

News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

Vol. 11, No. 11 • November 1997

Renaissance

Echoes From My Heart

JoAnn Roberts

"I wish I could speak with each and every one of you personally; but as that is not practical, allow me this front page forum for my thoughts and feelings.

As we move into a new phase of growth and development, let me start by thanking everyone whose efforts have made Renaissance one of the most successful transgender organizations in the country. From the beginning, we made a commitment to be an active part of the community, both in terms of providing support and services for individuals and providing education for the general public. In order to accomplish these goals, we have an ongoing need for two kinds of help from you.

First, we need your active participation. In any group, club, or society I've ever been associated with the 90/10 Law has held true—ninety percent of the work gets done by ten percent of the people. Those of us who have been active knew that and accepted the fact that we would be carrying the bulk of the workload. But it doesn't have to stay that way. You can join in and help.

Second, either in place of, or hopefully in addition to, you volunteering your time, we need contributions... no matter how small they may be. There are many projects that Renaissance has contemplated, most of which are just ideas or concepts at this time. We hope to bring these into reality. And we can, with your financial support."

If the forgoing words sound familiar for many of you, they should. You see, they are my heart's echoes. I wrote them, with a little editing, for this newsletter about 10 years ago. The irony is that what I said back then is even more true today. When Renaissance was born, the waters ahead were largely uncharted. It took courage for us, as it does for any who set out into the unknown, to take that first giant step. We took it. Our mission was to reach out to the world. We didn't ask "Why." We said to ourselves, "Why not."

Over these few short years, we have come to realize that we, the transgendered, inhabit every category of society... in numbers possibly far in excess of any other subculture. We are doctors, architects, educators, executives and business owners. We work in steel mills, grow food, and deliver the mail. Indeed, we are your sons and daughters, and your

mothers and fathers, and your brothers and sisters. And all we seek is understanding and acceptance.

Today, I share with you the pride of beginning to feel the fulfillment of those two goals: Understanding and Acceptance. We have broken the ice. Occasionally there are examples in the media of transgendered-identified exhibiting inappropriate or bizarre behavior, but a significant portion of society now acknowledges, at least tacitly, that we are not only a threat to no one, but represent components that form the very strength of the culture itself.

The achievements of the past few years have provided us a firm foundation as we move forward into our second decade. I'm confident. I'm optimistic. I'm excited! These next two years will be viewed as perhaps the most pivotal in our history. We already have begun the process of developing a comprehensive five-year Strategic Plan. This will have as its focus two primary objectives: (1) strengthen the magnitude and quality of our "Outreach" to every relevant sector of society; and (2) build a solid financial base with which to fund the variety of projects needed to serve you, our members, better. At the end of the next five years, we may not be the "biggest." We may not be the "best." But my vision is that when those "in-the-know" are asked which organization they feel does the finest job of supporting its members, Renaissance will be among those organizations mentioned in their first breath. We will be the standard against which all others are measured.

And the key to achieving that? The answer lies within ourselves, working as a team whose profound focus is fixed upon our new goals. I cannot do it without you. Our Board and Staff cannot do it without you. You must become an integral part of the Renaissance future... proactive in terms of contributing your talents, time and/or your money.

On a separate sheet accompanying this month's newsletter is a breakdown of specific areas where we feel we need to make new or stronger initiatives over the next year. Look over the list and check those where your background, your training, education and experience, your passion would be particularly helpful. We want to create a team of the best and the brightest talent available in any given func-

continued on page 6

Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Wilmington, Delaware: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808. Phone: 302-376-1990 or email to: [redacted]@aol.com

Pennsylvania

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

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

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

Affiliates

California

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

Connecticut

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

Georgia

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

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

Illinois

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

Louisiana

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

New Jersey

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

Western Central New Jersey: New Jersey Support, Call Susan at 973-[redacted] or Dorothy at 21-[redacted] (weekends only). Write PO Box 0034, Montville, NJ 07045 for information. Email: [redacted]@aol.com Meetings are the first Saturday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Crossing.

New York

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

Long Island: Long Island Femme Expression (LIFE), PO Box 1311, Water Mill, NY 11976-1311. Phone 516-283-1333. email to [redacted]@aol.com

Oklahoma

Central Oklahoma: Sooner Diversity, part of the Central Oklahoma Transgender Alliance (COTA). Contact, Vanessa Kaye, Oklahoma City: COTA, 6957 N.W. Expressway, #121 Oklahoma City, OK 73132. email to [redacted]@ionet.net>.

Electronic Subscriptions

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

Renaissance News & Views

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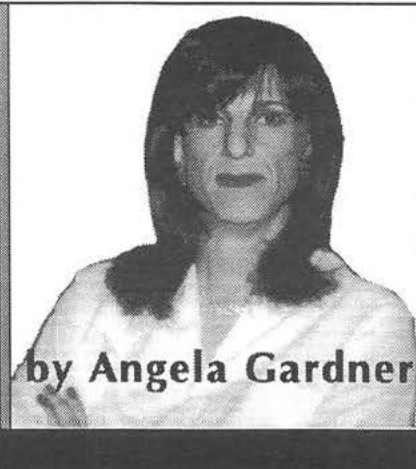
Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the transgender community and the general public. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, make your check or M.O., payable to Renaissance and send it to our National office. Your contributions will help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

Local Calendar

November

- 1 Ren. LSV - Harrisburg
- 1 NJ Support - Trenton
- 8 Ren. Lehigh Valley
- 8 Ren. Delaware - Wilmington
- 15 Ren. GPC — 1st Annual Benefit Auction - Wayne, Pa.
- 22 MOTG - Red Bank, NJ

News Beat & Reminder



by Angela Gardner

Well, my little no-fat muffins, it's November again already. Where does a year go these days? Seems like I was running around in my Summer print dress just a few days ago. Now it's sweaters and tights as I get settled into my new home. That's right, in all the hustle and bustle of October, I may not have mentioned that I moved mere minutes away from the Renaissance National Office. Now I can head over there everyday and slave away at the big job of providing support and information for the transgender community. Sure, I have to drive by the King of Prussia Mall complex on my way to the office so my chances of ever getting there early are slim to none. And as far as slaving goes, girls, they've got Macy's, Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus! I tell ya, with all that shopping so close who's got time to type and lick envelopes? I'm gonna need a raise.

Speaking of raising things, it's time to raise the funds to renew your membership. Every year we start with the October issue and insert a Membership Application/Renewal form in *News & Views*. This year, for the first time, we're able to accept Visa and Mastercard payments for your membership and extra donations. Already several members have taken advantage of the plastic plan to renew. What the hey, if it's good enough for ordering lingerie from Fredericks then it's good enough for us. Don't forget to include your expiration date.

Another place to use your plastic (of course, we'll always take cash, checks, and money orders) is the **Renaissance National Benefit Auction** at the

GPC meeting this month. Items are still coming in and we'll continue to accept donations of cool stuff up to November 14th. (We just got a slew of theater cards from films with TG themes. These are originals from the theater and, Yes, *Tootsie* is included.) Call the National Office and speak to me or leave a message.

Remember, the **Phone Watch Crew**, under the command of Miss Jessica Brandon "womans" the phone on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights from 6 to 10 pm. Give them a call if you want to speak to a real live girl about your donation. Those nights are also good to drop off donations, as long as you call first to make sure someone will be there. The office number is 610-975-9119.

This is probably a good time to ask, how is the Phone Watch working out for you? Have you called with questions? Have you gotten the info you needed? Part of the crew's job is to answer questions from people who are just coming out, but the other part of their job is to give service to the members. Think of them as the Customer Service Department. If you don't get what you need feel free to go over their heads and contact the boss, that would be me, and I'll take care of you.

A Crowd of One

On October 19th the Renaissance Librarian/*News & Views* Managing Editor, Lee Etscovitz, and I slid on down to Philadelphia's premier gay bookstore, Giovanni's Room for a release party for the *Renaissance 10th Anniversary History* that Lee put to-

gether. (Hey, another item to buy with your credit card! Only 10 bucks.)

You may recall that last month we put a flyer in the newsletter with a half page announcement that we'd be there. Maybe you didn't remember, or perhaps it was just that it was the day after the GPC meeting and everyone had razor burn, but only one member showed up to say hi. At least she bought a copy of the book.

Now, you probably think that I'm upset. Nah. Other than the flyer we didn't do too much in the way of promotion, so I wasn't expecting a lot. The bookstore staff told me that one author's release party reading only got an audience of one, and that was with her publisher doing promotion. No, it didn't bother me that only one member came down (actually my personal photographer and Pocono Weekend DJ, Miss Miranda did show up after it was over and we went for a nosh) because that member was a person who has never been to a meeting. She's been reading the newsletter and even recognized me from my photo. (Which is more than I can do. Randi! We gotta do a new headshot.) She sat and talked with Lee for most of the "event" and I think we may have talked her into attending a meeting. If she comes out to the GPC meeting this month, then our appearance at Giovanni's Room was a success. (She knows who she is. I hope this isn't too much pressure.)

Another good thing that came out of it was my meeting a man from the gay Catholic group, Dignity. He didn't know about our big "event" but had come in for information on what the various symbols for the les/bi/gay/TG communities looked like. He said he was doing research on the symbols for a logo he had to design for Dignity. They want something that will show they are open to everyone, including transgender people. He told me that Dignity is looking for a transgendered person to head up their transgender outreach effort. If you are interested, contact Dignity in Philadelphia or get in touch with me and I'll pass your name on to them. That's enough of this

continued next page

News Beat...

serious stuff. Let's take a look at...

Thou Dost Protest Too Much?

I used to love that little dough boy of a comic **Drew Carey**, till he had to go and get all defensive (and offensive to crossdressers) on the *Late Late Show* in September. His show featured a *Rocky Horror vs Priscilla* drag-dance-off, and I thought he was a pretty cool dude about men prancing around in ladies clothes. (Drew didn't do a drag character; he just danced in his male underwear. But he was surrounded by men in exotic attire.) However, it appears Tubby has a little bit of a problem with drag.

He told Tom Snyder that in college he was a nerd and pledged a frat so he could improve his social life. Well, the frat boys thought it would be a gas if the pledge did what we all know to be a standard plot device for TV fiction... went out on a date as a girl. Drew was a lot thinner then, and I was surprised at how he looked as a woman. (Tom had pix.) Hubba hubba, Drewette!

Apparently the date went as planned—without any TV fiction plot twists (Dreweena gets kidnapped from the restaurant by an escaped convict who takes her to a cabin in the mountains and turns her into a “real” woman), and Drew became a happy frat-rat in male attire for the remainder of his college career.

Tom asked how Drew enjoyed experiencing the female role, and Drew didn't really say much. Tom went on to add that his assistant, **Kennedy** (who happens to be a male, *not* the chick from MTV), was the Homecoming Queen at his high school and really liked it. Before we could get anymore details Drew blurted out, “What was it, homosexual high?” For shame, dough boy! From now on if I even watch your show I'll root for your arch nemesis...

Mimi. She looks like a queen anyway.

Could Carey's over-reaction be the result of having fond memories of that magic night long ago? Anything's possible. Intrepid N&V reporters will start

checking his trash for discarded Queen-size pantyhose, and scan his credit report for any charges made to TV boutiques. If there's any truth to the allegations that Drew actually enjoyed his college dream date we'll ferret it out and put it here. Stay tuned.

We Still Got A Way's To Go

Drew was bad enough when he confused gender and sexual preference, but **George Clooney** really socked it to us on the Letterman show. Clooney was a guest on *Late Night With David Letterman* last month and told a story about his appearance on the syndicated comedy show *Mad TV*. He made this TV mad when he told his story. The skit he appeared in called for him to be in drag. His daughter had come along for the taping and Dave asked how she took to her dad in drag. Clooney said she was a little taken aback at first but got used to it. Dave said, “Well, it's nothing she hasn't seen around the house.” That Dave, what a kiddier. Clooney's daughter was more excited that one of the other guests on the show was L.L. Cool J. So excited, in fact, that she wanted to be introduced to L.L. when they all collided in the hall.

This is where Clooney loses his star status for me. Maybe he was being defensive after Dave's joke about doing it around the house but he said he was “humiliated” by having to meet L.L. Cool J while wearing a dress. Georgie, Georgie, Georgie. Where's the humiliation in that, my boy? Setting aside the fact that there's nothing wrong with a man wearing a dress (well, he should try to look good, if possible), and that he shouldn't be embarrassed to meet *anyone* while in drag for any purpose, what's up with the humiliation stuff, George? You're a professional actor dressed in a costume for a skit. Even though **RuPaul** has a television show and appears on *Regis & Kathy Lee*, guys like Clooney, with their macho attitude that wearing a dress is somehow embarrassing, are still out there to give us trouble. Well, George, all I gotta say is, I saw *Batman and Robin*. Michael Keaton was Batman. You ain't no Batman. So there. (Insert raspberry sound.)

Another Set Back

For every jerk on the macho side who sets back the cause of drag, there's always a bozo on the drag side that makes us all look bad. One of them has caused trouble recently for an actor who was not only not afraid to wear a dress but looks pretty good in one, **Johnny Depp**. For the past two years, some poor demented cross-dresser has claimed to be Depp's wife and has been stalking him. Yes, “Ed Wood” himself is the target of an obsessed crossdressing fan.

The stalking has been a feature of Depp's life for a while, but it recently got more crazy when the CD called his club, The Viper Room (I have a club—the Boom Boom Room! Gimme a Pabst and a shot), and said she was Johnny's wife and was on her way over to meet hubby for a cold one. She was met by extra security and arrested.

No word on what tipped them off, but it could have been her voice. That's what always gives us away. Also, no word on what she wore. I wish the straight press would get with it and start giving us the details we really need. What kind of outfit? Skirt and top? Dress? Accessories? Gimme something I can work with. Anyhow, it's about time Johnny got rid of her. After all, I'm the CD who bore his children. Timmy, put down that Angora sweater right now. Oh, they are such a “scissorshands” full. Ouch!

What's So Strange About That?

There's more and more news about crossdressing appearing in more and more mainstream publications. A few years back, when I was just a lonely girl in a closet, it was pretty hard to find news stories about guys in dresses. Oh sure, there were always criminal transvestites who did drag while they robbed people, but they certainly didn't give us any positive role models. Then there were always a few, famous transsexuals who made headlines when they went for SRS, but that was about the extent of it. Now I see so many things about crossdressing that I don't even bother to make a note of them.

continued next page

News Beat...

The September 26th issue of a local Delaware entertainment paper, *Brandywine Valley Weekly*, featured former Miss Gay America, **Lauren Taylor**, on its cover and had a big article about the 1998 contest. These days drag is front page news... and it's being presented in a positive light.

Another example: one of the male characters on an episode of the new **Kirstie Alley** show, *Veronica's Closet*, (it's about a women's lingerie company) started a conversation with a woman about undies and said, "This underwire is diggin' into my skin!" Just another example of casual inclusion of crossdressing. As noted ladies lingerie fancier, **Marv Albert**, would say, "Yes!"

All sorts of other stuff comes up with crossdressing overtones, if not outright sequins and feathers. Stacy-Lynn Carlton sent me a story from the *Wall Street Journal* about a group for British expatriates (of course, Brits love their frocks) called the Hash House Harriers. They've been a group since the 1930's and have chapters all over the world. It's a drinking club, so maybe that explains this. Every year their Washington, D.C., group holds an event called **The Red Dress Run**. On September 27th, 470 men in red outfits—from long sleeved shifts to red bustiers and lace bodysuits—ran five miles through our nation's capital. The British menaced D.C. way back in the Revolution but not quite like this.

Apparently the group has a variety

of different runs they do at various times over the year. One of them is a run in which the participants all dress like Dalmatians. (How many pints of ale do you need for that?) They sound like a bunch of fun guys to me. I wish I were British so I could sign up. Of course, I wouldn't do any actual running. I'd just wear the red dress, trot to the first turn, and then take a cab to the finish. I would do it that way, 'cause the article closed with a paragraph about how the runners retire to a bar after the race where they remove their torn and sweaty dresses. There's only one way I want to get my dress torn and sweaty, and it ain't running.

One of the Harriers was asked why they do it. He responded, "We're just everyday professional people who want to get out, put on a red dress and run. Then everything's back to normal Monday morning." Right, Monday is blue dress day at my office.

Gimmie That Old Time Religion

Jessica Brandon gave me an article about another odd juxtaposition: drag and gospel music. You heard right sisters. There is a drag gospel group, called **One Voice**. The article appeared in the *Philadelphia Daily News*, the paper that has the reputation of being the blue collar news source in Philadelphia. A large photo of the ladies topped the article, and they were identified with their male names. It was probably a good idea. They all look so good enfemme, most folks wouldn't have gotten the idea if they were called Amber, Ivory, and Dominique. They are gender illusionists from Baltimore,

and they sing contemporary style gospel in gay churches, at Pride festivals, and wherever they can spread the word that Jesus loves drag queens, too. Now how many drag gospel groups have you heard about in the past? Not many. Just another sign that things are moving in the right direction. Praise the Lord and pass the mascara!

Last Words

If you missed **Henri David's Halloween Ball** in Philadelphia at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel, you're a silly CD. You have another chance though. You can attend the **Dia-bolique Fetish Masquerade Ball** this month. The event is a benefit for **Action AIDS**. It happens on November 20th at the nightclub, Egypt. Tickets are \$25 in advance. VIP tickets which include a buffet (nothing I like better than to slip into a tight rubber dress and then eat like a pig) are \$50 in advance. Tickets are available all over the Delaware Valley. Call them for more info at 215-990-8030 or visit their website at:

<<http://aol.com.members/dyaboleek>>.

Remember, I can always use input from my loyal readers. No matter how hard I try, I can't read every newspaper and magazine or watch every television show. If you see something people should know about, send it along to me care of the National Office (see page 2 for address).

See you next month, honey bunches of oats.



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Reporter Suggests Sports Steroids Create Lesbians

On September 17, 1997, Los Angeles radio station KFWB "News 98" morning reporter Brett Lewis suggested that steroid use makes female athletes lesbians. During the 6:45 am broadcast, Lewis reported on an athlete who had been permitted to return to competition after a suspension for using steroids (testosterone), adding, "I guess that means she'll have to cancel her scheduled appearance on Ellen." United at United, the lesbian and gay employee group at United Airlines, is meeting with the airline's management to urge them to pull advertising from the station after requests for a retraction from Lewis went unanswered.

Lewis' comment propagates the

worn-out stereotype that all lesbians are "mannish," and adds his own bizarre twist, implying that taking testosterone would make a woman "more of a man," and thus, a lesbian. Further, that once an athlete stopped using testosterone, she would be restored to heterosexuality, and so would no longer want to be on Ellen, since it is a "lesbian show." While the athlete probably never had anything to do with the show in the first place, Demi Moore, Oprah Winfrey, Billy Bob Thorton, Gina Gershon and Dwight Yoakam would certainly be surprised by Lewis' assertion that guest appearances on the show are predicated by one's sexual orientation. The reporter's off-hand re-

mark was probably not meant to offend, and yet reveals his own homo-ignorance and anti-gay bias.

To insist that Lewis issue an on-air retraction and to let United Airlines know that you support their pulling sponsorship of the station if KFWB is unwilling to correct its immature and wrong-headed mistake, contact: KFWB-AM, PO Box 4310, Los Angeles, CA 90078, fax: 212.871.4670, e-mail: quake@kfwb.groupw.wec.com; John Kiker, Vice President, United Airlines-WHQPR, Corporate Communications, P.O. Box 66100, Chicago, IL 60666.

S.F. Chronicle Features Prominent FtM Activist

An excellent front-page story of the Sunday, September 21 San Francisco Chronicle features James Green, a leader of the female-to-male (FtM) transgender community. Below a full quarter-page shirtless picture of the well-built, bearded Green, the headline, "A Self-Made Man," is followed with the lead-in, "When James Green was a little girl, he saw Mary Martin play Peter Pan and knew right away he could do a better job." Staff writer David Tuller says that Green "wants people to understand one thing about masculinity: It has more to do with a man's inner life than with his genitals." Tuller takes pains to explain how FtMs have struggled for visibility even within

the transgender community, and with the difference between "sex" ("the biological category represented by the genitals") and "gender" ("the psychological identity that nestles wherever a person's most intimate sense of self resides—in the mind, or in the soul or in the heart"). Filling two inside pages, the text continues by recounting Green's appearance in almost erotic terms: "His voice is deep and rich as chocolate. His arms and upper torso are thick and muscular. His beard is full, and his hairline is receding. His booming laugh explodes across the room like a grenade," Tuller writes. In addition, the inner pages feature nine pictures of Green, from early child-

hood to adulthood, with his brother, as a woman with her daughter, and with his girlfriend. Alternating between descriptions of Green's life and discussions of the logistics and politics of FtM surgeries and the struggle for transgender rights, Tuller represents a full, well-rounded group of perspectives on Green and the issues of FtM transgender people.

To feature an article on FtMs in a major daily paper is exceptional. To do so with such sensitivity, at such length, and to illustrate the article with so many photographs, brings the subject to life, making readers see both the common humanity and the differences and challenges that FtM transgender people embody.



Echoes...

tion. Keep in mind that your involvement can be either direct or indirect; i.e., relegated to "behind-the-scenes" only, with no public contact, if that's what you prefer. Anything you do will be done with total confidentiality and anonymity. The only way any outsider will know of your involvement will be if you tell them. Not us. Fair enough?

The form also contains a line where you can designate any monetary contribution you care to make. Anything you

give will benefit you and other important members of our "family". Complete and return the form to the national office now. Don't wait.

We will follow up promptly by the method of contact you prefer. By returning the form, you make no commitment nor incur any obligation whatsoever. We can't expect anything like that unless and until you are satisfied that what is asked of you is something that you can and want to do.

Anything you offer to do or to donate will be appreciated, no matter

how small or how large. It is the act of giving that counts in our organization.

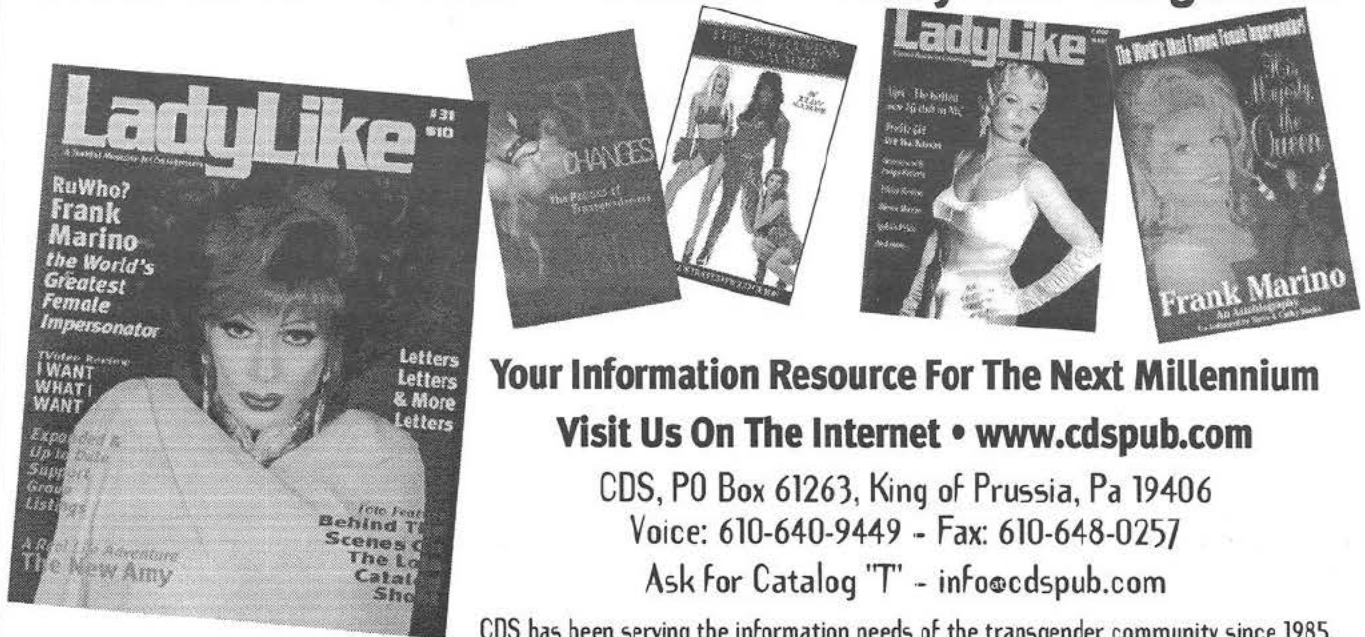
And speaking of "commitments," I continue to be committed with you. My term as Chair of the Board expired in October, but I have agreed to remain in an active capacity on the board of directors. I will be deeply involved in the implementation of our business plan, and in making Renaissance's next decade even more exciting and fulfilling than the last. With your able assistance, it will indeed happen.

Will you join me... please?

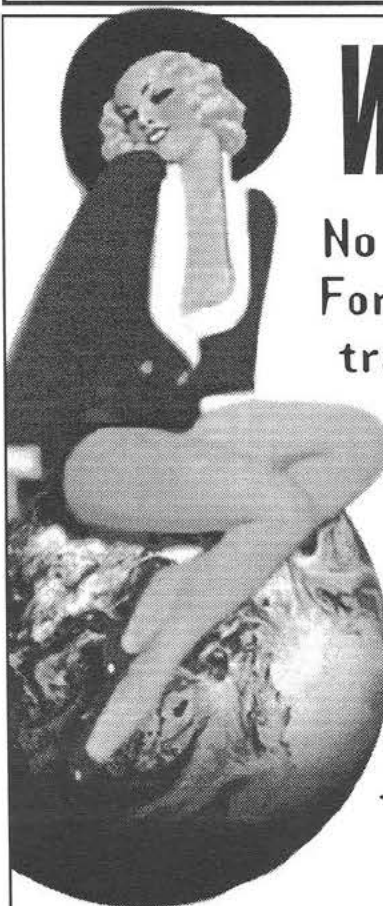


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As is my standard practice, I'm on deadline as I write this month's column. This month even more so than usual. So I'll dispense with my customary long-winded introductory comments, with the exception of passing along belated 50th birthday greetings to our First Lady, Hillary Clinton. Am I really the only man in this nation who thinks she's a bit of a fox?

DIVIDED WE STAND...ON OUR OWN TWO FEET

The CrossPort *Innerview* newsletter published by the CrossPort group in Cincinnati, Ohio, carried an essay titled "Reflections" by Jeanette [REDACTED]. Jeanette discussed several instances where she saw hypocritical or divisive behavior by members of our community.

She started out by quoting from an article written by Vanessa Kaye on the Internet's *TGForum* in which we are exhorted to remember we are all "ambassadors" of the TG community whenever and wherever we go in public. Jeanette took this advice to heart but went (I believe) a little too far in her advocacy of personal ambassadorship. She writes, "Your goal (of dressing appropriately) being that you want to be a chameleon and blend into your surroundings, not stand out like a peacock in a hen house. Which will get read first? Which will end up starting trouble? Do you really enjoy getting bailed out of jail?"

This is an example of an argument that pops up every so often in our literature. Crossdressing is a means of personal expression and none of us should be browbeaten into conformity by someone else's definition of what is

appropriate clothing or behavior. The idea that each of us is an "ambassador" for the whole crossdressing universe is too much of a burden for anyone to handle. I don't expect anyone to be my ambassador—don't really want anyone else to be my ambassador—especially the little housefraus who take it upon themselves to be our ambassadors.

Jeanette also mentions an article from *TG Tapestry* magazine wherein the writer states that the word "transgender" is **not** an umbrella term suitable for both crossdressers and transsexuals. That person seems to think there is a hierarchy of transgenderism that places the transsexuals above the mere crossdresser. Jeanette disagrees with this point of view, asking the question, "What happened to being treated as equals, accepted as we are?"

Unfortunately, a lot of transsexuals—and even some crossdressers who think they must "graduate" to become transsexuals—feel that crossdressers are a lower form of transgenderism. A true transsexual person has a much different outlook than a crossdresser, but it should not be one of superiority in the sense that they are somehow "better" than the part-time crossdresser.

Jeanette relates a conversation that was printed in a *Tapestry* article by Dr. Randy Etner, where a transsexual told him she will never frequent a certain restaurant where "they" go, meaning the crossdressers who "are always overdressed with the glamour look." The rationale is that being seen with the crossdressers would trivialize her own transition.

This is actually an understandable reaction for someone who is attempting to forge her own identity in the op-

posite sex. But it may indicate a lack of self-confidence in her own transformation since she worries about being associated with crossdressers. The remark about "overdressed with the glamour look" also seems to buy into the concept of ambassadorship, i.e. the crossdressers are not being good ambassadors for this one transsexual's transition process. That's a lot of baggage for all of us to worry about when we go out for our own enjoyment.

Jeanette's hypothesis in relating these seemingly disparate anecdotes is that "we are all in this together" so let's all get on the same page and go forward together. However, I think by looking at the very different dynamics that make up our individual motivations (for transsexuals and crossdressers), we can see that it is really impractical to expect everyone to sublimate themselves to conform to some universal standard of transgenderism.

TO 'D'... OR NOT TO 'D'

The *Fiesta!* newsletter of the New Mexico Chapter of Tri-Ess in Albuquerque published an article by member Vicki Anne titled "Well, She Finally Said the 'D' Word." The article recounts her thoughts and feelings after being confronted with her wife's ultimatum to either give up crossdressing or face divorce.

Vicki Anne had told her wife about crossdressing after they had been married for some while. Her wife took a dim view of it and did not make an effort to understand it or take up Vicki's offer of participating in any spousal programs offered by Tri-Ess. Vicki says that she referred to it "as a bad dream from which [Vicki] should awake."

As all of us know, this is not something that is going to happen, and when she purchased a new outfit on a credit card, her wife found out about it and gave Vicki the ultimatum. "All the clothes, lingerie, wigs, and support group meetings are to go or she would ask me for a divorce. I am to make the choice."

Vicki gave the issue some thought. There were children involved and that posed a special concern to her. She didn't wish to sacrifice her marriage to the grail of crossdressing. However,

she also realized that the motivation to crossdress ran deep. If she swore to forego her crossdressing, she knew that in time she would come to resent the limitation imposed by her wife and family. Vicki was afraid of becoming bitter under those circumstances and that bitterness could ruin her family life as easily as her wife's insistence on its cessation. And when she reflected on the state of her marriage, Vicki realized that it hadn't been going that well over the past few years. She opted to tell her wife that she would remain a crossdresser and if that meant divorce, so be it.

The story has a somewhat happy ending. After being confronted with Vicki's willingness to divorce rather than give up crossdressing, her wife relented and decided she could try to live with it to save the marriage. Presumably, they are still working on the marriage under these new conditions.

The article concludes with two quotations that are apropos of Vicki's marital situation, as well as life in general. "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself" (George Bernard Shaw) and "Humanity's most valuable assets have been the non-conformists. Were it not for the non-conformists... the world would have known little progress indeed." (Josiah William Gitt). Vicki's wife was one of the many people out there who want the world to adapt to their particular view of things. When things don't go their way they strike out at those in disagreement with their viewpoint. The non-conformists who question the traditional order of things push us forward—perhaps for better, perhaps for worse in some cases—but were it not for people willing to stick their necks out in quest of their own vision, we might all be living in caves. Vicki found that being a non-conformist is a risky thing, but like all risky ventures the returns can be great when things turn in your favor.

STANDARDS OF CARE IN CONFLICT

Janice Heckler, M.A. wrote an interesting article titled "Caveat Emptor:

Letting the Consumer Beware" which appeared in *The Two Spirit News*, a publication primarily for transsexuals published by the Atlanta Gender Explorations group in Georgia. Ms. Heckler's article dealt with real conflicts that arise between TS patients and their therapists when the *Harry Benjamin Standards of Care* are followed to the letter.

The crux of the article is that therapists who follow the *Benjamin Standards of Care* may be placing those *Standards* above the more basic tenets of mental health treatment that may indicate alternative, quicker routes to deal with gender conflicts. She cites one example where the side effects of hormone therapy exacerbated a diabetic condition and hypertension. The patient wished to cut short the twelve month real life test called for under the *Standards of Care* to accelerate her SRS and eliminate (or lessen) the continued hormone therapy that posed a health risk. The therapist was reluctant to do so because of his/her adherence to the *Standards*.

Ms. Heckler notes, this is an example of the *Benjamin Standards of Care* being in conflict with the patient's "overall" well being. The patient, unsatisfied with her original therapist's response to this conflict, found another psychologist who concurred and things proceeded more to the patient's liking and—presumably, by the tone of Ms. Heckler's article—more in tune with the patient's overall health picture.

The reason Ms. Heckler wrote the article was to point out this potential conflict between the *Benjamin Standards* and individual patient health. **The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association** is considering increasing the real life test standard from one year to two years. Hence, this conflict could become more profound if that change is adopted. Ms. Heckler writes, "it is increasingly worrisome to this writer that many practitioners... are supporting the extension of the full life experience required by Harry Benjamin to two years when the only known readily apparent gains to be had will be en-

hanced fees and reduced legal liability for the practitioners. Thus, the change so far as the consumer is concerned may not only be without any apparent merit but may actually worsen existing conditions (i.e., depression experienced as a result of discontinuity between perceived gender and anatomical assignment)."

I am not familiar with all the *Benjamin Standards*, nor the many instances where their circumvention may have resulted in successes or failures. Standards for treatment leading up to SRS seem well-advised, but like all standards, rules and laws, there needs to be some area of flexibility given specific, unusual, cases at hand. Those of us not in the profession may not be familiar with the success stories of gender therapy that go outside the guidelines of the *Benjamin Standards*, but many of us have heard of the failures and anguish brought about by their circumvention. One hopes that ethical practitioners will always keep the patient's well-being at the forefront, even if there is some conflict with one or more of the *Standards*.

STANDARDS OF CARE: FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

The *Grace and Lace Letter* is a publication specifically aimed at serving the spiritual needs of Christian male and female crossdressers, and transsexuals. It is published by Lee Frances Heller in Jackson, Mississippi. A recent issue included an article by Terri [REDACTED] titled, "God's Standards of Care."

Terri recounts a conversation with a former classmate who heard of her transition. The classmate had many questions and specifically asked about the *Benjamin Standards of Care*. The classmate asked a provocative question, namely, "What are the *Standards of Care*? Is it how you treat others, or how you behave yourself?" It was an interesting question and started Terri thinking about the concept of standards of care, not "how others treat us... but how we treat others."

Terri then proposed a set of five "Spiritual Standards of Care" for our

continued on page 14



GenderReflections

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

Did It Have To Happen?

Every time I hear of a post-operative transsexual who commits suicide, I wonder, "Did it have to happen?" What went wrong? Was the surgery a failure? Did she change her mind too late? Did he confuse sexual orientation issues with gender identity concerns? Was she mistakenly diagnosed as TS, or was he not diagnosed at all?

I'd like to explore this subject from the perspective of a therapist who has been involved in a number of individuals' transitions. Many transsexuals choose to adhere to the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association's (HIBGDA's) Standards of Care. In choosing an endocrinologist and/or surgeon who is a member of HIBGDA, patients must engage in a period of psychotherapy prior to receiving the medical treatment they seek. While some participate in therapy only to satisfy the guidelines, others appreciate the opportunity to explore their gender identity issues with a knowledgeable, objective professional.

Some people, however, resist this process vigorously. The reasons they give are many. Some do not believe in

the process of therapy, saying they know all there is to know about themselves and no outsider can enlighten them further. Some resent the intrusion of a person who has the power to permit or deny the medical treatment they want. Others fear they will not meet the criteria for medical treatment because of past or present mental or emotional problems. A fair number resent the cost of a service they do not consider necessary in addition to the charges for more highly valued medical and cosmetic services.

As a therapist, I see psychological evaluation and counseling of pre-operative TSs as essential. Although there are many who do not need it, there are a number of people who seek sex reassignment services inappropriately or prematurely. How is the medical practitioner to distinguish one type of patient from another? Endocrinologists and surgeons are no more competent to assess true transsexuality than I am to prescribe hormones or perform surgery. They depend on the skills of the therapist to evaluate as well as prepare the prospective patient for the experience ahead. In this way, inappropriate

applicants such as the unrealistic, depressed or mentally ill can be redirected to appropriate treatment while those not yet ready for the stresses of transition or surgery can be prepared through education and support.

When I hear of the tragedy of a transsexual suicide, I wonder which of a number of circumstances may have occurred. Perhaps important issues in her life remained unresolved despite having achieved her dream of SRS. Did she suffer from depression, health problems, difficulties in the workplace, conflict with friends or family? Did he relocate "to start fresh" and find himself lonely and isolated? Did she have unrealistic expectations of the way it would be after SRS? Did his therapist mess up? Did she even have a therapist?

When individuals seek medical treatment from physicians who adhere to HIBGDA's guidelines, they are required to complete one full year of crossliving and six months of psychotherapy prior to SRS. This is a powerful combination for helping issues surface that need attention before irreversible medical procedures are performed. While there is no guarantee that these people will never suicide after SRS, had they proceeded within the guidelines of the Standards of Care, the safeguards would have been in place to identify them as being at risk and appropriate treatment could have been offered.



More Auction Items Donated for November Benefit

The Renaissance National Benefit Auction will take place this month at the Greater Philadelphia meeting, November 15. And more items have been added to their auction list.

Recently donated were a beautiful Barometer in a walnut case, and a necklace, bracelet, earring combination set of jet, turquoise and crystal.

However, the real goodies were donated by one of our members consisting of 17 movie poster, some with transgender themes. The "price" among these is the *Tootise* poster. Also donated were posters for *Top Gun*, *Heaven's Gate*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *My Girl II*, *Venom*, *Trading Places*, and more. We also have a copy

of *Glen or Glen* on video.

The auction proceeds go to benefit Renaissance national and help keep the doors open so we can provide education and support to the community and general public.

So, bring cash or plastic (VISA or Mastercard) on November 15th and help a good cause.



Three Film Reviews from Etcetera

Ladyboys (Waterbearer Films).

Charles Herman-Wurmfeld's 1995 documentary about female impersonators from Thailand and their struggle to attain notoriety is thought-provoking and entertaining. The effort provides a detailed portrait of two gay teenage boys— Odd and Dod— from northern Thailand.

The pair aspire to win a title in a local pageant in order to move south to the larger city of Pattaya where many clubs offer lavish drag reviews. After failing to win, they choose to make the trip anyway, hoping that somehow they'll find work. In Pattaya both interview for drag jobs, one successfully, the other unsuccessfully. Along the way, the viewer is privy to the emotional ups and down of Odd and Dod and of several other entertainers by whom they are befriended. Story's end leaves you wanting an explanation to their fate today.

Days of Pentecost (Videoactive Releasing).

Lawrence Elbert produced, directed and edited (all on video) this independent release. Apparently spoofing "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" and "Valley of the Dolls," his unique vision of a group of black and latino holocaustal drag queens on the lam provides sufficient laughs (especially from Melena D'L'Moja, played by Marcus Kuiland-Nazario).

The three subject's of the film are

employed by a West Hollywood gay bar as dancers, where they must endure the continual jabs of asinine clientele. After a particular nasty confrontation with a customer they flee the big city but quickly find themselves trapped in a small town after their car breaks down. They are forced to contend with a completely different world, including a self-loathing closeted auto mechanic. From a nearby gay club they abduct a bar patron whom they continuously torture and provide impromptu musical numbers for. It ends as one might expect, with an elaborate chase scene, ala "Set It Off."

Despite the fact the production values border on painful (perhaps that's part of the charm), Elbert's efforts should encourage wannabe moviemakers to get off their butts. If John Waters had access to video back in the mid '60s, we know what direction he would've gone.

P.S. Keep your eyes peeled for Alexis Arquette.

Fanci's Persuasion (Turbulent Arts)

Campy, outrageous and utterly nonsensical, "Fanci's Persuasion" is a full-throttle gender-bending, pansexual farce about a lesbian wedding in San Francisco.

In the passionate heat of doing the nasty, butch Loretta asks the punk-femme Fanci for her hand in marriage, and chaos quickly ensues. A power outage, a ripped wedding dress, dueling supernatural friends, a disapproving mother and a

butch with cold feet are just some of the normal-gone-bizarre obstacles that Fanci must face the day before her wedding.

Don't expect an entirely comprehensible plot. Half of the time it's hard to know what's going on

in any given scene, but the wackiness seems to be the point, even if it sometimes misses its aim and falls short of funny. Then again, when Fanci hangs upside-down in suspension boots wearing her miles-of-lace wedding dress, or when the friendly witch Olive stages a version of "West Side Story" starring dogs and cats, it's difficult not to experience a sudden sense of the playfully ridiculous.

There's a fabulous performance by Justin Bond as Kiki DuRane playing Fanci's evil homophobic mother and an appearance by director Herman-Wurmfeld as the sadistic, pretty-boy-in-killer-drag Theo. The sexy-stud Boa as Loretta and the pun-lovely Jessica Patton as Fanci make for yummy eye-candy, and there's a mild dose of kinky sex as good measure. A marriage of the weird and the mundane, "Fanci's Persuasion" is a queer cult film with a kinky-sweet message for gender-transgressive, self-identified perverts of the wedding-aisle persuasion.



CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Ads are \$3.00 for 3 lines for 3 months.

FOR SALE: Assorted dresses and two piece outfits in Plus Sizes. Shoes, womens size 12W. Contact Randi Schwarz at 609-983-8294. Leave a message.

Apartment for rent. Private home in country setting. Credit and personal references required. Owner is Ren. member. Call 610-287-5989

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

ALTERATIONS: get that dress to fit the way it should, buy the size for proper fit in the shoulders and I'll take in the waist and hips to fit your figure the way it was meant to fit. 10% Discount to Renaissance members. call Lisa at 610-838-7485

LEGAL NAME CHANGE for under \$200 ! Why pay an attorney up to \$1000 when you can represent yourself and save hundreds? I'll supply all necessary forms, ready to file, and instructions for \$50.00. Renaissance members pay only \$35.00 call Lisa at 610-838-7485

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"We learn something every day, and lots of times it's that what we learned the day before was wrong."

— Bill Vaughn

I'm almost fully recovered from my carousing at **Southern Comfort '97**. What a fabulous conference it was this year. **Terry Murphy, Sabrina Marcus, Max Anderson, Donna [REDACTED]** and the rest of the SCC crew did the job right. This was one of the absolute best events I've attended in a long time. Those Southern girls know how to throw a party. To give you just a hint of its fabulousity, her highness the Queen did not get into any arguments with anyone. Also, I appreciated all the friends from TGForum that stopped me to say Hi.

The big news that came out of Southern Comfort was the announcement of **Alison Laing's** "retirement" as Executive Director of the International Foundation for Gender Education (**IFGE**). I put retirement in quotes because anyone who knows Alison knows she'll do anything but retire. We're working on two book projects together and she has many other projects in the works. She will also remain as an IFGE volunteer and will serve on the IFGE board of directors as secretary. Replacing Alison as Executive Director is former IFGE board member **Nancy Nangeroni**. To be honest, I'm not sure Nancy is up to the tasks of the

position, but I'll give her the benefit of the doubt. Let's hope that IFGE has a bright future with its new director.

Another interesting announcement made at Southern Comfort, but missed by most people, was that the 1998 lobbying activity sponsored by **GenderPAC** will be called the **1998 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Lobby Days**. Wow, now that's a mouthful. But even more important is that the "transgender" tends to get lost in the alphabet soup. In my not so humble opinion (why bother having an opinion if it's humble?), GenderPAC is off 180 degrees from where the community needs it to be on this one. GenderPAC was created to give the transgender community a voice at the political table, but instead that transgender voice is being drowned out by peripheral noise. What is missing is a national discussion of the important issues. For example, **Tony Baretto-Neto**, chair of GPAC, announced at Southern Comfort that the GPAC board had unanimously approved a position statement on **Gender Identity Disorder Reform**. Fact is, two of the GPAC organizations did not approve the policy. Renaissance withheld its vote because there was no discussion of the policy prior to the call for the vote. The other "nay" came from **It's Time America**. What we have are a few individuals speaking at a national level as if they represent the community at large and nothing could be farther from the truth. This community needs to get off its collective ass and create a transgender rights movement that will focus on the needs of transgender-people by getting input from those most affected by the issues.

Rumors have been flying about a **merger** between two, three, some, or all of the major national organizations. Let's set the record straight. *There is no merger*. What is getting underway is a study to determine the feasibility of combining the resources of several of the

major organizations into one national umbrella organization. The study team consists of two members from **IFGE**, two from the American Educational Gender Information Service (**AEGIS**) and two from **Renaissance**. This does not mean that other organizations are excluded from the study. The team will interact with other organizations as needed to gather inputs for the study. Any recommendations for mergers, consolidations, acquisitions, etc., will have to go to each organization's board for approval before implementation. Based on feedback I've received from people not involved in the study, the feeling is "Not only No, but Hell No" on any merger. Ah well, I'm sure there were some who didn't want to build the Panama canal, either. We'll just have to see what the study team develops.

Dr. Richard Docter and others have arranged to celebrate the 85th Birthday next month of the community's Grand Dame, **Virginia Prince**. Virginia's friends and supporters are encouraged to send her greeting cards (both individually and signed by group members). If you wish to send a recorded message to be played at the banquet, please communicate with Dr. Docter first. The birthday celebration is Saturday, November 22, 1997 at 7 PM. Grand Salon/The Student Union, California State University, Northridge. For banquet tickets (\$20.00) (checks payable to Richard Docter) mail to: Richard F. Docter, P. O. Box 280126, Northridge, CA 91328-0126. Call: 818-[REDACTED] or send e-mail to: [REDACTED]@aol.com>.

So, now they say **Marv Albert** had a 15 year affair with a male **transvestite** from New York City. Supposedly police received an anonymous tip about the alleged paramour and police tracked him down and verified the story. The **New York Post** was told by an associate of the crossdresser, "The relationship he had with Marv Albert—there was no vio-

Hot•Buzz

lence, no rudeness, no inappropriate-ness. It was just straight transvestite sex." Okay, I'll bite. (Oops!) What the Hell is "straight transvestite sex?" If anybody has a good definition of straight transvestite sex, lemme know.

Did you know that the **Barbie** doll was a copy of a German doll called **Lilli** and that Lilli's reputation was less than sterling? Betcha dint know that. You can find that info plus a whole lot more at a web site devoted to the Mattel sweetheart. Go to <www.users.interport.net/~napier/barbie/barbie.html>

I'm sure you've all heard of **Mr. Blackwell** and his best/worst dressed list. Well, he's hit cyberspace with his own website and he has a feature called **Screams and Dreams**, a weekly list of fashion picks and pans, plus reader voting for his Top 10 Best and Worst lists. Go to <www.mrblackwell.com>.

Two new photo books have hit the market that might be of interest. The first is a collection of **Francesco Scavullo's** cover artwork for *Cosmo* and other high fashion magazines. The \$60 (Abrams) coffee table book contains over 200 photos of the likes of **Paulina Porizkova**, **Stephanie Seymour**, and **Christie Brinkley**. What do all three of those super models have in common? Their partners/so's were all rockers. Guess who. Which brings me to the second book: **Rolling Stone Book of Women in Rock: Trouble Girls**. This \$25 (Random House) book is a virtual encyclopedia of girls with guitars and more. The book contains photos and profiles of women like **Janis Joplin**, **Liz Phair**, **Courtney Love**, **Madonna**, and many others.

While I'm in the bookbin, look for **Kevin Aucoin's** new makeup book *Making Faces*. What's so cool about Aucoin's book are the easy to do tips, tricks and how-to's. Plus he shows you how to do celebrity makeovers, like Marilyn Monroe, Barbara Streisand, or Liza Minelli. Perfect for the budding Drag Queen. The book is \$24.95, plus \$3.99 s&h from

the Condé Nast collection. Call 1-800-426-9922 for credit card orders.

On to fashion news. The lip color of the season is **Berry**. Your only decision here is whether to go brown or burgundy. The look is very casual, like you've been eating **blackberries**, instead on the precision, coated look of a year or so ago. There are two techniques for applying berry shades... Twist the color onto the center of your lips and then spread it with your finger... Line upper lip and press against bottom lip to transfer color... In either case, add lip gloss for final effect. Personally, I don't like either method. I prefer to line the lips with a pencil that matches the lip color, then apply lipstick with a brush working from the inner to outer edges.

The latest in lipstick technology is making it big in tinsel town where air-kissing had become a higher artform. **Lip-Ink** is a six-step process that results in a no-smear colored lip. **Rose Nichols**, founder of Lip-Ink, describes the process: "You start with a coat of Lip-Ink Shine, followed by two coats of Lip-Ink Color, layer of Magic Powder, another coat of Color, and a final coat of Shine." All three pieces cost \$15 each, so you'll shell out \$45 for the kit. Of course, if you're a celeb, \$45 is peanuts. Call 1-888-547-4651 to order.

There's been much ado about **high heels** of late. The Fashion Mavens (mostly men) keep trying to bring back spike heels, but the real-world women continue to resist. Sometimes I think if it weren't for transvestites and fetishists, there'd be no stiletto heels available at all. Well, according to a local podiatrist, a heel height of 1 inch to 1½ inches is optimal, and an occasional excursion to 2¼ inches is okay. A **wedge** or **stacked** heel is better than a **stiletto**, even if the thicker heel is higher. The wider base distributes your weight more evenly. Also, you should not switch from high heels to flats without stretching your calves first. Well, maybe that's what the doctor orders, but I'm not throwing away my 3½ inch spikes with ankle straps or my 3 inch knee-hi boots.

It looks like **Revlon** has made it a complete set. They've added a **ColorStay Powder** to the line of stay-put makeup products. The line now includes foundation, powder, lipstick, and blush. No smudge is great, but remember to buy the special remover, too. Revlon has also introduced a new nail polish, **Top Speed**, that is said to dry in **90 seconds**. The only problems I can see are the funky colors. There isn't a red-red in the lot. My best selection would be Fudge.

Revlon isn't the only nail news around. The colors for Fall have been pigment-pumped for deeper, richer colors. The Fall palette includes rich, dark **chocolates**, deep **reds** and iridescent **midnight blue**. Try these selections... Reds: **MAC Carnal**, **Sally Hansen 3-D**, **Cutex Cranberry**... Blues: **Creative Nail Design Nocturnal**, **Naturistics Quartz**, **Urban Decay Pigeon**... Browns: **Elizabeth Arden Choco**, **Maybelline Cinnamon**, **Sally Hansen Mink Stole**.

One thing I notice often when I attend various events around the country is the **amount of makeup** some people wear. I mean, come on girls, it ain't Bondo! If you don't know if you're wearing too much makeup, here are some cues... Your neck or hands are a different color than your face... You can't see a single pore, a sure sign your foundation and powder are too thick... You leave color prints everywhere, your clothes, your hands, your phone, etc... You can't feel your face through the foundation... You reapply powder more than twice a day. Unless you're at a photo shoot, that's too much powder. The other thing that bugs me is lipstick that is smeared. The opposite, of course, is **too little makeup**. The transsexuals are more prone to this error than the transvestites. Believe it or not, every woman needs a little makeup. The trick is to wear just enough makeup so you look like you're not wearing any.

So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? I think there is something to be learned from everyone, even if it is how *not* to do something. Comments? Write me care of this publication or send email to [REDACTED]@cdspub.com>.
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Vis A Vis...

consideration. They are :

"Copping an attitude is inappropriate for the transsexual Christian. Many transsexual Christians cope with adversity by thumbing their noses at the world and the people in it. [This] will not develop effective relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters."

"Remain in the fellowship of the saints. I was asked to leave a couple of churches [and] two or three openly condemned me. It would have been easy to just say, 'they won't accept me, I can serve God without the church.' But that was not God's plan for His people. Pray for guidance and keep looking for places to worship in the congregation of the saints."

"Concern yourself with the feelings of others. If you are following God's path for your life, you have to know that this decision will impact other people. A little consideration will go a long way toward improving your relationships and confirm your experience with Christ."

"Being transsexual does not exempt you from the Duty of Love."

Terri acknowledges that living as a transsexual will undoubtedly bring you under attack from some quarters.

"You must not allow bitterness to grow from them. You must love those who hate you. It is not a divine suggestion. It is a divine commandment."

Although Terri's proposed standards are written specifically to a Christian audience, all of us can use the basic concepts to improve our rela-

tionships with others as well as cope with whatever hardships we may encounter as either crossdressers or transsexuals. Many of the stories of personal strife I've read in newsletter articles and essays could have been helped, if not completely avoided, by following Terri's thesis that a considerate, loving attitude toward others—even those who misunderstand us—is healthier than the alternative of anger, contempt and despair.

On a final note: I have read in several sources that Lee Frances Heller, publisher of the *Grace and Lace Letter*, is retiring, presumably from her work on the *Letter*. It offers a unique viewpoint in our community and I have found several interesting articles from fresh perspectives in its pages. If Lee is indeed retiring, then I wish her happiness and hope that her work continues through a successor for the *Grace and Lace Letter*.

BITS... AND PIECES OF TAIL

There were a few items I came across that deserved some comment, if not the full analytical treatment to which my readers are accustomed. Herein are just a few:

Several Tri-Ess newsletters reported the cancellation of the 1997 Holiday En Femme originally scheduled for November 12-16, right in our own backyard of Cherry Hill, New Jersey. The event was to be hostessed by the Sigma Nu Rho sorority in Burlington County, New Jersey, and held at the Holiday Inn in Cherry Hill. The reason for the cancellation was given cryptically as "after a set of cir-

cumstances arose that precluded offering the event as originally planned." One can only wonder what those circumstances might have been. No one in any Tri-Ess publication I saw deemed it newsworthy enough to spell them out. I think it would be a good idea for someone in charge to lay the cards on the table, since this is one of the nation's better known crossdressing gatherings. As it stands now, it smells like someone at Tri-Ess screwed up. If so, or if not, the real reasons should be disclosed.

The *CD News Quarterly* published by the Rochester, New York, CD Network announced on its Fall issue cover that the editor, Nancy Ann Howes, is stepping down, and unless someone else in the group picks it up the editorship will cease to be. If they've gone this far in the announcement, it appears that no one has yet stepped up to the plate. Here is a classic case where a six year old publication is about to go down for the count because of a lack of volunteerism. C'mon girls, in this day and age of computers and word processing capabilities, it doesn't take a latter day William Randolph Hearst to put out a quarterly newsletter for your group. Somebody up there in the North Country, please get on the stick.

Our affiliate, **ConnecticutView**, is producing a benefit drag show on November 8th, and the flyer in the September and October issues of their newsletter included a stunning photo of an old acquaintance, the accom-

continued on next page

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Teen CD Suspended from Conn. High School

[Connecticut] In September, a male student was suspended from Trumbull High School for two days for using the girls' bathroom. The unnamed young man, who regularly wears miniskirts, makeup, and a feminine hairstyle, describes himself as a crossdresser. His suspension mirrors a similar incident in Vermont last year when another young man, Matthew [REDACTED], was suspended from school for wearing a dress to class.

"It's a little strange to see a boy in the girls' room," said one girl at Trumbull High last week, "but what's the difference? It doesn't really bother me."

Trumbull High's administration maintains a surprisingly tolerant stance on the matter. Principal Robert McCarthy has turned aside complaints from several parents about the youth's dress and behavior saying that the school does not have legal authority to

impose stringent dress codes. "We are fairly liberal when it comes to a dress code," he said. "But we don't allow young ladies in the men's room or men in the ladies' room for any reason." A principal in Trumbull for 31 years, McCarthy said things have changed from the days when a female teacher wearing pants was sent home for violating the school dress code.



Vis A Vis...

published Ann-Margaret impersonator, **Morgan Stevens**. The photo shows Morgan with mucho grande del cleavage generously displayed. And it ain't a mere optical illusion. I remember bumping into Morgan one night a few years ago at Edelweiss in New York City where those newly minted puppies were bringing out the green eyed mon-

ster in all of us part-time girls. After seeing this new photo of Morgan, I can't help but think of a possible remake of the Ann-Margaret film, *Carnal Knowledge*.

Another Renaissance affiliate, The Chicago Gender Society, favored us with their 1997 *Swimsuit Special* in the September issue. Noteworthy bathing beauties included my old sparring partner, Kiki [REDACTED] with a lean and mean bod, and CGS Vice Presi-

dent Olivia Connors, who looks like the real deal in a tight bikini. In fact, I haven't seen a crossdresser look that good in a bikini bottom since our own Angela Gardner graced our swimsuit issue two February's ago. Well done, ladies. Check them out in the newsletter copies available in the Renaissance library.



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Ms. Lynda

Southern Comfort Conference: A Report

by Tina [REDACTED]

With this year's convention being lauded as 'the best yet,' the big question that both the organizers and attendees were asking was, "How do you improve on this?"

Gender conventions have to be a finely mixed bag of serious content and plain old good times. Southern Comfort seems to have this down to near perfect, with three full days of seminars, ground-breaking topics, plus social events both on and off site that left everyone breathless.

Attendees from as far afield as Hong Kong and Dubai mixed with their American brothers, sisters, concerned professionals and friends.

More than a few of the 200-plus attendees who packed downtown Atlanta's Hard Rock Cafe on Thursday night woke up with more than happy memories and sore dancing feet the next morning. There were a lot of frag-

ile heads on Friday and Saturday mornings with the seminars being better attended once the gift shop had dispensed the Tylenol and Mineral Water. Rumor has it that it was not only the attendees who had trouble getting up in the morning.

This year also saw the first of a new feature at Southern Comfort—the Transgender Town Hall Meeting. While most agreed that it was a little long, the well attended meeting raised some of the most important issues for all of us. The articulate audience was more than gratified by the discussions from the panel and the floor. Next year should be even better.

Modesty forbids me from extolling the virtues of all the assembled entertainers who performed on Friday night, since I was among them. Suffice to say that the audience was thrilled by the depth of talent from the dozen or so girls and boys who took the stage.

For over an hour they kept the Ballroom at the Holiday Inn Central thrilled with live performances stemming from the thrilling voice of Stephanie Schumaker's closing *tour de force* and our friend Jami Ward with her new routine stemming from last year's "You Might Be Transgendered" to songs and tears from all the cast.

On Saturday night the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus was nothing short of stupendous. Taking the diners on a roller coaster of awe through tears, laughter, and back in their beautifully performed repertoire. Since the Southern Comfort Conference is also the second largest source of support for the group and their effort for HIV/AIDS, we can be sure to see them again next year.

Next Year? The hard-working group which put on SCC met on Sunday morning to start planning for Southern Comfort '98.



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Dealing With Change

From The Daughter Of A Transgendered Father

The following was written by Dee McKellar's daughter just days before Dee passed away suddenly on Sept. 6, 1997. It is not known if Dee ever saw it, but Dee already knew that her daughter, who has given permission to share this, loved her.

When I was growing up, there were good times and conflicts as in any other family I knew. We were living the average middle-class American life and everything seemed fine. It was not until I was nine years old that I was told about our family secret. My father was a crossdresser and had been for all of my life. This admission shocked me, of course, but I was really too young to understand what was going on.

Over the next four or five years the crossdressing continued with my knowledge. However, our encounters at home were infrequent enough when he was 'dressed' that I was able to block out the feeling that I thought my father was a freak. Things changed, however, when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. He actually started wearing these clothes in front of me on a regular basis! It became a routine. When he came home from work he would check the mail and proceed to go change. Other than the clothes, the evenings went on as always. During my

teen years, I spent a lot of time in my room to get away. I also kept very busy with school, a job, and spending time with my friends. I did anything I could to distance myself from the freak. Needless to say, there was a lot of discord in the house and animosity between us.

Things finally came to a head when I was eighteen. I found my own place and moved out. Things were tough, but there was no way that I was going back. Shortly thereafter, my parents separated and filed for divorce. In a period of approximately seven or eight months my father had effectively erased his family from his life.

Over the next two years or so, I would occasionally visit my father and share small talk to catch up. A close friend of mine likened these visits to business meetings because of our demeanor. Over time, however, I began to notice changes. His hair was getting longer and he seemed to be developing—dare I say it—breasts! Finally, my father put me out of my questioning misery and gave me a letter. This was his way of coming out of the closet to publicly live his life as a woman. The letter explained the steps that would follow; such as name change, changing the sex on the driver's license, and ev-

everything else that goes with becoming a new person. When I read that letter I felt as though I would fall over. This piece of paper was telling me that my father was essentially dead.

After this revelation, I saw my father even less than ever. Suddenly, three years ago, I grew up. Visits became more frequent and conversations were longer and more enlightening.

Now, I am twenty-eight years old. I am proud of who my father has become and the person that she is. She is not ashamed of her identity and does a lot of work in the community. She is also a major force in the transgender community. She is working nationally and internationally to help make things better for other people who are having trouble adjusting to their identity.

I still have problems getting my pronouns straight, and on occasion I still accidentally call her "Dad" in public. She is patient though, and tells me that it will just take time. She tells me that she is thankful that we are talking, because there are kids that sometimes turn completely away from their parents. I sometimes space my visits apart, but I could never lose complete contact. After all, deep down inside is the person that raised me. She is my father.



NGLTF Adds TG To Mission Statement

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) today announced the adoption of a new mission and vision statement. In addition, the organization announced the election of new board co-chairs and the appointment of three new members to its board.

At a September 13 meeting, the board adopted new language for its mission and vision statements. The newly approved mission statement reads: "The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force works to eliminate prejudice, violence and injustice against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered

people at the local, state and national level." The language in the new vision statement reads: "As part of a broader social justice movement for freedom, justice and equality, we are creating a world that respects and celebrates the diversity of human expression and identity and where all people may fully participate in society."

"Our revised mission statement is the result of discussions by our board and staff to add clarity to our work," said Kerry Lobel, Executive Director of the NGLTF. "As gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered

people, our future is closely linked to other movements for social justice. We have recommitted ourselves to that important work."

The new co-chairs of the NGLTF board of directors are Rachel Rosen of New Mexico and Joe Hall of Nebraska. They will both serve a two-year term. Rosen, a former commodities trader and market analyst is very active in the GLBT community of New Mexico. She has served on the NGLTF board of directors since April, 1996. Hall is

continued on page 23

Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.

Making Sense of It All

My Maple Tree

Every time I look at the lovely maple tree in my front yard, especially during the autumn, I am reminded of the fact that gender change at any level involves far more than what the eye can see. That reminder has taken the form of a poem, "My Maple Tree:"

My maple tree
has shared with me
another season of its life.

The leaves
are now flushed
with the fullness of fall,
adding splendor
and sadness
until the last moment
and even beyond it all.

For when the branches
are finally bare,
naked
to the season's sun,

my maple tree
will show to me
and to all eternity
the soul work
yet to be done.

When I first wrote this poem I did not have any gender struggle in mind, at least not consciously, for at the time I was not even aware of the fact that I was struggling with gender confusion. I just knew that my life was a never ending series of challenges, both inner and outer. And those challenges, which in my case have ultimately included a struggle with gender identity, continue to emerge and evolve.

It is one thing for me to have found myself at last, that is, to have found the gender identity which allows me to feel grounded and truly alive. But it is another thing simply to live life, regardless of my gender. I cannot really overstate the awesomeness of realizing that, even having faced the

unbelievable fact of my gender discomfort and resulting change, I still have life in general to face. I still have to get up each day, eat properly, go to work, drive carefully, watch my finances, get enough sleep, and so on. All of this may sound like I am stating the obvious, but I have had to remind myself that my gender change is not the final answer to my encounter with life. My gender change may be a relief and represent a new lease on life, but it is not the total answer to the daily challenges.

As a matter of fact, my gender change has added to the challenges, both inner and outer, which I continually face. Initially, I just wanted to resolve my inner turmoil, an effort that involved self-recognition, self-acceptance, and self-integration. Those challenges persist in varying degrees, but now I also face other challenges. For example, I will always live with some degree of secrecy, even though family and friends can see my gender change. The world in general, however, does not know of my change unless I announce it, for I am lucky to be able to have made a fairly good transition in terms of appearance, voice, and mannerisms. So there is a certain measure of secrecy remaining, a secrecy which is undoubtedly appropriate. Of course, my writings tell the world who I am and what I have gone through. But on a day to day basis I keep my gender change a matter of private knowledge, in other words, a secret. Though my remaining secrecy does weigh a bit on my soul, such weight is part of the soul-work which I increasingly accept. When I look at my maple tree without its cloak of leaves, I see my soul-work beneath it all.

Along with some continuing measure of secrecy in my life, I am also experiencing a sense of ambiguity, in that, to one extent or another, my body is ambiguously constructed. Again, I do not present an ambiguous appear-

ance, but I carry the sense of ambiguity beneath my clothes and within my soul. When I look at the bare branches of my maple tree, I see the bare facts of my existence. How I handle it all is part of the soul-work which I face.

Though I have pretty much made my transition from one gender to the other, the change effort which that transition involves is never really finished. I am forever dealing with various aspects of my gender change, whether concerning my body or my relationship with family and friends. Strangers, of course, do not know what I have gone through. But medical examinations and some occasional legal documentation represent two situations in which I am especially reminded of my gender change. School reunions, if I choose to attend, are another poignant reminder. I must admit I do not like these various reminders. I just want to live my life, but my gender change is part of the reality which constitutes my life experience as a whole. Handling that reality is part of my soul-work. My maple tree, with its annual autumn splendor followed by its wintry bareness, reminds me that my gender change is an ongoing aspect of my journey through life.

All of this experience, including such matters as my lingering secrecy, my residual ambiguity, and the endlessness of my change, represents a challenge to my soul. But I am not alone with my soul-work. Transvestites, transgenderists, and transsexuals, both male to female and female to male, as well as intersexed persons, whose sense of ambiguity is unavoidable, at least initially, all know the meaning of soul-work. And, of course, those who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual all know the meaning of my maple tree, for they, too, face soul-work throughout their lives. And those closest to us, that is, spouses, children,

continued next page



Dining With Carol & Babs

Ecco L'Italia

are courteously fulfilled. Appetizers such as shrimp cocktail, mozzarella in carozza, and stuffed mushrooms are favorites, as well as the Caesar and tri-color salads. The best values are the well prepared entrees. Almost all the veal dishes are \$11.95, our favorites being Veal alla Parmigiana, Valdostana (prosciutto and mozzarella), Scallopini alla Sorrentino (eggplant, prosciutto and mozzarella), and, of course, Saltimbocca alla Romana with prosciutto and sage.

Most chicken dishes are \$10.95 with the house dish, Pollo alla Ecco (with artichoke hearts, peas, mushrooms and, of course, prosciutto) being our favorite. Others range to \$12.50. Most seafood dishes are similarly priced, ranging from \$10.95 to \$15.00. Even those "steak eaters" among us were pleasantly surprised at the quality and cut of the Filet Mignon in an Italian restaurant. In addition there are daily specials, generally at the higher range. Desserts that we've particularly enjoyed (but paid for afterwards) are tiramisu, Italian cheesecake, and zabaglione!

What sets Ecco apart from most restaurants is the fact that on weekends, during dinner, it's a jazz club. Expect to find an accomplished jazz trio, usually with a singer. Expect also at any time to find a talented musician to just pop in and "jam" at least a few numbers. Unlike other places in the area, there is no music charge. One night one of the soloists came by our table and dedicated a "number" to

Babs... was she in heaven. There were a few extra dollars in the musicians' tip glass that night. Normally, as long as you are not directly next to the musicians, conversation is possible. Sitting three or four tables away makes for an incredible ambiance.

Ecco is one of those places where we feel welcome and special when we arrive dressed. It's really nice when the owner and manager greet both of us with a warm, "Good Evening, Mrs..." and a kiss on the cheek. Even Albert, the new bartender who, unlike his predecessor, knows how to make an Absolut Gimlet, is better known as the opera singing Countess Diva of the Imperial Court of New York... and a friendly face.

One note of caution for the frugal diner. Since most of the entrees are quite reasonable for the city, and since there is no music charge, plus the fact that Ecco is included in the Entertainment Book and other discount plans, means they make up for the lower meal prices with their beverage prices, including even milk and tea! Reservations are suggested on weekends. It's a place for a good time.

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Making Sense...

relatives, and close friends, all face soul-work in terms of us.

The truth of the matter is that, regardless of one's gender or sexual variation, soul-work is part of life. If we pay attention to the inner tasks in the midst of our outer comings and goings,

we can add depth and meaning to our lives as a whole. If we are unable on our own to find the depth and meaning we each seek, we can always turn to others for help, such as professional counselors, especially counselors who understand what it means to find happiness and fulfillment in a world where diversity is really the norm and not the

exception, where being different from each other is as normal as the change of seasons. Perhaps a good counselor is one who knows what my maple tree is trying to tell us. Such a counselor will in turn help each of us to know for ourselves what my maple tree is saying.



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Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Greetings, girlfriends and pilgrims! If it's November, that must mean Turkey Day is right around the corner! Every Thanksgiving my cousin Denise invites me over for dinner, and she really cooks up a storm. After two, sometimes three, helpings she makes me a big Tupperware bowl full of goodies for me to take home, and I wind up eating well for nearly the entire week-end. Then I spend the entire following week exercising it all off! Sigh! What a vicious circle!

If it's November, that also means Black Friday is on the way. Just as Halloween is the unofficial holiday for crossdressers, Black Friday is our day to go hog wild in the stores, provided, of course, you get to the malls before everyone else, and that's the trick, as stores like Sears, Penney's and the like have been known to open their doors as early as 7:00 am! When I worked at the King of Prussia Mall, the lots would be filling up with cars long before Regis and Kathie Lee hit the air.

I had an interesting cosmetic experience a while ago that I wanna rap with you about. In September, a new Lord & Taylor store opened in downtown Philly and, as part of the promotion hyping it's opening, customers on their cosmetics department mailing list were sent postcards inviting them to get a free colorprinting session at the Perscriptives counter in the new store. Since I was on that particular list and was curious about colorprinting, I decided to investigate. The Perscriptives salesperson explained to me what colorprinting was all about, and now I'll explain it to you as best I can.

Perscriptives has four color groups for their cosmetics pertaining to one skin tone: yellow/orange, red/orange, red and blue/red in six levels from the lightest beige (level 1) to the darkest brown (level 6). Once my skin tone level was established (level 5), the saleslady dabbed foundation from each of the four groups on my jaw.

From there, she blended each example into my skin to determine which blended best. The red/orange group was the winner. I had been color-printed in all of five minutes. From there I was shown an family of cosmetics for my particular level and color group: eye shadow, eyeliner, blush, lipliner, lipstick, the entire nine yards, and the saleslady was extremely helpful to me every step of the way in the process of selecting just what I wanted.

One of the coolest things about Perscriptives cosmetics (at least to me) regarding their eye shadows and blushers is that they're refillable. When you initially buy those products, you get an empty compact in which the colors you chose come in pads that fit into recessed spaces in the compact. When you run out of a particular color, all you do is go back to the store (where your level and color group is on file) and buy replacement pads instead of the whole compact. Neat, huh?

Not only is it extremely clever, it's cost effective. A single compact can last years unless you break the mirror or change your brand. Even then, replacement compacts are only three to five dollars. As for the cosmetics themselves, the foundation, Virtual Skin, wears very nice and light on my face

while everything else in my color group looks exceedingly good on me. Give colorprinting, which is free, a shot. You might like what you see.

Regarding my dissertation on shoes back in September, two nice girls took the time to drop me some tips on places to go/write to for "jumbo" size shoes. Jackie [redacted] from deep-in-the-heart-a Texas told me about a place called Shoe Express which has women's shoes in sizes up to a whopping 15 at reasonable prices! That I would consider to be "super jumbo!" If you're interested, Shoe Express has a catalog you can get by writing to Box 31537, Lafayette, LA 70593-1537.

Also, for you gals in Houston, Jackie's neck of the woods, there's an upscale (read—expensive) shoe store, called Brucette's, which has two stores and also carry sizes up to 15! I always knew things were big in Texas, but this is incredible! The addresses to these stores are 4920 San Felipe, phone: 713-993-0022 and 1-800-229-0022 and 11510 Gulf Freeway, phone: 713-941-1170 and 1-800-941-1170. Mucho gracias for the tips, Jackie!

News & Views' resident dining mavens, Carol and Babs, check in with a place to go for large size shoes. While on a trip to Florida, a sister from the state's Serenity group told Babs (a size 13W like moi) about a store called Stat-Shoe-Esque that specializes in high fashion footwear in sizes 10 and up. The owner, a 6' 2" GG knows how every model of shoe she carries fits. Babs visited the store both in her girl and guy guises and was treated well.

Babs also told me that the store, located in Davie, a suburb of Fort Lauderdale, publishes a mail order catalog that has a most unique feature—a fold out, step-on foot-measuring chart that can most certainly come in handy for the novice CD trying to determine her correct shoe size! Now, girls, is that kewl or what? If you're interested in a catalog, you can call the store at 1-800-367-7167. Many thanks to you, Babs! May your dining experiences continue to be rewarding to your appetite!

Lastly, on shopping for tall girls,

continued on page 23

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NGLTF...

the executive director of Nebraska AIDS Project in Omaha. He has served on the board since January '96.

Appointed to the board at the September meeting were Arturo (Art) Nava, an engineer from Boston; Lynn Cothren, an aide to Coretta Scott King in Atlanta; and Lani Ka'ahumanu, an AIDS educator in San Francisco. All three new members have had a long-standing history of activism in the GLBT community. Nava was the first elected national co-president of the Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay United Employees at AT&T (LEAGUE). He served a two-year term from 1992 through 1994. Cothren, a Tennessee native, has performed nearly all his activist work in Atlanta. He has been a special assistant to Mrs. Coretta Scott

King, Founder of the King Center in Atlanta, since 1982. He has also worked with many GLBT organizations in Atlanta as an advisor, member of the board of directors, or volunteer. Ka'ahumanu is a Community Education Coordinator at the Marin AIDS Project in San Francisco. She has been a bisexual grassroots and national organizer for over 30 years, and is the co-editor of "Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out."

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Sex Change..

group which produced the guidelines. He admitted that up to one in four of the teenagers who at 14 seem convinced of their desire to change sex will later change their minds. "They cannot be totally sure at that age. There's pressure to intervene because these patients are in no-man's-land. They find it very distressing and they need help in tolerating it," he said.



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Shopping...

Dana Ashley checks in with a place to go. Dana e-mailed me about a place she discovered called Tall Girls Today out in Fort Wayne. According to Dana, the store's owner, Sandra, is very nice

and gender friendly and is interested in serving the TG community. She both welcomes people into her store and can do mail order as well. The address is 2831 East State Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46805. Thanks loads for the tip, Dana!

Well, girls, it's time to sign off for now. I need to be well rested to battle the hordes at the mall on Black Friday! As always, my electronic mailbox is open for your comments at

[\[redacted\]@voicenet.com](mailto:[redacted]@voicenet.com).

Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, Sisters!



Resources

Background Papers

Background Papers are \$1.25 each:

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

All of the Background Papers and Community Outreach Bulletins are available for free at the Renaissance web site <www.ren.org>.

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FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION

Note Bene: Dr. Lee Etscovitz, Renaissance National Librarian, has scheduled the next meeting of the Library Discussion Group for Wednesday evening, November 5, from 8:00 PM to 9:30 PM at the Woods. Anyone and everyone is welcome. For more information contact Dr. Etscovitz at the office.

Sex Change Treatment for Children in UK

Sunday [London] Times, *by Lois Rogers, Medical Correspondent*

Children as young as 14 are receiving sex change treatment through the National Health Service after revealing to their parents that they are confused about their sexuality.

They are among an estimated 600 girls and boys—some as young as seven—who suffer gender identity disorders in Britain, according to doctors and support groups.

The disclosure that a growing number of children are seeking treatment for the condition known as “gender dysphoria” has prompted an intense debate among medical specialists. While some psychiatrists believe children should be helped to change sex early, others insist they should only take that decision after reaching sexual maturity.

Some children are offered help at school to change their first names and wear clothes designed for the opposite sex. They receive drugs to block the onset of puberty, followed by hormones to help develop the characteristics of their preferred gender.

The final step, taken after the child has reached 18, is the complex surgery required to provide the external reproductive organs of the other sex.

Russell Reid, a consultant psychiatrist at Hillingdon Hospital, West London, believes children as young as 13 should be offered preliminary drug treatment to prevent puberty. “It’s not a crime to prescribe these drugs but

you really have to know what you are doing,” he said. “Changing the body to match the mind is increasingly the accepted way of doing things, but the medical profession has been dragging its feet.”

Margaret Griffiths, who runs Mermaids, a support group for families of sex-change children, managed to get treatment for her son when he was 14. He harboured doubts about his sexuality since he could remember, but did not tell his parents until his early teens.

“We had problems with him not wanting to go to school and not being able to tell us what was wrong,” said Griffiths. “By the time of the treatment his voice had begun to break a little bit, but it made an enormous difference. It took the pressure off, but I’m certain he would have done much better at school if he had been treated younger. Kids can be so nasty.

“We supported our child because he was suicidal over it. It was better to have a live daughter than a dead son. The treatment is controversial but parents have to live with the distress of their children and they want psychiatrists to stop being cautious about it.”

She is campaigning to widen the availability of treatment and receives up to eight inquiries a week from parents of children unhappy with their gender. “One family has a child of seven who has wanted to be a girl since he was four,” she said. “He exhibits all the signs of cross-gender behaviour.”

Other affected young people say

they have been left to suffer because some psychiatrists remain reluctant to treat them. James [redacted], 11, was born a girl but has changed his name. His school lets him play football with other boys and treats him as a male, but doctors insist he must go through puberty as a girl before they will consider hormone therapy or surgery. “I am a boy, I was born a boy trapped inside a girl’s body, but the doctors won’t even say when I can start treatment to be a boy,” he said.

His mother, who recently agreed to refer to her child as “him,” dreads the nightmare of his puberty and is powerless to help lessen the trauma.

“I’m convinced he’s not going to change now,” she said. “I am committed to his cause, and I want anything that is going to help him live a normal life, but we don’t know what to do.”

The growing demand for treatment has led to the creation of a Royal College of Psychiatrists’ working party to establish guidelines. The controversial draft proposals, to be finalised this autumn, urge the provision of “therapeutic intervention as early as possible in a child’s life, an optimistic approach to improving the child’s life, and in some cases, altering secondarily the gender identity development.”

Domenico Di Ceglie runs the gender identity development service at the Portman clinic in London where Griffiths’s son was treated and led the

continued on page 23

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