Renaissance News

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AIDS Benefit Is Boffo !!!

There were those who thought that the idea of an AIDS benefit was laudable but ill-conceived. And there were those who offered more positive wisdom - we would be lucky to break even. But we fooled 'em all! With barely two and a half months of preparation, Renaissance members proved, once again, that we can deliver what we promise. The *Travelling Trash & Talent Tuesday* AIDS benefit was successful by any measure.

Of course, there is good news and bad news. The bad news is: ticket sales were not up to expectations and there is no money to donate to AMFAR. The good news is: the show returned a profit and Renaissance is making a donation to a local AIDS charity. Renaissance board members will present, in person, a check for $500 to *WE THE PEOPLE WITH AIDS & ARC* in Philadelphia.

Renaissance has shown itself to be a responsible member of the metropolitan Philadelphia community. It has achieved no small measure of recognition through this event. Write-ups, prior to the show, appeared in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* (the major daily paper in the city), the *Philadelphia Gay News*, and *Au Courrant*, as well as showing up in event listings in other city dailies. The show itself was provided coverage by *PGN* and *Au Courrant*, who sent a photographer.

If you missed the show, too bad! You'll just have to wait until we do it again next year.

Have Dress Will Travel...adventures in Columbus, OH.

Last month three Renaissance members took to the road and carried the organization's message to Ohio. Angela Gardner, Trudi Henry and Paula Sinclair spoke to two human sexuality classes at Denison University on Sept. 21. The following day, Angela and Paula appeared on the television program "Good Morning, Columbus."

The Denison students had been briefed about crossdressing by Professor David Przybyla, so there were only a few sideways glances as the Renaissance girls took their seats at the front of the classroom.

Each gave a brief autobiography with heavy emphasis on their crossdressing experiences. The remainder of the period was devoted to questions from students. Although they were a little nervous at first, the students soon entered into a productive dialogue with Angela, Trudi and Paula. The students even laughed at their jokes. The girls also managed to slip in some flirting (Angela with the female students, Paula with the males).

The questions ranged from inquiring about feminist issues to the old chestnut of "which bathroom do your use?" and "what do you put in your bra?"

Dr. Przybyla said the visit resulted in a new positive attitude among his students regarding sexual variations. This, he added, was "quite an accomplishment." He termed the entire visit "amazing," and promised to endorse these Reanissance sessions to his colleagues at other colleges and universities.

Tuesday's television show went well, Angela and Paula said, even though they were dubious at the beginning. The show on Monday was devoted to AIDS and some of the guests quoted Lyndon LaRouche and other right wing extremists. While watching that program, Paula became concerned that a city with people like that may not be open to the alternative lifestyle of crossdressing. When Angela and Paula arrived at the station the next morning, there were additional "bad omens." The other guests included a group of single people there to discuss the heterosexual dating scene in Columbus and a skin care expert.

But the girls were pleased by the open-mindedness everyone displayed. Calvin Sneed, one of two co-hosts, said before the show that he had a friend in San Francisco who is a crossdresser. That put Angela and Paula at ease. The interview went so well that toward the end of the segment Sneed even asked the two "B" questions: bathrooms and bras. Two telephone callers implied criticism -of crossdressing, but the girls were able to deflect it with humor.

After the show, Sneed, co-host Dawn Meadows and their producer talked to them for over a half an hour about crossdressing. They were invited to do the show again.

Most of the Buckeyes the girls encountered on the trip were polite. For example, on Monday night Angela and Paula went shopping at a nearby mall (dressed in their men's clothes). When the sales clerk learned that they were buying women's clothes for themselves, she was very friendly and helpful. The same was true of the staff at the motel where the girls stayed. Because they got back from the station late in the morning, they needed an extension of the check-out time. Paula went up to the desk clerk—dressed—and asked to keep the room for an additional hour. "No problem," the desk clerk said, as if they had crossdressers stay there every day!

An Evening At Cha-Cha 3...by Therése

Well, it was quite an evening at the Warwick Hotel on October 4, 1987 for Cha-Cha 3. Cha-Cha is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds for AIDS charities. Cha-Cha 3 was their third annual benefit/ cocktail party. To say that the attire for the evening was "Fashionable" would be an understatement. The music was more than adequate. There was a wide selection of good wines and liquor, along with sparkling waters. Regardless of your preference for food, there was something for everyone; Swedish Meatballs, Prime Rib, Stir Fried Vegetables, and Pasta. Desserts did abound, including two fine varieties of grapes and tasty cheeses. The coffee was excellent.

This writer did encounter a number of people that had attended the TT&TT AIDS benefit, and met some new friends as well.

Cha-Cha announced that the following AIDS groups will be receiving funds: 40% to Philadelphia Community Health Alternatives; 30% to Action AIDS; 20% to BEBASHI; 10% to the newly opened AIDS library; and a $1500 contribution to The Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force.

All in all the Cha-Cha 3 evening was very enjoyable and very memorable. Obviously, a lot of thought and planning went into this event. However, the most important ingredient was the PEOPLE, who came from all lfe styles and occupations.

Thanks For TT&TT from Angela Gardner

I've been trying to write this article for weeks, but it kept getting too long. I wanted to thank everyone who worked on the show and tell a little of their contributions. That's where the length problem started. Everyone who volunteered to help did so much that the descriptions took up too much space. So, here's the short version.

Paula S. did publicity, JoAnn R. made props. Trudi, Etiénne and Berry did rehearsals at home for their Andrews' sisters number. Etiénne's S.O., Davy, portrayed the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy and had to assemble her own costume. Emily and Kathy, Trudi's S.O., pulled ropes backstage. Robyn D. designed the original artwork for the program cover. JoAnn's friend Steve helped us get the Mask & Wig club and he worked the light board the night of the show. Chris and Sheila operated spotlights. Therése was our usherette. Donna Miller and Eric of Donna's Hair Studio 1 in Trenton did hair and makeup. Alison was our cashier at the door.

That's a list of most of the things people did (Angela forgot to mention that she produced and directed the show as well as working the sound board-Ed). Some did more but everyone did so much that some of it's slipped out of my airhead. If I've forgotten someone, please forgive me. Everybody gave two hundred percent. Some even risked breaking a nail! Seriously, we couldn't have done it without the quality of help everyone gave. I'd be happy to give them all recommendations for jobs in show biz. Thank you all. And, guess what? There's some costumes in the attic that we haven't used yet. So, lets do another show. Maybe next year we'll do it on a Saturday.

TS Group To Be Co-Sponsor

"Voices", the 1988 Conference on Transgender Issues will be co-sponsored by both *Renaissance* and *The Gathering*, a TS support group in the NY, PA, NJ area. Paula Keiser, a member of both groups, brought Jana Thompson and JoAnn Roberts together to get the agreement worked out. Members of *The Gathering* will staff the TS panel at the conference and their presence will add immensely to the program's content.

We are also expecting Quad-S to co-sponsor the conference as well. Approval should be forthcoming within the month.

Business Report For October

Starting Balance:	**$423.72**
Income:	
Show Ads&Contrib	$173
Show Tickets	$200
Member Dues	$396
Subtotal	**$1197.72**
Expenses:	
Show Equip/Perf	$380
Ohio Lecture	$65
AIDS Donation	$500
Bank Srvc Chg	$23.34
Subtotal	**$968.34**
Ending Balance	**$229.38**

Coming Events:

October
30th, Henri David Halloween Ball, Tickets $8

November
21st, Renaissance Meeting

December
19th Renaissance Xmas Party
Tentative date-joint w/ Phi Chapter of So. Jersey

January
16th, "Voices" Conference on Transgender Issues

23rd, Renaissance Meeting

The Opinion Page

Crossdressing In The Heartland ...*by Trudi Henry*

Late in September, three of us Renaissance girls made an appearance at Denison University in Granville, Ohio to speak to two sections of Dr. David Przybyla's Human Sexuality class.

There's something about a campus in the heartland in Fall that takes me back to a time when living was easy and I wasn't in debt. It was also a confusing time of trying to get a handle on what I was about. I just wish that someone would have done for me what Dr. Dave (as his class calls him) is doing for his kids.

When I was an undergrad, I took a course in Human Sexuality in hopes of learning more about why I felt some of the things I felt, particularly that nagging little matter of wanting to dress up like a girl.

The class was one of the most popular at the university. It took a couple of quarters of trying just to get into the section. Finally, I got in and was all set to learn the answers to all my questions.

I bought the text and just couldn't wait. I popped open the index and found the page covering "Transvestism". The subject, along with homosexuality and transexualism, was covered in a chapter on sexual abnormalities. It also included every fetish and kink I'd ever heard of and a few I hadn't. I don't remember the exact wording, but in a sentence or two it simply said that transvestites were men who dressed like women. I muttered, "Thanks for the in-depth analysis." I hoped for more when the semester started.

The class itself was no better. We spent days on fantasies and masturbation, but breezed through the "abnormalities". The net effect was that I felt more like a freak than ever.

Dr. Dave takes a refreshingly different approach. He uses a textbook that spends a number of pages on crossdressing. In inviting us to speak, he let us show his students that we can pursue our feminine side, and yet live a full life otherwise. He made available, on a private basis, the names and addresses of TV support organizations in Ohio.

I can't help but wonder, though, if there was just one kid in either class who was like me when I was studying Human Sexuality. If so, I hope we gave him/her some encouragement and made him/her feel a little less alone. I hope we spared someone the endless cycle of guilt, obsession and alienation.

Living In A Box ...*by JoAnn Roberts*

The newspaper carried a story today of an 11 year old boy who was kept in a wooden box by his stepgrandmother, because she feared he was brain damaged. The boy was found to be mentally normal.

When I read the story in the October 10th issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, I almost started to cry. What an ignominious way to live! How has that poor child's pysche been damaged? What will happen to him in later life? The whole thing gave me pause to consider my life.

As I thought about that child, I realised that I, too, at one time, lived in a box. My box was made from a variety of woods; bigotry, racism, sexism and parochialism were a few. The nails holding it all together were fear, loathing, ignorance and despair. The wood was supplied, without charge, by the world around me and I pounded those self-made nails. Yes, my box was nailed shut from the inside. I hid the real me in that box for almost 32 years. The person that walked through the world was only a facade, a shadow-person built out of other people's expectations.

Then one day something happened. The nails made of ignorance started to rust away. They were soon followed by those of fear. Eventually, the nails were all gone and first one side then the other fell away from my box. I let free the real me. I faced the world for the first time and realised that I could be my own person. I could have original thoughts and feelings. I was not a puppet to be controlled.

I knew I could do almost anything I set my mind to and that ultimately, I could control my life. The key was acceptance of myself and acceptance of the responsibility for my actions. I understood that there is a basic human dignity within everyone and that dignity deserves respect. I resolved never to apologize to anyone for being me. And, I would consider carefully any criticism of others.

So, how many of you are still living in your own boxes? Isn't it about time for you to start pulling the nails free? Isn't is about time for you to kick the boards loose? And, isn't it about time for you to face the world and yourself with the truth?

There are no barriers except those you erect yourself, so tear them down. Look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I have the ultimate control and responsibility for my life." Then believe it and get on with the rest of your life. The past is immutable, so why worry over what cannot be changed? Look forward to the future and new goals. You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish if you will only believe in yourself.

There is no one in this world more deserving of your respect than yourself. For, if you cannot respect yourself, how can you possibly respect anyone else? And, how will you ever break out of your box before you mentally suffocate?

Catalog Shopping: Part 2

by Paula Sinclair

Autumn has barely begun and already mail order companies are havng sales on Fall Styles. Isn't merchandising wonderful? Just try telling that to the models who had to wear wool suits and coats in June or July so we could have Fall catalogs in September and October. But, whatever the season, these mail order companies have what it takes.

The all-time top slot on my list belongs to a company that not only offers mail order, but has stores all over the country. The nearest one to us is in north Jersey. Royal Silk Ltd. offers classic clothing in 100% silk or silk blends. Taking advantage of two circumstances in world economics—cheap labor in the Far East, and China's push to both expand their silk industry and gain foreign exchange—Royal Silk has simply wonderful clothes at reasonable prices. One minor problem is that the clothes are so good and so inexpensive, that keeping them in stock is difficult, so once in awhile an order is delayed. But the company is very responsive and, I believe, tries very hard to satisfy its customers. The line is not too terribly extensive, running, as I said, to classic clothes. In my opinion, classics form the foundation of any good wardrobe. Many things are available in size 16 or extra large. The address is Royal Silk Plaza, 45 East Madison Ave., Clifton, NJ, 07011

I don't know who these people are, but I wish that they would stop it. I mean those people who root through the pantyhose displays in the supermarket, messing them up and putting the packages back in the wrong location. Do you have them in your neighborhood too? Thanks to their efforts, buying pantyhose takes far too long and you can never seem to find the size, style and shade you want. Well, now there is a catalog just for pantyhose—L'eggs Showcase of Savings. The catalog offers first quality and slightly imperfect L'eggs, Hanes, Underalls and Isotoner pantyhose in all sizes, styles and shades, at considerable discouns. A pair of L'eggs cost over $3 at my local market. I can buythe same pantyhose (slightly imperfect but fully guaranteed) for $1.49 a pair from the catalog. The catalog also contains L'eggs lingerie, panties and Bali bras. And, making it a full service outlet for TVs, a full selection of men's Hanes underwear and socks. Quality of all the items is very good even though some items are rated slightly imperfect. As they say in the catalog, these are imperfections that you wouldn't even notice. And the great prices are even better during one of their regular sales. The address is L'eggs Brands Inc., Box 6000, Rural Hill, NC, 27098. [In case you were not aware of it, almost all the hosiery in this country comes from only two or three mills, all in North Carolina. Ed]

While we're below the waist, we might as well go all the way...to shoes. (What did you think I was going to say, you nasty thing!) As I have written, Lane Bryant offers shoes in larger sizes and wide widths. The styles aren't tremendous, but they aren't "old lady" shoes either. I have just seen a catalog that has prices equal to Lane Bryant's and with marvelous styles. The company is A. J. Valenci, Designer Circle, Salem, VA, 24156-0201. I can't vouch for quality or service because even though they offer large sizes (up to 11 D or EE), they are still too small for the huge growths at the ends of my legs. Prices are good—nothing over $50 and many pairs for $30 and $40. If someone has any experience with this company, perhaps they will share it with us.

And speaking of sharing, despite the fact that my mailman has several times suggested that I move to a different Zip Code zone and take my catalogs with me, I am sure there are mail order companies I don't know about. If you have done business with a firm that provides good merchandise, reasonable prices and fast responsive service, please let us know so we can share it with all. By the same token, if you have been ripped-off, tell us that too, and we will warn our sisters to save their stamps. You can send your contributions to me care of Renaissance.

For Your Information

Renaissance now has a phone line for information about events and activities. Call (215) 640-9449 any evening after 6:30 PM Eastern time. If JoAnn is not available the phone will **not** be answered.

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

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

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

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

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