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Buffalo Belles

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BUFFALO BELLES**NU PHI CHI

 President: Denise [REDACTED] V.P., Treas.: Janice [REDACTED] Newsletter: Kathy [REDACTED]

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 Williamsvil, NY 14221-4100

Dear Sisters,

The October meeting was held on a cool, dampish night. Just the perfect weather for getting out in. No more makeup-melt of good ol' summer time...Heh, it's my job as editor to try to point a sunny side on things, I'm missing summer already also.... With the return of "normalcy" to our lives, the turnout increased also...FALLING out were Jean [REDACTED], Janice [REDACTED], Patty [REDACTED], Holly [REDACTED], Rene [REDACTED], Dana [REDACTED], Joan [REDACTED], Kathy [REDACTED], Tammy [REDACTED], Frances [REDACTED], Collean [REDACTED], Jackie [REDACTED], Julie, and guests Jeniffer and new visitor Kurst.

As usual, a nice evening of lady talk & Pizza ensued. We set a new record for departure, it was just before midnight when the last half dozen of us left. Another wonderful night spent with ladies like oneself. How did seven hours pass so quickly?

Mainly in conversation. With one lady you might discuss a make up problem. With another, just a sympathetic ear for her problems with the wife. Clothing is always a subject being discussed by someone. Fit, style, sources-it is only at the meetings that you can hear from the princess of the bargains, Collean let you know who has the best sale going on! Her bargains shown each meeting are amazing. The ladies often talk of their past history of cross dressing. It is really something the common bonds we share. We share experiences just as sisters have always done. We each experienced our own alone, but at the meetings you finally find that sister you were missing.

It stymies me on how to entice those sisters who never attend the meetings. I certainly understand the fear...Fear of discovery. Of ridicule. Heck, you'll get arrested, have your picture on the front page the next day! Yep! Happens every meeting. It's a wonder we are still going after two years.

There is another fear that needs addressing and discussing. The fear of what happens if you let the genie out of the bottle. The stepping out of the closet. Where will it stop? Will you loose control and go to far?...I don't know the answer yet. It was only eighteen months ago that I attended my first meeting. I now do things like the Buffalo Nite Out I, II, etc. I denote no adverse affect in my

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behavior so far...if you don't count the shaved legs, hands, torso etc. or the nails that are to long and well done for any stoop laborer like myself. There is some good, I've lost about 40#s since joining in. Went from size 22 to 14/16. Much better for the old ticker. I have kind of lost my friendship with some old friends, as I devote much more time with my new sisters. The physical changes I have done to myself are noticed. First is the weight loss, but closer eyes have picked up on the nails, the legs. no sideburns, high waist lines. No real problems though. Besides I play most of my golf with the sisters now anyways. But I am single. My changes have been done without the concern of another. This really is the BIG FEAR. What will happen if you do take the step and join in. Certainly for those who have, the results are mixed at best. We have about 30 members. About half have attended atleast several to almost all of the meetings. We have lost one to the TS route, another has taken the next step and is fully involved in the TS change. We have several others who have declared themselves to be TS. We have divorces in process because of these changes in our sisters. I am sure all would say that these changes are for the best, but one does wonder. So be prepared. Attending a meeting will be an important event in your life. One that may never be forgotten!

* * * * *

As much as I beat the drum for our meetings. There are a couple of thoughts I've had lately that aren't as positive for our little group. I got to thinking one night. I took a look at our attendance records-the same as what you read back in the first paragraph or two. The attendance as reported in the newsletter of our events. Meetings and "Nite Outs". Out of 24 Events held, there is a core of 13 have attended half or more. A handful at several-those sadly missed because personal circumstances severely limit their attendance, but when fate cuts them some slack, they are there! And then there are those who only attended a meeting or two-they number about 18. What did we do wrong? Was it us, or them? But what really bothers me is, that we haven't picked up a new steady member in almost a year. We lost two, to moves-granted. We had a fair amount of visitors this past summer, even repeats, Attendance is steady, with about a dozen at each meeting. But growth in attendance isn't really seen yet, but we are just out of the summer time lows.

Another thing we seem to be lacking is something to do. We have settled into being a monthly coffee clutch, OK-Pizza Clutch, we gather, go get a pizza about eight, and either go home or the adventuresome head out into the night to the bar scene till all hours.

As I said in the beginning, conversation takes us well into the night. But is this enough? I took a look at last years November issue. In it, Plans for next months Christmas party, The November meeting is to be styles on video show-(not held because not enough would commit beforehand, but showed up expecting it to be held!). We were lining up the things to be done for the Spaghetti dinner in March. February was going to be a make-up session/lesson with Tony (No comment). January was a tag sale coming up.

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OK, not all of these events came off to well. But certainly we were trying to make the meetings more interesting. I'd still like a styles on video session. And a wig session. Perhaps some type of monthly talk session. Maybe we need a "charity"- I read of another sorority as ours who benefits a battered woman's shelter. I'm sure each of you can come up with a meetings subject or two.

What we need now is someone who is ready to step forward and take on the responsibility of being the activities chairwoman. And if you see another need-create a title and and you may be it! Isn't it nice to be as unstructured as we are? We have no need for elections. You see a job you want, it's probably yours!

We have had a good stream of luck so far. Joan got us started four years ago by going public in the Sunday News and telling about Tri-Ess. The chapter she had chartered. Denise came along and really got us going. Useing various lists she had, she got our site and scheduled the first meeting just 25 months ago. Janice has been our point-girl, handling "public" duties like interviews, reservations etc. We must not forget Jean, who has quietly kept the refreshments available.

As well as we are doing, I am concerned. I have been reading other newsletters, magazines, etc. What I see is a pattern that I've also seen in other groups that I've been involved with in the past. A group is formed when there is a need. In our particular case, a number of cross-dressers were out there-as always is in most societies. Media has given our lifestyle quite a bit of publicity over the last few years. We know we are not alone! Ok, along come someone like Joan, who is willing to take the risk of going public and starts a group. Out of the "woodwork" comes a couple of dozen of like minded girls. Next thing you know a viable group is formed and off and running. Goals are set. Some are accomplished. And complacency sets in. And the group slowly dies. Sure we have made some new friends. Very valuable and dear friends. Confidence and ability have been acquired over time. Before long this success breeds the destruction of the group. If one can go out in public now. why bother with the meeting? More fun shopping, dineing out etc. We have to look no further than to Toronto. Sometime take the binder with the Toronto Cross Dresser Club newsletters! They killed themselves with the success they achieved! They went from several meetings per week, to weekly, to bi-monthly to the ending of the "clubhouse". All in a few years. Ask Dana, ask Janice, they were part of it. We need to evolve, to regenerate for if we try to to maintain the status quo, we will soon fall apart. Abbie Hoffman used to say "Revolution, for the Hell of it" Or was that Sgt. Pepper? And don't forget, Aunt Samantha, wants you!!

Katty [Redacted]

100 at

C A L A N D A R

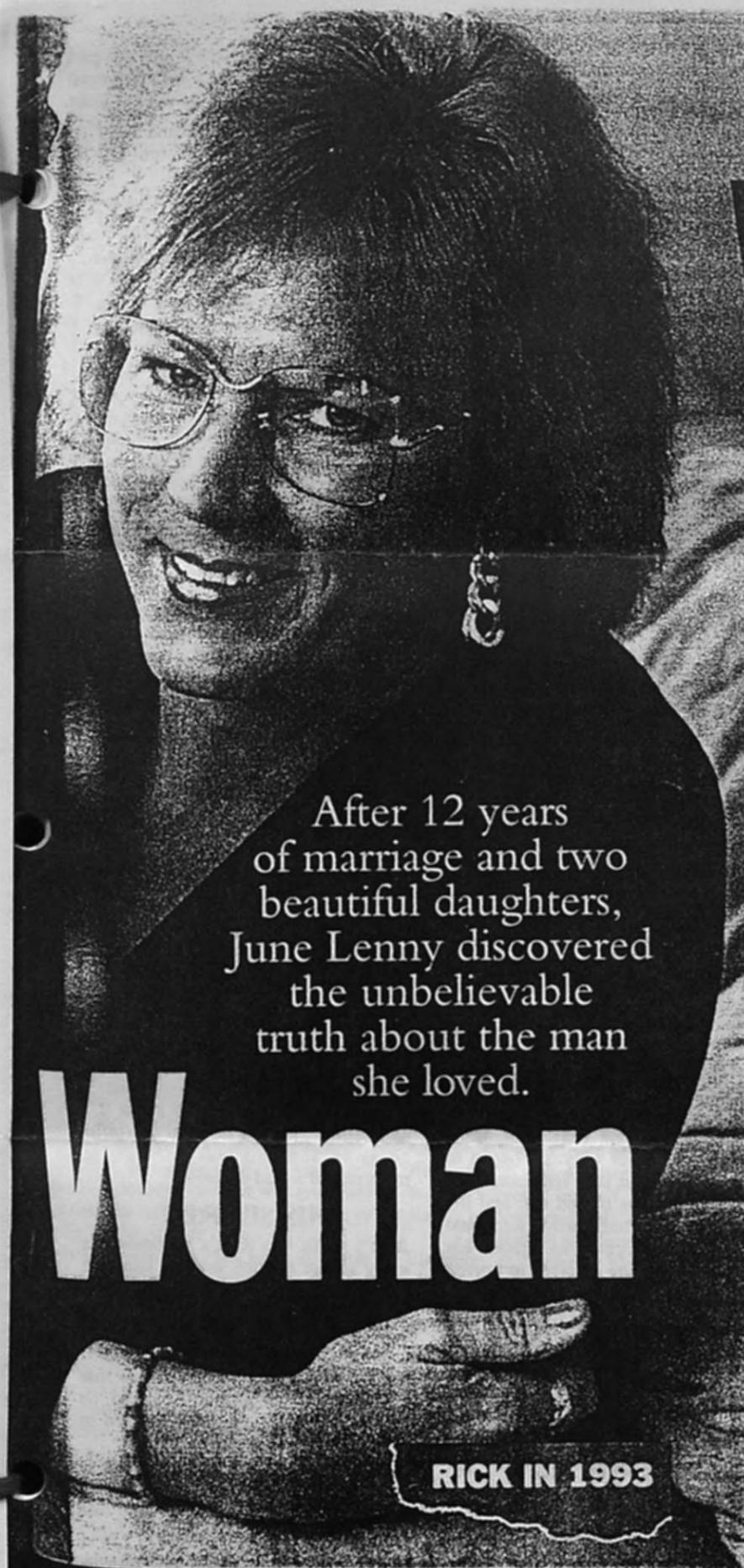
- October 29 - Halloween celebration-Lot's going on. Rochester group planning outing meet at TS Salon at 8:00 Pm
- November 5 - BUFFALO BELLES regular meeting-see starting time may be delayed. See sidebar.
7 Roch. CD reg. meeting-Monday night-TS Salon
- 18-20- Riverside Weekend-so far we have a contingent of Patty, Janice, Denise, Kathy, Jean & Lu, Tammy, Jennifer are attending from Buffalo Belles.
- December 3 - BUFFALO BELLES- regular meeting-anyone going to get a party going?
5 - Roch. CD meeting
- January 8 - BUFFALO BELLES regular meeting, unusual date

SIDEBAR: I will call the meeting place at the last possible time, to find out if we are going to have the potential conflict with the other group or not. Here is the latest advisory to starting time: *Next (2) two meetings held upstairs, use FIRE escape IF you wish. Church holding 40th Anniv. Reception in NOV. DECEMBER ALSO HAS ANOTHER group FROM 5-7 using "OUR" SPACE.*

I wish to thank Jean for taking over as librarian. As we now have a secure storage cabinet now. The collection is on site. If you have something of the clubs, please return it as soon as you are finished with it. I am still missing my personal copy of "Hormones" by Shelia Kirk, latest edition. Also Dana donated two twenty year old copies of a drag mag. They haven't been seen in awhile. I am sure Jean will do a much better job than I, as our librarian! I was a little too lax with my duties. I don't think you want her at your door collecting an overdue book!!! So why not kick in some of your old items? Also, if your bringing magazines, catalogs, etc. to hand out. Just draw a slash with you quill, across the front, so others will know it is for the taking. Good materials, give to Jean.

To remind those who wear their wigs to tight.. The meeting fee is five dollars. You are expected to have it. Give it to Collean! She will directly collect the fee. You don't want to cross her! She'll have you going off into the night muttering "my shoes don't match!"

Don't forget that dues will be coming due in a short while. We will have to increase the associate rate to fifteen dollars. It cost us \$12.70 to produce and mail our ten page newsletter. We are not in the red, but our treasury is about empty. Atleast by Newyears. We were much too lax on meeting fee's. We are not trying to get rich, but having a little cushion for future events, deposits etc. would be nice. Our meeting fees have been increased all the way up to small, from miniscule! We will be willing to grant financial hardship exemptions to those who need them. If one gives up just two cigarettes per day, you'll have the fee! My best guess is that we lost 2-300 dollars in meeting fees. Wives are free of course. With two years of success, we shouldn't be running so close to low.



After 12 years of marriage and two beautiful daughters, June Lenny discovered the unbelievable truth about the man she loved.

Woman

RICK IN 1993

W

Whenever her friends griped about their husbands, June Lenny felt lucky. Her husband, Rick, an air force sergeant, was a devoted family man who loved to spend his free time with June and their two young daughters. The couple talked easily, worked problems out calmly, and made love often. And Rick never forgot June's birthday or their wedding anniversary. Their marriage was the envy of their friends. Indeed, many considered them the ideal couple.

Today that picture-perfect marriage is just a bittersweet memory. After 20 years together, the Lennys are now divorced. June, who lives with the children in suburban Colorado, is struggling to come to terms with a life that's been shattered by shame and betrayal. Rick is living in Florida with a new name, a new life, and a new body. He had a sex change operation a year ago.

"Not in a million years could I have imagined that this would happen to us," says June, 40. "I

by Esther Davidowitz

believe I could have dealt with most anything: alcoholism, cheating, drugs, unemployment, you name it. But not this. Not my man turned into a woman."

THEIR BEGINNING

June was a 19-year-old student at a junior college in Miami when she met Rick. She was standing on the balcony of her apartment complex when she first spotted her handsome, six-foot-one, 20-year-old neighbor. They were instantly attracted to each other.

After a whirlwind courtship of just two weeks, Rick proposed. June, who grew up on a farm in upstate New York, didn't think she knew her doting boyfriend well enough to say "I do." But what she knew, she liked very much. Rick was bright, charming, sophisticated, and gentlemanly. He came from a fairly well-to-do family in Ohio, where his father was a senior production engineer for General Motors. "He always treated me well. Rick was thoughtful and respectful," June remembers.

And he was manly. In fact, June and everyone else who knew Rick considered him the epitome of a virile, healthy, all-American man. "There was nothing effeminate about him," June insists. "Nothing." Rick was an auto-mechanic. He loved cars, boats, and sailing. Even his taste in food, says June, was masculine. He just wanted meat and potatoes. Nothing else was as good to him. "He was," June declares, "a macho man," a term many who knew Rick often used to describe him.

In 1973, just one year after they met, the two wed. Rick joined the air force. After a two year stint, he left to resume work as an automechanic but remained in the air force reserves. June worked as a waitress and office clerk. Their jobs allowed the couple, who loved to travel and explore, to live in various cities. "In the first seven years of our marriage, we moved fourteen times. We were free spirits," says June.

Three months after the birth of their first daughter, Renee, in 1975, the couple faced their first significant marital crisis, one that many marriages don't survive. Rick, feeling hurt and rejected by June's devotion to the baby, found

the attention he craved elsewhere—with another woman.

"It was a rough time for us," June confides. "But we worked it out. We always could talk and resolve our problems."

The years passed. In 1980 the couple settled east of Denver, where Rick eventually got two jobs, a civilian position repairing airplane equipment for the air force, and a part-time military assignment with the Colorado Air National Guard. June worked as a computer operator for the air force.

In 1983 their second daughter, Nikki, was born. "Everything seemed right," June says. "We were a complete family."



JUNE LENNY TODAY

But one night a year later, their happy marriage of 11 years began to disintegrate. It was late. The doors were locked, the lights turned off, and the couple tucked in bed. Feeling warm and happy, June snuggled up against her husband. Then she recoiled in horror. Rick was wearing nylon panty hose.

Repulsed, she asked, "What is this?"

Rick looked embarrassed. "It's to keep my legs warm," he answered.

"But you have thermal underwear," June cried. "Why aren't you wearing long underwear?"

"These feel better," Rick answered. "Besides," he argued, "what's the big deal? What's the harm in it?"

June, utterly confused, didn't press

the issue. "This was my husband and I loved him," she explains. "I shrugged it off."

A couple of months later, Rick supplemented the panty hose with a pair of satin panties. June was horrified—and nauseated. "My stomach turned," she recalls.

"I don't like this, Rick," she warned. "This is disgusting. Why are you doing this?"

Again, Rick tried to calm her fears. "It's no big deal. Women can wear men's clothes and no one bats an eye." One night Rick added a bra to his outfit. "He looked ridiculous. It was such a turnoff. I hated it. And I told him so."

Then one afternoon June received what she now recalls as the biggest shock of her life. She had rushed home early from work on Rick's day off to discover, to her horror, an oddly familiar person coming down the stairs. After gazing past the heavy make-up, long dark hair, fake nails, large breasts, tight miniskirt, silk stockings, and spike heels, a mortified June realized that this was Rick, her husband.

"I freaked out," she says. "I screamed, 'Go away. Don't come near me.'" Unwilling to think, June grabbed an old toothbrush from under the kitchen sink and frantically scrubbed every inch of tile on her kitchen floor, all the while sobbing uncontrollably. Rick sat silently upstairs. "I knew then we had a serious problem, but I hadn't a clue what to do about it,"

says June. "I kept hoping it would go away, that this was some phase my husband would outgrow."

HIS SECRET

June's shock was Rick's liberation. As early as age 6, Rick says he knew he was different and that he "wanted to be a little girl." He yearned to play with dolls, bake cookies with his mom, and wear colorful clothes. But his parents and society at large let him know that little boys "don't do that." And so, he says, "From an early age I learned to have two separate lives."

Rick tried to be what his body insisted he was. He took up wrestling and track, but his heart and mind told him he was something else. "I didn't

like the rough-and-tumble sports that boys played. I'd rather read, write, and look at clouds." His family noticed. One day when Rick was 9 years old, his dad mustered up enough courage to "use the big Q word." He asked his son: "Are you queer?" Rick answered, "No." But he wasn't sure. "I didn't know what I was. I was so confused."

However, Rick knew very well what everyone else wanted and expected. He continued to try hard to meet the socially prescribed idea of what a man should be. He rode motorcycles, played sports, and fixed engines. Yet none of these conventional attempts at manhood could "quash my feelings."

When Rick began dating women, his concerned parents were visibly relieved. But although he had sexual relationships with women, Rick never felt comfortable. "Opposites are supposed to attract, but I didn't feel attracted. I never felt the magic, the chemistry."

That is, until he met June. "It's hard to explain why but I knew right away June was going to be a special person in my life. She was pretty inside and out. I fell in love with her as a person." The chemistry was right too. "Sex with June," Rick says, "was always satisfying."

But there was always something troubling him, something he didn't fully understand but knew he had to hide. Rick would surreptitiously buy women's clothes. "I'd say it was a gift for my wife," Rick recalls. He stashed bras, panties, nylons, and myriad other feminine paraphernalia in a locked storage shed, beside his gardening tools and extra car parts. Sometimes he'd tuck skirts and blouses under the seats of the family's station wagon.

Often on his days off, he would tell June—honestly—that he was going off to ride his motorcycle, sail his boat, or hike in the woods. What he failed to tell his wife was that he'd do these things dressed as a woman. "I did everything I said I did. I just didn't do them as Rick," he says. Even in the military, Rick would dress up. When he was sent overseas, he'd always pack two suitcases: one for a man, another for a woman.

Rick loathed being secretive and deceptive, but he was also petrified

that the truth would scare his loved ones away. "There was a lot of ripping and tearing of the heart," he says. And a lot of trying to be, or remain, what he thought was a man. He bought pornographic magazines. He hung up posters of half-clad women in his auto shop. He went to strip joints with his buddies. But, says Rick, "What they didn't realize was that while they were looking at these women with raw lust, I was looking at them with envy."

When friends came over, he'd be happier hanging out with the women in the kitchen. "All guys wanted to talk about was beer, women, and sports, and I wanted to talk about my children, my family, my job, and about

Eventually
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feelings. Men never talk about feelings unless it's lust."

It wasn't lust that drove Rick to slip on panty hose that now infamous night. "It was never a sexual thing," Rick says. It was a desire to reconcile the two halves of himself. "I felt free. I finally let down this wall around me."

But in addition to a heady feeling of liberation, each time he gave his wife a larger glimpse of his secret life there was deep anxiety. "There was always the fear that June would say that's too much, that at some point there would be the ultimatum: Stop or leave."

HER DEPRESSION

June told herself again and again that this—this phase, this compulsion, this

bizarre hobby—would stop. It had to stop. "It was driving me crazy. I couldn't think of anything else. My eyes were puffy from crying all the time."

She tried to be tolerant, to understand her husband's needs, but it was unbearable. "There were plenty of times I'd just drown myself in a six-pack of beer or a few tequilas."

She told no one. "I didn't want people to think my husband was a wacko. I thought it would reflect on me." And of course she worried about her children. More than anything she wanted to protect them.

She tried to assure herself she could deal with her husband's problem and even sought a therapist to help her cope.

"What I needed was to talk to someone, but instead I was taught stress management—breathing techniques."

Naively hoping that if she didn't overreact somehow her husband would "just get it out of his system," June agreed to let Rick dress up on Monday, his day off, as long as he switched back into more acceptable attire before the girls, then 7 and 15, got home from school. For a while the arrangement worked, but eventually Renee and Nikki began to notice that something was "odd about Dad." Sometimes his lips seemed suspiciously red ("cherry flavored lip balm," June would claim), his eyes disturbingly dark ("Dad's tired," she'd fib). "I knew I couldn't lie to them forever," June says.

Rick went through cycles, often tossing out all his women's garments in a fit of self-loathing. Each time he did, June hoped his strange compulsions would come to an end, but then "I'd catch him wearing a pair of woman's underwear under his jeans or see polish on his toenails and think, Oh, God. Here we go again."

As time passed, Rick grew more bold. He'd wear bras under his military uniform and clear nail polish on his fingernails, and pluck his eyebrows and shave his legs. He'd sashay, flutter his eyelashes, and flap his wrists. Friends noticed but nobody ever said a word. "No one wanted to hurt my feelings," June surmises.

Certain that there must be a cure for her husband's (continued on page 134)

Now a Woman

(continued from page 105)

problem, June begged Rick to find help. Four years ago he did, at Denver's Gender Identity Center, a support group for cross-dressers and transsexuals. But it wasn't the kind of help June had expected. "I was hoping the center would help Rick become a man. All it did was encourage him to become more like a woman."

Rick began to dress up more often. He'd go out at night sporting high heels and short skirts. He'd take frequent trips to the mall dressed as a woman. He'd get dolled up whenever he and June were alone.

June began to feel more and more repulsed. "After awhile I got numb, sexually and emotionally." Although the couple continued to have sex, June says, "I just went through the motions. I didn't want to touch him. It made me feel like a lesbian." June began to doubt her own femininity. "I couldn't help but wonder if I was supposed to look like Rick's version of a woman. I wondered about my own desirability. Most of the time I wear jeans and T-shirts, not tight skirts or frilly blouses."

She'd also grow furious. "Rick became the expert on how to look like a woman. I'd tell him that there's more to being a woman than dressing up like one. I'd tell him he didn't have periods, PMS, yeast infections, or the responsibility of being a mother. What the hell did he know about what it was like to be a woman?"

When four years ago Renee, then 14, asked, "Mom, is Dad gay?" June knew it was time to have a heart-to-heart with her. She told Renee that her father liked to wear women's clothes. "It was a relief for me. I didn't have to hide it from her anymore. But it was really tough on Renee." The girl's grades and spirits sank precipitously. "I didn't know where I fit in," Renee recalls. "My friends would complain about their problems with their parents but they were nothing compared to mine."

Nikki, then 8, would learn six months later from her dad. "I was kind of in shock," Nikki recalls. "And I was really sad. It was weird."

June finally told friends and coworkers. Most were horrified. "I nearly fell off my chair," confides June's supervisor at the county office where she works. She says June was

"so depressed and distracted, I was really worried she'd do something to herself." Some admitted their suspicions. "I had noticed the dyed blond hair, the lacquered fingernails, the mascara," says a close family friend. "I thought Rick was gay."

A year and a half ago, when Rick wanted to take hormones to develop breasts and reduce muscle tone, June finally summoned up the courage to give him the ultimatum he so feared. "Take the hormones and we're through," she warned. Rick took them secretly for a month before June discovered the pills. June demanded a divorce. Twelve months later, Rick flew to Brussels where "in two and a half hours I went from being male to being female." From being Rick to being... Sharon.*

SHARON DOESN'T HAVE TO LIVE a double life anymore. She doesn't have to hide her skirts or lipstick.

"I'd tell him he didn't have periods, PMS, yeast infections, or the responsibility of being a mother. What the hell did he know about what it was like to be a woman?"

Finally, she feels real: She is what she's always wanted to be. "I'm not acting anymore. I'm a woman and I'm happy with that." Even her mother (her only living parent), though initially horrified, has accepted her. She thrilled Sharon by sending her a birthday card addressed "to my daughter." Sharon's brother and sister have also come to terms with their sibling.

But life hasn't turned out as splendidly as she hoped. She is unemployed: She lost her job for having, the military explains, "major abnormalities and defects of the genitalia." (She is fighting to get reinstated.) And while her looks, she says, can stop men on the street, some of whom, she reports proudly, are "ten years younger than me," Sharon concedes that she isn't likely to find another mate. "I'm looking at being alone for the rest of my life."

All of that hurts, of course. But what hurts most, Sharon confides, is the loss of the family she still loves. Her mobile trailer in Florida is 2,000 miles from them. "In order for me to

be me, I had to hurt the ones closest to me. I'm going to have to live with that for the rest of my life. I miss my wife and children. I cry a lot."

A NEW BEGINNING

June doesn't cry anymore. Her heart no longer aches. Time and therapy have helped her heal. Renee is on the honor roll. Nikki is happy and popular in school. And June has a boyfriend. At first she was petrified to date again. "I didn't know how to go about it. For twenty years I was with someone who wanted to be a woman. What did that make me?" But now June is spending much of her free time with a new man, a divorced father who believes Rick must have been nuts. "To go through what he did and give up this woman," June's new friend says. "What a fool!"

Rick, everyone agrees, is "dead." For Renee and Nikki, not having a dad is painful: "Aunt" Sharon isn't a good enough substitute. "I'll never see my

dad again," Nikki says. "My dad has changed into a girl." Although Sharon calls frequently and sees her daughters on holidays and during their summer vacations, Renee and Nikki say they miss and want a father.

"I have two parents," says Renee. "I just don't have a mom and a dad." Last Father's Day the girls didn't bother sending a card. "They don't have a card section for your transsexual parent," Renee says, her cleverness masking a lingering bitterness. The girls, however, have no doubts about their love for Sharon. They also feel sorry for her. "She's a little hunched over and she looks frail," Renee reports. "My dad used to stand tall."

June, though no longer mourning, is still angry. Not at Rick. But at his stand-in. "I'm mad at Sharon for taking my husband away. But how can I compete with her when this woman is my husband?" □

**To give herself a chance to start a new life, Sharon has asked that her real name not be used.*