The Femme Mirror

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The Femme Mirror

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2. We encourage all contributors to the Mirror to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.
3. We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
4. Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner.

Thank you, Frances Fairfax

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Are You Moving?

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Donna [redacted]
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659

A Note of Thanks

A note of thanks from your Mirror Staff to all of you who contribute your articles, photos, cartoons, poems, as well as your typing and envelope-stuffing skills. Your service is enriching the lives of all your sisters. This is YOUR journal. You, the readers, are the source of its contents and the reason for its existence. Ya'll are doing GREAT! Just keep it coming now, hear?

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Executive Director's Message

By Carol Beecroft

Many times crossdressers and wives talk about the family and the problems crossdressing can bring to it, but never really get deeply involved with a part of the family that seems to be taken for granted - the children.

Some time ago I had the pleasure of corresponding with a young lady whose father, a crossdresser, had gotten "in print." The subsequent publicity resulted in a number of letters to her from other children of crossdressers.

The young lady addressed a letter to her father, as the following story unfolds:

"Dad! Since your discovery I have received letters from my friends, whose fathers are crossdressers, and I shared my experience with crossdressing within my family. My friends are also very concerned about their own fathers; like, for instance, being discovered, along with other things as well, and how it might affect them and their family."

Then, this young lady writes about her friends' "stories" and what these friends are concerned with (I've changed the names):

"Dorothy is from a small town in California and writes to say that her dad and mom are very much like mine. Our parents say this is a family secret but somehow never quite see how it affects us - their children! Oh, you are open and you talk with us, but when we ask the tough questions you do not seem to have answers. I have thought for a long time that it was just an excuse to not answer my questions. I have since learned that other children received the same response from THEIR parents and did not believe their parents, either!"

"We watch TV shows where crossdressers make an appearance and sit silently while our friends make fun of them, regardless of how well the show was presented. Yes, parents, we are still teenagers and life is still before us, and we do not seem to be any different from our friends. Yes, we are wiser than our friends, for we know the world is not black-and-white only, and what you see may not be reality at all. Moms and Dads, we know the truth - you have entrusted us with it, but, please do not stop there. Include us in your life."

"We now that our dads are not what others perceive them to be. We know them to be very loving and caring people, who would not intentionally hurt anyone."

"Even though Dorothy knows about her dad, she cannot talk to her friends about his need to crossdress. She felt alone until her dad gave her the story I wrote. Then, she and I started writing to each other. I know the feeling well - so well! She can now talk to her mother and dad and even write to me and others. I do sympathize with Dorothy even though her situation is not exactly the same as mine. Unlike my family, theirs has no religious ties. Her dad, also, has a very high profile type of job. (Dad, you do not have a high profile job, no matter what you used to say.) The girls that I write to have been concerned about the possible discovery of their dads' crossdressing. They wonder if he would lose his job if discovered. They are concerned that the loss of a father's job would mean that the girls would

not be able to go to college. I don't believe these friends of mine are being selfish. Yes, Dorothy is very concerned. Sometimes both of us feel that you, our parents, are only concerned about his employment and how you feel about that. (Yes, Dad, even you at times were guilty of this! - not listening!) Dorothy and I relate well together and so do the other children of crossdressers who have written to me."

"Sally is from Denver. I lived there for almost three years - and we both hate cockroaches! They were everywhere. She does not appear to be awfully worried about her dad's crossdressing, but the fact that he has not worked for the last nine months has her quite concerned. The thought of losing their home and uprooting her life because of the lack of income seems to be uppermost in her mind. I can feel her concern! My dad has been laid off from his job four times and we have moved around from Pennsylvania to California. I was never happy when I learned I was leaving friends behind. I told Sally not to worry because everything will work out according to God's master plan for each of us."

"Sally does say that her dad does dress more than he used to. All that I could say was that my dad, too, has been dressing more than in the past. But I don't think there is anything to worry about."

"Alice is from Chicago. Her dad is not typical of any of the dads I have heard about. Her dad just came out of the closet in the past three years. She came home from school one day and there was her father - in all his glory! The shock ran through the family like a nightmare that never ends. All he would say was he was this way all his life and it was about time his family knew who he really was. The father said he was tired of living a lie and that if he did not do something soon, he was going to explode."

"Alice's life was changed dramatically. She can no longer talk to her parents and they no longer talk to each other! She is so afraid they are going to get a divorce because they cannot work out their differences. She no longer has friends over, and she spends more time at her best friend's house. She has even considered telling her best friend about her dad's crossdressing."

"I and my other friends could only advise her not to tell her best friend. Her best friend doesn't have strong family ties to start with. If Alice told this friend and if this friend told someone else, then she would have troubles that would really be out of control. My friends and I also felt she had very little control at all over the situation at home and no influence to change anything."

"I must confess I do not understand Alice's dad. Knowing what I now know about crossdressing, I wonder why Alice's dad did not take advantage of the information that is now available concerning crossdressing. I do realize there are a number of unanswered questions. I do not believe he should have informed his family in the way he did! I think he could have found a better way to tell them. It was wrong of him to take a position of 'take it or leave it.' Most of the kids I correspond with can not even remember not knowing about their dad and his crossdressing. It's been part of our life from the very beginning. Linda and I have written to Alice in an effort to help her keep up her courage. And it's not an easy thing to do. She is learning, however, that not all dads are crossdressers. Alice, if we were there, your friends, we would give you a big hug and tell you that we love you. As long as we are Alice's friends, she will never stand alone."

"Lisa is from Nashville, Tennessee. Her mother is deceased and she is extremely close to her dad and his crossdressing life. She complains that her dad dresses a little too feminine for work. He has gone so far as to have all his facial hair removed. I think my dad would also like to do this."

"She is also concerned that the people at work may think her father is gay by the way he dresses. That thought haunts her and it is very hard for her to shake that feeling. She believes people are saying things that are not true."

"When Lisa asked her father to dress more casually, he jokingly said, 'What are they going to do? Fire me?' It so happens that her father owns the company, but this does not give Lisa much comfort because she hates what people are probably thinking of her dad. Lisa's major concern is that her dad might be thinking about being a lady all the time. Even though he says that's not true, no one can deny this type of thing hasn't happened in the past. In her heart, Lisa firmly believes this is exactly what is going to happen. She believes it will happen after she leaves for college or shortly after she gets married."

Her prayer is that her father will stop and take HER into consideration, before he does anything at all with that part of his life. Lisa says that to support her dad's living full time as a woman would be most difficult for her to handle, but she would probably do so because she loves her dad so much."

"It is my sincere wish that this will never happen to MY dad. I love my dad but I am not sure either I or my brother could accept his living full time as a woman. Lisa certainly has a reason for being worried about her father. She loves her dad very much, but in her heart she doesn't quite believe what he is denying as pertaining to his not living full time as a woman."

"Mary is from Canada and I hope to meet her family the next time they come to the States for a shopping spree. Then

she will be able to meet MY family as well. In Canada they must be more tolerant of crossdressing. Where else could your dad participate in a beauty contest at a county fair? After all, her dad had won a Third Place and a couple of Runner-Up's, but the big one keeps eluding him."

"Mary told the story of sitting in the stands while her dad was on stage. The people sitting behind her made nasty comments. So Mary proceeded to tell those people about crossdressing, and that a good corset does help a man to have a smaller waist. She also told those people her whole family participates in her father's crossdressing."

"Mary wonders whether, if and when she has a family, her son might be a crossdresser. Her dad and mom said they didn't have an answer to that question. Mary thought that perhaps I might have an answer, so I went to an expert on the subject - my dad! He was a little bewildered at first. He finally said, 'Who knows what skeleton is in your closet? Who knows the medical history of everyone in our family tree?Your genes are your connection to the past. I, to my knowledge, am the first to tell anyone about crossdressing.'"

"My father did not know about any studies on the subject. He did ask me, 'If you had a son or grandson who was a crossdresser, would you love him any less?' As usual, my father left the answer up to me."

"This is my final comment concerning crossdressing. Communication is the only connection to solving problems!"

"At the age of ten I learned I had epilepsy. It was, perhaps, the roughest time in my life. My mother told me that long ago people with epilepsy were thought to be possessed by demons and were locked away from others. People feared what they did not understand!! They thought, in those days, they had all the answers. How stupid these people would feel if they were around now when the truth about epilepsy is well known! Think of all the pain and suffering caused needlessly by their lack of knowledge!"

"Crossdressing is like epilepsy. None of us asked for it, but we have to learn to live with it. As my mother would say, 'It's all in the attitude, and a good attitude will give you the quality of life that God intended for you.' So why have a bad attitude when it's so easy to have a good one?"

"What we have learned from dad's experience is that his fear of the unknown was greater than reality. .He is still respected by those who know him and love him. We found his fear of discovery was unfounded. Those who we thought would never support him were the first to show their support. Yes, fear was our greatest enemy!! My father's values have not changed. The only change he experienced was in the clothing he occasionally wears."

"A friend said she was so sorry for me because my father was a crossdresser. I asked her if she still liked my dad. She said, 'Yes.' Then I asked if she could say to her dad (assuming he was a crossdresser), "Can I borrow your nail polish? Your hair spray? Or how about that piece of jewelry that appeals to me? And how about the great bubble bath, and not the $1.99 stuff, either?' Her reply was that she hoped she could do that because she loved him."

"But Dad, when you're looking for clothes it better be, 'Hey, Honey, give me a hand with my purchases,' because I think my dad is being somewhat old-fashioned again. My friends and I agree that our dads are in the dark when it comes to fashion, even though we like some of the clothes our dads wear!"

"My dad once invited me to a Christmas Party that his chapter was putting on, and then he changed his mind. The leaders said I needed to be 18 years old in order to attend. Why? Was it an X-rated party? I have met several of my dad's friends and their families. I would be proud to be in the presence of these friends of my dad's."

"I also asked my dad why it is, with all the questionnaires he has received, the rest of the family is left out? His answer was, 'Evidently, no one thinks it is that important.' Well, Dad, they are wrong! We ARE important!"

"Why is it that some chapters must always be dressed when they meet? Why can't they meet as families? They need to get to know each other as friends. Then, if you feel good about us children, invite us to a dressed meeting. I guarantee we can handle it!!!"

"Lastly, dad always says, 'Where there's a will, there's a way, but first there has to be a will.' The question is, do you have the will to break the grip of fear? To break that grip is the most courageous thing a person can do. My dad and I know all too well about this!"

"To quote a girlfriend, 'I love my dad and mom, but they still live in the Dark Ages and forget they are not the only ones in the family. We children have feelings about crossdressing, and we have rights, too!!'"

There you have it - an intelligent young lady gives us some positive thoughts regarding crossdressing and our children.

Gender-Pitched Advertising:

Do Men and Women See the Same Things?

by Melanie Yarborough

"There really are fundamental differences in the way men and women process information...Women tend to process more extensively more different pieces of information...Men tend to rely more on mental short-cuts..." This was one of many points brought out in a recent discussion on National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation". The Moderator was Brooke Gladstone. Her guests included Deborah Blum, Author of "Sex on the Brain," and Professor of Journalism at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and Joan Myers Levy, Professor of Marketing and Consumer Behavior at the University of Chicago Business School.

In one study mentioned, a group of people were brought to a room and later asked to remember various items there. It happened that women had much better memory for details than did men. Men might remember the big picture of an office like the location of a desk or bookshelf. But women would remember more intimate details like a vase of flowers in the corner, or a picture of a husband and wife on a book case.

This begs the question "Are women smarter than men?" There is no simple Yes or No: the answer seems rooted in human evolution. Men and women had to face different pressures as each adapted to their own specialized social roles. Men had to become the more aggressive hunters and compete with other men. They had to process information quickly, perhaps more quickly than females. Biochemical studies have even shown a more "jittery" neural response from men. This explains the long-term relationship of men to other men, where one was always looking over one's shoulder. One had to eliminate unecessary details quickly, simplify and react just as quickly. Or, if you weren't the Alpha male leader, you'd want to be one of the guys. Conformity became crucial.

The converse of this is that women as gatherers had to mentally map in fine detail things like bushes and berries and where they had stored food. They also tended to relate less by competition and more by sympathy and empathy. Research suggests that in women, the two spheres of their brains communicate better than do men's. Studies show that women pull in information from both halves. This allows women to give a more sophisticated emotional response. Thus, women are better at talking about their emotions and reading subtleties.

It therefore seems that this isn't necessarily a case of men and women being smarter or not smarter than each other. Each approach was the environmentally correct one, necessary for both men and women to survive in their assigned roles. Now in today's consumer-oriented society, these kind of gender differences have not gone unnoticed by marketers. Ad agencies often ask, "What makes an effective ad for a man or for a woman?"

For women, ads often are more detailed. Take for example toiletry ads. For one thing, women are more concerned abut grooming and appearence. And they appreciate very fine distinctions, such as 5 different variations of shampoo - for curly hair, straight hair, oily hair, dry hair, etc.

For men, by contrast, toiletry ads focus on a single product. Men are likely to pick up on one or two very salient and obvious kinds of cues. Men think in a more macro way, and need to be shown the big picture. Also, men are less likely to process complex metaphors. Are men phobic about fashions? Actually, it's more that men are phobic about appearing to be concerned about fashion. They don't want to come across as caring about it too much. It's often an issue of how they're perceived by other men. The fear is that they'll appear to be too foppish (i.e., gay) or narcissistic if they seem to be overly concerned about dress. Thus, those selling fashion to men have to offer the options in a subtle way, not a direct one. Offering too many options can be the kiss of death.

Interesting, men are much more responsive to sexual cues. In one study, men and women listened to audio tape conversations about non-sexual topics. In one, a women discussed if she should be an anthropologist. Men read sexual cues into the conversation, while women didn't. Men seem to be much more sensitive to sexual signals. This fact has not been lost on advertisers. We all know how sex sells.

It's important to appreciate these perceptual differences between men and women. In the transgender community, we've spent a lot of time studying the physical differences between men and women. The spotlight seems to be on things like makeup, wardrobing, electrolysis, hormones, or the intricacies of sexual reassignment surgury (SRS). However, the psychological and sociological differences between men and women are unhappily all too unexplored. Anyone who truly wants to understand what it means to be the other gender, must recognize these less tangible but important differences.

(Ed. Note: This article originally appeared in the Neutral Corner newsletter, and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)

Editorial Policy

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Cover Girl

by Janyne CA-2984-C

Let me give you a little background about the GENDER 101 article. I have been attending church as Janyne since the summer of 1994. The man I wrote about in the following little piece is also a member of the same church. He is also the president of the Widesky Men's Council. We have taken a couple of classes together and have learned to respect each other. — Enjoy! *[Ed. Note: Janyne's article first appeared in "Alpha Bits," the newsletter of Alpha Chapter. See page 47.]*

I was recently asked to write an article about myself and my life for a men's group newsletter. You see, I have a man friend at church. He is a tall bearded man with a great booming voice. Ray takes up too much space, talks too loud and swears. He is also a sweet man who happens to think I am an example of true courage and spirit. No wonder I like him.

Ray is the president of a men's group. You know - the guys who beat drums, sweat, chant and howl at the moon. Well, amongst all that men's stuff these guys try to understand themselves and each other. Ray and his group are men who, like so many men, have had trouble understanding their own feelings and especially any thoughts or feelings they may have had that might be feminine.

Ray has seen me at church for some time and I am a friend of his wife. We took a class together and he fell in love with my sense of humor and my ability to just be as I am. He told me recently that he has used me as an example in his men's group. He has asked me to consider speaking to the group, something I haven't committed to as yet. He did ask me to at least write an article for him.

This has turned out to be a very difficult task. Sharing myself with men at a spiritual and emotional level is something I have avoided. With women I have the bond of our mutual femininity, with men I always feel I am the exact thing men are most afraid of. Ray has shown me a side of manhood I have been unwilling to look at. A real man who is proud of his manliness yet is able to appreciate my conviction and my right to exercise it with all the grace and poise I can muster, and if I can believe Ray and his wife, I do it pretty well.

Letter To The Editor

My Dear Editor,

Yesterday the Fall issue of "The Femme Mirror" arrived at my home. As always, I was anxious to enjoy many more interesting articles, knowing I would reread each many times. Now a day later I am still on Page 7 and the letter from "A Secret Sister." How can any of us read her words and not want to bring comfort to her? How many of us have actually felt her agony to such an overwhelming degree? I myself wrote one of the multitude of letters begging for a hand to hold and an understanding sister. We who have written those letters need to pour out the hurt we bear because there is not a soul to whom we can reveal the turmoil we are forced to hold within.

This is the subject that is most near and dear to my heart. I was so pleased to see you confirm what I had hoped was a primary responsibility of a true Tri-Ess sister: Compassion! Hopefully others will remember that a sister is more than a friend. A true sister will see seek out those within her chapter who need a friend. Go one step further. Give more of yourself, and be all that a sister should want to be. The next time you stand in front of the mirror, trying to get your makeup just right, you will find that you really like the girl looking back at you. I do hope that "The Femme Mirror" will continue to remind us that at every meeting we attend, there is someone who needs, and will be grateful for, just five minutes of your time. Remember, you will feel just as good inside as the person with whom you share those moments.

So very sincerely,
Katherine WI-4864

Suzanne and Stephanie Go To Dinner

by Stephanie K, MN-4674-K

Well, what happened last night was, once again, simply amazing! Suzanne joined Stephanie and Sharon for dinner out. We found this great little gourmet restaurant called the Lavender Rose up in Bay City, WI, just across the river from Red Wing, MN. We had dined there as Steve and Suzanne on our anniversary weekend in January. It's owned and run by an old acquaintance of Suzanne's. The place is VERY transgender-friendly. So I asked Suzanne if she might be ready to appear in public with Stephanie and she said she would if we went someplace far away where we would have very little chance of meeting someone we knew. So we agreed on the Lavender Rose and asked my friend Sharon to join us.

Well, we were both doing some deep breathing all week getting ready for this big step. I called for reservations for Saturday night. All was in place. Sharon was going to be in Winona so we made plans to pick her up at the motel at 5:30. Earlier in the week I had decided to choose a couple of outfits and then let Suzanne decide which one she would like to see me in. In addition, I let her decide which of my wigs she would be most comfortable having me wear. Saturday morning I let her choose between the black blazer, black straight skirt, and purple stretch velvet top or a new red stretch velvet tunic top over a lovely pair of gun metal blue silk pants that I had gotten at the consignment shop in Hastings the previous weekend. She chose the pants outfit and I accessorized with a pretty floral print scarf around the neck, a stunning gold and gemstone floral pin at the shoulder and some new, very dangly gold earrings. I wore my auburn shag wig. Suzanne chose to wear what I thought was a quite masculine-looking black rib-knit, high-neck sweater and black cardigan with a pair of tan silk pants. She has very short hair, but wore a very feminine beaded necklace and earring set. She kidded with us that she had actually thought about going to the consignment shop in Winona during the week and getting a suit and tie to wear!! Hmmmm, what a jokester, eh?!! Sharon wore a red sweater over a pretty red print broomstick skirt with a red Pendleton wool blazer.

Well, at 5:20, Suzanne took a deep breath and we stepped out to the garage and she drove right through the middle of town in broad daylight to the motel. I don't think anyone saw us (er, anyone we knew!). She went into the lobby of the motel to pick up Sharon and we were on our way, 60 miles up along the Mississippi River. Got to the restaurant by 7:00 and took another deep breath and walked in. Neither of us knew if we would meet anyone from Winona there—small chance, but you never know! Well, the place was half full and we didn't see anyone we knew. Whew! Suzanne had been thinking all week about what she would say if she met someone she or we knew. It didn't happen (then!!) So far so good! We got our table and the server, a very friendly guy, came over and took good care of us throughout the evening. After a couple of glasses of wine we were all feeling fine and having a great time. My back was to the room so I couldn't see if anyone was noticing us. Suzanne said that a few people glanced in our direction but lost interest quickly. I excused myself to use the ladies room after the first glass of wine and passed a couple of people on the way and just smiled and had my smile returned. Very civilized!!

Dinner came—the best grilled tuna with olive pesto I had ever eaten—and about halfway through dinner the chef made the rounds of the room. When he got to our table and said hello, Suzanne noticed it was her old friend. CRUNCH TIME!! Suzanne performed beautifully!! She said "Hi!" and smiled and he recognized her and they exchanged a few words of greeting and then it happened. "Bill, I'd like you to meet my husband, Steve...Stephanie." We made eye contact and shook hands, both smiling, and said "Hi!" Then, "and our friend Sharon." "Hi, how are you? Great to have you here! Enjoy yourselves!" And away he went back to the kitchen. We all looked at each other and Suzanne had this humongous smile on her face!! She was quite pleased with herself. She confessed that in the heat of the moment she had considered 1) fleeing to the bathroom until he went back to the kitchen, 2) not acknowledging that she knew him, 3) intentionally "forgetting" to introduce us, 4) introducing me only as her "friend," or 5) saying it straight like nothing was out of the ordinary! She was quite proud that she had made the integrity move and acted naturally! Number 5, GOOD CHOICE!! We had a wonderful discussion about the incident and finished a delightful meal in full blush of our accomplishment.

During dessert we wondered (jokingly) if Bill had gone back to the kitchen and immediately posted a memo to never honor a reservation from any of us again grin! But when we got up to leave our server was right there and thanked us profusely (really!!) for coming and extended a genuinely warm invitation to come back again. Of course, I think the 20% tip helped generate his very hospitable mood. We exited proudly and quietly and had a very pleasant trip home.

This was great fun!! I recommend it to all couples! Suzanne even said that she had so much fun that we might even do it again!! God, she is so amazing!! I am in deep, deep love with her! Can you tell?? So, that's the way it is in the little town of Winona, MN, where the women are strong, some of the men wear dresses, and the children think it's pretty interesting overall.

SPICE 1998

by Sofronia Anne, MN-3264 G

Well, I have had a few days to digest the experience of the SPICE Conference. This was SPICE VI. It was my first SPICE Conference. Although Onnalee has been going since SPICE I in Dallas in 1993 it was my first. It was the first time Onnalee wanted me to be there. She has always said that SPICE was her support group and it met just once a year and it was hers alone. Finally, this year she felt she wanted to share this precious annual event with me. I felt quite honored at the invitation. I was not disappointed at what I encountered!

No crossdressing is allowed at SPICE, and with good reason. It is a woman's conference, a serious discussion of women's issues and not another one of the numerous crossdresser party weekends. I did beat the game, though, but fairly. I went out to dinner as Sofronia Anne, with Onnalee and Lauren [redacted], the Grande Dame of the Sigma Epsilon Chapter in Atlanta, and a charter member of Beta Gamma Chapter. Oh, my, what a wonderful meal we had at Alfredo's. I had as fine a Saltimbocca a la Romana as I have eaten. After that I was quite content to be en homme for the conference. My host, Bill Nolan, even remarked that I made a rather better looking woman than a man - and he's known me for a half century, without ever seeing Sofronia Anne until last week.

From Sunday to Wednesday we were guests of Soggy Bill. The students and faculty of the Atlanta College of Art (where he is the Dean) would be amazed to hear their august Professor Nolan referred to in such terms, but as Bill and I go back to the days of racing sailboats on Lake Harriet in Minneapolis (ca. 1948) I remember him best in his nautical persona as Soggy Bill, the perpetually drenched Skipper of Ankle Deep, a "C" boat, the waterborne version of an Indy Racer.

His further claim to fame derives from having introduced me to Onnalee, via a blind date (A blind date, for God's sake?) at which it was love at first sight. Anyhoo, a few days with Bill was a delight, a closure. I hadn't seen him since he departed for Atlanta twenty-seven years ago.

The SPICE Conference opened on Wednesday evening with a visit to Pitti Pat's Porch, a glorious tourist trap dripping with ante bellum, "Gone with the Wind" decor. We met new friends, dined on venison ragout and had a grand time.

Onnalee, only a week out of spinal surgery (game girl- got up and finished fourth) began to leave lumbar pain behind and began to beam and sparkle.

On Thursday, the Conference commenced in earnest with a brilliant opening address by Alan Yorker, an Atlanta based sexologist and transgender therapist. From it we learned that we are transgendered and we are OK. His insightful, incisive and exceedingly knowledgeable commentary sent us all into the conference inspired and ready to learn. We did!

For three days we we got educated, inspired, stimulated and challenged. Fresno based therapist Sally Hunt shared fantastic insights and understandings that were as exciting and stimulating as Sally herself. (Sally is an exciting person.) John Crounse let us all take the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory and then gave us each our results, providing insight for each of us on the nature of ourselves. He also shared with us the insights gained by the developers of this accurate inventory and their insights into human nature. Although John was unwilling to say so, in my opinion the inventories yielded some marvelous insights into the wonderfulness of crossdressers and the women who love them.

Richard and Rachel Miller facilitated two sessions in which they showed us the means and methods by which we might find bliss and oneness with ourselves and our spouses in the way which they have done so successfully in their loving relationship.

We lolled in the whirlpool, swam in the pool, schmoozed in the lounge and even created a trio of thrushes that revisited old college songs in two part harmony. We listened to the sophisticated piano stylings of a gifted crossdresser from Brussels, and we ate (and ate and ate). We hung on the accented words of an attendee from Paris, a figure well know to our sisters on the CDSO list. We hung out in the hospitality suite and made new friends and renewed old friendships. We listened, we questioned, we schmoozed, ate, drank and just enjoyed ourselves immensely.

On Sunday afternoon we flew home and proceeded to go to work on SPICE VII- which will be right here in Minneapolis.

The theme of SPICE VI was "Stumbling Blocks to Stepping Stones." It proved to be exactly that for those who attended. It was of little value, of course, to those who didn't attend it.

The theme of SPICE VII will be "A Wilderness Adventure." That promises to be a survival school for the transgendered. That should be good stuff too.

What amazes us about SPICE is that year after year, those who attend it come to it nervous, expecting the worst, and leave, inspired, enthusiastic, and enriched. Several years ago I told Onnalee that I thought that those women who were partnered with crossdressers and wouldn't go to SPICE had no grounds for complaint.

After having attended SPICE this year I also concluded that neither did the men who didn't attend it. It's sort of like if you don't vote you haven't much grounds to criticize the administration. It is sort of like what Richard (Rachel) Miller told us at the conference. Being a crossdresser ain't easy. It ain't easy for the wife either. If you want to make it better you gotta do the work. SPICE is a great place to do that!

SPICE 1998

by Diane [redacted]

My spouse, Desiree', first went to SPICE in Philadelphia in 1996. It took a lot of prompting on my part to get her to go. She was so impressed with the men and women she met there and the programs for the partners of cross dressers that she wanted to go again.

SPICE 1997 was held in Ontario, CA and Desiree' was there again. I guess that she wasn't the only one to be impressed by what she saw. When she returned home, she informed me that I was the partner of the new Director of Outreach for SPICE. Since I was the one who pushed her to the first meeting, how could I complain (not that I would have anyway). I believe that there needs to be support services for the partners of crossdressers. We have had many years to learn about and deal with our enhancement, but our partners are confronted and then expected to resolve all of their issues immediately and then either support us, leave us alone, or just plain leave. That is quite an expectation and just isn't fair.

I didn't attend the first two SPICE meetings which Desiree' attended for two reasons. The first was that it was HER opportunity and I didn't want to be there to affect any interaction between her and the other ladies. The second and minor reason was a work schedule that didn't have the time available to take off work.

SPICE 98 in Atlanta was a different situation. Desiree' was now an active participant and it was appropriate for her spouse to be there. I could get the time off of work now and I wanted to see what was being provided to the women in terms of information and interaction.

We arrived in our Atlanta hotel on Wednesday afternoon, just in time to join the group headed downtown for an evening of informal friendship. We rode The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) train from a local station to the downtown area. A short walk and we were at the Sheraton Inn hotel. We rode the outside, glass enclosed elevator to the top of the hotel to have refreshments and look at the scenery from the revolving lounge. We took over almost one whole side of the lounge and enjoyed talking and getting to know one another. An hour or so later we rode back down the elevator, walked across the street to Pitti Pat's Porch Restaurant for dinner. We took over the restaurant, had a very good time until they "kind of" suggested that we leave at about 11 PM by mopping floors, putting chairs up on tables, etc. A quick ride back to the hotel and it was time to rest up for the start of the conference the next morning.

We got started quickly with a joint (men and women together) session on "Love and Marriage with the Gender Gifted Man" by Alan Yorker. HE WAS GREAT! He is an accomplished speaker and motivator who also was knowledgeable about the gender issue. He was one of a select few who has been to the Kinsey Institute for studies of human sexuality. He is very knowledgeable on crossdressing and gender issues. We all hated for that session to end. Subsequently, I didn't hear a single "disparaging word" about Mr. Yorker. Everyone was so excited that he was asked if he would make an audio tape of his presentation for later sale. (I think he agreed. Stand by for more information from SPICE OR TRI-ESS.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the conference is the special support and handling given to women who are new to the phenomenon or are just having a hard time handling the issues. Women who request it are assigned group leaders from whom they can get the support and information not provided by the larger sessions. These women learn to feel secure and are then able to bring out their issues and emotions.

There were two or three women there whose husbands would have to be defined as "non-supportive" when it is usually the woman who wears that label. These women's husbands do not allow their wives to see them dressed, go with them to meetings or go to conventions. In some cases the wife hadn't even seen a picture of their husbands "en femme". Since the crossdresser is usually the one complaining of non-support, it is hard to understand why a potentially supportive wife would be denied any information or contact with the gender community.

The author of "The Bliss of Becoming One", Richard Miller, and his partner were also there. In a joint seminar he told us of his trip down genderland's highway. It was obvious by watching him that his journey has been worthwhile. He appeared genuinely affected by various issues he discussed. He offered to chat with anyone who thought that learning of his journey could help them.

There were also seminars on Depression and Communication presented by Sallie Hunt. She offered suggestions on recognizing, handling and recovering from depression, a malady from which many crossdressers have suffered. A conference such as this couldn't be complete without discussing communication and Sally did an excellent job of covering the subject.

The main complaint was that "there isn't enough time to cover the subject" on which the presenters did such a fine job.

The heart of the conference, however, is the separation of the men and women into their own discussion groups. This allows the freedom to express their feelings and thoughts without regard to what the opposite sex might think or feel. Being a male, I am completely incapable of reporting on what went on in the women's groups, however, we were separated by only a movable partition and at times we heard a lot of laughing. "Were they laughing at us?" Paranoia City, here we come. Of course, all the men are well aware of paranoia, given the crossdressing aspect of their lives.

In the first male session on bonding, everyone gave a short discourse on who he was (in the metaphysical sense). At least one of the participants let his emotions out for all to see. It is very hard for a male to do this (BIG BOYS DON'T CRY) because everything we have ever learned growing up cautions against showing emotions. The rest of the men were very supportive of this individual.

This is a good time to mention another facet of SPICE -the Confidentially Pledge. Everyone signs a pledge to not identify any one or experience that occurs at SPICE nor to link a person to an act. This gives everyone the safety they need and forms a basis of trust so that they can expose their issues without fear. Because of this pledge, I am unable to link any person with any action. This summary, therefore, may appear to be somewhat cold.

The group sessions were all good, but no conference would be complete without personal interaction. And interaction we had. The Wednesday night outing to downtown, 30 minute periods between seminars, the lounge in the evenings, the free afternoon for sightseeing or more discussions, etc. I think that I must mention the impromptu group sing in the lounge one night. Two men and a lady just kind of clicked and began singing songs that absolutely no one had heard since the late 50's. These weren't hit parade type songs but were more like college drinking songs. The singers had a ball doing it and the rest of the people didn't throw any vegetables; so it must not have been too bad! The same three ended up doing another impromptu number Saturday at the banquet - much to the delight of the whole group.

And here comes the kicker! I, a heterosexual male crossdresser, enjoyed the opportunity to react with other males with a common bond (crossdressing) without being dressed, without that subject as the only topic of discussion, and to be able to BE THE COMPLETE PERSON THAT I AM!

I strongly recommend that anyone, male or female, who has a crossdresser as a friend or relative or is one himself attend at least one SPICE conference. The next one is in Minneapolis, MN on July 14 - 18, 1999. Start planning for it NOW.

Disclaimer

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Thoughts from the Threshold

by Bev

As I sit here in this motel room, like every other motel room in the world, I can feel the sweat accumulate. My palms are moist. I keep wiping them on my jeans. The air conditioning is turned down low. It's cool in here, yet... I feel my face warm to the touch.

I keep flipping the channels on the TV, hoping to find something to distract me. Nothing...

It was an uneventful drive from our little seacoast town in Louisiana to the"big city" of Houston. The radio was broken in the car, so we had nothing to do but talk...talk about everything except what was on our minds. We pointed out landmarks to each other, talked about work, (his and mine) then would lapse into long silences. He would ask me, to break the silence more than anything else, "Are you okay with this?" I would force a smile and answer, "of course, why not?"

So as I sit here in this anonymous room, unable to NOT think anymore, I give into it.

My husband is in the bathtub. He is neck deep in bubbles, his long hair clipped on top his head with a dainty clip, shaving his legs. I miss hearing him sing while bathing, as is his custom. But he is in the midst of his transformation. Singing is not appropriate to him right now. It bothers me..though it does not distress me.

I let my mind wander over the years, thinking about our growth as a couple, as husband and wife. I remember the first time I witnessed his feminine persona. It was a horrible experience for both of us. Me, because I was newly-wed to the man of my dreams, one I had waited for til I was 45 years old. Him, because I could not hold back my anger, rage, shock and disappointment and unloaded both barrels on him with no regard for his feelings.

I fast forward to a "better" time. When I finally was able to take the challenge and go out in public during the day with him, or rather "her". I was nervous and probably too aware of how other people looked at us. I didn't really know how to relate to this woman I was with. I didn't know her. It was like taking a stranger sight seeing in a tourist town. I would hang back and let her wander amongst the stores in the mall, and try to judge if she was going to be able to handle herself. If I felt the need, I would be there, instantly, at her side, to protect and guide. It was stressful for me, but not unbearable.

I hear him getting out of the tub now... still, no singing. Now he will spend quite a bit of time shaving his face, and strangely, washing the tub. He wants no evidence left. He knows that I do not like his legs shaved. It was only at my insistence that he did it. It is a special occasion. It is "his" night. I want things to be perfect for him. He wants me to be as comfortable as I can...so he cleans the tub so that I won't see the hair he has shaved off his legs. It is a gesture of kindness and respect, and I accept it as such.

I smile to myself, and think..yes, I am a lucky woman to have met such a "nice" man, and married him.

I return to my thoughts. His dressing will take a while. He will luxuriate in each phase of the ritual. He will ask me to help with his make-up, and I will, and to help with the wig, and I will. I will have passed over the sweaty palms by then, and be caught up in the magic of him becoming "her". That's the way it always happens.

I remember our shopping expeditions. Thankfully, he took my advice and switched from the short skirts,and 38 C bosoms to a more "respectable" fashion statement. His "ensemble" for this evening is a designer silk two piece evening suit we picked up at a garage sale for just a couple of dollars. It was a real bargain!.. fits him like it was made for him or rather her. I am green with envy because it is way too small for me.

I have trouble with the proper pronouns, and make a mental note to myself to be very careful tonight at the Tri-Ess meeting. It is to be a banquet. All the men will be dressed as women, each one glorying in their femininity. I have to watch myself. It is a special night for all of them. I don't want to tarnish one moment for anyone. I am a "stranger in a strange land" and I would do well to observe the customs in this society.

I hear him now rummaging about for something. He won't ask me to help at this point. I know he is in his..her.. lingerie. That is something I had to ask him..to please do not let me see him at this point. It really gets to me. Makes me .. I don't know what it makes me...I just don't like to see it.

He really is a thoughtful person. We talked and talked forever it seems , negotiating boundaries, explaining feelings, trying to understand , and finding a way to allow us both to be the best spouse we could be to each other while making room for this other person..the one he is working on becoming... as he suddenly breaks into song in the bathroom. I smile. I knew he couldn't hold out much longer. It soothes me. He is still here.

I must have dozed off. Suddenly he....no.. she is there. It's time for me to become the "hand maiden", and I don't mind one bit. I have come to understand this woman just a bit better. She is as kind as "he" is, and as gentle, and as loving. It's the least I can do. It's going to be okay.

All I need is five minutes to change my clothes, run a comb through my hair, and slip on some make-up. But I do this every day. She only gets to once in a while. I know this will be a long evening. She will want to stay real as long as she can.

We are finally both ready to go. She looks wonderful. I did a good job on the makeup. The wig looks fine, everything is in place. Her eyes sparkle. She is excited and bubbly. I know I will have to drive. The long fake fingernails get in her way. I don't mind. I am starting to get excited too.

Highlights of the Summer Board Meeting

July 25, 1998

1) Peggy Rudd reported SPICE VI "the best yet." The Board asked Peggy and the SPICE Planning Board to explore costs and production options for a booklet and/or video promoting SPICE.

2) With two new chapters chartered this year and two more soon to follow, the Board authorized creation of a Chapter Operations Manual.

3) Tri-Ess membership has experienced steady growth over the past year and is at an all time high. The Board appointed a committee to consider plans to revamp the dues renewal process.

4) The new Membership Directory was reported at the printer's. Now fully computerized, the Directory may soon be made available on CD-ROM.

5) The Board moved to continue the Library Book Project. 39 book packets have been placed to date. More donors are needed.

6) The Board moved to seek the services of an advertising professional to explore various options for advertising and outreach.

7) The Board moved to create a fundraising campaign for outreach.

8) The Board commended local chapters' outreach efforts to local college classes, and Tri-Ess officers' visits to local chapters.

9) Peggy reported on plans for the upcoming 1998 Holiday At Sea.

10) Jane reported on Holiday En Femme 1999, to be held November 10-14 in Houston. Peggy announced an optional add-on - a 7-day Mexican Riviera Cruise with Norwegian Cruise Lines - November 14-21.

11) Kathy announced Holiday En Femme 2000 - "A Millenial Spectacular," in Los Angeles.

12) Holiday En Femme 2001 will be held in Chicago, also with a millenial theme.

13) The Board unanimously voted a Letter of Commendation from the Board to Membership Director Donna [redacted] in view of her dedicated service of well over a decade.

14) Because of long term non-compliance with Tri-Ess membership requirements, the Board placed Nu Phi Chi Chapter (Buffalo Belles) on probation.

15) Carol proposed that Tri-Ess create, in addition to the large, national Holiday En Femme, a number of smaller regional Holidays. The Board authorized a survey to solicit members' input.

16) The Board encouraged the SPICE Planning Board and the Tri-Ess outreach team to coordinate their efforts for a Tri-Ess /SPICE outreach presence at other gender community events.

17) Citing security issues, the Board reaffirmed Tri-Ess' longstanding policy of denying membership to those incarcerated in the criminal justice system.

18) The Board appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of selling Femme Mirror subscriptions to others in the gender community.

19) The Board moved that Tri-Ess obtain and register its own internet domain name.

20) The Board reviewed proposed new logos for Tri-Ess, and moved to seek additional input from a professional logo service for consideration at the next Board Meeting.

Yes, But!

by Rachel Miller

[From the Publisher: This article is repeated from the last issue due to a truncation of the last paragraph. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.]

At times it seems that the favorite words of many cross-dressers are "Yes, but." Yes, I'd like to be accepted as I am, but that will never happen in today's society. Yes, I want to be free to dress as a woman, but I would lose my job if I did. Yes, I'd like to help others, but I just don't have the time. Yes, I'd like to assist my local organization, but I don't have any skills. Yes, I agree, but I can't. As long as we continue to follow the yes/but formula, nothing will change and we will be the losers. Society certainly doesn't care if we remain repressed so we must run out of excuses and scapegoats and take responsibility for our destiny if our conditions are to improve.

There is an element of truth in each of the yes/but statements, but the problem is that the statements are being used as an excuse for our inaction. Instead of continuing in the yes/but mode, why not try a more constructive approach. Try thinking and saying, "I can do that if..." or "I can't do that, but I can do this if..." From the can/if perspective, new choices of action become possible. Instead of focusing on why we can't do something, we begin to focus on steps we can take that make a difference.

We begin to change things when we initiate positive actions and treat others the way we want to be treated. We must act first because waiting for others to change is like the old Pennsylvania railroad law—if two trains approach on intersecting tracks, both shall stop and neither shall proceed until the track is clear. I can envision two trains that reached an intersection in 1898 and, since neither can move until the track is clear, are both still waiting for the other to move. There is no value in waiting for society's train to take the action we desire.

Our gender community has an interesting parallel in the plight of the Black community. They feel the impact of discrimination and often despair because there is no lasting solution in sight; however, there are a growing number of leaders who advocate individual effort within the mainstream to change society. We too can rely on our individual effort to change society rather than complaining about its shortcomings.

Those same leaders advocate creating a collective identity while retaining diversity. They seek an end of repression based on race and see personal development as their highest challenge. We too can establish a collective identity and encourage diversity at the same time. We too can work to end repression based on gender stereotypes while developing ourselves.

While admitting that beneath surface acceptance there remains a pool of residual racism, progressive leaders point out the enormous range of opportunities. They urge taking advantage of these opportunities to create a new society where they can enjoy equal membership. While admitting the existence of prejudice we too can create a new inclusive society.

We can make all those improvements and there is no better place to start than within our own gender community. When you consider how we put each other down, it's clear that we need improving. Some of us don't accept those who dress or act differently. Some don't accept those who dress in a sexually explicit fashion. Some cross-dressers don't accept homosexuals. Some transsexuals don't accept transvestites. Some organizations don't accept members with different views. Some leaders don't accept the leaders of other organizations. Far too often we treat each other worse than society treats us. This prejudicial behavior isn't true of everyone but it is far too prevalent to ignore. How can we expect the rest of society to treat us well if we don't treat each other well? All they have to do to justify rejecting us is to follow our own provincial actions. If we are intolerant of those who don't meet our expectations, how can we possibly hope that mainstream society will be tolerant of us when we most certainly don't meet their expectations.

The strangest thing is that we have so much in common, yet we tend to focus on those aspects that differentiate the other person from ourselves. We belong to the gender community and that fact alone should be enough to unite us, yet our common bonds run far deeper than that. We live in the same political system and enjoy religious freedom. We work in the same economic environment and share similar dreams, aspirations, doubts and fears for ourselves and our children. We even share the same fast foods, television sitcoms and bad jokes. With all of that in common, our differences don't seem quite as significant.

As we set out to improve ourselves, we need to set reasonable expectations. Most of us want any problems resolved by this afternoon so everything will be wonderful by dinner time. I would love to say that we could achieve our goals quickly, but our rate of progress is much more likely to be slow and steady like a waddling turtle. Quick fixes are generally quick but are rarely fixes because meaningful, lasting change takes time.

The challenge to treat others as you want to be treated means starting with the idea that it is your turn. Accept others as they are, not as you think they should be. Give everybody the same chance you want for yourself. Your words and actions make a difference. Your efforts will help to create a real gender community where we transcend our individual differences while demonstrating our interdependence. All you have to do to make progress is to heed the words of James B. Conant—"Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out." All you need to do is just stick your neck out a little bit farther.

Models My Size?

by Ricky

Heaven knows I'm not a clothes horse. In fact, when I wear a dress it has been remarked that I look more like a horse with clothes. I read each catalog that shows up in the PO box with care and interest, even when I know I can't afford anything. Anyhow, I have enough dresses and goodies in the closet to last forever and then some.

I suppose it's happened to all of us. Paging through the catalog you see a dress that just looks fabulous, and you can't wait to get one. So you send in your money, or put it on the charge card and wait anxiously for it to get there. The thing finally arrives, you finally find time alone to try it on, and it looks somehow - different. I mean it looked great in the catalog, but now it's on you and it just doesn't look so hot. I hate to bust anybody's bubble, but in my case I know it's because the model in the catalog was a size 10, and you could probably fit 3 of her into a dress that fits me. Why is it that even Lane Bryant, that caters almost exclusively to the larger woman (or man), still uses slim, narrow waisted, small breasted women to model what they know darn well is going to be sold in size humongous? You ask a stupid question, you get the obvious answer: it's because all of us generously proportioned consumers of feminine fashion like to think of ourselves as that slim and inviting model, not as a Sherman tank in a skirt.

So along comes the L'eggs people with a new catalog for us larger types and, lo and behold, the models are as big as the merchandise. It's nice to know that the frilly slip will look like that on me, and the nightie will just never make it, so I can save the money for something else. So let the merchandisers and their conventional wisdom and traditional sales plans take note: it didn't offend me one bit to see a hefty woman in the bra I want to buy. In fact I went out and bought a dozen of the imperfect pantyhose to keep on hand. Now that's truth in advertising if I ever saw it! (This article was previously published in "Cross-Talk," and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)

Become a Tri-Ess Life Member Today!

Any person eligible for full membership in Tri-Ess (including Wives/Partners) may become a Life Member upon acceptance of an application, and fee payment as specified below. You will never pay annual renewal 'dues' again.

Included with Life Membership is a lifetime subscription to the Femme Mirror, Membership Directories, and all other material published by the National Organization. Payment may be made by check, money order, or credit card (Visa, Mastercard, or American Express). And, if you are associated with a local Chapter, they will cease 'bugging' you about your annual National renewal (although you will still be responsible for local annual Chapter membership/association fees).

Or, you can take advantage of the Life Membership 'Installment Plan' offered by National. This interest-free program allows the Life Membership fee to be spread over four payments within a 12-month period. An initial installment (one-fourth of the total fee) must be forwarded with your application. You will then be billed for the remaining payments at three-month intervals. (Credit cards may NOT be used for installment payments).

The one-time Life Membership fees are:

$500.00	**Individual Crossdresser only.**
$700.00	**Couple (Crossdresser with Wife/Partner).**
$200.00	**Separate (Wife/Partner only, who is widowed/divorced, etc.).**

"The opportunity of a lifetime!" Enroll now, join with all the other Tri-Ess Life Members in support of our wonderful Support Organization, and demonstrate your commitment. How about it?

Donna [redacted]

National Membership Director

Blossoming after a Long Spring

By Rachel Rene [redacted]

I've known I was a crossdresser for nearly 30 years. Only in the last five years have I realized how much I have in common with other crossdressers. And only within the last year did I first meet and talk with another crossdresser. While crossdressers share many common emotions and behavior patterns, we still have individual differences. What is important to some, is only mildly interesting to others. I have been inspired recently by crossdresser biographies. Sofronia Anne Strong's in the "The Femme Mirror" touched my heart. Robert J. Rowe's Bert and Lori described in beautiful literary detail many of the same joys and fears I have experienced. While similar in most respects, my life as a crossdresser has been different from both. This compelled me to write about my experiences, which are both similar and different from others. Perhaps my story will be helpful to someone else, just as others' stories have helped me understand myself.

Family. It seems to be well established that crossdressing is in some way related to one's early childhood experiences. Some authors have said that practically all male crossdressers were forcibly crossdressed during childhood. This supposedly creates a trauma that stays with the crossdresser his entire life. That was certainly not the case with myself. At least, not to my knowledge. If I was ever crossdressed by anyone, it was before I was old enough to remember it. It is difficult to believe that early child hood crossdressing, prior to being cognizant of the difference between sexes, could have an effect on one's later life.

My childhood was completely happy, and normal in every respect. I was the youngest of four children, and the only boy. I'm told I was spoiled rotten when I was very young. That's not surprising with three older sisters. But my sisters were quite a bit older. They were all married and beginning their own families by the time I was seven. I may have had plenty of feminine influence in my early childhood, but I would not characterize my mother as dominant or my father as a weak role model. About the time all of my sisters were all married, my father began farming as a second job. From then until I left for college, he and I spent a lot of time together working the farm.

Teen Years. My first recollection of crossdressing was when I was about eight or ten years old in the 1950s. My youngest sister had been a baton twirler when she was in high school.

Her white satin twirling uniform was in the back of a closet. I found the soft, shiny fabric enticing and fun to touch. What must it be like to wear such alluring clothes? I tried them on, and found the satin underpants with the side zipper especially comforting. Some months later, while wearing the twirling uniform, I first became aware of my approaching manhood. Robert J. Rowe says in Bert & Lori that crossdressing is essentially sexual. This is certainly true for me. I felt my first sexual awareness in the twirling uniform before I even knew what was happening to my body.

Then I began trying on my mother's things. I found that I especially liked the feeling of the soft materials, like nylon, acetate, and rayon. This was the heyday of the girdle, before pantyhose. I also liked pulling on a snug fitting girdle, and struggling a bit to get it zipped. Two years in a row I went to Halloween parties wearing one of my mother's dresses. It was a black dress made of a mesh material that you could see through, which I wore over a full black slip. It had a scooped neckline trimmed with sequins. A school friend of mine loaned me her black pumps with two-and-half inch heels. I felt like a sexy vamp, all dressed in black. I'm not sure why, but to this day I seem to prefer black lingerie.

After those two Halloween parties, I never let anyone see me in women's clothes until after I was married. I would still try on my mother's clothes, or my sister's clothes when I was visiting them. It was erotic, and I was aware of the stigma placed on male crossdressing. I felt a certain amount of guilt about

doing it. But adolescence is full of strange, wonderful, and sometimes awful temptations. I was certain that crossdressing was just an adolescent "indiscretion" that would go away when I became an adult and could have a normal sex life.

Marriage. During high school I dated as much as most boys my age. I had one steady girl for about three years, then we broke up about the time I graduated. She never knew of my "indiscretion". I went on to college, majored in chemistry, and dated occasionally. About half way through, I met a girl who was really special. Before I really realized it, we were falling deeply in love (and remain so today). We made plans for marriage after we both graduated. It never occurred to me to talk to her about crossdressing, because I knew it would be over once we were married.

For over a year after we were married, I did not even think of crossdressing. I thought I had it licked! But then I found myself wanting to try on some of my wife's pretty dresses. Again it was the softest, most shiny fabrics that I wanted to touch. Dresses with zippers in the back were especially fun to get into. Soon I was trying on complete outfits.

One of the dresses was a purple print with small flowers on it. It had a V-neck, short sleeves, and a short sexy skirt. I decided that I had to share my secret pleasure with my wife. So I wore that dress, her wig, makeup, and some black vinyl Carnaby boots that were fashionable then. That was also the first time I ever shaved my legs.

Naturally she was surprised when she came home and found me dressed. She didn't display a lot of emotion, but when I said I hoped she could understand, she said, "I don't know if I can." She didn't say much else about it, then or later. She clearly was not comfortable. I continued to crossdress occasionally for a few days or weeks in the hope that she would accept it, or at least talk with me about it. After continued silence on the subject, I decided I had better put it back in the closet.

Years of Purges. What followed were years of closet dressing, guilt, and periodic purges. I never knew there were other men who were experiencing the same behavior pattern. About 1975 I happened on a copy of Jan Morris' book Conundrum about her transsexual transformation. It was a very interesting story, but I knew I wasn't a transsexual. Sure, I had fantasized on occasion about having sexual reassignment surgery. But I knew SRS was a fantasy, not anything I would ever want to do. I did not feel "trapped in a woman's body" like so many transsexuals. I was a man, in love with a woman, and I didn't want to do anything that would change that.

This was also about the time "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" developed a cult following. I had admitted to myself that I was a crossdresser, but I couldn't identify with the displays in that movie. It seemed vulgar to me. I crossdressed to feel pretty, not disgusting. I also knew I wasn't homosexual, or a drag queen. Those were too extreme, and were far from my experience of softness, comfort, and relaxing pleasure that I got from crossdressing. But I also knew I wasn't mainstream.

After my initial disclosure to my wife failed to produce any understanding (by either of us), I decided I had to repress whatever feelings I had about crossdressing. Most people regard male crossdressing as disgusting, repulsive behavior, so I thought it must be wrong. The stress I felt about societal norms and fear that it would come between my wife and myself caused me to purge. I discarded the one item of female clothing I had ever bought for myself, and promised myself to never crossdress again.

That lasted only a few months. My wife spent several months in another state while she finished a master's degree. While she was away, I purchased a few things so I could dress at home. When it was time for her to return, I discarded those things and told myself again that I would quit crossdressing for good. That too lasted only a few months. After we moved to a new state, she took a job that included some evening hours. I found the opportunity to dress in private again. Only now I got a little bolder. For the first time, I began venturing out of the house, fully dressed en femme. My excursions were infrequent, and limited to driving around in the car at night. Most of my time I stayed at home and busied myself with laundry and housecleaning.

On one occasion, after driving around in the dark, I found my wife had returned home earlier than expected. I was trapped! I couldn't get back into the house without her seeing me. When I did go in with my heart pounding, I tried to be as casual as possible. I said hello and admitted she had caught me "doing my thing". I didn't try to explain or apologize for my behavior. She said, "You look different". My heart soared. As a crossdresser, I was trying to look different, even pretty. But I'm sure now looking pretty is not what she had in mind. She probably meant I looked strange, or alien. Give the societal repulsion to crossdressing, she was probably scared of the implications of my crossdressing. Unfortunately, we did not, or could not, bring ourselves to discuss it. But I did know she was angry with me. Very angry. So angry that it scared me. I was afraid I had caused a rift that would result in divorce.

That episode resulted in a major purge. Again I discarded all of the feminine things I had acquired and kept hidden in the house. Again I swore to myself that I would never, ever engage in crossdressing behavior again. And again I failed to keep my promise to myself after a few months. As before, it would start with just trying on something briefly because it felt good. Then it would be a few more things the next time. Soon I was fully dressing again, but trying to be ever so careful not to get caught.

As time progressed I became bolder in my crossdressing. By far the largest amount of my crossdressing time has been spent at home busying myself with housework. But in 1985 I worked up enough nerve to go to a shopping mall in broad daylight. What a rush! Some teenagers "read me" and jeered, but nothing ugly. It did convince me that in spite of how I felt, I could not pass. Shortly after my shopping mall excursion, my wife came home one day after I had been dressing and noticed I hadn't removed all of my mascara. It had been several years since she caught me previously, but I was scared again. I decided to see a psychiatrist.

I told the psychiatrist I wanted to stop crossdressing. He was very honest from the beginning, telling me that he might be able to reduce my urge to crossdress, but he could not eliminate it. That proved to be true. As long as I was seeing the doctor (at $90/week), my desire to dress was dramatically reduced. We talked a lot about my childhood. He said that crossdressing behavior is often related to early childhood experiences, but he didn't find anything that had "caused" my behavior. Before ending the sessions, I asked how to relate this to my wife. He said that many women do not want to be confronted with crossdressing, so I should

discuss it with her only if she asked. She knew I was seeing the psychiatrist, but never asked the outcome. So I never brought it up either.

Discovering Tri-Ess. Eventually the purging effect of the psychiatrist sessions wore off, and I repeated the pattern again, remaining in the closet, but eventually being caught again. I was beginning to push 50 by then. Knowing that crossdressing has a sexual aspect to it, I was hoping that the general decline in sex drive with age would also diminish the crossdressing. I know now quite the opposite is true. My first clue came in my company newsletter. There in the "News from Our Retirees" was an article and a picture of a guy in a sissy maid uniform hosting a dinner party with his wife. He was 75 years old! I was astounded, because this had been one of my fantasies for years.

My understanding of the crossdressing phenomenon began to develop quite rapidly after that. Web browsers were just becoming widely available. Like everyone else, I was surfing the net just to see what was out there. I was surprised to find message boards on AOL devoted to crossdressing. Having never known another heterosexual crossdresser, I was amazed there were others out there who appeared to experience the same joys and guilt about crossdressing. My appetite for information was whetted. I joined Tri-Ess and read every issue of "The Femme Mirror" cover to cover. That led me to the books on crossdressing by JoAnn Roberts, Peggy Rudd, Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Robert Rowe, and others. Other crossdresser's experiences were very parallel to mine - starting about age 8-10, thinking marriage would "cure" it, doing housework like a maid, luxuriating in the relaxation of dressing, and then enduring the crushing guilt when it was over. One common pattern that many of us share is repeating the purge process over and over again. Another common pattern that is just beginning to emerge in me was the intensification with age of the drive to crossdress and imitate femininity.

As I began to understand more about crossdressing, I got bolder about practicing it. Four years ago I admitted for the first time to someone besides my wife that I was a crossdresser. It was a sales clerk where I purchased my first breast forms. That purchase produced nervous excitement in me, but she was very matter-of-fact about it. I went back to that store soon and bought my first maid's dress. With that I began purchasing female clothes for myself instead of borrowing them from my wife. For years I had driven around town at night dressed as a woman. The next step in my "coming out" to others and myself was working up the nerve to get out of the car and go into a restaurant. It happened on an out-of-town business trip. I took my feminine things because I knew there was a gender friendly restaurant in this city. I was welcomed by the staff, was unnoticed by the other patrons, and had a lovely dinner. Then the big step came six months ago. I contacted the local Tri-Ess chapter and met another crossdresser for the first time in my life (to my knowledge!).

During this coming out process, I got caught again, well sort of. My wife was out of town on a business. I took vacation from work and stayed home so I could crossdress 24 hours per day for a couple of days. She found out from my voice mail that I was not at work. So I had to admit what I had been doing. Soon after that I allowed her to catch me en femme while doing housework a couple of times. At first she did not object and I was hopeful that she would tolerate a little crossdressing at home. I gave her a copy of My Husband Wears My Clothes, by Peggy Rudd and offered to discuss it with her. However, she resisted my at-

tempts to bring up the subject and has let me know she does not want to see me crossdressed. That psychiatrist years ago was right about not forcing it onto her.

It distresses me that my crossdressing causes my wife pain. As much as I would like to spare her whatever angst she feels, I know from my years of purges that I cannot permanently resist dressing. I can't talk to her about it, but I can't deceive her either. So she knows when I go to Chi Epsilon Sigma (Chesapeake Bay Tri-Ess) meetings. She may not be able to embrace my need to crossdress, but I would rather she know what I am doing than to risk greater damage by hiding it from her.

Chi Epsilon Sigma has been a wonderful support group. I was skeptical about crossdressing clubs when I first learned they existed. It seemed narcissistic and, frankly, weird as I imagined a bunch of guys sitting around in drag, all dressed up and no place to go. So I hesitated. I finally decided to attend just one meeting. Upon walking into the meeting room I was so surprised to find nearly as many genetic females as crossdressers. The first woman I talked with complimented me on my dress. Well, my heart just melted! I felt like a schoolgirl must feel to be told she is pretty. I had never felt so feminine in my life. As we crossdressers all know, feeling feminine is what it's all about.

Like most crossdressers, dressing makes me feel relaxed and engulfed by some kind of glow. It is that feeling of femininity. I get that feeling over and over again at the Tri-Ess meetings. It comes over me whenever we are talking about make-up, hairstyles, color coordination, clothes, or other "girl talk". Why I don't understand, but I have always had an insatiable curiosity about "girl things". I've never been able to discuss them with anyone until now. Talking about them, sharing compliments, and acting out my feminine fantasies makes me feel more right about myself than I have ever been.

Rachel can be reached at 11654 Plaza America Drive, #328, Reston, VA 20190, or at [redacted]

"Our Honeycation" or My First Adventure

by Michelle M. OK-4901-M

My wife Janie and I were on our Honeycation. We called it that because we never had a honeymoon and this was our first vacation since we were married two years ago. We were in beautiful Branson, Missouri, and Janie and I had decided before we left home that Michelle was going to make her debut there.

When the day finally arrived I was more than a little apprehensive. I was not only going out in public, but I was in one of the most popular tourist areas around, and we were going to a 3:00pm matinee of the Shoji Tabuchi show. We had been out and hid ridden the Ducks (WWII amphibious vehicles for tourists) that morning and were rushed for time, but Michelle was still going to go, no matter what. We were doing our nails and noticed we were almost out of time. So, we rushed to get dressed and do our makeup and in the process we destroyed the beautiful job we did on our nails. It was time for a quick coat of polish, grab our purses and hit the road.

I drove. That was a mistake. The woman within had taken over and forgot how to get where she was going! I was on the right road and didn't even know where I was! We finally arrived about 15 minutes before showtime. (Whew, we made it!) Not exactly! When I was getting out of the car I lost the bottom button on my dress, a knee length button front dress, and of course the wind was blowing. Now I'm walking into the wind up hill in heels and fighting my dress! Could it get any better than that? Oh, yes!

At the top of the hill were three guys that had witnessed the whole thing. Janie overheard them talking. They were trying to figure which one of us would be the easiest to put the moves on! Well, it turned out to be me! That went straight to my head, and I was feeling great about myself, but little did I know what was still to come. I ended up with an aisle seat. Most of you would think that was great, right? Uh, no. I had to answer questions, such as, "Is this Aisle J? What is your seat number?" All these questions came from women who were sitting next to us. That didn't help my nerves, but no one said anything about the deepness of my voice.

Intermission, and Janie and I visied the ladies' room. Wow! It was one of the most glamorous restrooms I had ever been in. It was done in purple and gold and was more a part of the show than a restroom. I touched up my lipstick and turned to walk out, and there she was, the ladies' room attendant! She was the same one my wife had talked with the day before, and there I was, next to her, a good 8 inches taller than my wife! Janie stopped to talk again. I just stood there, wondering when I would be thrown out, but she never said anything or even acted like she cared. That was very comforting, because I was sure she could tell I wasn't all woman.

The show ended and we made it back to the car, but we didn't learn the first time because Janie let me drive again. I jumped right behind the wheel, not thinking. Well, it wasn't good. I got lost going back to the motel room, and when we did get on the right road I drove right past the motel and didn't even notice it! I was just talking and driving. Janie said we needed to hurry up and get to the room and get Mike back so he could drive, because Michelle was the worst driver she had ever seen.

The adventure was over, and it was great. I would do it again and again and not change one thing that happened that day. Now, on to more and bigger and better adventures, as Michelle and Janie have only just begun to have fun!

We would like to hear from you. Janie is a very understanding wife and will help you with anything she can, and as you can tell, I just love to talk. E-Mail: [redacted]m

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The War Stories #3: My Son

by Phyllis Randolph Frye, Attorney, Houston, Texas

(Recently, I went back into my many boxes of diaries, letters and other records to retrieve something from the past. In so doing, I met a flood of memories of episodes in my life, what some might call my "War Stories". If you are willing to read them, I will make the effort to produce them on a regular basis for publication.)

My son is named Randy, and I love him very much. We were separated in 1976 before his sixth birthday. He is approaching twenty-two. Up until last month, we'd only seen each other once during that span of nearly sixteen years. It was worth the wait.

Our families are very important to all of us in the gender community. There is so much pain that we experience merely to be true to who we are. Recently, a friend of mine had a heart by-pass where the doctors took a large vein from his leg and planted it in his chest. I did some self-talk ("They tell us that if God wanted us to be women, God would have made us so. Yet, did God want this man to die only to have the death interfered with by special surgery? And speaking of surgery, what makes mine sinful and his not?") while he told his story to me, all the while surrounded by his loving spouse and kids. But since he and his family are friends, I kept my self-talk to myself that night because I didn't want to dampen our joy over his being alive.

Being alive and being whole. That is all we transgendered folk seek. Yet, the love of our families is always placed in jeopardy. Divorce, estrangement, ostracism, embarrassment, you name it: it simply is not consistent. In addition, it's just not fair. But it happens to us all to some degree. It happened to me and it took almost sixteen years to work it out with my son. (It's still not completely worked out with my parents and siblings.) What I offer in this writing is NOT THE solution, but simply a solution to how to handle the kids.

My first spouse divorced me in 1972 when my son was two because of my crossdressing. During the next several years I visited Randy and spent those days with him. I still had a beard then and was trying to make it as a man. In 1975, I began to crossdress in public on occasion. My hair and nails became longer, my eyebrows thinner. He became puzzled by my appearance and his mother was becoming very nervous when I visited. **I made a deliberate decision: I would give my son and his mother the space they needed to come to terms (at their own speed) with who I was.**

I made that decision after much thought and prayer. You see, I knew that even though I'd spent most of my life surrounded by my parents and siblings, we were growing apart over who I was becoming; therefore, physical nearness was no guarantee. I also hoped that by sacrificing some time now, we might have the rest of our lives as good friends. What bothered me also was how I could ensure that he didn't grow up hating me for feeling I'd abandoned him.

So I wrote to him, every single month for those sixteen years. Much happened. His mother and I almost squared off twice in the legal arena, she remarried, my son decided for himself that he wanted to meet Phyllis once when he was about eleven, his mother asked me and I complied with an inflationary raise in the child support, I pledged to him continuing the monthly payment for four more years after he turned eighteen. In short, I walked a fine line between being too close and staying too far away.

Yes, I cried a lot over it. Every month when I wrote my son the wound would open again. I was always honest to him and simply reported what was going on in my life. Father's Day was an annual hell because I couldn't be close to either my father or my son.

Three days before Christmas 1991, he called. He was visiting his grandmother in San Antonio and wanted to know if I could make a special trip to visit. Well, I said YES (while I cried). I told my spouse the wonderful news (and I cried). I called my mother to tell her (and I cried). I drove to the courthouse the next morning (and I cried). I told several courthouse friends about the call (and cried on each telling). I drove to the airport (and I cried). I flew (and cried again). When we first met and hugged, I cried.

It was a wonderful day. We spent most of it together. When I hugged him, he hugged me back. His mother and grandmother were very gracious and loving and hugged my as well. He was not at all shy about me. **It was very warm and very healing!!** He told me this (paraphrasing what I remember) during one of our many talks:

"You did a good job. You stayed far enough away for me to come to terms with who you were. Yet, you wrote to me every single month for sixteen years. I never doubted your love. I always knew that you were close by and would come at a moment's notice. I always knew that you wanted me."

As we parted, he indicated that we would get together again. He is in college, and he works part time. It probably won't be until this summer, but it will be. I know in my heart that it will be another visit with much warmth again, and I feel sure that I will cry once more. So much healing was done; so much more remains to be done.

(NOTE: He has since married and finished professional school. He is a father. Trish and I were invited to the wedding and the college graduation and are "Ganny" and "Gam" to our two year old grandchild. We talk about twice a week on the phone. They get a copy of all of my political transgender e-mail. Last month they took a six day vacation with us. We are close. It worked for us.)

Rules for Crossdressers

A question often raised and discussed among crossdressers is whether or not to tell one's wife about the predilection to crossdress. Along with that question is how to go about the process. The pornography of crossdressers often deals with it by developing a wife who either immediately falls in love with the "new girlfriend" or decides to turn the situation into a domination scenario. Neither of the above is what normally occurs in real life, of course. The revelation will introduce stress into the relationship and that stress will ultimately destroy that relationship unless properly handled and released. Counselors experienced in crossdressing recommend various courses,but can be summarized by the following:

1. The wife should be told. Keeping a secret will ultimately poison the marriage in other ways which will not immediately be apparent.
2. Involve a counselor immediately. The crossdresser may, through prior study, know many of the answers to his wife's questions, but a counselor will have a better chance of being believed by the woman.
3. Talk a lot with your wife. Talk not only about the crossdressing, but most of all about other things. She will be threatened by the crossdressing. You must assure her that it is not a threat to her or the relationship.
4. Do not pressure her to see you dressed. Remember, she married a man and will be disturbed by the sight of her man dressed as a woman. Each woman is different in how she will react to the revelation, and most will not want to deal with the actual sight of the crossdressing. Seeing the clothing is not a particular threat, in fact it may be good for her to see them to remove any thoughts of hers that there is something "strange" in your collection.
5. Establish clear boundaries in which you can remain and still have opportunities to dress. Be honest, but at the same time be sure you don't push her into something with which she is not comfortable. For example, you may establish a room in the house in which it is okay to keep your clothes and times when it is acceptable. Arrangements need to be agreed to as to where the crossdresser can go while dressed...outside...if so where and when? Don't expect too much too soon.
6. Decide early on whether you want to keep the marriage. That is the principle decision. If that is a priority, then the decisions and compromises you make concerning crossdressing become a bit easier. It is easier to decide that keeping the marriage together is more important than insisting that she go shopping with you while dressed, for example.
7. Should you tell the kids? Probably not right away, and certainly not while they are very young. They have so much to deal with without having to handle daddy's strange habits. This is not to say that they should never be told, but the time should take into consideration what is happening in their lives as well.
8. Keep the lines of communication open. Check it out daily. Go for walks with your wife where you can talk about all the things that affect your marriage...most of the walk/talks will not even involve talking about crossdressing. If the communication is open, other things become open as well.
9. Don't be afraid to go back to the counselor periodically for a checkup, both as a couple and singly. The times alone with the counselor allow each partner to air issues which are difficult to address with their mate. The counselor is also a good check on your boundaries to be sure they are realistic.
10. Keep the job and the crossdressing separate, especially if you are not absolutely sure of their reaction to your cross dressing. It is important to maintain an income to support the family, and love has a difficult time surviving poverty.
11. It would be nice if all people in the world accepted crossdressers and never even cast a passing look your way. Being more realistic, however, one must recognize that it is possible to lose a job (legally or otherwise) or at least go through a great deal of difficult time. It may not be worth it, despite any altruistic motives you or others around you may have.

(Reprinted from The Cactus Flower.)

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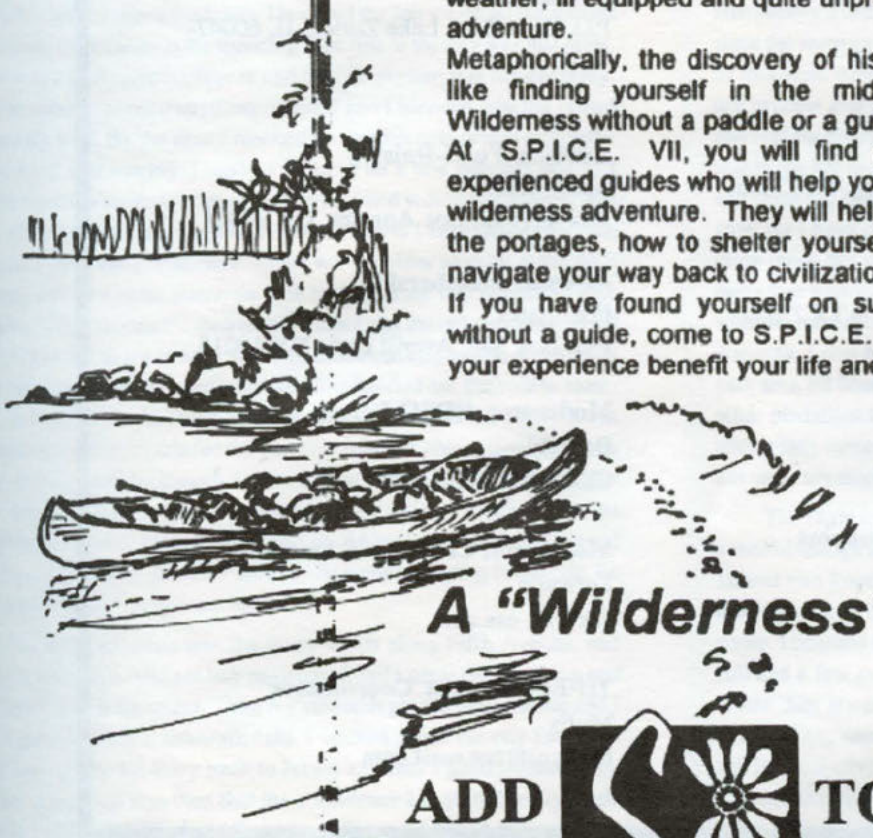

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"I Loved New York!"

by Alexandra F

It was something I always wanted to do. To go on a business trip and spend a majority of my time en femme was something I always dreamed about doing. The opportunity finally arose in late May when I had to go to New York to attend an Electrical Conference and Trade Show. I seized the opportunity and prepared the usual extensive double wardrobe for the trip, since it would be a full week and I was planning quite a bit of activity en femme. I would stay at a hotel on the New Jersey side of the Hudson and commute daily into the city by way of the New York Waterway Ferry. Following the first few days of attending the conference and spending a number of nice evenings going out en femme to dinner, I finally decided to start riding the ferry in the late afternoon to go out on the town in NY. The weather that week was superb and it was really nice to be able to dress very light. I had to sit most of the time, though, since the stiff breeze kept lifting my skirt and I could not seem to keep it held down.

As I became more comfortable with my adventure I brought it to a crescendo the last day of the seminar by becoming very brazen. I decided to attend the last class en femme. One might say that true insanity had set in. I donned my beige suite as it was very business like and the skirt was only a few inches above the knees. I boarded the ferry with all the masses of business commuters in the morning. The ride to the city was just great. There was a cool morning breeze and the NY skyline was breathtaking. Almost nobody noticed anything unusual and I blended into the crowd amazingly well. By the time I reached the convention center my confidence level was soaring. I made a point to be a few minutes late so I would enter the seminar after everyone else and would not have to mix with all the bubbas I knew would be attending. As I entered the room the seminar was already underway. There was an older woman at the door handing out the course materials. She looked at me and remarked with surprise, "Oh, a woman!" I then realized that I was the only person dressed as a woman in the room with about 60 electrical engineers, of which at least one other must be a crossdresser. She handed me the course materials and I proceeded to take a seat at the very back of the room. I was somewhat uncomfortable for the first few minutes about possibly being read. As time went by though I realized that everyone was so interested in the lecture that nobody really gave me much notice. I then began to get comfortable. The course material was an old hat for me so I only stayed for about a half-hour since I wanted to do some shopping in the city. So off I went to play hooky from school.

The next attraction was the many shops along Fifth Avenue, and Macy's. Although I did not buy anything, I had a great time looking and strolling through the stores. Then my stomach got the better of me and I had a great lunch at a sidewalk cafe. I walked about the city for a few more hours, rode the ferry back to Jersey and had a great dinner in the hotel restaurant. It was then that the confidence I acquired really made me flip. I decided that I would fly home in femme. I called Airport Security and they basically said that if I had no weapons I would be OK. Then I called Delta Airlines but they told me that without a femme ID I might have problems. I agonized for a while but decided that if they could not ID me with my driver's license I would just simply remove my wig for the ID process. Fortunately that never became a necessity.

The next day I dressed in my short black polka-dot dress, no hose and two inch heels and checked out of the hotel. I went to curbside check-in. When the Skycap asked for my ID I produced my driver's license and said, "Unfortunately, the ID does not match." He smiled and said, "Oh, don't worry, it's OK." He was really nice and we even chatted for a few moments while he went about preparing my baggage claim checks. I was amazed at how well everything was going. I returned the rental car without incident, rode the crowded monorail to the terminal and proceeded to the security check. Passing through the metal detector brought the first and only event of mild panic. The detector went off. I backed up and removed my watch, and rings. Again the alarm went off. Back I went again. I removed my necklace and any other articles of jewelry. By this time the line was getting longer behind me. Passing through again, you guessed it, the alarm went off again. I removed my belt realizing that it was the only other item remaining before I would have to begin disrobing. Fortunately it did the trick and I was allowed to pass; though not literally since the security person and a few other people had obviously made me by that time. Anyway, I remained reasonably composed through the entire process and proceeded on down the concourse with my head high and feeling pretty good. I had about two hours till departure so I took a seat in the bar and ordered a glass of wine. I spent about an hour reading and drinking large quantities of wine. Feeling no pain, I headed for my gate. As I have often noticed before, a few people possibly read me at close range but not many. However, men, it seems, cannot help but undress you with their eyes. That's OK; I do it, too. It makes you aware of what women deal with. I began to wish that I had worn a longer dress. Anyway, I was having too good of a time to be concerned. I sat in the gate area till boarding time reading my book. I boarded along with the other medallion members and took my aisle seat. A few minutes later a young lady came who had the center seat. I got up and let her in. She did not seem to notice anything.

The flight crew was very nice and professional. The flight was uneventful though long, since we were in a holding pattern over Atlanta for almost two hours due to severe weather. Then the work began. With three pieces of luggage (two wardrobes) and my purse it was a real chore. I boarded the shuttle bus to the satellite parking area. The bus was full and a few people sitting directly across from me were suspicious. When they stared at me I just confidently looked directly at them and smiled. They dared not look again. Once in my car, I realized that this was the greatest adventure I ever had en femme and that I will do it again. Though next time I will rather have one large piece of luggage than many small ones.

(Reprinted from "The Southern Belle," newsletter of Sigma Epsilon Chapter.)

Question About Your Tri-Ess Membership, Publications, or Programs?

Here's How To Get Answers By E-mail

You might appreciate knowing the e-mail addresses of various Tri-Ess officers with whom you might wish to make contact for certain needs.

Membership Information (fees, status, or notifications of change of address, etc.), email Membership Director Donna [redacted] at [redacted]

Big Sister Program or the Mail Forwarding Service email Marlene at [redacted]

S.P.I.C.E., or wives' and partners' or couples' support, email Peggy Rudd at [redacted]

Questions about chapters, email Director of Chapter Networking and Support, Judy Daniels, at [redacted]

CDTRIESS, crossdressers' online forum, email Sofronia Anne Strong at [redacted]

CDSO, Spouses' online forum, email Bev [redacted] at [redacted]

The Sweetheart Connection email Editor Onnalee at [redacted]

Membership Directory email Denise [redacted] at [redacted]

The Femme Mirror and materials for publication should be emailed Frances Fairfax, its Editor, at [redacted]

Information about joining Tri-Ess, questions about the Holiday En Femme, Tri-Ess Outreach or the workings of Tri-Ess, plus those you are not sure how to direct, should be emailed to me at [redacted]

We and the rest of the Tri-Ess Staff are here to help you get the most out of your Tri-Ess membership. Help us to better serve you by routing questions to the correct department. The only "stupid" question is the one not asked.

Grace and Lace Letter

A Christian Publication for the Transgendered Community

Jane Ellen and Frances Fairfax
Publishers

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All the News That's Fit to Print, or Alpha Zeta Meets the Press

by Cindy

As some of you know, "The Arizona Republic" called us to gather information for a feature article in the "Republic." Seems as though one of the reporters was surfing the internet for possible stories and came across the Alpha Zeta home page. I only had two days to get a group of about ten members together for this meeting. So we hastily assembled an ad hoc group and had the meeting on the first Saturday of August at our home.

I did have some misgivings about this and wanted to make sure that all security measures were solidly in place. I also wanted to make a good impression with the reporter to make sure that she didn't do a hatchet job on the group.

I hastily assembled some guidelines for both the members and the "Republic" reps, such as no photos without members' consent, no photos of the house that could be identified with us, and of course, no real names were to be published.

On the night of the meeting, the photographer arrived first and the reporter arrived ten minutes later. (She got lost!) They were both quite congenial and interested in just what this group called "Alpha Zeta, A Chapter of Tri-Ess" was all about. I passed out the usual literature, the brochure, the Benjamin chart, and a copy of the Cactus Flower.

Everything went smoothly, their questions were strictly information gathering, and seemed quite non-judgmental. When the reporter had enough information for an article, she turned the photographer loose. I believe he got some very good photos, some front shots of Valerie and some rear shots of two of the ladies' hair. They only stayed for about 2 hours, then left for the office.

I waited patiently along with everyone else, for the article to appear. Every day, I scanned the paper hoping to see the article. About the tenth of August, the reporter called with a few more questions, and said the article might appear in the Saturday or Monday edition. The weekend came & went. Nothing.

The last word we received was that the editor had turned down the article because it was not "News." Guess we were too conservative for them. Maybe we should have staged a Jerry Springer cat fight! Or how about a little more exposed flesh? Or better yet, let's just stay the great group that we are and avoid negative publicity!

A big THANKS and round of applause for all the ladies who showed up for this event on such short notice.

(Ed. Note: Ladies, your chapter can arrange for an interview, too. Tau Chi Chapter had such an article published back in 1990, and to this day we get inquirers who have been saving that newspaper clipping and are finally ready to join. The outreach value is incalculable! - Frances)

Poet's Corner

Tell Me Of The Venus Doves

tell me of the venus doves
and of their downy under-plumage
and rocket-science wings

tell me of the venus doves
and of their shape-shifter flights of fancy
in the face of buzz-cut swagger-hawks and
venomous humming-bitches and others
with eyes obsessed with mandated disguises

tell me of the venus doves
and of their periwinkle eyes
and their true voices singing
an anthem to every human's
glistening nucleus of moons and suns
yin and yang

tell me of the venus doves
and of their hearts' double-drumming
pumping a ba'zillion joy-bubbles
through silken arteries and softly sueded veins

tell me of the venus doves
and of their migratory passage above and beyond
seemingly endless planes of molten volcanic disdain

Jayne (PA-4961-G)
E-mail: [redacted]

Ending Note: Thank you so much for reading my thoughts and your consideration. As an absolute ***newbie*** on the outer fringe of the Tri-Ess organization, I hope it is not too presumptuous of me to submit material for consideration. It is only within the past few months (and with your organization's help) that I've made the decision to accept all of the layers and facets of my life as actual and natural—and have begun several new books using a more openly exposed and personal gender-gifted voice. This text is from a book of poetry I'm working on entitled, *Within This Rosebud Chrysalis* - under the pen name: Crystal Pentecost.

Central Intelligence Agency Report AD-663 - October 1993
Sexual Behavior and Security Risk: Background Information for Security Personnel

by Richards J. Heuer, Jr.

Ed. Note: Ladies, ever wonder what "The Feds" really think about our transgendered behavior? Well, courtesy of the T.O.P.S. organization (Transgendered Officers Protect and Serve), here is an official report from the CIA.] (From the T.O.P.S. web site. Reprinted by permission.)*

Executive Summary. There is today no community consensus on value judgments regarding sexual practices or how these practices should be evaluated in a national security context. Conflicting interpretations of sexual behavior that were widely accepted during earlier time periods continue to influence the public psyche, the legal code, and organizational practices.

The record of past espionage cases and the bulk of scientific research suggest that the connection between sexual behavior and personnel security is more complex than a simple notion that "normal" sex is acceptable but "nonconforming" sexual practices are a security risk. Self-control, social maturity, strength of character, and overall psychological adjustment are more important security indicators than the specific sexual practices in which people engage.

This report identifies criteria for relating sexual behavior to security risk. Specifically, sexual behavior may be of security concern when it is criminal, when it is compulsive or out of control or indicates a personality disorder, when it exposes the individual to pressure or coercion, or when it is notorious. Sexual behavior offers such a significant window into an individual's psyche that it may also serve as an indicator of broader emotional problems. The bulk of the report provides background information on the nature, causes, and prevalence of a wide variety of sexual behaviors. It then discusses security concerns that may or may not be associated with these behaviors.

Sexual behavior of any type, including "normal" heterosexual intercourse between consenting adults, is a security concern if it is compulsive and out of control. Indicators that sexual behavior may be out of control are seeking sex as a means of coping with problems of loneliness, stress, anxiety, low self esteem, pain, or sleeplessness; an obsession with sex that dominates one's life, including sexual fantasies that interfere with work performance; so much time devoted to planning sexual activity that it interferes with other activities; feelings of shame about one's sexual behavior; a feeling of powerlessness or inability to stop despite predictable adverse consequences; inability to make a commitment to a loving relationship; extreme dependence upon a relationship as a basis for feelings of self-worth; or little emotional satisfaction gained from the sex act.

It is not the frequency or type of sexual activity or number of partners that is of greatest significance, but a pattern of out of control behavior that causes problems for the individual with employment, health, marriage, social relationships, or the law, or that causes a significant lowering of self esteem.

The report discusses the origins of homosexuality and cites research conclusions that being homosexual does not predispose one to unreliability, disloyalty, or untrustworthiness. Lifestyles of homosexuals are as varied as heterosexual lifestyles. Homosexuality does not by definition reflect poor judgment, nor is it an emotional disorder. To the extent that it is concealed, homosexuality may cause a person to be vulnerable to threats of exposure, but not necessarily more so than the adulterer or any other person who conceals an embarrassing personal secret.

For these reasons, sexual orientation alone is not an appropriate basis for security concern. However, the regular "cruising" associated with some homosexual lifestyles does involve a degree of promiscuity and sexual indiscretion which is difficult to reconcile with some security requirements, especially if the individual may travel or be assigned abroad.

To protect employee rights to privacy and civil liberties, adjudication of sexual behavior needs to be based on demonstrable security concerns, not on commonly accepted myths or the personal moral values of individual adjudicators. This will be aided by improved understanding of the wide diversity of human sexual behavior and the specific connections between various forms of sexual behavior and security risk.

Findings in this report suggest a need to rethink criteria for evaluating a number of forms of atypical sexual behavior, some of which may be unrelated to security risk. The report reinforces the importance of case-by-case judgments rather than automatic disqualification of some categories; this emphasizes the need for qualified medical expertise in making many of these judgments.

Transsexualism. Transsexualism, literally, means going from one sex to another. A transsexual experiences strong discomfort with his or her biological sex. There is a conviction that, mentally, one is a man trapped in a woman's body, or a woman trapped in a man's body. As with other gender and sexual anomalies, this occurs with varying degrees of severity. In more extreme cases, it may result in a request for a sex change op-

eration, which is usually granted only after the person has spent at least two years living as a member of the preferred sex. In the United States, several thousand people have undergone surgery to change (insofar as possible) their external genitalia to that of the opposite sex.

Transsexuals generally also suffer from a moderate to severe personality disturbance. They frequently report anxiety or depression, which they may attribute to inability to live in the role of the desired sex. Any associated personality or adjustment problems would be a security concern. Transsexuals sometimes take strong doses of hormones, and this entails some risk; testosterone, for example, can cause people to become aggressive.

Prevalence of transsexualism is estimated at one per 30,000 for males and one per 100,000 for females. The wish to be a member of the opposite sex commonly dates back to one's earliest childhood memory. The young child may make very emotional assertions that he or she is the other sex. Cross-dressing normally begins early in life, as do play which is more typical of the opposite gender and choice of playmates exclusively of the opposite gender. Although transsexuals almost invariably report having these gender identity problems in childhood, most children who report these problems do not grow up to be transsexuals. The transsexual tends to be asexual and may be so aversive to the genitals that there is a reluctance to touch them to masturbate. Attempted self-mutilation is not uncommon. Transsexuals are usually attracted sexually to members of the same biological gender, but they perceive themselves as heterosexual as they are themselves in the wrong body.

One would assume, intuitively, that the U.S. military is the last place one would find transsexuals. Actually, there are grounds for speculating that transsexuals may be more common than expected in the military. An Air Force psychiatrist assigned to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base reported evaluating 11 male transsexuals during his 3-year tour there. Eight were current or former active duty military personnel, while three were civilians. Of the eight who had extensive military service, seven had joined the service voluntarily at a time when no draft existed or other options were readily available. All were requesting either female hormones or sex reassignment surgery.

Young male transsexuals in the throes of adjusting to their situation appear to go through a hypermasculine phase in which they try to purge the feminine side of their personality and prove their masculinity both to themselves and others. Transsexuals pass through this hypermasculine stage during late adolescence and early adult years, which coincides with the time when men consider military service. Quotes from taped interviews with military transsexuals are typical: "I tried to do things to make me feel more masculine, like joining the Navy and getting married." "I thought it would make a man out of me." "I joined the Navy hoping maybe the problem would go away." "I joined the Air Force as a cover. In uniform, my masculinity would not he questioned." Also typical is the civilian doctor who advised one young man who had come to him for treatment of feminine feelings to "join the Army, go to boot camp, and learn how to run over trees with a tank." These military transsexuals tend to seek out the more macho military specialties. One who had been assigned as a lab technician volunteered for combat-helicopter training during the peak of the Vietnam war; his hobbies were mountain climbing and race car driving. Another became a Green Beret. These are natural choices for the young transsexual in the hypermasculine phase making a last ditch effort to adjust to what society expects from a male. This effort eventually fails in many cases, however, and transsexual urges return, although transsexuals have had successful military careers of 20 years or more.

Transvestism. Transvestism is cross-dressing. The transvestite is almost always a male, and usually a heterosexual male, who has an obsession for wearing women's clothes, usually as a means of reducing psychic stress or tension. To the extent that sexual arousal is a principal motive for wearing female garments, this is a type of fetish and is mentioned in the next section under fetishism; it is sometimes called transvestic fetishism. Crossdressing by homosexuals is the exception rather than the rule. Transvestism takes a number of forms. It may involve occasional cross-dressing while alone in private, usually accompanied by masturbation; relaxing in women's attire while at home in-the evening with a spouse; crossdressing as an erotic turn-on during intercourse with a partner; wearing on a daily basis a single item of women's attire such as underwear or stockings under one's masculine clothes; dressing up in full women's regalia with wig and makeup for the excitement of venturing out in public alone as a woman; or participating in the subculture of transvestite support groups or transvestite bars.

The transvestite should be distinguished from the drag queen and the female impersonator. A drag queen is a male homosexual who dresses as a woman, often for the purpose of sexually stimulating other males. Although he may be a transvestite, in many cases he is not. The female impersonator is an entertainer. He, too, may also be a transvestite, although in many cases he is not. The drag queen and female impersonator may have no psychological dependence on wearing feminine clothing as a form of tension release, nor do they necessarily gain sexual stimulation from the clothing.

The transvestite should also he differentiated from the

nale transsexual who seeks to change his gender identity. As liscussed above, the transsexual male feels like a woman trapped n a man's body, wishes to live as a woman, and experiences an nsistent urge to change his anatomical sex. Although some cross-dressers evolve into transsexuals as young adults or in early middle age, most are quite happy with their gender and feel no urge to change it. There is also an intermediate condition called gynemimesis in males and andromimesis in females, where the person dresses and lives continuously as a person of the opposite sex but does not wish for any change in the anatomy.

Gynemimesis might be more common in the United States if there were not such strong societal constraints against its expression. Males who live as women are accepted and have well-defined and in some cases highly respected roles in a variety of cultures, including India, Burma, Oman, Polynesia, and among North American Indian tribes. In one small town in Oman where they were studied, the Xanith, as they are known there, comprised 2% of the 3,000 adult males.

Many transvestites are married and masculine in appearance. Most assume a female name and personality while they are cross-dressed. Crossdressing often starts in childhood or early adolescence. The causes are not known, but some prenatal biological influence may be involved as well as later experiences during early childhood.

No valid statistics are available on the prevalence of transvestism. The Society for the Second Self is a support and social organization for heterosexual cross-dressers. The group reports about 1,100 members organized into 27 chapters nationwide, with another 23 chapters in the process of formation. Other similar organizations also exist. The "second self' is the woman that the society believes "is buried within every man." The group's purpose is to create a safe environment for the heterosexual male membership "to express without fear, to speak without shame, and to act out without guilt the femininity that is within them." Members generally limit their cross-dressing to the privacy of their homes or cover of night and socialize en femme only at chapter meetings with their close confidants.

The largest survey of transvestites was conducted in the late 1960s by V. Prince and P.M. Bentler. They received survey responses from 504 subscribers to a magazine for heterosexual cross-dressers. Prince, who was one of the founders of the Society for the Second Self has almost 1,200 more responses from recirculating the same survey questionnaire during the past 3 or 4 years. Prince reports that the responses "come out pretty much the same as the original survey, which indicates that the phenomenon is pretty much the same over a 25-year period.'

The findings reported here are from the original Prince and Bentler survey. In response to a question about how they see themselves, 12% said they felt like a woman trapped in a male body; in other words, they may be transsexuals rather than transvestites. Another 12% reported they were a man with just a sexual fetish for feminine attire, which suggests they should be classified as transvestic fetishists. The classical transvestite response, that they feel themselves to he a man who has a feminine side seeking expression, was given by 69%. Only 28% reported ever having any homosexual experience, which is less than the 37% reported by Kinsey for the male population as a whole.

Most (64%) respondents were currently married, with another 14% either separated, divorced, or widowed. About one third of the married members described their wives as either cooperative or understanding, while 20%of the wives were completely unaware of their husbands' interests. About one quarter had a college degree, while another 13% had earned an advanced degree. A remarkable 17% were either presidents or owners of a company or business, while 19% had played football in high school or college.

To some extent, these figures reflect the fact that people who join any type of support group tend to be well educated. The figures may also say something about transvestites, however. A separate study of 51 members of the Society for the Second Self found that many were high achievers, driven to seek personal success in order to gain a sense of self-worth and positive recognition. Many sought out particularly masculine occupations as a means of compensation, that is, to prove their masculinity both to themselves and to others despite their enjoyment of feminine things.

Cross-dressers are not dangerous. That is, they generally are not child molesters, voyeurs, exhibitionists or rapists. The practice does not generally interfere with work performance. If cross-dressers have difficulties with the law, it is generally because of society's inability to accept persons who do not behave in the "normal" way. A book to be published later this year by one of the principal scholars in this field will argue that gender impersonation (including cross-dressing) should not be classified as a mental illness or a pathology unless it becomes a compulsive behavior. Under those circumstances, it should be considered the same as any other compulsive behavior.

Prince and Bentler report that 76% of their respondents had never had a psychiatric consultation for any reason. This is significant, as it indicates that many transvestites do not experience other emotional problems of sufficient gravity to require treatment. Some scientific literature on transvestism is written by psychiatrists based on clinical experience, and they

tend to see cross-dressing as the tip of the iceberg of other emotional problems. If the psychiatrists see only those transvestites who are seriously disturbed by their problems, their impression of the phenomenon as a whole may be less accurate than the broad survey research.

Because of lack of public acceptance, crossdressers normally conceal their feelings and their secret life, and this creates a potential for extortion in exchange for keeping their secret. On the other hand, secret cross-dressing tends to be a solitary activity. Unlike homosexuality or adultery, it does not require a partner, so the risk of discovery and blackmail may be considerably less. According to the Prince and Bentler study, almost 50% of transvestites had told either no one or only one other person (often the wife). Most others were very limited in their disclosure; only 9% had told anyone who was "antagonistic," showing that transvestites "were quite adept in selecting individuals to talk with who would not respond negatively to the information."

Transvestism is similar to homosexuality in that it is not illegal, and there is no empirical evidence that transvestites are, by nature, less trustworthy or loyal than other persons. Cross-dressing, by itself and in all circumstances, does not necessarily indicate poor judgment, unreliability, irresponsibility or emotional instability, although these disqualifying characteristics will he present in some cases. There is strong evidence that many cross-dressers lead successful lives with a high degree of personal and professional achievement. Each individual should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate medical authorities should determine whether there are other associated emotional problems or evidence of a progression toward other sexual disorders such as fetishism or transsexualism.

The DCID 1/14 criteria that may apply to some cases of transvestism are the public nature of the behavior and susceptibility to blackmail or coercion. Going out in public dressed as a woman may indicate lack of discretion and would be an aggravating circumstance that may justify disqualification. Concealment of current cross-dressing behavior may indicate susceptibility to pressure. Admission of cross-dressing during a security interview may eliminate some of this susceptibility but is discouraged by the sanctions associated with current personnel security policies.

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Carnival and Mardi Gras 1998 in New Orleans and Galveston

by Micheline

On Friday, February 13, 1998, Janet, a friend from Houston, calls me and tells me that she will go to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans in Louisiana and she asks me if I wish to go with her. I will have just to pay for my flight between Quebec City and Houston and New Orleans because she has already paid for the hotel in New Orleans. I tell her that I will call her back on Monday because I need a few days to see if I am able to have an airplane ticket to fly down to Houston at a low fare. Finally, I call her back on Monday, February 16, and I tell her that I will arrive in Houston on Thursday, February 19 because, prior going to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans, I wish to go to the Carnival in Galveston named the Big Speakeasy.

Thursday, February 19. I must drive from Quebec City to Montreal because I do not have enough time to take the bus. During the first 50 kilometers, I come across a snow storm but after that, the sky is blue and the pavement is dry. So, it is a good trip up to Montreal. At the airport, before checking in my suitcase, I open it and put inside my winter boots and my coat to let me travel light. So, in the airplane, I just wear a short brown and gold dress with black pantyhose and black high heels. This time, I fly on U.S. Airways without any incident or delay and I arrive on time at the George Bush International Airport in Houston where Phoebe, a friend, picks me up at the airport. She drives me to downtown Houston where we meet some friends. I give to my friends some gifts that I have brought for them from Canada. After chatting a little bit, we go to a restaurant where Janet is waiting for us. After a light lunch, I go with Janet to stay at her place while I will be in Houston.

Friday, February 20. As usual, I wake up myself, I dress myself and I am ready to go to the restaurant to eat breakfast or to go shopping. Obviously, Janet is not ready, and she gives me the keys of her car to let me going shopping at the nearest shopping center, the Willowbrook Mall. The sky is blue and the temperature is around 70*F. Inside Sears, I decide to go to the hair dressing salon to have a brushing and I buy a casual red and black dress. Around 16:00, Janet is ready and we do a lot of shopping because she needs a new special outfit for the Big Speakeasy. She buys this outfit, a kind of yellow leotard with green ruffles like a leotard worn by an ice skater, at a place named Skate Texas, where I buy a new necklace in rhinestones.

Saturday, February 21. As usual, I wake up myself, I dress myself and I am ready to go out for breakfast and obviously Janet is still not ready to go out. So, she gives me the keys of her car and I go shopping again. Finally, around 16:00, Janet is ready and we depart for Galveston. On our way, we stop at a lingerie boutique where Janet wishes to show her sexy outfit and my Arab Princess dress. My dress has a corsage in green, gold and red satin, the sleeves and the skirt are in gold transparent fishnet and there is a kind of flounce in the front and in the back of the skirt to hide my panties. I also wear a red bolero in satin over the dress and a red veil in satin on my head. The veil is attached to a gold diadem that I wear on my head and around my forehead. The salesgirls are completely crazy when they see our costumes. We take many pictures and now, we are ready to go to Galveston.

Janet knows Galveston well and she finds the shortcuts to bring us downtown without being stuck in the traffic. We arrive downtown around 18:30 and we stop at a restaurant near the Strand Street where the parade will pass. We are lucky to be able to park the car in a street near the restaurant. At the restaurant, I order just a small order of French fries because I hear the sound of the parade and I wish to see it. Janet orders a light lunch, a beer and a hurricane because she wishes to be in good shape for the parade. Finally, we leave the restaurant around 19:15 and we walk directly to Strand Street where we see the parade. Even if we have missed one third of the parade, the parade is nice and I appreciate every thing that I see.

There are many floats on which there are people who throw away some beads, cups and medals for the greatest pleasure of the crowd. There is also a band between each float and the crowd is happy. When people on the float throw away some beads, cups and medals, the crowd becomes crazy and everybody tries to catch some beads, cups or medals. After the parade, we walk on the street and I note that there are many people on the balconies on each side of the street and they also throw away some beads to the people who walk in the street. So, the sexier you are and the more you look at the people or you salute them, the more they will throw away some beads.

At this moment, I loose Janet in the crowd and I am unable to find her. I continue to walk from one end of the street to the other end of the street but I do not find her. So, I decide to go back to the restaurant where we were at the beginning in hopes that she will have the same idea. Furthermore, I go first to the car and I leave a little word in the window telling her that I am in the restaurant. At the restaurant, I eat a standard meal waiting for Janet. After finishing eating, Janet is still not here. So, I go back on Strand Street to try again to find Janet. When I am on Strand Street, there are some shootings and one person is killed and four persons are wounded. The police arrive very swiftly and they move us out of the street very swiftly; they wish to have enough room for the ambulances and they wish to have no people around them for doing their job. It seems that this is a kind of war between two gangs and some people were only at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Meanwhile, it begins to rain and I am stuck in my Arab Princess dress in the middle of the street. I have the choice to go back to the car or to go back to the restaurant. I am unable to continue to search for Janet on the street because the police have closed the street. Worrying about the possibility of being stuck in my long dress under a huge rain, I decide to go back to the restaurant. I wait for Janet in the restaurant up to 22:30

and I must leave at this time because the restaurant is closing, but I face now a very important problem. Outside, there is a huge thunderstorm with thunder, lightening and such a heavy rain that it looks like a flood. I must stay in front of the restaurant under the weather-board stuck to the wall of the restaurant and trying to not be soaked by the rain. In front of the restaurant, there is a kind of canal with a V shape where the water is going before going to the sewer, but the rain is so huge that the water begins to spread slowly but inexorably toward me. I must turn my feet to avoid the water and at the same time, I begin to become wet on my shoulders, my back and my breasts because the rain passes through the weather-board. I am beginning to become a true wet girl stuck in a long dress under a huge rain. Finally, the rain slows down a little and the water stops at less than one inch from my feet. At this time, I decide to cross the canal and to run under the rain up to the car. I am lucky because even if this is Janet's car, I have the keys because she prefers that I keep the keys. There is just one problem; I have the key for the doors and the trunk but I do not have the key of the motor. So, I open the trunk of the car, pick up my long winter boots and my coat, put them on me and sit in the car waiting for Janet. It is now around 23:15 and my dress is wet, my undergarments are wet and I am lucky to have my winter boots and my coat to keep me warm.

Meanwhile, Janet has a lot of fun at the Kon-Tiki, a well-known bar in Galveston. She tries to reach me but seeing the thunderstorm, she stays at the bar. Around 1:00, she reaches the car and she find me inside the car, half asleep. The streets are now quiet and I inform Janet about the shooting. She is not aware about that. Anyway, we decide to go to sleep at the home of Janet's parents, who live in Galveston, and we arrive there at 2:00. They are asleep on the second floor and we go to bed right away on the first floor.

Sunday, February 22. As usual, I wake up myself, I dress myself and I am ready to go out for breakfast, but Janet needs few minutes to dress herself as a man because her parents have never seen Janet and so they will not see her this time. So, I decide to take a little walk outside to give Janet enough time to dress herself. When I come back, Janet and I go to the second floor to meet her parents. They are very happy to see us and Janet's mother has prepared a very good breakfast for us. But before eating, she says to her son to remove the mascara on his face! The parents of Janet are really lovely and I would be very proud to have parents like them. After the breakfast, we chat a little bit and the father told me that, at the beginning, he was eager to know the tall blonde lady in the red dress who has slept in his house because he has seen me walking on the street when he has looked out the window on the second floor. As you remember, we have slept on the first floor and Janet's parents live on the second floor. Finally we go back to Houston and I am driving the car. We make a little stop in a lingerie shop because Janet wishes to buy some clothing and finally we arrive around 16:00 at Mary's, a bar in Houston, where Phoebe is waiting for us. After few drinks, Janet and I decide to go home early because she needs time to pack her suitcases. In fact, we go to bed around 1:00 after Janet has finished her suitcases.

Monday, February 23. The alarm clock rings at 6:00. As usual, I dress myself fast and I am ready to go at 7:00. Janet is ready at 8:20 and we leave for the airport. Our flight is at 10:35 at Hobby Airport in South East Houston and Janet lives in North West Houston. So, we think that we need at least one hour to reach the airport. Finally, we arrive at the airport parking lot at 9:30 and we are at the counter of Southwest Airlines at 9:40. For traveling, I wear the same short brown and gold dress that I have worn during the flight between Montreal and Houston, but Janet wears her yellow and green skater outfit. You may be sure that every body has seen Janet in the airport. The flight is on time and we arrive around 11:30 at New Orleans. Richard, a man from The Oliver Estate, the bed and breakfast where we will stay, is waiting for us at the airport, and he drives us to The Oliver Estate in fifty minutes. This hotel is very well located, a little bit at the North East of the French Quarter, and we may go on foot to the French Quarter. If you go to New Orleans, go to this hotel; it is very fine and the staff is perfect.

During the afternoon, Janet and I walk on Bourbon Street, the main street of the French Quarter, where many people stand on the balconies of the second floor and throw away to us some beads. Bourbon Street is approximately two kilometers long and it is crowded from one end to the other end of the street. During this walk, I wear a short black dress with golden flowers and Janet wears her yellow and green skater outfit. We received tens and tens of beads. We also walk on Canal Street where many parades go on at different times of the day. For a moment, I leave Janet in a bar on Bourbon Street because I wish to go to watch some of the parades on Canal Street.

You must know that this year, there were 46 different parades for the Mardi Gras in New Orleans from February 8 to February 24. These parades are :

Sunday(2/8):	Little Rascals(1)
Friday(2/13):	Cleopatra(2), Ashanti(3), Oshun(4), Atlas(5)
Saturday(2/14)	Choctaw(6), Pontchartrain(7), Sparta(8), Caesar(9)
Sunday(2/15):	Barkus(10), Carleton, Allah, Rhea(13), Camelot(14), Centurions(15)
Monday(2/16):	Thebes(16), Neptune(17)
Tuesday(2/17):	18-Pegasus(18), 19-Sinbad(19)
Wednesday(2/18):	Saturn(20), 21-Thor(21)
Thursday(2/19):	Babylon(22), Aquila(23)
Friday(2/20):	Hermes(24), D'etat(25), Diana(26)
Saturday(2/21):	Nomtoc(27), Iris(28), Tucks(29), Endymion(30), Isis(31)
Sunday(2/22):	Thoth(32), Okeanos(33), Mercury(34), Mid-City(35), Napoleon(36), Bacchus(37)
Monday(2/23):	Bards of Bohemia(38), Orpheus(39), Zeus(40)
Tuesday(2/24):	Zulu(41), Rex(42), Elks Orleanians & Crescent City Trucks(43), Argus(44), Elks of Jefferson & Jefferson Trucks(45), America(46)

As you may see, the names of the parades come mainly from the Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Viking mythology. Usually, in each parade, there are twenty floats and twenty bands. On each float, there are between ten and twenty people who throw away beads, cups and medals. So, the crowd become hysteric and crazy each time a float passes in front because every body tries to catch beads, cups and medals. There are so many parades on Canal Street that you may just stay there someday like

the 14, 15, 21, 22 and 24 for watching parades.

On Monday evening, I watch the parades by the Bards of Bohemia and Orpheus. After that, I go back on Bourbon Street to meet Janet. We come back to the hotel around 23:00 where we chat with Richard and Victor, the owner of the hotel, and with some other clients of the hotel. We go to bed around 3:00.

Tuesday, February 24. This is the big day for the Mardi Gras. As usual, I wake up myself and I dress myself with my Arab Princess dress. I am ready to go out for the day but obviously Janet is not ready. So, at 13:00, I go out alone on Bourbon Street to have more beads. The sky is blue and the temperature is around 75*F. I continue on Canal Street to watch the parades by Zulu and Rex. On this day, there are thousand of people with costumes and even if I have a very pretty dress as an Arab Princess, I must tell you that there are many dresses that are more beautiful than mine. Some of these dresses are 8 feet high by 8 feet wide with hundreds of feathers; it is very impressive.

At 17:00, I meet Janet and Victor at a bar on Bourbon Street. I take a drink and I chat a little bit with them but I decide to go back to the hotel to have a little rest and to change my dress for the evening. At 20:00, I come back wearing a short and sexy black dress with silver dots. It is really more comfortable because the temperature is always around 72*F and because there are so many people on the street. I receive again tens and tens of beads. In fact, when I will come back to Quebec City, I will have more than twenty pounds of beads in my suitcases.

When we walk on the street, we encounter many religious people who wear a cross or a placard on which it is written "God Is Our Savior," "God loves every one, included the sinners," "Repent for the last judgment" and so on. Usually, there are just there in silence but one time, there is a man with a megaphone who tells us there we are sinners and that we must repent to save our souls. They do not disturb us, but it is just strange to see these true believers standing there with their crosses and their placards on a day like Mardi Gras. On Tuesday evening, at a moment, more than 2000 true believers walk in silence on Bourbon Street, three by three, each one putting their hands on the shoulders of the previous walker like a giant caterpillar. I must say this is very impressive. Even if the crowd is very dense, it opens a way for this religious procession. It is very special and, at this time, I have had the impression that if these people do not stay calm, it may be the beginning of a big fight. However, they are very pacific and every thing is fine. It is just a strange experience for me. I go back to the hotel around 23:00.

Wednesday, February 25. As usual, I wake up myself and I dress myself with an ordinary dress because I wish to go shopping. The sky is still blue and the temperature is around 75*F. Obviously, Janet is not ready and I go shopping alone on Canal Street where I buy a pair of running shoes. The streets and the sidewalks are too rough for high heels and my feet need some rest. At 15:00, I am back to the hotel and with Janet, we go together for the last time in a bar, the Lafitte. After that, Janet goes back to the hotel because she will leave in the evening for Houston. Meanwhile, I continue to walk and to shop and I go up to a mall named The Riverwalk where I shop but I do not find something interesting for me.

Thursday, February 26. It is now time for me to go home by airplane on U.S. Airways but my flight is just at 17:20. So, I have time to do some shopping at the flea market and on Canal Street where I buy a pair of platform shoes. The sky is blue but it is a little bit windy. I come back to the hotel around 15:00 and Victor drives me back to the airport at 15:45. My plane takes off at 17:20 from New Orleans to Montreal with a stop in Pittsburgh. For traveling, I wear only my short brown and gold dress; as you know, my boots and my coat are in my suitcase because I prefer to travel light. The weather is perfect at the airports and my plane is always on time but during the flight between New Orleans and Pittsburgh, we come across some turbulence and the captain asks the flight attendants to stop serving the meals. When I arrive in Montreal at 22:50, I pass through the customs and immigration, open my suitcase to grab my boots and my coat, put them on and take my car to drive to Quebec City. The sky is clear, the temperature is around the freezing point and the road is on dry pavement. Finally, I arrive at my home 2:10.

This is the end of this marvelous trip of Micheline to the Carnival of Galveston and to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans in February 1998.

An Issue of Trust

by Sharon K.

I was married to a crossdresser for over twenty years, before I discovered—quite by accident—that he is a crossdresser.

Through many years of counseling, much soul-searching, much researching and many nights of crying myself to sleep, I found my only choice was divorce.

The decision to divorce did not come lightly. I loved the man I married; I trusted the man I married; I wanted to spend the rest of my life, grow old and retire with the man I married. Tragically for me, that man was not my husband but the person he pretended to be.

Honesty and trust are two parts of a triad—love is the third—that make up any healthy relationship. When a person keeps a secret, such as being a crossdresser, from the one he loves, that is a lie, a deception, manipulation of the cruelest kind.

As I understand it, an addiction is any mood altering behavior a person engages in, and cannot—or will not—stop regardless of the consequences to life, lifestyle, health or security.

An Issue of Trust

This is exactly the behavior my former husband engaged in. Had his addiction been to gambling, sex, drugs or any other addictive/compulsive behavior, I would have had the same misgivings about trusting him. This was not an issue of gender but an issue of trust.

I tried so very hard to understand his compulsion to steal my clothing, steal my make up, and cross very well defined and private boundaries of trust and honesty. I no longer felt safe in my own home because of his lies and deceit; as a consequence, we had to part. He couldn't be who he was and still be my husband. However, what many who embrace crossdressing fail to understand, is those of us on the other side of the closet need to be allowed to be who we are as well. If who we are, is someone who does not wish to be married to, or involved with, a crossdresser, then we have the right to know what we are getting into, long before the relationship gets serious.

I hope your organization strongly encourages crossdressers to be honest and open about who and what they are. This is of paramount importance to any prospective spouse. I had a right to know the man I planned to spend the rest of my life with, was a crossdresser, long before I made the decision to marry him. I was denied that right. He felt if he told me, I would not have married him. Maybe I wouldn't have, but maybe I would have. We'll never know, because I was never given the opportunity to make that decision, a decision I, and only I, had every right to make for myself.

Thank you for listening to what it's like for those of us who unwittingly marry or become involved with a crossdresser. I know it is not easy to accept the fact, that what is so much fun and brings them so much enjoyment, can be so potentially harmful to those they profess to love the most. If I can spare just one woman the pain and sorrow I suffered as a result of crossdressing, then I will have accomplished a great deal with this one message.

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Tri-Ess Pen Pals

Many sisters have written over the years to express their disappointment in not receiving replies to their letters to other Tri-Ess sisters. It seems that while some sisters are wonderfully prolific pen pals, others (for a variety of reasons) are not. To assist those who would like to receive lots of letters, we have compiled a "Pen-Pal List". All you have to do is promise to reciprocate. Just fill out and sign the form below and send it to:

Carol Beecroft
P.O. Box 194
Tulare, CA 93275

"I promise the courtesy of a reply to all correspondence from my Tri-Ess sisters."

Femme Name_____

Code Number_____

Here's how to write a Pen Pal through the Forwarding Service:

1) Write your letter to your chosen Pen Pal. Include your picture if you wish. If you choose not to include your own return address at first, be sure you include your own Code Number in your letter.
2) Place your letter in an envelope, affix correct postage, and lightly pencil in the name and Code Number of your Pen Pal on the front.
3) Place this envelope inside another envelope and address this outer envelope to:

Tri-Ess Forwarding Service
P.O. Box 194
Tulare CA 93275

4) Include your return address on the outer envelope and be sure to apply correct postage. Once received at the Forwarding Service, your inner envelope will be properly addressed to your Pen Pal and sent on its way. If or when you and your Pen Pal choose to exchange letters directly is up to you. Have fun, Sisters!

If you wrote us asking to be placed on the Pen Pal List and your name does not appear above, please write us again. We are sorry, but sometimes we do "drop the ball." (Or, in this case, the name!)

NEW!!! We have a sister who wants to be a Cyber-Space Pen Pal. Kimmie (FL-4532-D) says she loves answering her E-mail and would like to have you visit her Web Site, too. Her E-Mail address is: [redacted] Her Web site is at: http://members.aol.com/kimmiecd/index.html

List of Pen Pals

AL-4940-H
AZ-3954-B Rebecca
CA-3800-M Charli
CA-1282-V Fran
CA-3354-N Michelle
CA-4249-F Shirley Louise
FL-2520-B Joan Ann
FL-3720-R Karen Rose
FL-4046-J Rita
IL-3623-G Nancy
MN-3996-L Carla
NC-3723-C Sherri
NJ-3818-L Carol Ann
NY-3433-T Donna
NY-3717-P Tammie
OH-1617-H Razilee
PA-3961-G Jayne
E-Mail only: [redacted]
PA-4046-J Rita
TN-1230-H Rita
TX-4820-W Irene
VA-2642-I Madelyn
VA-3401-W Samantha
WI-4864-S Kathy
IN CANADA
PQ-4457-M Micheline
IN MEXICO
MX-4626-C Mariana

Inner Beauty

by Marla

Yep. Here's one we've all struggled with, especially when the image we've fantasized about does not materialize with we look in the mirror. It's about "Inner Beauty" and we all know that beauty really begins within. This article excerpt from "Shifting Times" by Dr. Dorrie McCubbrey really hit me between the eyes. Perhaps it'll do the same with you.

"Beauty truly is in the eyes of the beholder: You. The real keys to being beautiful are within you. You can receive millions of compliments from others but reject them all unless you feel good about yourself first and foremost. Learn how to look inside yourself and discover the true beauty that lies within. Self-acceptance mean accepting your entire self: physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Listen carefully to the messages that you send yourself, and realize that if you criticize any part of yourself, you criticize the whole.

"Self-acceptance begin today, not after you're thin enough. Find ways to make peace with all the parts of yourself, and see the difference this makes in your entire life.

"When you feel good about yourself, you will naturally take better care of yourself. When you take better care of yourself, your goals will begin to unfold on their own. When your goals begin to manifest, and you are healthy on purpose, you can give more to others. If we accepted ourselves, focused on true well-being, and gave fully to ourselves and others, wouldn't many of our external problems be solved?"

At the risk of being a bit hokey, I thought I'd include one of Dr. Dorrie's poems. Maybe it's worth cutting out and pasting next to your makeup mirror...

[Ed. Note: Article reprinted from "La Femme Silhouette." Please see Dr. Dorrie's poem on the back cover.]

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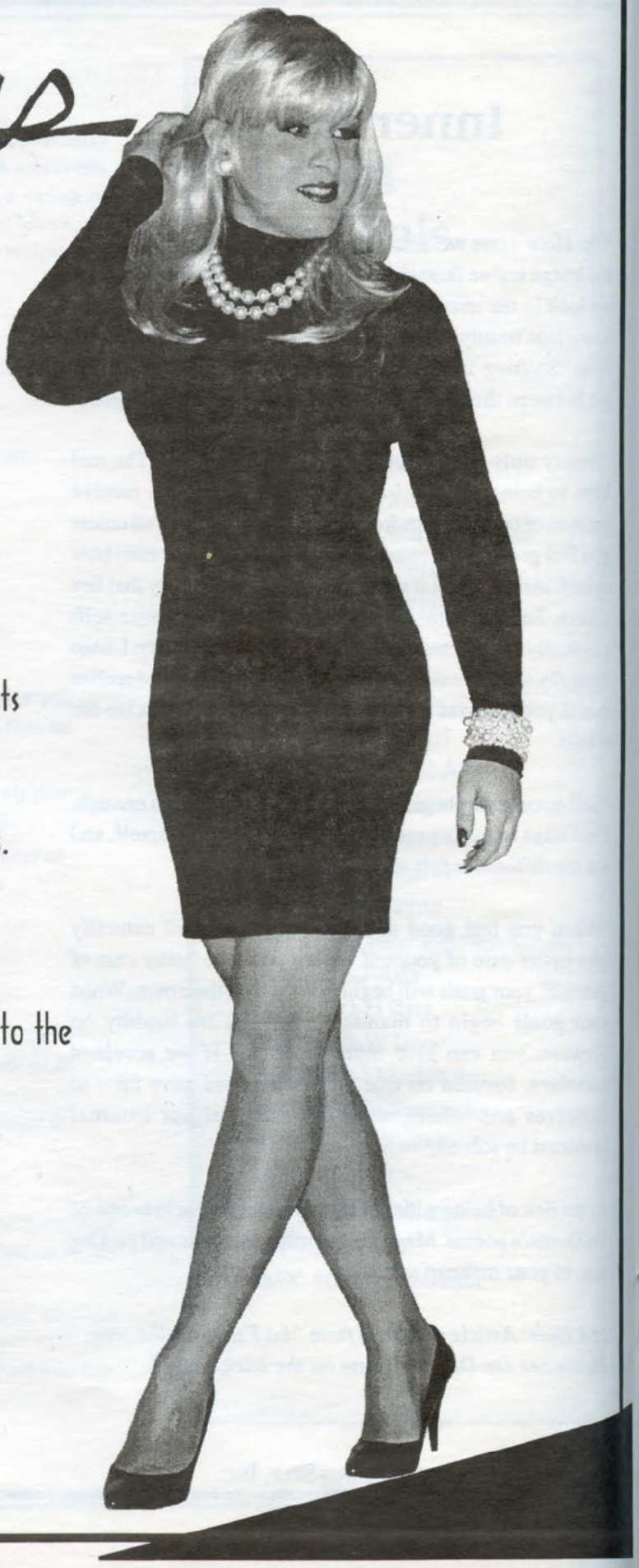

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Tri-Ess Membership Categories

Those desiring to support and participate in Tri-Ess have several options:

Annual Membership
This membership is intended for crossdressers and their spouses or partners. It is the basic minimum support level. Contribution is $36/year or $60/2 years for an individual, and $48/year and $80/2 years for couples. Annual members receive our publications and may participate in support programs.

Sustaining Membership
Many Tri-Ess members desire to support the Society's purposes with contributions greater than the basic Annual Membership. While any amount is welcome and helpful, the Sustaining Membership levels shown here provide an opportunity to more significantly support Tri-Ess programs and outreach. Sustaining Members receive special recognition, discounted early registration for the Holiday En Femme, and periodic special offers. Individual Sustaining Members contribute $96/year or $160/2 years. Sustaining Member couples contribute $120/year or $200/2 years.

Life Members
Life Members wish to demonstrate their lifetime loyalty and support to Tri-Ess. They receive special recognition and benefits, including discounted early registration for the Holiday En Femme and special offers. Contribution is $500 for an individual, $700 for a couple. Life Members can, and frequently do, make additional contributions to the work of our organization.

Friends Annual Membership
Those individuals, other than crossdressers and their spouses, who have a constructive interest in the philosophy and goals of Tri-Ess, are also invited to support the Society. These members receive our publications, with the exception of the Membership Directory, and may participate in support programs as appropriate. Contribution is $24/year.

Friends Commercial Membership
Local and national vendors who serve our community are also encouraged to join Tri-Ess. They receive the Femme Mirror and discounted advertising rates. Contribution is $48/year

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Places to Go, People to Be...

by Sharon MN-4041-O

The Engineer Returns... (But only for the moment...)

"The very act of observing disturbs the system."
-W. Heisenberg

As I'm sure you'll all remember, Herr Heisenberg is responsible for perpetrating the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle (dP=h/dX), which, in English, says that it is impossible to simultaneously know both the position and momentum of a particle, since to measure one property will alter the other. Take my word for it.

The Engineer departs.

Believe it or not, the opening quote came from The Little Zen Calendar, not a physics textbook. Physics textbooks aren't usually big on people-oriented things like quotations anyway. So what does this have to do with crossdressing? Or anything else macroscopic, for that matter?

Last night, I was watching a TV videotape (yes, it really was a TV on videotape. Maybe next month it will be available on CD, but that's getting much less punny than it used to be...) Anyway, the videotape was "LadyLike Deportment" with Paula Sinclair. Ms. Sinclair talks about some basic issues at the beginning of the tape, including a discussion of the question of Passing versus Acceptance. Of course, nearly all crossdressers would like to be able to Pass as women in public, but, alas, this is not to be. Many of us can Pass, but many more of us cannot, and probably never will Pass, without cosmetic surgery on the order of a full body transplant.

Let's back up for a minute. Why do we need to Pass? The answer, of course, is so that we can go out in public while dressed. Ms. Sinclair's point is, It is not necessary to Pass in order to dress in public! Any of us can put on our most appropriate dress for a given social situation, match it with proper lingerie, shoes, makeup, and wig (and assistance is available if you don't know how to do this - just ask your Big Sister) and just Do It. Just Do It. Just Go Out. It is not illegal. You will not be arrested for dressing.

But wait. This isn't enough. You think, "I don't want to be embarrassed. I don't want people to think there is something wrong with me. I want to be Accepted."

That is the key. Acceptance. Not Passing, but Acceptance. How do I get that?

Back to the video. Ms. Sinclair makes a very important point during her presentation. It is not important for people to accept you as a woman when you are out and dressed. It is important for people to accept you as a Lady.

The difference is rather interesting. People are men, and people are women. People are also longshoremen, or construction workers, or secretaries, etc. Some people are perceived by the general public as Ladies. Some Drill Sergeants perceive new Marine recruits as Ladies. (Well, if a Marine can be a Lady, I guess it's OK if I'm one too...) It doesn't matter if they are biologically men or women. Being a Lady is something quite different, and it is a function of what you are wearing, how you behave, the appropriateness of your hair, makeup, accessories, comportment, and where you are. Ladies don't go to biker bars. Ladies are fashionable. Ladies act like Ladies. If you look like a duck, walk like a duck, and quack like a duck, most people will accept that you are a duck. You will be Accepted as a duck unless you do something to convince others that you are not a duck.

So, again, what is the point? If you go to places frequented by Ladies, if you dress and act like a Lady, you will most likely be Accepted as a Lady. People may be fully aware that you are a biological male, but they will Accept you as a Lady. To do otherwise requires some effort on their part to show that you are not what you present yourself to be, and most people are really too lazy to bother, especially if you are doing a really good job yourself.

However, this may create problems for some crossdressers. Guilt. Shame. "I'm not a Lady. I'm a guy! I really like dressing like this, but it's not really Me! I'm not a Lady! Well, Guys can be Ladies. There is nothing Shameful about being a Lady! After all, women do it all the time. Well, most of them, anyway. Remember, Guilt and Shame are acquired from others. Neither is

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Contact: Evelyn NY-3277-H
E-Mail: [redacted]
Contact Sharon Ann Stuart NY-3276-H

Buffalo, NY Metro Area
NU PHI CHI
Buffalo Belles
P.O. Box 1701, Amherst, NY 14226-1701
Contact: Denise NY-3404-N
Phone: 716-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
Website: http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Village/3339/

Region 2
(Middle Atlantic/Ohio Valley)

Trenton, NJ Metro Area
SIGMA NU RHO
1092 St.Georges Ave., Ste. 234,
Rahway NJ 07065
Contact: Carol Ann Lee NJ-3818-L
Phone/Fax: 732-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]

Northern Pennsylvania
Endless Mountain Girls
EPSILON MU GAMMA
P.O. Box 4, Three Bridges NJ 08887
Contact: Alice [redacted] NJ-4160-H
24-Hour Voice Mail: 717-[redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]

Gouldsboro, PA Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
c/o Tri-Ess
PO Box 194, Tulare CA 93275
Contact: Sue PA-2164-C

Northern Ohio, Western PA Area
ALPHA OMEGA
P.O. Box 2053
Sheffield Lake, OH 44054-0053
Elaine Lee OH-9034-B: 216-556-0067
E-mail: [redacted]
(Diane) http://www.triess-alphaomega.org/

Lansing, MI Metro Area
Lambda Mu
P.O. Box 246
Moline, MI 49335-0246
Annette MI-4290-B (616) 752-8058
E-Mail: [redacted]
E-Mail Joanna: [redacted]
Web site: http://www.lambdamu.com

Baltimore, MD Metro Area
CHI EPSILON SIGMA
P.O. Box 505
Baltimore MD 21022-0505
Contact: Grace MD-1856-R
E-Mail: [redacted]
http://members.tripod.com/~Chesapeake_Tri_Ess

South Central PA Area
CHI PI ALPHA SECTION
Contact: Yvonne and Linda
PO Box 3469
York, PA 17402-3469
E-mail: [redacted]

Northern Virgina Area
PI OMICRON TAU SECTION
Contact: Joan [redacted]
PO Box 1728
Herndon, VA 20172
E-mail [redacted]

Richmond VA Metro Area
RHO IOTA CHI SECTION
Contact: Lucy [redacted]
PO Box 382
Norge, VA 23127
E-mail: [redacted]

Region 3 (Southeast)

Charlotte, NC Metro Area
KAPPA BETA
P.O. Box 12101, Charlotte, NC 28220
Phone (Sherri): [redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
Web site: http://www.kappabeta.org

Raleigh/Durham, NC Metro Area
SIGMA RHO DELTA
P.O. Box 61406, Raleigh NC 27661
Beverley NC-4268-B: 919-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
Web site: http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/6299

Greensboro/Winston-Salem Area
TAU GAMMA
P.O. Box 25282, Raleigh NC 27611
Contact: Melissa NC-4534-E
E-Mail: [redacted]
http://www.geocities.com/~tau_gamma

Atlanta, GA Metro Area
SIGMA EPSILON
Box 272, Roswell, GA 30077
Lauren GA-3390-H: 770-[redacted]
E-mail (Karen): [redacted]
Web page: http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/sigep.htm

Nashville, TN Metro Area
ALPHA PI OMEGA
P.O. Box 871, Brentwood, TN 37024
Contact: Laury TN-3934-W
[redacted]

something that is part of the real you. You are who you make yourself to be. Guilt and Shame are a paint that some will try to apply to you against your will. You do NOT have to accept either as a part of yourself. Some people will say, "Hey, great! I really like you!" Others may say, "Yuck! I'd never do that!" It doesn't matter! It REALLY DOESN'T! You are who you are. Who you are comes from you and you alone.

Personally, I enjoy being a Lady. I go out in public, dressed and behaving (I hope) as a Lady. I want to be Accepted as a Lady. If some people happen to think I am a woman, I can enjoy that too, but I usually find it to be rather amusing. It is not my goal to be accepted as a woman. I just want to be Accepted, and it is much easier to be Accepted as a Lady than to be accepted as a woman. (Well, at least for most men.)

Lots of crossdressers go out and assume that they Pass because nobody reacts negatively. That's fine, but are they really Passing? To paraphrase Heisenberg, can one go out dressed as a woman and really know that one is Passing? I know where I am, but am I Passing? The only way to know if I am Passing or just being Accepted is to ASK someone. The measurement has now interfered with the actual situation. Before asking, I didn't know if I was Passing or just being Accepted. Now, by the very act of asking someone if I am Passing, I no longer am!

It no longer matters which, since it turns out that there is no way I can ever really know what actually was happening! This means, as long as I am Accepted (as a Lady), it doesn't matter if I am Passing or not! So what do I do? Obviously, concentrate on learning to be a Lady. Not a woman. A Lady. If I can convince the public at large that I am a Lady, and be accepted as such, I can go out in public wearing women's clothing, go anywhere a sensible woman would go by herself, and be Accepted. As a Lady. If some people think that I am a woman, well, that's just fine. A bonus.

Someone wiser than most of us summed this all up with the following: You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time. But you can't fool all of the people all of the time. Fortunately for most of us, it really isn't necessary to fool ANY of the people ANY of the time.

(Reprinted from the Beta Gamma Chapter newsletter, 'En Femme,' July, 1997)

Tri-Ess Helpline!

Do you have a question about Tri-Ess? Do you need help regarding media outreach in your area? Tri-Ess Executive Director Carol Beecroft may be reached at the Tri-Ess National Office in Tulare, California at:

(209) 688-6386

Carol is often available to speak to radio audiences via long-distance telephone hook-up, and she is compiling a list of members who are able to appear on radio or television, or speak before college classes.

Do you have a question about the Femme Mirror or other Tri-Ess publications and services? Tri-Ess Chair of the Board Jane Ellen Fairfax and Mirror Editor Frances Fairfax may be reached at:

(713) 349-8969

Are you interested in starting a Tri-Ess chapter? The new Tri-Ess Liaison for Chapter Support and Services, Judy Daniels, may be reached at:

(580) 226-9644

Does your local chapter have a Helpline? Ideally, each Tri-Ess chapter should operate a Helpline and list the number with the local Crisis Hotline, Gay Switchboard, Mental Health Clinics, etc. The expenses involved would vary with local phone rates and installation charges. As a second, unlisted line in a sister's home, a Helpline does not take a lot of money. What it does take is considerable dedication on the part of the sister volunteering to answer the Helpline. How about it, ladies? Does your chapter have a Helpline yet?

Region 4 (Mid-South)

Houston, TX Metro Area
TAU CHI
8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104
Houston TX 77036
Contact: Jane TX-1757-M:
(713) [redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
E-Mail (Brandi): [redacted]

Austin, TX Metro Area
ALPHA TAU Chapter
P.O. Box 1398
Georgetown TX 78627
E-mail (Heather): [redacted]
E-Mail (Lee): [redacted]
E-Mail (Robie): [redacted]
http://www.angelfire.com/tx/atau/

South OK / North TX Area
TAU OMEGA FORMING CHAPTER
P.O. Box 1922, Ardmore OK 73401
Phone (Judy Daniels): 580-[redacted]
Judy: [redacted]
Michelle: [redacted]
http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/2258/

Region 5 (Mid-West)

Chicago, IL Metro Area
CHI Chapter
P.O. Box 40, Wood Dale, IL 60191
Phone: [redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
http://members.aol.com/chitriess/trisss/chimain.htm

Minneapolis, MN Metro Area
BETA GAMMA
P.O. Box 8591
Minneapolis, MN 55408
Sofronia Anne MN-3264-G
Phone: [redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
http://www.tri-ess.com

Southern MN- Northern IA Area
PI THETA FORMING CHAPTER
c/o K. Morgan
PO Box 74 , Kensett Iowa 50448
Contact: Kandice MN-4554-G
E-Mail: [redacted]
http://www.mwpcdir.com/ptg.html

Wausau, WI Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
c/o Tri-Ess
PO Box 194, Tulare CA 93275
Contact: Frances Ann WI-4148-W
Phone: 715-[redacted]

Springfield, MO Metro Area
SIGMA MU
P.O. Box 2502 #198
Springfield MO 65801
Contact: Rachel [redacted]
Hotline (Riki): 417-[redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]
http://members.tripod.com/~Sigma_Mu/

Region 6 (Mid-Continental)

Denver CO Metro Area
DELTA
P.O. Box 11504, Denver, Co 80211
Contact: Diane CO-2387-L
E-Mail: [redacted]

New Mexico, So. Colorado, W. Texas
Fiesta Chapter
8200 Montgomery NE #241
Albuquerque, NM 87109
Contact: Vicky Anne NM-4734-A
Phone (Vicki): (505) [redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]

Region 7 (Northwest)

Moscow, ID Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
520 S. Hayes St., Moscow ID 83843-3424
Contact: Laurie Wolf ID-1704-W
Phone: [redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]

Grants Pass, OR Metro Area
Rogue Valley Girls
RHO GAMMA
P.O. Box 5551, Grants Pass OR 97527
Contact: Lori OR-4319-L
Phone (Edward): 541 [redacted]
E-Mail (Lori): [redacted]

Eureka, CA Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
c/o Tri-Ess
PO Box 194, Tulare CA 93275
Contact: Lois CA-2148-M

Region 8 (Southwest)

Los Angeles, CA Metro Area
ALPHA
Box 411352, Eagle Rock Station,
Los Angeles, CA 90041
Contact: Kathy Helms: (818) [redacted]
E-Mail (Janyne): [redacted]
E-Mail (Stacy): [redacted]
http://www.3dcom.com/tg/alpha/alpha.htm

Fresno, CA Metro Area
TRI CHI
P.O. Box 26593, Fresno, CA 93729-6593
Fresno Area and North: Phone Karyn CA-4273-H: 209-[redacted]
or Angela CA-4750-P: 209-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
Visalia Area and South:
Phone Carol CA-1012-B: 209-[redacted]
E-Mail (Marlene): [redacted]
http://www.psnw.com/~huckfinn/index.html

Santa Cruz/Monterey Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
MU BETA
P O Box 729, Castroville CA 95012-0729
Contact: Fran CA-1282-V
Phone: 408-[redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]

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Tri-Ess-Sponsored CDSO Online Forum for Spouses and Partners of Crossdressers Signs 90th Subscriber!

Our subscription list for support of crossdressers' wives and significant others has signed its 90th subscriber! Operated by a wife, Beverly, the listserv is a forum for all genetic women involved with crossdressers. Subscription is free. It is not limited to spouses or partners who are members of Tri-Ess. However, it is "for women only" as there are many, many forums available for transgendered men.

Now, a few words from Beverly:

> Hi! Welcome to our very own support list for wives and/ or SO's of crossdressers. Just a few rules here....
>
> 1. NO postings, and NO subscriptions from crossdressers. Not your husbands or your boyfriends. This is for US.
> 2. No flames. If you disagree with an opinion please do so with courtesy and respect. Don't attack the person.
> 3. Those of you with strong, militant transsexual attachments, please move on. This list is not for you. If you'd like to E-mail me privately, I can pass on to you several addresses for support of SO's of transsexuals. There are many out there.
> 4. No advertisements! If you are in doubt about the acceptability of something, please forward it to me.
> 5. Many subscribers to this forum are uncomfortable seeing people crossdressed. For the comfort of all, transmission of crossdressing photos on the forum will not be allowed. Such transmission can be done by private e-mail, among consenting parties.
>
> That's just about it for now. This list is still new. The rules may change along the way. If so, I will post a general announcement. If you have any suggestions, comments, or just want to talk.....feel free to E-mail me at [redacted]
>
> Regards, Beverly

To subscribe to the list, send e-mail to: [redacted] with <SUBSCRIBE CDSO first name last name> as the message. You will receive confirmation from the listserv with complete instructions. Then, you may send a message to all the people currently subscribed to the list, by sending mail to a single address. **It's simple! It's fun! SIGN ON NOW, AND HELP SPREAD THE WORD TO ANY OTHER WIVES/SO'S YOU KNOW!**

Chapters On Line!

Does YOUR chapter have an e-mail address? We are receiving an increasing number of inquiries in response to Tri-Ess's Internet presence as well as to ads in gender community publications. Whenever possible we refer inquirers to the nearest local chapter. A Helpline or an E-Mail address makes the referral process much more efficient. To list your chapter's local E-Mail address or Helpline number, contact Jane Ellen Fairfax at [redacted]

Tri-Ess World Wide Web Sites

Alpha's (Los Angeles CA)
http://www.3dcom.com/tg/alpha/ alpha.htm
Alpha Omega's (Cleveland OH)
http://www.triess-alphaomega.org
Alpha Tau's (Austin TX)
http://www.angelfire.com/tx/atau/
Alpha Zeta Chapter's (Phoenix AZ)
http://tri-ess.org
Beta Gamma's (Minneapolis MN)
http://www.tri-ess.com
Chi Chapter's (Chicago IL)
http://members.aol.com/chitriess/trisss/chimain.htm
Chi Delta Mu's (New York City NY)
http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/7396/
Chi Epsilon Sigma's (Baltimore MD)
http://members.tripod.com/~Chesapeake_Tri_Ess
Judy Daniels'
http://www.angelfire.com/ok/judytriess/index.html
Kappa Beta's (Charlotte NC)
http://www.kappabeta.org
Lambda Mu's (Lansing MI)
http://www.lambdamu.com
Nu Phi Chi/Buffalo Belles (Buffalo NY)
http://geocities/com/WestHollywood/Village/3339/
Phi Epsilon Mu's (Orlando FL)
http://www.horizon-usa.com/misc/fem.htm
Pi Theta Chapter's (Southern MN- Northern IA)
http://www.mwpcdir.com
Sigma Epsilon Chapter (Atlanta GA)
http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/sigep.htm
Sigma Mu (Springfield MO)
http://members.tripod.com/~Sigma_Mu/
Sigma Rho Delta's (Raleigh/Durham NC)
http://geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/6299
Tau Gamma's (Greensboro/Winston-Salem NC)
http://www.geocities.com/~tau_gamma
Tau Omega's (Ardmore OK)
http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/2258/
Tau Upsilon's (Tucson AZ)
http://members.aol.com/tauupsilon
Tri Chi's (Fresno CA)
http://www.psnw.com/~huckfinn/ index.html
Tri-Ess International
http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/tri-ess.htm
Tri-Ess Resources Page
http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Stonewall/6801/
Tri-Ess Traveling Girls' Directory
http://www.mwpcdir.com
SPICE
http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/6280/SPICE.html
CDSO
http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/6280/CDSO.html

The CDSO Online Forum

by Bev [redacted]

Being married to a crossdresser isn't easy, for most of us. It is full of challenges, conflict, tears, and the question "Why?" Being told about the crossdressing, (or accidentally finding out!!!!) years into a relationship, also brings up issues of trust and deceit. For many of us, talking this over with your mother, your co-workers or your best friend is totally out of the question.

That's why CDSO exists. BECAUSE WE NEED TO TALK, SHARE, LEARN. This is the only e-mail based, secured forum, to my knowledge, dedicated solely to wives and female partners of heterosexual crossdressers. We address issues of self-esteem, trust, love, sex, money... well, you name it... There is ALWAYS something to ask, or tell, or share....

CDSO is intended to be a safe haven for women to discuss, find, and offer support in the context of their marriage/partnerships with heterosexual crossdressing husbands. Think of it as a type of incubator, if you will. We have many women just finding out about their husbands' crossdressing, and are in the grip of a fear and turmoil unlike any other they have faced. We have many women who have accepted and appreciated their husbands' crossdressing, and we have many women who do not accept ANY part of it! All are welcome on this forum.

Some things you might want to know...There are no men allowed on CDSO. We wanted to make this a place for women to speak their minds about the issues that concern them...and not have to worry about what the "guys" would think. Aren't you just a little worn out with keeping the secret?..and all that crying? There is NO pressure to accept or not accept the crossdressing.

We have many very knowledgeable women on our forum who can answer a variety of questions. Our forum is governed by a supervisory board of three... (all women) married to crossdressers, and is sponsored by Tri-Ess. Our rules and regulations are sent to each person upon their request to join, so there are no surprises.

Well, there it is.. We are here. If you have any questions e-mail me at: [redacted]

Chapter Hospitality

Remember how it was when you and your parents moved to a new town? Remember your first day at school? Remember how you had trouble meeting new friends? How about your first day at a new job? Or your first day at the new church? In all these situations, remember how they stayed away in droves? It was really unnerving, feeling so lonely and like an outcast. This is precisely why your chapter should have a greeting committee. Its purpose is to approach new members and talk to them, and make them feel that they are part of the family.

And now you ask, "What can I do to help?" When you see a new person at the meeting, go boldly up to them and say, "Hi, my name is +++++, what's yours?" Be prepared to share a little about yourself, such as I'm married, single, I live in +++++, I like Chinese food, or such, just to break the ice and possibly find some common interests.

Most importantly, be prepared to listen to the other person. Listening is an art form that is rarely taught in our schools and even more rarely practiced. I would like to see a class called "Listening 101" and have that be a prerequisite for "Public Speaking 101". Avoid war stories or horror stories, and don't recount all the details of your last five divorces or bankruptcies. Keep the conversation light and positive. How about, "Nice outfit! Where did you get it?" Show a genuine interest in the other person.

You'll need a friendly, outgoing person to lead the greeting committee. But, we can all be a part of it. We don't have be elected or appointed to the task. So next meeting, let's jump in there and help! Let's all show the new members just how friendly your chapter can be!

(Adapted from an article in The Cactus Flower.)

Historic Tri-Ess Sorority Pins

Get Your Tri-Ess Pin Now and
Show Your Support for Tri-Ess

Only $10. Send Check/Money Order to: **Alpha Zeta**
PO Box 1738, Tempe AZ 85280-1738

Press Release for 1999 En Femme Golf Outing. En Femme Golfing 1999

by Donna [redacted] FL3433-T

En Femme Golf 98 was a great success. Who could forget the sisterhood, the happy faces, the flying boobs, the great game, the dining out and the friendly hospitality of Hilton Head? Golf 99 should be even better. Put on your golfing skirt or shorts and join us. All levels of players are welcome. Non players are welcome as well. Accomodations will be at local condos.

Cost for players will be actual green fees plus a proportional share of a condo rental. Non golfers will share the rental fees only. February is still out of season so rates are low. Send your inquiries or reservations to:

Golf 99
c/o Phi Epsilon Mu
PO Box 3261 Winter Park, Fl 32790

PM Publishers presents

CROSSDRESSERS: AND THOSE WHO SHARE THEIR LIVES, 46 pictures and the stories of crossdressers and those who share their lives. $14.95

MY HUSBAND WEARS MY CLOTHES, the first book written from the perspective of a wife is a must in the library of every crossdresser. A best seller in the gender community. $12.95

CROSSDRESSING WITH DIGNITY, this book is based on research conducted with over 800 crossdressers. $12.95

LOVE CALENDAR: The Secrets of Love, a perpetual love calendar which can enrich the lives and relationships of everyone who reads and lives this beautiful book. $9.95 (SPECIAL PRICE $6.95)

TRANSFORMATIONS: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them, by Mariette Pathy Allen. A book of photographs and interviews with crossdressers and their significant other. $24.95 (SPECIAL PRICE $16.95)

Add 10% to the total order for shipping and handling.

PM Publishers, Inc. Dept. KR
PO Box 5304 Katy, TX 77491-5304

GENDER 101

I never thought I would be writing an article for a men's publication; I sure as hell don't read them. When I was asked to write something, I thought, "Piece of cake! I can just pull something funny off the hard drive, we can all have some yucks and I can prove to you guys that, even in a print skirt and tight shoes, I am just one of the boys." But it wasn't that easy. You may not be a friendly audience, you don't know the vernacular, and you probably haven't crossdressed, at least in public. So before we get into this I want to give you some terms to get you started.

Crossdresser: Anyone who crossdresses, for any reason. *Also C.D.*

Transvestite: A heterosexual crossdresser. *Also T.V.*

Transgender: Gender dysphoria of any kind. *Also T.G.*

Transsexual: A person who wants, has had, or is planning a sex change. *Also T.S.*

Sex reassignment surgery: the sex change operation. *Also S.R.S.*

Transgenderist: Someone who lives as the opposite sex, full time or most of the time, or for periods of time. *Also T.G.*

I am a transgenderist. I have lived for periods of time as a woman. I now live in both masculine and feminine gender form, and have a rich full life as both male and female.

Most people never have to think much about their gender; it's sort of like your teeth or finger nails. You never think about your teeth unless they ache, or your nails unless you break one. I have lived my whole life with a giant gender tooth ache. People who are transgendered are constantly aware of their sex and the gender that doesn't correspond with it. They are also aware of how they will be viewed by their friends and family if the truth gets out, and of course it does.

Joseph Campbell said "follow your bliss", he never said it was a blissful road. As a transgendered male, I had and do have the desire to look, act, and relate in a feminine manner. It was many years before I took the steps necessary to do just that. In 1989, at what was then the lowest point of my life, I declared myself transgendered, possibly transsexual. I had secretly worn girls' and women's clothes all my life, thinking for years that I was a simply a transvestite. As a T.V., I knew I could hide my "hobby" indefinitely. As a T.S. or a T.G., I would have to come out, not only to others but to myself as well. I found a support group for heterosexual crossdressers. I found people who teach make up, sell wigs, help with all sorts of things to improve and perfect the image. I discovered there were places that crossdressers can go and hang out. I thought I had found bliss, but it was short lived. Soon I was bored being a crossdresser, and hanging out with other crossdressers wasn't what I wanted. I wanted to act and interact in the world as a woman.

I was in love with femininity to the point of rejecting all masculinity. I wanted be the woman at all cost and all the time. To hell with men and their manhood; I was following my bliss. I then began to consider myself a transgenderist. I wanted to live full time as a woman. I decided I was willing to do the things that would be required of me to pursue that path.

I had been in therapy for some time and was keeping my therapist informed of my gender decisions. One day after I had told her for about the fiftieth time how the world wouldn't accept me as a woman, how hard it was, and how unfair it all was, she just looked at me and said, "For the next month you are to live as a woman." Something brilliant came out of my mouth like, "Yeah, but..." She said, "No buts." She reminded me that this was my choice and I would have to do it if I ever intended to really live as a woman.

Well, it was awful; it was my worst nightmare. I was laughed at; I was afraid to go anywhere; it took forever to get dressed and made up; I didn't have enough casual clothes. Things I hadn't thought of came up; writing a check became a comedy routine; the dry cleaner flirted with me; my friends wouldn't talk to me and my own dog barked at me when I came in. In the second week of this hell I had to run an errand, and I was late. I was rushing to complete my task and was focused on my job at hand. I wasn't even thinking about being a man in a dress when I noticed my reflection in a window. I was a lady in a crowed of people, just another gal doing her thing. And no one was paying me any attention. The police weren't following me, dogs weren't barking, babies weren't crying and best of all, teenagers weren't pointing and laughing. I was passing and I looked good, I looked real, I looked like I belonged. I had discovered a very important rule of life. You project who you are from the heart, not from the make

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up table. I was a lady focused on my task, not a guy wearing a dress trying desperately to "pass."

As time went by and I became more and more in tune with myself as a feminine being, I began to expand my life in such a way that it included a life at least part time as a woman. I did some things that astounded even me. Not the least was taking a class in Goddess religions and the joining of a mainstream church. I had been convinced that simply by accepting my authentic self and the pursuing of my true identity I was on a spiritual path. I was still on that road to bliss. For the first time in my life I had found GOD as I understood GOD. I felt I could be loved as myself, and therefore loved by this GOD I now knew.

Was bliss at hand? Not quite. I discovered there was still a little matter I had been ignoring. I was a male, I knew it, most people knew it, all the people I was close to knew it. I had to address that little problem. In prayer and meditation it became clear to me that sex reassignment wasn't a good choice for me. I had more baggage to carry around than what was between my legs. To truly be the divine feminine expression that I wanted to be, I would not only have to accept my self as male, I would have to embrace the masculine.

The masculine spirit and the feminine spirit walk hand in hand in all beings. For me to deny the essence of my manhood in pursuit of feminine bliss would deny me the knowledge of true spirit. To be whole, I would have to fuse the two halves. To know GOD I must know myself. To know my masculine self I must know my feminine, to know my feminine I must know the masculine. I am one with myself , one with GOD. The acceptance of myself as both masculine and feminine to the extent that I choose to represent those genders is somewhat remarkable. The obvious social and public reaction to a man who is also a woman is exciting, to say the least. The Joy of expression in the gender/genders I posses is the bliss I sought. I am not a stranger to myself anymore.

I have heard my name called and I stepped forward to answer. ***I am Janyne.***

Big Sister Report

by Marlene

I get about a dozen requests for a Big Sister each month. I currently have 46 Big Sisters corresponding with about 100 Little Sisters.

AK4320A Jo Ann (1)
AL4005J Saarah(1)
CA1012B Carol
CA 4624C Melissa (3)
CA3413C Pricilla (2)
CA4273H Karen(2)
CA l397L Judy Ann (4)
CA3738P Laura (2)
CA3592S Tommie (1)
CAl282V Fran (1)
CA 4346Y Julie (2)
CO3869HAngie (5)
FL2448B Carol Ellen (1)
FL2520B Joan (1)
FL2383L Catherine (3)
FL2565 P Joan (1)
FL 2746S Denise (2)
FL 3433T Donna (1)
HI 4503J Elise (1)
IL 3416M Candace (3)
IN3637K Teddy (1)
ME2461S Betsy (1)
MI 3343P Peggy (1)
MI2948T Marcia Ann (1)
MN1875Z Lynda(0)
MN3264G Sofronia Anne (7)
NC3734C Sherri (2)
NC3743HElizabeth Ann (3)
NV4222B Robyn (2)
Ny3404N Denise (2)
NY3717P Tammie (3)
OH2499M Rhonda (4)
OH2751M Gloria Sue (3)
PA2164CSue (3)
PA4046J Rita (2)
SD4384W Brennda (3)
TN l230H Rita (2)
TXl669M Vicki (4)
TXl435W Samantha (2)
UT4324 Jenni(3)
VAl304M Andria (3)
WA2835Q Kristal (5)
WA3308S Allison (6)
WIl2729L Kathy (2)
WI4148W Frances Ann (2)

WANTED: BIG SISTERS

MARLENE, your Big Sister Program Coordinator, needs your help. Your new sisters need your help. All it takes is a little sisterly compassion, and the willingness to spend a few minutes writing letters. New sisters are joining all the time. Few things are more rewarding than welcoming them aboard and supporting them in their first year. Won't you write Marlene today, and see for yourself?

MARLENE, PO BOX 4067, VISALIA CA 93278

How to Contribute to Your Chapter Newsletter and your Mirror

By Diane V.

In order to assure that your newsletter is kept productive and stays out of trouble, here is a simple instruction manual for maintaining your newsletter:

1. Pick up pen (or pencil) and paper.
2. Enter writing chamber. (Could be office, den, porcelain facility, etc. You get the idea.)
3. And speaking of ideas, engage brain (but do not clutch!)
4. Proceed to transmit signals from brain through digital process on either right or left hand with writing instrument connected.
5. Warning! Do not exceed personal limitations, commonly diagnosed as writer's cramp, or diarrhea of the pen (similar to diarrhea of the mouth).
6. Do avoid, however, another malady known as writer's block.
7. To aid in evading point number 6, a series of ideas follows: personal experiences; shopping trips; dining out en femme; embarrassing moments; fuzz busting and fuzz-busted; other busty experiences, such as stops at Jiffy Boob; recipes for almost anything; your autobiography; personal discoveries on makeup techniques, clothing, etc., worth sharing; personal triumphs and tragedies to the extent you wish to reveal them.

How about it, Gals!!

(Reprinted from Alpha Omega's Femme Silhouette, Oct. 1966)

Poet's Corner

Soul Mates

by Brandi Ann Welch

As the great warrior stands
where he last held his maiden,
He reaches out to the wind and feels her soul.
Like the breeze that caresses his skin,
Her spirit flows around him, encompassing within.
Though not allowed to be together by tribal decree,
They steal glimpses of each other with glee
Their souls see each other together in their sleep,
Knowing full well, that is all they keep
Till their spirits merge on the run,
When they'll be together as one.

The Meaning of Karaoke

From http://www.qal.berkeley.edu/~ext041/chiaki.html

[Ed. Note: Seems everyone's singing Karaoke these days. It has become a favorite of gender gatherings, too. Ironically, where crossdressers were once stereotyped as lip-synching female impersonators, now they sing along with the canned music, in their own baritone voices! If you ever wondered where it all began, read on!]

Do you know the meaning of "KARAOKE"? KARA comes from "karappo" meaning empty, and OKE is the abbreviation for orchestra. Hence, Karaoke literally translated means "empty orchestra." The word KARAOKE itself refers to songs without vocals. Note here that the proper Japanese pronounciation is KAH+RAH+O+KAY, but the Western tongue has corrupted it to CARRY+OH+KEE.

The use of karaoke started at a snack bar in Kobe City, which is in the west of Japan. (New trends such as an instant noodles or automatic ticket gates come from the West of Japan.) Though karaoke was at first a form of entertainment mainly for business people, it has grown to be a nationwide amusement, thanks to technological development and a new business called the "karaoke box," which consists of compartments made by partitioning and soundproofing rooms in a building.

The first karaoke box appeared in 1984 in a rice field in the countryside of Okayama Prefecture, just west of the Kansai area. It was built from a converted freight car. In Japan you can find many fancy karaoke boxes around train stations and on roads. When you enter one of them, you hear loud music. You go to the counter and tell the number of people and amount of time you would like to sing. If you are lucky, you can enter soon but in the evening or on the weekend, you have to wait for more than 30 minutes. After checking in, you get a remote controller, and, depending on the karaoke box, you can borrow marracas, tambourines and some stage props such as wigs and ribbons. In the room, with spotlights and a machine to score your song, you sing many songs, not only Japanese ones but also English and Korean ones. While you are listening, you clap your hands to the rhythm and play the maracas and tambourines, dancing and singing together.

Not only businessmen but also many students go to karaoke in Japan. Even elementary school students enjoy singing. Most people sing karaoke at least a few times a month. When I was a student, I went there once a week with my friends and, after graduation, I went at least once a month with my friends or my coworkers. Many high school students go there a few times a week after school and they usually sing for more than two hours with two or three friends. I've heard from one of the high school students I know that she sang for five hours with a few friends.

Do you know the reason why Japanese love karaoke so much? I guess we can get rid of stress by singing. We can produce different characters and can be intoxicated with ourselves. Also karaoke is one of the ways to become intimate with friends. Now it's your turn to sing! You invite your friends and enjoy singing. At first you'll be a little embarrassed but after singing a few songs and drinking, you'll get the knack and can't put down the microphone. You'll be crazy about karaoke too!!

(Reprinted from The Cactus Flower.)

Hey, Good Looking!

Make-Up Counter

Leave your old look and put on a whole new face you'll love. If doing your makeup is so routine you don't even require a mirror, here's all you'll need to burst out of our beauty rut and face Fall with a radiacally revamped look.

New Iced Nudes "Minimal looks don't have to be monotonous," says Miami makeup artist Tom Pollock. For a low-key look, shimmery nude lips with sun-kissed cheeks and pale lips are pretty but not predictable. To do:

EYES: Blend light brown shadow into creases. Sweep beige shadow over brow bones. Try Prescriptives eyeshadow in Fire/ Brimstone, $20.

CHEEKS: Blend cream foundation into skin with fingertips. Try Shiseido Sun Block Compact SPF32, $25. Dust rosy powder over apples of cheeks. Try Elizabeth Arden Cheekcolor in Rosy, $20.

Red Lite "Wearing sheer red eye shadow is a shockingly easy way to give your whole face an incredibly romantic new day look," Pollock says. To copy this look:

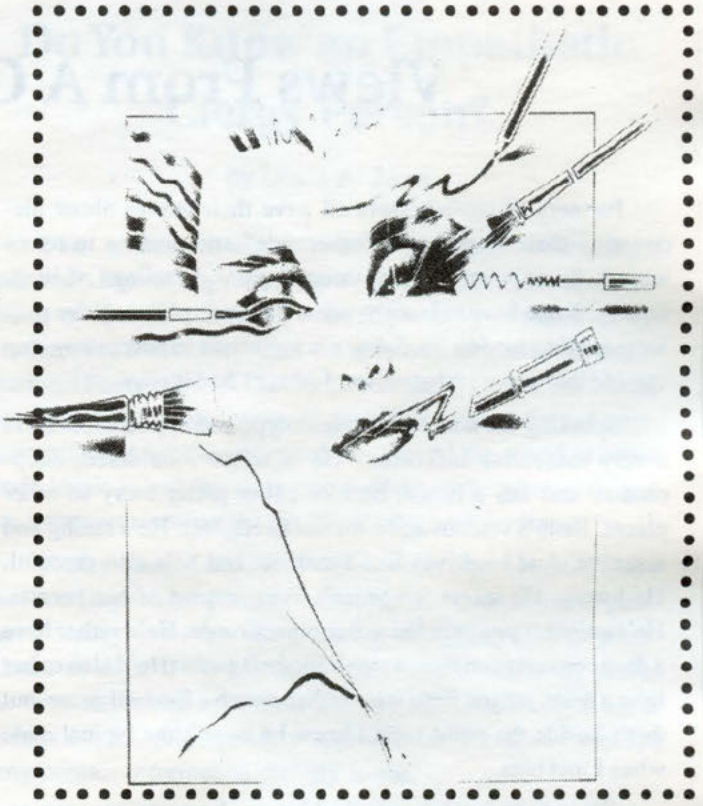
EYES: Lightly sweep deep red eye shadow over lids from lash lines to creases and under lower lashes. Avoid pink-tone reds, as they can make the skin around your eyes look irritated. Stick to brown or burgundy tinted reds. Also, always tap excess off brush first. You don't want to overdo it. Try Lancome Ombre Trio Rouge Thermique, $35. Blend well under lower lashes with a cotton swab.

CHEEKS: Dust burgundy-tone blush over apples of cheeks, blending up toward temples. Try Avon blush in Spectacular Wine, $6.75.

LIPS: Slick lips with a sheer, glossy lip color slightly more muted in tone than your eue shadow. Try Estee Lauder lipstick in Indelibly Frosted Apricot, $16.

Silverized Eyes "Fall's new shimmery silver eye shadows intensify your natural eye color and look edgy and new at night," Pollock explains. To copy this look:

EYES: Sweep silver eye shadow along lower lashes and over lids into creases, extending it just past outer corners. Try Cover Girl eye shadow in Charcoal Frost, $2.80. Dust shimmery white shadow over brow bones. Try Aveda Eye Shadow in Crystalline, $10. Rim inside of eye with black eyeliner to frame



and define the eyes. Try L'Oreal Eye Smoker Line and Shadow Crayon in Noir, $8.

CHEEKS: Apply pinky lavender blush to apples of cheeks, sweeping it up toward hairline. Try Chanel Powder Blush in Satin Rose, $36.

LIPS: "Pale lips look sensationally sexy with eyes this dark," says Pollock. Outline lips with shimmery peach pencil, then fill in with matching lipstick.Try Lancome Rouge Sensation in Naif, $16.50.

Make-Up Bag Ins and Outs

Stellar	Stale
*Shimmery shine on nude lips	*Shine sticks on cheeks
*Deep plum lip stains	*Shocking pink opaque lip colors
*Jewel tone, nude and buff polishes	*Sherbet shaded pearl color polish
*Short round nails	*Long square nails
*Natural, thick and distinctive brows	*Pencil thin brows
*Deep red eyeliner and shadow	*Brown eyeliner and shadows
*Luminous silver shadow	*Matte gray shadows
*Pinky lavender blush	*Terra-cotta blush

(Reprinted from "Our Special Joy," newsletter of Chi Delta Mu Chapter, New York City.)

Views From A Crossdresser's Wife

Partners of crossdressers all have their stories about discovering their loved ones' "other side" and coming to terms with it. Some have to work through painful feelings of inadequacy. Some have to learn to reject the basic philosophies they were taught growing up. Some are too afraid to accept any step outside the "norm" whatsoever. I guess I had it easy.

Speaking the language of stereotype and appearance, Ed is a very masculine individual. He is broad-shouldered, deep-chested and has a beard, besides being pretty hairy in other places. He is a veteran and a former firefighter. He's strong and assertive. And he drives like a maniac. But he's also graceful. He listens. He meets a woman's eyes instead of her breasts. He's artistic, open-minded and compassionate. He'd rather have a deep conversation than watch a football game (He'd also rather have a deep, jagged flesh wound than watch a football game, but that's beside the point.). So I knew he wasn't the typical male when I met him.

Clues as to just how atypical he was began to snag my attention. The long nails were the most obvious. A few days after we met, he painted them bright red for his Halloween persona, the Red Death. Here was this muscular male with an almost growly voice elegantly bearing his cigarette between the scarlet fingers of his upturned hand. I understand this would turn a lot of women off, but I was definitely, oh, how shall I say, NOT turned off. His walk seized my attention easily. He moved with grace and confidence like more women should. When he was especially comfortable, he let his arm come up and his wrist dangle.

I wondered what made him different. He kept Kissing Slicks lip gloss in his bathroom. I somehow assumed he was using it, which was pretty foolish since the guy hired models for his period photographs. I don't know why. I just had a feeling.

I'd always been interested in psychology and sociology. I'd read the Victorian studies to the modern studies, catching crossdressing here and there. But I was beginning to think I needed more information. Then one day he was telling me a story from his recent past and he casually mentioned that he was "in heels at the time." Aha! I ran to Jean Barnes Books. They had a total of one book on crossdressing, Virginia Prince's "Understanding Crossdressing." Whatever people may think of this book now, it was almost the only positive information I had at the time. I raced through it at once. ("Yeah, Mom, I'm just studying for that medical botany test.")

It was a while before he dressed fully for me. At first, I just saw lipstick and earrings and maybe a satin robe. Many psychologists would consider me worse than an enabler because I did encourage it. Elizabeth was fun, but, more important, Ed was comfortable and uninhibited. Why would I be unnerved by a harmless act that imparts a sense of freedom to the one I love?

We started shopping for Elizabeth. We were circumspect and only had trouble at Target. They absolutely refuse to waver from the policy of males with male clothes on the male side, females with female clothes on the female side, no mixing. That's okay; they charge far too much for cookie-cutter cotton-poly stitched by cross-eyed donkeys on heroin (bitchy, bitchy...). Now every time I stop to look at clothes, I look for my size and Elizabeth's size. If I look through catalogs, I have two girls in mind. This Christmas I bought Ed presents and a silver sequined skirt for Liz. I like his crossdressing to be just one more thing we share (especially when I raid Elizabeth's jewelry box).

I get a little kick out of watching men navigate on their toes, adjust their bras and try to remember not to rub their mascaraed eyes. They have some idea how much work it is to follow the femininity rules and can empathize with women. I feel a camaraderie with crossdressing males that I couldn't possibly feel with a male who didn't dress.

While I bristle at the appearance-oriented demands placed on women, I do realize we have more options when it comes to clothing. If I want to wear pants, no one calls me a "fag." Heck, if I wear a tie some people think it's "cute." But if Ed wanted to wear a comfortable denim skirt to the grocery store, people would laugh and/or be horrified. He might be thrown out of the store, not because he was harming anyone, but just because he was stepping outside society's clothing restrictions. Sounds silly to me.

I guess that's the main reason I find no difficulty accepting his crossdressing—it seems silly not to. Men throughout history have worn lace, ruffles, heels, wigs, or makeup at one time or another. This doesn't happen to be that acceptable right now, that's all. I realize that breastforms, etc. constitute a superficial gender transformation rather than just a flirtation with feminine clothing. But this seems such a small thing, too.

I get frustrated with the girded gender box society insists I

inhabit. A lot of men do, too, and some of them react by "crossing over." I can never completely understand the reasons Ed needs to cross over, and maybe he'll never understand them fully. But I do understand the need to escape the box and all its asinine standards.

I crossdress myself once in awhile. I don't; however, think it contributes to my understanding because it doesn't make me feel any different. Based on some women's stories, I have the perfect reasons to feel threatened by Ed's crossdressing. I was a tomboy as a kid and I'm not exactly the most feminine of adults (only when I try very hard). I positively loathe makeup. I refuse to touch anything remotely resembling a bra and I'm glad I can get away without one. I carry my trifold wallet in my pocket and if you call my bookbag a purse, I'll deck you. I could easily assume I'm not "enough of a woman" to him and that he wants me to dress and act as Elizabeth does. But that's hogwash, mainly because Liz has been around a lot longer than I have.

I have to admit that one of the reasons I find it a breeze to live with Ed's crossdressing is probably because I don't see Elizabeth that often. When I come home, I see Ed first. Or rather, I push the big dog out of the way, I try to shut the little dog up and then I see Ed. Sometimes I miss Liz, which is better than missing Ed half the time.

I am aggravated that the attitudes of the general population force us to keep this a secret. The "straights" don't bother to learn anything about crossdressers; they simply offer immediate condemnation. The ingrained sexism behind this reprehension should make any woman furious. Yes, I know there are other reasons for society's disapproval of crossdressing, but this one rankles me the most. "Oh my god, he's trying to act like a, a woman! How disgusting. How HUMILIATING. Why would anyone want to mimic so pathetic a creature?" Grrrr...

An advantage of being the wife of a crossdresser is that he won't direct this kind of garbage at you. He doesn't consider assuming a feminine persona demeaning, He doesn't consider you inferior for being a woman. He is generally more sensitive. And he'll never say, "Honey, doll yourself up and step into those five inch heels. We're leaving in twenty minutes."

Ed's crossdressing isn't a burden I have to cope with. It adds to our relationship in positive ways. He is the most well-adjusted person I have ever known, probably because the masculine and feminine parts of him are not in conflict. Because he is in touch with that softer part of himself, he can let it out whether he's in a silk dress or camouflage pants. I love that. I feel a camaraderie with crossdressing males that I couldn't possibly feel with a male who doesn't dress.

(Reprinted from the June 95 issue of "The Sooner Belle" Official newsletter of COTA.)

Do You Know an Empathetic Clergy Person?

by Diane A. Zahn

I am working to assemble a list of empathetic churches/pastors/religious organizations by geographic areas and religious affiliations (OF ALL FAITHS) willing to talk with the transgender community. This list is to be provided to the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE). It is intended to support the IFGE service of providing referral lists of organizations and health care providers around the world to assist individuals in making contact with others in their own area, and as a support resource for the IFGE telephone hotline.

Nancy Nangeroni, the IFGE director, has requested that I act as a single focal point of contact as this information is gathered. Nancy notes that she is already struggling with an abundance of other IFGE correspondence, and would really prefer to have this added mail route through me as the referral list is compiled. I would therefore appreciate it if you can forward any contact information directly to me.

I would appreciate it if you could help me compile this list. If you know people or organizations at least willing to keep an open mind in their spiritual counsel, and can verify they are willing to participate in such a network of support, can you forward contact information to me so that I might include them on the list or write to them and contact them myself? You can contact me by e-mail at [redacted] or surface mail at

D.A. Zahn
P.O. Box 2176
Monroe, MI 48161

If you have any questions or concerns about the IFGE's usage of this information, you can contact them at their mailing address:

International Foundation for Gender Education
PO Box 229, Waltham MA 02254-0229

Thank you for your support. If you feel so led, I would appreciate your prayers that this effort give glory to our Lord.

Dear Frances,

Recently I experienced a few months of fear and hate that I had forgotten existed. During this time I shared my fear and confusion with several friends. One of these people was my Minister. After this all had passed, and I told her about it's passing she asked me to write an article for the church newsletter. The following is the article as it will appear in "Heart Lines," the newsletter for The Center For Creative And Conscious Living (a United Church of Religious Science). This will also be published in "Alpha-Bits" in October. Oh, the photos are in the mail.

Janyne

Answered Prayer

by Janyne

Why am I surprised when it works? I have known it works for some time now but when the power of directed prayer is clearly visible it still is a bit of a shock to my system. A shock I gladly accept and look forward to. But still there is that little part of me that says, "Wow, it really worked!"

Several years ago I came to terms with being transgendered. If you don't know me or don't know what transgendered means, I will give you a brief lesson. I am a genetic male who is blessed with a feminine spirit, and I choose to honor that spirit in dress and manner. In short, I live most of my life as a woman. In doing that I know that I am expressing the joy and beauty of my gift from GOD. For the last several years I have lived in this manner and have enjoyed a level of acceptance that is almost unbelievable even to me.

I live in a mostly quiet Long Beach neighborhood, a little crowded but friendly and filled with the voices of children of many races and cultures playing together free from the prejudices and fear they may learn as they get older. Next to my home is an apartment building. The type of building referred to, here in Long Beach, as a "cracker box unit". It has all the faults that these units have: too many people, not enough parking, too much turn over and not enough room for the children to play. But in spite of these drawbacks, the people that live there do the best they can and for the most part remain up beat hard working friendly folks. I have lived in my place for just over two years now and have blended into my neighborhood. I come and go freely and am accepted by the shop keepers and residents.

But to this world of peace and tolerance there recently came a dose of fear and prejudice that I had come close to forgetting existed. A family moved into the apartment building next to me, and within a week or two of their arrival my life was threatened, my car was vandalized and my mail box was filled with garbage and vile substances. My first reaction was fear. I went to the police and explained the circumstances to them. They were unable to and seemed unwilling to help. I called my lawyer and was advised to move. On two separate occasions the husband and father in this family threatened to beat me up and then to kill me. The wife and mother verbally assaulted me at every chance she got.

Their children took up the call and would stand outside my door and shout vile threats and curses. They took to following me and I genuinely feared for my safety. I attempted to talk to these people but it was to no avail. The best effort I achieved was that the husband took a swing at me. I was able to step out of his reach and miss out on the experience of street fighting in front of my own house. These people in a short period of time had brought me back to a place of doubt and low self worth that I thought was forever gone.

With no where to look I called Reverend Betsy Elliot, just to talk and to hear a friendly voice. In the next few days I spoke with many friendly voices, Reverend Diane, Rose Genterman and several of my friends at our church. Betsy and I treated for understanding and clarity, Diane and Rose treated for me and helped me stay clear. I attempted to see these neighbors in the

light of God. Prayer went out for me and my neighbors. I continued to walk my path, to live my life as whatever example of spirit that I am.

Then the children seemed to get used to me, they learned my name and said hello when they saw me. They asked intelligent questions and we shared conversations. One day a boy came to my door and apologized for putting spoiled fruit in my mail box. Then one afternoon the woman in this family said hello, and we had a small conversation. About a week later we met on the street. She stopped me and asked if she could speak with me. I said of course, we talked about easy things for a few minutes, my dress, my car and my approaching wedding. I then asked her what had caused her change of heart about me. She said, "If you never spoke to me again, I would understand. I am so sorry for the way I treated you. You are a good neighbor and a nice person. You never did anything to us and you are so brave and quiet as you just go about your business." She went on to tell me she had talked to the women where she works about me, and they said to her, "Have you ever given this person a chance? Have you gotten to know her, to see what she is like?" And of course she hadn't, yet. We talked for a little more. I was able to tell her a small amount about me and learn a little about her. The father still doesn't speak to me, but he does give a small nod or wave in response to my smile and hello.

There are several explanations for the change these folks went through: they just got used to me, they were afraid of a law suit, they saw that I wasn't going to change just for them, or whatever. But I know what it was. Prayer Treatment, the power of God doing good in this mostly quiet Long Beach Neighborhood.

When we deal with fear in any form be it prejudice, anger or hate, and that fear in turn puts us in our own fear state, go back to the source, God. With the help of your Minister, Practitioner and friends that share your spiritual path, treat and pray and hold Love in your heart. Love is the only answer to fear. With Love you can continue your path, be the real you and know that you are safe in a world surrounded by God. And don't be surprised when it works.

Every House Has a Closet...

(Anonymous)

Large walk-in closets are popular in America these days, and many of our closets are larger than the living space allotted to entire families in many other countries. In theory, our closet provides for the orderly storage of our clothing and other possessions. Still, the closet is the most DANGEROUS room in our house, and even as children we fear it. The trouble with a closet is that we risk losing whatever treasure we put in there: it becomes buried, hidden, lost, even dead to our memory. This is a room where we can place keepsakes and mementos, only to discover them years later when they are moth- eaten, crumbling, old and brittle. I'm sure that if Jesus told the parable of the talents today, he would have the unworthy servant hide his talents in a closet!

One of the horrific tragedies of our time is the incidence of abused children being placed in closets. We hear of children locked in a closet for years, away from human contact, away from all nurturing an love. They emerge unable to speak, and even their hearing and other senses are permanently deformed, having been imprisoned in cramped and silent darkness for year. The child in us, the growing part that naturally turns to God as a sunflower tracks the sun, wants to flee from this room.

What have you stuffed in your closet? What unhealed memories, what lost inner children whimper in the darkness? What buried talents, what unsung songs, what birthday gifts, brightly wrapped yet still unopened, lie dusty and forgotten? What hoarded goods feed mildew and moth, while our sisters and brothers go without?

As we move into the Christmas season, and search our closets for ornaments and wrapping, winter clothes and snow boots, let's search out the recesses of our inner closets. Let's rescue those long-lost hopes and dreams, and gently lead them into the sunshine. Let's comfort our buried grief, and release it. Let's resolve, as we enter the New Year, to develop an unused talent; to befriend a lonely acquaintance; to become our true best selves; to empty our inner prisons and turn them into sunlit gardens.

Hey, Good Looking!

Artificial Nails

by Vicky Anne

I have always wanted to have long nails. I mean really long finger nails. I have strong finger nails and can grow them out to a decent length. But then my wife starts to complain, and about that point they become hard to maintain. I have tried press-on's and glue-on's but these just aren't what I am looking for. I found them hard to keep on. They kept popping off unless I was really careful about what I did.

While on a trip out to Los Angeles in June, I found my sister's new house was in the middle of Finger Nail Central. A full set of artificial tips was being advertised in shop windows up and down the street at $12. So what is a girl to do? The first morning I was up early and heading to the nearest shop just a block away. I just had to take advantage of those low prices. Since I was going to be dressed for the next four days, why not?

The oriental ladies who operated the shop welcomed me warmly but were a little taken aback by the fact that I wanted a full set of artificial nails. I happened to be in drab at the time. I hadn't taken the time to transform, since I was in a hurry to get to the shop as soon as they opened. The ladies were even more taken when I picked out a deep plum nail polish. I left the shop with a wonderful set of artificial nails that I enjoyed for the rest of my stay.

I just have to say that if you ever have the opportunity to have a set of nails applied, you should take advantage of it. A word of caution: don't bother with artificial nails unless you will be wearing them for a reasonable length of time. I'm thinking about having a set applied for my trip up to Colorado in October for Gold Rush.

To remove nail polish from the artificial nails you must use a non-acetone remover, or the nail tip will be damaged. To remove the tips an acetone remover is required, a problem I discovered too late. My sister had assured me she had plenty of remover, only to discover very late at night, with an early morning flight, that she had only a small amount left in the bottle. The trick to removing the nails is they must be soaked in the acetone polish remover to loosen them.

Because I didn't have enough of the remover I ended up damaging my own nails by trying to pry the tips off without sufficient soaking. Only now, almost three months later, have my damaged nails grown out to where they are past the chipped and damaged areas.

(Reprinted from "Fiesta," newsletter of Fiesta Chapter.)

Web Sites That Spotlight Makeup

Beauty Cafe: Hair, skin, and makeup products to order online: www.beautycafe.com

Bobbi Brown Essentials: All there is to know about makeup artist Bobbi Brown and her makeup line, with beauty tips: www.bobbibrowncosmetics.com

Cosmetic Connection: Extensive reviews of cosmetics lines, from Clinique to Smash-Box, as well as beauty tips and links to makeup companies' web sites: www.kleinman.com/cosmetic

Cosmetics Cop: Web site devoted to industry watchdog Paula Bergoun, author of "Don't Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me." Includes sample product reviews from her books and information about her skincare line: www.cosmeticscop.com

Iman Cosmetics: Product descriptions about supermodel Iman's skin-care and makeup line for women of color: www.sheen.com/sheen/iman/iman.html

Lipstick Page: Information about lipstick, including color chips of dozens of shades and list of lipsticks used by actresses, singers, and models: www.users.wineasy.se/bjornt/lip.html

Nail Polish Page: A minimalist site devoted to nail polish, including a chat room: www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/5192

Philosophy: Product descriptions, prices, and ordering information about the Philosophy line and its New Age point of view: www.philosophy.com

Zhen Cosmetics: A skin care and makeup line for Asians, with product information, order forms, and beauty tips: www.dgi.net/zhen

(Reprinted from "Our Special Joy," newsletter of Chi Delta Mu Chapter.)

Absolute Beginners

by Melanie Yarborough

Newcomers are pretty easy to spot. They stand nervously by themselves, almost frozen. Being in a roomful of strangers is difficult enough; add to that the fear of being "en femme" in front of a roomful of strangers. Taking a secret shame out of the safety of the closet to a public place. Hell, who wouldn't be nervewracked? I sure was, at the time. Many of us are veterans of countless en femme meetings or shopping trips, and seem to have forgotten that initial terror. We've also come to disregard the difficult situation of new sisters.

But it's so easy to approach them. A compliment on their outfit, an inquiry as to where they got a piece of jewelry, even just going up and introducing yourself. A joke, an ironic comment, anything would be so easy. But so many of us just don't do it. We stick to the familiar faces we already know. Or, we snicker to ourselves about their beard showing through inadequate makeup, a dissheveled wig, an ill-fitting dress. They're the unattractive stepsister at the ball: why should we go up and talk to "them"?

If everyone thought this way, there probably wouldn't be any support groups at all. Fortunately, many of us know that somewhere out there is a pre-teen transsexual fighting with feelings they can't understand. Or, a pre-teen crossdresser furtively sneaking into his mother or sister's closet during an all-too-seldom moment home alone. And we know they shouldn't have to go through what we went through; we have to make it easier for the next sister coming along.

When you see a new sister, go up and talk to her. Who knows? She could be your group's next great leader!

(Ed. Note: This article originally appeared in the Neutral Corner newsletter, and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)

Hey, Good-Looking!

Laser Beard Removal

by Angela

Thought you might like to hear about my adventures with laser beard removal. I first have to credit Crissy Marie for accomplishing all the difficult ground work. She checked out several Laser clinics and haggled to obtain the best price. I then jumped on the bandwagon and was able to visit the same doctor at the same price. The price we paid was $1100 for three visits. The normal price for this regimen is about $2000 so crissy obtained a very good discount. Thanks, Crissy!

You first have to have an initial consultation with the doctor. He uses this visit to explain what the procedure is, how it works, and what the expected results will be. The cost for this visit was an additional $80.

He covered many different things very quickly. I found that what he said went by in a blur and that I listened selectively. That is, I didn't remember clearly those things I didn't want to here. One of them had to do with the darkness or lightness of the hairs being removed. More about that later.

The day of the treatment you have to cover the area to be treated with a THICK layer of desensitizing cream. You then cover the entire area with Saran Wrap. This is to keep the cream from drying out and losing its effectiveness. You then have to drive across town and wait in the waiting room with your face swathed in Saran Wrap. I felt like "The Mummy."

The laser is a handheld device sort of like a large pen with a flat tip. The tip is about ¾ inch in diameter. The laser light itself covers an area about ½ inch in diameter or slightly less. The idea is that the energy of the laser light heats the hairs, which in turn heat the follicles, and the heat kills the follicles so that the hair doesn't grow anymore. The bursts of laser light are instantaneous and the machine is set to fire about every two seconds. The pain from the procedure varies depending on the thickness of coverage of hair and on the coarseness of each individual hair. The area around the mouth (moustache and chin) is VERY PAINFUL!!!!!!!! Masochists would be delighted.

The good news is that the pain dissipates very quickly (seconds). An interesting side effect is that you can sometimes smell the hairs burning.

After the treatment your face is somewhat raw. You cannot shave or go outside for several days. If you must go outside, you are cautioned to wear SPF 15 or greater sun block.

After treatment you make an appointment for a two week checkup. I decided to not shave for the entire two weeks just to see what would happen. By the time of my checkup I was rather upset because it looked like no hairs had fallen out and that the growth rate was about the same as always. How disappointing!! The last time I had worn a beard was about 4 years ago. At the time, the beard was almost totally dark brown with only a few streaks of grey. I was surprised to discover that about 80% of my beard was pure white. What a shock!

At my checkup, the doctor became somewhat defensive and insisted that he had briefed me that the treatment would probably not work on hair which contained no pigment (white or grey). This is the part I blocked out. He later checked with some national agency which controls laser treatments and was reportedly assured that no removal could be expected to occur if the hairs had no pigment. Ouch!

As soon as I left the checkup I went home to shave. It was encouraging after two days without shaving that my beard seemed to be sparser and that it seemed to be growing at about 50% of its normal rate. Some results are better than none?

I have now had my second treatment and can report that it seems that almost all of my dark hairs are gone. The white ones (quite a few, actually) are growing more slowly and seem to be less stiff. I'm hoping that if I go for a few more than the basic three treatments I may get rid of some of the white hairs also. The things we girls go through! Sigh!

(Reprinted from "The Pink Slip," newsletter of Tri Chi Chapter.)

Longer Legs in Thirty Days

by Tanya [redacted]

All of us have seen those booklets in bookstores and grocery store checkouts: ***Slim Thighs in 30 Days***, or ***A Flatter Tummy in 30 Days***, etc. Some may even have bought them. Well, I am going to make my contribution to the genre.

It shouldn't take an Einstein - or, I should say, a Madame Curie - to figure out that the actual length of one's legs is impossible to change. What God in Her infinite wisdom gave us is what we are stuck with. How they are perceived, however, is another story.

Aside from the obvious, males and females have basic differences in the construction of their bodies. One of these differences is the proportional length of the legs in relation to the torso. Males, for the most part, have an equal relationship between the length of their legs and the length (crotch-to-shoulder) of their torsos. Females, on the other hand, have proportionally longer legs than their torsos. A female with legs less than 3-1/2 inches longer than her torso is considered to have "short" legs.

Where does this leave the crossdresser? Standing in a hold, I should think. There are ways, however, for us to maximize the leg length we are given, allowing us to better imitate that with which we are so enamored.

Bonnie August, in her book ***The Complete Bonnie August Dress Thin System***, expounds upon a series of rules for those females who are "cursed" with short legs. These same rules are doubly applicable to the crossdresser because, besides being naturally shorter, our legs are usually heavier than the Genuine Girls' are.

Unfortunately, Bonnie's fine book is now out of print. I can only say that I have followed her suggestions to the letter and have received some very nice compliments on my appearance. In any event, I would like to pass on her rules concerning "short" legs. What they can do for your overall appearance is immeasurable:

1. **Hem Lines**: Your legs will always look their best if your wear your skirt so that it just touches the bottom of your kneecap, no higher, no lower. The only exception to this is if you are wearing boots. Then your hem line should drop to the point that your boot tops are covered. The sight of some leg (especially heavy leg) between the boot top and the hem line creates a horizontal line which accentuates the shortness of your legs.
2. **Shoe Styles**: Shoes can be ranked as to how well they increase the visual length of your legs. Best are backless mules, or "slides." They make your legs look FAR longer than they really are. Second are so-called "sling" shoes. Next are those with low throat lines or open shanks. After that come standard pumps, etc. But, "slides" and "slings" are by far the best. Shoe styles that MUST be avoided are any that have ankle straps or T-straps. They create the horizontal line mentioned above, and make your legs look shorter than they really are. (NOTE: That horizontal line must be avoided at all costs. Not even an ankle bracelet!)

   Avoid shoes with extremely pointed or blunt toes or extremely skinny straps or heels. Also avoid Chanel-toe styles, flats and skin-tight boots. Another Note: Do not wear shoes that just don't seem to support you. Extremely delicate shoes on a hefty torso is like an inverted triangle - there just doesn't seem to be enough at the bottom to support the top.
3. **Heel Heights**: The higher the better - within reason. Women should normally wear shoes with heels around 2 inches, and never higher than 3 inches. Higher heels make a girl stick her tummy out to balance herself, and cause foot, hip and spine problems. For the most part, however, we wear much larger shoes than real girls. We can, therefore, wear higher heels without exceeding the proportion of the real girl's 2 to 3 inch heels. Wear heels between 1½ inches and 3½ inches. 3 inch heels are a good average. But remember, 2½ inch slides or slings will make your legs look longer than 3½ inch pumps will.
4. **Hosiery**: Wear "Suntan" or darker stockings. Avoid very light-colored hosiery, opaque panty hose and any heavily patterned hosiery. Support hose (L'eggs "Sheer Energy" are great!) are best for short and/or heavy legs unless you are wearing slacks. Then wear ultra-sheer hose to prevent cling. (Also, seamed hose break the width of the legs when viewed from the rear.)
5. **Skirts**: Wear straight skirt styles or ones with minimum top-fullness: A-line, yoked, 4-6 gore, and wrap. Avoid full skirts, skirts with horizontal details, flounces, or horizontal patterns. Remember the hemline comments listed above. (The same applies to the skirt of a dress.)
6. **Slacks**: Wear your highest heels under slacks. The slacks should be hemmed so that they come to your instep, perhaps slightly lower in the back. They must never be cuffed. Remember that horizontal line we must avoid! Straight-leg or slightly tapered slacks are best. Avoid baggy pants and any style that does not allow the hem to come to the instep.

I hope this information is useful to you. Try to follow these rules for your next 30 days of crossdressing. I think you will find that your appearance will show surprising improvement for such seemingly minor changes. Taking what God gave you as a male and making it as feminine as possible is one of the greatest satisfactions of our ***hobby***.

A postscript: What if those long legs of yours are hairy? Charlotte found wearing the "matte finish" flesh-colored tights sold by K-Mart under her pantyhose solved the problem handily. I didn't know her legs weren't shaved till she told me!

(Reprinted from "La Femme Silhouette," newsletter of Alpha Omega Chapter.)

Sewing for Christmas

by Ricky

There's something wrong here. It says on my resume, of which I have mailed out approximately 6.37 billion in the last year of semi-employment, that I am a highly skilled electromechanical technician. It says a lot of other glowing things, but in essence it means I can go into a factory somewhere and quickly understand and repair several millions of dollars worth of complex machinery that is doing something the normal maintenance staff cannot fix. At the risk of hubris, I'm good at it too. So why is it that the common household sewing machine strains my abilities to the breaking point and beyond?

I have gone from semi-employed to flat out unemployed for the last two months, so with Christmas coming and lots of time on my hands I decided to stretch my meager resources and sew some gifts for people, like my wife and daughter and (ahem...) my feminine self. After all, sewing is the quintessential feminine activity. Soft fabrics, lace, needles, delicate stitching, ribbons and loving craftsmanship. (Sorry - the politically correct haven't come up with a gender neutral version of the word and I refuse to use such an unlikely construction as craftspersonship.) The local fabric store cooperated by having as sale on some of that lovely, shiny silky fabric that real men never, never wear, not even while eating quiche. So with pattern in hand and bundles of fabric and notions laid out, carefully I approached the task.

The preliminaries went well. I put the company tabletop on the kitchen table, laid out the fabric and cut out a dress for my daughter, and blouses for my wife and myself. As I cut I indulged in fantasies of medieval ladies gathered in a sunlit room of some castle, dressed in lovely long gowns, each with a potential new long gown on their lap, placing precise stitches by hand. I longed to be one of those ladies, secure in their art and creativity. But daydreams must fade and I could put it off no longer. It was time to confront my old enemy - the dreaded sewing machine.

I doubt if Mr. Morse knew what havoc he would bring to my life when he invented the thing. On the surface it is a rather simple device. A motor, a few gears and cams and a needle bobbing up and down hypnotically. My wife has used this machine for years and never had a problem with it, but every time I come within six feet of it it becomes a hypochondriac. Needles fall out, belts break, and gears grind. The thread tension becomes as erratic as the chart of a brain wave, leaving great gobs of thread on the underside of whatever is being sewn. This time I approached it as I would a faithful old dog. I patted it on the head, spoke kindly nonsense to it and stroked its well worn spine. I softly explained what I was doing as I loaded the thread, filled the bobbin and threaded the machine, hoping this would keep it from being confused and doing something awful to my sewing. It seemed to work. Pieces of cloth began to assemble into something resembling a blouse. I was amazed. I uttered not one unfeminine word during the entire process. Then, the blouse was finished and all that remained was to sew on the buttons.

I should have known better. It was just too easy. The machine worked perfectly, but the operator didn't. I lined up the front of the blouse to place the buttons and the ruffle was off a good four inches on either side of the blouse. I swear I matched all the foolish notches, dots and markings, but there it was. Now I used those unfeminine words as I wielded the seam ripper on those all too perfect and tight stitches, rearranging the ruffle and cutting one side short. Success! Only the buttons to go.

Remember my fantasy of lovely ladies hand sewing gorgeous garments? Forget it! If there is anything more boring than hand sewing I have yet to experience it. Next time I'll use a pattern with a zipper. Have you ever tried to keep a button in the exact right place while sewing it onto that slippery feminine fabric that looks so good? They tend to migrate to uncharted regions of cloth having no relationship to the front of the blouse, despite the best efforts of humanity. With perseverance I completed the task, and began to think about the two other garments cut out and waiting for me. So I did what any reasonable crossdresser would do. I came up here and wrote this article, and am fully prepared to discover several other urgent projects before I approach the sewing machine again. Wish me luck! There's only 3 weeks left to Christmas.

(This article originally appeared in Cross-Talk, and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)

A Visit from Santa

by Ricky

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house... Wait a minute, I think someone has already used that line. Darn, why can't I think of things like that first? But anyway, it really was the night before Christmas and the only difference between me and a little kid was about 35 years. I was restless, couldn't sleep, couldn't read, couldn't even watch the tube for more than a few minutes at a time. My wife was planning something special for Christmas, I could tell by the little hints and secret grins she gave me. She was fast asleep, it had been years since she waited up to try and see Santa, and I was feeling rather foolish to be up so late, visions of sugar plums or not.

I was still prowling around the living room, rearranging the decorations for the umpteenth time, when I heard a noise on the roof. Right, a noise on the roof. I must be going bonkers, I thought to myself, next thing I know I'll hear the sound of hoofs. Maybe I'd better get a larger girdle next time, the pressure must be affecting my brain. But it did sound like hoofs, and next thing I knew there was a commotion in the chimney and, as I turned to look, a pair of legs appeared, complete with 3" red high heels, white patterned stockings, and pretty red and green garters with matching bikini panties. The legs began to shake and were soon modestly covered with a red fur skirt, edged in white of course, and before my unbelieving eyes the rest of Santa popped out of the ashes and stood before me on the hearth.

Somehow the long white hair had survived the trip down the chimney without a trace of soot, and was exquisite lying on the red fur of the jacket. The bushy eyebrows had been plucked and the long eyelashes were simply astounding. Naturally the lips were a bright cherry red, but the ample breasts, even when compared with that famous tummy full of jelly, were a bit of a surprise. What was completely unexpected, though, was Santa without his trademark beard. Not only that, but not even a beard shadow. I was jealous, and I knew right then and there what I wanted for Christmas, and I was not thinking about my two front teeth.

I don't know why, but finding Santa was a crossdresser didn't bother me for a moment. In fact, it seemed almost logical. There are no nosy neighbors at the North Pole, and you can keep the curtains open or take a walk in the neighborhood without fear of being seen. What with working only one day a year there is ample time to dress up whenever you feel like it, and the elves are another species; they could care less what we crazy humans do in our spare time. What other job would allow you to roam the world in perfect security? You could go to work naked as a jaybird if you could stand the cold air in the sleigh, because no one would ever see you up close. If you were spotted from the ground no one would be able to tell what you were wearing, and we all know pilots have long since stopped reporting UFOs because no one believes the reports anyway. The reindeer can't talk, and Mrs. Santa either didn't know or didn't care. After all, it would be no trouble to fit a change of clothes into the toybag and let Rudolph take the helm for a few minutes while you were changing. Other than hitting an air pocket while applying makeup the job was simplicity itself.

Santa began to smooth her s
I emerged from my reverie and remembered
I was the host here and offered Santa the traditional milk and cookies. Hefting the pack of gifts over her shoulder, Santa followed me into the kitchen, where we talked for what seemed like hours. The same magic that hid the beard shadow evidently worked on clocks, too, as the hand of the clock over the stove never moved the whole time we talked.

You wouldn't believe the things I learned that night. I found that there wasn't a Mrs. Santa. The rumors came from a time when Santa had been spotted by an unexpected Arctic exploration team and what was there to do but carry it off as best she could? Santa told me that she missed being able to shop for clothes, but with a factory full of the world's greatest artisans on the premises, having something new to wear was never a problem. She had even attended some crossdressers' meetings in various cities, at least those in suburban areas where there was enough parking for the sleigh and reindeer. The hardest part in attending meetings was controlling her "HO-HO-HO" and making it a demure girlish giggle when someone complimented her on the lifelike wig, or commented on the choice of "Sandy Klaus" as a femme name.

At last I could contain the question no longer, and had to ask why she had chosen to visit me this night. She said that each year she chose one special letter from the mail for personal attention, and this year my very supportive wife had written one she absolutely had to answer. She had told her that with the budget so tight, I had not been able to indulge my passion for exotic clothing in some time, and she had begged Santa to supply the outfit of my dreams. From the pack Santa drew the blue Victorian corset I had been dreaming of, with matching panties and stockings. Then out came a spectacular Victorian dress, with layer on layer of ruffles. Since the corset laced from the back Santa kindly offered to help as she modestly turned her back while I put it on. With her magic working at full force she awoke my wife, who was soon standing at the kitchen door holding my best breast inserts and the necessary padding for my hips. Together Santa and my wife dressed me, and with the bustle and hoop skirts help was necessary.

All too soon it was time for Santa to go, and I stood holding my wife as the sleigh faded in the distance. As I waved good-bye with my new lace handkerchief I could hear the rustle of my skirts as I moved. How else could this tale end but by saying "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night"?

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Calendar of Tri-Ess Events

NOVEMBER 1998

8-13 **TRI-ESS HOLIDAY AT SEA/ DIGNITY CRUISE #10,** Miami-Nassua-Coco Cay -Key West CRUISES INC., (800) 621-6699 (Barbara Arendt), (800) 818-7830 (Mike Sinn)

DECEMBER 1998

19 **PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ** , Chicago, IL. Chi Chapter, PO Box 40, Wood Dale, IL 60191, (630) [redacted]

JULY 1999

15-18 **S.P.I.C.E. VII,** Minneapolis, MN. SPICE Registrar, Beta Gamma, Box 8591, Minneapolis MN 55408, E-Mail: [redacted], Phone: Mary Jane (Central) (918) [redacted], Evelyn (Eastern) (215) [redacted] Fax: Peggy (Central) (281) [redacted]

NOVEMBER 1999

10-14 **HOLIDAY EN FEMME,** Houston, TX. Brenda Thomas, 6904 E.Hwy 6 So. #334, Houston TX 77083, E-Mail: [redacted]

14-21 **HOLIDAY AT SEA/ DIGNITY CRUISE #11,** Houston, TX-Calico-Cancun-Coxumel-Roatan, Honduras-Houston, CRUISEONE, INC., Anne McLaughlin, (800) 699-6631, International 281-679-1399

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The Femme Mirror's Calendar of **Tri-Ess** Events and put your **Event** on the Map!

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The T-Shirt Conspiracy

by Ricky

Is there a conspiracy afoot? Maybe I ought to ask 'ole H. Ross Perot, after all he's uncovered more conspiracies than anyone else alive, so he would know. It all started when the Gods of Free Time smiled on me for a few days in succession, something that rarely happens. I stood before my closet in my pretty new underwear and debated what to wear. I picked out a long flowing summer weight skirt and discovered I really didn't have a blouse to go with it. Sure there were a bunch of blouses in there, but most of them had long sleeves (to cover the arm hair, of course) or patterns that simply didn't go with the skirt. OK, no problem, I just got an overtime check, let's go shopping!

So, with the charge card burning a hole in my wallet, I made the rounds of the stores carrying Plus Size women's clothing. Actually, I really didn't have to specify "women's clothing" in that last sentence because men are fat, women are Plus Size, and it sounds much better that way. I started at the local close-out specialist, all sorts of good stuff for low prices, but was disappointed. With the hot weather I had in mind something like a shell. You know - something distinctly feminine, silky, shiny fabric, enough sleeve to hide the armpits and a neckline high enough to hide most of the chest hair but low enough to allow a bit of cooling. Something in a plain red or yellow would be nice, but any color would do. After all, most of the Plus Size skirts are still variations on the theme of black, and you can get away with almost anything in a blouse.

I was disappointed. They had nothing like what I had in mind, but what the hey, this is a close-out place after all. So off to the Wal-Mart, then the K-mart, then Lane Bryant, and 16 Plus and on and on and on. What's going on here? In all these places the casual look was in. It seems the modern woman is wearing nothing but T-shirts or one piece suits with shoulders normally found on NFL types. Most of the T-shirts had cute designs on the front or a hint of lace at the collar, but they were just plain, old cotton T-shirts in disguise. Now, I have nothing against casual dressing, as my male self I wear practically nothing else, and that's the problem. When I put on a bra I want to cover it with something other than the stuff I usually wear. I want to feel feminine even if I won't fool anyone. I don't want unisex when I want to feel female.

A while back Virginia was speculating on the future of crossdressing in light of the unisex trend. I felt sympathy for my younger sisters. After all, what you think of as feminine is set at a young age, and what's the point of crossdressing if everyone wears the same clothes? But, like all of us I didn't worry about it too much because it was not my worry. My idea of feminine clothing is easily distinguished from the masculine and it wasn't my problem. I had forgotten I was at the mercy of the Fashion Gods, and if they decreed T-shirts were the in thing I wasn't going to find that shell I was looking for until the pendulum swung again and it was once again the in thing. In a year or two someone will decide that women want to wear women's clothing again and the world will once again fit my preconceptions. In the meantime, I have a couple of yards of fabric and a sewing machine to play with the next time the Gods of Free Time smile on me, but maybe it would be quicker to wait for the Fashion Gods to change their minds.

(This article was previously published in "Cross-Talk," and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)

Our Gender Family #13 - October, 1998
Let The Walls Fall Down

by Rachel (Richard) Miller

The bedrock of the United States' governing system affirms that all men are created equal and have certain God-granted rights. It is a nation with a strong spiritual heritage and the dual principles of loving God and loving your neighbor are widely espoused. Many settlers fled religious oppression and came to the U.S. in pursuit of their own personal vision of freedom of spiritual expression. Curiously, even with that backdrop, various groups of citizens, all of them God's children, find themselves treated decidedly unequally by much of society and frequently shunned by many religious organizations.

I have a permanent membership in one of those ill-treated groups and have considerable experience with the pain, guilt and shame inflicted by repeated rejection. The person that I allow everyone to see in public is perfectly acceptable and enables me to move about society freely without causing a ripple. Yet, I feel compelled to continue to hide some of the truth about myself knowing how others would likely react if they knew.

In mid-1991, after spending fifty years in hiding, I embarked on a journey to confront the fear and end my hiding. What is this fearful, secret burden that I have dragged with me? Terror of terrors, I am a man who sometimes likes to wear a dress. That's it! It may not seem like much, but it causes significant repercussions. People label me a transvestite or cross-dresser and many times something far worse. Mostly I'm surprisingly like any other person you know. We hide so deeply in our closets that no one, even our closest loved ones, suspects our secret. Even though you almost certainly know one of us, you don't know that you know.

Once I understood and accepted the cross-dressing part of me, I felt a strong compulsion to share that news with my family and friends, the people I love and care about. I simply had to end the pretending and hypocrisy that had overshadowed so much of my life. Remarkably, after sharing the truth with nearly sixty loved ones, they have all continued our relationships. They saw that I was still the same person they had known and loved over the years and accepted the news as part of my total person. Many relationships have actually deepened. Since I had become vulnerable by telling my story, they felt secure enough to tell their secrets, and these exchanges have resulted in an unexpected mutual easing of burdens.

Even after telling those closest to me, I have continued to withhold that information from most of my daily life. I have considered the corporate workplace out of bounds for fear of losing my job. Stores and restaurants have been avoided for fear of recognition and for my safety. Although I bristle at those restrictions, I have been able to rationalize them with one exception—church!

I am a spiritual person and strongly desire an accepting church home. For many years I have struggled with the question of how Richard could show the truth about his more feminine side at church. Not being able to show has continued to hammer at my sense of self-worth and has fanned the belief that I am not acceptable. In late August I wrote a letter (Keyword to: http://members.aol.com/rachelmill/spirit03.htm) to the pastors of nine local churches of different denominations, telling my story and asking if I would be welcome at their churches. I included a copy of a poem from my book, The Bliss of Becoming One (Keyword to: http://members.aol.com/rachelmill/bobo.htm), that describes my overall character and places cross-dressing in a balanced perspective. I included an extract of an article that I had written several years ago that addresses Biblical concerns.

I have been encouraged that two of the pastors wrote personal notes inviting me to attend. My wife Marsha and I, dressed traditionally, have visited both churches to see how well they fit my needs and how well we fit in. I am continuing to attend services at one church, still in traditional male attire, and have enrolled in a class for prospective new members. I am taking my time before deciding how to proceed.

It is discouraging that in the past month, seven of the pastors have failed to respond—they haven't said yes, they haven't said no, they haven't said anything. Perhaps the lack of response can be partially attributed to the prejudice towards cross-dressers that stems from negative stereotypical views and there is good reason for many of those views. Most of us try to blend unnoticed into society so only a small percentage is visible. Those who are visible tend to be more flamboyant personalities who often wear gaudy costumes and engage in attention-attracting behavior. Many of us complain that the outrageousness of a few ruins our reputation, still we continue to hide so you don't see the less ostentatious, garden-variety cross-dresser.

Some people believe that cross-dressers are simply get-

ting what we deserve. They consider us sinners and violators of God's word and that justifies ostracizing us and even restricting our civil rights. That point of view is incompatible with the principles of the governing system and with the spiritual principle of love and acceptance and needs to be changed!

The primary obligation for initiating this change resides within the gender community, a general term used to embrace cross-dressers, transsexuals and other people who consider themselves transgendered. We must reduce the degree of hiding and let others see us as we are. Lacking that exposure, attitudes will continue to be based on the few who flaunt themselves in public. If you are transgendered, consider coming a bit further out of your closet and, without taking excessive risks, working for your spiritual freedom and the spiritual freedom of others.

The next most important step rests within the religious community. Religious organizations, churches, ministers and members can exert leadership to change the existing attitudes. Consider demonstrating the love exemplified in this song that I learned last week at a local church.

Let The Walls Fall Down
One by one we're drawn together,
One by one to Jesus' side,
One in Him we'll live forever,
Strangers He has reconciled.

In His love no walls between us,
In His love a common ground.
Kneeling at the cross of Jesus,
All our pride comes tumbling down.

(Chorus)
Let the walls fall down,
Let the walls fall down;
Let the walls fall down,
By His love let the walls fall down.

-Bill Batstone, Anne Barbour & John Barbour
1993 Maranatha! Music

Governing officials have another crucial role in changing conditions. Only a handful of jurisdictions prohibits discrimination against transgendered people and even the Federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is not designed to protect us. While we haven't yet wielded significant political clout, all citizens deserve legal protection. If you are a legislator, consider how to help transgendered people to achieve equal status in society.

To change views, active media participation is essential. The July 20 issue of Time ran a constructive story, "Trans Across America," describing the efforts of transgendered people working for equality. The Arts & Entertainment Channel will air "Transgender Revolution" a ground-breaking documentary on October 5. The program moves beyond sensationalism and freak show images and treats us as real people fighting for our civil rights. If you are a member of the media, consider portraying a factual, non-emotional account of transgendered people or issues to dispel some of the negative stereotypes.

The medical community is needed to heal the existing pain and suffering. Most transgendered people function extremely well in society in spite of the difficulties they face, but many have developed significant emotional problems. They have been forced to compartmentalize their lives into a society-acceptable piece while hiding the true-self piece and this disassociation has had dreadful repercussions. The problems are exacerbated by the low level of involvement by the medical profession. If you are a health care professional, consider helping these people to break through their emotional barriers and integrate their lives.

While we have differing beliefs and value systems, we must find ways to demonstrate real love and concern towards real people with real problems. Together we can achieve freedom of spiritual expression by making the transgendered walls fall down.

When we allow freedom to ring,
when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet,
from every state and every city,
we will be able to speed up that day
when all of God's children,
black men and white men,
Jews and Gentiles,
Protestants and Catholics,
will be able to join hands
and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual,
'Free at last!
Free at last!
Thank God almighty,
we are free at last!'

-Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

c/oOpportunities for Improvement
P.O. Box 31475, Oakland, CA 94604, U.S.A.
(925) 935-9594
http://members.aol.com/rachelmill

A Rose By Any Name

by Dae

Recently at a college seminar, a student posed the question, "How do you come up with your femme names?" This lead o an engaging discussion, indeed. So, I thought it would be interesting to research the nationality, historical and religious significance of names and to survey our membership as to how they chose a name. My own name is an acronym for my full given name which I adopted as I was the third generation and it started to get a little confusing at family gatherings. Here are some members' comments:

"While some members chose a name of someone very special in their life as a tribute to that person, my name is that of a high school flame."

"I picked the name to immortalize my first full-blown case of infatuation."

"I chose my femme name for my very first grade school crush."

"I chose the name of a movie star that I've had a crush on since I was a young boy."

Others simply said it just felt right! A few members picked the name their mother would have named them, had they been a girl child. "Before we were born, my parents picked both a girl's and a boy's name. I chose the name my parents would have used, had I been a girl."

Is choosing a name difficult? A few struggled to find a name that would fit just right. *"One day, I sat quietly and introspected upon myself, thinking about names and how they would identify my femme being."* Said another, *"For a while, it felt funny, yet in some ways, quite natural."* When did you choose your name and why then?

"Long before I came out, I felt a need for a feminine name."

"It took weeks before it all (first, middle and last name) came together."

"Initially, I didn't feel a need for a name, but now that 'she' is emerging, 'she' has the confidence and courage to go out and have adventures and experiences en femme"

Often, a name is the feminine version of one's given name:

"I chose the feminine version of my given name as it proved to be most fitting and comfortable."

A few have a given name that has a feminine version; however, they elected not to use it:

"I don't like either version of my name."

"I just tried to think of a name that was beautiful since I'll never be a beautiful woman."

Some were "christened" with their name by someone in their life: "When I decided to choose a name, my wife and I discussed several. She helped me make the decision." Occasionally, a member may change her femme name:

"My wife didn't like my chosen femme name as it was the same as a person she disliked very much."

"After wearing my name for awhile, I realized the femme version of my name just fit better."

A middle name adds distinction and variety to a persona, and a few members have chosen a middle name as well.

"My middle name serves as a reminder of a good friend that helped me into the daylight."

"My middle name is the first name of a special friend."

What's in a name, anyway? Names have roots dating back to ancient times, countries and religions. Many are Latin, Greek, Celtic, Hebrew, Old English and French in origin. Often a name has been "modernized" or shortened through the centuries. The Catholic religion requires that a child be "christened" (named) after a saint, and the Orthodox Jewish religion requires that a child, especially a male, be named after a person who is no longer living. In some countries, parents must make a selection from an official list. While many names - Mary, Catherine, Elizabeth, Victoria, Ann - have retained their popularity through the centuries, others, such as Beatrice, Prudence, Beula, Agnes, and Maude, have fallen out of favor as being too "old fashioned."

Often a name is chosen in honor of a favorite celebrity or fictional character. In recent years, it has become fashionable to invent a unique name for one's offspring, and some can be quite creative! Unfortunately, this can cause a lifetime of ex-

planations and spelling corrections for an individual. Whether you picked your femme name because it meant something special to you or you simply liked the way it sounded, rejoice in the meaning of your "nom de femme." Here are translations of feminine names and their variations. For those who have not yet chosen a name, let this be your inspiration....

Beautiful names are everywhere. They are in month names, for example, April, May, June; in flowers and plants, for example, Iris, Violet, Daisy. Rose, Ivy, Fern, Heather, Jasmine; in precious gems, for example, Ruby, Opal, Topaz, Amber, Pearl; and in geographical areas, for example, Georgia, China, Montana, Virginia, Savannah.

Abby - fountain of great joy
Agatha - woman of high ideals
Alexandra/Sandra - mankind's helper
Alida - beautifully dressed
Amanda - worthy of love
Andrea - great femininity
Annette/Ann - pure
Ava - winged bird
Barbara/Bobbie - unusual
Beth - breath of life
Bianca/Blanche - white
Bonnie - good and fair
Brenda - flame
Bridget - strong
Camille - innocent
Candice/Candy - full of light
Carolyn - song of joy
Catherine/Kathy - purity
Celeste - heavenly
Charlene - petite beauty
Cher - dear one
Cheryl - beloved
Cindy/Cynthia - moon goddess
Claire - clear
Crystal - ice
Dana - gift
Danica - morning star
Darlene - little darling
Deborah/Debra - prophet
Desiree - desired one
Diana - divine goddess
Donna - woman of rank
Eden - adornment
Elaine - life giving
Eleanor - full of mercy
Emily - creative
Erica -powerful
Erin is the old name for Ireland
Eva - life giving
Farah - beautiful one
Fay - one of great fidelity
Felicia - happy
Fiona - pretty
Gayle - happy
Ginger - high spirited
Glenda - divine goodness
Gloria - glorious
Grace - charming elegance
Gwen - blessed
Haley - heroine
Harriet - mistress of the house
Heidi - noble
Helen/Ellen - light
Hilary - full of cheer
Ilene - daughter of light
Jacqueline - to replace as a superior
Jane/Janet/Janice/Jean/
Joanne/Joan/Jana - gracious
Janel - darling
Jennifer - fair one
Jessica - woman of wealth
Joyce/Joy - joyous one
Judy - praise
Julia - youthful
Karen - pure one
Kelly - female warrior
Kira - the sun
Kyla - royal crown
Lara - famous
Laurel/Lauren/Loralie/ or
Lori/Lorna - to crown with laurel for victory
Leila/Layla - born at night
Lena - light
Leona - lion
Linda - beautiful
Lois - mighty woman
Lucille/Lucy - shining
Lydia - cultured woman
Margaret - precious one
Melissa - she who brings comfort
Melody - a song
Mira - exalted princess
Miranda - admirable
Misty/Mystique - intriguing
Monica - counselor
Nancy - grace
Naomi - delightful woman
Nicole - people's victory
Olivia - symbol of peace
Pamela - sweet as honey
Patricia/Tricia - noblewoman
Paula/Paulina - petite or small
Priscilla - giving honor
Rachel/Raquel - female lamb
Ramona - protector
Regina - queen
RenEe - born again
Rochelle - little rock
Roxanne - dawn
Sally - princess
Sarah - true princess
Shanna - rose
Sheila - divine place
Sherry - cherished
Shirley - beautiful meadow
Sonya - wise
Stella - star
Stephanie - crown
Susan/Suzanne - a lily
Talia - blooming
Tina - little one
Tonya - wonderful
Ursula - good tempered
Valerie - fierce
Vanessa - star
Veronica - true face
Victoria - victorious woman
Virginia - maiden
Vivian - life
Wendy originated from Peter Pan

What's in a name?

Now you know!!!

(This article originally appeared in The Southern Belle.)

A Visit to the Orlando Tri-Ess Chapter

by Joellyn M.

It isn't very often that I can say a plan has come together just as I imagined. This last weekend was an exception for me when I had a business trip to Florida that I just could not get out of. What was worse, the meeting was through Friday evening and the return trip to Arizona would have made it a very long day. I had also discovered that the Tri-Ess chapter in Orlando was having their monthly meeting on Saturday August 1 (the first Saturday of the month). What an opportunity! With a few short fe-mail messages through the Tri-Ess web site, I found a contact and got an invitation to their monthly meeting. This was definitely going to be more fun than the previous three days of strategic planning. The "plan" was forming.

Shopping Saturday afternoon at the Ritzy Rag then a Tri-Ess meeting in the evening. What a deal! The Orlando chapter of Tri-Ess is the Phi-Epsilon Mu (FEM—with a few liberties here and there) chapter. The chapter is also referred to as the Central Florida Sisters (CFS), and they are mighty fine ladies. The chapter includes about 130 members from as far away as Key West to the south and as far north as Atlanta, Georgia. Most members travel from both coasts to the rather central Florida meeting location. There were approximately 40 members at the August meeting and probably 10 to 15 spouses. They experience a high turnover rate just like Alpha-Zeta. (Must be the nature of things.) They have a high seasonal membership fluctuation as the winter visitors move south to warmer climates (humm.). There is a large contingency of spouses and SOs and I met many this last Saturday. The national Tri-Ess paid the expenses for three spouses to attend the SPICE conference held last month and a very nice report was presented to the group.

The monthly Orlando Tri-Ess meetings are really two day affairs. On the Friday before the first Saturday there is an evening dinner held at the Adams Mark Hotel near the Florida Mall. The "Elegant Ladies Out on the Town" event meet at about 7 pm for drinks in the Habitat Lounge. About 12 ladies and spouses can be expected to attend and unfortunately, I could not get away from work, changed, and half way across the state before 7 pm or I would have been there too. Sigh. At about 8 pm, the group walks across the lobby of this rather high class hotel to the Le Jardin restaurant for dinner. The event is an opportunity for the ladies and spouses to "dress to the nines" (or eights). The Adams Mark and the Florida Mall are very tolerant of the transgendered community & I don't believe there have been any problems from the group's presence. Meals are pricey at about $25 to $30 each.

The Saturday meeting begins at 4:30 pm and lasts through about 10:00 pm. (When I heard this I was sure there was a mistake in the instructions, but I can assure you that it started on time and lasted way past 10:00). The meeting is always (with a few exceptions) held at the Days Suites in Kissimmee. The suite is two bedrooms with two bathrooms and a rather large living area and kitchen. The bathrooms offer those who can not change beforehand an opportunity to come to the meetings and change privately or in groups... (don't let your mind get too far off track here). From 4:30 or so to 7:00 there is a social period with soft drinks, chips and dips—much like a cocktail party. At 7:00 is a pot luck dinner. Generally, someone from the month before agrees to bring the main coarse—turkey, ham, etc. Others bring side dishes. The costs for the main course and the cost of the suite at the Days Suite is paid for out of the $10 meeting fee.

At about 9:00 is the monthly meeting with the usual Tri-Ess and transgendered topics of interest to us all. (Life's the same for us and our spouses everywhere). Spouses participate for a portion of the meeting, then break out for their own (closed) meeting in one of the bedrooms. (Do you think they are in there commenting on prettiest dress, best legs, or hairiest arms????). After the meeting, everyone helps clean up the Suite, packs up whatever needs to be packed and generally puts the Suite back in order. Those who need to change get first use of the bathrooms. I wouldn't have thought that six and a half hours could go so fast.

Meeting at a place so close to Disney World presents some unusual situations when meeting at a facility that caters to families. FEM/CFS has had no problems at the Days Suites from either the management or guests and the members are very careful to not cause a problem. Although, as you can imagine, this time of year is not the best to be outdoors in Florida, two teenage girls spent a great majority of the time on their balcony watching the goings on below. I bet they will have stories to tell their friends when they get back home to wherever they came from. This was somewhat amusing to the members too.

As I was saying when I started this article, what a plan! Unfortunately, there are always things that can and do go wrong and we are all in a very "precarious state" when things do go wrong. For me it was when the door closed at the hotel as I was leaving and I realized my key was inside. But that's another story.

(Reprinted from "The Cactus Flower," newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter.)

Gaining Freedom Without Leaving Your Closet

by Melissa [redacted]

Many of you probably will not believe what I am about to relate to you, but it is a true story. Some of you may even believe that you know who this person is. I have only met her through e-mail; we have never seen each other. I do know the name of her employer, her feminine name and even her male name, because her work e-mail address is her male name @company name.com. For this article, I'll call her Ms. Y to protect her anonymity.

Several months ago another Transgender Activist was telling me about a crossdresser he knew who was involved in some rather unusual activities in their company. Ms. Y was working with her Human Resources Director to develop an Equal Employment Opportunity Policy that covered gender identity. In and of itself, it does not appear to be that great an accomplishment. The unusual aspect, is that Ms. Y has never "come out of her closet" to her employer or any of her co-workers, only her immediate family. When I learned this last bit of information, I most assuredly wanted to learn more about Ms. Y.

The Transgender Activist got the two of us together through e-mail and after several messages she agreed to let me share this with you so you could see that you can make a difference without picketing, lobbying, marching in parades, etc.

To accomplish her goal, Ms. Y had to spend quite a bit of time in small, private meetings with the Human Resources Director as well as other Directors and Vice Presidents of her company. Ms. Y did an outstanding job of educating these upper managers without revealing her secret.

On February 1, 1998, the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy on the right was put into practice at her employer.

If you are willing to take a chance and expose yourself as a caring individual who is against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, follow in Ms. Y's footsteps, she has already blazed the trail for you.

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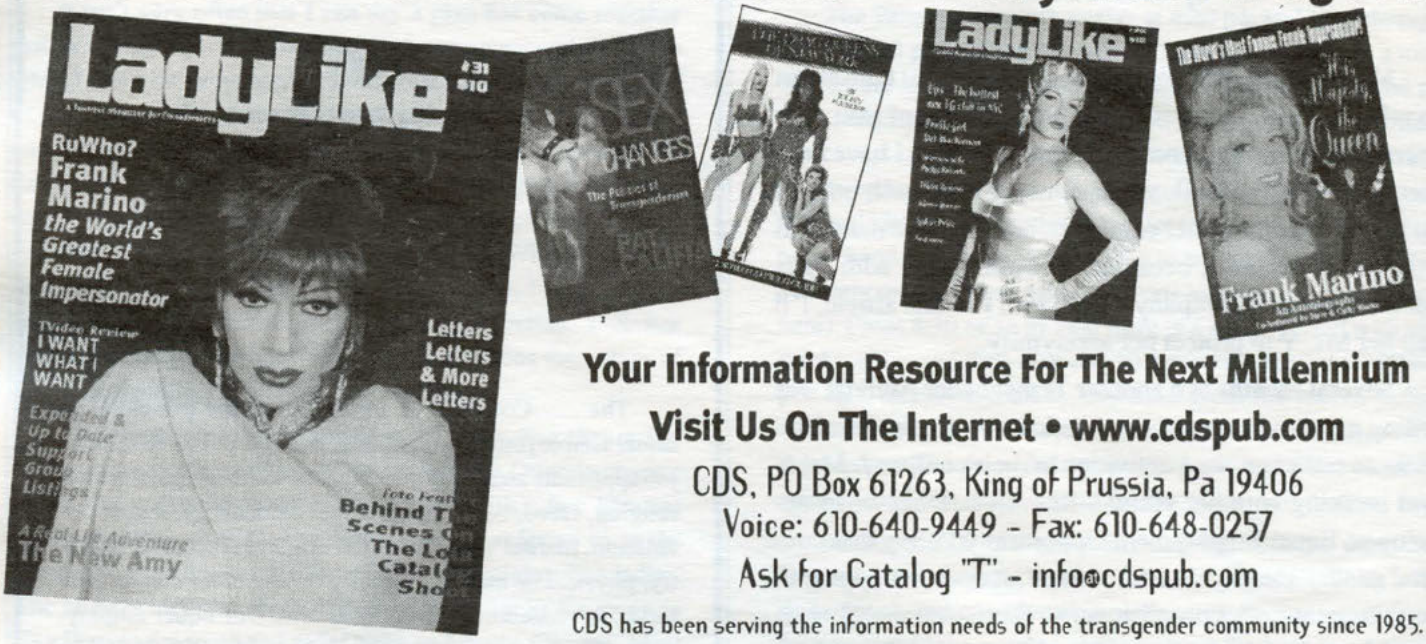

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How Can I Accept Someone As Imperfect As Me?

by Rachel Miller

Self-acceptance, to acknowledge myself exactly as I am, is a prerequisite for becoming a healthy, integrated person. As Suzanne Kilkus said so eloquently in a recent talk, acceptance means, "What is, is!" Call it a reality check but beyond that it means reaching the realization that with all of my quirks and shortcomings, I am okay. I'm not perfect, but I don't have to justify my imperfections. I don't even have to pledge to fix them. I just have to acknowledge that they exist.

For good mental health, we need to learn to think positively about ourselves. There are signs everywhere with slogans about what happiness is. Happiness is _____(fill in the blank). Those signs and slogans are fine, but a slogan that we ought to promote for greater self-healing is: True happiness is accepting yourself as you are. How can we improve our ability to think more positively about ourselves?

Respect yourself and be proud of who you are rather than trying to be like someone else.

Explore and appreciate your own talents as your special gifts.

Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings and trust them enough to act on what you think is right and makes you feel happy.

Become your best friend and learn to love yourself as a unique individual.

Learning to accept myself continues (as in not done yet) to be one of the most difficult tasks I have ever undertaken. I haven't found a shortcut or a quick fix. I haven't found anyone who could do it for me. Yet for all the difficulty, working through this process has improved my life in ways I never imagined. I started by being true to myself and that was difficult. I was afraid that I might not like what I would find, however I was hurting badly enough to start. Once I stopped pretending and faced the truth even the parts of me that I didn't like so much began to soften and change. In retrospect my only regret is not starting sooner.

Before he died, Leo Buscaglia was kind enough to allow me to quote some priceless wisdom about self-acceptance from his book, Living, Loving, & Learning. He was talking about how we often try to be what others expect of us, a banana, rather than what we were created to be, a peach. Leo offered a different, far better approach. "Isn't it all right to say to them, 'I am so sorry I cannot be a banana. I would love to be a banana if I could for you, but I'm a peach.' And you know what? If you wait long enough, you'll find a peach lover. And then you can live your life as a peach, and you don't have to live your life as a banana. All the lost energy it takes to be a banana, when you're a peach."

Many of us are beautiful, luscious peaches trying desperately to live up to society's view of a banana. We would be healthier peaches if we took control of our lives and stopped living as others expect. We could shed some of our not-so-wonderful-banana-traits if we learned about our true selves and then let that spirit free. Each of us has tremendous gifts locked inside that could benefit ourselves and the world yet most of us hold back for one reason or another. Transvestism seemed like a good reason to hold back. It was my "private devil" until I learned to accept it as an integral part of me. Everyone has their own version of a "private devil." When we learn to accept ours along with our neighbors', everyone can quit pretending and be themselves.

You might like the real you, so why not let that person out and give yourself a chance to know you.

You might be surprised how positively others react to the real you, so why not let that person out and give them a chance to know you.

Don't you know that you are okay just the way you are...a beautiful peach?

The supreme happiness of life
is the conviction of being loved for yourself,
or, more correctly, being loved in spite of yourself.
-Victor Hugo

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Female Bonding?

By Denise

This is a little tale of a special love and a certain cuteness that I can't help but share with you. Those of you who know me really well know I have a cat. This is a female cat I adopted from the humane society in the summer of 1991. She is a very loving cat and has been from day one. (Those few of you who have met her in person know this is a fact.) Over the last seven years we have become the best of friends, and we can talk to each other about anything.

I have noticed, and similar circumstances have been mentioned by other crossdressers with cats, that our kitty friends not only accept us no matter what we are wearing, but they actually seem to prefer us when we are "en femme." I've noticed when I'm in my "guy" mode Kitty is still very loving as I am to her. I have also noticed that when I am "en femme" that she wastes no time to hop up into my skirted lap and snuggle up close.

Again, those who know me fairly well also know how much I enjoy the bouffant fashions of the 1950s with the full skirts and dresses and lots of crispy crinoline slips. Keep this in mind as you read on.

Most of the time over the last several years I've been the one who checks in at the office on meeting day. There is a certain "science" to the check-in process that has to do with timing. Get there too early and the suite is not ready yet and they tell you to come back in 45 minutes for the key. Get there too late and there is a big line delaying things even further. So, I try to get there early and depending on how busy things are and what time I arrive, generally I'll walk over to "Old Town" next door for a little while. (Old Town is a shopping village, with lots of neat little shops.)

My favorite shop is one with all sorts of goodies from the 1950s including music, Elvis collectibles, "I Love Lucy" collectibles, and so on. Before the July meeting I stopped in once again to see what was new. I just couldn't pass up an adorable porcelain doll that I had not seen before. (A few of you at the meeting saw her towards the end of the night.) The doll is blonde and blue eyed, just like me when I'm en femme, and she is wearing a white blouse, red poodle skirt, nylon net petticoat, and even saddle shoes!

Now, I wasn't sure just what I was going to do with this doll, but she sure is adorable. Once home, I took her out of the box and just sat her on the bed resting against the pillows.

After settling in and putting away various meeting supplies, etc., I fired up the computer and went on line to check for any mail, etc.. As I was answering an E-mail from a new sister, I glanced behind me only to find Kitty had already hopped up on the bed and found a new friend. Just as though I was watching television in one of my many 50s outfits, Kitty was snuggled right up against the doll, resting her head right on her lap and bright red poodle skirt. And she's still there now just as she was when I started this little article. I may not have known exactly what to do with the doll, but it seems Kitty sure likes her. Now she has someone to keep her company while I'm at work or at meetings.

Continued from page 43

Tri-Ess Chapters

Phoenix, AZ Metro Area
ALPHA ZETA
Box 1738, Tempe, AZ 85280-1738
Cindy N. AZ-2817-N: 602-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted] Web Site: http://tri-ess.org
Tucson, AZ Metro Area
TAU UPSILON
8802 E Broadway Blvd.#145, Tucson, AZ 85710
Contact: Rebecca AZ-3954-B Phone: 520-[redacted]
E-mail Rebecca: [redacted]
E-mail Robby: [redacted]
Web: http://members.aol.com/tauupsilon
Las Vegas, NV Metro Area
THETA UPSILON GAMMA
P.O. Box 42401, Las Vegas, NV 89116
Rosalind Doyle NV-2474-P: 702-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]

Region 9 (Florida)

Orlando, FL Metro Area
PHI EPSILON MU
P.O. Box 3261, Winter Park, FL 32790
Contact: Alice FL-3077-E: 407-[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]
Web Site: http://www.horizon-usa.com/misc/fem.htm
Fort Myers, FL Metro Area
GAMMA CHI BETA
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Contact: Alice FL-3077-E: 407-[redacted]
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MU BETA GAMMA
PO Box 4126, Hialeah, FL 33014-1126
Contact: Barbara Ann
E-Mail: [redacted] Phone: 1-305-[redacted]

Region 10 (International)

Quebec City, PQ Metro Area
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BETA EPSILON LAMBDA
1050 Rue Orleans, Charlesbourg, PQ G1H 2H2
Micheline (418) [redacted] Fax: 418-621-5092
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Overseas Contact: Eve Burchert
574 Golfview Dr., Barrington IL 60010

Book Review

by Onnalee MN-9147-G*

Book Title: *Coping with Crossdressing*

by JoAnn Roberts

I am pleased to have back in my possession my personal copy of JoAnn Robert's book ***Coping with Crossdressing***. I received my copy as part of the registration packet at the first S.P.I.C.E. down in Dallas in 1993. So nervous and irritable was my state at that time, I was offended by the discovery of the inclusion of that booklet in the packet. I refused to even consider it until Friday evening, after the end of the second day of intense and eye-opening sessions. Exhausted and fortunate enough to have a private room, I fixed myself a drink, kicked off my shoes and settled onto the couch to begin scanning its contents in a most contentious manner. So relaxed and straight forward was [is] the writer's style, I got over the argumentative and defensive mind set quickly.

As with any controversial and/or complex subject, an overview of its history with definitions of terms must needs be done. Roberts does so quickly, cleanly and clearly, never overburdening with theory. Attention is focused neatly and understandably on how crossdressers feel about themselves. It was when I got to the reason for being at S.P.I.C.E. that the book began to really turn on my interest. The section on "Partners' Issues and Strengthening the Relationship" spoke so directly to me, I was convinced the author was a real woman. . .the wife of a transvestite [which is the term Dr. Roberts uses throughout]. Amazing!

I had the opportunity to meet, talk and even work a bit with Joe Roberts at S.P.I.C.E. 3 in Memphis. The shock was to discover how short he was next to me [I am six feet tall]. I identified so well with the written view points, I had unconsciously put him on a physical equal footing with myself at eye-to-eye level.

Having re-read Roberts' book again for the first time in almost four years, I am impressed still with the clarity and simplicity of the writing, the sensitivity and understanding with which solutions to our common difficulties with this phenomenon are put forth. I would still highly recommend "Coping With Crossdressing" by JoAnn Roberts,Ph.D. [Second Edition, C. 1992,] as an initial information source for any woman just learning about crossdressing for the first time. I have, as President of Beta Gamma Chapter, directed our librarian to purchase and add several copies of the booklet to our chapter library for the aid and support of our members' wives/partners. (Now that my personal copy with my marginal notes has been returned to me, I'd like to keep it at home for ready reference!)

*P.S. I am STRONGLY in favor of using Tri-Ess numbers as attribution signatures. I think it helps to build identification AND pride of membership.

[Ed. Note: Right on, Onnalee! Frances TX-9001-F]

My Name Is Janice

by Janice E. [redacted]

This is Janice's story about how, with the help of many friends, she was finally able to gain the confidence and courage to start her journey into an exciting and fulfilling new life.

Janice had been closeted for many years until one special day in June, 1998, when she finally got up the courage to appear in public for the first time. She met a special friend on that day who helped her gain confidence in herself and changed her life forever.

There had always been a conflict between her male and female personas, but as she matured this conflict became more and more severe. This conflict caused her male persona to exhibit arrogance and the inability to be compassionate and understanding toward others. This caused many conflicts both in personal as well as on-the-job relationships.

The conflict began at the age of 7 or 8, and as a child she was always very confused about the strange feelings that were surfacing. The taunting by the other children and the loneliness this caused resulted in a very frustrating childhood.

By her early teens it became apparent she was different. The desire to be female was getting stronger and stronger as the years passed. She began dressing in female clothes in secret, never allowing anyone to know of this "strange" desire. When dressed as a female she felt more at ease and the frustrations seemed to subside somewhat.

In her late teens she decided she would "cure" herself of this affliction and started what was to become her "Macho" years. She discarded her female clothing and started doing what were considered male activities. She tried to do all the things that would, at least superficially, show the world she was male. She married and had children, but the desire to be female kept resurfacing, no matter how hard she tried to deny it.

In her early thirties she began what was to become her way of life, dressing as a female in secret and always being afraid of someone "catching" her. There were no support groups available to her at that time in her life, and she became more and more depressed, as these feelings were becoming stronger as the years passed. With no one to share her feelings with, she became more and more withdrawn. Her interaction with peers on the job was deteriorating and her work, which had become her life, was suffering.

As the years passed, her male persona developed a very arrogant and uncaring attitude that caused many problems with family members and business associates. Only when she was able to dress as a female did this attitude change. As she was never able to show the world this side of her personality, they would never know the compassionate and kind person she really was.

In 1988 a work assignment brought her to Chicago, and by a quirk of fate she found an advertisement in the "Chicago Tribune" about a crossdressers' support group. She called the number in the paper. After talking with the person on the other end, she finally found out she was not alone. She was invited to the next meeting, and when that day finally came it was filled with excitement. This would be the first time in her life she actually would be seen by other people. She was concerned that she did not look good enough to be seen in public and was very frightened. She arrived early and stayed in the parking lot for a long time before she finally got up the nerve to walk into the meeting. Finally, after so many years, she was able to show her true self!

It was at this meeting that Janice met a very special person who became her friend and helped guide her through this difficult time in her life. Janice has emerged as a thoughtful and caring person with a zest for life. She is finally leading a happy and fulfilling life. Her whole attitude has changed in both her personal and business life. She now has the confidence to be who she really is! Janice has been very lucky in finding true friends who understand and really care about her.

For all of you out there who are going through what Janice has experienced, please take that first step and your life will dramatically improve. Just remember, a closet is a very dark and lonely place!

The White Christmas

by Phyllis Randolph Frye, Attorney, Houston, Texas

(Recently, I went back into my many boxes of diaries, letters and other records to retrieve something from the past. In so doing, I met a flood of memories of episodes in my life, what some might call my "War Stories". If you are willing to read them, I will make the effort to produce them on a regular basis for publication.)

December of 1977 was a bleak month for my spouse and me. I had been unemployed for nineteen months since I was last fired for being "a dress wearing freak". Her job wasn't generating what we needed because during the time that we were both employed, we had accumulated much debt. (Several years later, her profession enjoyed a substantial pay raise, but that was later.) We had used all of the savings while trying to learn how to downgrade our standard of living.

To make it worse, I had been unable to get unemployment compensation. My last employer did not fight it, but I had a homophobic Texas Employment Commission referee who chose to write up my interview in such a way that I was blocked from benefits. (We eventually won and got the benefits, but that was later.)

We felt very alone because neither of our families would have anything to do with us. (Her mom eventually came around and became a great ally, but that was later.)

The fight to change the ordinance was not making much headway. At the time Houston had a crossdressing ordinance. I'd already been lobbying against it for about a year. Every day, I never knew if I'd be arrested. Every day, my spouse never knew when she left for work if I'd make it home from job hunting, lobbying and such. (The ordinance was overturned in 1980, but that was later.)

Christmas was going to be meager. We had shoes, but they were not winter shoes. We had some warm clothes, but they were a bit tattered. It was depressing as hell. Actually, it was all around shitty.

About the only things we did have were each other, our faith in God and our church family. Even though she and I loved each other (and still do) and were best friends (and still are) those years of hardship bonded us together. We felt that our faith was being tested, much as in the story of Job, but no matter how bad it got we always tithed (and still do) 10% of our gross. Our church family helped to keep the loneliness and the isolation at bay. We were with the Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection and we sang in the choir. (Today when I sing the Hallelujah Chorus, I get it all mixed up. In junior high, I memorized it as a tenor and in college I learned the bass line. There at MCCR I sang soprano and in later years I did the alto line. Now when I hear it I just kind of sing it all.)

Each year at MCCR, as in most other churches, they have a White Christmas offering where people bring canned and non-perishable goods each Sunday in December, wrapped in white paper, and place them at the altar. The poor families are given this the day before Christmas.

As I sit here keypunching this out, I am starting to cry again, because they brought the food to us. We were the White Christmas family that year. It was really quite wonderful. We separated the eight boxes of food into category and took out ten percent. We then went to another transgendered person who had been living on the street because she'd also lost her job and gave it to her. We three cried a lot. With the money we saved from not having to buy food for several weeks, we bought some warm shoes and each a warmer coat.

As you all know, my spouse and I did survive and now are prosperous. The other transgendered person I referred to was an engineering graphics designer. She got a job several months later washing cars. Eventually, she made it back and got rehired in her previous profession.

I shall never forget.

Tri-Ess Supporting Membership Information - also complete reverse side

_ *Yes !* I would like to join in supporting Tri-Ess, *the Society for the Second Self, inc.*

Please select one of the categories and levels of suggested minimum supporting memberships shown below

All Tri-Ess supporting members receive - Membership Card and *The Femme Mirror,* our quarterly magazine, along with special discounts on selected products and services. Sustaining and Life Members receive special recognition and additional valuable membership benefits. Crossdressers will also receive the Tri-Ess Membership Directory, its supplements and a free personal listing in the Directory. Supportive Wives who join with their crossdressing husbands in the "Couple" category receive the quarterly newsletter, *Sweetheart Connection,* and early registration discounts for 'SPICE', annual spouses' conference. Wives and female partners may also join in the "Individual" category to receive their own copies of *The Femme Mirror.*

"Individual" Supporting Membership categories
Intended for Crossdressers only (see definitions)

*New - 16.7% Special savings - 2 Year Option**

___ Annual $36 per year $60 for two years*

___ Sustaining $96 per year* $160 for two years*

___ Life Member $500 * one time payment

"Couple" Supporting Membership categories
For Crossdressers and spouses or female partners

*New - 16.7% Special savings - 2 Year Option**

___ Annual $48 per year* $80 for two years*

___ Sustaining $120 per year* $200 for two years*

___ Life Member $700 * one time payment

___ Other, Please specify your optional or additional gift amount $ _____

Please check the appropriate statements: ___ I am - OR ___ I am not - over eighteen (18) years of age.

___ I am - OR ___ I am not - A CROSSDRESSER - defined as an individual, typically a heterosexual male, who occasionally chooses to make a social role presentation considered appropriate for persons of the opposite genetic sex, *for the purpose of personal expression*, without the intention of entering a program leading to sex reassignment surgery, and without attempting to attract a partner of the same genetic sex. Your femme signature is satisfactory.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Payment Options: ___ Enclosed is my Check or Money Order payable in US Dollars to "Tri-Ess"

___ Charge my membership to ___ VISA or ___ MasterCard or ___ American Express

Account Number _____ Expiration Date _____/_____

If paying by credit card, please enclose a separate sheet of paper showing (1) your name as it appears on the card, (2) the billing address, and (3) your credit card signature. This information is confidential and secure. Your credit card statement will indicate PM Publishers Inc, Katy, Texas, and show the payment amount you have indicated above, plus an additional 5% donation. ($36=$37.80, $48=$50.40).

For your security, The Society makes every effort to protect the confidentiality of all contributors, members and applicants. Your true identity, personal check and credit card information are safe with us.

* One time payment in full is required for these categories. Crossdressers financially unable to afford the minimum annual contribution amounts shown above should write for optional payment plans, reduced payments or waiver.

[The terms used herein assume the Crossdresser is male. Female Crossdressers are also welcomed. Please write Tri-Ess for detailed information]

the Society for the Second Self, inc. / 8880 Bellaire Boulevard, B2, Suite 104 / Houston, TX 77036-4621
Tri-Ess Email: [redacted] Tri-Ess Telephone Helpline: 713.349-8969

Please mail this completed form and payments to:

Donna [redacted]
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659-7859

Donna [redacted]'s Email Address
[redacted]

Tri-Ess Supporting Membership Information - also complete reverse side

For privacy and security purposes, Crossdressers and their wives, and other members, may choose to use assumed names. Most Crossdressers adopt a feminine name. If you do not have a name, have fun. You might select one that is similar to your real name, 'Sam' becomes 'Samantha', 'Donald' can be 'Donna', or choose one that defines your femme personality, 'Hillary', 'Mae', 'Dolly', 'Marilyn', your first girlfriend, or favorite movie actress. You can use your true surname, or choose a modification of your last name. However, it is usually advisable and we recommend you create a completely different femme surname. The choice of your name(s) should be made thoughtfully to meet your personal security needs and preferences. Even your mailing name may be another pseudonym. For additional security and convenience, we encourage Crossdressers to use a US Post Office Box or similar commercial mail receiving service. Simply rent the box in your true name and list any others names, including your femme name and your mailing name, as authorized to receive mail.

If you have been a former member of Tri-Ess please give your membership number, if possible, state of residence at the time, and the femme name used for your previous membership

Previous Tri-Ess number _____ Name _____ State _____

___ For "Individual" Crossdressers (Wives may also join as an 'Individual')

___ Check here to have a Tri-Ess Big Sister' contact you by mail

Femme Name _____

Mailing Name _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip+4 _____

___Check here to indicate a wife Joining as an Individual Please give the membership number of your Crossdressing partner

_____

___ For "Couples" (Crossdresser and supportive spouse or female partner)

___Check here if you wish to to be contacted by the nearest Tri-Ess Chapter

Crossdresser's femme name _____

Spouse/Partner's name or other adopted name to be used _____

Mailing Name(s) _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip +4 _____

Optional: Telephone Number in case we need to contact you

_____

Ask for:

_____

Optional: Secure Email Address:

_____

The "Friends of Tri-Ess" Supporting Membership categories below are intended for non-Crossdressers; individuals, organizations, vendors and other entities that support the educational aims and purposes of The Society. "Commercial" Members receive discounted advertising rates and other important benefits, write for complete details.

___ Friend of Tri-Ess "Annual" Member minimum contribution $ 24 per year
___ Friend of Tri-Ess "Commercial" Member minimum contribution $ 48 per year *
___ Friend of Tri-Ess "Benefactor" minimum contribution $100 * Please Specify $_____

Organization Name (If applicable) or Business Name (Commercial Members) _____

Mailing Name of Contact Person _____

Telephone Number _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip +4 _____

Milicent

The Cross Dressing Worm

By Melissa Ann Hadley

In the Mirror

by Dorrie McCubbrey

When I look in the mirror
What do I see?
Is it my own reflection
Looking back at me?
Do I see someone
I wish I was not?
Do I focus on things
I haven't got?
Or can I feel complete
And give a smile or two?
Can I look at myself
And say "I love you"?
For it is with this self
I must face the day
And know self-acceptance
Is the only way.
I can't live for tomorrow.
I've got to live for now.
And I intend to use my life
As best as I know how.
So when I look in the mirror
What do I see?
I see a vision of myself
Being all that I can be.

(Reprinted from La Femme Silhouette. Newsletter of Alpha Omega Chapter)

the Society for the Second Self, inc.
"TRI-ESS" THE INTERNATIONAL NONPROFIT EDUCATIONAL AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATION FOR CROSSDRESSERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Tri-Ess International Office: 8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104, Houston TX 77036-4621 Phone/Fax: 713-349-8969 E-Mail: [redacted]

Jane Ellen Fairfax, M.D.
Chair, Board of Directors
The Society for the Second Self, Inc.
8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104
Houston TX 77036-4621
Phone/Fax: 713-349-8969
E-Mail: [redacted]

February 25, 1998

Dear Tri-Ess Sister,

Tri-Ess has just inaugurated a new service for you! As you know, our online subscription forum for our wives has been a glorious success. We now have started a new online forum for our crossdresser members. The new program will enable us to chat about the "how-to's" of cross dressing, crossdressing activities, and personal and relationship issues. The forum will be kept strictly sleaze-free, and will focus on our needs as crossdressers. It's our own place for nonjudgemental dialogue; a place where we can access support, make friends, and have fun. Subscription is a part of your Tri-Ess membership; there is no extra charge for this service. To subscribe, e-mail Moderator Sofronia Anne Strong as follows:

[redacted]

When you request your subscription, please be sure to include your crossgender name and your entire Tri-Ess membership number; e.g.,

Jane Doe TX-3456-T

It is very important that you keep your Tri-Ess membership current, so that your service will not be interrupted. This program is limited to current Tri-Ess members only.

When renewing your Tri-Ess membership, you now have the option of renewing for two years at a reduced rate. The annual renewal rate is now $36/year for an individual membership, and $48/year for a couple's membership. The 2-year renewal rates are $60 and $80, respectively. This represents a savings of 16.7% over the annual rate. Tri-Ess is very proud of the fact that we have been able to steadily increase programs and services without raising membership fees. The old adage is true: "There is strength in numbers." Thanks to your continuing support, we are able to do more than ever to further the cause of crossdressers and their loved ones all over the world.

Yours in sisterhood,

Jane E. Fairfax, MD

Jane Ellen Fairfax, Chair
Tri-Ess Board of Directors