

ISSN 0968-4042

THE TARTAN SKIRT



The Scottish Magazine
for the
Gender Community

New Series No. 16



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THE TARTAN SKIRT

The Scottish Magazine for the Gender Community

Editor: *Anne Forrester*

New Series No. 16

October 1995

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Published and typeset by:
ADF Editorial Services

Tullochvenus House, Lumphanan, Aberdeenshire, UK

Printed by Rainbow Enterprises, Dyce, Aberdeen

© 1995 ADF Editorial Services ISSN 0968-4042

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- IMPORTANT NOTICE

We regret that as from this issue subscriptions to *The Tartan Skirt* can be accepted only on the basis of one issue at a time, and it will no longer be possible to place a subscription order for a whole year at a time, as hitherto. The subscription form on the last page now allows for this, and enclosed with each copy sent by mail order there will be an order form for the following issue. Please make all payments by postal order or by cheque made payable to ADF Editorial Services.

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BELIEF

"Believe nothing because a wise man said it,
Believe nothing because the belief is generally held,
Believe nothing because it is written in ancient books,
Believe nothing because it is of divine origin,
Believe nothing because someone else believes it,
But believe that which only you yourself judge to be true"

Gautama the Buddha

"IF I CAN HELP SOMEBODY..."

This issue marks the end of four years of publication of the New Series of *The Tartan Skirt*, so it seems a good time to sit back for a moment and think why we are here.

First, a confession and a plea. Although welcoming contributions from the gender community, since its launch in 1992 the magazine has been edited, typeset, published and distributed - as well as being largely written - as a one-woman job. (So now you know who to blame for the odd typographical error, not to mention some of the idiosyncratic views expressed). However, there are a lot of people who enjoy gender diversity, and at meetings of trans-gender support and social groups there is never a shortage of debates on the why and wherefore of gender diversity, and stories of the happenings that have lit up - or occasionally dampened - peoples' trans-gendered lives: so where are you all when it comes to sharing all this with others in a wider context? Please, put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and send it in. We don't publish fiction, fetishistic day-dreaming or pornography, but almost anything else is welcome. Unfortunately we can not pay for your contributions, but they will be of interest to others.

Now whether you think of yourself as a cross-dresser, a transgenderist (whatever that means), a transsexual, or any other of the many labels that we use, the fact remains that the trans-gendered community is still a 'persecuted minority'. This is largely because others do not understand us, and what people can not understand they fear. And what people fear they persecute, which is why most of those who cross-dress or find themselves trapped in a body that is at odds with their mind, remain firmly 'in the closet' and only rarely come to terms with themselves. So anything we can do to help open the closet door for those still inside, or to cure the ignorance of others, must be worth doing.

Apart from writing, running a telephone helpline has been (for most of the time) one of the great pleasures of my life, offering help to others with what the medical profession calls 'gender identity disorder', but which I prefer to think of as being gender gifted. Believe me, there is a real need for help, guidance and support for those coming newly to an understanding of their gender diversity. Of course, if you are reading this you have already started to acknowledge your own cross-gender interests (even if only to yourself), but there are many others out there with the same interests and concerns - possibly as many as a quarter of all men in the western world, so groups for trans-gendered people *should* primarily be **support** groups, offering a telephone 'helpline' for those starting to creep out of the closet and providing literature such as that found in *The Tartan Skirt*, to help newcomers and their families.

I do hope that readers of *The Tartan Skirt* find in it something of value to themselves, and perhaps even to others with whom they come in contact. Whether practicalities such as hints on make-up, deportment, speech, *etc.*, reviews of books by and about transgendered people, or debating the why and wherefore of gender diversity, I have tried to provide something of interest for everyone, wherever they find themselves on the gender spectrum. I hope that I have in some measure succeeded.

From my collection of sayings, quotations and mottoes, here are four of my favourites - I think they all apply:

"Ignorance is the most dangerous thing in society"

"Minds are like parachutes - they only function when open"

"I am not a label: I am a person"

*"Enjoy life: this is **not** a dress rehearsal"*

Now go out there and enjoy yourselves !

Anne Forrester ■

"I WANABE A WOMAN"

OR DO YOU ?

by Anne Forrester

As anyone who has ever worked on a gender helpline will confirm, a great many of the contacts who call in for help start off by saying something like "I feel that I want to be a woman". And if there is any one thing that instantly sets off warning bells it is that phrase "I want to be".

You see, a very large number of men cross-dress to some extent or other at some time in their lives (estimates range from one in a thousand through a more realistic 7-8% to as many as 24% - the figure quoted to me by a nurse in a large American hospital's emergency room, who reckons that this figure represents the proportion of men brought in unconscious off the street and found to be wearing articles of feminine apparel). However, the large majority of these people are so firmly in the closet that they will not even admit to themselves that they are crossdressers. Amongst those who do eventually crack the closet door open a little are some who add together 2+2 to make 5½, and think that because they like to dress in womens' clothes they must be 'gay', so they contact one of the gay and lesbian helplines, which usually refers them to a gender support group. However, some add 2+2 to make 7, and think that because they like to dress in womens' clothes they "want to be a woman" - and these are the ones who worry me.

You see, the first 'warning bell' starts ringing out loud with that phrase "want to be" - the 'signature tune' of the so-called 'wanabees' - and it usually means that it is almost certain that they are **not** transsexual. The true transsexual **knows** that 'he' is a woman (or, in the case of a female to male TS, she **knows** that 'she' is a man - and excuse me if, for simplicity's sake, from this point on, I do not

specifically refer to or differentiate between those travelling in the opposite direction, from female to male, who in coming to terms with their transsexuality face exactly the same problems). True transsexuals only "want to be" their true selves - whether they are the primary TS who has known from day one that he was "in the wrong body", or the secondary TS who has taken many years of struggling with himself, and society's expectations of a biological male, before realising what it is that has been struggling inside him to get out. The other 'giveaway' in the "wanabe's" approach is a belief that taking some hormone tablets, and having 'the operation' (which they sometimes refer to as 'the change') will turn them into a woman. Of course, nothing of the sort will happen. If they are not already a woman (or, in the case of a female to male TS, a man) inside themselves nothing any endocrinologist, psychiatrist or surgeon can do will make them one.

The real danger, however, is that in their profound ignorance, both of what a transsexual really is and the limitations of what hormones and surgery can actually do - they struggle on with their wish "to be a woman". They often go to extreme lengths to obtain contraceptive pills or an illegal supply of other female hormone tablets which they (wrongly) believe will feminise them. Some also place themselves in the hands of unscrupulous commercial 'clinics' which supply them with so-called "hormone creams" (that for all intents and purposes are totally inactive), treat them to interviews that go nowhere with a so-called psychiatric consultant, and throughout the whole (lengthy) process relieve them of large sums of money.

The real problem is that the "wanabe" has no real knowledge either of what it means to be a woman, or what is involved in going through the process of gender reassignment. Generally they only know what they have read in the tabloid newspapers and womens' magazines, and assume that this gives them a complete understanding of what is involved. Nothing could be further from the

truth, but most of these 'wanabe' people are ready to believe anything that they read on the subject.

One contact I spoke with recently on our helpline started off by saying that he "wanted to be a woman". When asked what help he had sought so far he said that he had been to see his doctor and had told him, straight out, that he was transsexual and wanted hormone tablets and surgery to become a woman. Not surprisingly, the doctor had at first laughed at him, and eventually warned him that if he did not stop wasting his time he would have him struck off his list as a patient. The man on our helpline wanted to know what he should do now to get "the tablets" and the surgery to make him a woman. I am afraid that my response was to say that frankly I was not surprised that his doctor had not taken him seriously, and that this was *not* the way to go about things. Apart from the fact that very few general practitioners have any knowledge at all of the subject, no doctor likes to be presented with a complete self-diagnosis and prescription for drugs without a full examination and, if thought appropriate, a referral to a psychiatrist experienced in this field. It further transpired that our client had "done some research" (as he called it) into transsexualism, which consisted of watching tapes of a few television broadcasts on the subject, and reading articles in some womens' magazines - a fairly typical "wanabe" story.

Anyone who seriously considers gender reassignment must realise exactly what hormones and surgery can and can not do. For example, they can **not** retrieve lost scalp hair, get rid of facial hair, alter a masculine voice into a feminine one, get rid of the Adam's apple, or turn a six foot something burly male body into that of a *petite* girl with the breasts of a page-3 topless model. Yet this is exactly what so many 'wanabees' seem to expect. It is necessary to realise that while taking female hormones will cause *some* loss of body hair and *some* (*quite modest*) breast growth, they may also have very dangerous unwanted side-effects including liver damage if taken by mouth, and the risk of a

potentially fatal phlebitis (formation of a blood clot in the lower limbs). Similarly, while reassignment surgery gets rid of the outside plumbing and (in the hands of only a very few skilled surgeons) produces a realistic looking and functional neo-vagina, this is *all* that it does. It does not turn a biologically male body into a female one complete with ovaries and uterus: far less does it alter any other body characteristics. A six foot bruiser with broad shoulders, large hands and size 11 feet will remain a six foot bruiser with broad shoulders, large hands and size 11 feet.

One self-diagnosed male-to-female transsexual known to me is actually less of a female in manners and appearance than is my large, friendly, and essentially sappy, male dog. This person makes no attempt to alter his body language, to feminise his very deep and gruff voice, and has less female clothes sense than any woman I have ever known. In his male guise he goes out 'clubbing' at night and is heartbroken because he can not get a girl friend - yet seems to see nothing incongruous in saying at the same time that he "wants to be a woman" and is determined "to get the change". Despite having had it explained to him many times and by many people (including three psychiatrists and a skilled counsellor) that being a woman is something very different from trying to dress like one, and that if truly transsexual he should have other priorities than trying to get a girl friend while in his male *persona*, he persists in trying to acquire an illegal supply of female hormones and declaring that he "wants the change".

This person is, all too sadly, typical of the 'wanabe' phenomenon. He has said to one very attractive TS friend of mine that if only he can "have the change" he will then have an attractive body and appearance like hers, and does not listen when she tells him that her slim figure and delicate features are those she was lucky enough to have been born with. This classic case of the 'wanabe' worries all who know him because he is patently heading for either a huge disappointment or a very dangerous and expensive

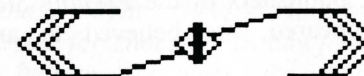
course of action that will probably involve further illegal acquisition of potentially dangerous drugs (which is what hormones are), the waste of much money he can ill-afford, and probable mutilation should he fall into the hands of an unscrupulous surgeon not experienced in this work and who will disregard the usual criteria for gender reassignment.

Before anyone who enjoys cross-dressing says that they "want to be a woman" they should ask themselves (as any competent psychotherapist will) whether it is the *dressing* as a woman that they enjoy or the *being*? If the dressing is important, the feel of feminine clothes matters and they prefer mini-skirts, high heels and a low cleavage, then they are most probably **not** transsexual. Remember, most women these days wear very practical clothes when going about their daily lives, such as slacks, jeans or leggings, with tank tops or sweaters, and often trainers on their feet: certainly **not** the stereotypical image enjoyed and copied by most crossdressers. A particular taste for high heels and short and/or tight skirts almost certainly reflects fetishistic transvestism rather than true transsexualism.

The real damage that the 'wanabe' does to him (or, more rarely, her) self is the loss of a fulfilling ordinary life. Being locked into a one-way pursuit of hormones and 'the change' without a true understanding of all the consequences means the loss of an ordinary everyday life with an enjoyable 'hobby'. Just take a walk down your local high street, and instead of looking at all the attractive young girls look instead at all the wrinkled older women, frequently burdened by their shopping and all too often bent and stiff from osteoporosis (the 'brittle bone disease' that attacks so many women in old age). This is nearer to the reality of how you may end up; plus, as a transsexual you will probably lose all your family and friends, often your job, and not infrequently be driven out of your home by the antagonism of - and often physical violence at the hands of - your neighbours. And if you do not look, act and sound one hundred percent 'passable' as a woman you will

probably be the butt of perpetual contempt, derision, indignities, insults and attacks for the rest of your days.

If you are certain that you **are** a woman, and don't simply 'wanabe' one, then with hard work, a great deal of pain and the expenditure of a lot of money (currently upwards of £ 20,000 - US\$ 30,000 - or thereby) you will find a way to achieve your goal. If not, then forget it and be content with enjoying your cross-dressing. Remember, the true male-to-female transsexual is not cross-dressing when she puts on female garments - only if for some reason she has to return to the boy clothes. And this is not all done 'just for kicks' or for relaxation - she is what she is for 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, for the rest of her life ! ■



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SO NOW THE PHRASE "SEX CHANGE" IS LIBELOUS !

Did you know that an accusation of having had "a sex change" can be held to be libelous ? Neither did I, until I saw a newspaper report recently of a case in which Lady Colin Campbell was given a public apology and "substantial" damages in the High Court over newspaper allegations that she was born a boy and underwent a sex change: and the "substantial damages", together with the legal costs involved in her action against Associated Newspapers, publishers of the *Evening Standard* in which the story appeared, are believed to amount to some £300,000 !

Following publication of a book by Lady Campbell the *Evening Standard* had stated that she had been "born and raised as a man" and alleged that she had had "a sex change". When the case came to court it was shown that Lady Campbell had been incorrectly registered as a boy at birth, the error being corrected and her birth certificate later amended. The newspaper admitted that their story was untrue, and in a rare instance of the press actually owning up to an error, "accepted without qualification or reservation that she was born female, that her birth registration was an error, and that it was 'both wrongful and extremely hurtful' to imply otherwise".

Surely this must be a unique case of the media actually *admitting* to having been wrong and having hurt someone by their rash, inaccurate and harmful reporting of personal matters that can not possibly be said to be of any concern to anyone other than those immediately affected - let alone of being 'in the public interest' - and also of the courts so adequately defending an individual against the gutter press.



CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

Dear Anne

As I understand that you are a scientist by profession, could I put an interesting thought to you ?

I expect that most of us are aware of the 'love affair' between most women and chocolate. My ex-wife, along with most of her friends, fought a never-ending battle between their constant desire for chocolate in any form - chocolate slabs, chocolate buttons, chocolate cake, chocolate drinks, and anything else with chocolate in it - while neither I nor any of my (male) friends experienced this to anything like the same extent. OK, I guess that most of us enjoyed a bit of chocolate now and then, but usually we could take it or leave it. However, since I started taking female hormones as part of my gender transition I have found that I have a permanent craving for chocolate, and nibble away at it all the time - much to the detriment of my waist-line, of course.

So is there some sort of connection between an increased desire for chocolate and increased levels of female hormones ? Do other transsexuals find a craving for chocolate once they start taking hormones ? And why is it that men seem only rarely seem to have this addiction, while it is common amongst most women ? Have I, maybe, stumbled on a new and hitherto un-recorded 'side-effect' of oestrogen ? If not, I'd love to know why else I have suddenly developed this constant longing for the stuff.

*Yours truly
Puzzled Chocoholic*

Anne replies:

What a fascinating thought. I must agree that I have noticed this phenomenon myself, and wondered about it. Certainly a love of chocolate is widespread amongst women. (In her book Love, sex and the pursuit of chocolate Nina Miskow, the writer and TV personality, described herself as "a chocolate headbanger", from her lifelong addiction to the stuff).

Yes, there could be a number of reasons for a link between female hormones and a craving for chocolate. Most pharmaceutical preparations have a range of side-effects, and I can see no reason why increased oestrogen levels should not induce a need for increased sugar intake. Is it necessarily only chocolate that is implicated though? In general terms the incidence of 'a sweet tooth' is often considered to be higher amongst women than men, and it is possible that this may be due to the proportionally greater amount of fat deposits in their bodies. (Have you ever wondered why it is that women can generally go around in cold winter weather in thinner and more skimpy clothes than men, without apparently feeling as much discomfort from the cold as men do? Well, that's due mainly to the greater proportion of fatty tissue deposited around their bodies).

While it may not be good for the waistline, chocolate is an excellent foodstuff and source of energy, and there are far worse things to be addicted to, so why not just indulge your love of chocolate and enjoy it? Why not a new motto: **Chocoholics of the world unite: you have nothing to lose but your waistlines!**

Anne

Dear Anne

Several friends called my attention to your article concerning the gender community and my involvement in it as a leader ("More changes at the top", The Tartan Skirt,

#15, July 1995, pp 19-22). First, congratulations. It must be great to know that so many of the community are reading your journal! I, too, think it is a fine publication. Second, I appreciate your kind words and compliments regarding my character: thank you. However, there is some additional information that may help set the record straight.

Yes, I was appointed in March 1995 to the position of Executive Director of IFGE (the International Foundation for Gender Education - Ed). I began working for them about half-time in June 1995, planning to increase this significantly in 1996.

With regard to my relationships with other organizations - Renaissance, AEGIS (the American Educational Gender Information Service - Ed) and OIGS (the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies - Ed) - I have submitted letters to each of them offering to resign, serve in a non-voting advisory role or to remain on their boards, serving at the pleasure of the board. So far AEGIS do not consider my role with IFGE a conflict of interest and I am remaining on that board. (For the record, interlocking boards have existed in this community for some time. Many of the Board members of IFGE have membership on other boards).

I will resign as Chairperson of the OIGS board in October 1995, and again will serve at the pleasure of that board as well. Please note: Ariadne Kane is still the Executive Director of the OIGS, and has been (as far as I know) for at least the last ten years. What I did was replace Ari as coordinator of Fantasia Fair, directing the 1994 and 1995 Fairs, and I will resign from this responsibility as soon as the 1995 Fair is over. Because of my love of the Fair I will volunteer to serve in an advisory role if the new Fair administration so chooses. Moneys from these Fairs have been turned over to the OIGS, as in the past, for the operations of the OIGS and the Executive Director's office and operating expenses.

You are absolutely correct in being concerned with attacks on, and removal of, leaders. You are also correct in being concerned about where the community can find capable leaders: certainly no one person should try to do it all. However, I disagree with your statement that "good leaders are born, rather than made". I sincerely believe that good people, dedicated workers and caring individuals, with the right encouragement and proper help can become not just good but effective leaders. I believe that there is leadership potential in almost everyone. What must be done to have better leadership and more leaders is to create environments that allow people to cooperate, develop teams, make mistakes and learn from each other. But this means we all have to work at the 'job' of developing leadership. The community must not fall victim to control by charismatic 'demigods' who surround themselves with privileged followers, so that a few can determine the fate of many. But it is all too easy to sit back and 'let Susie do it', or else try to do it all yourself.

In the last issue of the Tapestry magazine I presented the concept of "shared leadership", and I believe it works. In my new role at IFGE I have discovered many 'leaders', people who ask "What can I do to help?" What we, the current leaders, must do is share the vision of what we can do as a 'community' with these eager 'leaders to be', and share the leadership with them by encouraging them to take full responsibility for tasks and recruit their own help. We must share the work that needs to be done; there is so much to do. Finally, we must share the rewards of making a difference to the world.

As far as my own aspirations go, you summed it up nicely in your article: "We must all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately" (as Ben Franklin is alleged to have said). My own vision is to see the organizations of the transgendered community working together in harmony, sharing the leadership, sharing the work, sharing the tasks, and sharing the rewards. I feel

honoured to serve the community in whatever ways I can, and I damned well know that I can not do it all. I also recognize the awesome responsibility that goes with leadership of any major organization. Please understand that I appreciate your concern, and ask that you continue your vigilance in watching for trends that may keep us from having a true community.

*In caring love
Alison Laing
Executive Director, IFGE*

Anne replies:

Thank you Alison. I am grateful for your putting the record straight, and especially for highlighting the way in which the leadership of the major organisations in America for transgendered people 'interlock'. Of course, while this is a strength in helping these organisations to work together, it also tends to cover up the weakness of too few people actually doing the work. In a nation of some 250 million people, if no more than 5% of males are transgendered (and that is probably a very considerable underestimate) there are around 6¼ million transgendered genetic males in America - albeit with only a small proportion of these sufficiently out of the closet to be active as community leaders. But if that "small proportion" is only 1% there should still be around 63,000 people available to do the work. So far they nearly all seem to have kept their heads well below the parapet, and it is good to hear that Alison is starting to flush some of them out into the sunlight. Keep up the good work, Alison: and perhaps someone could then let us know how to do the same in Britain (where, using the same arithmetic, there should be at least 12½ thousand potential leaders: so where are they all?).

Anne



WHAT'S THAT WORD ?

- a wander through the alphabet

S is for Sex. And that is a word that can mean many things. It may refer to whether one is genetically male or female; it may refer to the act of copulation; it may mean any kind of interaction between two people - whether male or female or one of each. It may even be a verb, used to refer to the act of a medical practitioner (or a veterinary surgeon) in deciding - based upon the external appearance of the genitals at birth - whether one is male or female. (And in the latter case they don't always get it right !).

T is for Transvestite and Transsexual. The problem with these words is that 1) hardly anyone knows the difference between them, and 2) most people have the perception that 'Transvestite' means either a pervert, or a potential rapist, or that you're Gay, or a Drag Queen - and maybe all four together. Remember - "Facts are not unimportant, but it is by perceptions that we are judged".

U is for Understanding. Something that is noticeably lacking in most individuals these days. If only everyone could understand that not all people are the same, and that how one chooses to dress does not make one bad, inferior, perverted, dangerous, or a threat to society, then the world would be a much happier place. ☺

V is for Vagina. To most women, part of their bodies that leads to good feelings - although most women don't particularly like the appearance of their own. To most men, the object of their deepest sexual desires and the source of a basic 'hunting' instinct. And to gender diverse individuals - especially male-to-female transsexuals - an object of sheer envy !



HAVE YOU READ ?

Some Books Reviewed

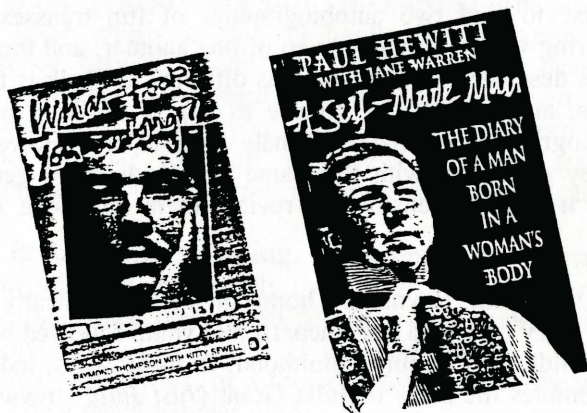
What took you so long ? A girl's journey to manhood by Raymond Thompson with Kitty Sewell. London: Penguin. 1995. ISBN 0-14-024645-2. £ 6.99.

A Self-Made Man. The diary of a man born in a woman's body by Paul Hewitt with Jane Warren. London:Headline. 1995. ISBN 0-7472-7819-9. £ 10.99.

It is so rarely that any book is published dealing with female-to-male (ftm) transsexuality that it came as a real surprise to find two autobiographies of ftm transsexuals appearing within a month or so of one another: and the life stories described are just about as different as chalk is from cheese, and certainly as diverse as any of the very many autobiographies of male-to-female transsexuals. However, as they each deal with this same little-understood gender shift, it seemed sensible to review them alongside each other.

So to start with, Raymond Thompson's story. Basically this is the story of a wild and uncontrolled youth followed by an even wilder and criminal adulthood. In many ways, indeed, it resembles the story of Julia Grant (*Just Julia* - reviewed in *The Tartan Skirt*, Issue 14, April 1995, pp30-31). Of that book I wrote that "like a few other high profile transsexuals whose stories have been published, her life has not been the sort of model that any of us would wish to emulate", and *What took you so long* is a similar story. From a childhood and youth of parental misunderstanding and neglect Raymond slid into an adult life of continuous crime and 'affairs' with several women, none of whom did he treat with any prolonged care or respect. All along there was the

feeling of being trapped "in the wrong body", but failure to cooperate with the professionals who tried to offer him treatment, together with his own often drunken and criminal anti-social behaviour, led to a long period of depression and despair before finally he was able to bring his mind and his body into harmony, and to come together with the woman who, following earlier periods of close togetherness, had been waiting for him (hence her quoted words which provide the title of the book). Unfortunately the book also makes somewhat tedious reading (a friend who saw the book just before I did couldn't even be bothered to finish it), and in summary I can only repeat what I said of *Just Julia*: "any transsexual facing the problem of 'coming out' to their family and explaining just what transsexualism is all about would probably be well advised to make sure that they do *not* get their hands on this book".



Paul Hewitt's book, on the other hand, is both eminently readable (perhaps a reflection on both the author's own academic background and his collaborator's journalistic skills) but also tells a story that most transsexuals of either direction of travel can readily recognise and sympathise with. Paul has also been one of those transsexuals who have 'gone public' in a big way, with his story having been told

in several newspapers and womens' magazines, but this is a sympathetically-told story of sympathetic character.

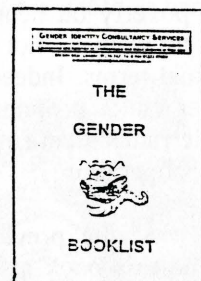
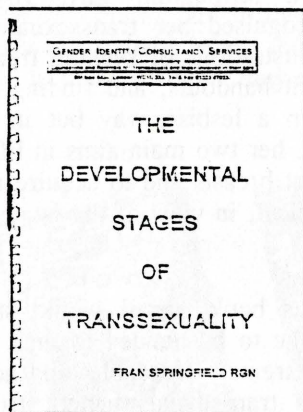
Paul was one of (non-identical) twins, and 'her' sister has been, throughout her transition, a tower of strength and support. As Martine the young Paul was what would normally be called a 'tom-boy', playing football and spending her time with the young boys rather than the girls. Societal pressures were at work, however, and as a young woman she graduated as a biochemist at Bath University and subsequently went through the 'ultra-feminine' period that corresponds to the often-experienced mtf period of 'macho' activity, even doing some sexy modelling on the way, and working as a stripagram girl. However, Martine/Paul early on recognised her transsexuality and then experienced all the frustrations of seeking treatment, living in poverty on benefit handouts, and finding herself attracted to women, not in a lesbian way but in purely heterosexual terms. Indeed, her two main aims in life were to lose her rather prominent breasts and to acquire a penis (prosthetic rather than surgical, in view of the 'state of the art' of this operation).

In contrast to the previous book, yes I would strongly recommend this book as one to be handed to ones family when 'coming out'. It is extremely 'readable' and not only would the families of ftm transsexuals benefit from the clear descriptions of the problems and agonies of a transsexual in transition, but mtf transsexuals' lives do in most respects mirror those experienced by Paul, and this book will certainly be of great interest - and perhaps of some real positive value - to them also.

The developmental stages of transsexuality by Fran Springfield. Gender Identity Consultancy Services, BM Box 5434, London WC1N 3XX. 1995. ISBN 1-899892-01-X. £10.00 incl p&p.

For anyone starting out along the path of awareness of their transsexuality, and certainly all those who run gender

helplines or who are involved in counselling or otherwise helping transsexuals, this booklet is essential reading. Written by an extremely experienced gender counsellor it traces the various stages through which one will pass if one is to realise ones true self. Fran Springfield - like myself, a proponent of the *Brain Sex* theory of transsexuality - has worked with over 200 transsexual clients over the past five years, as well as many more with whom she has spoken and counselled over the phone, and it is a distillation of that experience that makes up this theory of the stages through which a transsexual goes in seeking and obtaining the appropriate professional help.



Sadly, it is sometimes necessary to use labels when talking about people, and I have to disagree with Fran over her definitions of the distinction between what she calls a transsexual and a transgenderist (which I think may often be one and the same thing), but beyond that I can only confirm and praise her descriptions of the twelve stages of transsexualism from "The very early awareness" to "The final stage: realisation" - beyond which she sees a thirteenth stage, "Unlucky for some", in which some individuals receive inappropriate surgery or have surgery that somehow fails. The other stages, described in chapters headed "Confusion", "Denial", "Suppression", "Acceptance", "A

possible return to suppression or denial", "Desperately seeking treatment", "The treatment itself", "The immediate post-operative period", "Reassignment surgery", "Immediately post-op", and "Realisation", will be all-too familiar to anyone who has already been there, and will be a valuable guide and warning of what is to come for others starting out along this pathway. It is also important to recognise the distinction Fran makes between 'treatment' and 'surgery', for contrary to what a lot of people believe, before one comes to surgery - and sometimes afterwards, as well - there is a great deal more that has to be done.

This booklet, a 28 page spiral-bound A4 document, is very readable and contains much more valuable information than its size would suggest. Recommended as essential reading if you are serious about your gender orientation, or are involved - either part-time or professionally - in helping and counselling those who are so 'gender gifted'.

The gender booklist by Fran Springfield. Gender Identity Consultancy Services, BM Box 5434, London WC1N 3XX. 1995. ISBN 1-899892-02-8. £4.00 incl p&p.

This 20 page booklet (A5 size - the same as *The Tartan Skirt*) is the most complete listing of books on all aspects of gender diversity that you will find anywhere, up to and including August 1995. As well as books about the whole transgender experience - cross-dressing, transsexuality and all the other similar 'labels' that people put on themselves - the listing includes many biographies and autobiographies and, surprisingly, a number of works of fiction which have a strong transgender content. Each book is listed alphabetically by author with its full title, publisher, year of publication and ISBN number, so that any book still in print can readily be ordered through your bookseller, and others through your library. An absolutely essential work of reference for anyone at all interested in the transgender phenomenon. ■

ALERT: ELECTROLYSIS FOR THE NEOVAGINA

The American Educational Gender Information Service, AEGIS, recently issued this Medical Advisory, drawing attention to a little-considered problem for those planning gender reassignment surgery. Clearly, a little forward planning may save a lot of distress later on.

Vaginoplasty using the penile and penoscrotal inversion methods, with or without skin grafts or skin flaps, can result in a neovagina which is lined with hair-bearing skin. As the hair grows, the neovagina can become choked with hair. Not surprisingly, many transsexual women find this embarrassing.

Some sex reassignment surgeons do not appreciate the extent of this embarrassment. During a presentation given at the October 1993 meeting of the Harry Benjamin International Dysphoria Association, one prominent surgeon remarked that although his procedure sometimes results in a hair-bearing vagina, his patients do not seem to mind. Reports to AEGIS from post-op transsexual women indicate, however, that they *do* care.

AEGIS recommends that surgeons doing male-to-female reassignment surgery be aware that a hair-bearing vagina is extremely embarrassing for their transsexual patients, and provide them with materials educating them about the problem and indicating where they should consider having electrolysis to avoid the problem.

Electrologists should be aware that transsexual women who are seeking reassignment surgery have legitimate reasons for seeking electrolysis in the perineal area.

Anyone seeking male-to-female reassignment surgery who has excessive hair in the pelvic region should consult with their surgeon in order to determine which skin will eventually be inside the vagina so they can decide whether electrolysis is desirable and so they can schedule electrolysis and surgery accordingly.

Keep in mind that electrolysis is a gradual process, and it can take a year or more to completely clear an area. ■

DID YOU KNOW ?

Sexy politics

Those of you who like statistics (other than the obvious kind !) will be interested to know that in 1984 a MORI poll was commissioned to discover which was the sexiest political party in Britain. The results provided a bizarre insight into the private lives of political activists. Women members of each party were asked "Have you ever had sex with anybody except your present partner ?". The following percentages said 'yes':

Liberal-Democrats - 33%

Conservative - 33%

Labour - 26%

While most commentators suggested that this was a major defeat for Labour the more perceptive of them spotted another fascinating statistic. In answer to the above question, no less than **one in every 100 Conservative women replied "Don't know" !**

Who ?

Have you ever heard of the film star Pola Negri ? No ? Well, she was the first woman to wear toe-nail polish.

GROWING BREASTS UNAWARE

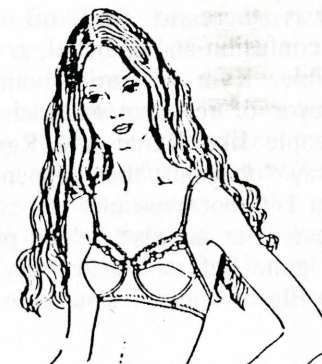
Yes, it sounds unlikely doesn't it ? Yet a study in Britain by a team from Boston University, reported recently in the *British Medical Journal*, looked into reports that some fairly common medications, often taken (for example) by sufferers from stomach upsets, may cause 'abnormal' enlargement of mens' breasts - a condition known technically as **gynaecomastia**. Of course, the real reason for the study was that most men have a huge fear of anything that may feminise their bodies, and would want to keep well away from such a possibility, if it exists. (But we know better, don't we ?).

'Abnormal' enlargement of mens' breasts (that is, growth to the point where they are fairly obvious appendages rather than just a slight rounding of the upper chest) may be due to increased deposits of fat - in other words the individual is getting seriously over-weight - or it may be due to an increase in true breast tissue: and in this case a common cause is excessive consumption of alcohol. (Hey, come back ! You don't just rush out and get drunk. We are talking here about *really* excessive consumption over a period of several years, possibly including the sad state of true addictive alcoholism, and after changes in the liver have lead to the body producing an excess of circulating female hormones that are normally present in small amounts in all males. And along with breast development in these cases goes shrinking of the genitalia, which is fine if you are a drink-sodden true transsexual, but which would certainly worry most cross-dressers - not to mention the overwhelming sober majority amongst the TS community).

It has been known for some time that a number of modern drugs can also cause gynaecomastia, including some tranquillisers and anti-depressants as well as some of the more useful drugs used to treat heart disease, high blood

pressure, stomach ulcers and oesophageal reflux (commonly known as a hiatus hernia) - not to mention a few uncommon antibiotics. However, the recent study considered three particular drugs that are fairly commonly prescribed by doctors for those suffering from stomach and duodenal ulcers and hiatus hernia: Cimetidine (sold under several trade names, the best known being *Tagamat*), Ranitidine (marketed as *Zantac*), and Omeprazole (sold as *Losec*).

It appears, however, that Cimetidine is the only one of the three that may cause 'abnormal' breast development - and even then this is a side-effect in no more than about 8% of men who take it, so the chances of getting your home-grown breasts on the National Health Service are really pretty poor, even if you have a severe gastric disturbance or stomach ulcer that calls for this treatment: and believe me, nothing is worth that ! At one time or another I have had to take each of these three drugs over a period of very many years for a gastric ulcer and its after-effects - and I can promise you 1) they didn't do a thing for *my* upper chest development, and 2) **nothing** is worth the suffering caused by a gastric ulcer. If you really want to grow your own breasts you will just have to convince a doctor that you have a sound reason for taking hormones. And for most people a pair of good prostheses are a great deal simpler - and safer ! ■



TRANSITION*

MAKING IT WORK

by *Chrystine Julian*

It was early fall. In Central California that means daytime temperatures in the high 90s...a relentlessly oppressive atmosphere adding to tensions of a more personal nature. Many years of desire and months of planning were about to be put to the test. Having lived in the fear of people finding out, I now faced the challenge of telling them. The cat is about to come screaming and scratching from the bag, never to be returned. How would the employees react to a new woman as the marketing director? Especially when they had known her for the last two years as a man.

Due in a great part to invaluable resources and supportive friends and family, overall the response was non-climatic. About every other day I ask myself why I waited so long. There were a few tense moments yet they settled quickly into the daily routine. I believe that sharing some of the planning, pitfalls and triumphs will be beneficial to others in the community.

The first key is having a personal network of support. Without my dear friend Dr Jan Eder, who not only gave me guidance but was there to fend off the arrows of disappointment, confusion and disbelief, none of this could have been possible. Kym Richards, both as a personal friend and purveyor of resource materials, also played a critical role. People like Karen and Randall Larimore, being there to say "oh yeah, that happened to me too." Some people that I've not even met and some people that may not even remember me also helped pave the way, as those that have gone before. Particularly, I found great comfort in Anne Blackwood's discourses on the subject of transition.

The three most important things I can emphasize are planning, planning, and of course planning. Plan your wardrobe, plan when and how people are going to be told, plan how to minimize the impact on others and yourself, plan what you will do if it doesn't work. My first step in the plan was purchasing IFGE's *Guide To Transition For Employers*. It gave me a good foundation for the issues that needed to be addressed. It was also helpful to present the book to my employer: it helped set the stage for them, but additionally it added credibility. It was essential that they know that they were not the first company to face this.

One of the first realizations that you face is that there is little or no legal recourse for you in this situation should non-acceptance occur. The United States Supreme Court has specifically ruled that termination of transsexuals as "a disruptive force in the workplace" is justified. You cannot force your employer to accept you. Even if you could, it would be short-lived. As a friend told me early on, "If they want you gone, they'll find a way." So before you plan transition on the job make yourself a valuable employee. Make them want you no matter what ! Make sure they would feel the loss if you left.

If you are late one or more days a week, call in sick regularly or perform only at the minimal standards, your prognosis for survival is minimal *without* transition in the way, and nil *with* it. Show up early, stay late, ask for additional responsibilities. Learn your job and the jobs of several people around you. Be able to fill in for others. Make your employer see that they would be up a creek, without both oars in the water, if they let you go. When I began to tell my employer of my intent the first thing I said was "If this is a problem for you, I will leave quietly. My concern is for the best interest of the company. I would never do anything to harm it or its reputation." Most importantly, if you say this, be honest about it and be prepared for the answer.

Combining luck, divine intervention and design, we devised a plan to facilitate the change. I was pleasantly surprised to receive pledges of support not only from my immediate supervisors but also the company owner and all of the company management. We talked about arranging an assignment at another facility, and that was a serious consideration for some time. (Frankly, I'm grateful that we did not choose that option. I have, on a number of occasions, needed to rely upon the relationships and respect I have developed with the employees.) My personal feeling to make the transition was an effort to not hide the real me. I was not ready or willing to simply exchange my male past. I'm simply not willing to live with hiding and the associated anxiety any longer.

Being under medical and psychiatric evaluation and supervision for several months prior to the debut of the new me was a great way of adding credibility. I have difficulty imagining how I would tell somebody that I "just decided to do this". Most people need the reassurance that this is a decision backed by professional opinion. Being passable and conservative in my attire were necessities. This is a situation where standing out in the crowd is not to anyone's advantage. People will be much more accepting if they are not embarrassed by being associated with you.

I would advise any one to considerate of - and conscious of - other people's feelings. It is inevitable that someone's toes will be stepped on. All the same, it is easier to make up if people understand that it was unintentional. We preceded my transition with the following letter to the staff. (For privacy purposes I've changed references to the company name.) It evoked both laughter and tears, but most of all it was effective. Feel free to use any of it that you might find useful:

*To my Friends and Co-workers at XXX-Company:
After much contemplation, planning, and
consultation among the management of XXX, it is*

necessary for me to make an announcement that should qualify as the most bizarre thing you have personally encountered. Please understand that this is not an easy thing for me to do. I'll try to make it as short as possible.

I've truly enjoyed the last two years at XXX more than any other place that I have been employed. For all of my working life I've struggled to keep my professional life professional and my private life private. Although, I'm certain that all of you are aware that I've always been a little (to some "very" is a better word) different. I am appreciative of your acceptance, camaraderie, and cooperation in spite of - or because of - that fact. I've been aware of how different I am since I was a small child (even before entering elementary school). I have always struggled to make my life as normal as it could be, in spite of that. In all those years I've wanted little more than to feel or be what others consider normal. At the age of 12 I had my first counselling sessions for a condition that is known as Gender Dysphoria. Since that time I've tried every conceivable avenue to reach some compromise (on numerous occasions it has brought me to the point of contemplating suicide). Until the beginning of this year all of those efforts to fix the problem have been futile. Since January I have been in counselling and treatment in preparation for what is clinically known as Sex Reassignment.

It is important that you understand what this is and what it is not. It is not homosexuality (believe me that would be much easier to deal with), it is not crossdressing or transvestism (although we all define ourselves to some degree by the clothes we wear). The latest neuro-research has shown it to be what would best be called a birth defect, resulting from exposure or lack of exposure to certain

biochemical substances while developing in the womb. This sets up a predisposition to gender confusion that may be accentuated by social influences. Which all simply means I did not choose this. It is a condition defined and treated by psychological and medical means. While it may be strange to know someone personally, thousands of people in this country are involved in this process of transition at any given time, with those that have successfully completed the process numbering more than 10,000.

Please understand that if it were possible I'd go through this without exposing anyone else to the discomfort and embarrassment it might cause, either to them or me. Nonetheless, I can assure you that I will do all that is in my power to minimize the effects it will have on you. Experience has shown that the novelty wears off and things return to normal in a period of a few days to a few weeks. In reality, other than appearance very little will change. You will see the same job responsibilities and performance, for good or bad, (sorry, there is no evidence that hormone treatments improve penmanship or spelling). Along with social and physical changes, this process includes a new name, Chrystine. This allows me to maintain the use of accounts listed under my initials and also maintains a stammer when I say it (I was afraid that too much change would be difficult for some people to handle). Additionally, arrangements have been made for me to use the third rest room as a 'gender neutral' facility to avoid any discomfort or threat to the privacy of other employees.

For those of you that can find it within yourself to be supportive, understanding, or even just tolerant, I am grateful. For those of you that can not, frankly, I understand. I can only hope that in time I

will at least earn your respect for being willing to take control of my own life. This is my problem to deal with. I am committed to not making it anyone else's. If I can do any thing to make it easier or if I can provide you with any information, let me know.

Again, I want to thank you all for the past years at XXX-Company. They've been the best years of my life. I hope that they may continue to be for many years to come.

Sincerely, Chrystine

I arranged a week of vacation to be taken at the time of transition. On the first day of that week the letter was delivered to the employees. On Friday we set up a meeting of the entire staff, including myself and Dr Eder. The plan was to allow people a few days to chew on the thought, even if they were not ready to digest it. None of us were prepared for the reaction. I've never had to face such an angry mob before. They were for the most part defensive, unsympathetic, vile, and downright mean. I tried speaking to them but wound up leaving the room in tears in short order. At that time Dr Eder took over. I can't give you the details of what was said, but the session continued for nearly an hour past quitting time. On their way out several people found me to pledge their support. (One of the guys offered to beat up a particularly cruel woman in the group. I declined the offer.) I spent that weekend empathizing with Dr Frankenstein's monster. I regularly looked out my window to see if the townspeople were marching on my castle with torches. This is a slight exaggeration, but I emphasize the word *slight*.

I was naturally anxious on Monday morning. The first employee I met as I entered the building had not been there on Friday. I greeted him with my arms wide, a smile almost as wide, and saying "surprise". He simply replied that he had heard about it and didn't have a problem.

Initially every one was at arm's length. No one spoke to me until I spoke to them. One by one the ice was broken. The previously mentioned particularly mean person was, within minutes, sharing makeup tips and comparing implements. All but a couple of people fell into the same pattern. Even the people who were most against this have managed to maintain a focus on the job to be done. I have been told by one person that they like me much better as Chrystine than they ever did in my male persona. Two weeks into the process I received the best compliment of all. I asked my supervising vice president what he thought of the process. His reply was that, judged on the basis of everyone's performance, it would be impossible to tell that anything had happened at all.

There continue to be challenges, triumphs, and disappointments. Frankly, I don't know if this account will be helpful to anyone else. As I mentioned at the start, I've been dependent and grateful to those that have gone before, so I am hopeful that sharing this can do the same for someone else.

Reprinted from *Cross Talk* #66, Woodland Hills, Ca, USA.

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TO DO NO HARM

(CONTINUED)

by Erin Carruthers

Regular readers will have seen an article in issue 13 (pp 3-7) by "a worried transsexual" in which she queried how one may come to terms with, and live with, ones transsexuality without hurting ones nearest and dearest. Subsequently Erin Carruthers expressed the view (issue 15, pp 44-45) that a transsexual must pursue her objective of full gender reassignment even should this cause distress to ones 'significant others'. In the same issue I disagreed (pp 46-47), and suggested that it may sometimes be necessary to put the interests of others before ones own. (Perhaps it would help readers who have issues 13 and 15 of The Tartan Skirt to hand if they re-read the arguments before reading on). Erin has now come back defending her stance, and although I still strongly disagree with her and feel that she is wrongly generalising from her own particular circumstances, it is clear that there are widely differing viewpoints on this topic - a point that I still feel Erin originally missed, although the last paragraph of her contribution below is the one thing upon which we can both agree. However, as there are still some points that I feel need taking up, rather than write a full reply I have inserted a few comments of my own at appropriate places. If you have any views on this subject, do please write to me at the address on page 2.

Anne

I hope readers will forgive this ongoing theme but, like Anne, I feel this is such an important subject that it must be explored and debated fully. Anne attacked my views quite strongly and I feel that I must justify at least some of them, so let me take Anne's comments in order.

1. She states that it is "obviously wrong" to claim that ones transsexualism "really affects nobody else's life". But Anne

has only quoted part of my statement. I did add "excepting one's spouse". Obviously it is going to affect his/her life, but I still maintain that my statement is true. All my family are grown up and living away, so how can it affect their lives, which continue as before? OK, some of us have young families who still live at home, but it is a fact that, contrary to parents' belief, the younger the children the better they come to terms with it. Of course there will be some who don't/can't do this, and I appreciate this will be a severe problem, but it is usually adults who can't cope.

But the 'children' are often adults themselves (sometimes with children of their own), and their lives frequently ARE affected by finding that the person they have always regarded as their father is actually a woman, as very many transsexuals will confirm. This usually comes as a great shock, possibly undermining their assurance in their own sexuality, and especially if it comes at a time when they already have some other trauma in their lives.

2. "Ruthless" and "cold and clinical": Anne says these are not feminine characteristics. True, and I heartily agree, but I was not dealing with femininity, I was referring to **survival**. Let me clarify that by a mis-quotation: "Some are born ruthless, some become ruthless and others have ruthlessness thrust upon them". I definitely belong to that last category. I resent it but I have no choice. Or should I have committed suicide? I saw this as the only alternative, and I am quite sure that Anne would not wish that.

Of course not - but there ARE alternatives, including access to skilled counselling services. Anyone contemplating suicide is clearly in need of help, and trying to work ones way through a difficult situation entirely on ones own is not always the best way of dealing with a problem. As John Donne said, "no man is an island, entire of itself".

3. "It is untrue to refer, as a generalisation, to opposition from Joe Public and the medical profession". No it isn't! Not from my experience and that of a few others I have talked to. If Anne's experience is different then I envy her. It probably depends a lot on where one lives and in which Health Authority Area.

Sorry, but as a generalisation it IS untrue. Maybe Erin has had such an experience, but most ordinary people are at best totally accepting, and at worst a little indifferent, leaving it to the hard line bigots, yoboes and drunks who cause trouble with anyone who is not exactly like themselves. Most medical practitioners are simply inexperienced in this field, and like any other group of people they also have their minority of bigots and despots. However, variations in support between different Health Authority areas is a matter of funding policy determined by lay managers rather than attitudes of individual doctors.

4. I was referring to my particular situation [concerning the attitudes of my parents]. Yes, Anne has a point here, but nevertheless I can only speak from experience. My mother, had she been alive today, would have been terribly embarrassed by my change-over - AT FIRST. But by now she would, I'm certain, have 'come round' and been very supportive. She was like that, and I do miss her even after 20 years - and especially now.

Yes, parents do find it hard to accept that someone they have known from birth is no longer the boy they brought up, but a girl (or woman). However, if a parent truly loves their child, then although it may take time, that will be the overriding emotion.

5. "It hasn't affected her life" [i.e., my daughter Catriona, now age 27]. Anne says it must have done, because of the comment I added about her not now speaking with me. No, I feel Anne is "barking up the wrong tree" here. It has only

affected Catriona's reaction to me when we are together in the same room: it has not affected her life, as she is still doing everything she would have done anyway. Incidentally I can add an encouraging addendum here. Catriona has been here again recently for two weeks holiday, and this time I tried very hard (but discretely, or at least tactfully) to break the ice between us, and I do believe there was an improvement in our relationship, which really does please me. Nevertheless, I did not mention my transsexuality because I felt, rightly or wrongly, that this would be pushing a bit too hard: next time, perhaps? If she is having a problem, then I would be more than glad to help or explain. Finally, I now understand from my wife that Catriona would like to come 'home' and live with us again, so perhaps she does not quite see me as an ogre (? ogress) after all. You see, Anne, in spite of what you say I DO care, but self-preservation must take precedence.

I'm not sure how Erin can be so sure that her daughter is "still doing everything she would have done anyway". How can anyone be sure what anyone else would do in different circumstances? By Erin's own admission, her daughter's reactions to her parent have certainly been affected as a result of her transsexuality, and she admits that it has been necessary that she "tried very hard...to break the ice between us" - which hardly suggests a 'normal' relationship, and must surely reflect her daughter's worries which are bound to affect her whole approach, not only to her family but also to her own relationships with others who may or may not have similar secrets locked away inside them.

In conclusion, we are all different, see the world in different ways, and our problems will not be identical due to differing circumstances. We all cope as best we can, according to individual circumstances. Anne is not necessarily 'wrong' because I disagree with her, nor am I necessarily 'wrong' because she disagrees with me.

And Amen to that - Anne ■

IT'S YOUR NAME - or is it ?

Transsexuals in Britain often bemoan the fact that they are discriminated against and penalised because following reassignment surgery they can not have their birth certificate altered or replaced to indicate their true sex, as is generally possible in many other countries. (Although it is not generally known or appreciated that in Scotland - whose legal system, as any Scot will proudly acknowledge, is generally far superior to that of England and Wales - it is possible for a post-operative transsexual to have an amendment of change of name *attached to* their birth certificate).

This situation is even more of a puzzle when we realise that children who are adopted are readily issued with a replacement certificate which legally records their new names and status, and which is used for all purposes in lieu of the original certificate. Why a similar arrangement can not be made in respect of those who undergo gender reassignment seems to be determined solely by a mixture of ignorance and bigotry on the part of our politicians, combined with the fact that there are simply no significant votes in such a humanitarian action.

As noted above, however, things are different elsewhere. In the USA, for example, I have myself witnessed the ease with which a new birth certificate is issued in the State of Pennsylvania upon presentation of a letter from the surgeon certifying that the individual can now function only in the 'new' sex. A statement certified by a Notary Public, together with the surgeon's letter and the appropriate (modest) fee results in a new certificate being issued with no difficulty and with minimal bureaucratic delay. However, you should be aware of one freedom enjoyed by

British transsexuals that our American sisters can not take for granted - the right to change your name.

In Britain, if you wish to change your name nothing could be more simple - you just do it. At least, to elaborate, you can indeed change your name simply by common usage. For example, if you want to call yourself (say) *Florence Nightingale*, or *Napoleon Bonaparte* then you just do so, and if you can produce evidence that this is what you are normally known as, then the law is satisfied. We must all know of *Screaming Lord Sutch*, the perpetual candidate at Parliamentary elections, who has indeed taken that as his official and legally recognised name.

If you want to change your name more formally, however, then there is the (expensive) option of doing it by Deed Poll, or much more simply (and inexpensively) you simply swear a statement before a Notary Public (or in England, make a Statutory Declaration before a Justice of the Peace), and that is all there is to it ! Of course, you then have the tedious task of changing all the documents which carry your former name - National Insurance and National Health Service records, bank accounts, house mortgage agreements, education certificates, *etc.* Usually this simply means sending the appropriate authorities a letter requesting that they change their records, together with a copy of the Notarised Statement (or Statutory Declaration), and the job is done.

Things are very different in America, however. There it is necessary to go before a court and convince a judge that you should be allowed to change your name: and the judge does **not** always allow it. For example, one American friend of mine had to go to court twice before receiving consent to change her name, while a recent case (June 1995) shows how arbitrary such judgments can be.

In the Court of Common Pleas in the State of Pennsylvania Judge Howard F. Riley disallowed an application by a

pre-op transsexual whose original name was David Charles Dahl to change her name to Diane Dahl. As reported in *The Daily Local News* Judge Riley said in his (two page) "opinion" (and note that it was just his 'opinion' that determined the matter) that "It is the court's position that [Dahl] has not taken the necessary steps to acquire the emotional, psychological and physiological change from one sex to another that warrants granting this name change".

Now Ms Dahl had at that time apparently been living in the female gender role for two years, had been formally diagnosed as having "gender dysphoria", and had been receiving regular psychological and medical treatment for this condition for the previous four years. So on what basis did the Judge decide that his own knowledge of psychology and sociology was superior to that of the professionals who had been treating Ms Dahl ? Indeed, on what basis did he take it upon himself to deny to *any* American citizen the freedom to be known by whatever name the individual decided to use ? (And one wonders what would be the Judge's opinion of someone whose name was gender-neutral, such as "Jo" or "Hilary" ?). We may well ask, and ponder.

In support of his 'judgment' Judge Riley selectively cited an 18-year old case in which a name change had been refused because the transsexual concerned had not at that time completed re-assignment surgery. However, at the same time he chose to disregard another court ruling which stated that changing a name to reflect a different gender status would in fact help the individual "while in no way disserving any societal interest, principle of public order or precept of morality". And perhaps this last point is the most important. For heaven's sake, what damage to society did the judge imagine would arise from allowing someone who looked like a woman and lived as a woman to adopt a female name to reflect that fact ? But perhaps we can guess what caused Judge Riley to make his perverse decision.

It is a fair bet that Ms Dahl was unfortunate enough to have come across one of those morally righteous religious bigots found in all walks of life whose definition of "normal is "exactly like ME". Of course we can only guess, but whatever the reasoning behind this particular sad slap in the face to someone who surely must have enough problems and difficulties in her life of gender transition, one basic fact *is* clear. In America, "the Land of the Free", its citizens do not enjoy the freedom to take whatever name they feel they wish to be known by - a freedom that in Britain we take for granted.

Surely, if one goes through any process that places on record a change in name from that one feels to be either inappropriate - or even just disliked and unwanted - to one that is felt to be either more appropriate or acceptable, then there is no sensible reason to deny that change. Parents often lumber their children with names that, as adults, they find unpleasant or embarrassing (for example, I once knew of a lady called *Mafeking Pretoria Jones* - named in recognition of the battles of those names, and effectively 'dating' that lady's age for the rest of her life). Surely it is only common kindness to allow anyone lumbered with a disliked or inappropriate name to change their name to something more suitable and socially acceptable.

So, when we bewail the legal reasoning that leaves transsexuals unable to change or amend their birth certificates in Britain, let us at least be thankful that at least we can call ourselves by whatever names we like and find appropriate - unlike some of our sisters across the water in 'the Land of the Free'. ■



A SHOPPING LIST OF TRANSEXUAL SHAME *

by Rachel Pollack

1. When someone says they wouldn't have guessed we were transsexual, we're complimented.
2. When someone says they knew we were transsexual, we're dismayed.
3. When non transsexual women discuss their periods or pregnancies, we keep silent.
4. We never discuss dilating, hormones or surgery with them.
5. We feel more legitimate when we have a lover.
6. We feel inferior when we don't.
7. We feel bad for putting our mothers through this.
8. We agree not to dress for family functions.
9. We agree not to discuss it when we go home.
10. We agree not to tell our grandmother, our niece, our son.
11. When we answer the phone we raise our voice pitch.
12. If someone calls us "Sir", we feel humiliated.
13. After surgery we grade our cunts by how non transsexual they look.
14. We show lots of bosom when we go out, to make sure we pass.
15. We avoid being seen with other transsexuals.
16. We reason that lots of non transsexual women have deep voices, large hands, and broad gestures, so they should accept us as OK.
17. We don't reason/think that compared to us, lots of non transsexual women have high voices, tiny hands

and feet, and minuscule gestures, so we should accept them as OK.

18. We make sure to get our implants a size too large.
19. We avoid discussing our dicks.
20. We convince ourselves after surgery that we no longer have one.
21. When we see non transsexual women who are pregnant we feel defective.
22. We're willing to settle for sex, when we really want intimacy.
23. We wonder if we'll ever have a lover.
24. We eat when we're unhappy.
25. We tell ourselves it's not that bad.
26. We spend so much energy responding to the voices outside and the old tapes inside, we never see our creativity, courage and beauty.

* Reprinted from *Chrysalis*, Winter 1995, Vol 2, No. 1.

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

A rule of life

"This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man".

Shakespeare (Hamlet)

A LETTER FROM A MOTHER*

One thing that all transgendered individuals need is love and support from their nearest and dearest - and all too often this is one thing that is lacking. This letter is an example of how wonderful such acceptance can be.

Dear Zelda⁺

This is a day out of my life different from any other day - following yesterday, which was unique from all the rest. And you played a part in it all - from such a distance; yet I can only say that in your work it is as if you were placing your hand in the hand of God and together you are continuing His work of creating.

What does this mean? It means that yesterday, when I went to the airport to meet my son, his plane arrived on schedule, but I did not see him alight. Instead, a tall and radiantly beautiful girl walked right up to me, the first one off the plane and said, calling me by name, "Your son will meet you at the car. You are to please come with me right away". She spoke softly, but firmly, and with such a light of brimming-over joy on her face that I felt everything must be all right and followed her. As we approached the parked car I said "Let's wait in the car. He will come to you". I hesitated. She put her arm around my waist and said very softly, "Don't you know me, Mother? I am your son. I've been here all the time". Still, a mysterious smile was on her

* Reprinted from *Chrysalis*, 1995, Vol 2, No1. Originally published by the (now defunct) Erickson Educational Foundation

+ Zelda Suplee was the Assistant Director of the Erickson Educational Foundation in the 1970s.

lips, and the expression was of a person waiting to give a precious gift, cherishing the moment, reluctant to disclose it all, yet unable to withhold it any longer. My thoughts were confused as I seated her in the front seat, kept firm hold on my keys, and still looked about for my son. "But you are not my son" I said. "I do know he is not so tall". "I have on heels" she said. "Mother, look into my eyes; don't you recognize me?". I laughed. This must be his girl, this radiant creature, playing a little joke on me. "No, I do not recognize you, but I have to say you are the most beautiful girl I have ever seen". She drew herself over to the car window and the eyes and the voice implored me now, "Please, get into the car". Then I sat down and turned to her, searching in the delicately chiselled young face for my son. "Show me your hands" I asked, and - yes, there I found the identifying scar. Then I listened to the music of that gentle voice, and there was something familiar. The eyes were not the same. Those long, curly lashes had made a change. But that smile, that glance, that sweet, chuckley amused look. There he was. The same radiant spirit of my precious son I had come to meet. "Didn't you know, Mother, that I have always wanted to be a girl?"

(Oh God, I prayed, help me to share his joy! Let me not hurt his moment of giving his new self so honestly to me. My God, my God, what agony for all these years he has undergone - and so manfully. Let me be equal to his moment of joy). Then I laughed and exclaimed, "How wonderful. Welcome home".

I sat a moment before starting up the car, just to be certain I was steady, "What a relief" he said. "Mom, I thought you might faint. I never dreamed I'd fool you. Do you think anybody else will recognize me?". "Impossible" I said. "If you can fool your mother you can fool anyone".

Then we drove home and he began to recount to me the struggles of many years he had been through...and the doctors and the psychiatrists he had been to see to discover

why he felt as he did when he was searching for the root of his mystifying feelings. It was such a help, he said, that I had told him only recently how much I admired Jung and his psychology of the self and the idea of the inner and the outer life of the individual. Had I not guessed the nature of his visit, my son asked, after our recent discussion of that article on Jung we had just read?

Home at last, we continued our conversation of the discovery of the self-identity. "But you are not a deviate" I asserted. "I know you well enough to be certain of that". "No, I am a psychic hermaphrodite. I was born with the body of a male, but the psyche of a woman, and my deepest wish is to be a woman. Today science has learned that one out of ever so many cases may have the psyche of one sex in the body of the opposite sex. I feel trapped in the wrong body. I have been studied for years. I went to Johns Hopkins [hospital] and to many top-ranking psychiatrists. As long as my psyche could not be changed to match my natural sex, science is finding ways to adjust the body to match the psyche. I simply am too unhappy as I am to go on living a constructive and productive life. I wish to become a female and then I will be able to realize some of my long-desired goals.

We discussed at great length the successive steps needed to accomplish this change, and after dinner we both began to relax. "I hope I didn't let you down at the airport" I said. "No" she replied. "Mother, you were fine!".

And so my precious one has come home - and this was, I told her, the greatest tribute paid to me by anyone, except when my late husband proposed to me, The way ahead will be new, risky, hard at times, yes, but for my precious one it shall never again be ALONE.

Thanks, dear God, that my offering of my Holy Communion up for the guidance of my son, who I felt was wrestling with something too complex to handle alone.

Thanks to Thee, for you have been giving guidance all along.

Then, dear Zelda, (please forgive this letter if it has become a little disjointed) then he gave me a book and a file of articles and clippings going back to earlier than 1952 on the subject of medical, psychological, and cosmetic aid being given to persons in a similar circumstance. It was in your dear note that I might, if I wished, call you. I have to call you, Zelda, by your first name, for you have been holding the hand of my child and your other hand has been, I feel, in the hand of God.

My husband did explain something to me when he was alive, of the threshold of another sex upon which many persons are born; and how much these individuals suffer and how deeply they deserve our every aid. I believe, had he lived, he would have welcomed this opportunity for my child to release her true self.

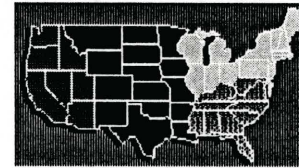
Yes, I am crying Zelda, but they are tears of joy; tears for the miracle of help for a suffering soul. In heaven, Christ said, there is no male or female. His immortal soul is intact. All will be well. I shall be standing by. Will I help? Does a mother's love ever die? Not if it is directed toward the child.

Thank you Zelda, and tell the other suffering and confused parents of children and adults in this similar situation to have faith and direct their help and love to promoting this pioneering and godly work in discovery.

In gratitude
A mother



FROM ACROSS THE POND



- A LETTER FROM AMERICA

By *Bonnie Lynne Betz*

Well here it is: summer is almost over, and what a hot one it was in the United States! We have had the hottest average summer temperatures since they have been keeping records. But you know, I did not feel the uncomfortable temperatures, I was so glad to be alive and happy. Life has truly been magnificent and a little heat did not bother me because, no matter what the temperature, my life can now be lived.

I am now in the eighth month since the day of my reassignment surgery in Wisconsin, and am now taking life in my stride. I have no problems since that surgery - nothing but happiness. Everything I do no longer requires thought before I do it. All my actions each day are natural and I no longer have to think how it should be: I just do it, and have been that way for the past three or four months. After reassignment surgery you can be yourself, and doing things becomes part of your life. I am now complete and no longer wonder if I am doing everything correctly, but do things naturally as if I have been doing them all my life.

I was blessed with being able to transition in a very organized and logical process. I worked hard to make everything as uneventful as possible, and was rewarded for my efforts. I was also blessed with many good friends and supporters along the way, and I have gained so many new and wonderful friends since I transitioned completely. There was a time in my life when I hated everyone and

kept to myself. Those days are over. I have now found a world full of wonderful people and am enjoying my new world along with others. I am enjoying people, and people are enjoying me. I have evolved from an ugly larva into a beautiful butterfly, and everything I always wished for has come true. And I owe it all to being able to be myself.

I have learned to grow into my new life and am living it to the full. I look back with fond memories on friendships I have made, but not on the suffering, which stays in the past. My goal now is to make a new life and put the old one behind me. I just wish that everyone going through a transition of their own may have the good fortune to have one like mine. Believe me, all the suffering is worth it !

I have found that I can do things that I never imagined possible, and am now pursuing many facets of my life that before were only a dream. Alas though, with this new life comes the realization that many things that I did before must be put aside in order to pursue my happiness. One of these is my little venture in writing '*Across The Pond*'. I have attempted to give readers of *The Tartan Skirt* some insight into a very complex person, and the struggles of someone who needed to find their happiness. I hope that I have brought some enlightenment to those of you who have deliberated on many questions concerning your inner feelings. I hope that I have helped those of you who were questioning your own gender to find some of the answers, and that everything in my little attempt at journalism has been of help to many of you. I also hope that as I leave I have made the lives of some of you a little better, and this little corner of the world a somewhat better place. May you all enjoy life to its fullest: it is a wonderful feeling.

With this final chapter of my journal I am finishing a part of my life that has not only been happy, but that has made me feel that I have given a little back to our world. If just one person has been helped by these episodes then I can feel that I have done something worthwhile. For over 40

years I lived a life that was a curse for me, then I started my journey to 'the other side' and now, finally, I am completely the woman that I denied for those 40-plus years.

A first world war song, later quoted by General Douglas MacArthur, said "*Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*". Well I am not a General but I too will "fade away", into a society that I strived so hard to break free from in order to be myself. Now I re-enter that same society as just another woman. I will never forget all the many wonderful people I met, and will always have fond memories of you all. Life has taken me down a different road that I will now travel to the end, for the rest of my life, and those I meet along it will know only one person - Bonnie Lynne Betz.

When you first became acquainted with Bonnie I told you that "I did not ask to be this way, God made me this way and he made me this way for a purpose". Well, I have found my purpose and my life, and now I will live that life as God intended me to live it. Some day I will answer to God for the way that I have lived that life, and I hope that I can live up to the way that God intended. I have a good start, and I know that if God did not want me to be this way I would have died on that operating table in Wisconsin in February. I can truthfully say that my life has been saved, and now I must live it. **Life is to be lived !!!**

And now I must take my leave and just fade away. God bless you all and keep you safe. Don't ever deny yourself, but pursue your life as if it will end tomorrow. Go forward and be who you are: **God never intended us to be anything but who we are.** Your life is in your own hands, so make the best of it and enjoy life.

Until we all meet again some day, in a world that makes no distinction between people, Good Luck in all you do.

*Yours lovingly,
Bonnie*

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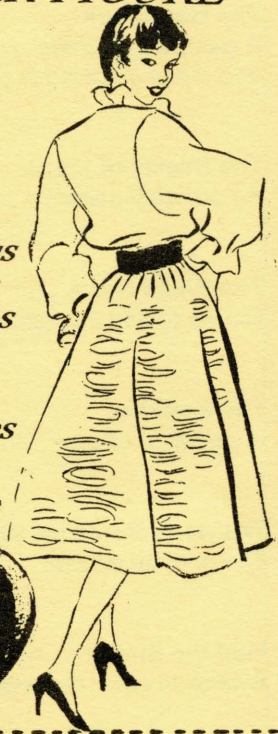
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