



# News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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## Yeah, I Remember When... And Boy, Am I Ever Trying Not To!

by Jessica Brandon

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you;  
Weep, and you weep alone."

-Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Solitude*

In the June 1993 issue of *Renaissance News & Views*, Dina Amberle and Gloria Lange collaborated on an article called "Remember When" that dealt with all those wonderful memories of first time experiences in cross-dressing. I found that to be a very fascinating article, since it related so very well to each and every one of us. To this day, it remains one of the best pieces I've ever read in this newsletter.

Now, as terrific as that article was, I wondered what it would be like if a dash of humor and wackiness were added, if we were to take a walk on the wild side and look at those adventures through the eyes of someone who should either be doing stand up comedy, or wearing a straitjacket. Since I happen to think I fall somewhere in the middle, I decided to have a little fun.

Let me stress here and now that everything you're about to read actually happened to me over the years, proof positive that I was a stone cold moron when I started doing this crossdressing stuff. I'm not afraid to laugh at myself, occasionally (I do a lot of that) and I hope you get a few chuckles from my adventures, too. I know I do when I think back to those nutty days of blissful transgendered ignorance!

I remember when... I put on my first pair of panties, and wondered why there wasn't a fly front on them.

I remember when... I tried walking in my mom's high heels, and thanked God the floors were carpeted, because I kept falling down.

I remember when... I put on a bra for the first time, backwards, by the way, and, yes, just like the old joke goes, it fit better.

I remember when... I accidentally ruined a pair of my mom's pantyhose, and hyperventilated from panic.

I remember when... I decided it was time for a dress, and virtually dislocated my arms trying to use that damn zipper in the back!

I remember when... I was stubborn enough to try on a dress that was too small for me. It fit pretty good, provided I didn't breathe.

I remember when... I fell in love with a pair of funky boots mom owned. Why then did it seem to take all day to lace them up?

I remember when... I practiced going down stairs in high heels. Needless to say, I got down a lot faster than I intended.

I remember when... I started raiding my mom's closet to feed my habit. I think I got more use out of her clothes than she did!

I remember when... I boldly tried on one of my mom's Afro wigs. Picture if you will, Linc from "The Mod Squad" in drag, a terrifying sight indeed.

I remember when... I attempted to put pierced earrings on unpierced ears. I couldn't figure out why it hurt so much when I tried to do that.

I remember when... I decided to buy my own stash of women's clothes. The thrift shops and five and dime stores made a killing off me.

I remember when... I finally learned what I did was called "crossdressing". You mean it's a religious thing? Praise the Lord and pass the lipstick!

I remember when... I first experimented with makeup, bought the wrong shade and freaked out when I looked like Al Jolson in reverse.

I remember when... I used crazy glue to keep press-on nails in place, and panicked later when I had trouble getting them off.

I remember when... I took those first pictures of myself fully dressed. Talk about hideous! I was actually amazed I didn't break the camera lens.

I remember when... I went to have those pictures developed. I walked into the shop wearing sunglasses and gave a phony name. Paranoid? Nah!

I remember when... I saw a picture of my very first crossdresser. Finally, someone who looked uglier in drag than I did!

I remember when... I watched Donahue parade around in a skirt on TV. Man! He made even my legs look like a million bucks!

I remember when... I attended my first Renaissance meeting. Tense? Let's just say the "Rocky" statue was less rigid than I was that night.

I remember when... I was the prototypical wallflower no one could get a word out of me at meetings. Nowadays, people can't get me to shut up!

I remember when... I ventured out in public for the first time in daylight. When a man said "Good afternoon, Miss," I turned around to see who he was talking to.

Finally...I remember when I was just a dull, drab nobody. Today I'm a crossdresser, a rare and colorful bird who's having the time of her life!

# Renaissance

## Chapter & Affiliate Information

### Chapters

#### Delaware

**Wilmington, Delaware:** meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808. Phone: 302-376-1990.

#### Pennsylvania

**Greater Philadelphia:** Write Renaissance GPC, 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, Pa. 19087. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia. Doors open 8 pm all year 'round. Call 610-975-9119 for information.

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

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

### Affiliates

#### California

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

#### Connecticut

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

#### Georgia

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

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

#### Illinois

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

#### Louisiana

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

#### New Jersey

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

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

#### New York

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

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

**Long Island:** Long Island Femme Expression (LIFE), PO Box 3015, Lake Ronkonkoma, NY 11779-0147. Phone: 516-283-1333

#### Oklahoma

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

#### Electronic Subscriptions

You can get RenNews&Views by email every month delivered automatically right to your email box for only \$10 a year. That's half off the regular paper subscription rate. Send your \$10 plus your email address to the Ren national office.

# Renaissance News & Views

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Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the transgender community and the general public. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, make your check or M.O., payable to Renaissance and send it to our National office. Your contributions will help us continue our efforts to provide education about transgender issues. Donations can also be made through your local United Way agency.

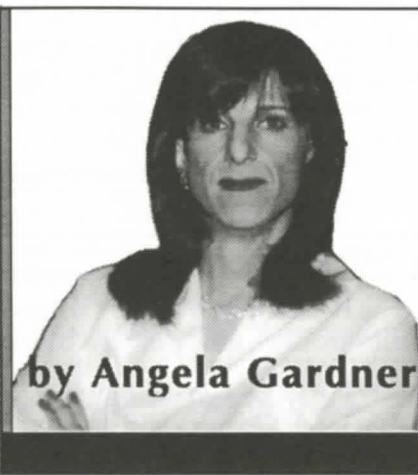
### Local Calendar

#### February

- 1 Ren. LSV
- 1 NJ Support
- 8 MOTG
- 8 Ren. Lehigh Valley
- 8 Ren. Delaware
- 15 Ren. GPC



# News Beat & Reminder



by Angela Gardner

Happy Valentines Day one and all. It's the **Swimsuit Issue** and we've got an adorable assemblage of cuties to turn your thoughts to the sunny days of summer. But before we get to the bathing beauties (go on, skip ahead, but come right back) let's have a little history lesson. Renaissance history is important, especially since we're going to celebrate our 10th Anniversary this year. This column is called *News Beat & Reminder*, which you know cause the title is right above this paragraph. (Like the new pic? It's the work of my personal photographer, the lovely and talented Miranda Thomas.) I try to cover the transgender news beat, and bring you reminders about things that are happening in Renaissance and the community at large.

Why, it was way back in 1992 that I took over the Editor-in-Chief job on this rag. Someone hand me my medication. At the time I promised to stick with the job till my brain burned out. Well, that happened a few years back and I'm still here, cause now I'm too stupid to quit. The seeds of *News Beat & Reminder* were sown on the first page of the September 1992 issue in a paragraph titled "Renaissance Reminders." By November of that fateful year it had become "News Beat" and in December it became "Reminder Beat." 1993 brought another variation—"News Beat Reminders," and from there I just went wacky. Once I called it "Re-Beat-Minder," but my favorite was "Reminders & Beatings." By the end of '94 we had settled into the dull consistency of *News Beat & Reminder* and the name is still the same. I think

it may be time to change it. If I can remember, I'll have a new (or possibly one of the old) names for my column. Let me know what you think, drop a note to our editorial address, PO Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020 and tell me your favorite from this little history lesson. And now, the beatings... I mean the News Beat.

## She's A What?

*The Sally Jesse Raphael Show* (Jan. 15, 1997) featured **Beautiful Women With A Secret**. Yeah, they all started out as guys. Why is it that when they do these kind of shows the "women" parade around in "fashion shows" that display huge amounts of flesh and cleavage? (Pretty good looking flesh and cleavage, I might add.) The outfits always seem to consist of glitzy gowns, G strings and thigh high vinyl boots. One of the female audience members complained that the women on stage were all trashy. Aside from the fact that they *were*, I guess that's the impression that comes through when television shows feature members of the glamorous portion of the TG community. Why do they do it? Glamour (read sex appeal) sells. That means rating points. A group of sedate, tastefully attired ladies, who happen to be transgendered, are no longer enough for a spike in the ratings. Bring on the babes! The Larry Flynt movie isn't bringing in the masses cause it's a stunning portrayal of one man fighting for his Constitutional rights. It's pulling the crowds cause they're hoping to see some hot babes in skimpy outfits.

I always wonder about TG women

who concentrate on glamour. I tend to suspect that those who take hormones and have various surgeries to make them look more like **Pamela Anderson Lee** are more on the transvestite end of the TG spectrum than the TS portion. I'm a transvestite (and proud of it) and I love to look sexy and wear hot (but expensive, darlings, not cheap) clothes. If other circumstance in my life were different (less body hair, more head hair, etc.) I might have been one of the girls on the Sally show. I have a big need to express myself in female roles, and I enjoy it a lot. I still wouldn't be a transsexual, but I would be able to wear a skimpy G string without worrying about hiding my candy, to quote Lady Chablis.

Don't get me wrong, I don't automatically assume that if you are transgendered male-to-female, and you dress in a sexy and provocative manner, that you're a TV tramp. Like the transgender impulse, *trampitude* is something that's part of a person regardless of gender or sexual orientation. I know two women (GGs) who feel like they're drag queens trapped in women's bodies. So, the desire to look like a cheap hooker doesn't mean you're not gender dysphoric. You may be, but you're too busy perfecting your eye makeup to go through any therapy that might clarify your gender identity. Speaking of blurred gender identity...

## Painted Male Hussies

My best friend's son came home from Texas to live with her. One day she noticed he had dark polish on his toe nails. Was he a kindred spirit? No. I wear toe polish for a TV thrill, he wears it to fit in with the new teen to twenty-something attitude that makeup isn't just for girls. In fact some younger guys consider it sexist to say that makeup is a feminine prerogative. I think it's part of the movement started by the glam rock bands of the Seventies and brought to popularity in the Nineties by modern bands like Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins. For whatever reason, grunge boys are wearing eye shadow, eyeliner and lip-

*continued next page*

## News Beat...

stick, as well as nail and toe polish.

According to *Spin* magazine (passed along to me by Jessica Brandon), 35% of 14 to 30 year old males thought that makeup was cool. What helps to make it cool are the names—like Uzi and Frostbite. Even the name of one of the companies that produces the makeup is macho, Urban Decay. Hey dude! If it's metallic purple or gunmetal color then it's OK for guys. I bet they still draw the line at shades of pink.

### Barbie Alternates

Back in December the *San Francisco Examiner* ran an article on the latest San Francisco craze, alternative Barbies. The dolls are designed and put together not by Mattel, but by a company called Motel. What does Motel have to fill our alternative Barbie needs? How about: **Trailer Trash Barbie**-She comes with a cigarette dangling from her lips, her platinum hair showing black roots, a baby swung over her hip and a quote bubble that says, "My Daddy Swears I'm the Best Kisser in the County!" Her trailer and other accessories are sold separately. **Big Dyke Barbie**-She sports a pierced nose and a quote bubble that says, "Want to shoot some pool?" **Carrie Barbie**-She wears a prom dress drenched in blood. **Hooker Barbie**-Accessorized with a negligee and condom. And of course, **Drag Queen Barbie**-A Ken doll with a Barbie gown and wig. Oh goodie girls, a doll for us! Get one soon before Mattel puts a stop to this kind of twisted creativity.

### Speaking of San Francisco

A concerned reader named Robyn forwarded a column from an SF newspaper. It seems that one of the city's firefighters is transitioning from female to male and the San Francisco Fire Department is handling it well. Assistant Chief James Cavellini issued a three-page memo to the troops, pointing out that "it is the duty and obligation of the Department to ensure

that all employees and members of the public are respectfully treated as members of the gender to which they identify." Kudos (what the hell does that mean, anyway?) to the Fire Department. On the other hand, the paper commented, "Highly civilized..."

### Speaking of Civilized

You just can't get more civilized than those wacky Brits. I mean, how could the country that brought us Monty Python be anything but civilized? Queen Elizabeth is in the habit of addressing the commoners every Christmas. For those who found the royal chin wag a bit too boring the innovative Channel Four offered an alternative. Comedian Rory Bremner, in his best Princess Diana getup, giving a Yule message at the same time as the Queen. How very droll, dahlings.

### Brit Appalls Hoosier Host

Gee, I hope that's right. I think Letterman is a Hoosier. Well anyway, it goes good with "host" and that's what counts in a snappy headline. The Brit in question was **Tracy Ullman** and the host seemed a little bit uncomfortable with Tracy's tale of wearing "fake genitalia" for her male cab driver character, Chic. It happened on the January sixth show when Tracy said she wore birdseed in a bag (now where did she get that idea?) to simulate testes, and a "sausage" of foam to provide an impressive bulge for Chic, the chick magnet. I've seldom seen Dave look as uncomfortable, except perhaps for the time when Howardette Stern appeared on the show and danced on his desk. He just kind of sat there while she talked about how she accidentally dipped her phony willy in the toilet when she went to relieve herself in the ladies room. (She said it was kind of weird to use the ladies room while looking like a guy. Believe me Tracy, I know what ya mean.) She said she had to remove the sausage part and throw it over the stall top to her assistant while other women were using the facilities. I thought it was hilarious, but Dave was nodding like one of those

puppies that people put on the ledge of their car's back window. The heads go up and down as they drive down the highway. I guess Dave really is repressed. The fake genitalia story didn't seem to bother Paul Schaffer. (He's Canadian, ya know. Has nothing to do with anything but I thought you should know.) Don't worry Dave, this gender blurring stuff isn't catching.

### Bad Taste, On The Other Hand...

**Dennis Rodman**, destroyer of cameramen, is also a fashion menace as far as Mr. Blackwell is concerned. The fashion designer (does anyone actually own anything designed by Blackwell?) chose Rodman to top his annual list of the worst dressed women. Blackwell described Rodman as a "unisex wreck." Well Mister Blackwell, Miss Dennis might be a fashion mess but she our fashion mess. Of course, since Rodman kicked that cameraman, he's probably going to have to get used to living on a tighter budget. He'll probably be getting his feather boas at the discount store for a few years. If he keeps acting out macho aggression like that we may have to disown him.

In any event, Rodman has been enough of an influence (without kicking) to be mentioned in other basketball player's sneaker ads. In one Michael Jordan ad we see Jordan talking to a classroom of kids. One of the kids asks, "Did you see the basketball player that dressed up in a wedding dress?" The legend continues.

### Speaking of Legends

**Joni Mitchell** is in the running for living legend. She appeared on *Letterman* (guess we know what I'm doing every night) and did a number with just her guitar. I got shivers down my spine. Damn she was good. Well, others think so too, including performance artist **John Kelly**, who has found that he can accurately reproduce Mitchell's vocal technique with his falsetto. He also kinda looks like her in his blonde wig and black beret.

(As an aside I mention here that Joni did some pictures for an album once in which she dressed as a black man. Shades of Chic.) Kelly is best known for performance pieces where he has portrayed people like Jean Cocteau and early 20th century painter Egon Schiele. Now he has put together an off-Broadway show called *Paved Paradise: The Songs of Joni Mitchell*. It's a full two hour concert where he performs all of Joni's hits backed by a bassist dressed as Vincent Van Gogh and a drumming drag Georgia O'Keeffe. How did Kelly get started as Joni? A 1984 performance at Wigstock, the grand drag event that has launched a thousand queens on the path to glory. Well, at least six. Look for a picture of Kelly as Joni in the January issue of *Spin*. Thanks to Jessica Brandon for giving me the article. (Guess we know how she spends *her* time.)

**One More Legend**

Legends don't get much bigger than **Marlene Dietrich** and I think anyone who puts together a tribute show to her had better be darned good. It seems that James Beaman (who has done tributes to **Lauren Bacall** in the past) is darned good enough. In a review in the January third issue of *Backstage*, the "Bistro Bits" column tells us that Beaman not only has Deitrich's look, gestures and voice down pat, but he has also captured the qualities that made her Deitrich. Hard enough for a female actor to do, an amazing accomplishment for a male actress. Beaman did the show at the New York cabaret theater, *Don't Tell Mama*, in January

and with any luck it will be running again this month. Call the club for dates and show times. I'll see ya there. I'll be dressed as Joni Mitchell.

**Final Musings**

Anyone catch the new *Romeo & Juliet* flick. It's done in modern dress with Olde English dialogue. One of the scenes is a costume party, and while Romeo and Juliet come in Elizabethan costume, the Mercutio character attends in drag. He does the Queen Maab Speech—dressed as a queen. The winner of the bold use of drag as a theatrical device award.

Speaking of queens, one of our own, Babs Casbar, is selling tickets to the **Night of a Thousand Gowns** (see Hot Buzz this issue). It's only \$125 a ticket for a full night of dining, dancing and coronating. Make your checks payable to "The Imperial Court" and mail to Casbar, 1115 Inman Avenue, #187, Edison, New Jersey 08820-1132. Babs (as in Dining With...) is planning to have two or three tables just for us and the North Jersey Tri-Ess girls.

I'll type now the words that I'll be repeating for the next few months: **May is the 10th Anniversary of this organization.** We're having a **big party**, where you can wear a hot dress, get a great meal, see the **Elvis & Cher Show** (No, they're not transgendered, but the show is hot and a lot of fun) and hear **Kate Bornstein** speak. Make plans now, mark your calendar for June 21st, at the Park Ridge Hotel in King of Prussia. Transgendered folks and professors and therapists from

around the world will be there since it's part of the **2nd International Congress on Sex & Gender Issues**. Come out and party with everyone. Tickets will be slightly less expensive than the Imperial Court bash at \$37 for the banquet and show. We'll have a proper form and all that in coming issues but if you want to get a jump on it, scrawl (legibly) your name on a piece of paper and send it to the office with a check for the number of people you're bringing. Large parties are encouraged.

Coming up on February 12th, the **Burlington County Gay & Lesbian Alliance** will be holding a potluck dinner for Valentines Day. I guess "potluck" refers to the food. It's from 7 to 10 PM in Moorestown, New Jersey and they welcome transgendered people to attend. Call 609-239-3100, leave a message and they'll call you back with all the details.

On a sad note, we must bid adieu to our Pen Pal Program Administrator, **Georgia Hilbert**. Georgia is leaving the PPP position to stop and smell the roses. Thanks for a great job with the PP Program, Georgia. You were wonderful with keeping it up to date and we really appreciate all your hard work. If anyone else out there (hopefully with computer/online capabilities) wants to take the job on please contact me at the National office. We are accepting resumes.

That's it for this month. See ya when March does it's lion/lamb thing. Ta ta my little cosmetic puffs.



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# I Like It!

Valentine's Day  
thoughts by  
Linda Kaye

Several times over the last few weeks, partners of crossdressers have emailed me about their problems and concerns with their sexual relationship with their transgendered partner. This seems to be one of the most difficult areas for women to come to terms with. I've written several articles about sex with the transgendered partner, but I think it is time to admit to the fact that I flat out like it!

One of the most eye-opening programs I've ever attended was one on woman's sexuality by Dr. Sandra Cole, well-known sexologist and Director of the Comprehensive Gender Services Program at the University of Michigan's Medical Center. Sandra gave a clinical explanation to woman's sexuality which was eye-opening and fascinating. To hear how a woman's body reacts, and to be taught ways to increase arousal and extend satisfaction was a major learning step in my life. Her program emphasized the inner beauty of the woman, all the while teaching us how to use not only our bodies, but also our minds to find sexual satisfaction in our lives.

Her program only verified what I have long believed in—that as women, we are equally responsible for our own sexual satisfaction. If we believe in ourselves as beautiful and attractive, this energy is generated from within us to our partners.

For a woman to deal with her own sexuality is often a tough experience. Unfortunately, so many of us have been led to believe that a man's sexual satisfaction is more important than a woman's; how many of us have "faked" the orgasm in order to make the sexual encounter more satisfying for the male partner? How confusing this becomes when our partner wants to be a woman! This is unfair to both ourselves and our partners.

For me, sex has always been important. I went through one sexually unfulfilling marriage to a second marriage. At first, the sex was great, but as

years passed, something went missing. This partner was also a crossdresser, and although I was totally supportive of his femme persona, as well as encouraging, I could never feel one iota of sexual attraction to that femme side. His fantasies were not mine, and although I would participate, it was done for him, and not for me. In fact, I was, at times, blatantly turned off by these fantasies and the sexual encounters with the femme side. Unfortunately, I didn't try to express my own fantasies, and the relationship, at times, was one-sided. Also, unfortunately, the relationship eventually ended.

However, when I met my partner, Vanessa, it was the male persona to whom I made love to at first. It was the most exciting, fulfilling sex I had ever had. It was so good, in fact, that I dreaded the time when I would be faced with making love to the femme persona, Vanessa. That time came, and I remember sitting in the livingroom, while she dressed in the bedroom, and having a feeling of impending doom.

What a total shock when this vision came bopping out, absolutely electric with sexuality. I was astonished at the extent it aroused me, and the lovemaking was far beyond anything I had ever experienced in my life. At the time, I could not pinpoint what it was, but as I look back now, I believe it was that by Vanessa stepping out in complete trust, I, in turn, put my trust in her and just let myself go. It was fabulous.

From that point on, Vanessa became a vitally important partner in this relationship. She is free to be who she is at anytime (other than when we have my partner's child here), and if she doesn't make an appearance, I miss her. The lovemaking is far more exciting when it is Vanessa, and if time permits, I am insatiable.

Weekends alone are the best, because we can make love constantly. The freedom of loving Vanessa and being loved by her, has opened up endless possibilities for continued sexual fulfillment. She encourages me to discover and live out my fantasies. Her trust in me opens my trust in her, and I've shared things with her that I have

never told another human being. Fantasies which were so wild, that I hid them in guilt, are explored and lived out. If they work, we live them out again and again.

Although I have never had a lesbian encounter, nor do I ever intend to seek one, I nonetheless have the opportunity, through Vanessa, to explore fantasies. I admit to liking her breasts, and her shaved body—I enjoy the smoothness of it. I encouraged her to have her ears pierced, and find the dangly earrings a real turn-on. When she puts on a black, lace teddy I bought her for her birthday, with garters and stockings, it is an incredible turn-on. If she underdresses (wearing women's lingerie under male clothes,) I think about it all day and imagine what the night might bring.

Sometimes, when she's acting seductive, she'll dance for me and I adore it. All it takes is Bonnie Raitt's *Let's Give Them Something To Talk About*, and I'm a basket case. That's Vanessa's theme song.

Recently, I corresponded with a wife who had been faced with once again trying to come to terms with her husband's femme side. He had purged for more than five years, and had finally been unable to hold back his transgendered feelings. I encouraged this woman to explore her partner's femme side with no pre-conceived ideas or prejudices. "Try it once," I said, and she did. She wrote back, "It was the most wonderful lovemaking experience of my life."

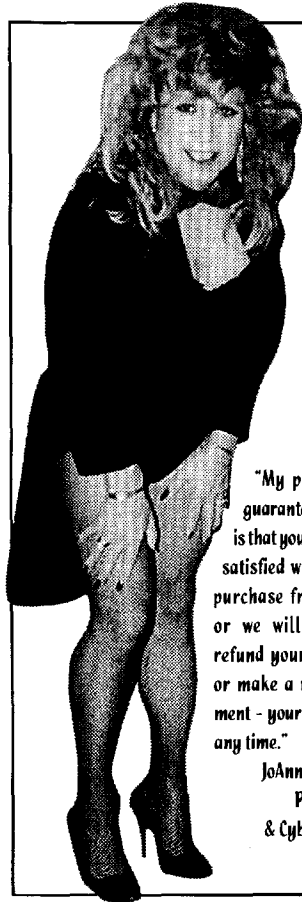
The sexual relationship with the femme side of my partner is exciting, fulfilling and the ultimate intimate experience in my life. In fact, the intimacy is profound, and it is based completely on trust in each other. The fear of rejection or mockery is gone for both of us. We can bare our souls, explore our minds and enjoy the physical satisfactions that such a relationship brings to us. If you are in a relationship with a crossdresser, don't curse the situation. Give it a chance by opening your mind as well as your heart. You may end up counting your blessings.





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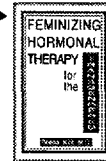
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Some of you may have seen the **Ann Landers** column that featured responses to a previously published letter from a fiancé of a crossdresser. The responses from across the country represented a fair sample of every good thing and bad thing ever said about crossdressing.

From Oregon came this typical reaction: "Why didn't you tell her to dump the creep and his padded bra? I walked in on a former boyfriend and was shocked to see him wearing my silk negligee. This is a guy who was very macho and into weight lifting and deer-hunting." Now hold on there a minute. If the guy was really into weight lifting, how was he able to fit into her negligee? Unless she was a big, fat...but no, that's unkind of me.

From California: "I'm a psychologist and a transvestite..." No wonder my HMO wouldn't pay for my office visits. Hey, I got enough problems without my therapist being a raging queen too.

Somewhere in Arizona: "I have enjoyed crossdressing for many years and am completely normal." Oh, sure. He's probably a weigh lifter **and** a deer-hunter.

A woman from Hamilton, Ontario checks in: "Coming home and finding a man in a dress never turned my crank." But did it float your boat? That's the real question here.

Finally a wife from just outside Philadelphia wrote in: "It's not the crossdressing that bothers me so much, but my transvestite husband spends all month reading support group newsletters, then writing a column about it. 'Vis a Vis', my ass."

### A Paradigm Terrorist Bombs

The *Powder and Pearls* newsletter of the MTGA group in Memphis, Tennessee condensed an Internet posting by an author working under the name "Starchild." The title of her epistle was "Paradigm Terrorist".

This is the third time I've reviewed an article using the word "paradigm" in the title and I was looking forward to some new insights by a transsexual working to change the way the world views gender. What I got instead was an insight to a world where everything revolves around the author's new life as a woman.

Starchild starts out strong by pointing out that changing one's gender is "one of the most arrogant acts a human being can commit." The reason being that such a drastic change affects not only the transsexual's own life, but the lives of everyone she comes in contact with. By attacking the "cherished foundations of our shared world view [regarding gender]," a transsexual is a "paradigm terrorist." The point here being that anyone who challenges ingrained notions of gender held by the general population strikes fear in others—who rely on the status quo to provide some comfort in their lives.

The author then goes on to classify six different types of reactions she has received as a result of her gender transformation. Of the six classes she outlines, five hold negative feelings towards transsexuals. The sixth class struggles to overcome feelings of betrayal to achieve some semblance of acceptance.

These are Starchild's personal observations so one can't really argue

with her but one can certainly argue against the self-absorbed way she analyzes others' reactions to her change. For example, the first classification includes people who are either strangers, or uninvolved acquaintances. Their reaction is one of "nonchalance," which may seem wonderful at first, until she analyzes that these people just don't care enough to have any reaction—positive or negative. Starchild sees this not as acceptance or even lack of acknowledgement, but of "denial" of the threat she poses to the established paradigm of gender.

Another group with whom she must interact at work or through family ties may seem to accept her new gender but really they are merely "splitting" their real feelings of fear and denial, while practicing tacit acceptance. Another class of people may profess their acceptance but practice denial by likening the transsexuality to a symptom of some other trauma that will explain it away. Then, of course, there are the hostile ones who reject the gender change completely.

Only in the last group Starchild classifies is some form of genuine acceptance achieved, but only after they fight through the fear and denial she sees everywhere around her.

There are grains of truth in each of the author's classifications. But what one is left with, after reading through the whole treatise, is that Starchild seems to see everyone else as a satellite revolving around her sex-change. Everyone is in some form of terror at what she has wrought on the world, even the ones who have come around to accepting her as her new self. I hope that a non-transsexual will not post a counter-essay on the Internet formulating a hypothesis that all transsexuals are paranoid megalomaniacs like the too-aptly named Starchild.

### Mixing and Matching

The *Crystal Chronicle* published by the Crystal Club in Columbus, Ohio carried an interesting article by a member named Sarah titled "Dressing from One's Soul."

Sarah relates her early interest in crossdressing and her fixation on what



we can call fetish attire. As she developed her feminine side, she began to see that there was another side to Sarah and her wardrobe choices began to evolve into more “appropriate” feminine attire.

This is a not uncommon phenomenon for serious crossdressers. Many of us go through a phase at the beginning where the tactile sensation or the visual appeal of the clothing dominates our fashion choices. As the novelty of crossdressing gives way to our deeper feelings, we usually move on to more everyday styles. The way in which Sarah came to this new way of thinking was very interesting and, again, something many of us can relate to.

Sarah’s male side had always wanted his wife to dress more in a fashion that he found provocative. Have any married crossdressers not traveled down this road? But one day, he saw his wife in one of her more provocative ensembles and realized that the picture was all wrong. His wife didn’t look quite right in clothing that wasn’t in her nature to wear. The clothing didn’t match the person he loved. And he soon realized that Sarah’s own “trampy” fashions no longer suited the new woman coming to life within himself.

There are some crossdressers who complain that others give our cause a black eye by dressing inappropriately in trashy outfits. The point we can all remember is that the clothes only look inappropriate if not matched to the wearer’s personality. Again, I think we can all point to someone we know who may wear provocatively sexy attire—yet seem to look perfectly natural doing so because it fits their personality. Conversely, we can think of a lot of crossdressers who would look out of character in demure outfits.

Sarah concludes her essay by saying, “We look our best when we dress in a manner consistent with our inner being and our outward behavior.” Clothing does not make the man—or the woman. It is merely an extension of who you really are underneath it all.

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### One Hit Wonders

Every so often, the cable channel

VH-1 runs a segment they call “One Hit Wonders,” featuring songs recorded by artists who never equal, or surpass, the one song that made them famous. In our society, where success is only appreciated when it is multiplied to excess, these “One Hit Wonders” are held up for light ridicule. But how many of us wouldn’t like to have even one publicly acclaimed success in any of our fields of endeavor?

I was thinking of this one night when they played one of my favorite “One Hit Wonders”, the song “C’mon Eileen” by the never-heard-from-again group Dexy’s Midnight Runners. In my mind, “C’mon Eileen” is a perfectly crafted song and something about which the performers can be proud, notwithstanding their inability to equal it with another hit of the same magnitude. No doubt, you can think of your own personal favorites by obscure artists who sank from sight under the weight of not being able to live up to their initial success.

Crossdressing—like music, literature, or any of the arts—is a form of personal expression. A lot of art and artifice goes into each of our personal expressions of femininity. I’m sure that within each of us there reposes one particularly shining memory of a high point in our crossdressing careers. It may be a single night, or a single moment captured in a photograph, when we felt all the pieces come together in a rewarding realization of our feminine self-image. That period—however brief—is our “One Hit Wonder.”

The great thing—or perhaps the most frustrating thing—about life is that we are always moving forward through time. While we all may have our own secret “One Hit Wonder” in our memories, we still keep working to recapture the magic, or improve on it, or perhaps try a different line of endeavor to express ourselves. Only by giving up do we truly resign ourselves to life enjoyed only through memory. So, C’mon Eileen... or Michelle, Diane, Roberta, et.al.: you may have a hit single in you yet.

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### Muscle Beach Beauties

February is traditionally the month

of the “swimsuit” issues of sports magazines, even our own *Renaissance News & Views*. This year, however, I discovered a more interesting collection of swimsuit features in the muscle magazine genre. *Flex*, *Ironman*, and *Muscle and Fitness* magazines are all running their spreads of hardbodied women wearing—or not wearing, in some cases—teeny bikinis.

A few months ago I wrote about the sheer pictorial splendor of taut-bodied women photographed in lingerie ensembles in *Flex* magazine. The swimsuit version of this visual smorgasbord is every bit as inspirational. Sure, *Sports Illustrated’s* swimsuit models will get all the press clippings, but the beach babes in the muscle mags’ make those supermodels look like a bunch of ninety-pound weaklings.

No, these are not the ephemeral beauties we’ve been conditioned to find lovely. The “fitness models” of the muscle mags are a class unto themselves. And I dare say that if stood side by side, the eye would travel faster towards the sharply defined muscle-toned physiques of the female bodybuilders.

The eye does more than travel, it meanders over each rolling muscle of our wondergirls. Blonde goddess Nikki Fuller does a pushup arched across two surf-dampened boulders; the awesomely developed Natalia Murnikoviene strikes a dominant posture over the kneeling Melissa Coates; Ursula Alberto and fitness pinup Amy Fadhli get up close and personal near a waterfall; and the magnificent Erica Kern brandishes a riding crop in a black Spandex cutaway catsuit that doesn’t have a thing to do with the beach, except that she could kick sand in your face and you’d learn to love it. If you’re thinking that this is a purely physical display, then think again, friends, because model Ahmo Hight poses the philosophical question: does a very long string of beads constitute a swimsuit? Do we really care?

If there is any life lesson to be learned from our own search for femininity, it is that it can be packaged in many different shapes and sizes. The

*continued on page 15*



# Gender Reflections

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

## Betrayal

Can an act of betrayal be forgiven or forgotten? Can the betrayed heal? Can the betrayer emerge from guilt and shame? It depends...

It depends on the maturity of the individuals, on the strength of their union, on the presence of a supportive network and on the depth of their love.

Of course, I'm referring to the commonest act of betrayal between a crossdresser and his spouse—one in which the crossdresser does not reveal his penchant to his partner prior to, and even during their marriage. Sometimes he is in denial about his practice, believing that it is in his past. Other times he chooses not to reveal it knowing it will end the relationship and hoping to keep it a secret. Once discovered he is almost always treated as a sneaky, devious liar and his wife almost always feels betrayed.

At this juncture their relationship becomes stressed almost to the breaking point. Its survival depends on several factors. When individuals are reasonably mature, they are more able to tolerate and absorb shocks to their system, in this case, their marriage. Mature people know that at different times they will be faced with threats to their security—be they financial, health, career, etc. They just don't know the form these threats will take. They are under no illusion that people live "happily ever after" but rather will be called on to overcome difficulties as part of a relationship.

Of course, the strength of the relationship is a major factor in its survival. Think of a marriage as a cable com-

prised of many interwoven strands, stronger for its numerous threads. Stresses may weaken or break individual threads and resolution of issues repairs and strengthens them. If discovery occurs at a time when the relationship is strong there are emotional resources available for the couple's use to address the issues of crossdressing and betrayal. But if this relationship is already weakened by adverse conditions in the marriage—abuse, financial need, illness, etc.—the discovery may be the final blow.

The presence of a supportive family can be the difference between survival of the marriage and divorce. Often the nature of the betrayal is such a cause of shame that these supports cannot be engaged. Little does the couple realize that keeping the secret of their distress adds yet another stress to their strained relationship. While they may not choose to confide the nature of their difficulty, they may gain some comfort from sharing with parents or siblings that times are difficult and patience and encouragement would be welcome—as well as some help with the children.

Lastly, a plug for love. While love is not enough to salvage a relationship between immature individuals saddled by many marital stresses and without a supportive network, it may be the turning point for those people who fall short of having all the above advantages. Love allows for forgiveness and the acceptance of responsibility without diminishing either partner and lets the healing

# Renaissance Eases Chapter Requirements

Within a month or so Renaissance may have its first Chapter on the West Coast. This was made possible by changes in the By Laws approved at the January board meeting.

Prior to this change, Renaissance required an out-of-state organization seeking chapter status to incorporate in their home state. This is no longer necessary. Any organization, incorporated or not, may now apply for chapter status providing they supply information specific about their officers and financial data.

Chapter status offers groups the umbrella of Renaissance's federal tax-exemption, i.e., 501[c][3]. This opens many doors for fund raising and confers a degree of professionalism and legitimacy on the group.

Contact the Renaissance office about applying for Chapter Status.



## Resources



### Background Papers

- Background Papers are \$1.25 each:
1. Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing
  2. Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing
  3. PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others
  4. The Matter of Children
  5. Annotated Bibliography
  6. Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View
  7. Understanding Transsexualism

All of the Background Papers and Community Outreach Bulletins are available for free at the Renaissance web site <[www.ren.org](http://www.ren.org)>.



# In Passing

by Jessica Xavier

"I am a transsexual man, and in my opinion that's a different gender from what people commonly think of as 'man'." - David Harrison, SF Weekly, October 25, 1995

If you're transgendered, you live in a world I like to call the disuniverse, because compared to the outside world, it's a disunified, inverse universe. Our disunity comes from the contention that arises from the over-importance we transgendered people place on our myriad differences. Over time, these differences have become walls that keep the different out of our respective spaces. Some of these finding-fault lines occur between crossdressers and transsexuals; gay, bisexual and straight people; out and closeted folks; white and nonwhite; those economically privileged and those who are not; and M2Fs and F2Ms. These differences wreck havoc on our fledgling attempts to build a real community and to organize a political movement for it. Thus far, we have chosen to view those friendships, cliques, conventions and organizations which dominate the social and political landscape as the transgendered "community". However, in reality we manage to break most of the most widely accepted rules for what constitutes a true community. Still, for lack of a more accurate term, we call it our community. As if.

The inverse nature of our disuniverse comes from some things that are backward with us. Here the M2Fs, the women, rule the roost. We have used our born-male privilege and the perks that come with it, like access to education, training and "old boy networks", to gain positions of economic power. We run almost all of the support groups, control six out of seven of the largest national organizations (FTM International is the lone exception) and thus decide how the bulk of the money is spent and how resources are allocated. Most of us M2Fs subconsciously cling to our former male privilege and act accordingly, out of some superior sense of entitlement. That is what

drives feminist women crazy when unthinking transsexual women, unaware of this antagonism, enter their space.

And it also disturbs many, if not most, of the transgendered men, the F2Ms. The transmen have been underground for many years for various reasons, and only recently are they coming out in any significant numbers. Almost all of them come from the lesbian community, so unlike the mostly heterosexual M2Fs they bring an initial queer identity with them when they come out as transgendered. Moreover, most of them are feminist and thus have great difficulty dealing with the entrenched male privilege they find, especially that of M2F leaders at all levels of the transgendered community. Although F2Ms are usually welcomed by M2F leaders at the meetings and conventions of the national organizations, there has been a perception by many F2Ms that there is an overall unwillingness on the part of M2F leaders to share power equally with them. Ben Singer of Rutgers University has gone so far to call this M2F power-over situation a hegemony.

In keeping with the inverse nature of the transgendered community, its the transmen who have custody of their children, and thus have to deal with the myriad concerns of child care and day care in order to work, on top of being transgendered. Almost all F2Ms come from economic positions of less than, since they have lived most of their lives without born-male privilege. Since it is still harder for women to be accepted in many traditional male occupations, most F2Ms have not had access to training in these fields and have not acquired the skills to do high-paying, traditionally male jobs. Without a male socialization experience from birth, all of them lack entry points into established old boy networks. Indeed, the reddest herring in the F2M community is that transmen are suddenly blessed with instant economic privilege the moment they transition, when in truth, it takes a lifetime to gain it. And a poorer economic status has serious consequences for the transmen who want surgery, because it is much more expensive than M2F surgery, with much less satisfying results.

Typical genital surgery for an M2F transsexual is \$13,000. Some may want tracheal shaves, breast augmentation, hair transplantation, craniomaxial (facial) or other cosmetic surgeries, but those are usually optional. But a transman starts with a hysterectomy and bilateral oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries) that takes him six weeks to recover from and can cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on whether he can get insurance coverage. And there is usually no insurance coverage for anything after that. The top surgery (double mastectomy with chest wall reconstruction) can cost \$5-\$50k depending on the surgeon. And the bottom surgeries (metaiodioplasty, scrotoplasty, phalloplasty, urethroplasty) can cost up to \$150,000 and must be done in stages with multiple procedures, delicate after care, long healing times, and often poor results. Some guys have experienced physical, financial and emotional nightmares over their bottom surgeries, simply because only a few surgeons have cared to do F2M surgery.

If what you're reading surprises you, its probably because you personally don't know any transmen, because most of them don't come to our M2F support group meetings. Why? Well, its not that we're unfriendly (sometimes, we're too friendly). Some transmen do go to MAGIC meetings for their family issues, and even TGEA has seen a few stone butches or F2M crossdressers. A few of us have some good friends in the F2M community, and some of the guys like to come to our meetings as a social event. Hopefully, some of you remember your former Outreach Director before me, Mr. Kitt Kling.

But the real reason we see so few of them at our meetings is that their needs, issues and concerns are so very different from our own. Unfortunately, here in the disuniverse, like in the outside universe, men are very different from women. In the outside universe, women are from Venus and men are from Mars. In the disuniverse, we're not necessary planets apart, but perhaps we do live in opposite polar regions of the same world.

*to be continued next month*



# Hot Buzz

## JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



*"He who does not bellow the truth when he knows the truth makes himself the accomplice of liars and forgers." — Charles Peguy*

It is now two and a half months since the **GenderPAC** "mobilization meeting" was held in King of Prussia and already the fledgling organization is falling apart. The only organization to fulfill the requirements for membership verification was Renaissance and the only other organization to apply for formal membership was **AmericanBoyz**, an FtM group. As of the fourth week of January, GPAC did not yet formally exist and may never get to that state. As for me personally, I have dissociated myself from GPAC completely. I believe if you say you agree to a certain set of rules, then you damn well ought to abide by them. Such was not the case over the Christmas holidays with GPAC. A subset of the GPAC reps decided they could conduct GPAC business better than the full board and convinced the president to create an **Executive Committee**. As author of the GPAC Articles of Association, I pointed out: (a) this committee was formed improperly according to the Articles, and (b), in my opinion, the committee's only purpose was to keep information away from the other board members. I was told by one member of the new committee that the "board just wasn't working" and this committee was the expedient

thing to do to get GPAC moving. Excuse me? Here is an organization that is supposed to be working for gender rights and one half of the board proceeds to trash the rights of the other half. Can you say hypocritical? Call me silly, call me naive, call me a dreamer, but the end never justifies the means. I could not convince the new committee to disband, and it was obvious that I was ineffective in my role as policy advisor to the GPAC board, so I resigned. I am not willing to compromise my principles for political gain. So, while the GPAC kids futz around, the community is still without a coherent political voice, as seen below...



I owe the good folks working for **It's Time Oregon!** an apology. Last month I repeated a claim that ITO! was working to eliminate t-people's rights under Oregon's disability laws. Well according to **Jessica Xavier**, one of the national directors for **It's Time America!**, nothing could be farther from the truth. Ms. Xavier believes the source of the news item was duped and that we were both ill-used. "No one in ITO!," she says, "is working to abolish any trans-rights in Oregon, nor are they working to abolish **Gender Identity Dysphoria (GID)** as reported." The GID issue will be the great divider for the transgender community in the coming year. I think it's a grave mistake to remove GID from the **Diagnostics And Statistical Manual-Fourth Edition**. It will do far more harm than good. But there are transactivists, including the Executive Director of GenderPAC, determined to get it expunged no matter the cost to our people.



Other transgender activists have been cozying up to gay/lesbian organizations in the hope that some of their political cachet will rub off on them. For the most part, it has worked and we're certainly being taken more seriously than many expected. However, all is not hunky-dory with the g/l/b community and trans-people. **Michelangelo Signorile**, a col-

umnist for **OUT** magazine recently wrote: "[W]ithout consulting the rest of us mere mortals, the [National Gay & Lesbian Task Force,] suddenly rename[d] us 'the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered movement' or, as one of NGLTF's leaders recently said in a press release, 'the g/l/b/t community.' Sounds like a sandwich... NGLTF's often dated and unrealistic political dogma will be cast off by the gay masses in due time." Meanwhile, **Phyllis Frye** has been working in the opposite direction trying to get g/l/b organizations to add the "t." Personally, I think hanging onto the g/l/b coattails like this is a mistake. Yes, we have a lot to learn from them, but we have to stand on our own. It does us no good to get drowned in a sea of voices where we have to fight just to be heard.



It looks like it's going to be an uphill battle all the way for transgender rights. Transactivists visited members of **Congress** who supported the gay-positive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (**ENDA**) bill last year. They were told by each member visited that if transgendered people were added to the ENDA language the bill would never pass because some of the moderate supporters would defect. In fact, one staffer warned that we could be added to the bill in an unfriendly way like we were in the **Americans With Disabilities Act**. What we need to do is keep visiting Congress and keep educating the members on transgender issues.



So how about mixing a little politics with a lot of fun? The 11th Annual Charity/Coronation Ball produced by the **Imperial Court of New York**, the fantastic **Night of a Thousand Gowns** is set for Saturday, March 22, 1997 at the Grand Ballroom of the New York Hilton & Towers at 1335 Avenue of the Americas, New York City. Dress is formal/Black Tie. Tickets range in price from \$75 each to \$5000 for a Diamond Table of 10, all deductible of course. The \$75 tickets get

# HOT•BUZZ

you in at 10:00 pm for dancing to a live orchestra, the full awards ceremony and Coronation, plus the fabulous dessert buffet at 12:30 am (worth the \$75 alone). Gold Tickets at \$125 include a full four course dinner at 8:00 pm. For more information call the Imperial Court at 212-724-0973 or 212 807-8767. Credit card orders can call CIRCUIT TIX at 800-429-3433. I'll see you there!

Gender bending and blending continues to fascinate the public and no less than the **Guggenheim** museum in New York City is host to the latest infatuation. **Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography** is an exhibition organized by **Jennifer Blessing**, a curator at the museum. Ms. Blessing has collected 80 photographs from 24 artists, from **Man Ray** to **Marcel Duchamp** to **Andy Warhol**, each asking some question about the gender of the subject. The title of the show is a play on Duchamp's feminine alter-ego Rose Sélavy (pronounced, Eros c'est la vie, or Eros is life), and **Gertrude Stein's** famous paraphrase of Shakespeare. The show is gaining high praise and one reviewer said, "...it is especially powerful... it teaches nearly as much about life as it does about art." The show runs through April 27, 1997. The Guggenheim is at 1071 Fifth Ave at 89th, New York City.

Time for the serious news. The hot buzz for Spring is **Evita** Fashion. Turns out she was a clothes horse and would have made a respectable transvestite. But everyone will be trying to emulate the look **Madonna** brings to the silver screen as Eva Perone. The easiest look to copy is Evita Lips. The key is a clean face with porcelain skin, simple eye makeup and classic red lips. Evita lip color is a neutral to warm red so don't go too blue or too brown. To copy Evita's lips, carefully trace the outline of your lips with a red lip liner and then fill in with **Dior** Rouge Mysore, or **Revlon** Empire of Fire. Other good options are **M.A.C.** Russian Red, or **L'Oréal** no 106. **Estée** Lauder has released an Evita makeup kit.

I'm sitting her typing this with a nasty razor burn on my thigh (it's Renaissance night tonite). **Razor burn** happens most of the time because your skin is too dry, even if you shave in the shower as I do. If this happens to you frequently try applying a light oil like **Aveda's** Calming Nutrients, and put a few drops on damp skin before shaving. The oil helps protect the skin from razor burn, and the blade sticks to the skin better, thus preventing nicks and cuts. It will also help cut down on ingrown hairs.

I mentioned a couple of times that I finally quit smoking after 35 years, but I'd added almost 20 pounds to my frame. (Hey, I'm just short for my weight.) I've managed to dump half those pounds in four weeks by getting my body in the **Zone**. A Zone-favorable diet is a revolutionary concept that seeks to keep hormone and insulin levels in your body in balance. By considering food as a drug, **Barry Sears, Ph.D.**, has developed a set of guidelines for the proper amounts of protein, fat and carbohydrate each of us needs to have a healthy body. All I can say is—it works. I'm not starving, and I get to eat a lot of food that I really like. The proof is on the scale, however. You can find out more about Dr. Sears Zone diet in *Enter The Zone*, ISBN 0-06-039150-2, Harper Collins, 1995.

Okay, forget about the runways. The fashions seen there have about as much relevance to our everyday life as finding ice on the **Moon**. Sheer madness seems to have invaded the fashion consciousness and models have been spied in flimsy, gauzy nothings displaying their underwear. This is fashion? Goddess give me strength! Your best bet to get fashionable ideas is to roam the upscale department stores in your local mall and look for labels like **Jones of New York** (I am in love with all their stuff), **Dana Buchman** (when I win the lottery, I will only wear her clothes), and **St. John by Marie Gray** (gorgeous knits).

Here is what the more sane voices of fashion are saying is coming for Spring... dresses are back, big time, especially for evening, but for daytime as well. The evening styles combine one of more of

the following elements: **strapless, asymmetrical, fishtail hemlines, and ruffles**, all in soft, fluid fabrics. The drop-dead gorgeous essential buy for the season is a strapless dress in a stretch fabric with an asymmetrical hem. Oh, yes, if it has a slash taken out of the torso, that's even better.

**Skirts** and **pants**, however, have not been abandoned. Pants should be slim and tight (meaning you better have the bod for it), while skirts are once again, pencil thin with a side slit (been a while since we've seen that). What's missing from this season is the structured, tailored **office jacket**. So what do you wear? A knit cardigan or twin sweater set.

The trend on the horizon is translating dancewear into high fashion. Designers like **Isaac Mizrahi** and **Michael Kors** have taken ballet tops and leotards and reformed them into stretchy, swirly dresses and unitards. "Dance clothes are about mobility and comfort", said Kors, "two things that translate well into real life." **Danskin** watch out. Meanwhile, **Lycra**, that miracle of stretch, has been blended with just about every fabric imaginable to create stretch cotton, satin, lace and more.

Playing on the fame of Hollywood superstar Marilyn Monroe, Warner's has introduced a **Marilyn Monroe** line of lingerie. First ads show a bra, brief and robe in a jaguar print. Very sexy!

Fifty contestants will take a shot at fame and glory in the **Miss Transgender Forum** contest being held online this month. Over **\$1000** in prizes will be awarded to a Grand Prize winner and two runner ups, including a trip to Los Angeles. Come on and check it out at <www.tgforum.com>. Only subscribers can vote, but you will get to see the contestants. The lucky winner will be announced in early March.

So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? I agree with Ghandi, the truth can never hurt a just cause. Comments? Write care of this publication or email to <CyberQueen@cdspub.com>. © 1997 by Creative Design Services.

Ms. Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.

# Making Sense Of It All

## A Letter to My Spouse

My Dearest,

When I look at you, and when I think about you, I find myself wishing that my need for gender change would go away. What I am going through is something which I never asked for and which you never expected. But still it does exist. It is a reality which I must face and which, at least in the context of our relationship, you must face, too.

As you know, I have tried to remain the man you married. I have worn to work the business suits you like to see me in, have gone to family gatherings for years as your proud partner, have maintained the relationship with my three adult children from my first marriage who truly love you, have been socially active with you as a married couple, and have enjoyed travel vacations with you. But now we face difficulties in all these areas of activity, because, at least on the surface, I am no longer the man you married. I look more like your sister, cousin, or girl friend, and that obviously redefines our relationship and thus the way we present ourselves as a couple to the rest of the world.

I realize how enormously difficult the task of such redefinition is for you. To make matters worse, the maintenance of our economic situation is especially difficult, for I have had to approach the world of work from a woman's perspective. I only hope my future earnings reflect more than the number of words per minute that I can type. Moreover, work-related gatherings, which often involve one's spouse, are not always possible for us.

It is equally difficult for us to attend family gatherings together. Of my three children, only my daughter continues the relationship with us, while my two sons cannot handle this whole thing, though they have no problem with you alone. My divorce from their mother was difficult enough for them. My gen-

der change certainly does not make things any easier. Socially, you and I do very little together, except for movies and to eat occasionally at our favorite little restaurant where they know the whole truth about us and are friendlier than ever. I wish we could go together to our favorite Chinese restaurant, where we have been going for years, but I understand your discomfort.

When it comes to travel vacations as a couple, we have been avoiding family and friends. You always go to your relatives by yourself, even though they know of my change. Since my parents and most of my aunts and uncles are all dead, I have very few relatives to inform or to visit. So far, one of my cousins seems to be very accepting of me.

In the light of all this, you have had to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of our relationship in order to decide if redefining it is something you want to undertake. I do know we love each other deeply. We have been soul mates from the moment we met, and when we hug in bed at night, it is as if the whole world could collapse around us, so long as we can be together. But during the day the social reality of our situation stares us in the face, posing all kinds of problems. I guess the fact that we are seeing a counselor together is a sign of hope.

As I said at the beginning of this letter, I wish, at least for your sake, as well as for my own, and for the sake of our relationship, that I could erase my gender issue. I wish I could simply appear as the man and husband you so fervently desire, the man you married fourteen years ago. In the wedding picture which we keep in the living room, you look so radiant, and I look so proud. I hate to see either of us lose that radiance and pride. But even though my beard is now gone and my hair is longer and more feminine, beneath it all is the same person, the same love, the same pride. In fact, you and my daughter have both remarked that I

am even more relaxed and more giving than before I faced the truth about myself.

That truth, the truth about my gender confusion, is something of which I myself was not fully aware at the time of our marriage. I did not know what was wrong with me, only that I increasingly felt uncomfortable as the person I was, and that I sometimes envied women for being women. All of that was terribly disturbing to me. I thought that those disturbing feelings would disappear with a good marriage. The marriage was good, but the disturbing feelings persisted. I kept them hidden, but I was dying on the inside. I gave the appearance of life, but I lacked the emotional substance to keep me going, even though I never felt any less love for you. Moreover, psychiatrists were never able to help me.

What was I to do? My choice, as I saw it then and as I continue to see it now, was either to end it all out of desperation, or to try to continue living as a man while at the same time trying to cover up the inner truth, or to give birth to the feelings I had been suppressing all my life but which would in turn seem like the death of the man and husband with whom you were living. For my own sanity, for my very life, and with proper counseling at last, I had to opt for my rebirth as a human being, even with all the marital, familial, social, and vocational risks which that rebirth would entail. Otherwise, you would have had an increasingly angry husband who would simply have been difficult, if not impossible, to live with. I would eventually begin to resent you, for I have to love myself, at least as much as I love you. And so I have made a choice which has liberated me from the bondage of my own suppression and which has freed me to be a whole person and freer than ever to love you

*continued on page 16*





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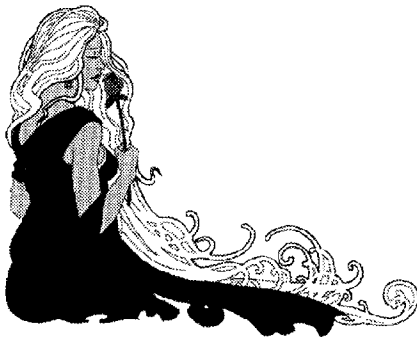
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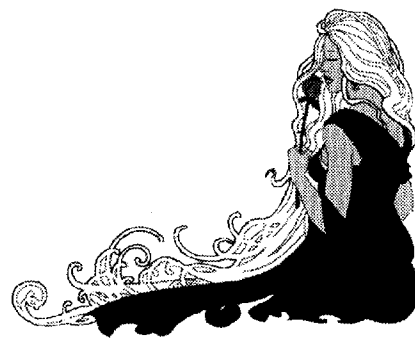
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## Vis A Vis...

beautiful women of the muscle and fitness world prove that feminine sex appeal can go far beyond our usual notions of what is lovely to look at. And if people would just open their minds to this concept, who knows, maybe our own crossdressed swimsuit cuties will get the same attention someday.

### And The Winner Is....

Each year at this time, the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of Renaissance polls the group to select the past year's "most inspiring feminine image" from the categories of Film, Television, and Newsmakers. Past recipients of these "Renni" awards have included Hillary Clinton, Princess Diana, Sharon Stone, Sandra Bullock, Jane Seymour, and Gillian Anderson.

Since not everyone has a chance to attend our meetings, I thought you might like to participate at home. This year's nominees for the coveted Renni will be: For Film, Pamela Anderson

(*BarbWire*), Vanessa Williams (*Eraser*), Kristin Scott Thomas (*English Patient*), Demi Moore (*Striptease*), and Helen Hunt (*Twister*); For Television, Brooke Shields (*Suddenly Susan*), Rosie O'Donnell (*Rosie*), Julia Louis Dreyfus (*Seinfeld*), Ellen DeGeneres (*Ellen*), and RuPaul (*RuPaul on VH-1*); For Newsmakers, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, Kathie Lee Gifford, Kerri Strug, Madonna (for the baby, not Evita-yet), and Madeleine Albright (Sec'y of State designate).

If you'd like to cast a ballot, mail it c/o our office address, and watch next month's *News & Views* for the results. Come to think of it, you can watch for this column again (ho-hum) in next month's *News & Views*, too.

### Please Note:

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Mi casa es su casa. Need a place to change before the Renaissance GPC meeting? The perfect location awaits you just off exit 33 Rt. 76. Call CDTips 215-878-3383.

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# Dear Doctor

*Dr. William R. Stayton answers your questions in a regular column.*

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

Dear Dr. Bill:

Recently I had a very discomfiting experience which caused me to abandon crossdressing briefly. The experience engendered digestive difficulties which made cinching difficult. I decided that if I were to return to dressing up, I would need a trimmer figure and began dieting. Then a voice said, Whoa, this sounds a lot like the rationale of anorexia nervosa. I began to smile, thinking that a genetic male could never suffer from this disease. I decided to cinch when I can, but to invest in some float dresses in the event that such a problem recurs. But then, after chuckling a bit, I wonder, have any transgendered males suffered from anorexia, and is such a thing even considered seriously possible?

Sincerely yours,  
Jennie

Dear Jennie,

Yes, males can suffer from anorexia nervosa. It is a serious disease. The difficulty is that the person loses any type of objectivity regarding their own weight and looks. I would be very careful about entering into such a venture unless you really are overweight, then I would consult a professional weight loss person and get a plan that fits your size and situation. You really need to question your stereotypes of women, thinness, waist size, and attractiveness, otherwise you are going to be in for a lot of problems down the line. I think your idea of investing in some float dresses sounds good and cinch only when you are comfortable.

Dear Dr. Bill:

My spouse does not want to see me

enfemme. She says she accepts the fact that I need to dress. She even likes attend the area Renaissance meetings with me, but she won't let dress for them. I enjoy her being with me but the sight of all the other ladies in their finery is almost too much to bear. can I manage this touchy situation?

Frustrated

Dear Frustrated,

First, it is important to develop good communication with your spouse. Try to get her to express all her fears, concerns and feelings regarding men who crossdress, including you. Do this without getting defensive, so that you can truly understand her side. Even mirror back to her what she is saying so that she knows that you understand her point of view. Second, ask her how crossdressing with her, just at home, could be done in a way that made it fun and rewarding. For example, could it be like playing "dress up" when you were children. Part of the difficulty with crossdressers approaching their spouses about crossdressing is that it often feels heavy, scary, and much too serious. It needs to be lighter, enjoyable, with the rewards of closeness and fun. Third, once she is comfortable with you at home and it is not filled with so much seriousness, then discuss going out with you crossdressed to Renaissance where she will meet some very wonderful people. If this does not work, then I would suggest seeing one of the gender therapists who might be able to help the two of you to incorporate crossdressing into your relationship. Good luck!



## Making...

and to be fully present to you.

It is this liberation, this freedom which I am now experiencing, which has in turn become so difficult for you, forcing you to see if you can somehow find a way to live with the new parameters in our relationship. I must admit that it is also very difficult, if not impossible, for me to compromise any longer my true self. The initial basis for our marriage was to decide separately to be together or not. Two separate decisions, even though discussed together, make for a relations]hip that is as solid and as soul-deep as ours has been. Whatever you choose to do, therefore, I respect and accept, though just the thought of separation from you in any way is extremely painful for me. But as I said earlier, that pain is one of the risks I must take, for it is still less than the pain of my own self-suppression.

If we can genuinely stay together, we will continue to have the warmth of our love with which to face the pain of whatever difficulties we face as a couple. However, if the struggle is more than you can handle, or if my gender change is simply not in keeping with your wants and needs, then we each face the pain of separation but at the same time embrace the integrity of self which can only come with courageous honesty.



Do you like writing to new friends? Would you like to help out Renaissance? You can by volunteering to manage the Pen Pal Program. This is a vital project for many people who cannot get out to attend meetings and who otherwise have no contact with the transgender community.

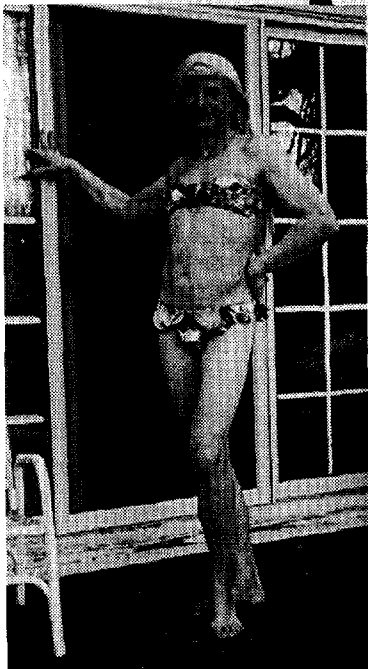
Contact the office for information on how you can become involved.



◀ Ms. Gardner at the Raven pool



Babs Casbar at Rainbow Mountain Resort ▶



◀ Billie Jean on her patio



Carla by her pool ▶

# The Swimsuit Page





## Traveling & Dining With Babs

# Provincetown-A Safe Haven for TGs

by Carol and Babs

MacMillen Wharf, the home of the towns' fishing industry, where you'll see not only fishing boats, visiting yachts and whale watching boats, but also fisherman mending nets and unloading their catch.

This fall Babs finally went out on a whale watch boat, picking a mild clear day, with very little wind so she didn't have to hold on to her wig! She did wear a windbreaker with a hood, just in case! Our guide on the boat, a scientist from the local Center for Coastal Studies gave a very informative and enthusiastic lesson about the cetaceans; what species were endangered and why they come with regularity to this particular area only a few miles north of P-town. We saw a few small Minke whales and several large and sleek Fin whales, whose spouts could be seen for miles, but the "stars" of the day were the many Humpback whales that surrounded our boat. Most of these leviathans she identified by name, recognizing the unique markings on their flukes. To see these graceful giant creatures up close, feeding, playing, sounding and breaching was truly a singular experience and highly recommended. (But remember to pick a good weather day, and as the locals say, Spring and Fall are optimal times for sightings.)

There are many excellent restaurants here, and we list below our favorites, those which we have found consistently good from year to year for the quality of the food and service:

Napi's- A most unusual restaurant featuring a fine selection of seafood, meat and vegetarian items with an international flavor, but also including local dishes. The quality of preparation has been very consistent, a tribute to its owners. Its unique ambience and charm is strongly influenced by the tastefully eclectic art that adorns its walls. You must see its "wall of bricks". Free Parking available. 7 Freeman St. (508)-487-1145. Major Credit cards, plus Transmedia a/o 1/97.

Abandoned after five weeks by our Pilgrim forefathers for the safety of the mainland at Plymouth in 1621, Provincetown, at the extreme tip of Cape Cod has become a safe haven for the transgendered vacationer. Known to many simply as "P-town," this eclectic community is full of American history and character. This unique character has been shaped by the fishing industry, which still dominates its economy and harbor, its fisherman (mostly of Portuguese ancestry), the old New England Yankees, and its large "out and open" lesbian and gay community. It is a curious blend or amalgamation of different cultures that are both very separate, yet appear comfortable together. It is popular as a resort for traditional families as well as "alternative lifestyles".

Because it is a special place to so many different lifestyles, the town offers a wide variety of almost all activities, and one doesn't need a car to sample the museums, historic sites, art galleries and the countless shops featuring every kind of merchandise, and price ranges for every pocket book. One of the joys of a visit to P-town is an unhurried walk through its narrow streets. You can walk from one end of town to the other in less than an hour (try that in sneakers, not 5 inch pumps). The commercial area at town center is filled with shops, galleries, outdoor cafes, guest houses and restaurants. Take a few minutes to sit on the benches in front of Town Hall and enjoy the favorite P-town pastime, people watching. No walk through town is complete without a stroll down

Front Street- Located in the cellar of a Victorian mansion, it features a high quality Continental menu, with service to match. We've been impressed by a wide range of menu samplings, beef, seafood and fowl. The atmosphere is intimate bistro style, sometimes noisy, but fun and friendly. 230 Commercial Street, 487-9715. major credit cards.

Stormy Harbor- Originally recommended as a good place where the "local straights" ate, we welcomed its quality, yet modest fare with a wide enough menu to satisfy a wide variety of tastes. In 1996, its new owners, from the mainland, have gone out of the way to seek the GLBT business and have added a little entertainment, as well. We enjoyed the lovely, but very tall (you guessed it) female impersonator who gave out makeup tips as part of "her" performance. It's a friendly place for breakfast, lunch and dinner. 277 Commercial St. Major credit cards (508)-487-1680.

The Cactus Garden- A refurbished Victorian home offering innovative Mexican-Southwestern cuisine with an

*continued on next page*

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# Dining...

ocean view and several outdoor tables. The interior decor is Southwest to match. We only ate here once, for Sunday brunch, but found not only a charming place, offering a pleasant ambience and innovative food, but owners who, although busy, took that extra care to make our meal enjoyable. They offer a full menu 'till 11 PM and entertainment. 186 Commercial St. Major credit cards (508)-487-6661 Most of the restaurants have Portuguese inspired dishes. Remember that "Linguica" is a Portuguese sausage, not an Italian pasta!

Need a wig restyled? A makeover? There are 3 Salons that are overtly gender friendly: Paul Richards Hair Salon at 182 Commercial Street. Their personnel seemed friendly and responsive to our desires.

The West End Salon at 155 Commercial Street has a full spa facility downstairs, and a flair for doing "Annette or Gidget", not really our style!

The newest, opened in 1996, is "Before and After" Salon and Drag Store. It also features clothing and shoes to size 15 and is located at 247 Commercial Street in the Crown and Anchor complex. "Jim Bridges, where are you when we really need you?"

For a wide range of accommodations and general info, contact the Provincetown Business Guild, the gay business association at POB 421-94, 115 Bradford St. Provincetown, Mass. 02657, phone 800-637-8696. We also found the Chamber of Commerce helpful at 307 Commercial Street at MacMillan Wharf, POB 1017, Provincetown MA 02657, 508-487-3424. For information on Fantasia Fair, where one can experience a unique October holiday vacation in the company of hundreds of kindred spirits, with diversified formal programs directly related

to our "gender" issues, contact The Outreach Institute, 126 Western Ave.- Suite 246, Augusta, ME 04330.

For us in the transgender community, Provincetown is special to our lifestyle, you have the complete freedom to be yourself (assuming you are a responsible and law abiding person), not only during the outrageous Carnival Week in August or Fantasia Fair in October, but all year long. There's even a gay and lesbian beach out among the unearthly, picturesque sand dunes! Bring a camera! (A car would be recommended for getting there.) Provincetown is sort of a border town where a melange of cultures mingle, interlock and remain separate all at once: straight and gay year-rounders, summer people, tourists, all commingling in a fascinating spectrum of relationships between gender, orientation and identity.



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# Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Greetings, girlfriends! If it's February, that must mean Valentine's Day is right around the corner! It's the month when love is in the air, and sales on greeting cards and chocolate go through the roof! So, remember to shower your significant other with lots and lots of love, but **not** bon bons! She might think you're trying to make her fat!

Last September I did a column on a catalog of catalogs I got through the mail called *World Famous Catalogs*. Well, a few weeks ago, I got their latest edition at my post office box **and** an entirely different catalog of catalogs at my home, so I thought I'd spend a little time reviewing what both books have to offer. As I mentioned last year, mail order is still a neat and convenient way to shop if you haven't the time or the inclination to do so in person, and these catalogs are a shopper's dream.

Let's start with *World's Greatest Catalogs* (You can reach them at Publisher Inquiry Services, 951 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Building 190, P.O. Box 5057, Boca Raton, Florida 33431, or by phone at 561-997-1221). Since the first time I talked about them, they've added clothing catalogs such as **ForPlay** (exotic clothing), **Adaptations With Attitude** (size 14 and up), **Leather Collection** and **Tre Si** (designer bodywear). For lingerie there's **Imagine**, **Secret Passions** and **Lover's Lane**.

You'll also find shoes, jewelry, cosmetics, wigs (though to use such catalogs would violate my seventh Commandment of Shopping!), adult products and just about anything else you could name. All told, close to 450

catalogs can be found here, none more than five dollars and some absolutely free. For the girl who enjoys being a mail order shopper like moi, such a resource is a dream come true and should be utilized fully. I've gotten a few of these catalogs and they have very good deals.

The second catalog resource I've recently received is called *Shop At Home Catalogs Directory*. Just like *World's Greatest Catalogs*, *Shop At Home* also contains 60 plus pages worth of catalogs, well over 600 that can be purchased from five dollars to zip city. They offer purchasing by credit card and have express delivery. Again, virtually anything that's related to women's wear can be found through this resource. Here's a sampling of what *Shop At Home* has available:

In the clothing department, there's **Lerner New York**, **Sue Brett**, **Lane Bryant Brownstone Woman** (plus sizes) and **J.C. Penney's Especially for Tall**s. For lingerie there's **Tropical Adventure**, **Lady Grace**, **Maitresse**, **Barely Nothings** along with **Big Is Beautiful** and **J.W. Ramage** in the plus size category. For shoes, there's **Classic Pumps**, **Shoe Express** (large sizes, 10-15, AAAA up to WW and **Shoecraft Tall Girls** (11-14 in various widths).

For hosiery, there's **No Nonsense Factory Direct** and **One Hanes Place**. For wigs, if you're so inclined to go that route, there's **Paula Young**, **Dolly Parton** (Damn! Still no Dolly breastforms!) and **Franklin Fashions**. And there's the swimsuit catalogs from **Carabella Collection** and **Ritchie**

**Swimwear**. To get the *Shop At Home* catalog, write to 2080 S. Holly Street, P.O. Box 221050, Denver, CO 80222-9050, or call them at 1-800-315-1995.

As I promised last month, I'm now going to devote some space here in my column to spotlighting one of the advertisers who you see here in *News & Views* every month. The advertisers are an important part of the Renaissance mission of support to the transgendered community as they provide goods and/or services to us, and, as we say in the 'hood, it's well past time to give them their props. We start with a favorite place of mine, **Ballow's Shoes**.

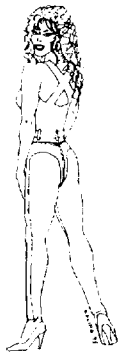
Located at 308 Mill Street in Bristol, PA, I discovered this place from the *Who's Who & Resource Guide* published by Creative Design Services. On my first visit there, nearly three years ago, I was suitably impressed from the word go. Run by Morty and Marlene Silverstein along with Neil and Cheryl Gervon, these people are friendly to the hilt and very helpful, which was a must since I was quite nervous on my initial visit.

Ballow's has a large selection of shoes and boots in sizes up to 13 in a varying selection of widths. They also have dye-able shoes and handbags in both satin and fabric that can be dyed in virtually any color you want, with a turnaround time of a few days. You won't find any super exotic five inch spike heels or thigh high dominatrix boots that you'd see in crossdresser boutiques, I'm talking about good quality shoes at good prices that you can put on and wear anytime and anyplace.

What I particularly love about Ballow's is their sensitivity—they treat you like everybody else—as a valued consumer. The first time I shopped there (in my male guise) and told them I was interested in women's shoes, they simply asked me what I was looking for. Then even offer private fittings in their rear office if you're too shy to try on shoes on the sales floor. These are good people and I recommend them highly. For directions to Ballow's, call (215) 788-2857.

Lastly, from the "Take It With A

*continued on page 23*



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# In Memorium

We regret to announce the passing of a staunch Renaissance supporter, Susan Sokol. Ms. Sokol passed away on November 27 of last year. Her remains were cremated in Harrisburg, Penna. on November 30th and a Memorial Mass was held at St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Turnersville, New Jersey on December 14th. Interment took place at St. Bridgets in Glassboro, New Jersey. Susan will be missed by her many friends.

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# Shopping...

Grain Of Salt Department", while in the check out line of my local supermarket a few weeks ago, I noticed a blurb on the cover of the December 31st edition of that bastion of journalistic integrity, *The Weekly World News* that proclaimed how shopaholics live longer and stay younger!! Intrigued (Or suckered, depending on your opinion of supermarket check out rags), I decided to buy that issue and find out what this article was about.

An independent research project had tested 260 women on their shopping habits and instructed them to keep careful records on how long their sprees lasted and how much they spent and were all given rigorous physical examinations before and after their sprees. The results showed that women who averaged 17 hours of shopping a week or more and spent over two hundred dollars were slimmer, stronger and more robust than women who spent fewer hours shopping and bought less merchandise.

The article goes on to say how frequent shoppers showed fewer wrinkles, higher energy, brighter, more vibrant skin and better all around youthfulness than women who limited their sprees and purchases. The study didn't include men, but funding was being raised to see the effects shopping has on them. The moral of this story, ladies: if you wanna stay young, fresh and vibrant, forget about health clubs and exercise gizmos, just grab your plastic and hit the stores!!

Well, girls, that's it for now. If you wanna chew the fat about that article, or anything else related to shopping, you can reach me at <treetop@voicenet.com>. Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, sisters!



# I Love L.A.

queen of indecent exposure, Madonna, is represented by a black bustier with pointy tips that could put an eye out.

From a simple mail-order business to a 200-store chain, Frederick's of Hollywood has come a long way, baby, and its lingerie museum reveals this lacy face of fashion at its buxom bust... er, best.

If you go: Frederick's of Hollywood Lingerie Museum, Address: 6608 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90028 Phone: (213) 466-8506

Directions: The museum is inside the Frederick's of Hollywood flagship store on Hollywood Blvd. Hours: Mon-Sat, 10-6; Sun., noon-5, Admission: Free

The preceding article was reprinted from Laura Bergheim's *Weird Wonderful America* column. It appeared in *The Press Enterprise* on April 2, 1995



# I Love L.A.

from *Powder Puffs' Girl Talk*

The purpose of this article is to inform the reader of one of the many places in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area for the transgendered person planning to attend "California Unity" in April 1997 — **Frederick's Museum of Unmentionables.**

Long before Victoria had her secret, Frederick had lingerie lovers in the cup of his hand. the late Frederick Mellinger the prince of push-ups, the guru of girdles, the king of kinky gave his first name and his life's work to his famous bra-and-panty emporium, Frederick's of Hollywood.

As befits one of the true stars of the Walk of Fame, his flagship store on Hollywood boulevard has its own lingerie museum. You can't miss the store, a glamorama landmark with fish awnings and pink and purple neon, not to mention the unmentionables in the window. The small museum in back

opened in 1989.

From whence did this La-La land of lingerie come? And how has "Hollywood" become Frederick's definition as well as its location? Like a tunnel of love, the exhibit beckons with its sweeping marble staircase curving upward into a pink-neoned hallway, where just a hint of the collections within peeks around the corner. entranced, you enter. Once inside, you find the social history of post-World War II lingerie, from Frederick Mellinger's silken seduction of a plain-panted America, to the sexy apparel appeal of stars such as Lana Turner and Madonna. The museum offers a trip down mammary lane, with exhibits such as "Missiles and Snow Cones," displaying Frederick's pointedly fulsome 1950s bras; and "An Array of Color," a palette of pink and purple push-up bras that reveals how a dash of color can shake things up. Looking at these alterations in America's undressed code, one is amazed that Mellinger's newly founded New York

mail-order company shocked the nation in 1946 simply by creating a line of black lingerie. It hit the white-cotton world like a Hollywood bombshell. Next came Frederick's push-up bras, merry widows, and later, the bikini (it was Frederick's that brought the scandalous swimsuit to America). Having escaped the trussed-up Victorian corset culture, women now were given licentious license to strap on sexier versions of their grandmother's unmentionables for bedroom, not ballroom, affairs. The sexual revolution was built on such foundations. Of course, Hollywood helped too. In tribute, the museum's Celebrity Lingerie Hall of Fame has the bras, slips, bustiers, petticoats and garter belts of Mae West, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Elizabeth Taylor, Cher, Ava Gardner, Ethel Merman, Shirley MacLaine and many other famous figures. Even Tony Curtis has a bra on display (From the film classic "Some Like it Hot"). The

*continued on page 23*

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