



News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

Vol. 8, No. 5 • May 1994

Renaissance

Renaissance Pens Agreement for Transgender Film Project

The Renaissance Education Association, Inc., and Ms. Terri Randall, an independent film producer, are pleased to announce a film project for the transgender community. Ms. Randall is a noted and award-winning film producer who has made films for *The Discovery Channel* and the *Public Broadcasting System*, among many. Most notable is a film she produced for PBS on adolescent sexuality *What Kids Want to Know about Sex* featuring Bob Silverstone, Ph.D., the past-president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex.

Ms. Randall discussed her transgender film concept with Dr. Silverstone, who referred her to Dr. Wm. R. Stayton, who referred her to JoAnn Roberts and subsequently Renaissance. Ms. Randall made a proposal to Renaissance which its board gave much careful consideration. On March 13, 1994 the board of directors of Renaissance unanimously approved the proposal and agreed to raise funds for the project.

Renaissance will act as fiduciary for this film project and apply for grants using its 501(c)(3) tax exemption. Renaissance is an ideal agent for this project because it is an all-volunteer organization with very low overhead costs. Except for a small management fee for Renaissance, all monies received will go directly to the film project.

In addition to grant applications, Renaissance is setting up a Community Film Fund. Anyone who wishes to see this project succeed, is urged to make a donation to this fund, whether it be \$5 or \$500. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Renaissance will provide substantiation of all donations as required by current IRS regulations.

The film, as currently envisioned, will be a feature-length documentary that examines contemporary crossdressing, as well as its history. As anyone who watches the talk-show circuit knows, the subject of transgender behavior is easily sensationalized. This film will attempt to reach behind the façade of makeup and clothes to reach

into the lives of people blurring the lines of gender. It will also offer the opportunity to question hitherto sacrosanct notions of what it means to be a "man" and a "woman" in today's society.

Ms. Randall and a Renaissance Film Project Steering Committee are now working out a project schedule and a detailed budget. The initial estimate for the funding required is between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in grants and donations. The project will take several years to complete. Filming may take place at a number of community events around the country and Renaissance will coordinate permission to attend and film. The organizers of the *Southern Comfort* event have already expressed an interest in the film. The national board of Renaissance, its chapters and affiliates hope that the transgender community at large will endorse this film project, help spread the word, and help raise funds.

A Press Release describing the Transgender Film Project was distributed to members of the Congress of Transgender Organizations attending the 8th Annual *Coming Together-Working Together* conference in Portland, Oregon, this past March. The CTO representatives present unanimously endorsed the project concept.

Renaissance will also help Ms. Randall assemble an Advisory Committee of experts from several areas to consult on the film. Dr. Wm. Stayton and Prof. Marjorie Garber have expressed their willingness to consult on the project. It is hoped that Richard Docter, Ph.D. (*Transvestites & Transsexuals*), Drs. Vern and Bonnie Bullough (*Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender*), and John Money, Ph.D. (*Sexual Signatures*) will also agree to participate.

As project details become available, Renaissance will make additional announcements via *Renaissance News & Views* and other sources. The community will receive regular updates on the progress of the project. For more information on donating to the Community Film Project, contact Renaissance at PO Box 60552, King of Prussia, PA 19406.





Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Renaissance Delaware Chapter: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808 or call 302-995-1396.

New Jersey

South Jersey/Shore Area: Write Renaissance SJ, Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ 08330. Meets the first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee City. Doors open at 7 p.m. Call 609-435-5401 for details.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia area: Write Renaissance GPC, Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020-0530. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia. Doors open 8 p.m. all year 'round. Call 610-630-1437 for information.

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122 Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call 717-780-1LSV (1578) for location and times.

Affiliates

Georgia

The American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), PO Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 or call 404-939-0244. Information resources.

Louisiana

The Gulf Area Gender Alliance, PO Box 870213, New Orleans, LA 70187-1300. Local support group.

New Jersey

Monmouth/Ocean Trans-Gender, (MOTG), write PO Box 8243, Red Bank, NJ 07701. Local support group.

New York

Metropolitan Gender Network (MGN), write 561 Hudson St., Box 45, New York, NY 10014, or call 201-794-1665, Ext. 332. Local support group.

Start Your Own

Would you like to start a group in your area? If so, we can help with our chapter/affiliate program. Write to the Director of Outreach, Chapter Development, Renaissance National, PO Box 60552, King of Prussia, PA 19406 or call 610-630-1437 and request our Community Outreach Bulletin No. 1.

Renaissance News & Views

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Articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor are always welcome. Ideas for articles and opinion pieces should be sent to our editorial office care of Renaissance, PO Box 530, Bensalem, Pa. 19020-0530. Complimentary and irate letters to the editor may be sent to the same address.

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the transgender community and the general public.



Resources



Background Papers:

- Background Papers are \$1.25 each:
1. Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing
 2. Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing
 3. PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others
 4. The Matter of Children
 5. Annotated Bibliography
 6. Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View
 7. AIDS/ HIV Safety and Ethics.
 8. Understanding Transsexualism


Significant Other Support

To network with other partners of transgendered people contact Evelyn Kirkland, PO Box 1242, Newtown, Pa., 18940.

Pen Pal Program:

If you would like to correspond with other people around the country contact Pen Pals, care of Maryann Kirkland, PO Box 1242, Newtown, Pa., 18940. Maryann will put you on the Pen Pal List and give you a copy of that list so you may correspond with as many new friends as you like.

TransParent Forum:

If you are transgendered and have children, that makes you a TransParent. If you'd like to network with other TransParents contact Elsa , PO Box 2122, Harrisburg, Pa., 17105, attention: TransParent.

Events Calendar

May

- 7 Ren LSV - Vendor Night
- 7 Renaissance SJ meeting
- 7-14 EuroFantasia, Denmark
- 14 Renaissance Del. meeting
- 21 Ren GPC - On Coming Out.
- 17-22 Esprit, Oregon
- 19-22 Paradise In The Poconos, CDS
- 23 AIDS Benefit- Academy of Music
- 27 Randy Allen as Bette Davis at Odette's
- 31 Tiffany Club Spring Outing

June

- 4 Ren LSV
- 4 Ren So. Jersey
- 8 12th Annual Be All, Pgh., Pa.
- 18 Ren GPC - cosmetics & skin care
- 24 Stonewall 25 Ball, NYC
- 26 Stonewall 25 march on the UN

News Beat
& Reminder



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by Angela Gardner

Hey, where's the flowers? It's May, right? I figure we should be up to our well mascara'd eye lashes in posies by now. Oh... wait a minute. I'm writing this back in April so I still have to put up with those April showers for a few more weeks. Ah, the burden of writing ahead. But, on with the show. Er, column.

MASK & WIG, EMPHASIS ON WIG

I picked up a copy of a U of P campus paper, *The Compass*. On the front page was an article about the Mask and Wig Club, the University of Pennsylvania's 106 year old, all male theatrical club. Renaissance is familiar with the Mask & Wig Club. Back in the founding mists of our organization we threw an AIDS benefit show at their clubhouse on Quince Street in center city Philadelphia. And, two of my good friends were members of M & W when they were undergrads. *The Compass* piece was about the Wigger's latest show, "A Sworded Affair." One of the show's writers, Gabriel Ledger, is a Penn Senior who started his acting career as a Freshman. He had never acted before and when he saw the ad in the campus paper for Mask and Wig auditions, he decided (quite suddenly it seems) to attend the audition in drag. Now, I wonder why? The article goes on to inform us that the latest show is the only one in which Ledger has portrayed a male character. Just can't get out of the pumps, ay Gabe? Let his own quote condemn him. "It's more fun to play a woman. It's the essence of Mask and Wig, and you're

sort of a focal point." Ya got that right girlfriend! Three inch heels and a mini skirt will get you all kinds of attention. If you're on stage in a show it's all positive attention.

Mask and Wig has taken some flack over the years for being an all male group. Ledger defends that stance, "We hardly invented the idea of putting men on stage as women." My feeling is, why not open the club to women but only let them play male roles? (OK, maybe they could play children too.) In any event, maybe we should return to the Mask and Wig Club for their fall show. Ask your chapter leader to call 215-923-4229 for group rates.

BARITONE BABE

A while back Dee [redacted] sent me an article from *Allure* magazine written by Katherine Dunn. Ms. Dunn is a novelist but the article was not about her writing, it was about her voice and the problems it has caused her. I'm sure, if you're like me, when you're out in public you worry that the carefully cultivated feminine tones you are trying so hard to project will not pass muster and some keen eared observer will uncover your secret identity. Ms. Dunn's article in the August '93 *Allure* tells how she coped with being a girl and then a woman, with a deep voice. Her friends in school called her Froggy. When she was thirteen a boy she had a crush on squeaked in his puberty cracked voice, "Can't you talk like a girl?"

Imagine if every time you opened your mouth, even when you were dressed like a man, the voice that came out was a sexy, soprano more suited to a leggy supermodel than a regular guy. I think that gives you some idea of how Ms. Dunn felt.

In order to cope with what she calls, "the voice" she signed up for speech classes and using a trick that cross-dressers can take advantage of; moving sound reproduction from the throat to the back of the mouth—what singers call a "head" voice—she succeeded in finding a more girlish voice that wouldn't intimidate high-voiced boys.

In the late seventies, she hosted a

radio program and read stories every Saturday morning using the air name, Red Ryder. Because of "the voice" there were listeners who were sure she was male. One young woman even had a crush on Red.

Red Ryder was heard by a voice therapist who gave Ms. Dunn a call. It seems the therapist worked with transgendered clients and she wanted Ms. Dunn to speak to her clients and demonstrate that she was a low voiced, genetic female. She went and as the class tried to sound like women she said, "Listening to the students struggle with the delicate manipulations of tone, pacing, and pronunciation that I had worked on semi-consciously from childhood, I silently, mercilessly, critiqued their awkwardness. They sounded like men mimicking women." She goes on to say, "This was luscious irony, because speech trophies and radio fans have never been enough to relieve my suspicion that I was only a masquerade girl."

Meeting the transgender voice students helped the author realize that she, like them, was hunting for a feminine essence and she finally realized that her deep voice was just her voice, a woman's voice. What we can take from her realization is the comfort that a genetic woman, a woman who had borne a child, was so worried about her voice not fitting her gender she had gone to the same lengths that many of us have explored to sound more feminine. Her need to sound more feminine came from applying the same culturally imposed criteria that make crossdressers go to extreme lengths to perfect their feminine facade. By trying to be perfect many crossdressers miss having any fun. Find a copy of the August '93 *Allure* if you'd like to read the whole article or ask the Renaissance Librarian for it at the next GPC meeting.

HEY COACH!

Although I am indifferent to sports I have a couple of sports related items to relay to you, the reader. Jimmy Johnson, featured in last month's

continued next page

News Beat...

Reminder Beat is out of work. It seems he just couldn't get along with the owner of the Dallas Cowboys. Now, he led the Cowboys to Super Bowl Championship but that didn't seem to be enough for the owner. He just seemed to have it in for Jimmy. What's up with that? Well, maybe some photos of Jimmy in his enormous "boobies" made their way into the owner's hot little hands? Could be one explanation.

Next up on Angela's Sports Talk, basketball coaches who take big bucks to get their college teams to wear certain sneakers! When I heard this story, I couldn't help but think about the Easy Spirit pumps spot with the women playing basketball in pumps. Just imagine if Easy Spirit paid a college coach to get his male team to wear Easy Spirits on the court. I think I'd start tuning in to more college basketball.

OH YEAH, PAL...

Elsa [REDACTED] took a break from transparenting and took up clipping. No she's not working at a hair salon or trimming the hedges. She's clipped some things from her local papers and dutifully sent them in to *Reminder Beat*. One of her clips is from the *York Daily Record's* March twenty-fifth issue that gives us written confirmation of the Royal Bank of Scotland's transvestite credit card offer. The "oh yeah" part is the name of the column.

It seems this guy named Chuck Shepherd, a graying longhair, takes little snips of news from all over the world, edits them down and spews it out under the title, *News of The Weird*. Now I can get behind the concept. It seems kind of familiar in fact. What I resent is transvestite positive news being included under the "weird" banner. There we are, stuck with blurbs on cops who shoot themselves while describing how another officer shot himself, naked men in London steam rooms who have themselves whipped and immersed in ice water to extend their lives and a soccer team manager who fines his players for locker room flatulence. If you're as steamed as I am, send your angry letters to Chuck Shepherd, PO Box 8306, St. Petersburg, FL 33738.

WORLD CLIPS

We have told you about the problems of unfortunate Turkish travesti in these pages, now from the scissors of our Kuwait correspondent, Billie Jaye [REDACTED] (she has a full name now) comes the story of a young lady boy who is living large in the repressive Turkish atmosphere. Ceyhan Firat is the transvestite editor of Turkey's first naughty newspaper, *Natasha*. (I wonder where is Boris?) A picture of Ceyhan is included with the article and like all transvestite editors, she is a beautiful brunette. She says that her paper, with it's eight pages of topless models is, "selling like freshly-baked baklava cakes."

It seems that porno is flourishing under the influence of the late Presi-

dent Turgut Ozal. Back in the 1980's he was the Prime Minister who introduced private television broadcasting that resulted in an explosion of private channels that took advantage of loopholes to broadcast sexual stuff. Seeing sexual stuff on TV gave the Turks an appetite for porn on the printed page, therefore giving our TV editor a job. Ceyhan suspects that recent gains by the pro-Islamic Welfare Party may result in more of the aforementioned repression and someday in the near future *Natasha* may be shut down. In the meantime she says, "... I'm having lots of fun." Go on girl!

Billie also sent in a clip with news from Germany. It seems that a sixty four year old German postal worker named Ruediger H (an initial person!) was hauled into court on espionage charges. Nothing strange (or "weird") about that you say? Well, as he answered charges that he had opened 2100 items of mail intended for the German military/intelligence services, he wore a wig, earrings and carried a handbag. No word on whether or not he wore matching pumps.

Lee Estcovitz sent a clip from the Jewish Exponent about a Tel Aviv prostitute. It seems Daniela Nahmias worked as a male prostitute and then decided to have sex change surgery and pursue the profession from the female perspective. Unfortunately she did not do her research on the credentials of her surgeon. Oops.

Apparently, since the SRS she has been unable to work in her field and the National Insurance Institute (of

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Israel) has recognized her as disabled. She won't have to worry about earning a living while she studies new skills. The Haifa District Court awarded her \$44,000 in her suit against the surgeon.

SHOES ON THE OTHER FOOT

Jacqueline [redacted] sent in a photo piece from the *New York Times Magazine's* January ninth issue. The photos are worth a thousand words. The piece is titled, "If The Shoe Fits" and the premise was to get famous shoe designers to wear their own favorite pair of heels. They're all men and they sported their heels with their regular male attire. Of the five designers who actually took their shoes for a test drive (one wimped out) Phillippe Model best mastered the techniques of walking in heels—four inch, sling back, spikes in acid green leather. Personally, I don't like sling backs but Philippe liked his so much he promises to make more. His acid green beauties will run you \$220.

Stephane Kelian stopped at his favorite brasserie for lunch in his ankle strap, four inch heel sandals. The good news, the waiters acted as if he always strolled in that way. The bad news, his favorite shoes will set you back \$365.

If you have \$450 to spend on footwear you might want to try Christian Louboutin's black patent platform pumps with Guinness beer can heels. Unfortunately Louboutin broke his foot the morning of the shoot so he only posed in them.

The most positive reaction to heels came from Londoner, Patrick Cox. While he traipsed along King's Road

Pat found that his lace up four inch mules were a rush. "High heels are empowering. There's this feeling of being above everybody else." said the delighted designer. He could have just asked RuPaul. (Did you see *her* face in the paper disguised as a boy? Stubble and everything.) Anywho, the really great thing about Mr. Cox's empowering heels is their price. They'll only set you back \$190! My favorite designer is of course that famous and affordable designer, Claráncé Salé.

TRANSEXUAL SUPPORT

The Transsexuals of the New Cumberland Valley are planning to get together in a Get Together on the second Saturday of each month. You can get information from Rachel at her home number, 717-[redacted], or her business, 717-749-6208.

If you are a transsexual with HIV or one who wants to learn how to maintain an HIV-negative status, a support group is being sponsored by Action-AIDS, 1216 Arch Street, 4th floor. For information call 215-981-0088.

ITS A BIRD, ITS A ...

Cappy from Bi Unity sent in a note about the March sixth episode of *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*. (How many shows have Superman and SuperBoy had on television? 22?) It seems that in this episode Lois cynically says a regular looking old guy at the Smallville Corn Festival is probably a secret cross-dresser. Clark looks over at the old guy, who's busy barbecuing and says, "Oh really?" When Clark's mom

appears he says, "Mom, Lois thinks that man over there is a crossdresser." Clark's mom smiles and says, "That's funny; that's Clark's father. He won't even buy a dress for me, much less himself!"

In other TV's-on-TV news, the girls were on *Larroquette* again in April. The network has been running two *Larroquette* shows back to back and at the end of one of the shows John is setting in the bar with two lovely ladies. One of the women is Teddy, the featured crossdresser and the other lovely creature Pat. They're referred to by John as Patrick and Theodore. John says he will never understand women. Both crossdressers agree that women are not easily, if at all, understood. The lovely Pat was portrayed by Jazzmun, the Living Black Barbie. (Her own title.) Jazzmun is no stranger to television. She has appeared on the *Byron Allen Show*, the now-defunct *Putting On The Hits*, *The Montel Williams Show* and *thirtysomething*. She was a member of the *La Cage Aux Folles* touring company in 1988.

Larroquette continually presents one of the most positive images for crossdressers on network television. Keep up the good work.

CLOSING WITH A QUOTE

This one is provided by my pal Jayne and attributed to Jane Wagner. "All my life I've wanted to be somebody, but I see now I should have been more specific." Try and be specific and that's it.... I'm outa here!



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Stonewall 25

Pro

by Terry M. (M.O.T.G.)

The struggle for transgender human rights will burst onto the international arena with renewed vigor this coming summer. The largest human rights march and rally ever planned will be held on Sunday, June 26, 1994 in New York City. This grand event, known as Stonewall 25, is both a commemoration of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising and of the current worldwide effort to affirm human rights, dignity and freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, drag and transgender people. Our common struggle for human dignity will be elevated to the international level. The United Nations itself will be called upon to assure that our rights and freedoms be included in and affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (originally adopted by the United Nations in 1948). Stonewall 25 is an event that we, as transgendered human beings should actively participate in. It offers us a unique opportunity to demonstrate our own struggle for dignity and freedom with the whole world watching. We have the real and very significant potential of staging the largest and most publicized transgender human rights march and rally in history!

The influence and spirit of our community has already achieved an important breakthrough: a dramatic revision of the official Stonewall 25 literature. The terms "transgender" and "gender identification" now appear throughout. Most significantly, the list of demands that are to be presented to the United Nations now reads, (in part):

"We call upon the United Nations, its agencies, its member states and its affiliated non-governmental organizations to take all necessary action to assure that:

1. *The promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights not be denied for lesbian, gay, bisexual and drag/transgender people.*

2. *The rights and freedoms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights be fulfilled to all people including lesbian, gay, bisexual and drag/transgender people without distinction of any kind, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, language, age, disability, socioeconomic status, national or social origin and gender identification."*

Diversity is valued and honored by such inclusive spirit. Just as we honor and celebrate the diversity within our very special transgender community,

Stonewall 25 celebrates our community's historic place within an even larger context; the global struggle for human

Con

by Jessica Xavier

Where it is: New York City. **When it is:** Noon, Sunday, June 26, 1994, *providing:* Mayor Rudy Giuliani grants **it's** organizers a permit to march up 6th and 8th Avenues & **It** doesn't collapse beforehand due to the yawns of outrageous apathy and corresponding dearth of funds & God doesn't strike us all dead that Sunday. **What it is:** Stonewall 25: *The International March On the United Nations to Affirm the Rights of Lesbian and Gay People.* **What it isn't:** Stonewall 25: *The International March On the United Nations to Affirm the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Drag and Transgender People.*

Why it isn't: I wish you hadn't asked that question. Well, let's see. A long time ago in a galaxy, far, far away... There was this drag riot, and like, people over-reacted and things got outta hand and gays started thinking they were people, too, with rights under the law... Now everyone connected with that drag riot is a nominee for gay sainthood, but even worse, people are fighting over how to mark the 25th anniversary! For some strange reason, the drag queens who started the riot think *they* should be honored for *it*! So do the people of color who finished *it*. The nerve! Even the transgenders (whoever *they* are) are taking pride in the prominent roles of their drag sisters and brothers in kicking off what became the (cue the fanfare, please) GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT. And this upsets the gay white boys and lesbian separatists who want to have a nice sanitized march and get the UN to take them seriously.

Besides, one of SW25's three national co-chairs is a drag queen who is an *expert* on the differently gendered, and according to Mr. Nicole Ramirez Murray and I quote from SW25's own Executive Committee Minutes taken January 17, 1994: "There is no transgender, only drag and transsexual." Mr. Murray was once a pre-op MtF transsexual, ya know, and the five years of estrogen *he* took made him very knowledgeable on the subject, as well as extremely heterophobic (Yes darlings, gays can hate straight people too: hatred can flow in any direction). As everyone knows, we transgenders tend to be mostly straight, and so queers shouldn't put *us* in the title of one of *their* marches, should they? After all, then we might try to march with them, and heaven forbid, queer unity might erupt, with equal rights and protection under the law following close behind. No more victimization. Ugh!

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Mom, They're Editing Me Again

Nobody noticed it, but last month's *Vis a Vis* column had a few words excised by our Editor-in-Chief. She told me it was because space in last month's issue was at a premium.

Understand that this was the issue that had a three-page article on Bugs Bunny for cryin' out loud. Gotta make room for that. And another regular feature of this newsletter (written by a certain Editor-in-Chief) that is getting so long, we may have to call out the National Guard to kill *The Column that Ate Philadelphia*.

Okay, okay: I'm bitching about spilled milk. But isn't that the English translation of 'Vis a Vis'?

Unable to Label

The *CLCC News* out of Minneapolis reprinted an article originally written in 1988 by a member named Cindy. She recounts the frustration of watching a Sally Jessy Raphael show wherein they tried to pin down the labels of crossdresser, transvestite, drag queen, etc., etc.

Cindy writes that she has become disappointed in these talk show exhibitions because they never seem to rise above "Transgender 101" as she puts it. "You can be sure that they will... determine which public restrooms we use and what our sexual preference may be. Beyond those key points, [they] do little to add to a better understanding of our issues."

That's a pretty concise critique of the talk show coverage we've received. And it's all the more remarkable when you consider that she wrote this piece back in 1988, when crossdressers on

talk shows had not yet become the cliché they are today.

Cindy's main thrust, however, was this preoccupation with labeling ourselves. In her own words, "I have become disenchanted with... dividing ourselves into specific groups within the spectrum of transgender feelings... We proceed to apply labels and draw boundaries to ensure that everyone under a particular label knows what behavior patterns are expected to remain true to his or her label... I have yet to find a label that truly defines my personal feelings... I see elements of myself under a variety of labels."

She's already said a mouthful but she's not finished yet and her own words are right on target. "By pinning these labels on ourselves we run the risk of compromising our own feelings, of channeling our actions (consciously or subconsciously) to fit the generally accepted definition of the label."

Interpreting Cindy's words in a broader sense, we should be true to ourselves and express ourselves freely without worrying about whether we occasionally cut against the grain of some imaginary boundary within transgenderism. There are some forces in our community who would like to see all of us in a lock-step that identifies us as a mass movement. To that I say 'baloney!' and Cindy in Minneapolis said the same thing in this remarkable, visionary, essay six years ago.

Why Ask Why?

Denise Mason is based in Connecticut but I picked up a reprinted version of an article she wrote in *TransCare* published in New Zealand. Denise's article was titled simply 'Why?' and

dealt with the fascination that so many crossdressers have with analyzing the reasons they dress.

Denise has a refreshing slant on this. She thinks it's a waste of time. There are probably so many factors involved in each individual's motivation to dress that one will never discover the answer to 'Why?'

But continually searching for the elusive answer also indicates that the self-questioning crossdressers aren't completely comfortable with themselves. In Denise's own words, "once we stop asking 'why' and start enjoying who we are will we truly be satisfied and content with who we are."

She also points out that people who spend their conversational energy on this topic can become tiresome. Again, in her own words, "or would you rather sit with a person who totally accepts himself for what he is... This is an all together person... And she's fun to be with." Amen, to that sentiment, sister.

Paris... Revisited

The film 'Paris is Burning' about Harlem drag balls was an art theater hit of a couple years ago. As with many things, I only saw it for the first time recently and was surprised by it.

Not the drag queens in the film; I think we've all seen our fair share of drag queens and there was nothing particularly remarkable about any of these girls. No, the interesting and revelatory aspect of the film was the inclusion of other forms of 'drag' in these shows

The participants in the balls are all ghetto kids of African or Hispanic descent. And beside feminine drag, there were categories set aside for 'collegiate', 'executive', and 'straight' modes of dress. If you're a young, poor, gay, minority male, then dressing up like a successful executive, or a preppy college student, or just a perfectly 'normal' straight man, is as much a form of 'drag' as putting on a sequined evening gown and voguing down the runway.

As you may have expected, much of the media focus on this film when it came out revolved around the cross-dressed drag queens featured in the

documentary. But by far the more poignant element was the idea that young people whose chances of succeeding in this society are pretty slim, mimic those stereotypes of success in the same way we mimic feminine appearance. And sadly, that dressing up for the part in a drag ball may be the closest they ever come to realizing the 'American dream' of being a preppy executive.

Pardon Me Miss, But Your Johnson Is Showing

I feel it's my responsibility to report on all facets of the transvestite press. So I've been spending some time in adult bookstores—even more time than I usually spend in adult bookstores... but let's move on.

With a few notable exceptions, most TV magazines feature crossdressed males exposing their privates. Well, they're sexually oriented magazines so perhaps it's understandable. It's understandable on the part of magazine publishers who are appealing to some segment of the adult market. But what about the crossdressers who submit the photos?

I'm referring to the amateur crossdresser who goes to the trouble of making up, dressing up in some kind of outfit... then spoils the feminine image by exposing his masculine member as the flash bulb pops. This has always seemed contradictory to me. And if I can be perfectly catty: there aren't too many who are very well-endowed. So, what's up with that?

If you peruse these magazines, you quickly realize that there is another

breed of crossdresser quite far removed from those of us who attend meetings, go shopping en-femme, or go clubbing to have some fun as part-time women. Without making value judgments on those other girls, many seem like cases of arrested development. Some are quite pretty but haven't been able to maximize their potential because they are mired in the closets of cheesy outfits and half-realized eroticism.

But what do I know? Maybe they are realizing all the potential they wish to achieve by getting all dolled up and showing everybody their johnson. The old saying "Different strokes for different folks" may have a literal meaning in this case.

Wanted: Proofreader

The *Northwest Gender Alliance Newsletter* carried an article by their Public Relations Director, Jamie F., in which she reviewed the organization's policy on confidentiality. The earnest tone of the piece was severely undercut by this hilarious grammatical error: "We never send *male* [emphasis mine] to another member without the permission of that member."

There are so many punch lines for that set-up that I don't even want to get started. Go ahead, you finish it off.

Saving Space

This month's column is a little shorter than usual because I'm anticipating the need to save some space for a late breaking story on the crossdressing proclivities of Foghorn Leghorn and that little pansy Tweetie

Bird. An article like that could be a four-pager. So until next month, see ya 'round.

Editor's note: The exposé on Foghorn Leghorn's crossdressing activities has been delayed. The writer had to drop it to cover a fast-breaking story on the sex lives of the Tiny Toons. It seems that there is hanky panky in Acme Acres. It has been rumored that the scandal involves more than just the Tiny Toons. Ren and Stimpy, as well as several of the Simpsons, have been implicated. We'll have it here first, even if we have to bump Vis-a-Vis to make room for it.



HELP!! The Philadelphia Renaissance Chapter is in desperate need of volunteers to act as Greeters. Greeters are the Hostesses who welcome members at the door and provide assistance to newcomers, and we cannot survive as a group without the work that they do. Volunteers should be ladies who enjoy talking to others and meeting new people. The peak time begins at 8 PM and lasts until about 10 PM. If you are available when the doors open up at 8:00 or sometime during this period, please consider helping out. This is a voluntary self help group that can't operate without everyone. We really could use all the capable help we can get. We also need people to help with simple clean up jobs after the meetings or to volunteer to bring refreshments. Even if you can't make every meeting or are only available part of the time, every little bit helps. Contact Michelle [redacted] Dina Amberle, or any Renaissance board member in person, or call us 610-430-1437, or write us at Box 530, Bensalem PA, 19020.

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"It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, than to initiate a new order of things, for the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order..."

Machiavelli

• • • • •

I promised you some important announcements from the IFGE convention and I won't disappoint you. The board of directors received and accepted Vision 2000, the strategic plan for IFGE's future. This plan took a year in the making under the leadership of newly elected board member Laura Cauldwell and was facilitated by the very capable Jheri Lee Summers. IFGE will be making several announcements about board initiatives related to Vision 2000... The other important news is the creation of a new position, Founding Director, for IFGE founder-philosopher Merissa Sherrill Lynn. This is a lifetime appointment as an ex-officio member of the board and all committees. Lynn may also serve as a voting director if elected to the board and may also work as an employee of IFGE as well.. Lynn is currently a paid employee of IFGE serving in the capacity of acting Executive Director and holds a voting seat on the board... Meanwhile IFGE is actively searching for a new Executive Director to manage the daily business of IFGE. Several resumes have been received and are in review. When a candidate is chosen for Executive Director, Lynn will take the Founding Director position opening the way for the new Executive Director. Anyone interested in the position of Executive Director of IFGE should send a resumé to IFGE, Box 367, Wayland, MA 01778.

• • • • •

Everybody is getting into the 900 telephone line business. Not too long ago I reported that the Masters & Johnson Institute launched a sex information hotline. Well, the April issue of *Glamour* magazine reported a road-test of the service and they were not pleased. First, the

charge per minute is high at \$3.99, and, second, you're limited to a maximum of thirty minutes. (Thank goddess, that's \$120 or \$240 an hour). Next, they report they had to sit through an "annoyingly long and repetitive computerized menu" which ended up costing about \$8 without even asking a question. On one Tuesday, when only one "expert" was handling calls, it cost them about \$4 to find out she was busy and they should call back. They called back on a Sunday when there were two "counselors" available; one handled a complex question well, but the other was ill-informed about contraceptives and gave out inaccurate information about birth control methods. They also report that more men than women call the hotline and their number one concern is impotence. There are also a lot of questions about AIDS. However, the national Center for Disease Control has a free AIDS hotline at 800-342-AIDS.

• • • • •

I wear contact lenses, but only when I'm "in face" and it is sometimes difficult to get used to wearing my contacts if I haven't had them in for a while. Now, Bausch & Lomb has a solution for those of us who only want to or need to wear contacts occasionally. They're called Occasions and they're single-use contacts you wear for a day and throw away. Believe me, these may be perfect for crossdressers. Nothing changes your face like uncovering your eyes from behind a pair of glasses.

• • • • •

The HOT BUZZ in the fashion world is the demise of the Size 8 standard. See, most designers start with their patterns scaled for a size 8 woman and then scale up or down as needed. The problem with that technique is obvious when there is a minor flaw in the size 8 pattern. A quarter-inch error at size 8 is almost unnoticeable, but at size 14 it may mean 2 inches. Many designers are now paying more attention to the ends of the scales when designing their clothes. For

example, designer Donna Karan is not a size 8 herself, so she pays more attention to the fit of larger sizes. So what does this mean for us "larger girls?" Good news, that's what. Designers now recognize that more than 40 percent of American women are a size 14 or larger and 49 percent are 5'4" or shorter. The average size of dresses at Sears, for example, is now a 12 or a 14, and they won't stock manufacturers that don't make size 18. Even better, Federated Department Stores (which includes Bloomingdales and Jordan Marsh) sent a letter to more than 400 of its suppliers that said in essence: if you're not offering size 18's, we're not buying. So, slowly but surely, we're getting more fashionable clothes in larger sizes.

• • • • •

Also hot on the fashion scene this spring is the slip dress, an item that was definitely **not** designed for the average woman or transgendered person. The style is bare, very bare, and leaves almost nothing to the imagination. It also leaves almost nothing for supporting lingerie, so unless your breasts are up to failing the pencil test (ask any large busted women, they'll fill you in), forget the slip dress for Spring.

• • • • •

Hot on the heels of the slip dress is another style called the "untucked" look. Now, you should never, never say "untucked" to a serious crossdresser, but this style has nothing to do with exposing the family jewels. It is a layered-look with all the layers exposed, like a short tunic over a skirt with a tank over the tunic followed by a jacket. Can you say "hot?" The look is unkempt not untucked. Try this with caution. You could end up looking like you shop at the Army Navy store rather than Saks.

• • • • •

Yet another Spring style to avoid unless you're twenty-something, is the "little girl" look. No, I'm not talking about those crossdressers who want to emulate Shirley Temple in her *Good Ship Lolly-*

Hot•Buzz

Queen of Prussia

pop days. These little, short, flippy dresses seem ridiculous on real women, and if you're not waifishly thin, they'll look even more ridiculous on you. These baby-doll dresses smack of cradle-robbing and the styles have been heatedly discussed in the fashion pages of the *New York Times* and *W*. Curiously, many of these styles were shown by female designers as well as the males.

Now, don't get me wrong. I like short dresses and skirts. (They make my legs look longer.) Fortunately, many of the styles shown for Spring include short skirts and they were shown in almost every collection. So, if you've got 'em (nice legs, that is), flaunt 'em.

Glamorous and sexy are two words that define the coming styles seen recently. Gone are the clunky shoes (she groans with pleasure) with beaded gowns. Back are the sexy high heel of old. Clothing seems more body conscious once again and that means we have to work on that waistline girls! Start stepping or Nordic tracking to whittle that waist.

Now this is really HOT. Todd Oldham showed a slip of a tank dress in flames. Oldham started with a photo of fire and enlarged it many, many time, then had a special fabric printed with a dye sublimation process. The result was an intensely colored fabric on fire. Cool!

Spring usually brings to mind pale, natural colors (boring!), but this season some designers are brightening the season with neon brights, skimpy shapes and slinky fabrics. A perfect examples is the shocking-pink nylon stretch-knit dress with rolled sleeves or the electric-yellow boucle suit from Chanel (a mere \$3230), or the silk hologram trousers from Helmut Lang.

Piercing is passe. Tattoos are tiresome. The HOT new trend is branding. Say what? Yes, branding, as in Double R-Bar

burnt into your-hide, not cowhide. The practice started up in Canada and is finding its way down into the lower 48. What will they think of next?

Want to look like an up-to-date career woman? Try these easy looks. The new suit: a vest over a classic white shirt with skirt to match the vest... Or a white blazer over a black tank dress... Or easy knit dressing: a knit tunic over a short skirt topped with a matching cardigan.

Here's a twist on the skirts-for-men that crops up every few years — makeup for men. Yes, Francois Nars is offering a line of men's makeup with macho-model Cameron as cover-boy. Included in the line are concealer and "eyelash enhancer" (a.k.a. mascara). Not!

But dahling, we already knew this. Androgynous has become the personality trait de-riguer for the nineties. Recent studies have found that the person who is at once competitive and nurturant, aggressive and accepting, dominant and warm, has better mental health than either the traditionally masculine or feminine types. And research conducted at Syracuse University seems to indicate that such androgynous people have better physical health too. Does this mean that socially well-integrated transvestites are more stable (mentally) than other transgendered people? Maybe, maybe not. Interestingly, androgynous people were more concerned about maintaining an appropriate weight than masculine types and those with the most feminine scores thought they were too fat.

Most everyone has heard of Christo, the artist who creates miles long art. Now we have a clone, Nicolino, who wants to stretch hundreds of bras across the Grand Canyon to protest a society that reduces women to the size of their breasts. The National Park Service has some doubts, though. A helicopter is planned to lift the mile long stretch of

bras but "who knows the tensile strength of a bra strap," mused one official. Well, I'd be willing to bet that can be answered by whoever makes Dolly Parton's custom fitted lingerie.

Most of us have a budget to work within for our supplies and clothing, so anything we can get for free helps a lot. If you have the chutzpah to approach these department lines you can get lots of freebies, like... *Clinique*: Natural Glossy Mascara... *Lancome*: Carecils Mascara... *Elizabeth Arden*: Ceramide Time Complex, Ceramide Eyes Time Complex, and Ceramide Time Complex Moisture cream... *Chanel*: Prevention Serum Lift, Teint Naturel Liquid Makeup... *Clarins*: all products including foundation... *Origins*: Original Skin foundation.

What do men think about makeup on women? *Allure* magazine asked and they answered... **Walter Thomas**, writer: "I have great affection for those who do it well, regardless of gender." **Fabien Baron**, art director: "I don't like makeup. I like women when they've had a little sun. No makeup is far better than wrong makeup." **Max Blagg**, poet: "I love buying lipstick for my wife because I like it when the salesgirl wonders if it's for me or not. I like diva red." **Jon Hassell**, musician: "Generally my attitude is that makeup is body decoration and it has a long and honorable tradition throughout the world... If flowers are the sexual organs of plants, what more needs to be said about lacy panties and putting color on your face?" **James Rizzi**, artist: "When there's a bunch of girls around and they want to make me up, I'm all for it. Certain girls like to make up men. Old guys in drag remind me of a sad clown. But when I see young guys, whether they're in drag or doing a thing, it's cool."

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Stonewall... Pro

freedom. This is indeed our struggle as well as our common bond with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and drag communities. Our own search for freedom is not without it's very special and unique aspects, yet we need not to be alone in our quest. Stonewall 25 gives us an unprecedented historic opportunity to demonstrate to the world our own pride, our own diversity and that courage of spirit and love for one another that has become the most treasured hallmark of our transgender community.

• Stonewall Notes •

On a hot June night in 1969, the NYPD raided a gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. The police had been raiding gay bars in New York for years so the raid itself was nothing new. What did a little more harassment of "queers" mean? This time it was different. This time the queers, lead by the *drag queens*, fought back. It raged on Christopher Street for three days and nights. That fight became the gay liberation movement that continues today.

Some crossdressers say, "What's that got to do with me?" The answer is simple. We, like gays, lesbians and bisexuals are perceived by "straights" as different. We are lumped in with gays in most of the world's mind. "A guy in a dress has gotta be queer." Well, in the original sense of the word, we *are* queer. We aren't like the majority of people. We are dif-

ferent. The struggle for human rights is our struggle and we learn from the gay liberation movement as we support it.

Diversity means different opinions. It is such a difference of opinion that has caused "transgendered" to be excluded from the complete title of Stonewall 25. Transgendered people are mentioned in the literature and the list of demands to be presented to the United Nations but some people want those deleted, the same people that kept us out of the title. Some people on the organizing committee staging this massive march for human rights and against homophobia, are themselves prejudiced against crossdressers. Most notable is Nicole Ramirez Murray, a drag performer. Murray contends the longer title resulting from inclusion would confuse international participants.

The march itself takes place on June 26. For more information about it and surrounding events, like the Stonewall Ball on June 24, which is promoted as the "premiere drag event of the decade," call these numbers: For the Ball, Empress Nicole at 619-692-1967. General info: 212-626-6925, Fax: 212-626-6965. Travel/accommodations info: 800-216-1880. By computer: Backroom BBS at 718-951-8256. LOGIN: FIRST NAME= SW25, LAST NAME=INFO

Postscript: On March 19, 1994, the board of directors of IFGE sent a fax to the Stonewall 25 national committee expressing its extreme disappointment on the exclusion of "Transgender" from the title. Meanwhile, members of the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy plan a counter-march and civil disobedience.



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Stonewall... Con

Another SW25 national co-chair, Pat Norman, from Oakland, CA, was so overtly negative about transgender inclusion that her efforts to run the SW25 plenary sessions seemed to be encumbered by the utter stupidity of hierarchical oppression. She seems to be afflicted with that dreaded disease, the great crippler of young minority liberation movements, namely *horizontal hostility*, as seen in its most virulent strain, Bay Area Lesbian Separatism. Yes girls, ... er, I mean boys, don't you know yer place! The Goddess reserved the special hell of womanhood and its attendant patriarchal oppression for womyn-born-womyn *only*, and these 'surgically-altered men' need not apply. So what if someone notices that an oppressed sexual minority is beating up on another, much smaller, more defenseless group—"they're still evil men, don't ya know!?! Fuck the patriarchy"—see you at Michigan, kiss-kiss.

How it didn't happen: Call me impetuous, call me idealistic, call me naive, call me Jessy, call me anything you want except late for dinner, but I went to Atlanta in January and New York in March as a representative of two national transgender organizations (Transgender Nation and FtM) to see if the title of SW25 could be amended to include bisexuals, drags and (ahem) transgenders. The members of SW25's U.S. Steering Committee were already quite angry, having received a nasty letter from a lawyer (one Phyllis Frye of Houston, TX) shaming them all for their oversight (or oversight) and political ineptitude. After all, this very same issue just narrowly escaped the straight media's lust for a divisive wedge issue during last year's March On Washington (MOW). Cooler bewigged heads narrowly prevailed, and we stopped Transgender Nation from lying down on Pennsylvania Avenue to block the MOW then. Pulling our punches this time will be much tougher.

Anyway, when my two proposals were placed before the U.S. Steering Committee, they went over like lead balloons. Or water balloons, perhaps, because this issue was raining on their parade. Nobody likes to be accused of discrimination, even gays and lesbians. But there they were, trying to cover up ILGA's (the International Gay and Lesbian

Association, who called most of the early shots for SW25) mistake when they named SW25 in Barcelona last year, just two months after the March On Washington and the stink we made over the missing 'transgender' in its title. The ILGA reps said it was a cultural thing, a language barrier thing (heck, there are people in *this* country who don't know what transgender means—just ask Mr. Murray), and when these arguments failed, they said it would be American "arrogance" if the U.S. Steering Committee renamed SW25 to include us and bi's and drags. Yeah, it was American arrogance that started it all 25 years ago, too. And come to think of it, it was American arrogance that threw NAMBLA (the North American Man-Boy Love Association) out of SW25 during the Atlanta meetings (it's funny how ILGA found just the right words for having sex with children in all those languages to permit NAMBLA to join ILGA in the first place). And it was the arrogance of Mr. Murray and Ms. Norman, who threw every parliamentary tactic in Roberts' Rules in our path to prevent *even a vote* to be taken on the issue, for fear we might have won. Anyway, we won the right to call the question twice, and we lost the vote in Atlanta, 51 to 17 with 13 abstentions, and again in New York, 37 to 28 with 20 abstentions.

Why did I bother: I naively thought that this was an excellent opportunity to galvanize a marginalized, if not disenfranchised, part of the queer community (namely we transgenders) which has become energized by the prominent role our drag sisters played during the Stonewall riot of '69, to join together to lay the ground for future combined efforts based on common issues and oppression. (Hold it! Did she say we're queer too? Alright, who let this crazy lesbian TS into our Tri-Ess meeting! So, what if all my straight friends who don't know I crossdress think that there is truly nothing more queer than a man in a dress? Besides, I *like* denial. O.K. Jessy, you've gone too far this time. Editor, please strike any reference to queer and replace with "sexual minority." Sorry guys, er, I mean, girls.)

As a lesbian-identified, bisexual, post-op, MtF, TS woman (whew!), I see many connections between transgenders and the other um... sexual minorities, but while our common concerns like discrimination, harassment, violence, health and legal issues generally parallel, intersect and overlap, the wall between sexual orientation and gender identity is quite thick, and many on both sides prefer it that way. But not me. Y'see, I can't accept the status quo, because I am on both sides of that wall. If we transgenders can come of age, like the gays and lesbians did 25 years ago, coming out of the shadows like they did and stop living in fear of ourselves, then we can stop being afraid of others. And if we suddenly learn to care about ourselves, our rights will follow. However, I believe those rights may be secured only by working together with larger sexual minorities. There are too few of us, and they (gays and lesbians) are much better organized, having been at this for 25 years. So much for transgender separatism. To paraphrase the Queer Nation chant: "We're here, we're queer

continued on page 15

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I receive many letters each day, week, month, and year and none has ever touched me like this one did. I have tried for over 10 years, to reach into the closets and reach the person that is feeling alone and unworthy. This came to light again this month (March '94) when I was following up on an old mailing list. I was using the mailing to update and attempt to contact old customers and persons that I have not heard from in quite a while. I usually get back a large percentage of 'box closed' or 'moved forward expired', but when I opened this letter, I was devastated. I only share this letter with you because I feel that WE ALL need to do more in the outreach area. Vendors, club members, even those that do not participate in organized clubs, WE ALL need to attempt to reach the people like the one described in this letter I received. I have omitted some information for the privacy of the family and I have changed the name of the family involved. Most of you already know me and understand this is an honest effort to open your eyes and take that extra step through what ever means you have. Computer BBS, letters to the editor, letters to 'Dear Abby' or any of those other publications, adult or regular.

Here is the letter. Please read slowly and soak up all of the feelings. It will never leave your mind once you have read it.

"YOU SAY IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU HAVE HEARD FROM MY SON. WELL, I GUESS IT HAS BEEN. YOU SAY THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE HIM BACK WITH YOU. WELL, SO WOULD I. WE FOUND HIM DEAD **** YOUR LETTER OPENED A LOT OF WOUNDS AGAIN. MY HUSBAND DID NOT KNOW OF OUR SON'S CROSS-DRESSING UNTIL WE FOUND HIM DEAD, IN A WEDDING DRESS NO LESS. I REALLY FEEL SORRY FOR THE YOUNG AND OLD WHO FIND THE NEED

TO CROSSDRESS AND THE EROTIC SEX THAT GOES WITH CROSSDRESSING. PLEASE DON'T SEND ANYMORE MAIL TO OUR HOME.

THANK YOU,
MOTHER OF 'JOHN SMITH' "

There it is. My hands still shake every time I read it. What could I have done differently to stop this tragedy? What could you have done differently?

I am not trying to point blame on any of us, but maybe, just maybe, one of us, you or I, could have said one sentence to him to help him understand that he is not alone. He is not a deviant. He is not strange or alone. We are a community, and it is important that we all reach out, touch each other, and say, I am ok, we are ok, you are ok.

Well, enough of my preaching. Please, do not destroy this letter from where ever you obtained it from. Place it in a place where you can read it, see it, remind you about where you were as a young man, how you felt, did you feel alone, different, maybe even suicidal? Not everyone is strong enough to stand up through that kind of pressure.

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Stonewall... Con

too, get over it." (Oops. Sorry. The Q word. Slipped again.)

What you should do: If the local Tri-Ess group isn't meeting that Sunday and you've got nothing else truly remarkable to do, you should head up to the Big Apple for the biggest gay party ever in Central Park. As Ed Sullivan used to say, "It's a really big shooooooooow..." *Tout la queer monde* will be there: nice clean-cut white boys, angry black lesbians, masters and slaves, tops and bottoms, butches and femmes, leather dykes, diesel dykes, dykes-on-bikes, lipstick lesbians, gay moms 'n gay dads with their gay kids, international queers who don't know what transgender means, American drag queens who don't know what transgender means, lesbian separatists who unfortunately *do* know what transgender means, bisexuals who should be as mad as we are about being left out of the title too, the Lesbian Avengers, the Radical Faeries, gay cops, gay bands, the sky above, the Central Park mud below, too much sun, too much fun, horrible traffic jams, vicious muggers and \$5 Cokes (this is New Yawk, ya know). Maybe even The Few. The Proud. The Crazy. Those transgenders who haven't heard or haven't read this story, or better still, feel they have to be there because *it's the right thing to do* (truly radical notion, that). If you haven't been to one of these gay pride events yet, they are the place to be and something to see! If you don't feel empowered, then at least there

will be plenty of others there to whom you can tell your story of growing up different. They may even understand and empathize.

The main stage on Central Park's Great Lawn will have foreign queers speaking in halting pidgin English, saying how happy they are that we didn't rename their march, Stonewall survivors (their term) who took place in the actual riot, saying how happy they are to be still alive (we won't forget you, Marsha Johnson), Elton John saying how much money he lost being there, exultant Executive Committee and happy Host Committee members all congratulating themselves for pulling this off, and... oh yeah, maybe if-we-behave-and-don't-mouth-off-to-the-straight-press quite possibly a transgender speaker like Leslie Feinberg or Yvonne Ritter, a woman who identifies as transgender and was *actually* there 25 years ago, fighting the cops on Christopher Street!!! NAMBLA will show up and embarrass everyone, mostly themselves. The activists of *The Transsexual Menace* (their spelling) will be annoying the lesbian separatists and handing out pamphlets along the parade route to educate the non-transgendered masses. But the best part will be when the Stonewall Now! malcontents, Transgender Nationals and other unhappy campers all join together to block one of the main entrances to Central Park and get arrested, triggering a new Stonewall rebellion. What a riot! Don't miss it! All this and Stonewall 25, coming to a head in a theatre of the absurd near you! Show starts at

noon Sunday, June 26, with mayhem all over Manhattan to follow! Show up and they might just feel sorry for us and put us in the title of next year's even bigger "biggest queer march in history..."

But if you can't or won't be there, I understand. Really I do. If these politically inept, self-important, self-destructive, self-loathing queers want to exclude us from their march's title, so be it. They may also, to paraphrase the immortal Yogi Berra, "include us out" of the march itself. I mean, with all those cameras, why take the chance of exposure when they won't give us any billing for it? So if you're at home that Pleasant Valley Sunday, June 26, do something else for the Transgender Movement to mark Stonewall's 25th. Wearing your nicest brassiere over your polo shirt, just go out into your back yard at 5 p.m., turn towards the northeast facing the gay Mecca (or Sodom) of the moment, and scream at the top of your lungs for all to hear, "I'M TRANSGENDER AND MAD AS HELL AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE IT ANYMORE!"

If we all scream it together, loud and clear, maybe even Mr. Murray might hear us.



Dr. William Stayton has agreed to answer readers questions in a new column that will begin as soon as we get enough questions from *you*. If there is anything you would like to ask Dr. Stayton, send it to us at Renaissance News & Views, PO Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020.

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THE PRICE OF SECRECY by Jessica Charlene Brandon

One of the more difficult aspects of crossdressing is baring your soul to your loved ones about this lifestyle, be it a spouse, family members, friends or children. It is not an easy thing to do because of the misconception of crossdressing as being either a twisted perversion or associated with homosexuality, despite evidence to the contrary. Since society for the most part still has the wrong view on crossdressing, this makes opening up to others so damned hard because of the fear of rejection, turmoil in marriages and the risk to jobs and careers.

These fears, perfectly legitimate in today's turbulent climate, make some of us extremely paranoid. We let our imaginations run riot, envisioning only the worst possible scenarios of horror, disgust or outrage when we dredge up the courage to come clean to somebody. We almost never stop to consider the possibility that this dreaded revelation might not be as catastrophic as we think, that we would still be loved despite our compulsion to wear clothing of the opposite sex. So, we don't, we keep our secret hidden from the world, we spend our lives constantly looking over our shoulders, scared to death of being exposed, racked with guilt and shame because we can't bring ourselves to trust those closest to us. I am living proof of that, and the price I paid for keeping my secret safe was a steep one.

When I discovered my love for women's clothing at age fourteen, I wondered what people, especially my mother, would think. While I considered this a harmless hobby, it was definitely not a "normal" one, especially in the beginning, since I had little control over it. Although I had no idea what crossdressing was, what I did know was that if I were discovered, the repercussions would be nightmarish. In my mind's eye, I could see mother going through all sorts of extreme emotions if she ever caught me in her clothes. She would be horrified, revulsed, or even worse, ashamed of me and heartbroken because she

would think she failed in her job to bring me up properly. The consequences were too great to chance being caught.

Even though I usually never kept any secrets from my mother, I kept this one, and hated myself for it. But that didn't stop me from raiding her closet whenever I got the chance. The need to crossdress in those early years was overwhelming, just as was my need to keep mother in the dark about it. When the guilt kicked-in over this daily deceit of the woman who brought me into this world, I thought about telling her everything, if only for my own peace of mind. I started feeling terribly isolated; not a day went by that I didn't wonder if I was the only male on the face of God's green earth who wore women's clothes. But, every time I mustered the nerve to do the deed, I had those awful visions, and my courage fled. Then, in 1985, my nightmare became reality.

It happened on the week of Halloween ironically enough. I was still living in mother's house and had come home for the weekend from my duty station in Norfolk, Virginia. (Jess is in the service - Ed.) When I entered the house, I found mother seated in the dining room, a terrible haunted look on her face. Seeing that look made me wonder if a relative or neighbor had died, and when I asked her what was wrong, in a low voice she said she had been in my room the day before and had found the sea bag in which I kept my lingerie. Suddenly, I felt an icy fist clamp around my heart, my secret was out in the open. I felt cornered, trapped, my breath came in short rasps and invisible walls closed all around me as mother asked what I was doing with a bag full of woman's underwear.

The visions of revulsion and sorrow that plagued me for nearly a decade scrolled through my mind as I agonized over what to tell her. There were only two choices: tell the truth and finally unburden myself of the guilt, or lie and keep it all going. Unfortunately, fear won out in the end as I opted for

the latter. I just couldn't get those visions out of my head, so I told her I used the lingerie as an aid in masturbation. For what seemed like hours, mother was silent; the wait for her reaction was maddening. Finally, she spoke, and what she said came as a complete surprise to me as, with a nod, she calmly accepted my explanation. Then, she really shocked me when she suggested that I should regularly wash my things after they've been soiled.

That was it. No disgust, no disappointment, nothing. My first reaction was relief because my secret was safe, I even felt pleased that she accepted what I told her. But those feelings didn't last long, I wasn't able to sleep that night. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw that haunted look in mother's eyes, that made me wonder what would've happened if I had told her the truth. Right then and there, I decided that crossdressing, no matter how much I enjoyed it, wasn't worth the grief I would cause mother if she caught me dressed. So, the very next morning, I gathered up all my feminine things, stuffed them into the very same sea bag and tossed it in the first dumpster I found. For mother's sake, I was determined to give up crossdressing forever.

"Forever" lasted only a few months. In August of 1986, I moved into my own apartment, and, before long, I had bought a whole new wardrobe. But this time, I kept everything in a locked closet, despite the fact I lived alone. The reason: mother was my landlord and had a key to the place. For the next several years, I reveled in the freedom I had to dress whenever I wanted without the fear of discovery. Even the guilt I had over keeping the secret lessened with the passing of time. Why I'm not sure. Maybe because I was no longer under mother's roof and I no longer had to directly deceive her, if that makes any sense. During that time, I learned to control my desire to crossdress to

continued next page

where it became an enjoyable pastime instead of an obsession. Life was back to normal, more or less.

That too would change, and for the worse. In September of 1992, mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. The doctors thought they caught it in time and could remove the tumor, but they discovered it was inoperable and would have to be treated with radiation and chemotherapy. The next several months were very hard and painful. Mother was in and out of the hospital. The treatments, unsuccessful, reduced her from a vibrant, energetic woman to a frail, weakened soul as the cancer spread unchecked throughout her body. I didn't dress so much as once during those months, as I became her primary care-giver. By late December, mother was bedridden, hideously transformed into a shriveled husk by the cancer. It would only be a matter of time before the end came.

Having accepted the inevitable fact that she was going to die, I found myself thinking about the secret, and the chance I had to take her into my

confidence about my crossdressing. A chance I never took because of fear. The guilt I had over not being able to trust my own mother was positively terrible, resulting in a lot of sleepless nights. I deeply regretted failing to tell her about my secret before it became impossible for me to do so.

Finally, on January 17, 1993, God came for my mother and took her away from me. After the funeral, I spent a lot of time thinking about the past, about the choice I made, and how cowardly I had been not telling her everything. Those feelings lingered for weeks after the burial.

In addition, there were the moments when I asked myself, over and over and over again: "What if"? What if I had mustered the courage on that night in 1985 and told mother the truth? What if instead of anger, horror or shame, she fully accepted my crossdressing? What if it didn't matter one bit to her that I wore woman's clothes, that she still loved me for who I was? What if she even came to enjoy the idea of having a daughter as well as

a son? The sad part of it all is that I'll never know, and it took a long time for me to accept that.

Today, I've come to grips with the past, the regret over not confiding in mother, and pouring my heart out in this article has helped a great deal. Before I wrote this piece, I hadn't confronted these feelings since she passed away, and it feels good to do so.

When I think back to all those long, lonely years spent in the closet, hounded by fear, persecuted by guilt, I'm genuinely amazed I am sane. However, with mother gone, I have no one outside the community that I can trust with my secret, therefore, it stays intact. In some ways, I consider that more of a blessing than a curse since I wouldn't want to cause my friends or loved ones any distress, or be shunned by them if they couldn't handle the truth. For this reason, I have to maintain the secret, but the price for keeping it has finally been paid. Perhaps, somewhere up in heaven, mother will understand.



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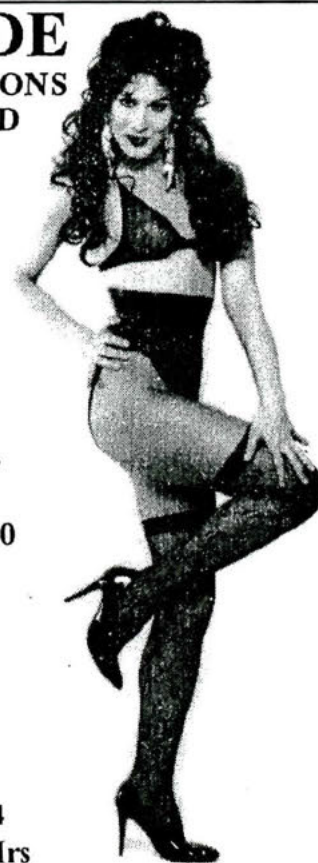
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Renaissance Members Shine At IFGE Portland '94 Convention

by Maryann Kirkland

Each year during March, the leaders of the transgender community converge on a selected hotel site for the annual "Coming Together-Working Together" convention sponsored by IFGE. What is IFGE? This standard one-liner should now draw less smiles at Renaissance after we hosted the '93 Convention. Remember Casino Night? No, you say? Well, shame on you! Do you remember the Blizzard of '93? During that same week we partied up a real storm!

The International Foundation for Gender Education is many things: a three story building in Waltham, Mass.; a life-time commitment by an office staff; a publishing clearing house; all the readers of *Tapestry* and possibly, *you*. This non-profit, tax exempt organization provides a framework for structure; an open forum for *all* transgendered people to speak out and (hopefully) business acumen to accumulate capital to fuel its projects.

This is the big picture and you, the reader, are part of it because Renaissance has been, is now, and will always be, in the front ranks of community leadership. A Renaissance team has just returned from producing and supporting the eighth annual IFGE convention. These members contribute at every level, from Executive Board to committee posts. Renaissance members are everywhere in IFGE. Our team

continued next page

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members this year included Alison Laing, Evelyn Kirkland, Andrea Susan, Jane Ellen Fairfax, Mary Frances Fairfax, JoAnn Roberts and myself.

Portland, Oregon, some eight hours by air from Philadelphia, was the location of a very significant recognition of two of our founding members: JoAnn Roberts and Alison Laing. Both received a metal sculpted statuette called the "Trinity Award." From the initial 63 nominations this year, six individuals were honored. The Wednesday night Trinity Award Ceremony started in 1991 and there are now 24 recipients. The Trinity is a recognition of acts of Love, Service and Courage to the transgender community. Receiving this award is, in my own medieval allegory, like being raised to knighthood. To be chosen to present this award to two of my friends, mentors and role models was a cherished honor. The other recipients were Wendy Parker (CHIC), Marsha Botzer (Ingersol Center), Ginny Knuth (ETVC), and Marilyn Irving who started the DREAM gatherings on the West Coast.

The achievements of Alison and JoAnn should be evident to most Renaissance members. What needs mentioning is that their most significant contributions have been made outside of the monthly Renaissance meetings. Alison Laing has, in seven years, advanced from "new girl" at Fantasia Fair to Director of Fantasia Fair. She also revitalized the Congress of Reps (formed in 1990) into the present Congress of Transgender Organizations. JoAnn's contributions are in community outreach and education through public speaking, publishing, and political activism. Finally, both Alison and JoAnn

are good models for the Trinity motto: *The Trinity of Being — Of Being Masculine — Of Being Feminine — Of Being One With Yourself and Nature.*

That's what happened on just Wednesday night. Other activities of Renaissance members included:

- The collaboration of myself and Christina Young to create a Crossdresser's Track. I hosted (and participated in) sessions on personal growth, psychological wellness, and androgynous living. Unless I can find a black hole to hide in, I will be overall program chairperson for Atlanta '95.

- JoAnn begins her third year of her term as a member of the IFGE board and serves on the Executive Committee and the Personnel Committee. I was elected a board alternate and attended my first IFGE board meeting.

- Alison stepped down as chair of the CTO and I was elected Secretary to serve with Anne Johnson (IXE) as chair and Jennifer Richards (St.LGF) as co-chair.

Each IFGE convention has as its high point with the Virginia Prince Lifetime Achievement Award. The 1994 recipient was Ellen Summer from the host group Northwest Gender Alliance. With over 20 years of community service, Ellen is a legend on the West Coast, and they don't make people any nicer or warmer than Ellen. Each year I meet new people who become new reasons to attend the next convention. This year I added Roni Laing of NWGA, Judy Osborne of Emerald City, and Jennifer Richards of St. Louis to my list of beautiful people. To each of you, thanks a million for your contributions to our cause and may we all meet again. Soon.

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