

TWENTY MINUTES

MAY 1990

THE XX (Twenty) CLUB

\$2.00



‘Let the voters
decide now’

Officials of the Harris County Democratic Party have dropped their effort to convince Leslie Elaine Perez to quit the runoff for party chairman. Perez said she has received more than 100 calls from supporters, strengthening her determination to remain in the race.

Perez, 52, a transsexual who was convicted of murder in a sensational 1961 Houston case, received 27 percent of the vote to 42 percent for Ken Bensten Jr., 30, a nephew of U.S. Senator Lloyd Bensten. Local party chief Jack Carter said runoff ballots are being printed with Perez's name on them, after Perez rejected requests from Carter, Bensten and others to step aside.

Perez promised a spirited race, emphasizing she has paid her dues as a longtime volunteer and champion of gay rights. The Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus endorsed Bensten. Perez is president of the Houston chapters of the Gay and Lesbian Democrats of America and the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. She also was a delegate to the state Democratic conventions in 1984 and 1988.

Perez said she was born Leslie Douglas Ashley, but became Leslie Elaine Green when she underwent sex-change surgery after her release from prison in 1971. The name Perez, which she has used for several years and is on her driver's license, "comes from a boyfriend of mine," she said. Perez said she did not use the name in order to attract Hispanic votes.

"I've tried to build a new life and help others," she said. "I wasn't running for a paid position, and I didn't think (the conviction) was going to come up again. That should have no bearing on this." But she described the publicity and the spotlight it cast on her past as "almost unbearable."

As Leslie Douglas Ashley, Perez was convicted - along with co-defendant Carolyn Ann Lima - of capital murder in the 1961 shooting-and-torching slaying of Fred Tones, a Houston real estate man. Both were given the death penalty - Perez was once a few hours from execution - but the convictions were later overturned and new trials were ordered.

After the second trials, Lima was convicted of murder without malice and sentenced to five years in prison. Ashley was convicted of murder and sentenced to 15 years. He was released in 1971, after serving about five years of his term. About her past, Perez said only that she was "in the wrong place at the wrong time" and that the killing was in self-defense.

(Reprinted from the *Houston Chronicle* from articles written by Alan Bernstein and Rebecca Trounson.)



Carol Burnett:
She's a he who returns home.

Carol's memories of her 'boyhood'

All along, Carol Burnett has been saying that she plans on showing viewers of NBC's new *Carol & Company* anthology comedy series a new side of herself. The April 7 episode had a fairly standard premise: a star athlete, George Baker, returned for his 30-year high-school reunion. The twist: the athlete is Carol, who plays the quarterback on the football team who has had a sex change and is now Georgette. Swoosie Kurtz played her high-school sweetheart.

(EDITOR'S NOTE...above reprinted from *TV GUIDE*. That's TV as in television!)

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TWENTY MINUTES

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THE TRANSEXUAL SUPPORT
 GROUP OF NEW ENGLAND
 AND NEW YORK

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Sen. Soaper says:

In spite of unisex clothing and hair styles, it is still easy to differentiate between the sexes. A woman is the one with two earrings.

**BE HUMBLE--
 MOST OF YOU IS
 EMPTY SPACE BETWEEN
 ELECTRONS, AND 85%
 OF THE REST IS
 WATER!**

All the news that's print to fit.

This newsletter is funded entirely through subscriptions and the sales of educational materials. All written contributions welcome. A backlog of material may prevent the immediate publishing of submitted articles. The XX Club, or its members are not responsible for the opinions expressed or accuracy of information provided by the writers of unsolicited or solicited materials. Parts of this newsletter may be reproduced if source credit is given.

CLUB CALENDAR

MEETINGS

- Saturday, May 12**
Saturday, May 26
Saturday, June 9
Saturday, June 23

Regular meetings of the XX Club are held the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 2 PM sharp to 5 PM.:

Christ Church Cathedral
 45 Church Street
 Hartford, CT

(Located at the corner of Church and Main Streets in the downtown area across from G. Fox.) If you believe you are gender dysphoric, you are welcome to visit and find out more about our group and talk about yourself and your feelings. The XX Club is a transsexual support group, not a dating service. There is **NO SMOKING** allowed during the meetings, though we do allow smoking during breaks and after the meetings. We attempt to provide peer support and practical information about making the gender transition, as well as information about the Gender Identity Clinic of New England. Parents, siblings, spouses and significant others are also welcome to attend.

GUEST SPEAKER

At the meeting of the June 9, we will have as our speaker - Roger E. Peo, Ph.D. of Androgyny Unlimited. He will speak on the differing needs of transsexuals and cross-dressers focusing on how this has the potential of creating problems that divide the larger transgender community. The title of his talk would be "Transsexuals: Second Class Citizens?" He will follow up by answering your questions. So put this date on your calendar and plan to attend. Remember - all XX Club meetings begin at 2PM sharp!

TREASURER'S

REPORT

Balance - from March	\$1667.67
INCOME:	
Collections - meetings	31.67
Newsletter subscriptions	143.00
Brochure sales	9.50
IFGE sales	15.00
GF sales	4.00
Donations	20.00
Savings interest	7.81
Total Income	\$230.98
EXPENSES:	
Refreshments	28.90
Newsletter & brochures	124.95
Postage	25.00
Supplies	8.47
Bank Fee	.00
Total Expenses	\$187.32
Net Income for April	\$ 43.66
Balance - end of April	\$1711.33

Doctors Fined in Sex Change

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France (AP) - Two doctors were fined and given suspended prison sentences for performing a sex-change operation on a patient who committed suicide in 1988, eight years after the surgery. An appeals court convicted the doctors of willful aggravated assault on Jean-Eric Oyac, who had requested the operation because he wanted to become a woman. French law forbids sex-change operations unless stringent conditions are met regarding the psychological need for the surgery. Oyac, who worked as a nurse and called himself Jennifer, filed a complaint in 1984 asserting that the operation had not been successful and that he was in constant pain.

(EDITOR'S NOTE...Reprinted from the Springfield Union-News.)

XX CLUB PICNIC

Sat. July 28

GARFIELD



WHO ARE THESE BOZO'S AND HOW DID THEY GET HERE?

by Veronica Jean Brown

This editorial describes three true scenarios that describe events of our subculture happening outside of our subculture. We invite your comments on any part or all of what you are about to read.

True Scenario #1: A M-F TS goes through the motions of gender transition and convinces a local gender clinic of her sincerity of intent and in meeting their requirements. She has surgery and upon return to work, loses her job. Several years later, she instigates a Jane Doe lawsuit against her former employer claiming a 'mental handicap'. She even confides to friends that she fooled the gender clinic because her divorce wasn't final when she got SRS.

What's wrong here? The TS in question worked out of a field office in the female role and all during her pre-op real life test 'she' appeared at the head office as her male self. When she returned to work after surgery, she announces to her boss, "I'm back. Notice the changes? Of course you'll have compassion and over look the new me. After all, I'm still a worthwhile employee." But that's not how the employer saw things.

Result: There's a bunch of angry TSs who resent the actions of this Jane Doe lawsuit. The overall implication is that they too are mentally handicapped as well. Most TS don't have a mental problem, but rather a physical one.

True Scenario #2: Twenty Minutes takes great displeasure in awarding the MUCM ADD ABOUT NOTHING AWARD to Sarah Luiz, of 511 Cutts Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801 (603) 433-3067. We are including this above information here as it appeared in the June 1989 TWENTY MINUTES, when she was a young, starry eyed pre-op fighting the valiant fight against the monolithic monstrosity known as Blue Cross / Blue Shield for those of you who may want to express your feelings in regards to her present condition.

Back in 1989, Sarah's case involved suing BC/BS for SRS. They had apparently agreed to pay for the surgery but later claimed a clerical error was responsible for paying her pre-op expenses. Sarah made a splash in local and national newspapers across the country and was quoted as saying, "If I don't get the surgery, I'll kill myself..." She was playing the part of legal counsel in the fight against BC/BS and had been offered an out of court settlement by them of \$100,000, which she refused, intent on going after a much higher sum. It now seems she was playing the part as a transsexual as well as recently reported on A Current Affair (February 1990) the news that she was abandoning her quest of ever becoming a woman, but continuing the lawsuit to possibly recoup her personal losses brought on by this windmill joust.

Result: The question of Sarah Luiz's gender dysphoria is not at issue here. The issue is that by her bumbling through the news media as a squeaky wheel, seeking public attention for personal fame, she brought a great deal of attention to transsexuals everywhere and then she backed out claiming medical problems. If you don't fit in anywhere, carve yourself a new niche. Thanks a lot Sarah!

True Scenario #3: Back in February (ratings sweeps month) our 'friend' Sally Jesse Raphael had a couple of F-M TSs on her show. One of the guests was a 'normal' TS type, that is, having gone through all the preliminary changes and working towards the final surgery or phalloplasty. The other guest was Frank, a thirty-seven year old transsexual, formerly Francine and one of two fraternal twin girls. Frank's thing was that he didn't want the phalloplasty. Frank had both breasts, uterus and ovaries removed.

"At this point, the final surgery is nothing more than an ornament. In my case it's not really needed. It's time and money; it's ten operations and \$50,000," said the short, bald mustached Italian man. "I was legally able to change-

my sex to male by no longer functioning as a female. I don't have to function as a male."

And Sally said, "I've had a lot of transsexuals on my show over the years. It seems the men who are trying to be women always look like men and the women who are trying to be men always look like they originally did! You Frank, have a very male persona. But why not go all the way and be a complete male person? Aren't you in a kind of limbo here?"

"The only thing a penis is good for," said Frank, "is to make babies. I will never be able to do that, it will never really work. Having a penis will not make me look different to the outside world. The doctors can't make the feeling, sex is for pleasure. I'm not in limbo, I'm a man. Before I get involved intimately with a woman, she will know."

Sally asked the female members of the audience, "Suppose you dated Frank and then found out he had a vagina and no penis?" An older woman in the audience pointed out how small Frank's hands were. Most in the audience didn't agree. The second person (a straight appearing male) agreed with Frank's comment that what's in the heart and soul is more important than what's on the body. Another person, a small boned effeminate male (possibly a F-M TS in transition) with a sparse beard agreed with Frank about being himself and not conforming with the rules.

A middle aged woman finally answered Sally's original question with a question, "Do you tell a woman about yourself on the first date?" Frank's said no. "I think that's terrible," she said. "I'd be furious if this ever happened to me."

"What's under my clothes is not what I am," Frank said.

"I'm sorry Frank," said Sally. "She has a point there."

"If you love Frank..." at this point, Frank compared himself to an impotent male getting involved with a woman. He wouldn't tell the woman on the first date he was impotent.

It's amazing how the camera people seem to pick members of the audience during a transsexual show who could possibly be transsexuals themselves. The audience at this point was split between supporting Frank for being a nice person and against Frank for not being honest with his dates. The helping professional on the show answered all the questions and gave plenty of information to the audience to further their understanding of this phenomenon. Once the subject got off of Frank's apparent ongoing deception (which unfortunately was of a sexual nature and people are uncomfortable with sex anyway), the questions went to the usual ones of family, friends, etc.

F-M TSs have a very strong male gender identity to begin with, sometimes much stronger than the female identity that most M-Fs have. Most transsexual support groups are dominated by M-F TSs and F-M's are not served well. Their support needs are met from other sources such as a female lover or lesbian inclined companion. They are habitually treated in a similar way that M-F TSs are treated by TV dominated gender groups, with poor understanding.

Result: Since the F-M surgery is not as well perfected as the M-F is, a number of the guys choose not to get it. Many spend more time as a "mid-op" and become accustomed to their "incomplete" state. This in itself is not wrong for them, but when this concept of incompleteness, or sexual limbo by choice is thrust upon a studio audience, it is not well understood or received. We live in a genitally oriented society thanks to the dogma preached at us through Christianity (and other patriarchal religions) through the centuries. Those of us within the gender community are aware of the various types of gender people and like society, some of us may not understand or agree with the various states of incompleteness as preached on by the wanna-bees and transgenderists within our sub-culture. It may be better to keep this behavior under our hats. In this case the less said the better. So, duamy up out there!

I suppose if you really kick hard and otherwise do stuff to annoy the sleeping giant long enough, it will eventually wake up, look around and attempt to smash you flat with one fell swoop of a meaty fist, sort of like the fat man whose unfeeling sleep has been disturbed by a pesky mosquito. The recent letter to me via "Twenty Minutes" is indicative of this aforementioned action. If one person says something based on "fact" that they really and truly believe to be the truth and someone else says something based on "fact" but is totally opposite to the former but that they really and truly believe to be the truth, where then does the truth lie? Why, in the eyes of the beholder, of course. History is written by the victors and if you were on the side of the "enemy", woe be to you and your children.

Case in point: To quote out of context from Wendi Pierce's letter in Twenty Minutes 1990 - (The April Fool Issue), "...and retreated to a 'safe' position much like a little child who says, 'I don't like your game, I'm not going to play, and you're all a bunch of creeps anyway.'" Untold numbers of transsexuals have never played the TS support game anyway and those that did, eventually stole quietly away into the woodwork. And now one of them hasn't gone so meekly, with head bowed, into the woodwork. So sue me.

Everything Wendi said in this particular quote is true. Much of what she said otherwise, while apparently based on the content of my editorial alone was influenced by the words of others within the churning wheels of IFGE. Wendi, as the chairman of the board of IFGE has to act in strict accordances as mandated by the greater whole and in unity to serve and protect that greater whole. I, or anybody else as a member of the Twenty Club, or any other transsexual on this continent are not bound by such constraints. By their very position within the contemporary social structure and while men rule the world, they endure limited behavioral constraints. Well so do the devout members of IFGE.

At the beginning of IFGE's move into Waltham, I was offered a position within the "company", given my very own set of keys to the building and offices and taken under the 'loving and leading' arm of Merissa S. Lynn. Perhaps I was too close to IFGE headquarters (90 minutes away), or perhaps I let my feelings about the personal behavior and attitudes of some IFGE leaders get in the way of their greater scheme of things. Or perhaps, I didn't like their rules and their game plan and didn't want to play their game their way. Or perhaps, I, as an editor and writer in the transsexual community (notice I say transsexual and not gender community) listened to the complaints and arguments from other transsexual people at Twenty Club meetings and from letters addressed to the club, who were either afraid or unable (because of CDer censorship) to get their words voiced elsewhere. Some of my best editorials were based upon the seeds thoughts and ideas of other transsexuals (some very well known), but as it was my name (willingly) on the byline, I knew I'd get the flack from those persons who represented the targets of those editorials. I do willingly accept all responsibility for putting forth my own voice and the voices of other true transsexuals.

There are several things at issue here. The first is the genuine need for some males to crossdress without the loss of personal identity within a ruling social structure. Need has nothing to do with reasons, because while I laboriously transcribed and rewrote the audio tapes (22 hours worth and from which IFGE has produced lucrative income and educational status) from the 1987 IFGE convention, I discovered there were indeed, many reasons given by convention attendees for this behavior.

The second thing at issue here is the type of organized structure represented by IFGE. Male dominated groups always seem to have colorful and hardworking leaders, rules, bylaws and regulations ad nauseam that exist and are enforced for the betterment and unification of the group. True transsexual groups are similar to women's groups on the other hand and exist all across the continent as small de-centralized groups, each working for the betterment of their members. Few have status or power. I may be just as stable or as off the wall as the next transsexual. I have so much status, I need a ladder to get out of bed.

The third thing at issue here is the plight, the diverse (but not really so diverse) needs and the education of and the support for the gender dysphoric or true transsexual person who is about to make a life changing decision who may or may not be served by category two above according to who you listen to.

In a recent letter to a Twenty Club officer, another club member told her that because of the March editorial blasting IFGE, the Twenty Club has been "blacklisted by Merissa and IFGE. Twenty Club members are not really welcome at the Cushing Street headquarters." What's the matter folks, doesn't anyone read the disclaimer on page two? It looks to me like the big kids on the block are finally (what took them so long?) taking their ball away from the little kids. So what are they going to do, remove the Twenty Club listing and the Twenty Minutes ad from the TV/(token)TS Tapestry? (hint, hint) The Twenty Club has been around longer than Tiffany/IFGE and will continue to operate without their help.

We believe that transsexuals, if they wish, should take a stand on things that may affect them. Twenty Minutes has stood for voicing an opposition to and concerns about and has never refused (well, almost never) to publish legitimate opposing viewpoints especially when we were the instigators. In fact, the staff of Twenty Minutes welcomes fiery viewpoints from the readers. It's good to know that TS people are alive out there. We have not produced just another boring club newsletter. We got people's attention, didn't we? Get it off your chest even if you don't have one and put all of your cards on the table so that everyone concerned will know as much as possible about anything concerning hormones, SRS and even IFGE. Changing your sex is for the transsexual more serious than crossdressing is for the male, or at least is, from the transsexual's viewpoint. I've advocated from the start that true transsexualism is different from transvestism. (Oops, I've said the "T" word) Dr. Roger Peo, a Board Certified Sexologist of Androgyny Unlimited in New York, has recognized the potential differing needs between the two groups and how this has led to problems within the larger gender community.

So while the "ladies" of IFGE may be exercising the typically male trait of 'power over others' by 'taking their coveted game ball away' from the Twenty Club (the little kids), our organization will continue to provide support and education for our kind, those who need it the most - the person seriously questioning his or her gender identity and the true transsexual who has no time for gender socializing, politics, and structured hierarchy under another roof.

Twenty Club people may be indeed like other true transsexual people. Most are no nonsense individuals, liberal minded and have no interest in IFGE. They have to be to survive since they have some serious life changing concerns on their minds. I haven't been around the scene for that long, but I've seen a good many people come into the group a little bewildered, uncertain and afraid. I've watched them take those first few steps towards gender congruity, ask questions and eventually quit or graduate. True transsexuals got hormones, counseling and SRS long before the present social/educational/outreach gender structures got their acts together. As long as there are professionals and a few dedicated peers to help the newcomer along, who needs an organization like IFGE anyway?

The true transsexual will find help alone and this arduous journey may in itself serve to weed out the wannabee people like Sarah Luiz and others. You've got the Twenty Club, The Sunday Society, Sister Mary Elizabeth's J2CP Information Service and a whole bunch more. You don't like what I write, use Twenty Minutes to line your bird cage. Maybe the new editors (coming soon) will be friendlier towards IFGE. Maybe not. Like I said, you're dealing with some liberal, no nonsense people here. No one's telling you what to do, how to act or what to say. Take your choice. You do have options. Play with IFGE, or soar with those who seek gender congruity.

MAGGIE'S DRAG

(c) 1989 by Maggie Brinley

If you happen to be watching a British film, either new or old, and the story is around Christmas time, don't be surprised if you see the upper class husband and wife characters attending a party or visiting their friends while in drag. This old English custom is called "mumming" and was described by one writer, to have spread to parts of New England. That writer obviously has never been to New England. The men don't wear any makeup or wigs, they just put on something frilly of their wife's that happens to fit and the women wear their husbands' suits.

Take the drag theme, expand it to last an entire film and what do you have? Why the delightful drag classic, the 1959 Bill Wilder film, Some Like It Hot. Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis play a couple of musicians who happen to witness the St. Valentine's Day massacre. They flee Chicago with the mob hot on their tails and disguise themselves as new members of an all female band heading by train to a club date in Miami. Tony Curtis become Josephine and Jack Lemmon is Daphne. The script is well written and the tightly acted film becomes more intense as both men fall for the band's sultry lead singer, played by Marilyn Monroe. How does a man in drag come on to a woman he has the hots for, while maintaining his air of femininity and not blowing his cover? See the film if you haven't.

Moe! Larry! Cheese! Moe! Larry! Cheese! - screams Curly in a scene from a Three Stooges film. Our three boys always seem to get into unusual situations, or appear out of place in common place scenes. In their 1938 film, Wee Wee Monsieur, they join the French army and some how get into drag as girls in a harem to survive the cruelties of the land. Everyone in the audience knows they're not real harem girls, but the actors on the screen don't notice.

If you ever see a television listing for one of the "Carry On" movies, make an effort to tape or watch it. For example, Carry On Up the Khyber, Carry On Constable, and etc. These films of the late 50's and 60's are excellent representations of Brit wit. In Carry On Constable (1960), Kenneth Williams and Charles Hawtrey play a couple of cops (constable on patrol) and have to go undercover while working on a case, while in drag of course.

Elizabeth Taylor plays Velvet Brown in the 1944 film, National Velvet. Velvet disguises herself as a male jockey with the help of Mickey Rooney so she can ride her horse in the Grand National race. The race officials frown on this kind of behavior unbecoming a girl by disqualifying "him".

In the spinoff series, The Girl From UNCLE, (from the Man from UNCLE), Boris Karloff is disguised as Mother Muffin in a 1966 episode, as the leader of a notorious spy ring.

I Want What I Want (1972) is a good film starring Anne Heywood about a boy named Roy, who as the son of a widowed father, tries to create an interesting life in a world of his own making by dressing as a woman. When his female self, Wendy, undergoes a sexual attack, Roy feels he must seek transsexual surgery to make things right.

In the 1915 silent film, A Woman, comedic star Charlie Chaplin finds himself in a nasty situation with a couple of men. They both want to do him in. Chaplin dashes upstairs to a bedroom and discovers, you guessed it, some female clothes. His transformation is nearly complete when the daughter of one of the men chasing him, discovers his disguise. With the aid of a razor, she helps him make the transformation complete. Later, Ms. Chaplin's beauty so affects the two men, they both seek her charms and favors.

Bing Crosby starred in the 1960 production of High Time. Bing plays a middle aged millionaire who returns to college for a degree. To gain membership in the Xi Delta Pi fraternity, Bing must don an elegant gown and attend an equally elegant party.

ROGER'S NOTEBOOK

by Roger E. Peo, Ph.D.

Member, Tri-Ess Professional Staff

Some interesting questions have been raised in recent newsletters from various transgender groups. Of significance are these three: Do all transgender persons have the same needs? Can any one organization meet the needs of all transgendered persons? Are transsexuals second-class citizens in the transgender community? Together these and other questions point to several rifts in what once seemed a relatively homogenous community. This and my next few columns will address these issues which can affect the gender community in potentially damaging ways.

As a therapist, I can tell you that transgendered persons do not all have the same needs. While there are often common or typical concerns, the outcome is never the same. All transgendered persons seem to be searching; they want to know who they are. Just as others who come for therapy, the transgendered person is a unique individual. With this uniqueness comes a need to have solutions that fit his/her particular circumstances. When they gain this understanding they can learn to find the right path through the maze of the future.

Outwardly the transvestite and the transsexual may appear the same but inwardly there are profound differences between them.

The cross-dresser wants to live in both the masculine and feminine gender roles. Since our society does not recognize or support such duality, conflicts are set up which must be resolved if the cross-dresser's life is to move peacefully. Some struggles within the individual are revealed as dissatisfaction with their physical body or with the expectations place on them by the society in which they live. A larger set of problems are found in the cross-dresser's relationships. With some insight and sensitivity, together with significant emotional work, the cross-dresser can have portions of both worlds.

The transsexual is not as fortunate as the transvestite because their internal conflicts are not responsive to therapy alone. Further, they often feel very isolated because their needs are more in conflict with their physical being. Their personal relationships are often full of struggles which doom them to failure. Intimate relationships collapse leaving the transsexual with little emotional support. The bright spot in this situation is that with appropriate help the transsexual can make the transition into the other gender role and become a whole person.

In some ways the transsexual and the cross-dresser each think the other has the better situation. A transsexual can "get the operation" and move to the new role where gender discomfort no longer exists. The cross-dresser does not have the intense discomfort of "being in the wrong body" so he can have the best of both worlds. Neither situation is either simple or easy. There is no magic wand. Each person has to find the right responses to their uniqueness.

If you have subjects you would like me to write about or wish to write a rebuttal, send them to P.O. Box 4887; Poughkeepsie, NY 12602 or call (914) 462-7455. All communications are confidential. (December 11, 1989)

I don't
work for anyone~~
I'm just having fun!

THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT

By: Sheila Mengert

It is January 1990, the parties are over, Christmas an extravagant memory, the Earth is iron hard in many places, and for us all, a new decade lies ahead. In spite of our dreams and resolutions we know that the mere turning of a date does not guarantee progress. Still, we cannot help feeling a sense of elation at the prospect of a decade as yet unsoiled, one last change to redeem the century. Many of us may feel a certain terror before the yawning abyss of the 21st century, if nothing else we know that somewhere across that empty plain we shall leave this world. Maybe this is why the decade of the 90's seems like a last corner in which I may hide, snuggle up to my past, decide what the meaning and definitive direction of my life is to be. It might also be a time to review our grievances or at least my own. So now join me in what I dare to call, the winter of our discontent.

In the waning days of the 1980's I find myself looking with sadness at the situation for people who are gender dysphoric. Forgive me if I am too bleak but the title of this essay should have warned you about the possible tone this essay was to take. I find that many transsexual people are locked into various symbolic gestures in order to attain legitimacy. It is as though both bodily attributes and social status were combined into a grab bag of characteristics that constitute the reassigned gender role. These elements are then assembled into a credo against which other transsexuals are judged. It would appear that the only way that some transsexuals can feel secure in their transition process is to make other transsexuals insecure in their own. I also commonly hear denunciations of other sexual minorities or subgroups of them and efforts to identify with some of the most conservative elements of straight society. In the concentration camps it was quite common for the Jewish kapos to identify with the S.S. guards and to imitate their dress and manner. This phenomenon of identification and imitation of the oppressor group is quite common. It is, however, a costly decision and one that will never allow gender dysphoric persons to be treated with respect and dignity. I understand that persons who have been through the abuse and denial that has cost us such a large part of our lives leaves many of us bitter, frightened, and insecure. I suggest, however, that we cannot grow as individuals or as a people as long as we spend our time in bitchy infighting and gossipy pronouncements on how our sisters or brothers are doing in their efforts to define a cohesive body-social image in our present sexist society. We must try to avoid efforts to symbolize legitimacy by assuming standardized female or male sex roles in an effort to be convincing as if we really need to convince anyone of anything. We are not counterfeit bills trying to pass a watchful eye, we are real people engaged in the same search for a mature identity as any other person. We need to believe in our common humanity and stand with others engaged in a similar struggle if we are to be any more than a scattered group of victims.

I believe that the first step to a healthy identity is a frank acknowledgement of who we are and what we have gone through, we must embrace our past if we are to have a future. We have in fact been victims of a cruel bio-psychological condition that may never be explained. The result of that condition is that we are deprived to varying degrees of the normal synchronized maturation process in our proper sex roles and in congruent bodies. The legacy of that deprivation is present in some form in all of us. We are in varying degrees in a process of recovery and in mourning for our lost days and nights. We are even now victims of cruel ignorance and misunderstanding. Many of us have been forced into marginal roles in society. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Many are exiles from their families. Even the most attractive and mergable of us, live in fear of discovery. (I use

mergable rather than passable to emphasize the tactic of many transsexuals to merge into a sexist society rather than standing as a witness of sexual variability to that society). This form of existence makes us social refugees rather than full citizens and full persons. I suggest that this prolongs our status as victims and insures that those who come after us will continue to face the same deprivation and abuse that we have experienced.

I am not suggesting that people engage in fits of sexual heroics and come out in unsafe ways. I am suggesting that we grow in pride and solidarity to the extent that we can acknowledge to ourselves that we are transsexual and that our unique life situation has made us historical victims of abuse and has also given us an unique opportunity to resist all forms of sexism in our society. We must try to engage in support and dialogue with others similarly oppressed, and we must resist homophobia and the oppression of women and male indoctrination under paternity. In this way we will heal as a people and bring about conditions where we are not forced into the darkness. We have too long labored under a burden of undeserved guilt. We have been exiles from our families, our society, and our own bodies. It is time we come home and set our house in order.

Some of my readers may disagree with my insistence on affirming a transsexual identity and a transsexual community awareness. I assure them that I do not question the desire to merge with society and to move on with life as a complete and secure female or male after sex reassignment. In an ideal society, transition would be smooth, surgery readily available in each community, therapy would begin in adolescence or before, family support would be there, insurance would cover surgery, and society would affirmatively aid the person in transition in recovery of social and physical integrity. This is not the case. Transsexuals are not perceived as victims of a developmental disability but as adherents of a deviant lifestyle aided by a few misguided members of the medical profession who will engage in exotic surgery as a sort of gender art form. We are in short denied the compassion and aid that would be forthcoming in any other case where a birth defect or disability made life painful, unproductive, and in many cases intolerable. We must gather together as a people as a temporary measure to insure our survival.

It was common to believe at one time that conditions like blindness or deafness were punishments on the children for the sins of their fathers or mothers. No people have ever gained freedom from ignorance and oppression by denying the very characteristic that triggered the oppression. We must not deny ourselves as a price of admission to human life. We must learn to view our condition as legitimate and as morally neutral as any other birth defect and demand the same research, counseling, and medical funding that is common in any other condition.

Sexual variability is a simple fact of human life and it is time that we as a society stopped choosing as scapegoats people who have already suffered so much and striven with such courage to discover and to embody who they are. We should be proud of our response posed by the dilemma of our existence. We have endured, now let us find ways to insure that we shall live and live fully as total members of the human community.

No essay can create a community consciousness. It will be up to us to draw upon our own talents for survival and our own abilities and education to reach out and to create a time and place where we may live with dignity and pursue our dreams. I invite that search and that response, not only from transsexual persons, but from all people of good will. A society that engages in the victimization of any minority insures its own ruin.

There appears to be a law in this world that insures that however slowly the wheels of justice turn, the oppressed are finally made freed. I have great hopes for the coming decade. I am in your company. May we reach across our divergent life experiences, find a common thread. Let us walk together and let the long years during which we have known as deeply as any people a winter of discontent find a new spring. [Copyright 1990, Sheila Mengert]

Be careful what you wish for— you may get it!

Take my advice— I'm not using it!



TEN WAYS TO READ TWENTY MINUTES FOR FREE

by Sonia

10. Write to the XX Club under an assumed name and ask for free TS literature.
9. Borrow a copy from a friend when she's done with it.
8. Say that the dog ate your copy before you could finish reading it and you need a replacement.
7. Read it over a friend's shoulder at the meeting.
6. Sneak a copy into the ladies' room from the table at the meeting.
5. Read it at Dr. Higgins office.
4. Read it as you help collate it for mailing at the XX Club office.
3. Contribute monthly columns or editorials for a free subscription.
2. Take over as editor of the newsletter.
1. Well, you don't really think we're going to give you ALL the ways to read *Twenty Minutes* without paying for it, do you? After all, we would go out of business.

(EDITOR'S NOTE...Now that we're on to you, don't think you can try any of these ideas and get away with it!)

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Dear Wendi Pierce,

Last August I had dinner with JoAnn Roberts, JoAnn's wife Betty, Paula Sinclair and several other people from Renaissance in Philadelphia. JoAnn told me then that she was resigning from the board of IFGE because of personal and other reasons. She had not been pressured by anyone. I knew at that time I was next in line for the board and then I stabbed her with a fork. I made specific reference to this in the March editorial, and I quote myself, "JoAnn Roberts has denied these allegations..." I was surprised when Merissa made these comments in front of people at IFGE headquarters that pressure was brought to bear on her from TRI-ESS members who refused to give monetary donations unless JoAnn was removed from the board.

In a private letter to me recently, Merissa accused me of being bitter, a biased militant and of lying and distorting the truth. It looks to me that Merissa has been caught in a bald faced lie herself, while possibly mouthing off to people to bolster her ego. Perhaps some of the IFGE people from distant parts of the country are not aware of Merissa's other side, because she is not always the lily white leader that most people consider her to be.

If you think IFGE has all this unity and synergism, maybe you'd better wake up and smell the coffee. There is strife within the organization, after all, IFGE is nothing special, it's just another SIG (special interest group). Strife is part of life. I can name a dozen people I spoke with at the '88 convention who badmouthed Merissa or the workings of IFGE.

Comparing Sister Mary Elizabeth to someone like Merissa is not valid. Sister Mary is a totally loving person and is involved in humanitarian issues reaching far beyond mere gender concerns. Outside of her bridge game nights, Merissa may be otherwise totally submerged in the gender community, receives income and other benefits (like a car) and has invested part of her personal finances in IFGE.

The definition of the VP award I gave in paragraph eight of the March editorial was taken right out of tapestry. It's amazing how you emotionally charged up people like to change what was actually written to something else. Sorry, but I do my homework, dearie.

Since you aren't able to approach this with logic, it's easy to pick and grab at anything within reach and to presume I am not happy with my life. Like the little ditty about the secret, "...everyone dances around the circle and tries to suppose, while the secret sits in the center and knows." You think I should apologize to Merissa? Okay, here it is. Merissa, I apologize for your being the way I perceive you to be.

Since I was elected by the community to serve the community, perhaps the fault lies with their error in judgement by choosing me. When Merissa called me in January to tell me the good news, I asked her what was expected of me? She said, "I'll let you know..." But she never did. I'm terribly sorry for letting them down by resigning from the board. My name, my reputation was now run up the flag pole with the rest of the banners. And for what? Increased credibility to IFGE?

When I was elected to the board of Tiffany, I asked when and where the meetings would be. But I was not informed and later was even chided for not having the sense to call the club and find out on my own. And when I received my always late copy of Rosebuds, many of the monthly events had gone by. Am I being overly sensitive about this, or just tired of being treated like a second class citizen?

Losing credibility fast,
Veronica Brown
Toronto, Ontario

"C" 15 (1987)
Albany, New York
April 29, 1987

To: All Issuing Offices

Subject: Change in Required Documentation for Proof of Sex Change

Procedure 4335, page 11, the amendment of a driver's license to reflect a sex change, requires that only the physician who performed the operation may sign a statement certifying that the operation occurred, and the correct gender of the applicant. Based on Counsel's opinion, effective immediately, I am revising our policy to allow an applicant to submit evidence of medical, psychological or psychiatric evaluations, with a medical determination that one gender predominates over the other. Such evidence will be acceptable as sufficient proof of true gender if submitted on physician's letterhead. Proof that an operation occurred is no longer necessary.

Procedure 4335 will be revised to reflect this change. Please advise your staff of this change.

PATRICIA B. ADDUCI
Commissioner

(EDITOR'S NOTE...Thanks to Jamie of *Crossroads* of Buffalo, NY for supplying us with a copy of this document. Any of our NY readers should mention procedure 4335 at their registry office when applying for a new driver's license during their transition. Note that this document applies only to the state of New York. If your state does not have such a directive, we urge you to write to your state motor vehicle commissioner and urge them to adopt a similar law in your state.)

TS MAYORAL CANDIDATE

AP. Yountville, CA - Things have been pretty lively around the veterans home since Terri Pohrman, a transsexual Brigitte Nielsen look-alike, started running for mayor under the banner "The Change Will Do You Good".

The former Las Vegas show girl was a regular entertainer at this California wine town before she entered the race. But the stakes have gone up because more than 700 of the town's 1800 registered voters live there.

Pohrman, a onetime female impersonator who underwent a sex-change operation in the 1970's, moved here two years ago. If elected, she says she will donate the \$180 a month mayor's salary to charity.

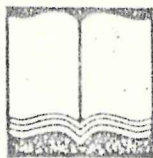
One of Pohrman's campaign goals is to get an additional 500 residents of the home registered. But Pohrman's ambitions have panicked some residents. Pohrman operates a jewelry and dress shop and hit the road last year as a sales representative. She first entered politics after the town's design review committee questioned the appropriateness of the advertising on her boutique.

City Manager Bob Myers argued that she had violated city ordinances by placing colored plastic flags around her shop and in the trees. She also had neon lights and a sandwich board sign that are illegal. The name of her shop: *Such a Deal*.

Pohrman, who appeared on the Sally Jesse Raphael show on April 9th, lost her bid for mayor.

(EDITOR'S NOTE...Reprinted from *Trans-World Bulletin*, newsletter of The Sunday Society.)

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J2CP Information Services

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J2CP INFORMATION SERVICES provides information/referral services formerly provided by the JANUS Information Facility and its predecessor, the Erickson Educational Foundation, and Renaissance: Gender Identity Services.

J2CP INFORMATION SERVICES provides an information package consisting of pamphlets concerning gender dysphoria syndrome, in particular transsexualism. This package is available for a donation of \$30.00, to cover research, printing, first class postage, and secretarial services.

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