

TV Watching in P'town

By Bill Damon

PROVINCETOWN — An ex-Luftwaffe pilot, an army colonel, a middle-aged bank executive with his wife, a young married couple, and a truck-driver got together last week in the presidential suite of Provincetown's Crown and Anchor Hotel for a dress auction. It wasn't a Bonwit's showing of the latest fashions for the wives, however, or their girlfriends. The men were there to add a few new frocks to their own wardrobe. The auction was part of the ten-day-long Fantasia Fair, a first national transvestite convention, held in Provincetown Oct. 25-Nov. 1.

The Fair brought some 50 T.V.s and some of their wives to Provincetown for "ten glorious days of dressing 'en femme,'" and, according to convention coordinator Ariadne Kane, the Fair was a glorious success.

Featuring classes on dress, makeup, hair-styling, elocution, and a film festival, the Fair allowed many TVs the hitherto unknown luxury of the freedom of being themselves, or their spiritual "sister," in the unique environment of a small town without the ever-present fear of exposure/discovery they live with at home.

It also afforded Provincetown's gay population the opportunity of learning how the other half lives. To some, it became apparent that America's TV subculture today seems to be where a large part of its gay culture was five or ten years ago as far as self-acceptance or social acceptance. Today's TV lives with the fear of being found out

about and although the vast majority of the conferees hold a heterosexual sexual preference, their social acceptance problems are most similar to their gay counterparts.

Unlike the stylish drag queens Provincetown is used to, as one resident remarked, "It looked like a group of middle-aged housewives." Indeed, many of the TVs had not before had the opportunity to share in cross-dressing techniques, and the courses offered in good old American charm turned many of the dowdy, doting ladies into pleasant fashion plates.

In total, the Fantasia Fair was a learning experience for all who wished to learn, be they in attendance or spectators. The basic lesson seemed to be that if the little lady next door happened to be, in reality, her husband, there wasn't really anything to fear — unless it was a personal fear on the part of the viewer as to how they'd feel in a dress.

CORRECTION

In GCN's article on Otherfund last week, it was incorrectly stated that the organization had "never" notified grantees that their projects would not be funded. In fact, Otherfund sent out letters to the grantees on October 3.
