

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT 18th GET-TOGETHER

by James

Fifty people attended the 18th quarterly Get Together last July. Some of us remembered when there were only two, or three, or four willing or able to attend an afternoon meeting: what a transformation! Over the past couple of years, more and more people are consciously acknowledging, questioning, and exploring gender issues. And participation in FTM group activities has grown accordingly.

At our July meeting we watched "The Blank Point--What is Transsexualism?", a new video by Xiao-Yen Wang of the Beijing-San Francisco Film Group. Xiao-Yen (pronounced like Cheyenne) Wang is a feature film director from China who came to San Francisco and was amazed by the diversity of sexuality and gender expression she found here. In China, she says, no such diversity exists, so she developed her video project (her first documentary) to further her own understanding. She focusses on three transsexuals, two MTFs and one FTM (me! --using the pseudonym "Richard" to protect my children). Also featured in the video are San Francisco-based psychologist Lin Fraser and surgeon Michael Brownstein. The footage was actually shot in late 1989 and early 1990, and post-production took almost a year. The video has been shown this summer at a number of film/video festivals in the U.S. and Canada, and it has received several awards. The producer, Andy Martin, has not been able to get a broadcast commitment from PBS or any local station as yet, but he is still working on that. [Representatives of San Francisco's local PBS affiliate, KQED, would not even look at the video, saying they had a transsexual video already and they did not need another. The one they have is "Metamorphosis" which features only one MTF and her struggle to adjust to the female role. Is this sex discrimination?]

Response to the video at the FTM meeting was generally positive. Most people felt the film was very sensitive and supportive, and would serve well as an introduction to transsexualism for people who had no personal experience of the subject. [Andy and Xiao-Yen told me about being stared at and referred to as "those people who made that dirty movie" by a few people attending the International Film Festival in Houston, Texas, so I guess there's just no educating some people...]

The video lasted one hour, and following announcements about an upcoming talk show featuring "Female Crossdressers" (see Kevin's review elsewhere in this issue, "A First For Female Crossdressers") we spent the rest of the meeting time socializing and networking. There were a number of new men present, as well as people from out of town who made the trip especially to attend our meeting. It is always a pleasure to greet visitors, so I hope people will continue to make the effort to come to our meetings to share information and the experience of our personal transformations.

FIRST SOCIAL AND SUPPORT MEETINGS WELL-ATTENDED

As announced in the last issue of this newsletter, our group has recently instituted monthly forums which rotate between "Informational," "Social," and "Support." Our first "Social" was held August 4th in Golden Gate Park as a no-host picnic. About 20 people attended in spite of foggy, drizzly weather. Most of us had a pretty good time, although we did receive some constructive feedback (see the Male Box). Our first "Support" meeting was held September 8th at a private home which was almost too small to accommodate the 25 attendees. All the feedback I've received was very positive. Everyone seemed to appreciate the opportunity to express themselves and ask questions in a highly confidential environment.

Some people did express some dissatisfaction with the process of telephoning for information about the meetings. We discussed this at the Support meeting and agreed that the phone network was the best way to control costs and retain confidentiality. To alleviate frustration when calling for information about meetings, please keep the following suggestions in mind:

1. When you call for information, always leave a message.
2. When you leave a message, always speak slowly and clearly.
3. In your message, state the best time(s) to return your call.
4. Spell your name and repeat your phone number so we can be sure to understand it.
5. If you require us to be circumspect in returning your call, using another name or not identifying ourselves as from FTM on an answering machine or at your workplace, please say so. Of course, we usually are circumspect as a matter of

practice, but you can be specific and we will respond accordingly. It's okay to leave an address if you don't want a return call.

Also, don't worry about leaving a message. All of the numbers listed for information contacts are private lines, and no one else will have access to your name or phone number. And once we've returned your call, we destroy any written messages. People in the South Bay Area can avoid long distance charges by calling Sandy's voice mail 408/235-0438.

Because some people are loathe to talk to answering machines, we've decided to make Tuesday night "Real Person Night." From 8 to 11 p.m. Pacific Time every Tuesday one of us promises to stay at home to answer calls. Here's the schedule:

First Tuesday of every month:

James.....510/658-0474

Second Tuesday of every month:

Sky.....415/871-0350

Third Tuesday of every month:

Michael.....415/244-9423

Fourth Tuesday of every month:

Billy.....415/861-8680

Fifth Tuesday (as required, EXCEPT Dec. 31):

James.

Here's the meeting schedule for the next several months:

NOV. 10 '91	SOCIAL	
	Contact Sky.	
DEC. 8 '91	SUPPORT	2-5pm
	Contact Billy or Michael.	
JAN. 19 '92	INFORMATIONAL	2-5pm
	Contact James.	
FEB. 16 '92	SOCIAL	
	Contact Sky.	
MAR. 15 '92	SUPPORT	
	Contact Billy or Michael.	
APR. 12 '92	INFORMATIONAL	2-5pm
	Contact James.	

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend!! Call during the month prior to each meeting to find out the time and place.

THANKS FOR KEEPING FTM GOING!

Many thanks to everyone who has donated time and money to keep this newsletter alive and make our meetings possible. This is a non-profit self-help group newsletter. An annual financial statement will be published in each January issue.

FTM GETS A NEW MAILING ADDRESS

In September our Haight Street mailing address fees were due. To make it easier for me to pick up the mail more frequently, I decided to move the mail box to an East Bay location. Our new mailing address is:

FTM (or FTM Newsletter)
5337 College Ave. #142
Oakland, CA 94618

Please direct all correspondence to the above address.
Thanks! --James

NETWORKING COLUMN

Dear FTM,

I am a 42 year old FTM who is looking for other FTMs in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, and would especially like to hear from those who identify as gay males. I have not had any surgery and am not on hormones, although I would like to be. I need to find out more about reputable doctors and therapists in this area. I have been hesitant to pursue hormone therapy and surgery because I am having psychological problems overcoming my dissatisfaction with my small size (4' 11"), passive nature and feminine appearance, but in my psyche I am definitely male and the conflict is becoming unbearable. I am in therapy now and also attend a 12-step program. Please respond if you can offer psychological and emotional support. I need some understanding and accepting friends to talk to. Thank you. Write to:

Les Tolleson
c/o Mike Lewis
210 Windy Lane
Rockwall, TX 75087

Dear FTM,

Please include in an upcoming issue any information on phalloplasties done by Dr. Biber in Colorado--i.e., people who have gone to him for phalloplasty and how they feel about the results. He does both F to M and M to F surgery, but mostly M to F. As a potential patient of his, I'd like some first hand info on his phalloplasty.

Thank you.

Name withheld by request.

If you have any info we can publish in response, please send it to FTM at our new Oakland address.

Dear FTM,

...Also would like to contact other FTMs.

Conn Rose
P.O. Box 1621
Wilmington, VT 05363

Wanted: All Post-Op TSs for information concerning your surgery results. Your name is not necessary. I am interested in success of surgery and who your surgeon was, as well as any problems occurring post-operatively. My intention is to track down complaints and then post a bar graph of surgery results as well as let you (FTM) know if any surgeons raise a red flag for future TS pre's who are looking for surgery. No specific complaints will be published so that I won't be sued. If people wish to have a results poll of a certain surgeon, I will provide one through a letter (only). Send your information to:

Ryan
 c/o Concepts
 33 Willey St.
 Albany, NY 12203

FTM MALE BOX

Dear FTM:

After attending the picnic on August 4th, I have some comments I'd like to make.

I was uncomfortable with an environment that I felt wasn't particularly inclusive. It was strong enough to encourage me not to come to another event. Seemingly, there are a group of individuals in FTM, who may have been members for quite a while. I believe that these particular individuals in mind need to be reminded that the purpose of the group is to welcome EVERY FTM within the spectrum. Upholding this purpose is imperative!

To be part of a group based on such a very sensitive issue (with newcomers at various stages, emotional levels, and coping skills) means to utilize or ACQUIRE communication skills to welcome new people that members haven't yet met.

One has to keep in mind what kind of tone one sets when one plans an event. And a tone that can be interpreted as exclusive can leave quite a negative impression.

Personally, I was disappointed and angry. I confront genderphobia daily, and I don't need to come to an FTM event to feel isolated.

This doesn't mean anyone is responsible for "babysitting," but I'm quite sure members are familiar with what it feels like to be a newcomer to this group. And I'm sure one can remember what it was like for someone who's more familiar with the others to at least say "Hello" and introduce himself and others around him. It's called "Welcoming."

There are people who can handle being in an environment that claims to be supportive, but isn't, and they handle it like water off a duck's back, without giving it any attention at all. Some don't! AGAIN, the focus of the group is on a personal subject that is extremely sensitive for many...especially NEWCOMERS!

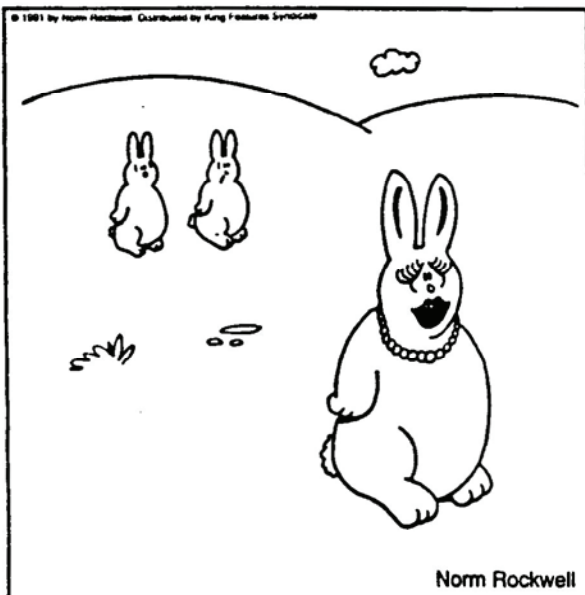
To those who may read this, and feel this letter is not directed to you or your behavior, let's get one thing clear! This is NOT meant to stir up controversy or cause divisive "fingerpointing." This is not for the purpose of gossip.

This is written to express my interpretations/feelings, and to remind all of us,...I repeat...All of us, newcomers and old friends, to ask OURSELVES (this means the man we see in the mirror each morning when we awaken), "How do I treat people?", "How do people interpret me?"

Thank you for your time,
 NAME WITHHELD

(Reply follows on next page...)

See the seed for what its flower shall be
 And see me for the person I will be
 Understand, I mean no one harm
 There is a space for one in my arm
 With hope, I venture on
 The stars, I wish upon
 Never alone
 Not under stone
 See me
 Love me
 Grow
 --Titian



"Poor Ralph. He hasn't been the same since that cosmetics company did those experiments on him."

..This letter struck a chord with me, and it wasn't a very pleasant sound in my head. I do understand where you are coming from, and I am sorry that you had a bad experience at our first attempt at a social event. I have to admit, I wasn't very comfortable in that environment, either. I'm not saying that as an excuse for my own behavior, but I felt so nervous and shy myself that when someone produced a football I rushed to hide on the playing field, spending most of the event throwing the ball around to avoid talking to people I didn't know or who looked familiar to me but whose names I felt embarrassed to admit I couldn't remember. In my own selfish insecurity, I abandoned my woman companion at the picnic table; and she was furious with me later for not introducing her to the people she didn't know. I apologized profusely to her, and I'm apologizing to you now. I hope that you'll give me and FTM another chance.

Many of us are shy and introspective, and perhaps because of our gender issues we are not likely to develop ourselves as social directors. We are not professional organizers or trained counselors. We are simply a bunch of people struggling with deep internalized issues who have come together to meet others who may share some of our concerns and to obtain information. And when there were just a dozen or so of us it was easier --less intimidating-- to establish a rapport. Now the group is growing at a phenomenal rate, new people are showing up all the time, and I'm not sure how to handle it other than to make myself available to talk and answer questions and pass along information. Your letter (and my companion's fury) tell me that I have some personal work to do. I hope my admission will make it easier for others to do the same, and I hope we can all remember that "welcoming" is part of our responsibility as members of a group. If we all take that step to reach out to each other --even if we take it a little bit at a time-- it helps us all to grow.

James

Dear FTM members,

I am an English F to M, who changed over 16 years ago and am now 35. I am doing postgraduate research into the law and transsexuals. I am very keen to contact groups (both F to M and M to F groups) and individuals in the States.

I am particularly keen to hear from contacts in other states apart from California, who would be willing to fill in a short questionnaire about the law in their State.

This is I feel a very important piece of work for English transsexuals. At present the law in England

is still in the dark ages as far as TSs are concerned. We can't marry, get our birth certificates changed, would be sent to a prison of our original gender designation even after surgery, and are still open to all sorts of abuse.

If you feel you can help me please contact me. I will of course pay expenses. I am also hoping to visit the States at some time during my research work, so I would hope to have the opportunity to visit some contacts then.

Thanks a lot,
Stephen Whittle
Upper Brook Street
Victoria Park
Manchester M13 0EP
United Kingdom

It's always a pleasure to hear from men in other countries. If anyone can help Stephen out, I hope you will write to him. Stephen, I wonder whether you are familiar with the work of Sr. Mary Elizabeth? She has published a booklet "Legal Aspects of Transsexualism" which is an excellent summary of issues and case law in the States. I believe the 1990 edition includes the section on Identity and Identification which summarizes the policies of most of the States with respect to changing birth certificates. It is available for \$10.00 (U.S.) from IFGE, P.O. Box 367, Wayland, MA 01778. Or, contact the author directly (I'm pretty certain) through J2CP Information Services, P.O. Box 184, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693-0184. J2CP offers an information package which contains considerably more than just the "Legal Aspects" booklet, at a higher charge of course. Write them for specifics. Their services are also available "On-Line" (for computer-philes) from 2 p.m. to 10 a.m. PST daily. Phone TerraNet at 714/248-2836. Communication protocol: 2400, 8N1. I haven't tried this yet, but I understand that confidential registration is required. You should also see the "Call to a National Conference on Transgender Law" elsewhere in this issue. I wish you all the best in your efforts to modernize and humanize British law.

James

September 3, 1991

Dear James,

Remember our phone conversation before the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day Parade? You asked how many FTM pamphlets to send for ETVC's booth, and I said, "six."

"Only six?" you replied.

"Yeah. We didn't get that many inquiries last year. Six should be enough."

You told me you'd send a dozen, but actually sent 25.

You goofed. We didn't have nearly enough. More than an hour before we closed, all the FTM literature had been taken.

Next year, how about 50 pamphlets and an FTM representative to distribute them?

Jane Bentley

WOW! Anyone ready for booth duty?

M. M. HERNANDEZ

Attorney at Law

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CALL TO A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TRANSGENDER LAW

Tentative date and location: weekend of 21-22 August 1992, in Houston Texas. Both are proposed because of good possibility of being at University of Houston Law Center campus during two week window between classes and because of closeness to Hobby Airport. Conference can also be held elsewhere in Houston while possibly retaining UH Law Center affiliation. Houston is proposed because of central location and because of being conference initiator's locale.

ARE YOU INTERESTED? All attorneys, paralegals, law enforcement officers, judges and magistrates, law students and anyone interested in law that relates to and affects the entire transgender community are welcome. The conference should discuss family, military, probate, housing, employment, insurance, criminal, discrimination, health and other areas of law, and can produce post-conference proceedings. Write the conference initiator: Phyllis Randolph Frye, Attorney; 5707 Firenza St.; Houston, TX 77035-55155

Timetable: For early face-to-face discussions with Phyllis, come to "Fantasy Adventure Weekend," Nov. 8-10, 1991, in Houston (F.A.W., Box 90335, Houston 77090, c/o Jackie Thorne 713/780-3553). Meet with Phyllis for actual preliminary planning during the

"Texas-T-Party," Feb.28-Mar. 1, 1992, in San Antonio (Texas-T-Party, Box 17, Bulverde, TX 78163, c/o Linda & Cynthia Phillips, 512/438-7604). All plans are to be finalized at "6th Annual IFGE Coming Together Convention," Apr. 6-12, 1992 in Houston (IFGE, Box 367, Wayland MA 01778, 617/894-8340).

[Note: Phyllis has been Phyllis since 1976 and has actively practiced law as Phyllis in Texas since 1986. She asks that you photocopy this and send it to anyone and everyone and all "tg" group newsletters from around the nation copy it from other newsletters. Let's get the word out and help make this conference a success.]

LOU'S PANEL PART OF NAMES PROJECT QUILT

One of our brothers, Jeff S. in Southern California, made a panel for Lou Sullivan which became part of the Names Project Quilt at a dedication ceremony in Los Angeles on August 11, 1991. With the many other panels dedicated that day, Lou's panel was sent to the Names Project Headquarters in San Francisco to become part of the larger quilt.

Many thanks are due to Jeff for honoring Lou and helping the world remember him on behalf of FTMs everywhere.

A FIRST FOR FEMALE CROSSDRESSERS by Kevin Horwitz

"People Are Talking," a San Francisco-based television talk show, recently aired a panel discussion on the topic of female crossdressing (synonymously referred to as transvestism). The four-person panel included three crossdressers and one therapist.

Even though public figures such as Willa Cather, Gertrude Stein, George Sand, and Katherine Hepburn openly crossdress(ed), medical researchers have claimed for years that female crossdressers don't exist. The standard joke about the wife who comes home from work and finds her husband parading around the house in a pair of black lace panties doesn't seem to have a parallel in jokes about, say, wives in boxer shorts.

According to Bay Area therapist Lin Fraser, one reason for the invisibility of the female transvestite is sexism. Another reason is "the fact that many never come to see us, and we write about who we see." The well-known gender specialist expressed optimism for

future changes, and stated that what is psychologically healthy for an individual should take precedence over the statistical norm.

What is a female crossdresser? Although panelists didn't completely agree on this point, the general idea seemed to hinge upon clothing. A crossdresser has a strong desire to wear, in this case, men's clothing, either part- or full-time. In keeping with this theme, the crossdressers were all handsomely suited-up in male attire down to their underwear. Some of the reasons for pursuing a crossdressing lifestyle included a sense of enjoyment and appreciation for men's clothing, a feeling of emotional comfort, erotic stimulation, the facilitation of a male persona, and a way of initiating bi-gendered fantasy play.

The crossdressing panel was diverse in style and in motive. Sandy and Theresa identify as dykes who crossdress 100% of the time because they feel "at home" in the clothing. Sandy says that she doesn't even own any women's clothes (not even a brassiere). Francis, in contrast, is a part-time crossdresser who is also bi-gendered. As a woman, she goes by the name Cheryl (or Rima) and is married to a male transvestite. Francis, the hetero male persona, wears the pants in the family.

Sandy exuded self-confidence, and seemed to possess the "emotional comfortability" that she said she got from wearing men's clothing. She had a knack for communicating little-known facts about transvestism, such as cultures in which clothing for men and women is identical, and only the hairstyles reflect the gender difference. In that culture, according to Sandy, men sometimes wear their hair in the women's style and vice versa.

A big issue seemed to be that people think she is a transsexual, and she wanted to clear that up. She explained that she wears men's tailored suits to work each day because she is a crossdresser. However, she says she is comfortable being a woman, and has no desire for sex-reassignment surgery or hormones. As far as being a lesbian goes, she sees this as unrelated to the other, and says that "not all crossdressers are lesbian, and not all lesbians are crossdressers."

Whereas Sandy seemed to enjoy men's clothing for enjoyment's sake, Theresa specified that for her, women's clothing had some unsavory aspects such as being less safe, and generally less sturdy than men's clothes. This was the closest anybody got to the male privilege issue, which was never brought up directly as a reason for crossdressing. When asked if she felt like an alien, Theresa responded, "Yes, I certainly do!" The alien theme seemed to strike a chord particularly in the women's restroom where she is oftentimes mistaken for a man. "The woman looks around and thinks she is in the wrong room," says Theresa.

Cheryl/Francis's presentation was somewhat more dramatic since the crossdressing evokes an alternate persona named Francis-- a hetero Gypsy fellow. He certainly looked like a dapper kinda guy in his dark pinstriped suit, red tie, fedora, and paste-on mustache. For Cheryl/Francis, men's clothing is not merely comfortable, but erotic-- and offers a chance to "step through a looking glass and see life from the other side." The act of dressing is like a ritualized performance art which allows for the shift in gender identity and expression. The "getting ready" process was documented on video, as Cheryl transformed into Francis prior to the airing of "People Are Talking." After pasting the mustache into place, s/he noted, "Cheryl went away, and I'm Francis, I came in. What more can I say?"

Parts of the video footage were manipulated into brief overlapping stills displaying Cheryl's transformation into Francis. These highly effective slow motion segments were shown prior to each commercial break, accompanied by, respectively, Holly Near's "The Woman Is Dressed In Style Tonight," and "What A Difference A Day Makes."

The audience varied on its "take" of the crossdressers from "got it" to "didn't get it" to "ferblundjet." Sandy's tailor stated that he was all for individual freedom(s), and that clothing is the most personal self-expression we have. Cheryl's boss at the SF-based law firm where she works agreed with this, adding, "Cheryl is a terrific legal secretary, and what she does in her personal life is absolutely her own business." Also present in the audience were at least four other female crossdressers. One of these, Peggy, commented, "I don't know who wrote up the dresscode as to how you are supposed to dress to be a man or a woman. I dress for what is comfortable for me."

The diverse San Francisco audience did its best to understand female TVism, but probably could stand a few more doses of panels like this one. However, this excellent beginning should get the ball rolling for future panel discussions on the same topic. Perhaps we will see some female crossdressers on Geraldo or Donahue or Sally Jesse Raphael. If so, let's hope nobody throws any chairs or hits anybody on the head with the microphone.



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Board Certified Sex Therapist

GAY PRIDE PARADE

by Francis

This summer I had the opportunity and honor to be the chauffeur for the ETVC car in the Gay Pride Day parade. It gave me an excuse to wear my tux, shades and leather cap, a new combination for daytime wear. Since ETVC has done a lot for our group, advertising Lou's book in their newsletter, trading speakers, providing support, hosting a tribute luncheon for Lou, and was where Lou started out when there was no FTM group, it was good to be able to do something with them. Teri, Miss ETVC, is a lovely crossdresser, and I enjoyed driving her through an enthusiastic crowd who cheered as we slowly made our way to the Civic Center. Two FTMs, and you know who you are, ran out of the crowd to give me support. Thanks, guys! This was my first public daytime appearance, and the affirmation was really appreciated. ETVC distributed our new informational flyers at their booth, and reported all gone within a few hours. Since the parade is open to bisexuals, transgenderists, and all sexual minorities, Gay Pride Day was a good place to come out, or just blend into the crowd and see the great variety of people being whomever they wish to be.

SPEAKING OF GENDER

by Francis

I would like to explore the concept of being "bi-gendered" as an FTM. My own definition of bi-gendered is someone who is comfortable with feeling both "male" and "female," either coincidentally or at separate times. This is not necessarily the same as feeling "masculine" or "feminine," since there are masculine women who identify only as women, and feminine men who identify only as men. This definition excludes sexual orientation, as a separate though related issue. As we have taught the gender workers, there are many orientations, and they may change, so there are no set combinations. I know bi-gendered FTMs who feel more comfortable living as men than as women, and take hormones, or also have upper surgery, but still acknowledge and enjoy occasionally feeling like a woman. There are a few

I've read about (and would like to meet!) who live part-time as each gender, holding part-time jobs as each. There are others like myself who occasionally crossdress fully as a man, and feel like one, while living and feeling the rest of the time as a woman.

Personally, I have never felt like a "masculine woman," but there has always been a "male" side of me. Sometimes I feel like a mixture of both genders, but when my feelings are more separate (and they often are) there is a definite difference in my basic energy vibration. Most of the time, my clothes and personal gender perception are in harmony, but I have occasionally found myself feeling like a "drag queen" walking down the street in a dress, or feeling decidedly female after doing a complete crossTMdress transformation with mustache. This is usually more obvious to myself than to others, as I become more aware of how I project and how I feel inside.

If you have read Carlos Castaneda's or Lynn Andrews' books, one could draw the conclusion that the concept of gender is personally constructed, and can be consciously changed if one has the ability and interest to do so. The Native Americans call this "shape shifting," and the Tibetans have a similar concept. Both cultures also entertain the possibility of changing to non-human (animal, bird) forms as well, and stories abound of shape shifters being perceived by others in those forms. This practice is based on thought and energy projections, but they can affect what others feel and see. This is an interesting concept, and may explain why some transsexuals who aren't yet cross-living cause confusion in others: they are projecting male vibrations while in female form.

I think that being bi-gendered is a viable choice, perhaps a rough equivalent of the male-to-female "she-males," or "complete" crossdressers who switch into this other side of themselves, either for short times or to cross-live. To paraphrase what one FTM said in a meeting, we are the shamans in this age, building a bridge between the genders, and making our own new boxes and categories. Gender is surely the newest societal frontier, and we are the pioneers.

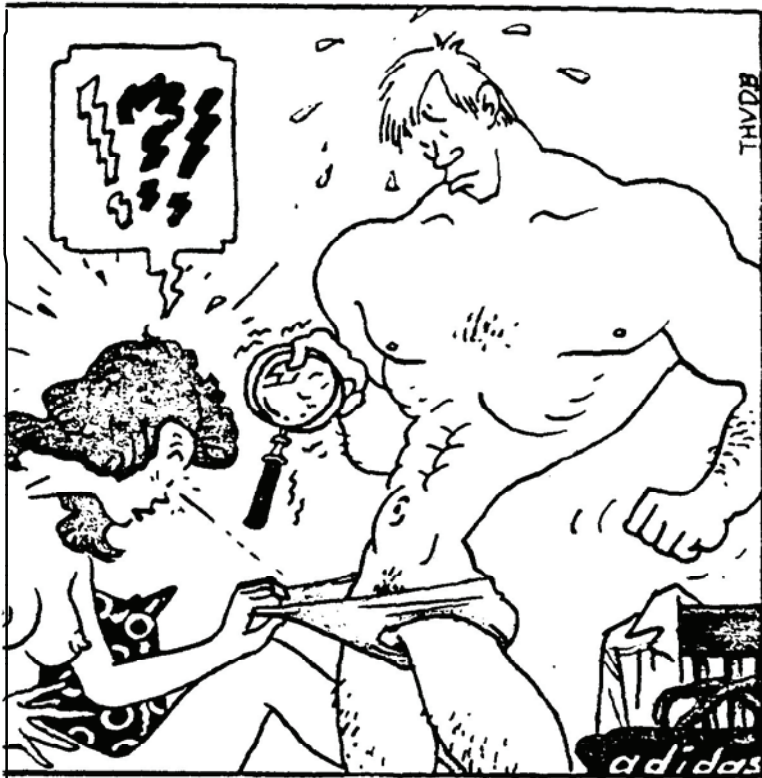
FTM NEWSLETTER

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SANDWICHES • PROTEIN SHAKES • WHOLE BEAN COFFEE



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-----cut here and return-----

USE THIS RESPONSE FORM TO UPDATE OUR MAILING LIST, LET US KNOW IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THE FTM NEWSLETTER, OR SEND IN A DONATION TO HELP KEEP US GOING! THANKS!

PLEASE PUT ME ON THE MAILING LIST FOR THE FTM NEWSLETTER

PLEASE KEEP ME ON THE MAILING LIST

THIS IS AN ADDRESS CHANGE

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NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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