumphanan,
Aberdeenshire AB31 4RN, Scotland, UK**

(NB. All of the surgeons on our list adhere to the Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association).



1993

by Anne Forrester

Fantasia Fair is, without a doubt (and with due deference to the newly-established *Europhantasia* baby), the major gender event anywhere; and this year was no exception.

On this occasion, for the first time, I did the whole thing - 140 mile drive to Glasgow Airport, flight through Washington to Philadelphia and 10-hour drive with a friend to Cape Cod, 10 days at the Fair and then the whole trip in reverse - without a stitch of male clothing with me, and despite my very male passport. Advance planning, a bit of extra I.D. documentation and a degree of self-confidence (or was it just brass neck ?) ensured no problems with the various immigration and customs officials, and I certainly anticipate no problems with doing the same again in the future.

The Fair this year was a 10-day event (longer than usual), and was basically a first-class vacation in a relaxing enviro-

onment, with congenial company and plenty to keep everyone busy. Provincetown (known to the tourists as P'town) in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, is a very laid-back place with a large gay community that accepts just about everyone and everything, and is a totally safe place in which to walk and work. The weather was kind (and certainly better than anything we've seen in the north-east of Scotland this year), and around 85 genderists - transsexuals, cross-dressers, and even a few avowedly fetishistic transvestites - contrived to have a marvellous time.

As in previous years, the Fair overlapped with Womens' Week, and this time there were 7000 lesbians in town for the first few days (that's right - **seven thousand**). They're a great bunch and Bonnie (my dear American TS sister) and I were more than once mistaken by them as being part of their own group as we wandered round the town - which was an 'interesting' experience ! (As we left at the end of the week the leather and chains guys were roaring in on their motor bikes for *Entre Nous* - their annual get-together: actually they're just a bunch of great big teddy-bears).

During the week there were the usual great events including a country and western evening, a Fantasy Ball where everyone puts on fancy dress (or at least, something a bit on the wild side), a fashion show, and the Fantasia Follies - a great variety show in which the girls 'strut their stuff' on stage, mostly courtesy of lip-sync to taped recordings. All of these, of course, being open to (and well-patronised by) the general public.

In between all of this there were the usual holiday things, varying from the general *shop 'till you drop* syndrome to whale watching 15 miles out in the Atlantic (and make sure your wigs are securely in place), walking on the sand dunes, and generally having fun.

In addition there were two awards banquets, at the first of which the community recognised professionals who have

helped them, and at the final banquet when awards are given to members of the community who have been voted by those attending as 'Miss Best Dressed', 'Miss Cinderella' (the best all-round first time attender), 'Miss Congeniality' and 'Miss Femininity'. Two other awards are voted on by the Board of the Outreach Institute, 'Miss Most Helpful' - which, to my great surprise, I received myself this year in recognition of my work on the daily newsletters - and 'Miss Fantasia Fair', an award which this year went to Chris Howie, a very attractive and lovely person who is a long-time transgenderist.

Fantasia Fair is not a cheap event, and most of those attending would not be seen dead wearing the same thing twice. With the variable October weather in Cape Cod requiring both light-weight and winter-weight clothes - not to mention footwear ranging from sandals and high heels to boots - and the need for ten each of both day and evening outfits, and including at least three very formal evening outfits (full-length ball gowns being very much *de rigueur*), this all means a large wardrobe and even larger suitcases. (At least one regular attender turns up each year with one large suitcase devoted solely to her two full-length mink coats!).

Put simply, the Fair is Fun, and I have already booked myself in for next year's event, which should be something special as it will be the 20th Fantasia Fair. Look out P'town, here I come - again!



Fantasia Fair - the Video

A ½ hour promotional video for Fantasia Fair, in UK/European PAL format, is available price £ 10.25 post paid from:

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