

Renaissance News



Volume 5, No. 7

Vision - Integrity - Quality

July, 1991

Do you believe in MAGC?

Officers of the the three Renaissance chapters and the national organization certainly do.

MAGC stands for the "Mid-Atlantic Gender Coalition," a loose confederation proposed for transgender groups from New England to West Virginia. Similar coalitions exist in upstate New York, the southeastern United States, and in the Midwest. Recently, the boards of the Renaissance chapters and the national board approved participation in MAGC.

"With the continued growth and proliferation of support organizations serving our unique community, there is a challenging opportunity to form a coalition of kindred groups in this region," said Alison Laing, member of the Renaissance board and one of the originators of the MAGC concept. She has been joined in this effort by JoAnn Roberts, also a Renaissance board member.

However, both stressed that the MAGC concept does not belong to any one organization.

Roberts said that possible goals for MAGC include the exchange of resource information, regional conventions like the annual Be-All weekend, coordination of political and outreach activities, and a regional speakers bureau.

"The opportunity to work together for our common yet uncommon concerns cannot but strengthen us," Laing said.

She stressed that by participating in MAGC, individual groups will not lose their independence.

"It is our intention that this coa-

lition will not in any way infringe on the integrity or autonomy of any member organization," she said.

In addition to the Renaissance organization, the groups contacted are the Connecticut Outreach Society; Long Island Femme Expression; The Gathering (New York City), Girls' Night Out (Brooklyn, N.Y.), Monmouth/Ocean County (N.J.) Transgender; TransPitt (Pittsburgh), the Baltimore/Wash-

ington Gender Alliance; My Choice (Baltimore), the District of Columbia Education Association; Virginia's Secret (Richmond, Va.), and Trans-West Virginia.

Several groups have expressed interest in MAGC, but so far none except the Renaissance organizations have officially approved participation. According to Laing, when a few more groups sign on, an initial organizational meeting will be held.

WHO still says we're sick?

The latest edition of the World Health Organization (WHO) *International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10)* will not list homosexuality as a mental disorder, but it will continue to include both transvestism and transsexualism under the category of "gender identity disorders."

And as long as transvestites and transsexuals seek therapy, the *ICD* — as well as its American cousin, the *DSM* — will classify those behaviors as a mental disorder, an expert has told the Renaissance News.

The elimination of homosexuality as a disease came after years of intensive lobbying by gay and lesbian activists and the American Psychological Association (APA).

Since 1975, APA has been on record as saying that homosexuality per se "implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability or general social and vocational abilities." In 1987, the APA issued a policy statement opposing the clas-

sification of homosexuality as a disease.

Yet neither the APA nor the American Psychiatric Association holds the same opinion on transgendered behavior. The psychiatric association's *DSM-III-R (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual)* presently categorizes transvestism and transsexualism as a mental disorder.

Marjorie Dam, a WHO spokesperson, said the change in the *ICD*'s classification of homosexuality was probably prompted "because we have more knowledge" about sexual orientation.

However, a therapist and Ivy League university professor told the *Renaissance News* that the decision to drop homosexuality from the earlier version of the *DSM* was "political." He said that among other purposes, the manual is used by insurance companies to authorize third-party payments for therapy. If a condition isn't listed as a disease in the *DSM*, then a therapist

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CHAPTER INFORMATION...

New Jersey

South Jersey: Kelly [REDACTED], chapter leader. Write Renaissance SJ, c/o P.O. Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ 08330. Meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, Inc. 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee, N.J. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Call (609) 641-3782.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia area: Dina Amberle, chapter leader. Write Renaissance PHL, Box AD, Bensalem, PA 19020. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia, Pa. Summer hours: meeting starts at 9:00 p.m. For information, call (215) 946-8887.

Pennsylvania

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Brenda Davidson, chapter leader. Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets the first Saturday of the month. Presently, the chapter lacks a permanent meeting site, so call (717) 780-1578 for latest information and meeting location. The June meeting will be at 8:00 p.m.

Pennsylvania

Reading: The National Board has revoked this chapter's charter. If your membership there has not expired, please contact National Secretary Susan [REDACTED], P.O. Box 552, King of Prussia, PA 19046.

AFFILIATE INFORMATION...

The board of directors has approved a new policy for the development of chapters and affiliates.

- Any group that wishes to become a Renaissance chapter must be incorporated as a non-profit institution in their home state (except Pa.) before asking for chapter status.

- Any group that wishes to become a Renaissance affiliate will pay a small annual fee for services normally afforded to chapters for free. Affiliates have no legal connection to Renaissance and remain autonomous. Services include unlimited

access to reference publications and newsletter copy.

Write for details to Alison Laing, Co-director of Outreach, P.O. Box 552, King of Prussia, Pa. 19046.

Current affiliated organizations are:

- Monmouth/Ocean Transgenderists, PO Box 1326, Brick, NJ 08723

For current information about national Renaissance events and activities, call (215) 630-1437 24 hours a day.

AND, DON'T FORGET ABOUT...

- Background Papers** are available for \$1 each plus \$.25 postage for each pair ordered. Eight papers are available: 1-Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing, 2-Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing, 3-PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others, 4-The Matter of Children, 5-An Annotated Bibliography, 6-Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View, 7-What Is Renaissance?, and 8-AIDS & HIV Safety and Ethics.

- The Pen Pal Project. If you

are willing to write letters to pen pals, please inform Maryann Kirkland or write to the office, c/o Dept. PP.

- A gift of only \$6 gives a transgendered inmate 12 issues of the Renaissance News. Please help provide this needed support to our sisters in prison.

- A few copies of the deluxe edition of Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* are still available at \$39.95 postpaid. Make checks payable to Renaissance.

Renaissance News

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Articles must be submitted for publication one month in advance.

For current information about Renaissance, call (215) 630-1437 24 hours a day.

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the gender community at large.

Calendar of Events JULY

6th So. Jersey Chapter

6th Ren. LSV Chapter

20th Gr. Phila. Chapter:
Lingerie Party

AUGUST

3rd So. Jersey Chapter

3rd Ren. LSV Chapter

17th Gr. Phila. Chapter

SEPTEMBER

7th So. Jersey Chapter

7th LSV Chapter

19th -22nd Paradise in the
Poconos

21st Gr. Phila. Chapter

JoAnn Altman Stringer™ **SURVIVAL**

On a Saturday night some months ago, my husband and I had just sat down to a scrumptious dinner of fried chicken when the phone rang. My cousin Sandi was on the other end from California. "JoAnn," she said, "I don't know how to tell you this, but your father died today."

That was in January. It had been a cold, stormy day here in Colorado — kind of appropriate for the occasion of this dreadful news. She explained that earlier that afternoon he just simply had lain on the bed and passed away quietly. My golden brown chicken thigh sat on my plate the rest of the evening, my dinner spoiled by her news.

Calm at First

Immediately upon hearing those fateful words, I was calm and collected. After all, it had been nearly three years since I last talked with him on the phone, and over six years since I last saw him. But a couple of minutes after I put the receiver down, tears flowed like a river in spring flood. Joseph, my husband, put his arms around me trying to understand my pain. I heard myself saying, "That damn man! That damn man!" At that precise moment all I felt was a universe full of confusion. My feelings whirled around me like our infamous spring tornadoes in this Rocky Mountain state.

My blood family was gone except for my sister who does not communicate with me. Seven years before, Dad and I stood by Mother's bedside the moment she succumbed to the ravages of cancer. At that time it was unbelievable that I would ever get over her death. In fact, I took her loss much more deeply than my father's passing. On that fateful Saturday in January, my parents, who had breathed life into my being, were gone from the living world. I was alone.

The death of my father was not wholly unexpected, and had been

something that I had thought about for nearly two years. He was about 74 years old when he died. He had five heart attacks during his lifetime (the first being at age 17), a quadruple bypass, a stroke, and worsening Alzheimer's disease for his last year. Sandi told me that during the last month his health had gone downhill rapidly. Considering how my mother died in a grueling two-year war against cancer of the colon, his death was a Godsend — quick and painless in his sleep. He deserved at least that.

My confusion sprang from turbulent emotion over the last five years. It was during this period that I underwent transition, was excommunicated from the military, took the blade of the scalpel through sexual reassignment surgery, and remarried. Before I resigned my Army commission, I told Dad what was going on with me. Since his roots and beliefs went back to the actual Old West, it was not surprising he didn't quite understand. But he said he loved me, and he did try to cross that field of transition in my moccasins.

Sometimes Accepting

For the next three years, he vacillated between acceptance and rejection. Sometimes he called me JoAnn, sometime my old name. He never acknowledged my husband at all. I feared for the holidays when I could expect that phone call for someone who didn't exist and the obligatory card and check made out to my former self. They were things I hid from my husband. Always, always my father was on the fence about what I had done with my life.

Then one day, I sat down and wrote Dad a scathing letter putting it all on the line, right out in the open. Four years was enough for me. I could no longer be the peacemaker, the politician, the one to look out for his feelings. I said that

either he accept me (and my husband) and what I had done with my life, or our relationship would be forever ended, our communications would be cut. I never heard from him again.

He Had My Love

Here was a man whom I had loved for the first 34 years of my life, someone who had told me stories and had always been there when I needed money. Yet, he very rarely showed any outward sign of love or affection to me. Certainly, he had never seen the my female traits that the rest of the family had seen over the years. Maybe he HAD seen them, but never believed it. During the last three years my love for him evolved into a conditional love, and then, sadly, hardly any love at all. The erosion of my feelings was the result of my putting out 150 percent to smooth the situation between us, and his putting out only 5 percent. I became tired and weary of the fight. I could no longer support what wasn't there.

When Sandi told me of his death, I cried tormented tears because I didn't know whether to feel remorse over his death or relief he was finally gone from my life. As I write this, I still don't know exactly what I feel, or what I should feel. After all, he *was* my father! But where is it written parents and children must always get along? I kind of feel guilty for not having done more to cement the bond between us. But I don't know what more I could have done, and the situation between us was making me a psychotic wreck.

Consider Your Costs

This column is more than my mindless wanderings about my father's death. It is meant to make you think of the costs you may incur on your journey into the gender jungle. Losing your parents or siblings because of your transgender

(continued on page 5)

Mayor's sexual minorities commission seeks volunteers for speakers bureau

Continuing the fight against ignorance, discrimination and oppression, the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission for Sexual Minorities announced the formation of a speakers bureau of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons who will make presentations to community groups, churches, schools, classes and other groups on the issues of heterosexism and homophobia.

The bureau, sponsored by the commission's Heterosexism and Homophobia Workgroup, will attempt to change the attitudes and beliefs of our heterosexist society through education, understanding and acceptance of diversity.

A workshop on heterosexism and homophobia will be held all day, Saturday, September 28 at a location to be announced. People inter-

ested in joining the speakers bureau will be required to attend another session on Sunday morning, September 29. The second session will focus on facilitating skills

and operating guidelines for the bureau.

Contact the Mayor's Commission at 215-686-1545 to register for the workshops.

Frisco group supports F-to-Ms

"FTM" is a peer group exclusively for female-to-male transsexuals and transvestites.

With headquarters in San Francisco, the organization has a mailing list of more than 200 persons around the world. This includes females who are only interested in crossdressing, those who are considering making the change to males, and female-to-males who have been living as men for many years, some more than a decade. In addition, the group also welcomes

women and men who who are interested in meeting female-to-males for social interactions.

Since 1986, FTM has been holding get-togethers in the San Francisco area every three months. Approximately 20 female-to-males attend these functions.

The organization also publishes a newsletter which is distributed free to members.

For more information about FTM, write 1827 Haight St., # 164, San Francisco, CA 94117.

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Renaissance adopts drug, alcohol policy for meetings, social events

After a minor incident at a chapter meeting, the Renaissance board of directors has adopted a policy on the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol.

The new policy specifically prohibits the use of all illegal or controlled substances (i.e., drugs) at all Renaissance functions, regardless of type. Furthermore, any use of alcohol at any Renaissance mem-

bership meeting is specifically prohibited. The judicious use of alcoholic beverages is permitted at Renaissance-sponsored social functions.

A visitor at a Renaissance membership meeting who over-imbibed from his own supply of alcohol precipitated the new policy. Chapters leaders may now use the national policy as grounds for denying en-

trance to, or ejecting, anyone who is obviously intoxicated or impaired from the use of drugs or alcohol.

People who might abuse drugs and alcohol at a Renaissance meeting jeopardize the entire organization. The national bylaws provide for the expulsion of any member who damages the reputation of Renaissance.

Change proposed to Hate Crimes Law will protect transgendered persons

The Pennsylvania legislature is about to consider an amendment to the present Pennsylvania Hate Crimes Law.

The amendment, HB 1353, will add penalties for hate crimes committed against sexual minorities in the state of Pennsylvania. The amendment will define hate crimes are those committed because of a victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation.

The amendment is sponsored by State Rep. Babette Josephs (D-Phila.). Josephs introduced an amendment last year that added only sexual orientation; it was defeated by a mere 20 votes.

Jurists believe that the addition of "perceived sexual orientation" will give transgendered people a measure of protection.

"While the ideal amendment would specifically include transgendered people, there is little chance that it would pass in that form," said Paula Jordan Sinclair, who, as a member of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission for Sexual Minorities, lobbied Josephs to include the words "perceived sexual orientation" in her amendment. "Most attacks and assaults against transvestites and transsexuals are due to homophobia," Sinclair said.

"It doesn't really matter if we are gay or lesbian; our attackers believe we are. Therefore, the amendment will provide important protection."

"Once the legislature accepts the idea of protecting people because of their sexual orientation, there is a better chance that they will favorably consider specifically protecting transgendered people as well," said Angela Gardner, who had joined Sinclair in the lobbying efforts by speaking at a town meeting called by the commission last year.

While the 1990 bill had little pre-introduction publicity, the 1991 bill has garnered much support across the state and is expected to pass if lawmakers know that constituents support it.

For information on how to show

support for the amendment, call the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission for Sexual Minorities (686-1545) or Andrea Friedman of Rep. Josephs office (977-7732).

It may be too late...

Liebfrau Productions is compiling a collection of recipes and tips related to drag queen lifestyles, dating, and beauty. The book will be called *The Transvestites's Cookbook and Guide to Sensible Living*.

The book will be high camp, and contributors are asked to include their drag names and tell something about themselves.

However, there is one problem: the deadline was June 30. But it may be worth a try. Send it to Liebfrau Productions, 200 St. Philip, Box 301, New Orleans, LA 70116-2726.

Survival

(continued from page 3)

issues means losing them forever—and forever means even after death.

Sandi tried to comfort me by saying, "Now he will finally know the truth about you." Maybe so. I will ask him when I travel that path. Death becomes the final letting go when all truths remain black and white. As living is part of life, so is death. For the transsexual, death can assume even darker meaning

than it has for someone unaffected by our dreaded ilk.

When my mother died, I was at her bedside holding her hand. It was my chance to say good-bye. I couldn't do that for my father. If I couldn't share that with him, let me share it with you, if I may.

I loved you, and I'm sorry for what occurred between us. Good-bye, Father.

THE *Paula Jordan Sinclair* NEWSQUEEN™

We did something last month that we seldom engage in — travel. We met many courageous and outstanding members of our community in Cleveland and Toronto. Yet there are other “stand up” girls we certainly would have liked to meet...

Drag queens in the nation's capital flipped their wigs last month when organizers of the Gay Pride Day activities slighted female impersonation when they put together a show to mark the 22nd anniversary of the birth of the modern lesbian and gay rights movement.

“Out of six hours of entertainment, only 20 minutes are devoted to drag,” complained Jeffrey Pendleton, a Washington, D.C. female impersonator. “Gay Pride is supposed to be a celebration of the Stonewall riots. Drag queens played a major role in Stonewall.”

Pendleton is looking forward to next year's festival, and is forming a group called “Drag United” to address what he calls discrimination and misconceptions people hold toward female impersonators.

♣ ♣ ♣

Miami Beach queens have likewise begun outreach activities, but with less success in breaking down stereotypes. The city's *New Times* magazine calls the Palace restaurant the “best place to spot drag queens on Sunday mornings.”

Says the magazine, “An exhausting, all night session of dancing and Ecstasy can produce one hungry drag queen. Make that numerous hungry drag queens. And what a scream watching the tourists at the Palace spit up their omelettes when these magnificent creatures open their mouths to speak, usually in a loud voice, usually more than one at a time, usually in Spanish, usually something profane.”

♣ ♣ ♣

Drag queens in Las Vegas have an informal outreach program by taking their message into the streets, or rather into the men's

restrooms of a casino.

Several queens attended a recent AIDS fundraiser at the Sands. After one queen left the restroom, one man said to another, “Man, if my wife looked like that, I'd be pumping her all the time!”

But not all contacts were so positive. As another queen was using the facilities, two young men came in, spotted her, and quickly exited.

♣ ♣ ♣

Speaking of queens, Elizabeth II's visit to the United States in May has given her many tales to tell when she gets back home. But she probably won't be telling this one...

When introduced to cinematographer Dean Semler (*Dances With Wolves*), the queen observed that “I have a brother-in-law who is a photographer.” Semler replied, “Oh, how terribly coincidental. I have a brother-in-law who's a queen.”

According to Semler, Elizabeth moved on without another word.

♣ ♣ ♣

John F. Kennedy Jr. was much less squeamish with the idea of crossdressing.

The scion of this country's only royal family recently lost his cool with a veteran *paparazzo* outside Kennedy's Manhattan home. He confronted the celebrity photographer, and asked, “What the [bleep] is going on? Do you think I'm going to come out in drag and beat you up?”

♣ ♣ ♣

Philadelphia Inquirer columnist Clark DeLeon invoked crossdressing imagery to explain to his readers how he felt as a life-long Democrat voting in the Republican primary in May.

“Today is election day and for some reason I feel as if I'm about to replace Dustin Hoffman as Tootsie. I mean if my voting in the Republican primary doesn't qualify as cross dressing (sic), what does? I couldn't feel any more conspicuous walking into the Republican voting booth

today if I were wearing four-inch heels.”

He concluded the item with a reference to being in drag in a different sort of booth, a reference that probably few people other than crossdressers understood.

“Yeah, this voting Republican is going to be an entirely different experience. It'll be the first time I ever had to sit down just to vote.”

If Clark would *really* like to experience crossing the line — say for Halloween — we know where he can turn for assistance. We guess he is a size 18 or 20, but we could find *something* in our closet.

♣ ♣ ♣

Actor Scott Bakula is a third celebrity who seems to be comfortable with crossdressing. The star of *Quantum Leap*, who often finds himself plopped down in a woman's identity (and wardrobe) has been named International Man/Woman of the Year by the Hollywood Radio and Television Society.

If Bakula would really get transformed — instead of merely looking like a man in a dress — maybe he could amaze and astound tourists in Las Vegas and Miami as well.

♣ ♣ ♣

If prospective director Tommy Tune has his way, Kevin Kline, Jeff Goldblum, Donny Osmond, Arsenio Hall, and Don Johnson will not only be wowing them in Miami and Las Vegas, but all over when the film version of *La Cage aux Folles* is finally made. Tune wants Kline for the role of ZaZa (opposite Richard Kline as Alban), Goldblum, Osmond, and Johnson for crossdressing chorus girls, and Hall as ZaZa's campy maid.

♣ ♣ ♣

One story we hope doesn't soon become a movie is yet another tale about a transgendered person with a murderous streak.

The new novel, *Chicago Loop*, by Paul Theroux, tells the kinky and sordid story of yuppie couple Bar-

THE *Paula Jordan Sinclair* NEWSQUEEN™

bara and Parker. They seek out erotic sex games in flea bag hotels where one night Parker kills a woman named Sharon during a sadomasochistic frenzy. The memory of the killing drives Parker close to madness. He become so obsessed with Sharon that he literally becomes the dead woman, and experiences her fears, humiliation, and degradation in Chicago's South Side.

Naturally, book reviewers are calling Parker a "transsexual."

♣ ♣ ♣

If movie producers are so intent on making films about transsexuals and criminal activity, why don't they contact Erika Erinwulf of Houston? According to a report from a supermarket tabloid, Erinwulf chases crack dealers out of her neighborhood armed with a raccoon.

"So far I've collared about 20 people for the police, she said. "But Baby (her pet raccoon) and I won't stop until these people are out of here."

"I used to carry a .44 Colt handgun in my purse," said Erinwulf, who began living as a woman two years ago. "But it was stolen in a burglary. Now, I take Baby with me when I drive crack dealers away."

The article quotes a Houston police officer as saying Erinwulf "goes places where a lot of police officers won't go." Although the police department confirmed that Erinwulf has called to have drug

dealers arrested a number of times, it doesn't recommend the confrontational tactic.

"Baby and I go through abandoned houses where the crack dealers hang out," she explained. "I hold her up and say: 'The Raccoon Lady's here. Its time for you to move on.'"

"Crack dealers hate me," she continued. "They once caught my two cats and killed them. Now that I have Baby and an M-1 carbine, the worst they can do is make phone threats."

♣ ♣ ♣

A transsexual identified only as "Jane Doe" is another who isn't afraid of a fight. But instead of seeking aid from a raccoon to stand up to thugs, she enlisted the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

After more than five years as a computer software engineer at the Boeing aircraft plant in Seattle, Doe began the process of becoming a woman. For two years, things went well. She was issued a new company ID badge with her feminine name, her government security clearance was re-approved, and her co-workers and supervisors were sympathetic. But when she began to dress as a woman, company brass became uptight. They prohibited her from using the women's restroom, barred her from wearing feminine clothes even though the company has no dress code for its engineers. When she came to work with a string

of pink beads accessorizing her outfit, she was fired even though 15 co-workers had signed a letter urging that her performance be evaluated only on professional grounds.

The letter said that Doe's changes in lifestyle and appearance were "her personal attempts to cope with an uncommon, but genuine, inner conflict, something the rest of us have not had to face. Whether we individually approve of these changes is irrelevant in the workplace. her professional conduct and competence have not changed."

The ACLU sued Boeing on Doe's behalf, charging that transsexualism constituted a disability under the terms of the Washington state anti-discrimination law. The suit charged that Boeing failed to make reasonable accommodation for Doe's disability.

In a landmark ruling, Judge Frederick Rasmussen, upheld the disability argument and ruled that Doe should be reinstated. He said the case was "about a unique human condition and a case about human dignity, and we need to be respectful of that. However, he also said that up until Boeing fired Doe, it had made reasonable accommodations for her condition.

Miss Sinclair will be on the road again this month, attending her 22th high school reunion in drag. When she returns from her journey, she would love to see tons of clippings relating to crossdressing awaiting her. Be sure to note the date and name of publication.

Hrs: Tu. 9-5: W/Th/F 9-8: Sat 8-4

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The *For Ideas*
FORUM

Can a transvestite be a woman? Or is it a pointless quest?

Feeling good about being male

by JoAnn Roberts

A friend gave me a copy of an essay she downloaded from a computer bulletin board. I'd have reprinted it in its entirety, but I don't know how to get in touch with the author, so I'm going to extract parts of it for discussion.

The essay is titled "Preserving The Polarity or Just Because You've Crossed the Line Doesn't Mean You've Erased It." The author is Brenda [redacted] and if anyone knows her, ask her to get in touch.

Now, the essay is very witty and funny, but the flavor would be lost here so I won't even try. The main reason for Brenda's writing seems to be a stern reaction from other

transvestites when she tries to explain her dressing behavior.

You see, unlike so many of us, Brenda doesn't go out dressed, nor does she go to support group meetings. She doesn't feel "more feminine" when dressed and is uncomfortable trying to act feminine. Brenda likes dressing up in costume. Sometimes it's Batman, sometimes it's Star Trek, but, more often than not, she enjoys wearing women's clothing.

Brenda likes her male self. She attributes the negative feedback from other transvestites as a sign that they don't like themselves as males. Brenda says she feels no guilt about her crossdressing and

that fact really confuses others.

She says in conclusion, "As crossdressers, our sense of self-worth has to come from within, not from society at large. If you're one of us who's waiting for society to accept you in women's clothing, forget it. You don't need their approval, any more than you need mine."

I've often said those same words in print here. They can't be over emphasized. We have to feel good about ourselves before we can feel good about others. It's pretty obvious that Brenda feels very good about her(him?)self and doesn't need the support a group offers.

However, there are some things

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CREATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATES

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The For Ideas FORUM

To be, or not to be... What?

by Wendy Katherine

Its really no wonder I'm fond of Canada. I'm a transvestite, and being a transvestite is a little like being a Canadian; you are always caught in a search for the meaning of your identity. Canadians agonize over what — if anything — makes them different from Americans, while we as transvestites agonize over what — if anything — makes us like real women.

As a TV, I am suspended between two great divides, male and female, of a culture that deals only in dualities. In Western culture, everything is either Ying or Yang. If not man, then woman; if not black, then white regardless of the whole spectrum composed of red, blue yellow...

Thus, as a Transgenderist, I tend to feel myself to be a woman, or maybe a feminine person in a society that insists I must be a woman to be feminine. But am I a woman cursed with an inappropriate body, or a feminine human being who simply adopts a convenient label to

get by, or a man who has only the vaguest and most stereotypical notion of what a woman is?

We TVs naturally identify with women, but having been raised as men, we start by viewing womanhood and femininity from the outside. In our efforts to be accepted as woman, we chain ourselves to whatever definition of womanhood we can understand. Yet, genetic women themselves cannot really define what being a woman really is.

Recently, a born-woman friend asked me if TVs wanted to be women or ladies. It's a good question. A lady is, after all, a role that society prescribes for a woman. You don't have to be a lady to be a woman, but you also don't have to be a woman to be a lady. You just have to follow the rules. That's a lot simpler than trying to be a woman. There are no rules there. Ask a hundred women what constitutes a woman, and you will get 101 definitions.

So we copy the standard of femininity we see in our society. Frequently, that means we find ourselves copying roles men have established for women. Naturally, woman play the same roles, but by concentrating on them, we miss the reality of femininity.

Consider: How many articles on makeup do you see in TV magazines, and how many on relationships and emotions? Yet, one of the big gaps between men and women is that women constantly discuss re-

lationships and their feelings when among each other. Men, on the other hand, (even TVs) frequently try to hide their emotions for fear of being thought weak.

For that matter, my wife still can't understand why their aren't any discussion of sex at meetings. Women talk about it all the time. But TVs try to be ladies, and ladies don't talk about sex. For that matter, do most male "ladies" know the difference between talking about sex in the locker room versus talking about sex at a hen party?

So we go to our meetings, and everybody drags out their most fashionable ensemble and slaves over their makeup to look like real woman. Yet how many of us dive into the kitchen to help with the feeding? (And believe me, when wives start expecting you to help in the kitchen, you are *definitely* a naturalized woman.) How many even remember that the toilet seat is supposed to be down? Does the meeting end up with the wives doing the traditional women's jobs while us "wannabes" sit around enjoying ourselves like typical butches? I want to know why a typical TV meeting can't be more like a hen party!

Now I don't want to be judgmental. Women themselves have a hard time defining womanhood and femininity, so why should it be easy for us? Still, like obscenity, we may

(continued on page 10)

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To be, or not to be... What?

(continued from page 9)

not be able to define it, but we insist that we know it when we see it. And so, we copy all the little nuances of socially defined ladyhood in an attempt to prove, if only to ourselves, that we are entitled to the name "woman."

But is all this role playing who we really are? If, as Wendy, I have some small claim on the status of a woman, who is that woman?

I'd like to think of her as breezy and self-confident, the sort who would go sword-slinging with Dejah Thoris, be perfectly at home running a million-dollar company in a drop-dead skirt suit and heels in the Alexis manner, tough as Scarlet O'Hara, and witty as Katherine Hepburn. Alas, she's more of a quiet girl, scared to death somebody is going to think she's unladylike; so busy trying to figure out what the other person expects a of genetic, standard woman to have

any time to figure out what she should do. In other words, to busy trying to win acceptance as a woman to have any time to be one.

Put another way: my old radical anarchist friend Alison, always wanted to know why I had to put on drag to be a girl. She has a point. A natural woman can wear a man's T-shirt, jeans, sneaks, earrings, and lipstick and feel fully feminine. I can't I've tried wearing feminine jewelry and a hint of makeup with my boy clothes, but I feel very uncomfortable with being an effeminate man instead of a woman.

Why do I feel that way? Like most of us, I am a product of my childhood. Virginia Prince said that in the future, jewelry, skirts, pants, hair, and cosmetics would all be human and not merely male or female. The idea was that nobody would ever have to play a role in order to fit in; they would simply be themselves, however masculine, feminine, or

androgynous that was. But for me the need to be accepted as a woman will always be there because the world I grew up in would only accept my being one or another.

An extremist might argue that not being a woman born, I can never truly be a woman. Perhaps so, if being a woman means being female. But it seems to me that the issue is one of butch or femme, categories of behavior that really cover both genetic sexes. Still isn't it a character flaw that I need somebody else's definition of womanhood to measure my own femininity against?

I began this exercise in introspection with a question, and, as usual, found more questions along the way. What it it to be a woman? I don't know, that's why I'm still looking. Perhaps someday I will know, but I don't think I'll find the answer in a fashion magazine.

⇒ A version of this article originally appeared in *Fiesta!*, the *Fiesta Chapter newsletter*.

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The For Ideas
FORUM

Phaedra responds: 'Learn to love'

To the Editor:

The huff of Hoff has it that she has been physically threatened? That's a clever trick from across the Atlantic! The "break/neck" joke is a popular enough form of rhetoric on both sides of the pond for me not to need to point out that Miss Hoff seems a trifle too tightly wrapped to take a joke. Nor was there any personal attack intended. Rather, I was rounding on a portion of our shared community who behave a la Hoff, who sadly is not alone in her insular fears.

Did this community form "self-help" groups in name only? Or do we intend to follow through entirely, in the way that every other minority self-help group is doing? Are these organizations only "shadow" boardrooms (with a playroom attached) in which everyone dresses up as "goils," shuffles some papers at a committee meeting knowing that nothing will be accomplished,

and then shrugs it all off and goes playing?

We don't have groups for hideaways. The intent should be that we graduate out of them toward rejoining society as something more worthwhile, rather than hiding inside what's become a microcosm of the mainstream's worst ills. We get the future we make!

We have evidence that inmates on both sides of the pond are double punished. If they be transgendered on entry, they are given double the usual sentence. But if it should be discovered while they are inside, the sentence will be adjusted — made worse. They are being punished for being transgendered. What you perceive as your "honest" citizenry means nothing. Try to tell that to a court of law and see how far you get. And yes, you do already know that. And, yes, for your total lack of courage and solidarity, you deserve the guilt you so transpar-

ently deny.

A Gender Transient does not believe in liberalisms, gray areas, or gray thinking. I hold that there is only right and wrong at any given time. I accept that it has been human nature for 5,000 years of so-called civilization for humanity to waste the energy of humanity, to squander other people's ability and potential for the sake of their differences. I do not accept that this demands me (or anyone) to sink to the level of wasting myself. Should another be "offended," it hurts me not; even less for my having the self-confidence to offer a fellow human equal care. Groups have been around for a long time now, and if they're not getting the job to those they pretend to serve, people have a right of complaint!

Ours is a very assimilative minority, but there's two ways in that. One is confident enough to assimilate

(continued on page 12)



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Feeling good about being male

(continued from page 8)

in Brenda's essay that bear a little closer examination. Brenda takes on a couple of crossdresser's myths and attempts to poke holes in them from her personal experience.

• **Crossdressers understand women better.** She says after 11 years of crossdressing, she doesn't understand women any better than she ever did. Perhaps that is because Brenda never experienced femininity. For myself, and a few others, who share confidences with me, I know that my crossdressing has led me to strive for a better understanding of women and in particular my spouse and partner.

• **Crossdressers feel some form of guilt.** She doesn't understand why most of us have felt guilty. I can only guess that Brenda: (a) is not a Roman Catholic; (b) has forgotten she ever felt guilty; or (c) is a sociopath. In fact, some of what she writes suggests that (c) is closest to the truth.

For example: "Me, I'd like just to be left alone. I don't care whether society likes it or not... It's because I'm not letting society dictate what I think is right and wrong."

And there's this curious statement that makes you wonder why she dresses at all: "After all, I don't want to be a woman. I don't want to act like one, or even, when you get right down to it, look like one."

But, after all this, Brenda does make a sound argument for achieving a balance. She talks about Tao and the Yin and the Yang. There is no male without female or vice versa. There is no good without evil, no dark without light.

She says, "This [Yin-Yang] is the

male-female polarity as it should be. If there are male and female elements within us, they should be balanced. One cannot transcend the other, because the balance would be destroyed."

No bonus without an onus.

Phaedra responds

(continued from page 11)

late the majority into itself and make that majority suit the minority. The other staggers and dithers between the all extreme options, one moment siding with gays, then with transsexuals, then with radical feminists, then with any broken reed that offers hope. This is playground assimilation, the "can I be in your gang?" ploy. Such we see from Madam Hoff and ilk.

If you're so clean and honest, what stops you doing the job for all your kind without prejudgment? The good Whitechrist of your dreams did sit down with thieves and sinners, yet remained untainted. Is not what was good enough for Him good enough for you?

Hoff and ilk are the actual sufferers of hostage psychology: so long insulated that they have lost sight of what they were and what they could become again, instead of learning to love and identify with all that holds them down and back. Hence,

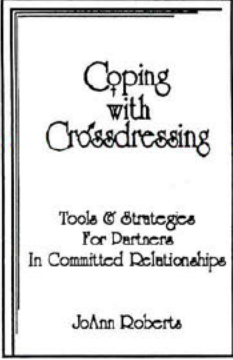
the analogy with the Hoff perspective and the KKK. I wrote that you imitate those who would burn crosses on your lawn too. So for the sake of anybody's God, come out from behind the hair on your chest and be a real Tran for once!

I thank the editor for the right to "serve." However, I shall not need further service since it would be pointless — not to say unsporting of me — to engage in a game of literary tennis with one who so obviously has only bile for balls.

—Phaedra Kelly
United Kingdom

☞ Although Phaedra has lobbed her final ball on this issue, other players are welcome to join the debate. For those who may have forgotten, the central question was the degree of support the transgendered community on the outside should provide transgendered prison inmates and if that support should be conditional.

—PJS



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To Cleveland and Canada

Renaissance is on the road again

by Pamela A. Westin

Last month, three members of Renaissance again took a leadership role in the transgendered community. They presented programs at the Be-All weekend in Cleveland, and later one of them was featured in a video taping for *Donahue*.

JoAnn Roberts, Allison Liang, and Paula Jordan Sinclair again ventured out to educate not only the

transgendered community but the general public as well.

At the Be-All in Cleveland in early June, they presented numerous programs which included deportment, fashion and style, wardrobes, and femme speaking. The workshops were well-attended and received much praise from the girls present. Organizers of this year's Be-All proposed that Renaissance

put together all of the workshops for for the next Be-All in Detroit.

As far as the general public's education is concerned, that was Paula's area. She once again stepped in front of the camera and taped a segment for an upcoming Phil Donahue show. The place was the Take a Walk on the Wildside boutique in Toronto. Because she was the only transvestite the producers could convince to appear in both male and female roles, Paula had a complete transformation at the hands of Paddy Aldrich. Sinclair gave a small taste of what fantasy crossdressing is like by wearing many different costumes: French maid, school girl, nurse, and bride. The show is due to air later this month.

So, are these girls out for personal recognition, or what?

They're not. Allison, JoAnn, and Paula are simply hoping to educate both our community and the community at large. They spend much effort and time out of their personal lives to help us, and hopefully everyone else out there, better understand the transgendered community. Renaissance is very lucky to have members who are as dedicated to the cause as these three are. And I, who am simply the proverbial fly on the wall, can attest to the wonderful example that these three girls — as well as many others in Renaissance — set for others in the transgendered community to follow.

WHO says?

(continued from page 1)

can't get paid by an insurance company for treating it, he said.

The previous edition, *ICD-9*, was published in 1972. No date has been set for the publication of the newest edition which will make the earlier version obsolete, Dam said. The *ICD* is used by psychologists and psychiatrists around the world for research, the delivery of services, and third-party payments.



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ALIEF, TEX. - All good things come to those who wait...

I was so very pleased to receive word from **Jane Ellen Fairfax**, executive chair of the national board of **Tri-Ess**, that Tri-Ess national has endorsed the Bill of Gender Rights and is urging all Tri-Ess chapters to do the same. The vote on the endorsement was unanimous.

Jane Ellen and I had a long chat at the "T" Party (I guess it was good for something) concerning our previous differences in light of my "peace treaty" with **Virginia Prince**, and we patched things up between us. Since then, Jane Ellen has fiercely championed the "bill" and one sees the effect she's had. I'm glad we're on the same team.

▼ ▲ ▼

ELYRIA, OH. - Time heals all wounds...

Without dredging up old mud, my "battle" with Tri-Ess started here with the **Alpha Omega** chapter. As a result of my personal issue with a former **AΩ** editor, *Renaissance* was dropped from the **AΩ** newsletter exchange.

I received a letter from **Jennifer Higgins**, president of the chapter, extending a personal apology and offering to reinstate the newsletter exchange.

No apology from the chapter was necessary, after all the problem was with a particular person, not the chapter. Nevertheless, I truly appreciated the sentiment and the exchange has been reinstated.

▼ ▲ ▼

NEW YORK CITY - Talk about left-handed compliments...

The May issue of **Allure**, a hip, trendy and irreverent fashion mag, did a sidebar piece on lipstick, asking the question, "Does lipstick say anything about a community?" The magazine then sent its minions into the streets to answer that question.

One spot they found was **Lee's Mardi Gras** on West 14th street.

The "bozo" who wrote the lead characterized Lee's as a shop "frequented by prostitutes and drag queens..."

Hmmmpf! Well, I never...

I was pretty miffed at that broad brush stroke and a letter to the editor followed. Lee Brewster is a personal friend and a long-time supporter of this community. We'll see if I get a reply.

Meanwhile, in the same issue, contributing editor, **Tracy Young**, describes the award-winning film, *Paris Is Burning*, as a documentary about transvestite drag balls. Now, we know that transvestites don't have any... drag balls that is.

Actually, the film is about drag and voguing competitions among the young black and Hispanic men who comprise New York's "voguing fraternities" (sororities?).

▼ ▲ ▼

BUFFALO, N.Y. - An "oldie" but a real "goodie"...

The year was 1910. The place was Germany. The book was a milestone in the history in human sexuality. **Magnus Hirschfeld**, M.D. wrote *Die Transvestiten*, and coined the word **transvestite**.

Unfortunately, two world wars and a new repression about things sexual relegated Hirschfeld's book to the realm of historic novelty and then only if you could read German.

Now, that's all changed with the translation and re-publication of *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress*, by **Prometheus Books**. The translation was performed by **Michael A. Lombardi-Nash**, Ph.D. and the book was edited by **Vern L. Bullough**, Ph.D., a name that should be familiar to many readers.

Bullough sent me a copy and I've read it completely. It is a fascinating and marvelous book, considering when it was written. Perhaps I'll write a much longer review in the future, but if you can't wait you can order your own copy directly by

calling **Prometheus** at 1-800-421-0351 (24 hrs.) Have your **VISA** or **MASTERCARD** ready.

▼ ▲ ▼

SAN FRANCISCO - Words of wisdom...

I've always admired the folks at **ETVC** for the way they do things and their newsletter editor, **Cindy Martin**, gives us a good example of the **ETVC** mind-set.

Martin writes in the May-June newsletter of a conversation with a woman (a friend of the community) who was getting really fed up with seeing transvestites portray females in their most powerless and least respected roles: tramps and hookers. She was referring to the tight miniskirts and sky-high spikes.

But, what made her most angry was not the presentation of the French maid, but the realization that a transvestite can go home, wash off the makeup, and resume his authority, power and respect as a male in society.

Martin says that many of us are realizing that "crossdressing is far more than putting out a feminine appearance... there is a lot of discussion going on about how to 'integrate' [our] male and female personality into a unified whole that draws from the best of both. All of us, no matter how far advanced in our dressing abilities, must eliminate the chauvinism and sexism that is part of our male history. We cannot be hypocrites in heels."

▼ ▲ ▼

WALTHAM, MASS. - If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem...

That adage from the original Earth Day came to mind when I read the report from the **Congress of Representatives of the International Foundation for Gender Education**. The congress met at the annual **IFGE** convention in April and, among other items, considered the *Gender Activist's Decla-*

THE ^{JoAnn Roberts} TM **ICONOCLAST**

ration of Independence and the Bill of Gender Rights.

According to the IFGE *May Update*, the two documents are considered "political action projects" and "IFGE cannot get involved."

Poppycock! First, the IRS regulations governing tax-exempt organizations, like IFGE and Renaissance, forbid such organizations from supporting specific candidates or specific legislation. In fact, on pages two and three of the *Update*, it says exactly that, "...we cannot support specific candidates for political office, but we can lobby all candidates regarding issues pertinent to our community. Also, we can run advertisements and articles that present our opinions on pending or existing legislation." (Italics mine.)

Second, no one asked IFGE to "get involved" only to endorse the principles of the two documents.

So, who's fooling who? Doesn't the right-hand know what the left-hand is doing in Waltham, or is this a case of NIH (Not Invented Here)?

These two documents are among the most important to come out of this community, ever. It is a sad commentary that the organization that so proudly touts itself as representative of the whole community can't or won't endorse the principles of gender rights for all.

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NEW ZEALAND - Around the world in an envelope...

Almost literally, that's what happened to an article that originated here in the U.S., but came to me by way of **Leone Neil** and her organization **TransCare**.

The article, *Double Fault: Renee Richards and the Construction and Naturalization of Difference*, was published by two women, **Susan Birrell** and **Cheryl Cole** in the *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 7, 1990, pages 1-21.

It is an interesting review of the "incident" involving Richards and

the professional women's tennis association. But, underlying the article is the thesis that our culture "legally constructs women" (and, one presumes, men) and "produces particular notions of gender, sex and difference..." The authors further state that transsexuals, in seeking sex reassignment, perpetuate rather than challenge our society's dominant gender arrangements and ideologies. To wit:

"The transsexual's solution to gender dysphoria is to change sexes: an individual solution to a systemic problem. Gender dysphoria is the personal manifestation of a larger cultural problem, in this case the institutionalization of a system that reduces sex to two mutually exclusive, natural categories.

"By seeking surgical remedy, the transsexual acquiesces to a system that locates individuals as either male or female subjects. Ironically the transsexual's personal relief reinforces the very systems that produces transsexualism."

Elsewhere they state that acute gender dysphoria suggests reconfiguring the body is easier than living in a culture in which rigid gender ideologies do not permit men to act in stereotypically feminine ways.

Transsexuals who'd like to give the authors an education in gender issues may write to Susan Birrell care of the Dept. of Physical Education and Sport Studies, the University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

One might assume there are no transsexuals at the U of I.

▼▲▼

ESSEX, MASS. - Speaking of the construction of gender...

Transsexuals seem to loom large in the news this month. **The Outreach Institute** is planning a special weekend event just for transsexuals, the **National Conference for the New Woman**.

The program features Dr. Nancy Ledins and Dr. Jayne Thomas, both

well-known within the community.

In addition, some potential topics for discussion include, legal issues-the right to marry, resumé writing, healing emotional abuse, transparenthood (sic), and gender euphoria-are we having fun yet?

For more information write the Outreach Institute at 405 Western Ave., Suite 345, South Portland, ME 04106 or call (207) 775-0858.

▼▲▼

NEW YORK CITY - I always said what transvestites need is an easy way to remove nail polish...

Oh well, there goes another great idea. **Avon** cosmetics has announced **Quick Change** nail color which can be peeled off within three to 24 hours. Wonderful! No more red stains around the cuticles.

An Avon rep who works with my wife says the new polish is not selling that well. She's just not selling it to the right people.

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HOUSTON, TEX. - Healing the rifts in our community continues...

My good friend and space cadet, **René Fenner**, wrote to inform me that the 1992 IFGE convention will be jointly sponsored by **Tau Chi Tri-Ess** and the **Gulf Coast Transgender Community**. Readers of this column will recall these two groups had a tiff over a jointly sponsored event that ended in a quarrel between the two.

A tip of my wig to **Jane Ellen Fairfax**, et al. (Tau Chi) for being able to recognize that the IFGE convention might just be a bit too much for her group. She approached GCTC for assistance. Another tip of my wig to **Jackie Thorne**, et al. (GCTC) for recognizing the opportunity to patch up past differences.

▼▲▼

NOTA BENE - The opinions expressed in this column are mine alone. Got an opinion you want to share? Write to me at PO Box 1263, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

The BACKPAGE

The devil made me do it!

by Paula Jordan Sinclair

Crossdressing is taking another hit from the Christian right. But this time it isn't men in dresses which provoked the ire of fundamentalists; it's women in pants.

According to a flyer Joan Hoff found in her local supermarket in Massachusetts, women wearing pants, jeans, and shorts are contributing to "the terrible immoral trend in our nation and the world at large." The flyer encourages "true Christian women" to pledge "not to wear trousers, slacks or shorts as this apparel is not pleasing to God." Short skirts are also *verboten*.

Short skirts we can understand. But how, you may ask, do women's pants lead to the corruption of civilization?

First, the flyer states, "they re-

flect the Unisex Movement" which seeks to remove distinctions in appearances between the sexes. The result is the elevation of homosexuality "to respectability."

Secondly, pants on women "reflect the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement" which violated the Bible's proscribed role for women — to "bear children, guide the house" and "to be discrete, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands." In short, women's liberation "is a movement in rebellion against God."

Lastly, wearing pants encourages women to engage in "immodest posture and habits" and to have "a coarser, more boisterous, less feminine disposition and bearing."

Who set women on this path to perdition? Who is the guru of gen-

der bending? Need you ask? The devil, that's who.

"When men began wearing long hair and ruffles as women shorten their hair and put on pants, it is obvious that Satan is having his way... Christian women (and men as well), if they would remain free of the devil's devices, must learn to hold off from new fads until they can determine whether the devil is behind them — and if he is, what he is up to," the flyer advises.

So if you want to pledge to never again wear jeans, trousers, shorts, and skirts that don't extend well below the knees (in any posture), write to the Our Lady of The Rosary Library, 4016 Preston Highway, Louisville, KY 40213. Be sure to tell them you learned of the pledge in a crossdressing publication.



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