

Renaissance News



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Transsexual Support Group Forming

Renaissance was founded as a support group for all transgendered people. Most of its efforts, to date, have been aimed at its transvestite members. That is about to change with the beginning of a Transsexual Rap Group. Paula Keiser, a transsexual who is one of the founding members of Renaissance, has agreed to lead the sessions at the general membership meetings.

The transition process for a transsexual is a difficult time and

the charter of this group is to provide practical, useful information and peer support for the emerging TS. Sharing experiences can help to ease the pressure and avoid some of the pitfalls.

If you are a transsexual, or you are not sure of your gender choice, and want to participate in this group, please contact Paula through our mailing address or use our 24 hour phone line. Paula will be in contact with you about the sessions.

Hamburger Helper

Positive Ideas For I.F.G.E. Action

By JoAnn Roberts

I have to wonder why I am the only one who is publicly musing about the activities of IFGE. I know that other people out there are as concerned as I am, because I've spoken with them about it. It is coming from all sides, New England, Mid-Atlantic, California and overseas, as well.

I am afraid that no one wants to speak out because IFGE is the child of Merissa Sherrill Lynn. Merissa holds a special position in the hearts of this community because of her work at Tiffany and the Tapestry. These two institutions have become the "sacred cows" of the TV/TS world and it looks as though IFGE has acquired that standing by association.

I do not belittle the accomplishments of Merissa, Tiffany or Tapestry. Indeed, if not for Merissa and her work, many of us would still be in the closet and never know about our sisters and their support organizations. But, IFGE cannot exist nor survive on the energy of one person alone. Georgia Saunders was "used-up" by GGA and we are the worse for the loss. Will Merissa fall prey to the same fate?

I hope that does not happen. And, I hope IFGE can be more than just a convention organizer. I believe it can be one of the most powerful unifying tools that has ever been created in this community. Now is the time to shape it to our needs.

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Library Project...Share The Information

As Renaissance grows in both size and strength, it is moving into new areas. But, as always, these new directions need the support of the organization's members and friends if they are to succeed. This is particularly true of two new projects, a bibliography on transvestism and transsexualism and a library.

Many crossdressers remember the first time they read something about their unique interest. Most have said that the first book or journal article was not entirely supportive of the behavior. The reading often said crossdressing was a mental illness or, at best, a developmental problem. Published material which is supportive of crossdressing is rare, but it does exist.

It is the goal of the Renaissance annotated bibliography on transvestism and transsexualism to list as many books, articles and periodicals as possible so that transvestites and transsexuals will have a handy resource to aid their personal growth. The bibliography also aims at providing a tool to professionals and lay persons for better understanding these phenomenon. The bibliography is now being prepared, but so far research efforts have only scratched the

surface. If you know of a book, journal article, or periodical on transvestism or transsexualism that you think should be included, please send a short note to Paula Sinclair who is compiling the bibliography. Include the title of the book, article or journal, the author's name, the publisher, and date and place of publication. Also provide a short (two or three sentence) description on what the published piece contains.

"We are not only looking for items that support crossdressing, but we are also interested in listing that may attack it," Paula said. "Because in understanding our enemies, we understand ourselves a bit better."

A second Renaissance project is related to the bibliography—building a library of transvestite and transsexual literature for use by members. In working on the bibliography, Paula noted that some of the most interesting books are almost unobtainable, either because they are out of print or are very expensive. And, because of the specialized subject matter, they may not be available in community libraries. In addition, newspapers and popular maga-

See Library on last page.

Hamburger Helper...from page 1

Last month it may have seemed to some that I made hamburger out of the "Sacred Cow". So, now let me add the Hamburger Helper by making some specific, constructive suggestions.

⇒ Suggestion 1: The most important thing is to get the publication of the Tapestry back on schedule. To many of us, the Tapestry is our only link with IFGE. Without it we have no idea what is going on in the rest of the world. Modern, personal publishing technology can be used to make the preparation and publication of the Tapestry more efficient and cost effective. It is crucial that this major line of communication be kept open to all.

⇒ Suggestion 2: Set up an IFGE telecommunications network. A great many of us have access to computers and word processing software. And, there has been a proliferation of gender-oriented computer bulletin boards around the country. Couple the two capabilities through telecommunications and here is an excellent means for authors to deliver copy to the editor rapidly.

⇒ Suggestion 3: Immediately publish in the Tapestry the By Laws of IFGE so that people will know what rights and privileges are afforded by membership.

⇒ Suggestion 4: The governing body of IFGE should be representative of all the groups, clubs and organizations that wish to affiliate with it. The IFGE might adopt a congressional form of government, with a smaller Board of Directors functioning as a Senate, and a larger body of IFGE members functioning as a House of Representatives. The Representative would be selected by their group to speak for them at IFGE meetings. The Board of Directors could be elected from the body of Representatives.

⇒ Suggestion 5: Have IFGE develop press kits for local groups, a kind of 'Do-It-Yourself' publicity package with prepared letters, ads and a step-by-step guide on how to

make contact with the media. This would help fledgling groups to reach out for new sisters.

⇒ Suggestion 6: Have IFGE prepare a series of "White Papers" which could be given to the public and the media, educating them about transgendered behavior. Keep the language simple and easy to understand.

⇒ Suggestion 7: How about a workshop for those of us willing to appear on television or in the press. This program would help us develop a presentable public image and teach us how to keep an interview on track. Also useful would be a speakers' demo video tape that can be sent to television stations, so they will know what to expect from us.

⇒ Suggestion 8: Sponsor our own Transgender Archive like the one reported in these pages two months ago (Vol. 1, No. 5). This would be an enormous task, but consider the overall benefits that would be derived by having access to a mountain of information about transgender behavior. A national electronic database would serve as well.

⇒ Suggestion 9: Support and affiliate with a national professional organization like The Society for the Scientific Study of Sex. Participate with them at both a national and local level. Create a professional respect for IFGE and its affiliates.

⇒ Suggestion 10: Work with the gay community to foster a better understanding of our mutual goals. Shouldn't gender preference be protected under the law as much as sexual preference?

These are just some ideas that have come to mind. I am sure that my sisters in other groups have suggestions as well. Bring those ideas to Chicago. Let the Board of IFGE hear what you think needs to be done. Then, volunteer to help do it. We will. I am certain that Renaissance stands ready to lend its full support to any program that will be of positive benefit to the entire community.

For Your Information

For up to the minute information about Renaissance events, call 215-640-9449 any time. Our new answering machine will have brief details about activities. If you need to speak to someone, just leave a message and we'll get back to you ASAP.

Mona Lisa charms in sterling silver are available to all members of Renaissance for \$25. Non-members may purchase them for \$40. Contact JoAnn Roberts at the number above or write.

Interim Business Report For Jan/Feb

Starting Balance: \$1013.07

Income:

Donations	\$22.00
<u>Member Dues</u>	<u>\$325.00</u>
Subtotal	\$347.00

Expenses:

Jan. Meeting	\$50.00
Newsltr	\$30.00
Postage	\$37.92
<u>Other</u>	<u>\$27.49</u>
Subtotal	\$145.41

Ending Balance \$1214.66

Coming Events:

March

**19th, Renaissance Meeting
Color Analysis, S.O.S.,
Open Rap Groups**

April

**16th, Renaissance Meeting
To Be Announced**

May

**21st, Renaissance Meeting
To Be Announced**

June

**2-5, "Paradise in the Poconos"
weekend
18th, Renaissance Meeting
To Be Announced**

The Opinion Page

God Loves Transsexuals, Too. ...by Paula Keiser

Like most children, I was raised by my parents with a smattering of religious education. I learned the rituals of my Church, I learned about God the Creator, and I learned the Ten Commandments. I know the difference between right and wrong, as defined by my parents and my Church. I also learned a most valuable lesson, which is now serving me well in both my life on this Earth and my relationship with my God.

The Immortal Soul is the essence of my existence. My soul is what makes me unique in God's eyes. It, alone, is the eternal characteristic of my being. My body is its earthly, temporary home.

God is the Infallible Creator. He created my soul that I might learn from my earthly experience. Then He gave me a human body. The body He gave me doesn't match my soul, though! My soul is that of a woman, my body that of a man! If God is so infallible, why did He do that to me?

For 40 years, that question drove me farther and farther from God. Man kept telling me, "God made you that way. You should live with it, be grateful, and stop complaining." So, for 40 years I attempted mightily to make my

soul agree with my body. Every attempt to live within the functions and expectations imposed upon one with such a body met with either frustration or failure. Every attempt made me angrier with God.

In desperation, I prayed through my anger, "God, you can do miracles. Would it be such a big thing for you to have me wake up a woman tomorrow? Please? PLEASE??!"

It was then that the miracles began to happen! I discovered a group of people like me, for whom God had prescribed similar tests of faith. I was put into contact with people who could help me sort things out. was given psychological and medical help that started the miracle happening! Every time a seemingly insurmountable roadblock came up, God would remove it! He even arranged a meeting for me with a local minister who helped me sort things out. We discussed my situation, prayed about it, and the minister went away convinced that I was doing God's will for me!

The bottom line in my relationship as a transsexual with God is that for 40 years I had my priorities reversed! I had been trying mightily to please Man by trying to change my

soul to match my body, when God's Will was that I should change my body to match my soul! Once I got that straightened out, the miracles began!

I now have a personal relationship with God. It's lonely, sometimes, because I seem, on the surface, to be going against the "teachings" of every organized religion, but as I've discussed this situation with my religious acquaintances, I've found that God has guided me in helping them see that what I am doing is right for me. I've also found that no religion seems to have any kind of doctrine that specifically precludes gender modification. Some people *think* they do, but no one, in my experience, has been able to find the reference.

So don't lose faith in God. He wants your soul to thrive. Your soul is eternal, your body is temporary. If your body is driving a wedge between your soul and God, pray about it. Then start looking for miracles!

Reprinted by permission from the JSS Gender Forum BBS, 609-693-8849, a support board for transvestites, transsexuals and other transgendered people.

Lord What Fools These Mortals Be... a lesson in etiquette by Angela Gardner

There are times when you have to say to yourself, "What strange creatures these humans are. They build spacecraft and pyramids, compose symphonies and punk-rock. They organize and execute intricate plans." We do all these things and yet, sometimes, some of us, fail to do such a simple thing as honoring a commitment to meet someone at a certain place at a certain time.

For some unknown reason, this undependability seems exaggerated in the crossdresser paraculture. In turn, this leads to excessive aggravation to those of us left waiting.

It's a familiar story. You make arrangements to meet Miss X. You spend time getting dressed and made up to make a good impression. You go through the anticipation of a the good time you and Miss X are going to have. You arrive at the appointed place at the appointed time and wait. Time passes... Miss X Does not arrive. "Oh," you say to yourself, "Perhaps she has been kidnapped by space aliens. Or, maybe she decided to defect to the

Soviet Union."

Well, thoughts like that can only occupy the idle mind for just so long. At some point in the evening you realize that Miss X is not going to show up.

Why do these things happen? There are many reasons. Maybe she really was kidnapped, but most likely she lost her nerve. She got a run in her stocking, she broke a nail, she heard neighbors walking around or she convinced herself that you would have a private detective there to document the meeting on film. In other words, all of her confidence evaporated faster than a drop of alcohol on a hot plate.

In Miss X's mind you have slowly evolved from an interesting, supportive, crossdresser friend to a six foot four inch biker who wants to remove her pantyhose the hard way, by pulling them over her head.

The answer is quite simple. Don't make a commitment to meet someone if you don't think you can handle it. If you have any doubt that you will have the nerve to see it through, then leave yourself an out. If arrangements were

made by phone, then agree to phone again at least two hours before you are to meet to confirm that you will be there. If you set up the meeting by mail, then you should leave at least two to three days for a letter to arrive and be read.

The question is - are you ready? If you are not prepared for a face to face meeting then take more time to get comfortable before making an arrangement. Write more often. Talk on the phone to sisters. If you want to get out, but are worried about being in public, then come to a Renaissance meeting. The meeting is the safest, most secure place that you can go dressed the way you want and still meet other people who share your interests.

Don't get caught up in the fantasy of how wonderful it will be going out with your pen pal and then lose your nerve when faced with reality. The reality can be much more fun and fulfilling than the fantasy.

When you are ready!
Don't dream it; Be it!

News & Notes

Tina Louise, President of the Phi Chapter and member of Renaissance, has informed us that she has found a woman in Glasboro, NJ, who will give sewing lessons to small groups of 6 to 8 people.

Tina, who does quite a lot of sewing, says that classes will start in the spring and that the seamstress does not care if you arrive for your lesson "en femme".

Here's an opportunity to have that special dress you'd never fit into, or that cute teddy that doesn't come in your size; make it yourself.

Anyone interested in the lessons can get further details by writing to Tina, care of Phi Chapter, P.O. Box 2512, West Chester, PA 19380.

JoAnn Roberts and *Creative Design Services* have announced a get-away weekend in the Pennsylvania Pocono mountains for members of our community. The "Paradise In The Poconos" weekend is an extended event beginning on Thursday, June 2nd and runs to Sunday, June 5th.

The program of events includes a Frite-Nite costume party, a Princess of the Poconos contest, an amateur talent show, cocktail parties, poolside bar-b-q, and a drag used clothing/accessories sale.

Arrangements have been made for the hair styling and makeup services of Donna Miller and Eric to be available during the weekend. In addition, photographers will also be available to take your portrait, if you wish.

The cost for the 4 day/3 nite affair is \$225 per person. A \$50 deposit, fully refundable, will hold your reservation. Call 215-640-9449 or write Box 1263, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

Mariette Pathy Allen, who is well known as the photographic chronicler of our community, was awarded a grant by the New York State Council on the Arts. The grant will help Ms. Allen to continue her work with crossdressers. As part of the grant, she must make presentations and

mini-exhibitions of her work in three areas of New York state. The panel of judges felt that this type of work had not been done before, that the work was artistically strong and that it was being done in a sympathetic manner rather than for shock value. Congratulations Mariette!

The old saying "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" should be changed to "When in Greece, do as the Greeks do," at least for transgendered people on Jan. 8, for on that day Greek men and women reverse their traditional roles for the observance of "Women's Day."

Primarily a holiday in northern Greece, Women's Day originally was the one day each year when Greek females (not the world's most liberated group of women) were allowed to leave their housework and sit in cafes. Men had to stay home and take care of the house.

But Greek tourist officials note that in recent years women "get to do a lot of what men do, so the day's not nearly as much fun anymore." Maybe not for the women. But there must be some Greek men who live for the one day when society accepts their taking on the role of women.

Ever hear of a SAR? It means Sexual Attitude Readjustment. Dr. Wm R. Stayton and colleagues conduct SARs on a regular basis.

The goal of a SAR is threefold: 1) to facilitate reassessing attitudes to various aspects of sexual behavior, 2) increase knowledge of sexual physiology and response, and 3) develop skills in effective communication and intimate human behavior.

The workshop is appropriate for both singles and couples. The format is viewing relevant sexually explicit films followed by small group discussions led by trained counsellors/therapists.

For more info on the next SAR write to Bill at 987 Old Eagle School Rd, Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087 or call (215)-971-0700.

Volunteers Needed

HELP! We are growing so fast that the amount of work, particularly our Outreach activities, is inundating the Board members. We need volunteers to help out in a variety of areas. Please give this your serious consideration.

One-on-One Outreach: We often receive calls from people who are intimidated by the thought of facing a crowd of people and would really like to meet face to face with an individual first, or just have someone to talk to on the phone. If you are willing to meet with people or to have them call you, please let JoAnn know.

Significant Other Outreach: Many times a person calls and they want to have a spouse or female friend of a member speak to their spouse/friend. If you are an S.O. and are willing to call other S.O.s, tell JoAnn.

Speakers Bureau: Our calendar is filling up quickly for speaking engagements at local colleges and universities. Our regular speakers are being spread very thin and we would like to give new members the chance to have a classroom experience. In particular we would like to have more transsexuals and more couples get involved. If you are interested, please contact Paula Sinclair.

Media Outreach: Our television stars are suffering from overexposure to Klieg lights. Again, we would like to give others the chance to have their say in front of the cameras and on the radio. Couples and individuals who are interested should contact Paula Sinclair.

Grunt Work: This is not as glamorous as television or college lectures, but we need help in preparing the newsletter for mailing. Just a few hours will help to get the newsletter folded, stuffed into its envelope, and labels applied to the envelopes. We handle between 250 to 300 pieces of mail each month. To help contact Angela Gardner.

News From Around The World

It Is A Long Hard Road. ...reproduced with permission from The Tartan Skirt

Psychiatrists are involved in two major important decisions for transsexuals. These decisions are crucial because other doctors will not normally undertake prescribing (hormones) or surgery without the go-ahead from a psychiatrist.

For practical purposes, decisions mainly concern male to female transsexuals because surgery is technically possible and effective. Female to male transsexuals are referred less frequently, partly because there is not normally enormous difficulties in having mastectomies and hysterectomies performed, partly because women can live more easily as men than vice versa, and mainly because there is no satisfactory way of making an artificial penis.

The first decision the psychiatrist must make is the decision to recommend that the general practitioner prescribe female hormones, which is somewhat dependent upon whether or not he is likely to be making a decision later for surgery. One would not like to start anyone on hormones and along the extremely difficult road of public apprenticeship to femininity without feeling that there was more than a 65% chance that one might be prepared eventually to refer for surgery after a period of apprenticeship was satisfactorily completed.

It is necessary to remember that surgery is highly controversial and that the few surgeons who will perform the operation want an absolute assurance from a psychiatrist that a potential patient is adequately prepared and has been able to live satisfactorily for a substantial period of time in a female role. Surgery is the consummation of a process of transformation that may have taken two years and sometimes much longer. Surgery is rationed so that only

very deserving candidates are referred.

A major exclusion would be people who are not physically fit. Another would be people who are in any way ambivalent about the gender reassignment. A third would usually be the ability to pay. There is a very long waiting list for NHS [National Health Service-Ed.] surgery in London, so that for most operations it is important to know from the outset that the total price is probably as much as a small car and it has to be budgeted for (sic) in advance.

People who are alcoholics or are anti-social or who have a very inadequate work record or who take drugs or who are chronic depressives (unless the depression is entirely related to difficulties in recognition of the transsexual condition) need to be excluded. In other words, people of an unusual degree of general emotional stability will be put forward.

This degree of stability is probably less than is required for potential adoptive parents, but more than might be expected for less difficult and less controversial surgical intervention.

Also, in deciding to recommend possible surgery, it is as well to think whether or not the person's bodily shape and appearance is such that one could imagine that person as a woman. Admittedly, one has to be very elastic indeed and the possibilities of surgery and retraining under the influence of hormones are so great that few people would be excluded on this criteria alone.

With these provisions out of the way, one can get down to considering whether or not to start the patient off on hormones. One would normally want to hear that the patient has felt uncomfortable in the male role and perhaps in

male clothes for many years. One would want a patient to be attracted to men, but only attracted in such a way that they imagine themselves in the female role. One would want a patient to agree in principle that they do not live in a vacuum and that if they are married, break-ups have to be arranged and careful plans have to be made for children.

In many of these arrangements, the cooperation of the ex-wife would be enormously helpful, although not necessarily vital. The road to gender reassignment is not easy and it helps if a patient has someone to help them along the way. If therefore, they can bring along members of their family or close friends who are prepared to continue to take a supportive view and to offer long term help, then this too is useful.

One learns, to some extent, to distrust histories because self-help organisations, among others, tell potential applicants what the doctor wants to hear but one is trying to exclude straight forward homosexual transvestites and also obviously the mentally ill and also immature people for whom transsexuality may be a phase that they grow through.

If the history is right, and the patients are stable, and there is support, and sensible arrangements can be made for the family and others, and also if some money is being saved, then one has to consider whether the person could "come out" and live and preferably work and earn a living as a woman. Is the electrolysis proceeding alright?

Is further surgery, perhaps on the nose, needed? Is help with speech, dress and deportment needed? Is there a supportive,

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Hard Road... from page 5

kindly doctor willing to prescribe drugs or will the patient have to change doctors? Are they prepared to come in with a friend to give an account of themselves at three monthly intervals during the process of change?

If all the answers to these questions are positive, then hormones can be prescribed. The rest is a matter of watching the process of change. Patients should be able to live as a woman and develop a few friends and feel comfortable and look right in the role. It is always better if they can work and be self supporting although this requirement is not 100% rigid.

Clearly, there are people whose families will support them and provide employment and clearly there are others where getting a skilled job in a new role may necessitate change of workplace and there are others who may be retired already with substantial redundancy payments [pension-Ed.] or savings for whom the requirement to work may be less important.

In general, however, patients should be able to show that they can or are likely to be able to earn some sort of living as a woman without too much difficulty. During the apprenticeship it should go without saying that they should stick religiously to medication and any physical tests needed. They should avoid getting trouble with the law and should lead as blameless and competent lives as possible.

When one is satisfied that this role change has been satisfactorily established for something not less than a year and usually two, then referral for surgery is usual. While there are a few quite exceptional surgeons doing this work, it would be unrealistic to say that there are not sometimes complications and people should be prepared for sometimes months of difficulty before everything is absolutely right. Some support may be needed during this period.

It seems to me that far too many patients regard the whole business with psychiatrists as merely a

rationing device for getting surgery. Often there are major problems after surgery. It may be difficult enough for someone of 40 to be looking for a partner in a way that young people normally do before they are 20. To do this, however, in a different gender really is much harder.

Courting with a different body, of which one is not quite sure, is very hard. Lies have often to be told and stories practiced and new habits and often moves to new places and friendships all have to be negotiated. It seems to me that this is a phase during which continuing psychiatric help should be offered and it surprises me that these offers are so seldom taken up when one meets patients who have had difficulties during the first two or three years.

Finally, there are the matters of access to children and legal problems with ex-wives and difficulty with former relatives and all these are matters for which specialist help and discussions may continue to be needed so that there are excellent arguments for keeping in touch with the psychiatrist referring for some considerable time after the operation.

Perhaps I should add that the foregoing is my personal approach and vital blueprint and is not necessarily the view of all my colleagues.

Editor's note: Dr. Michael Tarsh is Consultant Psychiatrist to the Salford Health Authority.

(This article first appeared in S.H.A.F.T. and was reprinted in the Tartan Skirt, the newsletter of the Scottish TV/TS Group, Audrey [redacted] Editor, Julie [redacted] Assistant Editor. Our thanks for letting their "colonial" sisters share this information.)

Library... from page 1

zines sometimes carry articles on transgendered behavior, yet these publications sometimes do not have good yearly indexes. She feels that all of this material, or at least as much as is practical, should be collected for the general

use of Renaissance members.

Many details concerning the library have yet to be worked out. Meanwhile, Paula has issued a plea to members to search their bookshelves and donate books, articles, clippings, in short, anything that has an application to transvestism or transsexualism. When Renaissance receives its non-profit recognition, such donations will be tax deductible.

Another means of getting material for the library is cash donations to purchase essential books and other items.

Video tapes, too, will be important to the library. While Renaissance has tapes of most all television appearances made by its members, tapes of other programs will be useful. While dubbing facilities are available to Renaissance, the programs and blank tapes for making copies are not. Help is needed in this area too.

If you would like more information on how you can help in either of these projects, or if you would like to make suggestions for the bibliography or donations to the library, contact Paula through Renaissance.

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Subscription and Associate Membership is \$12 per year. Full Membership in the group is \$30 per year.

Renaissance is a non-profit corporation which has the purpose of providing education about transgendered behavior to the general public and professional counsellors.

Renaissance meets once a month, on the 3rd Saturday of the month, unless otherwise noted. Starting time is 9:00 PM in the late Spring/Summer, and 8:00 PM in the Fall/Winter. Regular meetings are held in the Valley Forge area. Occasionally, we will meet other places and these will be noted in the newsletter.

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