CROSS-TALK

The Transgender Community News & Information Monthly

#86

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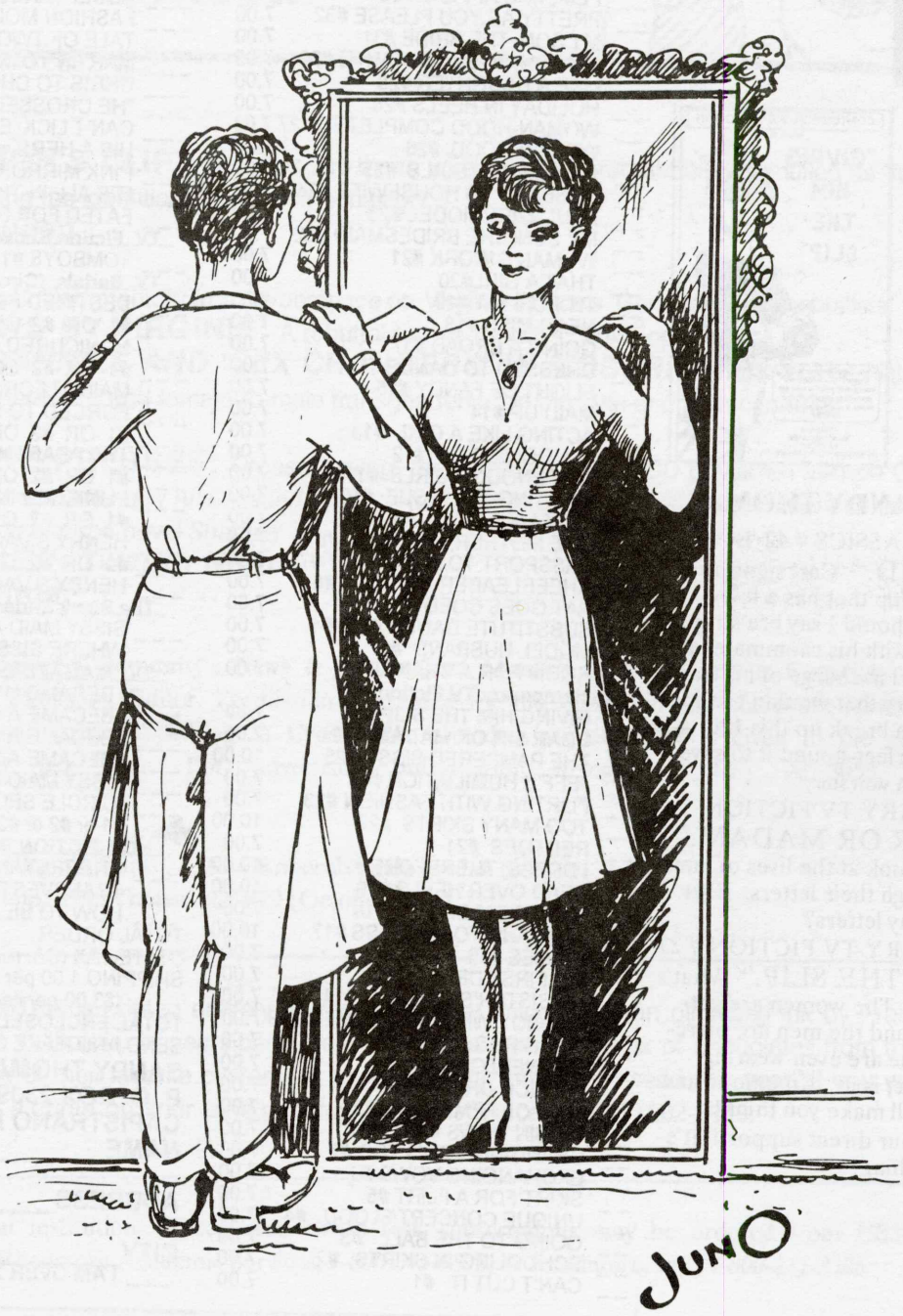

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The Transgender Community News & Information Monthly

DECEMBER 1996
(ISSUE #86)

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KYMBERLEIGH'S CLIPBOARD

OVERREACTION AND FUNDAMENTALISM

by Kymberleigh Richards
Publisher & Managing Editor

fun-da-men'-tal-ist *n.* one who affects the foundations of something

Much as they will hate to hear it, those who so violently disagreed with Virginia Prince's commentary "Gender Fundamentalists" two issues ago really *are* fundamentalists. Because their voices of outrage -- justified or not -- certainly have had an affect on "business as usual" in the transgender community.

We were barely off press when one of our subscribers -- post-op transsexual physician Anne Lawrence, M.D. -- took offense. But, rather than contacting us here at the magazine to voice her concerns, she took to cyberspace, issuing an "action alert" that accused Virginia of "the worst kind of gender prejudice, and intolerance against transsexuals." She then went on to call for Virginia's censure, expulsion from her honorary position on the IFGE board of directors, and the removal of her name from IFGE's Lifetime Achievement Award. Subsequently, Dallas Denny of AEGIS posted a message of her own, urging people to write here to demand Virginia's removal from our pages.

I suppose it would have been too easy for Lawrence or Denny had the decency to communicate with me first. After all, I *only* publish the magazine Virginia's remarks appeared in, and I *only* make the decisions as to what gets assigned space here. No, it was obviously more important to make oneself a name by "exposing" this "great wrong" and put that Prince woman in her place once and for all.

Another salvo was fired just before we went to press. I received a carbon copy of a letter from Joan Goodnight to Jane Ellen Fairfax, of all people, calling for a reprimand of both Virginia and myself ... as if **Cross-Talk** was somehow controlled by Tri-Ess, or that Virginia speaks for Tri-Ess -- or, for that matter, IFGE -- every time she opens her mouth.

Never mind that in making demands, all three of these complainants lived up to the definition of "fundamentalist" Virginia described. For the basis of their arguments, distilled to their essence, was "Virginia is wrong because *I* say so."

Let me note something before I continue. Virginia Prince has not been expelled from either the IFGE or Tri-Ess boards. Her name has not been removed from the annual award that will be given out this spring at California Unity. Neither of us have been censured or reprimanded in any way, primarily because no one has the authority to do so.

In her letter, Goodnight accused me of "violating [my] own code of vowing not to print any article that could be detrimental to any person, group of persons, or any organization." Somebody show me where I wrote that! **Cross-Talk** has always explored a variety of philosophies and viewpoints within the transgender community, and this is not the first time (nor will it likely be the last time) we have published something controversial. If Joan Goodnight, Dallas Denny, Anne Lawrence, or anyone else is expecting me to apologize for publishing Virginia Prince's opinions, they do so in vain.

However, in keeping with a policy I *have* stated many times, I have cleared space in this issue, at the expense of a few regular features, to publish several rebuttals and replies to Virginia's column, as received via the Internet. (I did make available the text of that commentary to all who, reading the "action alerts," wanted to read Virginia's remarks in context, so even though the published remarks are not, for the most part, from our regular readership, the writers have seen the original commentary.)

I suppose that my refusal to go beyond what I am doing, to accede to the demands of the protestors, will cost me a few subscribers. That, unfortunately, is the price of a free press and of defending the right of those who write in these pages to speak their minds freely. It is that same dedication to journalistic principles that motivates me to allow the dissenting voices to be heard this month alongside those who agree and those who feel the dissenters have blown the incident far out of proportion.

And it is that same free press that allows me to share my opinion that those who have attempted to create a crisis out of commentary ultimately did far more harm to their own images than they did of those they attacked ... because they failed to realize that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and that theirs is no more important than mine or yours.

❖❖❖

The NewsQueen

by Paula Jordan Sinclair

Ms. Sinclair knows that she won't make any friends with her first item this month (not that this worry has stopped her in previous months), but she is appalled to report that lawmakers in San Francisco -- usually a paragon of common sense and Solomon-like wisdom -- have stuck their political noses where they don't belong.

Last month the city's Board of Supervisors passed a resolution calling on the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association to take immediate steps to halt the use of the Gender Identity Disorder (GID) diagnosis for children and youth.

The resolution also calls on all federal, state, and local governments to ban government or public funding or "coercive, manipulative treatment of children and youth based on GID diagnosis, when such treatment is used to arbitrarily or forcefully modify a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity."

Supervisor Tom Ammiano, who sponsored the resolution, said the diagnosis was used to identify "pre-homosexual" and "pre-transsexual" children in hopes of preventing them from growing up to be homosexual or transsexual.

Not surprisingly, Phyllis Burke, author of *Gender Shock*, urged the Board of Supervisors to approve the resolution. But Burke's opinion was not the only one. Margaret Dierdre O'Hartigan, acting director of the Filisa Istima Foundation in Portland, Ore., was appalled at the resolution. The foundation works to obtain legal and medical assistance for transsexuals in need.

"I'm incredibly angry," O'Hartigan, a post-op transsexual, said. "Removing the sole mean by which trans youth have to obtain hormone treatment is appalling abuse. We are trading one form of abuse for another."

O'Hartigan, who has used the GID diagnosis for more than a dozen years to get increased civil rights and funding for transsexual health care, advocates going after abusive doctors through malpractice lawsuits.

Ms. Sinclair agrees with O'Hartigan and officials in the American Psychological Association that the community's anger should be directed toward those who misuse the GID diagnosis rather than the diagnosis itself.

But she understands how the San Francisco Board of Supervisors was led astray and chose the wrong side of the argument. Their heart is in the right place (as evidenced by their suggestion that the city should cover the medical and counseling expenses for transsexual city workers through the city's health insurance). But, Ms. Sinclair wonders, if the GID diagnosis is eliminated, as some activists demand, just *how* will insurance companies *provide* those benefits, especially to transsexual children of city workers?

True, the resolution approved last month acknowledges that some treatment programs for *adult* transsexuals require the GID diagnosis, but Ms. Sinclair fears that the supervisors have greatly exceeded their area of expertise in the name of political correctness.

●●●

Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) announced in October that the bureau's Civil Rights Division will accept complaints of discrimination based on transsexualism under current state law, and O'Hartigan, on her home turf, was responsible in part.

The announcement culminated ten months of effort by Oregon transsexuals to persuade BOLI that the state law protecting the civil rights of disabled persons did *not* exclude transsexuals. BOLI had previously refused to accept complaints of discrimination based on transsexualism.

Portland's Dean Kotula fired the first shot in the struggle in January of this year when he attempted to file a complaint with BOLI alleging discrimination on the part of his employer. BOLI refused to accept Kotula's claim, citing lack of jurisdiction in matters involving transsexuals. With the assistance of transsexual activist O'Hartigan, Kotula contested BOLI's rejection of his claim, citing the American Psychiatric Association's recognition of Gender Identity Disorder as a mental illness, as well as Oregon state law which defines disability to include "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits life activities only as a result of the attitude of others towards such impairment."

BOLI closed Kotula's claim in late spring, citing the Americans with Disabilities Act's exclusion of transsexualism. O'Hartigan challenged BOLI's ruling and the agency subsequently reversed itself, stating "we have reviewed our policy. We will accept, under the current Oregon law, complaints of discrimination based on transsexualism."

"Recent events in Oregon illustrate the need for transsexuals to retain the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder in the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*," O'Hartigan stated. "Without a recognized medical diagnosis for transsexualism, transsexuals would not be provided legal protection in the state of Oregon."

Nor, presumably, in the city of San Francisco.

●●●

Of course, Ms. Sinclair hastens to state that not *all* ideas

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coming from San Francisco are far out. For example, last month, the Housing Focus Project (HFP) announced that it is creating a trans-friendly neighborhood in the lower Haight area.

HFP will pay any transsexual $125 for establishing a household at a qualifying address. Says HFP's Jennifer Freeman, "We hope to create an alternative to the inner-city Tenderloin. Once enough proud transsexuals move into the area, the idea of a 'trans-town' will become self-sustaining."

For more information, contact Jennifer Freeman at HFP, 41 Sutter St. #1124, San Francisco CA 94104-4903, or telephone (415) 973-4836 (days), or (415) 552-3577 (evenings).

●●●

Politics in San Francisco *is* a little strange. Where else would a drag queen emcee introduce a political candidate at an event that also featured a bawdy prostitute poet and a couple having sex on stage? Later, the candidate rode a burro around the room and invited everyone to kiss her ass.

In any other city in America, the photo opportunities alone would be enough to ruin a political career. But not in San Francisco.

The candidate in question was Margo St. James, and she was campaigning at the annual Hookers' Ball for a seat on the Board of Supervisors. Although she finished with a high number of votes, her total was insufficient to unseat any incumbents.

●●●

Although Elizabeth Michael's long-shot race for a seat in the House of Representatives from California ended in defeat -- just like her 1994 campaign -- she still has her place in history as the first transgendered congressional candidate.

Michael was born a hermaphrodite and says she had sexual reassignment surgery in 1984. She is now a lesbian of black, American Indian and white descent. She is a Messianic Jew, who practices Judaism but accepts Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

She is also an entrepreneur and former accountant, hosts a political show on public-access television and lists her heroes as former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Theodore Roosevelt, and Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Michael holds a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Pennsylvania. She voted Republican for 14 years but switched two years ago because "the party basically was selling rhetoric and not implementing anything." She also tired of GOP "attacks on gays and lesbians and women," she said.

She joined the Libertarian Party. Nevertheless, she preaches the staunch conservatism that sells in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains north of Los Angeles. But her background stands out in the suburban district, where Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena ex-hermaphrodites are not so open about their past.

The focus on her sexual history is "old hat," she said. She prefers to emphasize her political background: GOP candidate for the state Senate in 1988, for the California Assembly in 1990 and for Congress in two years ago.

Michael says she is the first "transgendered" person to run for Congress but isn't doing it for the sake of trailblazing.

"I did it because I love the country," she said. "I see my involvement in politics as totally removed from whether I had a sex change, whether I'm a lesbian, what my personal social life is."

●●●

Hermaphrodites in Boston went down in the history books as well in October when they staged what was billed as the first public demonstration by intersexed people in modern history. The target of the demonstration was the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatricians.

Hermaphrodites with Attitude (HWA), joined by Transexual Menace, were protesting "Intersexed Genital Mutilation," their term for surgery performed on the genitals of intersexed infants of infants born with "ambiguous genitalia."

The surgical procedure to produce "normal bodies" has been roundly denounced by hermaphrodites as "the moral equivalent of giving homosexuals electroshock and lobotomies to help them achieve 'normal' heterosexuality," according to a HWA spokesperson.

In response, the Academy issued a statement defending the procedure: "Research on children with ambiguous genitalia has shown that a person's sexual body image is largely a function of socialization, and children whose genetic sexes are not clearly reflected in external genitalia can be raised successfully as members of either sex if the process begins before two and one half years," the statement read.

Demonstration spokespersons Cheryl Chase and Riki Anne Wilchins claimed that "medicine is obsessed with policing, regulating, and suppressing difference. Cutting into an infant's flesh are removing its genitals only to force it into an acceptable body image has no place in civilized society; it is barbarism -- there is simply no other word for it."

Perhaps the protest's most poignant moment came when one HWA member, who had lost all erotic sensation because of the surgery, was informed that her pediatrician was at the meeting, chairing a panel on "managing" intersexed children.

"That (blank) cut off my clitoris, put it in formaldehyde, and has it in a jar," she cried, and then broke down in tears.

●●●

And speaking of missing genitalia, the rumor in the porn industry is that Kevin Dean, a star of *major* proportions, has had a sex change.

●●●

Big Apple drag queen Honey Van Camp didn't set her sights on a mere congressional race -- she went for the biggest prize of all, the White House.

Van Camp is the author of *The Drag Queen's Cookbook & Guide to Sensible Living*, just published by Winter Books.

But Ms. Sinclair feels that neither Bill Clinton nor Martha Stewart had anything to worry about.

●●●

Van Camp's defeat *doesn't* mean that there won't be drag queens at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue any time soon. In fact, there were a passel of them there recently -- on film, anyway.

Last month, President Clinton was on a 12-day trip to the Western Pacific that included state visits to Australia and Thailand and a summit in the Philippines of Pacific Rim nations. It was Clinton's first trip to Australia and, chatting with reporters on Air Force One en route to "the Land Down Under," he seemed excited about it.

The President volunteered that the only Australian movie he'd seen lately was *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. At the president's request, the film was screened in the White House.

"You know who recommended it to me?" the President said with a chuckle. "My mother-in-law," Dorothy Rodham.

●●●

Last month, another drag queen tour heading out across the upper, dryer regions of Australia. Known as the "Not the Priscilla Tour," this drag show cut a glamorous path through the top end of Australia. "This tour is not just about having a good night out," said organizer David Wells.

"More importantly," he added, "it is about community development and bringing people together and providing a safe and secure venue by which people who do not normally feel comfortable about going out, can go out."

Folks in each of the towns the tour visited put together gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender "mini-expos" that will precede the drag performance.

Steve Lambert, another spokesperson for the touring group said, "The idea is that as many community groups, organizations, and businesses who work with the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community will display their services and wares."

Unfortunately, the tour didn't take place in a bus topped with a giant high heel pump or flowing silver lame. There simply weren't enough queens to make the big bus idea viable. But they started out hopeful that six drag queens hitting any town will be enough to cause a bit of a stir.

●●●

But just as San Francisco politics gets more outlandish, an annual event that had become famous for outlandish behavior turned tame in October. Of course, Ms. Sinclair speaks of the city's Halloween party. It is still held on Halloween but little else is the same. There was dancing, lots of food and plenty of men dressed as women, but many revelers were disappointed by efforts to move the annual Castro Street Halloween party to the city's Civic Center.

Because of complaints about noise, rowdy crowds and trash, organizers tried to lure party-goers away from San

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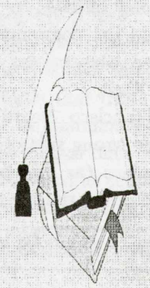

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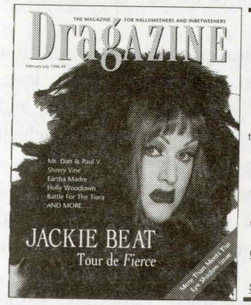

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Francisco's largely gay Castro Street district this year.

Those who heeded the location change showed up at Civic Center Plaza dressed in flamboyant costumes for the party that has become a citywide tradition. But many of the thousands who came said the Castro was still their ultimate destination of the night.

Although the bash began as a gay party when it started 16 years ago in the Castro, it has grown bigger and wilder than ever. Last year, as many as 300,000 people took part. This year, organizers encouraged everyone to attend -- young and old, straight and gay. In the Castro, a man dressed as a prom queen said he and his friends were bored after an hour at the Civic Center bash. The man, who called himself Mary Ellen, said he felt more comfortable on Castro Street.

"It's so much more non-pretentious here," said the man, dressed in a flowing white gown. "We got tired of it because [the Civic Center's] where all the tourists are. They were just gawking at us."

But in the Castro, Mary Ellen had lots of company.

"I was just in Walgreen's and there were about 30 drag queens in there," said Aaron McPeek, a waiter at Orphan Andy's, a 24-hour diner in the Castro.

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The move to make Halloween conventional has, unfortunately, extended to Ms. Sinclair's own backyard.

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This year, several suburban school districts near Philadelphia issued guidelines for "acceptable" Halloween costumes for school parties, eschewing violence, gore, and, in some cases, satanic influences. But two of those districts went entirely too far when they went after drag.

Both the Uwchlan Hills Elementary School and Bensalem High School banned "crossdressing." As Bensalem Principal Steve Smith explained, "Sometimes you get kids crossdressing, and that can be a distraction."

Smith added that French-maid costumes have historically been a problem at the school.

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Even though this is 1996, Ms. Sinclair fears that the real reason school officials frown on crossdressing is because of the perceived link between it and homosexuality. But it was the real link between crossdressing and *hetero*sexuality that earned a Saudi man 200 lashes and six months in prison recently.

The man dressed like a woman and attended a wedding party in the city of Heal so he could catch surreptitious glances at women he might want to marry.

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Religious conservatives in a small town near Akron reacted severely -- but less violently -- to a similar threat to the established moral order last month.

A lesbian married to a male transsexual was escorted off her church's property by police, and church leaders told her not to come back because she "remains unrepentant and seeks to mock God."

Debi Easterday was not allowed inside the Church of the Brethren in Medina, Ohio, and police warned that she could face trespassing charges if she returns to the church she attended for four years but never formally joined.

"I feel they are wrong," Easterday said. "I feel in my own eyes that no one has the right to tell me where I can go to hear God's word."

Easterday married Paul Smith in a civil ceremony October 3. Smith plans to change his name to Denise and undergo a sex change operation to become a woman within three years. The two have said they are lesbians.

The church's administrative board issued a statement saying church members want to gather for worship, prayer and Bible study "without the fear of harassment, threats or general chaos."

The board said it followed biblical principles in handling a difficult situation. "Despite our initial acceptance, love, generosity and prayers, Debi remains unrepentant and seeks to mock God," according to their statement, which did not specify any actions by Easterday.

Easterday, a mother of four, believes she is being banned because she is a lesbian and married Smith. She said church officials have falsely accused her of being "evil, demonic and a witch."

Not all church members condemned Easterday. Becky Buckroader said she was renouncing her membership over the woman's ouster.

"You reach people by showing love and acceptance, and you don't reach them by condemning them," Buckroader said. "You can't accept sin. But that doesn't mean you can't reach out to the person."

Nevin Dulabaum, spokesman for the Church of the Brethren General Board in Elgin, Ill., said the church issued guidelines in 1983 welcoming anyone who believes in Jesus, but also only condoning the relationship between husband and wife. Congregations are free to respond with what they believe is best for their churches, he added. Technically speaking -- and for the time being -- Easterday and Smith *are* husband and wife.

But it was the media circus surrounding the couple that the Brethren objected to. No members of either family attended the nuptials (both brides wore black, by the way). But there wasn't a shortage of guests; reporters and photographers.

When asked what their plans were for the future, Easterday said, "Getting out of Dodge," an apparent reference to escaping the media interest that had accompanied their wedding.

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But not all churches behave that way. An Atlanta transsexual who was ordained as a Presbyterian minister before undergoing a sex change has been allowed to retain her ordination.

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta recently voted 186-161 to allow the Rev. Erin Swenson, 48, formerly known as Eric Swenson, to continue in the ministry. She was ordained in 1973.

"I'm really looking forward to getting on with my life and counseling," said Swenson, a marriage therapist. "This has caused some division. I would like for us to get this behind us and heal."

Before the vote by the presbytery, the local governing body for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Swenson made a personal appeal to the audience.

"I understand that the changes in my life may seem to be bewildering, or even outrageous," she said. "But they are not intended to be so."

The Rev. Bill Adams, executive presbyter, said he was glad the decision had been made.

"I think it's an indication that there are a lot of things in life that we don't understand, and this is one of them," he said. "This is a very fine person, always has been. He has been a very good minister. Nobody questioned that. The only question is what does this do?"

The Rev. Don Wade, pastor of Rehoboth Presbyterian Church in suburban Decatur, Ga., said the decision sets a dangerous precedent.

"By this action, we're saying it's OK for a Presbyterian minister to try to solve a psychological and emotional problem in this manner," Wade said. "I believe that there is healing available through the power of the spirit of God for the kind of struggles Rev. Swenson has."

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Another transsexual professional has been allowed to keep her job.

In a surprising move, the medical committee of the King Edward VII Hospital for Officers in London reversed an earlier decision disallowing Sarah Muirhead-Allwood (who was William Muirhead-Allwood) from practicing medicine at the hospital. Dr. Muirhead-Allwood is now free to admit patients, a development has both her and the chief executive of the hospital "very pleased."

Dr. Muirhead-Allwood was considered one of Britain's leading orthopedic surgeons, and even assisted in the replacement of the hip of the Queen Mother last year. When she chose to go public with her gender reassignment plans (after being threatened with being outed by a British tabloid), the committee withdrew Muirhead-Allwood's admitting privileges.

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A pair of media "professionals" in Atlanta certainly *don't* deserve to keep their jobs.

Last month an Atlanta transsexual was set on fire and police apprehended teenage male suspect. Earlier, the two were said to have been arguing.

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Reports said the transsexual had burns over 15 percent of her body.

News reports, however, identified her as a transvestite, but that wasn't the worst of it.

The next day, Neil Bortz of WSB Radio mentioned the television news coverage of the story, and implied it had no place taking precedence over coverage of the elections. Then he asked, on the air, "How do you put out a flaming transvestite?" His sidekick, Belinda, retorted, "with gasoline!"

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Neil and Belinda are obviously victims of some genetic experiment gone awry.

Now there is disturbing new evidence that *chemical* pollution can cause deformities related to reproductive systems and sexual development. The latest evidence has turned up in fish in Lake Mead in Nevada, one of the nation's most popular recreation spots and a major source of drinking water for Las Vegas and Southern California.

The result of federal research at Lake Mead and two dozen other sites around the country reinforces a growing body of science that appears to reveal that common chemical contaminants have interfered with hormonal systems, feminizing male animals and generally wreaking havoc with sexual development in several types of wildlife.

Researchers rarely have been able to link similar disorders in humans to environmental pollutants. However, scientists are exploring possible connections between chemical contaminants, low sperm counts and high rates of prostate and testicular cancers. But scientists point out that the developing embryos of humans and animals are similar and that, in the earliest stages of development, all creatures may be vulnerable to the same influences.

The study on so-called endocrine disrupters was released last month in Washington, at the annual meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry. The phenomenon has shown up in a broad variety of wildlife exposed to chemical contamination, including river otters and alligators with abnormally small sex organs, beluga whales with fertility problems and male panthers with high estrogen levels and low sperm counts.

In the Lake Mead study, evidence of endocrine disruption appeared in "the presence of female egg protein in blood plasma samples of male carp," the report said.

The fish were taken from areas of the lake that receive much treated and untreated waste, including pesticides, and industrial chemicals, from the Las Vegas area.

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Being impatient critters, humans aren't waiting for the effects of chemical waste to blur the lines of gender. Some men are taking a more direct approach: they are removing their body hair more than ever before.

"It used to be gay men doing it. Now its all men," says Lia Schorr, who runs a Manhattan grooming salon. Forty percent of her customers are men and many want their chest hair removed.

"A new Darwinian era is upon us," writes Gay Trebay, a columnist for the *Village Voice*. "After eons of mutation, the male of the species has shed his protective pelt."

Some blame a proliferation of homoerotic images in the fashion media. Others, like Eric Silverman, a DePaul University anthropologist who studies body images in various cultures, describes an aesthetic of androgyny mixed with pubescent eroticism, resulting in "somebody who looks like a well-manicured boy, a taboo 'middle look' between traditional male and female images."

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So how did the notion of hairlessness become a feminine trait?

According to an article entitled "Caucasian Female Body Hair and American Culture" by Christine Hope, published more than a decade ago in the *Journal of American Culture*, U.S. women were basically browbeaten into shaving underarm hair by a sustained marketing assault that began in 1915. The assault on leg hair came later.

The aim of what Hope calls the "Great Underarm Campaign" was to inform American womanhood of a problem that till then it didn't know it had, namely unsightly underarm hair. Around 1915, sleeveless dresses became popular, opening up a whole new field of female vulnerability for marketers to exploit.

According to Hope, the underarm campaign began in May, 1915, in *Harper's Bazaar*. The first ad featured a waist-up photograph of a young woman who appears to be dressed in a slip with a toga-like outfit covering one shoulder. Her arms are arched over her head revealing perfectly clear armpits. The ad read, in part, "Summer Dress and Modern Dancing combine to make necessary the removal of objectionable hair."

Within three months, Cook wrote, the once-shocking term "underarm" was being used. A few ads mentioned hygiene as a motive for getting rid of hair but most appealed strictly to the ancient yearning to be hip. "The Woman of Fashion says the underarm must be as smooth as the face," read a typical pitch. Anti-arm hair ads began appearing in middlebrow *McCall's* in 1917.

Women's razors and depilatories didn't show up in the Sears Roebuck catalog until 1922, the same year the company began offering dresses with sheer sleeves. By then the underarm battle was largely won. Advertisers no longer felt compelled to explain the need for their products but could concentrate simply on distinguishing themselves from their competitors.

The anti-leg hair campaign was more fitful. The volume of leg ads never reached the proportions of the underarm campaign. Women were apparently more ambivalent about calling attention to the lower half of their anatomy, perhaps out of fear that doing so would give the men ideas in a way that naked underarms did not. Besides, there wasn't much practical need for shaved legs. After rising in the 1920s, hemlines dropped in the '30s, and many women were content to leave their leg hair alone.

What may have put the issue over the top was the famous WWII pinup of Betty Grable displaying her awesome gams. Showing off one's legs became a patriotic act. That plus shorter skirts and the new sheer nylon stockings, which looked terrible with hairy legs, made the anti-hair pitch an easy sell, at least in the U.S.

The practice of shaving legs and underarms has been confined largely to English-speaking women of North America and Great Britain, although it is slowly spreading elsewhere.

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Finally, Ms. Sinclair passes along this request from a gentle reader:

"I am trying to locate a dear, dear friend. Her name now is Canary Conn. She wrote a book in the '70s called *Canary*. As a transsexual in those times, she was a pioneer of sorts. At any rate, over years we lost contact. I want to reestablish contact with her. Her male name was Danny O'Connor."

Anyone with information about Canary Conn/Danny O'Connor is invited to write to Ms. Sinclair in care of **Cross-Talk.**

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And those who don't *have information about Canary Conn, but who* do *have clippings relating to crossdressing are invited to write Ms. Sinclair as well, just as long as they include the name and date of publication.*

Subscribers who have experienced delays in delivery of their *Cross-Talk* subscription are advised to read the open letter from the publisher appearing on page 27.

You *can* make a difference!

Help us fight for your right to be transgendered.

In June of 1995, several of the national transgender organizations created the community's first political action committee — GenderPAC. It's purpose is to fund the increasing number of political activities of the transgender community such as the Transgender Lobby Days last October. In just a few short months, GenderPAC, through the evangelism of a few dedicated people, managed to raise and disburse over $10,000. It is not enough.

It's time for the entire community to pitch in. GenderPAC wants to ensure that your right to work, your right to fair housing, and your right to reasonable public accommodations will not be denied. GenderPAC will continue to lobby Congress in 1996 for transgender inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). But, we can't do it alone and we can't do it for free. Your tax-deductible contribution will make the crucial difference. Give and give generously. You'll feel really good about it. Send your contributions to:

GenderPAC, c/o IFGE, PO Box 229, Waltham, MA 02154

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HotBuzz

by JoAnn Roberts

"Nothing changes more constantly than the past; for the past that influences our lives does not consist of what happened, but of what men believe happened."

-- Gerald W. Johnston

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Every community has its share of rehistorians -- those who want to rewrite history after the fact -- and our community is not spared. Faithful readers saw the announcement last August for the **Second National Transgender Lobby Days** sponsored by **GPAC**. But, floating around the community recently is an announcement by **Phyllis Randolph Frye** (ICTLEP) of a "third" national transgender lobby day. The only problem is this "third" event takes place before the official GPAC event. Ms. Frye has decided that a visit to Washington, D.C., in March 1995 made by herself and two other transgendered people with two spouses constituted a "first" national transgender lobby day. Consequently, the event that took place last October must have been the "second," and an upcoming visit to D.C. by Ms. Frye, therefore, is the "third" and, finally, the GPAC sponsored event, since it is last temporally, must be the "fourth" transgender lobby day. Now, I'm all for giving credit where credit is due, but that visit in March 1995 was no more a national event than is a regular meeting of a local Renaissance chapter. *Renaissance News & Views* ran an extensive two-part article by Ms. Frye about ICTLEP's 1995 activities in the January and February 1995 issues. There was no mention of a "national" transgender lobby day. I am reminded of a puzzle: If you consider the tail as a leg, how many legs does a dog have? A: Four: because no matter what you say, a tail is not a leg. So, let's be clear. The Second National Transgender Lobby Days sponsored by GPAC will be held May 5-6, 1997. Any other event can call itself anything it likes, but I know a tail from a leg.

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Most people think the October staff announcement from the **International Foundation for Gender Education** (IFGE) was the big news I mentioned in September. That was only the beginning. There are more changes to come in 1997. But looming larger on the horizon is a possible move. The lease on their building, the Great White Elephant, is up next summer and the IFGE BoD has to decide if it wants to move into new digs or stay put and it's getting later every day. Either way, it's going to cost them more money than they can rightfully afford. The old lease has been the single largest drain on IFGE's revenue over the last four years.

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There were two major meetings last month, within a week of each other. First, there was the **GPAC Mobilization** meeting in King of Prussia, Pa., on the 2nd and 3rd of November. Looks like every major organization sent a rep. Let's hope they actually got some work done. Following the GPAC meeting on the 7th through the 10th was the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's **Creating Change Conference** in Washington, D.C. What's cool about Creating Change is that the NGLTF has woven the transgendered community seamlessly into its programs.

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While NGLTF has embraced the transgender community, other gay and lesbian organizations are trying to co-opt transgendered people. I find this an interesting, new way of being exploited. I get lots of e-mail messages over the net and some of them are from gay/lesbian online services that are trying to create web-based communities. Several of these services are targeting transgendered people. So, I go and visit their sites and guess what? There's is little of interest to a transgendered person. I mean they don't even have an event calendar. So, why should I bother if they don't take the time to dig up information and resources that would be of interest to me and my sisters? Besides, there's no reason to look anywhere else for TG resource information on the web than at the **TGForum Resource Center, <http://www.tgfmall.com>** and it's free.

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Some of you called to let me know you'd seen me on **Cinemax**. Well, you can imagine how surprised *I* was. Over two years ago, many Renaissance members cooperated with a pair of film makers from New York, **Ellen Sherman** and **Peter Schwartz**, to help make a documentary on crossdressers. That film, *All Dressed Up and No Place to Go* was released on Cinemax October 17 and is reviewed in this month's "Alternative Presses" column. It will go on to compete in several international film festivals. According to the producers, HBO won't make it available commercially for at least a year; when there's a way to get a copy I'll let you know.

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Just when you think all the hype about **RuPaul** is over, it ain't. The SuperQueen has a talk show on cable's VH-1, which premiered October 12. Guests so far have included **Dennis Rodman** (oh, a fashion fight!), Whoopi Goldberg, and Cher, and lots more are scheduled. This could be interesting.

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Closer to home (Philadelphia), there's a new club in Reading, Pa., called **Exccentrix** which features drag shows. It's at 124 N 4th St. Call for details to (610) 376-4650.

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I need some help in locating a resource so I'm appealing to my reading audience. I need to find people who can do **sign language interpretation** for the Second International Congress on Sex & Gender Issues in June of 1997. Ideally, I'm looking for volunteers. If you can sign or you know someone who signs, please contact me, immediately.

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Okay, onto the good stuff ... **Chanel** has taken **Vamp** to the max. They have introduced an entire eponymous (look it up, it's good for your brain) line of makeup based on the blood-red lipstick. You can have it all, lipstick, blush, polish, even mascara. What, no foundation? It would've been great for Halloween. Price range from $15 to $45.

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For those of you who like the **Hard Candy** nail polishes, you now have lipsticks to match the nail colors. About $16 each for Scam, Sky, Pussy Cat, Nymph, Gold Digger, and Trailer Trash.

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Prescriptives made news with its colorprinting technique to match foundation to skin tone. Now they claim to have a foundation unlike any other on the market. Virtual Skin is said to fuse with real skin to give the most natural looking makeup coverage. About $28.

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Sometime ago I mentioned the **Curves** breast enhancers as a possible alternative to more expensive breast forms. So, now I found an ad for **Silicone Cup-Enhancers** that will add up to 1-1/2 cup sizes to your figure for just less than $50. I ordered a pair, so I'll give you a report next month. But if you can't wait, you can order your own set from 1-800-345-6602. Ask for item CE in medium or large.

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The soon-to-be-divorced **Pamela Anderson Lee** inherits the title of best female impersonator in Hollywood from **Marilyn Monroe**, although Ms. Lee doesn't have the talent of Ms. Monroe. What she does have a lot of is readily apparent in the movie ***Barb Wire***, now playing on Pay Per View and soon to hit the video stores. The movie is every teenaged boy's wet dream. I also caught part of a movie called ***Synapse*** in which a young man's brain (or memory) is transplanted into a female body. If anyone knows what the scoop is on this film, please let me know.

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What do you do with the last little bit of lipstick that remains in the tube? Makeup artists usually scoop it into a small compartment or tray where they can mix it with other colors. Now you can do the same with a paintbox from **Japonesque**. The boxes come in six ($12) or twelve ($16) compartment styles and include a brush and spatula. Call 1-800-955-6662, or write them at P.O. Box 644, Sausalito, CA 94966. Or, go to your local **General Nutrition Center** and pick up a vitamin box for $1.99.

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From our "We could have told them this" Department. According to a recent survey, the city that buys the most lipstick and eyeliner per capita in the U.S. is ... ta-dah! **San Francisco**. Other beauty factoids ... Region where women are most likely to use hair spray -- the South, and up to 75% of women use it ... Region where women paint their nails most frequently -- the South; favorite Estee Lauder colors: Red Lips and Earthy Red.

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It was bound to happen. When Drag Queens become media Divas and image is everything, **Lawn Makeup** is not all that surprising. Sold by Global Star Products of Oklahoma City, Okla., the spray makeup comes in several shades of green. There is no truth to the rumor that the company's CEO is none other than **Rachel Rudnick** of COTA fame.

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My fave mag, ***Allure***, can always be counted on to give me a chuckle and they did in last month's issue with an article called "In The Line of Beauty," which focused on testing common, everyday beauty items. For a test on false eyelashes, the editors dug up three New York Drag Queens, **Sherry Vine, Misstress Formika, and Candis Cayne**, for the road test. Well, who else would know better about false lashes? Kryolan B-1s are best. But what really sent me giggling was the road test on lipstick by nine gossip columnists, including **Michael Musto** of the *Village Voice*. Revlon ColorStay won top honor. A trick I learned from makeup maven Jim Bridges -- using baby wipes to remove makeup -- was also mentioned.

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Maybe they've found the cure for raccoon eyes. Revlon has announced **ColorStay Lashcolor mascara**. They say it won't migrate from your lashes to your skin no matter how oily your skin is. All of the Revlon ColorStay products deliver performance as advertised.

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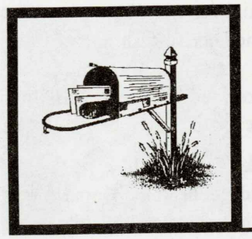
So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? Those who fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. I know it's not original, but it's true. Comments? Write care of this publication or e-mail them to **<cyberqueen@cdspub.com>**. *Copyright (c) 1996 by Creative Design Services.*

THANKS FOR READING CROSS-TALK



Vox Populi

Letters to the editor

This special edition of "Vox Populi" concerns itself entirely with remarks made on the Internet in the aftermath of the publication of "Gender Fundamentalists" (Virgin Views by Virginia, **Cross-Talk** *#84). With the exception of the remarks by Drs. Lawrence and Allison, which were written specifically for publication, and the remarks by Dallas Denny, which were excerpted from her original post to the* **AEGISNWS** *mailing list, all remarks were posted either to the* **alt.transgendered** *and* **soc.support.transgendered** *newsgroups or to the* **TRANSGEN** *mailing list and appear here with the permission of the authors. It should be noted that remarks questioning* **Cross-Talk** *editorial policy have been edited, since said policy is not subject to public debate in these pages. Otherwise, the least amount of editing possible was done, primarily to correct spelling and punctuation, or to limit repeated quoting of the same passages from Virginia's column.*

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Virginia Prince made numerous hurtful and inaccurate generalizations about transsexual persons. Among her assertions:

Transsexuals are "fundamentalists" who think they know what is best for others, and try to push their views *(" [they] ... are the fundamentalists who know what is best for everyone...")*;

Transsexuals should form their own organizations, and leave the rest of the transgender community alone *("...nobody made them have the surgery, so now that they have had it, why don't they just go about living their own lives, forming their own organizations and building their own amorphous psychology and leave the rest of us alone?")*;

Transsexuals prior to SRS were humans of a kind; following SRS, they are no longer human *(" [Transsexuals] ... look back ... remembering the days when they were a kind of human...")*.

These remarks, along with others too numerous to quote, demonstrate Virginia Prince's lack of understanding and concern for transsexual persons. Her editorial is full of inaccuracies, false assumptions, and disregard for the most vulnerable members of the transgender community. Prince has revealed herself to be the true fundamentalist, who would have everyone accept her point of view without question, casting out any dissenters.

As transsexual women who support the entire transgender community, we find Prince's comments personally offensive, divisive, and harmful to our goal of advancing understanding and tolerance for all transgendered persons.

Virginia Prince made extraordinary contributions to the cause of gender freedom in her day, albeit over twenty years ago. This makes her descent into prejudice and intolerance all the more tragic. Such remarks, made by someone of Prince's former stature, cannot be ignored.

Virginia Prince serves as an "honorary" member of the Board of the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE), an organization that seeks to represent the entire transgender community. All IFGE Board members are specifically required to pledge that they will represent the whole community, without bias. IFGE's annual Lifetime Achievement Award is also named in honor of Prince. Based on Prince's current writings, we request that IFGE rescind her membership on the Board, and rename the Lifetime Achievement Award. Persons who agree are urged to contact IFGE.

Anne Lawrence, M.D.
Rebecca Allison, M.D.

I think this is an excellent example of the trans community's propensity for what I call the "Emily Litella syndrome," after the Gilda Radner character on *Saturday Night Live*, who would go into a rant about something she misunderstood (e.g., "violins" on television, Soviet "jewelry") and then at the end say in a little voice "Never mind." This has happened again and again. In fact, when Dallas Denny first launched her salvo at Tri-Ess, there was a big hoo ha on **TRANSGEN** about what she supposedly did and what her supposed intention was. I suggested people stop wasting bandwidth theorizing about it and ask Dallas directly, as I had when I first read the press release and didn't understand her motivation. Then Dallas herself posted to **TRANSGEN**, and some of the people who had been questioning her action (if not her sanity) said "Never mind."

I fully agree that various segments of the trans community keep trying to palm *their* reality off as *the* reality for all transgenders. I am a female-to-male transsexual who identifies as a bi, mostly gay, male, and am also a drag queen, so honey, I know in advance most folks *ain't* speaking for me! I have said publicly in the past that I don't see why if heterosexual CDs want a place of their own they shouldn't have it. As a gay drag queen, I don't feel insulted and would not yell "homophobia." The trend toward everyone demanding inclusion in everyone else's organizations to me is asinine. We can all form strategic alliances when necessary, but if I want to form a group only composed of FTM drag queens, then by damn I'm gonna do it, and I think I have the right to exclude straight FTMs, het MTF crossdressers, British royalty, marsupials, or anyone else I want to exclude, because I don't take tax money and it's a free country.

I may not agree 100% with everything Dr. Prince said but she is, like everyone else, entitled to her opinion without being presented as a monster or a possible Alzheimer's candidate. I hope that among people who believe that one can disagree with someone's opinion without attacking them personally or trying to censor them, reading the entire text will stop some of the attacks. The "my-reality-is-*the*-reality-and-only-I-am-entitled-to-express-myself" crowd, however, will I'm sure continue in full hue and cry. Dr. Prince calls them "fundamentalists." I call them "cryptofascists." They demand rights galore, but want to censor anything they don't agree with. Some civil libertarians! (And they are notorious for attacking first and checking facts later.)

C. Julian Leonard
Editor/Publisher, TransFagRag

This mean-spirited PC-ness is just plain going too far. Dr. Prince has a right to her opinions, and frankly I've been waiting for this kind of a backlash from the Tri-Ess founder for some time.

I think the political efforts of the past year which made strong efforts to bring Tri-Ess into the political equation were misguided. The Tri-Ess organization has had a long and wonderful heritage of their own. Their lack of inclusiveness to other slices of the T community was their choice, and it always has been! Who are we to intrude?

Think about it. Tri-Ess is the equivalent of the Daughters of the American Revolution -- conservative -- and mixing them with the Nader's Raiders of our community like Transexual Menace in the public political arena is *absurd!* They have their place in the community and we have ours!

If we as transsexuals want to change the world, then so be it. We shouldn't expect the crossdresser community join us and take the risks that we have all endured. We are the most demanding and selfish slice of the community. All too often, we manage to pull off our personal changes, then afterwards we lack mission. We either turn our progressive energies toward our own projects (like Wendy Carlos) or (God forbid) toward the politics of our community.

The politics, in my humble opinion are misguided. The vast majority of the community did not elect us to represent them in this capacity!

We are but a tiny portion of the community, though it seems like we have the lion's share of the vocal press and public visibility. With that visibility comes a grand responsibility; one that demands of us to be the best citizens we can be ... always looking out for the greater good.

I think we need to put actions ahead of words, and change the world one person at a time by the fruit of those actions.

It's obvious to me, that if Dr. Prince is making these comments there must be a "basis." I really think that we as a TS community should reflect on her words before we make efforts to flame, censure and expel her, as has been the case with several other notable leaders of our first generation.

Cheryl Ann Costa
Transexual Menace

Though I feel Virginia Prince has the right to speak her mind I do take issue with a generalization she made and with a baseless ascription she wrote.

To generalize that transsexuals are the "fundamentalists" who belabor all TGs with their agenda is inaccurate and inappropriate. There are transsexuals who disagree with Tri-Ess's membership policy and who campaign against it. Yet it is wrong to imply that all transsexuals feel that way about Tri-Ess's policies. In the past I have posted to a variety of lists my feelings about this issue; and it is clear that many others feel as I feel in caring not a whit for anything Tri-Ess does (as long as it doesn't have a negative impact on the entire T-community). Further, I've said, again and again, that the needs of TSs and CDs are disparate and often at odds. It is only natural and fitting that CDs have organizations that address their needs and that TSs have organizations that meet theirs.

Virginia's article clearly targeted transwomen and utterly ignored transmen. After all, does anyone know a transman who's "grown long hair, had electrolysis, tracheal

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shaves maybe, face lifts and nose jobs ..."? And this supports my criticism of Virginia's article having generalized *ad absurdam*.

Generalizations blindly ignore that each of us is different, even from those we feel are kindred spirits.

I take strong issue with Virginia's statement that post-op TSs are neither male nor female and that because of this they have a "mental burden" and that they would be the "last to admit it". With this foolish sentence Virginia shows she has no grasp of how a transsexual woman or a transsexual man feels inside. And, this statement is, I feel, gratuitous and grossly inaccurate. Finally, I know of no transman or transwoman who has ever approached an expression of a "sexual nostalgia" in remembering "longingly that they were crossdressers ..."

Of course Virginia may say what she likes, yet anyone with a modicum of intelligent discriminatory power will know that what she has written in **Cross-Talk** is as much drivel as some of the radical expostulations of the transwomen she fails, through the speciousness of her own case, to damn.

United -- in coalition, of course -- we stand, divided, without coalition, we fall. And if we can't laugh we may as well hang up our hormones, our binders, and our Tri-Ess's and TS Menaces and GenderPACs and all go back into the closet. It's the only place I can recall in which I knew no laughter.

Jerdynne Olivia Lobo

I read Dr. Prince's column with brows, hairs and every raisable body part raised -- and not just because I have one less raisable body part. Of course, after the many attacks from "fundamentalist" transsexuals at the transgenderist option, on Usenet and elsewhere, a retaliation of sorts was only a matter of time and not really to raise anything about.

I think Dr. Prince correctly observes and dissects the "fundamentalist" attitude among *some* transsexuals. However, I find it sad to see how she -- after all, one of the founding mothers of transgender awareness -- then lowers herself to an all-out attack on any and all transsexuals. Then, Dr. Prince makes some factually untrue or illogical statements that tempt me to say she ought to know better. Out of context but in order:

But those poor transsexuals! They don't have any of the confidence building mechanisms that gays have. They don't have anywhere to go because there are no effective organizations for TSs.

It is not as if transgenderists and other non-TS transgendered have any better confidence building mechanisms and any more effective organizations.

So they remember somewhat longingly that they were crossdressers once ...

Only a minority of transsexuals have ever labeled themselves as crossdressers, for any length of time. I am astonished that Dr. Prince would not know better.

... and they kind of look back on those days with a kind of what might be called "sexual nostalgia."

Studies -- and I could name them -- show time and again that less than one percent of post-operative transsexuals look back on "those days" with any kind of nostalgia. Again, I am surprised with Dr. Prince's knowledge.

... and they probably could not survive without synthetic hormones of one kind or the other the rest of their lives. ...

Again, I am surprised by Dr. Prince's knowledge clashing with that of a herd of endocrinologists. Stopping hormones is not a good idea for a transsexual, because she may develop osteoporosis twenty years later, for upkeep of "passable" complexions, and for how she feels. However, a transsexual can *survive* just fine without hormones.

As a magazine editor myself, I know having to write a monthly column or an editorial, can at times be a burden, and one product succeeds better than another. I trust next month Dr. Prince's column will be back at the level to which we are accustomed from her.

Rosalind Hengeveld
Managing Editor, Transformatie

With respect to "[Transsexuals] are the fundamentalists": In context, it is clear that Virginia was saying that there are some people who are "Gender Fundamentalists" and that, among those GFs, the most vocal segment are those who are TSs -- *not* that all TSs are GFs, but that TS GFs are the most vocal GFs. I don't know if this is true or not, but it is, in any case, not a slight against all TSs.

The comment on "a kind of human" has those words in ambiguous mode -- they may, perhaps, be just another way of saying "either male or female". However, other words in that same paragraph are not at all ambiguous in the very poor attitude expressed regarding the essential humanity of TSs. Consider, for example, "Now after surgery they are neither fish nor fowl since they have no reproductive organs of any kind" -- are we expected to regard reproductive ability as the only way to affirm one's place in society as a gendered person? Is a woman postmenopause no longer really a woman, or the man with a testicular disease not really a man? Since when is ability to contribute to the gene pool of primary importance to being a person who can be fish or fowl quite comfortably? Then, "They are not really male and really not female and that has to be a major mental burden (although I am sure they would be the last to admit it)." -- a very patronizing attitude, again calculated to deny proper personhood to the TS.

Regarding the Iranian terrorist quote: Virginia uses this as a measure of attitudes (saying it is going around the transgender community and implying something not specific, but, to me, disturbing in feel). But even if this is not being put forward as Virginia's own line, she *does* own the line that follows: " ... the fundamentalists have become the transsexuals and the transsexuals have become fundamentalists." This is unambiguous in being a blanket condemnation of all TSs. If this is not what she meant to say, it is up to her to correct things or suffer the subsequent lack of respect from all who see such broadsides as unworthy.

Steve Harris

As an organization dedicated to serving the needs of transsexual men and women, AEGIS is egregiously offended by "Gender Fundamentalists."

In the article, Dr. Prince declares transsexuals non-human and otherwise lambasts them. We deplore Dr. Prince's untrue and unfounded characterizations of transsexual people, and register our indignation on behalf of transsexuals and right-thinking people everywhere.

Dallas Denny, M.A., Executive Director
American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc.

I know all three of the parties -- Virginia, Kym, and Anne -- involved. Virginia Prince has been concerned about attacks made on Tri-Ess about its intention to tailor its programs primarily for the married or heterosexual crossdresser. Since she has been a founder and always-active member of Tri-Ess, it seems quite natural to me that she might write an article that says, "Get off our

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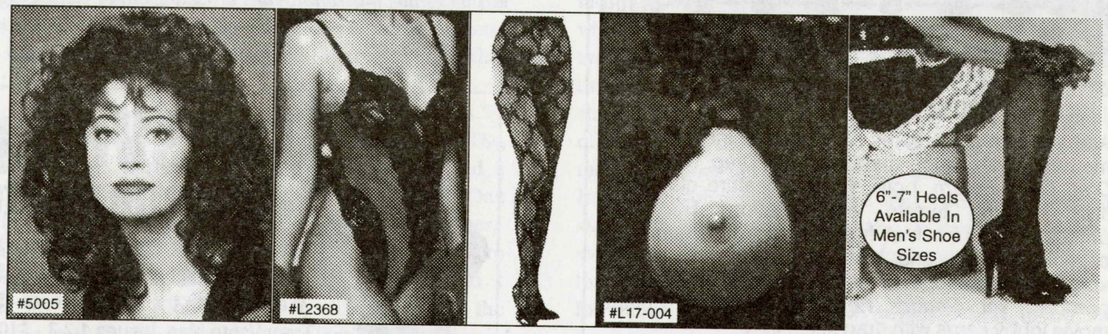

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backs! If you don't like our program, start your own organization." It is also logical and predictable that she has chosen one avenue of gender adjustment which satisfies her, and which seems natural to consider as "the right way." How many hundreds of times have we seen such opinions expressed from every different wrinkle in our gender spectrum?

Kym Richards too, has found a satisfying point in life which does not include SRS. She is also a heterosexual transgenderist, and as far as I know, has never claimed to be anything else. Kym too, has been a valiant defender of Tri-Ess, which has been under great criticism for not revising itself into a generalized gender support group for everybody who suffers from gender discomfort. She has often pointed out that both the individual members of Tri-Ess, and the organization acting as a national standard-bearer for heterosexual transvestites, have devoted much of their effort and funds to helping people and groups who have other gender differences and problems. I think she has had it up to her eyeballs that so many people take cheap shots against Tri-Ess, which is the only national organization that openly encourages wife participation and allows them to hold office.

Anne certainly has a different and justifiable point of view than Virginia's. Anne has "been the route," successfully maintained her medical practice throughout transition, and come up a prominent and very well-informed post-op person in the transgendered community. She continues to help others of us and has stood on the firing line in the struggle for transsexual rights. How could she fail to be critical of Virginia's defense of Tri-Ess when Virginia's remarks about SRS were so contrary to her own experience and feelings? So she wrote a response which was clear, if a little out of context, and which I think was justifiable. In fact it had an eloquence that made her case and that for the transsexuals about as well as it could have been done.

So now we have three people, all of good character and good intention, who have made strong statements in defense of their own points of view. So be it.

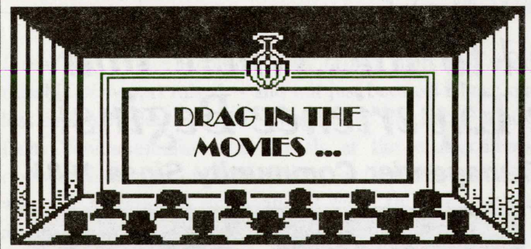
Even if we may feel that one, two, or all three of these people is off-base, is this cause to start an intra-gender civil war? Is this a reason for yet another important person in the community, Dallas Denny to call forth more vitriolic exchanges and hurtful communication? All three principals have been fired, flamed, and glazed. It's time to stop the war of words and the incitement of further division among all our friends in the gender community.

It's obvious there is smoke, and there may be a fire, but I look to responsible leaders to help put those fires out; not to pour gasoline on the source of the smoke.

Everyone involved in this fracas is someone who has donated huge amounts of their time, their lives, and their efforts for the benefits of the other members of our community. Even Abraham Lincoln and George Washington probably said a few things they might have said differently a second time around. And many of us hold them in very high esteem.

One great orator whose arrest record continues to grow said, "Can't we all just get along?" Being somewhat less conservative myself, I beg the activists in genderland, *Stop this bickering; this is not Watts or Lexington, or Gettysburg!*

Allison Marsh



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VIRGIN VIEWS BY VIRGINIA

REBUTTAL AND REPLY

by Virginia Prince

Virginia Prince responds to her critics in the aftermath of the recent article "Gender Fundamentalism".

There are a number of transsexuals in our "community" who feel that it is better to kill the messenger than to hear her message and reply to it. The response to my column in **Cross-Talk** #84 ("Gender Fundamentalists") is ample proof of that, since demands for me to be "punished" run from requesting the managing editor of this magazine to drop me as a columnist to asking the IFGE board of directors to terminate my honorary membership and discontinue the "Virginia Prince Lifetime Service Award".

Of course, none of these actions will occur because (1) Kym Richards realizes -- though many TSs apparently don't -- that the purpose of columnists, in this or any other publication, is to express new opinions or ideas, to comment on matters of interest to its readership and generally to provide that readership with something to think about; (2) the IFGE board knows that I was not speaking for them in any way, but as a private person and thus it would not be appropriate for it to take sides on the matter ... and further, that the board has no authority to censor or try to control the opinions or statements of its members when they are speaking (or writing) on matters unrelated to its responsibility.

This is *not* an apology for the original article. However, it is an expression of some regret that the wording of parts of it was such that it was interpreted differently than what I had intended.

I said that "transsexuals are the main fundamentalists." I concede that this statement appears to include *all* TSs, which of course it should not. I should have included a modifying word like "some," "many" or "activists." One should never use such terms as "all," "none," "never," "always," "everybody," "nobody" and the like, because there are always individual differences and exceptions. So I regret my failure to utilize such qualifiers. But if the objectors were fair they would realize that I was writing in defense of Tri-Ess and against those who would change its policies. When one is angry one doesn't tend to write dispassionately and objectively.

Humans come in two "kinds" ... namely male and female. So when I said, "[TSs], remember[ing] the days when they were a kind of human, a male or a female," I wasn't making a comparison with a lower animal; that ought to have been clear from the sentences which followed. I meant that if humanity was divided sexually into two "kinds" those who had lost their basic reproductive equipment could not be included in one or the other of the two defining "kinds". I thought I had made that clear, but the TS activists, ever on the alert to catch both accidental and intentional "snubs", chose to overlook the subsequent explanation. I am sorry that they did so, because the resulting brouhaha obscured any consideration of the basic message of the article. Transsexuals still have gender but they do not have a sex in the biological sense. Sex is not a matter of vaginas and penises -- they are just part of the delivery systems. Sex is a matter of eggs and sperms.

(Now there will be some people who, in order to keep the argument going, will bring up the matter of post-menopausal females. While they no longer produce eggs, they still have the ovaries, which have simply gone into retirement, so they are still females. Males or females who have had to have surgery for cancer or who have undergone some sort of accident to their genitals or who through age are unable to perform sexually, are still classed as males or females since they were all originally of one sex or the other. They were simply the victims of these conditions none of which were under their control.)

It is evident that many of those who rose up in anger and wrote either to **Cross-Talk** or the IFGE board had never even read the whole article but had responded to the call to arms issued by one of the activist leaders. It is a sad day for individual objectivity when people simply follow and react on command to someone else's call to arms. It also tends to support my use of the term "fundamentalist" (i.e., "If our leaders say it is so, then it *is* so and I don't have to go to the trouble of reading the original article and making up my own mind."). Sound like any recent religious and political leaders you know of?

Finally, I did not intend to criticize *all* TSs collectively. I have a number of good friends who are transsexual. But there are those activists who try to speak for the TS

community in general. Sometimes they have a point, but sometimes they get a bit blinded by their enthusiasm. This is why I called them Gender Fundamentalists. I would like to think that the majority of transsexuals -- MTF *and* FTM -- will confront whatever issues arise with their own minds, get the information straight, evaluate it and come to their own conclusions about it rather than follow some "guru" who seeks to control them and use their loyalties to support his or her views.

It is ironic that both Kym Richards and myself have been termed "transsexuals" by AEGIS' Dallas Denny simply because we dress and live as women full time. Whatever happened to the difference between sex and gender? We changed our lifestyle, i.e., our gender; we have not tampered with our genital anatomy. We are "trans*gender*ists", not "trans*sex*uals". It occurs to me that if, by her definition I was a TS then I would have to follow Dallas' dictates and write to **Cross-Talk** and IFGE to protest my own position and demand my ouster. In short, I should have had to commit a sort of intellectual suicide.

It has even been suggested that I "resign" from the "community" and retire to obscurity. Sorry, "dahlinks" but I played a very significant role in the initiation and development of this "community." I have served it well for 35 years and I have no intention of jumping ship at this late date. As long as I can think and operate this computer I will continue to write about things as I see them without submitting them for preprinting approval by *any* guru.

Too bad more of you haven't got the same degree of independence.

So, let this be the last word on this matter, on the right of Tri-Ess to conduct itself according to the wishes of its members and to any other disruptive battles. There are many important issues to be concerned with and I suggest that we get on with them and stop all this internecine warfare.

Sincerely, Virginia

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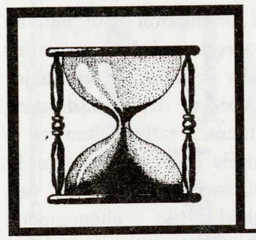


HIS/HERSTORY

FAMOUS TRANNIES AND "SEX CHANGERS" IN MODERN TIMES

by Roberta Perkins

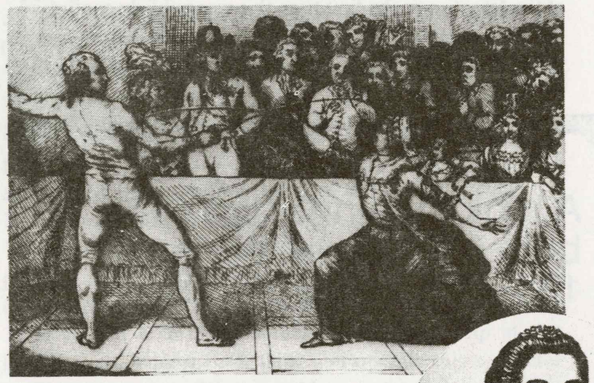
Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, gender crossing has become better known and more prominent in western society. To Victorian society it was an embarrassment, but to the post-"sexual revolution" generation it has become increasingly fascinating and even something to symbolically emulate. Then in the last half of the present century came the medical phenomenon commonly called the "sex change."

Famous Trannies in the 19th Century: Perhaps the best known 19th century trannie is Dr. James Barry, who was born a female in 1795. Much of James' early life remains a mystery; so skillfully did he disguise his biological sex that we don't even know what his given female name was. The earliest record of any certainty that we have of him was his graduation from the Edinburgh Medical College in 1812, at a time when women were forbidden in the medical profession. A year later he joined the British army as a medical officer. After a few years in the home guard, James was promoted to staff-surgeon in 1819 and sent to the Cape of Good Hope as medical advisor to the Governor. A few more years later he was serving on St. Helena and Malta, and was elevated to Surgeon-Major in 1827. After that his rise was meteoric in the army medical corps, and he served in the West Indies as chief medical officer. James was prickly in temperament and quick to lose his temper. People said of him that he was guarded and secretive. His slight frame, small limbs, short height and smooth face aroused the suspicion of some of his colleagues, arousing the curiosity of outsiders, one of whom remarked that "he was thin in build and in stature resembled a woman, with small limbs in good proportion. His voice was shrill and squeaky and quite unlike the voice of a man, The impression left after speaking with him was that he laboured under some sexual malformation." Whatever people thought of him, there is no doubt that he was admired for his medical skills. In 1851 he became Deputy Inspector-General and in this capacity served in the Crimean War in charge of the medical corps. It is interesting to speculate on the type of professional relationship Dr. Barry and Florence Nightingale, as his nurse in charge, might have had throughout the war. After the war James reached the top in his profession by becoming the Inspector-General of Hospitals in 1858. He spent his remaining years in London, and died at home in 1865. A postmortem revealed that James Barry was indeed of the female sex, the first time this was publicly confirmed. Whilst a cloud of doubt surrounded James Barry's sex for much of his life, there were many other females who lived their lives as men without the slightest suspicion in most people's minds, including Charley Wilson, alias Catherine Coombes, a painter and decorator by trade for 42 years, John Coulter, who amazingly was married to a woman for 29 without her being aware he was a female, Charles Durkee Pankhurst, a stagecoach driver in the American west, and "Mountain" Charley, a Rocky Mountain trapper of many years. The tradition of females entering the military as men continued into the 19th century. Nadezha Durova was a peasant girl who married and had a son before running away dressed as a boy to join the Russian Army in 1805. As Aleksandr Aleksandrov he saw action in 1807 and took a part in the campaign against Napoleon in 1812. He left the army four years later and in 1836 began working on his manuscript with writer Aleksandr Pushkin, who persuaded him to revert to a female sex role, in which state she remained until her death in 1866. Another female-soldier was Loreta Janet Velazquez, who joined the Confederate Army during the American Civil War disguised as a man purportedly to find her husband. In the process Loreta ended up in a number of battles and was wounded twice.

Jenny de Savalette de Lange lived as a woman most of her life and even had a birth certificate designating her a female. She became engaged to marry a cavalry officer, but managed to avoid actually marrying, and she had a number of other suitors, all of whom she rejected. One of her discarded lovers had some unkind words to say of her: "(She was) tall, thin and lop-sided, and she leaned on an

A look at gender crossing, both MTF and FTM, in the 19th and 20th centuries.

umbrella. Her features were hard; her look stern and her voice shrill and cracked ... She took snuff frequently and had such a masculine appearance that people who passed in the street used to say how much she resembles a man." But Jenny obviously had some influence in high places because Napoleon granted her a pension in 1812 and even rooms in the palace of Versailles. Although this pension ceased with the fall of the Empire in 1822 she was paid the salary of a postmistresses, even though she never actually took up a position in the mail service. Her pension and the Versailles chambers were returned to her in 1825, but in 1853 she lost her rooms at Versailles when the palace was turned into a museum. Five years later Jenny died in a



Above: The Chevalier d'Eon, shown in a duel with the Prince of Wales. Sexologist Havelock Ellis based his term "eonism" on the Chevalier.
Right: D'Eon's contemporary, Edward Cornbury, governor of New York and New Jersey in the early 18th century.

little apartment in Paris, and upon examination her body was found to be that of a male, but no one knew her original name nor identity.

Sexology and Trannies in the Early 20th Century: Around the turn of the century the new science of psychology introduced some new concepts on gender crossing and crossdressing. But the first attempts at scientifically investigating sexual variations were made by a German physician, Carl Westphal, who wrote the earliest scientific publication on crossdressing in 1869. Richard von Krafft-Ebing is the foremost sexologist whose milestone book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1887, established the concept of sexual perversion, which included everything apart from heterosexual activity for the purpose of procreation. Sigmund Freud did not investigate crossdressing as a subject of psychoanalysis, although he considered it a form of fetishism and an outcome of penis envy in females or castration anxiety in males. Iwan Bloch demonstrated the universality of crossdressing. But it was Magnus Hirschfeld who first described crossdressing as a different phenomenon to homosexuality and fetishism. Some say his own homosexual orientation gave him an insight into the area referred to as sexual deviancy in his day than any other contemporary scientist. In his major work on the subject in 1910 he tried to view crossdressing as a variation on a sexual theme, rather than as a perversion, and in 17 cases closely examined by him 12 were heterosexual, two bisexual, two autosexual and one homosexual. Hirschfeld called the phenomenon *transvestism* (literally: cross-dressing). Another prominent sexologist of the early 20th century is Havelock Ellis, who preferred the term *eonism* (after the Chevalier d'Eon) to describe crossdressing. But, more importantly was his recognition that more extreme forms of crossdressing, that is where someone actually wants to be of the opposite sex and is not just satisfied with donning the clothes of the opposite sex, may be a separate phenomenon.

With or without scientific terminology to describe their behavior, females and males continued the long tradition of gender crossing in western society into the 20th century. Female soldiers passing as men fought alongside their male comrades in World War I and were occasionally discovered, such as Maria Bochkareva, who fought as a man in the Russian Army in the war and was allowed to continue in the trenches even after she was found to be a female. Later she would lead the Petrograd Women's Battalion of Death in the Russian Revolution in 1917 in support of the White Russians against the Bolsheviks. Of all the female-to-male trannies in the pre-"sex change" period Billy Tipton, who became a prominent jazz musician with his own trio in the 1930s and was married with two adopted sons who called him "father", is probably the most successful. None of his close musical colleagues suspected his biological sex, and anyone who suggested he was effeminate looking was challenged by Tipton to fisticuffs.

There were some very successful male-to-female trannies in the pre-"sex change" era too, like Adele Best, who lived as a woman for 54 years without detection, which included three husbands who were none the wiser either. Georgia Black also married, and was widowed twice, and had an adopted son who knew her only as his mother. One of Bloch's cases, Frederica, provides a clue to how these trannies might have kept their biological sex a secret from their husbands; she managed to have many lovers who never doubted she was a woman by using her anus as a vagina. In 1923 a pretty young woman was detained by Chicago police as a murder suspect after she was identified at the scene of the crime. But as she sat in her cell in her nightgown and kimono the police noticed the young woman sprouting a stubble beneath her makeup. The woman turned out to be a noted gangster who frequently dressed as a woman. In court she appeared in make-up, satin slacks and silken top, but

managed to achieve an acquittal because the witness who positively identified her said her eyes were blue, whereas, in fact, they were grey. Another example of trannie variance was the tragic case of a Parisian public servant found hanged in his room attired in lingerie, hosiery and makeup in 1926. On investigation police found that this quiet unassuming little man was none other than the notorious Madame Cartier, who frequented the night life of Montmartre and was well known for dancing and diningthe evening away and, like Cinderella, disappearing into the night at midnight. Next morning the little public servant would make his way back to his office in the morning; that is, until that fateful morning of his suicide. The authorities wrote the case off as just one more deranged homosexual killing himself out of shame.

Came the "Sex Change": For many trannies in the past their greatest desire was to change their genitals to the shape of their desired sex. That desire would become reality for thousands following the so-called sex reassignment surgery of the mid 20th century, during what I have referred to as the "sex change" period. But this period began at the end of more than half a century of experimenting. Perhaps the earliest attempt at reconstructing genitals to shape them like the opposite sex took place in 1882 when German woman Sophia Hedwig's genitalia was operated on to try and give them a semblance of a male's. Although it was not very successful, Sophia's sex was changed officially and she became Herman Karl for the rest of his life. In 1917 another woman, Alberta Hart, herself a physician, underwent a hysterectomy and thereafter lived as a man known as Alan. The next most important case occurred in 1931 when Margrith Businger was granted the full status of female by a Swiss Canton court following a castration operation. Two years later Danish artist Einar Wagener underwent an operation in Berlin by surgeon Franz Abraham, who removed both his testes and penis, and he became Lili Elbe when given the official status of female in Denmark. Poor Lili died only six months later while waiting for vaginoplasty (a constructed vagina). During the war a repulsive experiment was carried out by a Nazi surgeon who reshaped the genitals of a male Jew prisoner who had no intention of changing his gender. About the same time Arnold-Leon Leber was castrated in Switzerland, but an attempt at vaginoplasty was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, he was legally proclaimed a female by a Swiss court and she took the name of Arlette-Irene. By this time the issue of "sex change" was becoming much discussed in the medical journals and one writer Dr. David Cauldwell coined the term by which people came to know those who sought "sex change" surgery when he spoke about "psychopathia trans-sexualis" in a 1949 edition of *Sexology*.

In the same year of Cauldwell's article a female called Laura Dillon completed the first "sex change" that involved a reconstructed phallus. She had undergone a mastectomy

and a phalloplasty, but not a hysterectomy nor oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries). Laura became Michael, entered medical college and served as a ship's doctor before disappearing into oblivion as a Buddhist monk in India, where he eventually died. In 1951 an ex-RAF pilot during the war and more recently a racing car driver, Robert Cowell, was operated on but was not given a vaginoplasty. Nevertheless he changed his identity and became known as Roberta for the rest of her life. The most celebrated "sex change" was that of Christine Jorgensen, a one-time US soldier called George, who was operated on by the Danish surgeon Christian Hamburger in 1953. Jorgensen had an orchiectomy (removal of testes) and penectomy (removal of penis), but a phalloplasty was not completed. However, she was the first trannie to undergo extensive estrogen therapy, and her case became the model on which all subsequent "sex change" treatments were based. Following the immense publicity of the Jorgensen case, Dr. Hamburger received 465 written requests for surgery from women and men all over the world. For the first time society was beginning to grasp the extent of the transgender phenomenon. The focus moved from Europe's experimental surgery to the United States and "sex change" as an acceptable practice in medicine. Endocrinologist Harry Benjamin took up it up as a major cause with his well-known statement of "if the mind cannot be changed to suit the body, then let the body be changed to suit the mind." He was granted funds by the Erickson Educational Foundation to pursue research into transsexualism further and eventually established the guidelines upon which modern-day "sex changes" take place. The first operation in the U.S. was carried out on a female-to-male, who had a mastectomy and oophorectomy in 1960, but the first fully successful conversion took place with a negro male-to-female trannie in 1965. Since then medical institutions in many parts of the world have carried out "sex change" operations as a normal part of their medical and health services. And, as they say, the rest is now history!

❖❖❖

This concludes our serialized presentation of Roberta Perkins' thesis in anthropology. Ms. Perkins is affiliated with the School of Sociology at the University of New South Wales, Kensington.

Look for future articles by Ms. Perkins on the history of crossdressing, drag, transsexualism, and gender crossing in future issues of **Cross-Talk**.

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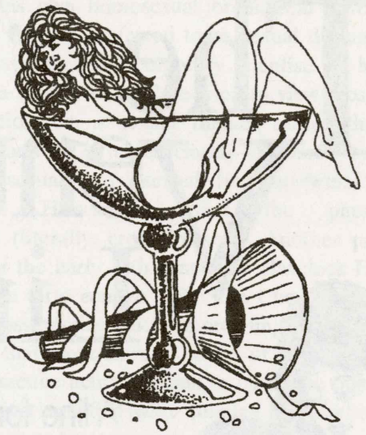

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CROSS-TALK COMICS

THE ADVENTURES OF KAREN

by KAREN ANN MICHAELS

PANDORA'S BOX

by Amy Sakurai

WHAT'S ON THE TV TONIGHT? by Christine-Jane Wilson

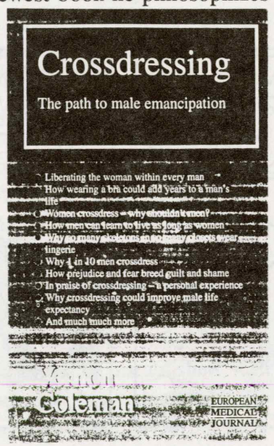
THE PASSING SCENE by Kay Lightner

Alternative Presses

by Kymberleigh Richards

I have found a book that should be required reading for every person who does not understand that crossdressing is harmless.

It is *Crossdressing* (European Medical Journal, 1996, ISBN 1-898947-84-8) by U.K. physician Vernon Coleman, the follow-up book to *Men in Dresses*, which I reviewed in **Cross-Talk** #80. In the original, Coleman "outed" himself as a crossdresser, and in this newest book he philosophizes freely on why he indulges this side of his nature.



Indeed, Coleman is so full of joy and imparts so much honest, factual information that it's hard to point at any one comment that defines this book. Is it the remark in the foreword that it is the crossdressers who have found an answer to stress and society that has the problem? Or Coleman's contention in chapter three that men would expand their life expectancy by crossdressing, offering as proof the fact that women -- who do have the freedom of choice as regards clothes -- do live longer than men? Perhaps it's that Coleman is so refreshingly honest when he says his crossdressing is neither a compulsion or an obsession, but a choice on his part. But it could also be the way he describes the inner peace that comes from painting one's fingernails on a lazy afternoon ... or his ranking dignity above "passing" ... or the observation that he hates wearing black as a man but thrills at wearing a black dress.

There is also a recap of the questionnaire that formed the basis for *Men in Dresses* as well as a sampling of questions and answers on crossdressing that appeared in his national newspaper column in the past few years. In fact, Coleman is so knowledgeable (and accurate) on the subject that I wish he was one of our columnists.

If for some reason your local bookstore is unable to obtain this book domestically, contact Publishing House, Trinity Place, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 9HJ, U.K. for information on ordering it by mail.

□■□

What a great month. The perfect book on crossdressing *and* the perfect documentary on the subject both turned up. HBO's sister service Cinemax premiered *All Dressed Up and No Place to Go* just before we went to press, and although I don't subscribe to their service, they were kind enough to provide me with a review copy on videocassette. And after all the sensationalized coverage our community has had over the years, this production is a breath of fresh air.

Using a meeting of Renaissance and the "Moonlight in Manhattan" weekend as an overlay, this program imparts a great deal of factual information about crossdressers without getting sidetracked by fantasy issues or sexuality. Included are comments from wives and girlfriends about their partners' crossdressing, a daytime window shopping trip in Manhattan with a CD who wisely advises that she's going to dress appropriately for the occasion, but still won't be upset if she gets "read," and quite a bit of footage featuring "High Heel Neil" Cargile, who died recently and was well-known for wearing a skirt, nylons and high heels with his business suit as a CEO.

The documentary also features JoAnn Roberts, who manages to show a copy of **Cross-Talk** on camera for a few seconds, Virginia Prince, who explains Tri-Ess' membership philosophy (wonder why the HBO offices haven't been picketed for airing her remarks?), and Jim Bridges, who explains the difficulty in making a genetic male passable as a woman.

I have to compliment producer/writer Ellen Sherman and director Peter Schwartz for the high level of professionalism they brought to this project; the care they have taken to present a compassionate, honest look at the heterosexual crossdresser is apparent in virtually every minute of footage. They also obviously went to great lengths to keep from being unwelcome intruders, and if it's not too late to nominate them for a Trinity Award, I'd like to do so now.

The only unfortunate disappointment is that, unless you have Cinemax and are able to catch one of what will undoubtedly be many airings of this program, *All Dressed Up and No Place to Go* won't be available for you to view for at least a year, since that is HBO's policy on releasing of original productions to home video. I'll try to get word on a video release date, though, and will report to you if I do.

□■□

When I received a copy of their new title *Betty & Pansy's Severe Queer Review of San Francisco* (Cleis Press, 1996, ISBN 1-57344-056-6), I was somewhat at a loss. How is a Los Angeles-based publisher who hasn't visited the Bay Area in almost 20 years supposed to judge whether a travel guide is accurate and useful? The answer is ... I can't. But my dear friend Ayme Michelle Kantz, who moved there from L.A. five years ago, can. So I forwarded it to her. Ayme?

Well, the subtitle to this book seems to say it all: "an irreverent, opinionated guide to the bars, clubs, restaurants, cruising areas, performing arts and other attractions of the queer mecca." And nowhere is this more true than the running commentaries the authors offer on S.F.'s gay bars. Interjected with (overly) personal sexual escapades, their reviews tend to be full of inside jokes and take for granted that the reader is "one of them," so be prepared for some raunchy images which only serve to perpetuate the gay-equals-sex stereotype.

The audience for this book is obviously the typical GWM (Gay White Male) and will hold little interest for the majority of **Cross-Talk**'s readers, as they will find it hard to relate to the gay sensibilities that permeate this guide. But frankly (and there's no avoiding it), if a TV or TS from Southern California (or wherever) wanted to have a great time in San Francisco, the gay subculture is the place to go. Theirs are the bars, restaurants and clubs that offer the most acceptance for those who want to party "en femme" ... although it is my personal opinion that you should go wherever and whenever it interests and suits you. You shouldn't have to answer to anyone for who you are or how you feel inside. There is, however, a level of risk involved and how comfortable and confident you are with that.

In the beginning of this book, Betty & Pansy offer quick overviews of various neighborhoods, but I was disappointed with their one-sentence review of the Financial District: *"Besides one gay bar and the fact that tons of queers work here, the area is of little interest."* To which I respond (being one who works there), baloney! Downtown San Francisco (proper) is vibrant, teeming with activities, shops, events, historical sites and wonderful restaurants. You don't have to be straight to enjoy downtown! But they do have good insight when it comes to our Mission District, commenting that "some folks bet this is where the new queer community will blossom." Probably true. If you speak a little Spanish, you can have a good time there, but for now there are better (and somewhat safer) areas of the city in which queers can play.

They round out their preface with a page on transportation on which I noticed an error. They comment on the cost of a monthly Fast Pass for our MUNI system as being $38, when from experience I can tell you it's only $35. Generally, though, for a buck and a transfer, you can get anywhere in San Francisco if you're willing to be patient and deal with humanity up close and personal. Although if you're the shy type, but want to get around quickly and privately, rent a car (parking's a bitch, though) or get a taxi (not unreasonable, considering).

A good way to start your visit to San Francisco, especially if you're interesting in making contact with the various sub-cultures within the city, is to obtain current copies of the local free press: The *Bay Area Reporter, Bay Guardian, Bay Times* (the only zine with "Transgendered" on their masthead!) and the *SF Weekly* all offer up-to-date and current information on what's happening in town. The authors review each publication, telling you where to find them and commenting on their various assets and drawbacks. Which segues nicely into the Bars section, which they preface by wisely cautioning us to "please call in advance to see if [the bar/club/restaurant] is open and at the same location." Things happen fast in S.F., so this is probably the best advice they offer in this book.

Otherwise, much the same ground gets covered as in any other "gay" guide to San Francisco. One glaring omission in their Restaurants section was one of my late night favorites, Orphan Andy's (corner of 17th & Castro, as mentioned in this month's NewsQueen) which, while smaller, has much better food than the Baghdad Cafe ... and a groovy jukebox to boot. They also cover the usual prurient interests for those interested in Cruising, Tearooms, Video "Arcades" and the like. Most of the spaces/sites/venues they mention are still operating and are quite popular. There is a new play space opened recently that specifically mentions in their advertising that transgendered people are encouraged and welcome, and having been there myself once, I can recommend The

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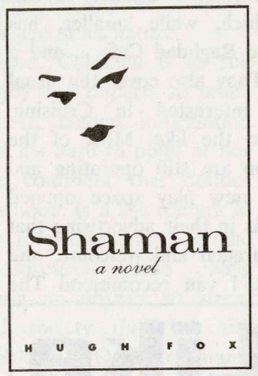
Assuming you're a transvestite or transsexual and you're visiting San Francisco for the first time, this guide is as good as any on the shelves to help you find out more about our fabulous city, if you don't mind authors who don't pull punches and have an affinity for the gay lifestyle. **Cross-Talk** readers will find this guide funny, frank and a fairly useful jumping off point for the $10.95 price, but S.F. ain't cheap, folks! You might find the Internet a more effective and efficient way to get information in planning a trip to the Bay Area.

□■□

I have been trying for months now to get through the novel *Shaman* by Hugh Fox (Permeable Press, 1993, ISBN 1-882633-00-8) ... mainly because I promised publisher Brian Clark I would. The trouble is, this is a *very* strange book and difficult to follow, which may explain why I never could get beyond 20 pages at a sitting.



Well, I recently had a *long* bus ride ahead of me and I took *Shaman* with me in hopes of finally finishing it. And I finally did, but it still wasn't an easy read.

This novel is not for those who expect a typical fantasy crossdresser story; it is more of a stream of consciousness narrative of a drag queen's coming out while traveling cross-country. And it's a very strange trip that the main character, Jack, takes, including stops at some quite unusual places involving him in some borderline bizarre escapades (like doing drag as a Native American woman ... or is it a Latina? I can't tell ...), all the while questioning why he's doing this.

If this novel has any real appeal to the typical crossdresser, it is that Jack goes shopping for women's clothing everywhere he stops, describing the clothes in loving detail, as well as the clothes of the genetic females who assist him in creating a "passable" image. In fact, Jack seems to have something of a foot fetish; he seems overly interested in discovering whether or not his female accomplices are wearing nail polish on their toenails, and seems genuinely disappointed when they wear footwear other than sandals (which prohibits same).

I wonder, though, if this novel is geared more toward the gay community, and perhaps I'll forward this to my friend Lois Commondenominator at *Dragazine* to see if it plays any better to that audience. Is it worth $10.95? Maybe ... it depends on the reader.

□■□

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AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER REGARDING DELAYS IN DELIVERY OF *CROSS-TALK* TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS:

In the past several months, we have received numerous letters and telephone calls from subscribers concerned about erratic delivery of their *Cross-Talk* subscriptions.

The problem lies primarily with the U.S. Postal Service, which in July instituted new guidelines for "standard mail" (formerly third-class mail). Unfortunately, these new guidelines make it nearly impossible for us to bundle our subscriber mailing in a way that allows the Postal Service to quickly sort and deliver *Cross-Talk* in a timely manner. Specifically, where the old guidelines allowed us to bundle all copies destined for the same state together, the new guidelines do not provide for a "state-level" bundle, and thus we can only create bundles in larger metropolitan areas where we have a high concentration of subscribers. Elsewhere, we are now forced to combine mail for several states into a single bundle.

As a result, we can no longer guarantee that subscription copies of *Cross-Talk* will be delivered as quickly as they were in the past, although we are trying as best we can to create bundles that both comply with the new Postal Service guidelines and direct mail to the same region of the country as a single bundle. However, the continued reports from our subscribers indicate that our effort is only marginally improving delivery time.

We have communicated our dissatisfaction to Postal Service management in Washington, D.C., and hope that they will effect adjustments to the guidelines that will restore the delivery time to what it was before. If you would like to voice your dissatisfaction as well (it should not be necessary to "out" yourself; referring to yourself as "a subscriber to a magazine mailed via Standard Mail" should suffice), please refer to "Classification Reform" and address your comments to:

John H. Ward, Vice President, Marketing Systems
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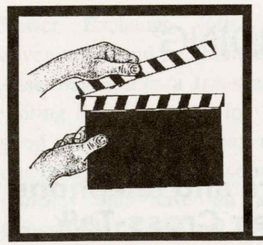
Washington DC 20260-2401

Mr. Ward's fax number is *(202) 268-3428*.

We will continue to give our subscribers the best service possible under these circumstances, and we thank you for your support.

Kymberleigh Richards
Publisher & Managing Editor



MOVIE REVIEW

TWELFTH NIGHT

by Diane Chaplin

Illyria, that Shakespearean hotbed of thwarted desire and sexual dissimulation, is a brooding coastal landscape of mist-shrouded cliffs and Gothic revival architecture in Trevor Nunn's voluptuously atmospheric film version of *Twelfth Night*.

Moping about in her castle, Olivia (Helena Bonham Carter), a beautiful bereaved countess mourning the recent deaths of her father and brother, hides her grief behind a heavy black veil. When she removes it, her hair is a mass of Aubrey Beardsley tendrils, her lips curled into a sullen pre-Raphaelite pout. As she throws her head back in an exaggerated gesture of romantic agony, one's first impulse is to run for the smelling salts.

The movie's late-19th-century setting of dim candlelit rooms and bittersweet piano music suits the director's treatment of Shakespeare's comedy as a moody pre-Freudian allegory. Without bending the play too badly out of shape, this version treats *Twelfth Night* as a comic meditation on desire, disguise and inherent bisexuality.

It takes seriously the mad crush Olivia develops on Viola (Imogen Stubbs), a shipwrecked young woman who is posing as an adolescent boy named Cesario. It takes equally seriously the desperate passion that Viola develops for Orsino (Toby Stephens), the dashing count for whom she goes to work in men's garb and who pines with chest-beating melodrama for the intransigently celibate Olivia.

In the movie's most sensual moment, the disguised Viola gives Orsino a sponge bath, practically drooling over his naked body as he confides his lovesick fantasies.

In calmly presenting the homoerotic elements of these tangled connections, the movie suggests that an essential sexual ambiguity exists in all of us once the defining plumage of one sex has been exchanged for that of the other. Having turned herself into a boy, Viola, whom Ms. Stubbs plays with a chipper wide-eyed smirk, gamely learns how to play billiards, smoke cigars and ride horses.

For all his aggressive courting of Olivia, Orsino, a hypermacho soldier, seems to be much fonder of the "effeminate" Cesario than he is of Olivia.

When Viola finally reveals her true sex, he sweeps her up and instantly steps from the role of mentor and protector into that of lover. At the same time, Olivia, unable to respond to Orsino, becomes wildly infatuated with this tomboy in disguise.

Olivia (Helena Bonham Carter), Viola/Cesario (Imogen Stubbs) and Orsino (Toby Stephens).

As Feste (Ben Kingsley), the play's jesting commentator, darts back and forth between Olivia's and Orsino's households, dispensing nuggets of sarcastic wisdom, Kingsley's laughing brown eyes seem to be stealing glimpses a century ahead into the age of sexual reassignment and hormone therapy.

Of course, there is more to *Twelfth Night* than romance. There is rowdy farce in the drunken antics of Sir Toby Belch (Mel Smith), his ludicrously prancing and preening pal Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Richard E. Grant) and Olivia's maid, Maria (Imelda Staunton).

The crowning comic touch is Nigel Hawthorne's portrayal of Olivia's fawning steward, Malvolio, as a pompous Victorian prude with upper-class pretensions. Considerably older than the usual Malvolio, Hawthorne's character acts like a self-appointed guardian of moral virtue who proudly believes himself to be beyond sex until he is tricked into imagining Olivia loves him and becomes her groveling, slavering fool. An uncomfortable message conveyed by this harshly funny performance suggests that as much as desire may attenuate, the sexual pilot light never goes off.

Twelfth Night, like almost every other recent movie adapted from Shakespeare, takes some broad cinematic liberties. The movie begins with a voice-over narration and a shipboard scene that establishes Viola and her twin brother, Sebastian (Stephen Mackintosh), as professional purveyors of gender-bending entertainment.

As it goes along, the film compulsively cross-cuts among the characters, rarely allowing a scene to build. The actors' line readings tend to undercut Shakespeare's poetry to maintain a cooler contemporary tone.

For all that has been thrown out, reduced and tacked on, this *Twelfth Night* is deeper than most in the way it confronts the psychological forces seething behind the conventional facades of masculine and feminine. It fully recognizes the genius of the play as its comic understanding of the degree to which desire (the more frustrated the better), and not love, is what makes the world go around.

Rated PG. Starring Helena Bonham Carter, Richard E. Grant, Nigel Hawthorne, Ben Kingsley, Mel Smith, Imelda Staunton, Toby Stephens and Imogen Stubbs. Directed by Trevor Nunn. Written by Nunn, based on the play by William Shakespeare. Produced by Stephen Evans and David Parfitt. Released by Fine Line Features. Photo credit: Alex Bailey.

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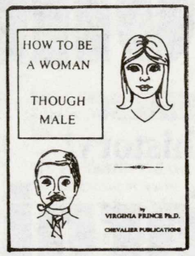

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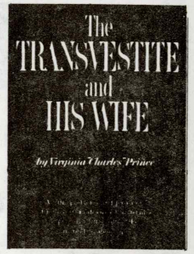

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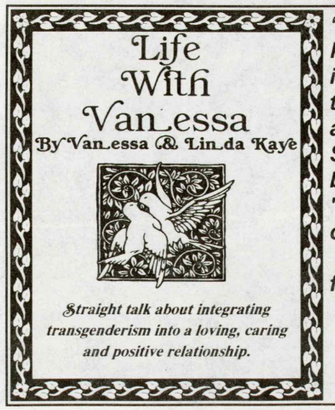

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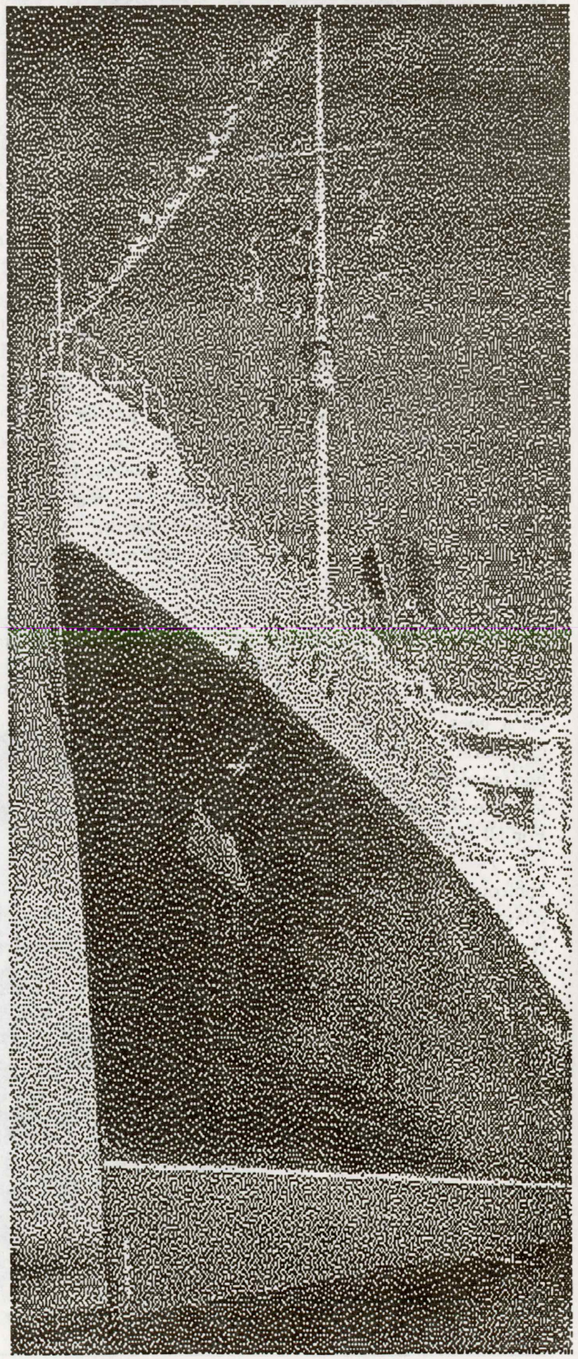

EVENTS CALENDAR

January 23-26, 1997: "First Event '97", Woburn MA, sponsored by Tiffany Club of New England. Call (617) 891-9325 or write P.O. Box 2283, Woburn 01888-0483 for information.
March 11-16, 1997: 9th Annual "Texas 'T' Party", Dallas TX. Send SASE to P.O. Box 17, Bulverde TX 78163; phone/fax, (210) 980-7788; e-mail *<txtparty@aol.com>*.
April 15-20, 1997: "California Dreamin'/IFGE California Unity", Long Beach CA, hosted by Powder Puffs Of California and other California organizations. Details from IFGE, P.O. Box 229, Waltham MA 02154 or by phoning (617) 899-2212.
May 15-18, 1997: "Paradise in the Poconos", Canadensis PA, produced by Creative Design Services, P.O. Box 61263, King of Prussia PA 19406. Information via Internet: *<poco@cdspub.com>* or by phone: (610) 640-9449.
May 21-25, 1997: "Esprit '97 Gala", Seattle WA, sponsored by The Emerald City, NWGA, Trans-Port, and Cornbury Society. Details from P.O. Box 1101, Renton WA 98051-1101.
May 29-June 1, 1997: 17th Annual "Spring Fling", Provincetown MA, sponsored by Tiffany Club of New England. See listing for January 23 event for contact information.
June 20-22, 1997: Second "International Congress on Sex & Gender Issues", Valley Forge PA, co-sponsored by the Human Sexuality Program at the University of Pennsylvania and Renaissance Education Association. Contact Renaissance, 987 Old Eagle School Rd. Suite 719, Wayne PA 19087 for information, or JoAnn Roberts at Creative Design Services: (610) 640-9449, fax (610) 648-0257, or e-mail *<cngrs2@cdspub.com>*.
September 18-21, 1997: "Paradise in the Poconos", Canadensis PA. See May 15 listing for details.

(Please send information on national transgender community events to **Cross-Talk,** *P.O. Box 944, Woodland Hills CA 91365. Listings must be accompanied by a written authorization by an officer of the sponsoring organization or be listed in their group newsletter. Information will not be accepted via e-mail.)*

A list of transgender community organizations with contact phone numbers is available upon request by sending a self-addressed #10 envelope with 32 cents postage to Cross-Talk Hotlines, P.O. Box 944, Woodland Hills CA 91365-0944. Outside the U.S., simply send your name and address and one International Reply Coupon to cover postage.

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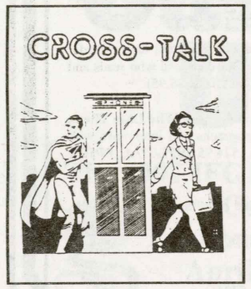
#82 ***(August 1996):*** How much does the controversy over same-sex marriages affect the transgender community?; The diversity of African cultures' approaches to crossdressing and intersexuality; Hormones as a cause of crossdressing; Fashion advice for younger crossdressers.



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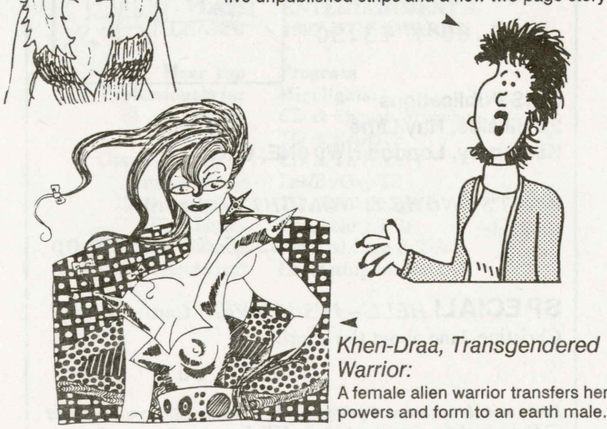

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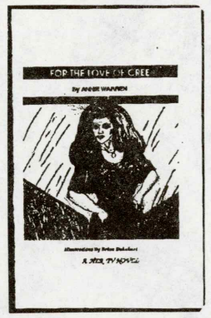

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