

Renaissance News



Volume 2, No. 7

P.O. Box 1263, King of Prussia, PA, 19406

July, 1988

Board Working On Changes To By-Laws

For the third time in a year, the Board has been asked about the formation of a local chapter under the general guidance of Renaissance here in Philadelphia. And, this time the Board has decided to go forward with the necessary changes to the By Laws that will allow it to create and govern such chapters.

The formation of "Local Units", based on geographical area, is permitted under the Pennsylvania statutes governing non-profit corporations such as ours.

The Board is reviewing a set of amendments to the By Laws which will define; 1) the process for creating a "local unit", 2) the responsibilities of the corporation to the unit, and 3) the responsibilities of the unit to the corporation.

The Board believes that chapters should have as much autonomy as possible and be responsive to the needs of their local members. Consequently Renaissance will only impose such constraints on a chapter as are required by our By Laws, state and federal law.

Individuals or groups that successfully petition for affiliation will be given access to the full range of resources that we've developed, including the Background Papers, Community Action Bulletins, library, Speakers Bureau, and training sessions.

Other minor adjustments to the By Laws have also been proposed with this major addition.

The amendments will be printed in the August edition of the newsletter and a vote will be taken at the September membership meeting.

Birthday Party Draws Record Attendance

75 people jam meeting to celebrate with us



*Trudi expostulating on something or other to the group.
Photo by Angela Gardner*

Metamorphosis Foundation Closes

On March 26, 1988 Rupert Raj tendered his resignation as Executive Director of the Metamorphosis Medical Research Foundation in Toronto Ontario. Subsequently the remaining directors voted to dissolve the foundation because they felt there were not sufficient human resources to carry on. At a final board meeting in May the directors will make all the necessary arrangements to legally "wind down" the organization.

Raj says that the level of effort required to keep the foundation on its feet was too physically and emotionally taxing. He goes on to say, in a recent letter, "...but I'm

not quitting the game entirely, I'm still a player," "...I'm changing the rules and am switching sides." Rupert explains further that he has gone from a peer-support role (Rupert is a post-op F-t-M) to one that is strictly professional. He has started his own counselling service, GENDER WORKER and will produce a bi-monthly newsletter for professionals, students and lay resource providers. Publication of the newsletter is expected to begin in June.

Contact Rupert Raj care of, GENDER WORKER, Box 1224, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5W-1G7, 416-769-7170.

Highlights From The June Meeting

The June meeting went off very well considering that the air conditioning was not working. Half the ladies held conversations outside where it was much cooler.

Our guest this month was Tommi Avicoli of the Philadelphia Gay News. Tommi told us what it was like to be a radical drag queen in Philadelphia in the early 70's. He recounted what it was like then and compared it to the scene in the city now. He feels that drag queens (and TVs) have not made much political progress since those days, even to the point of saying that the gay politicians have left the queens behind.

He also read excerpts from a performance piece he has written about his "coming out". We thank Tommi for "coming out" to Renaissance and giving us an interesting, enjoyable and educational talk.

Jackie K. headed up the TS Rap Group this time and reports another good session. This group seems to be growing larger each month.

Kathy Stevens from "My Choice" in Baltimore visited us.

Angela's Used Clothing Sale was a moderate success with lots of clothes, wigs and shoes in evidence. We'll have to try this again in the Fall.

No Meeting In August...Two in September

The board of directors has decided to cancel the regular meeting for August. It was decided that a rest was needed for everyone involved in planning and conducting the meetings. Says JoAnn Roberts, "We want some time to think about the Fall and our programs for next year." The Renaissance News, however, will be produced on schedule.

In other news, September will see the addition of a weeknight

meeting. Based on the member survey, it seems as though such a meeting is needed. So, we will have an extra gathering at our regular location on Monday night, September 19th, beginning at 9:00 PM. If you have not been to a meeting because of the weekend, here is your chance to meet us. If there is enough response, we'll do it again.

Also, nominations for officers of the corporation will open in September and close December 1st.

Renaissance Girls Sweep "Princess" Contest

Teri [redacted] of Renaissance was crowned the first *Princess of the Poconos* last month at the *Paradise In The Poconos* Weekend. She won out over forty other competitors. All four of her courtiers were Renaissance members as well. Charlene G. took Ms. Fashion Plate. Joanie S. won Ms. Gams. Michelle D. was named Ms. Ingénue. Donna [redacted] our local DJ, was titled Ms. Congeniality.

"No, it was not a fix!", says JoAnn Roberts, producer of the weekend and founder of Renaissance. "I designed the competition to be one in which the participants had to vote for each other by ballot. There were plenty of non-Renais-

sance members at the weekend and the ballot counters did not know any of the contestants. It just turned out this way on its own."

Each participant was given a ballot and asked to select two choices for each of the five categories. JoAnn reports that it was a close count between Teri and Charlene for the *Princess* title.

The spouses present made it known that they wanted recognition too. So, JoAnn has announced that the September weekend will have a special, exclusive competition category for spouses, et. al.

Congratulations to all the winners and good luck next time to all those who came in second.

Renaissance News

Staff

Senior Editor: **JoAnn Roberts**
National Editor: **Paula Sinclair**
Overseas Editor: **Trudi Henry**
Correspondent: **Angela Gardner**
Admin. Assistants: **Susan P., Beth & Rachel M.**
Copy & Layout: **Creative Design Services, King of Prussia, PA.**

For the latest information about events call: (215) 640-9449, 24 hrs. a day.

Business Report Thru June 30th

June Attendance: 60
Paid Members: 175

Starting Balance: \$1920.41

Income:

Donations	\$128.50
Publications	\$105.50
<u>Member Dues</u>	<u>\$613.00</u>
Subtotal	\$847.00

Expenses:

Meeting	\$60.00
Newsletter	\$75.00
<u>Office Expenses</u>	<u>\$90.37</u>
Subtotal	\$225.37

Ending Balance \$2542.04

Coming Events:

July

16th Renaissance Meeting

August

No Meeting for August

September

15-18, "Paradise in the Poconos" weekend

19th Renaissance Weeknight starts 9:00PM

24th Ariadne Kane workshop

24th Renaissance Meeting Ari Kane, guest 9:00PM

October

15th Renaissance Meeting

?? Dinner/Fashion Show date to be determined

14-23, "Fantasia Fair", P-town Outreach Institute

The Opinion Page

Tennis, Anyone?...Some thoughts on television by Paula Keiser

The following has been downloaded from the Jersey Shore System, a free computer Bulletin Board dedicated to the support of the Gender Community. For MO-DEM access, please call 609-693-8849. Log on with the name, April May, and the password, "FRIENDS", ALL capital letters. For the past several weeks I have been involved in a heated discussion about media coverage of gender-disoriented people. It all centered on two shows, in particular, that many of the JSS callers, me particularly, felt did more harm than good for our public image. I was as guilty as others of a "criticize and run" attitude which left me somewhat uncomfortable. I have since given it some thought, and I'd like to throw those thoughts out as a springboard for possible discussion among ourselves.

What do we see when we tune into a television show about transvestism or transsexualism or both? We see an antagonistic host inciting an antagonistic audience to force us to justify ourselves! Even if the host him/herself pretends to be sympathetic, he/she certainly doesn't discourage the audience from putting us on the defensive. It's good television, and it gets ratings. I feel that the guests (us!) fall right into the trap

by actually trying to justify transvestism/sexualism.

I'm beginning to understand what our black/homosexual/female brothers and sisters have gone through all these years!

Standard procedure. Probe until you can put a label on a person, then judge the person according to the prejudices you've developed about the LABEL. Never mind the person, judge the label! Are you black? Fine. Now, prove that you're NOT lazy, shiftless, a welfare bum. Are you a homosexual? Fine. Now, prove that you're NOT out to convert our kids to your preferences and that you're not going to do "disgusting" things to me if I don't stop you forcibly. Are you a feminist? Fine. Now, prove that you're NOT out to upset the social order of male superiority, that you really have some intelligence, and that you're at least as good as a man in a given situation.

Our situation is not similar to the ones I cited. It's IDENTICAL. When we appear on a television show as gender people of either or any stripe, we are appearing as representatives of a labelled group. NONE of us is typical. None of us is capable of representing ALL of us, and we've come up a failure on many shows by trying. We spend a lot of time trying to communicate that, "I'm trans-?, and I'm okay

because trans-?s are okay because..." How about, "I'm a person, just like other people. I vote, pay taxes, love my mother, root for the Phillies, and I love to play tennis. Have any problems with that?"

Doesn't that then put the show host and the audience in the position of having to present and defend their prejudices? Isn't THAT the real problem?

I propose a tactic on talk shows of making the audience, rather than the guests, defend their positions. It could make some really interesting television, advance our cause, and help solve the REAL problem, PREJUDICE. WE are the experts. They are merely gathering facts. Let's make them think!

People who have no prejudice are a rare breed. They are more interested in what they have in common with us than they are in discovering a label, and then relating to the label. The bigots say, "You're a queer, and I hate queers." The liberals say, "You're an unfortunate victim of invalid social norms, but I'll tolerate you anyway, and everyone else should, too...as long as you don't try to date my daughter." The real human being says, "So, you're a transvestite. Do you play tennis?"

Can we help someone become more of a human being? I hope so! Tennis, anyone?

Meeting A Past Generation...by Trudi Henry

A recent business trip took me to Scranton where I stayed in the Hilton Hotel at Lackawanna Station. This lovely facility is built in a grand, circa-1900's railway station, complete with high ceilings and Swiss marble paneling on the walls. It was at breakfast, one morning, that I learned about the death of James Merryweather.

James was a strikingly hand-

some, English born paint salesman living in New York city. On the night of November 10th, he dressed himself as a bride, took the cord from the curtain rod on his window, and hung himself from the bedpost. Investigators who found him said that the dressers in the room contained all types of feminine garments. In James' suicide note, he said that most eve-

nings he would retire to his room early and spend the remainder wearing his female finery. He said that he didn't understand why, but that he felt compelled to do so. He could no longer stand the guilt and fear of discovery, so he took his own life.

If you hadn't heard James'

continued on last page

News & Notes

Edited by Paula Sinclair

The organizer of the 1988 Miss Gay USA beauty pageant for female impersonators may file suit against the Indianapolis, Ind. police department and other city authorities for not providing proper security for the event held last month.

An hour before the pageant began, a several hundred demonstrators from the Indianapolis Baptist Temple picketed in front of the building where the beauty contest was being held. According to reports, the demonstrators at times blocked the entrances to the building in violation of the law. Pageant promoter Jerry M. Bird of Pearland, Tex. said that he lost about \$9,000 because many people were unwilling to run the gauntlet of demonstrators to see the pageant. However, more than 1,100 people did attend the event.

Police said that there had no advance notice of the demonstration and handled the situation well. "There was no violence," Police Chief Paul A. Annee, said. "If the police were not there, there probably would have been violence."

Bird had earlier said that he would make Indianapolis the permanent home of the pageant. The demonstrators vowed that if that happened, their protests would turn violent.

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Transvestites and homosexuals in Singapore are facing difficulties because of a morality campaign under the direction of law enforcement authorities. Police have threatened to revoke the license of any bar that admits crossdressers or gay men. "We want to put an end to this kind of behavior," a police official said.

The police order has also caused problems for bar owners. They say they are having little problem identifying transvestites because

their identity cards do not match their physical appearance, however, homosexuality is not so easily observed. Bar owners are also wrestling with how to refuse entry to the now undesirable patrons in a "nice, polite way."

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Meanwhile in Shanghai, China, Shou-yu Yank is seeking a sex change because his parents raised him as a girl to shield him from evil spirits who they believe afflict male children but ignore female youngsters. Such beliefs are not uncommon in rural China.

The 23-year-old medical student said that since he was a young child, his parents told him that unless he dressed and acted like a girl, the evil spirits would do terrible things to him. So, he said, "I wore very long hair and girl's clothes. I played with girl's toys and helped my mother in the house as if I were a little girl." As he grew older, he learned how to skillfully apply makeup to hide his masculine features. He was so good at cosmetics that he advised other women in the village.

The masquerade was so convincing that most of his teachers and all of his friends in the village believed that he was a girl. And as the years passed, he said, he began to think of himself as a woman. Problems began, however, when Shou-Yu left his village to enroll at a university. "All of a sudden I was supposed to be a man and I found out that it was too late for that. I am a woman in my heart."

A surgeon in Shanghai who Shou-yu contacted about the sex change operation said that the practice was not common in China, but he was certain it would be successful if the government and Shou-yu's family approved.

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A female movie star in Bolivia recently entered a clinic for a face

lift and emerged several weeks later as a man, much to his surprise and to the great shock of his agent.

Jennita Zarto, now Johnny Zar, has become accustomed to his new gender. "At first I felt suicidal," he said. "But things looked up when I was given the part of a fisherman in a television series." He added that when Jennita's agent first heard about his "new" client, he was "furious." "But after he came to see me in the clinic, he changed his mind and renamed me Johnny Zar on the spot."

Dr. Jaime Lurinda said he performed the surgery because "when I saw Miss Zarto on the operating table (ready for the face lift), I thought 'She ought to be a man!' and I set to work." He defended his actions by saying, "I am good, I am cheap, and I am quick."

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When was the last time you had the courage to put a tape measure around your waist? According to Pendleton Woolen Mills in Portland Oregon, women with a 19-inch waist are a thing of the past; the hour-glass figure will *never* come back. Nowadays women are not only bigger, which naturally means they have ever-so-slightly wider waists, but they are much more concerned with comfort and freedom of movement. They note that a size 10 skirt now has a 28-inch waist, where in 1970 it was a mere 25-iches. So who's counting?

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For those of you in the central New Jersey area, the *Sigma Nu Rho* chapter of Tri-Ess meets on the first Saturday of the month in Bordentown, near the NJ turnpike interchange. For details, contact Dorothy [redacted] c/o Box 467, Oakhurst, NJ, 07755. Tri-Ess is a national organization for heterosexual male crossdressers.

An Open Letter From Mariette Allen

This letter was received June 10th and is the latest word on the NY Post affair.

Dear Members of the Gender Community:

It has been almost three months since the *New York Post* attacked our community. Now that the shock has begun to recede, I think we'll see that:

(1) The *Post* will not remember this as their finest hour.

(2) That this episode may serve to strengthen the community.

Let me tell you what has happened since March 16th. On that day I hired the first lawyer that was suggested to me because I felt that time was critical, and I was leaving for California the next day. This individual, knowledgeable and expensive, spoke lawyer-ese, (not my language) and passionately wanted to sue the *Post*; his reputation is based on "going for the jugular". My case, however, was not as simple as it looked. Copyright infringement was questionable as this material was considered "news" even though it was the *post* itself that created the news. Apparently, if something is news, it may be printed against the will of anyone involved. That left the willful destruction of a work of art and defamation of character as the two issues upon which to base a case. Since my photographs were cropped, their integrity as works of art was destroyed. The law created to prevent this kind

of harm to artists was legislated in 1983 and had never been tested. Defamation of character would have required proof that my personal life had been severely damaged by this attack. In truth, because of everyone's lack of respect for the *Post*, my professional status was hardly touched.

Upon my return from California, I consulted several other lawyers who had more inside information and more professional detachment. As one lawyer explained it, the *Post* knew that they were wrong but, because they had a new owner, and therefore, a new legal department, the legal department was itching for a fight to prove their worth. "This will go on for the next ten years, and you could wind up going to the Supreme Court. I can't advise you strongly enough to settle out of court if you can." The other lawyer told me that the *Post* would have a field day with my deposition, and that they, most likely, would insist upon depositions from some of the people whose pictures they published.

That was the final straw! I asked my lawyer to settle out of court, and, although he was disappointed, I was tremendously relieved, and even consider it a small victory that the *Post* paid me enough to cover my legal expenses.

While I was waging my personal battle, there was

good news in the art world: the New York State Council on the Arts, chaired by Kitty Carlisle Hart, defended its grant awards eloquently and with great vigor. Other arts groups, and the gay & lesbian community came to the support of the council, and the hearings instigated by the *Post* turned into a total defeat for the *Post*.

Meanwhile, T.I.G.E.R. has been collecting money in support of my case. I am happy that I will not need this money, and, now, we have a fund available for the next legal hassle that occurs within this community. This fund is something that was needed in the past, and is likely to become even more important as the community gains strength and takes further steps toward acceptance and respect.

I would like to thank the many wonderful people who supported me, who gave me moments of wisdom and calm when I really needed it, the people who wrote letters to the *Post* and the New York State Council on the Arts, and sent donations to T.I.G.E.R. I would like to thank Ginny Knuth of ETVC, in particular, and T.I.G.E.R. for taking on the tasks of informing you and for creating the legal defense fund.

Warmly,

Mariette Pathy Allen

More photos from our Birthday Celebration, by Angela



Mariette Allen photographs JoAnn cutting the cake while Dr. Stayton and members look on.



Gayle relaxes in one of the offices



Carol Saline, right, from Philadelphia Magazine talks with a guest.



Would you believe former teacher and former student!

Past Generation from page 3

story, I'm not surprised. I found it in a corner of the front page of a November 11, 1908 issue of the *Scranton News*, which the hotel had on display.

The story sent a chill down my spine. It reminded me of just how fortunate I really am to be born into this time and place. Had I been born seventy years earlier, I might have been another James Merryweather. Lord knows, I spent enough of my life running home and scampering about in dresses and pantyhose for the rest of the evening. The difference is, even before I met my current circle of transgendered friends, I knew from letters in *Forum* magazine

that other TVs existed. Now I have close friends who understand my feelings, my involvement in Renaissance, and a wonderful woman in my life who is willing to accept the fact that Trudi is part of the whole me. Poor James needed to be so lucky.

James Merryweather (femme name unknown) was a martyr. He was driven to an early death by fear and guilt from a society which had no room for people like him, or for that matter, people like me. He was my ancestor and I dedicate all of my efforts in future outreach projects to his memory. May his tortured soul rest in peace.

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Subscription & Associate Membership is \$12/year. Full Membership is \$30/year.

Renaissance is a non-profit corporation which has the purpose of providing education about transgendered behavior.

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.