



News & views

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Renaissance

The Healing Power of Friendship

by Lynn Elizabeth Walker

*"Of things I'd rather keep in silence
I must sing."*

-The Countess of Dia

There's this ghostly, ghastly memory that's followed me around and nipped at my heels and teased me for many years. I'm about three years old and my father is in the living room. The walls are green and he is telling me my mom was hoping to have a girl. And they got me instead. Later I ask my mom and she says "no, of course not," and I don't quite believe her. I don't exactly understand what all that really means except for a vague sense that my mom is maybe unhappy or disappointed and that adults don't always tell the truth and maybe I've done something wrong, but I don't know what to do or how to make it all better.

The memory fades. Years later, of course, both parents deny that this ever happened and it really doesn't matter anymore. What really does matter is this nagging memory which prompts me to think there is no earthly way I will ever measure up or be good enough or really acceptable or really successful. Eventually, slowly, I almost learn to play the game and lose myself in the masquerade, pretending to be like everyone else. This was a big part of the baggage I carried with me when I finally found my way to a group of transgendered people who

were willing to be my friends and to help me look at myself and my life as I began to discover and acknowledge my worth and dignity.

*"I'm nobody. Who are you? Are you nobody too? Then there's a pair of us! Don't tell—
They'd banish us, you know"*

- Emily Dickinson

Central to the life of a support relationship is friendship. For women, a key ingredient in friendship is laughter. It's been noted that women share love and laughter the way men share football. Instead of dealing with aggression by giving in and charging at each other, women laugh as we recognize "it's us against them—you and me against the world." Moreover, the laughter serves to put it all in perspective, and to protect us. Not to say that we're frivolous. We still agonize over world events, our sense of self, our identity, our relationships and romances. But laughter lets us relax a little, confront and work on our relationship with the world.

For us transsexual and transgendered women who do not have strong roots in feminine childhood and adolescence, this friendship and laughter is absolutely essential. We cannot go back and experience party dresses, Barbie dolls, sugar and spice, mother-daughter bonding and so on. For some there will always be a deep chasm inside, so big and empty it can never be filled. Some of us still,

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South Africa Today

by Diane Knoetze, *Phoenix Society*

A while ago, JoAnn Roberts, Assoc. Editor, asked me about how South African crossdressers and specifically *Phoenix Society* members are coping with the present conditions in this country. Well, this is the fourth rewrite of that report. Why? Even as I write changes in this country make what I've previously written obsolete. It really is happening that fast. It is quite unbelievable!

I started writing this article before our elections and had to scrap it during the elections. Now the ANC government is in power, our new constitution is operative and likewise for our South African Bill

of Rights. This Bill of Rights is being tested in all quarters in the courts, barely weeks after it became operative. Presently a case is in progress concerning a well-known lesbian working as an area manager for the Blind Tape Aid organization. She was asked to resign after her sexual orientation became known. She is going to win the case, I'm sure, since the South African Bill of Rights specifically prohibits discrimination against women and homosexuals. She qualifies on both counts.

Magazines such as *Hustler*, *Playboy*, *Penthouse*

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Chapter & Affiliate Information

Renaissance News & Views

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Editor-in-Chief

Angela Gardner

Contributing Editors

Dina Amberle

JoAnn Roberts

Layout

Creative Design Services

Distribution

Beth & Rachel Marshall

Business Manager

Susan Persing

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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.

Chapters

Delaware

Renaissance Delaware Chapter: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808 or call 302-995-1396.

New Jersey

South Jersey/Shore Area: Write Renaissance SJ, Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ 08330. Meets the first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee City. Doors open at 7 p.m. Call 609-435-5401 for details.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia area: Write Renaissance GPC, Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020-0530. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia. Doors open 8 p.m. all year 'round. Call 610-630-1437 for information.

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122 Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call 717-780-1LSV (1578) for location and times.

Affiliates

Georgia

Atlanta: The American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), PO Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 or call 404-939-0244. Information resources.

Atlanta: Atlanta Gender Explorations (A.G.E.), PO Box 77562, Atlanta, GA 30357, 404-435-4203.

Louisiana

The Gulf Gender Alliance, PO Box 870213, New Orleans, LA 70187-1300. Local support group.

New Jersey

Monmouth/Ocean Trans-Gender, (MOTG), write PO Box 8243, Red Bank, NJ 07701 or call 908-219-9094.

New York

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



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. AIDS/ HIV Safety and Ethics.
8. Understanding Transsexualism

Significant Other Support

To network with other partners of transgendered people contact Evelyn Kirkland, PO Box 1242, Newtown, Pa., 18940.

Pen Pal Program:

If you would like to correspond with other people around the country contact Pen Pals, care of Maryann Kirkland, PO Box 1242, Newtown, Pa., 18940. Maryann will put you on the Pen Pal List and give you a copy of that list so you may correspond with as many new friends as you like.

TransParent Forum:

If you are transgendered and have children, that makes you a TransParent. If you'd like to network with other TransParents contact Elsa Larson, PO Box 2122, Harrisburg, Pa., 17105, attention: TransParent.

Events Calendar

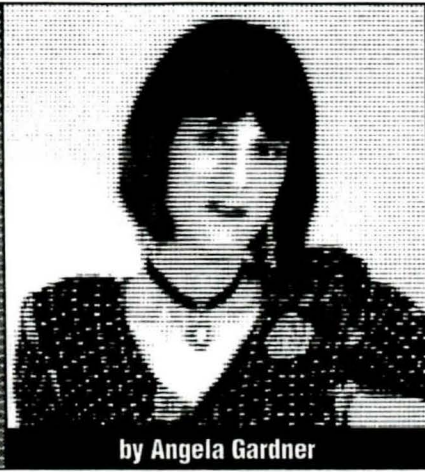
September

- 3 Ren So. Jersey
- 10 Ren LSV - Cosm. Surgery
- 10 Ren Delaware
- 17 Ren GPC -
- 22-25 CDS Pocono Weekend
- 24 MOTG - 4th Anniv. Mtg., Guest: Leslie Feinberg
- 29-2 4th Annual So. Comfort, Atlanta, Ga.

October

- 1 Ren So. Jersey
- 8 Ren LSV
- 8 Ren Delaware
- 15 Ren GPC
- 16-23 20th Anniv. Fantasia Fair Provincetown, Mass.
- 31 Henri David's Hallowe'en Ball

News Beat & Reminder



by Angela Gardner

So girls, it's nearing the end of the long hot summer. We've seen floods, the horror of war in Bosnia and Rowanda, the triumph of Nelson Mandella in South Africa, a cosmic collision on Jupiter, and Wesley Snipes & Patrick Swayze dressed as drag queens. (Go girl!) Oh, yeah, how could we forget that O. J. thing? I think irate aliens from Jupiter did it because they thought since O.J. used to fly in those Hertz spots, he had something to do with the comet. In any event, we've certainly seen a lot so far this year. As the Chinese curse goes, "May you live in interesting times."

Times will get even more interesting for crossdressers now that fall draws neigh and the ladies of the transgender community stir from their self-imposed summer hibernation, applying Daisy razors to hairy legs and armpits in preparation for new adventures in Transgender Land. (Now there's a good theme park idea!) Once again, *Renaissance News & Views* stands ready to be your one stop spot for info on the exciting season coming up. That's right ladies, it's time for:

Events, Events, Events!

Well girls, if you're planning a trip to the left coast, or if you're already in La La Land around September 17 you might want to drop into the Playboy Mansion for "The Hoppening." What's that you ask? Well, its a \$250-a-ticket fund raiser to benefit AIDS Project Los Angeles and the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS. What will

"hopen" at The Hoppening? Playboy is revamping the classic bunny costume and New York party maven Susanne Bartsch has been signed up to publicize the fact. A Who's Who of fashion and design have signed on to tune-up the outdated outfit and the results will be dropped on the public at The Hoppening.

The artist formerly known as Prince is one of the most noteworthy trying his hand at bunny refurbishment. (Too bad he had to get weird and refurbish his name. Does he think he's Michael Jackson or something?) Also on board for the updating process are designers; Anna Sui, Todd Oldham, Azzedine Alaia, Betsey Johnson, Laura Whitcomb, Chrome Hearts, Isabel Toledo, LA Eyeworks and Abel Villarreal.

You can see the results of their efforts and help the fight against AIDS by calling 310-652-6601 for ticket information. New York drag performance artist and jazz chanteuse Joey Arias was on hand in a leather bunny look for the announcement party back in August and, who know's, since, as the *Los Angeles Times* writer said in his piece on The Hoppening, "These days drag queens are pretty much the only ones willing—no thrilled—to wear the classic Playboy bunny costume and act like they mean it," maybe Joey and some of our other sisters will be on hand to help model the new designs.

Now, on to more reasonably priced reasons to get dressed up.

Where would an events listing be without Paradise In The Poconos?

These twice-a-year events are presented by Creative Design Service. Do you have your reservation for their big soiree from September 22 to 25? If not, forget it. Producer JoAnn Roberts has sold out again. I'd reserve now for the Spring event if I were you.

If you can't go to the Poconos maybe there'll be space left in Atlanta for the Fourth Annual Southern Comfort Conference. It's happening September 29 to October 2 and the ladies will be cavorting for the entire weekend in their feminine finery.

And "...meet and learn from community leaders (Miss Lynn! You're on!), famous physicians, (Go ahead, touch this scalpel. See how sharp I keep it?) and other helping professionals." They'll have vendors in the hotel and shopping trips to area malls. As usual, a fun time is guaranteed for one and all. Contact them at 404-875-5749.

October 16-23 it's the grand mamma event of them all, the 20th Annual Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, Massachusetts. A week of pumps and mini-skirts, bow blouses and big hair. You've gotta live this one to believe it girls. For all the important information contact grand poobah Alison Laing at PO Box 941, SE Pa. 19399-0941.

November 17-20 if you're not already worn out and broke, you can journey out to the Midwest area of this great country and attend Fall Harvest '94 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Is that near Otumwah? Is that how you spell Otumwah? Anyhow, the girls will be carving pumpkins and bobbing for apples all weekend long. Join them by asking their host organization, Iowa Artistry, for details. Write PO Box 75, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406-0075.

The same weekend is the date for the elegant Riverside Gala Weekend sponsored by the Erie Sisters Club in quaint Cambridge Springs, Pa. Cambridge Springs used to be a spa back in the old days where folks would go to, "take the water." The Sisters usually fill the fifty-four room Victorian Inn and everyone returns to a kinder, gentler time. Don't forget to bring your embroidery. The dates

continued next page

News Beat...

again, November 18-20. Write Erie Sisters, 2115 West 8th St., Suite 261, Erie, Pa. 16505.

Smaller than these events but also open to one and all is the Renaissance Greater Philadelphia Chapter Holiday Party. It happens (at the same hotel IFGE used for the '93 Convention) in the heart of downtown Philadelphia on December tenth. Party planner Angela Gardner (Gardner? Sounds familiar.) promises a live band for your entertainment pleasure and parking included in the low ticket price. Out-of-towners may be eligible for lower room rates. Attendees will be responsible for their own dinner but you get one free drink and all the hors d'oeuvres you can stuff in. There are several fine restaurants within a few of blocks and the one in the hotel is pretty good. That's it for events. Get those gowns to the cleaners and have your pumps reheeled. Now where did that boa go?

Aunt Miltie

Speaking of events, here's one I missed. Milton Berle appeared in a show at New York's Town Hall Theater back in June and Uncle Miltie did it in drag. What with pressing time commitments and no money, I couldn't make it. If anyone out there did, please send us a review.

I believe Miltie was performing with a bevy of female impersonators (Charles Busch for one.) and his gowns where said to be fabulous. He was

described in the magazine blurb I saw as a blonde bombshell with cigar and designer gown. The gown was designed by the woman who did the costumes for Miss Saigon, Suzy Benzinger and the main piece of couture was a full length (Berle always loved full length gowns), beaded number with a plunging neckline and front slit.

Ms. Benzinger said, "... kind of a cross between Mae West and Carmen Miranda and boy does he have shapely legs." I'm sorry I missed it. It's Uncle Miltie's fault though. If he would just send press releases to the transgendered community we could have all been there in the front row.

Cat's Out Of The Bag

In the July 22 issue of *Back Stage*, a publication for thespians such as myself, they devoted an article to New York actors' favorite things. Among the actors talking about their favorite theaters, coffee shops and places to go for a pleasant walk was Everett Quinton, an actor who does most of his performing in drag with the Ridiculous Theater Company of Greenwich Village. Everett told everyone about his favorite dress shop. Out of all the retail establishments selling frocks in New York City, what is Everett's favorite? Lee's Mardi Gras on 14th Street and Tenth Avenue. Lee has been an advertiser in *Renaissance News & Views* since the beginning, and, I might add, is a personal friend of JoAnn Roberts.

In the article Quinton said, "You can buy fabulous things there. I used to go there back in the days of shame

when you had to whisper you wanted dresses for drag. But at Lee's it's total freedom and you are totally respected. I've turned several people on to it. I've sent costume designers there and they always tell me they love it."

Well thanks a lot Everett. Now every actor in New York will be down at Lee's Mardi Gras buying up all the good stuff and making the wait for the elevator far too long. Great, just great. You should be ashamed.

Ru Paul Purges?

According to a clipping from the *Associated Press* sent in by Elizabeth Jarrell, RuPaul Charles, the gorgeous six foot seven inch, drag super model and singer is putting away his frocks and falsies. It seems Mr. Charles has decided to get in touch with his masculinity at this point in his career. Interesting. Talk about cross-over acts. It's kind of like Lawrence Welk getting into Rock & Roll. RuPaul has made his name and reputation as a woman. Will it work as a man?

RuPaul said he wanted to do this at this time because now he feels sexy as a male. Says Mr. Charles, "In the past I've never felt sexy or appealing as a male, but I do now. And I want to make myself known in the public eye out of drag."

I know how he feels. I often feel like I'm sexier when crossdressed and presenting myself as a woman. I may be sexy as a man too, but I don't feel that way and it's harder to gauge people's reactions. Most women will check out a man in subtle ways, so if you're not paying close attention or are

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just socially inept you may not notice if someone thinks you're sexy.

When I'm dressed I feel sexy and if I'm in a social situation it's much easier to see how people are reacting. (Oh my God! It's a guy!) How about you? Do you feel sexy as a man or do you only feel sexy when dressed? Drop me a line and I'll print the results. Meanwhile, good luck to RuPaul and remember, "You better work!"

Drag Dolls

The *Weekly World News* used that headline for this bit and I figure what the hey! If it's good enough for them, who am I to burn out brain cells trying to come up with something better. The *News* tells us that a Chicago-based, "...international group of transvestite and transsexual investors" know as SWISH (sounds a lot like SMERSH or SPECTRE to me... Calling Mr. Bond.) are producing an anatomically correct male doll that comes dressed in women's clothes. SWISH has contracts with doll manufacturers in Taiwan and they are planning to have the foot tall Dragdoll on the market in time for the Christmas season. Let me take a minute to add that to my list. I want a blonde, a brunette and a redhead. They even wear tiny little wigs!

Of course the *News* plays up the fact that consumer (read "religious right") groups are up in arms. As a representative of Concerned Parents For Normal Toys (CPFNT?) said, "What these disgusting dolls teach innocent children is that there all kinds of perverts and weirdoes in the world... we want to protect them from sick

things..." Well, I guess the folks in CPFNT could let their children be adopted by members of the transgender community. That would help keep them away from real weirdoes, like their parents.

Why don't these people have a clue? Being different is not catching. How many little transvestites have you recruited this week? I haven't met my quota and Supreme Transvestite Command will give me demerits. Oh horrors.

But, in my righteous indignation, I digress. Ricardo Penesso of Rome is one of SWISH's major investors. He said the dolls have short hair just like regular guys but they come with long wigs, flouncy frocks, padded bras and, a few have false eyelashes and makeup. Any little gaffs under the frilly finery? Ricardo goes on to say, "We plan to target little boys especially because we want them to understand that they're okay however they are—even if they like to dress in girl's clothes. But we also hope little girls will buy Dragdolls. We want all youngsters to learn to be more open-minded."

Good luck with the dolls Ricardo. If they sell like hotcakes, how'd you like to invest the profits in another enterprise that should help people be more open-minded about crossdressers? Remember, we're trying to make a movie here. The Community Film Project is dedicated to producing a feature-length documentary film, directed by Emmy award-winner Terri Randall, about our community. The project is endorsed by The Congress of Transgender Organizations.

Send that check or money order to Community Film Project, PO Box 60552, King of Prussia, PA 19406-0552. Hordes of little transvestites will bring their Dragdolls to the theater to see a film that would have changed my life had I been given the opportunity to see something like it at an early age.

What's Dat?

I'm sure, since confusion abounds around transgendered matters, even among members of the community, that some people who read the article in the *Weekly World News* were thrown by the photo which took up most of the Dragdoll article page. It was a shot of a beautiful woman in a bathing suit with the shoulder strap lowered seductively on one arm. I'm sure many folks wondered if this was a man. Sorry girls, it's not. She's the Page Five cheesecake photo the *News* prints to keep up their circulation and stimulate the circulation of their sexually-oriented-toward-women readers. (Oh, how PC can she get?) It's just a coincidence that her name is Angela, and, I did happen to pose last month for some pics I plan to use for the *News & Views* Swimsuit Issue. I haven't been in the *Weekly World News* though. Yet.

Celluloid Heroines Abound

Since I mentioned movies a minute ago, let me pause to update my readers on the current state of transgendered people on film. While the Community Film Project won't be premiering for a

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Friendship...

secretly cry ourselves to sleep out of deep frustration, inexpressible isolation and a need to be held. Together, however, we can bond with each other here and now. A girlfriend is a source of laughter and love "more comforting than chocolate and more dependable than men."

Someone said to me recently that it is never too late to have a happy childhood. Now certainly, some things may not be entirely feasible but the real point has something to do with the notion that we owe it to ourselves to love and be gentle with ourselves and each other. We owe it to ourselves to smile and laugh, to go on holiday.

*"Does the road wind uphill
all the way?"*

Yes, to the very end.

*Shall I meet other wayfarers
at night?"*

Those who have gone before?"

- Christina Rossetti

Support groups? Good Lord! A community, a nation of transsexuals and transgendered women! Just think how overwhelming that idea can be for a new arrival. A group of any kind can be scary for someone who walks in, as each of us once did, after years of "splendid" isolation, suppression, shame and denial; not knowing who or what she is, why or how she fits in with this group and what we all have in common. It is utterly, utterly critical that we who are here are prepared to welcome the newcomers, to be here for them, to offer them the hand of friendship and acceptance, to nurture, advise, assist and reassure them. To

help them connect with others. For the moment, forget the national political agenda, the activism, the networking. Be here, now, with her. Nurture her.

*"You think I cannot understand.
I have been wrung with anger
and compassion for you."*

-Siegfried Sassoon

No single group can ever meet everyone's needs. And when someone does leave a group, it means that group failed to meet her needs and drove her to look elsewhere. We have a long way to go to develop sufficient flexibility and diversity in our groups so that we can provide for the needs of all who come to us. We need to be open to change. To be flexible and willing to meet our sisters on their own terms. We need to recognize the limitations of our groups so that we do not "burn out" trying to be "right" for everyone.

As individuals and groups, we need to reach out and open-up to each other. It doesn't take a professionally trained counselor or psychologist to care for another, to want to help another along the path we all walk. When each of us first came out there was perhaps confusion, anxiety, stress, panic and a sense of vulnerability. Then, someone reached out to help and it got easier. Reaching out to help someone is not necessarily an automatic reaction, but caring, empathy and nurturing are feminine characteristics. It is good to stretch, to extend a hand to someone needing support, friendship, care, help. It's good to smile and make eye-contact, to put a loving hand on her shoulder. It's good to show emotion, open up, be vulnerable, accept help and to really talk.

There's this other memory that

follows me around. I'm thirty something and in a restaurant. I'm finally telling my son about myself and my friends and he's not surprised, unhappy or disappointed. My heart stops when he says he thinks its "cool" and he sounds sincere, maybe a little pleased and we talk for hours. He has a hundred questions as we make eye contact, smile and joke and hug each other. We share secrets and I wipe tears from my eyes when he's not looking and still they come. Now I can talk to him. Now I can talk to my friends, face myself and maybe begin a little bit at a time to think kindly thoughts about myself, my parents and deal with my thirty something years of silence, isolation, guilt, shame and anger. And the tears still come. A year later, I tell my mother. Finally. We cry together and we hug each other and I begin to understand a little more about unconditional love.

Support groups. Connecting and laughing with others. It has been through these groups that I discovered, came to appreciate and rely on the loving support of my sisters; someone to hold my hand during the tough moments, to listen when I needed to talk, to advise when I was lost, to help me little by little get rid of some of the baggage and ghosts that follow me around. Someone to hug me when I needed it and someone to party with me in good times. In theses groups I discovered I could realize some of my dreams, that it is never too late to become my best self. A little support, a little friendship, a little laughter. They go a long way.

*"If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?"*

- Thomas Beddoes

News Beat...

year or two (I have time to shop for my Academy Awards gown) there are two films that are now out and playing in a theater near you. Or, soon they'll be in a video store near you. Not cause they're bad. They're art house pics.

First, *Just Like a Woman*, a British

film about an actual crossdresser, not a guy who dresses up to do something like *Tootsie* or *He's My Girl*. Gerald dresses 'cause he likes it. He's played by Adrian Pasdar, an actor with Philadelphia roots. Pasdar said he'd never dressed up before and was all the way into page 21 of the script, on a flight to L.A. for the audition before he realized just what would be required.

Undaunted, Pasdar said, "I can do that!" and the producers gave him the job. I think he got it 'cause he's got no Adams' Apple. (I hate him.)

Gerald is a closet crossdresser from the U.S. who has gotten married, fathered two children and taken a power job as an investment banker in

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Guess Who's Had A Makeover?



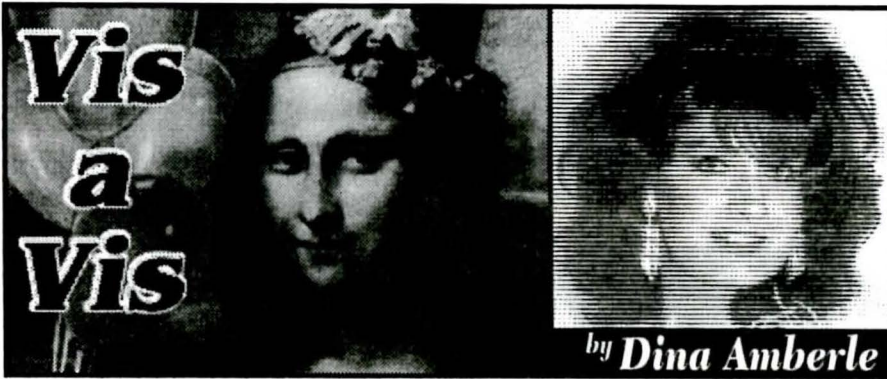
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I'm hoping against hope that it's the summertime heat and daylight savings time that has sent the provocative newsletter authors to ground because there's been a dearth of thought provoking articles lately. And thought provoking articles are the meat of this column. For example, the CLCC newsletter out of Minneapolis is down to one page double-sided. Hey, I'm good—but there ain't much I can do with one page of material to lambaste. Of course, there are some newsletters who say as little in ten pages as CLCC says with one.

But if this trend continues, *Vis A Vis* will soon be on the endangered species list. And I know how sad that would be for all the people I've ripped in columns past. So to my sisters writing in other rags across this land: do the right thing for transgendered literary criticism and get to work out there with essays, good or bad. Either way, you're sure to get noticed by your old Aunt Dina.

Two Presidents—One Message

Both the *CHIC Dairy* out of southern California and *Paradise Tales* from Parma, Ohio, carried articles from their respective presidents bemoaning the lack of participation in their group activities. The leaders of these two groups, thousands of miles apart, told similar stories about lack of interest or help in new ventures.

Susan Howard of the CHIC group took an interesting angle when she said a poll of members indicated a strong desire for broader venues in which to socialize with the group. Yet a planned theater outing elicited only one response from the same membership

who clamored for "broader venues." Susan writes, "...is our vision of broader venues just a part of our rich fantasy life?"

Is it indeed? I once gave out over a hundred complimentary passes to an extremely safe and friendly gay nightclub so our Renaissance girls could enjoy a night out. We had thirty people turn out. Not bad by some measures, but our group should pull more participation than thirty percent.

Theresa Richards of the Paradise Club writes a more conventional complaint of the support group leader. Nothing will send most members to the far corners of the room faster than asking for volunteers to help in some task. It's so frustrating to her that she says she'd just like to be able to understand the phenomenon rather than try to change it. She asks, "What are those of you who choose to be wallflowers looking for here?" Do the leaders even need to provide food and a program or are they just happy to stand in a room dressed for 3 hours?

To be fair to everyone, group leaders should realize many members


simply cannot be more active than attending the occasional meeting. The secrecy that so many of us need in this lifestyle inhibits otherwise willing members from getting too involved in group activities. On the other side of the coin, members of groups should be careful about taking for granted the efforts of those persons who expend themselves to make the groups successful.

Enough Already

I think every newsletter in this nation (and believe me when I say "I've seen 'em all") has carried the letter from David Nurmi of N.S. Products in which he passes along a letter from the mother of a crossdressing son. Apparently, the crossdresser in question was found dead while in drag and the mother was none too happy to find out about her son's pastime in that way.

Now I believe Mr. Nurmi is sincere in his concern about this tragedy and that is why he mailed the letter to all the TG support groups in the country. But there's something about the letter that just doesn't ring true to this reader. I suspect the letter from the mother is a hoax. If so, it's a sick hoax and if it's an honest letter... well, it's really a shame this mother had to find her late son like that.

Mr. Nurmi's letter appeared in this newsletter back in May and was still turning up in other newsletters as late as July. True or false, I'm tired of seeing it every time I pick up a newsletter from out of town. So enough already. And, if you're thinking



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of doing something suicidally kinky in drag, please consider your mother... and the rest of us who have to read support group newsletters... and don't off yourself in lingerie and high heels.

Outside Looking In

A couple of people who wrote to me voicing displeasure at things I said in this column have as much as told me I had no "right" commenting on anything in "their" newsletter. As an outsider to their group, the articles or editorials in their newsletters were not in my domain to criticize.

That's a curious, insular viewpoint. It's indicative of some of the problems with this "community" as the tribal chieftains bicker over territory or pseudo-political side-choosing.

This column's reason for being is to comment on what's going on in other groups or the environment in general. Although some of the items I write each month are critical of some position or viewpoint expressed in another group's newsletter, the aim is not to simply trash the other guy, but to argue or debate the issue. Agree or disagree, but please don't say that an outsider has no right to read and comment on something appearing in "your" newsletter.

Through A Glass Rosily

I first got interested in crossdressing in the early seventies, the era of platform shoes and hot pants. Looking back on that decade, it was a disaster fashion-wise and a strange patch of time in general.

But now the seventies are back in a sweep of nostalgia that only twenty years of distance and failing memories could provide. The shoe stores are awash in god-awful recreations of clunky-heeled shoes reminiscent of the seventies. The young women's shops are filled with retro-creations of hippie outfits, thankfully in more tasteful color combos this time around. My first realization of this phenomenon was when Kelly Bundy began forsaking her spandex mini-dresses and pumps for low-slung jeans, shapeless blouses and ugly shoes this past season on *Married... With Children*. More significantly, the seventies are back in music and the nostalgia brought on by the silver anniversaries of the moon landing and Woodstock (the sixties' last gasp and the stage setting for the jump in to seventies) and the twentieth anniversary of Watergate and Nixon's recent death.

A popular radio station here just switched to a format of "all seventies" music. This afternoon I listened to it on my way home from work. Nothing repaints memories like hearing an old song from the past and as I listened to "Mama Told Me Not To Come" and "Put The Lime In The Coconut" I remembered there was a time when an ensemble of a halter top, crushed velvet hot pants and cork-soled platform shoes could get any fella's motor running.

You know, the seventies weren't so bad after all.

De-Mystification of Bra Sizing

An article in the July 31 *Philadelphia Inquirer* tells anyone who is interested how to pick the proper bra size. According to the paper, 85% of American women aren't sure of their bra size. No statistics exist for TVs, but with variable bust size being an option its likely the percentage is even higher.

Fitting yourself is not that difficult if you keep in mind the following tips from *Victoria's Secret* spokeswoman Monica Mitro.

First, measure around the body directly under the breast and over the ribcage, then add 5 inches. That's the bra size. Next, measure around the body above where your breast tissue would be if you had any. (You might want to put your pads in a light bra and measure.) The measurement above the breast should be similar to the below breast measure. Male shoulder widening may make it a bit larger. Measurement number three is around the body over the fullest part of the breast. If this measurement is one inch larger than the bra size, you need an A cup. Two inches makes it a B cup, three inches larger and its a C cup. A D cup is called for when the measurement is four inches larger and five inches gets you a DD.

Look for a bra that fits comfortably on the middle hook. Breast tissue or pads should be fully contained by the cups and the center front should fit snugly against the breast bone.



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"I'm going to speak my mind because I have nothing to lose."

S. I. Hayakawa

Since this is September, the start of the season, so to speak, we'll get right to the good stuff first... Why the Fashion News, of course dahlinks.

Dumbest New Look of the Season goes to the Pants+Skirt look. The idea here is to layer a mini-skirt over slim pants. Pssst. Ms. Karan. If I wanted to wear pants, I wouldn't crossdress. Got it?

We often spend a lot of time and energy learn how to apply makeup, but we don't give much thought to taking it off.. until the wife comes home early from that shopping excursion. Anyway, here's a quick primer of removal methods for eye makeup and mascara. Waterproof formulations require an oil-based remover to dissolve the makeup. Try Cover Girl Clean Eyes Make-Up Remover, or Noxema Dif-Rinse. Water soluble mascara and shadows only need a good cleanser like Noxema or Aveda Pure Gel Eye Makeup. Personally, I use baby wipes. They're lots cheaper. If you wear contacts, you need a little more care and Clinique Extremely Gentle Eye Makeup Remover may be just what you need.

Skinny is still "in" and the School Girl look has survived the summer. Thank-

fully, I haven't seen a crossdresser try to pull off the short-skirt, thigh-high stocking look. Come to think of it, I haven't seen any real women (off the runway) either. That's good because it's a look that could get you in deep trouble.

Anyone who knows me well, knows that my wardrobe is primarily black in color. Partly that's because it goes with everything, and partly it's because it's slimming. But lately I've longed for a bit of color and just in time the "new" Fall color is brown, warm brown. Colors like coffee, chocolate, and cinnamon are cropping up everywhere. I wonder if brown and black go together?

While black and brown may not work, one way to add color and spice to your wardrobe is to add a hot, bright color over basic black. Try brilliant green, neon pink, or fire engine red.

Nothing will kill a good time like a killer pair of heels. What we need is a good shoe stretcher. Well, maybe we found a good technique. I pass this tidbit along from the pages of the MFGE news in Minnesota. Whatcha do is fill a pan with rubbing alcohol. Jam your foot into the shoe, then immerse foot and shoe in the alcohol. Let the alky saturate the shoe leather. The leather will begin to stretch immediately. Then take your foot out of the pan and let the alcohol evaporate while the shoe is still on your foot. Takes about 15 to 20 minutes. They say it works every time, but not on patent leather.

For those of you into collecting things, here's something new to add to the list: supermodel trading cards. They look like baseball cards but feature top models. Instead of game stats, the cards list height, weight, measurements, number of magazine covers, calendars, and commercials. The cards come in packs of 8 for \$1.69 or \$18.95 for a special limited edition set. Proceeds from the cards go to the National Resource Defense

Council, and environmental group.

Factoid — Percentages of women on various on-line services: America On-Line - 30%; Compuserve - 10%; GENie - 25%; Prodigy - 40%; Delphi - 15%; Women's WIRE - 90%... Another Factoid: Anyone who presents themselves as a female in cyberspace is presumed to be a male until proven otherwise. All us trans-whatevers aren't fooling anyone on the net.

One thing is for certain, if you're not on the net soon, you'll be cut-off from a major source of information. The baby-Bells are the most likely candidates to bring the information superhighway into your home in the very near future. Once that happens, it is quite possible that the very nature of how we run our daily lives will undergo what is called a paradigm shift, a fundamental change. But for all the hype about the Internet and Cyberspace, one thing puzzles me greatly. William Gibson, the author who popularized the term "cyberspace" isn't on the net. Think he knows something that we don't. Like, get a life, people.

Even though the skirt length of the nanosecond seems to be just knee-length, short skirts have not disappeared (Thank God!). Well, if you were watching the runways, you might have wondered if they had disappeared. Some of the skirts seemed little more than a handkerchief around the model's waist. Luckily, what's seen on the runways doesn't make it to the stores that way. For example, a DKNY skirt that was 12" at the shows, is about 15" in the store, or a Norma Kamali that was 14" on the runway might be 19" on the rack. One reason it's a good bet for CDs to wear a shorter length has to do with body proportions. A female measures almost two-thirds of her height from her feet to waist, while a male only measures about half his height. In other words, given a male and female of the same height, the

Continued next page

HOT•BUZZ

female's waist will be higher. Thus, to give the impression of longer legs on a crossdresser, show more leg, i.e., a shorter skirt. No, not *that* short!

Okay, you succumbed to the fashion rave of the moment and bought a really short skirt. What do you wear with it? The number 1 recommendation is cover your legs. Wear heathered tights and knee boots, or ribbed tights and ankle boots, or black opaque pantyhose and high-cut pumps. Please, stay away from the thigh-high stockings. You'll just look ridiculous. Also, pale tights will add weight to your legs and that's the last thing you want.

Okay, that's for under the mini, now what about over it? Try the newest fingertip length coats in single or double breasted styles. They're slightly fitted through the waist and flare out to cover the hips. Likely, it will cover the mini. It can also be worn with tight pants or leggings and boots. Under the jack and over the mini is a turtleck blouse.

The good news for Fall is that you've still got stuff from seasons past that are "IN." Like a classic pantsuit, or leggings, an oversize sweater, ankle boots, pleated skirts, anything velvet, or shiny.

Looks that have died an early death (thank goddess) — exaggerated ruffles, messy hair, pale makeup, the waif-look, heavy shoes, baby doll dresses, and long narrow hobble skirts.

You think it's easy being a fashion maven? Check out these prices: Donna Karan neon pink velour jacket—\$1350; Armani double breasted herringbone suit—\$2430; Escada cobalt and black, wool and velvet suit—\$2320; Richard Tyler plum wool gabardine riding jacket—\$2400. And, if you think no one buys this stuff, hear this: Donna Karan's one week take at Bergdorf's—\$650,000; Armani's take at Bloomies in two days—\$868,000; Chanel three day trunk show at Bergdorf's—\$1.5 million. Would someone *please* introduce me to one of these Sugar Mommas.

Get stuffed... that's the message for Fall fashions. Stuff yourself into a Wonder Bra, a brasellette or a corset. Yes, kids, the voluptuous female form is back in *Vogue*. Many of the haute couture designers showed clothes that were very form fitting and the models wore undergarments with stays. Imagine, stays in the 90's! One report in *W* mentioned that corsets were back in style big time, especially custom-made corsets. Well, hey, if it wasn't for crossdressers buying this stuff when the real women weren't, it wouldn't be there for them now, would it? Thank you very much... After all the hoopla caused by the introduction of the Wonder Bra, almost every lingerie company is rushing to market with their own version. But we all know that Fredericks of Hollywood has had super-duper push-up bras since 1948.

You probably didn't believe me when I told you that stores and catalogs were starting to carry really fashionable clothes in larger sizes. I just received the latest *Victoria's Secret* catalog and almost every dress, suit, skirt, and blouse is available up to size 16. That's a major leap for VS and a great service for us. If they keep this up, I won't have to shop for anything anywhere else.

Before I forget, I am now wired to the Internet. If you want to send e-mail, my address is: cdspub@omni.voicenet.com. Ask for the on-line catalog to get the latest information about CDS publications, videos, and events.

If you've been wondering what to do with your time come this Fall, consider giving Fantasia Fair another try. Yes, it's been hard times for the Fair the past few years, but this year it has been revitalized by none other than our own Alison Laing. The "new" FanFair sports a lower cost and all new programs.

The HOT BUZZ about color for Fall is metallic, but not the same old gold and silver. Nope, this season we've got colors like pewter, brushed aluminum, chrome and the hottest metallic is gunmetal. These new colors lend a high-tech look to Fall's newest accessories, from

shoes to bracelets to handbags. Prescriptives even has two lipsticks with metallic shimmer: Myth and Moonglow.

Remember last month I told you about the misinformation about transgendered folk on the Internet? Here's another sample of a little posting I found out there in cyberspace...

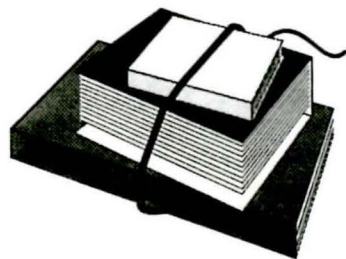
Basic Rules of Lingerie

- Women in garter belts & stockings: good
- Men in garter belts & stockings: bad
- Animals in garter belts & stockings: illegal
- Hobbits in garter belts & stockings: difficult
- Reptiles in garter belts & stockings: silly
- Bill Clinton in garter belts & stockings: slightly more often than Hillary
- Men should not wear panties.
- Women 25+ pounds overweight should not wear lycra shorts.
- Bras should go on breasts, not on head.
- Underwear should be cleaned and pressed, no starch
- If it has cones, ice cream should go in it, not body parts.
- Cindy Crawford can wear anything she wants, as long as it is not referred to as a "strap-on."

If you missed it first time around, the film *Just Like A Woman*, based on Monica Jay's book *Geraldine*, is back in town. One of the Philly papers gave it three of four stars. Adrian Pasdar who plays Gerald/Geraldine is a local boy who played football at Marple-Newtown high school. Also in town is the Aussie film, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, which follows three "showgirls" (two queens and a TS) on a trip to Alice Springs. Add in *To Wong Foo* and *Ed Wood* and drag is hot in 94.

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BOOK NOOK



Review by William A. Henkin, Ph.D. Identity Management in Transsexualism: A Practical Guide to Managing Identity on Paper, by Dallas Denny, M.A. (published by CDS, P.O. Box 61263, King of Prussia, PA 19406, \$16.50 postpaid.)

The first official, surgically-assisted sex-change recorded in Western history took place in Germany, in 1882, when Sophiia Hedwig had her external genitals altered and formally became Herman Karl. Early in the 20th century a well-known Danish painter, Einar Wegener, convinced he was really a female, went to Berlin to have his genitals removed and took the name Lili Elbe; Elbe died soon after a second surgery, intended to construct a vagina for her. The first sex-change operation gender specialists sometimes say concerned full transsexualism took place in England, in 1949, when Laura Maud Dillon became Laurence Michael Dillon. And the first sex-change operation most Westerners ever heard about was Christine Jorgensen's, whose 1952 surgery took place in Denmark, and whose transformation from male to female took place in newspapers and magazines throughout the world.

Some of the problems shared by Karl, Elbe, Dillon, Jorgensen, and the thousands of transsexual men and women who have pursued their dreams for wholeness in the final third of this century will be immediately apparent, even to people who never thought about the differences between sex and gender: breasts as well as internal and external genitalia to be built up or removed; body hair to be grown or dispersed; voices to be altered; body contours, posture, gait, carriage, manners, and attitude to be

reformed; family, career, relationships, and social conditioning to be utterly reconstructed.

But wholly apart from these obvious difficulties of reconfiguring a life — apart, even, from the less obvious psychological strain involved in resolving transsexualism — there is a very practical set of problems few people consider who are not confronted with the need to do so. These problems concern the paper trail we all leave behind us that defines us, to a very large degree, for our fellow humans.

From the day we are welcomed to the world with a birth certificate to the day we are welcomed from it with a death certificate, our name and designated sex follow us everywhere. When we attend school, enroll for military service, or visit a doctor or dentist; when we apply for a driver's license, a passport, or a library card; when we go to work, get a social security number, and pay taxes; when we buy insurance, or seek credit with banks, stores, and utility companies; when we register to vote; when we join unions and other professional organizations; when we are called for jury duty or otherwise become involved with lawsuits; when we marry or divorce; when we seek government services; when we calculate our estates; when our children need records of their own — from birth to death, who we are is defined for others repeatedly by these simple facts: my name is John, I'm a man or boy; my name is Jane, I'm a woman or girl.

Managing our own identity in the world is rarely a problem for most people, though the tasks impinge on everyone all the time; but for transsexuals it is critical, because identity

management determines so completely how we are seen and known by others. A few authors have addressed the subject in the past, but since 1990 only *Legal Aspects of Transsexualism*, by Sr. Mary Elizabeth, SSE has been indispensable.

Now Dallas Denny has written what amounts to a companion volume to Sr. Mary Elizabeth's book that is also indispensable. Though less complete than *Legal Aspects* regarding specifics of the law, *Identity Management* is far more thorough in its consideration of the social implications that attend changing one's identity. *Identity Management* is also more prescriptive than descriptive, telling people how to achieve their goals as well as what goals needs to be achieved, and to further that end the book contains Appendices with names, addresses, and model forms that are eminently useful. In addition, *Identity Management* is a delightfully personal book, both because Denny illustrates her points with anecdotes from her own gender journey in some unembarrassed detail, and because she is a rather charming writer:

"When I moved to Georgia... I was armed with a Tennessee driver's license identifying me as Dallas Denny. My photo was very androgynous. But the license said I was a male. I filled in the Georgia application and wrote "F" in the box which asked about my sex. The examiner took my old license and began entering information into the computer. I held my breath, hoping she would not notice the "M on my license, and she must not have, for she said nothing, and when my license came back, it had an "F" on it.

"Of course, I might have been okay even if she had noticed. She might have thought it simply an error. If you pass successfully, and if nothing otherwise points out your transsexualism, the wrong sex designation on a document may be looked at as a mistake. It rocks the world of the clerk less to believe a mistake has been made in the paperwork than it does to believe you started out as a member of the other sex."

continued on page 17

South Africa

and *Men Only*, which were considered pornographic just a few weeks ago, are now appearing on our bookshelves. Of course, our censorship control board tries to ban them as soon as they appear, but it is futile, since they are losing every case they take to court. The same scenario is applicable to video material.

Very soon the rules of censorship in this country will have to be rewritten as is now the case for our old, totally outdated gambling laws.

Since immediately before the elections (and still holding) peace has broken out in almost the entire country. There is a completely new atmosphere between the races in the streets, shopping centers and most every public place. The different races are even communicating in a new way. There is more mutual respect and greater socializing between the races, which of course was almost prohibited under the apartheid system.

Yet, it isn't all rosy. There are problems. Chief among them the language problem. I speak Afrikaans and English plus a little German and Dutch but, no Xhosa or Zulu. I personally find it very frustrating that I cannot communicate properly with 75 percent of my fellow countrymen. I'm sure they feel the same way since 80 percent of the blacks here, Zhosa or Zulu, can't speak proper English. Forty eight years of segregation has left its mark. It isn't all that difficult for us to communicate, just awkward and I'm sure our children will happily eliminate that problem. Personally I

will NEVER forgive our previous government for not teaching at least one black language as a compulsory subject while I was in school.

But, notwithstanding the communication problem, we are all, black and white, trying. That is the important part. (All except the radical right wing and who worries about them anyway.)

I did say things are happening fast here and as a case in point—2 to 3 years ago all SRS was stopped in this country. Now it will resume and all laws regarding birth certificates and identity documents are being changed to accommodate both transsexuals and transgendered people making South Africa's laws among the most liberal in the world.

The way I see it, aspects of interest to crossdressers which are not covered by the South African Bill of Rights are covered by our new constitution. Things are certainly going through some very interesting developments and I'm watching all this with bated breath. One thing is for sure; at the moment South Africa certainly isn't dull! No one I know is considering emmigration. Speaking for myself, I do not want to live anywhere else in the world. Cape Town is my home and we will damn well make things work out.

South African SRS Laws

Diane included a clipping of the article from the *Cape Town Sunday Times*, June 26, that told about the new proposals concerning sex changes in South Africa. According to the *Times*, Parliament is considering the suggestion that post-operative transsexuals should be able to change the

sex on birth certificates through a simple process that would make legal recognition as a member of the opposite sex much easier. A statement from the doctor who performed SRS surgery and another statement from a doctor who examined the individual after the operation to certify completion of the process are all that would be required.

The country's leading legal expert on transsexual concerns, Professor Jerold Taitz, recommended that South African law be changed to recognize the post-operative sex of transsexuals if they meet certain conditions. Most important of these was that transsexuals should be carefully screened before SRS. The Law Commission found the Professor's recommendation to be too expensive to administer and too restrictive. They sent the proposal to Parliament without any pre-screening requirements.

If Parliament adopts the Commission's proposal it will certainly be easy for post-operative transsexuals to achieve legal recognition, but by waiving the pre-screening requirement the South African government risks problems down the road with individuals who are unsuitable for SRS. As psychiatry professor Tuviah Zabouw said in the *Times* article, "Some people want it [SRS] for the wrong reason, and persuade the doctor to go ahead. Then you have a person who is totally unable to fit in as either sex."

Good luck to South Africa's transgendered community and as we get more reports we'll pass them along.

— Ed.



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News Beat...

London. While his wife is on vacation, Gerald has been having an orgy of crossdressing. The wife gets back early, finds his drag-rags hanging all over the bathroom and throws them out the window assuming they are some bimbo's who's been living with Gerald while she was away. He makes feeble attempts to correct her assumption, but she throws him out too. He sets about finding lodgings. Enter the love interest, Julie Walters, as Gerald's new landlady, Monica. She is recently divorced and after a short while romantic sparks occur between her and Gerald. Things proceed from there and I don't want to give away too much of the fun. Let me just say this is the best film about crossdressing that I have seen. I have been through some of Gerald's experiences and I think you will find the ground familiar too.

Some aspects of the film, such as Gerald's inability to perform sexually

unless dressed, are not completely accurate, and, as with all films, parts of the plot require suspension of disbelief. These things don't detract from the enjoyment or the general atmosphere of tolerance toward crossdressing the film promotes. This is a good film to take a friend or lover to see if you are planning on coming out to them. I give **★★★★** to *Just Like A Woman* (that's 4½ Monas out of 5).

Second on the parade of pumps is *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of The Desert*. This one had Steven Spielberg a little shaken since, on the surface, the plot sounds a lot like his now-in-production *Too Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar* and both pictures have titles long enough to choke a crossdresser. The bespectacled master of special effects called Stephen Elliott, the writer/director of *Priscilla*, and requested an advance screening. Big sighs of relief were heard after the flick ran and Spielberg's people saw that even though this film has three transgen-

dered folks driving across a continent, just like *Wong Foo*; it's completely different. *Wong Foo*'s queens are driving across North America. *Priscilla*'s are driving across Australia. It's easy to spot the difference if you just concentrate.

Priscilla stars Terence Stamp as a transsexual named Bernadette. Stamp, like Adrian Pasdar, had never done drag before. He is best known in the U.S. for his role as General Zod in one of the Superman films. He called Bernadette one of his most challenging roles to date. "Normally when I'm playing a role I respond in an intellectual way, but playing Bernadette my responses were almost all completely emotional." He added, on the subject of feminine attire, "Women's apparel has to do with being uncomfortable, and playing Bernadette gave me insight into what women put up with everyday. I wouldn't recommend the bras, the high heels, the makeup, the heavy earrings, or trying to put on stockings with false nails." I guess it all depends on how motivated you are.



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Right girls? Adrian Pasdar complained about heavy earrings too. Haven't these boys heard about aluminum?

The distributors of *Just Like a Woman* and *Priscilla* contacted Renaissance offering free tickets. *Just Like a Woman's* distributor also sent copies of the film's poster to make up for the small amount of tickets-4. (Oh boy, door prizes for the Holiday Party!) *Priscilla's* distributor gave us seats at a special screening. The important point is, both of them thought of us. Even though they are looking for a way to make the screenings as exciting as possible it's great that they called us to bring out the girls. That's recognition.

Let's hope when the Tim Burton directed, Johnny Depp starring, *Ed Wood* hits the theaters we'll be thought of again. "Go back for popcorn later girls. Ya gotta get a seat quick at these screenings!"

Crossdressing Schoolbreak

Now here's a CBS Schoolbreak Special currently in production that is definitely a teenage crossdresser

fantasy. The show is called *My Summer as a Girl*. Doesn't that just send shivers up your spine? I had that fantasy as a child. I even remember a comic strip that used that plot. (I don't think it's a phantom memory but you know how dim an older woman's memories can be.)

This production will probably air some afternoon in the fall. Its a comedy (of course) about a boy who disguises himself as a girl to get a summer job as a chambermaid. Backstage called it "Tootsie" for teens. I expect we'll see all the standard stuff, boy dressed as girl attracts attention of guy. Guy asks "girl" out. Big yucks as "she" tries to fend off the guy's advances. There will most likely be a love interest of the opposite sex with all those awkward scenes where the "girl" has to hide her attraction to the girl, etc. Oh well, it could be fun if they do it right. Check your papers after the fall season starts and set those VCRs girls. It just keeps blinking 12:00!

Media Watch

I try to keep my eye on how magazines are treating the transgendered and people send me clippings of the things I miss. Here are a few things that have come in from you, the readers.

Dee Smith sent me a page from the June issue of *Mademoiselle*. It was the Sex Q&A, (I thought that was T&A?) and the first question was from a woman whose man was a "Cross-Dressing Lover." Blanche Vernon, the Q&A columnist, gave a good answer to the question of whether the questioner should be worried about her boyfriend's desire to get dressed up and then make love. She gave a brief background on crossdressing and then told the writer to figure out if she can accept it, "because repeated studies show a transvestite isn't going to change. All your disapproval will do is drive him into the closet—probably with his

continued on page 18

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Roger's Notebook

The Final Chapter

by Victoria K. Powell

In the spirit of Roger's *Notebook* and as Roger's wife, I would like to share with the community two philosophies that Roger felt the transgendered culture may want to continue to integrate into their lifestyle. They are unity and the acceptance of one's sexuality.

Roger felt that unity is an important factor to the success of the community. I think this may be summed up by a letter from a crossdresser who wrote to Roger expressing his feelings that "We are our own worst enemy." His meaning was that the disparity that surfaces in the community is destructive and acts to divide - and ultimately diffuse - the concerns. Roger would have liked the community to come together under a united banner that can share differences and be enriched by them.

The acceptance of one's sexuality is a bit more complex and I will illustrate by example, just as Roger often did. In the transgendered culture - particularly the transvestite or crossdresser - there appears to be a denial of personal sexuality. When this happens, the desire to emulate the female gender takes on an anti-sexual fascination, focusing just on the visual image. The male's self-

sexuality tends not to be integrated because it is not identified as normal under the circumstances. Therein lies the conflict that many crossdressers encounter. The linking of the feminine clothing and image to the socialization and the sexuality imprint of the "Man." Roger would have liked each person to reach inside their psyche and celebrate one's own expression of sexuality.

This is a personal struggle that each person must wage on his own terms; however, compromise is a necessary ingredient too, especially in relationships. Roger would have wanted all persons - male and female - in this transgendered sphere to be happy with themselves and to realize their true sexuality by listening to their hearts and reaching out for help in both the community and the professional environment.

Just one last note about Roger. Not many persons in the transgendered field knew of Roger's "other" profession as a respected senior engineer at IBM for 33 years. His degrees in physics and engineering enabled him to work on patents, computer designs and projects, and to act as an international liaison for IBM. Roger's memorial celebration on April 14 was attended by persons from the wide spectrum

that was Roger's life. I asked seven persons to speak, addressing his diverse interests. I asked Dr. Sheila Kirk to represent the transgender community and I am grateful for her most gracious and dignified words. In closing, I would like to share a comment by one of Roger's colleagues from IBM, who said, "And I thought he belonged to us..." I thought that a very poignant statement to describe Roger. I believe that he belonged to all of "us," and he would like this remembrance.

Comments? You may contact Victoria at P.O. Box 3445, Poughkeepsie NY 12603. Copyright © 1994 by Victoria K. Powell. This column may be reprinted in any non-profit organization's newsletter if the name and address information is included. Other publications must obtain written approval. Copies of reprints should be sent to Victoria.

The editors of *Renaissance News & Views* would like to thank Ms. Powell for choosing us as one of the two publications to print the final chapter of *Roger's Notebook*. It is an honor and a privilege we humbly accept.

Roger Peo may be gone, but we doubt he will be forgotten. His contribution to the transgender community in the form of *Roger's Notebook* remains as a testament to his dedication and work on our behalf.



Book Nook

The world of American transsexualism is changing in profound ways. The first tribal elders remain important figures, in fact as well as in myth, but for the most part they have made their impact. The next generation of leaders, now really the gender old-guard, is composed of the people who founded important organizations and wrote or edited publications that effected change and defined a movement; many of them are, appropriately, consolidating their gains for themselves and for

their community. A new group of movers and shakers is coming to power in a radically altered world, where gender concerns are part of mainstream dialogue.

In this world Dallas Denny is a figure of value, and of growing importance — not only because she is founder and director of the American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), publisher of *Chrysalis*, one of the most important contemporary magazines devoted to gender concerns, and was recently elected to the Board of Directors of the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies. No, Denny is important because she has

something important to say, the willingness to say it openly, and the ability to say it in ways other people can hear. *Identity Management in Transsexualism* makes all these facets of her value clear.

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William A. Henkin is a board certified sex therapist and a licensed marriage and family therapist who specializes in alternate sex and gender concerns. He conducts his private therapy practice in San Francisco.




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own extensive wardrobe of dresses, lacy underwear and wigs.”

Not bad Blanche. It's just what I would have told her. Kudos and a Rennie award to *Mademoiselle*.

Did you know there is a magazine devoted to catalog buying? Talk about market focus. It's *Catalog Age* and Melissa Franks sent in a column called Update. I can't tell you what issue it was since Melissa didn't tell me.

(Please, if you send something make sure you write the issue month and name of the source on the clipping along with your name.)

Update was all about how the large-size market has always been a hot segment for a few catalog merchandisers but it was often hard for large women to get good large size accessories. Now a new catalog has stepped forward to serve those who need a

bigger designer belt or longer neckline. It's called *Right Touch* and although no contact address is included I bet if you have bought anything from some of the larger size catalogs you will probably be getting a copy of *Right Touch* in the fall.

Otherwise look for ads in *Big Beautiful Woman* magazine.

“Wait a minute Angela, what's this got to do with how magazines treat transgendered folks?” Well, the last paragraph of the column contains this: “Although she [Judith Tsanos, the woman who launched the new catalog] is confident the plus-size audience will be both a loyal and a lucrative market, Tsanos wouldn't mind targeting a secondary market of cross-dressers, because the *Right Touch's* offerings would be ideal for men looking for women's accessories in large sizes. It may be a challenge to find them, she notes, but nearly 5% of the male population are cross-dressers.”

There ya go! More public accep-

tance for guys in dresses. I mean, to this woman we're a market niche. Have your Visa or Mastercard ready and start ordering from this lady before midnight tonight.

After two positives, here's a negative. I had previously reported the controversy in Arizona over a course in transsexuality. The Arizona governor thought it was “an obscene gesture” and “an insult to the taxpayers...”

Jessica Brandon sent further details she found in the June 14th *National Enquirer*. I found out the person who taught the class was himself a transsexual. Everything okay so far but what kind of slant did the *Enquirer* take on the story?

They called the teacher, a grad student named Thurin Schminke, “a bizarre transsexual” and the large red headline blared that students were required to dress as the opposite sex for the class. The fact that Schminke was a TS teaching a class on the subject was termed incredible and the

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Held at the Wayne Counseling Center (where Renaissance Greater Phila. meets) with Dr. Lee Etscovitz, Director of Human Dimensions, an organization specializing in gender education. Dr. Etscovitz is also the Renaissance National Librarian and a former Professor of Human Behavior at Drexel University.

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Enquirer called the crossdressing requirement, "a slap in the face to normal standards of decency."

To be fair to the *Enquirer*, they did include comments by the teacher and one of the students that were more positive. The student, a Mexican-born young man said it was a shock to crossdress because of his upbringing in a macho culture but, "I think it might help me become open-minded."

The President of the university was quoted as saying, "...selecting topics to teach based on popularity will not advance knowledge of the social sciences." And, reading the *National Enquirer* could lead to brain damage. Their accentuation of the "bizarre" and "outrageous" aspects of the story outweighs any feeble attempts at journalistic integrity. Boo *National Enquirer*. Their final slam comes in the last paragraph quote from Sid Taylor, research director of the National Taxpayer's Foundation. Good old Sid won't be mistaken for an open-

minded human being any time soon. "This not only wastes students time, but warps their minds with crazy information about wacko sexual perversions. It's an outrage!"

In another media note. Stella Bamvil alerted me that *48 Hours* was having a show on gender and they would be featuring a gender-swapping couple. I set my VCR and found the couple were the same New York actors who dressed as the opposite sex for the *Ladies Home Journal* and the Maury Povich Show. I guess they're making a career of it. They are hired by these programs to do this and they have to at least be getting scale for each appearance. Probably over-scale if they have a good agent.

This time we saw them shopping for their outfits and then getting made up and going about their business. The one interesting point that came up in this piece was the fact that the reporter questioned people about what they thought. At the close of the piece ,

after the "woman" had walked by two construction workers the reporter asked them what they thought. One of them said, "Beautiful." When pressed for further comment he added, "Oh, it's a guy." Remember girls, they've seen it all in New York City. Don't even think about passing.

Finally, word on the street is that *NBC Dateline* is working on a show about transgenderists, the Virginia Prince defined transgenderists. The show is in production now and will air sometime in November, just is time for sweeps. Isn't that special!

Well kittens, its time for this finger weary queen to get her beauty rest and close with a quote. This month's quote was contributed by Danielle Lynn.

"I was always looking outside myself for strength and confidence, but it comes from within. It is there all the time" -Anna Freud.



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Love, Nancy

A Significant Other Speaks

by Dee Jay Smith

My husband is a transvestite. He shared this information with me before we were married. The first time I went out with him "dressed" I felt very awkward. I had previously only known him as a masculine, handsome, kind gentleman. I wasn't quite sure who this "individual" was; dressed as a female with legs shaved, face closely shaven, lipstick, fingernail polish, ruffles, ribbons and bows. "She" certainly was very different from the man I had been dating. She enjoyed silky, sensual clothes, sexy high heels, jewelry and makeup. It took well over an hour for the transition. She enjoyed herself so much that I had a hard time expressing my embarrassment/awkwardness while accompanying her. So, I didn't. None of our personal friends know about this. It is as if we enter another world when we go out. We frequent nice restaurants, bars and clubs, some straight, some lesbian. I have come to like some of his "unique" friends made through this network.

My biggest dread is that when we are out some evening we will bump into friends who will recognize me and I will have to introduce my partner. Or that one of our neighbors will appear as we are leaving in the car and want to stop to say hello. What would I do? I have thought about it a lot and have come up with no satisfactory solution. I have many questions unanswered. Why is he like this? Nurture? Nature? Why are individuals of "different orientation" looked upon by society as "strange"? Homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites; why can't they be accepted as themselves? Why, indeed, do I feel as if I must hide this information? What would happen if some of my friends did find out? I tell myself that if they are real friends they

will understand and accept... but I don't believe it for one minute. So, I don't risk the alienation that might follow. I want to support my husband in his adventures because he gets so much enjoyment out of it. We go to many events where transvestites dress very elaborately and expensively and perform lip-sync to tapes of famous female entertainers. I am impressed with the style, sincerity and skill of these performances. Only if you are personally involved can you appreciate the time, money and effort that goes into finding clothes that are beautiful and appropriate, getting them to fit, learning about makeup application and eventually, after getting up the nerve, performing in public. My hat goes off to those who succeed.

I think he/she would appreciate it if I would dress as a man to escort her but I draw the line there. I enjoy being a female too much to make that transition. On rare occasions, I have paid for our drinks but I don't really like even doing that. I don't mind opening doors for "her" because I want "her" to know the nice feeling of being treated like a lady.

One of my worst evenings was when someone in a lesbian bar came up to us and said how great we both looked and that no one would know. He had assumed that I too was a crossdresser. That hurt!

On occasion, my spouse travels for his company. He often carries with him an extra suitcase with "her" items. I know that he will look up a place to dress and entertain himself. Oops, I mean herself. I think she enjoys seeing if she can get picked up. She likes to dress in sexy little tights, short skirts, peek-a-boo lace and slinky slacks with long, flowing hair. I worry and wonder... if she does get picked up, what

would happen? I don't *think* they would land in bed, but I just don't know. It would upset me if they did.

There is a picture in our bedroom of my "female" husband in a wedding gown that I made. I know he enjoys wearing it, but I wish the picture wasn't there. I don't want to have to explain it to any of his or my kids but he has made it clear that he wants it there, so it stays. The one time that my daughter-in-law asked who she was I just said that it was a friend of my husbands and changed the subject. I wonder if she knows.

My husband is basically a very conservative person, but money is no object when it comes to his "female" self. While he frequents second hand stores for much of his apparel, it is not unusual for him to order elaborate, beautiful and expensive clothes and jewelry from catalogs. Once he spent \$100 for a wig when we were traveling together and we were planning to go out and realized he had left his wig at home. He spends more on his female self than his male self.

I'm not complaining. He is kind and generous with me and I love him dearly. I just question his priorities. But they are *his* priorities and he is entitled to them. When we go out together and he is dressed in a business suit, shirt and tie, I am the proudest woman around. I love dancing with him at wedding receptions and gala affairs when he is his male self. When we come home from one of our evenings out when he is crossdressed and he takes off the wig, feminine clothes, jewelry and make up and crawls in bed with me it is wonderful to have my *man* back!



Adventures In Purge-atory

By Jessica Charlene Brandon

Like most members of our unique fraternity (sorry girls, sorority) we've all had moments when guilt or other circumstances forced us to do the purge-thing at least once, perhaps twice. For me it's been a couple dozen or so thanks to my employer, the United States Navy.

Two years after discovering the wonderful joys of women's clothing I enlisted in the Navy. I had no desire to go to college and my late mother did not have the money. Purge number one came in July of 1976 when I went off to boot camp in Illinois to learn to be a sailor. This meant a separation from my mother's wardrobe for nearly two months while I drilled at all hours of the day, sat bored in classrooms for hours on end, got precious little sleep and ate the absolute worst food ever conceived by man. Believe me, you haven't lived until you've had powdered eggs. After you've had them you'll thank God you're still living!

Being new to crossdressing and dumb as sin about it (How dumb? So dumb I didn't even know what it was called until around 1983.) I had no idea I was experiencing my first purge, all I knew was it left me sad and depressed because I was away from the harmless hobby that brought me such pleasure. But, as boot camp progressed, I learned to live without my feminine finery and was no longer in a funk because I couldn't dress. Predictably, when I came home on leave, whatever mental balance I had attained while away went right out the window when I laid eyes on my mother's closet and in nothing flat I was back to my old crossdressing ways and happier for it.

The first of my longer purges started in December of the same year when I was sent to my first ship stationed at Pearl Harbor. I wouldn't see home again until July. Two months was one thing, but nearly eight was

downright murder. Early on, I thought I could repress my urges, but I discovered I couldn't. It got so bad that on a weekend off I rented a room at a fleabag hotel in Honolulu, bought a dress, wig and shoes at a thrift shop and holed up in my room with my feminine wares for the entire two days. I ended up throwing the stuff away after checking out because I couldn't take it back on the ship with me.

As it turned out that was nothing compared to the longest ever purge in my life, *one whole year!* In August of 1977, our ship was reassigned to Yokosuka, Japan. That's not exactly around the corner from the old hometown. I went on leave in mid-December for thirty days of holiday fun and private crossdressing binges. When I returned to my ship in mid-January 1978 I would be stuck there until December. The withdrawal symptoms left me a wreck for weeks and, I had absolutely nothing what-so-ever to relieve my urges.

The lengthy purge forced me to reevaluate my hobby as I saw it becoming an obsession, an obsession I had to control since I wouldn't have the opportunity to dress or even repeat that weekend in Honolulu. If I didn't, I probably would have snapped. I was that stressed out. Learning to cope without women's clothing wasn't easy but over time I succeeded. Of course, not being able to dress didn't stop me from admiring well-dressed women I saw in my travels and invariably I'd picture myself in their clothes. Hell, I even envisioned myself decked out in a kimono like Madame Butterfly! Imagine, if you will, a black, 6' 3" geisha girl. The mind boggles!

Naturally, when I returned from Japan one of the first things I did was raid mother's closet but not quite as rabidly as a year or two earlier. The cold turkey purges helped to curb the constant, uncontrollable need to dress.

In the years that followed there

would be more lengthy periods away from home and wardrobe as the Navy sent me to Norfolk and from there to the Mediterranean for major deployments as long as six months at a time. I came to accept this, primarily because I had no choice. However, the forced purges taught me to really enjoy the brief dressing episodes I managed to squeeze in between periods underway.

Now, unlike most of our sisters who wear femme underwear beneath their male clothes while at work, it's impossible on board ship because living conditions are unbearably tight and privacy is non-existent. I can't even do it on shore duty since the Navy has unannounced urinalysis tests (nicknamed "Operation Golden Flow") to check for illegal drug use. This procedure entails being escorted into a lavatory with an officer or enlisted person of a higher rank who actually watches you fill a one ounce bottle. Since women's underwear don't have fly fronts you can guess the sort of unpleasant ramifications I'd face when I pulled down my trousers.

The bottom line to this rambling monologue is that I decided on the Navy for my career so I had to live with the consequences and the hardships that came with my uniform. As my career nears its end—I retire in 1996 after twenty years, God willing—I think back to all my countless adventures in the Navy, both good and bad, but all of them extremely memorable. All things considered I wouldn't have traded those experiences for anything in the world. In a way the Navy unwittingly helped me to strike a balance in my life about my crossdressing. I discovered that a purge or two, or several can actually be good for the soul.

