

FEMME & MIRROR

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***Our Cover Couple
Book Reviews, Tips & Tricks,
Hey, Good Looking!***

Winter 1999

The Femme Mirror

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3. We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
4. Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner.

Thank you, Frances Fairfax

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Are You Moving?

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

A Note of Thanks

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

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See Page 52 for About Our Cover Couple

Let's Stamp Out Gender Bulimia!

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

Binge and purge. Binge and purge. So in an endless, weary cycle goes the life of a bulimic. One minute he cannot devour enough food. Then, wracked by guilt, he ingests emetics or laxatives to get the wretched stuff out of his body. A poor self-image plagues many bulimics, and the endless bingeing and purging can devastate their health. Fortunately, the appropriate therapeutic approach can terminate this destructive cycle and lead to newfound happiness and a sense of well-being.

All too often, crossdressers practice gender bulimia. For years they huddle in denial, hiding from even their nearest and dearest their inner femininity. "Gender gift?" they sneer. "Curse is more like it!" So they grow beards, get "saved," engage in risky macho hobbies, and marry unsuspecting women in a frantic attempt to leave behind their inner "demon."

But the girl within does not die. Uneasily she sleeps as the crossdresser tries to squeeze his whole identity into his masculine side. Deluding himself that his feminine side is gone for good, he deceives his wife into thinking he has been "cured" - if he has told her at all. This deception will come back to haunt him later, for his femininity is woven into his being. Trying to cut it away makes about as much sense as trying to excise every vein in the body.

The result is what one would expect when one tries to cram a large quantity into a small space; tension builds. Crossdressing becomes the lightning rod for other relationship issues. Projecting blame for his confinement onto his wife and family, the crossdresser may flare at trivial annoyances. Pressure may even spill over into physical illness. Despite his best efforts to suppress "her," "she" begins to clamor ever louder for expression.

Finally the explosion occurs. The crossdresser comes roaring out of secrecy. Even if he has not accepted himself, he tells his wife about his crossdressing, and may not be particularly sensitive in doing so. Floating on a cloud of gender euphoria, he interprets her initial cautious reaction as total approval of whatever he wants to do. Nothing will do but to be out in public - security considerations be damned. So he disseminates pictures of himself all around, and goes out with other crossdressers in his hometown. When folks out in public do not confront him immediately, he's sure he passes. Awash in femininity, he fantasizes about living full time. Life is a sweet delusion!



Jane Ellen Fairfax

Until, that is, he runs into a check. Perhaps someone reads him and bursts his confidence. Or his wife brings him back to earth with an ultimatum. Or someone at his work recognizes him. For whatever reason, the high is gone and guilt sets in. Out go hundreds of dollars worth of clothes, all his newfound friends, and his self-esteem. It's compression time again. So back and forth it goes as years roll past. One minute he denies he ever wants to put on a dress; the next he contemplates living full time en femme. Seeing nothing but extremes, he never perceives the nourishing mean between starvation and gorging.

Yet there is a healthy middle ground, and no crossdresser need ever allow gender bulimia to blast his life. All it takes is careful thought and common sense. Victory starts with acceptance of the reality that his gender gift is, for better or worse, a part of who he is. Once the crossdresser acknowledges reality, he can make that reality work for his personal betterment.

Having accepted himself, the crossdresser is ready to dismantle the wall of deception he has built between himself and his spouse. Telling her may precipitate a crisis of trust, but, if he shares from the heart, and educates her slowly and gently, she will probably find a comfort zone with his need for self-expression. Her concerns about security and family issues will have a natural tendency to

ow down any inclination toward a bull-in-a-china-shop
proach. And that is all to the good!

ghtening experiences lead to purges. The best way to avoid
structions in the road is to go slowly. One crossdresser I know
me flying out of secrecy at warp speed. Nothing would do for
n but to be out and about everywhere. Flying on his pink
oud, he believed he could pass anytime. So he went to a rough
ve, got propositioned and then beaten up. He has yet to
emerge. Going out in public is not Nirvana. A more prudent
proach is for the crossdresser and his wife to select a mutually
mfortable support group, where he can enjoy the positive
inforcement of peers, and take baby steps out to accepting
ublic areas. As his experience grows, so will his confidence.

hile sound judgement and a deliberate pace will lessen exposure
adverse experiences, the crossdresser cannot completely
sulate himself from hurtful comments. If he has truly accepted
mself, however, he knows that he has every right to self-
pression, so long as he does not violate the rights of others.
hen he looks at the twisted expressions on the faces of his
tractors, he knows it is they who have a problem. Because he
wns the right to be who he is, outside events cannot induce him
purge.

he wise crossdresser keeps all of reality before him. He is a
minine person with a right to express that softer side within.
ut he is not a woman. He accepts that there are some feminine
periences he will never have. While he may fantasize about
ving a feminine ideal, he knows where Oz ends and Kansas
egins. Not long ago I answered an inquiry from a sister who had
st decided to emerge. Seeking information on the Internet, she
countered someone who urged her to embrace her femininity
y going on hormones. Armed with a firm sense of reality, the
ossdresser can brush aside such Siren-calls to binges. She
nows she has within her a natural femininity that does not come
at of a bottle.

he crossdresser's wife can help break the binge-purge cycle.
hile the revelation of her husband's crossdressing may fly in
e face of the stereotypes with which she was brought up, she
es well to accept what she cannot change. This does not mean
e must support whatever her crossdresser wants to do. There
little to be gained by enabling gender bulimia. By realizing that
ere clothes do not make her husband a different person, she
oids the temptation to issue ultimata that perpetuate the binge-
urge cycle.

y fostering an acceptance of all its components, the gender
mmunity can help reinforce the need to accept gender realities.
e Gender Bill of Rights hit the bull's-eye. Crossdressers have
e right to be and act like crossdressers; transsexuals have the

right to be and act like transsexuals. Nothing is gained by
converting crossdressers to be transsexuals, or vice versa. The
only product of such selfish recruitment is human misery. Only
when each person cleaves to the truth of his identity can he be
free of the pressure that causes the binge-purge cycle.

Fortunately, society is becoming more accepting of crossdressing.
No longer is there any need to risk patronizing businesses or
services whose condemnation can destroy self-esteem and lead
to purging. In many areas the crossdresser can find shops that
treat him as a feminine person, and even churches that welcome
him to the love of a God Who first loves all human beings. Such
resources are becoming more and more widely available. The
gender community is lobbying hard for just laws that enforce
social acceptance of gender reality. It behooves the crossdresser
and his wife to seek out accepting resources and work so there
will be more of them.

It is time to declare our independence of the sad cycle of gorging
and purging. The crossdresser can help by accepting his
femininity and cleaving to its reality. His wife can help by
reaffirming that reality and working with him to develop both his
masculinity and his femininity. The gender community can help
by recruiting more resources that affirm reality. There is a mean
between the extremes of denying our true femininity and letting it
dominate our lives. Let's help one another onto that healthy
middle ground, where people can grow. Let's all band together to
stamp out gender bulimia!

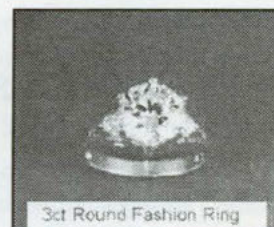
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Albert Lea, MN 56007





Executive Director's Message

By Carol Beecroft

Well, I finally did it!! "Did what?" you ask. Well, I am NOW a MOTHER!!!! I really am! For the last several months, I've been a foster parent to two children - a boy age 16 and a boy age 9.

Let me tell you people out there - I'm now washing three tons of clothing and towels every day. (At least, it feels like it!) I'm mopping floors several times each day, cleaning up the bedrooms, straightening out their beds, putting toys away, getting the kids up in the morning, making breakfast, getting the kids off to school; and then, in the evening, getting them back into bed and hoping that they will settle down soon. What a struggle it is, getting kids to go to bed!

And then it's picking them up at school for trips to Cub Scouts, to the doctor, to visits to social workers and then more trips to more social workers. And when we go shopping, it's "Get me this!" and "Get me that!" And, of course, preparing meals for children who won't eat vegetables, or anything else, for that matter. It's a fight to get them off the phone each day. People wonder why my phone is always tied up.

A man puts in his eight hours and comes home, feeling he's "done" for the day, but the mother is still working her rear off doing housework and supervising the kids. A man gets two days off each week, while a mother works seven days a week with no days off. And she does this for 52 weeks a year. No wonder many mothers hate summer vacations!

Anyway, when I go to school to pick up Charlie, I find a lot of other mothers already there, waiting for their children. Of course, I'm the only male. But it's nice to talk to the mothers about MY children and to ask questions about how these mothers handle

different situations. I told them that since I have to do everything that they do, the least I could expect is equal rights! Certainly, it is only fair that I be called a mother, too! They smile sweetly and say that, yes, I'm a mother, too!!! So there!!!

I've learned just how important a mother's work is, how hectic a mother's life can be. I've discovered that you have to wait until the kids are up, fed and sent off to school, the floors mopped, and then, and only then, can you get into the shower!

So now I'm a mother! The other mothers at school say that I am a mother, so it must be true!! A pleasant thought!

My eyes have been opened. A mother's life can be either heaven or hell, depending on kids' moods, health, and the tons of clothes waiting to be washed and dried. We really don't give mothers the thanks and appreciation they truly deserve.

But for ALL the headaches and work involved with being a mother, I LOVE it!!! I feel NEEDED! My life has so much more of a meaning to it! I actually feel younger. Well, after all, we mothers still like to feel young (and pretty).

So hats off to all those wonderful mothers who take babies and turn them into civilized human beings; those wonderful mothers who make our houses into homes; those mothers who put themselves last in order to successfully raise children - and husbands.

I'm proud to be a mother!!! I'm actually, like all mothers, molding a child's life for the better!! There's nothing more important than that!

Carol, a new mother

Letters to the Editor

Dear Frances,

Although I've been a Tri-Ess member for about a year and a half, this is my first time submitting something for the Femme Mirror. I live in Florida and am an active member of the Phi Epsilon Mu chapter. I am very happily married and my wife of 30 years knows about and supports my crossdressing. However, for the first 28 years she was unaware. That's basically what my article is about - not so much my telling her, but how we both did damage control after. I've attached it as Word '97 and just copied it to the body of this email as well. Hopefully, one will work and not require too much reformatting. I'd include a photo of myself, but I don't want to risk scaring small children. This may be a bit unusual as my wife Beth has edited it, so she gets writing credit also.

While I'm at it, I just want to compliment you and everyone who works so hard putting out the Mirror each quarter. It's enjoyable, informative, topical, and just plain well done.

Warmest,
Carolyn Marie [REDACTED], FL4806-C

Dear Jane,

RE: Volume 23, Issue 3, Page 47

Yes, an unusual way to begin a letter, but what a great hook. You couldn't stop reading this letter if you tried. I

DARE YOU! Of course there is no assurance that you won't call this a waste of your time, or I may even beat you to that determination! If nothing else, it is a good excuse for taking a break from your daily routine.

On page 47 is something that you will see at a later date in a category called General Interest. The article tells how the author selected her femme name. I couldn't finish reading it without a woman named Kathy coming to mind. As I thought, I said to myself, "Self, wouldn't it be interesting to find an article in each issue of The Femme Mirror that tells why we selected our femme name?" It may be a name we felt worthy of the woman we would fashion ourselves after. Some names may have been born in a precious memory. Some as a tribute to one whom we admire, a woman whose name establishes a standard of ladylike deportment and of feminine achievement.

Just a thought, yes, but cannot a flicker of thought procreate a worthy result? It's like the young lady who was "just a little bit pregnant." May I offer, for your consideration, "Her Name Is Kathy," or perhaps "The Chancery." We will both learn the title selected when we find page two. In fact, why don't we look and see for ourselves?

Katherine [REDACTED]

(Ed. Note: Katherine's article may be found on page 39 of this issue.)

ADDRESS CHANGE!

On your mailings to our Tri-Ess address in Houston, please note we are now using the PMB prefix, instead of STE, to comply with Postal Regulations.

Make sure your mail gets to us!
Address it as follows:

**The Society for the Second Self
8880 Bellaire B2 PMB 104
Houston, TX 77036-4621**

This affects all mail going to our box, whether addressed to Tri-ESS, The Femme Mirror, SPICE, Jane Ellen Fairfax, Frances Fairfax or any other Tri-ESS Officer or Department.

Make sure your mail gets to us!

Note this change RIGHT NOW!

The Bridge from Despair to Hope

by Dr. Peggy Rudd

"Hope springs eternal in the human heart."

Alexander Pope

There is reassurance in the words of Pope, for his idea helps us believe that hope is an available resource found within all of us. But even with this awareness we may still get lost in the mire of hopelessness and despair. Many crossdressers and the women who love them remember being pulled by negative emotions, and being tossed about on a sea of hopelessness with no direction or focus.

Do you remember the time when you felt there was little hope for your life or your relationship? There may have been a time when your self-esteem plummeted so low you could not love yourself, and certainly did not expect another person to love you. Many of us remember being lost in a maze of confusion and heartache. All of us have had at least a few moments when hope seemed to be light years away. It is difficult to escape the initial plummet associated with life as a crossdresser or as the committed partner of a crossdresser. Many tell about searching for direction through darkness, believing they are the only people experiencing gender confusion. Was there ever a time when, although your love was real, you continued to stumble through life, because you were not prepared for a relationship so unique, and so challenging? Those who still feel the sting of despair may find a path to hope as you read the words of Alexander Pope.

Hopeless people demonstrate three negative behaviors. First, they become willing to passively accept the status quo. Complacency does little to solve problems, for passivity yields a willingness to endure whatever may come. The second scenario occurs when desperate people become rashly willing to take any risk in order to improve the situation. Some crossdressers take risks when they plunge fervently forward with little thought of the people who may be hurt along the way. Wives and partners may risk the security of the relationship by saying, "If you continue to crossdress don't expect me to show any affection!" Life becomes a vicious cycle of distrust, pain and sorrow. Thirdly, desperate people feel totally dejected and may demonstrate some form of compulsive behavior. This occurs when crossdressers and the people who love him are unable to think of anything else

except "the problem." During these dark days they don't know what to do, or where to look for help. They no longer hope for the best. They just hope to avoid anything worse.

A solution may come when the couple ponder a difficult question. "Which is greater, 'the problem' or the love?" I like to think of love as the bridge between despair and hope. We will be ready to seek help when we begin to love more completely and the love is clearly greater than "the problem." But first, we need to love ourselves. Self-love may be difficult for the crossdresser who is saying, "How can I love myself when I am perverted and out of step with society?" Remember! This is the time when he actually believes himself to be corrupt. It is difficult for the wife, also, and she may be saying, "How can I love myself when there is so much disarray in my personal life?"

Crossdressers may find self-love once the concept of their own gender gift is fully realized. Yes! You are truly gifted. You are among the men who have experienced the best of humanity; the better feminine traits, and the best of masculinity. Wives and partners may find self-love when they realize that the gender gift is, in fact, a gift rather than a curse.

Love can unlock the doors of hopelessness and despair as we move toward hope. George Lord Littleton said, "Love can hope where reason would despair." Reason tells us that crossdressing can't be explained, therefore it should not be accepted. But love is the basis for a faith that says, "Everything will be O.K. We will not be able to reasonably describe our thoughts or our actions, but our love is strong enough to rise above it. Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible, and hope is made possible through love."

I remember sharing dinner a few years ago with Dr. Mickey Diamond of the University of Hawaii. Mickey is among the most prominent, if not the most outstanding researcher in the field of gender and human sexuality. We spent the evening sharing thoughts and theories related to the question, "Why do some men seem to have a higher level of femininity?" We tossed ideas around, but at the evening's end we both said, "We know what we believe, but theoretical proof is still incomplete in many areas." If we believe that love can hope even when our logic and reason seem to be pulling us in a different direction, we are getting closer to hope, and our faith in ourselves and in our relationships

may become a reality. Can an individual be successful if he or she crossdresses? Can a woman find self-acceptance if she shares her life with a crossdresser? The answer is an emphatic, "Yes!" But first we must follow the path to hope.

Faith believes it, Hope anticipates it, Patience waits for it!

Patience is one key which opens the way to hope. It is difficult for a crossdresser to sit patiently and wait for those who love him to accept him. I remind men to be patient and wait for acceptance. I ask them to remember the ever-ending process and the time frame experienced in their own path to self-acceptance. Self-acceptance certainly did not happen overnight. People spend a lifetime moving toward finding self-acceptance. Women need time! Love is the bridge between despair and hope, and if our love is complete we will patiently wait on each other.

What Is Hope?

Hope is the anchor of the soul.

Hope centers around a person expecting something.

Hope is a promise, trust and reliance.

Hope can become a catalyst for action and personal growth.

Hope is the incentive to relationship success.

Hope is holding a hand out into the darkness when, in truth, we really can't predict what is out there.

Hope is characterized by effort directed toward making a relationship work when self-doubt and a distrust of loved ones would be easier.

Hope sees what others can not see, feels the intangible and achieves what once seemed to be impossible. Hope can end the war that is looming greater than life in the human heat.

End The War

Once in the midst of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln saw the damage wrought upon human life. The war had torn families apart: husbands against wives, siblings against siblings. As one brother fought boldly for the North, the other brother marched with the South. Mothers and small children were left behind under threat to their security and peace. In the midst of the battle, Abraham Lincoln spoke these words, "Fondly we do hope; fervently we do pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." Do you remember wishing the war within you could end? Have you ever felt your search for personal fulfillment came at the expense of home and family? We have often hoped to call

Tri-Ess Library Book Project

My Husband Wears My Clothes by Peggy Rudd

Understanding Crossdressing by Virginia Prince

Crossdressing, Sex and Gender by Bullough and Bullough

Crossdressers and Those Who Share Their Lives by Peggy Rudd

Wouldn't you like to see these books in YOUR local library? Remember how you could never find any information about crossdressing when YOU were looking for it? Well, now YOU can do something about it!

The Tri-Ess Library Book Project is a long-term Tri-Ess effort to educate the public, including crossdressers, wives, therapists, teachers and the general public about crossdressing. Our goal is to place a packet of four good books in public and college libraries across the country. Here's how YOU can help:

- 1) Send us the complete contact information for the Acquisitions Librarians of TWO libraries you wish to supply with these books. Carol Beecroft will contact the libraries and determine whether they will accept the books.
- 2) Send us the money to purchase ONE book packet. By special arrangement, the cost of each packet is only \$30.00. The great news is that Tri-Ess will match your gift to a local library, in full. That means you can place books in not just one but two local libraries because of the matching gift from Tri-Ess.
- 3) Follow up with the libraries a few weeks later to see whether the books have been added to their catalog and placed on display. Carol will work with the donors of the packets and the libraries to make sure the books are available to the public.

This is a wonderful and inexpensive way to reach sisters still in secrecy, plus their family members, educators and helping professionals, and the general public. And do remember that in each book we are placing a special notice that the book has been donated by Tri-Ess, with our national address and phone number.

Why not make this a priority project of YOUR local chapter? You'll never know how many of your sisters will be glad you did!

Continued on page 10

a truce during the inner battles. The war will end if we: Hope for the best. Prepare for the worst. And find the humor in it all.

Smile Your Way To Hope

Humor is another key that opens the door to hope. During SPICE in Minneapolis it was a joy to see couples who could laugh at themselves and at their relationships. Somehow people were able to find time to smile and find humor, even as a stream of tears poured down their faces. I knew that collectively the SPICE participants were getting very close to hope.

The Word "Hope" Points The Way

We want to remember the word "hope" for this is the secret of moving beyond despair and hopelessness. Look at the word carefully. The "H" in hope stands for HONESTY. There is no substitute for honesty, No valid excuse for dishonesty, No varying degrees of honesty. Honesty gives a person strength, but not always popularity. The most important person to be honest with is yourself.

The "H" also stands for HELP. Get help when you need it. HELP is available for all who seek it. Tri-Ess is blessed with activities designed to help. There are meetings, conventions, cruises, and SPICE. There are books, journals, and a thousand answers to a thousand difficult questions.

The "O" in the word "hope" stands for OPTIMISM. It has been said that if we keep our faces to the sunshine, we will see fewer shadows. The problem with being an optimist is that people don't believe you know what is going on. Optimism is one of the foundations of my life, for my mother read me the entire book "Pollyanna" when I was still a babe in arms. She sat in a rocking chair, cradling the book and me. My sister, 22 months older, sat quietly at her feet. Day after day we listened to the book in its entirety and Mother carefully explained the message of it all. Because of these lessons, I have been able to see sunshine beyond the storm clouds. I know if the rain falls, the rainbow will follow. I also know I love my husband, and our love is greater than the problem. This does not mean I am blinded by optimism. I see the problems, but I believe in solutions.

My book, "My Husband Wears My Clothes," is the story of hope, but the original manuscript, hand written, is frequently blurred with tear drops. I remember the pain, but I also know that hope is seeing things others cannot see. When dark clouds obscure the vision it is difficult to believe that good is just beyond the cloud. Somehow the Pollyanna in me can always see the joy just beyond the most recent challenge.

The "P" of HOPE stands for PATIENCE. The true measure of a person is: The height of his ideals. The breadth of his sympathy. The depth of his convictions, And the length of his patience.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to wait patiently as hope matures, and the storm clouds part bringing better things into focus.

The "E" in the word "hope" stands for EDUCATION. An education teaches us the most important things to worry about. We can all learn through interaction with others, through literature, or professional help. So when should begin to have hope? When should we get help, practice honesty, face life with optimism, and continue the pursuit of education? The best time to get around to it is between your yesterday and your tomorrow. You will never get around to it if you wait until you are ready, for procrastination is the fertilizer that will make your difficulties grow. Go ahead and take the most significant leap of faith. Find hope! Your life will never be the same!

(From Dr. Rudd's Keynote Speech at the recent SPICE VII conference in Minneapolis)

How To Recognize A Good Woman

(from the internet)

A good woman is proud. She respects herself and others. She is aware of who she is. She neither seeks definition from her man, nor does she expect him to read her mind. She is quite capable of articulating her needs.

A good woman is a strong woman. She recognizes that her strength is weakened by attitudes that suggest that she doesn't need a man. We all know that is not true. We do need lots of loving, O.K.

A good woman is hopeful. She is strong enough to make all her dreams come true. She knows love, therefore she gives love. She recognizes that her love has great value and must be reciprocated. If her love is taken for granted, it soon disappears.

A good woman has a dash of inspiration and a dabble of endurance. She knows that she will at times have to inspire others to reach the potential God gave them. A good woman knows her past, understands her present and forces toward the future.

A good woman knows God. She knows that with Him the world is her playground, but without Him she will just be played with.

A good woman does not live in fear of the future because of her past. Instead, she understands that her life experiences are merely lessons meant to bring her closer to self-knowledge and unconditional self-love...

Pass this along to all the good women you know.

Patterns of Marital Adjustment

From "Transvestites and Transsexuals: Toward a Theory of Cross-Gender Behavior"

by Richard F. Docter, Ph.D., Plenum Press, NY, 1988

Below is an introduction by Richard F. Docter followed by four "games" he purports to be common in crossdressing relationships. They are: 1) The Isolation Game, 2) The Personal Growth Game, 3) The Double Message Game, and 4) The Mother Game.

Wives of Crossdressers. Let us consider some of the tactics we have observed crossdresser couples attempting to use in their efforts to live with actively practiced crossdressing by the husband. We shall do this by describing several patterns of adaptation or interactive "games" enduring over an extended period. Two important preliminary points are these: First, most couples employ a combination of games. Second, marital success is obviously not dependent merely upon how the cross dressing is managed. Most important is the basic character of the marital relationship and the quality of personal adjustment seen in the partners as well as their commitment to each other.

The Isolation Game. The tactics of the isolation game call for each partner to withdraw and seek satisfaction elsewhere. It involves much denial of real problems and feeling. There is much cover-up, lying, and deception on the part of the husband. Intimacy is lost. Mutual commitments are diminished. The partners attempt to isolate crossdressing by pretending that it does not exist. Here are the main elements of this game.

- * Each partner attempts to deny the reality of cross dressing and this behavior is separated and isolated from the wife through secret sessions of crossdressing. The husband fabricates reasons for absences from home and for money spent on cross dressing.

- * There is little meaningful communication about feelings, frustrations, sexuality, or cross dressing.

- * The husband searches for others like himself. He joins a club, corresponds with other crossdressers and builds a circle of new friends with whom he feels comfortable.

- * Marital sex takes second place to sexuality associated with cross dressing. This is typically solitary masturbation while cross dressed.

- * The wife becomes increasingly angry but cannot fully express these feelings. She holds her husband responsible for damaging her life and their marriage.

- * The husband is less angry and frustrated as he finds new ways to express his crossdressing. His new interests, new friends, and

new ways to spend time and money take priority over investments in his wife. He cannot understand why she has become so resentful and angry.

- * Often the couple remain married, especially when children are involved, but the relationship is not very rewarding to either partner.

- * Each may look toward a long-term goal of divorce, for example, when the children are out of the family, following retirement, or at some other time of major life reorganization.

- * When there is a divorce and remarriage by the husband, it is usually to a woman far more informed and able to tolerate crossdressing than was the earlier wife. Not infrequently, a new wife is selected who is to some extent sexually aroused by cross dressing. Little is known about the success of second marriages by crossdressers.

- * In rare cases, when the partners are strongly committed to each other and share many common interests, the isolation game can help mask the problems of cross dressing. The irritation of crossdressing is avoided by pretending it does not exist.

The Personal Growth Game. The Personal Growth Game is characterized by struggles on the part of each partner to understand and respond to the needs of the other. A high measure of mutual respect and concern for the partner is imperative. Each partner must be motivated for personal growth, change, and adaptation to the changing environment of the marriage. Crossdressing may be regarded as an unwanted interference, but it is also accepted as a part of reality and not as something about to disappear. Here are the main elements of the game.

- * In this scenario the partners put aside the fear and discomforts associated with crossdressing and engage in intensive discussion of what this means to them, both individually and as a couple.

- * There is a quality of genuine concern and respect for the well being of the other person. Despite inevitable changes in their respective comfort levels, each partner is committed to the belief that their marriage will not only survive, but it will grow stronger and more satisfying.

- * There are great differences among couples in how the marital sex life is affected. For some, crossdressing facilitates stronger and more mutually satisfying sexual experiences, although most wives ban crossdressing from their actual sexual relations. For

others, there is a gradual decline in their sex lives together. Despite their mutual respect and concern for each other, for the crossdresser, crossdressing becomes more sexually rewarding than marital sex.

* As one crossdresser stated: "When marriages work the wife usually takes some part or some interest in crossdressing." Whatever this may be, it is a powerful way to show respect and caring. Even the slightest demonstration of acceptance or encouragement by the wife is highly valued by the crossdresser.

* The wife meets other crossdressers and their wives and comes to the conclusion that new friendships can be rewarding for her as well as her husband.

* The most frequently noted effect of crossdressing according to wives is that it brings great pleasure to the husband which then accrues to her benefit. It may be this insight by the wife, together with the desire to help her husband, which are the most critical starting points for constructive management of cross dressing within the marriage.

* The husband perceives both the anguish of his wife and her desire to be helpful. He modifies his behavior by following negotiated rules and guidelines which are most valued by her. There is considerable variation among crossdressers in their ability or willingness to abide by their agreements.

* With the passage of time, crossdressing takes a place among the various activities and sources of pleasure which make each marriage unique. Crossdressing generates less unpleasant emotion and less conflict than initially seen.

The Double Message Game. In this game, crossdressing is out in the open but the partners are not honest in their efforts to handle this. They deny their feelings, pretend all is well, communicate falsely in hope that this will help, and generally fail to establish bridges essential to long-term marital satisfaction. Here is some of what we have observed in those relationships.

* The husband professes that his marriage is the most important thing in the world to him. He says he will do anything to save his marriage and to strengthen it. But he persistently behaves otherwise. He breaks the rules they have agreed upon. He is a law unto himself. He believes that he must have what he wants when he wants it.

* Like most wives of crossdressers, this wife would prefer that crossdressing did not exist. However, she has difficulty expressing this directly because it seems very rejecting. Instead, she buries and conceals her feelings and, at first, pretends to be accepting and supportive. She occasionally buys a gift for "the other woman" and assists her husband in crossdressing. Together with verbal approval, these outward signs of acceptance are really a mask for her feeling of contempt, anger, and frustration.

* The husband incorrectly assumes his wife really enjoys his crossdressing and asks her to become more involved in purchases, club activities, and other crossdresser events. The more she does, the more he asks for.

* The wife continues to mask her feelings but becomes increasingly uncomfortable. She is becoming fed-up. As time passes, there are occasional episodes of anger, tears, and accusations.

* Neither partner is eager to seek marriage counseling. If they do so there is sufficient ambivalence that little progress is made. For both, it is more comfortable to conceal feelings than to discuss sources of conflict.

* There is progressive withdrawal from each other and, at a time of unusual stress, the marriage may end.

The Mother Game. The themes of this game are dependency and subordination by the crossdresser; he seeks to transfer the responsibility for his need-fulfillments in all areas to his wife- the idealized, all-giving mother. Perhaps he has selected a wife who was comfortable with certain managerial and leadership tasks. But it is highly unrealistic for him to assume that she ever expected to take on such responsibilities with regard to his cross dressing. Here is the scenario for this game:

* The husband seeks a wife who will function in a mother-like relationship with him, giving direction, control, and parental authority to his life. He wants to be dependent, to be passive, to be controlled- but at the same time he resents this. As with teenagers there is both a need for compliance and a contradictory desire to break away from parental jurisdiction.

* In general, the wife is pleased to be cast in the role of the mother. She is more comfortable calling the shots, managing, giving directions, and issuing orders. However, she is not interested in giving direction to her husband's cross dressing, and has no desire to encourage this behavior.

* The husband values his cross dressing and wants his wife to give the same love, direction, approval, and control to this activity as she may be giving to the other activities he enjoys. He wants his wife to help improve his feminine image and teach him how to be a girl. These responsibilities do not appeal to the wife.

* Instead of showing unconditional acceptance and approval of cross dressing, the wife begins to take charge by telling her husband what he can do and cannot do, when to do it, where to do it, and how much to spend on cross dressing. Since she has been effective in the past by being a no-nonsense leader in the family she continues to use this managerial style. She is surprised to discover that her husband resists her efforts to regulate or control his crossdressing.

* The husband attempts to break away from the dominance of his wife and cross dress as he wishes. As he does so, she tries harder to take control. More orders are issued. There are threats, rules, and demands by her.

* When the wife becomes aware she is losing this battle, despite her husband's promises to mend his ways, she becomes angry and resentful. She may consider his cross dressing to be out of control, although he may see this very differently.

* The outcome of this power and growth struggle will depend largely on the wife's ability to share control over cross dressing and to partially give up the mother role. On the husband's side, the challenge will be whether or not he can take steps to carry out his cross dressing in ways which are either satisfactory to his wife, or at least offer minimal annoyance to her. Possibly he will learn that as he takes responsibility for his expression of crossdressing he can also do so in other areas of his life. The experience of discovering and working on his own dependency needs may help him to become a more assertive person.

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How to Contribute to Your Chapter Newsletter and your Mirror

By Diane V.

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

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

How about it, Gals!!

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



Can't Stop Dressin' in Women's Clothes

*(To the tune of "Can't Help Lovin' That Man of
Mine" by George Gershwin)*

Fish gotta swim
Birds gotta fly;
I gotta dress,
Or I will die.
I can't stop dressin' in
Women's clothes.

Tell me I'm crazy.
Say it's a sin;
Call me a pervert
and I'll purge again.
Can't stop dressin' in
Women's clothes.

When she goes away
That's when I can play
At be-in' a girl...
Wig, hose and heels,
How good it feels....

She can stay out
As late as can be
That gives me more time
To be Lady Me.
Can't stop dressin' in
Women's clothes.

(Lyrics by Onnalee)

Marvelous Moments

By Rachel Rene

Several months ago I had some photographs made of myself en femme by a professional photographer. Recently I stopped by her studio en femme just to say hello. When I arrived, she was sitting in her reception area with another customer. She greeted me warmly and introduced me to her customer, who I will call Susan. After a few moments of chitchat, Susan said, "Rachel, come over here and sit by me, because I really need some support right now."

I didn't quite understand why Susan thought I would be a source of support, but I sat down with her and took her hand. She began to explain that she had lost her long term lesbian lover about three months before, and she was working through the grieving process. She had come to the studio that day to inquire about having pictures made to help her in finding a new partner.

Susan's lesbian lover had died tragically following routine surgery that was not expected to be life threatening. The lover she lost was the only partner she had ever been with. They had been together for over 18 years. So it was quite a shock to lose her unexpectedly. I felt a special bond with Susan because I had lost a sister several years ago following routine surgery. The three of us sat together and continued to talk. We shared many stories about how we have had to deal with loss and disappointments in life. We shared stories of personal loss, divorce, sexual dysfunction, and the stress crossdressing brings to a marriage.

We also talked about what wonderful therapy it is to have your picture made. Certainly, my experience with the photographer helped me realize a greater self-esteem. It was very flattering to have a professional make-over, to get your hair done just so, and to have the photographer pose and pamper you. And the finished product proves that you are as beautiful as you always imagined you could be.

What was it that caused Susan to recognize that I could provide her comfort in her journey? Why did the three of us find it easy to share our emotions and stories of personal pain? I don't understand these things any better than I understand why I am compelled and fulfilled by crossdressing. But I do know that I was deeply touched by the marvelous moments I shared with Susan and the photographer. The conversation was all about emotions in a way that I have never experienced as a male, even when talking with a woman. Never have I felt so close to new acquaintances so quickly. There emerged an understanding, a bond that was new and exhilarating. Never have I felt so female than during those marvelous moments when I connected with sister journeymen in a very special way. I hope they were as blessed by our encounter as I was.

If There Were Only 100 of Us

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, there would be:

- 57 would be **Asians**
- 21 would be **Europeans**
- 14 would be from the **Western Hemisphere** (both North and South)
- 8 would be **Africans**
- 52 would be **Female**
- 48 would be **Male**
- 70 would be **Non-white**
- 30 would be **White**
- 70 would be **Non-Christian**
- 30 would be **Christian**
- 89 would be **Heterosexual**
- 11 would be **Homosexual**
- 6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the *United States*.
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death; 1 would be near birth
- 1 (yes, only 1) would have a college education
- 1 would own a computer
- 1 would be a crossdresser

When one considers our world from such a compressed perspective, the need for acceptance, understanding and education becomes glaringly apparent.



On Balance

By Lucy [REDACTED]

Whether you feel blessed or cursed because you are either a cross-dresser or the spouse/significant other of a cross dresser could very well depend on how well that person in your relationship (you or your partner) maintains the balance between masculine and feminine sides. But what is the right balance?

I am convinced there is no ideal balance, but I am also convinced there is an optimum balance point for each cross-dresser and spouse/significant other. It is that combination of activities that permits a cross dresser to express masculine and feminine sides in such a manner as to be satisfactory to the cross-dresser, minimally disruptive in his/her life, and be the most acceptable to his/her spouse/Significant other.

For many couples, maintaining this balance is very difficult because the cross-dresser is still getting in touch and becoming comfortable with his/her second self. As a result, it is all too easy to overbalance one way or the other. One symptom is the problem that many of us have experienced; the cycling between long periods with much interest in cross-dressing and building guilt that always culminates in purging.

The stakes for achieving a balance are high. On the one extreme is pushing the cross-dresser's second self to the detriment of the cross-dresser's gender-determined primary self. When this occurs, the result is tension and unhappiness for both partners, as well as the potential impact on the health of both, their careers and even their future together. At the other extreme, purging and total denial also can lead to tension and unhappiness that can severely impact the health and happiness of both partners, and even threaten the future of their relationship.

For me, balance has become easier since I have accepted myself, and I have generally become satisfied with who I am. As a result, the recurring feelings of guilt, that plagued me for many years, no longer get in the way. This does not mean that maintaining a balance is automatic, or does it mean that the balance point will always remain the same. Both my needs and those of Joan are certain to change over time, but as long as we are honest with each other, attentive to the other's concerns and willing to compromise, I am certain that we can look forward to a continually fulfilling and happy future.

To everyone reading this column, it is my sincere hope that you also are making progress toward achieving and maintaining the optimum balance in your lives.

Our Gender Family #17

Will You Try To Understand?

By Rachel Miller

Don't you just hate transvestites! They're all a bunch of faggots, wearing skimpy, outrageous costumes and cruising the bars looking for sex all the time. Every one of them is a Godless abomination. They're just plain evil. They're not only low class but mentally ill as well. They don't deserve any rights. They should all be locked up to protect society, especially our children, from this dangerous and depraved menace.

That is how many people see transvestites or cross-dressers. Such a stereotypical view is an oversimplified belief that assumes every member of a group conforms to an unvarying pattern and thereby lacks any individuality. Without any connection to such a group, it is easy to hate them all. As James Russell Lowell said, "Folks never understand the folks they hate."

You may think that you don't know anyone in the transgendered community but you probably do. Unless you live alone in a cave, someone you know is likely to be a transvestite who is afraid to tell you for fear of rejection. Society says there is something wrong with us, so we hide the truth. You live right along side us and never know our secret. I hid so well that of the 60 people closest to me, including my wife, none of them had any idea that I was a cross-dresser. They were all very surprised when I told them.

I don't fit very neatly into a box simply labeled "Cross-dresser!" While cross-dressing is a part of me, it is only a part of who I am. I wrote this poem to explain that situation to my family and friends.

Do You Love Me?

You know me as a person who has strong spiritual beliefs,

Who loves his wife and is committed to his marriage,

Who values family and friends and

Who feels that being a grandfather is one of the greatest experiences of life.

You know me as a person who loves children and childlike things,

Who is sensitive, caring and compassionate,

Who believes in personal responsibility and

Who is committed to working hard and doing a good job.

*You know me as a person who enjoys good food and fine wines
(Plus beer, pizza and ice cream),*

Who brings humor to the workplace and elsewhere,

*Who works at physical conditioning and enjoys roller-blading
and Who loves animals, especially cats.*

*You know me as a person who is discovering a love for theater
and the arts,*

*Who is learning to express his enjoyment of decorating, colors,
fabrics and textures,*

*Who wants to be accepted and loved just as he is, So, do you
love me?*

*What if society does not accept part of me but I do; Will you
still love me?*

*What if I need to expose the truth about me to be at peace
inside; Will you still love me?*

*What if I take a chance and become vulnerable by disclosing
my story; Will you still love me?*

*What if I told you that I like to shave my legs and wear a skirt;
Will you still love me?*

Because we had strong relationships on different levels, everyone I told responded with support and acceptance. They all reaffirmed their love for me. They didn't understand much about cross-dressing but they knew I didn't fit the stereotypical mold so they were willing to learn. Later, some told me that they found themselves making friends with people who were different in other ways.

I know many cross-dressers and they are all unique individuals. They are good and bad, nice and not so nice, just like any other group of people. Because of the fear of losing everything they have become as good at hiding as I was. Your husband, brother, best friend or coworker could be a cross-dresser and you wouldn't know. Would it be safe for them to tell you? Would you treat them as individuals or would you respond with the anger, fear and hatred described earlier? Will you try to understand?

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom:

And with all thy getting get understanding.

Proverbs 4:7



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

Top Ten Reasons to Love a Crossdresser

Provided by Liz [REDACTED]

10. She doesn't care how much money you spend on lingerie, makeup, etc.
 9. You'll always have a girlfriend.
 8. If she is the same size, your wardrobe just doubled.
 7. YOUR foibles are minor, at least in HER mind.
 6. She is so happy she found YOU.
 5. She talks about something other than sports.
 4. You'll never iron shirts again.
 3. She never leaves the seat up.
 2. Unlike other men, she listens to you—mostly.
- And the number one reason to love a crossdresser—
1. *She loves to shop!*

How To Recognize A Good Woman

A good woman is proud. She respects herself and others. She is aware of who she is. She neither seeks definition from her man, nor does she expect him to read her mind. She is quite capable of articulating her needs.

A good woman is a strong woman. She recognizes that her strength is weakened by attitudes that suggest that she doesn't need a man. We all know that is not true. We do need lots of loving, O.K.

A good woman is hopeful. She is strong enough to make all her dreams come true. She knows love, therefore she gives love. She recognizes that her love has great value and must be reciprocated. If her love is taken for granted, it soon disappears.

A good woman has a dash of inspiration and a dabble of endurance. She knows that she will at times have to inspire others to reach the potential God gave them. A good woman knows her past, understands her present and forces toward the future.

A good woman knows God. She knows that with Him the world is her playground, but without Him she will just be played with.

A good woman does not live in fear of the future because of her past. Instead, she understands that her life experiences are merely lessons meant to bring her closer to self-knowledge and unconditional self-love...

Pass this along to all the good women you know.

Sally A Hunt, M.A. MFCG

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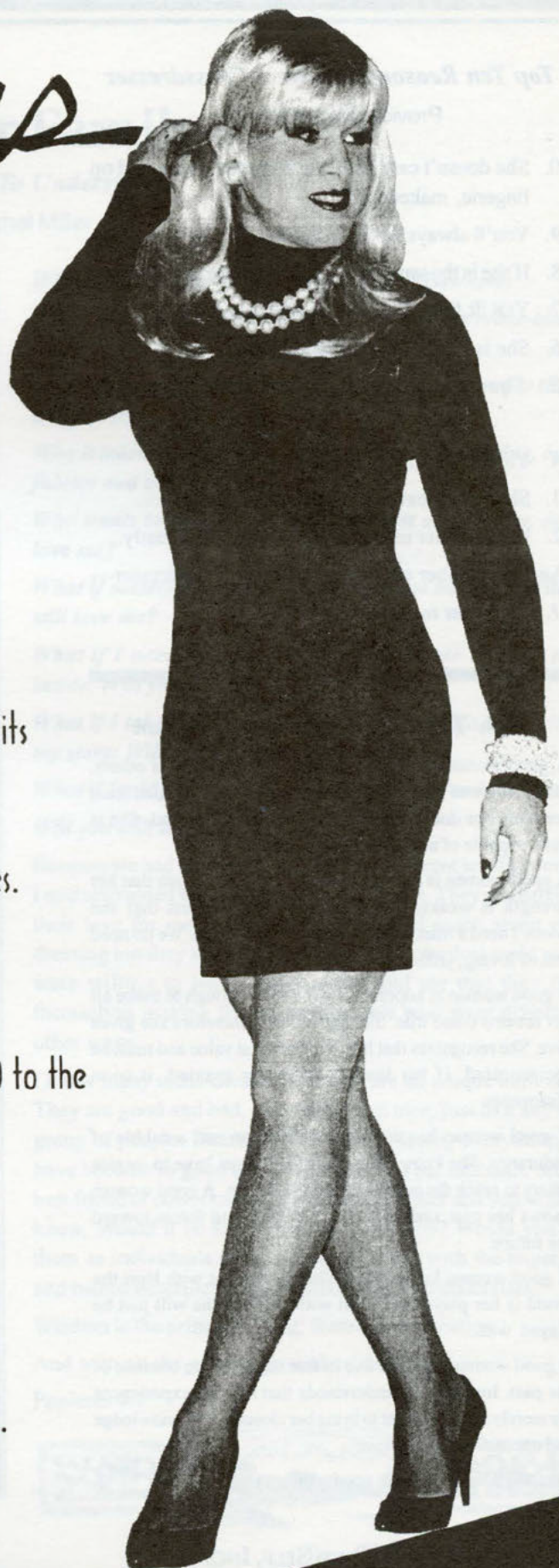
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CELEBRATE THE JOY OF FEMININITY!

Hips

by Joanne

In the December, 1996 issue of Reader's Digest, can be found an article called, "What Makes Us Attractive." It's quite interesting, as (I think) all us of sisters would like to feel attractive, at least to some degree.

One of the subjects discussed is the Waist-Hip ratio (WHR) which defines the ratio of the waist-to-hip measurements of a person's figure. I, like everyone else, I think, can appreciate a nice hourglass figure. A WHR of about .7 seems to be about the ideal. My waist measurement is 34 inches, while my hip measurement is 38, giving a WHR of .89. Not a very feminine figure. So, I decided to do something about it.

I bought some very soft, yet dense foam (not the usual polyurethane packing foam), 2 inches thick, and cut two rectangles 8 by 15 inches. After rounding the ends, I shaped each one into a smooth mound shape, and hollowed the back side just a little. Sandpaper will do a good job of smoothing after the trimming with scissors, and the more smoothing, the better.

I wear these pads between two pair of spandex bike pants, which hold the pads in place very nicely. The result makes one "Broad, where a Broad should be Broad." I personally much prefer the broad hip figure to a "Twiggy" figure, and my figure while wearing a girdle and the hip pads, is 42 - 32 - 45. The WHR is .71, which is about optimum.

To smooth the hip pads, wear a little spandex mini-slip over them. Then put on a form fitting knitted skirt, bra and breasts and a nice blouse, and I think you will enjoy your new figure. I know I do. I enjoy wearing full skirts with crinolines underneath, and the hip pads really add to the feeling of having a nice, pretty and feminine, figure.

(From the Neutral Corner newsletter.)



THE SOCIETY FOR THE SECOND SELF, INC.

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

Current Post Office regulations have changed the way you receive your mail. People with CMRA (Private Mail Boxes: Mail Boxes Etc, etc) may NO LONGER use the prefix APT, STE, or a plain number. They MUST use the prefix "PMB." The Post Office has announced that the regulations took effect April 24, 1999.

There will be a 6 month grace period, after which mail addressed to a CMRA which does not have the prefix PMB before the number will be RETURNED to sender, under USPS Regulations.

Therefore, in order to keep our mailing list up to date and make sure you receive your mailings, please advise Membership Director Donna [REDACTED] of your correct prefix.

Remember - you cannot use the prefixes APT, STE, BLDG, NO. or #, unless your address is a real apartment or office suite.

Whether your address is an apartment or a private mail box, please tell us your correct prefix to avoid confusion and possible loss of your Tri-Ess mailings.

When you write or e-mail Donna, be sure to include your Membership Number. Here's an example of a Private Mail Box address:

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JEANDOE
1314 MAPLE STREET, PMB 133
YOURTOWN, ST XXXXX-XXXX

On your mailings to our Tri-Ess address in Houston, please note we are now using the PMB prefix instead of STE, to comply with Postal Regulations. Make sure your mail gets to us! Address it as follows:

THE SOCIETY FOR THE SECOND SELF
8880 BELLAIRE B2, PMB 104
HOUSTON, TX 77036-4621

This affects all mail going to our box, whether addressed to TRI-ESS, THE FEMME MIRROR, SPICE, JANE ELLEN FAIRFAX, FRANCES FAIRFAX or any other TRI-ESS Officer or Department.

Note this change RIGHT NOW!

Grateful For Spousal Help

by Allison [REDACTED]

"That green blouse can't go with those green pants!" That's the word from Claw as we prepare to leave the house as "we women" for a shopping extravaganza.

I respond, "I thought they looked OK; after all, it's all green."

"No they don't; try it with navy blue pants—the ones with the pockets."

So I remove and hang up the pants and put on the navy blue ones.

Claw: "There, those look a lot better. But those green hose look just horrible!"

"Well, I had them on for the green pants. Yeah, I guess I could change those, too." So I change the hose, fold up the green ones, and restore them to the drawer.

Now I'm redressed from hose through pants. "I'm ready!" I declare happily.

Claw says, "It's about time. But those shoes—you can't wear those brown shoes with navy blue pants and hose. Better change to black ones."

The whole outfit is ready now, and I start to make a rush for the door and the car.

"Wait a minute," says The Claw. "I don't really like that green blouse very well with the necklace and ear rings. The white one with the lace collar would look richer and more conservative; after all, we're not trying to attract attention."

"Easy," I said. "Quick change. After all, these blouses all have to hang out, so I haven't creased the bottom of the green shirt; it can go tomorrow with something else." I remove and hang up the green and put on the white, "feelie" blouse. I have to confess, it did make quite an improvement.

Claw looks thoughtful. "That does look rich. But you know, those beige slacks with the cargo pockets would look more relaxed with the blouse. It would be nicer to have that comfortable, relaxed look. And you'd still look elegant."

"But Mrs.," I almost cry, "if I put on the beige pants, you're going to tell me to change to brown hose and brown shoes. I thought you were in a hurry to go."

Claw looks pretty irritated and comments, "Well, I just thought you wanted to look your best. Just tell me and I'll never give you another wardrobe hint in my life."

OK, so now I have on the lacy white blouse, the beige pants, the brown hose, and the brown shoes. We're in the car, driving up I-5, planning to stop on the way to have lunch. Claw looks over at me, giving me a reassuring look of satisfaction.

"You have a big run in your left stocking! We can't go anywhere that way. Stop at the next supermarket. You can't come in until those are changed, so I'll go in and choose a better shade anyway."

Finally, I gather my courage and say, "Look, Mrs. At this rate, we'll never get to go shopping. We'll have to go back home because all the stores will be closed."

Claw looks hurt. I can see she's not crying; but she really does look crestfallen. "All I was trying to do was help you look attractive. How can you speak to me now with such sarcasm?"

I just don't answer. I've just pulled in, in front of the supermarket. She's right, of course. But I'm too busy with my eye brow pencil, coloring in the part of the stocking that's too light because of the run. I'll be alright unless the stocking twists a little bit and leaves the dark lines on my legs a half inch away from the new position of the run.

I'm thinking, "This is really great. It feels really pleasant to know I'm soon going to look the best I can. Unless she notices that my breast prostheses aren't the same size."

My Mother Is a Travel Agent for Guilt Trips.



What We Are and The Names/Titles/Things We Call Ourselves and Each Other

(Thoughts of a crossdresser.)

by Charlee OH-2783-S

I have put a lot of thought into the content of this article, also a little sweat and maybe even a little bit of myself. I am not a psychologist, psychiatrist, or doctor of any type - these are comments from a common crossdresser with nothing more than an associate's degree and technical training.

I am a crossdresser. I accept this name and put myself into this category because I am a male who occasionally wears the clothes, jewelry and makeup usually worn by females. I also ALWAYS wear the underclothing usually worn by females and currently do not own any male underwear except socks and T-shirts which I wear to conceal the bras so no one will be offended. The tee shirts are being replaced by bodysuits which I feel are more feminine and which still serve the purpose of disguising the bra lines. I believe that the term gender is one of those terms used to put people into a category. People in general want everyone and everything to fit into a category.

Unfortunately, everyone has beliefs that they are taught, some by their parents, some by society; i.e., friends, teachers, religion, literature, television (unfortunately), etc., and these beliefs form what they consider a norm of behavior or a normal category. They then believe that everyone must fit the norm and be in normal categories only. The problem arises when someone does not quite fit into the category people think that they should, for example:

Biological males = male gender

Biological females = female gender

We have been taught that to be acceptable we must conform to these norms. Even here in Tri-Ess where we are trying to find acceptance and understanding with people somewhat like ourselves, we end up trying to force everyone onto the same mold - to conform to our own categories and within our own beliefs. I think we should all try (and yes, trying takes an effort) to avoid doing things which might be offensive, especially to those new members and their wives (partners) who are trying to adjust to major changes in their lives. We should set boundaries for our behavior and our conversations, but we must also realize that life itself is a learning experience and we are all trying to learn and understand more about what we are, and possibly why we are what we are. To learn we must share our experiences. We just

have to adjust how we talk about these experiences based on the level of acceptance of our audience.

Yes, I am married. Yes, my wife of 20 years knows that I am a crossdresser. We have lived, grown, and learned together through the disbelief, denial, tolerance and finally acceptance of my femme side in the 15 years since I told her. We found that once I released this secret I was hiding, I also released (to myself and her) other things about myself which had been buried alongside it. While it has not been easy, the result up to this point has been worth the price. We have grown closer as we have learned to accept more about ourselves and each other.

I don't know what it feels like to "be" a woman because I am not one, and can never be a true genetic woman, but I have experienced some things which "normal" men don't. I also know that emotions which I feel I "must" hide when I am being a socially acceptable male, are more easily expressed when I am crossdressed.

Am I transgendered, transsexual, gender gifted or any of the other titles we use? I am not sure. I do KNOW that other people perceive a difference in me (from other males), and did before I knew that I was a crossdresser. (Before I knew that there was a name and a category into which I supposedly fit.) Even when I was at my macho worst, trying to be the toughest most manly man I could be and not just denying but blocking out the earlier experiences of crossdressing, something else, something different was there. (See, even I can't help putting myself into categories!)

I know that what I think and do changes as I continue to grow, mature and accept myself. (Yes, 44 year old men can and do grow and mature.) I also know that how my wife thinks about me and what I AM changes constantly too. We do things now that neither of us would have been comfortable with in the past. We also enjoy life much more fully now.

Basically I hope that eventually all Tri-Ess members will be able to express themselves freely and not find condemnation or rejection. As for myself, I will continue to answer all questions asked of me as fully and truthfully as I can and will help anyone who comes to me for information or support. I currently am trying to contact Marlene to be added to the Big Sisters Program.

I can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Why It's Great To Be a Man

Anonymous

- Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat.
- You know stuff about tanks.
- A five-day vacation requires only one suitcase.
- You can open all your own jars.
- Dry cleaners and hair cutters don't rob you blind.
- You can go to the bathroom without a support group.
- You don't have to learn to spell a new last name.
- You can leave the motel bed unmade.
- You can kill your own food.
- You get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness.
- Wedding plans take care of themselves.
- If someone forgets to invite you to something, he or she can still be your friend.
- Your underwear is \$10 for a three-pack.
- If you are 34 and single, nobody notices.
- Everything on your face stays its original color.
- You can quietly enjoy a car ride from the passenger's seat.
- Three pairs of shoes are more than enough.
- You don't have to clean your apartment if the meter reader is coming.
- Car mechanics tell you the truth.
- You can quietly watch a game with your buddy for hours without ever thinking, "He must be mad at me".
- Same work more pay.
- Gray hair and wrinkles only add character.
- Wedding dress - \$2,000. Tuxedo rental - 75 bucks.
- You don't mooch off others' desserts.
- You can drop by to see a friend without having to bring a little gift.
- If another guy shows up at the party in the same outfit, you become lifelong friends.
- Your pals can be trusted never to trap you with, "So, notice anything different?"
- You are not expected to know the names of more than five colors.
- You don't have to stop and think of which way to turn a nut on a bolt.
- You almost never have strap problems in public.
- You are unable to see wrinkles in your clothes.
- The same hairstyle lasts for years, maybe decades.
- You don't have to shave below your neck.
- At least a few belches are expected and tolerated.
- Your belly usually hides your big hips.
- One wallet and one pair of shoes, one color, all seasons.
- You can do your nails with a pocketknife.
- You have freedom of choice concerning growing a mustache.
- Christmas shopping can be accomplished for 25 relatives, on December 24th, in 45 minutes.

Do You Know an Empathetic Clergy Person?

by Diane A. Zahn

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

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

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

[REDACTED] or surface mail at

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

If you have any questions or concerns about the IFGE's usage of this information, you can contact them at their mailing address: **International Foundation for Gender Education PO Box 229, Waltham MA 02254-0229**

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

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Vulnerability

Something Every Woman Wears

by Brandi V. [REDACTED]

So, you want to look and dress, walk, and talk like a woman. How about feeling the fright a woman often experiences? I now know the fear my wife has experienced and now two days later, I'm still uncomfortable thinking about it.

I was driving home northward on I-95 from a-nother support group meeting about midnight, and south of Ft. Mead Road it started. A car had slowly come up behind me in the fast lane and passed. I must say at this point, I was still fully dressed. The car then changed lanes, got in front of me and slowed slightly. I changed to the far-left lane and passed. This time the other car got in the 2nd lane, passed and got back in my lane. We were going about 75 when it gradually slowed below 55. I slowed too. I wasn't about to pass this maniac again. He continued playing games to the tunnel tollbooth, where I passed through much more quickly than he did. But, it wasn't long before the "games" continued, and some fear welled up inside me. I felt pretty safe in my big van, but still was concerned and began to think about what to do. I thought too late to exit at Moravia, where I could be back on I-95 in 2 or 3 minutes and not even go out of my way.

As I edged toward the very long upcoming exit lane to northbound I-695, the other car got in the exit lane ahead of me and slowed down again. But, I stayed in my lane, went straight, got off at Rt. 43, and went to the district police visitor's parking lot and calmed down. Then I did what I normally do — put my jewelry, wig, purse, and things in a shopping bag and drove the short distance home.

Ah, but it wasn't over yet! On the short drive home, I saw a pickup truck waiting at a side street. It had plenty of time to turn either way before I got there. It seemed like it was waiting for me. Oh no, not again, I thought. Yes, it pulled out in back of me and followed me. Deja-vu! But as soon as we made the main road, it pulled off into the shopping center. Whew!

Some of you, who know me, know that I take medicine (by necessity, not choice) that gives me hot flashes. Well, now I know another feeling a woman has, and I will never forget it! It was frightening, maybe less than a genetic female feels, but frightening nevertheless.

So, to paraphrase the old sergeant on Hill Street Blues, "Ladies, be careful out there!"

(From the newsletter of Chi Epsilon Sigma Chapter.)

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My Birthday - 02 September 1999

by Rickie Marie

My Dear Sisters,

I don't know where or how to begin but if you know me at all, you will expect me to start anywhere and sooner or later, through my ramblings, I'll get to the point.

Perhaps the beginning came today and I should establish September the 2nd, 1999 as my birthday. It is certainly the first time in my life that I have spoken to another person as I did this morning, and not felt nervous, embarrassed, guilty, weird, or any of the other emotions that I have experienced over the past forty-one years (I started on this little journey of mine at age 8). That's right, ladies, I'm 39 years old.

You see, I went to Shoppers Drug Mart today to speak to a young lady named Michelle about my problem of having foundation not cover my razor shadow, yet still rub off onto my blouses and dresses. I had of course phoned ahead to be sure that Michelle would be there, as I had been referred to her by another wonderful lady named Mary Grant at Lady Godiva Boutique here in Winnipeg. Michelle and I shook hands delicately as I introduced myself as Rickie Marie. She smiled in a very friendly way and asked me to describe again in detail what I had told her over the phone. She listened attentively without interrupting.

As previously instructed, I had brought along my little bag containing all of my favorite cosmetics, including the notorious foundation, which I pulled out and handed to her. As soon as she saw it, Michelle began explaining to me the reason why this particular product was staining my clothes and suggested that we try a different product that she was certain would solve my problem. She also explained in quite lengthy detail why I should consider a different shade at the same time. Something perhaps that would suit my skin tone more naturally. I immediately thought of Miss Chi-Chi's line in "To Wong Foo" and told Michelle. We both laughed - not really giggled, but close.

Michelle picked out two foundation tones that I would never have looked twice at, as they appeared quite dark to me. She then asked me a strange question - would I mind if she applied the makeup to my face for me so I could see right there at the counter what it would look like? Of course I said, "Yes, please do!" Michelle proceeded to Q-Tip on each shade, in small test patches, then selected a third and tried that one too. We both

looked in the mirror as she explained the reasons for her preference among the three. I agreed and asked, "What's next?"

My little bag of "goodies" was unceremoniously dumped out onto the counter and there we were rummaging through blush, eye shadow sets (3), lipsticks (2), eyebrow pencils (2), compacts, etc. Michelle would pick up an item, open it, look at me for several long seconds, approve or disapprove, then move on to the next item. In total we spent almost thirty minutes together comparing makeup styles with my opinion of how I wanted to look, compared to what I was "troweling" onto my face. Yes, she thought the word troweling might be appropriate considering what I had been using up to that point.

My present eyeshadow being pink and bright purple with blue and/or green at times, Michelle advised these were definitely not me. In agreeing with my desire to be somewhat conservative and ladylike in my makeup and to not look like a hooker, Michelle picked out one more item that she strongly recommended. It was a pair of eyeshadow colors that she thought would be perfect. The base color was a soft cream and the accent was what looked to me to be a dark gray, almost charcoal. These, she tested on one of those cards that have the outline of a woman's face on it.

Michelle explained how, and more importantly where, to use each color in relation to my iris. Oh, I almost forgot - she also told me to throw away those little spongy-end applicators that come with most eyeshadow sets, as well as the little brushes that come with blush, and spend a few extra dollars to purchase some real makeup brushes. (Did you ladies know that we're supposed to clean our brushes? Obviously, I did not, and we laughed about that, too.) I needed one for blush, one for eyeshadow that I should clean between colors, and of course one very special brush to do my eyebrows, that would give them a soft feathery natural look and not like they were "drawn" on with a Crayola Colored Pencil.

In all, my purchases totaled \$41.37. I must have looked shocked because Michelle gave me an inquisitive look. I explained that the first cosmetics sales person I had purchased makeup from years earlier had sold me enough "powder and paint" to do a makeover on a battleship - \$250.00 worth in all. Again that smile of hers flashed, and we laughed as we agreed that there is a lot to learn about makeup no matter who you are.

In saying thank-you and good-bye, I told Michelle that besides

In saying thank-you and good-bye, I told Michelle that besides being so helpful and understanding, she was a real "hoot" (I think that's Canadian for a very special person to be with) and that I would return the very next chance I got. Again, that small delicate handshake of hers, and I was gone. As I stepped out the front door of Shoppers and into the mall, I felt more like a woman than I have ever felt before. I caught a glimpse of my reflection in a store window and I had the loveliest smile of satisfaction and real joy on my face that I have not seen in many years.

Yet, as I walked the length of the mall, to return to my car, no one seemed to notice me. No one even "looked" at me. It didn't seem to matter what silly grin I might have had on my face, I simply blended into the crowd. I was a "natural." I was passing. It was lunch time now and the mall was full of business people stopping for a bite to eat, but to them, I was just another shopper. And why shouldn't I be? I was wearing canvas shoes, dress slacks, and a cream colored shirt open at the neck, no tie. That's right, ladies, male clothing and Michelle's makeup test patches wiped off. I was Rick to all of them but to Michelle and I, today I was Rickie Marie inside and out. I truly believed I had made it and it had only taken me forty-one years. It no longer mattered how I was dressed at that point in time. I was Rickie Marie and I always would be.

But no, not everything changed in my life this morning, and my story is not yet over. You bet I went straight home, had a shower, put on my new makeup, my favorite dress and heels, adjusted my wig, and looked in the mirror. Even if I never really do "pass" to anyone in my remaining years on this earth, the lady who looked back at me in the mirror is who I am. I will always be her, wear her clothes whenever I can, and I will always remember Michelle and how she made me feel today.

I love you Michelle, thanks, Rickie Marie

Tri-Ess E-Mail

For identification purposes, when communicating via E-Mail to any Society leader or Society member, include as the FIRST item in the 'Subject' line of your E-Mail either "SSS:" or "Tri-Ess:," then follow with the usual brief description of the content of your E-Mail. This will immediately alert your recipient that this is Society material, and not just some unwanted 'hard-sell' or pornographic material that we all receive on a daily basis and usually trash before reading. E-Mail communications are becoming a most important part of quick and immediate Society contacts, so a method of identifying that an E-Mail is from a Society Sister is becoming more-and-more necessary.

Travel Time

by Melanie Yarborough

As crossdressers, we sometimes find ourselves anxious and even irritable as we're getting dressed up and made up. And after a meeting or large transgender convention, we have a hard time coming down from the gender euphoria. These two things aren't just coincidence. In fact, they're both part of the same process, a process I'd like to call TRAVEL TIME.

It takes time and energy to "get to" one's femme self. Makeup application is a painstaking process; we're often never completely satisfied with the results. Coordinating a blouse and skirt (or dress) with hose, shoes, purse, jewelry and makeup also requires intense focus. Most of us have never had the advantage of having been teenage girls and young women with years of fashion experimentation behind us. And even more importantly, as we get ready, we're almost swooning with emotional and yes, even erotic anticipation. It's a heady state to be in!

After the evening or event is over, it takes time and energy to "leave" one's femme self. When we take off the makeup or slip off the dress, we revert to the beard stubbled masculine face and plain trousers. It's almost with a profound sense of disappointment. It's like we're leaving the Promised Land, or that we've left the best part of ourselves behind.

Crossdressers need to know and appreciate the pressures of travel time. We may find ourselves becoming more annoyed and snappish with our spouses and partners while getting ready, and not know why. We need to recognize the dislocations of going from masculine to feminine. The frustration of unfamiliarity with female accoutrements, and the fervent desire to look our best, could cause aggression to be displaced onto a hapless companion.

Conversely, spouses and partners need to give the crossdresser the space necessary to get into character. Many women admittedly aren't comfortable with transgender in general. They may find themselves in passive-aggressive behavior: finding fault, becoming cold or sarcastic, and so on. Women also need to look within themselves to recognize and validate any negative feelings they may have. And both parties need to dialogue, dialogue, dialogue!

Transgender requires TRAVEL TIME to get to and depart from.

The Invitation

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, And if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, For your dreams, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, If you have been opened by life's betrayals or Have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain!

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own; If you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you To the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, To be realistic, or to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you're telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself, If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it is not pretty every day, And if you can source your life from God's presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, And still stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the silver of the moon, "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, Weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done for the children.

It doesn't interest me where or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away. I want to know if you can be alone with yourself, And if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer

The author says: "I am a teacher and writer living in Toronto with my two teenage sons. While my family history includes stories of Scottish, German and Native American descent, I am a Canadian woman, and not an 'Indian elder' as has sometimes been reported, being neither old enough nor wise enough to claim the status of 'elder' for any people."

The Ultimate and Final Purge

By Rachel Rene

Terri Lynn's article about how she and Cindy are leaving notes in their wills to explain should the unexpected occur touched me deeply. I have been corresponding with a sister in Maine who was also very troubled by the Ann Landers article. Betsy is 81 and has been married to the same lady for 54 years. Her wife doesn't know. When Betsy read the Ann Landers column, she became concerned that the same thing could happen to her. She is concerned her wife would be devastated by finding evidence of a femme lifestyle after her passing. She had been troubled by that thought for several months, and how to extricate herself from the situation. Recently she developed a heart condition, which is controllable, but it prompted her to make a decision. As she said, "Inevitably I came up with the conclusion that there was absolutely no way I could ever subject my family to this kind of disillusionment; they have such a different image of me that the truth would simply shatter them. So regretfully I decided to bite the bullet. I have purged my femme things (sigh!) and cancelled my post office box, which unfortunately means that I will no longer be able to receive any crossdressing mail from all you lovely girls."

This ultimate and final purge places Betsy in a very lonely place, unable to even correspond with her sisters. I am sure she would welcome your thoughts and prayers, even though she never knows we care for her.

(From the newsletter of Chi Epsilon Sigma Chapter.)

ADDRESS CHANGE!

Make sure your mail gets to us! Address it as follows:

***The Society For The Second Self
8880 Bellaire B2 PMB 104
Houston Tx 77036-4621***

This affects all mail going to our box, whether addressed to TRI-ESS, THE FEMME MIRROR, SPICE, JANE ELLEN FAIRFAX, FRANCES FAIRFAX or any other TRI-ESS Officer or Department.

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The Society for the Second Self, Inc., Winter 1999

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A Story of Support

By Stephanie S. AZ-5171-S

Four years ago I made a phone call, a call that literally changed my life. That call was to the Alpha Zeta hot line. For over thirty years I thought I was alone, isolated in my feelings, definitely different from what I was told was normal. That normality was proven false when I talked to a representative from Alpha Zeta.

The call led to a meeting in which I realized that there are many others who feel much as I do. Of course, the majority of people in Alpha Zeta didn't feel as strong as I did about going so far with the gender issue., but it sure was great to know that I could turn to a larger number of people who wouldn't make fun of me when I dressed according to my own feelings of gender.

Why am I sharing this with you, some may ask? The answer is simple. Without Alpha Zeta four years ago, I don't know if I would have had the courage on my own to go public. Sure, I always knew I was crossgendered or transgendered as some of you might say. But without the support (and I mean SUPPORT in a strong way) of the members of Alpha Zeta, some more than others, chances are I might still be huddled up in a small corner of my little world still waiting to be the person all of you know today.

Alpha Zeta gave me the courage to be the best that I could be, and knowing Tri-Ess was the international backbone to Alpha Zeta, gave me that extra confidence to venture out in public. The key item behind the wonderful members of Alpha Zeta is the backing Tri-Ess can give you when legal or moral issues arise. And if you can't handle the matter on your own, if you are a Tri-Ess member, you have the credibility and backing of an international group to call upon. Knowing all of this makes it a little more comforting to venture out into this world.

My point to all this is, in short: be sure that you support your local and international group by paying your dues when the time comes. This way all of us as, well as others like us, will have the help and extra security in place when it is needed. With this extra confidence, you will have more "breathing space" wherever you may venture.

Thank you and be happy.

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



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Transgendered in the Womb

by Sandra [REDACTED]

I was reading an article in the Aug 9 U.S. News & World Report titled "Inside the Teen Brain" (sounds like an oxymoron), and a paragraph struck a familiar cord. I did a study for wives trying to explain why we are transgendered based on Dr. Bushong. Of the two passages below, the first is the U.S. News section and the second is the Dr. Bushong section describing the same period of fetal development.

"Estrogen and testosterone may not alter the brain at puberty so much as flip neurological switches, which were set by hormonal levels while a child was still in his mother's womb. Once flipped, these switches have a profound effect on a teenager's sex drive and moodiness. Shifts in prenatal hormones also affect mental skills in ways that may not become apparent until later in life. Testosterone, for example, appears to shape centers in the brain that process spatial information.

"Evidence for this comes from a study of girls with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, or CAH, a condition that causes their adrenal glands to pump out excess androgen, a testosterone-like hormone, during prenatal development. Once the girls are born, they are given cortisone, to keep the body from producing too much androgen. Their brains, however, have already been molded.

"Sheri Berenbaum, a psychologist at Southern Illinois University medical school, and others have found that as teenagers, girls with CAH report they are more aggressive than their sisters, and they have better spatial skills-the ability to rotate an object in their minds, for instance, or to imagine how pieces of a shape fit together. They are also more interested than their sisters in becoming engineers and pilots, traditionally masculine professions. But researchers don't yet know precisely how testosterone molds the brain's ability to imagine all the facets of an object, or why it would make girls (or boys, for that matter) want to become Engineers." - from US News and World Report

"Physical Gender - Our primary and secondary sexual characteristics. To discuss this aspect of gender we need to examine hormonal involvement, in particular testosterone. All sexual differentiation, physical, mental, and emotional are produced by hormones which may be amplified and/or specified by one's social environment. During fetal life, the amount present, or the absence of testosterone determines our sexuality - physically, mentally and emotionally. There are key times or

periods during development when the fetus will go towards the male or the female depending on the level of testosterone. These windows of opportunity may be only open for a few days and if the needed level of testosterone is not present, a basic female orientation develops regardless of the testosterone levels before or after this critical period, and the resulting sexual imprint. The first critical period is at conception when the presence of the SRY gene (Sex-Determining Region of the Y chromosome) will determine our physical gender." -

Dr. Bushong



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An Argument For Patience

by Carolyn Marie and Beth

Should you tell your wife you're a crossdresser? That's a question that really depends on your own individual situation. It's very easy to listen to the experiences of other crossdressers and think their approach will work for you, but you must consider that every relationship is different. Your wife's beliefs and values aren't likely to be the same as yours or the other crossdressers you've talked with. She's unique and you have to factor that into the equation. I'm certainly no expert in how to go about telling her, but because of the way I did it, I got a lot of experience in damage control and eventually, a better understanding of myself as a crossdresser.

Contrary to what I believed, when I told my wife of 28 years, she had absolutely no inkling of my transgenderism. Despite what many crossdressers say about their marriages breaking up and their crossdressing only being the straw that broke the camel's back, I'm fairly certain that it plays a much greater role in these problems than we would like to believe. At the time I told her, our marriage was in jeopardy. I had become mean, verbally abusive, and prone to violent fits of temper over nothing. Truthfully, I didn't like myself very much, so how could I expect her to love me, much less like me? Later, a therapist told me, "You'd been bottling up a secret for over 40 years - it's a wonder you hadn't exploded." Actually, I was exploding, and that's what finally prompted me to tell her.

Except for others in the transgender community, I've only told my wife of my secret, so I can't qualify as an expert on breaking the news. Despite doing absolutely everything wrong, somehow, a year and a half later, our marriage is stronger than ever, because she and I worked together to repair the damage I'd done. The most important thing to understand is that when you break the news, you've enrolled her in a club she has never had any choice of wanting to join or not. As my wife said to me, imagine being sat down one evening and told you're now a member of a secret society that you had no option about participating in. You

didn't know the rules, the reason, or even the magnitude. You've been given no information to help you understand what you've just become involved with, and all you instantly know is that discovery of this secret will jeopardize your relationships with your family, friends, employer, and even your children! Is it any wonder that her reaction would be one of shock?

There is endless information available through the Femme Mirror, the Internet, and our local Tri-Ess chapter on how to properly break the news with the least negative emotional impact. In almost all, patience is stressed. It isn't stressed enough! There is nothing else you can do to give your wife or partner more relief than being patient with her acceptance process. You've been living with this secret since you were a child, so why do you expect her to become comfortable overnight?

I've read and heard a lot of remarks about how crossdressing helps one to experience the softer, more caring, feminine side. Prove it! If you're sincere, you'll do what most women would do and put the needs of your partner first. I did not, and it took months of repair to get where I could discuss my emotions and feelings honestly and on an even basis with hers. After listening to many crossdressers tell their stories, I believe we all tend to script our big moment, playing the various scenarios over and over in our mind until we choose the one that is the most comfortable to us, but not necessarily to our wives.

The length of time you've been married will probably make a big difference. It's one thing to tell her after one year and another to tell her after 28. "Hey, what else have you been hiding?" Here again, I believe it's important to honestly display the sensitivity you claim to have in expressing your feminine side. She needs assurance and information, not an ultimatum. She needs to know she has some say in this situation. Believe me, one of her first reactions will be the realization that a divorce may leave her at a poverty level because of your normally greater earning power. This can

be seen as a club to force her acceptance, but is that something a sympathetic woman who's in touch with her femininity would do? Chances are you've thought about it - I did. There is nothing more important than her feeling secure in who she is and in her relationship with you in her coming to understanding and eventually, acceptance of you as a crossdresser. If she has been dependent on you, then this will take more time & of course, patience & your help.

You need to give her as much information as she asks for. This means doing serious research on the causes of your crossdressing from both a physical and psychological standpoint. There's no shortage of literature available, but I've found that the majority deals with the psychological or physical needs of the crossdresser. Very little is directed towards support of the spouse, and she will likely see most of the literature from the viewpoint that it supports the crossdresser, justifies his actions, and ignores the wife.

Be prepared to discuss the reasons behind your situation as best you understand them, not just from a "this is the way it is" standpoint. Try to help her understand that no one really knows the cause, and that because this is not an illness, there's no "cure." Make sure the literature she sees is scientific and factual in nature and not some "how to" book for making you look more feminine. Above all, make sure that she understands that crossdressers are not transsexuals. It's very likely the only exposure she's had so far has been from the Springer Show. And you wonder why she's scared?

You'll need to work with her to set some boundaries that are reasonable to both of you. I suggest you not do it immediately, but wait until after the emotion and shock has worn off and you both understand a little more about your situation. Again, this means you will have to be extremely patient. The wide open world you thought you would get by confessing to her just isn't likely to happen as fast as you'd hoped or wanted. It's going to take her time to get accustomed to her husband sitting around in a dress. Do not alter your physical appearance in any way without prior agreement. That means no shaving of body hair, ear piercing, or even eyebrow plucking. I can promise that in most cases, her reaction will be sheer terror that it will be noticed and your secret will be found out, and she will react very negatively.

Don't mistake her initial reaction as acceptance or tolerance. No matter what she says, I suggest you not take your things from their hiding place and hang them in the closet until she's more comfortable with it. It was suggested to me that I show her a photo of myself first. I wish I had, because it's less threatening than seeing you completely dressed within hours of finding out.

There is lots of advice on how to tell a partner. Based on my own experience, I've found it's all pretty good, but needs to be tailored to your own particular situation. One thing I think I did right was to tell her the evening before we were going to be together all day planning an antique car tour. That gave her the day to ask questions and discuss things with me. Of course, I totally screwed up that evening by having her accompany me to a department store to buy a nightgown. You can't take her initial reaction as acceptance and interpret it as an open invitation to go all out. Even though she may give you all kinds of good signs and warm fuzzies, she's still very scared down deep and probably in shock.

Several months after I came out, we were eating at a Chinese restaurant. We'd begun to talk very openly by then, but I was still pushing as hard as I could for her acceptance of every aspect of my crossdressing. When we opened our fortune cookies, I found myself reading the words, "A handful of patience is worth more than a bushel of brains." That's all she had been asking all along, but I was too busy scheming ways to force her into quicker acceptance. What a shame that it took a fortune cookie to make me listen to what she had been asking me for all along! I now carry that fortune where I see it every time I open my wallet.

Finally, please understand that in most cases, she will initially see nothing positive for herself in your crossdressing. By doing the things I did, I completely negated my argument for being more caring and understanding and only proved my selfishness. I'm truly fortunate to have married a woman with enough love for me to work through it together. So trust me on the patience.



On Cross-Dressing: Blessing or Curse?

By Lucy [REDACTED]

Perennially in the crossdressing community there is a lot of discussion concerning whether being a crossdresser is the result of a blessing, a curse or even God's practical joke. Certainly, crossdressing has impacted and indeed complicated the lives of everyone, both crossdressers and significant others, reading this column. Initially, I felt more like it was a curse because, after all, it would be a lot easier, if less interesting, to fit the stereotype of the all-American boy. However, now that I have achieved a reasonable balance in my life that includes crossdressing, I have come to feel that it is a blessing.

Our sex, inherited genetic characteristics, and biologically induced effects during gestation greatly influence our destiny from the day we are born. One characteristic, the need to crossdress, or at least the inclination, is probably one of the traits that is with us from birth. Whether we consider this or any other inborn trait to be a blessing or a curse probably is greatly influenced by the way we believe that it has influenced our lives. Since many crossdressers have experienced great unhappiness in their lives as a direct result of this trait, it is not surprising there are many who view it as a curse. If you are one who considers crossdressing a curse or at least a problem you would be very willing to banish from your life, you also might want to consider the positive aspects of being a crossdresser. Then consider how you can enrich your life by taking advantage of the positive side and how you can better manage what you find troubling. Once I accepted myself and achieved a reasonable balance in my life, I have progressively considered it a blessing.

Certainly crossdressers have an appreciation for clothes, and I am no exception. I very much enjoy going shopping with my wife. I love clothes, flowers and other pretty things, and I am no longer too inhibited to acknowledge it. In fact, a few months ago I finally felt good enough about my self to acknowledge and do something I have longed to do for a long time. I started my own collection of collectible porcelain

dolls, beautifully gowned icons of femininity, which are lovely to look at, and now sit gracefully on a series of glass shelves that adorn one wall of our bedroom. Not only am I having the pleasure of putting together a collection that seemed so unconventional that for a long time I would not admit my appreciation for these lovely things to anyone, but also I have had the satisfaction of putting together a lovely display area for the dolls. And a very nice part of my collecting is my wife and mother-in-law are participating and seem to be enjoying it too.

The important point here is that my appreciation of things usually reserved for the opposite sex is not in place of the things more typically considered appropriate for members of my sex but in addition to them. I very much enjoy my role as husband, father and grandfather in addition to expressing my feminine side as Lucy. My doll collection is not in place of, but rather in addition to my tools in the garage and the computers I share with my wife in the study. I enjoy going out with my wife as her husband, but I also enjoy occasionally going forth with her and her mother as another lady. I have found that the difficult part of being a crossdresser is achieving a balance, a balance that is right for my wife, Joan, and me. During the process of coping with the issues that encompass crossdressing, Joan and I have become closer. Now that I can maintain a fairly comfortable balance, I feel that I have been blessed to be able to have it all or at least as close as practical. The ongoing challenge is maintaining the balance, a balance that changes from time to time. While crossdressing has introduced problems in our lives, working them out and developing an acceptable balance has enriched us. As a result crossdressing has given us more in life, not less, and that would seem to make it qualify as a blessing.

(From the Chi Epsilon Sigma Chapter newsletter.)



In My View

by Robyn

Transvestitism - *n.* A compulsive need to dress in the garments appropriate to members of the opposite sex.

Garments - *n.* An article of clothing, especially of outer clothing. (Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary, 1963 edition)

A recurrent discussion on the Tri-Ess listserver (CDSO, CDTRIESS, TRIESS42) and other chat areas on the Internet deals with just what disturbs the general population about people who "cross dress." In my view, it seems there is a misunderstanding concerning what we do with our attire. Technically, the act of cross dressing is when a person of gender A wears the garments that society has assigned to gender B. The definitions above specifically describe the act as applying to outer garments. This concept is important, in that it refers to the "act of wearing" the opposite gender's clothing. That is to say, not to become the other gender or make other societal appearances to that fact. For the remainder of this discussion, references will be made to the MtF variety of cross dresser.

Cross dressing today extends this concept to include a full spectrum of activities ranging from those that only under dress to those dressing full time in the attire of the opposite gender. Most people do not notice the "inside joke" of wearing articles of clothing that are not overtly female in style. In my case, I have begun to wear female styled shorts, jeans, polo shirts and socks. There have been no reactions to this attire. No one can tell or cares. It is not something that hits them in the face.

However, if we take it to the next level and wear overtly female attire, such as a dress or skirt, the reaction is quite different. People may laugh, giggle or just point at that MAN in a dress. They still are within their comfort level but enjoy the "show." Something to tell the family about and then move on with life. We are, after all, just cross dressing.

But, as we all fully aware, just the act of wearing the garments assigned to the opposite gender does not full fill our compulsive need. We are driven to take it to the next

level. A level that I like to call "emulation." This is the act of appearing to the public as the opposite gender while not making the conversion to that gender. Once we modify the appearance of our bodies (chest, hair, make up, etc.) we then cross that acceptance line society has offered us and entered an area where most people are uncomfortable. An area in which the norms of appearance and gender identity, in that split second the human brain takes to classify a person, turn out to not be what they find is reality. They then feel as if they have been fooled, conned, taken advantage of, ripped off. This is where the nonacceptance begins.

Our duty in dealing with this is to honor those we try to emulate. Bring honor to them by presenting ourselves in the best light possible. To act as ladies and enjoy the open bounds that society has granted females to be themselves. After all, we are not Jerry Springer material. We just have a need, much like the need to play a sport, to excel at work, to help in community matters.

Most of us are not blessed with the body proportions, physical size, hairline, skin, or bone structure to make this an easy task. But then, just look at the rest of society. How many people, male and female, fit the norm in appearance or behavior? Not many. I use to worry about my legs, but how many women have great legs? I have seen better and I have seen worse. How about height? There are short men and women and tall men and women. Once we learn to accept who we are and how we look (just average folks) and exude that feeling, society pays less attention to us.

What I attempt to do is not to "pass" as a female, but to move through society in a stealth mode. To be accepted as a female, not a good looking one, but one of my age. I try to act and dress as any female would for the occasion and not to bring ridicule or dishonor upon them. I have felt my greatest comfort level as a person during those few times when society has accepted Robyn for the person that she is and not that MAN in a dress.

Fireworks Over Hanover

by Shelley H.

On my recent business trip to Germany I had a weekend free to take in the sights around Hanover. From my travels as a crossdresser in this foreign country, I would like to share with you my experiences of that warm summer evening in July.

I had a reservation for a hotel that was nestled in a forest near the Oberharz foot hills about 75 miles southeast of Hanover. It turned out to be more of a resort, for the grounds were covered with flowers and each wing of the hotel looked like a Swiss chalet. After being out most of the afternoon taking in the local sights, I found myself back in my hotel room asking myself the question, where to go for dinner, and what to do that evening. In past trips to Germany, while staying in Frankfurt, I had found several fine restaurants and jazz clubs that featured live entertainment. So the decision was made to adventure out to the big city of Hanover.

After freshening up, I changed out of my new summer romper into what I thought to be a more appropriate outfit. It was my favorite one-piece short sleeve dress, black with large red roses scattered throughout, that flared out just above my knees. I chose off-black nylons with black patent leather heels and handbag. My hair was butterscotch blonde that was styled in a shoulder length straight cut with soft tapered layers. I decided to take with me a light gray doubled breasted jacket that was tailored to compliment one's figure. With silver jewelry and red lips and nails I was ready to take on the town.

It would be at least an hour drive to Hanover, but mostly by way of the Autobahn. As I approached the city I found myself on the highway that circled the town and not knowing what exit to use. The plan was to follow the signs marked Centrale, which would lead me to the heart of the city where all the large stores, restaurants and theaters are. Not seeing any such signs, I decided to exit on the west side. With the setting sun in my rearview mirror, I traveled east through this straight city for the first time.

As I came closer to what appeared to be the Centrale, traffic was becoming heavy and I began seeing a large number of people, on both sides of the street, walking in the same direction I was going. The crowd was made up of both young adults, mostly dressed in jeans and printed tee shirts, and older couples, some in suits and fancy dresses. I asked myself, "Where could this diverse group of people be going on a Saturday night?" Curious, I began following the crowd. They led me to a park with several

large buildings that looked like a museum or concert hall. People were gathering in the square in front.

As the road took me away from the crowd I noticed that the parking lots and all the parking spots on the streets were full. I said to myself, "This is big and well worth checking out." It took about 15 minutes driving up and down the side streets to find a parking spot about four blocks from the park. The evening had turned dark now, but the streets were well lit, and cooler, about 70. I was glad I had taken my jacket. I made my way through the crowd to the square, passing several police officers without any problems. In Europe the police patrol in pairs and look like soldiers. Both were carrying a machine gun swung over their shoulder. Very intimidating, to say the least.

As I stood in the square trying to figure out what event was drawing all these people, I was approached by five young woman all dressed in casual jeans or sportswear, except for one. Standing about five-foot-four, with a cute round face and smile, she appeared to be wearing a costume that looked like a peasant or gypsy girl. She was dressed in a long

multicolored skirt and a white long sleeve button down blouse with a gray and black opened vest. Her hair looked fake, black and straggly with a colorful scarf tied over it, and she was carrying a straw basket full of small bottles.

She began talking to me in German and I answered, "Sorry, I don't speak German, only English!" Then one of the other girls, the tallest, about six-two, said, "Oh, are you American?" As I nodded yes, she began explaining about the gypsy girl, "He is getting married next weekend and we girls have dressed him up for the evening and are showing him a good time." As I was congratulating him, he suddenly pulled open his shirt revealing a wadded up crew sock saying, "See, these are not real, and see what I have for a tummy." He then pulled on the elastic waistband on the skirt exposing a round flat loaf of bread tucked into a blue pair of leotards.

Everyone was laughing and I couldn't believe what I was seeing. He then asked me if I could come to his wedding and if I would buy one of the small bottles. I told him, no thank you for I would not be in town. The tall girl then told him to kiss me and that it would even things out. Hesitating for a moment, he then kissed me on my cheek. As they were leaving I asked them what was

going on here, meaning why the crowd had gathered. Misunderstanding the question, they said they were just out here to have fun.

While standing there in awe for what had just happened and still not sure what was bringing all these people out, I noticed a number of posters on one of the buildings. What they described, from what I could determine, was a music festival called Stadt Hallenfast 99 that had started on Friday night with such bands as the Papa Chubby from New York and The Original Blues Brothers Band (I though John Belushi was dead) and was continuing through this evening until the early morning hours. The posters showed that several bands were playing at the same time and that the next big groups to go on stage were Wolf Maahn and Jule Neigel + Band. This is what I was looking for, live music!

I began following some of the crowd who had formed a line at the far end of the building. As the line of people passed through the gateway, I noticed several young men passing out flyers for different events and nightclubs. One of them saw me coming and said, "Please wait one moment, I have something just for you." He reached into his rear pants pocket to get a different flyer, handing it to me as I passed. As the line slowed down, I had a chance to read what he gave me. It was advertising for a club that featured drag shows and female impersonators. On the back, in big bright letters, read Gay and Lesbians Welcomed! I guess it's a universal belief that a man seen wearing a dress must be gay. Maybe someday the world will see us, the transgendered, in a different light and look upon us, as we do, as unique human beings whose outer expression does not reflect our sexual orientation.

While waiting in line to buy a ticket, I noticed there were very few women wearing dresses and I began questioning my appearance. Was I over dressed? Did I stand out in the crowd? Why was I so easily read? As I reflected on what had happened, I realized I had been presenting a positive attitude that was attracting positive experiences. This has been my belief over the past four years, ever since I accepted myself in both gender identities. I look at this desire to express my feminine side as a gift and if I'm read, and I assume I am most of the time, that it does not matter. Although people may not understand, what they see is a happy person who feels good about herself, and when I smile most people can't help but smile back.

I could hear the music as we approached the side doors of a large auditorium. Inside at one end was a wide, five-foot high stage. The crowd had filled over half of the hall that was the size of a football field. There were no chairs and everyone was standing or dancing to the rock music. I made my way through the dimly lit crowd to an open spot about twenty feet from the stage. The five

piece all male band, three of which were guitars, sounded good but loud. It was great to hear them singing in English. I had fun moving to the music and at one point joining in with a group of girls who were dancing. It was also interesting to watch the people. Have you ever noticed men do not dance? They were just standing still, watching the band while sipping on their glasses of beer. We girls, on the other hand, love to shake-it-up and are not afraid to sing along.

After the band finished playing, I decided to get something to drink from one of the refreshment stands that were on each side of the hall. As I stood in front of one of the four lines that formed, waiting for my drink order to be filled, a short man to my left began to stare. He looked me up and down, not once or twice, but three times with a shocked look as I noticed him out of the corner of my eye. Across from me was a young man filling a drink who was observing. We both began smiling as I shrugged my shoulders as to say, "What's this guy's problem? What's the big deal?" He nodded his head as to agree with me. As the man to my left was about to leave, I looked at him with a big smile on my face, raising my eyebrows as to say, "You'll just have to deal with it."

As the young lady behind him moved to the front of the line, she started talking to me in German. I told her that I didn't understand the language. She then spoke to me in English saying, "Boy,

Just Walk Beside Me

*"Don't walk too far ahead, I may not follow. . ."
Your steps are so much swifter than my own,
If I lose sight of you within the distance,
I doubt that I can continue on alone.*

*"Don't walk too far behind, I may not lead. . ."
I lack the strength of soul that you possess,
And if you lost your way because of me,
The both of us would face a wilderness.*

*"But walk beside me. . . "so that I may know
The sweet companionship your presence brings,
So may we, hand-in-hand and heart-to-heart,
Help each other on to higher things.*

Grace E. Easley

some people can really be jerks." And with a big smile said, "And I think you look cute." I thanked her and she then asked, "You are out here to have a good time, right?" I nodded "Yes" and thanked her again as I left with my drink. As I looked back at what just happened, I realized that I was reflecting an image of someone who was proud of who they were, for what could have been a bad experience turned out to be very good.

As another band was setting up, I decided to checkout the rest of the festival. Exiting the building through a different group of doors at the opposite side of the hall, I found myself outside in a crowded court surrounded by a large variety of food vendors. This was quite appealing, for I hadn't eaten anything since the early afternoon. After purchasing a couple slices of pizza, I made my way into the park. The pathways that crisscrossed through the park were all lit up with strings of white lights. I could see more food and refreshment stands scattered about with several large beer gardens. As I sat down to finish eating my dinner in one of the gardens, all the lights in the park and around the stands went off. A minute later the sky became illuminated with a beautiful display of fireworks. As I watched this colorful light show I could see that hundreds of people had gathered on the lawn at the one end of the park where the fireworks were being launched. The show ended about twenty minutes later with a spectacular finale.

After the park lights came back on, I walked around and found more music and dancing. There was a DJ playing Disco while people danced to his beat. At another spot was a fifties band with a skinny guy who sang Roy Orbison tunes and a heavy set woman who sounded like Peggy Lee. It was great watching both young and old dancing to their music. There was a band singing German melodies in one of the beer gardens and inside the other building was a nightclub playing Retro. Truly a music fest for all. Back in the main hall, I saw the late set of a rock band with a laser light show. They featured a dynamic female singer that had the crowd jumping. On the way out I saw people still buying tickets for the midnight show.

What a night! As I found my way back to the car, I couldn't help thinking the fireworks were just for me. A celebration of me living my life the way I want by being myself, a Bi-gendered person, and loving every minute of it.

(From the Chi Tribune, newsletter of Chi Chapter.)



What Is This In Dad's Closet?

By Terri Lynn [REDACTED]

We all, at some time, have lived in fear of what our families will find in our closets if we die unexpectedly. My wife, Cindy, and I recently read an article in Ann Landers' column about the consequences of not planning properly for this occurrence. This was one of our fears until we each drafted a letter for our children that we attached to our will. The letter I wrote dealt with my feelings and emotions related to crossdressing. Cindy wrote from her prospective as the wife of a crossdresser.

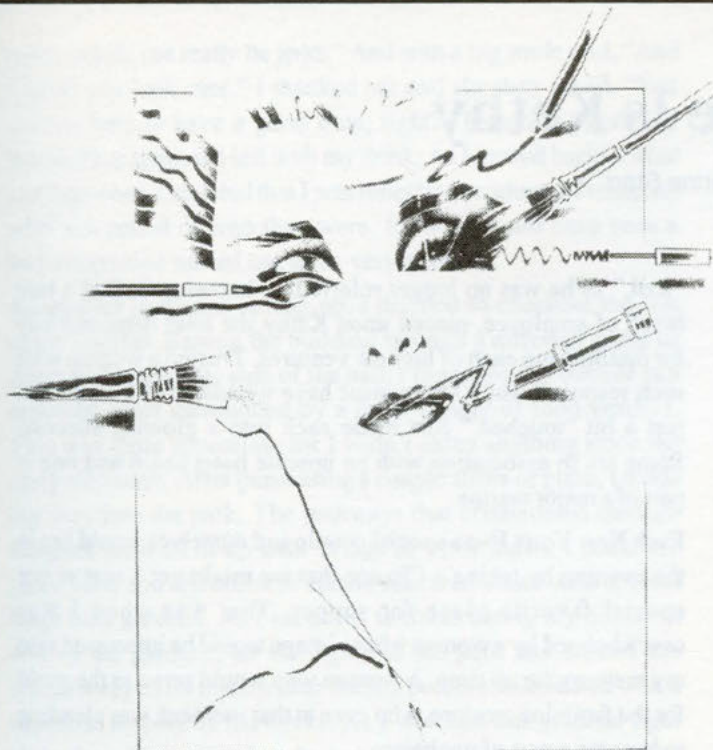
I began by admitting that I had been a heterosexual crossdresser since early childhood. The next section was devoted to providing information on the subject. I included books and articles that were easy to understand. Lastly, I apologized for not sharing my feminine personality with them. The purpose of the letter was not to ask for their acceptance but only their understanding. In closing, I reaffirmed how much I loved them and how proud I had always been of them. Cindy's letter explained how I had told her about my other self and her subsequent feelings on how it has enriched our lives. We can only guess if they will be angry or understanding. We believe our letters convey our desire to be considerate of their feelings and to show our love for them.

(From the Chi Epsilon Sigma Chapter newsletter.)

A Crossdresser's Limerick

*There was a young man in a dress,
Whose life was a terrible mess.
But his shame went away,
And he said, "I'm OK,
Thanks to my friends at Tri-Ess."*

by Dianne, MN-4981-T



Hey, Good Looking! Don't Overdo It!

by Allison [REDACTED]

Things one might want to keep in mind when getting ready to go out en femme:

- Have more than one wig, but avoid wearing more than one at a time.
- Shower clogs are not a substitute for women's flat shoes.
- Your most colorful men's necktie still doesn't make a nice hair ribbon.
- If you use colored fingernail polish, it's best to use the same color on all nails.
- If you use lip liner, choose a color that matches your lipstick. Black liner and red lipstick look like you made up in a brothel. Green liner and orange lipstick look much more conservative.
- Try buttoning the middle buttons in your blouse before you finish getting dressed.

- The Salt Lake City Olympics Committee assures us that girls with runs in their stockings can run faster. You always run faster when you have the runs.
- Turn your baseball cap around so the bill is in the front.
- Trim your mustache very neatly. Bushy ones are not in this season.
- Wear your tear-drop prostheses with the tail horizontal to your nipple; don't aim the tail up toward your shoulder. Especially if you are wearing a strapless bra.
- The wider your belt, the less you need a corset. Take two belts, and you'd better not be the designated driver.
- If you smoke, switch to cigarettes; you'll never have room to carry your pipe.
- If you carry a retractable eye liner, you needn't carry a pen.
- If you are old enough to crossdress, you are too old for a mini-skirt.
- If your wrists are too limp to hold your hands up like other women do, buy a skate-board wrist brace.
- Never tease your hair so much that it will stop going out with you.
- The best place for your chewing gum is on the sole of your shoe, high in the arch, just ahead of the heel. That makes it easy to retrieve when you resume your guy role.

Los Angeles Times: "It's really pretty simple. The way to live longer is to lower your risk of dying."

(Note: Erna Bombeck needed an organ transplant, and even though she could have been moved to the head of the waiting list, due to her prominence and wealth, she refused to do such, and subsequently, died from organ failure.)



Her Name Is Kathy

by Katherine [REDACTED]

One of my favorite cars was the 1968 Volkswagen I purchased brand-spankin' new for \$2,308. The little Bug took my wife and yours truly on many wonderful jaunts.

One day we heard of a 28 year old "fool" in a little town 10 miles north of here who bought an old tavern that went through several owners but just couldn't seem to stay in business. Into the Bug we jumped and a most important jaunt began. The foolish kid remodeled the place and fashioned it into a family restaurant that suddenly became popular for great burgers, fries, and most of all for the big basket of peanuts on the table. Yup, you guessed it. The shells went onto the floors and stayed there throughout the day. The atmosphere was fantastic. Peanuts and beer, peanuts and coke, or their fantastic yet reasonable wines. Take your pick. The waitresses were all young girls bedecked in cute little waitress costumes. The stress was on quality of food and quality of service. The perfect place to take friends, family, and kids. It caught on like wildfire.

It was on one of our earliest visits that we first met Kathy, who had just started her junior year in high school. In fact, if I remember correctly, she had to have an older girl bring wine or beer to the table. One of those law things, you know. Kathy was a very lovely young lady. The kind of kid you would hope your own would turn out to be. Kathy was always happy to see us, but she was always happy to see every one. She was equally friendly to even those who were about to cast peanut shells onto the floor for the first time.

Time passed, and Kathy began talking about going off to college. "Kathy, that's great!," we would say, but as soon as she turned we discussed how the place wouldn't be the same after she left. As fate sometimes is, the State University saw it in their infinite wisdom, to put a branch in this area. Is it possible that the powers that be at the University were also Kathy's regular customers and were just as concerned as we about losing our young friend? We were able to keep Kathy and she was able to go to college.

In the meantime the fool who had started this little place expanded his gold mine as the business grew and Kathy was soon responsible for training the new help. Soon it was time to open new stores. Each grew to be more upscale, but it was always Kathy who trained the help. Soon she was the manager of the fool's first peanut haven, now a most successful establishment. By now Kathy was a grown young lady, happily married. The

"fool," as he was no longer referred to, knowing he had a rare breed of employee, placed upon Kathy the total responsibility for establishing each of his new ventures. Trusted a woman with such responsibility? Many must have wondered if he was still just a bit "touched." She made each into a glowing success. Some are in association with an upscale hotel chain and one is part of a major marina.

Each New Years Eve a special couple and ourselves would begin the evening by taking a Chance that we might get a seat at our special favorite place for supper. That was when I was overwhelmed by a woman whose image would be impressed into my memory for all time. A woman who would serve as the mold for the feminine creature, who even at that moment, was pleading to become a part of my being.

As I gazed over the heads of the revelers raising their glasses to toast the others' health and success in the coming year, my eyes were drawn to the woman across the room. She was a stunning vision, dressed in a simple white sheath, with her hair elegantly fashioned, standing alone at the entrance to the dining room. She presented the image of a confident, successful woman. Until my wife uttered, "Oh look! There's Kathy!"

It had been several years since last I laid eyes upon her and did not recognize the high school junior who brought peanuts to our table years ago. She was now the ranking manager in a chain of eight very successful restaurants, the largest of which she put together from nothing but a vacant building on an undeveloped piece of property. She was now the successful businesswoman, a mother, and still the gracious hostess to all who were there that evening. She had achieved what, at that time, was almost unheard of for a woman. Yet, she did so with out shedding her gracious femininity, or the charm born while waiting tables, for the semi-cordial front presented by the typical male who managed to achieve such success in his chosen field of endeavor.

Her name is now my feminine name, for it bespeaks not only a worthy image, but also a standard of character and grace worthy of any woman. She is the exquisite portrait of the transition of a kind young lady to a very poised woman. Her name, now also my own, is a constant reminder of what my feminine self must strive to approach, if even the most modest degree. The most beautiful part of my feminine attire is her name, a tribute to a Lady.

If I Had My Life To Live Over

by Erma Bombeck

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have talked less and listened more.

I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained, or the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would have shared more of the responsibility carried by my husband.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television - and more while watching life.

I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle. When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner." There would have been more "I love you's," .. more "I'm sorry's,"but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute...look at it and really see it .. live it...and never give it back.

Stop sweating the small stuff. Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what. Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who Do love us. Let's think about what God HAS blessed us with. And what we are doing each day to promote ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, as well as spiritually. Life is too short to let it pass you by. We only have one shot at this and then it's gone. I hope you all have a blessed day. *In memory of Erma Bombeck who lost her fight with cancer. Pass this on to the people you want watched over.*

Dressing On Family Vacation

By Christine [REDACTED]

I must start by admitting that I have an unusual advantage over many crossdressers. Both my wife and daughter know my secret. However, my daughter has never seen me dressed and wants to keep it that way. Therefore, in the spirit of compromise, we reached an agreement on my dressing before we even left home. I could go out one day on our vacation if I didn't dress until after my wife and daughter had gone out and if I agreed to return to the hotel room before they did.

Our vacation was to New York City. On the agreed day, my wife and daughter left the hotel about 11 AM. Between shaving my legs and arms, doing my hair and makeup, and my desire for perfection, I wasn't ready to step out until 2 PM. I wore a Disney top and jumper with hose and blue tennies. Given that this was New York, I probably could have dressed a lot fancier, but I decided to stay with a casual look.

Once I got out, I was walking on air. I took a leisurely stroll down Fifth Avenue. Since I was feeling so good, I decided not to ruin the mood by looking at any price tags in the designer stores. Instead, I opted for the Disney Store (OK, so I'm still a little girl at heart - I do own Disney stock). I bought a couple hairpins for my hair and wore them out of the store (For those of you who don't know me, I use my own hair instead of a wig).

When I continued my walk down Fifth Avenue, I almost ran into my wife and daughter. Luckily, I saw them first and was able to cross the street before they saw me. I then decided to take a stroll through Central Park. Since this was a beautiful Saturday, there was a fair crowd in the park. Being an avid Beatles fan, I visited Strawberry Fields, a part of the park set aside as a memorial to John Lennon across the street from his apartment. I also enjoyed several different street musicians who were playing at various locations throughout the park. When I finally started walking back to the hotel, I noticed two 13 year old girls who did a double take on me. They were the only people I noticed who might have read me. I got back to the hotel at 5:30 and had showered and changed when my wife and daughter came in at 6:15. Although my outing was brief, it was still a few hours of sheer delight.

(From the Chi Tribune, newsletter of Chi Chapter)

The Bra-Less Look

by Ricky

We crossdressers are a creative bunch. With a little paint, some strategically shaped padding and no little imagination we can create a feminine exterior to match our interior being. Admit it now, when you are dressed from head to toe and there is no one else in the house, haven't you ever stood in front of the mirror and sung some pop hit by your favorite female singer and thrilled to the applause from the looking glass? Maybe you've even succumbed to temptation, donned fishnet stockings and something daring, propped up the camera on the dresser, set the timer and taken pictures that were a bit provocative. If you are on line I know darn well you have checked out the pictures at alt.trans. These days a crossdresser can create a convincing appearance; heck, some of us can even do so outside the protection of our living rooms.

But in all my years I can't recall seeing a crossdresser wearing a spaghetti strap top, at least not one who hasn't had breast enhancement surgery. I love those tops! They were popular in my youth when the braless look was celebrated with gusto. As a budding feminist I worked very hard not to drool like a maniac as I surreptitiously watched breasts swaying under the thin cloth. What could be more feminine than a low cut top with those slim cords holding it on the shoulders? Herein lies the problem. When I wear something low cut my cleavage displays an unacceptable expanse of cloth from my breast inserts. To make matters worse, just how is a crossdresser to go without a bra? It seemed to be an insurmountable problem.

That is, until I attended an outdoor festival on a sunny spring day. Either the young women of today are more conservative than my contemporaries or the Fashion Gods have intervened. There were plenty of tank tops, spaghetti straps and cleavage in view, but darned if every one of those girls wasn't wearing a bra. There is no way to conceal a bra with these garments. They simply can't hide a bra strap. Well, the proclamations of the Fashion gods are many and weird. It is not my place to question.

If a boyfriend was present there was the frequent and surreptitious struggle to align the straps without him noticing. It soon became a game to see what color bra a girl was wearing and see if it matched her top. This is not the only bit of color matching ordained by the Fashion Gods this season. A rather large percentage of these girls had flamboyant tattoos on their backs, and as most of these tops were cut low in the back as well, I could color match

the bra band to the tattoo. Sometimes it boggles my mind to realize how little it takes to amuse me.

All of this is great news to crossdressers. We are no longer limited by the braless look, at least for this season. The popularity of tattoos is an even greater boon. Even a recovering Hell's Angel in a skirt wouldn't seem out of place in the variegated artwork I saw. Besides, everybody will be looking at your illustrations and not at your face, so you can stop worrying if your makeup has run and the beard is showing through. If someone asks about the blue shadow just tell them it's the latest fashion in tattoos.

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Tri-Ess Pen Pals

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

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

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

Femme Name _____

Code Number _____

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

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

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

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

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

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

List of Pen Pals

AL-4940-H
 AZ-3954-B Rebecca
 CA-3800-M Charli
 CA-1282-V Fran
 CA-3354-N Michelle
 CA-4249-F Shirley Louise
 FL-3433-T Donna
 FL-2520-B Joan Ann
 FL-3720-R Karen Rose
 FL-4532-D Kimmie (E-Mail only)
 [REDACTED]
 FL-4046-J Rita
 IL-3623-G Nancy
 MN-3996-L Carla
 NC-3723-C Sheri
 NJ-3818-L Carol Ann
 NY-3717-P Tammie
 NY-4892-D Jackie
 OH-1617-H Razilee
 OK-2222-R Regina
 PA-3961-G Jayne (E-Mail only)
 [REDACTED]
 PA-4046-J Rita
 TN-1230-H Rita
 TX-4820-W Irene
 VA-2642-I Madelyn
 VA-3401-W Samantha
 VA-4846-S Rey
 WI-4864-S Kathy
 IN CANADA
 PQ-4457-M Micheline
 IN MEXICO
 MX-4626-C Mariana

Tri-Ess Helpline!

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

(209) 688-9246

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

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

(713) 349-8969

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

(903) 813-3398

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



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Surprises, Surprises

by Carla

This past summer, three of us (Jackie, Joanna and I) were invited to a party in Detroit en femme. Joanna is from the Detroit area. Jackie and I are out-of-state girls. We planned on meeting at a local hotel to transform and then go to the party. As the time drew nearer, the anticipation mounted. On the appointed day Jackie and I drove to Detroit and checked in at our host's place of business.

Surprise No. 1. Our host informed me that she had a crossdresser friend from the East Coast visiting all week. She told us she was going to the party too and would like to meet us. She then said, "Here's Stephanie," and passed me the phone. Little did I realize that she had been on the phone as we came in

the door. Stephanie and I hit it off very well and the next thing I knew we had a change of plans. Stephanie had invited us to her hotel to do our transformations there and get to know one another a bit. I accepted in a heartbeat. (Jackie, Joanna and I are always ready to meet other crossdressers and this was a chance not to be missed. Carla is also a frugal girl and the idea of reallocating the money for the hotel bill to the "unmentionables" fund was irresistible).

Surprise No. 2. Jackie and I left our host and drove to Stephanie's hotel. The hotel did NOT have outside doors to each room. The rooms all opened on a central hallway. I think Jackie and I both realized it at the same time. We looked at each other and I said, "Oh, my!" On the way in we would be our male selves. On the way out we would be en femme. It appeared it was going to be necessary to go through the lobby en femme. We went into the hotel and introduced ourselves to Stephanie. We expressed our concern about going through the lobby. She told us there was an exit at the end of the hall that exited directly to the parking lot. We chatted for a while and then moved our things into Stephanie's room. We started to get ready for the evening and shortly thereafter Joanna joined us. She had been at a picnic en femme. We all chatted for a bit and then got busy with our transformations. Joanna had a bit less to do because all she needed to do was touch up her make up for the evening and change into something dressier than picnic attire.

Surprise No. 3. Some one made the comment they were really hungry. Stephanie told us that snacks and soda were the limit of what would be at the party. Jackie and I had not eaten since very

early in the morning and although we may try to look like girls, we surely don't eat like them! We all agreed we needed to get some food before heading to the party. Stephanie told us she had been eating at several places in the area all week. She suggested we finish dressing and go to one for supper. The three of us looked at one another and reached a quick understanding we would rather brave a public restaurant en femme than be hungry. (None of the three of us had ever been out to a restaurant en femme.) Since Stephanie was dressed a little too well for an Olive Garden, she started changing to something more sedate.

While Stephanie was changing, I decided to move some of my things out to the car. Jackie and I would have to travel back across the state that night after the party so we needed to be packed when we left the hotel. (It was going to take two trips to move everything out to the car, Carla has not yet learned how to travel light.)

Stephanie had told me to turn right when I left the room and I would be able to use the back entrance to the parking lot. I thanked her, picked up my luggage, took a deep breath and stepped into the hall. (Does anyone else have to take that deep breath before they take that first step into public?) I turned to the right and stopped. I was carefully made up. I was well dressed. I decided then and there that I was NOT going to go sneaking out of the hotel. I was a LADY, so the lobby it would be! I turned around and with my heart rate approximating aerobic levels, headed for the lobby.

As I entered the lobby there was a conversation going on between the female desk receptionist and a couple seated in the lobby. The conversation stopped as I entered the lobby. Flashing my very best smile, I said hello to the receptionist and went out to the car. After loading the suitcase in the trunk of the car I returned to the lobby. This time the conversation did not stop. The receptionist said, "Good evening, Ma'am." (I am the age where I get "Ma'am" rather than "Miss" or other admiring comments that Jackie and Joanna get with regularity). I said "Good evening," and went to the room. After sharing the results of my foray into the lobby with the rest of the girls we all gathered our things and left by way of the lobby.

We were only about 5 minutes by car from the Olive Garden. We parked the car. Collectively taking a deep breath we left the security

security of the car and headed for the entry of the restaurant. The entry was only about 25 yards from where we parked but it seemed like a long way. Never before did four sets of heels sound so loud to me. Stephanie was the only one who had ever done this before so I am sure that three heartbeats were at a rapid level as we approached the door. We passed through a foyer and were in the restaurant lobby.

Surprise No. 4. There was a 20-minute wait. We were going to have to just stand there and wait! We looked at one another and nodded our heads. We WOULD wait. We were the center of attention for about 5 minutes. When it became obvious we were doing nothing more interesting than chatting like a group of ladies out for an evening, we ceased to be an item of interest. Of course as more new people came in we got some glances, but nothing out of the ordinary. The 20 minutes passed quickly and we were escorted to a booth that set against a mirrored wall. (Seems we were to be on display a bit.) Stephanie and I slid into the booth, leaving Jackie and Joanna on display to the room. As the evening progressed I caught several admiring glances in our direction from other tables.

Our waitress appeared. She was immediately nervous. We started chatting with her as we gave her our beverage order. By the time she returned with our beverages she seemed to be more comfortable with us.

Surprise No. 5. As our soups and salads started to arrive I noticed two waiters we had not seen delivered them. Our original waitress was hovering in the background making sure everything went well. The young waiter delivering my soup was nervous. The soup bowl was chattering on the plate underneath it as he set it down. I smiled and said, "Thank you." He smiled and returned to the kitchen. When we finished our soup and salad another waitress showed up to clear the plates. (By now I was assuming that word had been spread in the kitchen.) Two new waiters showed up to deliver our entrees. Our ever-present original waitress was making sure that each person received the correct dish as she carried on a conversation with us.

By the time we were finished with dinner we had seen 7 different members of the wait staff. We had certainly received our share of attention from the wait staff. I certainly hope that the other customers in our room did also. Needless to say our waitress was well tipped and we were thanked as we left. The walk through the restaurant attracted a few glances but nothing more than a group of attractive ladies would get.

We were acknowledged by the host who said, "Thank you, and have a good evening, Ladies." WOW, He called us LADIES. Pretty heady stuff. While we all knew we still had the party to

go, to we all agreed we had all had a good evening and would do it again.

SOME TIPS

1. If you are unsure if a business is crossdresser-friendly, call them and ask. I have NEVER been discouraged or turned down in response to a call. Most responses are, "Of course, why not?" I explain that I want to make sure I don't offend anyone.
2. Act like nothing is unusual (even though your pulse may be racing). Behave in a ladylike manner and you will be treated as a lady. (If it looks like a duck and it acts like a duck, it must be a duck). You don't need to pass. You just need to act like a lady. I have received superior service when dressed more often than not. Many businesses have learned we are good business.
3. Use some discretion in the places you select. Macho rowdy bars, etc., are NOT the places to be treated like a lady.
4. Enjoy yourself! There is a whole world out there to enjoy. Get out and do it. Often that first trip is easier with a friend or as part of a small group. Tri Ess meetings or meetings of like-minded people are a good place to start. As you get more confidence you can venture out with a friend or on your own. Shopping malls and restaurants in the early evenings are good choices for a first venture. Ideally, a place where you can park close to where you are going, and a well lighted parking lot, are definite pluses.



The Word "Christian"

It is not for us to say who, in the deepest sense, is or is not close to the spirit of Christ. We do not see into men's hearts. We cannot judge, and are indeed forbidden to judge. It would be wicked arrogance for us to say that any man is, or is not, a Christian in this refined sense.

- C.S. Lewis in *-Mere Christianity*

TRI-ESS Chapters and Forming Chapters

Region 1 (New England)

New York City Metro Area

CHI DELTA MU

P.O. Box 1, River Edge, NJ 07661-0001

Susan Lynette NJ-4142-W

1-800- (Code 4985)

Tammie:

www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/7396/

Albany NY Metro Area

LAMBDA CHI LAMBDA

P.O. Box 97, Iliion NY 13357

Contact: Evelyn NY-3277-H

Nashua NH Metro Area

FORMING CHAPTER

C/O Gerri

P.O. Box 7681

Nashua, NH 03060-7681

Region 2 (Middle Atlantic/Ohio Valley)

Trenton, NJ Metro Area

SIGMA NU RHO

PO Box 9255, Trenton NJ 08650

Pat NJ-3524-H

Voice Mail: 609-

E-Mail:

www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Castro/3774

Northern Pennsylvania

Endless Mountain Girls

EPSILON MU GAMMA

P.O. Box 4, Three Bridges NJ 08887

Alice Harding NJ-4160-H

Voice Mail: 717-

Gouldsboro, PA Metro Area

FORMING CHAPTER

c/o Tri-Ess

PO Box 194

Tulare CA 93275

Sue PA-2164-C

Northern Ohio, Western PA Area

ALPHA OMEGA

P.O. Box 2053

Sheffield Lake, OH 44054-0053

Elaine Lee OH-9034-B:216-

Lisa:

www.triess-alphaomega.org/

Lansing, MI Metro Area

LAMBDA MU

P.O. Box 246, Moline, MI 49335-0246

Annette MI-4290-B 616-

www.lambdamu.com

Baltimore, MD Metro Area

CHI EPSILON SIGMA

P.O. Box 505, Brooklynville MD 21022

Contact: Grace

http://members.tripod.com/~Chesapeake_Tri_Ess

SECTIONS:

Wilmington DE Area

DELTA EPSILON SECTION

Contact: Tammy and Sandy

c/o Tammy

PO Box 1674, Media PA 19063

South Central PA Area

CHI PI ALPHA SECTION

Contact: Yvonne and Linda

PO Box 3469, York, PA 17402-3469

Northern Virginia Area

PI OMICRON TAU SECTION

Contact: Joan

PO Box 1728, Herndon, VA 20172

Richmond-Tidewater VA Metro Area

RHO TAU

Contact: Jennifer

PO Box 13244, Chesapeake, VA 23325-0244

www.transgender.org/rtc/

Region 3 (Southeast)

Charlotte, NC Metro Area

KAPPA BETA

P.O. Box 12101, Charlotte, NC 28220

Phone (Sherri): 704-

www.kappabeta.org

Raleigh/Durham, NC Metro Area

SIGMA RHO DELTA

P.O. Box 61406, Raleigh NC 27661

Beverly NC-4268-B: 919-

<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywoodCafe/6000/>

Atlanta, GA Metro Area

SIGMA EPSILON

Box 272, Roswell, GA 30077

Contact: Lauren GA-3390-H

Lauren: 770-

(Karen:

<http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/sigep.htm>

Region 4 (Mid-South)

Houston, TX Metro Area

TAU CHI

8880 Bellaire B2, PMB 104

Houston TX 77036

Contact: Jane TX-1757-M: 713-

Brandi:

Austin, TX Metro Area

ALPHA TAU

P.O. Box 1398, Georgetown TX 78627

Heather:

Lee:

Robie:

<http://www.angelfire.com/tx/atau/>

Dallas- Fort Worth Metro Area

PI BETA GAMMA FORMING CHAPTER

South OK/North TX Area
TAUOMEGA FORMING CHAPTER
 P.O. Box 1922, Ardmore OK 73401
 Judy Daniels: 903- [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 Michelle: [REDACTED]
<http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/2258/>

Region 5 (Mid-West)

Chicago, IL Metro Area
CHI Chapter
 P.O. Box 40, Wood Dale, IL 60191
 Shelly: 708- [REDACTED]
 E-Mail: [REDACTED]
<http://members.aol.com/chitriess/trisss/chimain.htm>

Minneapolis, MN Metro Area
BETA GAMMA
 P.O. Box 32014, Minneapolis, MN 55432
 Contact: Karen MN-4807-P
 1-877- [REDACTED] (or 1-877- [REDACTED])
 (Toll-Free in MN, ND, SD, IA, WI)
 E-Mail: [REDACTED]
 Web site: <http://www.tri-ess.com>

Southern MN- Northern IA Area
PITHETA FORMING CHAPTER
 c/o K. [REDACTED]
 PO Box 74, Kensett Iowa 50448
 Contact: Kandice MN-4554-G
 [REDACTED]
www.mwpcdir.com/ptg.html

Wausau, WI Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
 c/o Frances Ann [REDACTED]
 1004 Winton St. Wausau, WI 54403
 715 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Springfield, MO Metro Area
SIGMA MU
 P.O. Box 6187
 Springfield MO 65801-6187
 Contact: Rachel [REDACTED]
 Hotline (Riki): 417 [REDACTED]
 E-mail: [REDACTED]
http://members.tripod.com/~Sigma_Mu/

Region 6 (Mid-Continental)

Denver CO Metro Area
DELTA
 P.O. Box 11504, Denver, Co 80211
 Diane CO-2387-L
 [REDACTED]

New Mexico, So. Colorado, W. Texas
FIESTA
 8200 Montgomery NE #241
 Albuquerque, NM 87109
 Vicky Anne NM-4734-A - (505) [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Region 7 (Northwest)

Grants Pass, OR Metro Area
Rogue Valley Girls
RHO GAMMA
 P.O. Box 5551
 Grants Pass OR 97527
 Lori OR-4319-L - [REDACTED]
 Edward: 541 [REDACTED]

Astoria, OR Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
 c/o J. [REDACTED]
 PO Box 592, Seaview WA 98644-0592
 [REDACTED]
 (Private): 360 [REDACTED]

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

Region 8 (Southwest)

Los Angeles, CA Metro Area
ALPHA
 Box 411352, Eagle Rock Station,
 Los Angeles, CA 90041
 Contact: Kathy Helms
 Kathy: (818) [REDACTED]
 Linda: (310) [REDACTED]
 Linda: [REDACTED]
 Janyne: [REDACTED]
www.3dcom.com/tg/alpha/alpha.htm

Fresno, CA Metro Area
TRICHI
 P.O. Box 26593, Fresno
 CA 93729-6593

Fresno Area and North:
 Karyn CA-4273-H: 559 [REDACTED]
 or Angela CA-4750-P: 559- [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Visalia Area and South:
 Carol CA-1012-B: 559 [REDACTED]
 Marlene: [REDACTED]
www.psnw.com/~huckfinn/index.html

Phoenix, AZ Metro Area
ALPHA ZETA
 Box 28363, Tempe, AZ 85285-8363
 Cindy N. AZ-2817-N
 480- [REDACTED]
tri-ess.org/alpha_za.htm

Tucson, AZ Metro Area
TAU UPSILON
 8802 E Broadway Blvd.#145
 Tucson, AZ 85710
 Rebecca AZ-3954-B: 520 [REDACTED]
 Rebecca: [REDACTED]
 Robby: [REDACTED]
<http://members.aol.com/tauupsilon>

Las Vegas, NV Metro Area
THETA UPSILON GAMMA
 P.O. Box 42401, Las Vegas, NV 89116
 Theresa B. NV-9459-B
 702 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
www.geocities.com/westhollywood/park/1880

Reno NV Metro Area
KAPPA PI NU FORMING CHAPTER
 c/o Janet [REDACTED]
 P.O. Box 52050
 Sparks NV 89435-2050
 Helpline: 775- [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Region 9 (Florida)

Orlando, FL Metro Area
PHI EPSILON MU
 P.O. Box 3261, Winter Park, FL 32790

Continued on page 53

Tri-Ess-Sponsored CDSO Online Forum for Spouses and Partners of Crossdressers Signs 100th Subscriber!

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

Now, a few words from Beverly: Hi! Welcome to our very own support list for wives and/or SO's of crossdressers. Just a few rules here...

1. NO postings, and NO subscriptions from crossdressers. Not your husbands or your boyfriends. This is for US.
2. No flames. If you disagree with an opinion please do so with courtesy and respect. Don't attack the person.
3. Those of you with strong, militant transsexual attachments, please move on. This list is not for you. If you'd like to E-mail me privately, I can pass on to you several addresses for support of SO's of transsexuals. There are many out there.
4. No advertisements! If you are in doubt about the acceptability of something, please forward it to me.
5. Many subscribers to this forum are uncomfortable seeing people crossdressed. For the comfort of all, transmission of crossdressing photos on the forum will not be allowed. Such transmission can be done by private e-mail, among consenting parties.

That's just about it for now. This list is still new. The rules may change along the way. If so, I will post a general announcement. If you have any suggestions, comments, or just want to talk.....feel free to E-mail me at [REDACTED]

Regards, Beverly

To subscribe to the list, send e-mail to: [REDACTED] with <SUBSCRIBE CDSO first name last name> as the message. You will receive confirmation from the listserv with complete instructions. Then, you may send a message to all the people currently subscribed to the list, by sending mail to a single address. **It's simple! It's fun! Sign on now, and help spread the word to any other wives.**

Chapters On Line!

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

Tri-Ess World Wide Web Sites

Alpha's (Los Angeles CA)

<http://www.3dcom.com/tg/alpha/alpha.htm>

Alpha Omega's (Cleveland OH)

<http://www.triess-alphaomega.org>

Alpha Tau's (Austin TX)

<http://www.angelfire.com/tx/atau>

Alpha Zeta (Phoenix, AZ)

<http://tri-ess.org>

Beta Gamma's (Minneapolis MN)

<http://www.tri-ess.com>

Chi Chapter's (Chicago IL)

<http://members.aol.com/chitriess/triess/chimain.htm>

Chi Delta Mu's (New York City NY)

<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/7396/>

Chi Epsilon Sigma's (Baltimore MD)

http://members.tripod.com/~Chesapeake_Tri_Ess

Judy Daniels'

<http://www.angelfire.com/ok/judytriess/index.html>

Kappa Beta's (Charlotte NC)

<http://www.kappabeta.org>

Lambda Mu's (Lansing MI)

<http://www.lambdamu.com>

Phi Epsilon Mu's (Orlando FL)

<http://www.horizon-usa.com/misc/fem.htm>

Pi Theta Chapter's (Southern MN- Northern IA)

<http://www.mwpcdir.com>

Rho Tau Chapter's (Richmond-Tidewater VA)

<http://www.transgender.org/rtc/>

Sigma Epsilon Chapter (Atlanta GA)

<http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/sigep.htm>

Sigma Mu (Springfield MO)

http://members.tripod.com/~Sigma_Mu/

Sigma Rho Delta's (Raleigh/Durham NC)

<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Cafe/6000>

Tau Omega's (Ardmore OK)

<http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/2258/>

Tau Upsilon's (Tucson AZ)

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

Theta Upsilon Gamma's (Las Vegas NV)

<http://www.geocities.com/westhollywood/park/1880>

Tri Chi's (Fresno CA)

<http://www.psnw.com/~huckfinn/index.html>

Tri-Ess International

<http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/tri-ess.htm>

Tri-Ess Resources Page

<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Stonewall/6801/>

Tri-Ess Traveling Girls' Directory

<http://www.mwpcdir.com>

SPICE

<http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/6280/SPICE.html>

CDSO

<http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/6280/CDSO.html>

TRIESS42

<http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/6280/triess42.html>

Holiday En Femme 1999

<http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/holiday.htm>

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About Our Cover Couple

by Judy and Leslie Daniels

In 1956, Paul wore an aunt's nightgown to bed, and a crossdresser was born! Although he only dressed occasionally in private from then to 1975, he knew that he was special and he loved his feminine side. He found expression whenever possible through 1981. During this time he often felt isolated and wondered if he was the only crossdresser in the world. He decided to find out.

Through his research, Paul was led to meet Peggy and Melanie Rudd in Houston, Texas, in a small motel room. It was his first encounter with another crossdresser. This meeting was the birthplace for two important Tri-Ess components: Tau Chi Chapter and Judy Daniels! However, this was to be a short-lived victory for Judy. A messy divorce made her drop back into hiding for twelve years. But, Tau Chi was off and running.

In 1994, two important things happened for Judy. She rejoined Tri-Ess and Tau Chi. This was also the year she met Leslie, who knew about her feminine side almost from the start. After thinking things over for three or four days, Leslie decided that she might have discovered a life-mate, and was determined to work Judy into her relationship with Paul. She has no regret!

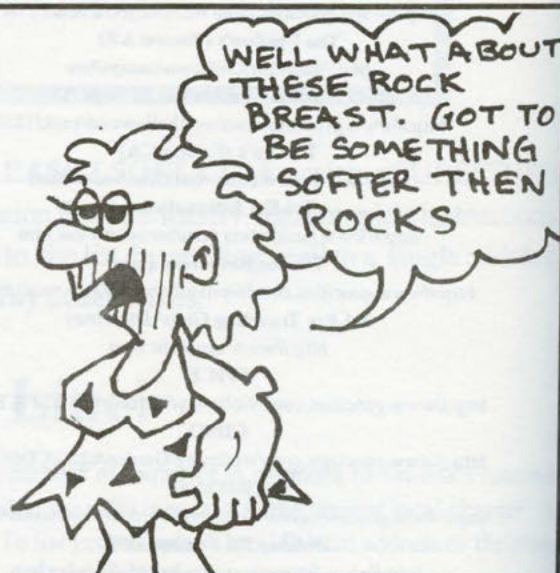
By 1995, Judy had been placed on the Board of Directors of Tri-Ess. She was recognized that year with an award for her outreach efforts. Also, that was the first year of Judy's involvement with the National Council on Family Relations. Every year thereafter, Tri-Ess has maintained a booth at the conference to educate counselors, university professors and others. 1995 was a busy year for Judy. She also formed the Sigma Mu Chapter in Springfield, Missouri.

Now the Daniels live in Sherman, Texas, and are involved in trying to form a chapter in Oklahoma. They told Judy's adolescent daughter about her in 1998, and then the family attended SPICE. Things are going so well with her daughter, Judy was able to take a vacation with her, and dress en femme about 50% of the time. Ashley, when told that she was handling the situation well, replied, "Well, he's still my daddy!"

The Daniels continue to learn about each other and about crossdressing together, adapting their lifestyle to permit as much feminine expression as possible. Every day is a new journey!

BC / CD Stone Age Crossdressers

By Melissa Anne



Continued from page 49

Tri-Ess Chapters (cont.)

Contact: Alexis FL-3077-E

407- [REDACTED]

www.horizon-usa.com/misc/fem.htm

Fort Myers, FL Metro Area**GAMMA CHIBETA**

P8660 College Pkwy, Ste.230

Ft. Myers FL 33919

Alycia FL-4274-E

941- [REDACTED] or 941- [REDACTED]

Miami FL Metro Area**MUBETA GAMMA**

PO Box 4126, Hialeah

FL 33014-1126

Barbara Ann

305- [REDACTED]

Region 10 (International)**Quebec City, PQ Metro Area****FORMING CHAPTER****BETA EPSILON LAMBDA**

1050 Rue Orleans

Charlesbourg, PQ G1H 2H2

Micheline

418- [REDACTED]

418- [REDACTED]

Overseas Coordinator

Eve Burchert

574 Golfview Dr.

Barrington IL 60010

[REDACTED]

Big Sister Report

by Marlene

I get about a dozen requests for a Big Sister each month. I currently have 57 Big Sisters corresponding with about 100 Little Sisters.

AK 4320 A JoAnn *
 AL 4005 J Sarah
 AL 4940 H Ally
 AZ 3954 B Rebecca
 AZ 5041 L Lacy*
 CA 4822 B Angie*
 CA 3800 M Charli
 CA 3413 C Pricilla
 CA 4373 H Karen
 CA 1397 L Judy Ann*
 CA 3738 P Laura
 CA 3592S Tommie*
 CA 1282 V Fran*
 CA 4346 Y Julie*
 CO 3869 H Angie
 CO2446 W Billie*
 FL 2520 B Joan*
 FL 2383 L Catherine*
 FL 3433 T Donna*
 FL 4859 W Donna*
 HI 4503 J Elise*
 ID 5142 D Linda Kay
 IL 3416 M Candace
 IL 4033 E Jennifer*
 IL 1172 S Marilee*
 IN 5049 S Mindy
 IN 3637 K Teddy *
 KS 4719 B Robyn
 MA 5097 B Delores
 MA 4619 C Rose *
 MD 4883 A Terri *
 MI 5035 B Carla *
 MI 3948 T Marcia Ann

MN 4807 P Karen*
 MN 1875 Z Lynda
 MN 3264 G Sofronia Ann*
 MO 1823 M Diana*
 MO 4760 H Rachel
 NC 4800 C Debbie*
 NC 3743 H Elizabeth Ann*
 NC 5151 S Karen*
 NC 3734 C Sherri*
 NM 4717 S Terri
 NV 4222 B Robyn
 NY 4846 S Jessica
 NY 3717 P Tammie*
 OH 2783 S Charle*
 OH 2751 M Gloria Sue
 OH 4850 D Susie*
 OK 2222 R Regina
 PA 2164 C Sue
 SD 4384 W Brennda
 TN 1230 H Rita
 TX 1441 W BrandiAnn*
 TX 3179 T Brenda*
 TX 4380 S Chris
 TX 4261 H Diane *
 TX 1669 M Vicki
 VA 1304 M Andria
 VT 4336 S Stephanie*
 WA 2835 Q Kristal*
 WA 3308 A Allison
 WI 2729 L Kathy*
 WI 4148 W FrancesAnn
 WI 4816 S Charlette
 WI 4864 S Katherine

* means that she has an email address

WANTED: BIG SISTERS

The Big Sister Program currently adds about a dozen new Little Sisters each month. The Program has 34 Big Sisters with e-mail addresses. Few things are more rewarding than welcoming them aboard and supporting them in their first year. Won't you write Marlene today, and see for yourself?

MARLENE, PO BOX 4067, VISALIA CA 93278

Older Crossdressers Renounce Transvestism

A Fantasy News Break

by Allison [REDACTED]

A late story from the Tacoma Times says unnamed authorities at the Fort Steilacoom, Washington, Veterans Home have confirmed that 63 members of Veterans for Girlhood have renounced their practice of wearing women's underwear and satin jogging suits on group excursions and during visiting hours at the Home.

Colonel Robert (Jackie) [REDACTED], former bombardier and president of the group says, "Maintaining a distinctly uniform dress code is no longer worth the effort. We simply attract too much attention at public events like the State Republican Convention, Husky Homecoming Day, and even the Fourth of July Daffodil Parade.

Reactionary legislators have repeatedly threatened to cut funds for the Veterans Home, expressing the belief that crossdressing veterans may be entering the ranks of the infamous U.S. Amateur Child Molesters Association.

Speaking strictly for the club membership, Vice President, Tilden (Tillie) [REDACTED] complained about the institution's laundry facilities' rough handling of garments designed to be washed by hand in cool water, and hung up to dry. "I can't tell you how many times my hosiery has come back in shreds, and how quickly the elastic gives out in my brassieres from the harsh chemicals and bleach they use. Those things are not cheap for us to replenish, especially with the postage and handling charges they add to the Victoria's Secret catalog price!"

"I was drafted right out of my mother's dressing gown to fight in World War II," complained a leading member of the group who asked that his name be withheld. "I was constantly on report for being late for muster. On the days I was on time, I had to hurry so fast I nearly always had streaks of mascara on my upper eye lids. Now we have all the time in the world and sometimes it's just not worth the effort."

Eddie (Edwinna) [REDACTED] complained about how the aging process works against maintaining neat lip lines. "Even Revlon anti-skid lip base doesn't really keep the red from creeping up and down the lines of our lips. Mine sometimes runs upward so badly that people think I have anosebleed."

The vote to purge themselves of women's attire was forty to twenty-three. The dissenters were in tears as the secret ballot was revealed. "Without a wig, I'll look like an old man," said one emotion-struck veteran. "I'd rather have been a Viet Nam veteran than give up all these pretty things. It's a terrible thought just to have to look like everyone else!"

Reaction from other male veterans at the home was disappointment and a sense of loss. "They added a great deal of color to our place of residence. Many of us have no one left whom we can ask to dance. There's no way

I'm going to ask one of those old men to whisk around the dancefloor with me when he has gone back to shaving only once a day."

One dissenter, still clutching his lavender jogging outfit with pink rosettes around the collar, said the politicians are responsible for this disaster. "Several members of our club are still running for public office, and are ruining life for the rest of us by fighting against our dress code."

Citing the case of Kenny (Kennetha) [REDACTED], who has run three times for Superintendent of Tacoma Schools, he said, "Political greed and individual thirst for power is ruining it all for the rest of us." Kennetha [REDACTED], when interviewed separately, blamed his defeat on having to show up for every election rally in the Club's jogging suit. "Other politicians," he says, "get to change suits; women can decide sometimes wear skirts and cute scarves. People just get tired of seeing the same old satin from one election to the next. I can't even wear pearls for formal events. Who's going to vote for someone who has so little imagination in his choice of clothes?"

The Steilacoom Veterans Home has requested a federal government grant to outfit the 63 members with pants, shirts, and sweaters so that this may become a more military-looking institution.

Individual choice of heels and wedgies will still be left to the residents themselves, but with the increased occurrence of bunions and corns, there is talk among the medical staff of restricting footwear to standard oxfords or jelly sandals.

"Anything to stop this wave of foot problems will save the government money, said Dr. Ludwig (The Grouch) Farnswarg." Farnswarg was asked to leave the club several years ago after attending a national psychiatric convention in all-men's attire except for a lavender satin sash and lavender satin pumps. Members objected, saying, "Club standards are club standards! All for one and one for all. If some deviant psychiatrist wants to go his own way, let him do it in his own name and not drag the rest of us down with him."

So a colorful chapter comes to a close at the Washington Steilacoom Veterans Home. Churches in the area are conducting prayer services in hopes that some solace may take the place of this life-enhancing phenomenon at Steilacoom. Perhaps some corporate sponsor will at least supply satin sheets or Liz Taylor body lotion. Whatever comes, must come early, because time is running out for these wonderful, stalwart men whose only real desire is to live in the role they were deprived of during their service to their country.



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

A Jewish Dress Code?

Rabbi Uncloaks Law Against Crossdressing

by Natalie Weinstein, Bulletin Staff

When Rabbi Eliezer Finkelman starts a discussion on crossdressing, he isn't about to bring up the benefits of smudge-free mascara or low-heeled pumps. Instead, he pulls out ancient Jewish texts to get to the heart of Deuteronomy 22:5, commonly translated as: "A woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination to the Lord your God."

"As usual when you have a written text, it cries out for interpretation," said Finkelman, the spiritual leader of Berkeley's modern Orthodox Congregation Beth Israel. Finkelman is in the midst of teaching a six-week course advertised as an exploration of Jewish law on crossdressing. The class, which meets at 8 p.m. Sundays through mid-December, isn't a series of lectures on what traditional Judaism allows men and women to wear. Instead, it traces interpretations of the biblical verse from ancient to modern days. If people are looking for an absolutist interpretation of this prohibition, they're attending the wrong synagogue.

"The history of Jewish law is the history of difference of opinion," Finkelman said. Some sources eventually decide that crossdressing is prohibited in all instances, even on Purim when men customarily dress up like women; others say it's prohibited only when the intention is to create illicit sexual opportunity through deception. Today, Finkelman said, "certainly a drag queen is violating this prohibition."

But the 20th-century Orthodox community is split on the commandment's subtler undertones. The ultrareligious community, for example, will say the verse means that women may wear only dresses and skirts, Finkelman said, while the centrist or modern Orthodox community will say that women may wear pants as long they're "not cut to be provocative." Within even the ultrareligious community, Finkelman added, some rabbis would say that women can wear pants when they're appropriate to the activity at hand — such as skiing or horseback riding.

The legal tradition is also "sensitive to fashion," Finkelman said. Two centuries ago in Turkey, he said, women who didn't wear the baggy pants of the day would have been considered "bizarre." And a few years back, American men who wore earrings attracted a lot of attention because they were thought to be making statements about their sexual orientation. "Now it is boring," Finkelman said.

On the first night of the class earlier this month, a dozen men and women gathered around a table in Beth Israel's sanctuary. They spent 90 minutes discussing Jewish law and listening to the rabbi

read from the earliest sources on the verse. Ancient translations of the Hebrew text into Aramaic, in fact, offered widely varying interpretations of the verse, Finkelman told the class.

One of the texts, known as Targum Unkul, which Finkelman called "possibly the oldest authoritative translation," was prepared around 100 to 200 C.E. It translates the verse into a prohibition against women carrying weapons and against men using the "vessels" of a woman. According to this source, Finkelman said, a woman would be allowed to sport a tuxedo, bowler hat and cigar, but she would break the law "as soon as she puts on her Uzi." Another of the Aramaic texts, Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, which was written around the same time as Targum Unkul, translates the verse into a ban on women wearing tzitzit or tefillin and on men trimming their groin or underarm hair. But those texts weren't the final word on the Jewish dress code, said Finkelman at the end of the first class. "We'll see how this marches down the history of Jewish law."

Elza Behrens, a Beth Israel member attending the class, said she was relieved to see how Finkelman approached the topic. When the class was announced, she said, congregants had "huge reactions" to it. Some women, especially feminists, were concerned about being confronted with a prohibition against wearing pants. Others worried about the direct implications for homosexuals.

"We all have assumptions about what this thing says," Behrens said. "People assume there's this stuff they don't want to know." But studying the ancient texts helps allay such concerns for Behrens. "It turns a lot of this on its head in a good way," she said. "It proves the point over and over that [Jewish law] gives us a lot of room about how to live our lives."

The class originated in a general lecture Finkelman gave earlier this fall on the classic texts of Jewish tradition. Congregants asked for a follow-up class that would track a single topic through all of the texts. Finkelman picked crossdressing because it was a specific and "fun" topic, although he added that "for people who have a strong desire to crossdress, this could not be a funny issue at all." The rabbi said he planned to present the subject in a "straightforward" but "sensitive" manner.

"I don't have to be afraid of being who I am," he said, "or teaching the Jewish tradition as I understand it."

(Ed.Note: This piece has been circulating on the Internet for awhile, and has been sent to us by more than one cyberspace friend. We publish it here with apologies to Ms. Weinstein and the Bulletin. We just wish we knew what else the Rabbi had to say in his remaining lectures!)

Book Review

by Sofronia Anne Strong

Girlfriend- Men Women and Drag

by Holly Brubach

Random House, \$39.95

It has been said of Holly Brubach that she can write about a safety pin and make it seem chic. She is a former fashion writer for the New Yorker, a victim of the Tina Brown purge. She is currently Style Editor for the New York Times. I have always found her enjoyable to read because she brings an insightful intelligence to the fashion scene, writes well and makes sense out of what has become a bizarre unreal world from 7th Ave. to Paris & Milan.

In this book she has picked up the wave of fascination that has swept over us all regarding drag. Obviously, the time is right for a book like this.

From Marjorie Garber to Elaine Showalter we have been instructed about men in dresses. We have also been seeing with greater frequency all sorts of men in frocks and locks. Suddenly drag is everywhere from the NBA courts to the cinema and in the classroom. We have enjoyed Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, To Wong Foo, Hedwig and the Angry Inch and scholarly works from the best colleges. Ru Paul has done wonders for us all. Patrick Swayze made an awesome lady in Wong Foo. Unfortunately, too few of us have seen the movie *Just Like a Woman*, the only sensitive treatment of the perils of a heterosexual crossdresser.

The book incorporates 76 photographic plates by Michael James O'Brien depicting men in various states of drag. I have the feeling that this bunch of photos was a collection looking for a home when an editor at Random House found Ms. Brubach's manuscript looking for a publisher. There is no direct relationship between the text and the photos, other than subject matter, and the photography does raise the price of the book rather too much.

The author has elected to survey the drag scene for us in eight cities: New York, London, Amsterdam (naturally), Bangkok, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, San Francisco and Berlin. After this tour she attempts to deal with the key question, "What's going on here, anyway?" She also attempts to answer the great question, "What do you want?" All in all it is a workmanlike, readable, thought provoking treatise. As she reports on what she sees and hears it is not quite apparent where this is going, but at the end she will inform us very nicely what it is all about.

She opens with an excellent quote from Virginia Woolf, "The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are but the symbol of something hid deep beneath." It is this difference that Brubach sets out to examine and explain by cruising through the international drag culture. And just what does she conclude? "The more I witnessed, the more convinced I became that people who dress in drag are acting on behalf of us all." By this I am sure she means that we are informed and enlightened by drag as well as challenged. Men in drag are informing us of something, something important.

She also makes this observation, "It [drag] articulates men's ideas of women. These men become women as seen by men, or as men would like to see them." The issue of privilege, liberty & prerogative also come into play. She echoes Camille Paglia when she writes, "the woman who dresses as a man in our time gains nothing by it; she already has acquired the privileges and liberty that men's clothes confer. Whereas the man who dresses as a woman enters into a real experience that has been off-limits to him."

As Ms. Brubach carries us around the world into various drag scenes a theme develops. She hears a lot about drag from a lot of people and encounters a variety of explanations as to what is going on here. She reestablishes certain truisms, such as drag being pan-historic and pan-cultural. In her search to understand what's going on she finds the usual explanations, homoerotic attraction, theater, art and power tripping, satire and the search for identity. For some it is a way of making a living, for others a way of loving. Sometimes it is simply for fun. It is also a way of teaching society about stereotypes, iconoclasm and our life roles.

She doesn't find the heterosexual crossdressers, however. In London she hears about the Beaumont Society, whose members claim to be heterosexual, but she is told that the claim defies the facts. Holly seems to mainly have found the gay drag practitioners of this world. She certainly didn't find Tri-Ess.

In the last chapter Brubach does tie together some fascinating conclusions. She quotes Wendy Kaminer, the feminist ".....equal rights feminism was doomed for a number of reasons, among them the fact that...it challenged men and women to shape their own destinies without resort to stereotype." In the negotiations for equality men were expected to put all their privileges and

prerogatives on the table for renegotiations. When the women were asked what they had to put on the table they said they had nothing- the men had taken everything for themselves long ago. Unfortunately, this wasn't true. Women held a card they wouldn't acknowledge. They owned beauty as a female prerogative which they would not give to men. A man might be strong, or handsome, or capable or rich, a winner, but he must never be pretty. Women are free to make themselves as beautiful as they can but men must never presume to be beautiful. "A man, it seems, is only a man to the extent that he is not a woman." That statement suggests that men are defined negatively as whatever a woman isn't; i.e., whatever the women will allow them to be. So, who's in charge, after all?

"Drag is a man's initiation into the cult of beauty."

"Today men in drag are every bit as threatening as women in drag used to be, and for the same reason; they represent a bid for power that has been denied them- in this case the power of beauty."

There has been a real turning about in our culture, then. There seems to be a conviction, probably by both sexes, that women have it better. Our culture has become increasingly visual. As this has developed, appearances have become increasingly valued. The power of feminine beauty has risen dramatically in the last century. As Brubach puts it, "When a man does drag today he puts on the trappings of women's power and the naked exhilaration that ensues is so palpable it is contagious."

This book does quite a good job of dealing with the question, "What's going on?" It seems to be several things at once, most of them traditional and persistent, but this notion of men wanting to own beauty is a new phenomenon. It seems to have happened because being denied that right is relatively recent. She also provides an answer to the other question, "What do you want?" Men want everything the women have because in their view women have it all (while complaining of being deprived of everything). Drag challenges the sexual stereotypes and demands that we rethink the nature of our being. When we do that we become creative beings, which leads to art, and art is the search for beauty.

This book is a comprehensive look at drag and its meaning. Its chief flaw is that the author didn't find the largest contingent of the drag world, the heterosexual crossdressers. It also fails to investigate one of the most important aspects of drag - its spiritual value and meaning. Its great value lies in the author's conclusions about the nature of drag and its very deep significance to us all. Drag is important, it is valuable and it is significant and we will probably be seeing more of it all the time.

Sweethearts Appreciation Month

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

February 2000 is hereby proclaimed Tri-Ess International Sweethearts Appreciation Month. During this month, we request that all Tri-Ess Chapters make a special effort to show their spouses and partners how much they are appreciated.

Your chapter can celebrate this month in a variety of ways. You can have special speakers of interest to wives, take the spouses and partners out to eat (en homme), present them each with a rose at the chapter meeting, read an open letter to them from the chapter leadership, or pamper the Sweethearts with a salon night. Let your creativity run! Then, let's all share what our chapter did. I would like each chapter to e-mail me a paragraph on how it made its Sweethearts feel special. We will then combine all your contributions into an article, and share it with our entire membership in the Mirror.

This project should be fun for all of us. From time to time, we will send out reminders of this upcoming celebration. I very much hope each and every one of our chapters will be part of this wonderful project!

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If Looks Could Kill

by Yvonne [REDACTED]

[Reprinted from the June 1999 <http://www.albany.net/~yms>. Yvonne is a married crossdresser with a supportive partner and lives in the Albany, New York area. Her e-mail address is: [REDACTED]]

Recently, two events helped me to focus on an aspect of crossdressing I was having trouble resolving. One incident was an e-mail I received. The other was a conversation I had with my daughter, who is in the fifth grade now.

My daughter wanted me to come to a "Career Week" being held in her after-school program and talk to her classmates and friends about my work. I was a little surprised because my daughter has no real interest in computers. I reminded her of this and also mentioned that computers are a lot more fun to work with than to talk about, especially the kind of techie stuff I work on all day.

I told her that I thought the kids might not find my job so interesting. But she insisted that the kids thought computers were very cool, and I began to suspect that she wanted to "show me off" a bit to her friends, which I was not opposed to.

She told me her friends thought I was "cool." Naturally, I had to ask her why. I was surprised by the answer. It seems that her best friend, also in the fifth grade, liked the fact that I laugh a lot and that I have "little lines" around my eyes from laughing so much. Crows' Feet.

The irony in this is that about a week earlier, I had been seriously contemplating seeing a plastic surgeon about getting some of the wrinkles removed from my face. Not that I have that many, but age and gravity are taking their toll. I would find myself standing in front of the mirror and pulling the skin around my temples back to see how much of a difference it would make. And I confess that I thought quite a bit about how the absence of those wrinkles would improve my femme image.

Fifty years from now, when I'm gone and my daughter is left only with her memories of me, she'll remember my Crows Feet and how much her friend liked them. If I could kick myself in the ass, I would have, just to teach me a lesson.

The e-mail I spoke of was from a rather young crossdresser in her twenties. It was a long letter and there were many issues brought up in it, most of which were really not crossdressing related. Then she wrote about her appearance, and told me that she did

not make an attractive woman. Actually her words were this: "At about 5'7" (I haven't measured myself lately, so this is a guess) and 190 lbs, I can tell you I'd make one *ugly* woman..."

Ouch. I know we live in a consumption-oriented culture in which the media saturates us with images designed to create discontent and desire, mostly at the expense of our self-esteem. The price, we are told by the people who set the prices, doesn't matter. If that price were limited only to cash I suppose that might be true. But I don't know what's worse: not stacking up to Madison Avenue's concept of beauty, what it is and how important it is to have it, or discovering that people only like you because you are perceived as possessing that beauty.

It seems to me like the only people who think it would be fun to be treated like a "sex object" are the people who never are. I have been, and I don't like it. And thanks to crossdressing, I've experienced this insulting behavior in all its variations: women and men who find me attractive as a male, men who find me attractive as a female.

Often these semi-evolved simians have one thing in common: they think that because they tell me they find me attractive, I owe them something. Mind you, they never comment on my choice in clothing, never acknowledging the thought and effort that I put into my appearance, never compliment me on my grooming. Never say anything nice about something that I can actually take credit for. Rather, the "compliments" are usually overly generalized and vague, and have the unpleasant effect of placing me on some sort of pedestal, as if that's where I want to be.

As I write this, I am in the process of completing an on-line survey of crossdressers, in which more than 1,200 people from around the world responded. I'd like to share a few of the results here, because they pertain to this topic. I asked the following questions, which could be answered 'Yes' or 'No', or left blank: (Note: The sample size is based on those responses in which the answer was not left blank.)

- 1) Overall, are you satisfied with the way you look as a man?
Yes: 60.5% No: 39.5% (n=1161)
- 2) Overall, are you satisfied with the way you look en femme?
Yes: 43.2% No: 56.8% (n=1161)

Empowerment

(from an internet friend)

WOMEN have strengths that amaze men. They carry children, they carry hardships, they carry burdens, but they hold happiness, love and joy. They smile when they want to scream. They sing when they want to cry. They cry when they are happy and laugh when they are nervous.

WOMEN wait by the phone for a "safe at home call" from a friend or relative after a snowy drive home.

WOMEN have special qualities about them. They volunteer for good causes. They are pink ladies in hospitals, they bring food to shut-ins. They are childcare workers, executives, attorneys, stay-at-home moms, biker babes and your neighbors. They wear suits, jeans, and they wear uniforms. They fight for what they believe in. They stand up for injustice. They are in the front row at PTA meetings. They vote for the person that will do the best job for family issues.

WOMEN walk and talk the extra mile to get their children in the right schools and for getting their family the right health care. They write to the editor, their congressmen and to the "powers that be" for things that make for a better life. They don't take "no" for an answer when they believe there is a better solution.

WOMEN stick a love note in their husband's lunch box. They do without new shoes so their children can have them. They go to the doctor with a frightened friend. They love unconditionally.

WOMEN are honest, loyal, and forgiving. They are smart, knowing

that knowledge is power; but they still know how to use their softer side to make a point.

WOMEN want to be the best for their family, their friends, and themselves. They cry when their children excel and cheer when their friends get awards. They are happy (or cry) when they hear about a birth or a new marriage. Their hearts break when a friend dies. They have sorrow at the loss of a family member, yet they are strong when they think there is no strength left.

A WOMAN'S touch can cure any ailment. They know that a hug and a kiss can heal a broken heart. She can make a romantic evening unforgettable.

WOMEN come in all sizes, in all colors and shapes. They live in homes, apartments and cabins. They drive, fly, walk, run or e-mail you to show how much they care about you. The heart of a woman is what makes the world spin!

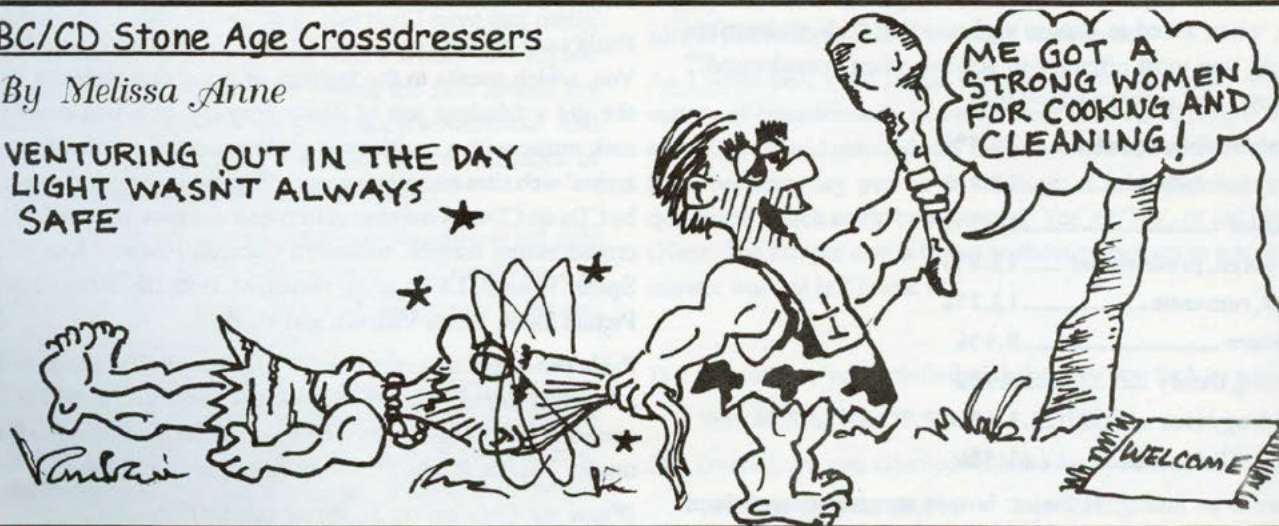
WOMEN do more than just give birth. They bring joy and hope. They give compassion and ideals. They give moral support to their family and friends. And all they want back is a hug, a smile and for you to do the same to people you come in contact with. Women have a lot to say and a lot to give.

This was sent to you by someone who respects you as a WOMAN and who sees many of your qualities in this letter. Why not pass it on to someone you recognize and know? *That which does not destroy me only makes me stronger!*

BC/CD Stone Age Crossdressers

By Melissa Anne

VENTURING OUT IN THE DAY
LIGHT WASN'T ALWAYS
SAFE



- 3) Has crossdressing compelled you to want to loose weight so you can look more 'feminine'?

Yes: 76.9% No: 23.1% (n=1178)

- 4) Do you take, or have you ever taken, any kind of female hormones?"

Yes: 21.0% No: 79.9% (n=1179)

- 5) If so, were they (hormones) prescribed by a doctor?

Yes: 21.2% No: 78.8% (n=241)

So by donning women's clothing, applying some makeup and putting on a wig, almost 1 out of 5 of crossdressers suddenly become dissatisfied with the way they look. That's actually the exact opposite of what those products are intended to do. Among the crossdressers who were satisfied with the way they looked as a man (702), almost half (46.7%) were not satisfied with their femme image. On the other hand, more than one out four (27.9%) of those who were not satisfied with their male image were actually happier with their femme image. So among crossdressers, looks matter.

There are a lot of factors that would influence whether someone was satisfied with their image. Some are not within a person's control: height and weight or body shape, for example. Other factors are more manageable: clothing, wig, makeup. Yet oddly enough, only 19.7% said they had been to a professional makeup consultant for lessons or a make-over. And of those, 58.1% like the way they look en femme, 15% more than the overall satisfaction rate and 19% higher than those who have not been for makeup lessons. Those who have never been for a make-over or lessons are satisfied with their femme image 39.5% of the time. By the way, 61.9% of those who said they attend support group meetings on a regular basis are satisfied with the way they look en femme. Think about that.

Finally, when asked to choose a phrase that "...best describes the 'look' you most often try to achieve when crossdressed?" here's how folks answered: (n=1163)

Fashionable, stylish 20.4%
Sexy bombshell 18.1%
Casual 14.3%
Tailored, professional 13.8%
Soft, romantic 13.2%
Mature 8.9%
Young, trendy 8.3%
Androgynous 1.6%
Little Girl 1.5%

But there is an intangible factor: how is attractiveness defined

and what is the standard for beauty? And how many people, male or female, crossdresser or not, really meet that standard? Men in our culture have an additional component to deal with: namely that their "success" is, in some social circles, measured in part by the woman who chooses him - more commonly referred to as "the trophy wife." It bothers me to think that a person who has had to cope with crossdressing all his life and finally gets to the point where he can start to express himself, now has to deal with the fact that he doesn't look like a Victoria's Secret supermodel. Living with crossdressing is so much about self acceptance in the first place. Is it coincidence that crossdressers fall victim to the same "lookism" that women face every day? Is the pressure crossdressers feel to conform to an unrealistic standard of beauty any different than what women feel? I think not.

Rock and Gender Roles

Mitch Tries on the Blue Dress

[At a recent chapter meeting] Paula traced the appearance of crossdressing themes in rock music from Glam Rock of the early 1970s to Goth Rock of the 1990s. Many of us remember Take a Walk on the Wild Side as the first song with a crossdressing theme to make it onto mainstream pop charts. Other mainstream artists have included crossdressing in their lyrics, including Pink Floyd, Aerosmith, David Bowie, Twisted Sister, and many others.

Paula sang her own composition, The Revolution Begins Inside You, which speaks to the feelings of many crossdressers. Then she did a fabulous job of illustrating crossdressing themes in rock music with a multimedia presentation of pictures from the artists' web sites and playing recordings of their work (that would be CDs on CDs). A number of musicals and movies have featured crossdressing themes, including Cabaret, Hedwig, Kiss of the Spider Woman, La Cage Au Folles, M. Butterfly, Rocky Horror Picture Show, Victor Victoria, and Yentl.

Paula showed us her collection of CD music on CDs, and provided a handout listing over 50 songs with CD themes, as well as the names of numerous artists who have used crossdressing in their music. Thanks, Paula, for a very entertaining evening.

(From the Chi Epsilon Sigma newsletter.)

The History of the Zipper

The idea of the zipper goes all the way back to 1851. That was the year that the inventor of the sewing machine, Elias Howe, invented the automatic continuous clothing closure. He had it patented, but for some reason never pursued marketing it or improving the idea. Later, the inventor Whitcomb Judson became the first to actually market the zipper; therefore, he became known as the inventor of the zipper. He first displayed it at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. His zipper, which was called the clasp locker, did not catch on very quickly, but he and a businessman named Colonel Lewis Walker decided to go into business manufacturing clasp lockers.

In 1913, Gideon Sundback, a worker of the company, invented the modern zipper, which was a lot easier to use than the clasp locker. Still, nobody wanted them. The only way they were being used frequently was for army clothing (WWI was going on). The idea didn't pick up until B.F. Goodrich bought the zipper from the company and used it in his invention, rubber galoshes. Goodrich was the first to come up with the name zipper.

Zippers weren't put on clothing until the 1930's. They became the dominant fastener for clothing, over buttons, in 1937. What was mostly responsible for making them popular was the fashion

industry. Now, thanks to the early inventors of the zipper, and the fashion industry, zippers are used everywhere on various products. They have become very popular, and they even have a web page devoted to them!

How to Fix a Zipper. You probably won't need this because it's a very long and pointless process. It would probably just be easier to just throw away your old zipper and get a new one. But just in case for some strange reason you might need this information, here it is.

Zippers are great until they break. There's always the chance that even the best quality zipper could separate, and develop a gap behind the slider. But before you throw away the item, or rip the whole zipper out and replace it, try this simple repair method.

Before you begin, if you have a zipper that's not separated, but is merely balky or stuck, try these measures first: Look underneath the zipper to see if any threads are caught in it. If there are, take a scissors or razor

blade and cut them where they enter the slider. Pull them through to free the slider. Rub a bar of soap or a candle on the teeth of the zipper. Now run the slider back and forth a few times. This will smooth things out.

If the zipper is actually separated, remove the old stop. The thick horizontal piece at the bottom of the teeth is called a stop. Take this item in one hand and the pliers in the other. Grasp the metal stop at the bottom

of the teeth, and work it off. Then turn the zipper over if need be, in order to access the other side of the stop. When the stop is removed, you'll be able to get rid of the gap.

To realign the slider: Once the stop is off, move the slider down the zipper, and carefully run the teeth back through the slider. Zip the zipper completely up, so that the fabric is aligned on either side. Create a new stop. Since it's just about impossible to reattach the old stop, you'll create a new one. Thread a needle with heavy thread. Starting from the back side, create a new stop by placing several stitches across the bottom of the zipper. You need enough stitches to hold, but not so many that it becomes bulky. On your last stitch, tie off the thread in a double knot or two under the zipper and cut the thread.

(From The Cactus Flower, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter)

Disclaimer

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Hey, Good Looking!

BODY SHAVING

by Melanie Yarborough

There's more to a body shave than just lathering up and going at it with the razor. There are special techniques and little tricks learned with time and experience.

-Make sure your bathroom is well-lit. You'll need good lighting.

-Fill up your tub and soak in a warm bath. Not only does this soften your pores and hairs, it's a relaxing thing to do. After 15 minutes, get up and sit on the edge of the tub.

-Keep the faucet water running a little: Your razor will be clogged with hair with each stroke, and need constant rinsing off.

-Important! Use Hair Conditioner on your legs instead of shaving cream. It's a lot smoother to apply.

-Don't forget to change sitting positions every so often. You can cramp up a leg and not even know it. Use smooth, even strokes. You may need to go over one area several times.

-The most delicate part of the leg is around the kneecap on both sides. The skin is thinnest here, and you can really slice yourself up badly. Do not go over this area at first. When you have shaved the rest of your legs, then stand up. In a standing position, kneecap skin will be taut and more shaveable.

-Don't forget to shave wisps of hair on your toes and fingers.

-Chest shaving: Be careful around the nipple area where it's especially sensitive.

If you are going to be wearing a low cut top, consider plucking

each individual hair with a tweezer. Yes, this can be very time consuming and painful. But a shaved chest still shows "under the skin" stubble which would have to be covered with makeup. A tweezed chest shows no hair at all for a day or two.

Put on the top you plan to wear, to see the exact amount of surface area you'll need to pluck.

-Razors: A lady razor is best for sensitive skin. Remember to replace it after 3 shavings. That's why it's called "Disposable"! When done, don't forget to clean it out & dry it off thoroughly. Do not store by the bathtub-the moisture will rust it quickly.

(From the Neutral Corner newsletter.)

[Ed.Note: There is one more point Melanie doesn't mention, but it is perhaps the most important consideration of all. BEFORE you shave, make sure you've thoroughly discussed the issue with your spouse! Otherwise, you could lose a lot more blood (figuratively speaking, of course) than the worst shaving nick you ever had!]

TOWARDS A NATURAL, NON-IMITATIVE FEMALE VOICE

by Melanie Yarborough

Many in our community would like a simple "How-To" book of how to speak female, just as they might learn French or German or Spanish. But beware, says noted speech pathologist Maureen O'Connor of San Francisco's Peninsula Associates. One should not think that the best way to develop female speech is to uniformly adopt certain behaviors, and then put them on as a false persona. It's better to have a menu of female communication behaviors to pick and choose from, that sound natural.

Maureen O'Connor has been practicing speech and language pathology for the past 25 years. She studied at the University of Wisconsin and Purdue, and has worked in Albuquerque and Stanford University. Since 1978, she has been in private practice. At a seminar at a past California Dreamin' convention, she elaborated on female voice and communication behaviors.

First, there is no one specific type of female voice. For example, there's Audrey Hepburn (graceful, elegant), Liza Minelli (bubbly, energetic) and Ellen Degeneres (plain, simple and likable). All are female, but each is very different.

Two common mistakes many transgendered make attempting a femme voice: falsetto and breathiness. Falsetto is high, thin and tinny sounding. But there's no power to it, and you can't get melody or inflection. Speaking up there habitually is not the way vocal chords were meant to vibrate. Breathiness is associated with Marilyn Monroe or Jackie Onassis. It may sound inviting and sensual, but the balance of breath to tone is out of whack.

It's far better to develop a female-sounding voice within your range, than to go outside of that range.

Feminine communication behaviors are different in basic use of vocabulary. Men tend to sound more matter-of-fact and monotone, while women are more expressive and can paint pictures with words. For example, women have a much broader color vocabulary than men, as they deal with fashion more. A man might say something is white; a woman could say it's ivory, bone, egg shell or ecru. Moreover, women have a broader vocabulary about food and other topics traditionally considered a woman's domain.

Women also use intensifiers to express emotionality. A male might say, "It's a beautiful day." A female would say, "It's such a beautiful day!" Or, a male might say, "She's pretty." A female would say "She's so pretty!"

Centuries of having to depend on the goodwill of others has created a female vocabulary which is often more approval-seeking, even supplicating. Women use tag questions more. They'll often end a sentence with, "Isn't it?", "Doesn't she?", "Aren't you?" They even use more politisms, such as "could," "would" and "should." And, sometimes, they'll couch a sentence in double and triple requests. A man might say, "Take out the garbage." A woman would say, "Would you please take out the garbage, if you don't mind?"

Women's nonverbal communication is just as significant. They maintain more intimate eye contact with the person they speak to, and have a more frequent social smile. They show more facial expressions and constantly give you feedback. One needs to be somewhat (but not exaggeratedly) more expressive with the face. Does your face reflect what your voice says? And men will often boom out their declarations to the world, even if only talking to one person; women will project only to the listener, and not into the space around them.

How can a person practice to develop a female voice? "There's actually a useful function for soap operas as voice partners," Maureen jokes. They're melodramatic. Repeat aloud the female lines and try to sound as she does. But don't choose a female news commentator to study. They've been trained to be Bi-Dialectical, giving a flat, neutral, more "male" presentation.

"Internal voice" is important as well. When you think to yourself when dressed en femme, try not to speak with a female voice in your head. Maureen reminds us that in trying to talk as a "typical" female, "All generalizations are false. There are exceptions to every rule on how men and women speak. Stereotypes are inaccurate, unjust and dangerous."

(From the Neutral Corner newsletter)

A Place For Us

There is a little place
Only I know
I go to this space
only to grow.

It's nothing fancy
no walls laced with pearls
telling was chancy
I am one of the girls.

I have wanted this
for so many years
I can't steal a kiss
she'll start the tears.

I don't want to hurt her
I love her too much
go back to where we were?
Are you really that nuts?

I'm out of the closet
And into the world
I borrowed her corset
Oh, her ruffles are furled!

so I tried on a skirt
so what does it matter
Don't wear the shirt?
It makes me look fatter?!?!?!?

Come with me, my dear
I promise I won't bite
It's special in here
I'm free as a kite.

I know a little place
only we go
to laugh and to love
and continue to grow...

Dedicated to
crossdressers
and their S.O.'s
Written By a Wife. PKB
4/23/99

Amanda Lynn's Notes

by Amanda Lynn

Last year Gloria and I had both published stories of how we had the opportunities to crossdress at office parties under the guise of acting out characters. Both of us wondered about what might be the fallout from such a performance. For the most part, it has gone well for both of us. But then last week I received an e-mail from a woman at the office who had seen my performance almost three years ago. It read: "A few of us girls are going to the Clinique bonus at Fields on Friday. Want to join us?"

Well, can you imagine the high from that! I knew better than to immediately react to the message and say "YES, YES, YES!!!" So I decided not to answer until I had some time to think about my alternatives. I first recalled Deirdre, the UIC professor who visited us at the August meeting. Then I remembered some of the encouragement I have read in Rachel Miller's book and monthly newsletters. The stories of courage some of you sisters have told me also came to mind. They were stories of self-confidence enabling them to tell others of their gender variation, and live to tell even more people.

So I leaned on these lessons of courage and decided to go along with the girls, realizing that doing so would really out myself. Four women decided to make the Fields trip. We met for lunch first, but no one brought up the subject of why I was tagging along. It was obvious that each was waiting for the other to say something, and I wasn't going to be the first one. Then finally as we left the cafeteria, one asked "Well, are you going to get something for your wife?" There it was. The question was asked. I had wanted it to be asked. I even rehearsed what I would say when asked. So I responded: "No, I'm going to buy some cosmetics for myself." "You mean Clinique for men?" "No, women's cosmetics for this man. I enjoy crossdressing and I buy almost all my cosmetics at bonus sales."

Well, she was blown away with surprise and was quickly poised along with the others to hear more. I was calm, laid back and quite confident. Inside I was jumping for joy. The

conversation continued with me telling little tidbits about being transgendered and what it meant. The women were quite touched by my revelation and had some very kind remarks about having to accept the way one's path in life led.

We arrived at the counter and they wanted to know what I was going to buy and if I was going to tell the clerk it was for me. I just told them to watch me in action. When my turn came I asked for the things I wanted by product name, color and strength. (I had done my homework at www.clinique.com the night before.) The clerk asked, "For your wife?" I answered, "No, for me" and smiled. With a returned smile and a cute "OK", she found the items, rang up my Visa, and bagged them and the freebies together. I left the counter listening to her wish for me to "Have a nice day and enjoy your cosmetics!"

The girls realized by now that I was a card-carrying crossdresser. On the way back to work we chatted more about it and they were quite supportive. Of course, I brought some photos along to show them what they didn't see at the office party. They were quite impressed and each had a different favorite pose. We parted with their self-initiated pledge to keep this episode among themselves, and a request for me to take a day off and come join them for lunch as Amanda. How cool!

Like others have said, "Our own fears are our worst enemies." I had my fears, but was bolstered by the courage of others who had done this before me. I had the burning desire to spread the word about us through my own example which is so like many of us: a veteran respected employee, married for many years with a bunch of grown kids, and can live to tell of his happy transgendered life with pride and dignity.

Thank you, God!

May you too have the same courage when your turn for a 'bonus' in life comes.

Samantha Says...

Dressing Down

Some of the girls feel that it should be all the way or nothing, but that is not my way at all. Sure, when you go out on the town or to a club meeting it's got to be that way; you know, wig, dressy outfit, heels, careful make up job and all that. And you got to act like and even think like your female personality, but how about the rest of the time?

Well maybe I've got it better than lots of the girls, but my Significant Other doesn't mind what I wear as long as we are not going to a social event or church or something like that; and as long as, you know, I'm presentable for the circumstances.

My normal mode is male. By that I mean that I generally think male, act pretty much male, but I don't want to forget that I am a crossdresser, and enjoy wearing female clothing. (Samantha is never far away). So what do I wear around the house and working and doing the ordinary chores like grocery shopping or other errands in town? Actually, except for shoes, my clothes are usually almost entirely unisex or female almost all of the time. But you gotta arrange it in such a way that you don't appear to be anything else than male when others see you.

I'm going to tell you my normal dressing schedule in a minute, but first let me tell you about a couple of goodies I have! For a long time I have had leg vein problems, and although they were fixed years ago, they still can bother me, but we have found a great solution. Active control pantyhose do the job! These are a MUST!

Second, in '95 associated with cardiac problems, I had a pacemaker installed. This isn't a big deal, but it is stuck in under the skin right where a bra strap will hold it nice and firmly, and it can cause some pain if it is jogged around like on a long drive or such. We found that wearing a sport bra solves that one nicely. Even a regular bra works, but they are somewhat more obvious and if you wear them all the time - especially underwire types - tend to puff up your breasts a bit, which can be annoying.

OK. So, when I get up in the morning, make breakfast, let the cats out, and make the bed, etc. (my chores), I take off my nightgown and put on a clean fresh pair of pantyhose, then a sports bra and panties. I like nylon panties and have recently found Hanes Her Way ones with nice wide lace-elastic tops. After deodorizer, shaving, toothbrush and water-pix, I rub some moisturizer on my face except not on my lips. I put lipstick on them and then loose powder on the whole face. I find that Revlon "pink in the afternoon" # 25 is exactly the natural color of my lips and after the translucent powder you can't tell anything has been put on them. A squirt of perfume - Vanilla Lace or - more special - Shalimar - completes the job.

Next comes a pair of sport socks and slacks. I use elastic waist ladies' slacks, which are otherwise the same as men's - except no fly and usually smaller pockets.

For a top I have a number of plain blouses and tee shirts which go well in the summer. Actually I will often use a man's shirt just because it is around. The difference - buttons differently - is never noticed. In the winter I may use a camisole in addition or a short slip for warmth.

As I indicated above, I wear a nightie to bed at night and often in the evening if we are going to be home looking at TV or something. If it is cool I have several robes to put over it and some nice slippers. I do not like tight panties at night so I have found several pairs of lace trimmed petti-pants, which I find very comfortable.

Since I have been dressing like this for a good number of years, it has really become my normal habit and is no longer a big deal at all. In fact I would not be comfortable at all wearing pajamas again at night - unless they were VERY pretty!

(From the Chi Epsilon Sigma newsletter)



Sister Groups, A Solution?

by Diane I.

During my review of newsletters in the past few months I have noticed at least one Tri-Ess chapter wrestling with the ups and downs of affiliation with National. In some cases, members are not satisfied with one policy or another, the services or the fact that "The Femme Mirror" is late again. Some feel they would rather be independent from a national organizational structure. Others feel they would be happier in an "open" group. These issues have faced Tri-Ess chapters for years. It has caused some chapters to drop their affiliation with National and others to fraction.

However, to most members of Tri-Ess, being a chapter member in a sorority has its advantages. The Tri-Ess network is large and secure, emphasizing trust and confidentiality. When traveling, Tri-Ess members often contact local chapters to meet other crossdressers, find out about safe places to go dressed or attend meetings. Tri-Ess specifically serves the needs of heterosexual transvestites. It has also been on the forefront of educating the public in classrooms, on radio and television. Tri-Ess chapters are among the most active crossdressers' support groups in the country. Tri-Ess isn't for everyone, but it is the best alternative for many crossdressers.

Further, to remain a strong and active organization in the gender community as a whole, the sorority needs good communication links with other groups. The best solution I have found is what I call the "sister group" concept. In simple terms, sister groups are separate local organizations serving different aspects of the crossgender community. They may serve different needs, but they show an active support for each other.

The concept works. It's not a fresh or unique idea and it has worked well in the past. In Phoenix, Alpha Zeta and A Rose have such a direct referral that we have on-going advertisements in each other's newsletters. In fact, we shared newsletters for over a year. We plan activities together, have a joint speaker's bureau and sometimes plan activities together. In Chicago, Chi Chapter and CGS are in strong communication and work closely together on specific events. In Houston, Tau Chi and Gulf Coast have worked together on events. Alpha Omega in Ohio has made strides in strengthening ties with Crossroads. There are lots of other examples. In some cases, Tri-Ess chapters have even helped another organization get started.

Leaders of Tri-Ess chapters who have members going through anxiety over being tied to National should realize that dropping the affiliation with Tri-Ess is not the solution. Tri-Ess serves a very important function in the crossgender community. We're not only a support group for those who have confidently been out of the closet for some time, but more importantly we serve those who are just coming out, insecure and often alone. I sometimes think of the sorority as standing by at the closet door, patiently helping confused or frightened crossdressers as they step out for the first time.

The solution is to have a strong link to one or two other local groups. You can trade referrals, share information and even offer assistance in times of need. The loss of any Tri-Ess chapter is a tragedy. If some of the chapter membership is having a problem with National, give the "sister group" concept a try. If there is no sister group, form one or give assistance to one just getting started. It doesn't matter that they have a different philosophy from your own. The key is that all these groups need mutual support to best serve the needs of the crossgender community as a whole.

Sound familiar? It was written by Diane I., in 1989! The more things change, the more they remain the same.

(From The Cactus Flower, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter.)

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**Write For A Price
List of Books**

Guidelines for a Chapter Book Club

by Bookworm Becky

Last November we started off with our first [Chi Epsilon Sigma] book discussion gathering. It was sort of a "Book-of-the-Month" discussion group. All who attended had a great time and thought that the session was most interesting. In fact, some expressed the idea that the discussion that the book (one of JoAnn Roberts') engendered was more enlightening than the book!

Anyway, for those interested, here's how we organized our book discussion group. We agreed to meet on a Sunday afternoon. There are only three ground rules. They are:

1. The material is of relevant interest. (Translated into English, that means the material would be about crossdressers, crossdressing, transgenderism, or associated subjects);
2. The topic book must be easily obtained; and
3. Participants will follow the 3 R's. That is, we treat all with Respect, we take Responsibility for our words and actions, and employ Rational thought. (That latter item is hard in my case. I gave up thinking when I got commissioned as "conduct unbecoming an officer.")

There are a number of relevant books out there ranging from Allen's *Man in the Red Velvet Dress* to the Bulloughs' tome on the origin and history of crossdressing. I personally like to stay away from "tomes" as they remind me of "tombs" and that's a grave subject we'd rather not dig into...

Your chapter, too, can see about setting up a Sunday afternoon where those of you who are interested can gather en femme and display not only your feminine apparel but also your feminine minds.

[Adapted from the Chi Epsilon Sigma newsletter.]

The Femme Mirror Advertising Rates

Per Year (4 Issues)

Full Page	\$300
½ Page	\$175
¼ Page	\$95
Bus.Card	\$50

Please send us a copy of your ad, camera-ready if possible, along with your check or money order payable to Tri-Ess to:

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Houston, TX 77036

Tri-Ess members deduct 20% from all rates. Gender Community events and publications free on reciprocal basis.

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Many Thanks..... MIRROR Staff

The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of!

by Becky [REDACTED]

No, not those types of dreams... but it is interesting that in the past two weeks the subject of crossdressing, transgender, and dreams have all sort of come together in material I've been reading... and I'm talking the New York Times, Steven Ambrose, and other authors who are not normally associated with our activities.

Ambrose makes an interesting point in his "Crazy Horse and Custer." The young men of the Sioux (he wrote this before everything was politically correct...so his accuracy as to which element of the Lakota Nation he was talking about was not too precise) would derive their name and sometimes their future life as a result of a fast and ordeal which culminated in a dream. And the winkte, or holy individual who was also a crossdresser in our vernacular, would know so from the dream he had at the end of his ordeal... and how many of us would find ourselves "dressed" in our dreams following a particularly rugged experience?

The NYT carried an interesting article by an author, Jim Harrison... "First Person Female: There Are Some Doors a Man Can Open Only by Being a Woman." And in this very interesting article, a sort of autobiography, Harrison raises an interesting point worthy of additional research. He claims that Jung held "...one very troubling idea... of what we [men] have done with our twin sisters that the culture [Ed. Emphasis added] forces us to abandon at birth." Seen your twin sister lately, like maybe in the mirror or in a dream?

In my own case for years, since I was ten or so, I used to go through these literal nightmares of being "outed." But once I faced up to the realities of who I really am and accepted myself...and then came "out" to my spouse, the nightmares stopped and I began to live more and more of that original dream...and then revealing Becky to my two older sisters also sort of helped me maybe find that twin...

Interesting things, these things that dreams are made of...

(From the newsletter of Chi Epsilon Sigma Chapter.)



Questions About Your Tri-Ess Membership, Publications, Or Programs?

Get ANSWERS BY E-MAIL

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

Questions about membership fees or membership status, or notifications of change of address, go to Membership Director Donna [REDACTED] at: [REDACTED]

Questions about the Big Sister Program or the Mail Forwarding Service go to Marlene at: [REDACTED]

Questions about SPICE, or wives' and partners' or couples' support, go to Peggy Rudd at: [REDACTED]

Questions having to do with Outreach go to Outreach Director Judy Daniels, at: [REDACTED]

Anything having to do with the spouses' online forum, CDSO, goes to Bev, its Moderator, at: [REDACTED]

Anything having to do with the crossdressers' online forum, CDTRIESS, goes to Emily [REDACTED], its Moderator, at: [REDACTED]

Anything having to do with the couples' online forum, TRIESS42, goes to its Moderator, Cat, at: [REDACTED]

Anything having to do with "The Sweetheart Connection" goes to Onnalee, its Editor, at: [REDACTED]

Questions about the Membership Directory should be addressed to Denise [REDACTED] at: [REDACTED]

Questions and comments about the "The Femme Mirror" and materials for publication should be sent to Frances Fairfax, its Editor, at: [REDACTED]

Requests for information on joining Tri-Ess, Tri-Ess Chapters, other administrative matters or those you are not sure how to direct, should be sent to me at: [REDACTED]

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

Your sister, Jane Ellen Fairfax, Chair, Tri-Ess Board of Directors

CALENDAR OF TRI-ESS EVENTS

November 1999

- 10-14 **Holiday En Femme**, Houston, TX, Brenda Thomas, 14601 Bellaire #334, Houston TX 77083, Phone 281- [REDACTED] (after 7PM), E-Mail: [REDACTED]
- 14-21 **Holiday At Sea/ Dignity Cruise #11**, Houston, TX-Calico-Cancun-Cozumel-Roatan, Honduras-Houston, CRUISEONE, INC., Anne McLaughlin, 1-800-699-6631, International 281-679-1399.

July 2000

- 12-16: **SPICE VIII - 2000: A Spice Odyssey**, Houston, TX Desiree [REDACTED], SPICE 2000, 7120 Rufe Snow Drive, Suite 106, Fort Worth, TX 76148-1867; E-Mail: [REDACTED] Or call: 918- [REDACTED] Mary Jane (Central Time), 215- [REDACTED] Evelyn (Eastern Time). Fax: 281- [REDACTED] Websites: www.pmpub.com OR www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/6280/SPICE.html

November 2000

- 8-12 **Holiday En Femme 2000 - A Millennial Spectacular**, Los Angeles, CA. Alpha Chapter, PO Box 411352, Eagle Rock Station, Los Angeles, CA 90041; Phone (Linda): (310) [REDACTED]; E-Mail (Linda): [REDACTED], Website: <http://www.3dcom.com/tg/alpha/alpha.htm>
- 13-17 **Dignity Cruise #12 - Celebrate The Millennium** Aboard a Ship Called THE HOLIDAY- Round Trip from Los Angeles, visiting Catalina Island and Ensenada; Call Cruises and Tours of the World, Anne Fleetwood, Toll Free 800- [REDACTED], or 281- [REDACTED]. Fax 281- [REDACTED]. Ask for the *Holiday En Femme Dignity Cruise*. E-Mail: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

CHAPTERS! Planning an EVENT? Send your information to:

The Femme Mirror's Calendar Of Tri-ess Events and put your EVENT on the MAP!

BC/CD Stone Age Crossdressers

By Melissa Anne



Crossdressers and Queens

by Melanie Yarborough

Many crossdressers get seriously angry when compared to (or even mentioned in the same breath as) the more flamboyant crossdressing gay men. Heterosexual crossdressers will be quick to say they have little in common with Queens. First and foremost, because crossdressers aren't gay. And second, because crossdressers don't do exaggerated drag as queens do. Crossdressers have the loftier goal of wanting to present as "real women".

Ironically, crossdressers spend lots of time and money in gay bars, where the queens circulate. And with good reason - it's one of the few public places a man dressed as a woman can safely socialize. The management there may even look on them with wry amusement: "You say you're straight, but you're wearing a dress and hanging around in a gay bar. Hmmmm....."

Angry denials and separatism really don't get us anywhere. Transgender rights are furthered by understanding how and why stereotypes occur and what we can do to change them. Crossdressing is seen as synonymous with homosexuality for a simple reason: society's machista/heterosexualist ideology. Love and sexual relationships can only exist in one way, through masculine men dominating feminine women. This maintains the heterosexual male power structure. It also puts down women, gays and lesbians, interracial couples, leather people, and anyone else who doesn't fit in.

Transgender confuses this society totally. The only way it can rationalize something so alien is to think: If a man wants to dress as a woman, it simply must be in order to have sex with a man. And if a man wants to have sex with another man, it simply must be because he wants to be a woman. Plain and simple. Pretty narrow view of things, isn't it?

Straight society needs to be made to understand that gender and sexual orientation are two different things. Gender is how you identify yourself (as male or female). Sexual orientation is whom you prefer as a sexual partner (males or females). Plain and simple.

Another problem is that crossdressers and queens sometimes look the same: Big luxurious hair, thick makeup, ultrashort skirts & ultrahigh heels, glittering jewelry. Queens take the idea of femininity and carry it to the extreme. This is a

conscious effort to burlesque the sex goddesses of stage and screen. Crossdressers unwittingly do the same, but for different reasons. For many TV's, the image they have of femininity is those exact same sex goddesses of stage and screen-not the quiet housewife or mousy librarian.

What is it about queens that so rankles crossdressers? It may be a sense of "You're spoiling it for the rest of us!". While crossdressers try to convince straight society they're not a danger and don't have to be a visual affront, flamboyant queens appear to set these efforts back. By being openly gay men in drag, they confirm society's worst prejudice: that all crossdressers really are gay.

Interestingly, gay men themselves also are rankled by queens for the same reasons. They're also trying to convince straight society they're not a danger or a visual affront. And here are these transvestite gay men swishing and flouncing and being in-your-face..... So ironically, crossdressers and gay men actually have something in common, that both look down on queens.

Assimilationism is the belief that if I can just get society to see me as one of them, I'll be accepted. But the sad truth is, by definition transgendered are not like straight monogendered society. Prejudices about gender and sexual orientation are ingrained. The monogender and heterosexualist ideology can't bend itself to accommodate transgender or homosex. It needs to be convinced to broaden that ideology to accommodate variations. In other words, we'll never find a place under their small umbrella. We need to get them to expand their own umbrella. It may be difficult, but not impossible.

Minority groups have been most successful in gaining civil rights by defining themselves as for something, and not just against something. Pro-African American, not anti-white. Pro-Feminist, not anti-male. Pro-gay rights, not anti-heterosexual. The transgender community doesn't have to define itself as anti-gay or anti-queen. We can stop trying to define ourselves by what we're not, and start defining ourselves by what we are.

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

Target Audience

by Cindy [REDACTED] AZ-2817-N

(Ed.Note: Read the following, substituting the name of your own chapter for that of Alpha Zeta. How do you measure up? Are you running ads? An attractive, up-to-date website? A helpline? An outreach team? Are you, the member, doing your part?)

Just who is our target audience? Who are these people who contact Alpha Zeta and what is their motivation? Many of us have been there, but let's take a look to refresh our memories. After many years of meeting new prospects I have come up with a standard profile of our members. The "median member" is about 45 years old, is married and has two kids. Often, his wife is not aware of his dressing or does not approve. His first recollection of crossdressing goes back to when he was about 12 years old. At this age, he found a stash of female clothing, tried it on and discovered that he liked the silky feel of it. Guilt, or fear of discovery, made him stop his exploration at this time, but he always came back to it whenever he could.

This of course led to some confusion for him; he began to question his sexuality and had fears that might be "turning" gay. These fears and associated confusion led him to engage in activities that would prove his masculinity. Often this involved risk-taking sports or substance abuse. His crossdressing continued as a solitary activity, dressing whenever could on out of town trips, or even renting a hotel room for an evening.

Eventually, about age 45 or so, he found an ad for a crossdressing group right here in his own town! He could hardly believe it! He carefully tore the ad out of the newspaper and put in his wallet. After carrying it in his wallet for six months, he rented a PO box and sent a letter off to the address in the ad. Up to this point in his life, his total knowledge of the crossdressing community came from the seedy bookstores in a shady part of town. He was afraid, or perhaps hoping, that his letter would set off a barrage of ads for sexually explicit material.

After waiting for what seemed an eternity, he finally received a letter inviting him to meet with an officer of the group. With hands trembling, he called to make the appointment with the "orientation" person. With a lump in his throat, and an inability to say "crossdresser" in public without the fear that someone nearby had overheard him, he met that "orientation person" and found out that he "was not alone," that there were many others just like him! Finally, after all those years of hiding, and with great apprehension, he attended his first meeting. And, as

they say, the rest is history. Admittedly, not every Alpha Zeta member has gone through all these twists and turns in finding the group, but there are many common elements in this story. It is a compilation of many stories and not any one person's story.

How about the wives, what do we have for them? We have a several other wives/SO's that are willing to listen and share their experiences about the issues they have faced in being associated with a crossdressing partner. In addition, we have a very comprehensive and growing library that contains helpful material.

Do we allow transsexuals in the group? Certainly, but answers to some of their questions are more easily found in A Rose. Many transgendered individuals have come to us not knowing where they stood, not knowing the difference between a transvestite and a transsexual! Here they have found where they are, and have found that there many alternatives in the transgendered world. But, of course, they know our focus remains on the heterosexual crossdressers and their significant others, and they respect that. Some of them have even hung around long enough to help replenish that well of knowledge that they've drunk from.

Do we allow gays in the group? I don't follow the members into their bedrooms, and this has never been an issue for Alpha Zeta. I remain non judgmental in other people's lifestyles and I'm confident the rest of the group shares that attitude.

Now that we know who the target audience is, where do we find them? We find them in mainstream America. They are the doctor, the lawyer, the truck driver, the engineer, the retired guy next door who plays golf and takes care of his roses every day. That guy who reads the New Times or surfs the web, and one fine day, discovers the existence a group for heterosexual crossdressers.

In conclusion, in order to reach our target audience, it appears that our best outreach is to advertise in the New Times, the Arizona Republic, and to maintain our website. In addition, a gender program on public access television has been proven to be a great source of new members. There several other areas where we can reach new members, but the above has been the most effective in the past. Are there other avenues that we can use to reach new members? Yes. Let's get together and discuss it at the next meeting. Maybe we can come up with some new ideas, and better yet, get some new volunteers to carry through with some of these ideas!

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

the Society for the Second Self, inc. 8880 Bellaire Blvd., B2, Suite 104, Houston TX 77036-4621

Tri-Ess E-mail: _____

Tri-Ess Telephone Helpline: 713-349-8969

Please mail this completed
form and payments to:

Donna _____
P.O. Box 597859

Donna _____ s E-mail: _____

Tri-Ess Supporting Membership Information - also complete reverse side

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

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

Previous Tri-Ess number _____ Name _____ State _____

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

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

Femme Name _____

___ Check here to indicate a wife joining as an Individual

Mailing Name _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Please give the membership number of your Crossdressing partner _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip + 4 _____

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

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

Optional: Telephone Number in case we need to contact you

Crossdresser's femme name _____

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

Ask for:

Mailing Name(s) _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional: Secure E-Mail Address:

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip + 4 _____

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

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

Please Specify \$ _____

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

Mailing Name of Contact Person _____

Mailing Address Line 1 _____

Optional Line 2 _____

City, State and Zip + 4 _____



Milicent

The Cross Dressing Worm

By Melissa Ann Hadley

Sisterhood , Sharing is Caring

Zandra ! you look so lovely tonight. You do have a tad bit of a beard shadow showing through. I can show you a technic that would help cover it up.



Thank you so much Milicent! I am new at doing my make up and appreciate any help you can offer.



A FRIEND...

*(A)ccepts you as you are
(B)elieves in "you"
(C)alls you just to say "HI"
(D)oesn't give up on you
(E)nvvisions the whole of you
(F)orgives your mistakes
(G)ives unconditionally
(H)elps you
(I)nvites you over
(J)ust likes to "be" with you
(K)eeps you close at heart
(L)oves you for who you are
(M)akes a difference in your life
(N)ever Judges
(O)ffers support
(P)icks you up
(Q)uiets your fears
(R)aises your spirits
(S)ays nice things about you
(T)ells you the truth when you need to hear it
(U)nderstands you
(V)alues you
(W)alks beside you
(X)plains things you don't understand
(Y)ells when you won't listen and
(Z)aps you back to reality*