



News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

Vol. 9, No. 5 • May 1995

Renaissance

CSUN Center for Sex Research Endorses 2nd Congress Here in '97

Plans for a *Second International Congress On Crossdressing, Sex and Gender Issues* took a step closer to reality last month when the Human Sexuality Education Program in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania agreed to be the academic sponsor for the event. William R. Stayton, Th.D., and JoAnn Roberts, Ph.D., co-chair the Steering Committee for the conference to be held in the late Spring of 1997.

The overwhelming response for the first congress was so positive that several members of the transgender community approached Vern Bullough, Ph.D., R.N., the organizer and co-chair of the first event, with the idea of holding the congress on a regular basis. Dr. Bullough, while supportive of the idea, did not want to be responsible for a second or subsequent conference. He did, however, encourage the exploration of possible sites for a second congress and pledged his advisory support if a suitable academic sponsor could be found.

While still at the conference, many people from both the transgender community and the professional community talked openly about when and where a second congress might be held. Several people regarded the University of Pennsylvania's program as an excellent choice for a sponsor and that 1997 would be the best timing. JoAnn Roberts agreed to seek the University's cooperation.

On March 17, 1995, Dr. Stayton at the request of

Dr. Roberts proposed the congress to the faculty of the Human Sexuality Education Program and they agreed to sponsor the event. Roberts then contacted Dr. Bullough and James Elias, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Center for Sex Research at Cal State University at Northridge (CSUN), to inform them of the decision by the faculty at the university.

In a fax on March 29, 1995, Dr. Bullough informed Roberts, "Jim [Elias] says the Center for Sex Research will be happy to co-sponsor, and endorse [the second congress] as our legitimate successor..."

"This is an opportunity for both the transgender and professional communities to work together again on a project of widespread importance," says Roberts. "We'd like the event co-sponsors and the Steering Committee to be even more eclectic than it was for the first congress," she said, "Where it goes after this will be up to whoever is willing to do the groundwork. There are several contenders."

Cooperation between the transgender and professional organizations will be critical to the success of this second congress. The TG organizations will provide both the seed funds and the bodies to do the behind-the-scenes work. The professional organizations will primarily be concerned with the programming and review of submissions.

A Call for Papers will be announced later this year, along with other details of the event.



Happy 8th Birthday Renaissance!

None of the five co-founders of Renaissance in 1987 would have believed where the organization is today had someone been able to foretell the future.

That first meeting of 13 people gave no hint at the impact this small group would have on the transgender community at large.

Today, Renaissance stands as the only national membership organization for all transgendered people. It has grown from a local support group to a

federally recognized education association with four chapters (soon to be five) and seven affiliates in nine states, and it's still growing.

Renaissance members are community contributors, too, with members serving on the boards of IFGE, Outreach Institute, AEGIS, and Tri-Ess.

So, a Bronx cheer to those who thought Renaissance was just a "flash in the pan" and congratulations to all Renaissance members on your birthday.



Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Wilmington, Delaware: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808 or call 302-995-1396.

Maryland

A chapter is forming in the Baltimore area. Watch for more information.

New Jersey

South Jersey/Shore Area: Write Renaissance South Jersey, Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ, 08330. Meets first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee City. Doors open 7PM. Call 609-641-3782 for details.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia: Write Renaissance GPC, 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, Pa. 19087. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia. Doors open 8 p.m. all year round. Call 610-975-9119 for information.

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122 Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call 717-780-1LSV (1578) for location and times.

Affiliates

Georgia

Atlanta: The American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), PO Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 or call 404-939-0244. Information resources.

Atlanta: Atlanta Gender Explorations (A.G.E.), PO Box 77562, Atlanta, GA 30357, 404-939-2128.

Louisiana

New Orleans: The Gulf Gender Alliance, PO Box 870213, New Orleans, LA 70187-1300. Local support group.

New Jersey

N. Central Jersey: Monmouth/Ocean Trans Gender, (MOTG), write PO Box 8243, Red Bank, NJ 07701 or call 908-219-9094.

New York

Manhattan: Metropolitan Gender Network (MGN), write 561 Hudson St., Box 45, New York, NY 10014, or call 201-794-1665, Ext. 332. Local support group.

Long Island: New York GIRL & Partners, PO Box 456, Centereach, NY 11720, Call 516-732-8219 for info.

Oklahoma

Central Oklahoma: Sooners Belles, part of the Central Oklahoma Transgender Alliance (COTA). Contact, Rachel Rudnick, P.O. Box 575, Norman, OK 73070.

Renaissance News & Views

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Articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor are always welcome. Ideas for articles and opinion pieces should be sent to our editorial office care of Renaissance, PO Box 530, Bensalem, Pa. 19020-0530. Complimentary and irate letters to the editor may be sent to the same address.

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the transgender community and the general public.

Local Calendar

May

- 6 Ren. South Jersey
- 6 Ren. LSV meeting
- 13 Ren. Delaware
- 20 Ren. GPC
- 27 Balto. Affiliate

June

- 3 Ren. South Jersey
- 3 Ren. LSV meeting
- 10 Ren. Delaware
- 17 Ren. GPC
- 24 Balto. Affiliate

July

- 1 Ren. South Jersey
- 1 Ren. LSV meeting
- 8 Ren. Delaware
- 15 Ren. GPC
- 22 Balto. Affiliate



Resources

Background Papers:

- Background Papers are \$1.25 each:
1. Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing
 2. Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing
 3. PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others
 4. The Matter of Children
 5. Annotated Bibliography
 6. Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View
 7. AIDS/ HIV Safety and Ethics.
 8. Understanding Transsexualism

Significant Other Support

To network with other partners of transgendered people contact Evelyn Kirkland, PO Box 1242, Newtown, Pa., 18940.

Pen Pal Program:

If you would like to correspond with other people around the country contact Pen Pals, care of Maryann Kirkland, PO Box 1242, Newtown, Pa., 18940. Maryann will put you on the Pen Pal List and give you a copy of that list so you may correspond with as many new friends as you like.

News Beat & Reminder



Did you notice it was a triumph for the transgendered at the **Oscars**? Oh yeah, the award for best costumes went to our very most fab favorite, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, and yes the designer accepted the award in a dress made entirely of credit cards and, Martin Landau collected an Oscar for his work in *Ed Wood* — which was about a transvestite, but: the piece de resistance was when **Arnold** (Schwarzenegger, not Ziffle) introduced **Clint Eastwood** as the recipient of the prestigious **Irving Thalberg Award**. Why's that you ask? If you have been reading this column religiously you will recall that Mr. Thalberg was a crossdresser. Now ain't that a hoot? They gave our biggest macho guy an award named after a sissy. And, he liked it.

HAIRY SITUATION?

If people who shave their heads are called skinheads, does that make people like me, who shave their body hair off on a regular basis, skinbodies? A moot point. I only bring it up since I recently went through what most crossdressers dread— medical tests. Tests that require you to remove your shirt and possibly your pants. (The nurse only had to push my pant legs up, but there I lay in all my stubble covered splendor.) There were just a few routine blood tests, so I knew my arm would have to be bare. The EKG was another matter, though. "Take off your shirt and wait in that room." Well, here goes.

She never said a word. First the

blood tests and the shaved arm. Then, the EKG room and the stubble covered body. Through it all we chatted amiably as my hands sweated. (They tend to do that when people are sticking needles in me.) I have no clue what she thought about my trimmed down body hair but I knew she couldn't miss it. Could it be, she was simply being what more people in the world should work at being, civilized? Yes, I bet that's it.

It proves to me once again, people, for the most part, don't care what you do or how you dress. They may wonder about you but how will that hurt you? If you have to have a procedure done, don't risk your health worrying about what the doctors or nurses may think if parts of you are shaved (besides your face). No big deal.

Maybe someday we'll meet again, that pretty blue eyed blood test woman and I. In some other EKG room in some other town. And, maybe then I'll tell her why I go through the trouble of shaving my whole bod. Until then, we'll always have the memories.

OJ'S QUEEN

I guess we all know by now that a man in a dress (with a totally inappropriate bow in his hair! Judge Ito, call the Fashion Police!) was ejected from the O.J. Simpson trial back in April. Will B. King, a pseudonym if I've ever heard heard one (shouldn't that be Will B. Queen) who was actually wearing a pink skirt and an awful top, had been a spectator at the trial in a previous incarnation featuring swim trunks,

a necktie and Hawaiian shirt (maybe he's coming to the LSV Luau. Be very, very scared!). He has gotten in while wearing these outrageous outfits since they fill the peanut gallery by lottery. There's no discrimination when it comes to spectators. (And Will B's taste is non-discriminatory, too.)

Now, I just don't know why we bother. I mean, here we are, trying to make a place for ourselves in society that will be respected, trying to be seen as responsible human beings, not weirdoes and then a card carrying weirdo like King comes along, dresses badly and gets labeled a "transvestite" by the media. I'm sure he's just a dork who figured he could get some jollies by dressing up in an amusing little outfit and attending the trial. Well, as a noted queen once said, "We are not amused." Remember Will B. King, if you try this again, we'll hunt you down and make you appear on *Hard Copy*. If you must try it one more time, be sure to let people know you aren't a transvestite. Perhaps a large sign on your back that reads, "I'm not a transvestite but I dress like one on Court TV" would be in order.

SCHEMAIL

I got a press release from the Society of Crossdressing Hardware Engineers promoting a newsletter they put out called *SCHEMail*. All they sent was a short synopsis of the contents of the latest issue along with a copy of the cover. I would have liked to have seen the real deal but they claimed poverty and said they hoped the synopsis would "whet" my appetite. Well, they are asking for \$4 plus \$1 for postage for a copy. Looking at the sketch of the contents, it seems like it might be worth it. If you have an insatiable desire to read all you can about the transgendered community and you like your information presented in a savvy and irreverent manner, read my column! Oops, I mean get in touch with the publisher of *SCHEMail* and check it out. Nancy R. Nangeroni is the perpetrator and she can be reached by phone at 617-497-6928 and by E-mail:

continued next page

News Beat...

nrn@world.std.com. Just what we need, another wacky transgender newsletter. The cover page says, "Something vaguely resembling Transgender Wit, Wisdom, & Politics." With a header like that, all I can say is welcome aboard. The more the merrier.

STOP THE PRESSES, ITS A MAN IN A DRESS!

We really are popping up everywhere and not just in newsletters and 'zines. *Esquire* did a twelve page story in their April issue on the transgender trend. It's a pretty comprehensive job, covering such diverse people in the transgender community as Las Vegas Barbie **Jahna Steele** to legal eagle **Phyllis Randolph Frye**.

Jahna was featured in a sidebar to the main story, with enough photos included to keep any red blooded femmophile happy. Boy, does that woman look good! I'd take her home to mom. She told of how she had never felt like a man and had remained a virgin until after her surgery. She also stated that in order to maintain her beauty she has to take estrogen every day. (She has lived as a woman since the age of 17. You can't start late and look that good.)

In the main story a TS named Martine Rothblatt said that since she had surgery she doesn't have to take hormones. Now, who is right? When in doubt, go with the showgirl. Jahna is

correct in saying she must take hormones. Martine was either misquoted or doesn't understand that with the testes removed you're not getting big splashes of testosterone but you have no ovaries producing estrogen. A hormone supplement is necessary to maintain the blush of youth and femininity.

Of course the two women have completely different backgrounds: Jahna always felt like a woman and never felt like a male. Martine spent half her life as a male and claimed to have been a "regular guy." She made a decision to spend the second half of her life as a female when she found herself spending more and more time crossdressed. Could she be— transgendered, not transsexual? Read the article and you decide.

It's a well rounded treatment of the transgender phenomenon and worth reading. I found it in my local library.

At my local newsstand I picked up a copy of *Details*, it was their May **Sex** issue and I bought it for the articles. Actually I bought it, since, in my capacity as Co-Director of Outreach for Renaissance I was contacted by two reporters from the magazine asking for information about Renaissance and the drag scene in Philadelphia. I was prepared to be quoted and gave them the best sound bytes and PR speak I could muster, but as far as I can tell from perusing the mag closely, paying particular attention to the hot photos of **Traci Lords** (another woman I'd take home to mom, but mom would throw us out.), I could not find any info on

transgendered folks except a blurb in their Global Affairs section on the SF transgender rights law. (I think *RN&V* scooped them on that.) They quoted an official who said, "Now a guy can't get a pink slip for wearing one."

If I find any other reference to TG people in *Details* I'll let you know. Of course it may take a while. Along with those photos of Traci there's that article on Tantric sex and an interview with Brooke Shields.

Practically at press time we got a notice from *Mothering* magazine letting us know that they mentioned us on page 21 of their Summer 1995 issue. The notice didn't say what context we were presented in but I think it's pretty cool to be mentioned as a resource for mothers who may have transgendered children. I'll check this mention out and let you know what they had to say about Renaissance.

MRS. DOUBT ZAZA?

A report has appeared in several publications stating that **Robin Williams**, last seen in a dress as *Mrs. Doubtfire*, will return to the feminine side of the spectrum as the Zaza character in a remake of *La Cage Au Folles*, called *Birds of A Feather*. I guess Robin (that's a girl's name ain't it?) felt that his return to women's attire should be a trifle more glamorous than the Doubtfire drudgery. I can't wait to see him in some fabulous gowns. And you know the boy will make her wild. He just can't help himself. Look for high camp and I'm not talking about a tent on a mountain top.

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His co-star will be noted Broadway actor Nathan Lane. (Who?) No word on when this production will hit the silver screen but I'm sure it fits in well with other transgender friendly films like *To Wong Foo* sure to be released in the coming months. Put a few guys into drag... now that's entertainment!

HELP, I'M ORGANIZING AND I CAN'T GET UP

If you're trying to get a group off the ground in your neck of the woods, and believe me the woods are loaded with TG people looking for support, then this item is for you. The IFGE will help you reach potential members. Contact Holly Cross, c/o IFGE, PO Box 367, Wayland, MA 01778. Holly is the Mistress of the Database and Marquess of the Mailing List. She will tell you how many copies of your promotional material she needs. You then put your organizational informational brochures into envelopes, stamp them and ship them en masse to Ms. Cross. She will print the labels, stick them to the envelopes and dispatch them through the US mail. This service is only open to not-for-profit groups so don't try to get her to mail out your order form for the latest Wonder Hip Enhancer (only one twenty nine ninety five, plus tax. Order today while supplies last!)

By the way, in her note Holly added her two cents to the Premarin discussion that's been going on in *News & Views*. She said, "Premarin is *not* the only one that will do the trick." I know." Thanks for the helping hand for new groups and thanks for the hor-

mone hint. Remember girls, Premarin is made by treating horses **very** badly. When you were a little girl (or whatever), didn't you always want to ride a horse? (The jodhpurs were pretty cool.) Well, these poor horses can't even walk. They are kept pregnant in pens. If you are taking hormones, ask your doctor for something else.

ACTION AIDS & TG INFO

Alive And Kicking, the newsletter for people with AIDS and HIV, informs us that ActionAIDS in Philadelphia has published a brochure on AIDS information for the transgendered. The cover says, "There's more out there passing than you... don't forget HIV/AIDS." To get a copy of the brochure, or several copies for your support group meetings, call ActionAIDS at 215-981-3351.

If you are in Philadelphia and would like to find out about events of interest to the TG community you can call the Transgendered Information Line at 215-981-3328. Even though it is sponsored by ActionAIDS, you don't have to have to be HIV+ to call and find out what's happening. If you do have the virus and would like to attend a support groups for HIV+ transgendered people, check out Passages, every Thursday from six to eight PM at 1216 Arch Street, fourth floor. For more information, the number again is 215-981-3351. Out of town? *Don't* call collect. Not even with the 1-800 Collect thing. They need all the cash they can get to continue their work.

RHPS GETS CAST & VIRTUAL

If you've got a few spare bob, and you don't mind ordering merchandise from Merry Olde England, this might be right up your alley... if you like **Frank N. Furter**. (Funny thing is, my ex-wife loved the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and I was so far in the closet I couldn't tell her I would have loved to dress up like Frank for her private pleasure. Ah, life.)

Phaedra Kelly tells us that Frankie is immortalized in cast porcelain. She says it's a "15-inch tall cold-cast porcelain kit." It will cost you £74.95 plus £2.75 postage *within* the U.K.. Lord knows what postage is to the States. Contact: This Island Earth, 10 Elm Grove, Urmston, Manchester, M31-11N UK. If you fancy an international call ring them up at 0-61-748-0491. Don't forget the county code, luv!

I imagine they'll be able to tell you how much shipping will be and if they can take your credit card, your card company will do the dollars to pounds conversion. Thanks for the *Rocky Horror* info Phaedra.

JoAnn Roberts adds that fans of RHPS will find a Web site dedicated to the flick at <http://www.cs.wvu.edu/~paulr/rhps/rhps.html>.

And thank you gentle readers for once again giving me a reason to type till I get keyboard wrist. Ouch! Where's that Ace bandage when I need it?



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IFGE Report: Inside Atlanta Action '95

by Evelyn Kirkland

Introducing a new logo and a new format for programs, IFGE's 9th annual "Coming Together-Working Together" convention convened in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 12, 1995. Entitled *Atlanta Action '95*, the focus of this year's gathering was to motivate local groups to become visible and active in today's society. To this end, the programs were designed to develop leadership at all levels of the community and to share successful endeavors between groups.

With approximately 125 registered participants and many local walk-ins, this year's convention may not have been a financial success, but it did achieve its objectives. Although not as well represented as at previous conventions, Renaissance's leadership was visible through those representatives who did attend.

Maryann Kirkland was appointed to a full three year term on IFGE's board of directors; thereby, continuing Renaissance's representation there. Maryann continues to serve as Program Chair for next year's convention.

Alison Laing, a co-founder of Renaissance, was chosen as the new Executive Director of IFGE. This position became vacant by the resignation of Merissa Sherrill Lynn, who founded the organization.

The new programming format was introduced on Wednesday with two all-day seminars. One session was a Boot Camp for Public Speaking led by Eve Burchert who chairs IFGE's committee for Public Education and focused on improving one's ability and confidence when addressing the public. The other session was a Community "Town" Meeting where groups and individuals focused on how to build a stronger and more visible community.

The programs on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday were varied with never more than three programs presented at any one time. A fourth room was available for "spill over" discussions

from the seminars or for just conversation between convention participants.

The Congress of Transgender Organizations (CTO) met twice during the convention. At present, the CTO has representatives from 110 of the 220 groups known to exist within the community. Membership is expected to increase significantly because of outreach toward the Tri-Ess groups. Anne Johnson and Maryann Kirkland were re-elected to the offices of Chair and Secretary respectively. Lynn Walker and Patricia Winn will share the office of Vice Chair.

Many exciting projects are being undertaken by the CTO. The direction and purpose of the organization were rewritten to more clearly indicate what the CTO is about. The new direction reads: "To facilitate communication and co-operation within our community and the community at large." The new purpose reads: "To promote and encourage the exploration and acceptance of diverse representations of gender identity within our community and the community at large." This newly defined direction and purpose incorporates the principles expressed in the "transgender alliance Pledge for Community" and requires organizations to subscribe to the pledge without actually signing the statement.

The CTO adopted a proposal to create an electronic home for the worldwide gender community on the Internet. A committee of four are working to make this proposal a reality in the near future.

The CTO endeavors to expand on the outreach efforts of several local organizations by contacting religious congregations at a national level.

The first ever STAR (Special Transgender Achievement Recognition) award was presented to Ms. Jennifer Richards of MAGGIE for Meritorious Service to the Community. This award is available to any organization that wishes to recognize an individual for dedication and

service on a local level. (Contact Anne Johnson or Maryann Kirkland for details on how to nominate a STAR.)

On Wednesday night, the Trinity Awards were presented to six people in the transgender community. This year's recipients were: Dallas Denny, founder and Executive Director of AEGIS; James Green, editor of F2M, the largest circulated publication for female-to-male transgender issues; Laura Caldwell, who led IFGE's Strategic Plan, Vision 2000; Leslie Feinberg, author of *Stone Butch Blues* and *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*; Sharon Ann Stuart, director of the Military Law Project for ICTLEP; and Linda Peacock, board of directors IFGE and TRI-ESS, chair of SPICE.

The highlight of the Convention occurred on Saturday night with the presentation of the Virginia Prince Lifetime Achievement Award to Yvonne Cook-Riley, who has faithfully served IFGE as "financial wizard" since its beginning. Prior to jumping aboard the IFGE train, Yvonne was active in many local organizations in Indiana. Today Yvonne is making great strides in strengthening the bonds between the transgender and gay and lesbian communities.

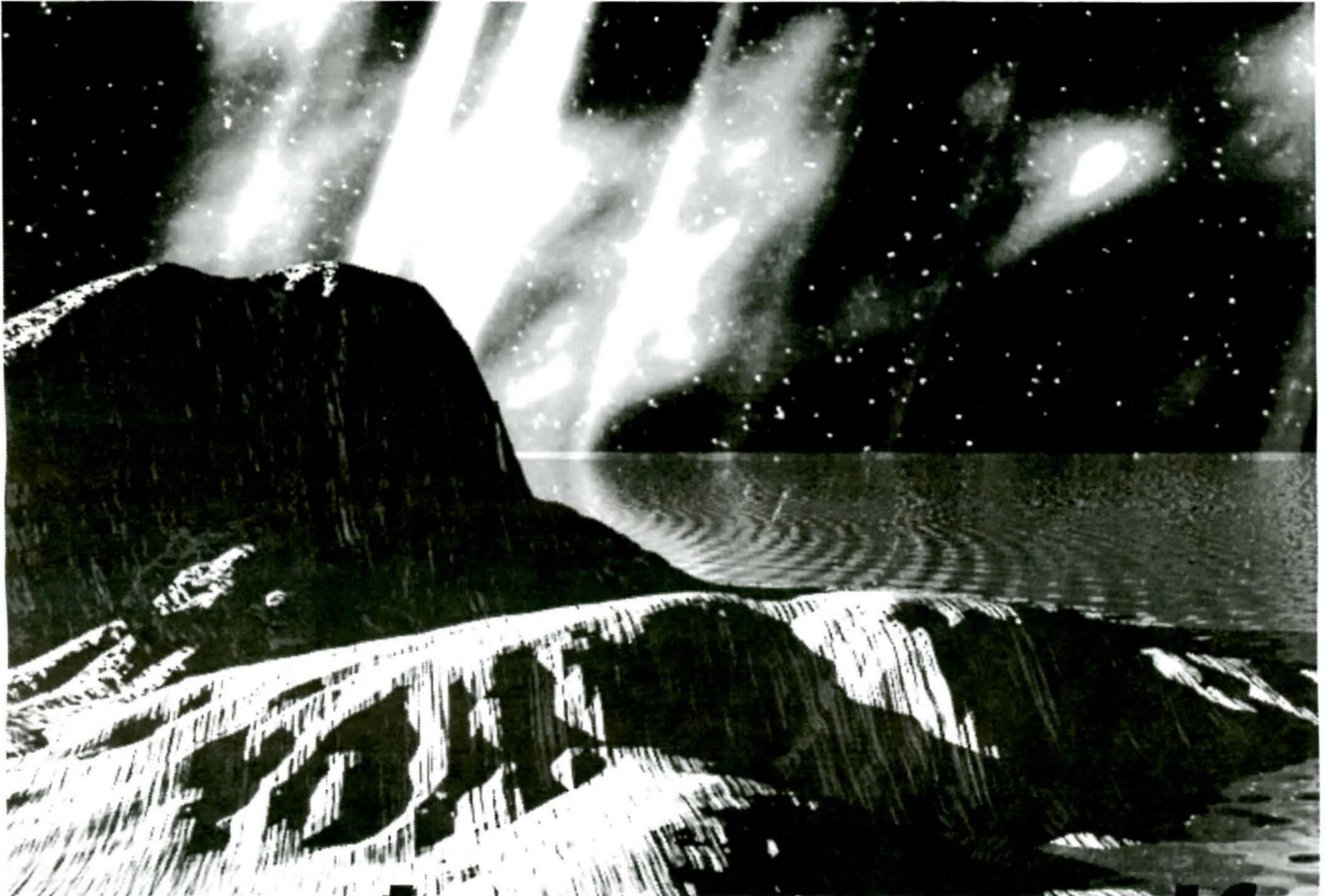
On Sunday morning, the traditional IFGE football was passed to the convention host contingent from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Next year's convention will be held in Minneapolis March 24, 1996 to March 31.

Hope to see everyone at "Minneapolis Pride."



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But Cargile's public antics point out that if crossdressing is practiced in a spirit of openness and good humor—rather than semi-embarrassment and subterfuge—others can accept it at face value. There's got to be more of a motivation for all of us to cross-dress than simply 'fun' but let us not be afraid to admit crossdressing is enjoyable as an end in itself.

So Funny I Forgot To Laugh

It's nice to know that if I miss something of note in newsletterland, somebody out there will call it to my attention. Bonnie from the *Boulton & Park* group in Texas sent us a copy of a tongue-in-cheek piece that was published in the newsletter of the *Gulf Gender Alliance*. Unfortunately, I don't have the name of the author of this piece, which is a lucky break for whoever he or she may be.

The article was in the form of a 'Hazardous Materials Report' and the hazardous material being analyzed was a substance called "Woman," and you can begin groaning now.

Here is a brief sample of what was written [my comments in brackets]:

Discoverer: Dr. Adam R. Male [Even the most misogynistic clod wouldn't claim that man 'discovered' woman.]

Physical Properties: Boils at nothing, freezes without reason; melts if given special treatment; bitter if incorrectly used; yields when pressure applied to correct points. [This was men's magazine'-style humor from the 50's and 60's but this is 1995... isn't it?]

Chemical Properties: Affinity for gold, silver, and precious stones; activity greatly increased by saturation in alcohol; may explode spontaneously for no known reason; most powerful capital reducing agent known to civilization. [Why waste time simply demeaning women when you can just insult them outright?]

Common Uses: Highly ornamental, especially in sports cars; great aid to relaxation; effective cleaning agent. [Answer that phone. If it's Gloria Allred, tell her we're not in.]

The strike is over and the replacement players have been banished to the sandlots once again. And not a moment too soon, either.

I think this last batch of newsletters from which I cull the items for this column were written by replacement crossdressers because there seemed to be a dearth of interesting material.

So it'll be nice to have the major leaguers back at their word processors. I can look forward to a few hits, some errors, maybe a wild pitch, and the inevitable drag bunt. But please... no runners.

If That's What You Call Fun

The January 16 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine carried a profile of socialite businessman and crossdresser Neil Cargile. It's an interesting study of a successful 'man's man' who happens to enjoy—quite openly—the thrill of public crossdressing.

My interest in this article was not the surface facts surrounding how "High Heel Neil" (as he is called by friends) goes about his crossdressing or his fashion choices. The descriptions of his outfits and the accompanying photo is not terribly flattering. Mr. Cargile is a ruggedly handsome fifty-something man. As a woman, he favors flashy, perhaps trashy, outfits that are unremarkable except in their brazenness.

John Berendt, the journalist writing the profile, attempts to understand the crossdressing phenomenon in general and Cargile's motivation to crossdress in particular. In this respect, it is an excellent basics course for the non-crossdressing public.

Cargile, who doesn't really use a femme name but sometimes refers to himself as She-Neil (as in chenille) is pretty blunt about his motivation to crossdress. "It's fun," he repeats many times whenever the author tries to pin him down on why he likes to cross-dress. At times, the "fun" motivation seems to be a defensive explanation to keep more serious issues at bay. The only other reason that Cargile admits for his outrageously feminine crossdressing is that he enjoys attention, especially when he knows his audience is shocked and amused by his presence.

When he isn't wearing ridiculously short skirts and fancy women's hats in full drag, She-Neil enjoys mixing his masculine and feminine wardrobes. The author of the profile recounts his meeting with Cargile at New York's Tavern on the Green restaurant on a crowded Sunday afternoon—where Cargile showed up as his male self in a navy double-breasted blazer and dress shirt, coupled with a micro miniskirt and high heels. The tourists went crazy gawking at him/her and Mr. Cargile loved every minute, and snapshot, of it.

She-Neil isn't a member of any crossdresser's support group. And maybe that's a good thing because some support groups on which I've reported have dress codes against just the type of outrageous female dress and *gender-mixing* of wardrobes in which Cargile does his thing. And I'm sure there are some community leaders out there who find his insistence on having "fun" as somehow beneath the dignity of the "true" crossdresser.

Tests: Rosy pink when found in natural state; turns green when placed beside a better specimen. [Now that you've dug that hole, should we just throw the dirt in on top of you, or do you really think you can get out of it?]

If this supposedly humorous piece was found in the *American Beer Drinker's Journal*, it wouldn't be any funnier but maybe the context would make more sense. In a transgendered support group newsletter, it's unfathomable. Aren't we trying to emulate women? Aren't we supposed to have a more empathetic outlook on what it's like to be a woman in our society? Hell, forget all that: aren't we supposed to *like* women? What was the author thinking when he submitted this for publication? And which editor was asleep at the switch when this trainload of woman-bashing tripe came rumbling down the tracks?

I once wrote that our community newsletters were our calling cards to the outside world. A piece like this sends the wrong message to any intelligent person reading it. Someone outside the transgender community would be rightly suspicious about our stated interest in things feminine upon reading something like this item. Let's be more vigilant in what we publish and what we are saying about ourselves through our newsletters.

[Ed. note: See the *Letters To The Editor* column for more on this issue.]

Stifle Yourself Archie

The Memphis Transgendered Alliance puts out the newsletter *Powder & Pearls*. In their February issue, they printed an unsigned letter to the editor. Like the "humorous" article above, I could hardly believe the content of this letter appeared in 1995. Rather than paraphrase the writer, I'll let his own words stand for themselves.

"I must protest the apathy of this group (MTGA) on the subject of homosexuality," he or she begins. "[At] recent group meetings, there has been present an admitted homosexual. As a crossdresser, I ask for separation.

"...While I engage in occasional

crossdressing, I do not wish to be confused with the homosexual."

Our letter-writer then takes a few sentences to explain how heterosexual crossdressers must allay the fears of spouses that crossdressing partners may have homosexual tendencies.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I believe there should be an acknowledged separation between the transgendered and the homosexual," he writes before signing off with this kicker, "I agree we should be nice to our guest, but our guest should also be severely limited to the quantity of visits, say once, and also limited to our group resources, for example, our patience."

I was waiting for his suggestion that the homosexual member be required to wear a pink Star of David on her dress so that any new members would know that they were dealing with an "admitted homosexual."

MTGA is an open group, not limited to heterosexual crossdressers, and another uncredited member (presumably an officer) wrote a counter-opinion in favor of diversity and freedom within the group. In fact, the MTGA meets in the Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center, which would make the exclusion of homosexuals somewhat hypocritical, don't you think?

Unfortunately, there are probably more than a few heterosexual crossdressers who don't mind taking refuge in gay establishments because of the easy acceptance therein, while secretly harboring the worst kinds of prejudice against homosexuals.

It is true that most heterosexual crossdressers wish to maintain a distinction in the public's eyes between us and the stereotype of gay drag. But we won't get sympathy from anyone with two brain cells to rub together if we act like Archie Bunkers in high heels.

How Dare You Have Such A Sense Of Humor!

The Transgenderist is the newsletter of the TG Independence Club in Albany NY. A regular feature of the newsletter is a column by a member

writing under the name Miss Take and the name of the column is *Gotterdammerung* which I think is German for "Ve Are der Master Race". Anyway, the *Gotterdammerung* column is Miss Take's irreverent view of the transgendered experience.

In their March issue, another regular contributor to the newsletter, Callan Williams, wrote to complain about Miss Take's less than serious approach to things. You see, Callan Williams is very serious about stuff like transgenderism, and usually takes up a page or two of each of their newsletters with her own views of things transgendered. Her letter of complaint to Miss Take was printed in full and is filled with references to learned studies on gender dysphoria, complete with words like "gynemimetic." All as a means to show the contrast between her own seriousness and Miss Take's coverage of things like Reba McEntire meeting her drag impersonator in a new Nashville revue. Apparently, that meeting was not gynemimetic enough to meet Callan's stringent requirement for intellectual stimulation.

Callan closes her multisyllabic diatribe thus: "Transgender isn't a game! You embarrass us and our community by your frivolous attitudes!"

It never ceases to amaze me how many people wish to control all aspects of everyone else's involvement in the TG community. We've seen more than a few groups impose dress codes; there is the sexual orientation litmus test in some organizations; some have said I have no right to report on things I see in other newsletters; and Callan Williams is only one of a few who think that a sense of humor is a dangerous thing. Her view is especially odd given the name of her own organization: TG *Independence Club*.

There are enough of us out there to allow for the diversity of each individual. We don't need to run everyone through Callan Williams'—or anyone else's—cookie cutter.



Attention Crossdressers: Please let your Significant Other read this article.

Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are

by Lily (*NY Girls & Partners*)

I am amazed at the partners and wives, WHERE ARE THEY? Each and every month I read a dozen or so newsletters from around the country, hoping and looking to find an article written by a partner. But other than a very select few of us, we somehow remain, non-existent, invisible and silent. I find this silence deafening!

My emotions run from sincerely felt empathy, to downright *mad* at the (for the most part), total lack of partner participation. Once again, I ask, WHERE ARE YOU?

More often than not, I have found myself the only partner at a party, where most of the people are married. I can count on one hand the number of women that attended a non-dressed meeting. I find this very confusing. If our partners were into golf, or bowling, or tennis, and we weren't, wouldn't we take some interest in it? WAKE-UP ladies. Those are hobbies and can change with the seasons. His cross-dressing is *not* a hobby and is here to stay. Now, wouldn't it seem logical to learn more about it?

To make a point (I will use fictitious names): Just this past month, John/Jenny attended a party in someone's home, a party at a hotel, a board of directors meeting, and a non-dressed discussion meeting. He says he is "happily married" and his wife accepts his crossdressing. Well then, where is she? Doesn't she want to know where he is going? Isn't she curious about the people he is spending time with? He spends 3-4 nights out of the home every month, in places she has never been, sharing his life with people she doesn't know. Isn't there something wrong here? When he goes home, how can he talk about where he has been, or who he has spoken to? How can she know and understand what is going on in her partner's life? When it's his turn

to speak at a discussion meeting about his inner feelings and thoughts—she is not there to hear. Shouldn't what he is revealing be of more importance to her than to anyone else? Yet, on the many occasions when John/Jenny and I have spoken he is always proclaiming his "happy marriage." I can't help but shake my head in bewilderment.

I believe a couple should share their lives. Now, don't misunderstand me, sharing does not mean suffocating. If one partner is into something that the other partner isn't—shouldn't the other person be responsible to know enough about it so that they can, at the very least, have a conversation concerning the other person's interest? Shouldn't a couple be a team? Doesn't a team work together? How horrible would it be to attend a meeting? Many groups even have non-dressing meetings, if that's your problem.

In discussing this dilemma with many people, I have heard all the justifications. Everything from, "We would have to get a baby-sitter if I went" to "If I don't go with him, maybe it will go away."

May I repeat—IT'S NOT GOING TO GO AWAY! By alienating ourselves, we put up a wall in our relationship. Eventually this wall is too high for either partner to climb.

Personally I don't understand how a partner can "tolerate" her partner's crossdressing. How can you say you love someone, and just tolerate part of his being? Let's stop here for a second. Nowhere does it say that you have to stay in this relationship. *So get out.* What are you waiting for? A slow *death*. But before you end it, try a meeting or two. Talk with another woman. Read a book on crossdressing. You may be surprised to learn that the "monsters" you thought were at these meetings are genuine human beings, from all walks of life.

I have taken the other route. I am very involved in all of my partner's crossdressing ventures. And *no*, it is not always easy. There are things that I have a very hard time with. But I can tell you this: We are a team! We are extremely close, and have a lot of fun together. We attend everything together, and I wouldn't have it any other way. When there becomes a problem, we work it out together, "Together" what a great word!








In order for a relationship to survive, your partner should be the number one person in your life. If you *both* feel this way, you are a loving team, and can only grow closer together. Although I'll be the first to admit it's not always easy, for the most part, we are very lucky women. Our men are gentle, warm, loving, and very devoted. These are the characteristics that made us fall in love with them in the first place. Our partners are exploring another side of themselves, and it's probably twice as scary for them, as it is for us. Share in their experience. Don't let him be alone or I can almost promise you, you will be the one *alone* in the end.

I have been privileged to attend many support discussion groups, and although the room echoes with an acceptance for one another, the people we want to accept us the most are the people we love. Be there for him. Love him. Take strength from each other. Share each other's fears, and be a part of his world. Be a team. Know that the road ahead will be bumpy for *both* of you. But, if you hold each other's hand, and keep the door for communication open, you will be on the winning team.

Reprinted from *Visions & Attitudes*, the newsletter of *New York Girl & Partner*, Box 456, Centereach, NY 11720. *New York Girl & Partner* is an affiliate of the Renaissance Education Association, Inc.



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"Men, left to themselves, will engage in endless ceremonial acts."

— Jack Wutherford

One ceremonial act we all recognize is the "changing of the guard" within our institutions. Last month this newsletter announced that Merissa Sherrill Lynn, founder of the Internationa Foundation for Gender Education, resigned as IFGE's Executive Director, leaving the organization completely, and that our own Alison Laing will be taking that position in the near future. Lots of people have been saying now that Merissa is gone IFGE's problems are over. Not necessarily so. While Merissa did cause some havoc with IFGE's image, she was *not* responsible for the financial difficulties IFGE has found itself in over the past few years. The folks responsible for that are still entrenched at IFGE and those money problems are not likely to go away soon. But, if anyone can turn IFGE around, it's Alison, providing the board listens to her recommendations.

I gave out a WWW URL last month for the CDS storefront on the Internet. It might not have been "open" when you tried to visit. It should be up and running by the time you read this, so go visit "www.cdspub.com" and leave me a message at CyberQueen@cdspub.com.

We've all heard the expression TVs on

tv, but this is really a TV on tv... Levi Strauss is running an ad on late-night television in England that has the social "watchdogs" in an uproar. The ad shows an attractive black woman getting into a taxi in New York. The taxi driver gives the lady a leering look until she pulls out an electric razor and begins shaving. The tag line is "Cut for men since 1850." Levi has no plans to run the ad in the U.S. since we're considered even more uptight about sex than the Brits.

Here in North America, we have our own Drag Icon, RuPaul, who has been signed as spokesmodel for M•A•C cosmetics. Frank Toskan, M•A•C owner and creative director of the Toronto-based company said, "We have found a beautiful person who happens to be 7 foot tall, a black man, a gorgeous woman and certainly ageless. Why not RuPaul? We couldn't find anyone who wore more makeup and had so much fun doing it." Hey Frank, come to one of our events.

Hot Pants conjures up some sexual images and some designers are trying to bring those skimpy shorts back. It seems every fashion atelier in Paris is stocked with Hot Pants. Leave it to the French to try to revive a fashion best left dead.

There are always the jokes about "large" European women, but it seems that some of them are, in fact, getting larger, especially in the waist and hips. A recent survey of 10,000 German women and girls compared sizes to 10 years ago and showed that the average waist size is 29.92 inches (up an inch) and the average hips are 39.37 inches (up an inch), while the bust average was 36.22 inches. Sorta shoots the Hell outta the Brunhilde icon, doesn't it?

My fave magazine, *Allure*, is on my "hit" list this month for an article they published in their April issue, "Dude Looks Like A Lady," by Vanessa Friedman. Ms Friedman interviewed several drag

queens for their makeup tricks and tips. In the article Friedman distinguishes female impersonators from transvestites by defining transvestites as "...men who dress as women and who look like men dressing as women with large, masculine builds, heavy features, and five o'clock shadows..." while female impersonators and drag queens "...tend to have small bones, fine features and look more like genetic females than genetic females themselves." Well, this slight could not go without a response, so I fired off an email missive to the editors. If you'd like to add your two cents, please send a message to alluremag@aol.com.

Curves are IN for the next few seasons, thank goddess. Designers are hanging onto the feminine shape for Fall and Winter fashions. The waist is still the focus of most clothing, although breasts still get their share of attention. If you're thinking of buying a new suit or dress, better get out the Nordic Track first. Unless you don't need a Nordic Track in which case I hate you already.

We gave a MONA last month to *It's Time America* for not seeming to do very much. Perhaps they're just a little overwhelmed. I received a copy in late March of an *It's Time America* newsletter dated January 31, 1995. According to the newsletter, ITA is incorporated and has an Employer Identification Number, but, they say, the IRS does not know how to classify them, so they're still waiting for some kind of federal exemption. What is not obvious to me is what, if anything, has been accomplished by ITA. Without any kind of federal recognition, ITA "directors" are simply acting as private citizens. ITA should be directing at least some of its efforts "inward" toward the community. They should be at every event teaching workshops on how to set up regional and local lobbying groups, how to start an effective letter writing campaign, how to go about setting up appointments to meet legislators, and

HOT•BUZZ

more. They're not and that's no way to build support from within. There is at least one bright spot in the ITA universe and it seems to be *It's Time Texas*, headed by Sara De Palma. Sara is hosting a talk-radio show in Houston and is working the Texas legislature to get a documentation law passed that will make it easier for transgenderists and transsexuals to get legal documents changed.



To all those people in the tg community who wish that drag queens and transvestites who dress provocatively would become invisible, I offer this quote by Michael Musto from the Oct. 1994 issue of *Spin* magazine: "... a gay man's job is not to represent all gays. It is to be himself, do his best work, and be the finest person he can think of. Only then can he make his mark and further the gay cause. I didn't come out of the closet to conform, to become a well-oiled goodwill machine. Why the fuck doesn't anyone ask the suits 'Aren't you afraid you might be hurting the gay movement because you're so damn boring?'"



The April issue of *Esquire* magazine carried an article titled "The Third Sex" which was really about the growing transgender rights movement. Writer John Taylor interviewed Phyllis Frye, Merissa Lynn, Yvonne Cook-Riley, Riki Wilchins, Martine Rothblatt, and Dallas Denny among others not so recognizable in the community. Phyllis Frye comes off extremely well in the piece. Overall, I thought the article was very positive and well-balanced. However, others did not feel Mr. Taylor was fair in noting his perceptions of transgender people. Wilchins, co-founder of *Transsexual Menace*, held a protest in front of the *Esquire* offices in New York. The Rikster, as she calls herself, felt that Taylor dissed Lynn and some of the other transsexuals mentioned in the article. I think there is sensitive and hyper-sensitive and Riki is hyper on this one.



This just in from Paris... the "official" length for skirts is to the knee. While that

may be fine for real women, we've got to consider leg proportion differences between males and females. A female's legs are longer than a male of the same height. So, in order to make your legs look longer, your hem should fall above the knee, but not too far above. Show a little class, not a little ass.



Well, you know you're a celebrity when you have a WWW site dedicated to your work and someone else put it up on the Web. One of the most creative and active people in the tg community, Kate Bornstein, has a WWW site. Visit and read about Kate and her work. You'll find it at: http://english.hss.emu.edu/ctheory/a-kate_bornstein.html. Now that's a mouthful! Kate was one of the seven original directors of Renaissance just after it was founded in 1987 and we're very proud of her.



Nancy Ganz, the Maven of Lycra, is at it again. Her line of Bodyslimmers lingerie has expanded by three. These new items are part of the "Beautiful Bottoms" collection: Butt Booster... gently lifts and gives firm support; Belly Band... firms tummy, trims hips, and gives smooth lines; Waist Cincher... adds curves and smooths out wrinkles. Hmm. I'll take all three, please, and pass the ice cream.



Here's more hype... but this time it is good hype. It would seem that IFGE and the Powder Puffs of California (PPOC) have come to an agreement on a combined event for 1997. Yvonne Cook-Riley (IFGE) and Joan Goodnight (PPOC) sat down in February to discuss how IFGE and PPOC could work together to bring a unified community event to SoCal. The result of those talks will be *California Unity '97*, a joint convention combining Cal Dreamin and Coming Together-Working Together. Cook-Riley and Goodnight worked out the details which will be forthcoming in a joint announcement, but we know the event will be held in March 1997. Congratulations to Ms. Goodnight and Ms. Cook-Riley for putting community first and politics second.



We've been over this ground before, but it bears repeating. Here's the scenario:

Ms. X writes an article in newsletter Z. Ms. Y, reading Z, feels compelled to write to newsletter Z about Ms. X's article. What ensues would be called a "flame war" on the Internet. Usually Ms. X's argument goes something like this: *You have no business commenting on [insert issue]. You don't have all the facts and, besides, it's internal and none of your business!* Well, wrong. Anything printed and distributed to the community at large is fair game for commentary by anyone. It's called the First Amendment right to Free Speech. If the author doesn't want outside comment, then it shouldn't be published and distributed in the first place. Matters of internal politics and policies should be kept internal. But, some issues are everybody's business, like discrimination.



Reports of my impending surgery are greatly exaggerated... It was reported as rumor in the April issue of *The Transgenderist* (TGIC, Albany) that I have my tickets to Trinidad, Colo for SRS. The date of the issue should have been a hint. But if that was too subtle a hint, then the "note" preceeding the rumor should have been the giveaway...



"GUMP Happens... The Gender Unified Marketing Program should be an incredible step forward in gender support. An umbrella organization with roots in King of Prussia, PA, it combines established conferences, magazines, support groups, bookstores, and gender research & education groups under one roof, to allow true one-stop shopping, and achieve economies of scale otherwise unavailable. This 'food court' approach, with distinctly different groups available through one focal point, should quickly make GUMP the dominant organization in Gender." The byline is Miss Take, but I know this writing is the product of the fertile, bizarre, and twisted mind of Callan Williams. I had a good laugh at the piece and those who believed I'm ready to trade in my factory OEM equipment and my wife.



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Report: A Night Of A Thousand Gowns

by Carol and Babs

On Saturday March 25, at the Grand Ballroom of the New York Sheraton, we attended the most glamorous fund raising event in the New York gay scene. Produced by the Imperial Court of New York, a member of the Greater New York Gender Alliance (GNYGA), the Night of A Thousand Gowns is an elegant formal extravaganza, full of exotic and glamorous, sights and sounds, well orchestrated with sometimes dramatic and sometimes tongue-in-cheek pomp and circumstance. An absolute delight to behold, certainly for someone seeing this for the first time. Almost everyone there remarked that this edition was the most enjoyable!

The Imperial Court of NY is a social fund raising organization that benefits many charities with direct effect in the gay/lesbian community. This year's event benefited The Community Health

Project (CHP) and the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD).

After an impressive, professionally choreographed, "Tribute to Broadway" by the entire Court, the evening's program began. The Motion Picture Academy, Shriners, politicians, and Fortune 500 companies could learn how to throw a "changing of the guard" banquet that is interesting, entertaining and covers all the business!

The ever elegant and graceful Dowager Empress Coco LaChine in her role as President of the Court started the program. When she introduced the outgoing monarchs, it seemed it took 5 exciting minutes for the Empress and her entourage to reach the large stage. NY State Assembly member Deborah Glick was honored for her support to the Lesbian and Gay community. (Too bad it

wasn't Mayor Guiliani, would have loved to see him in drag!) All the many out of town "Nobility" (representatives from Courts all over North America) were honored, too.

During a break in the program, when some changed their gowns, the Hot Lavender Swing Band accompanied the incomparable Miss NYC, the Countess Victoria Weston, who sang to an enthusiastically appreciative and admiring audience. Our disappointment over the lack of encores was tempered by the knowledge that she had to change and participate in the next part of the program. It was enjoyable dancing to real acoustical music played by a live big band, where we joined couples of every variety on the dance floor!

Dinner was very good for a banquet, flavorful, without being spicy, and professionally served. When the band took a break, a DJ took over with more

continued on next page

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contemporary music. For dancing as well as listening, it was a good balance, something for everyone's musical taste.

The ceremonies continued with the presentation of the College of Monarchs, followed by the New York Court members by rank, highlighted by the much anticipated and highly dramatic entrance of the Absolute Empress VII Coco LaChine, The Celestial Dragon Empress of New York, Heir apparent to Empress Jose I, Third in Line of Succession, an entrance befitting her title. Then came the Absolute Empress Jose I, and finally the grand entrance (Mahler must have anticipated her entrance when he wrote his First Symphony) and Coronation of H.M.I.S.M. Empress IX Philomena, the Empress of Faith, Hope, and Cartier.

The beautiful Empress Philomena is a local NYC "tv" cable star, Miss NYC runner-up, and has appeared on network tv and off-broadway. She, as well as several other members of the

court, will appear in the upcoming movie, *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*.

Can't forget the dessert. After an exotic feast for the eyes and ears, the Viennese table treated the stomach. A lot of gals wished they didn't have their corsets on! Even the fresh fruit was good, ah....., we did cheat a little.

A couple of observations. First, of the several politicians who sent letters of acknowledgement and congratulations to the Court, two made reference to the "gay, lesbian and transgender community." The outgoing Emperor V Ron, Emperor of Social Change and the Empress VIII Billie Ann Miller, Empress of Peace and Love, spoke out on behalf of the transgender, leather, drag, lesbian and gay communities." Miss New York City, the Countess Victoria, was very gracious in her message as a member of the "New York transgender community."

Secondly, noticeably absent from

the gala were representatives of the local transgender community. Although the Imperial Court is a member of the Greater New York Gender Alliance, along with Crossdressers International, Chi Delta Mu (Tri Ess), Girls Night Out, LIFE, the Metropolitan Gender Network, and most recently Monmouth Ocean Transgender (MOTG), except for ourselves, we didn't recognize members of any of these groups. The Court did formally greet and recognize Veronica Vera and faculty and students from her "Miss Vera's Finishing School" on stage.

It was an evening to remember! A dazzling display of silk, satin, glitter and glitz. We certainly had a wonderful time. Can't wait till next year!

Ed. Note: Maybe someone should tell the Imperial Court of New York that we never received word of this year's event.



Reserve Now For The LSV Luau

Nikki Hoy all you hula queens! It's the 1995 LSV Luau. Join the ladies of Renaissance LSV in the air conditioned comfort of the Sheraton Inn in Harrisburg, Pa., on August twenty sixth. Grass skirts will shake and food and fun will be had by one and all. The cash bar opens at 7:00 PM and the dining commences at 8:00 PM.

The menu features Chicken Hawaiian, Broiled Haddock, Teriyaki Beef Kabobs and all the accouterments and accompanying gourmet delights.

At 9:00 the Luau show draws on the talents of the dynamite performers who captivated the crowd last year: Kelly Sheridan, Tina Rapport, Kathy Michaels, Richelle and Erica Edwards.

It's only \$40/person if you pay by July 31st. After that it's \$42, so sign up early. Mail check/money order to Renaissance LSV, PO Box 2122, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2122. No tickets will be sent, your name will be on the list at the door. To reserve a room at the Sheraton, call 717-561-2800. Aloha!

New & Views On The Net

Keeping pace with modern technology, Renaissance is happy to announce you can now send us your Letters to the Editor by email. Our Editor invites those with an urge to communicate to address their electronic missives to: bensalem@cpcn.com, since email is so much easier than writing a letter, going to the post office, standing in line, paying for the stamps, etcetera, Ms. Gardner may not only run your electronic letter in *News & Views*, but dash off a quick reply on the Net.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am a supportive wife of a cross-dresser and a very active member of the Boulton & Park Society. I write a column called "Bonnie's Bitching" for our newsletter, *Gender Euphoria*. I volunteer more time than most of our transgendered members who are too busy shopping or painting their nails.

It is for this reason I am just now writing to you about a not so funny joke that was printed in the December '94 issue of *The Flip Side*, the newsletter of the Gulf Gender Alliance, an affiliate organization of Renaissance.

Just before I stopped working for Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas, I was employed in the Safety Office as a Senior Research Chemist and I was responsible for seeing that all hazardous Waste generated at SwRI was disposed of properly. I was also responsible for maintaining a file of all the Material Safety Data Sheets for the chemicals at SwRI.

The "joke" referring to WOMEN as a Hazardous Material was demeaning, harassing, and not called for from a group of crossdressers who for some reason, I thought, liked to be treated like women. You, who dress as women because you hold us in such high regard. You, as crossdressers, wish to be accepted by the public and your wives and partners and this is the kind of trash you print in your newsletter?

Perhaps the members of the Gulf Gender Alliance should change their name to Bubbas R Us. Your motto could be, "We drink beer, chew tobacco, and run women down!"

I worked for over fifteen years in a male dominated profession only to be treated as a second class citizen and be paid less for equal work. Now I have given the last five years of my time volunteering to help a community that prints this

kind of demeaning joke in their newsletter. I can only assume that GGA does not have a wives support group, or welcomes genetic women to their meetings. I cannot believe that Renaissance would accept your group as an affiliate.

Maybe I have lost my sense of humor but why should I try and help the transgender community only to be run down as a woman? I guess maybe I was wrong in thinking that transgendered males would be more aware of what genetic women have to deal with every day in the male dominated world. I thought the transgendered knew what it was like not to be accepted as first class citizens. I can only assume that all I read is just fantasy and the down trodden community does not exist. Give me a break.

I would like a public apology from the Gulf Gender Alliance on the front page of your next newsletter and an apology to your mother affiliate, Renaissance.

If you want to look like a lady, why not start thinking and acting like one? Frilly underpants and a pretty frock are not necessary to show women the respect they deserve.

Sincerely, Bonnie Brooks

We got this letter from the Flip Side Senior Editor before we went to press on this issue.

Dear Bonnie,

This is in response to your letter regarding our December 1994 *Flip Side* in which an analogy was made between Women and a Material Safety Data Sheet. For your information, this item was given to me by my genetic sister, who had read several previous issues of the *Flip Side* and thought we needed to "lighten up" from some of our previous rather heavy political outreach efforts. She happens to be a staunch supporter of the gender community in general and her "sister" in particular.

Since you personally know quite a few of the GGA ladies, I'm sure you also know that we are not "Bubbas," as charged. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

We do regret that you did not share the intended humor in the article. By looking a little further, it should be intuitively obvious that we are striving to share this "hazardous area" with the ob-

jects of our devotion and to leave bubadom!

In the interest of community instead of strife, I would prefer to allow you to have made your shot and vented your feelings, but see no sense pursuing this in the newsletter. I, of course, am sending a courtesy copy of this letter to Renaissance.

Yours truly, Cissy G. Conley
Flip Side Senior Editor

P.S. When this response was read at our monthly meeting this past weekend, there was unanimous approval, including the three wives present!

Angela comments: A lesson learned? As Sly and the Family Stone once sang, "Different strokes for different folks." One person's humor is another person's insult. I read the Hazardous Materials Data Sheet and didn't find it funny. I thought it was indicative of a kind of 1950s attitude toward women. I wasn't insulted. I just thought it shouldn't have been printed, but then I'm not a born woman. In her response Ms. Conley says they wanted people to understand they were trying to "share in this hazardous area." Being like a woman is more than adhering to outmoded, repressive attitudes toward them. Unfortunately, many crossdressers don't have a clue about what feminism means. Of course many feminists use their ideology as an excuse to male bash. Often times the pendulum swings too far. But, let's hope we learned something from this experience and start a meaningful dialogue. That's the only way toward understanding and community. (See this month's *Vis A Vis* for some of the hazardous humor and Ms. Amberle's witty critique.)

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the MONA, "All Fizz, No Soda Award" for *It's Time America*. It was very well deserved. Since we started our initial informational blitz in the wake of *It's Time America's* founding last August during TRANSGEN 94, the other co-directors of ITA and myself have done what transgendered activists everywhere do best: argue.

continued next page

Since working with them proved to be impossible, I co-founded a chapter of ITA in my home state of Maryland, and *It's Time, Maryland* has been doing what the national "organization" has failed to do... something. We have lobbied Annapolis for anti-discrimination and re-documentation measures, including changes to the state's existing health code, and fought the state's powerful gay and lesbian lobby, the Free State Justice Campaign, for inclusion in their anti-discrimination legislation, thus far without success, but we are still pushing hard.

Sarah De Palma of *It's Time, Texas* has been working even harder, pushing for transgender inclusion in hate crimes legislation and full inclusion in the gay and lesbian civil rights agenda of Texas. And Penny Huggins is working to do the same with *It's Time, Virginia*. Curious... it seems the more de-centralized we are, the more we get done. Could it be that the "Transgender Movement" no longer needs big, unwieldy organizations (and egos) to lead it? The notion gives me pause whenever I hear of the next "grand alliance" being formed to meet, greet and party at the next big convention. Have fun girls, but I gotta go. The real revolution is happening beyond those banquet doors.

Very Truly Yours, Jessica M. Xavier

P.S. You have my permission to print this in News & Views if you feel it is sufficiently inflammatory.

Angela replies: Thank you for the update, Jessica. We received an article from Sarah De Palma about the activities of *It's Time, Texas*. Due to space limitations in this issue, it will appear in the June issue.

To the Editors

I thought Joann Robert's article on the World Wide Web was excellent. There are so many wonderful T-resources springing up every month on the Internet. Today, for an investment of about \$1000 in a computer system, software and a SLIP/PPP account you can, without knowing anything about computers, have access to this world in one or two days. I highly encourage this, but thought some extra points should be added for our members not familiar with the net.

• Passwords: Whether you go through an on-line service (CompuServe or America On-Line, etc.) or through an Internet service provider, you will receive [a username and] a password. Your password is your first line of defense against computer hackers and fraud. Never give out your password to anyone. And change it at least every other month. Don't make it a simple word or name.

• Credit Cards: Be extremely careful about sending your credit card number on-line. There are commercial products available on the net which you can order by charge card. Be careful just as you do when using your card on the phone.

• Lurking: When subscribing to any Newsgroups, like alt.transgendered, or soc.support.transgendered, listen and read the postings for a period of time before sending your own post. This is called lurking and is encouraged. Make sure your post is appropriate for that newsgroup.

• Watch for jarheads: Just like any place in society, the Internet is filled with jerks. You need to be careful what you tell people, and be very careful about giving out your phone number.

• Educate yourself: There are hundreds of books on the net. Read one or two to become familiar it.

• Watch the costs: Know if your modem is dialing a local or long distance number. Internet sessions can last for hours, so be careful if going by long distance. All on line services charge fees for certain features and time. Know what they are, so you won't be shocked with a \$300.00 monthly bill.

• The Internet has its own language:
:-) means happy or smiling.
:- (means sad.
{{{ }}} means hugs or hugging.
LOL means laughing out loud or laughing on line.

Newbie means a new person.

Flame means when somebody responds very angry to a post or topic.

USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS means you're shouting. Don't!

But most of all enjoy it! The Internet and on-line services are a great place to meet all types of people and find information on anything. I found REA through the net, so the proof is in the pudding.

Lisa Gold (LisaG2112@aol.com)

PS: I hope REA is planning a WWW home page one of these days. It is a wonderful way to get information out.

JoAnn replies: Thanks for the additional info. It was greatly appreciated. As for REA on the Web, check out www.cdspub.com. Go to the TG Resources page and you will find detailed information on Renaissance, AEGIS, and the most accurate, up-to-date list of tg support groups in the U.S.

Dear Editors,

Despite the ephemeral nature of the MONA awards (just words in the air), I am pleased and honored to accept on behalf of I.F.G.E., the "Dale Carnegie" Award for our efforts in distinguishing between "fun" and "serious" events. I also wish to thank Dina Amberle for her comments during the past years. She was quick to make the distinction between the serious I.F.G.E. folk like myself and the "frivolous recreational" TVs of her circle.

As far as the low attendance at the Atlanta convention goes, consider these pearls of wisdom: "Many are called but few are choosen" [sic] and "One is either part of the problem or part of its solution."

Very truly yours, Maryann Kirkland
I.F.G.E. Board of Directors
Renaissance National Board

JoAnn replies: Ms. Kirkland is close but doesn't win the Kewpie doll. The aphorism on problems and solutions comes from the 1970's environmental movement goes thus — "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." In this writer's opinion that's what's been wrong with IFGE. I wish Ms. Kirkland better luck than I had at changing IFGE's participation in the community's solutions.

Letter to Editor

Thought you might be interested in some news from "Down Under."

The Australian Transgender Support Association (ATSA) of Queensland is negotiating with the Queensland Police Service to preserve certain rights for transgendered people when in police cus-

continued on last page

Dear Doctor

Dr. William R. Stayton answers your questions in a monthly column.

Send questions to PO Box 530, Bensalem, Pa. 19020

Dear Doctor Bill,

I have been reading *News & Views* for several months and really enjoy it, particularly your column. I haven't attended a Renaissance meeting yet and while I'm sure I need to meet others like myself (I am a CD) I worry about what people will think of how I look. I know I need help with my makeup and such and I guess I'm afraid some one might make fun of me. I know that's silly but what can I do to get myself to a meeting?

Alicia

Dear Alicia,

Your feelings are very normal. Whenever any CD goes out in public for the first few times, you wonder how your makeup is, will you be "read", will others be critical of you, etc., etc. First of all, within the cross gender community, you are your own worst critic. The cross gender community will understand what you are going through because each person has gone through exactly the same anxiety. They will be your greatest supporters.

Second, let me offer some suggestions: One option for you is to call the Renaissance office and tell the person you are talking to of your dilemma. They will be able to recommend a "big sister" to help you get ready and feel reassured about attending the meeting. Another option is to come dressed in your male attire and get a sense of the meeting and the people. I am sure you will go away feeling reassured and it will make it much easier to come cross dressed to the following meeting. One of the things you will learn from attending a meeting is how many wonderful people there are who are similar to you. The meetings are usually very interesting because they discuss subjects that are of concern to the cross dressing community. For example, at our last

meeting JoAnn Roberts spoke on "How to come out to your family and other loved ones". They often also have fashion and makeup consultants who give advice and counsel. At your first meeting there will be an orientation and that will introduce Renaissance and what it has to offer to you. Good luck to you on this exciting new adventure.

Dear Dr. Bill,

I have always felt that I am a woman. Since I was born into the male gender I guess that makes me a transsexual. I have only begun to try and do something about my physical state in the past few months but I have not started any therapy or hormone treatments. I have heard about the Benjamin Standards of Care and some of the debate that goes on about their use. I want to know why I should go through all of the hassle following them involves? I have friends who know where to get hormones and am seriously considering starting them. Tell me why I shouldn't, if you can.

Janice.

Dear Janice,

Even though it feels right, starting hormones and moving towards eventual reassignment surgery is the biggest decision of your life. I would hope that you would want to do this process "right". Processes like the Benjamin Standards of Care were developed for your wellbeing, not to be road blocks for you. Several years ago a study came out that shook the transgender community. The claim was that on follow-up studies of post-operative transsexuals, it was found that the majority were either severely depressed or had committed suicide. On a closer look at this study, it was discovered that none of them had gone through therapy or followed any professional standards of care. The ma-

majority of surgeons who do surgical reassignment will only operate on persons who have gone through the Benjamin process. Because it is the most important decision of your life we want it to be done correctly. This is your best insurance for finding satisfaction and happiness in the end.

Regarding hormones, it is important that you be followed by a competent physician, such as an endocrinologist. Hormones are very powerful and the dosage must be customized specifically for you. The dosage for one person may cause damage or death to another person. It is important to know your and your family's health history. I had a personal friend (MtF TS), who got her hormones and the dosage "off the street." A couple of years after her surgery, she died of a blood clot while on the operating table for some fairly simple surgery. The blood clot was directly attributed to the hormone misdosage. While this story may seem like a scare tactic, it is true and carries a lot of pain for me as I tried very hard to get her to see an endocrinologist for years.



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One Sentence in a Newsletter

by Denise Mason

My heart skipped a beat!

While reading another club's newsletter, I read the words that someone I knew was going to have Sex Reassignment Surgery. The newsletter said it was JoAnn Roberts, my best friend.

My heart skipped a beat, again! I sat there for a moment, stunned. I told my wife, and she was stunned. I've known this JoAnn and his wife for better than 10 years as well as their children, their lifestyle, acceptance, rejection and their activities during this time, letters, business and pleasure, Christmas cards, photos, even small visits.

And now... it's different.

The shock passes, and I think about my feelings. Am I happy for him? God, I didn't think he would ever consider SRS. Am I mad at him? I love his wife like I love him. What will *she* do now? What about their children? Though they are accepting, this is different. How will it impact their future? Choosing a spouse? The Family unity! Birthday parties, Christenings, Funerals! All that stuff!

Yet, if he doesn't have the surgery... how will his life be? Honest? Unified? Happy? What a hypocrisy living a lie and not sharing it with those he loves.

Difficult? Guilt! Confusion? Shame? Pain! Freedom finally! Release! Selfish! God, think of the emotional rollercoaster these people must be on.

What do I say? Do I write them both and express sorrow to one and happiness to another? Will he see the happiness yet disappointment in my eyes. Can I ever contact him again? Or should I just smack him upside of the head! How can I *not* contact him when he probably needs all the support he can get right now!

Why is it so difficult for us? Imagine how difficult it was for him! I can't.

Believe it or not, these feelings really came over me when I read Miss Take's one liner in the TGIC newsletter. Though I was 99%... no, more like 60% sure it was a joke, I just had to confirm if it was true or not. I happened to be in Pennsylvania a few weeks ago, and last minute, decided to visit my old friend JoAnn.

I admitted my anger, happiness, upset... all at the same time. And he understood how these feelings can happen all at once. But, I was sure happy... or was I sad... to find that it was an April Fool's joke.

Whatever I was feeling, JoAnn would be my best friend, either way.

The Soul of the CD

by Lee Frances Heller

Since Easter has just gone by for another year we'd like to take a moment to shift the focus from the candy eggs and fuzzy bunnies to examine the soul of the crossdresser. Can a crossdresser be a good Christian? There are many out there who attend church dutifully ever Sunday in their male attire, their faces still rubbed red with the effects of extra scrubbing to get off the makeup from the night before. They go to pray to their Lord and many of them feel that they have been let down. If not by their God, then by their church. How many good church goers worry about how their need to crossdress will impact the quality of their afterlife? We feel there are many and that is why we reproduce a portion of a letter from Lee Frances Heller, the publisher and editor of the Grace & Lace Letter, a newsletter for Christian crossdressers.

What is the purpose of the *Grace & Lace Letter*? It was started to serve the purpose of encouraging Christian transgendered people. We have been told by 90% of the visible Church in this world that we are wrong and have no right to worship God until we clean up our act and put on men's shoes, socks, shorts, undershirts, pants and shirt and then we may have the privilege of attending and worshipping God each Sunday at eleven in the morning. And what does God see when He looks at us there? He sees a CD/TG/TS who is attempting to fool Him. By doing this we are discrediting Him. He made us the way we are (Psalm 139:13-16) and now the church is at work on us, destroying a segment of His creation. If we conform, we are afforded the privilege of sitting in a pew and worshipping in an order of service that was started by John Calvin somewhere in the early sixteenth

continued on next page



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century. (It has been suggested it was between 1538 to 1542. If you have ever wondered where our present order of service came from, John Calvin is credited with the invention. Bet a lot of you thought the Baptists invented it.)

So where am I going with all of this? Simply to say the church in this world is not the final authority in the question of transgendered people. We pose a problem to them but not to God. Their treatment of us is a problem for God. In his infinite wisdom He foresaw this day and this problem so He became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy 22:5 is the scourge used upon us by the church to label us "abomination!" Our avowed purpose for the *Grace & Lace Letter* is to tell our community that God loves us and that Jesus Christ died for us also and those who have taken Him as their Savior are His children. Those who would place us in hell as

abominations do not understand Deuteronomy has some ordinances which were designed to keep Israel in check because they were in the midst of, and exposed to pagan practices. He loved them (as he still loves them) and wanted their undivided worship. The evidence of His love for us is found in Clossians 2:13-20. "When you were dead in your sins", God made you alive in Christ, He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, (the ordinances, KJV) that was against us and that stood opposed to us: *He took it away, nailing it to his cross.* And having disarmed the power and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

To the representative of the church who would tell me I am an abomination because I am crossgendered I say— the self appointed power and authority you say that in was destroyed the day Christ died so you're carrying the dead corpse of your power and authority. Get outta my life! Herein is

the calling of the *Grace & Lace Letter*. Perhaps my presentation has been a little roughshod but we are going on with that message of God's love for us. I could say a lot more and a lot rougher but I'll spare you. I just get so very upset with those who would write us off as something God hates and wants nothing to do with. He loves you just as you are now! My love for you is in following God's call to establish the *Grace & Lace Letter* and get it into your hands. I love you.

If you would like to receive the Grace & Lace Letter or if you would like to make a donation so that Lee Frances can continue to answer God's call you may write her at PO Box 31253, Jackson, MS 39286-1253. You may call her between 8AM and 6PM Central Time at 601-982-2276.



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Honey, You're Cleared to Land

by Vanessa Kaye, *Sooner Belles*

I work in the aerospace industry. Hence, I tend to speak in aviation terms. I liken my relationship with my partner Suzanne, where crossdressing is concerned, to a small airplane approaching a large airport. With Suzanne being the air-traffic controller, my femme self being the small plane and crossdressing being landing.

If you or someone you know is a pilot, then you may be familiar with the difficult task of approaching and landing a small aircraft at a busy airport. It can be done, but it ain't easy!

As the plane enters the airport's airspace, the pilot can expect to be constantly adjusting speed and course to "fit into the flow" of traffic in the area. This is true even if a pilot has properly filed a flight plan and is arriving at the scheduled time. Often, a larger and faster aircraft enters the area. The controller may tell the small plane to attempt a sharper turn or increase air speed to maintain his position in the flow of traffic. If the pilot is unable to comply, the jet overtakes the smaller craft. This results in the light airplane being told to abort the approach and come back around.

Then, too, there are the unexpected things that occur. Perhaps some aircraft has to suddenly return to the field and this disrupts all of the air traffic.

The pilot of the small plane needs to land the aircraft, that is a given. However, due to a great deal of factors to-

tally beyond his/her control this necessary procedure becomes very complicated and frustrating.

Such is the case for a crossdresser who has a job, home, spouse/partner, children and relatives. The crossdresser has a need to express his femme self, in other words, to crossdress. If he is fortunate enough to have a supportive partner or spouse, they may assist in trying to schedule a time for the femme self to "land." At our house, it is more of a rule than the exception that numerous obstacles interfere with the "flight plan." Sometimes these disruptions are humorous, sometimes they are a great disappointment.

The pilot of a small aircraft would be shocked to radio in on approach to a large busy airport and then hear the controller say, "I knew you were on your way in, so I've cleared all other traffic out of the area. Take your time."

While it isn't possible for spouses and partners to always clear the other "traffic" out of the area for us, once in a while would be nice. Don't you think? "Honey, there's a bubble bath waiting and your clothes are laid out on the bed."

In turn, we need to recognize the desires of our spouses and partners. We, too, need to "clear other traffic out of the area" and give our undivided attention to their feelings and needs.

Vanessa Kaye is chair of the Central Oklahoma Transgender Alliance.



Two Books Coming

Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (ISBN: 0-769-57701-5) was released in April as a Vintage Books paperback for \$12. The catalog says: Former heterosexual man, now a lesbian woman playwright and performance artist, Kate Bornstein knows that the problem with defining oneself as male or female comes from "living in a world that insists we be one or the other—a world that doesn't bother to tell us exactly what one or the other is." Kate, a former director of Renaissance, is scheduled for media appearances in NYC, Washington, Boston, Miami, Chicago, Minneapolis, Houston, Seattle, San Francisco, and LA.

This month Toby Fischer-Mirkin's *Dress Code: Understanding the Hidden Meanings of Women's Clothes* (ISBN: 0-517-593297), will be released by Crown for \$22. The catalog says: "The assured use of clothing begins with an understanding of the complex ways that a woman's look reflects and helps to define her sense of self. Does that long, gauzy dress make you look romantic, or unreliable? Does that sharply tailored suit make you look authoritative, or inflexible? From skirt length to collar shape to the colors and even textures of fabrics, *Dress Code* deconstructs each element of the wardrobe, from shoes to hats, to discover the subliminal messages of each." The author is a novelist, a playwright, and a former fashion reporter for the *Orange County Register*.

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Ben Franklin said, "The Lord helps those that help themselves." Renaissance is going to try and help the transgendered who are unemployed or underemployed. **Announcing: Renaissance Job Match**, a national employment resource center. If you are looking for work send a resume or brief description of what type of employment you want. Make sure you include a way for us to contact you. If you are in a position to offer employment or let someone know of a job opening send a description of the position. Maybe we can make a match. To be included in the Job Match files send your information to:

Renaissance Job Match, c/o Renaissance, 987 Old Eagle School Rd, Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087

Shopping With Jackie

by Jackie Thomas

A thought for this month: If a male to female transgendered person wears male clothing is he considered a cross-dresser? Chew on that one for a while.

Hey girls, have you looked at a recent copy of **Frederick's of Hollywood** catalog lately? If not, you are in for a surprise. Many of their exotic items are now in Plus Sizes.

My size 16 is well represented and many are larger. Prices are not bad, and quality is generally good. For a catalog, call 1-800-323-9525. They have lots of bathing suits for summer.

I've been saving a letter until I had the room to print it all. It is the point of this column and it says what I have been trying to get across to you. Its from Ellen Bush, and dated Aug. '94.

"I just read your column in the August *RN&V* and heard your plea for feedback. I have been reading and enjoying *Shopping with Jackie* since you started writing it and at times considered writing to you but I figured that what I had to contribute was well known by all and obvious so I shied away. Since you asked, I'll share.

I used to shop through the catalogs and occasionally as a male. I was seldom thrilled with what I got and quite often disappointed. When I finally crossed that line and started shopping "en femme" a whole new world

opened up for me. I know how hard it is to go the first time but it gets easier and easier each time and the rewards are great. Now I don't buy anything I haven't tried on first. I find that I can enjoy shopping and trying on clothes without buying a thing.

One of my favorite things to do is to go to the expensive department stores and try on outfits that I could never afford to buy. It's amazing how much nicer a \$250 dress looks, fits and feels than a \$50 dress.

When I am looking for something to buy I shop at the discount stores (Marshalls, TJ Max, Ross) and look for good clothes that are marked down. Sometimes you can find designer clothes at incredible prices. I always look for the red tags. These are the best prices.

I also have had fun at the outlets in Reading. **The VF Outlet** in West Reading is huge and has a lot of different types of merchandise. Most everything is at reduced prices.

There are also outlet stores there for some of the name brands and across the parking lot is the designers outlet where several of the big name designers have outlets (Carole Little, Jones of NY, Donna Karen, etc.) Prices at these stores vary but you can get some great buys when they are having a sale. The VF building also has a food court. The VF complex opens at 9:00

AM Monday through Saturday and you can easily spend the entire day there. That pretty much sums up my shopping activity of late.

I would like to see more in your column about matching colors and putting outfits together. This is the hardest thing for me. I'm learning but it is slow. I watch the GC's a lot and try to copy ideas I get from them. Also some stores display outfits put together and sometimes that gives me ideas too.

So far I have not gotten confident enough to ask for help from the sales-girls even though they offer it all the time. I have a friend who does it and she wears it is the best way to shop.

Oh well, I'll keep working on it. Keep up the good job on the column and don't get discouraged. I promise I'll write again.

Regards, Ellen Bush."

So there it is girls. Good advice that I am pleased to pass on. Ellen, I look forward to your next letter.

And all of you... take note and write. Until next time... HAPPY SHOPPING from Jackie.



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Ask The Dermatologist

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"Ask The Dermatologist" c/o
Renaissance News & Views.

by Jane Ellen Fairfax, M.D.

The largest organ in the body bedevils many crossdressers. It sprouts forth dark hairs crying "Testosterone made me!" It over-pigments, under-pigments, itches, hurts, gives rise to blisters, crusts, papules, pustules, scales, flakes, plaques and nodules. Exposed to the sun, it withers, thins and wrinkles. Still, it is the body's first line of defense against hostile organisms and influences from the environment. With proper care, however, it will make the appearance more attractive and even more feminine. It is the purpose of this column to answer questions about this organ to make it the best possible easel on which to draw your feminine image. We are, of course, talking about your skin.

As a Board Certified Dermatologist who has been in practice since 1977, I have had experience in dealing with the vagaries of the skin. Although my special interest is AIDS Dermatology, I see all sorts of dermatological conditions. Dermatology is a most fulfilling occupation, full of variety. The practice of dermatology is indeed a high form of art.

Before embarking upon this column, I will lay down one or two basic principles. Dermatology is a visual specialty. It is absolutely impossible to diagnose a condition without seeing it. Sometimes consultation with a pathologist is necessary to make a diagnosis. Nothing I say in this column will substitute for a visit with a trained specialist. The words, "it sounds like" will probably be frequently used. Needless to say, I will not prescribe any medicines, nor I will discuss problems in any field outside dermatology. My purpose here will be to answer questions about skin care, especially as it applies to transgendered people. I'll answer questions about products or ingredients, or diseases of the skin, hair, or nails.

Staying pretty depends on having healthy skin. With that in mind, I will tackle the first question.

Dear Dermatologist:

If I don't shave my legs regularly (at least once a week) I get tiny white head pimples on my thighs. If I pop them the spots get red and take a long time to fade away. I still have a few discolored marks from the last time this happened.

Are these pimples caused by in-grown hairs? They only occur after my leg hair has grown out for several days. Then, if I don't get out the razor they start popping up. Other than regular shaving, which I don't mind in the least, is there anyway to stop these things?

Pizza Thighs.

Dear Pizza Thighs,

It sounds as if you may be having folliculitis, a superficial bacterial infection around the hair follicles. Possibly the hairs are becoming ingrown after shaving, a condition known as Pseudo-folliculitis. The trapped hair acts as a foreign body, provoking an inflammatory response. In this condition, you may actually see ingrown hairs covered by a thin layer of red, inflamed skin. You are absolutely right not to manipulate these areas! Inflammation caused by "popping" may leave blood tattooing or pigmentation that can last as long as a year. Manipulating these areas may colonize them with staph bacteria from the fingernails, and may even cause permanent scarring.

To prevent these lesions, you might try shaving with an electric razor. Since you will not shave as closely, there will be less chance for hairs to ingrow. When shaving you should avoid using any oily or greasy lotions either before or afterwards. These block the entrances to the follicles and create a stagnant pool of oil, which bacteria find most nourishing. Gently washing the skin with Dial Gold before shaving will discourage their ardor. Your dermatologist can give you a prescription for topical Erythromycin which, used once daily, should improve the problem greatly. It is not particularly expensive, nor is it a frequent cause of contact allergies.

Your statement that shaving improves these lesions gives rise to another possibility. You might check the skin on the upper outer arms to see whether the follicle mouths have a rough, scaly material in their centers. If so, you have probably got Keratosis Pilaris, a hereditary condition in which the follicle mouths are plugged with skin cells. When severe, the problem feels almost like sandpaper or goose bumps. Lac-Hydrin, a relatively inexpensive lotion prescribed by a dermatologist, will frequently work on this problem. Sometimes the dermatologist will add Sulfacet Lotion or Retin-A at bedtime. Since this is an hereditary condition, you will have to stay on these topical medications to keep a satisfactory result.

Please rest assured, Pizza Thighs, that many times I "sausage" problems in my practice. It is important to deal with them properly so that they do not "mushroom!"



Letters...

today. Their recommendations are as follows:

- The right for trannies to have a single cell.
- The right to be addressed in their preferred gender terms.
- The right to be addressed by their chosen names.
- The right to choose the sex of the police officer who may need to conduct a strip search.
- The right to continue taking medication while in custody for post-op transsexuals.

Sincerely, Rosa/Queensland

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