

News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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TG Gene Discovered

Researchers at the Mei Fung Research Hospital in Singapore announced the discovery of a predictive gene in males that identifies those prone to crossdressing and transsexual type behaviors. In the April 1997 *Asian Review Of Medicine*, Dr. Wei-Fun Cho describes that procedure he used to identify the gene. "In Singapore, we care deeply about the orderliness of society," says Dr. Cho. "For many years we have been identifying males who choose to act as women and helping them adjust to society. By sampling this population, we were able to have a large enough gene pool to scan for similarities, which we have discovered."

Singapore's desire for an orderly culture is a hallmark of the city-state. In addition to fines and caning, "sexual deviants" are identified, and in some cases given the "option" of having government funded sex change operations so they fit neatly into the formal culture of Singapore. Dr. Cho's work

was funded to help Singapore identify and deal with these "sexual deviants" at an early age.

"We hope to use our work to develop a predictive test for these people," says Dr. Cho. "It should be possible, via amniocentesis, to identify those who are possible deviants before birth, so they can be effectively dealt with, maybe before birth."

Other researchers have not yet confirmed Dr. Cho's work, but seem skeptical. "Any gene simply creates possibilities — it is the environment that determines how those possibilities play out," says Dr. Mary Chaplin of the UCLA Genetics Research Project. "To make a determination based solely on gene testing is not an effective way to help anyone." Others agree: "Genetic testing has limited applicability for social control," says Peter Harmon of The Center For The Study Of Science in Society. "To

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Hate Alive & Well In Our Backyards

The following piece was received by email from **Stephen Whittle** an FtM transactivist in the U.K.

Just so we know why we continue to fight the battles I have included below a verbatim copy of a piece of hate mail that has been sent to at least 100 people in our neighbourhood. It refers to my house, and though much of what is said is factually incorrect; I tell you it is still incredibly frightening when it happens.

The Stockport Family Values Society
Mauldeth Rd
10th March 1997

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

It has come to my attention that we have a group of transsexuals with children, living in our community, on this very road at number XX. I wish to state that I have absolutely no prejudice against the gay community but it is a well documented medical fact that transsexuals are suffering from a form of schizophrenia so where is the wisdom in allowing these children to be brought up in a household boasting three transsexual women and two lesbians? One's mind can only boggle at what dubious activities that are going on, polluting these childrens'

minds. I certainly do not relish the thought of my children attending the same school as the offspring of this commune.

It is time to stop this moral degradation and return to decent family values where a child is brought up with one mother and one father. How many couples would raise a family in these conditions, and what effect will it have on these children in later life irrespective of how much love the "parents" give?

I know many gay couples who lead a normal decent hard-working life but transsexuals do not or cannot integrate into normal society because of the nature of their mental disease, I understand that they are obsessed with sex with men, women and even each other.

I genuinely feel sorry for these people and I know that they have to live somewhere but I know that I and many other neighbours do not want them to reside in Mauldeth Road, if you have any opinion, either for or against then please attend our meeting at: The Crown Inn, Didsbury Rd, Wednesday March 19th 7.30pm."

The letter was not signed, or an address given.

Renaissance

Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Wilmington, Delaware: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808. Phone: 302-376-1990 or email to: SadeCD@aol.com

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 pm all year 'round. Call 610-975-9119 for information.

Lehigh Valley/Pocono area: Renaissance Lehigh Valley, PO Box 3624, Allentown, PA 18106. Meetings on the second Saturday of the month in the Allentown area. Call for directions and more information, 610-821-2955.

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122 Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call 717-780-1LSV (780-1578) or send email to: <lsv@ezonline.com>.

Affiliates

California

Orange County: Powder Puffs of California, PO Box 1088, Yorba Linda, CA 92686, or email to <ppoc@aol.com>

Connecticut

Bridgeport/New Haven: connecticutView, c/o Denise Mason, PO Box 2281, Devon, CT 06460. Monthly newsletter and activities.

Georgia

Atlanta: The American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), PO Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 or call 770-939-0244, or email to <aegis@mindspring.com>. Information resources & referrals.

Atlanta: Atlanta Gender Explorations (A.G.E.), PO Box 77562, Atlanta, GA 30357, 770-939-2128.

Illinois

Chicago: The Chicago Gender Society, PO Box 578005, Chicago, IL 60657, 708-863-7714.

Louisiana

New Orleans: The Gulf Gender Alliance, PO Box 56836, New Orleans, LA 70156-6836, 504-833-3046.

New Jersey

N. Central Jersey: Monmouth/Ocean Trans Gender, (MOTG), write PO Box 8243, Red Bank, NJ 07701. Call 908-219-9094. Email: vikkimotg@aol.com

Titusville: Meetings are 1st Saturday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Crossing. Call Terri Risley at 609-933-2233.

New York

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

Long Island: New York GIRL & Partners, PO Box 456, Centereach, NY 11720, Call 516-732-5115 for info.

Long Island: Long Island Femme Expression (LIFE), PO Box 1311, Water Mill, NY 11976-1311. Phone 516-283-1333. email to joed2viola@aol.com

Oklahoma

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

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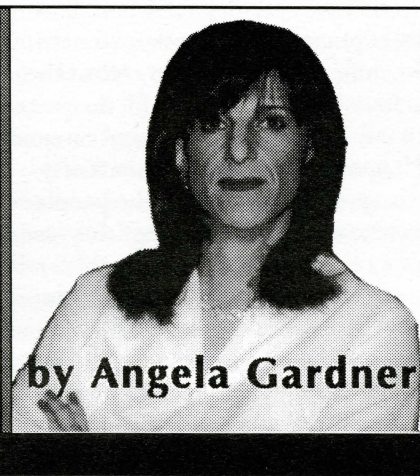
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Local Calendar

April

- 5 Ren. LSV
- 5 NJ Support
- 12 MOTG
- 12 Ren. Lehigh Valley
- 12 Ren. Delaware
- 19 Ren. GPC
- 19 Cal Unity: PPOC & IFGE

News Beat & Reminder



He's the mayor! He's a queen! He's the mayor! He's a queen! Stop! He's two, two, two people in one. OK, I got the old commercial reference in, and by now you've figured out that I'm talking about New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani. He's a man with real balls... and rubber tits. Word has it that when **Rudia Giuliandrews** hit the stage in full drag mouths fell open, and many in the crowd asked the question, "What's he on?"

Of course, it's good news for us, girls. Just think. Next time someone says something derogatory (isn't that one of those old photographs?) tell 'em if it's good enough for the mayor of New York... it's good enough for you.

New York is the world's largest closet so it's only appropos that the mayor should dress up. I figure he can get away with it if he limits his dressing up to the occasional night at LIPS or Edelwiess. Just don't take the official mayor's car and staff. One more appearance in a frock at a high profile media event, like this \$400 a plate charity dinner, and it's good bye reelection. Unless, perhaps,

Howardette Stern get's out the drag queen vote. Think of the campaign promises Rudia would have to make.

Rudia's won a place in history cause she's the only (known) mayor of New York to appear in drag. **Ed Koch** came close in 1984 by appearing in a gold lamé, stretch bodysuit with a mechanical pigeon on his head. I hope the pigeon didn't clash with the bodysuit. Were there any mechanical pigeon droppings?

While the media made a big hoopla over Giuliani they didn't say much

about the rest of the mayor's staff. The whole crew, except for stick-in-the-mud Deputy Mayor Rudy Washington, crossdressed for the event. (The female staffers wore tuxes.) Like they say, the staff that crossdresses together... uh, um... shares mascara! Or something like that.

Anyhow, I applaud the mayor's chutzpah and encourage more elected officials to cross the gender border. After all if politicians are really interested in a "kinder, gentler" approach to government, what better way to achieve it than by getting in touch with their feminine sides.

If The News Fits...

The Mayor's drag show brought inspiration for a piece in March 9th's *New York Times*. The article contended that the Mayor couldn't get away with an act like that twenty years ago, but now, "...drag is safely desexualized, presented as a lovable eccentricity..." While it may raise a few eyebrows (properly plucked, I hope) and get people talking, the Mayor knew that it wouldn't really effect his popularity, anymore than Howard's appearances as Howardette lost him any fans. The common people won't imagine that the Mayor or Howard might enjoy dressing up for more private functions. If they suspected that, then it might be another story.

A theater critic, Linda Winer, is quoted from an essay in which she compared straight men in drag (in theater, but she probably feels that way about them on the street) as akin to minstrel shows with white men in

blackface. She say, "At least RuPaul is the real thing." Well, excuse me. Does it mean that I *have* to sleep with men if I want to wear a dress? I don't think so, girlfriend. And as far as straight men in drag roles, does the word "acting" sound familiar. Actors are called upon to be many characters that have nothing to do with their own personality. Did Carrol O'Connor have to be a working class bigot to play Archie Bunker? Did Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon have to actually be on the run from the mob to play the characters in *Some Like It Hot*? No, they were acting. It's really because of the role clothing plays in sexual attraction that people get confused. A hot red dress and spike heels pushes a man's "turn on" button. If the outfit is on a man, people don't understand why he wants to wear it. Is he trying to turn on other men? Well, then he must be gay. The man in the red dress is turned on by wearing the dress. He's also turned on by other people being turned on over him wearing the dress. He doesn't necessarily want to sleep with men. But as the **Chevalier D'Eon** said ages ago, he might be willing to grant "small favors" to those who admire his feminine presentation. In modern day terms, I'll rub up against anybody when I'm feeling hot and sexy. That doesn't mean I want to make a life with them and bear their children. (I can't, thank goodness. Children make glamour so hard to maintain.)

The bottom line is, (Beavis turns to Butthead and says, "She said 'bottom,') there are many degrees of crossdressing desire and many degrees of sexual orientation. Depending on how these different desires manifest in an individual (pretty high faluttin' talk) determines how that individual will turn out. To further confuse things, we are all in a state of flux. (Uh oh, we're not in Kansas anymore.) Our desires in both areas can shift over time. Welcome to planet Earth kids. It's all mixed up but it can be a lot of fun... in the right wardrobe.

And With The Right Chest

Here's an item sent from across the
continued next page

News Beat...

pond via the Internet by loyal reader, Peter. It will either make you laugh or cry, possibly both. The *Independent* newspaper carried a story in February about eight Thai “transvestites” who are suing their doctor over breast implants. Thailand is even more confused about gender issues than the U.S., so it’s safe to say that we would probably call these girls (in our typically American desire to label everything) transgenderists or transsexuals. Women here have sued over silicone implants that leaked and caused problems. The Thai doctor who operated on these ladies, thoughtfully, did not use silicone. Instead he used salt water, but not in the approved type of implant. This genius used condoms filled with salt water. The ladies are suing for malpractice and damages. They plan to use the money to have their breasts rebuilt. I do hope this time they’ll pick a surgeon who didn’t get his degree out of a box of Cracker Jacks.

Word is going around that you can get a cheap sex-change in Thailand. When I first heard this I had to wonder about the quality of the service. I think this item shows I was right to question the surgical skills you might get for a bargain price. Remember girls, you can bargain shop for clothes, you can bargain shop for accessories, you can bargain shop for shoes, but... if you are considering serious body modifications go first class, if you can.

Springing Into... Talk Shows

The hour long talk show format is less than effective for presenting alternative ideas and lifestyles to a general audience. In view of this most of the large transgender groups in the country have declared a moratorium on talk show appearances by their members. It’s true that you are never going to convince Joe Sixpack and his significant other that it’s OK for men to wear dresses by appearing on a talk show. About the only thing you can accomplish is to let people who already feel like wearing the attire of the opposite

sex that they are not alone and there are support groups out there for them. So, unfortunately, the only effect the moratorium has had is to fill the seats on talk show stages with loose cannons who promote their own brands of transgenderism. While these people may be correct in the things they say about their own situation, (and I doubt many of them are that together) they tend to make sweeping generalizations that could scare some poor guy who’s struggling with his TG tendencies.

Such is the case with a recent appearance by “Alice: Had a Sex Change At 50” on the *Jerry Springer Show*. Alice stated her reason for appearing on the show as a desire to have people know, “...some of us can be good citizens.” Now what the hell is that supposed to mean? It implies that she feels that most transsexuals (which was how she identified) are *not* good citizens. During the course of her interview I found myself (God forbid) siding with Springer. He asked her why she felt she had to have a gender change at fifty. She replied, “It was the right thing to do” When asked to expand, she went into the typical crap about expressing her sensitivity, being gentle and feminine. When asked why she couldn’t do that without totally changing her gender she said she just couldn’t. That sounds like a real hangup to me.

Alice further explained that a year before she had her operation in Thailand (hope they didn’t use condoms for her breasts) she tried to commit suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. She claimed that deep depression over her gender issues made her do it. She didn’t really mention any counseling or therapy. Possibly a good idea after a suicide attempt? Could she be a self diagnosed? The trip to Thailand is a clue. I don’t think they follow the *Standards of Care* in Thailand.

She made a couple of other statements that made me cringe. One concerned the nature of transsexualism. She claimed that many transsexuals know at an early age that they are TS. Then she made a snide remark about TSs getting into one upmanship about how early they knew they were TS. It’s

obvious she has had a few debates. Her topper was that she, like many others had crossdressed for years and then “develop”(ed) into a transsexual. This is where I had visions of the poor guy at home watching, fascinated by the whole thing, thinking of finally calling a support group and coming out of the closet—suddenly getting scared that he would be starting down the road to surgery and slamming his closet door.

Alice can say she is a transgenderist. She can say she feels more comfortable with female genitalia. All that may be valid for her, but she shouldn’t say that she is a transsexual. While it may only be my opinion, she’s not. I think so because of her inability to be sensitive and gentle as a male. Another clue was how she had to interject (twice) how wonderful she felt trying on an expensive fur coat the day before. She said she felt like a woman trying on the coat. I have news for her. I can get in my car any day and go to the fur store, in drag or out, and try on coats to my heart’s content. I won’t feel like a woman. I’ll feel like a crossdresser, and that’s the ecstasy I heard in Alice’s voice when she described that experience.

Some members of the community have felt that we should make some protest over the presentation and treatment of transgendered people on shows like Jerry Springer’s. Well, we should. You can write to Jerry and demand that he get his facts straight, at least, if he is going to have the transgendered on his show. Alice was the only guest on this particular one. What about a dissenting opinion? Write to: *Jerry Springer Show*, 454 N. Columbus Drive, Chicago, IL 60611. Tell him to treat us better, to check his facts and get some people with the latest information. It may do no good, since his show depends on controversy and sturm und drang for ratings, but at least you’ll feel better after making your feelings known. I know I do.

Vertically Challenged Substance

That’s how you say “short stuff” when you’ve got a thesaurus. The Imperial Court, and I’m not talking about the one ruled by the Emperor from *Star Wars*, is 25 years old. **San**

Francisco's Imperial Court of Emperors and Empresses celebrated their anniversary recently. I always wondered how they decided on the Imperial Court motif and thanks to an item from the *Bay Area Reporter* I not only know, but can share the information with you.

Back in the 19th century a guy named Joshua Norton (nothing to do with Norton Utilities for your computer) proclaimed himself Emperor of San Francisco and became the cities' unofficial mascot until 1880. Time marched on and around eighty years later a drag entertainer named **Jose Sarria** started using "The Widow Norton" as a stage name. The Widow claimed the title "Absolute First Empress." Sarria and the next six empresses that were elected all ruled without consorts. After that the ladies felt they needed some emperors to help their benevolent rule.

The silver anniversary celebration was blessed by the attendance of all of the former empresses. While some where a bit long in the tooth a good time was had by all. The Imperial Court system has been copied around the U.S., Canada, and Mexico by 61 other groups and all are involved in community service and volunteer work. Let's hope they're around for another 25 years at the least.

The organization **PFLAG** (Parents, Families, and friends of Lesbians And Gays) has a webpage. (<http://www.critpath.org/pflag-talk/transparent.htm>) On their page they have information from their TransParent project. (Is that a parent

you can see through?) It is meant for parents of transgendered people but it also has info on how to come out to your parents. It's well done. They also have an Internet mailing list.

If you wondered why **Dennis Rodman** looked so pretty when he wore that bridal gown for his book signing, here's why. Instead of slathering on some drugstore goop he shelled out some big bucks and hired the makeup artistry of **Kevin Aucoin** (pronounced ahkwa, sweeties) to bring out his inner beauty. Small wonder as Mr. Aucoin is the man who is responsible for some of RuPaul's more important makeovers. Now he's sharing it all with you in his new book, *Making Faces*. Run out and pick up your copy so you'll look as pretty as Dennis the next time you get involved in an on court altercation involving sneakers and groin injuries.

A film that has been mentioned in these pages before is coming to cable this month. Now you can see *Vegas In Space* on Cinemax in April as part of their Midnight Cult Movies presentations. (*Rocky Horror* is also featured.) Of course if you call a program the "Midnight" cult movie special you might expect to see the film somewhere around midnight, right? Wrong. This one's a VCR alert. It runs on Sunday morning April 20th at 5:20 am. That's in the morning. The only people I know who will be able to stay up for this classic, starring Doris Fish, Ginger Quest and Ramona Fischer, are the party people in NYC who are just getting in from a night on the town.

On the health front... Sheila Kirk is back in practice. She remains the Di-

rector of Medical Research and Liaison for IFGE but now Doctor Kirk has opened an office in Pittsburgh. If you have anything health concerns, from gender transition to general health issues that you have been afraid to share with a non-transgendered physician, take advantage of the supersaver air fairs and fly out for a check up. Call 412-661-9972 to schedule an appointment. The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center Gender Identity Project in New York City is having their Third Annual Health Empowerment Conference on April 25th and 26th. For information call the Center at 212-620-7310.

Female to males take note: the 3rd FTM Conference of the Americas will occur August 8th, 9th, and 10th in Boston, Massachusetts at the Massachusetts College of Art. They promise workshops on legal issues, activism, medical issues and the usual conference stuff, even some stuff for MtFs. For more information write: Attention Mykael, Boston FTM Conference, PO Box 229, Waltham, MA 02254-0229 or email to ifge@worldnet.att.net. Oh, I almost forgot, handsome man about town Jamison Green will be the keynote speaker.

Don't forget our 10th Anniversary at the Parkridge Hotel in King of Prussia on June 21st. That's the regular GPC meeting night so they've agreed to not have the regular meeting in June so everyone will attend the Anniversary banquet. Check this issue for an insert with all the details. That's it for this month. See ya sweeties.



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TG Gene...

single out people based on genetic cues they have no control over is discrimination, pure and simple.”

“This opens up great possibilities,” notes Frank Clark, a fellow in the Center For Values, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C. “By identifying these poor fellows early, we can help them through intervention. We may even have the possibility to use gene therapy to help cure them of this terrible affliction. Studies show that many families are torn apart by this sexual deviance, and a great deal of drug use and other social ills can be traced directly to this deviancy. Some

studies put the cost to society as high as four billion dollars a year.”

Harmon is worried. “If we start changing genes around, we start changing the whole texture of the human race. There may be other benefits associated with this gene that are not readily apparent to us.”

Researchers around the world are scurrying to replicate the results, but Chapin doesn’t think this will happen soon. “No one else has the pool of “voluntary” experimental subjects that Singapore has,” she says, “and that will make this hard to discover. Most of these people work to hide their deviant urges, and in most western countries, we don’t have the power to do this wide ranging an experiment.”

All agree, though, this will continue

to be an issue. “Singapore is already acting on this information, and I would not be surprised to see some other societies start to do the screening when it is available,” says Chapin. Clark agrees saying, “We need to use every tool at hand to help make the world safer for families. Genetic testing and treatment can help.”

“We need to be very careful on this. If someone can be tested for gender deviance, or any other predisposition for that matter, even without their knowledge, as part of a regular medical checkup, then we have the possibility for abuse,” says Harmon. “It’s another case where medicine is moving much faster than society — we need to run to catch up.”



As We Were—Transgendered

by Jennifer Barnes

My companion in idle hours as a child often was a collection of Currier and Ives prints entitled *As We Were*. Ironically, my transgender career began as a teenager with the delights of frou-frou when I found a chest of pantalets. Some other mementos of this era suggest that at one time cross-dressing was a part of every male’s upbringing. Nonetheless, its progeny has been biased against women, and transgendered persons.

I refer to the custom of dressing up boys in girls’ clothing, which was prevalent in at least the Midwest around the turn of the century. I saw an old portrait of my father’s family. I could identify all his surviving sisters but one—that was he. Many years later, I was shown a portrait of what I thought was a smiling little girl in a frilly dress and bonnet. It turned out to be an uncle whom I remember as a juiceless, dour, humorless, fat, bald, grump and bigot. Both came from Ohio, and both photos were taken around 1905-1915. My aunts explained that boys began wearing male clothing anywhere from age four to five.

Perhaps it is too radical to say that at one time all men were crossdressers. More research is needed on this prac-

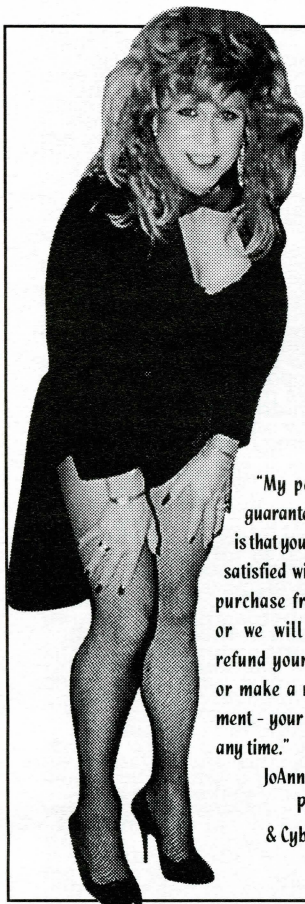
tice—its geographical and historical range, and origin. I can never remember when Jay Barnes (pseudonym for the male whose body I inhabit) did not believe himself to be a female. When his parents first showed him the portrait of his father as a three year old in a dress, Jay said that they should try this on him—once they got the dress on, they would realize he was really a girl, and would never take it off. His parents and aunts laughed.

I wonder if the practice was not part of a culture which believed that women and girls were children who never grew up. My father was the youngest in a family of girls. He hated female dominance, and it seemed he spent much of his life fighting the fear of it. Jay would not like it either, and I’m a feminist. Jay was forced to be a boy scout, and we remember the “scouters,” the high ranking scouting officials who seemed to be driven by a morbid compulsion to be different from women. The only support we have at present for the interpretation that the practice of dressing boys up as girls was part of a culture which regarded women as children is the dictionary definition of panty, as found in older editions, as a child’s (generally first) or women’s undergarment.

The transgender community should study these older forms of perhaps pseudo-transgender transvestism. The practices may seem dull. A knowledge of the history of such phenomena can be used to impeach conservative enemies of the transgender community who urge that our movement is advocating something new. Apparently at certain times and places, most or all males wore girl’s clothing. Only when the hypocrisy of the widespread practice of involuntary crossdressing without transgender identification (consider also the use of boys to play women, and castrati) is exposed will it be possible to respect the wish of a boy to dress as a girl.”

Lifetime Memberships Available

The national board announces Lifetime Memberships are now available for \$500. This will insure that you will always receive *Renaissance News & Views* plus any other membership benefits. A Lifetime Membership is only good at the national level. Chapter dues and fees will still be assessed.



Don't Be An April Fool!

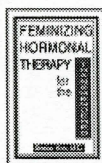
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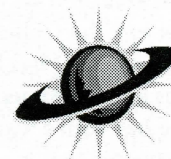
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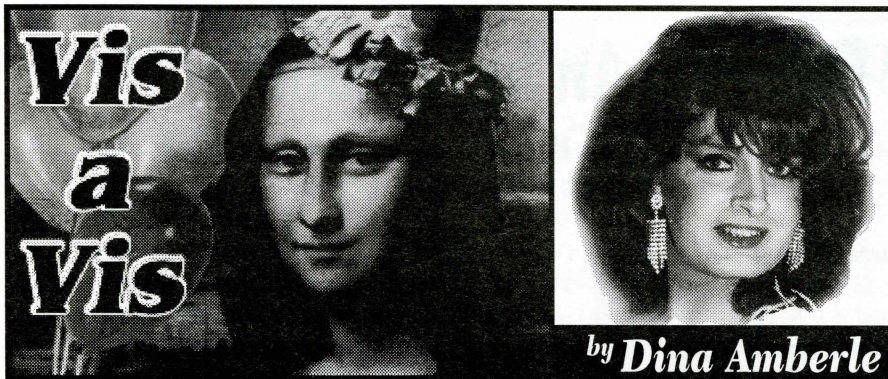
2. The TGForum Resource Center

<http://www.tgfmall.com/>

3. The TGForum Community Center

<http://www.transgender.org/tg/>

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operated web presence. Contact us about getting your organization or
business on the WorldWideWeb. [webmaster@tgfmall.com]



So much about our community mirrors the larger events of general society. As the Presidential campaign funding scandal opens before us, I must now report a similar funding scandal right here at Renaissance.

Through a confidential memo leaked to *Vis a Vis*, it has been confirmed that, for a contribution of \$100,000, donors can spend a night on an air mattress and army blanket right in our Renaissance office suite. For a contribution of \$50,000, donors must spend two nights.

Chinese "soft money" is rampant. It's a well-known fact that no Board member ever has to pay to have their cotton blouses laundered, starched, and returned on wire hangers. And it's not just the Chinese. The super secret "vinyl lobby" has bought influence with our editrix, Angela Gardner, by supplying her with a wardrobe full of PVC garments that is truly shocking... and kind of sexy.

And now I must confess that I've fallen victim to powerful members of the Greek lobby, who believed that a few well-placed dollars could lubricate their access to my most precious possession. I refer, of course, to this column. Yes, they've been behind me all the way.

O, The Sights They Saw On Vacation

The Chi Chapter of Tri-Ess newsletter, *The Tribune*, reprinted a column from the daily *Chicago Sun-Times* by Richard Roeper. The column dealt with a letter from a woman who wrote to complain about their family trip running head-on into the "Holiday En Femme" convention held in Chi-

cago last Fall. As their luck would have it, they were staying at the same hotel as the crossdressing convention.

Mrs. McCracken was disturbed that the hotel management did not advise them that they would be sharing the facilities with a large group of men dressed as women. Her major concern was that her family—and other families in attendance at the hotel for a youth hockey tournament—would be exposed to crossdressed men.

One of the incidents she related was when her 9 year old son went downstairs to get candy from a vending machine and came face to face with one of the crossdressers. The boy came back to the room crying, saying "it was the scariest thing he had ever seen." (Welcome to our world, son.) Their 11 year old was confused by "all the ugly women all over the place."

Mrs. McCracken wrote, "Don't get me wrong—if it was just my husband and me at the hotel, we would have gotten a major kick out of this. We just thought it would have been nice if the hotel had warned us that there would be a crossdressers' convention going on." Roeper got a spokesperson for the Hyatt Hotel to comment. "We're aware of [the complaint] and we have sensitivity to it, but the Hyatt does not discriminate against any group of people. I can tell you that the crossdressers were very well-behaved."

Mr. Roeper commented that he didn't think the hotel was in the wrong. (A refreshingly open-minded opinion, given the nature of the complaint.)

I think any of us can have sympathy for families caught unaware in this circumstance. When you patronize a hotel you never know what you're going

to run into. Chances are good that this is the one hockey tournament trip no one will ever forget. Still, as parents, it's understandable that they'd probably rather not have crossed paths with the "ladies."

The really interesting thing about Mrs. McCracken's letter was that she seemed to have an encyclopedic knowledge of the Holiday En Femme agenda. She mentioned the seminars for makeup, deportment and fashion, the glamour photography studio, and the gala "wedding ceremony." The editor of the *Chi Tribune* wrote in an accompanying note that the convention activities all took place in a far wing of the hotel, making it more than a little curious that Mrs. McCracken should be so well-versed in their goings-on.

And that is a phenomenon that anyone who's attended any large public crossdressing function can confirm. The public—despite any negative commentary they may make—are absolutely fascinated by our presence. At similar large-scale hotel events, I've seen a steady stream of onlookers going out of their way to gawk at us. When all is said and done, we ain't so scary after all. They may laugh, they may shake their heads in disdain... but they can't turn their heads away.

After A Fashion

The *Minnesota Freedom of Gender Expression News* in St. Paul reprinted a *New York Times* article relating the "symbiosis" between new designs for men's and women's fashion from those designers who do both.

Menswear designs don't change as rapidly as women's fashions and the designers who are marketing both lines are trying to find a thematic link between their new line ups. Hence, changes in women's fashions are slowing down. Designer Jil Sander says, "The men's' side is like a prophet [of the women's' designs]. In a certain way, it is like unified thinking. I respect the function and needs of men, and also the sensitivity of not being too fashiony." Stan Tucker, a fashion director of Saks is quoted, "When the designer is in the fabric market and starting to develop the concepts, mens'

comes before womens'. You can put a man and woman together wearing Jil Sander or Helmut Lang and they look the same."

Designer Ann Demeulemeester goes even farther saying, "For me, it's very disturbing in the commercial system, this split. I don't see the world being split into men and women. They are together in life. I work with one general idea of what I want in the next collection. Since men and women are both part of the same world, it's not something I divide."

Another note about the fashion world appeared in the February 1997 *Finesse* newsletter of the Central Illinois Gender Association in Washington, Illinois. An uncredited writer related a letter from a friend who wrote about a vision for fashion in the year 2020. That person envisioned a unisex style in which a jumpsuit type garment would be common for both men and women. The newsletter writer responded that she agreed with that wish for those who enjoy the androgynous look but wondered how many of us "would not want gender distinction in dress abolished."

Frankly, I find the world of haute couture fashion design somewhat baffling and not very relevant to what most people choose to wear from one year to the next. Practical fashions move at a much slower pace than the designers throw at us, which makes their efforts seem academic, even if entertaining at times.

But the *Finesse* author raised an interesting question for crossdressers. Would crossdressing have as much appeal to that part of our psyche that drives us towards women's clothing if the line between menswear and women's wear was minimal or nil? If the only choice between masculine and feminine fashion was the color of our jumpsuit, would we bother spending an hour applying makeup, donning a wig, and possibly forsaking our high heels? What would be the point in that exercise for most of us? And if we came to that point at some time in the future, would crossdressing organizations be the final resting place for vintage fashions of fancy cocktail dresses,

sheer hosiery, and high heeled pumps?

Celebrity Crossdressers Revisited

Last year we were treated to the sight of two celebrities donning drag to promote their books. Howard Stern and Dennis Rodman both came to book signing events dressed in women's' clothing for reasons that were never made clear. Stern's crossdressing was a tie-in to the title of his book *Miss America* (but why?) and Rodman's wedding dress outfit was part showbiz and part a "coming out."

Crossdressing newsletters heralded these events as more evidence of the trendiness of drag. We were all hoping that something good might come out of it for the rest of us, even if many had reservations about the messengers themselves. Stern has been a controversial media figure for a decade; Rodman has been the bad boy of pro hoops for just as long.

Howard Stern has now released the long-awaited-for movie version of his first book, *Private Parts*. The film has been getting uniformly good reviews, even from critics who didn't admire his radio show. The revelation for those who don't follow Stern is that he is a strong family man (much more so than many of his multi-married "family values" critics), married for nineteen years to his college sweetheart, with two young daughters, and apparently a geek at heart.

Meanwhile, Dennis Rodman has been twice suspended from the NBA for two instances of poor behavior and remanded to seek "anger counseling." Although he comes across off-the-court as a mild-mannered hipster, he definitely has some "issues," as they say, in his competitive endeavors.

I would hazard a guess that when these two gentlemen took up the drag mantle last year, most of us had higher hopes for Rodman as our "spokesmodel" than the comic figure of Stern's outrageousness. But now that we've had time to reflect on it, who really makes a better case for us—the angry and volatile Rodman, or the solid family man Stern? I'd say it has to be Howard Stern hands down... in the wet

cement of the CD Walk of Fame.

The After Effects Of Poison

MTV ran a special about some big names in music from the early years of the music cable channel and where they are today. One segment covered the "glamrock" band, Poison.

Poison came on the scene in the mid-eighties with their album *Look What the Cat Dragged In*. The cover of that album featured photos of the four members in ultra-glam makeup, complete with finely detailed eye makeup, pearlized lipgloss, rose blusher, dangling earrings, and the obligatory teased out big hair.

What made the photos so interesting was that these boys were not out to look outrageous. They were out to look beautiful and they succeeded to a remarkable degree. Aside from the album cover, all of the group's early publicity photos in the rock magazines pictured them in similarly alluring makeup and rock star fashions.

Their music was designed to appeal to a teenage audience and given the amount of marketing behind the band one can assume that the whole glamour image was also designed to appeal to the same audience. I would love to have sat in on the meetings where record company executives discussed the strong subliminal appeal that four young rock stars made up to look like beautiful female tarts would have on both teenage boys and girls. So far as I know, no one has ever attempted to study that phenomenon and why it worked so famously for not only Poison but a whole host of "makeup bands" that sprouted in the eighties.

MTV visited three of the four band members today, some ten years after their breakthrough. The band broke up after a few years of lessening popularity (during which they shed most of their glamour look, interestingly enough.) The band members are now in their mid-thirties and it was hard to imagine that the raspy-voiced, stubble-bearded and slightly paunchy men speaking about their past exploits ever could have been so drop dead gorgeous, even with layers of makeup.

But, we've all been there, haven't we?





Gender Reflections

by **Barbara F. Anderson**
M.S.W., Ph.D.

A Rose By Any Other Name

William Shakespeare said "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." But I'm not sure everyone would agree. It is rare in our society, except for a few exceptions, to get to choose your own moniker. Usually we make do with the names given us just as we live with the physical characteristics we inherit. Except, that is, for bi- or transgendered folks along with assorted others who feel the need, be it emotional or practical, to change or supplement their name(s).

When gender issues arise, especially in the form of feeling the need for expression of one's opposite gender, a concomitant desire to name this alternate presence also emerges. Have you ever wondered how others select names for their femme/butch selves? Somehow I doubt they pick their cousin Edna's or uncle Moe's name, revered as these antecedents may have been. Perhaps they select a pleasant combination of syllables, capitalize it and make it their own. Or maybe they choose the male or female version of their own name.

Or perhaps they do some research and select a name that reflects a trait, historical personage, or ethnicity that has significance. I thought it would be fun to look at the names and their meanings of the officers of Diablo Valley Girls and contributors of *Devil Woman*. Of course I have no way of knowing whether the names used are birth names or adopted in adulthood but the findings may be interesting

anyway. When we pick a name do we chose one that reflects us. When one is given to us, do we grow to reflect its meaning? If the latter is so, I need to ponder on the fact that Barbara means "stranger." Hmmm.

Those of you who are still considering different names may want to think about the meaning or ethnic derivation of ones you favor. Additionally, you may want to select those that sound well with your last name. Did you know that names with unequal numbers of syllables, like Dwight David Eisenhower, are more rhythmically pleasing to the ear?

Much as exotic names may attract you, be prepared for multiple mispronunciations and inquiries such as "where did you get that name?" Also think about what your initials will be. Hauling around a suitcase monogrammed with F.A.T. or D.U.M. may not enhance your image as you might wish. To be au courant consider the 5 most popular girls' names in 1991 — Ashley, Brittany, Jessica, Sarah and Amanda. At the other end of the spectrum, of the 500 most popular names, the last ranked were Lisette, Demi, Danica, Marilyn and Shirley.

For more information about names, refer to any book of baby names. I used the Consumer Guide's edition of *Unusual & Most Popular Baby Names* and *The Best Baby Name Book In The Whole Wide World* by Bruce Lansky.

Ren National Office Is BI

... in the computing department, that is. The office has been using an IBM clone to manage the membership database and while it has done a competent job, it hasn't been user friendly. Since the Chair of the Board, JoAnn Roberts and the Executive Director, Angela Gardner, are both Macintosh devotees, it made sense to get a Mac for the office. Thanks to the generous donations of Jessica Brandon, the talented and beautiful Greater Philadelphia Chapter Leader, and Miss Kalina Isato, loyal Renaissance member and Sexy Vampire, Ren. National now has not one, but two Macs for the office.

One of the machines will be put to use by Beth Marshal in her capacity as Bookstore Manager. Computerizing the inventory and other activities associated with the Bookstore will make it easier for us to serve member's needs faster and better. (The Bookstore is available every month at the Greater Philadelphia Chapter meeting.)

The other Mac will be used in the National Office to manage the membership database. Utilizing the capabilities of the FileMaker Pro database will enable the staff to sort the membership records much more easily and target mailings to certain zip codes or regions. We will now better able to find errors in data entry, and that will mean fewer mistakes and more members who get their newsletters on time.

The office will also use the Mac to manage the PenPal Program database. Georgia Hilbert is still participating in the PP Program but since the list has grown she has moved out of a central role. If you feel you'd like to become responsible for the List, contact the National Office. A new PenPal list will be generated sometime this month and sent to all PPP participants.

Meanwhile, the PC will be used to develop a voice mail and fax back facility to deliver information and documents 24 hours a day.



Where Are You When We Need You Phil?

by Helen Davis, Renaissance Delaware Chapter Leader

Last month while surfing through America Online, I came across an article about the *Jerry Springer Show* (*Delaware Renaissance News*, March '97) It was about the way Jerry Springer, on a recent show, allowed two transgendered teenagers to be savaged by his audience and their own family members. This took place without the help of a sympathetic adult or an understanding professional. Of course this is nothing new for this man. At least once a week he'll invite some unsuspecting soul who's looking for fifteen minutes of fame, onto his show and proceed to rip them to shreds.

For the past few years it has been the policy of Renaissance not to appear on any of these talk shows because they have gone from seeking to understand more about the transgendered community to ridiculing us in order to increase their ratings. Now, while this policy is understandable, it isn't nearly enough. If we want these talkshows to end this behavior, then we have to convince them to do so. This man enjoys bashing us. I myself heard him say that he receives his highest rating when he has "T" people on. Ans not only doeshe enjoy bashing us, he profits from it. This man benefits from our existence, while denying us our humanity. We cannot allow this.

I, along with Jessica Brandon and Delaware Renaissance Program Director Christie H., spoke to a group of students at the University of Delaware not too long ago. They told us they

thoroughly enjoyed our presentation, and they invited us to come back to speak to them again. So we were able to reach 35 students. Now, how many people does Jerry Springer reach? I guarantee you that on an average day no less than a million people watch his show. They get to watch him humiliate, browbeat and degrade an entire community that he knows little or nothing about. Don't think this doesn't affect you. How do you think someone feels about *you* after spending an hour watching Jerry Springer debase another transgendered person? There's no way they can come away with a positive feeling about you. It's no wonder people laugh and point at us as we go walking down the street. Until now we haven't been willing to do anything to stop him.

So it's time for us to take a stand and say enough. We have got to force this man to stop. So how do we go about it? There's something you can do right from the privacy of your own home that may be as effective as forming a picket line around his studio. You can write a letter. You can sit down in the comfort of your favorite easy chair and you can write a letter to the station in your area that carries the *Jerry Springer Show*. Address it to the station manager and say something like:

"Dear Sir/ Madam, I recently saw an episode of *The Jerry Springer Show* broadcast on your station and was shocked and dismayed by the things I saw. I had no idea that you and your television station endorsed such dis-

graceful behavior. The show contained transgendered panel members, and instead of attempting to educate his viewers about a very complicated issue, Mr. Springer spent the entire hour encouraging his audience to degrade and humiliate them.

If the point of the show wasn't to educate or entertain, then why are you broadcasting it? Was the only purpose of this broadcast to focus hate and intolerance on another segment of our society? I had no idea your sponsors sanctioned such content.

Due to the narrow-minded viewpoint displayed by Mr. Springer, and by your station, I will no longer watch *any* of the shows you broadcast, or purchase *any* of the products advertised during the time period *The Jerry Springer Show* is shown.

When you have removed this vile and despicable show from your television schedule, I will resume watching your station. I also plan to forward this letter to your sponsors."

I think a letter like this, or something similar, would be quite effective. I have spoken to some who believe otherwise. They say "Oh, we're just poor TG people, we could never defeat him." I say yes we can. This man is not God, he isn't all powerful and he isn't invincible. This is something we have to do. No one else can do this for us. If we're not willing to do something as simple as writing a letter that may help to improve the quality of our lives, then we certainly deserve all the grief society heaps on us.

Library Report

The Renaissance Library, under the guidance of our national librarian, Dr. Lee Etscovitz, is active and steadily growing. We now have 105 quality books available to members of Renaissance and to interested persons. Dr. Etscovitz, at (215) 657-1560, has information concerning the rules and regulations concerning use of the books.

The bimonthly meeting of the library discussion group, called "Discussion Plus," met again on Wednesday evening, February 5 from 8 to 9:30 PM at The Woods, where the Philadelphia Chapter of Renaissance holds its monthly meeting. There is no fee involved, and participants may dress any way they choose. The Woods is quiet and private as usual. Topics pertaining to crossdressing are discussed, such as articles in the general

news or from Renaissance News and Views, and then the personal and social implications of the articles are often examined (the "Plus" part of the discussion). The next meeting will be held on Wednesday evening, June 4, from 8 to 9:30 PM. The discussion is facilitated by Dr. Etscovitz or by her assistant, Gloria Vogel, a member of Renaissance who is also a professionally trained discussion leader.



Hot Buzz

JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



“Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.”

— Douglas Adams

I've never met a group more disinclined to learn from their past experience than the board of directors of the **International Foundation for Gender Education** (IFGE). In early March, I received my ballot to elect the new directors to the IFGE board. It would seem that no one there learned any lessons from the fiasco (and the conflicts of interest) of having board members who were also paid employees (**Merissa Sherrill Lynn**, former Executive Director and **Yvonne Cook-Riley**, former Office Manager and Treasurer) since they nominated not one but two of their current employees for seats on the 1997 board. Both Executive Director **Alison Laing** and *Transgender* Editor **Jean Marie Stine** appear on the ballot even though Ms. Laing says she asked not to be included. To add insult, the nominating committee saw fit to include Cook-Riley as a candidate for the 1997 board. Ms. Cook-Riley, you will recall, was fired from her job as Office Manager at IFGE earlier this year. I can understand wanting Ms. Laing and even Ms. Stine as members of the board, even though I wouldn't recommend it. Finding really

good board members is difficult. But having a fired employee sitting on the board just seems really dumb to me. In light of IFGE's continuing financial difficulties (the ballot mailing was two months late because they didn't have the money for postage), why would you want the person responsible for those problems seated on your board?

I reported in February that transactivists **Riki Ann Wilchins** and **Dana Priesing** visited with members of **Congress** who had supported the **Employment Non-Discrimination Act** (ENDA) and were told that adding transgendered people to the current language would queer any passage of the bill (I just couldn't resist the pun). What I failed to mention then was the fact that Wilchins and Priesing were accompanied by representatives of the **Human Rights Campaign** (HRC), an organization that has not supported transgender inclusion. After that meeting both Wilchins and Priesing were convinced that transgender inclusion in ENDA was not feasible in the foreseeable future. Now, it looks like Wilchins and Priesing were suckered by HRC and taken only to certain offices where the message would be delivered the way HRC wanted. According to reports coming from another group of 20 or so transactivists who visited the Hill at the beginning of March, transgender exclusion from ENDA is not a done deal at all. Many of the ENDA supporters said they would still support the bill if transgender inclusive language were added. We need to trust our instincts and not be so gullible. HRC is no friend to the transgender community as they have demonstrated time and again.

Most people think that guys have it made. They have all the power and the money, etc., etc. But, there are some who would say that men are just as restricted in their gender roles as women were at the beginning of the 1960's. A report entitled **“On Behalf of Boys”**

was delivered at the 1997 National Association of Independent Schools by Haverford School psychologist **Michael Reichert** and assistant headmaster **Tim Blankenhorn**. The study, which was started in 1994 and will continue indefinitely, concluded that young males must be given permission to express their feelings with other males and adolescent females and to witness adult men and women in leadership roles to debunk gender-based myths. The study asserts that gender restriction on boys results in problems like a suicide rate four times that of females and adult traumas such as failed marriages, absent fathers and violence. Twenty years ago, the women's movement led to gender studies for females and now the pendulum seems to be swinging the other way.

Several people have called me to ask what's going on with **Kyberliegh Richards** and **Cross-Talk** magazine, like I should know. But, in reality I do because I'm an associate editor and I talk with Kym frequently. Unfortunately, if you have a subscription don't expect to see **Cross-Talk** any time soon. Ms. Richards says the cash just isn't there to mail out the last issue (December 1996) which was rescued from the shredder by a generous donation from a subscriber. She is also trying to update the **Cross Connection** Bulletin Board System by putting it on the web. If she succeeds in getting **Cross Connection** wired to the web, we may see **Cross-Talk** return as an electronic publication.

Time to move on to the real news—a new fashion magazine for large size women. **MODE** is aimed at women size 12 and up. With 62 percent of American women wearing a size 12 or larger and with the average size a 14, it's about time. This is great news for crossdressers and other MtF transgendered people looking for stylish and fashionable clothes. The magazine says that just a few years ago there were maybe 200

HOT•BUZZ

large-size vendors and now there are over 2000. One thing you won't see in this slick new offering is an article on the latest fad diet. Six issues of *MODE* are only \$9.95. Send a check or money order to them at PO Box 54275, Boulder, CO 80323-4275. This mag is so cool and on target for our girls that I'm almost tempted to drop my subscriptions to all the other fashion rags.

Jumping on board the Plus-Size-Is-News bandwagon, **Playtex** announced a new line of larger size bras, panties and other lingerie. **Body Language** specializes in bras from size 38 to 50, B to DD in seamless satin stylings. Call 1-888-GET-BODY for a catalog.

Here's a list of new "plus" size lines to look for in stores... **AJSport** by **Andrea Jovine**: I love her knit clothes but they're always cut so close to the body that they almost never fit me until now. Ms. Jovine is now designing clothes up to size 24 and they're available in most major department stores from \$60 to \$225... **CoMPANY** by **Ellen Tracy**: offers great knits with weekend style, in a great color palette, from \$60 to \$275... **2000ZEN** by **Jane Suttell**: this is a younger, hipper line with unusual fabrics and vibrant colors priced from \$45 to \$375 in specialty stores and boutiques... **Collection** by **Kay Unger**: focuses on evening wear in sizes 14 to 24 with dresses, tunics and pants, priced from \$450 at Saks Salon Z and specialty stores... **Jones Jeans** by **Jones of New York**: a casual line in denim and cotton twill is sizes 14 to 24 and 1X to 3X priced from \$40 to \$60 at most major stores.

The hot new shoes for Spring is the slide and you couldn't pick a more simple shoe. Unfortunately, many of the styles offered are plug ugly. My daughter came home the other day with a pair that I wouldn't want to be buried in, yet she says they're the latest "thing," and she should know. She's the fashion design grad student. (It runs in the family. My father started in business in the 40's as a woman's shoe designer.)

The HOT color for Spring is **yellow**, both in makeup and in clothing, which is somewhat unique. Many of the Spring fashion shows sent the models down the runways with lots of yellow around their eyes, especially **MAC Chrome Yellow**. Makeup artists suggest that for reality based life, the color needs to be toned down like just applying a yellow dusting to highlight the eye, or if you dare try François Nars' **Goldfinger** eye shadow. Yellow isn't limited to eyes, however. **Chanel** offers a neon-yellow lip gloss and **Mary Quant** offers opaque daffodil yellow polish called Help. On the clothing front, a **yellow jacket** paired with a **chocolate brown** skirt or slacks sets the right tone for spring. If you want to be a little exotic, wear lavender shoes.

One of the more interesting items in *MODE*, is the last page called **LAST LOOK** and the article there discusses **Marilyn Monroe** and points out that at various times in her life Ms. Monroe was indeed a size 16. I recall reading somewhere that the ultra-sexy black lace dress she wears at the end of *Some Like It Hot* was a size 14. Of course, Ms. Monroe's 1950's **size 16** is today's **size 10** or **12**, so it's all relative, ya know. Meanwhile, check out **Virtual Marilyn** online at <<http://ligwww.epfl.ch/>>.

At the opposite end of the "size is everything" debate is a monthly contest sponsored by *marie claire* magazine where you can win a \$1000 cover look, including the designer dress the model is wearing... as long as you're a size 6. If the average woman is a size 14, who is a size 6? Not anyone one I know.

The latest shot in the advertising sex change wars features supermodel **Linda Evangelista**. Billboard sized ads on the sides of busses plying New York City streets show Ms. Linda kissing a male in an ad for **KENAR** sportswear. Actually the "male" is Evangelista touched up by the wonders of computer technology, boyish hair and no breasts. *W* magazine calls its sexy. Bring in the clones!

I used to do quite a bit of airbrush painting of model trains and often wondered

if one could apply makeup with an airbrush. Now I know the answer, Yes! The HOT BUZZ in Hollywood these days is a makeup kit called **Dinair** sold to post-operative facelift clients to the tune of \$350. (What a rip off!). Anyway, the idea is to airbrush on the makeup to cover bruising from surgery without touching the tender skin. Listen, run down to your local hobby shop, grab a **Badger** air brush and a can of propellant. Mix up your foundation with a little water and alcohol and you're ready to rock!

Speaking of **model trains**, over 60 percent of the transgendered people I personally know enjoy model trains as a hobby. I used to be very active in model trains 15 years ago and I'm getting back involved. If you have any **O scale** or **O gauge** you'd like to sell, drop me a line.

The results are in and the winner of the **Miss Transgender Forum** online beauty contest is **Nichole Williams**. Twenty-six contestants vied for the title. Ms. Williams wins a free trip to the **Cal Unity** convention this month in Long Beach, California, courtesy of TG Forum and the Wig Store, along with a new wig and breast forms from **Professional Hair Goods** and **LoLa, Inc.** Second Place went to **Michelle Ross** and third place to **Danielle Cox**. Transgender Forum awarded over \$1000 in prizes to the three winners. Stop by and take a look <<http://www.tgforum.com>>.

We suspected it all along because he seemed to like being in drag just a little too much. **Allison Stearn**, **Howard's** wife spills the beans in the April issue of *marie claire* saying, "... people think I'm the big anchor in the family. But really, he is—and he's really **part girl**. I mean the guy on the radio—there's nothing soft and sensitive about him. He's got no female side. But the other guy, I always said he was from **Venus**."

So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? You can lead a horse to water but teaching him to swim is another story. Comments? Write care of this publication or send me email to <CyberQueen@cdspub.com>.

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Ms. Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.

Making Sense Of It All

Some personal experiences are so significant in our lives that they become etched into the very fabric of our being. One such experience occurred in my own life quite a few years ago. I found myself in a panic late one night during the first week in my new apartment. I was petrified with loneliness, for I felt I had no human connection in the world. I was legally separated and was in the middle of divorce proceedings. The pending divorce was my choice, but I still had to face myself and my feeling of desperation.

Instead of celebrating my freedom, I was fearing it. Somehow my aloneness felt more like a burden than a liberation. It was as if I had been condemned to a long prison term rather than having been pardoned from a previous life of error and bad judgment. I was so upset, so frightened, that I felt as if the world were about to end, as if the sun would never shine again. I was alive but also dead, dead to the joy I was really seeking. I felt as if I were attending my own funeral, so deep into the hole of misery and self-pity had I descended.

At that point, more out of desperation than inspiration, I did the only positive thing I knew how to do when facing something akin to madness: I began to write. I started to talk to the paper on my desk and then, through my pen, to the forces that seemed so much greater than me but from which I did not really want to run. I realized that I was facing some type of test, a test of life in one of its most elemental and soul-wrenching forms. I was deathly afraid to face myself, afraid for reasons which the years since then have revealed to me. But at that moment in time I needed to give some

shape and form to my inner confusion, if only to feel some immediate sense of control in the midst of my inner turmoil. I managed to calm myself with the writing of a poem, entitled :

MOVE OVER MOSES

Move over Moses
and share your wilderness
with me.

For forty years I've wandered
in the desert of my life,
searching for the promised land,
looking for laws
to govern my existence
and to etch into a mountain
of happiness.

Move over Moses,
I'm at the foothills of my dreams.
I have seen the valleys of my soul
and have felt the anguish
of turning to the heights.
Behind me lies
a path of pain,
endured in solitude,
through which I've earned
whatever dignity I own.

Move over Moses,
I'm coming through.
This pilgrimage will end
at my beginning,
and even words like these
can never tell
the story in its entirety.

If there be wisdom
in this quest,
it is that each
is his own test.

Yes, I was facing a test, a test of my very existence, for underlying my struggle to find immediate peace of mind in the middle of that night was a

long-standing disquietude about my identity as a person. I am not claiming to be another Moses, but it is interesting to note that he also had an identity problem, though not concerning gender. And he also sacrificed a great deal for what he discovered to be the truth about himself. In my case, I was confused about my gender, though I did not realize that fact at the time. I only knew I was confused about who I was, and consequently I did not have the security of my own being with which to face life. I had always relied on other people to make me feel better about myself. This is not to say there is anything wrong with support from others and with receiving love and hugs, but I was fundamentally dependent on others to give me a sense of well-being in the world. I did not have that sense of healthy self-love which I find has accompanied my transgendered identity many years later, a self-love which allows me to be alone without feeling lonely, and which allows me to reach out to others, almost as if my inner love bucket is at last filled and wants to overflow onto the rest of the world.

To be part of the world, to be a positive and contributing factor in life, is a far cry from that lonely and painful night many years ago. I will always have tests to face in life, but it was that early test which paved the way for the biggest test of all: facing my gender confusion and thus facing myself. The result has been a gender journey that has led me at last to the discovery of my human birthright: a gender identity which I feel entitles me to leave the desert of my existence and to enter the promised land of everyday life as the person I was meant to be.



From l. to r.: Paula Jordan Sinclair, Angela Gardner, Trudi Henri and Alison Laing & JoAnn Roberts (seated).



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A Coming Out Trip — Babs Revealed

by Babs and Carol

Over the past few years, Babs has traveled all over the east coast and Caribbean, but on this trip she was full of anxiety as she would be revealing herself, in person, to Carol's sister "J" and her husband "R." Since "J", her only sibling, has lived in southeast Florida for many years, we've always made at least one trip a year to Florida. When traveling to Florida by ourselves or including any or all of our children, we've almost always managed to visit them and meet for at least a few meals together. As Babs' persona has grown and developed, as her confidence has soared, "she" has demanded (not unlike a spoiled child) more and more time. Whether going to a restaurant or club, shopping (at places where her family would not shop) or just lazing by the hotel pool, Babs took up more and more vacation time, competing with Carol's family, and her husband (whoever that person is!).

Things came to a head a little over a year ago, when we and several other "T" couples joined Peggy and Melanie Rudd's group on a Dignity cruise sailing from the Port of Miami. Since this was a "Babs" only trip, we never told Carol's family about it. Naturally, as "Murphy's Law" would have it, when we were away, Carol's sister called and one of our children slipped about Miami. Needless to say, "J" was hurt... very deeply. We were in fact only minutes away and couldn't meet... couldn't even call! There WAS something very wrong! When we went down to visit 3 months later, "J" was further upset that we had spent a few days in South Beach and hadn't contacted her. We knew she liked to visit there herself... she would have at least met us for dinner at one of the excellent and fun restaurants on Ocean Drive! (We had to blame that on Jodie and Char.)

The last day of the trip we spent at their place as Babs outwardly disappeared. Carol knew that "J" was upset by the apparent snubs which seemed to compound some of her own personal problems. That afternoon, the

sisters went off for a drive, visiting her nephew's new home, and just catching up on everything, hashing things out and spending quality time together while Babs' male self was stretched out on the front patio trying to catch the last few warm rays of the subtropical sun on his nearly hairless body (Brazen bitch- but nobody mentioned anything) before heading back north.

Babs now narrates:

Half dozing off, I nearly jumped out of my skin as a whisper practically BOOMED in my right ear, "Hiiiiiiyy... Babs!" Wide eyed, yet partially dazed I saw my sister-in-law smiling at me before she turned and nonchalantly walked through her front door! I felt a reassuring calm as I saw Carol smiling at me. Carol later told me, she was very relieved to share this with her sister because of the pressure and stress, the guilt in not spending time (guilt, something else we can share) and from the overall deception. Because "J" was burdened by her own serious family problems, Carol (having confidence in her judgment of her sister) felt that confiding in her would heal the hurt caused by our deception, and would be good therapy for both of them. Needless to say, it seemed to work! Now "J" couldn't wait to meet us on our next trip so "we could go out together as three girls!"

Sharing the secret of Babs with my brother-in-law "R," a slightly older, likable, yet very conservative and straight laced professional, was another story. He is a man of definite likes and dislikes. Because he is "J's" second husband, the physical distance and our relatively infrequent visits there, we were always friendly, but never really close. We didn't know how he'd react. We decided not to reveal Babs to "R."

Months went by, "J" and "R" came up briefly for a family celebration, where we had limited time to talk and no opportunity to bring Babs out. Finally, in the early autumn, "J" called, very excited! It seems they had watched a movie that had a cross-dresser character. "J" made a point of

questioning "R" about it... what he thought... how he felt about a guy dressing up and trying to pass as a woman. As a scientist he said that it was genetic, it is something that they can't stop doing, and as long as they don't hurt anyone there's nothing wrong with it... that's the way it is... it's normal for a certain percentage of the population. She wanted to tell him, but needed our permission. Hearing this, we both agreed (with not a little bit of anxiety) that "R" should know. The next evening I got a call from "R", "Hello Babs! I'd love to meet you! When you guys come down I can be surrounded by a harem of 3 girls!" Given his sense of humor, those words really sounded good and reassuring! Over the ensuing months I sent them pictures of Babs on our various outings and trips. Ironically, they would have had a "Ball" on the Rudds' Dignity Cruises with us!

Finally, we're here in the Florida Keys, staying at their weekend place... we've talked about a lot of things, family matters, politics, general things about their area, an area we used to visit before they moved from north of Miami... all of us talking perhaps more than we've ever done before... Carol with "J," me with "R," all of us together, open and with only a few oblique and light-hearted references to Babs! We've spent almost two days together, talking, swapping gifts, shopping, boating, dining and relaxing and now it's Sunday... time for Babs to come out for a day in Key West. As Carol was leaving our bedroom, I heard her say, "Make sure your makeup is perfect! Don't mess up!" That's all I needed to hear... PRES-SURE! Of course I want to look good!

They've seen the pictures, but now comes the real thing! Will they laugh... will they be turned off by Bab's grim reality? I've never quite felt this way! I've known "J" even longer than Carol. I do the best I can in the time allotted but... Babs is slow! Passable?... Suuure!

continued next page

Babs...

Let's put on the Wonderbra to get a little real cleavage in that zippered sports top with the matching slacks. Have it open just enough to help with the illusion... checking make-up... ok, maybe a little lighter on the blush, wig ok... eyes... just enough, not too much, OK!... adjust the zipper top not quite all the way down. Take a deep breath! (Sigh.) Yes... up the steps we go! "Good morning lovely people, here I am, better late than never!" "R," I know you're a boob man, so I wore my Wonderbra just for you!" "Well, hello, you look just lovely, boobs... 'er I mean Babs," "R" responded, play-acting in a friendly yet gracious manner that made me feel comfortable. Carol and "J" beamed and nodded in assent. Things were going to be ok!

The 110 mile trip from Key Largo over the mostly 2 lane overseas highway can take as much as 3 hours or more. With their station wagon in the shop for repairs, my rental car was now the biggest, so Babs drove. The trip down was very pleasant, it was really a continuation of the previous days pleasant repartee, only I was Babs, but I was still Carol's husband and brother in law to "J" and "R." It all seemed so smooth and natural... a fantastic comfort zone... no arguments, no aggravation over minutia. In spite of the traffic, speed zones and speed traps in the deer crossing zones, before we realized it, we arrived at Key West. With it's large and open gay community and it's wide range of tourist attractions shops and galleries, it would not only be "safe" for them to be with me, but a place where a transgendered person would feel comfortable walking about on the main streets.

Indeed, this was Babs' second visit to Key West with Carol, and our only regret was that "J" and "R" couldn't have met us there the last time for, ironically, it was a port-of-call on our first Dignity cruise.

We were fortunate to find a free parking spot just off Duvall St. (the main shopping and tourist area) a

block away from a restaurant "J" & "R" recommended for dinner later in the evening. This sounded perfect, for by the time we walked to the other end of Duvall St. (where the ships dock) and back we would be hungry, exhausted and ready to enjoy a gourmet meal!

I explained to "R," that although Babs enjoys shopping much more than her male alter ego, my enthusiasm and patience is still somewhat less than that of the two sisters. With both of us shopping, shopping can be very expensive and space consuming! It was kind of a strange male bonding we shared! Walking into jewelry shops and women's boutiques I was able to bond and relate to "J," and Carol as well. Other than a little sticker shock at one of the quality art galleries, and a very pleasant "afternoon tea time" break of iced mocha and a desert cakes at one of the outdoor cafes, there were only 2 notable experiences I will relate.

At the main Wayland Gallery I couldn't help but notice a wide-eyed male sales clerk staring at me after I had, in a very unladylike voice, called everyone over to see a particularly well executed large scene depicting humpback whales. (This "broad" will do anything to attract attention!) I then called over our salesgal (art consultant) and quietly told her to tell her associate, yes, there is a male here someplace and that it was rude to stare and make comments that I could hear. We then left without making a purchase. The other incident revolved about an apparently gay bar, where the first time we passed by I looked in, after seeing a drag show poster in front... waved and was greeted with applause... making a mental note to stop by on our way back for a before dinner drink.

On our way back, we did stop. Walking over to the bar, we found a couple of seats. This time the patrons seemed indifferent. The biggest surprise was that both bartenders ignored us! "R" felt uncomfortable and left first... the 3 girls followed suit. Babs made it a point to "strut."

We headed down Duvall St. towards "La-te-da," a small but luxurious hotel where "J" and "R" had stayed during their last visit to Key West.

They particularly enjoyed Godfreys, the restaurant located inside the hotel, which was recommended, not only for the food, but the ambience of it's private outdoor seating alongside the pool, which is well inside the hotel grounds. As we entered the main building I noticed this was the place that hosted the drag shows on a regular basis, upstairs on the Treetop Cabaret Bar! Did they know... they said they had stayed there before... sure, they did! The only problem was this was a Sunday night, and they hold a tea dance on the outdoor deck of the restaurant and the restaurant is closed. Sunday night there are drag shows starting at 11PM (which is midnight drag time)! Maybe they didn't know! We reluctantly left and Babs had to wave goodbye to all her new found admirers at the dance. We'll certainly stop there on our next trip to Key West.

We later found a nice family style Italian restaurant that accepted the Transmedia card, "Biamontes," where Babs had to be low key, endeavoring to play the "passing game."

This day, my loving spouse and sister and brother in law, showed me a new level of love and respect... a comfort zone of "Truth." It was truly a marvelous day!

Wait till they meet us in South Beach! ...to be continued.

"La-te-da" features 16 luxury guest rooms in the heart of Old Town. The historic "main house" built in 1894 is home to two of the islands best known if slightly notorious bars. The Bye George Bar is cozy and friendly, The Treetop Bar is home to the islands most festive parties and features nightly entertainment by Key West's Grandest Divas. Godfreys has an excellent reputation as a wonderful tropical gourmet restaurant but was, unfortunately, untested by us. [JoAnn Robert's note: *I did get to taste Godfrey's fare and it was absolutely wonderful. I heartily recommend it.*] Brunch is served daily 9 to 3 and dinner Monday through Saturday 6 PM to 11 PM. Located at 1125 Duval Street, the phone number is 305-296-6706.



Everyone Can Play In Our Super Bowl

by Rachel Miller

I grew up in Wisconsin and have been an avid fan of the Green Bay Packers through years of good and bad times. In January, I attended the Super Bowl in New Orleans with my brothers—the greatest sports experience of my life. Because of the enormous interest, the closest flight home was from Houston, so I had a 350 mile drive after the game to reflect on what had just happened.

The Packer fans had major differences in age, finances and social status but they weren't important enough to matter. We set them aside because we had a common objective—to cheer our team on to victory. I realize that professional football isn't the gender community but the same principles can apply.

What if... we lived in a society where it was impossible to distinguish men from women based solely on their clothing, makeup or behavior... where no gender judgments were attached to dresses or pants... where terms like transgendered, transsexual and transvestite became unimportant... where stereotypes associated with being bi-

sexual, heterosexual or homosexual stopped being an issue.

What if... that open society actually existed?

Can't the achievement of that society be a common objective for all of us who are transgendered? How much should it matter to us if we are transvestite or transsexual, male or female, gay or lesbian? While those are real differences, can't we set them aside? Isn't it more important to achieve something together? If a bunch of cheeseheads (remember I am one) can do it, why can't we?

There is a powerful system called "OGSMs" where the "O" stands for Objectives. It is used by major corporations to obtain alignment on common company objectives regardless of the differences between divisions and departments. An objective is a visionary condition extending perhaps 10 years into the future that describes where the organization wants to be. It helps to set annual Goals and deploy Strategies that lead to success. It helps to select the most effective efforts,

implement them effectively and Measure the results.

With that in mind, here is my proposal for our shared objective:

The gender family is understood by and accepted into mainstream society

We need to commit to the objective and that requires dialog, so... what are your thoughts? Will you support the objective as written? Do you have any changes or upgrades? Will you get others involved? Will you recommend it to your organization? If you can't support it, what would have to change so you will support it?

In President Clinton's inaugural address he said that divisions and differences had to give way to a "new spirit of community." We need the same spirit and need to communicate, so let's all start talking...

"We are not fighting for integration, nor are we fighting for separation. We are fighting for recognition as human beings. We are fighting for... human rights."

Malcolm X

The Oaks — A Classic Reborn

by Carol and Babs

After a lovely evening of dinner and jazz on a Friday night at Ecco L'Italia in the West Village, six of us crossed 7th Avenue South and walked a block to the corner of Grove and Bleeker Streets to the City's newest piano bar, **The Oaks**. Located on the site of the former Five Oaks, a legendary restaurant and club that closed during the summer of 1996, we wondered if the gender friendly spirit embodied by the Miss Five Oaks beauty pageant was still on the premises.

As Babs gingerly walked down the stairs to this basement club, she was welcomed by a smiling drag queen, "Hello! Party of six? Right this way!" She led us right to the front and center, and rearranged the tables for us. It was obvious that the old place had been refurbished, the ambiance en-

hanced by cleaned stone and brick walls with plaster columns. Fresh white paint eliminated the dreariness of the old place, but its lingering odor was our only complaint. After the first break, the pianist Charlie Lindberg, a talented and friendly young man, got up and asked us if we had any requests.

We were impressed by our waitress, Natalie Douglas, a gal with a big smile and a big yet polished voice...an obvious talent! When she sang, *You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman*, we felt she was singing it just for us!

We watched guests in the audience come up and sing, play the piano...one young man was cajoled by his date to play an impressive original composition. Talented people, professionals, they just came up and performed...well!

Meanwhile, Babs was in TV heaven

when a young lady passed by and told her, "You look gorgeous!" Another woman at the next table complimented her and a few of the gals on their earrings! This was too much! What ambience! Even the seats were feeling comfortable! She was floating!!

On a subsequent visit on a Saturday night, we were entertained by Jim Keith on the piano, he being another very talented and enthusiastic musician. Our waitress/singers were Suzie Campanaro a talented "local" gal who performs with the Tony and Tina dinner theater show and Perry Paine a gal who has her own Cabaret act in the City. In the middle of the evening, Laura Weston walked in...a little old lady looking as if she just came from the library or just dropped off her

continued on next page

Oaks...

grand kids...but Wow!... could she belt out them blues! With an earthy sense of humor and a flair for acting she sang, *Love Walked Right In* and *I Can't Give You Anything But Love*.

Damian Zabo, a young crooner/waiter with a classic voice that echoed of a Sinatra or Matt Monro, stopped by to sing a few Broadway tunes. Carol really enjoyed his version of *The Summer Wind*. She also thought he was very cute...OK!

Acting as co-hostess and coat check girl on various evenings is the marvelous Ruby Rims, the last of the red hot drag mamas! Wearing her trademark boa around her neck she takes a regular turn at the mike to give us a sample of her cabaret act. She can really belt them out in live song, always with a lot of heart! And she's a friendly gal too! She remembered us at one of her

cabaret shows and gave us kind of a "Queen to Queen" courtesy.

It's the kind of place where a talented amateur or even a star of a Broadway show might stop in and perform a couple of numbers...you just never know!

Completely refurbished with a new HVAC, sound system and kitchen, It is anticipated the kitchen will open to serve dinner and supper in early April. We look forward to sampling their dinner menu. The Oaks is owned and managed by the same people that run the Duplex, a cabaret and piano bar on Sheridan Square, the home of the long running *Dressing Room Divas*. Reservations are recommended for parties of 6 or more, especially on Saturday night.

The Oaks
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Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Greetings, girlfriends! Welcome to Spring! Even though we had a rather tepid winter here in the Northeast (Compared to the The Blizzard of '96!), I'm still happy to see the weather break for the better, I just hope that the summer will be as mild. Before I begin this month's column, I wanna send a big hug out to Stella Bamvil for those nice compliments she paid me in last month's issue regarding my article, "Yeah, I Remember When..." Mucho thanks, Stella!

Now, onto the shopping stuff! Before I got a computer with a modem and logged onto the Internet, I thought the WWW was a professional wrestling organization while the only web crawler I was intimately familiar with was The Amazing Spider-Man! However, now that I'm a Net surfer, I've come to realize just how vast and incredible a resource the Web really is, not to mention how much fun it can be! With that in mind, I bring you to the crux of this month's column, that being shopping resources for the transgendered on the web. Just as regular folks can buy just about anything electronically, so can CD's find all manner of women's regalia the same way.

The primary place to go on the web is **The Transgender Forum** which you can access at <www.tgfmall.com/tgfr.html>. From there, select the **TGF Shopping Mall**, and you're on your way! The TGF Mall lists over a dozen companies that specialize in products for the transgender crowd, quite literally everything from soup to nuts. Here's a small sampling of the companies listed. At the top of said list

is JoAnn Roberts' **Creative Design Service** (www.cdspub.com), I won't linger here too long, only because you should already know about the products and services offered by the legendary CyberQueen of Prussia! Long may she reign!

The Mall has two image consultants. One just so happens to be an advertiser right here in *News & Views*, Lynda Krupa of **CDTips** <cdtips@aol.com>, and **Criss/Cross Consultants** <www.tgfmall.com/crscrs/index.html> out of Houston, Texas. Both firms offer image consulting along with transformation services, shopping trips and photography. The **Dream Wig Collection** <www.wigstore.com> is where to go if you want to buy a wig online. But, if you're a regular reader, then you know my policy regarding buying wigs through the mail; don't do it!

Classic Curves <www.clcrv.com>, is the company that offers a CAD designed foundation garment "Veronica" for creating a more feminine figure. There are two versions, "Veronica 1" is for wear with short skirts and swimsuits while "Veronica 2" is a long legged version for use with regular skirts, jeans and leggings. This garment has to be custom fitted in order to work properly for you. An on-screen order form is included with space for your measurements and payment by credit card, check or money order.

The "Soup to Nuts" stores are also here in The Mall. The most prominent is **Lee's Mardi Gras Boutique** <www.lmgny.com>. For anyone who's been to the store, then you know

that Lee's, with their famous 25 foot wall of shoes, is THE shopping mecca for crossdressers on the East coast. In addition to shoes, boots, hosiery, breastforms, lingerie, corsets, wigs and foundations garments, Lee's webpage also offers tips on TG friendly clubs and events. While the webpage has but a fraction of what you'll find in the boutique, it'll give you a good idea of all the great stuff Lee's has.

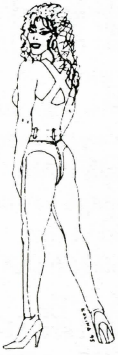
Two other sites in the Mall are **Affordable Fantasies & Illusions Boutique** <www.bvpb.com> and, from the left coast, another well known TG boutique, **Lydia's TV Fashions** <www.lydiastv.com>. Affordable Fantasies features silicone breastforms from \$270 to \$440, wigs in 15 colors, shoes from size 10-14, corsets, cosmetics and magazines. Lydia's, perhaps the Lee's Mardi Gras of California, has a rich webpage offering much of the same products as Affordable Fantasies in addition to breast enhancers likes "Curves" and something you don't see every day (at least I don't!), honest to gosh Maribou slippers. Wild!

Lastly, there are two resources primarily for silicone breastforms.

H.E.R.S. Breastforms <www.tgfmall.com/hers/hers.html> offers a wide range of sizes and variety of forms, from inexpensive enhancers to full blown forms at prices up to around three hundred dollars a pair. H.E.R.S. provides a sizing chart to make your selection easier. **Melody Products International** <www.melpro.com> offers "The Melody," a durable, high quality breastform in sizes from 26 all the way up to 52, in cup sizes A to D, though anything larger than 42 takes longer to ship. However, you pay for all that quality as the price for these forms are \$625 a pair in all sizes.

All of the vendors mentioned offer secure ordering by check, money order or plastic, and, in most cases (with the exception of some custom made breastforms and Classic Curves custom products) offer a fairly quick turn around time, not to mention security... as in plain wrapping for the more self conscious out there in cyberspace. As

continued page 24



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Dear Doctor

Dr. William R. Stayton answers your questions in this column.

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

Dear Dr. Bill

My husband and I are in a rather unique situation. In regard to children, your publications touched on how, when and why you should (or shouldn't) tell your children about crossdressing. However they did not touch on how, when and why you should (or shouldn't) tell step children. My husband and I have been together for two years, married for four months. I have known about his crossdressing since our first few dates, and I accept, support and love him as he is. My daughters, however do not know about his alter-ego. One is 10 and the other is 3. I know we won't have a problem telling the younger one when the time is right but what shall we do about telling the older one? Neither of us likes hiding this from her, but after knowing her "new" father figure for only 2 years, I do not feel that she has had enough time to forge strong enough bond with him to readily accept his alter-ego. My husband insists that she should be told as soon as possible. In other words he has gotten quite pushy about it. We have recently started fighting over when she should be told. Obviously, this is not the proper way to go about the whole thing. Especially since my husband has been quite loud about his arguments. Eventually, my daughter will overhear an argument and find out. Not really the way I want her to find out. Do you have any suggestions and/or guidelines for this type of situation? Any advice you have to offer would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, Erik & Michelle

Dear Eric & Michelle,

You have brought up a very important issue that unfortunately does not have one easy answer for all. There are some factors I would have you consider

in coming to your particular solution.

First, are your children's biological father involved in their lives? If so, how is your relationship with him and is he someone you trust and feel confident about? If you do have a good relationship with him, would you both be comfortable talking with him about this issue? What you do not want is for him to find out through the children and press the issue through the court system at this point, unless your court system is known for its progressive views on gender and sexuality issues. If your relationship with him is filled with tension and animosity, then you need to consult a lawyer to make sure that your custody rights will be upheld if this were to become an issue.

Second, how good is the relationship between your daughter and her stepfather? I would recommend that he spend time to build that relationship, so that she does feel some positive bonding with him before telling her. If she resents him or still has fantasies of you returning to her father, then it could become a wedge in their relationship.

Third, children are generally wonderful about diversity if you are comfortable with it. The fact that you are supportive of your husband is very important. If you treat his crossdressing as natural, fun, and an exciting part of your relationship to him, then it is more likely that your children will be accepting and supportive. Look at the number of Mumpers in Philadelphia. My guess is that the majority of their children take a lot of pride in their father's crossdressing activity as if their father had an interest in football or some other sport. I would treat your husband's interest in crossdressing in the same manner.

It is important for your children to know about the crossdressing if pos-

sible. It they were to find out accidentally, it would possibly be much more traumatic for both you and your child. Good luck.

Dear Doctor,

I am very interested in going out in public for the first time crossdressed. I am very afraid that I will be discovered by my friends or neighbors. I have gotten information from a support group in my area, but I worry that I may run into someone I know, either on the way to the meeting or at the meeting itself. This is very hard for me to deal with since I feel that I really must go out soon. What advice can you offer?

Nervous in New Jersey

Dear Nervous,

If you have already contacted a support group, here is a fine opportunity to meet another crossdresser who can help you to plan your first outing and maybe even go with you. Others in the crossdressing community have gone through the same anxieties, fears, and desires as you. I would explain your situation and ask one of them to come over to help help you prepare for that first outing. Do you do makeup well? Are you dressed in a way that will not bring attention to you if you are going to be in public? How recognizable are you, either personally or as a biologic male? How do you carry yourself? There are many tips that you will get about behavior, such as, crossing your legs when seated, etc. Good luck, I hope that your first outing is a success and that it will be an exhilarating experience and not a nightmare. The more prepared you are, the better the chance for an enjoyable and rewarding experience.



Shopping...

we approach the millennium and technology steadily advances (Check out the brouhaha over the sheep cloning), eventually, shopping on the net will become as commonplace as shopping in a store. So, get on the electronic bandwagon and check it out!

Well girls, that's it for now, time for yours truly to shuffle off and look for a sale as I still love to shop in person! My electronic mailbox is open and ready to receive your missives about the wide, wonderful world of buying stuff! As always, I can be reached at

<treetop@voicenet.com>
or through the plain old snail mail care of Renaissance, PO Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020. Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, sisters!



Ed Note: The article "Transgender Gene Discovered" on the front cover of this issue a joke. We apologize for any confusion that this may have caused. Gotcha! Again. April Fool! And, in case you think the article below it is also a joke, it's not. It really happened and is deadly serious.

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