

ADAM'S WORD

August 1990 Update

April 6, 1990

Dear Bud,

Well, it really happened! We got together, shared experiences and knowledge and feelings. Last June the idea of an all-day female-to-male program at IFGE's Convention was just that -- an idea.

Some months back, I started this letter to Bud, an F-to-M who shared with me the desire to organize a get together for our own segment, the female to male transsexual and crossdresser. I didn't really expect to ever meet Bud. Like many of us, Bud has his share of financial woes. Bud's enthusiasm was a constant support (and challenge) to me as I worked, often alone, putting the wheels in motion that would bring about the all day session for us guys this past March. And Bud did make it! What a joy!

Over twenty persons attended some part of the female-to-male program; some attended the general TS program that started on Friday as well. And some persons were only able to attend the "post program" meeting of The Adam Society (our local support group) which was held on Sunday afternoon. While most of the attendees were F-to-M TSs, we had in our midst one mother, three girlfriends, a male friend, and one wife.

Even though we had some good programs, probably the neatest part of all was the informal sharing that took place as many met other TSs for the first time. And the conversations went on into the wee hours of the night, or started early the next morning to begin afresh. What were we talking about? Hormones, surgical techniques, legal issues, transitioning on the job, our sexuality, accepting ourselves, confronting our own values and beliefs and making sense of things. We even spent some time learning about others, e.g., women who pass who are not transsexuals ("gender blending" females), and male-to-female crossdressers and transsexuals. We shared feelings, fears, and pride. And this was only a beginning, for now we have new contacts and friends.

IFGE and the male-to-female conventioners learned much from us as well. Next year there is going to be a two day female-to-male program at IFGE's Convention. Matt [REDACTED], legally male now, married, and in the last few stages of his surgeries, is the program coordinator. He is looking for persons interested in presenting programs and program ideas in general. If you have ideas or suggestions, please send them in soon.

Dates for next year's IFGE female-to-male program: April 12 and 13, 1991. The conference will be held in Denver, Colorado.

In June of this year, there was a female-to-male conference at the Midwestern sponsored "Be All You Can Be Weekend" for crossdressers and transsexuals, held in Pittsburgh, PA. It was quite an experience even though it had a small attendance. Four couples and one "unattached" guy made up the participants, compared to the over 200 male-to-female attendees. The events were both social and educational. Matt [REDACTED] led the sessions and was he dynamite! He helped us to look at the big picture-getting our lives in order while taking steps and making decisions which lead to altering our physical bodies. Matt was a wealth of information as was his wife, Karen. We learned of the surgical procedures of yet another doctor, working in the Detroit area. We discussed legal issues, our relationships, and many other topics. Learning where to seek out information was another issue. While networking is certainly important, some things you can learn on your own quite easily. For example, if you are unsure just what the law is regarding changing your name on your birth certificate, you can find out by writing to the State Department of Public Health, Vital Statistics, in the State in which you were born. Different states have different procedures and different statutes. Ask and you will find out!

On a more personal level, I met two people who have enriched my life immensely. As many of you know, I am in a relationship with a male-to-female who lives full time as a female. At "Be All" I was able to talk and share experiences with a couple living in a lifestyle much like mine.

Next year's Be All will be held in Cleveland, OH in June. NOTE: One of the comments made at the IFGE convention was the desire to have more contact with the other participants. Be All is designed to combine the social and the educational aspects to a greater degree perhaps than the IFGE Convention.

ANNOUNCEMENT: The Adam Society will be holding a meeting Sunday, August 12, 1990. 3:30 P.M. in the offices of IFGE. IFGE is located at [REDACTED], Waltham, MA. This will be an open meeting for female-to-male transsexuals, crossdressers, and their guests, family members, and friends (including interested therapists, etc.). If you need directions, please call [REDACTED] ask for Dan or Yvonne.

Steve [REDACTED] is going to be our guest speaker. Steve was scheduled to be a speaker of the IFGE Convention before he suffered injuries from a car accident. Steve is a post-op who has expertise in the areas of legal issues and insurance. So spread the word and plan on joining us for the afternoon. A social time will follow the meeting. A free will collection will be taken to defray Steve's transportation costs.

Also, the club newsletter, "Adam's Word" will only be published during those months when the club has met.

The following article was written by a very good friend of mine whom I had the pleasure of meeting through my association with IFGE and Fantasia Fair. Jamie McClosky is a lovely woman and a free thinker who I admire very much. Here is her report "back home" to the folks in the May The Tartan Skirt, newsletter of the Scottish TV/TS Group. While she writes from the male-to-female viewpoint, I decided to include her entire article, as is. There's so much to learn - about ourselves and others. Her book review is great!

A Voice From America.

(The Tartan Skirt Report — March 1990)

In my last report, about straight friends who know me as a woman, I left out Miriam, a legal assistant at the Wall Street law firm where I work. She was also my special crossdressing assistant when I changed in the ladies room there. She's very much a female — warm, empathic and intuitive — and it was easy to share my "secret" with her.

I don't find restroom conversions as easy as they sound in some accounts. Besides the trepidation (which is part of the fun), these metamorphoses require planning and more than a little time to execute. One has to note down exactly what to bring, and where it will be. People work late at banks and law firms, where I've changed. I make careful lists on my word processor with titles such as "How to Transvest at Citibank". It wouldn't do to forget one's coat or bag and have to re-enter the office, en femme, to retrieve it.

A special event in New York on March 3rd was the Night of a Thousand Gowns, a charity event that raises thousands of dollars to fight AIDS. I didn't go, but met ladies from around the country who did. On the Friday some of us went to Jan Wallman's cabaret and heard Barbara Lea, a fine jazz singer.

In her career at booking nightclub acts, Jan helped some famous people make their names — including Woody Allen, Barbra Streisand and Dick Cavett. I discovered her Village boite nine years ago, when I started getting bold as Jamie, and brought a lot of other TVs there. Now she's uptown and it's not as bohemian, but some of us still go. Barbara Lea, besides being a great singer, is a very well educated and intelligent lady. She cheered me by saying that men's crossdressing indicates there truly are things in woman's lot that are envied by man.

Jan's mother, Merce, who's of mainly Scots extraction, is still lively and mentally sharp at 95. She told me how she makes almost daily rounds of bars with gay friends, though she can no longer have a drink at each one. Merce was never very critical of sexual or gender minorities. She winters in New York with Jan to escape the chill of the Midwest, where she lives the rest of the year.

On the Sunday, Sheila from Pittsburgh and I painted the town magenta. Curiously, we were given extra friendly attention at a straight cabaret called the Village Gate, where they said things like "Don't be a stranger" when we left. Of course this was in the village, and we wore very pretty dresses. Another spot we hit was 5 Oaks, where we chatted with Alice, a Scottish waitress who's a special person. Sheila and I had a wonderful time, dishing everybody in the paraculture, just like the Bitch (no, not quite).

Recently I've come across two excellent books that would belong in any complete library about gender. I've written a long review of the first, because it describes a scene that's foreign to us, but I think they're both of great importance.

The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe, by Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C van de Pol. 1989, St. Martin's Press, New York
128 pp. plus 16 pp. of plates. \$29.95.

two and three

Living in an age of male-to-female crossdressing, I was intrigued to discover that, ~~three and four~~ centuries back, the majority of TVs were women. Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, two social historians at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, explore many aspects of their story in this entertaining book.

The era of female crossdressers — though there may have been some in earlier times whom we don't know about — was the 17th and 18th centuries. This study, the first of its kind, follows the careers of 119 Dutch women who appeared in men's clothes between 1500 and 1839, why and how they dressed, how they kept the secret and how society reacted when they were discovered.

Most of these crossdressers were poor. Many were immigrants, especially from Germany. The authors point out that female TVs in general came mainly from Northern Europe, where women had more freedom but less security than in Mediterranean countries. Besides the women documented in the study, there were many female brigands and cutpurses; pirates such as the English Anne Bonney and Mary Read; Catalina de

1550

Adarn's Word

Erauso, a Spanish conquistadora who was neither a lady nor a gentleman, and Genevieve Premoy, who as the "Chevalier Balthazar" was admitted to the Order of St. Louis by Louis XIV.

At that time crossdressing was often acceptable for women, though not for men. (Men were seen as demeaning themselves while women were stepping up in life, and if men were suspected of homosexuality they'd be put to death). Women would wear men's clothes for safety when travelling alone, and frequently during festivals.

Many of the Dutch crossdressers joined the army and navy — to follow a lover to the East, for example, or because it was the best way they could earn a living. Some of them were among the bravest fighting "men" during almost perpetual wars with Spain, France and England.

The authors believe that their 119 women were the tip of the iceberg: since most information came from court records, these female TVs were basically those who got caught. And there's a preponderance of women who became sailors and soldiers, probably because it was harder for them to keep their sex a secret. Dekker and van de Pol also suspect that however practical the women's reasons for crossdressing, there were probably deeper needs of which they were not aware.

Although these women were obviously courageous, they did know that others had gone before them. There was a tradition of female crossdressing, as revealed in books, plays and popular songs. This tradition goes back to female saints who crossdressed in the 5th to 7th centuries and later with the 9th Century "Pope Joan" and, of course, Joan of Arc. With this background, we can understand how a young woman who had to fend for herself might think, "what better way than as a man?" Several of the women reported that, when destitute, someone would give them a set of male clothes and advise them to join the army or navy.

Besides fear of discovery, sexual abstinence was a price that most of these women paid for male privilege. For one thing, many impoverished women chose to be men so they wouldn't have to be prostitutes. Secondly, although many of the crossdressers married real women for the sake of appearances, or economic advantage, most lived with their "wives"

as "sisters".

This may seem unlikely to us, but in that age most people couldn't imagine lovemaking without a penis. As a biproduct of their study, Dekker and van de Pol present a three-phase theory of modern lesbianism. In the first, up to about 1800, a woman who fell in love with a woman believed she was really a man, and would dress accordingly. In the 19th Century, as sexual knowledge and personal liberty increased, love between women became better understood. But it was only in the 1960s that homosexual women began to dispense with the heterosexual "butch-femme" model and work out their own style of loving. Though many women must have discovered lesbianism through crossdressing, this development is a nice example of how, with greater understanding of human nature, notions of gender limitations can change profoundly. This writer hopes some such evolution may occur in heterosexual relationships as well.

My favourite of the few documented lesbians was Cornelia Gerrits van Breugel, who crossdressed and married a woman, then raised suspicions when she went back to living as a woman. Why? She could no longer stand wearing male clothes. The authors believe at least one lesbian, Maria van Antwerpen, was, psychologically, a transsexual.

What happened when these women were exposed? Sometimes they were treated very generously, like one woman who joined the navy to follow her lover to the East. She was given a grand wedding with the Governor acting as father of the bride. Even lesbians were generally not punished with death. When the crossdressers were in a remote place or age they could be romanticized; too close, and they'd often be resented.

The authors conclude that "Crossdressing could be permissible so long as the woman claimed no masculine prerogatives (such as courting women), maintained her feminine honour, was extremely successful as a man, and finally resumed life as a woman in the end". About as much as we can expect for ourselves, I'd think, though today there is obviously more understanding of TSs.

The tradition of female crossdressing ended early in the 19th Century for several reasons, among them a more efficient bureaucracy that made
Also, peace finally came to the Netherlands,

It difficult
to hide one's
identity.

so untrained soldiers and sailors weren't in demand as before. And the greater equality of men and women made it less of a promotion for women to be men and ultimately allowed them to hold "male" jobs without changing gender. At this point, too, more men started daring to dress as women.

The book is part of a series of women's studies, which is probably why I found it in my local library. Since "men's studies" scarcely exist in the U.S. and male crossdressing is considered either kinky or silly, a book on male TV-ing would probably not be as easy to find.

But of course men's reasons for changing gender (or sex) may be just as serious as women's, even if they're not economic. And all of us may be creating a new tradition of male crossdressing that satisfies those needs.

If such a tradition is coming, here is a book that both celebrates it and is an indispensable part of it:

Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them, by Mariette Pathy Allen. 1989, E.P. Dutton, New York. 175 pp. with 133 photographs. \$24.95.

Anyone reading The Tartan Skirt knows this subject, so this won't be a long review. After a short introduction, Mariette Pathy Allen lets her crossdressers (one of them a woman) tell their own stories. They range in age from 20s to 80s and come from every racial, sexual and socioeconomic group.

Some themes are often repeated — the (literally) striking differences between the way boys and girls are brought up, the search for a sweeter, kinder self (or a sexier, raunchier one who's somewhat sweet and kind, too), the desire to be cherished as a sexual being, but the individuals come out to us, in their words and Mariette's pictures, in all their individual sweetness, wickedness, absurdity and (sometimes desperate) courage. They're frequently shown with spouses and children, whose voices are also heard. This is, on every level, a beautiful book.

Mariette has photographed TVs and TSs for 12 years. She sees us

(as I do) in the vanguard of men's liberation, even if it is not by choice: "These are people who question gender roles not merely in their minds but with their lives. I see them as heroic because they confront what most of us keep hidden in our innermost fantasies — if we allow ourselves that much freedom. Their struggles don't fit the old picture of lonely figures in murky bars, back streets, and rundown hotel rooms. To depict them where they belong, in the daylight of daily life, rich in relationships with spouses, children, siblings, parents, and friends is my tribute to their courage".

Is there a Scottish equivalent of "Amen, Baby?"

Jamie [REDACTED]



3. Illustration, after a portrait from 1630, of Catalina de Erauso, a Spanish 'conquistador' around 1600.

Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The TRADITION OF FEMALE TRANSVESTISM in EARLY MODERN EUROPE* (St. Martin's Press, New York) 1989.

CLGA
BOX 639, STATION "A"
TORONTO, ONTARIO
CANADA M5W 1G2