



News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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AEGIS and ITA to Merge

[Washington, D.C. —17 April, 1998]

After six months of deliberation, the Boards of Directors of American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc. (AEGIS) and It's Time, America! (ITA) have agreed on a merger which will form a new national organization, Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA). GEA will be, as its name implies, a transgender organization dedicated to both education and advocacy. GEA will continue the educational and political functions of its two parent organizations.

GEA will consist of a 501(c)(3) policy-making Institute and a 501(c)(4) Network of state chapters for policy implementation. The Institute and Network will be linked by Bylaws and a Joint Operating Agreement (JOA) which are under development.

GEA's Mission and Values statements and a list of Core Functions have been completed and approved. The new organization hopes to begin operations by the end of 1998.



Renaissance and the Evolution of the Individual

by Diane Dale, Renaissance National Board

It was a little after 10:00 p.m. on Saturday night, April 4, 1998. The place was a Sports Bar located in an upscale suburban Philadelphia hotel. The room was mobbed. Business travelers increasingly are being forced by their companies to stay over Saturday nights to get the benefit of dramatically lower airfares. In the past, a place like this would be absolutely dead at this hour.

But now it was electric with macho pool sharks playing 9-Ball, guzzling frothy beers, and watching ESPN between shots...ostensibly not exactly a welcoming venue for 40 crossdressers in their finest outfits to descend upon. But descend we did! Angela Gardner, Renaissance's Executive Director, had just concluded the formal part of our Spring Dinner and had invited everyone to adjourn to the bar to pick up where we had left off.

As we arrived some heads did turn, but no negative comments (audible at least) were made. We all sat down; ordered our drinks; and continued to enjoy the evening. A few minutes later, after everyone regained their focus, another wave of Renaissance sisters entered the room. This time not only did heads turn (and justifiably so), but an explosion of approval and

applause lighted the room. The evening was never the same...perhaps neither was anyone else.

Driving home, the thought occurred to me: "What if that arrival scenario had been played out in the 60's...the 70's...80's...or even the early 90's? Would things have gone as smoothly? We may have had a memorable time, but would it have been all that enjoyable? Each of us can answer those questions in our own way, but my response is a decided, "I don't think so."

For some magical reason, exhibited in that bar was a level of acceptance or, at least on the part of the majority perhaps, one of indifference. Many of us were surprised. We have certainly come a long way! It is so gratifying to see that the foundation built by our Community's pioneers and leaders...some of whom we proudly can call our own...is having such a positive impact upon the ways in which we are able to conduct our lives today...and the ways in which we would like to live them tomorrow.

Conjecturing for a moment, one has to ask whether or not we need a Renaissance any longer. Thankfully, we have more safe and secure options today than we ever dreamed we'd have: shopping, dining, socializing, night life, enjoying the outdoors...all within our

continued on page 6

Renaissance

Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

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

Pennsylvania

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

Lehigh Valley/Pocono area: Renaissance Lehigh Valley, PO Box 3624, Allentown, PA 18106. Meetings on the second Saturday of the month in the Allentown area. Call for directions and more information, 610-821-2955, or email to <RenLV@ren.org>.

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

Affiliates

California

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

Connecticut

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

Georgia

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

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

Illinois

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

Louisiana

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

New Jersey

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

Western Central New Jersey: New Jersey Support, call Susan at 973-[redacted] or Dorothy at 215-[redacted] (weekends only). Write PO Box 0034, Montville, NJ 07045 for information. Email: [redacted]@aol.com. Meetings are the first Saturday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Crossing.

New York

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

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

Oklahoma

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

Renaissance News & Views

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Lee Etscovitz JoAnn Roberts

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Business Manager - Jessica Brandon

Distribution - Emily Sheldon

Articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor are always welcome. Ideas for articles and opinion pieces should be sent to the National Office marked Attention: Editor. Or use email to <hmdm@voicenet.com>. Complimentary and irate letters to the editor may be sent to the same address.

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

Electronic Subscriptions

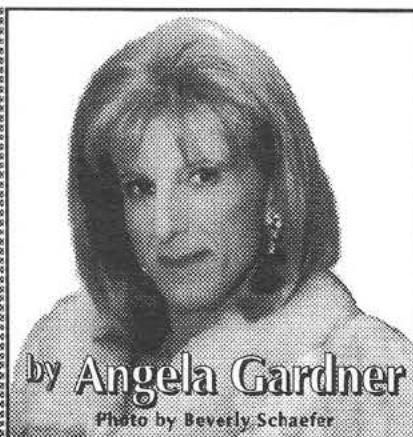
You can get Renaissance News & Views by email every month delivered automatically right to your email box for only \$15 a year. That's half off the regular paper subscription rate. Send your \$15 plus your email address to the Renaissance National Office.

Local Calendar

May

- 2 Ren. LSV - Harrisburg
- 2 NJ Support - Trenton
- 6 Ren. Library Discussion Group - Wayne, PA
- 9 Ren. Lehigh Valley
- 9 Ren. Delaware - Wilmington
- 16 Ren. GPC - Wayne, Pa.
- 23 MOTG - Red Bank, NJ

News Beat & Reminder



Welcome to the merry, merry month of May gentle readers. This *Newsbeat & Reminder* will be a slight departure from the witty, entertaining, and informative confection I usually provide. Uh oh, I hear the sound of pages turning. Before too many of you move along let me say there will be *some* entertainment in here, somewhere, and the rest of it is something you should hear... so listen up.

The Only Constant- Constant Change

For many years *News & Views* has been lauded as the one of the best, if not **the** best, newsletters in the transgender community. (Heck, we started producing it before the concept of a transgender community had been thought of.) Throughout the years the newsletter has been the responsibility of a small number of volunteers. At times it has been done by only one person, doing both editing and layout. (Not to mention writing most of the text.) Other times a team of two have worked to produce it. Thanks to the skills brought to the task by the various volunteers (and those skills that were picked up and refined on the job) the final product has become the excellent publication you hold in your hands today. It is now one of the most important services provided by Renaissance—a monthly source for information and opinion, a connection to a larger reality for transgendered people across the country. Many thanks to the newsletter staff across the past eleven years.

This month is the 11th Anniversary

of Renaissance. (The first ten years of Renaissance are chronicled with articles from the newsletter in the *Tenth Anniversary History*. It was put together by Lee Etscovitz and it's available from the Renaissance Bookstore, or contact the National Office.) Now, as we move into our eleventh year, it is time to do something different.

News & Views has been occupying a unique place among transgender publications. It is more than just a newsletter, but less than a magazine. It has always tried to provide that connection to the entire community—not just news about Renaissance activities. The next logical step for *New & Views* is for it to become a magazine, a magazine designed to serve the whole transgender community.

What's In A Name

To become a monthly magazine for the whole TG community we need to make several adjustments. First, we must change the name. Starting next month your issue of the newsletter won't be called *Renaissance News & Views*, it will be *Transgender Community News & Views*. (Never fear, it will still arrive in its plain brown envelope, for the benefit of those who must be discreet.)

The second adjustment is to the way we produce *News & Views*. We can no longer afford to gather news passively, we must become proactive and go out to find the news that is important to our readership. This means an expansion of the newsletter

staff, monthly editorial meetings, and reporters and writers all around the country. At first all of these positions will be filled with volunteers, just like it's always been. As we grow many of these positions will become paid. There's another benefit for the transgender community.

Next, we must expand the readership. Producing a magazine is a more expensive job than producing a newsletter. We need a solid base of readers across the country, all paying \$36 for twelve issues. (Twelve issues based on anniversary date rather than calendar year.) With enough subscribers we will have the additional funds to move to a magazine format, with a color cover, and photos to accompany the articles. Once we are producing a monthly magazine it can be distributed through magazine and book stores, and that will bring added revenue and increased exposure.

Building The Staff

As Editor-in-Chief it's my job to find the new staff members. I'm starting by asking you if you're ready to get involved? If you already sent in a volunteer form that indicated your interest in writing or newsletter activities—I'll be in touch. If you are a professional writer, editor or art director please contact me and let me know if you are prepared to lend your skills to the production of *News & Views*. It would be best if all of the staff was hooked up for email. If you're not and are still interested in helping contact me anyway and we'll discuss how you can be involved.

Here are the new positions on the newsletter staff:

- Sales Manager - Responsible for increasing ad sales nationwide.
- News Editor - Responsible for gathering news, assigning reporters to cover stories around the country.
- Columns Editor - Responsible for poking the current columnists with ideas, and for developing new columns.
- Articles Editor - This would involve picking unsolicited articles

News Beat...

that are submitted by freelance writers, and assigning writers to do in depth pieces on news, and ideas of interest.

- **Copy Editor** - This position is perfect for a grammar Nazi. The Copy Editor will be responsible for the spelling, grammar and length of all text in the publication.

- **Art Director** - After we add a color cover and are ready to start including photos on a regular basis we will need an Art Director to design covers, acquire photos and produce or obtain original art.

With the exception of the Art Director, who won't be fully needed till we go to the magazine format. (Hopefully early next year.) I need to hear from anyone who is interested in filling these positions. And, like the new, leaner, meaner staff, I will be proactive in finding the right personnel. The folks in these positions should be able to work together, but if they are all online they can be anywhere in the country. We will be holding staff meetings and the out of towners may end up attending over the Internet. Technology is a wonderful thing.

Format Changes

For the next couple of months the newsletter will continue to look much the same as it has for years. The big difference will be the name change. The next change will be when it goes to magazine format. We will first add a color cover. The inside will remain black ink on white, but more photos will appear and the layout will be redesigned to fit magazine format. Our regular columnists will still be on board, and new columns may appear. There'll be news and investigative reports, and oh, did I mention more photos? All of this will appear in your mailbox every month.

Building the Readership

In order to build the readership

and get the cash flow necessary to carry this out we have a plan. I bet you knew that.

For years we have exchanged newsletters with support groups around the country. We get around 70 newsletters from various groups every month. I'm now investigating placement of ads for *News & Views* in all those publications. I have already placed an ad in *LadyLike* magazine and on the *TGForum* Internet site. I am going to look into placing other ads in mainstream publications. While we have run ads in the past this is the first ad campaign that is specifically intended to build *News & Views* readership. We've had a great newsletter for years but we've been so busy producing it we forgot to promote it to the world. (Not *completely*, but you get the idea.)

Placing ads may cost us some money. If it turns out to be too expensive we may have to be very selective. One form of promotion that won't cost us a penny is available right now. As satisfied readers of *News & Views* tell your friends in the community that we do a good job, and deserve to be read. Give them an old issue and tell them if they like it and would like to see it as a magazine they should sign up. If everyone reading *News & Views* now can convince just one person to sign up we could double our membership. That means we get to full magazine format all the faster.

We want *News & Views* to continue to reach people with information they need as they explore a transgender lifestyle. We want it to be there for years to come as an example of the non-sleazy side of the TG community, and a tool for outreach and education—both inside the community—and to the general public. Help us to assure the continued presence of *News & Views* by helping in its production, or promoting it to others who could benefit from reading it every month. It's an exciting time for Renaissance. Thanks ever so much for your support.

Now The Entertainment

San Diego City Council has decided that it's a good idea to repeal their anti-crossdressing ordinance. I bet most of the crossdressers in San Diego didn't even know they were breaking the law. Sure, a few of the girls will always attract the attention of the fashion police, but the city cops probably weren't paying that much attention. The ordinance was a left over from 1966.

It seems that back in the Swinging '60s the sailors stationed at the three area Naval bases had a problem telling the boys from the girls, and it wasn't just because them hippies had long hair. Apparently there were a lot of drag prostitutes working the docks back then, and the sailors weren't too perceptive. City Council decided it had to keep the boys from consorting with the wrong sort of hooker and the anti-crossdressing law was enacted. Duh. The ordinance was nicknamed the "Johns Consumer Protection Act." Just another example of how government can waste the taxpayer's money.

The current Police Chief didn't oppose repealing the antiquated law, and the City Attorney even admitted the law was unnecessary. He said there were plenty of anti-prostitution laws on the books. I imagine the only time the law was used to charge someone was when they were already under arrest for prostitution, so what's the point?

The Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee voted unanimously to recommend repeal of the ordinance to the full Council. Soon San Diego crossdressers who are out for a little shopping and a tasteful lunch can breathe a sigh of relief as they boldly and confidently go anywhere they want with out fear of being arrested as a TV prostitute. Of course the city still has those anti-hooker laws so make sure you don't try to pick up any money on the side, girls.

News Beat...

It Ain't Camelot

I think they've been running for awhile, but just the other day I got to see the Mercedes spot with **Robert Goulet** in a meter maid outfit. (I think there's one where he's dressed as a female toll collector, too.) Lovely Rita Meter Maid he ain't. Bobby, Bobby, Bobby, we just love a woman in uniform. Seriously, this is the trend lately, guys in dresses in ads, on shows. While most often, as in the Mercedes spots, it's done as a source of humor (derived from the juxtaposition of strong masculine images with feminine/glamour images) I believe it is a sign that society is getting more tolerant on the subject. Sure they may still think it's kind of weird, but when people can see Robert Goulet in drag, moustache and all on their TV it's not that hard for them to accept a TV in their neighborhood.

Another example is **Conan O'Brien's** high heel comments on his April 14th show. He was interviewing a sexy young actress/model, and he commented on how hard it must be to walk in those shoes. He then casually interjected that he always found it hard to walk in heels. He quickly added that he only wore them for skits on the show, but it was interesting that he could touch on the subject at all on national television.

More Signs of Acceptance

A couple of months ago before the GPC meeting we had some pre-meeting meetings that brought folks to the GPC meeting site early. After the pre-meeting meetings some of the girls were hungry so we decided to dine at a nearby restaurant. There were five of us and we took two cars. The first carload arrived before my companion and I, and they were already seated at the bar when we came in. That makes three crossdressers at the bar, two walking the length of the packed restaurant to join them. What was the reaction? Nonexistent. It was almost disappointing. A girl likes to feel that she has caused some stir.

We enjoyed our cocktails and then repaired to the upstairs dining room. (The main floor was packed.) I got delayed and the others were lead upstairs ahead of me. I almost walked into the kitchen trying to catch up (gracious, that Pink Squirrel went right to my head) and some of the diners and staff pointed me in the right direction.

We had our meals in a small room that was as packed as the downstairs. No one there said anything, and I'm talking family dining, here. Conversations continued uninterrupted as we entered, dined and paid the bill. I was the last one out and as I started down the steps one patron gave vent to a short, low volume wolf whistle. Finally, attention! I guess it

was the short dress that finally broke 'em down.

A couple of the girls went there for dinner last month, too. Again, they said the reception was totally low key. The moral of the story? Don't let your transgender status make you a prisoner. Many times we stay at home, or go somewhere and then stay in the car, because we're afraid of what people might say. As long as you stay out of places with names like Bubba's Brew House, and The Fag Bashers Pub, you'll probably be OK. Have fun!

And that's it for another month. Remember to floss every day, make sure you clean your skin thoroughly after wearing makeup, and sign up to help us expand this newsletter into the best damn magazine in the TG community. Ya know ya wanna.

I'm a busy woman and I've only got so many eyes and ears. If you see or hear anything that would be of interest to the readers of News & Views, please send it along to N&V, 987 Old Eagle School Road, Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087, or email it to:

<news@ren.org>. Make sure you identify yourself so I can give you credit for sending in the information... or I'll just say I found it myself on the Internet. Like I've got time to surf.



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Evolution...

reach....all external to and totally independent of Renaissance.

Also, there are now more ways to obtain knowledge about ourselves; more savvy therapists; more role models; more communication resources, from magazines such as *LadyLike* to online facilities such as *TG Forum*; more suitable and cooperative vendors; and more positive portrayals of us in the media. So why do we need to belong to anything anyway? Why continue to invest our money on dues and our time on meetings?

Again, the legitimate big questions are: Has Renaissance and its sister organizations outlived their usefulness? Are they anachronisms? Have they become victims of their own success? Have they done their job and now it's time for them to fade into the sunset? The answers are not easy.

I've grappled with them for about a year now...well at least up until our recent Renaissance Leadership Conference. Several weeks ago our Chapters and Affiliates were invited to send their Managing Directors to a day-long Workshop. While not everyone made it, we had enough strong representation that it turned into one of the most spirited, developmentally productive, and perhaps pivotal days we've experienced as a leadership group. We shared countless ideas on revenue generation, outreach, and office administrative tips.

But the brightest light bulb shined during our morning session when we focused on our responsibility to meet the needs of the members of Renaissance. The needs of members as a whole are complex. Each of us as a member is ever maturing and as such has needs that are continuously evolving...we are all moving pictures, not snapshots. Add to this the fact

that our environment (social, cultural, political, and the like) is a dynamic landscape... pulling or pushing us in different directions at any given point in time. It's a little daunting when you think about it! How can one organization provide meaningful support to everyone all the time? The reality is that we must continue to try.

Let's look at what our conference brainstorming session came up with. We suggested essentially that we have to become more member-sensitive...more responsive. We took a stab at identifying the range of the different characteristics of our members and potential members. Through discussion we found that these characteristics fall into categories or phases...some distinctions being very subtle; some overlapping. Though not necessarily linear or sequential, our lives tend to touch upon many of them as we set out to explore and develop our other selves.

Each member of Renaissance is in his/her own stage of growth and development. For example:

1. We are transgendered, but we don't as yet know it. We feel we are different and all alone. We believe we could be the only one in the world like this. We are anxious and troubled.
2. We know we are transgendered. We have a fear of reaching out to tell anyone. We want to remain anonymous.
3. We remain in the closet, but we begin to make contact with others presumed to be like ourselves.
4. We have found a TG group but are not yet ready to venture out. We are very reluctant to walk through that door for the first time.
5. We attend our first meeting.
6. We regularly go to meetings; but remain anonymous.
7. We attend monthly meetings

and participate on a social basis only to make friends.

8. We become active and involved, serving on committees and special projects.

9. We continue to be active and would like to do more, but our energies are lessening because we are just plain burned out.

10. We are former members, having quit for a variety of reasons.

There are even some more variations. But even using what has been stated above, can you, dear reader, see yourself in any of these? This list does not claim to be all inclusive. But even as the list stands, in many ways it speaks to the profound responsibility of both the leadership of Renaissance and of each of us as members.

One major answer to our success as an organization, then, has to lie within our collective ability to meet the needs of all members on as much of a personal level as an organizational structure can allow. But that structure is really the collective result of each of us. We can each help Renaissance continue to be a meeting place, a place of learning and socializing, a place where we can each express ourselves in ways not always possible elsewhere, in spite of the increased opportunities in society as a whole.

In many ways it is through Renaissance, with its meetings and newsletter, for example, that we each prepare ourselves for venturing forth into the wider community. At the same time we are each part of the solution to making Renaissance itself a place where the individual can evolve, which means that we must each become more involved in the evolution of Renaissance. It is that twofold evolution that is the twofold challenge facing us all as leaders and members alike.

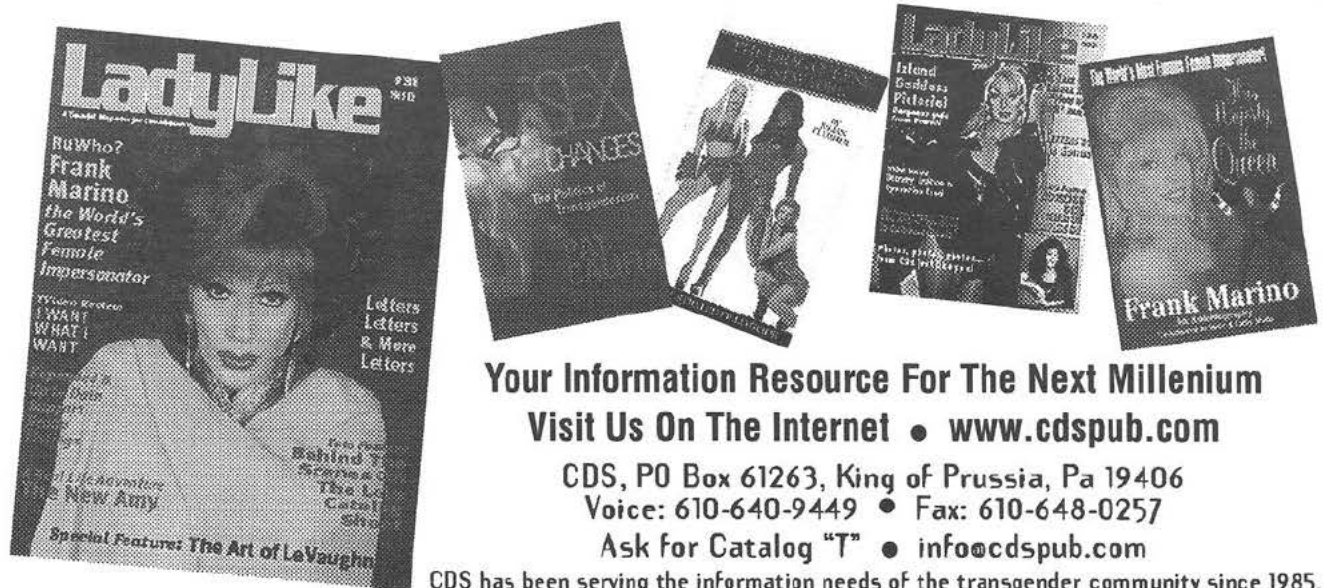


Nota Bene:

We would like to solicit your opinions on both this article and Renaissance in general. Does your personal evolution as a transgendered person mirror what Ms. Dale described above? And how do you think Renaissance should go about its mission of providing support to our community? Please email Ms. Dale at [redacted]@aol.com with your viewpoints. Thank you.

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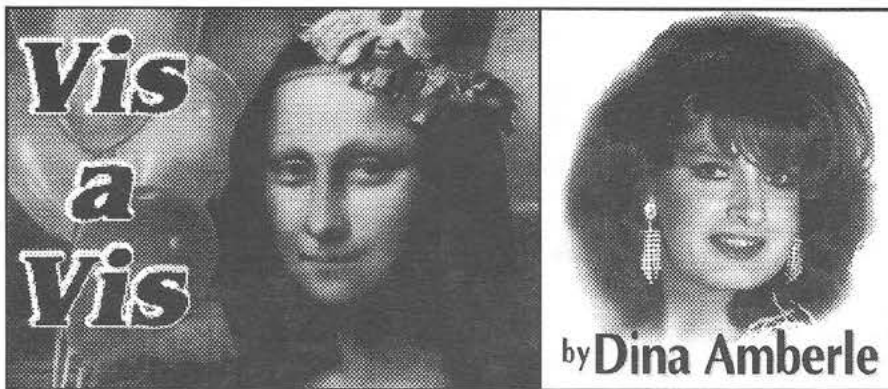
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One of the little-known duties of a "News&Views" columnist is to solve thorny social and political problems with a few glib remarks. Come to think of it, that is also the job description for the panelists on any of the political roundtable shows. But nevermind that.

I think I may have come up with a workable method of gun control that even the most rabid gun nuts could get behind.

Our forefathers guaranteed the right of all Americans to bear arms. And we've been arguing about it ever since. Being the great Americans they are, gun enthusiasts believe that they must not only bear arms, but stockpile them in collections which in many cases leads to family tragedy in almost laughably ridiculous accidents. But nevermind that.

My first solution was to restrict the bearing of arms to muskets, which I was sure the gun enthusiasts would approve because of their devotion to 18th century Constitutionality. However, I realized that their devotion only ran so far and we're talking killing power here (when you get right down to it) and muskets ain't worth a spit if you like to walk on the wild side and tempt your kids to play with your guns while you're not home. So nevermind that idea.

My latest proposal is to collect all the firearms out there and replace them with Pit Bull dogs. The advantage of this idea is that you still get the dangerous killing power with the Pit Bull and you always have the threat that the dog will turn on some member of your immediate family (whether by design or accident)...the

same way a gun could. We all remember the Reagan Administration plan to trade "Arms for Hostages". In my proposal, the citizenry would be trading "Arms for Hostile Dogs".

It's not only workable...it's glib.

WHOSE OX IS BEING GORED?

The "Channel" newsletter of the ETVC group in San Francisco, California carried a letter to the editor complaining about an insulting remark against the gay community by one of the group's columnists.

Sandra [REDACTED] had written a brief review of an episode of the TV show "Union Square" in which a crossdresser was depicted as a responsible member of society. A woman on the show, speaking about the crossdresser, pointed out that he wasn't gay and the crossdresser replied, "You see, I'm normal." Sandra remarked in her review that it was indicative of "the spirit of public acceptance slowly replacing the ridicule we've endured for so long."

The complaining letter writer, who used the name Victoria Secret, pointed out that Sandra had insulted the gay community by agreeing with the comment that the crossdresser was "normal" because he wasn't gay. The implication thereby being that gay is not "normal". The letter also called the editorial staff of the "Channel" newsletter to task for printing Sandra's insensitive comment without reproach. "It is this kind of attitude on the part of ETVC members that destroys all the work that Ginny Knuth did in trying to forge a bond between ETVC and the gay community. It is this kind of attitude that causes many in the gay community to

view ETVC as a group of middle-aged, middle-class, hypocritical homophobes."

Sandra's remark in her column is perhaps indefensible but it wasn't meant to paint "normal" as straight-only. It was one of those unfortunate slips that can occur in the euphoria of seeing things only from the cross-dressing viewpoint. The show "Union Square" and Sandra in her review tried to make a positive statement about crossdressers while unconsciously insulting the gay community. We understand what's being said...it's just a shame it wasn't said in a different manner.

LIFEBOAT PROCEDURES IN THE AGE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

My friend Marisa Richmond of the Tennessee Vals in Nashville, Tennessee had an interesting item in her "Queen's Throne" column in their monthly newsletter. She mentioned a column she read in their local newspaper, "The Tennessean", in which the "women and children first" rule of lifeboat chivalry was called into question in this new age of gender equality. The question was, of course, prompted by the film "Titanic".

Marisa expanded the question to include the changing definition of gender. She writes, "Increasingly, we see gender is not binary. Several modern day writers have suggested we need not limit ourselves to just two genders. Some cultures have seven or more. Given this, who gets saved in the next disaster?"

With this thought in mind, I imagined a modern day lifeboat boarding emergency which might run something like this:

"Children under the age of consent in West Virginia...all other children who are not on bail in criminal cases where they are charged as adults...genetic females who did not support the Equal Rights Amendment...all other women who have never failed an Olympic hormonal test...post-operative male-to-female transsexuals...intersexed persons living as females...pre-operative male-

to-female transsexuals in the real life test with certified therapist's letter...any female-to-male transsexuals who are now having second thoughts...transgendered persons living full time as female...anyone identifying as "gender queer" or who has ever questioned the cultural gender paradigm...outwardly effeminate men...female-to-male transgender persons with or without hormonally induced facial hair...crossdressers wearing any article of feminine undergarment beneath their pajamas and life jacket...[glub, glub, glub]...and finally, any man other than ship's crew who is now identifying himself as shark bait."

The scary thing is that I probably left out a few points along the increasingly tortured gender spectrum. But we gotta start somewhere.

DON'T HATE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL

Last year, I wrote an item about choosing our femme names and included the origins or meanings behind some of the most common names chosen by crossdressers. One name that has recently taken on mythic proportions in Renaissance is "Amanda".

The two Amanda's in question are both extremely beautiful, both having been named "Princess of the Poconos" while attending JoAnn's semi-annual bacchanal in the mountains. That would be annoying enough for the rest of us "beauty-challenged" crossdressers. But it turns out they're both sweethearts, which makes it even harder to condemn them for looking so damn good.

And now we have a relatively new Renaissance girl who goes by the name "Amy", which is a diminutive of "Amanda", and she shares some of the same natural gifts that distinguish the before mentioned goddesses.

When I wrote the "What's in a Name?" item in this column last year, I was trying to point out that we could use a name to create a persona. Now that I think of the coincidence of our beautiful Amanda's, I am thinking that perhaps a name has even more power than I imagined. Would these two

bombshells look as good if their names were Gertrude, Agnes, or...Dina? Somehow I think not.

Many years ago, a group of us decided that we had too many Michelles in Renaissance, so we instituted a "No More Michelle" rule for newcomers. Now I suspect that we may have a mad rush of name changes to "Amanda" in the hope that some of the cachet of that name will rub off on them. Sorry, girls, you're too late because we just retired that name and it will hang from the rafters as homage to a couple of extremely good-looking broads who came before.

THE BENEFITS AND PITFALLS OF CORSETRY

The "Finesse" newsletter of the Central Illinois Gender Association in Galesburg, Illinois prints excerpts of interesting articles from other TG newsletters in their monthly editions. The March issue cribbed an item from the "Old Hags and Sagging Bags" newsletter, which is published "for crossdressers of a certain age" and with a sense of humor - as is obvious from the title.

A 68 year old crossdresser named Madelyn wrote to extol the virtues of corsetry. Madge claims that wearing a corset beneath one's attire, whether male or female attire, can ease back pain, much as a back brace is designed to do. But medicinal benefits aside, corsetry is just (as Austin Powers might say) her bag, baby! "I also wear tight girdles during the daytime under my male attire.", Madelyn writes. And she continues with this admission, "I have even slept at night wearing a corselet or girdle."

A couple of thoughts came to mind as I read Madelyn's thoughts on corsets. Firstly, many crossdressers have also entertained the idea of climbing into bed while wearing their corset although I don't think that getting a good night's sleep was necessarily a part of the fantasy. But secondly, I had to wonder about a 68 year old man wearing women's foundation garments under his male clothing. To be perfectly blunt about it, that is an age

where a sudden medical crisis could find oneself being wheeled into an emergency ward as a team of nurses and interns strips off the patient's clothing to administer treatment.

One thing you don't need to hear as you lose consciousness is "Gramps is wearing ladies underwear."

I want an EKG, six cc's of phenobarb...and a complete test for gender dysphoria. Stat!

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

I see a lot of question and answer type of articles in other newsletters. It's always a good format, easy to read, usually dispensing good information. However, the answers are only as good as the questions, and since the author of the article is usually writing both, one must be careful for hidden biases in the results.

One such Q&A article was reprinted from IFGE's "Transgender Tapestry" magazine in the Carolina Trans-Sensual Alliance newsletter "All the Beautiful People" published in Charlotte, North Carolina. The article was titled "13 Most Asked Questions About Crossdressing - Answered", written by Cally Nichols.

As a service to my readership (hello, Mom), I have taken the liberty of answering a few of the questions myself as a sort of anti-virus against any of Cally's biases sneaking into her project. Here goes:

"Am I a Crossdresser?" If you are a 68 year old man and you are wearing a whalebone corset under your leisure suit, the answer is a decided Yes! Although, you may simply be wearing it for that nagging back pain, in which case the answer is...Yeah, Probably. Back pain, my ass.

"If There Is Nothing Wrong With Me, Why Do I Feel So Bad?" Maybe if you tighten the laces on your corset, that nagging back pain will go away.

"Am I a Homosexual in Denial?" No way, not me, never, unh-unh, what, are you kidding?

"Can I Protect My Identity If I Join a Support Group?" Yes, protect-

continued on page 14



Gender Reflections

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

Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

There seems to be a tremendous amount of confusion surrounding the dimensions of sexual orientation (gay, straight or bisexual) and gender identity (transsexual, transvestite, cross-dresser, drag queen). In doing trainings of professionals and talking with lay audiences, I explain that these aspects of human beings are completely independent of one another.

Just as non-transgenders can be gay, straight or bisexual, so, too, can transgendered folks. The question that persists in many people's minds, even TGs, is whether transgenders are gay or straight when they are crossing (living, dressing, etc.) as compared to their orientation when living in their societally-assigned gender role. Have I lost you yet?

The confusion is due to our language as well as the poorly understood concept of the immutability of one's sexual object choice even as the expression of gender identity changes. I suggest people forget the terms gay, straight and bi- for the moment,

because they are purely relative to the person's gender. If an individual is in transition it is difficult to get a handle on this concept. Instead, let's focus on the gender of the trans-person's desired object - male, female or both.

At this point, we need to address the varieties of transgender expressions. Transvestites (also referred to as crossdressers) are almost always males who are attracted to females, although some may also find men attractive. When they crossdress they maintain their attraction to the gender they enjoy when not dressed.

Transsexuals may be men or women who may be attracted to either men, women, or both. As they transition from their societally-assigned gender to the role they are more comfortable in, their sex object usually remains as it was pre-transition. The exception to this pattern occurs in the case of individuals who are so homophobic that they had only allowed themselves relationships with those of the opposite sex. Transition

may release these people to experience a relationship with the gender they truly are attracted to, and ironically, to maintain a heterosexual life style. Now, I'm sure I've lost you!

Now let's see if we can tackle the language that identifies sexual orientation. A male-to-female individual who lived a heterosexual life before transition will most likely continue to find women sexually attractive. However, her sexual orientation will appear to have shifted from straight to gay, though she remains attracted to women throughout.

A female-to-male who was attracted to women and identified as a lesbian, will usually maintain this attraction, but will re-identify as straight. Trans-people who were attracted to both sexes have the easiest time of all, linguistically-speaking, for they remain bisexual.

Of course, transitioning is a complex process which throws many aspects of one's life out of kilter and requires a re-balancing of many systems. Certainly, sexual orientation is not immune. Next month's article will deal with the impact of this process on sexual orientation.

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Renaissance Library Report

by **Lee Etskovitz, Renaissance National Librarian**

The Library Discussion Group met on Wednesday, April 1, attended by an increasing number of participants who welcome the opportunity to attend an ongoing discussion of transgender issues. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 1, 1998 at the Woods from 8:00 to 9:30 PM.

At that meeting we will have as guests the mother and father of a female to male (MtF) transsexual. They will discuss informally their experience as parents of a transgen-

dered child. Of course, their experience will have implications for all of us as the transgendered children of our own parents.

That's the good news. The bad news, at least for those participants who have enjoyed the monthly opportunity for a midweek discussion of transgender issues, is that, unless a new discussion leader is found for this group, it will be discontinued as a mid-week offering. However, its founder and leader, Dr. Lee Etskovitz, will continue to conduct a similar group, open to all, on a regular basis

at every monthly meeting of the Philadelphia Chapter under the auspices of the chapter itself.

This group will meet in a conference room at the Woods from 9:30 to 10:30 PM as an alternative to the main meeting for those who wish to explore transgender issues. Anyone and everyone is welcome to attend. As a rule, the topic or topics to be discussed will develop from the concerns and interests expressed by those in attendance at the time of the meeting.



Colorado Hate Crimes Bill Dies

April 9, 1998 - Denver

The Hate Crimes bill to expand the existing Ethnic Intimidation Act died for the second year in a row in the Colorado House Appropriations committee. This is the fourth year that a similar bill has been killed by the legislature. The bill would add sexual orientation, disability and age to the existing Ethnic Intimidation Act and would also change the name of the crime from 'Ethnic Intimidation' to 'Hate Crime' in keeping with language used at the federal level. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Penfield Tate (D-Denver) and was brought forward by a coalition of groups supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, people with disabilities and seniors.

"Perpetrators of hate violence commit these crimes because they think we won't fight back and that no one cares enough to protect us," said Sue Anderson, Executive Director of

Equality Colorado. "Our elected officials have again made a clear statement that they indeed don't care. If perpetrators of hate crimes against people based on race, religion, ethnicity or national origin deserve to have additional penalties added to their charges, then this should be true for perpetrators of ALL hate crimes. Sadly, the legislature finds that other victims of hate crimes should not be recognized. This sends a frightening message to both perpetrators and victims."

According to the FBI, a crime is classified as bias-motivated or a hate crime when it is clear that "the offender's actions were motivated, in whole or in part, by bias." Hate crime laws send a clear, unequivocal message to victims, perpetrators and law enforcement officials that crimes motivated by bigotry and hatred will not be tolerated and should receive harsher punishment. According to

preliminary research by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, victims of bias crimes suffer two to three times more symptoms of trauma than victims of comparable crimes that do not involve prejudice.

The Federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act calls for voluntary data collection of hate crimes, including those on the basis of sexual orientation.

Compliance concerning all hate crimes with the voluntary reporting program by law enforcement continues to be a significant problem across the country. According to FBI statistics, in Colorado in 1996, only 27 out of 230 law enforcement agencies reported in this program. Reporting on crimes against gays and lesbians, people with disabilities and seniors are mostly disregarded in what little hate crime reporting exists in Colorado, since these groups are not included in Colorado law.



Building a Transformational Movement

by Kerry Lobel

[WASHINGTON, DC—April 14, 1998—The following remarks are excerpted from a keynote address given by Kerry Lobel at the Fifth International Bisexual Conference held in Cambridge, MA from April 3 - April 5, 1998. Kerry Lobel is Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). Founded in 1973, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force works to eliminate prejudice, violence and injustice against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people at the local, state and national level. As part of a broader social justice movement for freedom, justice and equality, NGLTF is creating a world that respects and celebrates the diversity of human expression and identity where all people may fully participate in society.]

Twenty-five years after my coming out, and in NGLTF's twenty-fifth year,

I find myself at the helm of the oldest national gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization. I'd like to tell you about my vision for NGLTF and the principles I hold dear as we work for social justice.

We must be a transformational movement - one that brings all people forward together and that fundamentally challenges and transforms our society. At our core, we must recognize that we, too, have bought into the myths about how we are culturally represented. How many of our organizations are led by people of color, by bisexual or transgendered people? How many of our organizations work on issues like affirmative action, welfare, immigration, and child care?

We act as if we believe the myth of gay whiteness, of gay wealth, and all too many of us are content to be just like everyone else. Here's the reality. Not all of us want to be like everyone else. We make a serious mistake when we create a dress code for civil rights.

As a young woman, I was taught that bisexuals were fence-sitters, unwilling or unable to choose a sexual orientation, unwilling to face the stigma of being gay or lesbian, seeking comfort in heterosexual privilege. What harm was done to me and others with these very notions cannot be calculated, but the harm to our movement has been enormous.

I believe that our process as a community must reflect the world that we want to build. If we want to be like everyone else, we will act like everyone else. We will be greedy, we will value style over substance, and we will cast out those that challenge us and our comfortable assumptions.

If we want to build a movement that is transformational, we will model honesty, we will model openness, and we will take the risks that challenge conventional thinking. We will act with integrity in our personal relation-

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Hot•Buzz

JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



"The Bible tells us to love our neighbors and also to love our enemies—probably because they are generally the same people."

—G. K. Chesterton

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I have some good news, for a change, about the **International Foundation for Gender Education**. Their annual convention, held this year in **Toronto**, Canada, was a rousing success. The success of the event was due in no little part to the tireless energy and efforts of **Miqqi Gilbert**, **Pam Geddes** and the rest of the girls from **Xpressions**, the local host group. Congratulations, ladies! I'll bet it was scads of fun when it was time for the **Trinity Awards** which were shared this year by **Winslow Street Fund** (WSF) chair **Abby Saypen**, WSF critic **Judy Osborne**, **Sharon Saypen** and **Holly Boswell**. The **Virginia Prince** lifetime achievement award went to **Jamison Green**, the first time the award has gone to an FtM person. Way to go James! However, no WSF grants were announced this year.

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The **Human Rights Campaign** (HRC) took a full page ad in the **Impact News**, a gay/lesbian newspaper in **New Orleans**, attempting to refute the charge that HRC is transgender unfriendly. Recently, the **Renaissance** affiliate **Gulf Gender Alliance** stepped up a transgender boycott of HRC fund raising dinners. The boycott

has been criticized by HRC supporters and by **Nancy Nangeroni**, Executive Director of the **International Foundation for Gender Education** (IFGE). In the ad, HRC outlines its support of transgender issues citing things like working with GenderPAC and IFGE, and supporting transgender-inclusion in Hate Crimes legislation. Someone needs to explain a few facts to HRC: (1) The transgender community's leadership is not represented by IFGE. (2) The transgender community's political consensus is not represented by GenderPAC. (3) The community's political goal is transgender inclusion in the **Employment Non-Discrimination Act**, nothing less.

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I have to make an **observation** here. A few years ago, the future of the transgender community looked extremely bright. The nationals seemed to have settled into a cooperative mode of working programs together like the National Association of Social Workers conference as the **Transgender Community Alliance** (TAC). The first national transgender lobby day brought over 100 activists together to work for a common goal and eventually resulted in the attempt to create a political lobbying organization, **GenderPAC**. Today, I am sad to report, the notion of a unified community appears as **elusive as ever**. TAC is nowhere to be found. Participation between the nationals has dropped to zero. There are no plans to make shared presentations at any meetings or conferences. What little activity there is, is being done solo by one organization. GenderPAC has become a political joke and an embarrassment. It is extremely difficult to even find the word transgender in GenderPAC these days and the GPAC "HTGIC" does not communicate with the community directly. I was told that a leader from a major national organization visited Philadelphia recently. If true, that "leader" made no attempt to contact

the leadership of **Renaissance** which is based in Philadelphia. That, to me, is a major sign of disrespect and surely no way to build community. And that's what has me worried. I see few signs of cooperation, and fewer signs of community-building. Before it gets much worse, I suggest a **summit meeting** of the board chairs and executive directors of the community's nationals to work out a set of **common goals** and ways to work together to achieve them. It would be a step as major as that first national lobby day gathering but one with much farther reaching implications.

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Dallas Denny penned a tirade against the **Clarke Institute** (Toronto, Canada) published in the April 13th issue of **Transgender Forum**. In a nutshell, Ms. Denny complained that staff of the Clarke have infiltrated the **Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association** (HBIGDA) and are driving the development of the new **Standards of Care** (SOC) for the treatment of transsexuals. Denny believes that parts of the new SOC are, in her words, "unethical." She all but called the Clarke the Evil Empire. I would not be one to say that opinion pieces have no place in public discussions, but in this case Dallas crossed the line. It was an **unprofessional** piece of **name calling** and very unbecoming of Ms. Denny.

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The **Renaissance Spring Ball** was not quite the success the Renaissance leadership had hoped for but neither was it a failure. It turned out to be more of a Spring dinner than a Ball, but the 40 or so people who attended had a great time. Renaissance Executive Director, Angela Gardner, handed out a few surprise awards for excellence beyond the call of duty. One of the honorees was **Emily Sheldon**, a longtime member and supporter from the very beginning of the organization. Ms. Sheldon is one of the key people responsi-

ble for seeing that members get their newsletter each and every month. It's not a glamorous job but one that needs to get done. Look around your own organization and take the time to thank those who do the grunt work.

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If you've been wondering why I've not mentioned any of the transgender **Usenet newsgroups**, it's because they're generally useless and a waste of time. If a newsgroup hasn't yet been overrun with x-rated spam, then the participants seem to be arguing about the most inane aspects of transgender life. For the most part the flame wars fall into three categories: transsexuals vs. transgenderists, which is better; transgenderists and transsexuals vs. cross-dressers, which is better; and **Laura Blake** against everyone else. If you come across Ms. Blake online, ignore her. If you try to engage her in debate, you'll be in for a deluge of vulgar invective should you happen to disagree with her.

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Does this sound at all familiar? Researchers have discovered a new body-image disorder called **muscle dysmorphia**. It occurs among body builders (male and female) who, while impressively muscular, believe themselves to be puny, or in the case of women, too fat. Muscle dysmorphia is a form of **body dysmorphia** in which the person believes there is something horribly wrong with his or her looks despite appearing "normal" to everyone else and seeks cosmetic surgery to correct the imagined disfigurement. Go figure!

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Purple seems to be the color for Spring. Both Revlon (**LavenDare**) and Max Factor (**Wild Lilacs**) have complete lines based on purple hues. The Max Factor line centers on three colors: **Wild White**, **Wild Blue** and **Wild Lilac**, for nails, lips and eyes. I love Max Factor cosmetics because they're available in every drugstore and they're well made. And speaking of drug stores, did you know that if you buy cosmetics at **Rite Aid** and absolutely hate them, you can return them for your money back?

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This came in over the net from our Shopping Queen, **Jessica Brandon** — "I have a tip for you to share with all our sisters. I use **Dr. Scholl's** cush-

ioned insoles (men's largest size) in all my shoes, but what I recently began doing is **snipping off two inches** from the toes of the insoles. I find that change makes wearing pumps and the like much more comfortable since my toes and the insole material aren't crammed together in the same narrow space, and it still maintains full cushioning for the rest of my feet. During a recent outing, I went over six hours in a pair of three-inch heels without so much as a twinge. Usually, I get no more than four hours before that happens." Thanks, Jess, for that great tip.

• • • • •

There may be hope for the guys yet. In the May issue of **marie claire** they did a piece called "**What Looks Sexier? Your choice or his?**" Guess what? In three out of the four couples, "her" choice was more sexy and "his" was much more elegant. Only with couple number one did the guy's choice reveal more skin than the woman's choice, but even at that his choice was a long dress with an asymmetrical shoulder. Of the other three, only one was actually dressed **sexy**. She wore a very short tank dress with a bra top and high heels. The other two women needed help. One woman wore a black suit with a very short skirt, black hose and black spike heels. Very nice looking but not exactly sexy. The most outrageous outfit consisted of a very sheer long pink dress that showed all the wearer's underwear (black panties, green bra) topped with a grass green angora shoulder wrap...tres bizarre. Obviously these last two women need to be **dating transvestites** who could show them a thing or two about sexy dressing.

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Here's another set of **look 10 lbs. thinner** tricks...Wear **suits** rather than dresses. The more lines and seams you have, the less anyone will pay attention to not so perfect body parts underneath...If you must wear a dress, choose one with an **empire waistline**. These are very forgiving if you have slight a tummy bulge...Wear **skinny diagonal stripes**, the skinnier the better...Wear knits with a small **textured pattern**...Wear **black**. It's the simplest and best trick. Forget brown or navy...

Avoid pleats of any kind. They add pounds...Avoid **Lycra** (I know it's tough). It clings and you have to be buff... Avoid mid-calf skirts... Invest in Nancy Ganz Bodyslimmers lingerie.

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I almost never revisit a fashion subject, but I have to let you know that I took **Deborah's** advice from the March column and visited the **Total Shaving Solution** <www.totalshavingsolution.com> website to order some of the shaving oil. At the **Renaissance GPC** meeting in March I overheard several girls discussing how great they thought the product was and figured I'd better try it, too. It really does work as advertised. I don't think I've had a cleaner closer shave in ages. Visit the site and request a free sample which should last you for three shaves and that's about all you'll need to be convinced.

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I used to use **Stagelight** cosmetics contour powder that I bought in **J.C. Penney's** but then I couldn't find it any more. I stumbled over the answer in a recent issue of **Allure** magazine. Stagelight went out of business, but **Alcone** cosmetics, a theatrical supply house in New York City, will match any Stagelight product. Call 718-361-8373. In case you're at all interested, the hottest eye color of the minute is white.

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When I think of full lips I invariably end up thinking about **Goldie Hawn** and how she had her lips temporarily filled with saline for the **First Wives Club**. Then there are the other actresses who have **bovine collagen** injected every 6 months or so. Now, however, there's a surgical technique that can give you full, luscious lips and it's reversible, too. Called the **V-Y technique**, the inside of the lips is pinched into a "V" and the lower portion of the "V" is stitched to make a "Y" which pushes the lips forward and plumps them. Most patients have the procedure on their upper lip but it can be done to the lower as well.

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So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? Comments? Write me care of this publication or email to the cdspub.com. © 1998 by Creative Design Services.

Vis A Vis...

ing our identity is very important in the crossdressing community. Create a fake name for yourself as long as it's not "Amanda", get an anonymous mail box outside your own vicinity, never tell anyone you meet your real name,

or where you work. Communicate only via the internet using your fake name. Then go to the meetings and try to make lasting friendships with others.

"How Do I Know I Am Not Transsexual?" Don't worry about it. A lot of transsexuals don't know they are not transsexuals.

"Should I Seek Professional Help?" You should know that professional help is expensive. You could spend up to \$200 an hour with a professional, perhaps more with an out-call service. Oh, you mean professional psychological help? Yeah, whatever.



Movement...

ships and in our relationships with our colleagues. We will seek out and lift up every voice, challenged by what we hear but not afraid. We will listen to every voice.

The true test of democracy is how it embraces those who look, act, and think differently, not just those who are the same. This is the world we dream of—a more compassionate society. One that values the worth and dignity of all people.

We can't subscribe to the "I'll get mine now and we'll add you later" mode of politics. As a woman, as a lesbian, as a Jew, I can't be a woman on

Thursday, a lesbian on Friday, and a Jew on Saturday. And I challenge any organization that requires that I make that choice. Perhaps it is an old fashioned notion, but I believe that to move forward, each of us must move forward together.

Bisexual and transgender activists are forever transforming our understanding of sexual expression and gender identity. You have made great progress. For the first time, bisexual and transgender leaders are part of a round table, convened by NGLTF, of executive directors and chairs of national GLBT political organizations.

Together you're challenging the increased reliance on gene-based theories of sexual orientation and paving

the way for each of us to accept the fluidity that for many of us is our sexual expression. And perhaps you are leading us to the day where there will be less need and desire to categorize ourselves by sexual labels.

But I challenge you to go further. I challenge each of you to break through your world to a new place, to challenge your assumptions, to develop new relationships, to act as though the world that you create for yourself and your community is the model that each of us should live by. I challenge you to tear down your walls, to tear down your stereotypes, and to lead.



Texas Bar Approves LGBT Legal Issues Section

From ICTLEP (International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy)

On April 17, 1998, the Board of Directors of the State Bar of Texas, meeting in Austin, voted to approve the creation of a new section for legal study and continuing legal education.

The name of the Section is the

"Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification (SO&GI) Issues Section." It is believed that this is the first official State Bar to have a study section that is inclusive of transgender issues in the very name of the section.

A great deal of credit for this legal advancement goes to Phyllis Randolph Frye who, in the early

1990's, started ICTLEP (the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy) which has held six annual conferences and has five bound volumes of "Proceedings" on TG legal issues and strategies.



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Crossdressing Kickboxer is a Big Hit in Thailand

By Joseph Kahn

[The New York Times, April 4, 1998]

BANGKOK, Thailand — Muhammad Ali floated like a butterfly. Mike Tyson bites ears. Parinya Kiatbusaba, Thailand's kick-boxing sensation, pecks on the cheek.

In one recent bout, Parinya, 16, overwhelmed his rival with the swooping kicks, flying elbows and stinging uppercuts that make up the Thai kick boxer's arsenal. Then, arms raised as he pranced around the ring, Parinya planted a victory kiss on his opponent's sweaty cheek, lipstick gloss lingering there for a moment before the panicked victim's fingers scraped it away.

"It is hard to fight beautiful men," said the tall, big-boned boxer, whose dyed hair is a few shades shy of his blazing red fingernails. "I can easily knock them out. On the other hand, I want to hug and kiss them."

That kiss sealed Parinya's status as

Thailand's best-known kick boxer. His prowess in the ring is one reason. He has won 20 of 22 matches, all but two by knockout.

But most people know Parinya for another sort of conflict. He is a kick boxer who cross-dresses, and that attracts attention and a few heckles even in a country famed for its tolerance.

Unlike most of its East Asian neighbors, Thailand is not a closet society, and people have no problem with transvestites. Men outfitted and adorned as women are hosts of talk shows, live in all-gay housing projects and march in military parades.

Parinya's success has become a cross-dressing cause celebre. Transvestites packed the stands for his recent Bangkok match, giving the prestigious Lumpini Stadium a record crowd of 12,000. His rise has helped erase the memory of a slight two years ago, when two cross-dressing volleyball stars were barred from joining the Thai national team, on the ground

that they would give the country a poor international image.

But it seems that even Thais are fascinated by the specter of a transvestite competing in kick boxing, a no-limbs-barred martial art that requires such flexibility and fearlessness that few who have aged beyond their teens dare climb into the ring.

It is Thailand's ultimate symbol of masculinity. Baseball and basketball rolled into one, kick boxing is a year-round pastime that offers provincial boys a chance for modest wealth.

It is also at the core of military culture. The sport was derived from 16th-century hand-to-hand combat techniques, and combatants usually leave the ring bloodied. The Royal Thai Army remains its official custodian.

Parinya (pronounced pah-REEN-yah) revels in the contradiction. "I have the body of a great fighter," he said, fingering a purple pendant dur-

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To Goddess & Beyond...

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Ms. Lynda

Kickboxer...

ing a recent interview. "But in my heart I am a woman."

Between fights, he retreats to Chonburi, a gritty industrial city along Thailand's southeastern coast, where an ex-Olympian has set up a kick-boxing camp. Parinya is one of 20 trainees, all in their teens.

On practice day, a group of boxers, shirtless and dripping under a tin roof in 100-degree heat, have begun their workouts. Sparring, they thrust pointed bare feet at the necks of trainers, who use heavy-leather mitts as shields. Grunts fill the air. Boxers hop on one leg while the other thwacks the mitt in flurries of five or six. Coaches command "Again! Too soft! Again!" until the boxers fall back, exhausted.

Parinya arrives late. He is wearing several rings, a black T-shirt and a clasp to hold his clumpy hair down. He sashays over to a full-length mirror where others are measuring bobs and weaves. Parinya preens himself, dabbing his bright lips with a tissue, smoothing his eyebrows, neatly tucking in his shirttails.

In the ring, his kicks are tireless, his punches sharp. "Some boxers have just one or two weapons," says his coach, Shane Muangchon, standing ringside. "Parinya has all the tools — the kick, the elbows, the fist — all strong." The young boxer's specialty is a long, sideways kick that rises a bit above the neck, then hooks down for extra force.

After practice, Parinya sits impatiently for an interview, flipping through a comic book and answering questions in shy monosyllables. Do fellow camp members harass him? "No." Why does he wear makeup to sweltering workouts? "I like to look beautiful."

He brightens when speaking of his family. His parents grow litchi fruit on a farm in the north, where he received a basic education and helped in the fields. Not an obvious environment for a cross-dresser, perhaps, but no matter.

By age 7, Parinya says, he was trying on his older sister's rouge and jewelry in private. A few years later, he started applying blush and lip gloss before school.

Parinya insists that his parents are relaxed about his cross-gender experimentation. But his father often took him — he was initially a reluctant spectator — to day long boxing matches at the county fair. And instincts aside, Parinya developed a boxer's lithe build. Standing 5 foot 7 inches tall and weighing 142 pounds, he is classed as a heavyweight by wispy Thai standards. "I think my father always dreamt that I would be a boxing star," he said.

It was cross-dressing that finally made him one. Though Thais are on the whole easygoing about transvestites, farm boys found bejeweled Parinya easy to ridicule. He was lured into more than a few fights, and soon learned how to win. "A person teases me only once," he boasted.

But Parinya's boxing skills alone

would not have qualified him for the attention he has received of late. His first match in Bangkok, scene of the consolation kiss, was replayed on local television for days, earning him attention that even top kick boxers can only imagine.

Not surprisingly, he has doubters. Rivals suggest his success has been hyped because promoters covet the crowds he attracts.

But his streak of victories continues. Earlier this week he took on his first foreign opponent, a 19-year-old Danish fighter, Dennis Koebke. He sent the bigger Dane to the canvas three times with leg sweeps. The fight ended after Parinya unleashed a series of flying elbow attacks that left his opponent's face splattered with blood.

And for his critics, he has a simple answer. "Don't be distracted by my looks," he said. "This smile has knocked out 18 boys."



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Making Sense of It All

by Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.

Sticks and Daffodils

Spring is, for me, a very special time of the year. This is not to say that, as a resident of the northeastern part of the United States, I do not find the other three seasons to be special. There is something unique about each of them. But spring, particularly the month of April, brings with it an interesting situation. As I walked around my property on a warm mid-April weekend recently, examining the delightful daffodils and at the same time picking up the branches and sticks that had accumulated over the winter, I suddenly realized that, as a transgendered person, I, too, have both sticks and daffodils in my life.

There is a time, at least for most of us, especially among the transgendered, to throw away the outmoded and useless debris of our lives in order to make way for new growth, new beginnings, the daffodils that point to the summer ahead of us. Fulfilling our dreams, however, is not usually easy. In fact, the process is often painful. The following poem, called "April," speaks to the difficulty we face:

April
really is the cruelest,
but also the friendliest,
month of the year.

April
tells the truth
as winter warms
into spring,

and potent roots
nudge the budding earth,
while dry roots

yield not, share not
even a hint of growth.

April
can be cruel
after a winter of hope,
as dryness
here and there
mocks
the expected bloom.

April
also clarifies,
showing me,
and giving back to me,
out of potency and dryness,
the real roots
of my life.

April
is a springtime reminder,
a rebirth of my soul,
telling me who I really am,

that I may have my summer
and then,
and only then,
the true autumn
of my life.

What is it that makes the process of personal renewal so difficult? Why do we often have such difficulty in gathering and discarding the sticks and debris of our lives, let alone allowing ourselves to enjoy the personal daffodils that push for recognition and acceptance? Sometimes the sticks and debris keep the daffodils from blooming, and then what promises to be the beauty of spring and summer in our personal lives seems instead like a continuation of the drabness of our own winter.

There is a time for each season, but unlike the automatic seasonal change of the natural world, change and growth in human nature require human effort, and even that effort requires effort. I am not trying to speak here in riddles. It is just that life itself is something of a riddle, and I am trying to make sense of one of its biggest riddles, the riddle of human change, especially gender change.

As I say in my poem, April is both cruel and friendly, full of both sticks and daf-

fodils alike. What are some of those sticks? They are our individual limitations, our weaknesses, physical as well as emotional, our old habits, and our fears. And there are social limitations involving our own interpersonal skills, our relationships, our situations in terms of family, work, finances, and intimate involvements. Rejection is painful, yet it is a risk which the transgendered person faces, at least in a world where gender change of any kind is not fully understood, let alone accepted.

None of this is easy to handle, but what start out as limitations can also be seen, not as barriers to happiness, but as hurdles to be conquered. It takes time to grow into oneself bodily, emotionally, and socially. The daffodils did not bloom from nothing. They started out as bulbs which sat buried in the ground during the long winter. So, too, do the daffodils in our lives require time to get ready for the right season, for the right moment to blossom.

Discovering that right moment and doing something about it are among the challenges we each face. We can, of course, plunge ahead blindly, not thinking through the implications of our gender change efforts. Or we can take greater personal responsibility for our lives by moving forward with our eyes open and striving to distinguish between the sticks and the daffodils, between the dry roots and the potent ones. Good gender counseling, for those who seek it, serves to clarify this difference as well as the requirements for proper nourishment, so that the transgender expression that often lies dormant within us can bloom properly.

It takes courage to face spring. The truth following our inner winter may not always yield the bloom we expect, or it may simply take longer to realize than we like. But whatever the truth, whatever our spring thaw uncovers, we will be preparing the way for genuine personal growth. As a transgendered person, I have finally learned to welcome both the sticks and the daffodils in my life, so that I can clean up my act and begin nurturing my real roots. The month of April is, for me, a reminder of all this.



RuPaul Honored at Gay and Lesbian Music Awards

by Jeffrey Newman

[The following article originally appeared in *Etcetera*, 27 March, 1998.]

Andy Warhol once said that everyone gets their 15 minutes of fame. If that's true, then drag diva, TV and radio personality, author and singer RuPaul is on his ninth life. After 17 years in show business, the man who made "Supermodel" a number one dance tune, who counseled Jan Brady on the silver screen, and who made donning drag glamorous and chic, has far surpassed his 15 minutes and earned his place in the annals of pop culture.

The singer, performer, and author was honored this month as the 1998 recipient of the Gay and Lesbian American Music Awards' Out Music Award, which is given to an openly gay artist who has done extraordinary work in the entertainment industry. "It actually means more to me to get the Out Music Award, than any other award, because it comes from my gay brothers and sisters," says the 36-year-old performer and MAC Cosmetics spokesperson.

"In this world [which] is so masculine and male-based, where anything that goes against masculinity is put down, to be honored for what I've done is a real achievement, because it shows that people understand what it's like and what it means to go against the grain."

With a career based on gender-bending, RuPaul, who currently hosts

his own variety show on cable TV, is proud to be honored for breaking the stereotype and not limiting himself to society's designated male role.

"Anyone who is pumping femininity or pre-fab femininity into society is a hero in my book," he says.

RuPaul has also just released "RuPaul's Go-Go Box Classics," a dance compilation on Rhino Records paying homage to his days as a club dancer.

"When I moved back to Atlanta in the early '80s, I was a go-go dancer for two-and-a-half years. This album reflects that time in my life," says the singer, who hand picked each of the tunes on the set, including his recent duet with Martha Wash. "The CD is for people to go and be a go-go dancer at home. The songs are all tried and true classics and not the same ones you hear on every other CD, either."

International fame only found its way to the six-foot-seven diva after he released the drag anthem "Supermodel" in 1993. The single topped pop and dance charts around the world and made him a star. Off stage I am much more Scorpio-istic and intense. I tend to be somewhat heavy and introverted," the singer/performer says.

"RuPaul on stage is ongoing, outrageous, very accessible. It's a balance for my Scorpioism. But RuPaul on stage is an act. Entertainment," he adds. "I'm much more subdued. I'm a man living a human life, which is very

different from being a super human on stage. When you are on-stage you pump up the volume."

And pump up the volume Ru will do May 2, in Myrtle Beach, S.C., where he'll be performing at the House of Blues during the South Carolina Pride celebration.

Since 1993, RuPaul has released three full-length CDs- "Supermodel of the World," "Foxy Lady," and last year's successful Christmas opus, "Ho, Ho, Ho." He scored four top 10 dance hits, including 1997's number one smash, "It's Raining Men- The Sequel," a remake of the disco camp version with Martha Wash.

He also hosted his own morning radio show on New York's WKTU for two years. He recently resigned from the job to begin work on a syndicated radio show, which is expected to be launched this summer by Chancellor Media, the same company that owns WKTU.

"Ten years ago I was in L.A., with holes in my shoes, wishing that someday my name would be on a billboard on Sunset Boulevard," he says. "Today my picture is up there. I feel like I have finally made it."

In his 1995 autobiography, "Letting It All Hang Out," the Ru- meister offered an eclectic look at his accession to fame. From his dysfunctional relationship with his mother (whom he affectionately calls Mean Mrs.

continued on page 20

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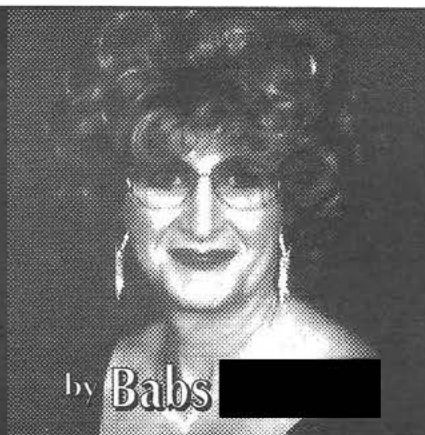
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Dining with Carol & Babs



IT'S ECLECTIC by Carol and Babs

Comfortable and classy best described our first impression as we entered the upstairs dining room at Svoboda on a recent Friday night. The decor had elements of Art Deco, beaux arts, neoclassical and Southwest American influences along with a subtle modernist metallic faux finish effect.

Located on the corner of Fifth St. and Second Ave. in the East Village of New York City, the large windows upstairs afford one a Hopperesque view of the movement, shadows and bustle outside. We were seated by the

manager, Bobsie, who openly welcomed members of the Transgender Community.

The menu, like the decor, is creative and eclectic, and prodded by Babs and assured by our waiter, Carol decided to be a bit daring. After all, this was the young and hip East Village! The Shark Bite appetizer was a pleasant surprise, the deep fried chunks of Mako shark accompanied by crisp subtly flavored fried potatoes and a Russian dressing tartar sauce made for an excellent combination. The dining experience was further enhanced by the upbeat yet muted piped in music that made conversa-

tion easy and relaxed.

For our entrees, we were a bit more conservative. The salmon steak over the perfect mashed potatoes was a simple delight. Our Friday fish night continued with one of the daily specials: shrimps sauteed in a light red wine sauce over angel hair pasta... delicious!

Entreated to sample the desserts, we reluctantly passed over the several delightfully obscene chocolate dishes and tried the Slice of Heaven, fried grapefruit sections and lemon sorbet covered with a coconut raspberry sauce. Devilishly delightful!

All of the dishes were imaginatively presented to enhance our pleasure. We almost hated messing up the plate and eating the food..... yeah right! With moderate prices, most entrees in the low to mid teens, an imaginative menu, and a very comfortable ambiance, Svoboda is truly as relaxed and civilized as it gets.

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RuPaul...

Charles) and his father, to his drug use (LSD was a regular dietary supplement between ages 20 and 30) to his days as a go-go dancer, RuPaul literally lets it all hang out.

The darkest time in his life came when he turned 28. "I had just moved to New York from Los Angeles and couldn't get arrested to save my life. I had no money, no real place to stay. I was still doing the drugs. My sister had kicked me out of her house. It was a pretty dark time," the singer recalls. "I thought about committing suicide, but I never came close to doing it. I knew that if I just hung tight and kept the faith, that I would get through it. I knew change was coming, and I just had to hold on."

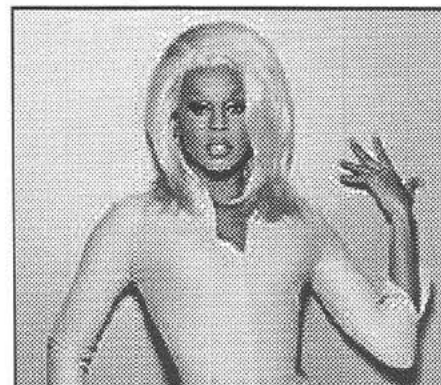
As for the future, RuPaul has no

plans to slow down or retire the wig and pumps. (For those who can't get enough, he'll be forever immortalized in wax at the soon-to-open Madame Tussaud Wax Museum in New York.) With nearly a-half-a-dozen films, including Spike Lee's "Crooklyn," "The Brady Bunch," and "To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar," RuPaul hopes to explore more of his thespian side. In June he will be seen in the made-for-television movie "An Unexpected Life," with Stockard Channing on the USA Network.

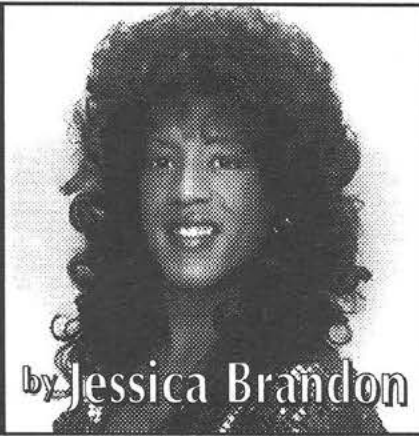
RuPaul says that, while being a celebrity has been great, he's never worried about losing his 15-minutes of fame. "Even if I had been a one-hit wonder, I'd still be working, I'd still have ideas and aspirations, and I'd see my inspiration come to light," he says. "Success is something that is between

you and yourself. The most important thing is for you to love and adore yourself. That is true success. I've accomplished that. So, with or without the fame, I've been successful."

The annual South Carolina Pride celebration takes place in Myrtle Beach, SC, April 30 through May 3. Of the numerous events planned, the House of Blues (803-272-3000) has booked RuPaul for a concert May 2 at 11:00 p.m.



Shopping With Jessica



Greetings, girlfriends! Ahh, spring! Such a glorious time of the year. The sun is shining, the skies are blue, and, more importantly—winter is dead! Now the world can come alive and no one will complain about the weather! At least not until summer arrives!

As you'll recall, last month I began a multi-part series on shopping and building a wardrobe for the beginning crossdresser, something we all were once. In Part One, I talked about how to take your measurements to determine your dress size, how to buy clothes if you're six feet or taller, shopping by mail order for the more timid among us, the "Three A's" for shopping en femme and, lastly, what your basic wardrobe should consist of. Now, ladies, we go into greater depth.

Where to shop for the basic wardrobe? The choices are legion. Department stores are your best bet because of the large selection and variety. But, if you're a frugal shopper like I am, target your local outlet mall. Here in the Philadelphia area, we have Franklin Mills, one of the largest outlet malls on the east coast with shops and stores to satisfy just about your every need: clothes, shoes, coats, lingerie, hosiery, cosmetics, jewelry. You name it, chances are pretty damn good you can find it there.

The latest craze in the shopping game is the Internet. For those of you online, the Web provides virtually an unlimited resource for your shopping needs and desires. Just about every big name department store and major clothing designer you can think of has

a site on the web where you can shop to your heart's content, and the best part is that virtual storefronts are open 24/7, 365 days a year. And, for peace of mind, ordering with your credit card is safe, because shopping sites are fully encrypted to prevent theft of one's card number.

Once you've built your basic wardrobe, then you can expand it. For instance, you might want to invest in an evening gown, as every girl should own at least ONE gown in her transgendered life for a formal function along with a faux fur to go with it in the winter. Speaking of winter, don't forget a good pair of leather gloves to protect your hands and perhaps a scarf as well. For casual attire, shorts in summer are a must, followed by leggings and/or stirrup pants, add a windbreaker for fall and a sleek black leather jacket for colder weather.

Now we come to my favorite topic, shoes. The basic wardrobe, as defined by JoAnn Roberts includes two pairs of shoes. As far as I'm concerned, at least one pair should be, no, OUGHT to be, black leather pumps. I've found that you can wear black leather pumps (BLP's) with just about anything, be it dresses, suits or pants. In my view, there's a certain irresistible allure to BLP's, especially when paired with a LBD (little black dress) which makes for a lethal combination. BLP's are tasteful, uncomplicated and supremely stylish.

Next, it wouldn't hurt to have a pair or two of loafers. Although I hate to wear flats when dressed (however, I

do wear them while in my boy guise), they're good to have for casual wear. Also, it's a sign of maturity when a crossdresser can wear flats in public like any other woman without suffering from what I call "High Heel Withdrawal." To expand on the footwear theme, you can't go wrong with black patent or black satin pumps. As attractive as BLP's are, BPP's or BSP's are a staple for evening wear or special occasions.

As for heel heights, that depends on how tall you are and how much attention you want to attract. Despite being six-foot-two, I've been out and about in four inch stilettos which can make me quite a towering presence, but, as a rule, I never wear more than three inch heels when out in public. If you're under six feet, the sky's pretty much the limit, but be sensible, as walking around in four inchers can get to be rather painful after a while. Oh, and don't forget to break in new shoes before wearing them for long periods. Plus, put cushioned insoles in your shoes for comfort.

To further expand your footwear, you gotta have boots. Boots are essential for wintertime wear, go well with long skirts, and can make a pair of long legs sizzle. You should have one pair of flat boots for regular wear and one pair of high heeled boots to dress up an outfit. There are many variations of boots to choose from, ankle high to thigh high, pull on, lace up, or zip up, and come in leather, suede, patent leather, and even, heaven help us, vinyl, straight out of the 60's, which looks to be making a comeback.

Well, kids, that's all for now. In Part Three of this feature, I'll rap about undergarments and accessories. If you've got comments, tips and opinions, send 'em to [redacted]@voicenet.com, or to the Renaissance National office on page two. Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, sisters!



Gene for Human Sex Reversal Syndrome Identified

By Patricia Reaney

LONDON (Reuters) - British and Italian researchers said Wednesday they had identified a gene they believe causes sex reversal syndrome, in which people have the chromosomes of one sex but the physical attributes of the other. Scientists had already suspected that the DAX1 gene played a role in the troubling condition. Now they believe they have proof. "The evidence we have strongly suggests that DAX1 is the gene responsible for human sex reversal syndrome. Just a simple duplication of the gene in a double dose apparently leads to sex reversal," Robin Lovell-Badge, of the MRC National Institute for Medical Research, told Reuters.

DAX1 lies on the X chromosome. When it duplicates it causes an individual who is genetically male to develop physically as a female. Another gene called Sry, on the Y chromosome, is the main sex gene which determines whether testes or ovaries will develop in the embryo.

Lovell-Badge and researchers at the University of Pavia in Italy con-

ducted experiments on transgenic mice to determine how DAX1 and Sry work. The research offers new insights into how sex is determined and identifies the underlying cause of the disorder.

In a report published in the scientific journal Nature, they showed that the interaction of Sry and DAX1 is vital in the early stages of sex-determination. "We know that Sry is the gene critical for male development. If it's there you get a male, if it isn't you get a female," Lovell-Badge explained. "Dax1 and Sry act in the same point in the pathway (chain of events), but in a normal male Sry wins. The normal function of DAX1, we believe, is to ensure that secondary male genes are turned off. It's an anti-male gene."

The XY chromosome configuration determines males and the XX females, but in sex reversal syndrome a male with XY will develop female sex organs or women with XX will have male characteristics. "In this case, with these duplications of the X chromosome, including DAX1, the individuals are essentially XY, so they

should have developed as males, but they developed (physically) as females," Lovell-Badge said.

The same things happens with Sry. If you have a mutation in that gene you develop as an XY female. In most cases those with sex reversal syndrome are not aware of the condition until puberty, when they fail to ovulate or have a menstrual cycle. "They are women but they are not fertile," he added. There are also individuals who are chromosomal females with XX chromosomes but who develop as males. Again, the condition may not be evident until puberty.

Complete sex reversal occurs in about one in 5,000 people, and partial reversal, producing a hermaphrodite with both testes and ovaries, happens in about one in 1,000 individuals. The researchers' work was limited to physical sex reversal, but Lovell-Badge said that since DAX1 was found in other parts of the embryo, including the brain, it could have an affect on sex-specific behavior and might explain why some females feel trapped in a male body or vice versa.



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28-31: TCNE Spring Fling, Provincetown, MA. Contact Tiffany Club of New England, P.O. Box 2283, Woburn, MA 01888-0483, phone: (617) 891-9325 (answered live Tuesdays 7-10 PM EST)

JUNE 1998

10-14: 16th Annual Be All You Want to Be Weekend, Pittsburgh, PA. Hosted by Transpitt, P.O. Box 15408, Pittsburgh, PA 15237, (412) 242-5902.

19-21: Gender, Sexuality, and Law Conference, Keele University Staffordshire, United Kingdom. Contact GSL98 Conference, Department of

Law, Keele University, Staffordshire ST5 5BG, England, UK. Phone: 01782-593218, Fax: 01782-593228, email: <GSL98@kelle.ac.uk>.

JULY 1998

15-19: S.P.I.C.E.: Spouse/Partners International Conference for Education in Atlanta, GA. For info, call (510) 235-7450 Pacific time; (918) 343-1953 Central time; (215) 860-9271 Eastern time or email to: [REDACTED]@phoenix.net>.

AUGUST 1998

NO EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 1998

18-20: The Third International Congress on Sex and Gender, Exeter College, Oxford University. Jan Cobb, PFC BM network, London,

WC1N 3XX Tel: +44 (0) 1473 421385, fax: +44 (0) 1473 421386, or email to: <Cong.bool@pfc.org.uk>.

30-10/4: Southern Comfort Conference, Holiday Inn Atlanta Central, Atlanta, GA. Call (404) 633-6470, or write to SCC, P.O. Box 77591, Atlanta, GA 30357-1591, or email to <sccatl@aol.com>.

OCTOBER 1998

15-17: Lavender Law Conference, Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, MA. Contact <LAVLAW98@aol.com>.

18-25: Fantasia Fair, Provincetown, MA. Contact Alison Laing, P.O. Box 473, Portsmouth, RI 02871-0473, phone: (401) [REDACTED]



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2. Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing
3. PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others
4. The Matter of Children
5. Annotated Bibliography
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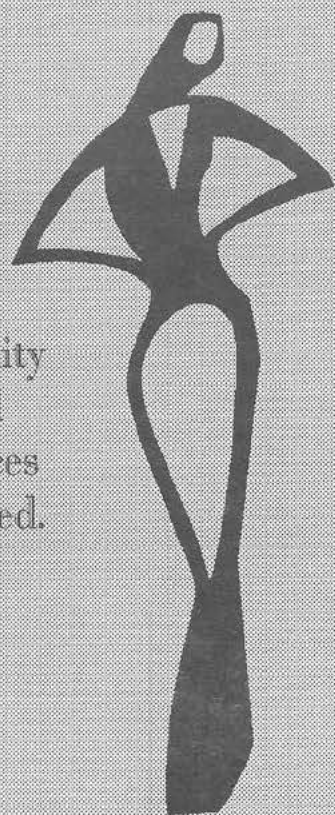
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