



The Sweetheart Connection

The Newsletter for Wives and Partners

Summer

An Official Publication of the Society for the Second Self

1996

8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104, Houston TX 77036

An Undeliverable Message

by Jane Ellen and Frances Fairfax

Foreword

Why did we write this article? It seems somehow strange to be writing a letter that may be undeliverable. In some ways, it's like posting a message in a bottle and casting it into the sea. Where will it wash ashore? Who will pick it up? Maybe no one. But if it reaches its mark even once; if it inspires one couple to renewed happiness, or one wife to initiate communications, we will not have been written it in vain.



*Undis te mandamus. Cor invenias!**

To A Wife Who Does Not Want To Understand Crossdressing:

How often have we longed to write you, to talk with you, to share your pain and offer you hope! But you do not want contact with us. One of us is a crossdresser - slime in your life's ice machine, a sinner deluding your husband, a siren who will lure your marriage to the reef. The other, a supportive wife, is in your eyes an enabler. As far as you are concerned, we are the Devil's team.

Your position is clear, strong and uncompromising. Your husband's crossdressing is wrong! Not only do you not want to see it; you've made it clear that, if he wants the relationship to survive, he will lock his feminine expression away. You married

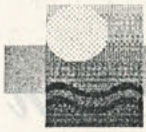
a man. Perhaps you think crossdressing an emotional illness. Because you love him, you will help him seek a cure. It does not matter that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders does not consider crossdressing per se pathological. It can't be normal. You were raised to believe social standards of behavior for males and females are inviolate. Men should be masculine; women should be feminine. Besides, crossdressing seems incompatible with the Holy Scriptures. Deut. 22:5 clearly states, "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing." Crossdressing, moreover, seems unnecessary. Why can't he enjoy art, music, cooking, sewing and other "feminine" interests without crossdressing?

You wonder what the crossdressing means. You've heard of drag queens and female impersonators.

Is that what he wants to be? Some of the talk shows you've seen are not reassuring; many of the guests seem kooky. What if his boss or a professional associate sees him out in public crossdressed? Will he lose his job, his standing in the community? What emotional scars will be left on your children? If you try to accept the crossdressing, will he want to do it more and more? Will he eventually undermine your marriage and leave you to become a woman? Why is he doing this? Are you not woman enough for him? He keeps telling you he wants to talk about it. But the subject is too threatening. Perhaps the tough love approach is best. There is no need to give in to the crossdressing. Cure it. Forbid it. Put it out of sight and out of mind. In time, he'll pass through this phase, or at least control his urge. Keep the lid on tight. Then the

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A Letter To Wives

TO: The Wives & Partners Of Crossdressers

By Amy

I plead with you to open yourself to another point of view.

I am now 76, but at the point of my revelation (about 30 years into our marriage) I offered to take steps to dissolve the marriage rather than see my wife have to live with "it."

We discussed the possibilities of dissolving the marriage and we each broke into heavy, heavy tears when we realized the severity of that move and how much we loved each other. We agreed to try and find other solutions since we wanted to stay together.

After 17 years of trying, we are still together and continue to work things out as mutually as possible. We keep feeling love for each other and keep saying "I Love You."

For my part, those 35 years of confusion and secrecy from my wife, family, and friends was heart-rending and lonely. Only a few counselors knew my trials in those years and they were not sufficiently knowledgeable to be very helpful.

During those years of struggle and loneliness, written material was virtually non-existent. Modestly, I suggest I know how to do research having a Bachelor's degree and three Masters in the humanities, but there was nothing written worthy of helping in self-understanding and I had access to major libraries in the northeast and futilely searched many for answers.

Having attended crossdressing support groups for about 15 years I have heard the anguish of scores of men. In many cases they have expressed the feeling that there has been mutual love in the marriage, but it has broken or is breaking over the issue of crossdressing.

That the marriage would be threatened is understandable, but perhaps it is not inevitable that it should come apart. Possibly there are steps to be taken to stabilize it through efforts at regaining the love and respect on which the marriage began.

These thoughts might be helpful for starters:

1 Is the marriage worth saving? Is the other person truly loved as a

good person?

- 2 What is the origin and future of crossdressing? Is it self willed? Socially developed? Is it genetic? Incurable? Is it something each can live with, with caring and creativity?
- 3 Are there knowledgeable people and sensible books and materials that might help couples come to terms with this thing called crossdressing?

Thoughtfully,

Amy

□

"Maturity is the ability to live at peace with that which we cannot change."

- Ann Landers

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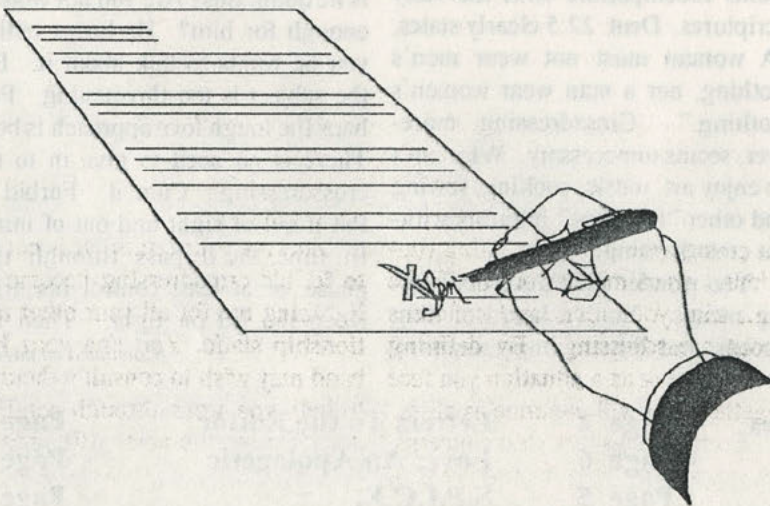
The Sweetheart Connection is published quarterly. Subscription costs are: \$12 annually for four issues, or a wife may join Tri-Ess separately from her partner for a cost of \$10. She will receive membership and the Sweetheart Connection. If she chooses to receive the Femme Mirror, her annual cost will be \$25.

Letters, comments and articles are encouraged and may be sent to the editor:

Diana Sexton

Richmond CA 94804

Or E-Mail to:





Undeliverable (Continued from page 1)
problem will cease to exist.

And likely, so will your marriage.

To go into denial is perhaps the most destructive delusion you can practice. Crossdressing is not going to go away. You can become icy-hard on the subject. You can threaten to divorce him if you ever catch him crossdressing again. Because he loves you, he may try hard to be what you want him to be. But he will not be happy. Little things may cause inordinate tension. He may become easily depressed, or even physically ill. Psoriasis, ulcers, hair loss, weight change and insomnia are only a few of the health problems he may experience. To gain a little release, he may take his crossdressing underground. Deception has entered your marriage. While you rock along, satisfied that you've eliminated the "problem," he is being torn by turmoil. For, you see, you are not just locking away the clothes; you are imprisoning one whole side of his personality.

Finally the tension bursts forth. He tells you he is going to crossdress whenever he likes. Blasting out of exile, he goes to support group meetings, bars, and maybe even gender identity clinics. Because he has had to suppress his femininity for years, he may be ready to suppress his masculinity. Hormones, full-time living - the sky's the limit. He is ready to make up for lost time. Job considerations, marriage, family - all may be sacrificed to the need to "be true to myself."

At this point your position is an unenviable one. By not communicating and negotiating you have forfeited your potential input. When you come forward now with your offer to reach a reasonable solution, he may tell you it's too late. Or he may give you an "accept-totally-or-leave" ultimatum. Whenever we get input at this stage, we advise the crossdresser to compromise and renew

Letters to the Editor



Dear Diana,

First, I'd like to thank you, Mary Frances and Peggy for all the work you put into publishing the newsletter. "The Sweetheart Connection" has pulled me through many a "pity party" and for that my husband and I thank you all!

I'd like to request, if I may, any information or articles you may have dealing with children and crossdressing. Maybe there are some readers who would share their experiences, positive and negative in telling their children of their fathers' crossdressing. Or, if they haven't told the children, why they chose not to do so. We have [several chil-

the relationship, if possible. If he is a considerate person, he will recognize his responsibilities and give your marriage a chance. He may, on the other hand, leave you with a broken family and a broken heart. And it was all avoidable!

The time to avoid future disaster is now. Please sit down with him and initiate a dialogue. Yes, his initial revelation was a shock to you. Just tell him that, but reassure him of your love and your desire to work through the situation together. He is, after all, the same person you married. You can tell him that your social conditioning makes it hard for you to relate to the crossdressing. If you are not ready to see him crossdressed, tell him so. You have every right to insist that he go slowly and not plunge you into threatening situations. As calmly as you can, share with him your fears and concerns about crossdressing. By defining crossdressing as a situation you face together, you will continue as allies.

Even as you share your concerns, you should make a commitment to

dren]. Given their ages, we really hesitate to tell the older [ones], but I just can't see myself playing "air traffic controller" in order to get [my spouse] out of the house and back in, undiscovered, for another 8 or 9 years. HELP! Any tips, suggestions, or even acknowledgment that we are not the only CD couple with a large family would be greatly appreciated! This subject might even be the basis for a new column, "Daddy your Slip is Showing!" or something to that effect, with helpful hints on what to do if your 3 year old asks, in the middle of church, why Mommy is carrying Daddy's black leather purse! Who knows, you may discover the new "Erma Bombeck" of Crossdressing!

Hope this helps with the next newsletter, we'll be looking forward to it. Thanks again for all your work. — J.B.

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learn as much as you can about crossdressing. You probably will find some surprisingly good news. Try to meet other wives of crossdressers. Attending a local spouses' support group or the Spouses' and Partners' International Conference for Education may help. At S.P.I.C.E. you will have access to highly qualified professionals and the support of other wives, many of whom are struggling with the issues just as you are. Perhaps you can attend non-crossdressing meetings of crossdresser support groups. Decide for yourself what kinds of people crossdressers are. Read voraciously. Many who share your concerns have written down their thoughts. Whatever your ultimate decision, let it be an informed one.

Sort out your issues. It is not fair to let his crossdressing become the lightning rod for all your other relationship static. You and your husband may wish to consult a therapist to help you work through conflicts. An effective therapist will promote

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Love: The Final Apologetic

by Terri Lynn Main

With Apologies to Francis Schaefer

Reprinted from *Grace & Lace Letter*

A little more than twenty years ago I read a book which had a dramatic impact on me. It was a thin paperback, no more than 50-60 pages long, entitled "The Mark of a Christian," by Francis Schaefer. In this book Dr. Schaefer called love "The Final Apologetic." All of our fine arguments from scripture, from philosophy, from science, from personal experience, all of our stories of miracles, even God's performance of miracles in the presence of the unbeliever will fail to prove the validity of the Christian claim in the absence of love by the Christian.

Jesus said it plainly enough in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." Our love testifies of our Christianity to a lost and dying world.

Our love also testifies of our Christianity to other Christians. Those of us who struggle with gender issues often find great opposition in the church. At the crux of this opposition is the assumption that one could not be gender conflicted and also a Christian. This assumption may come from a lack of understanding of a few scriptures, confusion of gender conflicts with sexual misconduct, fear of variance, or simple prejudice.

Too often we, myself included, hear a concern expressed by another Christian about our Christianity and we leap to the attack, armed with our historical data on Deuteronomy 22:5, our logical arguments, our challenge to find transsexualism in the Bible, etc. These all may be good arguments, but I fear we use

them prematurely. These should come after we get to know the other person and not before. Even then, they should be used only in the context of a loving discussion, and not in that of a battle.

The ultimate proof of our Christianity, to the Christian as well as the unbeliever, is our love. Love really is the final apologetic. It is hard to attack someone who will not attack back. It is hard to remain angry at someone who will not return that anger. It is hard to question the Christianity of one who says, sincerely, "You're in my prayers."

What I'm talking about is "aggressive loving." It means loving those who hate me. It means doing good to those who try to do evil to me. It means taking some hits and not returning the same.

"But that's hard," you say. Yes, it is. It is so hard that you can't do it. You can't do it all by yourself, that is. But with the power of God working in you, you can do it. It still isn't easy. Nobody ever claimed living the Christian life would be. We are promised persecution as Christians. Some of it may come from our

fellow believers.

So, what are some practical things we can do to aggressively love others?

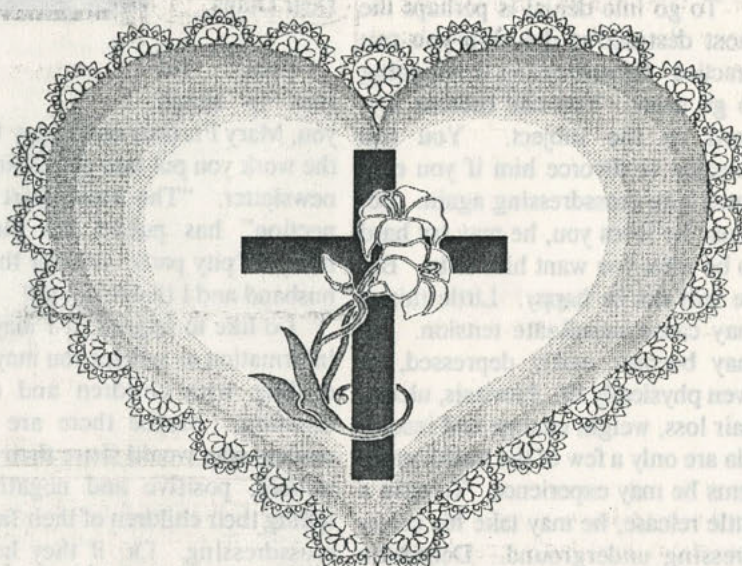
- 1 Don't do what you feel like doing. A few years ago, there was a saying, "If it feels good, do it." Well, in this case, that phrase

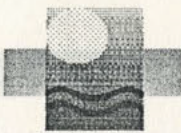
(Continued on page 5)

Undeliverable *(Continued from page 3)* neither your husband's agenda nor yours, but will help you establish common ground on which to renew your relationship. Fortunately, an increasing number of professionals are becoming knowledgeable about crossdressing.

If you can participate in a support group, you will have more impact than you might realize. First, you have every right to select a support group in which you, as well as your husband, are comfortable. Attending meetings will give you a shared experience that can stimulate further communication. Perhaps you can learn from the experiences

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Letters to Ed. (Continued from page 3)

Dear J.B.

I have a couple of articles on telling the children - mostly in favor. There are also some sections in Peggy Rudd's book "My Husband Wears My Clothes" dealing with telling or not telling the children.

I'm glad you're enjoying the newsletter, and I'll see if I can't get the assistance of our contributors and other readers out there in collecting the information you need.

Just to let you know, you AREN'T the only one out there with a large family. My husband has three sons, ranging in age from 13 to 20, from his first marriage and I have a son, age 21 and two grandchildren, ages 1 and 2. My husband's boys have known all their lives about their dad's crossdressing

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Beauty & Health

Tips for today's world

What's your Shape?

Ever tried to squeeze your pear-shaped body into a wedge-shaped dress? Or your hourglass figure into a tube dress? Then you understand the concept of not being able to fit a square peg into a round hole. All the same, sometimes you can't resist giving it a try. But it doesn't work, does it?

To look good and feel comfortable in a dress, you should know which dress styles are best suited to your figure, and which will never be flattering. Ideally, the cut of the

dress should echo the shape of your body. When you slip it on and zip it up, the dress shouldn't stretch or droop, gap or bind, ride up your thighs or slide off your shoulders.

The first step is to figure out your basic body shape:

Rectangle - Lean, boyish, with a minimum of curves.

Square - Chunky, with wide shoulders and hips.

Circle - Small shoulders, big middle, small hips.

Triangle - Wide shoulders, big bust, small hips.

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Undeliverable (Continued from page 4) of other couples in the group. By participating in a discussion group and writing for the group's newsletter, you may make the group more aware of your issues and needs. And you may be able to help other wives who are struggling, just as you are now.

In writing you we have no agenda other than your happiness and that of your husband. We do not seek to bring you to total acceptance of your husband's feminine expression. Every situation is different. We do accept as a given, that you are a wife who loves her husband and wants only the best for him. As such, you have every right to negotiate a "safe estate," an area of comfort, and expect him to stay within its boundaries. We cannot guarantee that opening communications will lead to a desirable outcome. We do, however, believe you will have a far better chance if you do take advantage of your right to gain knowledge and offer input. If that approach fails, you can at least take comfort in the knowledge that you

did all you could do to save your marriage. Isn't that worth it?

* "We entrust you to the waves. May you find a heart."

□

Love (Continued from page 4)

should be, "If it feels good, don't do it." Like Ezekiel's scroll, it may be sweet in your mouth, but sour to your stomach. The "natural" response to an attack is to counterattack. But the "supernatural" response is to say, "Attack me if you wish, but I will still love you."

2 Build relationships and not arguments. If someone comes against you, try this. Ask that person out to lunch or over for coffee. Say, "Let's get together. Let me get to know you better. And give me a chance to introduce myself to you. After we get to know each other, then let's talk about this."

3 Assume the best about the other person. We too often label someone who expresses a concern about our gender status as a bigot. This is usually not the case. Believe it or not, most of the time this person has your best interests at heart. If they sincerely believe that you are involved in sin, they are acting honorably, albeit misguidedly, in challenging you on that "sin." It is our responsibility to acknowledge that concern and express sincere appreciation for it. Then, and only then, can we gently present our case. This way, even if you continue to disagree, you preserve the relationship.

4 Recognize the other's pain. I was at church about a year ago when a woman who was visiting the church marched to the front just as the minister was closing the service. She turned and pointed in my direction. "There is a great evil among you. In your midst is one who..." By this

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Onnalee's Bag

By Onnalee

Onnalee (MN 9147-G) helped to form and is a charter member of Tri-Ess chapter Beta Gamma in Minneapolis; edited and produced their newsletter for four years, attended S.P.I.C.E. One, Two and Three, has been on the S.P.I.C.E. Planning Board for two years and designed the "daisy" logo.

It was most pleasant to have the new volunteer editor of our chapter newsletter "En Femme" leading the appreciation expressed by the chapter assembled June 15th toward me and the work I have done through the years. I am pleased to be released from that task, as I have set goals to achieve with watercolors and art shows which have grown urgent.

The column "Onnalee's Bag" will continue, perhaps even expand a bit, as the need for composing, editing, pasting, printing, assembling and mailing have been delegated to Sharon O. and Jessica. (Just make sure Jessica knows your current mailing address, people). That time will happily divert to more paintings being produced and maybe even mounted, matted and framed. That work seems twice what it takes to produce just watercolors.

I was deeply gratified to see more wives in attendance. The surprise was the "farewell" appearance of Courtney Anne, whom we knew as "Stephanie" when she signed Beta Gamma's charter request almost three years ago. We had a marvelous conversation with Courtney after the video on voice effemination ended. It revolved around the question of the need for the crossdresser to have the expressed approval of his presentation from a real woman (I

despise the term "genetic girl"). Courtney suggested that, while sometimes awkwardly sought, the approval request is a tacit acknowledgment that women know and are aware of more subtle 'touches' that make a credible and acceptable presentation than any 'guy' or teacher could begin to impart.

It gets a little touchy sometimes between Sofronia Anne and I when I exercise caution about what to say. Robert is still there under the make-up and wig; if I am not immediately enthusiastic, s/he will (and did that Saturday night) declare that I am "condemning" the get-up. When we work together from the initial idea, before purchases are made and money (always Anne's, never "ours") are committed, things seem to go more smoothly and the results to be more successful. Many times, s/he has complimented me though the decades with statements of great respect for my taste, style and color sense. I recognize this is a *developing* ability for Anne and am sensible to the need for self-decisions. Plus, there are those "hankerings," however unwise, that need satisfying.

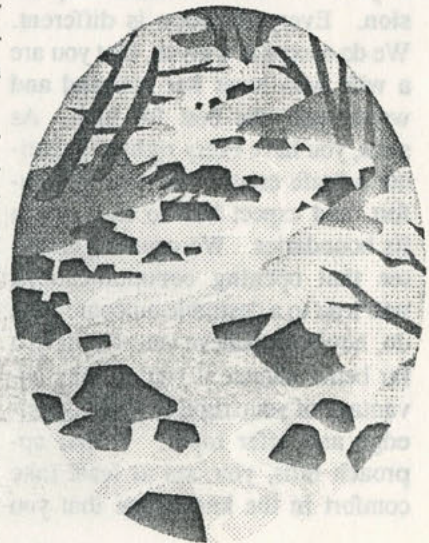
It's another one of the many little things that can, if not properly addressed, escalate to unreal proportions...like having a pebble inside a laced-up shoe.

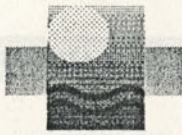
Come to think of it, I recall hearing at S.P.I.C.E. that finding a harmonious concert with a newly emerged crossdressing spouse is rather like adopting a teenaged girl...withOUT the monthly menstrual mess. PMS will still be present in varying degrees: simply re-define it as Pre-Meeting Syndrome!

The evening's greatest gratification came when the chapter voted to make funds available from the treasury (now, at last, doing *very* well)

for a "tuition" scholarship for a member's spouse/partner to attend S.P.I.C.E. I have been the recipient of such scholarships from Tri-Ess and feel indebted to the many members of Tri-Ess who have, with their continued financial support so enabled me to learn, negotiate and achieve a happier sense of myself and this long (37 years) marriage. In return I am hopeful that I may help others to improve their marital environments where crossdressing is involved.

To that end, I have reprinted "Onnalee's Oddyssey" in booklet form, which I am providing to the attendees of S.P.I.C.E. IV. After that, the booklet will be available for \$3.00 (includes mailing costs) with all proceeds above costs being donated to the Tri-Ess scholarship fund. And I will continue on the S.P.I.C.E. Planning Board for as long as I can be of viable use. Next: Beta Gamma's own "Sweetheart Club." If Beta Gamma could come to be, so can we!





Love (Continued from page 5)

time, the ministers had surrounded her and were working with her. She quieted down somewhat, but kept coming up the aisle in my direction. I could have been angry, but instead, the Lord placed a great compassion in my heart for her. I could feel pain as much as hatred in her voice. Later that evening the pastor called and told me that from talking to some people who knew her, he found out that her husband had just recently left her and begun a gay relationship with another man. Well, all that pain and anger was right there and looking for a target. I got chosen, but she was the real victim. When people called expressing concern for me, I could honestly say I wasn't hurting as much as she was.

- 5 Don't avoid them. This is hard, but it really speaks to these persons if you treat them as if they never questioned your faith. Shake hands with them just like you would anybody else when you meet them at church. Smile and greet them when you see

them in the store. C. S. Lewis in his book "The Four Loves" points out that Agape Love is not a feeling but an action in which you treat the person as though you felt love for him or her. Then the magic starts, because the longer you do that the closer you come to feeling that love as well.

- 6 Pray for them. Jesus tells us outright to pray for our enemies. How much more should we pray for our brothers and sisters that don't understand us. Now, I don't mean just praying prayers like, "Lord, make them see the error of their ways." I mean praying for their healing when they are sick. Praying for their financial situation. Praying for their families. Praying that God will bless them in every way. In short, praying the sort of prayers you would like others to pray for you. It's amazing how your perspective changes as you pray for them.

Abraham Lincoln faced major political opposition during his presidency. One day an advisor told him,

"Mr. President, you really have to destroy your enemies." Lincoln smiled and said, "Is that not what I do when I make them my friends?" Perhaps it's time you and I destroy our enemies with the militancy of love.

Shape (Continued from page 5)

Pyramid - Narrow shoulders, small bust, big hips.

Hourglass - Well-proportioned bust and hips, small waist.

Next, look for a dress whose basic shape corresponds to that of your body:

Rectangle

Your slender figure will look more shapely in a sarong, shirtwaist, sheath (a fairly close-fitting dress with no waistline), cowl-neck shift (a fairly loose-fitting dress with no waistline) or princess-style dress. Yours is the only figure type that looks really good in clingy knit styles, such as the polo and tube dresses.

Square

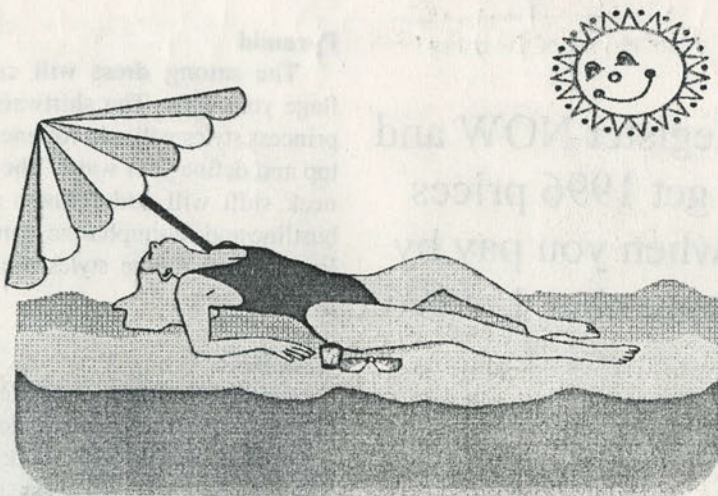
A coat dress, sheath or princess-style dress will soften the squareness of your figure and give a little waist definition. Another good choice: a wrap dress.

Circle

A tunic dress or sheath with detailing at the neckline or shoulder, or a diagonal drape from neck to knee, will de-emphasize your wide midriff.

Triangle

A coat dress, tunic dress, sheath or wedge style will accommodate your top-heavy figure. The crossover top of the coat dress will have a slenderizing effect- so will the narrow skirt of the tunic and wedge styles and the easy fit of the sheath.



Your tireless Editor at work!

(Continued on page 8)



Announcing...

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July 16-20, 1997

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FOR THE COMFORT OF PERSONS NEW TO GENDER EVENTS THERE WILL BE NO CROSSDRESSING AT S.P.I.C.E.

COST:

Thursday - Saturday \$150
Thursday - Friday \$116
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Letters to Ed (Continued from page 5)

and so far have adopted the attitude of, "That's Dad's thing, and it's fine." My son didn't come into the equation until he was 18 and needed to move in with us. We felt it was vital that he know, since my husband is very open for the most part. He's been pretty accepting of the entire thing - he's not nearly as unnerved by "Janelle" as he used to be. Of course, the grandchildren are too young for it to make much of an impression on them right now, but we don't hide it from them. We feel, and their parents agree, that this is a basically harmless condition, and if they are exposed to it as if it is a normal thing, they are less likely to develop intolerances for differences in appearance, background, etc. and more likely to learn to look past the outer appearance to the "real" person inside.

Again, I'll see what I can come up with for the next newsletter and in the meantime, I'll be sure to send you copies of all that I can find.

— Diana

How about it folks? Got any articles, or experiences to share on this subject? Send them in! - Ed.

Shape (Continued from page 7)

Pyramid

The sarong dress will camouflage your hips. The shirtwaist and princess styles will add volume at the top and define your waist. The cowl-neck shift will add fullness at the bustline and de-emphasize your hips. Empire and A-line styles are other good choices.

Hourglass

Styles that accommodate your shapely bust and hips while defining your trim waist will work best. These include the coat dress, sarong dress, shirtwaist, princess and wrap dress.