The Tri-Ess

Femme Mirror

Volume 22 Issue 1 Winter 1997

The Official Publication of The Society for the Second Self, Inc.

The Femme Mirror is the quarterly journal of The Society for the Second Self, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Address: The Society for the Second Self, Inc., 8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104, Houston TX 77036. Submissions to **The Femme Mirror** should be sent to: **The Femme Mirror**, 8880 Bellaire B2 Ste.104, Houston, TX 77036. Letters to the Editor may be directed to Frances Fairfax in care of **The Femme Mirror.**

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1) **The Femme Mirror** will not publish the last name of any Tri-Ess member without the expressed written consent of the member, unless the surname is known to be a pseudonym.

2) We encourage all contributors to the **Mirror** to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.

3) We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.

4) Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner. Thank you.

Frances Fairfax

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IF YOU ARE MOVING

PLEASE

NOTIFY

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

DONNA [redacted]
P.O. BOX 597859
CHICAGO IL 60659

A Note of Thanks

from your Mirror Staff to all of you who contribute your articles, photos, cartoons, poems, as well as your typing and envelope-stuffing skills, to enrich the lives of your sisters. This is YOUR journal. You, the readers, are the source of its contents and the reason for its existence. Ya'll are doing great! Just keep it coming now, hear?

Table of Contents

4 - Executive Director's Page - Carol Beecroft
5 - Tri-Ess Is Not A Bunny Slope - Jane Ellen Fairfax
7 - Letters to the Editor
11- A Response to Tri-Ess' Critics - Virginia Prince
13 - Imposter - Vicki Thomas
16 - Chapter News Update
21 - A Few Words from Our Membership Director
22 - Basic Human Rights - Melissa [redacted]
25 - A Message to All Tri-Ess Sisters - Melissa [redacted]
26 - 2nd Int'l Congress on Crossdressing, Sex and Gender
27 - Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are - Aere
29 - Christ and Crossdressing - Jane Ellen Fairfax
30 - Allison and Phoebe's Excellent Adventure - Allison M.
33 - Puttin' on the Ritz - Holiday 96 - Diane [redacted]
36 - Tri-Ess List Server
37 - Beta Gamma - A Tri-Ess Story - Sofronia Anne Strong
42 - Building a Unique Relationship - Dr. Peggy Rudd
44 - Coming Out to Your Friends and Relatives - Alice H.
45 - Carol Ann's Corner - Carol Ann [redacted]
46 - Hey, Good Looking Section - Cosmetic Q & A
47 - Fashion Forum - Donna Marie
48 - Go Easy on Your Feet - Georgia Ann
49 - Health Watch - News Briefs Staff
50 - Food for Thought
51 - Gender Wars - Paula G. Licata/ Carol Ann [redacted]
52 - Long Coats
53 - Women Face Marketplace Discrimination - Pam Adams
54 - Passing Perfect #8 - Gianna Eveling Israel
55 - Health Matters - Sheila Kirk, MD
56 - Book Review - Carol Ann [redacted]
57 - Tri-Ess Board of Directors
58 - Ask the Dermatologist - Jane Ellen Fairfax, MD
59 - Red Rock Adventure - Deborah [redacted]
61 - Tri-Ess Chapters and Forming Chapters
63 - Blackmail, Part 2 - Debbie [redacted]
64 - Tri-Ess Pen Pals
65 - Russian Dressing - Diane [redacted]
66 - Advertising
71 - CD Dilemmas - Paula
72 - Myself

About Our Cover Girl

Karen (MN-4348-L), of whom it has been asked, "That's a guy?" works in computer technical support and makes a stunning fashion statement when seen with her beautiful Samoyed dog, Frosty.

She made her first appearance at Beta Gamma at the meeting in September 1993 at which Beta Gamma made its charter request. She was snagged and reeled in off America On Line by another charter member. Since then she has achieved the only perfect attendance record in the chapter's history. She has served two terms as chapter Vice-President and currently serves as chapter librarian.

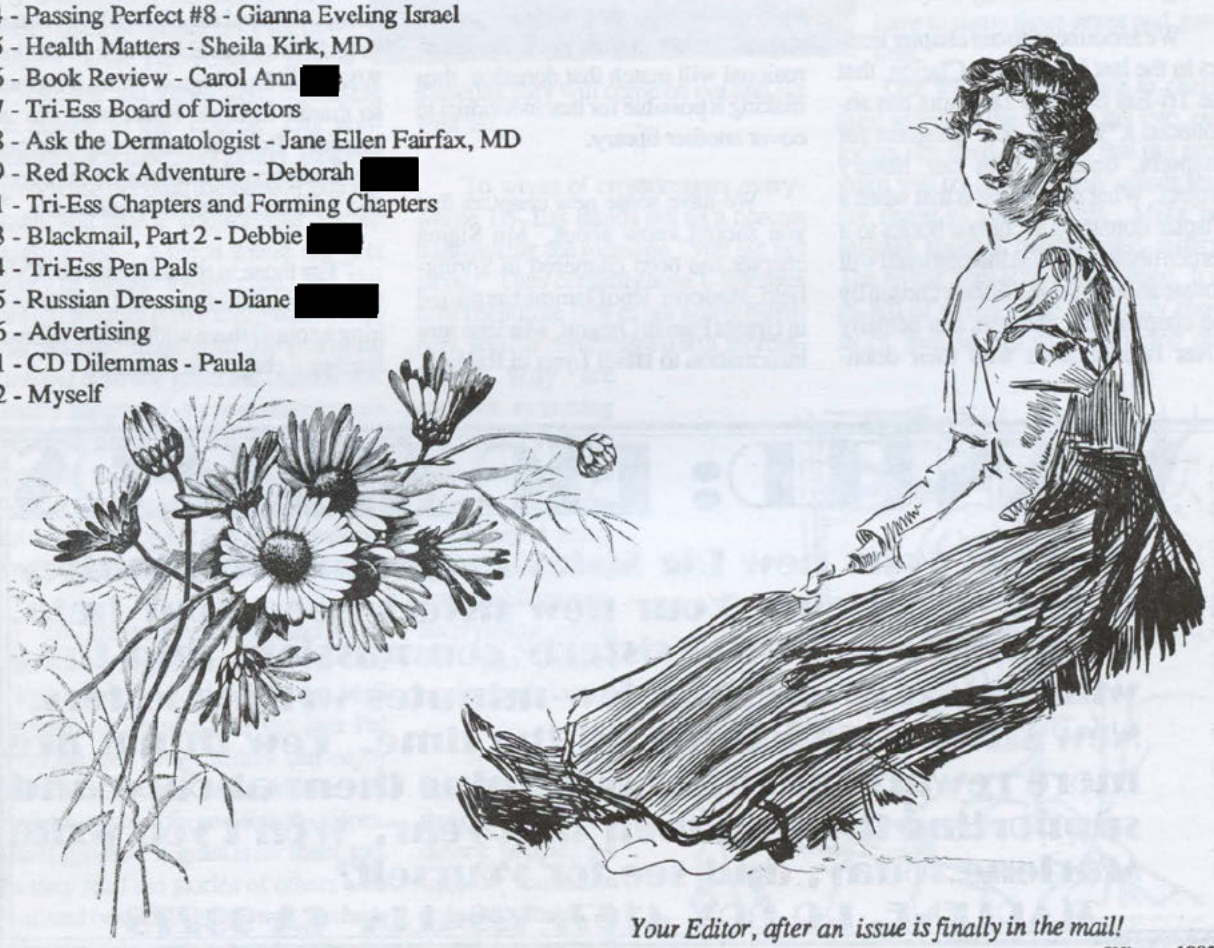
She formerly played the tuba in the University of Minnesota marching band, and is adept on keyboard instruments as well.

In 1996 Karen was elected Sweetheart of Beta Gamma as exemplary of her finely wrought femme presentation, ever stylish and fashionable. Her 24 inch waist is the envy of her sisters.

Karen is also the chapter's political scientist in residence, forecasting elections with unerring accuracy. Her forecasts for the 1996 elections, however, were not exactly 100%. (Thank goodness!)

We at Beta Gamma feel quite honored to have our sister Karen as a Femme Mirror Cover Girl.

P.S. Photo credit to Sharon (MN-4041-O).



Your Editor, after an issue is finally in the mail!

Executive Director's Page

Dear friends,

I hope that you will find that 1997 will be a year full of understanding and the ability to crossdress many times. I hope that our wives will find their husbands developing their feminine sides so that they will be better husbands and fathers. As men, we need to always remember that we are asking a lot of our wives when it come to understanding and acceptance. So, to all our male members, I hope that you will resolve that you will be a better person because you ARE trying to develop the feminine side of your persnoality. It was Dustin Hoffman, in the movie Tootsie, who said that he was a better man for having been a woman. I hope that 1997 will find many of our men agreeing with Dustin.

We announced to our chapter leaders in the last issue of the Clarion, that the Tri-Ess Board of Directors has announced a "two for one" program for chapters, dealing with our library project. What this means is that when a chapter donates a set of our books to a certain library, Tri-Ess International will donate another set to a library chosen by the chapter. So chapters can actually cover two libraries with their donations, which certainly makes it possible to cover more libraries and more library patrons. This program will also cover individuals who donate a set of our special books to a library. Tri-Ess International will match that donation, thus making it possible for that individual to cover another library.

We have some new chapters that you should know about. Mu Sigma chapter has been chartered in Springfield, Missouri. Rho Gamma has started in Grants Pass in Oregon. Marlene sent information to Heidi Lynn in Raleigh, North Carolina, to help her start a chapter there. Likewise, the same was done for Kristy in the Detroit area. Dianne in the Baltimore area is also working on a new chapter there. And in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Alice has been sent information that will assist her to develop a chapter.

Our Tulare office donated another eight boxes of material to the Bullough Collection at Cal State Northridge. So keep sending your chapter newsletters because they will eventually end up in the Bullough Collection. Future researchers on crossdressing will be grateful for your assistance.

I talked on several radio shows recently, so thanks to Daria and Paul at Station WWBB in Providence, Rhode Island. I talked for almost 15 minutes. In addition, I was able to talk on Station WKEE in Huntington, West Virginia, so thanks to Chris Ross, who was so helpful. Both of these radio stations gave our phone number out to inquirers, and I did receive some phone calls.

For those in the Sacramento, California, area, Marlene and I will be visiting a couple there with the intention of starting a chapter in that area.

WANTED: BIG SISTERS

MARLENE, your new Big Sister Program Coordinator, needs your help. Your new sisters need your help. All it takes is a little sisterly compassion, and the willingness to spend a few minutes writing letters. New sisters are joining all the time. Few things are more rewarding than welcoming them aboard and supporting them in their first year. Won't you write Marlene today, and see for yourself?

MARLENE, PO BOX 4167, VISALIA CA 93278

Tri-Ess Is Not a Bunny Slope

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

To any novice skier a bunny slope is a nice thing. You can feel the exhilaration of gliding down the slope, the wind beneath your skis. You get a foretaste of the fun skiing can be. But everything has been rigged for your safety. A nice soft chair lift sets you gently down. You look down on a gradual slope that ends back at the safety of the lodge. Along the course moguls are low and few, and there are no hairpin turns. It is hard to hurt yourself on a bunny slope. Some of the wishful thinkers in our community consider Tri- Ess to be a bunny slope, a comfortable place where novices go until they are ready to graduate to other types of groups. They could not be more wrong. Tri- Ess is not a bunny slope.

This is not to say that Tri- Ess is not a most appropriate place for newcomers. It is! Newcomers' groups provide the "ski instruction," orienting the novice to the course. Our non-crossdressed meetings gently pick her up and ease her onto the slope. Looking down, she sees a comfortable, secure meeting site - a place where she gets plenty of tender loving care. Tri- Ess and its chapters provide big sisters who will ski the slope with the emerging member until she gains her confidence. Gently supported, the new sister knows she does not have to come barreling down the mountain, but can explore the slope at her own pace. While Tri- Ess is not a bunny slope, it has a bunny slope. And it is one of the best in the business!

Tri-Ess is for home dressers, those who want to stay at the lodge. And what a lodge we provide! With the Mail Forwarding Service and the Pen Pal Program, our lodge sisters can enjoy warm friendships. In the Mirror they read stories about those skiing the slopes. The Big Sister Program is for them, too. As they read the stories of others who ventured out, ... who knows? Perhaps someday they will come on out and ski with us!

To wives of crossdressers everywhere Tri- Ess stands out as a beacon transmitting the message, "you are not alone." They certainly aren't. Spouses now constitute 18% of our active members, and the percentage is still increasing. Why are spouses swarming our slopes? Perhaps they feel comfortable with our family- oriented atmosphere and sleaze-free publications. Everything about Tri- Ess exudes quality and class.

In presenting crossdressers and their spouses as ordinary people, we take a common sense approach, to which our wives can relate. There are only two sexes, male and female, and only two genders, masculine and feminine. I am reminded of the Justin Wilson story about the time two Cajuns walked into the Sheriff's Office. "Sheriff," they pleaded, "we want another month to hunt duck." Replied the sheriff, "What you gonna name dat month?" Fixing the sheriff with a suspicious eye, the Cajuns replied, "What you mean, what we gonna name dat month?" "You Cajuns already hunt duck twelve month' out of the year already. If you want another month to hunt duck, you gonna have to name that month."

Similarly, if the pseudo scientists in our community believe there are more than two sexes and more than two genders, they are gonna have to name those sexes and genders.

Our wives do not have to check their values at the door to get into our lodge, nor need they fear that our program will try to twist their minds into the shape of soft pretzels. Make no mistake about it, brothers and sisters. The wives' trail is no bunny slope. It is as full of twists as an O'Henry short story, and as full of unexpected ob-

stacles and nasty surprises as a Tom Clancy thriller. But with S.P.I.C.E., the couples' programs and the Sweetheart Connection, Tri- Ess has tried to remove the stumps and lower some of the moguls. It is, nevertheless, a daunting trail. But it is wide enough for two people to explore together.

Tri- Ess is for the experienced crossdresser who has overcome guilt and is ready to be out in public. Several of our chapters enjoy monthly gatherings out on the town. Our more confident members appear on radio and television, before police academies, university classes and Crisis Hotline volunteers. This coming year will find Tri-Ess sisters working in the halls of Congress to achieve our human rights.

As we speak, our Tri- Ess sister, Dana, is at the National Council on Family Relations in Kansas City promoting acceptance of crossdressers and their loved ones, educating the professionals who will deal with crossdressers and their families in time of crisis. Our sister Judy has just come from that convention. Judy, Leslie, Dana, and many other Tri- Ess sisters who work for our acceptance by society, deserve our highest praise.

For the last two years Tri- Ess sisters have staffed outreach booths at conventions for the National Association of Social Workers, the National Association of Family- Based Services, and the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Teachers, handing out thousands of pieces of literature, networking with other transgendered groups, building a resource list of helping professionals knowledgeable and sympathetic to our issues. We are particularly proud of what our members do out in public. Do you want a course with lots of speed, where you will really feel good coming down that mountain? Get your lift ticket right here at Tri- Ess!!

Now there are some in Genderland who like to denigrate other groups, to play politics when there is constructive work to be done. You will never see Tri- Ess involved in these distractions. Our Mirror sets a shining example for the rest of our community. We will not publish any ad hominem argument or bash any gender- gifted colleague or organization. Others are beginning to follow our lead. There are crossdressers to support, marriages to renew, fulfillment to bring into human lives. Brothers and sisters, we didn't come here to throw snowballs. We came to ski!

Tri-Ess is for mature crossdressers who have accepted the challenge to integrate their masculinity and femininity into their whole personalities and keep them in balance. These are the ladies who have schussed past the guilt, flown over the mogul of selfishness, and skied the course toward self- actualization. These are the sisters whose femininity goes deeper than lacy clothes. It is these sisters who will enjoy the Tri-Ess experience at its most sublime. In their souls they carry the key of sisterhood - a helping hand and a feeling heart.

You see these sisters everywhere in Tri- Ess, tenderly teaching the newcomer how to put on her skis, accompany her on the lift and down the course. For these sisters the reward is seeing those first tentative turns, that sunny smile that says "I can!" Supporting that sister peeking out her secrecy and letting her know that she is not alone - that is Tri- Ess at work. Laboring over a dictionary so that the Tri- Ess message of love can be spread in many tongues - that is what Tri-Ess is about. The thrill of publishing in the Mirror, the first time out of a sister who just last month was too scared - that is the triumph of Tri- Ess. That smile of love returned is the miracle that remains ever young.

No, Tri-Ess is not a bunny slope. It is a whole ski resort with fun and fulfillment for every crossdresser and spouse. Okay, ladies, let's get down that mountain!

Letters to the Editor

"What's In A Name?"

Dear sisters,

In the Fall issue of the Femme Mirror, Melody [redacted] has an article titled "What's In A Name?" At the conclusion she invited others to tell how they got their femme names. I decided to reply because I have never met a girl who got her name the way I did. I WAS BORN WITH IT.

When my parents knew they were about to have a child, they selected two names. My father, who had a talent for sketching, prepared an announcement of the upcoming birth of their child, which they sent to friends and family.

The announcement was a sketch of a yellow stork flying over a roof top, with the message below that on or about May 15th, 1924, Thomas (last name) or Marcia (last name) would be born to Richard and Alice (last name). Little did they know that both a boy and a girl would be born to them that day!

As early as Thomas can remember, he wished that Marcia had been born instead of him. He dressed like her from a very early age, and from age sixteen began going out in public as Marcia. Now retired, he has allowed Marcia to be the dominant personality, and at age 72 is enjoying more than ever being the female child his parents never realized they had.

Fondly,
Marcia
MI-2949-T

EDITORIAL POLICY

The FEMME MIRROR will not publish any material that bashes any crossgendered person or support organization, nor will it publish any ad hominem argument.

Security Considerations

Hi Gang!

Here's a subject very dear to my heart. It really scares me how some girls walk where angels fear to tread. (Jennifer always said that some girls seem to have their brains drain out whenever they put on a wig. Guys who normally have common sense totally lack it when en femme.)

I began my business, "Tanya Brown's Prosthesis Emporium," back in 1988. Since then, I have received catalog inquiries from hundreds of crossdressers. It amazes me how many put their complete and total trust in a person who is no more than a name in an advertisement. Those who advertise in the Femme Mirror are generally safe. However, the world is full of people whose sole purpose in life is to prey on others, especially people with something to hide - like crossdressers. And some of us walk right into their hands.

What I'm alluding to here is the amazing number of crossdressers who write to me for a catalog and put on the return address "Joe and Cindy Smith, 1234 Anystreet Rd., Anytown, PA 45678." Then, just to add to the danger, they list their home phone number inside!

A few years back there was a fellow who advertised in other crossdressers' magazines some sort of a contact service for crossdressers. The truth was he was simply after a name base to use in a blackmail scam. He was rapidly discovered and disappeared, but reappeared a short time later with a new name and a new scam. That was also discovered and reported. We haven't heard of him for a while, but there's always a chance he Ilike pond scum) will float to the surface again.

If you are Joe (Josephine) Smith, crossdresser, do you really want someone like that to have your home address and telephone number? Do you really want to take a chance on your wife receiving a letter or call from some vulture out to make money off your deepest secret? Some vendors sell their mailing lists to others. Do you really want your real name and address moving around like that to who knows where?

PLEASE, ladies, give your feminine self a different last name! PLEASE take the fwe moments and bear the (slight) expense of renting a Post Office Box! And PLEASE, never give out your phone number except to close friends! These acts will do more to insure your security than anything else.

Have no fear of filling out the paper work at the Post Office. All they ask for is your identity and the names of any persons who will be receiving mail at the box. List yourself and your "sister." Don't worry about your sister having a different last name. Females do get married and divorced! Anyhow, the P.O. doesn't care what the names are. They just need to know who will be receiving mail. Additionally, the identity of box owner and mail recipient(s) comes under the Privacy Act, as long as the box is not used as the address of a business. Someone cannot walk into the Post Office and find out who rents Box 1234. What you are doing is legal, your identity is safe, and you have a secure and anonymous place to receive mail in your femme name.

Now, if a vulture should obtain your info, all he has is "Josephine Jones, P.O. Box...." instead of "Joe & Cindy Smith, 1234 Anystreet..." Should a vendor sell their mailing list to someone else, all that happens is you get another catlog at the P.O. Box instead of having to explain to the wife and kids why dad is getting a catalong from "Wanda's Wicked Wigs." (On that note, I should mention I do not keep a mailing list at all. I burn your letter after sending you a catalog.)

I am speaking from "Been There; Done That; Got the T-Shirt!" A few years back I received some very unwanted mail. God knows where the person got my address. I was saved by my Post Office Box from having to make up some extremely creative excuses. Unless you enjoy coming up with creative excuses on a split second's notice, change your last name, get a P.O. Box, and NEVER give your phone number to a stranger. Wrinkles and grey hair come soon enough without adding to their causes!

Love,
Tanya[redacted]
Alpha Omega Chapter

A Few Words From Your It's Time America! Representative

Ed. Note: This letter was originally transmitted to the Tri-Ess subscribers on Kymberleigh Richards' Cross-Connection.

Hello Sisters,

It's really nice to have this service available to discuss not only problems but also to share the good part of this gift that we've been given. And hopefully make a few new friends in the process.

I'm politically involved in that I represent Tri-Ess on the board of It's Time America!, I'm the Director at Large for the Southern region. From time to time you'll probably see some postings from me giving you advance notice of national events. As my first post I'll attach a letter I attempted to send to each Tri-Ess member through their chapter contacts. If you are a believer in Murphy's Law then you'll understand why you haven't seen it yet. I managed to miss more newsletters and create more confusion in my first attempt than I even thought was possible. Even though it talks about completing certain tasks during November and December, those tasks are always important. If you know of any Trans gendered person who is not a Tri-Ess member, would you please pass the attached along to them? Thank you.

Now, on to another topic. There were several good articles in the Fall issue of the Femme Mirror from the wife's perspective. "The Case for Focused Groups" by Marilyn Frank goes right to the heart of why Tri-Ess should remain a "closed" group for heterosexual crossdressers and their wives/girl friends. Don't misunderstand my point, I'm by no means anti-transsexual, nor am I homophobic. My political work has placed me in contact with several transsexuals, both MTF and FTM.

But the one that really hit home was " 'A' Is For Abandoned". It seems natural for every crossdresser that is "newly out" to think that they are really a transsexual. It happened to me; fortunately, I was in a position to put the brakes on and do some serious soul searching and self discovery before I started down a path that I wasn't ready to travel.

We give compliments on how well a sister looks, or give advice on makeup, eye shadow, etc., but we rarely attempt to help a sister understand who they really are, which to me, should be the number one priority of a support group. This wife has been very deeply hurt, and I believe that part of the responsibility for her pain falls on some local group. We try to tip-toe around people's feelings instead of talking openly and honestly about these issues. We do more damage by not talking about these issues than we realize.

How many chapters fall into the category of "social" rather than "support" group? By social, I mean that the primary purpose of the meeting is to go shopping, go to dinner, go to a local club, etc. By support I mean that time is set aside for a speaker on all aspects of crossdressing, makeup, wigs, deportment, voice, family, legal issues, etc.

How many chapters maintain a list of therapists that are well versed in transgender issues, especially those relating to the family? One of my 1997 goals is to start to develop this list of therapists. (I'll be asking for your help on this one later in 1997.) I guess I was rather naive when I first joined because I thought this would be available. I can go to over a dozen web sites on the Internet and get a list of therapists and surgeons if I were a transsexual.

I'd like to know what your expectations of a chapter are and how your chapter measures up to your expectations. Mine falls solely in the social category and the monthly meeting is considered support because members get to crossdress.

I appologize for writing as much as I have, but "Abandoned" really got to me as I felt her pain.

Melissa
NC-4303-D

P.S. Here's the letter I tried to distribute earlier. Remember, even though it talks about November and December, it's not too late! Please do what you can to help.

Dear Sisters,

On Wednesday, November 6, 1996, an historic meeting took place at the Washington, DC headquarters of the Human Rights Campaign. What made this meeting historic was that the group that met with representative of the Human Rights Campaign was comprised of virtually every spectrum of the Transgender Community. Represented were MTF crossdressers, FTM crossdressers, MTF transsexuals, FTM transsexuals, bigenders and fully transgendered persons and People of Color.

The purpose of this meeting was to gain recognition for our community by having the Proposed Gender Identity Amendment be included as part of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

To accomplish this you have a very important role to play. What I'm about to ask you to do may seem difficult and even impossible, but think of the strides that have been made by those brave sisters [and brothers] who stepped

forward to open doors and remove barriers for us. I'm asking you to step forward and help remove a barrier, employment discrimination. You can do it! If you have a TG or TG friendly friend who is not a member of a Tri-Ess chapter, please forward this to them.

If you have ever been discriminated against by an employer or potential employer we would like you to send a brief account of your personal horror story of TG employment discrimination to Jessica Xavier at [redacted]. Please "paste" it into the e-mail message and do not send as an attached file. Donwloading all of these is very time consuming. Please send a cc to Phyllis Frye at [redacted]. If you cannot send it via email, send it to me: Melissa [redacted], P.O. Box 10516, Charlotte, NC 26212-5674 and I'll forward it to the above coordinators. We need your personal horror story by the end of November.

Whether you have a personal story of TG employment discrimination or not, **we need you to meet with your local member of Congress or Senator.** Meeting with your local Member of Congress or Senator is a significant key. When you call, just ask for an appointment. This is YOUR elected Representative in YOUR home district, and these are YOUR two elected Senators in YOUR state. No matter what YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET IN TO SEE YOUR REPRESENTATIVE. And if your state is not over populous, you should also get to meet with at least one of your Senators.

If you are closeted, then go in drab if you must and do not reveal what you want to talk about until you are in with her or him. Then come out. PLEASE DON'T PULL OUT THE BABY-DOLL PHOTOS OR THE 8 INCH HEEL PHOTOS. In fact, it is best not to show any photos. Talk to them about your fear or experience of losing work solely because you are TG. And if your spouse is supportive, remind the Member that your spouse could also lose her job if you were discovered.

Will they out you? I make no guarantees. But elected officials do not like to make enemies of a person who votes in their district.

Let me give you a story about an anti-gay Senator from a rural state. He was visited in the same fashion as above by one of our sisters and was so amazed to learn that one of us even lived in his state, that the conversation remained courteous and informative for almost three times as long as originally scheduled. while some "important" people were left cooling their heels in the lobby.

What do we need at this time? We need those of you who will do this to let us know who you are and who your newly elected or re-elected Representative and Senators are BEFORE THE END OF NOVEMBER. We will supply you with info — not immediately, but before your meeting. You will report back BEFORE THE END OF DECEMBER. We will give copies of this info to our lobbying contacts who will compare it to who they know to be key House and Senate folks in the ENDA fight. From that information our lobbying contacts will again meet with these same key House and Senate folks in DC. The concern is (a) if this is a past ENDA supporter, will this person still vote for ENDA with TG in it, or (b) if this is a new Rep. or Senator or has simply not supported ENDA before, will she or he support it now with TG in it?

I know that I've already asked a lot of you, but there is one more very important activity that you can perform. **The 3rd National TG Event in DC will be 23-25 February.** There is no planned media coverage. If it shows, we will respond, but again, none is planned. What counts is getting your message one on one to the Members of Congress from YOUR district. That is what really counts and nothing else. I invite each and everyone of you to make plans to come in February. If you need for us to send our information sheet, simply let us know. You can get an information sheet by emailing [redacted] or mail your request to ICTLEP, Inc., P.O. Drawer 35477, Houston, TX 77235-5477.

If you do not have a personal horror story or cannot visit your US Senator or US Representative, there is one last thing that you can do. This request is not difficult. **Simply commit to a donation of $10 a month to the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP).** This is the organization that is on the front lines for each of us. Your donation could pay the transportation for a sister that is able to make these visits, your donation could make it possible for ICTLEP to provide quicker response to a sister [or brother] losing her [or his] job, having her [or his] children taken away because she [or he] is a crossdresser, etc., your donation will make it possible to assist with cash grants to attorneys who will take on difficult but winnable and precedent setting trial cases (it could be your case), hire a part-time Washington, DC lobbyist to monitor transgender legal issues, expand the small but effective working relationship with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, feminist, people of color, and other legal organizations for the inclusion of transgender issues in planning and moving towards greater freedom, and finally your donation could make it possible for ICTLEP to do so much more as the need arises. A donation of $10 a month is a small amount to give to help remove that cloud of guilt and secrecy that hangs over all of our heads.

I apologize for asking so much from you during the busiest months of the year, November and December. Unfortunately, Congress has its own schedule and we MUST be ready to lobby in January to have TG's included in ENDA.

Sincerely,

Melissa [redacted]
NC-4303-D

To post a message for distribution to all Tri-Ess list subscribers, send it to [redacted]

To reach the listowner, send e-mail to [redacted]

For listserv assistance, send the message HELP to [redacted]

Singles' Activities

Greetings to all sisters!

My name is Martina, and I have been a member of the Theta Upsilon Gamma chapter of Tri-Ess here in Las Vegas NV for just over a year now.

One of our newer members, Paula, had a great idea recently of forming a singles group for those of us who want to get out enfemm more than the usual twice a month.

This is not for single members only of course. Anyone interested in joining the new activities which will include movies, dinning, gambling, shopping, and what ever else our sisters here have had the desire to do, but without their significant others. Thus the name singles group.

If any of you have tried this in your chapters, or think this is a grand idea, please respond directly to [redacted] or to our chapter president, Debbie at [redacted]

Sincerely,
Your sister,

Martina

This letter was received via Cross-Connection's Tri-Ess List Server.

To post a message for distribution to all Tri-Ess list subscribers, send it to [redacted]

To reach the listowner, send e-mail to [redacted]

For listserv assistance, send the message HELP to [redacted]

Disclaimer

The opinions and views expressed in the Femme Mirror are those of the respective contributors and do not necessarily represent the views or official policies of The Society for the Second Self, its Officers and Board Members.

The "A" Wife Article

This is a response to the "A" wife letter in the Fall 96 Femme Mirror. I myself am a crossdresser and I am definitely getting deeper into it all the time. I don't think I can halt or cut back on my dressing. As the Lord knows, I have tried, and the Lord hasn't been able to help me yet.

I will be praying for her and her kids and her husband, too, a this is a more common occurrence with crossdressers today than most of us would admit. Maybe somehow her husband will see the destructive nature of his addiction, destructive to his family and himself, but as we all know, the prognosis is not good.

Believe it or not, when I went to my first Tri-Ess meeting, I pictured a bunch of men helping each other try to quit. I was surprised and stupidly naive, but I kept going to meetings and honing my dressing techniques as we all do. There is nobody who loves dressing more than I do, but I know it is becoming more and more an erotic thing. There, I said it! I know I can't be satisfied just dressing and must do other things. Where will it end? I haven't a clue at this point, but we all know what the ultimate step is.

I am becoming convinced some of the therapists embraced by the community exploit us and maybe even delight in emasculating us as males. Is this dangerous? Possibly, yes, since in our state of mind we are easily manipulated.

If you print this letter, I know there will be many who disagree with me, which is fine. I would like to hear from you. Remember, of course, I saw many positive things about "coming out."

Dear Lady ("A" wife), if it's not too late, try one more time with your husband, but tell him he must stop totally. And don't you be sweet and docile about it. After all, this is the most severely addictive thing you will probably ever face. There are many who face this battle every day.

Sincerely,
Janie IL-4465-P

A Special Letter From Judy Daniels

Dear Sisters and Chapters,

This is a special letter. I wanted to pass on word of some sisters who should be in our prayers and our thoughts at this time. Their names and Tri-Ess numbers are:

Diane
Diane (the crossdresser) CO-2387-L
Susan (the wife) CO-9061-L

These sisters are undergoing a serious medical crisis. They have recently been informed that Susan must undergo a dual organ transplant (kidney and pancreas). The wait for a donor is usually about one year. In the meantime, Susan must endure hours of dialysis daily.

Diane and Susan are wonderful people. I have had the privilege to visit with them there in Colorado on several occasions. They have been leaders of the Delta Chapter for years, and have always gone far beyond the call of duty.

I want to ask each of you to inform your chapter members of Susan's condition and to send a card, flowers or other appropriate remembrance to the family. If any member is in a position to help defray medical costs, I'm sure that would be greatly appreciated too. Please talk to your members and let's show our support for these dear sisters in need, Diane and Susan.

Sincerely,
Judy Daniels

A Response to Tri-Ess' Critics

by Virginia Prince, Ph.D.

In recent months, the criticism oft-leveled against Tri-Ess - that it is "exclusionary" or "discriminatory" against transsexuals - has resurfaced. As co-founder of Tri-Ess, and having weathered these attacks many, many times in the past, I want you to know something of the organization's history and philosophies in hopes that you will better understand what "they" are criticizing and (I hope) realize they are "barking up the wrong tree."

As most of you know, Tri-Ess is an organization *for* heterosexual crossdressers. It is not an organization *against* anyone else - gay, bisexual or transsexual. The fact that Tri-Ess does not (knowingly) accept members of these other three groups says absolutely nothing derogatory to or about them. It simply says that we concentrate our efforts on hetersexual crossdressers. I take complete personal responsibility for that policy because I conceived it back in 1962 when I founded Tri-Ess' predecessor organization, F.P.E., whose initials stood for Full Personality Expression. This meant that we here helping member to deal with and express both aspects of their personality, not just the one corresponding to their genital anatomy.

I formed F.P.E. from subscribers to Transvestia, which was the first magazine dedicated to those males who crossdressed. I founded both and F.P.E. because I wanted to help other males like myself. I had "been there and done that" for a number of years, so I realized what all other crossdressers were going through. I felt that I might be able to help them. In those days most all of them thought that they were the "only ones in the world." Therefore, I reasoned that a magazine dealing exclusively with their problems, desires and fears would help them. Learning about others was great, but actually meeting them was something else, so an organization was the answer.

But I was in my second marriage by the, having lost the first because of crossdressing. So I realized that any married crossdresser's biggest problem was his wife. I wrote my first book, The Transvestite and His Wife, to try to explain this to wives. Also, to have a functional organization you need members and meetings. I knew it would be nice if wives became sufficiently open minded that they would accompany their crossdresser husbands to meetings. But, since their biggest fear was that their husband might turn out to be either a homosexual or planning on having sexual reassignment surgery some day, it wouldn't do to rub salt into that potential wound. I didn't want a wife to come and then discover that the "girl" on her right was talking about her boyfriend, while the one on the other side was discussing having sex change surgery. That would drive the wife away for good and probably assist in the breakup of the marriage. The wife could hardly be blamed for reasoning that if the people her husband regarded as friends and members of the same society were gay or candidates for sexual reassignment surgery, it increased the probability that her husband might be leaning in the same direction.

So what to do about it? It seemed very reasonable to me that if we had no gay or transsexual members, it might reassure the wives that crossdressers like their husbands were very regular guys and that there was no reason for alarm. So I laid down that rule in the very beginning. Over the years I - and subsequently Carol Beecroft and I - conducted several straw polls to find out the membership's feelings about retaining that policy, versus opening up the group to all comers as most of the other groups in the trans world did. It was always overwhelmingly "leave the rule alone, don't touch it." Several even said that if we made Tri-Ess an open group, they would drop out of it. So we kept the rule in the past and we maintain it today.

This leads me to a certain often overlooked difference between an open and a selective (or focused) group. That is that F.P.E., and subsequently Tri-Ess, were designed to help crossdressers to live with their desires and get rid of the three monkeys of guilt, share and fear that ride on all crossdressers' backs. We could do that because the groups were homogeneous. That is, the main problems were common in one degree or another to all the members. Homosexuals and transsexuals have a variety of other problems, personal, psychological and financial. I did not in the beginning and I do not now feel that I could understand gayness and transsexualism well enough to be able to be of much help to such people. Thus I concentrated my activities, my publication and my organization on the group I did understand and felt I could help because I was part of it.

On the other hand, open groups are not so much "help" oriented, and their functions are more social and perhaps educational. That is not to say that Tri-Ess does not have social functions and purposes, or that open group members

may not get individual help from other members. But no other organization has attempted a national convention specifically for wives of crossdressers; Tri-Ess did, and it is called SPICE. We also publish a newsletter providing counseling for wives.

Our quarterly magazine (The Femme Mirror) is almost as thick as IFGE's Transgender Tapestry, but it is not full of personal ads and a group index as Tapestry is. We are a family oriented organization, and as such we do not want to make family life any more difficult than it may already be. That is why we select members on the basis of their heterosexuality. We do not exclude gays and transsexuals as we are often accused of doing. We just don't select them in, because they don't match our philosophy.

As a kind of parallel example: People with heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis or paraplegia each have their own types of problems. People who set out to personally or organizationally help members of one group do not attempt to understand and help the otherss. You just can't do everything for everybody, so Tri-Ess simply concentrates on straight crossdressers.

Now we come to current times. It is taken for granted that we have what is called a movement, or a community. But we are not really a community; rather, we are a coalition made up of straight crossdressers, gay crossdressers, just plain gays and lesbians, bisexuals, male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals, and numerous satellite groups like the fetishists, sadomasochists, bondage folk, etc. Since there are problems of common interest to the constituent groups in the "Transgender Community," we should join forces to deal with these, and let each of the constituent groups go their own ways on everything else.

An obvious area of common concern is education about the various human types that make up our coalition, in order to minimize the rejection that the rest of society heaps on all of us. We should also be concerned about various laws that restrict our rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," naturally including the right to present ourselves as we wish, to not be discriminated against in housing, jobs, medical care, social privileges and legal limitations. There is a vast area that all groups in our (non) community can cooperate on for the benefit of all.

But what do we have in actuality? We have those on the one hand advocating and celebrating diversity - witness the new IFGE Diversity Award presented last year to American Airlines - the attempt to integrate people of various faiths, ethnic backgrounds, religions, etc., into common, mutually beneficial activities, policies, communities, etc. Then we have the fundamentalists who have their own vision of what is right and what our goals should be. In short, there is a verbal battle between those who want room for everybody under the same tent, but leave each group in that tent the right to "do its own thing" as long as it doesn't infringe on the rights of others (this could be called Unity with Diversity) and those who think that to fight the common opponent we should all be alike in membership and other policies.

All kinds of fundamentalists have one thing in common - they are "right" and you had better see the light and join up with them. In the gender world they push the concept that the only "right" way to have a group is an open one where every type is welcome. Thus the gender fundamentalists feel that Tri-Ess has no business dealing with one portion of the coalition and not dealing with all the others too. In short, Tri-Ess should change its focus, from the one segment that it can help to every group, most of which it is not in a position to understand or help in any significant way.

The Society for the Second Self is not only the oldest but the largest group in the tent, and it has brought more help to more members than any other group. I wish the fundamentalists would occupy themselves with the more pressing problems that affect everyone, and stop trying to tie Tri-Ess into all the open groups. I have nothing against the so-called "open groups" - let them serve in their own way. But in the interests of diversity let there be one organization that deals with straight crossdressers. After all, the FTM group is not hassled for limiting its membership to those who qualify.

Even members who belong to open groups should appreciate the help Tri-Ess has given to so many fearful, just-out-of-the-closet crossdressers over the years. They should support, at least in principle, its right to set its own policies and grant it the freedom to do its work with those who seek its help and appreciate its philosophy.

Virginia Prince is a co-founder of The Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess) and the former publisher of Transvestia magazine. You may write Virginia at P.O. Box 36091, Los Angeles CA 90036. An earlier version of this article was originally published in Cross-Talk #85.

12 *Tau Chi Chapter's contingent at Holiday En Femme 96.*

Imposter

by Vicki [redacted]

Say the name Ferdinand Waldo Demara, Jr., and few will recognize this person as one of the most remarkable men ever to have lived. Apply the title, "The Great Imposter," and many of you will recall the 1960 movie by the same name. For you non- movie buffs, let me explain that Demara successfully posed as an assistant warden, a Trappist monk, a Latin teacher, and (using the name "Dr.Joseph Cyr") successfully performed surgery on 19 South Korean soldiers wounded during the Korean War. No, he never crossdressed or pretended to be a woman, but there are some important lessons we can derive from this rather strange compulsion. First, he recognized that he was an imposter, but never used any of the identities he assumed for personal gain. Next, he never felt guilt, because he was drawn to professions where he could do good and help others. Lastly, he prepared himself well for whatever job or role he didn't have the proper credentials to practice.

"Imposter" is one of those words which leave a bitter taste in our mouths; because no one likes tobe the brunt of a practical joke. Crossdressers as a group tend to be employed in very important positions, some of which take them into life and death situations every day. Dishonesty or prankish behavior is not a trait you are likely to find very often among crossdressers. While much has been written about confronting the sissy stigma and the fear of being caught in a dress, very little attention has been paid to the guilt felt because of the fear of compromising ethics.

Deuteronomy 22:5 scared the hell out of me when I was young. However, younger crossdressers growing up in a time when religion is less emphasized, find that deception is not something they are comfortable with. Likewise, crossdressers who go out hoping to pass invariably get "read" because they are either unfamiliar with feminine gestures and behaviors, or because deep inside, their honesty is preventing them from truly imitating women. Typical of this posture were two crossdressers who appeared dressed in the documentary What Sex Am I? When asked who they were when dressed, they replied that they were still Ken and Joe. We adopt feminine names, but it seems this is the only detour from truth we will allow ourselves.

With the exception of stressing honesty to spouses, crossdressing ethics has not been a subject which we sa a community have addressed. Indeed, the emphasis has been on finding others like us, mutual support, and educating the public. Today most of the major organizations are ten years old or older, there have been crossdressing conventions in every region of the USA for five years or longer, and there is even a convention for spouses and partners with a well-defined vision. Moreover, the Internet is becoming the best tool this community ever had in finding closeted crossdressers and educating the general public. The problem is, what do we do next?

Education does not necessarily equate to acceptance, nor does self-acceptance prevent burnout. I know. The year was 1992, and after attending four out of five Texas "T" Parties and numerous chapter meetings, and having gained the confidence to go out dressed in public, I was asking the question, "Is that all there is?" I might have purged if my male life had been totally satisfactory. I thought living full time was the answer. It wasn't, or it wasn't because of the way I was doing it. What I learned was that to really be a Virginia Prince, you had to interact with people on a personal level. This means that you have one of two choices. You can be a male whose gender is female, or perpetrate the hoax of being a member of the female sex.

At the time, the transgenderist option was not well defined. Moreover, entry into this level seemed to be marked by the taking of hormones. Aside from the serious dent Premarin would make in my pocketbook, I doubted the wisdom of taking them. I would still have to work as a man, at least until I was sure the label "heterosexual crossdresser" no longer fitted. This is not to say I am against the use of hormones; rather, I am saying that they should not be used as "Whiskey Courage." I've seen too many transgendered individuals who equated cleavage with passing, and considered body sensitivity the key that would open the door to complete acceptance as a female. This is simply not true. The money would be be better

spent on acting lessons. In fact, whether you take hormones or not, only those who can circumvent their male egos while emulating feminine behavior, feelings and gestures with the highest respect can ever aspire to never having their biological sex questioned.

Those of you who read my two part series entitled "What I Learned Living Full Time" (Femme Mirror Vol.18, issues 2 & 3) will recall how after feeling I had mastered feminine deportment, voice and mannerisms, I constructed a test for moving beyond just passing. My main liability as a woman is my height and size, so I formulated a plan to become a member of a club for men and women with those very same characteristics.

At my first meeting, I was shocked by how well I was accepted and how ordinary I felt in a room full of women 5' 10" or taller. To make myself credible, I did with past events what Dr. Frankenstein did with body parts. I took bits and pieces of my life as a man and turned them upside down, sewed them to experiences women friends of mine had lived, and made up some things as I went along. With a biography to work from, I could judge how I would react to various stimuli.

What I hadn't counted on was that one one particular woman would pick me to be her friend. At the close of the article I promised Mirror readers that I would end the relationship before someone got hurt or I was unmasked as a man. I miscalculated again on the lengths women will go to preserve the friendships they have with other women. After a while, the doors that were opened to me to explore femininity were just too good to close. Often I have wanted to pass on what I have learned about women so my sisters could have a better understanding of their spouses and girl friends, but I was never sure what the reaction of spouses would be.

Before you start checking to see if your best girlfriend is really George or Charlie, let me say that deception is as American as apple pie. From the guy living above his budget to impress the neighbors, to the woman who pads her bra, to the child who blames every wrong doing on a mysterious entity named "I don't know," we are all guilty of some form of deception. While we all commit and accept these forms of skulduggery, deception in the area of sexual identity seems to be on a different plane. Why is that? It seems the ego is programmed very early in life to expect infallibility in sexual recognition. It may be because as infants, knowing who had the feedbags was critical to our survival. Adults, not always comfortable with their own degree of manliness or femininity, can get angry because they may fear they allowed the deception in order to give permission for homosexual behavior.

Sexual attraction is really a misnomer. We are actually attracted to the opposite gender. Long before I got my first copy of Playboy, I knew I was sexually attracted to females. Our attraction is for form and behavior patterns exhibited. We assume that biological sex matches the outward manifestations. As long as no one is responding in a manner suggesting sexual intercourse, what is the harm?

What does all this have to do with you, the ordinary, garden variety crossdresser? My point is that deception is part of all our lives. Take, for instance, one sister I visited in my male guise. Her very precocious little boy told me in private that one day he would find out what was in "Daddy's special closet." My sister, I'm sure, was not aware that in a child's imagination, something much worse than women's clothes was thought to be in there. Often we hurt ourselves more than those we seek to deceive or protect.

Shopping should be a joy for us, because it is through the clothes that we make contact with the woman inside. Often our attempts at deception are wasted on sales clerks, who are becoming more and more aware that ther are men who like to dress in women's clothing. Contrast that with the deception transgenderists practice. Since many of them are married, it becomes easier to allow the public to think they are one half of a lesbian couple. Single transgenderists and transsexuals must live their lives like secret agents, always fearful their cover will be blown.

If deception is a component of the overall guilt transgendered individuals suffer, what should we do as a community to alleviate this pain? The answer is, "Nothing." As a community wishing to be seen as a group with legitimate needs and desires, we are duty bound to be honest. It is this dichotomy of purpose which causes gender confusion and opens us to criticism from others, especially gays and lesbians. For them, being "less gay" from one day to another is something they can't comprehend. Protecting wives and children from ridicule sounds like a reply of the reason they stayed in the closet for so long.

Too often, when we have been called upon to defend Tri-Ess principles, we have come off looking pious and self righteous. As part of the new honesty I'm promoting, we chould tell our critics that we operate in the way we do, not because we like it that way, but because fear, ignorance, and self-deception come with the first admission of the need to crossdress. We coddle those fears because protection of the status quo where families are involved is seen as the right thing to do. Limiting the time spent crossdressed is not as big a problem as harboring the secret. The misconception has been that honoring the marriage contract meant denying the need to grow in feminine expression.

The growing transgender phenomenon may force us to take a second look at what we are telling spouses. While it is still true that very few heterosexual crossdressers become transsexuals, there may be a desire on the part of the crossdresser to live full time as a woman as he grows older and his body produces less testosterone. After the onset of middle age, when all of a man's career goals have been met, there can also be lapses. Panic probably causes more divorces than actual transsexualism. This is because the crossdresser may not have an objective view of the state of womanhood. Given a taste, most men will come back to the loving arms of their spouses, if they will allow for the fact that understanding of the feminine side is not perfect.

I'm an imposter. I chose the most honest word I could think of to describe my condition. Nor do I see this as a final destination in the gender community.

I see it more as a way station. Although I can clearly see the borderline between crossdressing and transgenderism, I don't think I want my passport stamped just yet.

I should say that my fifteen year voyage from home dresser to imposter was something I did completely on my own. Chapter meetings provided great information on how to look better, and I love to bounce ideas off my sisters. I've never wanted to remake others in my own image. Those who do, have simply not dealt with their own guilt or the male need to have power. I do favor choice in regard to feminine expression within the walls of the chapter. If the choice to remain stagnant is based on real social risks, then this community must support that decision. As a community of individuals in various stages of development, we can't force our members to grow, but we should be cheerleaders for those who do. Risk management on the one hand, and exposing conformity as an illness of those who have given into fear, would seem the twin banners which chapters should take up. As a community, we should be daily examining whether risks not taken are costing us more than we should have to endure. The author Leo Buscaglia put it this way:

On Risks

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk being called sentimental.
To reach out to another is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk showing your true self.
To place your ideas and dreams before the crowd is to risk being called naive.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair, and to try is to risk failure. But risks must be taken, because the greatest risk in life to to risk nothing.
The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing, and becomes nothing.
He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn and feel and change and grow and love and live. Chained by his certitudes, he's a slave, he's forfeited his freedom. Only the person who risks is truly free.

What will the next leap forward for the gender community entail? I don't pretend to know Virginia Prince well enough to pick her mind, but I frankly don't see anything more that the leadership of Tri-Ess or any other gender organization can do to assist the growth of crossdressers. No, the next great leap for the gender community will come from you, the humble membership.

I keep having this crazy dream. On Halloween night in the year 2000, every crossdresser in the world comes out under the guise of wearing a costume. For the very shy crossdreser, the mission for the night would be to drop a bag of candy containing a Tri-Ess information pamphlet in the sacks of passing children out "trick or treating." As for the bolder members of this community, I see us marching under one banner, Tri-Ess members arm-in-arm with Renaissance, ETVC, IFGE, and every other gender organization. The banner atop us reads:

"I was a better man as a woman...than I was as a man..."

__Tootsie

I see millions of women inspired by our courage to unshackle themselves from relationships with bullies and brutes because they were no longer insecure about their own femininity. I see thousands of men dropping the pretense of being macho because they realize that real courage comes not from how much pain you can inflict or endure, but in the forcefulness of your ideas.

This is just a silly dream, isn't it? Assume for a minute it is not. I challenge all of you to get ready for the day we all come out. To you home dressers, who say you are perfectly happy dressing at home, I say "Strike! Go out dressed as a woman this Halloween." If there isn't an adrenaline rush of excitement like you've never known before, I will guarantee on my sacred honor to find someone to write an article representing your point of view for Mirror publication. To you "hit and run" crossdressers who get your kicks by brief appearances in public, I say "Strike! Join a chapter." You will be pleased to meet other crossdressers, and you can learn where it is safe to go out. To you chapter members who don't go out after meetings, I say "Strike! Find out if there is a gay or lesbian bar in your community that welcomes crossdressers." You will find that being around people who are not judgemental will do worlds for your self confidence. To those of you who have been going to gay bars for years, I say "Strike! Take a look in the mirror. If you look better than those guys in the beer commercials, consider a public outing away from the gay community." By the way, the last time I was "read" in a "straight" bar, the patrons were more interested in buying me a drink and asking questions than in beating me up.

Passing was not enough for me. I had to reach for something higher, but right now I'm thinking of all of you that either don't have the freedom to be the woman you were meant to be, or can't express your feminine side as much as you would like. This article wasn't meant to be about me. It's meant to be a message from one who practices the ultimate deception to those who somehow thinnk your maleness is put at risk when you put on a dress. It's put forward to stop all of those poor souls who are not truly transsexual, but think a piece of paper will make them women.

I can't say why Ferdinand Demara needed to be an imposter. Each person he impersonated was a person with authority. Perhaps it is the average woman's very lack of authority that has pushed me to want to look at the world through another pair of glasses. Unlike the female impersonator in M. Butterfly, my purpose was never sexual, though it has been interesting seeing the attention I get from men. Moreover, I've been in a unique position to help my female friends understand men from first hand information, from a source they could trust. In this desire to be in a position to help, Demara and I share common ground. It is only on that common ground that you should judge us.

CHAPTER NEWS UPDATE

Compiled by Jane Ellen Fairfax

Georgia

DATELINE:
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

On Friday, October 11, 1996, five Sigma Epsilon sisters went to Dr. Bob Agnew's sociology class at Emory University to give a brief introduction to our favorite subject. Speaking to a class of about 80 juniors and seniors, Laura, Annette, Lisa S., Stephanie S., and Susan H. spent an enjoyable hour educating and answering questions from an increasingly accepting class.

Dae, the Sigma Epsilon "Heloise," offers some excellent beauty tips for penny pinchers. It is amazing what this lady can accomplish with a little Armor All, Pine Cleaner and masking tape. Do your vinyl or leather shoes, handbags, belts, leather skirts and coats need protecting or shining? Dae advises that this is the time to pull out the Armor All or other vinyl protectant! She finds these products particularly helpful in protecting light- colored shoes from those unsightly black heel marks. For shoes already marked, Dae recommends a little "Pine Cleaner" to remove the mark followed by two or three coats of a protectant. Taking such measures will extend the life and looks of your clothing.

Lint and pet hair are troublesome "cling ons" on dark wool skirts. According to our "Heloise," masking tape is perfect for removing such unsightly additions.

"Does your magnetic personality cause a problem with static cling" asks Dae? "A light spritz of hairspray between slip and skirt helps a lot." Hairspray is also very effective for removing ink and lipstick stains from washable fabrics and is more efficient than the "prewash" products.

By using a conditioning shampoo to wash hosiery, one can nearly triple its life and avoid static cling. It is also useful for laundering unmentionables and cleaning cosmetic brushes.

Our household expert is also promoting the virtues of cornstarch and baking soda for absorbing moisture. An added virtue is that they do not contain perfume, which can cause allergies or compete with the fragrance one wears. It is also useful for sprinkling in shoes.

Witch Hazel is a mild astringent which is soothing and fragrance- free and has applications for removing the last traces of makeup. For those who are really watching their pennies, it helps to save cotton balls from vitamin and aspirin bottles. They are the perfect size for removing nailpolish, and they have the added advantage of being free!

Finally, those flannel "shoe mits" placed by the hotel in your room serve very nicely as jewelry bags to protect jewelry from nicks and scratches. Their use also enables one to keep jewelry sets together - a very useful application for the crossdresser in a hurry!

Over the last few months Sigma Epsilon has welcomed new sisters Ginger, Claire, Elizabeth, Joanna, Beverly, Alexandra, and Elaine. Welcome in advance to new sisters Crissie, and Jennifer, with whom Karen and this columnist have been corresponding. What a surprise it will be for them to receive their first MIRROR and see their names already in print! Welcome Sisters!

Why does Sigma Epsilon continue to climb from success to success? It has had to deal with relentless opposition which would undermine its entire vision and purpose and yet, with every quarterly membership tracking, it continues to grow. There are several palpable reasons for this uninterrupted growth and the ongoing bevy of Chapter of the Year and Commended Chapter awards which have come to Sigma Epsilon.

Sigma Epsilon has established a true esprit. Sisters are proud to call themselves Sigma Epsilon Girls! Also a factor is the outstanding leadership this chapter has had. Those in the forefront, such as Lauren and Linda, have developed the chapter to where it is today. But one cannot omit the outstanding work from such sisters as Robin, JoanAnn, Stephanie, and others who have formed a loyal hardworking backbone for this flagship chapter. New leaders are emerging. This columnist expects to hear a lot more from Karen, Dae, and others. When it comes to networking with other chapters, Sigma Epsilon is superb. Its team spirit is thus able to spread among our chapters, and Tri- Ess is the better for it.

Florida

DATELINE:
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Gail Ann found a new way to share her feminine side with her father. She wrote a college thesis on the subject of crossdressing and let her dad read it! When he asked whether she was successful as president of her crossdresser's

support group, she reported that she had just been reelected to the post. The reaction from dad - calm acceptance.

Gail also had another timely message applicable not only to her own chapter, but to other chapters and also to Tri- Ess. She chided those who want to be "just there" for their own benefit (i.e., to socialize and have a party night out): "You will always have some who are always willing to do more than their fair share, but you will always have those who feel it is okay to let those few who are willing do all the work for everybody."

Gail Ann advises her sisters to try to be one of the few, not of the many. Trying to find dedicated workers is always difficult. This columnist extends her sympathy to Gail Ann and her co-workers and offers her wishes that she be successful in adding to her core of real participants. Working together to help others - that is what Tri- Ess is all about! And while helping others, we help ourselves!

New Jersey

DATELINE:
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

Sigma Nu Rho continues to be the mouse that roared! The roar has been continuous and is becoming ever louder. This accomplished chapter has been chosen to host the 1997 Holiday EnFemme. They are already hard at work and should put on a memorable event.

Sigma Nu Rho has joined the growing list of chapters which have succeeded in hiving off new chapters. It has given birth to a new chapter in Northern Pennsylvania to be called Epsilon Mu Gamma or "Endless Mountain Girls."

The long awaited Sigma Nu Rho video library will open in January of 1997. It will stock a growing list of films dealing with crossdressers - everything from feature films to documentaries to "how- to" videos.

January will also be an exciting month for Sigma Nu Rho because the state police are scheduled to "raid" it!!!! Trooper Al LaFave of the New Jersey State Police will explain the do's and don'ts in the unfortunate event that a sister is pulled over by a state police cruiser. The title of his talk is, "Being Stopped - How the Law Affects Us as Crossdressers." Fearless leader Carol Ann explained that sisters might feel ill- at- ease at having a state trooper at the meeting. His response: "They haven't met me yet." He will be easy to spot as he will be wearing blue and gold. It should be a most exciting program.

Sigma Nu Rho's News Briefs monthly newsletter (or is it magazine?) has been something almost unique in Tri- Ess. This chapter, along with Alpha Zeta in Phoenix, is kind enough to submit its entire newsletter on disk to us. Much of the "Hey Good Looking" section is contributed by the ladies of Sigma Nu Rho. For this reason this columnist has been somewhat leery of giving them much space in the Chapter Update section, but I thought I would surprise them this time. Besides, it keeps them on their toes!

New York

DATELINE:
ILION, NEW YORK

How many of our new members suffer from "the Barrage?" They have joined Tri- Ess - so far so good - and the chapter and they are now ready to attend their first meeting. Then it hits - "the Barrage." All sorts of gremlins, goblins and ghosties appear, to impede a new sister's progress toward her first meeting. And oh, what things they whisper! "You know you are not ready yet. You don't look good enough!" "What if somebody sees you on the street as you drive to the meeting?" "I wonder what kind of weird people are in this group?" "I know I'm all right, but . . . ?" Carol, a new member of Lambda Chi Lambda Chapter in upstate New York, shared this delightful experience of her first time out:

"I'm 53 years old, married, and have experienced the need to crossdress since early childhood. While my wife is not thrilled about all this, she's grown to be accepting and wonderfully understanding of my need to express my feminine side. I heard of LCL through both the Tapestry magazine and through the national Tri- Ess group. Never did I think I would have the nerve to attend a support group meeting, though deep down inside I wanted to.

"Finally, one day I went to a pay phone and called Sharon Ann Stuart. I was a nervous wreck just calling her. When she answered, I awkwardly and nervously told her why I was calling. She immediately put me at ease, reassuring me and explaining what LCL is about and that what I was feeling was normal. She went on to explain that just about everyone else who has faced this gift has experienced similar feelings. Through one phone call, I felt like I had known her all my life. That was my first contact with another person like myself.

"Sharon explained to me where and when LCL meets and whom to ask for at the Hotel. I told my wife about all this and, for the first time, started to think that maybe it was within the realm of possibility that I just might be able to attend a meeting. But then the "what if's" started. What if someone saw my car? What if there was someone there I knew? What if? What if? Still, deep down inside, I wanted to go.

My wife and I talked about it over the next couple of months and finally decided we'd shoot for the February meeting. That day eventually arrived and I had everything picked out, packed and ready to go. At the same time I contacted some sort of flu virus and was feeling absolutely miserable. We

checked into out hotel room and I nervously dressed, feeling both apprehensive and physically ill. Then the "what ifs" started again and, to make a long story short I couldn't bring myself to call Sharon even though I was all dressed and ready to go. Needless to say, it was a bummer, but I at least got a chance to dress filly that night. I couldn't believe I had come so close yet so far.

"After that night, I was more determined than ever to make the next meeting. We set aside the date for the March meeting and I knew this time I had to go through with it for my own sanity. As we approached the hotel the "what ifs" and doubts came again. We stopped to eat at a restaurant and I couldn't eat much at all thinking about whether this was the right thing to do.

"My wife suggested I call the LCL meeting room and talk to someone. I went to a pay phone in the restaurant and called. Evelyn answered and she immediately reassured me and, quite frankly, convinced me with a few kind reassuring words that I owed this to myself and that I would get plenty of help and feel welcome at the meeting. She really exerted a calming effect, which was all I needed.

"We arrived at the hotel and checked into our room. I nervously got dressed (took an hour and 15 minutes). I looked in the mirror and felt nervous, apprehensive yet surprisingly confident. I called the desk and asked for Sharon. (She told me earlier to call and that she'd come out in the hall to meet me). Mind you, not only was I going to my first support group meeting, but I was actually walking down the hotel hallway in public. I must say I didn't have to walk too far, but it felt wonderful to be finally out dressed fully en femme.

"I met Sharon at the doorway to the room and introduced myself. She welcomed me to LCL and told me how pleased she was that I was here. She promptly introduced me to Monica, Denise, Chris, Vicki, Evelyn and a few others. The nervousness and apprehension almost immediately disappeared and I felt like for the first time in my life I was with others who understood and experienced my situation.

"It was an absolutely wonderful evening! I absorbed it like a sponge. Everyone was so helpful and understanding, knowing it was my first time out. Attending my first meeting of LCL has really helped me deal with this blessing. I've since attended three more meetings and have made several new friends. I feel like a more complete person and the need that I've had all my life to occasionally express my feminine side is now being met in a friendly and safe environment with others like myself. I'm really glad I found Lambda Chi Lambda and I thank Sharon, Evelyn and all the others for their encouragement and support. I look forward to working and sharing with you in the future."

Ohio

DATELINE:
SHEFFIELD LAKE, OHIO

Alpha Omega participated in a landmark event by partnering with IFGE in staffing an outreach booth at the National Association of Social Workers' Convention. Tri- Ess and IFGE jointly covered the cost of the outreach booth, but it was the ladies of Alpha Omega Chapter who joined with IFGE representatives in staffing it.

This is the type of partnership that should become commonplace in the crossgender community. Tri- Ess is the leading voice of advocacy for heterosexual crossdressers and their families, and IFGE is the umbrella organization for our community. What could be more natural than such a partnership?! Unfortunately it must be said that, because of a blizzard that howled through Ohio during the time of the convention, attendance was not what it should have been. But the landmark accomplishment remains!

For its annual Tri- Ess International Officers' Night, Alpha Omega heard a presentation by Judy and Leslie Daniels. It almost didn't happen. A few days prior to the meeting Judy, Tri- Ess Director for Chapter Development and Support, was hospitalized. But you can't keep a good lady down! Taking off into the wild blue yonder, (against this columnist's advice!) Judy, with her wife Leslie, kept her date with the chapter and gave them a rousing, down-home presentation, with which the chapter fell in love.

Under Diane's inspired leadership, the chapter is growing. In one month they welcomed Olena-Maria, Sylvia, Janet, Ellen, Lyn, and Ava. More than most chapters, Alpha Omega keeps current on what is happening with its International. This is one writer who hopes that International Officers' Night catches on at other chapters. It may mean an additional budget item, but that is one problem we will be happy to tackle at International!

Samantha [redacted] addresses the following thoughts on crossdressers:

"Just what is a crossdresser? I suppose there are as many ways to answer the question as there are crossdressers. But what makes up this person we call a crossdresser? All things feminine, not all things female. Women are always female, but not always feminine. Love of fashion, makeup, and style. Can you watch fashion television for hours without being able to pull away from the TV screen? If not, you probably aren't truly a crossdresser. Do you spend hours getting the very best shave and applying makeup? Crossdressers do. Is your closet full of shoes, and not sensible shoes, either. We're talking high heels! All dresses, skirts, blouses, and wigs!

Let's examine those nails. Hmmmmm. Broken cuticles, teeth marks. Oh, no. Can't be a crossdresser. And where are all those pretty pictures of you in all those gorgeous outfits? Crossdressers have these. When was the last time you went out with the "girls" and had a blast? How long did you pout when you were disappointed when the cute young man failed to hold the door for you? And after four hours of hard work, didn't you glow when

New York

DATELINE:
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The October meeting of Chi Delta Mu featured Mark Devine, makeup artist, doing a makeover on President Susan L. and new member Daven. Daven and fellow "rookie" Lanette also appeared on the chapter E- mail address list. Lanette wrote a blockbuster article, "If You Are Going to Be Female, Be the Best You Can", in response to another excellent article written by a wife, E. [redacted], "If You Are Going to Be Female, Don't Be an Airhead." Both articles will be published in an upcoming Mirror. This columnist has fond remembrances of the recent E-mail inquiries of both these sisters. It is so wonderful to see them taking advantage of their Tri- Ess membership and enjoying it to the full!

From Chi Delta Mu also come some hilarious crossdressing stories. Jan tells of the couple who moved in next to her. Curious about their new neighbors, they decided to visit. Jan had just purchased a new bra and breast forms and had been wearing them around the house underneath a sweater. Totally comfortable, she answered the door and had a short, cordial conversation with her visitors. It puzzled her, however, that they seemed anxious to leave. Not until she looked at herself in the mirror did she realize a revealing insight as to her neighbors' behavior. She was sporting quite a bust!

G., a crossdresser, lived on the second floor of the hotel at which she worked. Not wanting to walk through the lobby enfemme, she climbed the fire escape. Her heels got stuck in the catwalk and the police had to rescue her.

Stella informs us that things don't always work out the way one plans when one gets dressed to go out for a drive. Off Stella went, forgetting that she had just had a blind deadbolt installed on her front door for security. Because of that, she left her key on the inside of the door. Unfortunately, she also forgot the key to her garage door. Arriving home after her drive, she looked in the glove compartment and started have palpations when the garage key was nowhere to be found. There she was in dress, full makeup, wig and polished nails with no way to get into the house! What to do?

So our heroine took another drive to meditate upon the situation. Noticing an old tee-shirt, some polishing rags, a pair of pants 4 inches too big in the waist and a quart of motor oil, our innovative sister had her inspiration! The motor oil removed the makeup. Soon she had changed into her old tee-shirt and oversized pants. Then back to the house, tire iron in one hand and the waist of her pants in the other. Fortunately she was able to pry a window open and get back into the house. An hour and an half later, when her heartbeat had slowed back down, our heroine, nothing daunted, was again dressed in all her finery!

Florida

DATELINE:
WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

From Phi Epsilon Mu comes this heartwarming tale of two sisters. Kristi had a problem finding large enough press- on nails for her thumbs and published her dilemma in the chapter newsletter. Barbara Ann of Chi Delta Mu Chapter read of Kristi's dilemma and offered to mail the nails to the chapter so they could be relayed on to Kristi. Isn't this the sort of sisterly TLC we want to encourage?

Every crossdresser must solve the problem of selecting a femme name. Research from the University of California concluded that people with conventionally spelled names are perceived as more popular, successful, cheerful, warm and caring than those with unusually spelled names. Also spouses who have their own phrases, pet names, and rituals reinforce their marriages by creating their own intimate culture. According to one study of 154 couples, those who maintained this sense of playfulness scored highest in overall closeness.

Phi Epsilon Mu also has some beauty tips to share. Did you know lipstick lasts longer if you apply one coat of color and then apply loose powder and blot before adding a second layer of color? Also healthy nails depend partially upon the file you use. The crossdresser should avoid using a coarse file or buffer on natural nails because the rough sandpaper surface may cause separation at the distal end. It is wiser to use an emery board or metal file you can wash, dry, and reuse.

Finally, the chapter offers a story from an Orlando Sentinel newspaper column in which people were asked what things upset them. One waitress cited as her particular gripe: "Men who ask for drinking straws. Straws are a feminine item. I have to wonder if any man who uses a straw also goes home and wears petticoats!" About a week later appeared the following reply: "Using a straw is far more sanitary and convenient, and besides if someone wants to go home and wear a petticoat, it's none of your business." Now I wonder who might have written that!

Minnesota

DATELINE:
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

someone told you how lovely you looked? If not, you must not be a crossdresser. Every crossdresser in her heart is pretty and sexy and knows that girls just want to have fun!

If you're a crossdresser, that's great! And hi, Sis! If you're not, that's great, too. Enjoy your life, enjoy your friends. Know yourself. Be yourself. Be happy.

Finally, Diane offers the following insights about aging:

"You Know You're Getting Older When. . ."

You know you are getting older when, as a (real) woman, your favorite fantasy is a bunch of naked men doing housework.

You know you are getting older, as a femme, when your favorite fantasy is doing housework while dressed. . .

You know you're getting older when even one inch heels seem too high. . .

You know you're getting older when your eyesight is so bad that you need the aid of the astronomy department of the local university to see well enough to put your makeup on. . .

You know you're getting older when the teenage punks which formerly taunted you while you were out enfemme now offer to help you across the street. . .

You know you're not only getting older, you are really old if corsets and girdles with whalebone stays are part of your foundation collection. . .

You know you're getting older if your makeup foundation requires spackling paste and crack- filler. . .

You know you're getting older when your waist size exceeds your bust size. .

You know you're getting older if you still cling to using the word "rouge" instead of blush. . .

You know you're getting older when. . . you actually look forward to receiving all the AARP stuff in the mail!!!

Illinois

DATELINE:
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

What is "Chi Chapter???" This was the question Denise [redacted], President of Chi Chapter, posed in a recent Chi Tribune. The stock answer, "A support group for heterosexual crossdressers" instantly occurs. Others might reply with the most incomplete answer that it is a "social group for crossdressers" or worse, "a place to go once a month, dress up, have fun and visit." Denise provides a much better answer:

"Chi Chapter is a local group of Tri- Ess members."

That is the most complete answer of all. Yes, it is a place to go dressed. Yes, it is a support group for crossdressers and it certainly has its social aspects. It is all these and more. A true Tri- Ess chapter is a group of Tri-Ess members gathered together to promote the ideals and vision of Tri- Ess. It is obvious that Denise's words had the desired effect. The December quarterly tracking of Tri- Ess members for Illinois showed plus 16, the largest numerical increase of any state for any quarter in the history of Tri- Ess!

1996 was a banner year for this largest of our chapters. The fantastic success of the Holiday EnFemme might have been expected, given the leadership and experience of Naomi and the sisters with whom she worked. 1996 saw the growth and maturing of the PALS Program (Positive Attitudes Living Side- by- side), a women's group set up by wives and partners of crossdressers. Programs at Chi Chapter were as always unique and fun. Denise got Chi Chapter online by devising an outstanding Web Page. Given all these many accomplishments it is no wonder that Chi was awarded Commended Chapter Status for 1996.

On a more sobering note - Naomi, whose sparkling sense of humor and dedication to her chapter made it a flagship in Tri- Ess, had major cardiac surgery in December. I am most happy to report that she is doing well. Your thoughts and prayers for her speedy recovery into her old self (both of them!) would be most appropriate.

North Carolina

DATELINE:
CHARLOTTE, N. CAROLINA

How many of us have attended a crossdressers' convention for several days and emerged with our faces having the consistency of raw hamburger?! Shaving so often and so close hurts. Now a new product has emerged that can lessen the hurt of repeated close shaving. It is called Extreme Shave Cream. Among its 34 non- sensitizing ingredients, it contains topical anesthetics so that one can shave close without pain. A four- ounce jar costs about $12.00 and will last a month, even if used every day. One method of using this product is to overcoat it with Edge Shaving Cream. This most unique product is sold by the Johnson Smith Company, Catalogue Number: J9611, Order Number: 8805. Telephone Number is: 941- 747- 2356.

In the November issue of its Pink Slip, Kappa Beta Chapter published a buyer's guide covering everything from restaurants, to apparel shops, to alterations, to cosmetics and lingerie. This is a project every chapter should undertake. It is most helpful also to provide outreach literature and chapter business cards to these sympathetic businesses. You would be surprised how many referrals they will send to your chapter! Well done, sisters of Kappa Beta!

This columnist and your Mirror Editor visited Beta Gamma Chapter in October. It was a new experience for us seeing the Chapter of the Year close up. What we saw confirmed our previous impressions - Beta Gamma is quite a chapter.

This writer's presentation was well received, with plenty of questions afterwards. It was neat to see the esprit at the business meeting of this group. How many chapters do you know which have chapter colors (Carmine and White)? Beta Gamma is not about to rest on its laurels. The newsletter has been transformed into a all- color document with living color pictures and many outstanding articles. In January the chapter will inaugurate Boys R Us, a non- crossdressing event that will meet on Friday night of the meeting weekend. Their first outing will be a bowling party. Also on the agenda for Beta Gamma is a trip to Tony and Tina's wedding, Cinderella at the children's theater and visits by Dr. Walter Bockting, Clarice Marks and a sing- along duo called Barbara Lee and Sherry. The Pledge Program is in full swing. Plans for the current pledge class include sewing instructions.

Beta Gamma is demonstrating what a chapter can do when it believes with all its heart in the vision and mission of Tri- Ess and strives to find new applications for it. A lot of its success is based on the inspired leadership of Sofronia and Onnalee. They lead with a mixture of dedication, relaxation, humor and good old fashioned fun. Only Beta Gamma would collect its dues money in a high heel shoe! How lofty are this chapters goals? Here's a list:

1. Bid for Holiday EnFemme 1998.
2. Establish a chapter house.
3. Endow a chair for Transgender Studies at the University of Minnesota (!)
4. Send an expenses paid delegate to the Holiday EnFemme each year.
5. Continue to provide S.P.I.C.E. scholarships.
6. Get a Big Sister Program up and running.

Asks the president, "Does all that frighten you? It doesn't frighten us. We think it is exciting."

Sure is, Sis!

A Few Words From Our Membership Director

by Donna [redacted]

[redacted]

A couple of times each month I receive a letter from one of our members saying "Gee, I haven't received anything from Tri-Ess for many months. What's the matter? Why aren't I receiving the material promised with my membership? Oh, by the way, my new address is ....."

We mail material on as regular a basis as possible (I prepare the labels, and maintain the records), but when a mailing is returned to us by the Post Office as "Undeliverable as Addressed," "Forwarding Order Expired," or "Unknown at this Address" we stop all further mailings and must wait to be contacted by the member as we usually have no other way to make contact. PLEASE, when you move, make Tri-Ess one of those to whom you send a change of address card!

When you write to anyone, include your complete membership number. We have many members with the same femme name within a given state, and it is often difficult to determine who the "Jane" who signed a letter is without that identification. Also, when forwarding your annual dues, please include your membership number on your check or money order so we can be sure to give you proper credit.

An annual dues 'reminder' is sent about 30 days in advance of the month that your dues are payable (e.g., about March 1st for dues payable in April). When you receive the notice, please send your annual dues right away before you forget. You will be credited for a full 12 months from your annual renewal date, so there is no penalty if you pay 'early.'

Should you have any kind of financial problem which would prevent/delay your dues payment (out-of-work, ill-health or hospitalization for self or family member, etc), don't just ignore your dues renewal notice but let us know that there is some special situation. Arrangements can be made to continue your membership if there is a serious financial problem, but only if you contact us to let us know. Lack of response to your dues notice means that you will be placed on our "Inactive" (delinquent) roster when we don't hear from you. We don't want to 'lose' anyone, but nothing can be done unless you contact us.

I'm happy to be of service to the Society in maintaining the membership roster, mailing list, and related responsibilities, and will always promptly respond to any of your questions or comments that fall within the scope of my work.

Donna [redacted]

If You Are Moving.....

Please Notify us of your Change of Address by writing to:

Donna [redacted]
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR TRI-ESS MEMBERSHIP NUMBER!

Basic Human Rights For All Transgendered Persons

by Melissa [redacted] NC-4303-D

Like many of you, I spent many years hiding inside my own home. The years were not wasted, in that I spent many hours reading everything I could find about gender issues. Those of you who have attempted to take this route know that most public libraries are not exactly well stocked in this topic. So I turned to my personal computer and the various Bulletin Board Services (BBS). After many hours and the help of dozens of very nice people I realized that we, the members of the Gender Community, were, and are, being denied many of the rights that the non-Gender Community take for granted.

Not being an author, my anxiety level was pretty high about writing this article, and I procrastinated as long as I possibly could before I started decided that I couldn't wait any longer. To expedite my research I turned to the Internet, where to my surprise I was able to find literally hundreds of examples where Transgendered/Transsexual persons had suffered from insensitivity. I've been able to find either a newspaper article or an eye witness to the event to provide credibility to what I found. The eye witnesses did confirm, via email that what I found was true and several gave me additional information. This is not a fictional story to fill space in the Femme Mirror, these are real people that suffered real injustices.

In many states there are not any specific laws against crossdressing, transvestism, transsexualism, etc. As a matter of fact, my chapter has a letter from the North Carolina State Police stating that for North Carolina. What the author of the letter failed to state was that there are a myriad of laws that fall under the general category of "moral turpitude" that can be used to arrest us, incarcerate us, evict us from our apartments, and even support our employer when our employment is terminated.

I discovered the above about North Carolina by accessing the North Carolina Legal Library through the Internet and searching for court cases under various topics. Those cases that did contain a reference to crossdressing, transvestite, etc., were actually about other crimes such as shoplifting, robbery, prostitution, etc., because the defendants were convicted for other crimes. I almost gave up. I then tried to search on the word moral and up popped "moral turpitude."

It seems that the North Carolina "moral turpitude" laws are so vague that almost anyone could be charged, because they cover areas such as public displays of affection between adults, sexual intercourse between unmarried men and women, etc. A few years ago a teenage girl was arrested for displaying her navel. She was wearing a pair of hip-hugger jeans and a crop-top tee shirt.

Earlier this year Sharon Brown was terminated from her job at Fayetteville State University (Fayetteville, NC) when it was discovered that she was really a male. She has lost the two appeals that were listed and I have no idea if she is attempting a third or not. Her address was not available.

I started with the legal aspect of the lack of our rights to make you aware that we are not as secure as we think we are. I live in an apartment and I'm sure that some of my neighbors know about Melissa. If they wanted to complain to the property manager I could be legally evicted with no recourse available to me. I will be the first to admit that most police departments and District Attorney offices have too many real problems to deal with, without going around arresting crossdressers. Unless there is a Barney Fife on your police force, you are probably safe, but the laws do exist in North Carolina and I would imagine in every other state as well.

There are a few things that you can do about laws of this type, but it requires you to step forward as a Transgendered person. The simplest action is to go out more often, go shopping, go to a movie, take a walk, anything that will let people see that we are not nearly as decadent as many believe. I've set a goal for myself to go shopping at least once a week as Melissa. It may be a simple as buying household items or to buy a new outfit. Each of us needs to get out and let the world see that we are simply normal everyday people the same as they are.

If there are laws that specifically target crossdressers, transvestites, etc., you could take the approach that the laws should be applied to women who wear slacks with front zippers. For those areas that have laws denying men access to the Ladies Room, you could insist that the male maintenance worker or janitor be arrested for violating the same law that denies your femme self access. You would accomplished bringing the absurdity of the law to the light and either the law would be changed or repealed, or women would be hired to perform those tasks, which would require doubling maintenance and janitorial staffs because the women would not be allowed into the Men's Room.

Earlier I mentioned discovering hundreds of examples of insensitivity toward the CD/TV/TG/TS community. I'll only present three separate incidents in different parts of the United States, two of which ended in the death of an innocent person.

On August 7, 1995, there was one of many traffic accidents in Washington, DC. What made this particular accident significant was not that one of the victims died, but the way in which it quickly turned into a demonstration of intolerance and disrespect for human life.

Tyra Hunter, a 24 year old male who had been living as a female since she was 14, was a passenger in a car that was broadsided by another car at a 4-way stop. By the time the emergency personnel arrived, Tyra and her companion had been removed from their vehicle. A male firefighter began working on Tyra. When he cut open her pants leg, he realized she was actually a male. The firefighter stood and was reported in the Washington Post as saying, "This ain't no bitch!" and moved over to where other firefighters were standing. The group of firefighters began making comments and joking about Tyra while she lay there semi-conscious and gasping for breath, without any assistance from the emergency personnel at the scene.

Only after the crowd began shouting at the firefighters to help Tyra did two other firefighters begin to treat her injuries. She later was transported to DC General Hospital where she was pronounced dead.

My last example of insensitivity is about murder of Brandon Teena, the F-M transsexual in Humboldt, Nebraska.

From all accounts that I could find about Brandon, he was a very likable person and didn't hide his true sex from any of the women he dated. One reporter described him as the Don Juan of Humboldt, Nebraska. Brandon was arrested on a check forgery charge and it was discovered that he was both biologically and legally a female. Humboldt being a small town of 5,200, the word quickly spread, and two of Brandon's male friends raped him at a Christmas party in 1993. Despite threats that he would be killed if he said anything, he reported the rape to the local police.

However, charges of rape and assault were not filed until after Brandon's murder, despite the fact that his sister called the sheriff four days prior to the slaying to ask why the two had not been arrested, even though Brandon had identified them as his attackers. The sheriff responded, according to Tammy Brandon, that he "didn't need [her] doing his work." The sheriff, who has been quoted as stating of Brandon Teena that "you can call it *it* as far as I'm concerned," claimed that he had been pursuing the rape charges at the time of Brandon's murder. (If you believe that, I've got a bridge in Brooklyn I'll let you have real cheap.)

The two rapists and a third male were arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death for the rape and subsequent murder of Brandon Teena. Local authorities have denied that their outing of Brandon had anything to do with his rape and murder.

I admit, these examples were rather depressing. Believe me, they were not the only ones where innocent people died or where murdered because of someone's insensitivity. I didn't write about these people to scare you from ever going out again, I wrote about them in a hope that their situation would make you realize that we need to do something, and do it quickly. We all know that we cannot hide. We are the way we are. We can do something about the insensitivity of the police, fire and EMT departments! If a chapter hasn't already done so, it would be an excellent project for a chapter to develop a sensitivity training session for these departments, and I truly believe they would welcome your participation. However, in doing this you do not want to ignore a major player, the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual community.

Benjamin Franklin said, "We should all hang together, or surely we shall hang separately." This pretty well describes our situation in relation to working with the G/L/B community. We need each other, not only to develop sensitivity training sessions but to go beyond that and show a unified front to the world in general. The acts of discrimination, name calling, and brutal violence are really acts of gender perception. The perpetrators are enforcing their perception of how they believe the victims should act. It doesn't really matter if the perpetrator is representing a multi-national corporation or the perpetrator is a small minded bigot with a club.

In February 1997 an historic event will occur on a national level. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP) will be jointly lobbying Congress for human rights for all aspects of our community. Phyllis Frye, the founder of ICTLEP, said "Until we have aaaaa-llll-llllll, yes all, aspects of our community represented, we are fighting for freedom without only some of our troops." She said it so much more eloquently and in fewer words than I, but the point is, we ALL must get involved!

You can get involved by first putting aside any phobias you may have and join us in Washington, DC, on February 23-24, 1997, for the 3rd National Transgender Event in DC to help us lobby Congress to gain what is rightfully ours. (I've attached the application to the end of this article).

If you can't join us, at least give us your financial support by contacting ICTLEP and making a donation to help them continue to fight in the courts and legislatures around the country for our rights. You can mail your donation to:

ICTLEP
PO Drawer 35477
Houston, TX 77035-5515 USA

There have been many wonderful sisters that have come before us and broken down barriers and opened doors so that we can enjoy what we have today. What I'm challenging you with is to step forward and join their ranks and help make this an even better world for our sisters that are being born today as you read this.

3rd National Transgender Event in Washington, DC

February 23-25, 1997

Hotel information: Quality Inn, College Park, Maryland 301/864-5820. Ask for the "FRYE" block. Room is double-double that will sleep as many as you wish for $59+tax/night, which includes breakfast. Let us know if you reserved a room and if you want to share. We will give you names of others who wish to share and you can make arrangements.

Name _____
(as you wish any snail-mail or phone calls to be directed)
Mailing address with city and zip
_____
_____
e-mail address_____
_____

Do you have a hotel reservation?____
For what nights?_____
If so, do you wish to have a listing of others who wish to share a room? ___
If so, can we give out your name to others seeking to share a room? ____
Who is your Member of Congress?
_____
Do you wish to do general education of the Members of Congress or do you wish to do targeted and specific lobbying with ITA?
_____
For more information on ITA, contact [redacted]
Do you have financial needs, that if met, would allow you to come?_____
List (be specific and detailed on exact help or $$$ needed)_____
_____
Do you wish to help others who cannot come because of financial problems? _____
(ICTLEP can take money, check or monthly check draft, Visa/Mastercard or monthly debit of same in any amount — no amount is too small.)

If you are a heterosexual crossdresser or spouse and would like to coordinate your efforts through Tri-Ess, contact [redacted] for a chapter near you.

Tri-Ess Helpline!

Do you have a question about Tri-Ess? Do you need help regarding media outreach in your area? Tri-Ess Executive Director Carol Beecroft may be reached at the Tri-Ess National Office in Tulare, California at:

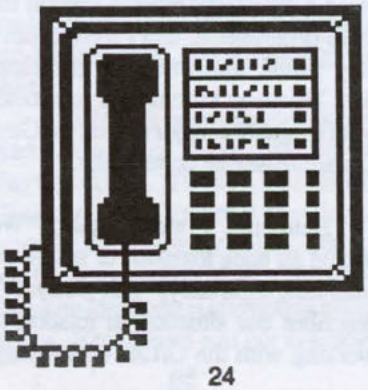
1-209-688-9246

Carol is often available to speak to radio audiences via long-distance telephone hook-up, and she is compiling a list of members who are able to appear on radio or television, or speak before college classes.

Are you interested in starting a Tri-Ess chapter? The new Tri-Ess Liaison for Chapter Support and Services, Judy Daniels, may be reached at:

1-417-831-3433

Does your local chapter have a Helpline? Ideally, each Tri-Ess chapter should operate a Helpline and list the number with the local Crisis Hotline, Gay Switchboard, Mental Health Clinics, etc. The expenses involved would vary with local phone rates and installation charges. As a second, unlisted line in a sister's home, a Helpline does not take a lot of money. What it does take is considerable dedication on the part of the sister volunteering to answer the Helpline. How about it, ladies? Does your chapter have a Helpline yet?



Tri-Ess On-Line

With the growing popularity of personal computers, electronic mail and the Internet, Tri-Ess is moving ahead to establish its presence in Cyberspace. The Tri-Ess Bulletin Board in Atlanta has been joined by Kymberleigh Richards' Cross-Connection, with its Tri-Ess List Server. In addition, as of press time there are ten different Tri-Ess Web Sites. Each site has multiple pages and links to other transgender Web sites. Available for downloading is a wealth of information about crossdressing, Tri-Ess and such programs as HCDA and SPICE. (At Chi Chapter's Web site you can even read and download the entire text of the Tri-Ess information brochure!)

Tri-Ess World Wide Web Sites

Brenda Thomas's (Tri-Ess International) at http://www. firstnethou. com/brenda/

Chi Chapter's (Chicago) at http:/ /users.aol.com/chitriess/trisss/ chimain.htm

Alpha Zeta Chapter's (Phoenix) at http://users.aol.com/jessicaphx/ alpha_za.htm

Theta Upsilon Gamma's (Las Vegas) at http://www.intermind.net/theta/ theta.html

Alpha Pi Omega's (Nashville) at http://members.aol.com/apotris/ aponash.htm

Phi Epsilon Mu's (Orlando) at http://www.virtual-pub.com/misc/ fem.htm

Kappa Beta's (Charlotte) at: http:/ /www.3dcom.com/tg/triess/kb/

Sigma Epsilon Chapter (Atlanta) at: http://pages.prodigy.com/kerricd/ sigep.htm

Anchorage AK forming group: http://members.aol.com/joandenali

Beta Gamma's (Minneapolis MN) at: http://www.tri-ess.com

A Message to All Tri-Ess Sisters

by Melissa [redacted]

On Wednesday, November 6, 1996, an historic meeting took place at the Washington, DC headquarters of the Human Rights Campaign. What made this meeting historic was that the group that met with representative of the Human Rights Campaign was comprised of virtually every spectrum of the Transgender Community. Represented were MTF crossdressers, FTM crossdressers, MTF transsexuals, FTM transsexuals, bigenders and fully transgendered persons and People of Color.

The purpose of this meeting was to gain recognition for our community by having the Proposed Gender Identity Amendment be included as part of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

To accomplish this you have a very important role to play. What I'm about to ask you to do may seem difficult and even impossible, but think of the strides that have been made by those brave sisters who stepped forward to open doors and remove barriers for us. I'm asking you to step forward and help remove a barrier, employment discrimination. You can do it! If you have a TG or TG friendly friend who is not a member of a Tri-Ess chapter, please forward this to them.

If you have ever been discriminated against by an employer or potential employer we would like you to send a brief account of your personal horror story of TG employment discrimination to Jessica Xavier at [redacted]n. Please "paste" it into the e-mail message and do not send as an attached file. Donwloading all of these is very time consuming. Please send a copy to Phyllis Frye at [redacted] If you cannot send it via email, send it to me:

Melissa [redacted]
P.O. Box 10516
Charlotte, NC 26212-5674

I'll forward it to the above coordinators. We need your personal horror story by the end of November.

Whether you have a personal story of TG employment discrimination or not we need you to meet with your local member of Congress or Senator. Meeting with your local Member of Congress or Senator is a significant key. When you call, just ask for an appointment. This is YOUR elected Representative in YOUR home district, and these are YOUR two elected Senators in YOUR state. No matter what YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET IN TO SEE YOUR REPRESENTATIVE. And if your state is not over populous, you should also get to meet with at least one of your Senators.

If you are closeted, then go in drab if you must and do not reveal what you want to talk about until you are in with her or him. Then come out. PLEASE DON'T PULL OUT THE BABY-DOLL PHOTOS OR THE 8 INCH HEEL PHOTOS. In fact, it is best not to show any photos. Talk to them about your fear or experience of losing work solely because you are TG. And if your spouse is supportive, remind the Member that your spouse could also lose their job if you were discovered.

Will they out you? I make no guarantees. But elected officials do not like to make enemies of a person who votes in their district.

Let me give you a story about an anti gay Senator from a rural state. He was visited in the same fashion as above by one of our sisters and was so amazed to learn that one of us even lived in his state, that the conversation remained courteous and informative for almost three times as long as originally scheduled while some "important" people were left cooling their heels in the lobby.

What do we need at this time? We need those of you who will do this to let us know who you are and who your newly elected or re-elected Representative and Senators are BEFORE THE END OF NOVEMBER. We will supply you with information — not immediately, but before your meeting. You will report back BEFORE THE END OF DECEMBER.

We will give copies of this information to our lobbying contacts who will compare it to who they know to be key House and Senate folks in the ENDA fight. From that information our lobbying contacts will again meet with these same key House and Senate folks in DC. The concern is

(a) if this is a past ENDA supporter, will this person still vote for ENDA with TG in it? or

(b) if this is a new Rep or Senator or has simply not supported ENDA before, will she or he support it now with TG in it?

I know that I've already asked a lot of you, but there is one more very important activity that you can perform. The 3rd National TG Event in DC will be 23-25 February. There is no planned media coverage. If it shows, we will respond, but again, none is planned. What counts is getting your message one on one to the Members of Congress from YOUR district. That is what really counts and nothing else. I invite each and everyone of you to make plans to come in February. If you need for us to send our information sheet, simply let us know. You can get an information sheet by e-mailing:

[redacted]
or mail your request to
ICTLEP, Inc.
P.O. Drawer 35477
Houston, TX 77235-5477.

I apologize for asking so much from you during the busiest months of the year, November and December. Unfortunately, Congress has its own schedule and we MUST be ready to lobby in January to have TG's included in ENDA.

Announcing the

Second International Congress on Crossdressing, Sex and Gender Issues

June 19 - 22, 1997
The Park Ridge at Valley Forge, King of Prussia, PA

The Second International Congress On Sex & Gender Issues is cosponsored by the Human Sexuality Program in the Graduate Department of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and The Renaissance Education Assoc., Inc. The Second Congress will be held at the Park Ridge Hotel in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania (suburban Philadelphia). Activities begin Thursday evening, June 19, with a Welcome Cocktail Reception at the hotel.

Special Plenary Session speakers are *Kate Bornstein*, playwright and author, and *Dr. Louis Gooren*, Professor of Medicine at the Vrije University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Ms. Bornstein is best known for her play "Hidden: A Gender" and her book "Gender Outlaw." She will also speak at the banquet on Saturday night. Dr. Gooren is one of the preeminent sex and gender researchers in the world. His research team made the recent finding of significant similarities between the brain structures of MtF transsexuals and genetic females.

A partial list of participants giving one of the 48 presentations or workshops includes: Dr. Randi Ettner; Dr. Carl Bushong; Phyllis Frye, Esq.; Jacob Hale; Holly Boswell; Dr. Roger Millen; Maxwell Anderson; Dr. Lee Etscovitz; Michael Saffle; Dr. Michael Gilbert; Alison Laing; Dallas Denny; Niela Miller; Dr. Mary Ann Schroeder; Dr. Bill Stayton; and Dr. Carol Cobb-Nettleton.

** New to this congress will be a vendor area with an emphasis on publishers and professional organizations. If your organization/company would like to exhibit at the conference, please contact Ms. Dallas Denny at [redacted] or call (770) [redacted]*

The Park Ridge Hotel is located in King of Prussia, Pa., about 30 minutes from Philadelphia International Airport. The hotel is served by several limousine services for which the cost is about $18. The hotel is located close to Valley Forge National Park and the now-famous King of Prussia Shopping Mall. Rooms rates are $90/single, $100/double (1997 rates) + 8% occup. tax. Free Parking. Participants should make their own room reservations by calling The Park Ridge at 800-337-1801 [610-337-1800] or by FAX at 610-337-4624 and mention the Renaissance Education Association.

Registration Fee: $80 per person. Note: Rooms and meals are not included in the Registration Fee.

Make check or money order payable to:
Renaissance Education Assoc., Inc., Congress Registration
987 Old Eagle School Road, Suite 719 Wayne, PA 19087

The Saturday evening banquet with Guest Speaker Kate Bornstein, author of "Gender Outlaw," is extra cost ($37). Please indicate if you will attend the banquet.

Major Themes of Interest:

* Brain Sex and Gender Identity: Nature vs. Nurture
* Gender Identity in The Third Millennium: Social and Legal Issues
* Counseling Issues & Methods
* Transgender Identity and the Arts

Format:

Three Plenary Sessions: Fri., Sat., Sun. mornings (Jun. 20-22)

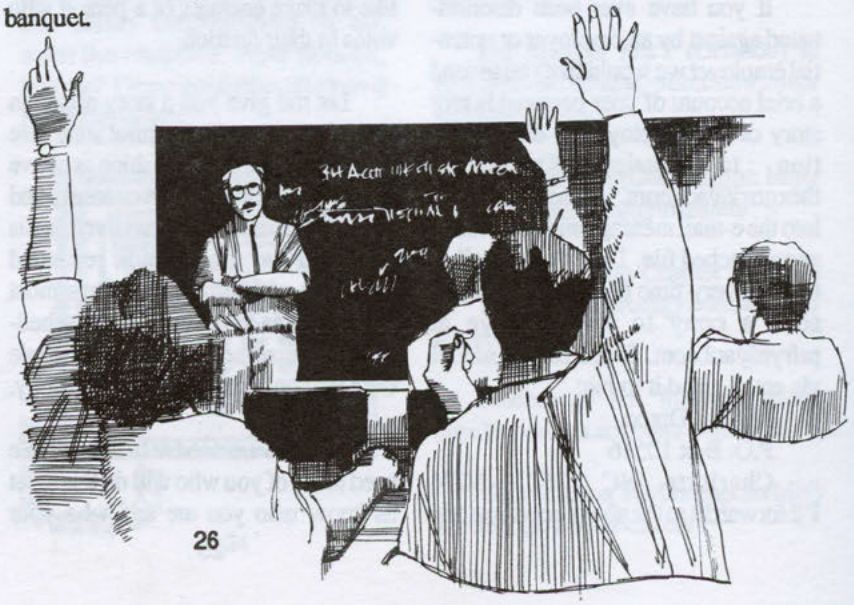
Four sets of 45-minute concurrent sessions

Workshops; one and two hour formats (optional)

Each conference day will be structured to provide ample time to attend sessions and conduct general discussions. Meetings and workshops will take place between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Social and business functions will be in the evenings.

General correspondence *only* may be directed to:

JoAnn Roberts, Ph.D.
PO Box 61263
King of Prussia, Pa 19406
Phone: 610-[redacted]
Fax: 610-648-0257
Email: [redacted]



Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are!

by Aere

For so long I lived in that dark prison, it seemed there was no escape. All ways out seemed to end in despair and destruction. I stand in amazement now as I walk free, feeling the warmth of the sun on my face, and tears of joy come to my eyes.

It's clear to me now, but it seemed so different then. The walls of my dark, impenetrable prison were made of paper, and there were no guards. It's such a shame that I lived there for so long when I could have left at any time. What I lacked was the key of knowledge, and courage.

I am a crossdresser, and though I differ from most of you in sexual orientation, I find more in common with other crossdressers than I find differences. But those differences only seemed to make the prison I lived in more impenetrable, and escape less likely; although the motivation for escape was probably greater.

I could see no way out without causing unacceptable pain to others. I had resigned myself to my unhappy state of existence. I would have to endure my pain so that others could be happy (so I thought). But I kept overlooking the pain caused by my doggedly continuing a relationship in which I could never be happy.

For example, how can my kids look forward to getting married themselves when they see the marriage of their parents not as a source of happiness, but of frustration? And doesn't my wife deserve a husband who is sexually attracted to her?

But even more, consider the female part of our personalities. Imagine a child, who is not acknowledged by her parents, who must always stay locked up within her room, and can have no friends or any association with other

people. Her "brother" can have all the things a child normally has, but of "her" everyone is ashamed. She can't even have the clothes that other girls have—only what she can find or "borrow"...

If such a child were discovered, the parents would immediately be arrested as child-abusers of the worst kind. And yet we live in this unfortunate (and unhealthy) state day after day.

Even more ironic, having been a deeply religious person all my life, most of the pain I experienced was caused by leaders in the church I grew up in. In fact, it was faith in what these leaders said that convinced me to get married in the first place (in spite of my knowledge of what attracts me sexually). But I had faith, and acted on that faith. Besides, when you're young, the hormone levels are such that you could probably have sex with anything.

After many years I had resigned myself to my unhappy fate, and concluded that none could help me. How strange it seemed, then, when the God my religious leaders said hated me, blessed me with a spiritual experience in which I was shown that it's OK to be who I am, and that there was great confidence in my ability to make it through this life successfully!

And later, during the most difficult trials of the "coming out" process, when every path I considered seemed to end in utter tragedy, God gave me a glimpse of the future as it could be (and as it is now). My family does not reject me, but respects me as the person they've always known. My ex-wife and I are still good friends, and she'll be getting married soon to a nice man who is sexually attracted to her. Of the two kids still the age to stay at home, the son lives with me, and the daughter with my ex-wife. My parents are very supportive, and even enjoyed seeing pictures of me as my "female" self.

The tragedy of it all is that the problems (and pain) of being who we are, are caused by the false perceptions of much of our culture, passed on generation to generation in the form of "locker room" stories. And even more, the pain, deception (and resulting guilt) of trying to be (or appear to be) something we aren't.

The walls of my (former) prison were ignorance and prejudice. The tools allowing my escape were truth, reason, and love. People can say all kinds of things about whatever group of people they want. But if an idea proposed by someone only makes sense to someone sharing the same prejudice, it most assuredly isn't true. It feels so good to leave behind deception, and be totally, unabashedly honest. My wife was the first person I "came out" to. We both came to enjoy many cross-dressing related activities together. These activities were non-threatening to the

relationship because they didn't involve a relationship with anybody else. It also helped us get along as a couple, even with my same-sex orientation.

The only problem that came was when her religious leaders convinced her this was "evil," and that it had to be "stamped out." I endured this "no compromise - no nothing" approach for two months, then "came out" as a gay male (though I'm to some degree bisexual). It took me a bit longer to "come out" as a crossdresser.

My ex-wife and I are still friends because of the lack of deception (and because she's such a nice person). If the crossdressing-related bigotry had been the only problem, we could have overcome it, and would have stayed together.

There was a lot of pain involved in the "coming out" process. It's something like having to endure the pain of a surgical procedure to cure a life threatening disease. But the pain is gone now, and it feels so good to walk in the light of day. I've been having dreams come true that I never before even dared to dream! However, it's been a long road, and not without a hefty share of disappointments. This process involved leaving the culture I grew up in, which required a high degree of motivation.

Although I recognize it isn't possible for everyone to "come out" (as a crossdresser or whatever you are), if you possibly can, I encourage you to do so, for two main reasons:

It's not healthy to live in denial of who you really are, practicing deception to give a false impression of yourself. In living this way, people often accept the false guilt imposed on them by others. Also, honesty really does seem to be (in my opinion) the best policy. It is also hard for your dreams to come true in this condition. Others have power over you (in the form of blackmail threats) while in this condition. Being "out" is a position of strength.

Second, each person who is "out" makes it easier for others to also "come out of the closet." For example, being "out" to various individuals at work, I've shown pictures of our "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" campout, which they get a big kick out of. They work with me and respect me as a good and trustworthy person. Now, if they meet someone else who identifies himself as a crossdresser, they will already have a positive impression to start with.

If people have real-life examples of an otherwise unknown type of person, they will discard the false stereotype in favor of their first-hand knowledge. For example, after attending a progressive dinner put on by the "Reconciliation" group (a gay/lesbian religious group), my son commented: "Those are the nicest people anyone could meet. I don't understand why anyone would hate them."

There's nothing wrong with crossdressing, and people in general (I think) see it as an interesting peculiarity. I recently participated in the Gay Pride Parade in downtown Salt Lake City. We were "en femme," waving to the crowd from a convertible labeled: Crossdressers: "Engendered Species" (the name of our group). The vast majority of the people we waved to seemed friendly, and if you smiled at them they would smile back. Only a few seemed displeased at what was going on. This experience gave me a better impression of humanity as a whole, and improved my outlook on life.

In closing, I'd like to invite the heterosexual crossdresser groups to take advantage of the resources offered by the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender community. Having been "thrown away" by the rest of society, this group of people tends to be very accepting of the various "differences" in humanity. I've attended all kinds of different events "en femme," and have never felt unwelcome in any degree. This is particularly useful for those of us who don't always "pass," because it doesn't matter if you don't "pass."

Wives of crossdressers need not worry about the idea of attending gay/lesbian events, since gay men (in general) are looking for a "hairy guy," and their husband dressed as a female is far from that ideal masculine image. Also, fascination with anything feminine (which crossdressers have) is unusual within the gay male population (though it does occur). Also, the husband's sexual orientation cannot change by his attending gay/lesbian events. It's already the way he knows (or strongly suspects) it to be since his teenage years. It also helps to realize that gay/lesbian bars are more of a place to meet people than a place to go get drunk.

In any reasonably sized city, there will be drag shows put on in various gay bars. These are great fun to go to "en femme," and I've never felt unwelcome. And when the show is over, they start up the dance floor, where you can go dancing "en femme." For that matter, you could go dancing there any time. If your wife is dancing with you that way, she needn't feel out of place, since there will undoubtedly be other female-female couples on the dance floor.

Also, there will usually be some sort of gay & lesbian community center (look for it in the phone book) in any reasonably sized city. I've attended various interest groups "en femme" in this non-bar setting, again totally accepted. Some of these groups go out to a restaurant after the meeting, and I've seen no difficulty for persons crossdressed even in this setting (the group tends to stick up for the crossdressed individual).

The Gay Pride Day celebration (usually held sometime in June) is your chance to wander around all day "en femme" downtown (in your city), without any worry about passing or not passing, in broad daylight. You might consider having your crossdressing group represented in the gay pride parade (if your city has one).

In Salt Lake City, a popular fund raiser for Pride Day is the "Gay/Lesbian Roller Skating" event, held once a month. I've enjoyed roller skating as my femme self in this setting, again without fear of rejection. (As a figure skater, this event was particularly attractive to me). I was initially a little apprehensive of how I would be received in this setting, but got only nice comments from people I knew who

managed to recognize me as my femme self. Admittedly, this is peculiar to Salt Lake City, but your city may have something similar.

There are churches ministering to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender community that welcome crossdressers. Most cities will have a "Metropolitan Community Church," which I have often enjoyed attending. The Unitarian Universalists are very supportive and acceptive of the differences in humanity (my son likes to go there). I belong to "The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ", which is a Mormon church (as opposed to the Mormon church). I even spoke in sacrament meeting dressed in my best Sunday dress, and intend to do it again (one of those dreams coming true that I never even dared to dream).

And last (but not least), there's the Royal Court system. Here's your chance to attend an "Academy Award" type event (Coronation), all dressed up in your finest gown. Most cities of any size seem to have these "Coronation" events. You can check into the designated hotel, mingle with the people, and attend the event, all the time "en femme." You can have a very fulfilling "en femme" existence just by attending the various "Coronation" events in your area of the country. If you're somewhat of a flamboyant person, you might try getting involved participating in the various drag shows during the year, or even take part in the various competitions within this context. (Did you think being a beauty queen was something you were forever denied?)

Anyway, I wish you all luck in your individual lives. I salute Tri-Ess in its efforts keep couples together where one is a crossdresser. I think this is a worthy goal, and one that can definitely succeed, improving the quality of life for both partners. I hope you'll consider some of the resources mentioned in this article. I believe that the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender community can be a great ally of the heterosexual crossdresser groups, and vice-versa.

Christ and Crossdressing

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

There is absolutely no reason why a person cannot be a crossdresser and a Christian, too! There is no prohibition against crossdressing in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, there is only the one old Deuteronomy passage. It is one of many relating to diet, dressing, bodily functions, religious ritual and family life, none of which are valid now under the fulfilled law of Jesus Christ. These passages do not give us trouble; rather, they show the love of God in protecting his people. In those days, no one knew about trichinosis or cholera. How wonderful that God chose to keep His people away from foods that transmit these diseases!

In the same vein, the famous passage forbidding crossdressing actually pertained to the ritual crossdressing of pagan worship. If you look at the tribes surrounding Judea and Israel back then, they worshipped the fertility goddess, Astarte (Ashtoreth). It was the custom that young men live crossdressed at the temple of the goddess and serve as temple prostitutes. To have sex with these prostitutes or to pay for their living was one of the highest forms of devotion to the goddess.

It was always a temptation for the royal houses of the Hebrews to ally themselves with the more powerful of these pagan tribes. Around 850 BC, one of these kings, Ahab, made such an alliance with Phoenicia by marrying its princess, Jezebel. Not only did she cause the end of Ahab's line, by introducing the worship of Baal and Astarte, but her daughter Athaliah came within one baby of wiping out the royal line of David in Jerusalem.

Some of the old prohibitions and laws may seem strange to us now, but they were eminently practical when God gave them to His people. When Jesus came, He fulfilled the law and brought liberation, while the law had "shut up everything under sin." Thus the two great commandments (Love God; love your neighbor) which summarize the law, while doing away with its outmoded restrictions.

What concerns us most today is how Satan is using fear of those old laws to accuse crossdressers and make them feel God is not their friend. Satan is the architect of despair, and it really hurts to see the damage he has done to good people. Some have come to deny God, while others look for some ersatz spirituality. To counter his lies, Lee Frances publishes the Grace and Lace newsletter, and the Femme Mirror also carries articles covering religious issues. Perhaps our house church pastor summed it up best. "Crossdressing itself has no moral value, plus or minus. It all depends on what you do with it." With St. Paul, we can declare: "By the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace in me has not been fruitless."

FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Grace and Lace Letter

A Christian Publication for the Transgendered Community

Lee Frances Hefler, Publisher
P.O. Box 31253
Jackson, MS 39286-1253
601-362-6335

Allison and Phoebe's Excellent Adventure

by Allison [redacted]

Phoebe "The Claw" and I took a 28-day vacation driving trip to Boston this fall.

"Allison" (that's the girl counterpart of Gail) and Phoebe left Olympia, Washington, on October 1. We drove through Eastern Washington, Idaho, Montana, Michigan, and down the Michigan Peninsula to Ann Arbor, where The Claw's son is a brain researcher at Park Davis. After two days of my being Gail, we continued in our recreational modes to visit Greenfield (the Henry Ford Museum Town near Dearborne), Niagara Falls for afternoon and evening picture taking on the Canadian side, and visited Vickie Terne (who also attended Texas T this year for the first time).

Vickie is a retired professor of English from Rochester University. Brilliant person. Hugely humorous correspondent. About my age of 70—maybe a little less. She cooked a lovely lunch which we all shared with Vickie's wife, who is not what one would call supportive of Vickie's TV role, but who was very nice to us.

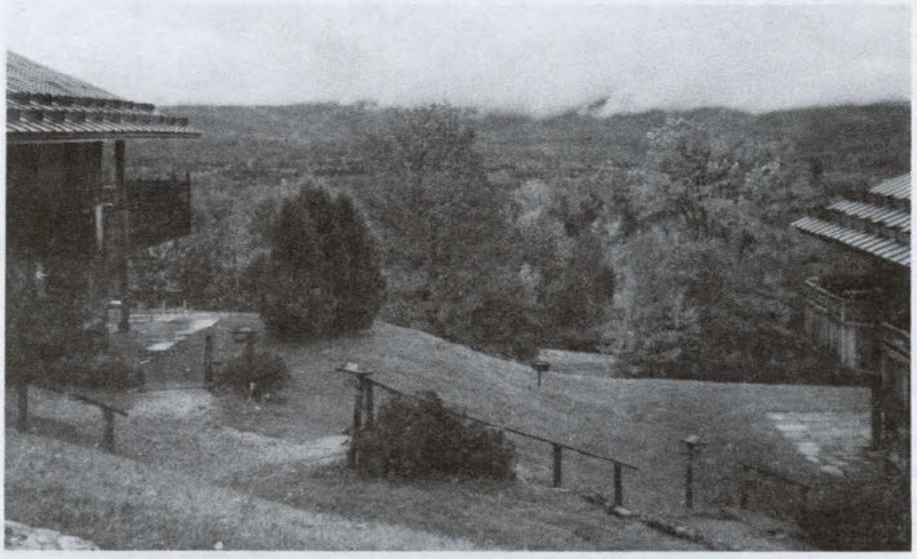
Allison says, "I couldn't send you pictures from the Northwest without throwing in a couple of trees!"

On Vickie's recommendation we proceeded to Palmyra, New York, where Joseph Smith found the golden tablets which he read just before starting the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Morman). We toured his home and the apple orchard where he used to meditate. And then we went to the top of Gorham hill where he found the golden tablets. Now we're not Mormans, and we have never heard how he finally disposed of those golden tablets, so we decided we should take along some garden tools. First, we might uncover the ones he read, assuming he had no knowledge of the going price for bullion and might have reburied them. Secondly, we were not at all sure he found them all. So we figured we'd scratch around a bit and see if we could find some more.

When two 70-year old ladies in their powder and wigs and high heels start pushing spades into the flora atop Gorham Hill, gentlemen naturally step up and offer to help. Especially Morman gentlemen, who had no idea we were going to stash our cache in the trunk and drive like hell for the nearest U.S. mint. A hardware store 33 miles down the road heard about our growing group and sent 30 extra shovels C.O.D. in their pick-up. When darkness fell, we tried illuminating the place with our car lights, but alas, we found nothing but the skeleton remains of a pre-cambrian transvestite and three piles of acorns burried by a busy squirel in expectation of a long winter.

On to Stowe, Vermont, and the Von Trapp Family ski lodge and tea room, midst miles of brilliant fall New England leaves, and then to Mt. Washington to ride the steam-engine-driven, one-car, narrow-guage railway from the bottom to the 6,000 foot summit. (It's the tallest mountain north of the Mason Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi.) (I don't pretend to know where the Mason Dixon Line is, but we kept seeing highway signs that said, "You have just crossed the Mason- Dixon Line. Avoid volleys from southern troops; accept no confederate currency; do not pick up hitchhikers." We also saw several signs warning us that we had passed the 45th parallel. Each time we passed one of those we changed our watches, and never did really know what time it was. And the only places we ever saw any falling rock were places that had no warning signs.

On to Bangor, Bar Harbor, an afternoon at the Bath, Maine, marine museum and the Bath Ironworks,which is building three Navy destroyers right now (too late to save stock I once received as a gift and later sold when I could have used it as wall paper but chose to repaint). Salem was fun, though some of the people there were more bitchy than witchy. (Namely us.)



Looking toward Stowe, Vermont, from the Von Trapp Family Lodge.

Finally, the apex of our trip—a visit with the assistant to the president of a large, international church, who had, 40 years ago, been an usher at my ill-fated wedding, and therefore a contributer to the mixed blessing and damnation I lived through for 25 years. Ken took us to Lexington and and saved us the experience of trying to find our own way around Boston. People who live in Boston put up with it because it has been there for 300 years and it's just too much trouble to rebuild into a pleasant place to live and drive.

We took a bus sight-seeing trip and saw where Mrs. Uphill had died of cancer in 1823, and saw where Johns and Billings had shot it out for control of their business in 1788. We walked the crooked-surfaced sidewalks, turning our ankles each third step; we visited an art museum which was Mrs. Ziggleby's; who in 1903, had sent a recent Harvard Graduate Student to Europe to purchase art treasures, furnished her huge house around a big skylighted court yard, and died in 1934 shortly after thieves dressed as policemen had stolen four of her irreplaceable original paintings, whose empty frames still decorated the walls, with little plaques telling what used to be in the frames. Someday there will be signs saying, "Here's where Boston was. It was here many years until the people all decided they deserved more than just history, and moved away."

Missing Fantasia Fair by one week, we proceeded to Cape Cod and Provincetown for a day and night. It was fun, like a lot of our Pacific Ocean beach towns, with many little shops and places to have coffee, spirits, and spend too much money for trinkets no one anywhere else would expect to sell. But it was a lot larger than we expected, and all four of our feet were deadly tired when we finally climbed back into our car to head for a motel. Everybody in Provincetown is on some kind of a gender kick; transvestites, gays, lesbians, drags, etc. We were hoping to find some child molesters or rapists, but no one was really interested in a couple of old over-ripe tomatoes, even in the leather dyke bars.

We went on to Mystic to visit another maritime museum, then to Reading, Pennsylvania, where we had planned to spend all the rest of the money from the bank robbery, but found its "largest discount shopping center in the world" to be no cheaper than the discount centers nearer home. Then to Gettysburg and the Civil War tour for half a day. They have something like 3,000 statues there, one billion left-over cannons, and not a single photograph of the LSMR (Landing Ship Medium-Rocket) #411 from World War II.

Somebody told us we should see Frank Lloyd Wright's house called "Falling Water" in Maryland or some state right above it. We found it and paid. He really did have some good ideas. Had a stream that went right under the house. Or at least under the porch. Not like the one that flows through our basement during thunder storms, this one goes year around and they just built the house down sort of over it. Frank didn't care much about kitchens or bathrooms or elevators for a five-level house, but he did have a lot of

Perhaps Frank Lloyd Wright's most famous house, "Falling Water."

Phoebe in the Fall Foliage near Bangor, Maine.

grand ideas about building a showplace. He also didn't believe in making wide stairways, giving one the impression that ascending to the next floor above was like moving from the forward torpedo room up the ladder through the escape hatch into the mess hall for coffee.

Rocky Mountain National Park was a blast right up to the point where, half way through, they told us the road was closed for the winter, and we'd have to go back the way we came in. We did find a different route out through a gambling town called "Center City." It's a new antique old mining town, just crowded with people because they have licensed gambling casinos there. The town is built on both steep-sloping sides of a single gold rush stream, thus enabling us to find our way out after becoming lost only once.

We patronized the public hot springs swimming pool at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. This seems simple enough, unless somewhere along the trip, you have decided it would be more fun for Allison to have $50 worth of bright red acrylic nails installed, which won't come off for a male dressing room at a public pool.

So we stuffed Allison's and the Claw's bathing stuff in the same bag, and while Allison was struggling with a mental inventory about what she might need, once inside, the Claw was anxious to go on in. So when I asked, "Are you sure I put in a dry bra?" Phoebe pointed to the end of one and said, "There's one." That was all I needed, since I already had on Allison's swim suit and prostheses under the blouse and slacks I wore in.

There was a public undressing area, and there were stalls with knee length cloth curtains in which one could dress privately. Phoebe took her suit out and left the bag with me while she went to a nearby booth. It worked well; we soaked, and played for an hour until it was time to leave. When I stepped into the private shower, I realised that it was a shared shower with next stall (not Phoebe's stall) which was shielded from view by another cloth curtain slightly smaller than the space it was intended to cover.

Then the Claw came to my stall for her dry clothes, picked up the only bra, said, "That's mine," and left me wondering how to make my way out of the place, holding a wet swim suit in one hand and trying to hold two silicone, unconnected prostheses up inside my blouse with the other. One or the other kept changing position. And then, of course, there was the issue about having a third or fourth hand to carry out the clothes bag. I can honestly say that staying out of jail in Glenwood Springs was the most exciting event of our trip.

We did, however, find ourselves in position to spend a day driving up into Sun Valley, Idaho, having breakfast at the famous Sun Valley Inn, and then driving north through the sawtooth mountains to Missoula. That's one of the prettiest one-day drives I have ever taken, and we try to do it once a year.

Next morning we drove from McDonald's in Missoula to the Couer d'Alene Resort restaurant for lunch, only to find that my purse was still back in the Missoula McDonald's, where I had left it 160 miles back. We phoned, told them we'd be there in three hours, retrieved the purse, returned through Couer d'Alene and Spokane, then drove the rest of 743 miles that day to arrive home at 2 a.m. Sunday.

A good tip about the acrylic fingernails is that if you use the "Non-Acetate" remover, the red color will come off and you can put clear nail polish over them and have a much stronger set of fingernails than your original ones. That's helpful for many of us who find that as we grow older, our fingernails tend more to flake and crack in unladylike ways. You must remember, though, that when you apply clear polish back on the top, it too must be non-acrylic, or it will just dissolve into the nail and leave a dull finish. Almay is a non-acrylic polish.

I hope you enjoy your association with Tri-Ess. As you know it is the only organization that includes both TVs and their significant others. 17% of the members are women, and many of the wives are officers in chapters and on the national board. For most of us that makes a very warm, friendly group of of supportive associates whom I now claim as many of my closest friends.

If you can make it to Tri-Ess's annual meeting, the Holiday En Femme, next November, I would urge you to do so. Having tried several national conferences, I find for myself that Holiday en Femme is the most personally satisfying group with whom I have the opportunity to meet. Phoebe attended last year with me, and enjoyed all the folks there. You'll also find that Femme Mirror, which comes out four times a year, is about the classiest TV publication in the country—always good reading and always informative.

Puttin' on the Ritz

'96 Tri-Ess Convention

My Personal Experiences

by Diane [redacted] TX-4261-H

Desiree' and I returned to DFW at 12:30AM on November 11 after spending two and a half fun filled days in Chicago at the Tri-Ess Annual Convention - "Holiday En Femme"

We had been in the Chicago area for several days visiting relatives when we decided we were ready to "get on with the fun." We called the hotel, hoping that they would have a vacancy allowing us to arrive Wednesday or Thursday. Unfortunately, they were full up on both nights.

There was nothing left to do but for us girls to get dressed up and go shopping to shake off the blues. The temperature outside was in the low 50's so I selected a grape knit sweater and skirt outfit with matching hose and flats. I topped this off with a doubled strand of pearls, dangling amethyst ear rings and a hand full of rings. I had a new white cape to protect me from the cold.

Desiree' selected her brand new (purchased a couple of days before in Wisconsin) pink long sleeve sweater and cardigan set and a black wool skirt. She chose black flats for her mall walking and accessories to match her outfit.

During the getting ready process, at one point Desiree' stopped stone cold and said, "I forgot an accessory I need for my Saturday gown." Now we not only had a desire to go shopping but we had a MISSION, a PURPOSE.

We drove north on the Northwest Tollway from O'Hare toward our destination mall. On the way there was a billboard advertising ladies shoes from AA to EE in sizes 9 to 16. We penciled that in on our agenda.

We arrived at the mall and made a cursory trip around the perimeter road to plan our attack. Let's see — there is Nordstrom's, Penney's, and Marshall Field's as anchors and lots of lingerie and shoe shops.

We made our initial attack upon Marshall Field's and we conquered them due to their lack of desired merchandise. We then decided to initiate a flanking maneuver to Nordstrom's. Carefully checking out every outpost along the trail, we attacked Nordstrom's head on. We declared that we would accept nothing less than an unconditional surrender. They displayed their offerings, which Desiree' declared to be acceptable, and victory was ours.

That battle over, we proceeded on our mission to the shoe store. Upon locating their encampment, we stole into their camp. Our initial survey showed, SAS, Easy Strider and many other name brands. Extending our raid, we rounded a corner and found - THE SALE RACK!! Look! Size 11EE, size 12, size 13! I sneaked up on the size 11 area and spied a perfect candidate for the Friday night event at Holiday En Femme. A beautiful little pump with gold and silver straps in size 11C; 11D; and 11E. Just like Goldilocks, I sat down and tried them on. The first pair, 11C, was much too narrow. The next pair, 11D, was a little snug. The third pair, 11E, was JUST RIGHT; and on sale too. $87.50 marked down to $42. I captured those shoes on the spot, took them to their leader and announced my intentions of wearing them on Friday night. The leader capitulated immediately and we walked out of the store in triumph.

Having been unconditionally successful on our shopping mission, we journeyed to our new camp to plan our attack on - HOLIDAY EN FEMME. We had chosen our camp with care; close to the site of the proposed encounter but far enough so that we would not be noticed. Villa Park (on Roosevelt Road) was a perfect location. We dined at the Boston Market to firm up our plans and then retired so that we could arise and start our attack at first light.

The morning finally arrived. It was time to arrive at the HOLIDAY EN FEMME. The plan was to get up, put on all of the necessary armor and war paint and make an impressive entrance. Diane chose a charcoal gray suit with a fuchsia blouse. The blouse had lace around the neck and sleeve cuffs. She also chose gray hose with plain black pumps. A small leaf of gold adorned each ear and a larger matching leaf pin was on her right lapel. Definitely a power outfit.

The distaff duo arrived at the hotel where they immediately registered for their room and were then ready to mingle among the other warriors. But wait!! The others weren't warriors!! They were friendly, peace seeking voyagers traveling the gender paths of life. They didn't want combat, they wanted to help — to aid — to assist. This called for a complete makeover (but the mini-mall wasn't ready for that yet). Change modes, let the feminine side out. Hey, I can do that. This is fun. Visit. Talk. Help others. Why did it seem like combat was such fun? Relationships are fun!

Samantha and her entourage were sitting around the breakfast table chatting as we arrived. We helped ourselves

to some juice and muffins and joined them. We chatted for awhile until I noticed that there were a couple of the Chi chapter girls there. I had a question to ask Miranda of Chi chapter and any other Chi's I might meet.

[Now I had a secret agenda for attending the Holiday En Femme this year. I know that none of you would breathe a word to anyone so I'll tell you. Just don't breathe a word of this secret. I grew up in the Chicagoland area. I went to high school in Franklin Park at Leyden Community High School and graduated in 1957 in a class of 500. Since we all knew that we are the only one who has ever cross-dressed, I'm sure that none of the other 499 did! But in the one-in-a-million chance that one or more did, I would like to make contact. So every time I saw a different Chi name tag, I quizzed them on how long they had been in the area. I'm sad to say that I never did find anyone who went back to the late 50's.]

As the group broke up to go and do their own thing, the distaff duo decided to try and register for the convention. We found the registration room closed until 2PM so there was nothing left for Diane to do but check out the vendors. Since we had not been able to register, we were unable to pay for the luncheon and therefore missed Jane Ellen's address to the convention. Desiree' and I had lunch at the hotel restaurant.

After lunch there was a workshop with students from Professor Alan Lanning's College of DuPage (County) class on Psychology and Human Behavior. There was a panel of four gender-gifted girls (Eve, Michelle, Candance and Naomi) and approximately 90 students. Each member of the panel told her story and then the floor was opened for questions. The session was well received and provided a great opportunity for outreach and education. After a short break, small groups were formed so that the students could operate on a more intimate basis.

Desiree' and I decided it was time to get a little rest in anticipation of the evening "Procrastinator's Halloween Ball" so we proceeded to our room. There were to be three classes of costumes for the evening -scary, original, and beautiful. Diane brought her "Southern Belle" gown - strapless, in a soft pink with white scallops around the skirt and a full hoop under the skirt. The shoes from the prior day's excursion and a silver sequined tiara completed the outfit.

How fun it was to ride down the elevator and parade across the entire length of the lobby, the entire time the center of attention of everyone in the lobby. We arrived at the ballroom and selected our seats. We were joined by Jane Ellen & Frances Fairfax, Melanie & Peggy Rudd and two other lovely ladies. The meal was exquisite, and the conversation quite entertaining.

When it was time for the "beautiful" judging there were about nine girls. Each of us had our chance to parade in front of the judges and the assembled convention. We then had to wait for the judges' decision on who would be the three finalists. The first finalist announced was one of our brides-to-be. I WAS THE SECOND FINALIST! The third finalist was a Chi member, Lori Fox, dressed as a Las Vegas show girl.

We all got to parade around the floor again and then the waiting began anew. Lori and I, in true pageant spirit, clung to each other and shared girl talk. I think our bride was scared to death. Soon the announcer approached the mike with the judges' decision. Lori was the winner! For those of you who don't know Lori, let me tell you that she has the looks and figure for which many genetic females would kill. She was particularly beautiful in her black net hose, skimpy outfit, and feather plumed headpiece. With the costume judging over, it was time to move to the dance floor and gyrate to the DJ's choices for the rest of the evening.

The next morning Diane left her power suit behind and became a Scottish Lass, with red plaid wrap-around skirt, matching red plaid vest, long sleeve black crew neck sweater and black hose and pumps.

After a continental breakfast which was furnished for the attendees, Desiree' opted to attend the 1997 SPICE Planning session. Diane remained to visit and make new friends. One couple, who were at their first convention, was Kristy and Teri. We got along famously and spent a lot of time together during the rest of the weekend. The time went quickly and it was time for the luncheon and Fashion show.

The food for the luncheon was delicious. The girls who modeled for the fashion show were lovely and the outfits were absolutely gorgeous. It was by far the best fashion show which I have attended at any crossdressers' event. Jane Ellen then presented the "Chapter of the Year" award to Beta Gamma Chapter of Minneapolis. Chapter President Sofronia Anne Strong gave an acceptance speech in which she challenged the other chapters to try the chapter-building techniques that contributed to Beta Gamma's phenomenal growth.

The afternoon seminars included a "Wives and Partners Panel" with Dr. Peggy Rudd and others, "Political Action" by Miranda of Chi Chapter, a dance class (featuring the Macarena) led by Amanda, and "Personal Safety."

The evening was chock full of activities. The theme for the evening was "Puttin' on the Ritz" and baubles, bangles, beads and sequins were the order of the affair. I chose a floor length gown of emerald green sequins and gold sequined pumps. Desiree' selected a floor length white formal with a very full skirt, under which she wore a very full petticoat. She also had a new pair of heels for the evening. After descending in the elevator, we were again the center of attention as we made our way across the lobby. (One of the local high school classes was having their 25th year class reunion in the lobby of the hotel. Do you think that event may have turned out to be memorable?)

The first event of the evening for us was an actual marriage ceremony (of Candace and Dawn) and the concurrent renewal of vows of two other couples (Colleen and Verna, and Brenda and Beth). The brides were lovely for their walk down the aisle. This was the first wedding ceremony I have witnessed in

genderland where the bride (the crossdresser) took the walk down the aisle alone. The brides were met at the altar by the grooms (genetic females) who were dressed in tuxedos.

After the recessional and congratulations, the entire group adjourned to the lobby area for a group picture. The photographer got us all arranged quickly and then the picture taking was over. This meal was also delicious and the conversation flowed freely. Honey West (Chicago's Cabaret Entertainer of the Year) provided the evening's entertainment with a wide array of vocal selections.

Following dessert, the group photograph was back and available for viewing and purchase. The same photographer was also set up to shoot individuals (although delivery was to be in two weeks, not two hours.)

By this time socializing, dancing, and visiting was the order of the night. All too soon the clock struck twelve and many tired girls returned to their rooms to start packing for an early departure and to dream of the recent events. For the more hardy, there was a wet tee shirt contest scheduled for 3AM but I, personally, don't know if it actually occurred.

There was a "Farewell Breakfast Buffet" served from 9:30 to 11:30 on Sunday morning. We met more new people, including Karen and Nancy from Virginia, and Patrice. We visited with other new friends recently made, and exchanged postal and e-mail addresses.

The most priceless exchange of conversation of the whole weekend occurred at the Farewell Breakfast. The people at our table were talking when Patrice shared with us an event which occurred during her school days. She said that she had gone to a Catholic all boys school on the west side of the river which, during her time there, had merged with an all girls Catholic school which was located on the east side of the river. Apparently her records got mixed up during the consolidation, and that is why she is now part girl and part boy!!! All too soon, the time had run out and it was time to bid adieu.

I apologize to all of those I met but whose names I haven't mentioned. I remember all of you even if I don't remember your names. You see, as I approach senility (much closer than I care to admit), I suffer from CRS (Can't Remember S—). If you can overlook that deficiency and put up with me, I will treasure your friendship.

For those of you who are reading this chronicle but have never attended a convention such as this, I highly recommend it. You may have many cares and concerns, be quite shy, and have many other reasons for not attending. If you do come, you, most likely, will have to overcome many fears and WORK VERY HARD to meet other people. Do it! The rewards are greater that the cost of the effort expended. The others will help you and you will NEVER regret taking that step.

Beta Gamma's elegant lady-about-town, Sofronia.

Beautiful Lori Fox of Chi Chapter.

Sofronia delivers acceptance speech for Beta Gamma Chapter of the Year Award.

A Bevy of Beta Gamma Beauties.

NEW! TRI-ESS LIST SERVER

AVAILABLE ON

CROSS- CONNECTION

Ladies! Wouldn't you like to be able to send an e-mail message to all your Tri-Ess sisters at the same time, without having all their addresses appear on your letter? Now you can, by subscribing to Cross-Connection's Tri-Ess List Server.

To subscribe to the Tri-Ess listserv, send e-mail to: [redacted] with anything in the subject line (the listserv doesn't read that line) and the one-line message

SUBSCRIBE TRI-ESS MEMBER#

Replacing "MEMBER#" with your Tri-Ess national membership ID number.
For example, the list moderator, Kymberleigh Richards, would subscribe by sending the message

SUBSCRIBE TRI-ESS CA-2310-R

Please note: This all must be on a single line, as shown. Don't write long messages asking to be subscribed; the automated program only knows how to read and process valid commands.

Send e-mail to [redacted] to reach a live person regarding the Tri-Ess listserv.

III Kymberleigh Richards, System Administrator III

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another splinter group." To a tiny set of core prospects I began mailing a small monthly newsletter called The Unchapter News.

I leaned upon Jane Ellen Fairfax and Carol Beecroft for counsel, advice and help. I got it! Jane Ellen sent me a wonderful piece called Recipe for Stone Soup, which was an outline of the do's and don'ts in chapter formation and operation. It became a lighthouse, keeping us off of dangerous shoals.

We began to run a small, inexpensive ad in our alternative newspaper in the Twin Cities. It read:

> **Wanted - Heterosexual Crossdressers**
>
> Tri-Ess, a national sorority of men in dresses, is organising a Twin Cities Chapter. Come join us in our sisterhood. Find the joy of being your femme self. You are not alone!

Then we got ourselves a voice mail number.

Then we wrote and published a recruiting brochure. We cobbled it together from the national brochure and those of several chapters. We realised that a newsletter needed two components; thoughtful, intelligent editorial content and a neat, readable appearance. Otherwise it wouldn't get read.

The Tri-Ess network was at work already. When we asked for help we got it. This network proved invaluable. It still is. Tri-Ess is the only national organisation with a quarter century of experience in supporting the needs of crossdressers and their partners. It is unique! It is not a social club. It is a support group, and there is a world of difference between the two. This surprising fact seems to be understood by very few, including a lot of people in TriEss. There is a wealth of experience and know-how here, all available for the asking. Despite common opinion, Tri-Ess is not just another transgender group. It is a sorority!

To find twelve heterosexual crossdressers who would gather in one room at one time and sign an application for a Tri-Ess chapter charter took twenty-one months, twenty one issues of the Unchapter News, and I can't remember how many interviews with nervous, frightened guys. We announced organisational meetings which no one attended. I spent evenings in motel rooms where no one showed up, even those who had promised to, but we persisted. We had new members who were transferred out of state. We interviewed sisters who wanted to meet in private but wouldn't come to a meeting.

We heard endless rationalizations and excuses, explanations and every kind of avoidance you can imagine, but in October 1993 twelve of us gathered in a cheap hotel room and signed the charter application. Lauren [redacted] President of the remarkable Sigma Epsilon Chapter in Atlanta, actually flew to Minneapolis for no other reason than to play midwife at the birth of Beta Gamma. That's real sisterhood. Lauren had met Onnalee at SPICE. That's networking working.

With that application we sent a set of by-laws for the new chapter, modeled on those of Tau Chi Chapter in Houston (and some others), and the charter was granted promptly. Beta Gamma was born! I will remain forever grateful to those twelve charter sisters who were in that room that night, grateful for their courage, their desire and their vision. Of them, four are still in the chapter and active, sisters Karen, Kay, Ginelle and myself. They shared the vision.

We had done it right. There had been no agenda war. Our greatest compliment came on a rare visit at The Club. The Club secretary congratulated me for forming Beta Gamma "entirely out of new wood." (The term was hers.) We had done it the the hard way, but we had done it the right way. We threatened no one, criticised no one, fought with no one and were beholden to no one. We had not torn down anyone's house to steal the bricks to build our own.

Our new chapter's by-laws stipulated that to belong to Beta Gamma a sister must first belong to Tri-Ess national. (which is also stipulated in our national by-laws.) At Jane Ellen's suggestion we began the practice of collecting the national dues from each new sister, and forwarding them, as we collected the chapter dues.

We also follow Carol's editions of The Clarion and monitor each sister's annual renewals.

When we chartered, I congratulated us all on a job well done and then commented that we must now begin the "hard part"- surviving our infancy, of reaching a critical mass of membership which would make Beta Gamma viable.

I had also made a promise that, once chartered, the chapter must become financially self-sufficient. I felt that if the sisters wouldn't pay to support their chapter it would be a weak chapter. My dad used to say you can always fill up a bar by giving away free whiskey. I am proud to say that the sisters of Beta Gamma have supported the chapter financially from the starting gate, supported it superbly, and still do. No one at Beta Gamma is unaware of our national affiliation and no one is getting a free ride.

We changed the name of the newsletter to En Femme. We then began to exchange newsletters with every chapter that would reciprocate. We built a chapter library. We brought it to every meeting. We created a photo album and brought it to the meetings. We contracted with a motel chain to rent a lovely suite with two dressing rooms for those who need to dress at the chapter house. It has two bedrooms, so that visiting sisters can spend the night. How did we pay for it?

The wonderful sisters of Beta Gamma liked the room so well that they voted to divide the cost of the room by the number in attendance at each meeting, and make the appropriate donation. Now- that's sisterhood! For a long time we had only four or five sisters at any given meeting but they paid for the suite- every time! They brought food. They brought beverages. They brought themselves. They cooked a full bore Thanksgiving dinner. They followed the advice of our housemother, Betty Beta. They got all dolled up and had fun together.

Beta Gamma
A Tri-Ess Story
by Sofronia Anne Strong

Ed. Note: Beta Gamma Chapter, Minneapolis, was honored as the Tri-Ess Chapter of the Year for 1996 at the Holiday En Femme. This article is Sofronia's acceptance speech, and a challenge to the rest of us. Congratulations, Sofronia, Onnalee, and the ladies of Beta Gamma Chapter!

Beta Gamma, is just one of several chapters of the TriEss sorority in the U.S. and Canada. It isn't even a very big one. In 1995 it was named a Commended Chapter, and now has been named 1996 Tri-Ess Chapter of the Year. Just how did that happen? It happened, the way anything happens. Someone wanted it to happen. Here is the story of how one Tri-Ess Chapter grew. Someone shared the vision of Tri-Ess and saw that vision and and realised it.

The Beta Gamma story begins with a crossdresser in denial. (Don't all crossdresser stories begin that way?) I had been in group therapy for some months, for reasons having only partly to do with crossdressing. I achieved two important A HA moments. The first came when the therapist asked me, "Did it ever occur to you, Robert, that not every man who crossdresses is ashamed of it?" OH, MY GOD. IS THAT TRUE? I had always been ashamed of it, but maybe I didn't have to? Wow!

The second A HA moment came when the therapist asked, "Have you figured out yet that you would have been a crossdresser even if you had never been punished that way as a child?" OH...DAMN!" Suddenly the lights came on. Crossdressing is a discovered condition which has nothing to do with how the twig was bent, not a matter of choice, or morals or having been or not been a good boy.

Crossdressers just are! End of subject! It had always seemed such a curse, but was it, actually? (Maybe not?) Could it be some kind of blessing, after all?

When I left my group I had stated some personal goals, one of which was to deal positively and realistically with my crossdressing. It is still a love/hate relationship, to win a long battle for self-acceptance as a man who wears dresses and tresses and must, for his own well being. Even now I still suffer from PMS (Pre-Meeting Syndrome.) Why? Because I feel so good when I dress and get so grouchy and miserable when I don't. That's called ambivalence.

However, in this struggle for acceptance of my femme self I have not been alone. I have had, and still have, allies; my sisters in Tri-Ess. I have needed support and affirmation, sisters who will dress up and say, "We are men in dresses and we're OK and so are you! How did I get these sisters? That's the Beta Gamma Story. Circumstances, the vision and desire all had to come together. I joined a local transgender club. I was reticent, afraid, nervous, but I joined and I went. It helped! It helped so much that I joined transgender club #2. That helped even more. Yet, I was somehow dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction turned out to be over agendas. The diversity clubs were trying to serve everyone's agenda simultaneously, which generated friction and bickering. This I have called the agenda wars.

I then joined Tri-Ess and began to read the Femme Mirror. I said to my wife, Onnalee. "The CD agenda seems to be the only agenda at Tri-Ess. Is that what we are looking for?"

"Yes, dear," she replied, "but there isn't a Tri-Ess chapter within four hundred miles of Minneapolis. However, she continued, "If I know you, you'll go out and make one, won't you?" She was right. That remark to me was the moment of conception for Beta Gamma. (It is curious how, in this instance, the seed was planted by the female and the new infant was gestated in the male. How's that for transgenderism?)

Although a "forming chapter" was listed for the Twin Cities, I soon learned that nothing was forming. Also, I realised from the scurrilous attacks I had heard on Tri-Ess, that the sorority was anathema in the region. For some reason, Tri-Ess was the enemy. This mystified me. Slowly I realised that the local "open" club had discovered that by avoiding Tri-Ess they could appeal to everybody and they didn't have to send any money out of town.

Further, they would be answerable to no one but themselves. They were on the easy path to big numbers. A lot of new groups have been snared by the vision of big numbers, achieved quickly. But I don't see Tri-ess as a numbers game. I would rather see one small, successful chapter of good sisters learning to be feminine and having fun together and helping one another, than see a group with big numbers engaged in bickering over agendas.

There were, at that time, no less than eight organisations in the Twin Cities that professed to serve one segment or another of the transgender community, and one that claimed to serve them all. Therefore, I laid down rule one; No raiding, no proselytising, no evangelising in the clubs. I swore not to get involved in the agenda wars. These are territorial wars and I felt they were counter productive.

I procured, from Carol Beecroft, a list of all the TriEss national members in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin and mailed each of them a solicitation to help us form a new Tri-Ess chapter. We opened a post office box. A few responded. Most did not! People were cautious. "Oh, dear," they thought, "just

At the end of our first year we had grown from 12 to 14 members. By the end of our second year we had grown to 22 members. By September of 1996 Beta Gamma's paid membership stood at 36.

Jane Ellen had advised me that most chapters rarely turn out over a third of their membership for any meeting. Beta Gamma turns out two-thirds of its membership for its meetings. Two sisters come over sixty miles to attend and one, our dear Frances Anne, and her partner, Nan, come over two hundred miles, regularly.

It has to be borne in mind that any chapter will have natural attrition each year, so these figures reflect those who have left as well as new membership. Why do sisters leave? They want a party house. They die, they get transferred, they get angry about something and leave in a huff. Sometimes they are diagnosed as gender dysphoric and become lovely women, which is what happened to our first Vice President. (We love you still, Courtney Anne.)

Mostly, they purge. Or their wives get frightened and go into one of several defensive modes. Sometimes new girls get carried away with their enthusiasm and make stupid mistakes, creating problems for themselves. Some come bouncing into the chapter, and scare themselves so badly they turn and run right back out again. For some it is easier to believe they are transsexuals than it is to accept themselves as crossdressers, so they diagnose themselves as TS's and dash off in search of a man with a knife.

The reasons for leaving are countless, but there is only one reason for staying; support and affirmation in our struggle for self-acceptance. I am convinced that the hardest thing a CD ever has to do is look at himself and say, "I'm a crossdresser. I always have been and I always will be. I love to dress up. It makes me happy. I'm going to accept this in myself, and just get on with it."

In 1996 Beta Gamma instituted its own Big Sister Program, wherein we assign a Big sister to every new sister who will have one, a mentor who will give her a guidance manual and lead her by the hand through it, helping her discover how she can make peace with herself and learn how to be a lady and have fun doing it.

The other achievement this year is a slate of officers who have taken on their assigned duties with commitment and enthusiasm and executed them in harmony and cooperation. Beta Gamma is no longer a one-woman show (THANK GOD!) A chapter where the work and responsibility are shared is a healthy chapter.

Beta Gamma is not a big chapter yet. I am not sure it ever will be. I'm not sure it should. I suspect that there is an optimum size for a Tri-Ess Chapter, beyond which it loses its sense of immediacy and intimacy. I have no idea what size that is. Certainly a chapter needs numbers sufficient to give it continuity and financial stability. But counting one's success by the numbers is a very macho way of keeping score. Sisters don't do that.

Rather, I would prefer to see Beta Gamma reach a certain size and begin to hive off new chapters in adjacent communities. That is how we see our future. We have survived our infancy and now face a new set of problems, those that accompany rapid growth and expansion.

How, then, did this sudden spurt of growth occur in 1996? When we examined it, we found the answer. Four years of seeding and cultivation had brought fourth a delayed harvest. Basically, it has been persisting in that little ad in the alternative newspaper. What has happened is that all the countless interviews, the endless phone conversations the persistent encouraging, finally got a lot of that seed germinated and it began to blossom out.

We found that 16% of the people who answered our outreach and asked for a brochure, eventually asked for an interview. 43% of those interviewed eventually joined Beta Gamma. The operative word is "eventually." The delay is often over a year. To get 36 members we have conducted over eighty membership interviews. The span of time between a request for a Beta Gamma brochure and a request for an interview is as long as eighteen months. The same holds true for actually joining. We, like all other chapters, have members who have never attended a meeting, and a sister who waited a year and a half after joining before attending. We had a sister who dressed for one meeting in two years and then quit.

We communicate and we wait. We scatter seed and nurture it. One thing is certain about crossdressers. They will run right up to it and run away again, but some will be back. Being a crossdresser never goes away, but crossdressers run like a retreating army. We wait to see who comes back. A chapter has to play the long game. Sooner or later, some of them will find the courage to stick with the game. Those that do are the ones who become our real sisters!

The millions of crossdressers constitute the largest permanent constituency in the transgender world. We don't have surgery and vanish, and we don't avoid surgery and complain about it, trying to convince the world that we aren't CD's. But- crossdressers hide! We rationalise, we displace it, we deny it, we do avoidance, we lie to ourselves and to others. We climb in the closet, slam the door, turn off the light and tear off the door knob, but we are still forever and always crossdressers, for all that.

Eventually, maybe, we wake up and just say to ourselves, "Hey, I'm a crossdresser. What the hell am I going to do about it?" That's when Tri-Ess comes into play. That's when they find the handle to their closet door and call Beta Gamma.

It's a slow game. It requires courage and patience on our part as well as on theirs. That's when the helping, the affirming, the sharing begins. That's when we welcome a new sister at the Beta Gamma chapter house. I know of no quick way to make it happen. For a chapter to blossom it has to be patient and till its garden through every kind of weather and through every season.

It also has to let every kind of malarkey that flies around in the transgender community flow right on

by. I have listened to Tri-Ess being torn to shreds by people who don't belong to it. I have had to read attacks on it in print by people promoting some private agenda of their own. I have had to hear a TS tell us that we hate her because she is a TS. I have been called discriminatory, homophobic, exclusionary and I refuse to pay any attention to it at all.

Being transgendered is no longer classed as pathological, but that doesn't mean that there aren't pathological people in the so-called transgender community. We may have to live in this community, but we don't have to buy into its malarkey. These panegyrics and pecadillos have nothing to do with Tri-Ess or with Beta Gamma.

What we are about is helping crossdressers discover that they are blessed and not cursed. What we are about is helping crossdressers, their wives and families live in successfully with the realities of crossdressing. That's our agenda and our only agenda. If that bothers some people, let it! That is not our problem.

At Beta Gamma we have enough to do to reach out to frightened crossdressers and invite them to step into the light of their second selves. It is sufficient to spend our time holding the shaking hand of a frightened newcomer who is about to faint at his first sight of a roomful of men in dresses. At Beta Gamma we stick to our agenda. Further, we have no hidden agendas. We are what we say we are and do what we say we will. We live by our bylaws and we stick to our mission.

Another reason Beta Gamma is working is because of the annual SPICE Conference. In the early days of Beta Gamma, when she was the only woman in the group, Onnalee said that her own support group met just once a year, at SPICE. She attended the second of these conferences just before we chartered. She had been appointed to the SPICE planning board that year. She also designed its daisy logo. Why was this so important? Because like most married couples my crossdressing raised some difficult issues in our marriage. Beta Gamma was two and a half years old before Onnalee ever agreed to actually see Sofronia Anne. Last March, Onnalee and Sofronia Anne drank martinis together in the lounge of the Marriott City Center. How, after four years, did this finally happen? It happened because we because of SPICE. How this happened through SPICE is outlined in a small booklet which Onnalee has made available. It is called Onnalee's Oddressy.

Our working this issue through together has contributed to Beta Gamma's success as well. In August of this year four women, Onnalee and the wives of three of our sisters, met for the first time to form the Sweethearts of Beta Gamma. They met by themselves and began the task of helping one another. This was an event was essential to our mission.

Tri-Ess has stated its mission as an outreach and support sisterhood in aid of heterosexual crossdressers and their wives and partners. Tri-Ess recognises that it is tough to be a CD in our society. It also recognises that it is equally tough to be married or partnered to one of us. SPICE and each chapter partner's group is carrying out that mission. Yes, it is possible for crossdressers and their wives to live with it successfully if we can break down the barriers that we erect between ourselves in crossdressing families.

If you just want to dress up and party, join a transgender social club. If you want to grow and mature in your femme self, to develop self-acceptance as a crossdresser and help your partner accept it as well, you will belong to Tri-Ess and you will support SPICE.

So, how did Beta Gamma come to be Chapter of the Year? Let me count the ways:

A clear vision of the Tri-ess mission.

A desire to act upon that mission.

Quiet, persistent outreach.

Patience! We're not in a hurry.

We built it with "new wood."

Fast action and good follow up; never an inquiry unanswered or delayed.

Good record keeping. We know who our prospects are and where they came from.

Encouragement, support and affirmation of crossdressers.

Good people- a core of committed, loyal sisters.

Sharing the work load.

Financial support from the membership.

Adherence to our by-laws and those of Tri-Ess.

A sense of creative play, remembering the words of our Housemother, Betty Beta- "Be pretty and have fun." We have good times together.

Sticking to our mission. Ignoring the malarkey.

A refusal to fight agenda wars.

Challenging one another, testing our readiness to expand our sphere of operations, trying new things, and then trying them again later, until we we have gained self acceptance through experience.

A sense of sisterhood, the feeling that we are sisters and we love one another, that we belong together and that it's great to be a Beta Gamma girl.

Forgiveness- an awareness that each of us has the right to be foolish, now and again, and that doesn't mean we don't belong in Beta Gamma. We talk things out together.

Kindness- We're sisters, we try to be nice to one another, tolerant of each others foibles and idiosyncrasies.

A sense of belonging! We have tried to develop a feeling that Beta Gamma is a chapter of Tri-Ess, that we belong to something valuable and worthwhile. This is a sorority and we're all sisters! We're fond of one another.

In closing, I want to challenge each chapter to make it its goal to join the 100% Club. This exclusive club has each and every member of the chapter belonging to the national organization.

I challenge each chapter to set goals for the year, membership goals, financial goals, outreach goals.

I will challenge each chapter to be certain that it has at least one delegate at next year's Holiday en Femme. This isn't just another transgender party weekend. This is our national convention. Shouldn't every chapter have someone here?

I challenge each chapter to make it its goal to become a commended chapter or chapter of the year. It isn't the achievement that is so important. It is the process that is important. Onnalee always says, if you shoot at nothing, you will hit it every time. Shoot at something!

We did! We made it happen because we got that idea and had the desire to act upon it. Beta Gamma is just another Tri-Ess chapter, and a new, small one at that. If we can do it, so can you, and remember, as you go about these things, don't forget to be pretty and have fun.

Teilhard de Chardin said that man is most godlike when engaged in creative play. So, let's go play! Come on, sisters! Let's do it together! Let's show the world and ourselves that crossdressers are wonderful people who have something of value to give to the world. The second self is a divine gift. Let's live it in harmony and joy together.

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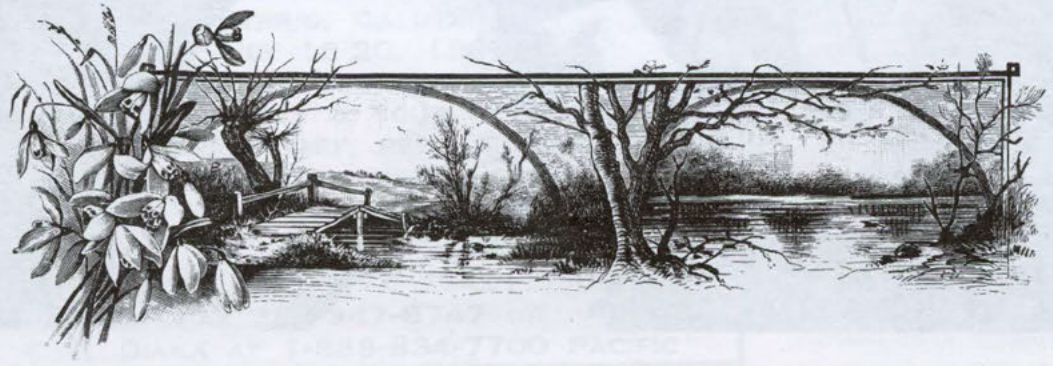

Building A Unique Relationship

by Dr. Peggy Rudd
Tri-Ess Director for Wives' & Partners' Support

Frequently women who are in committed relationships with crossdressers ask some very profound questions such as, "How can we make all of this work? How can we go about our day to day routine in a world that seems to have people in predetermined categories? How can we feel normal when our lifestyle is a giant step away from the expected norm?"

It is very difficult to answer these questions when we feel that our lives have no "fit" within society, and when we feel out of step with the rest of the world. It is true! If we measure our relationships against the standard or predetermined norm, there is an enormous feeling of loss. For most of our lives, the expected behaviors have seemed to be set down in black and white. Even as a small child I knew what I was supposed to do and I usually did it. I said, "Please" and "thank you," and I said, "Excuse me" when leaving the table. Why did I say these things? I said them because I was SUPPOSED to say them. My mother told me that all polite girls said them. For a while I felt uneasy because my husband was a crossdresser. I felt that I was not doing what I was "supposed" to do. I sometimes asked the question, "Would my mother, now deceased, approve of this lifestyle?"

I have often pondered my role as the wife of a crossdresser and asked another question, "What can I do to make all of this seem easier?" After much introspection, friendships with other couples within the transgendered community, and the basic experience of living, I have come to believe that it is possible to integrate transgendered behavior into a committed relationship when new, unique standards for relationships are clarified.

I have started to think that we have a lifestyle which has been designed to fit my husband's emotions and his need to openly express femininity. It is also designed to fit my own acceptance or lack of it. Does being different make us less than O.K.? I don't think so. By nature couples are very much like all other couples. With practice couples can become unique and more interesting.

Customized cars and houses are more valuable, and are easily marketed because they are rare. Perhaps unique, transgendered relationships are also more valuable. The "price tag" comes in the form of commitment, communication, and compromise. The bottom-line question is: "Are we willing to pay the price of a unique relationship?"

Someone must draw up a plan. All customized products have specifications and plans. For Melanie and me these specifications are in the form of a list of priorities. To make crossdressing work for us we thought about the elements of life together, and designed a plan which would accommodate crossdressing while remembering our own needs as individuals.

Melanie and Peggy at Holiday En Femme 96

While working through issues related to crossdressing it is important to remember that each person must feel comfortable with their role. It will be vital that both people work together in the "relationship customized for crossdressing." During the process each person must think about what is important to them while never forgetting what is important for the relationship. Neither individual can do this alone, and no one should be a martyr or sacrifice their own needs.

Here are the priorities which Melanie and I live by. It is our blueprint for a relationship that includes transgendered behavior. We are both comfortable with these priorities. You may use our list as a guide for your life together, but feel free to add your own ideas that reflect your own values. The priorities you write will more closely match your lifestyle and your involvement in crossdressing. Keep your priorities fluid and ever changing as you continue to talk about the issues at hand, and as you continue to grow as individuals and as a couple.

1 We will be open about the issue of crossdressing, and together we will learn more about how gender concerns will affect us in our relationship and as individuals.

2 We will strive for open, honest communication, with negotiation and compromise on both sides, especially in matters pertaining to finances, bedroom issues, risk-taking behavior and the level of involvement of the children and other family members

3 We will learn to pace the integration of transgendered behavior into our relationship. Both of us will feel comfortable before there is greater involvement.

4 We will discover the benefits of a relationship which finds a balance of gender expression. Such a balance will be characterized by men who maintain a responsive, positive, healthy masculinity while "exploring their femininity. It will also be characterized by women who can be both assertive and positive.

5 We will feel free to participate in support groups that promote personal growth and well-being, foster the development of individuals, provide tools for relationship building.

6 We will mutually decide the degree to which crossdressing moves from the security of our home into more public areas.

7 We will mutually determine the degree to which sexually explicit language and dress become a part of our relationship and the degree to which changes are made in body features and appearance.

8 We will share personal items including some jewelry or items of clothing when there is a mutual consent characterized by a respect for individual ownership and boundaries.

9 We will cherish our time together, but we will not forget the value of personal introspection, personal growth and creativity on an individual basis.

10 We will each assume a personal responsibility to maintain these priorities through willing compromise, empathy, and commitment to our relationship above all else.

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Love one another.

Coming Out To Your Friends and Relatives

by Alice H.

I don't claim to know what the right or wrong way is, but here is the way I would try it. I have found that you just can't surprise them. It takes a lot planning and time. I must first know and study the person I am coming out to, then I ask myself the following questions:

1) What kind of person are they?
2) How understanding are they of people who are different?
3) Do they discriminate against others?
4) Are they the forgiving type or a grudge holder?
5) How much do you value them as a friend?
6 How important is it, that you tell them?

I ask myself all these questions and any other things I can think of. Even if all the answers are positive, I may not feel it's the right thing or time to tell them. For example, I came out to my wife's aunt today because she is always visiting us and likes to shop and go where Alice goes. I also think that we are going to run headlong into one another someday.

All questions answered, the next is to do it. I started by picking a quiet time on a Saturday, when I know she will be alone and we wouldn't be bothered. I also took along a copy of the book Transformations by Mariette Pathy Allen.

After we talked for a while, I showed her the book. She thought the transformations were amazing. She didn't have too many bad comments, so I started to talk about crossdressing, in general. She said, "Crossdressers must have been born that way." At that, I said, "I must have been born that way too!" At this time, disbelief set in, as did denial. It didn't help that I was in my plumber's clothes. As quiet took over, she came back to life.

Her first question was, "How do you cover your beard?" At that point, I knew it was all downhill. That afternoon I was asked 1,000 questions about crossdressing and she wanted to know what I looked like. I had my photo album handy for this purpose.

She is still my wife's friend and she feels privileged to know something about me that very few other people know.

This little come out took all afternoon. Give yourself a lot of time. I have come out to a lot of people and most of the time the results are good. I start slowly, think carefully and do it tenderly.

This may or may not work for you. Remember, the feeling you wish to receive from them is the feelings you must give to them.

Just a note

Alice got caught about a week ago, but I didn't know it until about a week later.

I got caught by one of the contractors I work for. I was headed up I-78 when his truck passed me. I didn't think he saw me. The following week he called me about some work. He started by telling me he saw me on 1-78, the exact spot. I know I was made. I could hear the chuckle in his voice. He then just started to tell me about what he needed done, and that was all there was to it. If he's not worried about Alice, I guess I'm not either.

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

TRI-ESS BBS

There is a Tri-Ess Computer Bulletin Board Service operated by Rachel and Kathy [redacted] in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. The board currently is open to anyone interested in "Gender" topics, regardless of organizational affiliation. There is no requirement to give any personal information about yourself when requesting full privileges on the system as it is now implemented. Some of the digitized pictures and fantasy files may contain subject material of a sexual nature and content. It is up to the user to be the judge of whether he or she wants to download from these sections. There are no rules on the board! User discretion has always been polite and there has never been a need for restrictions.

Currently there are two non-rollover phone lines into the system. The numbers are available through direct dialing or by dialing through Compuserve's PCPursuit, Starlink, and possibly other national phone access networks such as Telnet, through an Atlanta Node. They are (770) [redacted] and (770) [redacted] Set your modem protocols for 300 to 2400 baud, No Parity, 8 data bits and 1 stop bit. On your first check in to the system, you must log on as:

Name?	Sigma Epsilon
Password?	triess

Select the simple questionnaire and give a femme name you want to use on the system. It must consist of a first name and a last name. Single word names or three word names are not permitted on the system. You will then be asked for a 5 to 8 character password. Normally within 24 hours your name and password will be entered into the user list. The best way to use the system is to <R>ead <N>ew messages since the last time you were on with all

<P>ausing disabled. Read the messages into a text log file on your disk and read them off line, to save Long Distance charges. You can also prepare text off line and use several protocols to upload files and messages much faster than typing them on the system. Call the system when rates are low in evenings or on weekends. Let's talk!

Carol Ann's Corner

by Carol Ann [redacted]

Some people need an attitude adjustment.

As I spend more and more of my time out as Carol Ann, I have become accustomed, and almost oblivious, to the sarcastic grins and giggles that accompany almost every outing. I merely write off these individuals as lacking the sophistication and maturity to understand why a male would feel the necessity to put on a dress. What bothers me is a problem that I suppose has always been omnipresent, but now that I am able to look people in the eye, I can only perceive as a new predilection to add to the temperament of non-acceptance by the remainder of society.

What I am now finding so irksome to me is being the recipient of so-called "dirty looks," after being "read" by certain males. It is not the loathing and contempt that I see in their eyes that bothers me, because it is they who have a problem, not I. I fully comprehend that the male of the species has a much more difficult time dealing with the crossdressing issue, so it is not that it is another male who is giving me the "evil eye" that infuriates me so much.

What it comes down to is the manner of his attire — unkempt to say the least — dirty shirt, grubby pants, with shoes to match -- that makes my blood boil. Here I stand, properly dressed, neat as a pin, looking somewhat like a female CEO at a board meeting, and my appearance is being judged rather negatively by, for the lack of a better term, a slob.

It is perplexing when you spend a great deal of time to be your personal best only to be judged by someone who gave so very little thought to his own appearance, much less, spent any time on it. Feeling somewhat cursed with a Arian personality (as in Aries the Ram, not Aryan Nation) that almost demands that I confront the offending individual and seek immediate retribution, I somehow manage to retain my composure. One of my sisters has remarked recently that I seem to go out dressed, looking for a fight. This is not the case. If treated like a lady I will, most certainly, act like one. But, this isn't a prerequisite. Treating me like a fellow human being is all that is necessary.

This encounter with someone who is much less fortunate than I started me thinking. Have I been allowing myself to be lulled into some false sense of security by the majority of decent people in the world? Have all the sales people that I have dealt with over the past few years been genuinely gracious, or were they simply interested only in my money? Am I only deceiving myself when another genetic female, who is in the same age bracket as I, gives me an acknowledging smile and nod or compliments me on what I am wearing?

The answer the these questions has to be a resounding NO! I believe that the bulk of the people that I have come in contact with have been sincerely friendly. The vast majority outnumber the few stubborn holdouts and, hopefully, their numbers will dwindle rapidly. I am a firm believer in the concept that we, or anyone else for that matter, should be able to go anywhere, at any time, with total impunity and not have to limit ourselves the places like New Hope and Provincetown.

I keep hearing that we will gain total acceptance by society, eventually, but not in our lifetime and that we are basically working for the future generation. If that is the case, so be it. But, I am starting to believe that this is not the case and I am convinced that it will happen in our lifetime. Acceptance of the transgendered lifestyle is beginning to gain momentum. As more and more sisters come out of hiding and on to the streets, those the levels of acceptance will accelerate even further. The slobs of the world will become the outcasts.

It is the man and woman on the street that we have to convince. It may seem very logical to lobby the legislators to enact laws to protect us, but sadly, they will continue to drag their collective feet until:

- We show sufficient numbers to force them to take notice.
- They are convinced that their constituency will swallow it.

Let's face facts. 200 or so transgendered people traveling to Washington is a nice gesture, but that's all it amounts to - a gesture. These thick-headed "good ole boys" need to be smacked in the head with a 2x4 just to get their attention. You need a massive march on Washington before they consider us anything more than a fringe group. The blacks did it. The gays did it. The women's rights advocates did it. Now it is our turn. I know a "Million Woman March" on Washington may sound far-fetched at this present time, but that is what it is going to take. We can paraphrase the old Helen Reddy song:: "I am transgendered, here me roar in numbers too big to ignore." I believe the numbers are there, we just can't see them yet.

Come out, come out, wherever you are.

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Hey, Good Looking! Here's your installment of helpful hints, health notes, and fashion finds. Do you have a tip to pass on to your sisters? Share it here!

Cosmetic Q & A by Paula Begoun

Dear Paula,

I know you must be tired of always hearing about someone's cosmetic woes, but your books have always helped me so much in the past that I thought you might be able to help with a problem I haven't seen you write about before. I have extremely sensitive skin on my body. I went to my doctor and she suggested I use Dove Unscented Soap. I am still using it, but I continue to get rashes every time I take a shower. I'm not sure if it's the water or the soap I'm allergic to. I recently bought Dove Moisturizing Body Wash and tried it because I thought it would be less irritating than the soap, but I was wrong. I've tried so many products out there, even Cetaphil Lotion, but nothing seems to help. I would appreciate any suggestions you may have.

Dear Reader,

If you are still experiencing this much irritation every time you shower the Dove soap is not helping in the least and you should stop using it immediately. You said you talked to your doctor, but you didn't say whether the doctor is a dermatologist. For skin as sensitive as yours, a dermatologist would be able to prescribe a cortisone cream to help reduce the rashes and irritation.

I do have a few recommendations I'd like you to try after you stop using the soap. Please purchase some raw uncooked oatmeal — not the quick-cooking type, but the kind you might find in a health-food store. Mix about a half cup of oatmeal with a teaspoon or two of water and use that in the shower as a massage all over your body. Continue using the Dove soap under your arms but nowhere else, and be careful when you rinse to have the suds fall away from your body. When you shampoo your hair, also be certain to rinse so that the suds fall away from your body. I strongly suggest you try some over-the-counter cortisone cream (such as Lanacort or Cortaid) over areas that are particularly irritated.

Dear Paula,

I've noticed that a lot of products are claiming to contain ingredients that can do the some thing as Renova, the prescription anti-wrinkle product being advertised in fashion magazines by Johnson and Johnson. What do you think of the claim that a cosmetic have the same effect as a drug?

Dear Reader,

Johnson & Johnson's Renova (the moisturizing version of Retin-A, containing the acid form of vitamin A called tretinoin) is getting so much attention, a host of products being launched boast they can produce the same effects as Renova because they contain vitamin A. They may contain vitamin A, but that doesn't mean they have anything in common with Renova. That would be like saying eating moldy bread is the same thing as taking penicillin.

Let me warn you about the Vitamin A ingredients making this comeback. Remember back in 1987 when Retin-A was in the headlines because of the controversial release of before-and-after pictures showing stunning results — reduced wrinkles and smoother skin after using Retin-A? Shortly after that, the market was flooded by products claiming they contained vitamin A and could do amazing things for the skin. They couldn't. Even Retin-A and Renova can't do wondrous things for the skin There is even a disclaimer on the Renova packaging stating that it "does not eliminate wrinkles, repair sun-damaged skin, reverse photo aging or restore a more youthful dermal pattern."

Wow! Could imagine any cosmetic making that statement?

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Fashion Forum

Compiled by Donna Marie

Lips go plum crazy

Just when you got used to the mod no lipstick of the summer, it's time to change. For fall, cosmetic companies are telling us to go back to dark lips. Not classic red, but purple. It's no surprise, when you start looking at all the purple clothes coming in for fall, but purple takes an attitude change.

For years, we've been told frosted blue eye shadow was only for bad girls, and ditto with the heavily frosted nail polish. Now, everybody from Revlon's Virtual Violet collection to Givenchy's Prunelle collection, is adding purple to its lipstick, eye shadow and even blusher. Although there's a lot of gold and bronze tones in makeup, purple looks newer because of its absence of several years. The fall face is dewy and natural instead of matte, with warmed up cheeks and intense eyes. Fake eyelashes are out, but you'll still want your eyes dark and smoky with plenty of eyeliner and maybe a burgundy mascara instead of black.

Brows are still arched, lips are still full, and nails are still on the short side, painted in purples and golds with a metallic undertone. That burnished metal influence in clothes, shoes and purses is also big in makeup, and numerous companies are digging for gold. For instance, Senna Cosmetics, now makes a Status gold metallic eye liner to be used at the base of the lashes of the lower lid to add dimension and offset the dark purple eye shadow. OPI Cosmetics has launched several metallic nail polish shades for fall, including the brownish-gold colored Grand Teton Topaz and Gold Digger's Delight, which looks inspired by the Bond movie "Goldfinger". Look for other top makeup firms to jump on the bandwagon.

Fashion statement is in the bag

A few seasons ago accessories were moving at the pace of glaciers and with about as much excitement. Today, accessories, particularly handbags, are as hot as chili salsa served at a tango contest. Women are casting off minimalism, starting at the accessory level. No more "one woman, one bag." Expect to see everything from tiny python clutches barely large enough to hold wallets and lipsticks to humongous straw totes that could see triple action as purses, lunch pails, and diaper bags.

When it comes down to making a fashion statement, the secret's in the bag. With clothing that looked so plain, the fashion forward sought other recognizable status symbols and latched on to the serviceable like the Prada bag, made of industrial strength nylon with metal handles. Prada accessory sales soared and even the company's clothing lines began to set styles. Before long, other companies were looking at Prada and were planning their strategies for bringing back the status symbol bag.

Pattern and color are big news in bags again. For fun, have a look at the Ferragamo black and white stripe bag with matching shoes or Ferragamo's tote that is a cage of black patent with several bright colors of interchangeable terrycloth liners. The highly patterned kilim carpet bags with leather trim remain popular, probably because they team so well with jeans or ethnic patterned dresses and move from summer to fall easily.

The Candies man can.

It all began around Halloween time - Candies were all over the place.

We're not talking Milky Ways or M&M's here - we're talking Candies shoes - those wooden-heeled "slide" mules with the brightly colored straps that were so prevalent in the late '70s.

During New York's fashion week, no fewer than 11 shows exhibited clothes mated with these vintage heels.

Neil Cole, CEO of Candie's Inc., remarked, "I don't know what to say - the fashion gods have smiled on us. I never thought we'd be selling slides again. But it's in the shows, editors are requesting them for photo shoots....I guess it's just a style that reminds people of good old times."

Candie's slide mules were first introduced in 1978. They became the rage of the disco years after Olivia Newton John donned a pair for the movie "Grease."

Not only have the shoes been revived on the runways, but designers like Anna Sui, Betsey Johnson, Vivenne Tam and Nicole Miller have created their own twists on these classics - like beads, glitter, clear plastic heels and other exorbitant details. Look for them to be in the stores by spring.

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Gaby's Gems
by Georgia Ann
Go Easy On Your Feet

A complex jigsaw of 26 bones; 19 muscles; and over 100 ligaments and 31 tendons, the foot is an engineering marvel that combines the best features of beanbag, lever, and concrete.

O Slip off your shoes to give feet a breather during the day. Enhance this pleasure with a refreshing foot spray.

O Go barefoot when you can, but protect your feet from sharp, craggy surfaces and during sports.

O If, from time to time, you have to stand for hours at a stretch, try shifting your weight to the outer edges of your feet to reduce stress on the usual weight-bearing points.

O Use feet instead of hands to turn the TV dial (I wonder if there is a double meaning here?), pick up marbles, open a drawer. Rotate and flex your feet. Drop a pencil on the floor; pick it up with your toes.

To strengthen your arches, stand pigeon-toed and rise up on your toes. Repeat four times in succession. Do this several times a day.

FOLLOW A REGIMEN

Daily:

O In the shower or bathtub, remove dry skin with a pumice stone (both pumice and skin must be damp). Rub gently over soles, heels, and sides of toes.

O Dry feet thoroughly, especially between the toes. (This is very important if you have diabetes. For more information on foot care for the diabetic look in future articles of gaby's gems). If feet perspire a lot, sprinkle them with talcum powder.

O Feet need daily moisturizing. The skin on your feet is coarser than that on your hands, so use richer lotions.

Weekly:

O Give your feet a 15 minute soak in warm water to which you've added sea salt or plain table salt.

O For problem feet, alternate soaks in warm and cold water; be sure to end with cold water.

O Use a pumice stone; abrasive creams can be used as well.

O To relieve dryness (caused partly because the soles of the feet have no oil glands), apply a rich cream. Wrap feet with plastic wrap, and cover with towels that have been dipped in hot water and wrung out. Wait 10 minutes; then remove wrappings and smooth cream into skin.

Monthly:

O Do a complete pedicure. If you walk a lot or participate in foot-pounding sports—like running and racquetball—give yourself a pedicure every two to three weeks.

FOOT EXERCISES

These stretching exercises will help the muscles in your feet and lower legs. Do each of the following sequences, except the last, five times.

*Ankle Stretch: While sitting down, cross your left foot over your right knee. With your right hand, hold the foot away from your heel so that you're pointing your toes. Hold and stretch, then pull the top of the foot back. Repeat with the other foot.

*Inchworm: While standing and keeping your weight mainly on one foot, move your other foot forward—curl your toes and arch your foot; then, keeping the heel in the same position, extend your toes to flatten the foot once again. Repeat until your foot has moved forward four to six inches, then reverse: by pressing your toes, slowly push your foot back to the start.

*Total Foot Flex: Lie on your back with your feet apart. Extend your foot upward by flexing your ankle so that you feel a stretch at the Achilles tendon. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Next; point your foot downward, then outward. Hold each position 15 seconds. Finally, rotate your feet in ankle circles, four times in each direction. End by shaking your feet.

*Towel Challenge: While sitting or standing, place your foot on top of a towel on the floor. Spread your toes and grab the towel with them so that you can pull it along the floor. Get your arch into the action, but not your heel. (It may take a while before you can do this; these muscles have been hibernating inside your shoes for years.) Now try it with the other foot.

*Toe Tricks: Sit on the floor so that you can easily reach your bare feet. Keeping your foot flat, flex your toes up. Now curl your toes back down one at a time, if you can, from your little toe to the big one. (If the little toe lies limp, help it along with your hand.) Do the same with the other foot.

*Achilles Tendon Stretch: This easy exercise will make your feet less vulnerable to fatigue if you do it twice a day. While holding on to the handrail, stand on a step with heels extended two inches off the edge. Rise up on tiptoes and hold 10 seconds. Then lower heels as far as they go and hold 10 seconds. Repeat 15 times.

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Health Watch

Compiled by the News Briefs Staff

"If the shoe doesn't fit-don't wear it." Pedorthists Reveal All

Correct shoe fit necessitates expertise on the part of the shoe fitter and an satisfactory inventory to fit the myriad of foot shapes and sizes in our society. Notwithstanding this need, appropriate shoe fit remains a cause of frustration for many. The advantages of having shoes professionally fitted by a pedorthist as opposed to a traditional shoe retailer is confirmed by the survey that asked: "When does a shoe fit?" One of the most invariable responses from the traditional retailers was, "The shoe fits when the customer says that it does." Pedorthists understand that there are many impediments in the selection of shoes that fit properly including: various sizing systems, a general partiality for shoes that look good regardless of fit, and a need for sufficient inventory to satisfy customer's needs.

Shoe fitting is a dilemma that has serious consequences both in terms of comfort and cost to the economy. A study by the American Orthopedic Foot and Ankle Society revealed that more than 75 percent of corrective surgery for women results from wearing poorly fitting shoes. Women's foot problems are believed to cost at least $3.5 billion per year and result in 15 million lost workdays.

The difficulty in fitting shoes is not a new problem. According to William A. Rossi, D.P.M., it wasn't until the turn of the century that most shoes began to come in specific sizes, including even left or right. Shoes were merely labeled large, small, fat or slim. The current American sizing system was established in 1930, and is based on the concept that each size is equal to 1/3 of an inch.

Pedorthists have the knowledge to properly fit shoes even though current methods of measuring foot width are far from precise. The standard method for evaluating width — with a Bannock device — takes a two dimensional measurement of the foot and compares it to the three dimensional girth of the shoe. The current system of widths ranges from AAAA to EEEEEE and represents quarter-inch increases in volume, not in linear measurements. This means that feet of the same circumference can have significantly different side to side measurements.

Pedorthic examination sometimes reveals that the foot is much wider in the forefoot then in the heel. This is even more apparent if bunions are present and is particularly true for women, as high heels significantly increase the pressure on the forefoot. As we age, the ball of the foot tends to widen while the width of the heel remains constant. In order to keep shoes from slipping off their heels, women often compromise and buy shoes that are too small. Only "combination last" shoes are made proportionally wider in the forefoot than the heel and can properly accommodate this widespread condition.

A full service pedorthic center must carry brands that come in a wide range of sizes and widths. In order to economize, most shoe stores generally confine their inventory to sizes they believe are the most popular. While this is satisfactory for the largest segment of the population, the limited inventory leaves people with relatively large, small, narrow or wide feet with very few choices.

In addition to width, many people require more depth than is typically found in most shoes. This may be the result of a high instep, hammertoes or the need for orthotic devices. Many comfort shoes are now made with removable sock liners like athletic shoes. These can be removed for additional room or replaced with orthotic devices. Depth in-lay shoes provide 3/8-inch room over the forefoot and are often able to accommodate irregular foot shapes eliminating the need for custom shoes.

Because fewer than 10 percent of shoe salespeople have had even rudimentary training in foot anatomy or shoe sizing, most fitting is based on a trial and error process. The shoe salesperson sometimes determines the appropriate size by simply looking inside a person's old shoes. A trained pedorthist has the skills to recommend the appropriate style to fit a personal comfort and lifestyle needs. The role of the pedorthist as a shoe fitting authority is increasingly important as manufacturers cut costs by limiting the widths in which shoes are made and retailers reduce inventories and fail to provide adequate sales training. Pedorthists continue to educate the public about the important role shoes play in providing comfort and improving health. Through their understanding of foot function and anatomy and communication with the medical community, pedorthists remain committed to helping people walk comfortably.

Food for Thought

Flounder Pecan

by Carol Ann [redacted]

Serves: 4

This main course gets taste, texture and a touch of class and elegance from the addition of the the lightly toasted pecans. To round out the meal, try serving this with broccoli steamed with a little orange juice in water and baked potatoes.

3 tablespoons finely chopped pecans
Butter-flavored spray or vegetable oil spray
1 pound flounder fillet or
4 4-ounce fillets
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon paprika
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Preheat the broiler. In a 9-inch by 13-inch baking pan, spread the pecans and lightly spray them with oil. Place under the broiler for 2 minutes, stirring twice, until golden, making sure they don't scorch.

Lightly spray the fillets with oil and arrange in a single layer over the pecans. Pour the lemon juice over the fillets and sprinkle with paprika. Broil 3 to 4 minutes until the thickest part of the fillet is opaque. Remove the fillets to individual plates or a large serving platter and sprinkle with parsley.

Serve immediately.

Pumpkin and Orange Swirl Cheesecake

by Carol Ann [redacted]

Serves: 10

A creamy cheesecake spiced with pumpkin and orange, this dessert can be frozen until you're ready to bake it or frozen after baking. For egg yolk watchers, this cake uses 2 whole eggs as substitutes don't work.

Vegetable oil spray
1-1/4 cups gingersnap cookie crumbs (about 12 cookies)
1 8-ounce package light cream cheese, room temperature
1 8-ounce package nonfat cream cheese, room temperature
1 15-ounce container nonfat ricotta
2 eggs
3/4 cup orange juice frozen concentrate
3/4 cup plus 1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 16-ounce can unsweetened solid-packed pumpkin pie filling
1 egg white
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 medium navel orange, thinly sliced (optional)
Several small fresh mint leaves (optional)

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

In a saucepan heat 2 quarts water to boiling.

Meanwhile, completely line the outside of a 9-inch springform pan with heavy-duty foil (which is wider), making sure all the edges are sealed and the foil has no holes. Lightly spray the inside of the pan with oil. Add the gingersnap crumbs and flatten with the palm of your hand.

In a food processor or bowl of an electric mixer beat together the cream cheeses, ricotta, eggs, orange juice concentrate, 3/4 cup sugar and vanilla until light and smooth. Measure 3-1/2 cups cream cheese filling into the crust-lined pan. To the processor or bowl containing the remaining cheese mixture add the pumpkin puree, 1/3 cup sugar, egg whiteand cinnamon, and pulse to mix well. Spoon the pumpkin mixture 1/4 cup at a time onto the cream cheese mixture in the pan and, with a rubber spatula, cut through and swirl a few times to marble.

Set the springform pan in a 14-inch by 9-inch by 3-inch pan and add enough boiling water to come halfway up the outside of the springform pan. Bake for 1 hour and 10 to 15 minutes until firm but slightly jiggly. Turn the oven off and allow cheesecake to cool in the oven for 1 hour. Remove to a wire rack to cool completely. Cover with foil or plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours.

To serve, remove the cake to a serving platter being careful that the cake doesn't crack (slide it off the pan bottom with both hands cupping the cake and get someone to help you if necessary.) If garnishing with the oranges cut the slices in half and place around the edge of the cake, cut side down. Garnish in between orange slices with mint.

PER SLICE; Saturated Fat: 3 gm Total Fat: 6 gm Cholesterol: 52 mg Sodium: 328 mg Calories: 261

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Sweet and Sour Meatballs

by Vicki [redacted]

2 lbs. extra lean ground beef
1 egg slightly beaten
1 can (16 ozs.) jellied cranberry sauce
1/4 to 1/2 cup catsup
1 box lasagna-style Hamburger Helper
1/4 to 1/2 cup La Choy Sweet & Sour Sauce
garlic salt to taste

Chop pasta from Hamburger Helper into bits. Combine with ground beef, Hamburger Helper mix, and egg. Shape into small balls. Place in roasting pan and bake in 350 degree oven for 20 to 40 minutes or until done. While meatballs are baking, make sauce. Mix cranberry sauce, catsup, and sweet and sour sauce in saucepan. Add garlic salt. Place over low heat and stir until cranberry sauce is melted. Add meatballs and simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes to blend flavors. Serve in a chafing dish, or on a hot tray. Makes 40 to 50 meatballs.

(Reprinted from Femme Forum.)

Gender Wars

Underwires and High Heels vs. Suits and Ties

by Paula Ganzi Licata

(with a few slight additions by Carol Ann [redacted])

Why are women's fashions so extreme—extremely uncomfortable, that is — compared to men's? (That's your opinion, Dear.) A shirt and tie vs. pantyhose on a hot summer day. Wonderbras vs. boxer shorts? High heels vs. wingtips? No contest! (I agree, I'll take the pantyhose, Wonderbras and the heels, please.) And how expensive is it to adapt to the new season's tie width? (It gets even cheaper when you don't wear ties.) Men don't experience the constant turnover of styles (varying skirt lengths, changing shoe shapes or chameleon-like cosmetics) or incur the expense of replacing last year's fashions the way their female counterparts do. (Wanna bet?)

They say clothes make the man—that's because it's so easy for him to shop. Where's the men's department in any department store? On the main floor, guaranteeing easy access and minimum time commitment. (So that's where it is. It's been a long time.) But women's wear is strategically scattered. We're led through a labyrinth of temptations. (Isn't it terrible, Hon? Those temptations can empty a wallet faster than a Hoover.)

Like Little Red Riding Hood dodging the wolf, women have to pass through a forest of cosmetics (the saleswomen hanging over counters like gypsies at carnival booths, trying to lure you with a spritz and a sample) (It does make it harder to find the Panstik.) or Notions (things you don't need but look great on display), just to get to the escalator.

Suits Sweaters. Coats. They're never on the first floor. And ladies' shoes must be considered the pinnacle of department store placement, tucked away on a higher floor or spread out in groups by designer or price. (I'm starting to get the feeling that you're not enjoying the finer things in life.) I'm waiting for a retail trend where they'll have them by color. "Oh, you want brown pumps? That's the fourth floor."

Where we buy isn't as indicative as what we buy. (You're on the right track.)

The Gap, "America's closet," suggests the seething gender war undertones in clothes. Neat piles of folded jeans in varying styles line the shelves. The men's section features "Easy Fit," "Loose Fit" and "Relaxed Fit." The women's jeans are featured in those same three styles, but there's one other choice, "Slim Fit." Why are women taunted with "slim" while men recline in "relaxed"? (Flaunt `em if you got `em.)

And the ever changing styles in women'swear will wear down any wardrobe budget. This Fall season features women's suit jackets at fingertip length, (sounds great for covering hairy arms) leaving all the short cropped jackets in my closet clamoring for freedom. Pant lengths are baring ankles and flaring out at the bottom. Staying in vogue costs big bucks. (I have to agree with you, again.) My forest green suit with black velvet collar and cuffs from last year looks so "five years ago" compared to the military garb favored in this season's suits. An Istante ad features a brown belted jacket with army pockets khaki collared shirt and tan tie — it looks like a World War I uniform and like nothing in my closet. (I think I'll pass on that one.)

Yet there's nothing terribly new in men's suits. (I'm starting (yawn) to lose interest.) Hugo Boss' 3-button charcoal wool suit seems relatively sedate and unsurprisingly similar to suits of seasons past. Calvin Klein's double-breasted pin-stripe navy suit shown with an iridescent, yarn-dyed broadcloth shirt won't cause a stir in the board room. This seasons suits from Donna Karan, Mani and Joseph Abboud all seem classic despite their trendy photo settings.

And there's nothing in menswear close to the way designers force the ridiculous upon women. Miu Miu has an ad featuring a woman in a 7/8 length coat with a black skirt hanging five inches below that. (Now, you're talking!) She looks like a war refugee from the 1940s.

The most shocking ensemble I noticed in the Fall fashion ads for men was a Gene Meyer multicolor horizontal tie on a blue and while horizontal striped shirt. Oooooh. Daring. (It may be daring, but I wouldn't want to be buried with it.)

Menswear seems so practical, so logical. Take belts. Men wear them to hold up their pants. But I see ladies in jersey knit dresses that are plastered to their bodies like mold to cheese, with big wide leather belts wrapped around their middle in the hopes of hourglassing their figures into a Barbie body. (Why not!!!)

If any one item can incite the fashion gender war, it's shoes Running to catch a train? There's a man in a pair of Cole Haan plain-toe oxfords, and a woman in Ferragamo's layered platform soles. Who will make it to the track on time? A Stuart Weitzman shoe ad featuring a 3 inch heel with a 1/2 inch platform proclaims, "An election year platform that's truly supportive of women." If Stu walked a mile in those shoes of his, preferably after being over-served at the bar, he'd hobble home to his favorite flat loafers. (I'd bet the ranch that he would refuse to take them off.)

But it's the clothes not seen that are the ones most telling. Men's and

Gender Wars

women's undergarments have drastically different agendas. Girdles. Control-top pantyhose. Underwire bras. Thong panties. Uplift shaper hosiery to get a bit more air under your derriere. (Stop, young lady, you're getting me all excited.) The wonder of Wonderbras and all their push-up pals is that their entire purpose is to please men. (I warned you once, already.) It's certainly not the comfort of women. Yet men lounge in baggy boxers and comfy tee-shirts. Hmm.

The first shot may have already been fired in the gender fashion wars. An advertisement for a comfortable bra captures the reader's attention with the caption "Guys say we're moody and emotional. Let's see how they feel after 8 hours in an underwire." (Only 8 hours! Now, them is fightin' words.) The picture in the ad features a pair of men's briefs laced with barbed wire around the waistband and crotch.

I guess this means war. (Ms. Licata, I'm a lover, not a fighter. Anytime you want to trade closets, just give me a jingle.)

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Long Coats

In addition to the vibrant colors, the long lean styles and the shimmering fabrics, another indication that the '90s are actually the '70s in Technicolor rerun is the return of the maxi-coat.

Maxicoats—for those who weren't around back then, or who have blocked the whole decade as a traumatic incident — are sweeping, belted, ankle-length coats. They complete that towering and slender outfit that we're seeing so much of: The flared or bootcut flat-front trousers, ribbed turtlenecks and a coat that makes the jacket obsolete.

The good news is that this outfit, and the maxi-coat in general, provides such an extended line that it can flatter even those who under other circumstances could be considered long and lean. It's a Hollywood look, and — bonus points for winter - it's also warm. It can certainly dress up even the most dreary day to day clothes, in large part because while you're wearing a buttoned-up maxi-coat no one can tell what else it is you're wearing.

The maxi also picks up on many other style trends this fall — think of it as a big ol's canvas that can be as trendy or as classic as you like.

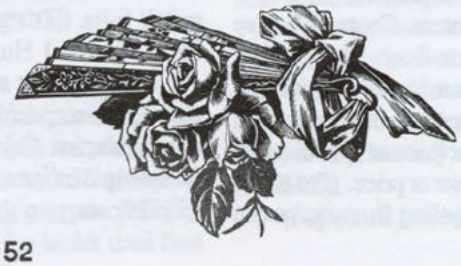
The primary style you'll find the maxi in is the military look — loden green, in wool or some other hearty fabric, with patch pockets and gold or brassy buttons, and maybe an epaulet or two. In stores you'll find a lot of maxis paired with matching pants, also in military green — great if you're going military 24-7, but problematic if you have other clothes you like to wear.

The other trend that the maxi plays up big time is the glam, extravagant, "kept-woman" look that's making it all right to wear real fur and large gems again. Of course, neither the jewel nor the fur absolutely has to be real. Carolina Herrera's take on the maxi is lined with fake chinchilla — which looks just as lush and spendthrift as the real thing, and which you might actually wear, as she styled it on the runway, with simple flannel trousers and an oxford shirt.

"I think a great coat with something simple but chic underneath, like the black ribbed turtleneck, is really very sexy, very glamorous in a Katharine Hepburn way, or a Lauren Bacall way. It's classic," says Neiman Marcus' regional fashion designer Duane Jeffers, who at a recent show of fall fashions at their Short Hills store featured several long sweeping coats — and not a few 7/8ths coats — in the line up. In particular a long coat of black shearling by Byron Lars made a starkly dramatic statement.

And finally, the maxi is great for showing off your true colors. As what was heralded as a "multi" season has boiled down to brown, black and the "new neutral" plum purple, a coat of many or one bright, bright color can certainly lift November spirits. Linda Allard for Ellen Tracy took the maxi to the limit in bright red with relaxed styling - people have been calling it her "bathrobe" coat — but in show-stopping poppy it's anything but sleepy.

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)



Women Face Marketplace Discrimination As Consumers

By Pam Adams Copley News Service

Check out the price of Speedstick deodorant and Lady Speedstick. In some stores, women pay 30 percent more. What about the price of a plain white woman's T-shirt and the same thing for men? Again, women typically pay more. Time and again, one study or another has shown women pay more than men for the same items or service at the dry cleaners, in auto dealerships and at hair salons.

In 15 years of covering consumer beats at the New York Times and Newsday, Frances Cerra Whittlelsey had never considered gender discrimination in the marketplace. Then consumer advocate Ralph Nader asked her to write a book about the subject. "I was amazed," she says in a telephone interview. But she wasn't surprised.

Her research forced her to recall shopping with her husband almost 25 years ago. He didn't have to hunt through racks. Store clerks brought everything to him. A tailor came out and fitted the suit perfectly, free of charge. Most major department stores charge men and women equally for alterations now. But women have to ask, or, in some cases, demand fair charges for alterations, she says.

The book became "Women Pay More: And How to Put a Stop to it," coauthored with Marcia Carroll of the Center for Study of Responsive Law, and Whittelsey became a confirmed advocate on women's consumer issues. After the book, she helped organize SHOP! Information Services, a publishing outfit on the Internet that provides pertinent consumer information to women.

When Whittelsey talks about the marketplace, she's not just talking department stores and auto dealerships. In the book, she documents a broad range of entrenched economic practices that result in women's differential treatment almost anyplace where money changes hands. For example:

Merchandising: "Be on guard that you're not paying more whenever there's a women's version of something. The premium we pay buys us a floral fragrance and a pastel package."

Health Care: "Women undergo more unnecessary operations than men do, primarily hysterectomies and Cesareans. Not only do we suffer the pain of these unnecessary procedures and the loss of pay during recovery periods, but we pay higher disability insurance costs."

Auto insurance: "Adult women pay the same as men, but we should be paying about 30 percent less. Men drive more and have more accidents, particularly serious ones."

Financial Industry: Despite enactment of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, banking regulators looking for evidence of racial discrimination in lending were surprised to discover that some of the worse cases were based on age and gender discrimination, she writes. This chapter also looks at retirement plans, pensions and Social Security.

Each chapter ends with sections on "Taking charge." For example, what to do when you think you've been discriminated against financially, and lists or resources to read or call for more information. Whittelsey says there's not one best answer on what women should do to protect themselves in the marketplace.

"In a general sense, the best advice is to inform yourself as much as you possibly can," she says. "Be aware that you're probably going to be treated in a stereotypical manner, and women of color should be even more on guard. Be very assertive and realize you'll probably have to bargain better and harder to get the same price a man would."

Ultimately, she would like to see a federal equal Rights Amendment that includes an unequivocal statement saying women cannot be charged more for goods and services simply because of gender. In the meantime, she suggests women press state legislators to enact laws similar to a self enforcing California law that allows a woman to collect $1,000 in damages if she can show she has been discriminated against.

"I had a marketing professional tell me women are charged more because women are willing to pay more," she says. "Women, in a sense are blamed for this. The issue isn't blame, there's no point in looking for conspiracies. All we want is change." The World Wide Web address for SHOP! Information Services is http://ww.sis.org. The book, published by The New Press, is just $9.95 for women and $11.95 for men. Or as the back cover says, "Just Kidding."

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

Passing Perfect (#8)

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One of the more highly coveted aspects of transgender living which receives a great deal of focus is being able to "pass" while crossdressed or living in a new gender role. Being able to pass has its benefits. For example, people use correct pronouns and terms of reference. Also, a transgender man or woman does not need to worry about receiving second glances and unsolicited comments. Passing simplifies life considerably for the person who only wishes privacy, and it also reduces the risk of being victimized by persons who cannot tolerate difference in others.

There is also, however, a lighter side to the subject of passing. As both a gender specializing counselor and transgender woman, I have the opportunity to hear as well as experience interesting events involving pass or not passing. As a full-time counselor with a primary focus on gender issues, I am also in the unique position of being able to call myself a "transgender spotter." Without any doubts, I can spot the majority of transgender persons, even several blocks away.

This ability introduces a question. What distinguishable characteristics lead me to believe I have spotted a transgender person? First, my ability to do so is greatly assisted by my location. Like other major cities it easy to spot transgender people occasionally as pedestrians. This is particularly so near my office, where within a 4- block radius at least one dozen transgender men and women either reside or work. Transgender persons who live in areas with high numbers of others with gender issues, should note that this makes them more likely to be noticed. For example, in San Francisco I am noticed all the time because people are more aware of transgender issues, yet while visiting New Orleans or Portland people rarely spot my differences.

A combination of a person's physical characteristics, body language, and clothing all play a key role in passing. I call the embodiment of these elements "presentation." One does not simply get dressed, hoping to pass by playacting a part. One becomes a transgender man or woman. Whether a person lives in the new gender part or full time, pulling together a consistent presentation greatly increases chances at passing. Furthermore, a consistent presentation is easier for others to understand.

One of the most common concerns transgender persons in the process of coming out have is the concern that one or several physical characteristics may ruin a person's chances of passing. In many cases this fear is unnecessary, particularly since as the individual focuses on pulling together more and more details their presentation will improve. Generally speaking, people do not walk about looking to see if others have big feet, broad shoulders, or are wearing a wig. Thus, if someone's overall presentation is fairly well pulled together, there is a good chance they may pass and not even realize it.

There are a number of details a person can focus on to increase their passibility. This includes learning the art of proportional dressing. For example, it is commonly known that round-shaped women should avoid wearing mini- skirts. However, what may not be known by a person lacking experience dressing as a woman is that wearing a shorter-length skirt may be possible if paired with a longer-length sweater or blazer. Also, remember that large body features can showcase larger-size jewelry.

The art of building a presentation also takes an emotional commitment, which involves self-examination. Does my clothing match my age, social position, and the occasion? Is it OK to dress differently than other transgender men or women? Are my clothing colors conducive to feeling good about myself? If I am spotted, is it OK for others to notice I am a transgender person? Do I always have to dress as others expect me to? Does my appearance match my gender identification?

Making an emotional commitment to one's presentation is a unique and interesting process. It primarily involves giving yourself permission to be who you are and allowing others the right to their own perceptions and beliefs. As a personal example, a few years ago I was approached by a husband and wife from Venezuela. After providing them with directions the husband complimented me in the kindest of tones by stating that I was the most beautiful man he had ever seen. As a transgender woman, I could have overreacted and become offended. However, understanding that this couple may not have ever encountered a transgender person before, I accepted the compliment graciously and explained that I lived as a member of the opposite gender.

Returning to the subject of transgender spotting, what most frequently leads me to believe I have spotted a transgender man or woman is the body language and energy or chemistry a person emits. At times a transgender person may put forth energies which are a mixture of masculine and feminine. This is OK because we are transgendered. I have also noticed that transgender persons put forth a more subtle energy which reflects their experiences. These energies can best be characterized as empowerment, self-confidence, and an ability to survive. Our bodies become the embodiment of our efforts, and our beauty shows when we give it a chance to blossom.

A relatively new dynamic concerning the ability to pass is choosing to

be "out" or not making any significant attempts to hide one's transgender identity. This dynamic has become more evident in locations where larger numbers of transgender people live. These people are making a statement of being proud, strong, and transgendered. They welcome people's curiosity, and do not mind answering questions about their apparent differences from others. The nice thing about this approach is that one no longer has to worry about being found out.

In closing, the experience of passing also has a humorous side. Some years ago I was visiting my physician's office and was treated by a substitute doctor. Without warning, this delightful woman suddenly turned into any transsexual's nightmare. She announced that she was immediately stopping my hormone prescription. I gagged! When I calmly asked why, she stated that my medical chart showed no records of having a gynecological exam. Ha-Ha! Keeping my amusement to myself, I gently asked the physician if she could put the chart down and look at me. After she did so, I explained much to her surprise that I was a transgender woman and that a pap smear wasn't necessary. She laughed, and I did as well, since I had assumed that I rarely pass. The lesson is one we all can learn. Sometimes we pass and sometimes we don't.

(Gianna Israel provides nationwide telephone consultation, individual & relationship counseling, evaluations and referrals. She is principal author of the Recommended Guidelines for Transgender Care, writes Transgender Tapestry's "Ask Gianna" column; is an AEGIS board member and HBIGDA member. She can be contacted at (415) [redacted] at P.O. Box 424447 San Francisco, CA 94142, or via e-mail at [redacted])

(Reprinted from Cactus Flower.)

I'm a possibility.

Health Matters

by Sheila Kirk, M.D.

Dear Doctor,

My husband has been a Transgendered person all of his life. Up to now he was content just to dress - at least that is what he has always told me. Of late he wants more - hormones, electrolysis and who knows what next. Help us!

This can be an all too common progression and it's what spouses and partners fear a great deal. They ask themselves, "When will what I agree to and accept not be enough?" Some Transgendered mean what they say and stick to it life long. Others believe they mean what they say, but ever so gradually they reassess themselves and their lives and feel they need and deserve more. They may be silent for a time. They may demonstrate their spirit more. They may be out and out demanding and confrontive, and may daredevil to their destruction and to that of the relationships they are in.

There are no real markers or warnings whereby individuals can identify the Transgendered who seek to move ahead. There are no real guarantees in the agreements made and the boundaries established. The one thing essential is honesty between partners. If the Transgendered has a need to express more or to move further along the pathway, it is essential that dialogues begin and counseling commence with an experienced and knowledgeable therapist.

It's unfair to all concerned to go underground, to be secretive, to yearn, and to deceive. The results of counseling can be rewarding. They can also be tragic. Some may benefit; some may feel cheated and abandoned. Speak with your spouse and ask for truth. Consider that you will both need counseling and take the steps to enter into it. You both may be quite surprised and gratified by such steps.

Dear Doctor,

I am a Transgendered male with high blood pressure and (I hate to admit this) am 75 pounds overweight. There is no cardiac disease in my family and I'm in my early forties. Should I be concerned about heart risk?

You don't mention whether or not you are under medical supervision and using medication. Your physician may be asking for "big time" weight loss to control your hypertension. No matter what the case may be, you should actively lose weight and reach the weight level appropriate to your size and height. Your blood pressure in most instances will lower in response and your heart status will be benefited greatly by that alone.

If hypertension persists after weight loss, you will need treatment. Blood pressure elevations or hypertension is not generally curable. It can be modified by various regimens and when lowered, the effects upon cardiovascular and kidney health are very favorable. Overweight is a controllable variable. Proper weight goes hand in hand with good health. You will wear smaller sizes as well, and won't that be fun?!

Dr. Sheila Kirk maintains a professional health care referral list, and those with desire to find a psychologist or physician can contact her at the addresses below. She also conducts a teenage crossdressing study and is writing a book about children and transgenderism. Dr. Kirk also heads a newly formed committee at IFGE that is studying ways to reach out and educate transgendered youth under the age of 16.

You can reach Dr. Kirk by: e-mail: [redacted] Phone: (412) [redacted] Fax: (412) 781-1096 address: Sheila Kirk, P.O. Box 38114, Blawnox, PA 15238-8114

"Even when you're shopping retail, it's important how the clothing fits. Women started asking me for a book or patterns to help them develop their own personal style. No matter what size you are, you can wear clothes that are stylish and attractive on you—something that fits you this minute," Farro says.

The book was conceived on the lecture circuit. Readers of "Life Is Not a Dress Size" will not only find advice on body types and what styles work best on you; fabric basics and wardrobe planning; accessorizing; personal grooming, but also, how to cherish the important moments in their lives. There is even a bonus sewing section.

(It should be noted that not all the recommendations in the book are suitable for crossdressers. For instance, Farro strongly advises everyone to wear shoulder pads to "even out your profile." We crossdressers have our built-in, non-removable shoulder pads.)

Farro has come to terms with her size, but she still sees room for improvement. (Don't we all?) "My ultimate dream is to lose a hundred pounds and turn my seminar title around to: `How to Dress with Style When You Feel like Roseanne and Look like Cher,'" the 47-year-old author quips. "I've learned to be happy with who I am. That's the key. Being happy is a personal choice."

(Reprinted from News Briefs.)

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Book Review by Carol Ann [redacted]

Life Is Not a Dress Size: Rita Farro's Guide to Attitude, Style and a New You by Rita Farro

She's dynamic, she's stimulating, she's charming — and she wears a size 24 dress. Author Rita Farro is a woman who has found new meaning in her life. As Farro says, "Life should be about more than what you weigh." As a means to an end, she has created "Life Is Not a Dress Size: Rita Farro's Guide to Attitude, Style, and a New You" (Chilton, $16.95)

Not only is the book about fashion for larger-sized women but it is also an informative, often humorous, chronicle of her personal strife with a weight problem, with self-esteem and with coming to terms with who she is. (I have to ask: Does this all sound familiar? Since the average size of a crossdresser is 16, we are a ready-made patrons for her book.)

Farro's individual conflict with her size began, as it does with many women, in high school. (Hers started a little later than ours, but was no less intense.) It was June 1965. Farro was then a sophomore in high school, and Twiggy invaded America via Vogue magazine. As a result of peer pressure, the thin, wispy teenage model became the "ideal" for many young girls, and women, who were unhappy with their bodies, including Farro. She was a size 13 at the time and started taking diet pills. "We all wanted to be like her, very thin. Women have spent a fortune ever since trying to lose weight," the Princeton, Iowa, resident says. (We spend a fortune trying to look female — the parallels are endless.)

"Think about this," Farro notes. "In 1960, there was no diet industry. According to Naomi Wolfe in `The Beauty Myth,' by 1992 the industry grew to an estimated $33 billion. I bet you can guess who the winner is in that case. I'm not totally against dieting, but, too many women have been falling for someone else's vision of perfection instead of accepting themselves as they are."

Following the birth of her two sons (now 15 and 18) Rita Farro "gained a lot of weight." As the years went by, depression set in. She ate more and became even more depressed. Following years of "yo-yo" dieting Farro stopped dieting in 1986. "Not only was I unable to control my weight, it was controlling me. It was stopping me from living my life fully. Before I knew it, I was wearing a size 22. Or, I should say I would have been wearing it, but I couldn't bring myself to buy or sew anything that big," Farro says. "I literally had no clothes to wear, and leaving the house was a major problem."

Her life began to take a turn for the better in 1986, when she and her husband opened a fabric store. "I've loved sewing most of my life. As I look back, I still can't believe how opening the store changed my life," Farro says. The idea of working outside the home brought on supplementary worries about what to wear. Because she didn't want to buy what was on the rack she was forced into designing her own clothes. "Today, most stores catering to plus-sizes start at size 14 and go up, but back then there wasn't a lot to choose from. What there was didn't fit properly or was just ugly," she says. Her own designs were becoming to her figure and fitted her lifestyle. She has a preference for colorful clothes — as opposed to the blacks, browns and grays that the stores were commonly offering to larger-sized women at the time. "Those clothes looked better on me than anything I'd worn in years. I started looking forward to getting dressed and began feeling a lot better about myself," she says.

In due time, customers began complimenting her. "That's a great feeling. People were actually being nice to me!" Farro experimented with colors and styles until she developed her own personal style. "The more comfortable I became with my clothes, the more I experimented with different things and the more daring I became," she says. In time, she realized that she was more than her dress size. "I'm a loving wife, a good mother and an excellent friend. Those are the things that really count," Farro says. (I would be willing to bet that this genuine lady has no problem with crossdressers.)

Her newly-found self-assurance led to another career — public speaking. She was invited to present a seminar at a sewing festival on designing clothes for the large-size woman. Frightened at first, as she thought: "How can I get up in front of a roomful of women and talk about things like how a couple of double chins affects my choice of necklines?" Farro's next quandary was to come up with a suitable title for the seminars. Deciding to use a humorous approach, Farro settled on "How to Dress with Style When You Feel Like Cher but Look Like Roseanne."

To make a long story short, a new career was established, and she expanded her lectures to include a non-sewing audience.

Ask the Dermatologist

by Jane Ellen Fairfax, M.D.

Dear Dermatologist,

I have a patch of skin near my nose that will not hold makeup. Every time I apply makeup there the sponge takes off more than it places. I had a girl friend once who had this problem but I never thought it would happen to me.

Is there anyway to recondition this patch of skin? Fortunately it's not in the beard area but I'm afraid someone will notice a bare patch on my otherwise made up face.

Spotty

Dear Spotty,

Since you do not describe a raised skin lesion, scale, or other obvious abnormality, I will assume that the area appears reasonably normal. Since it is near the center of the face, the problem may very well be sebaceous (oil) gland overactivity, or rosacea, in which both oil glands and the surrounding tissue overgrow. Since most makeups consist of oil, water, and covering material, oil gland overactivity may well cause the skin not to receive makeup.

Several solutions are possible. There is an acne medication, Sulfacet-R, which consists of a drying lotion that contains sulfur and sodium sulfacetamide, that can be used as a makeup base, especially in small areas. It comes with a pigmenting agent you can adjust to the desired color. Cover this with powder, and you may be "Spotty" no more.

Another possible method involves the use of makeup application technique. Rather than sponge on a makeup, you can pat it on, as is done with water-base makeups. Makeup applied by this technique usually stays put. You may even want to go with one of the better covering water bases in this area. Prescriptives is a good brand of this type. As always, you do best to set the makeup with a pressed powder, which again can be patted on.

Or, you can go in the opposite direction. An extremely heavy makeup, such as Covermark or Dermablend, patted on, may overcome even a lot of underlying oil. These makeup bases cover skin lesions of all types, from bare areas to birthmarks.

Dear Dermatologist,

I have a lot of hair on my hands. This is very inconvenient since I love to crossdress regularly and nobody likes a girl with furry hands. I know one of our girls who plucks the hairs out with tweezers. I have been considering this since electrolysis seems like an expensive solution. I know you can pluck your brows. Are there any drawbacks to plucking the hair on your hands?

Follically Gifted

Dear Gifted,

Plucking the hair out of the hands is an acceptable way to remove it temporarily, although it is about as pleasurable as a leisurely Epilady. The main problem is that careless technique may cause a bacterial infection of the follicles. Electrolysis will remove the hair permanently. How quickly the removal occurs depends upon the skill of the operator and your own hair's propensity to regrow. As you say, it is expensive, and can lead to a variable degree of scarring. It is not a procedure I would recommend to anyone with a history of keloid formation (overgrown scars). Epilating creams can be effective, but can cause severe irritant reactions.

On balance, I favor waxing or sugaring. Both these techniques have the effect of a massive pluck. These procedures, which are done by cosmeticians, cost in the $60 to $80 range. Sugaring is probably the less painful of the procedures, but not all cosmeticians use this technique. Doing the forearms and hands takes about 90 minutes, more or less, depending on the amount of hair present.

The chief side effect is a hive-like reaction, caused by release of histamine around the hair follicles. Usually, this lasts only a few hours. The most pleasant side effect for crossdressers is that, over time, the hair tends to thin out, as a certain number of hairs seem to get discouraged and don't grow back. After waxing, the hair usually takes about 6 to 8 weeks to grow back. So the crossdresser contemplating this technique may have to evaluate it in the light of family functions or summer activities. On the other hand (so to speak!), his hands and arms may be "good" for two genderland conventions!

(This column also appears in the Renaissance News and Views.)

Red-Rock Femme Adventure

Tan-Lines and Serenity, Anyone?

by Deborah [redacted] UT-4248-G

En Femme amid the Greatest Scenery on Earth!

We dreamed ourselves in this picture.

Our femme self in her favorite bathing suit, a sundress at noon, an evening gown by moon!

We saw it in "Priscilla Queen of the Desert."

We dreamed of doing it as we watched "Wong Foo."

As kids, some wished it, with "Some Like it Hot."

En Femme amid the Greatest Scenery on Earth!

Now, it was OUR TURN, as we went on a campout in some of Utah's most scenic wonders.

We went to a secluded riverside campsite, enjoying the fellowship of others like us. We swam, went sightseeing, and camped. We strolled along the canyon rim, enjoying grand vistas.

We left Friday evening, staying Saturday, & left Sunday, at an approximate cost of $20.00 each.

We also intended this to be a sort of toast to anyone who had ever dreamed of being in the open air in the sun, swimming, hiking, or just being you (your femme self). But we got so much more...

The first thought was how to make an outing like this compatible with a community of people who are largely hidden, and insecure about meeting others in this arena. Or, can we accomodate our more timid moments and imagined unplanned meetings with others? Out in the open, beyond the familiar enclosed spaces, it is easy to imagine a stranger suddenly appearing, with the unstated question of "Now, what do I do?"

The answer was giving each person attending the comfort of being in control. Being in control of their own transportation, whether riding with someone or by themselves. Being in control by having an escape route available at the campsite. Being in control by letting a person exit herself at any time. Being in control by encouraging having one's male clothing available for yet another type of refuge. Also giving everyone knowledge that there were at least one or two 'mother hens' more experienced in meeting the unexpected, available.

As events unfolded, we needn't have worried...

Deborah [redacted] Kari and Aere at the campsite.

The first day at camp, there was a certain exhilaration, as evidenced by statements such as, "Hey, I don't care if it IS only 5:00AM—I'm getting into a dress!". Or, "You don't know how many years I've dreamed of swimming in a female bathing suit, and now it's happening!". Or, "My male self gets to do this all the time, now it's MY turn!"

For the rest of the weekend, for me, time seemed to stand still. As it seemed like school was out, and I had a long summer yet to enjoy. There was being me, against a backdrop beautiful enough to have once only been available in dreams. There was a comparison with memories of doing this in a closed room behind secret doors—a claustrophobic existence, and now the open sky with the feeling of limitless expansion, a stretching out. The warm sunshine on my skin, the comfortable breezes blowing through my skirt...

For myself, as for the others, our shared activity now had pleasant associations of a comfortable state of being. The sharing with others of similar experiences in such a way that your innermost self knows that this is a positive growing experience.

This was born out in the statements of others when one said that this was so safe that it wasn't even a challenge. Even secretive people could do this. This attitude was acted out in experiences on the car-tour portion of the trip, where we stopped at a point of interest, and inadvertantly met other tourists. In an ordinary, everyday way, these people were met and passed with little notice. This built even more confidence, and illustrated a shift in mentality, where once there was trepidation, now there was minimal concern. This shows you just what a little sunbathing, swimming, and mealtimes, en-femme in the shadow of majestic cliffs can do!

Where dressing up was once paired with closed doors and darkness, it is now paired with light, and the comfortable vulnerablilty that is linked with the vast open bowl of the sky.

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Does YOUR chapter have an e-mail address? We are receiving an increasing number of inquiries in response to Tri-Ess's Internet presence as well as to ads in gender community publications. Whenever possible we refer inquirers to the nearest local chapter. A Helpline or an E-Mail address makes the referral process much more efficient. To list your chapter's local E-Mail address, contact Jane Ellen Fairfax at [redacted].

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BLACKMAIL, PART 2

by Debbie [redacted]

(VA-3143-H)

This is the continuation of an article published in the Spring 1996 Femme Mirror called "Blackmail." For those who didn't read the article, let me provide a brief synopsis. My ex-wife was extremely upset over a financial situation out of my control (removing her name from a loan that was assigned to me at the divorce - the company wouldn't do it) and she threatened to cancel my son's visitation at Christmas unless I found a way to make it happen.

Well, I couldn't and was tired of her using my son's visitation as a weapon, so I threatened to take her to court over visitation. In retaliation, she told my son of my cross-dressing - he canceled visitation. On January 22nd, 1996, I was served papers attempting to restrict visitation with my son. If approved, I could only visit him during the day, in San Antonio — escorted. Totally unacceptable, especially since I live in Northern Virginia. I decided to fight the action.

The next incident occurred when I was attending the Texas T-Party. Saturday morning I received a frantic call from my wife. She had just opened a express mailed envelope from my ex-wife. It was another blackmail letter. It had three conditions or she was going send a package including photographs of Debbie to the military. The conditions were: 1) Get out of my son's life, 2) send her $5,000 to cover her legal expenses, and 3) retire from the military (in the divorce she was awarded 50% of my retired pay; about $1000 per month). I abruptly had a panic attack that lasted until I got home and called my lawyer. He calmed me down and recommended it fight it. I agreed. My first step was to notify my military defense lawyer, and he gave me the advice not to admit anything.

Everything was quiet for about six weeks - it was nerve-wracking. On April 3rd I was visited by three military police personnel who searched my office and took me to their office for questioning. They told me my ex-wife had given them proof-positive that I was a crossdresser and that they were investigating me for three violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice: conduct unbecoming an officer, damage to government property and lying on an official report. Would I like to make a statement? After three hours of telling them I didn't want to make a statement without my lawyer present, they finally released me.

Everything was quiet for about six weeks - it was terribly nerve-wracking. Then on May 15th, my military lawyer called. The military agreed not to prosecute me, if I agreed to retire. Well, I got conflicting advice. My military lawyer told me to take the deal and run, while my civilian lawyer told me to fight it. He firmly believed that if the military had enough evidence to prosecute; they wouldn't be making a deal. Although I was tempted, I decided that too much was at stake (about $1400 per month for the rest of my life), so I opted to retire on July 12th and become unemployed.

Meanwhile, the civilian case was getting interesting. My ex-wife was telling my son all sorts of stories and lies. He was afraid of me. Every time I talked to him, she would give him a hard time. Finally, we just stopped talking. Meanwhile, I asked the court to have myself, my ex-wife and my son evaluated by a psychiatrist because my ex-wife was claiming I was dangerous to my son. The evaluation was conducted in July. Things got worse and worse between my son and me. It looked like I might win the court case, but lose my son anyway.

The military situation, the civilian court case, and my unemployment were taking their toll. My current marriage was the victim. My wife was understanding but, was troubled. How could I, while I was unemployed, spend $10,000 in lawyer fees fighting for a son who wouldn't talk to me? I have to admit, it was a good question. I still don't have a good answer, except I had to.

In September, I finally gave up the visitation battle. I had fought long enough and hoped my son knew I loved him and maybe someday he'd see through my ex-wife's lies. I sent him a letter telling him. We were scheduled to go to court on November 7th. My ex-wife, sensing victory, got very confident and greedy. She wanted more. She wanted me to pay for her $10,000 of legal fees. That was more than I could handle. I re-entered the fight.

We got the psychiatrist's report on November 5th. Her findings were: I was depressed over the situation with no other negative comments; my son was depressed over the situation and was having a tough time of it; and my ex-wife was depressed, but the psychiatrist provided some very negative thoughts and observations. The report made my ex-wife look like the controlling ?#$@& she is. On November 6th my lawyer got a call from her lawyer that she wanted to settle out of court. Which I was happy to accommodate. The new visitation language says my son can see me whenever and wherever he desires. The requested increase in child support was not included, and we're each paying our own legal fees. The best part is, my son wanted to see

me, and we spent some time together before I flew home.

I accepted a good job on November 10th, and things seem to be getting better. Please, don't let the tone of this article fool you. It was the worst year in my life. It was horrific. Words can't express the anguish and pain. You really can't understand unless you lived through a similar situation. If not for my wonderful, fantastic, supportive wife —I wouldn't have made it. The gender community was very helpful. When I put out a call for legal precedents and cases, I was inundated with help. A couple of people deserve special mention for their support; Dallas Denny, Lori Larkin, Candy Scott, Sharon Stuart and Cissy Conley. Also, the members of my local support group, TransGender Education Association, were wonderful. Thanks to all.

As with all my articles, there is a lesson. Life can be terrible and seemingly intolerable, but with the help of friends and family — you can survive almost anything. I love you all.

EdNote: What a nightmare! While the courts and the public are a little better educated these days, and it is harder for a wife to sue for exclusive custody of children solely on the issue of crossdressing, one can never tell how a judge might rule in any given family court jurisdiction.

If you find yourself in Debbie's shoes, you can help your case greatly by giving your attorney the necessary ammunition. Get in touch with the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP), P.O. Drawer 35477, Houston TX 77235-5477, phone/fax [redacted], e-mail [redacted]

Much useful information is contained in the Proceedings of the five conferences held thus far. Also, they may be able to suggest an attorney in your area, and/or an expert witness if necessary. Know your rights and your options before you make any decisions.

Tri-Ess Pen Pals

Many sisters have written over the years to express their disappointment in not receiving replies to their letters to other Tri-Ess sisters. It seems that while some sisters are wonderfully prolific pen pals, others (for a variety of reasons) are not. To assist those who would like to receive lots of letters, we have compiled a "Pen-Pal List". All you have to do is promise to reciprocate. Just fill out and sign the form below and send it to:

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Here's how to write a Pen Pal through the Forwarding Service:

1) Write your letter to your chosen Pen Pal. Include your picture if you wish. If you choose not to include your own return address at first, be sure you include your own Code Number in your letter.

2) Place your letter in an envelope, affix correct postage, and lightly pencil in the name and Code Number of your Pen Pal on the front.

3) Place this envelope inside another envelope and address this outer envelope to:

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4) Include your return address on the outer envelope and be sure to apply correct postage. Once received at the Forwarding Service, your inner envelope will be properly addressed to your Pen Pal and sent on its way. If or when you and your Pen Pal choose to exchange letters directly is up to you. Have fun, Sisters!

Now, here are the Pen Pals:

AZ-3954-B	Rebecca
CA-1765-B	Cindy
CA-3845-C	Elaine
CA-1282-V	Fran
CA-3354-N	Michelle
CA-4009-W	Paula
CA-4249-F	Shirley Louise
FL-2789-S	Cynthia
FL-3434-C	Debi
FL-3892-B	Jeanne
FL-2520-B	Joan Ann
FL-3720-R	Karen Rose
FL-3640-C	Norma
FL-4046-J	Rita
GA-4158-B	Franki
HI-3562-A	Alana
IL-3623-G	Nancy
MN-3996-L	Carla
MO-3752-B	Laura
NC-3743-H	Ann
NC-3723-C	Sherri
NJ-3818-L	Carol Ann
NJ-3884-K	JoAnn
NJ-2548-W	Joanne Michelle
NY-4022-B	Cathy Ann
NY-1320-N	Connie
NY-3433-T	Donna
NY-3277-H	Evelyn
NY-4177-H	Joan
NY-3943-F	Lisa
NY-3717-P	Tammie
PA-2542-K	Jan
TN-1230-H	Rita
UT-3779-E	Genevera
VA-2642-I	Madelyn
VA-3401-W	Samantha
WI-3846-L	Adrienne
FCON-3797-B	Barbra
FCON-4010-S	Julie Ann

If you wrote us asking to be placed on the Pen Pal List and your name does not appear above, please write us again. We are sorry, but sometimes we do "drop the ball." (Or, in this case, the name!)

RUSSIAN DRESSING

By Dianeovich [redacted]

Comrades! Is very happy to report that Sisters in former Soviet Union know cross-dressing just like Western lady wanna-be's:

---Just who do you think travels on Tranny-Siberian Railway?
---Ve've been cross-dressing for years---especially border crossings.
---Ve are expert at using special eye cosmetic Moscowa, especially since ve see Baba Wawa specials!
---Ve have sensuous KGB connections-- Kute Garter Belts....
---Transformations are *really* made easy with wodka. After a couple of belts ve think ve really are beautiful!
---Of course for years ve have shortage of nylons, but you know why? Because Russian scientists have choice of making either wodka or stockinks from potatoe crop, not both.
---Without stockinks, when ve want to bare our legs ve use special razor. You have Gillete, ve have Sabre. This razor very sharp-- Sabre make us Dance.
---Russian newspaper "Isvestia" really is code name for local support group. Public call us "Babushka Babes".
---Most famous Sister in Russia is Ruble-Paul. You Americans are always copyink!
---Biggest social event of year is still May Day. Instead of parade reviews by well-heeled party officers ve have high-heeled reviews with office parties!
---Big news! One of our sisters discover new animal high in snowy Ural Mountains! She call the new animal the "Tchi". Very reclusive, only seen once a day on the snow above the village of Schur. Animal very agile, but some say it look like cow. You can see famous Tchi cow ski at 18:12 over Schur.....(hee hee, is good shaggy bear story, nyet?)
---Naturally ve are verrry fashion-conscious! In fact, long ago we invented undergarment called the "Kremlin". But Westerners translate as "crinoline" . The Kremlin make more than just legs disappear.....
---Favorite animal fur of Russian dresser is Minsk.
---This year ve hold annual convention in foreign country, just like your Holiday en Femme in Calgary. So ve go to Ukraine where theme will be "Chic in Kiev".

Well darlinks, these are just few items from the East that you may not know. Nor care. Not very Orthodox but verrrry interestink!!!

(Ed. note: Dear Dianeovich: better go easy on the wodka, er vodka!!!)

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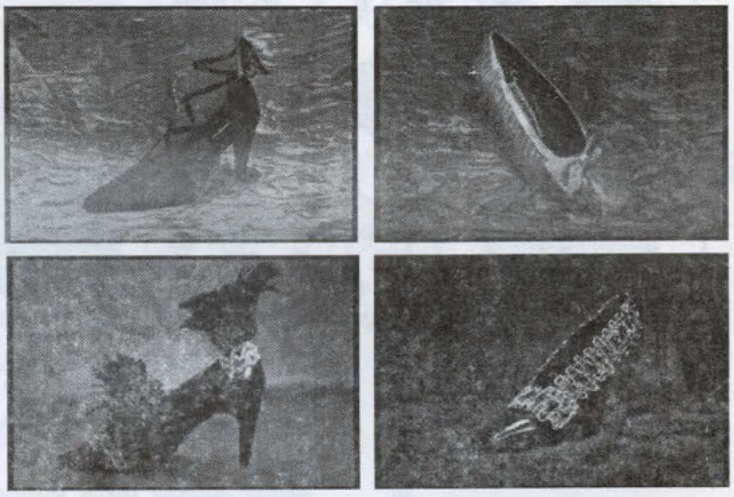

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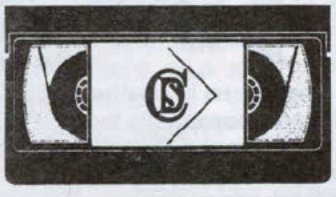

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CD DILEMMAS: WHAT A SURPRISE! A SORRY CD MAKES A GOOD POINT ----

In first grade, the sexy Miss Connally taught,
and wore low-cut blouses (though she hadn't ought),
which showed to we boys, who sneaked peeks to behold,
big beauties that **pointed** at us -- direct and bold.

Through grade school, I watched her, and I always knew
I'd be a CD (and I'd look like **her**, too).
By sixth grade, my urgings made right-now demands
to dress as a girl -- with **!wow!** mammary glands.

I tried bras with inserts, from Kleenex to beans,
tried balloons filled with water (caused several police scenes),
had good **pretend** bosoms; but that was a drag,
'cause stuffings or liquid won't point -- they just sag.

Then estrogen's "natural" growth of my chest
seemed more hip and cool (with less chance of arrest).
In high school, I sneaked female hormones and, hey,
got small cuddly cuties -- with no swing and sway.

But I wanted **!B O O B S!** like Miss Connally had,
with mind-boggling cleavage (not very well clad),
and in-your-face **pointing**, so lookers could see,
"I'm looking at them -- and **they're** looking at **ME**!"

So I **tripled** hormones to get much more size
and **pointy direction**; THEN (what a surprise!)
mine pointed all right, but in directions not best,
for one pointed Southeast -- the other Northwest!

Now, here's the **real** point: if yours aren't too **too** wee,
how udderly Miss Connall-yish **must** they **BE**?
If hormones aren't friendly, aren't inserts your friend?
Be happy with saggy -- and stay with **pretend**!

Paula (WI-2507-M)

Myself

- Anonymous

I love to live with myself and so,
I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able as days go by,
Always to look myself straight in the eye.

I don't want to stand with the setting sun,
And hate myself for the things I've done.
I don't want to keep on a closet shelf
A lot of secrets about myself,

And fool myself as I come and go
Into thinking that nobody else would know
The kind of sister I really am.
I don't want to dress myself up in sham.

I want to go out with my head erect.
I want to deserve all my sisters' respect.
But here in the struggle for fame and pelf,
I want to be able to like myself.

I don't want to think as I come and go,
That I'm bluster and bluff and empty show.
I never can hid myself from me.
I see what others may never see.

I know what others may never know.
I never can fool myself, and so
What ever else happens, I want to be
Self-respecting with conscience free.

Reprinted from the newsletter Old Hags and Sagging Bags, December 1996.