

Chrysalis

The Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities

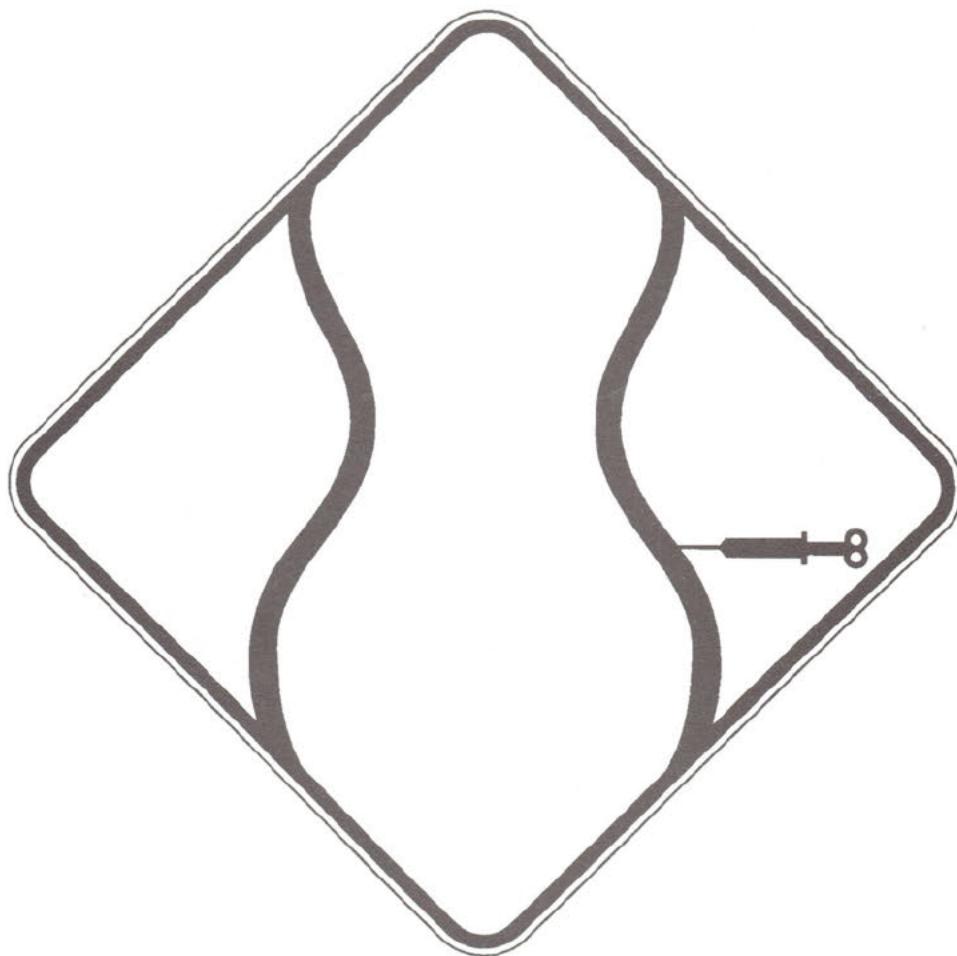


The PIZZA BITCH OF MIDTOWN



This issue

*Transsexuals
in the Workplace*



DANGEROUS CURVES AHEAD.

Curves! Beautiful, sexy, feminine, and cheap. Breasts, hips, thighs, buttocks, legs, cheeks, chins, and even full, voluptuous lips.

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Send for our free pamphlet, "Dangerous Curves Ahead: Why Silicone Injections Can Be Hazardous to Your Health."

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Chrysalis

The Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities



The theme of this issue is Transgender Employment

Finding and keeping work is a huge issue for transgendered and transsexual people, and we address it head-on in this issue, with articles by Dallas Denny, Caitlin Flowers and Riki Wilchins, Petra Hofmann, Penny Huggins, Keith Rogers, and Bee Sundin. You'll also find contributions by Dr. Richard Ekins, Dr. Ruth Hubbard, Phillida Hutcheson, Janie Hutton, Dr. Toby Mayer and Dr. Richard Fleming, Dr. Marisa Richmond, and Madeline Rose; fiction by Shirlene Holmes and Don Narkevic; and poetry by Jessica Xavier.

This issue of Chrysalis is dedicated to the late Dr. Bonnie Bullough, who served as a founding member of the AEGIS advisory board; and to Dr. Vern Bullough, who is also a founding member. Their work has been wide-ranging and insightful, and their interest in transgender and transsexual history pre-dates the community's own.

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Upcoming in *Chrysalis*:

Number 12 (Vol. 2, No. 5)

Hermaphrodites with Attitudes

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Mission: Chrysalis is dedicated to the in-depth exploration of gender issues. Our focus will be on topics which have been ignored or only lightly touched upon in other forums. Our treatments will be intelligent and balanced.

Submissions: We welcome your stories, articles, letters, editorials, news clippings, position statements, research reports, press releases, poems, and artwork.

Authors should indicate whether materials have been submitted or printed elsewhere.

We will be happy to exchange publications and space for small ads with publishers of other magazines or newsletters. We will publish for free a description of or publicity release for your group or magazine, if you will reciprocate.

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Authors of materials used will receive a free issue of Chrysalis.

The opinions of the various contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of AEGIS. The editors reserve the right to refuse submissions which do not meet our editorial or aesthetic standards.

Submissions are preferred on 3.5" MS-DOS or Macintosh diskettes, in ASCII or WordPerfect formats. A printed version should be included. Double-spaced typewritten or legibly handwritten manuscripts are acceptable. Electronic transfers can be sent via e-mail or FAX. Media will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work we go! A lucky few of us do, anyway. Many of us *aren't* employed, and not through lack of trying. It's not that we're not good workers— often we're exemplary— it's because we face a depth and breadth of discrimination that surpasses that shown to just about any other group.

Few employers will knowingly hire a transgendered or transsexual person. That means that those who do not pass, those who are "out," and those who live in small towns where everybody "knows" find it difficult to get a job, and even more difficult to keep one. Those who are undercover— including crossdressers— are at constant risk of being outed. The bottom line is that regardless of whether we consider ourselves to be crossdressers, transgenderists, or transsexual, and whether we are in or out of the closet, few of us are secure in our employment. We're but one innuendo away from being company history.

Many of us are forced into jobs which do not pay us commensurately with our talents, experience, and education. Some of us end up on disability or welfare. Thousands have no option but to turn to prostitution or other forms of sex work. Others wind up on the street.

It's not a happy picture, but things are much better than they were even five years ago. Many

of us *are* working, and at jobs that would have once been unthinkable. There are transsexual and transgendered pilots, physicians, psychologists, professors, politicians, and policemen.

A fortunate option which exists for many of us is transition on the job. That means that we stay at the same posts throughout and after gender role transition. Some large corporations, in fact, have nondiscrimination policies which include transgendered and transsexual persons. There is job protection in some cities (for instance, San Francisco and Portland) and three states—Minnesota, Washington, and Oregon— but we are specifically excluded from national protection by the Americans With Disabilities Act, and any number of courts have ruled that we are not covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That means that in most parts of the U.S. we can be fired at any time and for any reason, and so long as our trans status is listed as the reason for our dismissal, we have no legal recourse. I suspect that if more employers realized this, even more of us would be out of work.

Our experiences vary widely. Some of us sail along without any problems; others face constant rejection. Why is that?

We'll be looking at some of those "Why's" in this issue of *Chrysalis*. CQ

There is job protection in some cities (for instance, San Francisco and Portland) and three states— Minnesota, Washington, and Oregon— but we are specifically excluded from national protection by the Americans With Disabilities Act, and any number of courts have ruled that we are not covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

They Say by Dallas Denny

They say

"You should be happy with what nature gave you"

They say

"You should be happy with the body you have"

They say this

Through capped teeth

Looking at me through eyeglasses

Breathing through noses resculpted

Their faces lifted by plastic surgeons

Their breasts shaped by bags full of silicone

Their hairlines restored by punch grafts

Their bikini lines shaped by electrolysis

Their appendixes long removed

Their youth preserved post-menopausally by estrogens

Pins in their legs from broken bones

Coronary arteries bypassed

Hearts regulated by Pacemakers

Erections preserved by penile implants

They say

"You should be happy with what nature gave you"

"You should be happy with the body you have"

They say

"It is a sin to wear the clothing of the other sex"

They say

"It says so in the Bible"

They say this

While wearing clothing of mixed fabrics

While risking God's wrath by not having a parapet
on their roof

After eating pork

While eating shellfish

After working through the Sabbath

And even though they didn't stone their spouses
for infidelity

They say

"The rest of Deuteronomy we can conveniently ignore
But not the part about crossdressing"

"It is a sin to wear the clothing of the other sex"

"It says so in the Bible"

They say

"By changing your body you are perpetuating binary
gender norms"

"By dressing as the other sex you are empowering the
patriarchy"

They say this

While carefully perpetuating binary gender norms
themselves

After painstakingly studying their appearance in the mirror

To make sure they're not too butch

To make sure they're not too feminine

After making sure they transgress gender norms

just enough

So everyone will know they're "really" a man

So everyone will know they're "really" a woman

They say

"By changing your body you are perpetuating binary
gender norms"

"By dressing as the other sex you are empowering the
patriarchy"

They say

"You should conform to our expectations"

They say

"You should be what we want/need you to be"

While they, on the other hand,

Feel free to be whatever they want to be

Their parade rained on only, of course

By genderqueers like me

My name is Chloe Dzubito. I'm a friend of Riki Ann Wilchins, who suggested I write you. I'm home ill today and thought I'd jot down my experience with surgery, HIV, and a name change. Please excuse the handwriting. It's so Victorian?! I live in NYC and am a pre-op who has experienced great stress pursuing a name change. A judge refused me twice and I wasn't willing to retreat into my shame and so we fought like any good sister would. Only after finding a doctor who was qualified and willing to operate (i.e., castration), did the judge finally submit. Being HIV+, I didn't want to perpetuate the myth that HIV+ transpeople are too ill for surgeries. I'm living proof that we can challenge medical and legal powers! My T-cell count is below 40. So what! I healed like anybody with a normal T-cell count. My name was changed, and now I do not experience the difficulty in public so much. My doctor and I were very concerned that I present my case not as an HIV+ victim who can't ever have sex reassignment, but more as an empowered transperson who chose not to and still lives a productive life. Hope this helps my brothers and sisters.

*Chloe F. Dzubito
New York City*

Thank you for the "Transgender Gothic" issue. I cannot express how heartening it is to see a legitimate publication dedicate more than an editorial column to elimination of the old pigeonhole classifications that dog the existence of members of our community. I have sat silently, frustrated by my own inability to fit perfectly into any of the traditional paradigms of TS, TV, or CD. Your issue has given me new hope that I can join in the community without fear of rejection for not fulfilling the unofficial (or official) membership criteria of a particular group, and more importantly, given me hope that I can accomplish more complete self-acceptance without fear of the peer criticism that has troubled me on past occasions. It might be alright for me to be me after all, and with the safety and concomitantly larger voice in the affairs of the everyday world that the transgender community would have from the elimination of fractionizing rigid pigeon hole

criteria, it might be alright for all of us to be whatever we are in that everyday world. Thanks again.

*Melissa
Las Vegas, NV*

Heteropocrisy— Great piece!

*Bill Henkin
San Francisco, CA*

I just read the new *Chrysalis* cover to cover. I think it does an excellent job of saying many things that really needed to be said. I'm glad you have the guts to publish issues like this! I'm very pleased that AEGIS is taking a proactive role when it comes to figuring out where transgender is going and what the future will be like. I know many people are made uneasy by the deconstruction of labels going on now, but I think it is for the best and I am excited to be part of it. Keep up the good work!

*Lisa Lees
lees@cps.msu.edu*

Don't know if you remember me from various community conventions or not. If you do, it's most likely as "that wife who makes waves" by being TOO supportive! It's something which has, unfortunately, gotten me into hot water with many, disliked by others, and badmouthed by still others (one of them being the Chairman of the Board of that organization that's, in my humble opinion, "devoted" to the feelings and concerns of spouses at the expense of the needs of the very crossdressers it purports to serve).

Anyway, that is neither here nor there. I've just finished reading a copy of your wonderful article "Heteropocrisy" which was reprinted in this month's *Virginia's Secret* newsletter. You say publicly, with great eloquence, many of the things I have been saying privately for about the past three years. There were even those days, when I still had the ear of the board chair, that I attempted with great passion and no success to convince her of the reality of the very things you espouse in this article. There were many times, including the first SPICE conference, when I made the effort to speak frankly to spouses and partners regarding some of these issues, for which I was

We expected the Transgender Gothic issue of Chrysalis to generate a great deal of controversy, and indeed it did, bringing, among other things, a letter from the Board of Tri-Ess requesting the AEGIS Board to "counsel with" the editor and a virulently anti-transsexual diatribe from Virginia Prince, which was published in the October 1996 issue of Cross-Talk magazine. Most of the letters we received, however, thanked us for bringing up rarely-discussed issues. We have included the two letters that were critical of the issue's content.

P.O. BOX

severely criticized and accused of being so liberal that my "brains were falling out."

So be it. That is an opinion to which the person who expressed it is entitled. I spoke honestly and from my heart, and I am entitled to that.

There is great truth in all you say in this article and I would very much like to write a supportive response to it from the viewpoint of a wife who has recognized these truths and discovered positive ways to deal with them and incorporate them into a solid, loving, exciting and fun relationship. Would you be interested in such an article? Do you think it would serve a positive purpose? If you think it would be a good idea I'll work on a rough draft to send you in the very near future. If you think the idea sucks I'll probably write my thoughts down anyway but not do much with them for the time being. Let me know.

Either way, my fondest personal regards to you. I have always been impressed with your honesty and fairness in regard to community issues and, once again, you have outdone yourself.

*Janie Hutton (hutton@richmond.infi.net)
[See Mrs. Hutton's Editorial on p. 53]*

I have been reading with great interest the Spring issue of *Chrysalis*. "Heteropocrixy" lays to rest the myth of the male CD. As a MTF transsexual, I would like to see an end to the "Them Vs. us" bigotry rampant in our community. When one considers the problems of being transgendered of any description facing today's society, we must stop all this infighting and become a united front. Much could be accomplished. I would be satisfied to see Tri-Ess evolve into a society that nurtures sexual diversity among its members. It would go a long way in providing true support to its members. You know what they say: Tolerance removes the need to judge. Thank you.

Margot Celeste Bennett

Thank you for the "Transgender Gothic" issue of *Chrysalis*. I'm glad you had the courage to blow the whistle on the homophobia and TS-phobia, as well as the hypocritical denial of same,

that exist in Tri-Ess. I certainly encountered all of the above from an extremely prominent Tri-Ess official during his presentation at Southern Comfort last year.

However, I was surprised to read your characterization of the motives of those who would point out the differences within the "transgender community" (*Chrysalis* Vol. 2., No. 3, p. 49). Surely you must know that we are a diverse community, with diverse motivations. Fear and insecurity are not the only reasons that heterosexual CDs, "non-op" TGs, and post-op TSs might want to express some sense of difference or specialness. Other motivations might include pride, self-definition, or a desire to create safe space.

Your statement, "When transsexuals loudly proclaim that they are different from cross-dressers, it is because at a deep level, they know they aren't," is probably partly true, some of the time. But it is probably also true that at a "deep level," many transsexuals have learned that they are very different from most CDs. Possibly they find the new orthodoxy, which seems to imply that CDs and TSs are essentially identical, as simplistic and oppressive as the old orthodoxy, which seemed to deny any similarities.

I believe it is important that we continue to acknowledge and respect both the feelings of similarity and the feelings of difference that exist within the various segments of the "transgender community."

*Sincerely yours,
Anne A. Lawrence, M.D.*

Thank you for bringing up this point. I absolutely agree that the transgender community is diverse and that we should acknowledge and respect our many differences. However, I have become increasingly convinced that many of our supposed differences are artifacts of the terms which we use to define ourselves; we enforce the boundaries of those terms by proclaiming our differences from those who use other terms.

Certainly the life situations and practical needs of transsexuals and crossdressers are very different and must be acknowledged so that all parties can be provided with proper support. How much we differ

in the ways we feel inside as opposed to how much we differ because of the various life decisions we make in response to those feelings is an open question.

Thank you for printing the articles "Heteropocrixy" and "Homophobia Hurts Us All" (*Chrysalis* Vol. 2, No. 3). These articles contain some revolutionary insights, which as you acknowledged, will likely be controversial. Indeed, discussions relating to sexual orientation have been extremely volatile within many transgendered groups and have been the cause of much divisiveness. It is very good, however, that this topic is at least being discussed, as is evident in many articles which are appearing in a variety of publications and newsletters.

As you indicated, heterosexual crossdressers and their organizations have performed a very valuable service by challenging the predominant public assumption that all crossdressers were homosexual. Their efforts have helped to create a better understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles, and periodic cross-gender role playing. However, I would suggest that bias has been introduced into some of the educational efforts and that boundaries have been introduced in order to emphasize distinctions and ease the educational process.

To an extent the development of these artificial boundaries may have been necessary. In an effort to "explain" themselves, gender gifted individuals, as they are now termed, have had to concentrate on discussing the concepts of gender identity cross-gender role playing, and gender roles. These parts of the "human sexuality gumbo" have been emphasized and the subject of sexual orientation has been suppressed. Possibly, some of the suppression has been due to defensive compensating strategies, but for many it was a topic which did not require attention because they were confident of their own sexual preference.

The discussion of a bias within the gender gifted community may be blunted somewhat if we recognize that the gay community has also possibly developed "blind-spots" which are also harmful to their community. While it could be said that the gender gifted

commonly say, "I cross-dress but I'm not gay," gay males have frequently had to explain that they are gay but do not crossdress. Their educational efforts have led them to emphasize "sexual orientation" and suppress any discussion about gender identity and gender roles. Indeed, many gay males are vehemently opposed to those gays who crossdress because it perpetuates the "ignorant myth" that all gay males crossdress and want to be women. Hence, the reason for gay males and the gender gifted to introduce bias is based around the concept that "all gay males crossdress and all males who crossdress are gay." Different educational strategies developed to disprove the same concept. Both are somewhat guilty of suppressing discussion of topics which need to be explored and both oppress parts of their community who do not "fit" their concepts. Hence, as you suggest, there could well be many gay males who secretly crossdress. (Since they do not crossdress because they are gay, they crossdress because they enjoy it much like a heterosexual crossdresser crossdresses not because he is heterosexual, but because he likes it.)

When some gay males and some heterosexual crossdressers meet, their worst fears are personified. While the crossdresser fears that if he is seen with a gay male, the public may assume he is gay, you can bet that many gay males would be equally embarrassed to be seen with a crossdresser for fear that others may think he crossdresses. In any case, the fears of the two are irrational and result in inappropriate judgements. A widening of the scope of educational efforts within both communities to encompass the wide degree of variability of the various components of human sexuality would be a liberating experience for both communities. It would certainly facilitate the eventual acceptance of an individual regardless of where he or she naturally falls on the various continuums. Both groups could stop the practice of "selective ignoring" which originates not from an absence of knowledge, but from a failure to acknowledge information which is upsetting and controversial. Suppression of knowledge leads to oppression of people. We are a community which is asking the world to

end discrimination based on gender identification and gender roles, yet we openly discriminate against others for gender non-conformity. We are a community which wants the public to accept variance in gender expression, yet we fail to accept variance in other areas.

This brings to mind the passage in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. "Comrades!" he cried. "You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself."

The outrage expressed due to these articles may be a gauge to indicate how much education we have to do. Many individuals are not defensive about their sexual orientation, gender identities, and gender roles. They can gently guide others to a future without artificially imposed boundaries—a world in which commonalities are respected, differences are valued, and discrimination is intolerable.

*"Animal Farm, Animal Farm
Never through me
shalt thou come to harm!"*

Nancy Sharp

Three cheers for your "Heteropocrisy" article in Volume 2, No. 3 of *Chrysalis*. It stated facts that need to be mentioned again and again.

I once had a "crossdresser" roommate who stated he would never ever take female hormones. At the same time he was getting injections from a hack doctor. His issues with gender and crossdressing were something he kept hidden until he showed up at work one day in women's clothes. (Due to this unfortunate coming out choice he was fired.) This guy was an officer in Renaissance. We are an open support group.

I guess the point is, he and many other crossdressers with gender issues have held them in for so long and failed to deal with them for so long that they don't know how to have an open dialogue with others. The same applies for those who find themselves attracted to men while they are crossdressed. They have to tell themselves they're straight and only interested in women while

they long for a man's hand on their thigh. How about those who find it appealing to be "lesbians" with another crossdresser? These sexual issues are easily treated with the same kind of juvenile "nudge, nudge, wink, wink, say no more" attitude that Americans use to deal with any issues of sexuality.

I give a talk called "Sex and The Single Crossdresser." I discuss several different sexual interactions and I speak from experience. I let myself be picked up by a man while crossdressed in Los Angeles. We went to bed and did "stuff" (See, even I can be reduced to "nudge, nudge"). I insisted on safe sex activities and was lucky enough to get a guy who really was a considerate gentleman (Not that he didn't beg a little). The bottom line was, I enjoyed the experience and would repeat it if the right man came along, but it helped me realize that my primary attraction is to women. If I had kept having my fantasies about being treated like a woman, maybe I would have stopped pursuing relationships with women and been too afraid to try a man. I haven't gone out of my way to pursue men, but now I'm aware that that type of liaison is possible for me under the right circumstances.

I think far too many crossdressers fantasize about that romantic evening with Mister Right, don't act on it soon enough, and reach a kind of critical mass that starts pushing them into the parking lot for oral sex with Mr. Wrong.

Sexuality and gender diversity are wonderful gifts and they should be explored and enjoyed, not cloaked in "don't ask, don't tell" and treated as dirty little secrets.

Maybe a lot of TG support groups should schedule more programs about sexuality and have more rap groups about sex and gender. I know I'll recommend that Renaissance activities folks consider it for their meetings.

*Angela Gardner, Executive Director
Renaissance National*

In the last issue of *Chrysalis*, Vol. 2, No. 3, you ran an article, "Op-Ed, When Heteropocrisy Comes Home to Roost," in which you attacked Tri-Ess in general and its Atlanta-based chapter, Sigma Epsilon, in particular.

You opened with comments referring to your discomfort at remaining silent in order to maintain an illusion of community harmony. It is true that there is freedom of speech in America. Such freedom, however, carries with it a responsibility. For journalists, who report factual information, that responsibility is particularly serious. I would recommend that before you print an assault on an individual, group, institution, or philosophy, you gain firsthand information and verify the accuracy of your information. This is called responsible journalism, but you, the editor of *Chrysalis*, do not seem to feel any responsibility to check your facts. Perhaps your personal agenda overwhelms your obligation to report to your readers. It is unfortunate that in order to draw your biased conclusions, you resorted in several articles to hearsay evidence, half-truths, and incidents taken out of context. Such irresponsible journalism only fosters animosity, inhibits cooperation between support groups, and erodes your credibility as a responsible journalist.

Let's look at a couple of examples. In your article, you referred to a transsexual who attempted suicide and used wording in such a way as to mislead your readers into believing that Sigma Epsilon was in some way responsible for her suicide attempt. Yet on several occasions this sister has told you personally that her suicide attempt was due to severe personal problems at her work place. The only connection Sigma Epsilon had with this individual was that a friend at Sigma Epsilon invited her to attend a couple of dinner events. Unfortunately, because of her intense personal problems, her presence and behavior created problems with other members and their wives. Because she was in crisis, she was encouraged to seek more direct support in a group better equipped to render her counseling of the kind and depth she needed. Sigma Epsilon was never designed to render the kind of support she needed. In Atlanta, Atlanta Gender Explorations and the Montgomery Foundation are better equipped for this type of support. Sigma Epsilon simply acted as a good community citizen in making an appropriate referral.

In another article, you reported that

a Sigma Epsilon member, during a Sigma Epsilon function, asked a transsexual, "Aren't you uncomfortable here?" You implied that she was asked to leave. You failed to mention that the sexually fetishistic manner in which she was dressed was extremely inappropriate for the lobby of a four-star hotel, especially in view of other guests and their children. At Sigma Epsilon we attempt to project a positive image of our community, yet it only takes one self-centered and insensitive individual to undermine our efforts. So when we have visitors, we expect them to conduct themselves as ladies. This is a courtesy we would extend when visiting another group, but a courtesy many visitors to Sigma Epsilon fail to extend us. Sigma Epsilon expects appropriately gentlemanly and ladylike conduct at its meetings.

In your attack upon Sigma Epsilon, you go on to mention a past leader and how wonderful the organization was. You are correct, Linda Peacock was a great inspiration and loved by us all. Yet organizations grow, and growth requires change and new ways of conducting business and offering support. Sigma Epsilon has grown tremendously in membership, financial strength, programs, and public visibility. Over the past six years we have registered over three hundred members, with only nine going on to become transsexual. This is 3% of our membership. It doesn't seem to me there are so many running off to be TS as you would lead your readers to believe. We at Sigma Epsilon are committed to extending support to heterosexual crossdressers and their wives and significant others. We offer no apology for our focused support, because the diverse membership groups, for the most part, have forgotten wives and families' needs in order to promote a transgendered lifestyle with no responsibility to anything except "what I want."

Your article really boils down to attacking anyone or anything that fails to live up to your come-one, come-all philosophy. Any group that chooses to specialize in their services or support, you label exclusionary and thereby homo- or trans-phobic. You have a right to your opinion! But in this wide world there are other perspectives and

desires. As a transsexual friend of mine said, "Open groups are like a Jack of all trades, but a master of none." You just can't be everything to everyone and be effective! The focused groups, whether they be CD, TS, gay, etc., are the ones that really provide meaningful support. CD, TS, gay, bi/CD have many similar needs and concerns, yet at the same time they have needs and concerns that are very different from one another. Heterosexual crossdressers in marriages with children have their own unique issues and needs. But I forget—according to your many articles, most heterosexual crossdressers are really closeted, bi, gay, or transsexuals. Really! What *Chrysalis* espouses is a large social group, inclusive of all and not really dedicated to anything.

Most diverse membership groups fail to render any real support, but instead just become merry old social groups that could not care less about wives and families. They promote self-indulgence rather than restraint and responsibility.

So today we have Tri-ess and Sigma Epsilon, a very successful focused support structure that cares about crossdressers and their wives and families, and which attempts to render support to both the crossdresser and his wife and family. It is the very nature of focused support that has made Tri-Ess so successful. We state openly what we stand for and what we offer. True, there are people who come to Tri-Ess who are not honest with Tri-Ess or themselves as to who and what they are. But this is not a perfect world and many people are never totally honest with themselves as to who and what they are. This is not a reflection upon an institution or what it stands for, but rather a reflection upon the lack of honest intimacy mankind has with itself.

We at Tri-Ess and Sigma Epsilon are not perfect, but we have found a need and are focused upon serving that need. We offer no apology. We ask only God's help in fulfilling that need.

*Lauren Hester, President
Sigma Epsilon Chapter Tri-Ess*

Please read the articles again. I did not call for Tri-Ess or its Sigma Epsilon chapter to become open groups, or to in any

way change their focus on supporting heterosexual crossdressers and their partners. I did suggest that such support can be done even more effectively in an atmosphere in which members are free to explore all of their options without fear of group sanction or banishment; and I have noted that the lifestyles of many of the organization's local and national leaders stand in direct opposition to its rhetoric.

I was present during most of what I described as happening at Sigma Epsilon. I stand by what I wrote.

You have inflicted irreparable damage to your credibility with your ludicrous claim it was Will Roscoe, in 1994, who showed "that emasculated gallae served as priestesses of the goddess Magna Mater throughout the Middle East." Roscoe has consistently portrayed the gallae as gender variant males, and has utilized the masculine spelling, galli, to further effect this portrayal. He has never referred to these people as priestesses, nor has he ever used the feminine spelling gallae.

The damage to your credibility stems from two facts: 1) it was you yourself who in 1993 published my "Gallae of the Magna Mater," which portrayed the gallae as priestesses and much of my research had previously appeared in magazines such as *Open Ways* and *Sound Out*; 2) you have widely criticized me, using pejorative language, in a variety of publications for my role in the liberation of the Transgender Health Panel at the 1995 National Lesbian and Gay Health Association Conference in Minneapolis, a panel on which you were originally scheduled to share time with but two others and, as a result of the liberation, were reduced to but one of nine.

It is one thing for you to write your one-sided versions of what happened in Minneapolis—it is quite another for you to misattribute my research and writing, which you yourself have published, to Will Roscoe. Your vindictive action not only harms your own reputation but is transphobic, in that you falsely credit a nontranssexual with the research and accomplishment of a transsexual.

At this point there are very few courses open to you: you can either retract your erroneous claim which ascribed my research to Will Roscoe,

publicly and in the pages of *Chrysalis*, or you can expect I will denounce you publicly and in writing as having lied about material of mine which you yourself published. Your choice.

Margaret Dierdre O'Hartigan

You wrote a wonderful article making a case for gallae as transsexual priestesses, which I published in *Chrysalis*, and I'm sorry I neglected to refer to it, if only because it would have been a good plug for both of us.

Although Roscoe refers to gallae as "priests," he cites a number of primary sources like Plutarch and includes a map which clearly shows how crossdressed and emasculated males can be documented all across Europe and Asia. Since I was interested in demonstrating the extent of the phenomenon, and since the citations were meant to be representative and not an exhaustive list, I considered Roscoe the more logical source to cite. It would have been different if you had documented galli/gallae for the first time, but I believe Plutarch predates you by several thousand years. Perhaps I should be apologizing to him.

I see no reason not to cite Roscoe because he does not agree with your view that the gallae were long-ago analogs of modern-day transsexuals. It is not transphobic to give credit where credit is due.

There was no "liberation" of the Transgender Health Panel at NLGHA; there was a hostile takeover. Despite the claims of the literature you handed out that the panel was not made up of members of the community, it was in fact composed of three postoperative transsexuals. I challenged you then, if you remember, saying that if you really cared about transgender health, you would take the trouble to set up your own symposium at the 1996 NLGHA meeting, which was in your neck of the woods. Of course you didn't, which tells me a lot about what Margaret Dierdre O'Hartigan is really all about.

When I received your letter, I told you I would apologize for not citing your article, which I did in the first sentence of this reply. It's doubtless not the apology you wanted, but it's all you'll ever get.

I suppose I'll just have to limp along like always, the "irreparable damage to my credibility" I caused by not stroking your ego and by whatever you will write after reading this notwithstanding.

Thirteen Questions by Jessica Xavier

what does it mean to be queer?

what does normal mean?

what does it mean to be part of the endless and inevitable cycle of human biovariability?

what does choice mean?

what does it mean when you grow up different to be told you are deviant?

what the fuck does lifestyle mean?

what does it mean to be a tiny minority in a huge, hostile majority?

what does discrimination mean?

what makes human rights special rights?

how many colors are there in the rainbow flag?

what does gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender mean?

what does family mean?

what does it mean to be queer?

I got my packet from AEGIS with *Chrysalis* 10 and *AEGIS News* 6 & 7. The theme of this *Chrysalis* is "Transgender Gothic," with an image of Grant Wood's "American Gothic" painting on the cover, doctored by JoAnn Roberts to have the heads of Virginia Prince and Harry Benjamin. It contains my speech, where I call for transcending the Prince-Benjamin model. Dallas' big piece is on the myth of the Heterosexual Crossdresser, and the communities and people who remain untouched by the traditional gender community — and how labeling has left them out in the cold. Both pieces focus on the limits of the old models, on how the groupings of people into convenient labels and concepts limit all of us.

AEGIS News is fronted by "Vision 2001," Dallas' analysis of the TG community's national groups. Jessica Xavier writes the lead on politics, noting that to be effective, we have to create people whose primary identification is transgendered, like the gays and lesbians have done — and if we don't do that, we will fail as a movement.

I also read a piece in my local paper of a columnist who went up to the National Women's Studies Conference up at Skidmore. He came away with amusement at the triumph of identity politics, of how people grouped themselves under labels, and how limiting that was — even though it seemed to be the central canon of women's studies. In fact, the conference theme was "Boundaries: What Separates and Connects Us?" I suspect the answer to both questions was labels — identity politics.

The biggest gift that The Prince brought to transgendered people was identity politics. Labels and separations — not only of those who were not femiphiles or heterosexual crossdressers, but even of those who disagreed, as Dallas points out.

The question we have today is a tricky one. Do we, for political reasons embrace identity politics, as Jessica Xavier suggests, or do we, again for political reasons, transcend identity politics, as Dallas and I suggest?

Where are transgendered people to get an identity? Our birth families are very different than we are, and are

almost unanimously unaccepting, forcing us to lie about who we are, to create a false self. We don't get support in our schools or churches either, limiting our geographic or spiritual identities.

Lesbian and Gay people have the same issues, but they do get support from their lovers. They create families of choice out of a drive for companionship and sexual satisfaction. But transgendered people don't have those drives. We don't share an attraction to partners like us.

We end up coming together under concepts, under banners. And for a long while, those banners were simple: transsexual, het-crossdresser, drag queen. Problem is that we don't fit neatly there — the labels were forced, and they were not, as Jessica Xavier notes with some frustration, our primary labels. If TS, we wanted to become women or men; if TV, we were normal het males; and drag queens were normal gay men. We wanted to stay away from the TG label.

And why not stay away? What is the benefit of the TG label? Does it carry status, power, glamour, affirmation? In most cases, no — it only carries entry to a few support groups.

On a personal level, the transgender label, the history, and a few role models can help us find our own worth, transcend our own shame. But after all is said and done, we have to live inside of a community, and while some have postulated the creation of utopian transgender communities, none exist. The best we can get is queer communities, like the gay ghettos of San Francisco, Toronto, Atlanta, and so on. I suspect that we would find that the level of immersion of a gay or lesbian person into the local gay or lesbian community is directly related to how they primarily identify. If they are active, they are lesbians or gays first — but for many, who have settled like any other person, they may be lawyers, Mommies, Blacks, town dwellers, councilmembers, Christians or some other identity first. It is a question of the group you see as being your first home — and acknowledgement that we all live in many groups, many worlds.

Life, for most people, is beyond identity politics. And the gift of identi-

ty politics that Virginia Prince brought to the gender community is a double-edged sword, cutting the space for TG people to be themselves — and cutting separations between TG people and others in their community.

Politically oriented people will jump and run, tell us that the only way to be effective is to be part of a distinct group that can follow them and fight for rights — by giving time, energy and money to support the battles.

But many of us will wonder how that helps us be more effective in the communities in which we live.

Transgendered people have always been, and probably will always be rare. One or two per nomadic tribe of 50 or so was enough. They have also always spoken for individual expression — there was never a handbook on how to be a shaman, only stories and tales that lead us to our own personal ways of power and transcendence.

To be effective, transgendered people must create alliances with many others around them — it is not sufficient to find an isolated community where only TG people live, for such a thing has never existed.

Can we really find our voices as transgendered people using the sword of identity politics? I don't think so — the separations it creates cut us off from our natural powers of bridging worlds, of showing connection, of cutting across boundaries.

But that doesn't stop people from trying to introduce more identity politics into the world of transgender, and using the fear of separation to drive people together. "If you are not with us, you will be alone, isolated, harassed, killed. Only by standing together can we be powerful!"

Lily Tomlin: "We are all in this alone." I think, that while I would never want to give up my connections to other transgendered people, I never want to primarily think of myself as transgendered — or any other label relating to that, like TS or TV. I want to be essentially human, and connect with other humans.

Are identity politics the salvation of TG people, or the downfall of them? It is a question worth discussing. CQ

Callan Williams

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Ah, yes, liberal Scandinavia, where in the popular imagination one goes to get a sex change. Well... guess again!

The Situation in Sweden

by Bee Sundin

Internationally, Sweden has a reputation for social and political progressiveness which speaks out against violations of human rights. This picture does not necessarily reflect reality, especially regarding the situation of Sweden's transgender community.

It's true that gays and lesbians nowadays are very visible and that they are protected under the law against discrimination and have also been granted the right to enter into same-sex marriages on an almost equal footing with conventionally married couples. Earlier this year, two of Sweden's most prominent female rock singers were joined in matrimony wearing white, and with a huge amount of media coverage.

Yet as bright as the picture looks for Sweden's gay and lesbian community, it is equally bleak for Sweden's transsexual and transgendered persons. We enjoy no protection under the law when it comes to discrimination, as the law states explicitly "homosexual" and doesn't mention us at all. We are with minor exceptions a very invisible community, and this goes for transsexuals, transgenderists, cross-dressers, and drag queens.

Those of us who have managed transition and belong to that extremely exclusive group of people who have been granted the right to switch gender and undergo SRS under the law of 1972 number about 200-250 men and women in all, out of a population of 9 million. Most remain woodworked. Under this law a Swedish citizen who is above the age of 18 may apply to have his or her gender status altered legally and change the name accordingly. The permissions are processed by the Legal Council, which is a branch of the Medical and Social Board of Sweden, a very powerful and heavily bureaucratized government body. The council is composed of various researchers and

doctors active in the field of psychiatry and working as specialists in the field of gender dysphoria, as well as members of the legal profession. Until recently, there was no real way of appealing a decision handed down by this council.

Without the permission of the council, you will stand no chance whatsoever of undergoing SRS in Sweden; normally, you are not even allowed to apply on your own behalf, as in practice the application is done by a psychiatrist specializing in gender issues (not always very competent and in touch with the latest advances in science) who will be appointed to you by the authorities. In case your psychiatrist is serving on the council when the application is made, he might be replaced by one of his peers.

Although the period from your initial application to the date of the decision for acceptance for SRS is supposed to be about 3-4 years, a great number of transsexual men and women in Sweden have been waiting between 5 and 15 years.

When it comes to the prescription of hormones, only the psychiatrist appointed by the state is supposed to do this. The prescription of hormones by other physicians is considered not quite kosher and might involve losing the license to practice medicine, as the Medical and Social Board also serves as the authority granting these licenses.

Of course, there are exceptions—gynecologists and endocrinologists who out of pity or humanity help some transsexuals get Premarin or testosterone, but almost all ask their patients not to spread the word around. Hence, there are a lot of black market hormones going around within our community, and no one dares to see a doctor to get their hormonal blood levels checked.

There is absolutely no form of support of counseling for individuals with gender identity problems. The sole exception is the Benjamin League, Sweden's only transsexual organization, which forms a network that estimatedly might reach about 200-300 transsexuals and transgendered persons at best. The league's only source of income is the membership fees; the annual budget is a bit over \$2000 U.S. Recently, an application for a grant to publish our first information brochure and spread it to

relevant groups such as social services, police, and hospitals, was flatly turned down on the grounds that the responsible government body could see no need for this.

Interestingly enough, the gay movement is subsidized with more than one million dollars US annually to keep all kinds of activities going.

As you might well imagine from the above, it takes a lot of courage to embark on the road of transition in this country. Some of us choose not to follow our inner voice, and go through life without an often very necessary hormonal or surgical reassignment, settling for a life of more or less misery.

From my work as a voluntary counselor for social, legal, and employment matters within the Benjamin League and as a pre-op transsexual, I will try to illustrate the situation for five of our members, all pre-op transsexual women, and their difficulties in keeping their jobs during transition.

Our first case is Carol. She is good-looking, bright, and soft-spoken, a hormonally reassigned woman in her mid-forties. She was living in a small town and had been working for seven or eight years in a museum as a curator's assistant in the Department of Archaeology. As she began her transition, she encountered a great deal of harassment from some of the staff. The museum director did nothing to stop this, but rather encouraged her co-workers in mistreating her. Carol had to enter the hospital for an old back injury, and when she returned to work, all but a few made life unbearable for her. The aim was, of course, to make Carol feel so unwelcome that she would resign her post. She almost did this, but in a last-minute effort to find help, got in touch with me through the Benjamin League.

I contacted her trade union, and, being an old trade union veteran as well as a professional social worker, I had few difficulties in dealing with the local union representative, who told me he also was disgusted at the treatment Carol was receiving at the museum. Together, we forced the museum director to pay damages in the amount of \$9000 U.S. and to issue a letter of recommendation to any future employer who might be interested in hiring Carol. She was satisfied with this and left the museum, as she did not feel that

she would be welcome back and wanted to pursue a different career.

According to her trade union, this was probably the first time in Swedish history that a transsexual had "won" over a discriminating employer. The most ludicrous reason for wanting to fire her was that she, having been born male and living as a female, was a freak who would create an outrage among the visitors to the museum. My comment was that one must be very experienced or a transsexual oneself to ever suspect that Carol was anything but a woman. It was basically not the way she looked or appeared that constituted the problem, but the fact that she broke the sacred laws of gender.

Susan's story is somewhat different. Living in Sweden's largest city, Stockholm, and working as a clerk in a government office, she began transitioning about a year ago. This displeased her female boss and the local union, which cooperated in threatening her, telling that her employment contract would be terminated if she didn't stop her transition. Having already been accepted for treatment and having started her hormonal reassignment, she came to work in the sort of clothing worn by most Swedish women of her age. At work, she wore the special clothing used by all her co-workers, male or female. The threats concerned what she was wearing off-duty and on her way from and to work—and to really show their power, Susan was exempted from the agreed-upon raise of salary that all her co-workers were given. There was no criticism whatsoever about the way she performed her duties; her maltreatment was solely the result of being transsexual.

My advice to Susan was to get in touch with the higher ranks of her union, and if need be, to contact the Equal Rights Board, which enforces the laws against sex discrimination. Susan actually won her case and got her raise, but her boss is still giving her a hard time in hopes that she will quit her job.

In acting on Susan's case, the Equal Rights Board regarded Susan as a woman, although she was a pre-op transsexual woman. This will certainly have significance for similar cases involving transsexual women.

Alexia has excellent training as a hospital kitchen supervisor. She quit a

steady job to move to Stockholm to live full-time as a woman. Being black, petite, and very pretty, there certainly was no problem in passing as the woman she always had felt she was, and by moving to the big city, she also managed to pass the needle's eye and become accepted for hormonal treatment and SRS. Her problem began when she accepted a post in a shop selling lingerie and moved into a flat belonging to her bosses, a married couple who also managed some phone-sex lines. Soon, Alexia was asked to operate the lines when there were no customers in the shop, marketed as a pre-op transsexual.

Before long, Alexia was not receiving the agreed-upon payment. Under a pretense that she was active as a prostitute, she lost the flat. When she tried to fight back, the owners said that no one would believe her—that, being a transsexual working on a phone-sex line, she had to be a prostitute. Unless she quit her job at once and waived all claims, she would be turned over to the police and her doctor would be informed (i.e., she would no longer be receiving her hormone treatment and would lose all hope of SRS). Luckily, Alexia, on her visits to one of the major gay bars, had come to know a gay trade union official, who helped her to reach a settlement on the payment issues. Alexia is still homeless and lives temporarily at a friend's place, drawing unemployment benefits. My advice to Alexia was that she should inform her doctor immediately about the threats, and if anything negative occurred, to take legal action with the aid of the Benjamin League.

Rebecca is unemployed and has been unemployed for most of her transition. Being blonde and tall, with a model-like figure, she will get her SRS okayed in less than half a year. Mastering transition on unemployment benefits is certainly not easy, but Rebecca is also a tough and very proud woman. She lost her job as a nurse's aide before we met. Although not so severely harassed by her coworkers as Carol and Susan, she had a hard time in her department working with senile women who were asking her whether she was a boy or a girl. Rebecca asked for a transfer to another ward where she would work as a woman, as she was already so far in transition that the effects of her

hormone treatment were clearly visible. This was refused, and she was sent to the personnel office of the hospital, where she was offered a month's pay to quit her job. As she was having a difficult time at the moment, she accepted, after checking with her union, Sweden's largest trade union. They told her it was all right for the management to refuse the transfer, and that one's month's payment was all she could hope for. Rebecca was legally entitled to a transfer to another ward and three months' severance pay, but no one told her so, not even her union. When I became aware of this case, it was too late to do anything.

Rebecca has repeatedly applied for vacant positions, permanent and temporary, with the city of Stockholm, which runs the hospital and which is by far the largest employer in Stockholm, and guess what? There are no jobs—not for Rebecca, anyway.

Out last case is the only one with a happy ending and a supportive employer. Anna was a middle-aged Icelandic transsexual who more-or-less had fled her little homeland in the North Atlantic in order to transition. Just to hear her talk about what life was like for a transsexual person in Iceland would make your hair curl. Her only option was to find a job in another country and to try to have her operation there.

Being a trained naval engineer, Anna's scope of jobs in Sweden was limited. She landed a position at a Stockholm Municipal Water Works as a machinist. Almost immediately, she told her chief personnel officer about her situation. The personnel officer, a woman, reacted with the greatest sympathy, treating Anna as a sister. Whenever problems occurred, they were solved, and together they arranged a meeting of all her co-workers, informing them about the nature of transsexualism and how to deal with it.

Anna underwent her SRS about a year ago, and her story was widely publicized in Sweden's largest newspaper. The newspaper coverage probably did more to help us in achieving acceptance than anything else.

Anna is now back in her homeland and a very complete woman, busy helping her other sisters and brothers. The only sad thing is that Anna's story is the exception to the rule. CQ

The unfortunate "Situation in Sweden" is the logical result of the medicalization of transsexualism. It's what happens when transsexuals surrender their autonomy and throw themselves on the mercy of medical professionals in the hope that they will be one of the few "chosen" to receive sex reassignment.

In America, in 1996, anyone with patience, determination, and persistence—and let's not forget, money—can obtain medical treatments to masculinize or feminize their body: electrolysis, breast augmentation or reduction, facial plastic surgery, hormonal therapy, and yes, sex reassignment surgery. It's a bit of a game, yes, due to the HBGDA Standards of Care, which require letters of authorization for hormones and sex reassignment surgery (and for FTMs, top surgery), but it's infinitely better than the "old days" of the 1970s, when access to body-changing technologies could be obtained only by submitting to expensive and extensive tests and psychotherapy and by persuading a team of doctors who really didn't know all that much about transsexualism that one was "really" transsexual. More than nine out of ten were turned away without treatment. Most were not savvy enough to realize that hormones could be purchased on the street, and returned to their former situations, where they lived and all too often died in desperate depression.

The few who obtained treatment paid a dreadful price: loss of self. They had to conform to the doctors' demands: every demand—sensible or, more usually, ridiculous—or whizzt!, they were out of the program. Still, the pain was such that most were glad to sacrifice their dignity, even when it meant changing themselves into Barbies and Kens.

If things had happened differently: if, in 1996, the U.S. like Sweden, had a law that limited the number of sex reassignments; if, regardless of the number of applicants over the years, fewer than 27 per million would be granted the right to legal gender change and SRS, would you and I, gentle reader, because our hearts are pure, be among the chosen few?

Don't bet on it, Bunkie.

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The Pizza Bitch of Midtown

by Petra Lynn Hofmann



I am the Pizza Bitch Of Midtown and I wasn't always this way. I wasn't born, I was manufactured by a society, a culture that hates the question "What is your gender?" I haven't committed suicide, close! I haven't permanently damaged my body, yet. I'm disease-free and healthy and I'm in their face everyday, motherfucker!

I'm not just mad as hell, I'm angry to the core. I'm angry at myself for being who and what I am. I'm furious at a world that comes to a screeching halt until it knows with certainty what is between my legs— dick or cunt. But, most important of all, I'm angry because I'm 6'1" and 170 pounds (after losing 60 pounds) and look more at home in a Hart, Shaffner & Marx suit than a Mizrahi or Ungaro. And there is not one thing I can do to change these diabolical genetic facts. Well fuck me! Oh, pahleeze, what's a girl to do?

I get even everyday, in every way, and flaunt it. I'm proud of my puny B cup breasts on a 40-inch chest. They are all mine, no additives, yet, thank you very much. I love the feel of my smooth face. My girlfriend remarked one day how soft my legs felt. Compared to some of my transie friends, I'm lucky. So what, you might say. "It's your choice." Some choice: to work appearing as someone I can't stand, or to work as someone others can't stand.

I was laid off from my job as an automobile sales trainer almost exactly a year after I was forced to out myself to the owner of the business. Of course he told me that I shouldn't expect to work there during or after the transition, as I might upset the customers. He added, "I don't have any problem with what your are, but I am concerned

about what our customers might think." Of course, we'll never know. How convenient.

The night I was laid off I went to a friend's house to have "tee many maroonis." Commiserating over my lot in life, the idea surfaced. Transition now and get the "difficult" part over with. My friend suggested I start with getting my ears pierced. I did, signaling the world about my new life: the life I'd kept hidden from three wives, my family, and many employers. I'm still waiting for the "difficult" part to get over with.

A year and a half ago I decided the time was right for Petra to stop living a double life, and so I started living full-time in my chosen gender and persona. One of the first questions I felt I needed to address was what to do for a living. There were two careers I thought I might like: massage therapist and manicurist. I thought either one of these would work for me. I then started thinking what it might be like for a "transie" who can't pass to be a massage therapist. I realized then that I would really have difficulties with believability and credibility. I didn't think most people would view me as sincerely transsexual without some underlying or hidden sexual interest or fantasy. It was then I thought of my second option— that of manicurist or nail technician. It fit my requirements such as: female occupation, working with women, and meeting the public.

I started investigating different manicure schools and settled upon one of the more expensive schools in Atlanta. I enrolled in The New York School of Skin and Nailcare without difficulty and received financial aid, too. However, I was asked to interview with the school director, something others were not required to do. My interview was a non-event except for one statement. The director told me that, "he had no problem with my transsexuality, except for one concern: how others, students, would accept me." He added, "if there is any trouble, you will be asked to leave the school and remain liable for the tuition."

Little did I understand the subtle pressure this statement and my agreement would bring. I survived to gradu-

ate in minimum time, but had to withstand the enmity of others, much to my total unhappiness.

My next encounter was applying for unemployment compensation. I presented myself to fill out the required forms and waited for my interview. Soon, the clerk reviewed my application and was doing quite well until she blurted out, "You forgot to mark the question sex, male or female." She asked me what she should put down. I looked her in the eye and asked, "What do you think?" She checked off "female." My first victory against the system.

I now needed to interview with the official who'd authorized my payments. I sat in her office and watched her pull up my file on her computer screen, look it over, and do something interesting. This fine upstanding state employee deleted my first and middle names and inserted my first initial. I was now once again genderless in their eyes, made so by the bias and judgment of one person— another female. I never challenged her actions, which worked well for me, as they then kept my visits to the office to a minimum.

I decided that while in school I should have a part-time job. I applied to a restaurant for a waitress position. This restaurant is owned by a transsexual, managed by a gay man, and employs many of alternative lifestyle. I thought I had a chance. I applied, and during my interview was told that I couldn't be a waitress, as I might upset the customers. But I could have a job in the kitchen out of sight. This was my second encounter with this form of transie attack. That is, we are not employable to meet the general public, as the public might be too upset to purchase, receive, or use goods and services performed or presented by a non-passing transsexual.

It never ceases to amaze me how concerned business owners and managers become for their customers when it comes to a transie working for them, but give comparatively little thought or concern for the quality of goods and services they sell.

I accepted a position as cook, and through the heat, grease and several burns, I persisted— that is, until my back began to cause me real pain and

the person who hired me failed to increase my pay to the agreed-upon amount. In four weeks, I was gone.

The people I worked with were very nice to me, and many understood what I was about. I just wish it had been a nicer job.

Not being one to give up easily, I then interviewed for a part-time job in telemarketing. I thought my voice would not have to correlate with my appearance, making employment easier.

I called, was interviewed, and was hired to sell season tickets for a local theater company. After being offered the position, Steve, the supervisor, had only one question: "What's with this?" spreading his hands wide, indicating my appearance. I told him I was transsexual and was living as a female and working full-time. He was interested, and I talked for some time, after which we set a day for me to start. He also wanted to know about pronouns and what to call me. "Why, she and her," I replied. He did so and explained to others there, too. All was well for some weeks.

One afternoon Steve called me into his office. He had a minor request. Uh, oh! Sooner or later, if you don't pass, it always happens. He explained he had received a complaint from a woman on the staff about my using the women's restroom. He wondered if to minimize the concerns of others I might use the single-use restroom down the hall. Naturally, I said Sure, OK, I'll cooperate, because as a third class person of ambiguous appearance, I'm not entitled— only "they" are.

But I remembered the woman who I felt sure was the complainant. I was standing in front of the mirror putting on lipstick when I heard the restroom door open and this woman walked in and said "Hi." I looked up at her in the mirror to see a look of utter surprise, and then a mask of hatred crossed over her face as she turned and ran out. "Oh, well," I thought at the time, "this was bound to happen."

My revenge came two days later when I went to a theater reception and saw the woman. I made it a point to go up to her, smile, and say "Hi." It felt like a victory of sorts. However, it was short-lived, as I left the job shortly thereafter— not because of the

restroom issue, but because I was sick of harassing people over the telephone.

I graduated from nail school and went looking for a manicurist position just before Christmas. There weren't many advertised positions at the time, so I went to the phone book and started calling salons and asking if they needed a manicurist. Well, one actually said yes, and I went and interviewed with the owner. She was leaving shortly for Christmas vacation for three weeks and had no full-time help. She was quite curious about "T" people and said she was somewhat familiar, as she had one as a client some years ago. I got my first manicurist position and was quite excited.

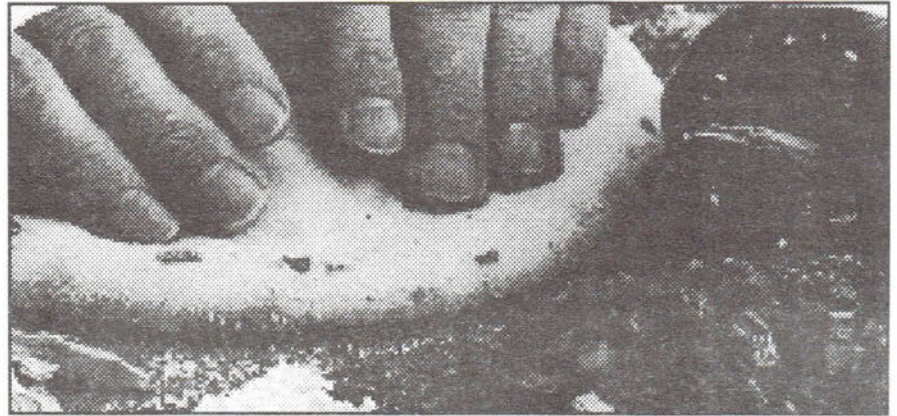
The shop manager, Ali, was a genetic male and a Pakistani. Over the months we worked together, he and I became good friends. After the initial shock of seeing me the first time wore off, we had many conversations about transexualism.

When the owner returned from vacation, the first thing she did was hire an Asian girl to work part-time with me. It was not long afterward that I realized that appointments scheduled for me, a full-time employee and her senior, were being directed to the other person, and that I was there merely to speak English so I could answer the phone. I waited until the right moment and quit. I packed my equipment and supplies and said, "Bye." I surprised the owner, as she had shafted many girls over the years and done them out of their money. Eight months after I quit, the business closed. Good riddance, I'd say.

All through my time there, nothing was said directly to me about my performance, good or bad. However, I've learned that actions, especially for transexuals, mean more than anything else. Business owners and acquaintances too will put on their "happy face" in front of you and then dump you in the sewer as soon as you turn your back.

I looked daily and soon found an ad for a manicurist in a local newspaper in Buckhead. I interviewed with the owner and performed a manicure and pedicure on her. A few days later she called me and asked if I would put a set of nails on her— not in her salon, but

in my apartment. Additionally, she asked if her husband could be present. I had misgivings about allowing the appointment, but felt if I didn't agree, I wouldn't get the job. Many things came to my mind— that perhaps she didn't want to be alone with me in my apartment or that her husband was



going to pass upon my work quality. In fact, I found out differently.

The day came and I performed the work well. Meanwhile, I spent my time answering their questions about transies until her husband asked if I had had SRS. I told them it was none of their business, but in keeping with honesty in a potential business relationship, I answered "No." They left and never gave me the courtesy of a phone call to say they'd selected someone else.

I had learned another valuable lesson of the "T" world. Never answer all their questions and never ever tell anyone whether or not you've had surgery.

I recently delivered a pizza and one of the recipients said to me, "You're the first drag queen I've ever met!" I responded by saying I wasn't a "drag queen," but that I lived this way, as I am transexual. He looked at me with startled amazement and said, "You mean you've had 'it,'" while he moved his two finger like a pair of scissors. I said "It's nobody's business what's between my legs. Furthermore, it really doesn't make any difference anyway. Does it?"

Some men are totally dumfounded by the idea that a man wouldn't want to keep his penis— let alone use it often. What they fail to understand is that the real power in this world comes from women and their vaginas and menstruation. Transexuals are the essence of

both genders and sexes. They possess the emotions, thoughts, and powers of both! I've come to understand that transexuals have much in common with salmon— although I hope not to suffer the same fate!

I soon became desperate: no job, no prospects, and no way to become

employed after spending over two thousand dollars to go to school. I was a failure once again.

I persisted and decided to apply as a delivery courier. I had a number of gay friends who had worked for one particular service and I thought that surely a transie could deliver packages. I also applied to a housecleaning business that was purported to be gay owned.

I learned that a transie isn't good enough to clean kitchens and toilets for seven dollars an hour. Perhaps I didn't look desperate and degenerate enough for a position I thought I'd be overqualified for. I wasn't hired as a housecleaner. However, I was offered a position as a delivery driver.

Hooray! I thought my wishes had been answered. I reported for training with a nice butch lesbian driver and trainer. I rode all over Atlanta with her, thinking, "I can do this job." She explained to me that one of the dispatchers was homophobic and didn't give many runs to the queers working there, but that one first had to work at getting delivery assignments from him. I'm still not sure what she meant. However, I couldn't understand the homophobia, as at the time the business was owned by a lesbian.

One of the stops during the afternoon of training was to the shipping department of Coca Cola's worldwide

headquarters. We went inside, checked the package dispatch box, and returned to her car. While we were talking on the radio to the dispatcher, one of two people in the building, a middle-aged blonde woman, opened the door and stared at me for some time. She then turned and went back inside. At the time, I could feel her curiosity, and I imagined her phobia. As we continued on our work day, I gave it no more thought.

The following morning, I reported for my first day on the job. The human resources person called me aside, saying she needed to talk with me. My heart began beating faster and my tears ran as she explained that someone had called the delivery service sales representative and said they had a problem with me delivering packages to their clients. I was out of a job, and not because I couldn't perform the job.

I was released because a little person—an employee, and not a manager with authority—questioned the appropriateness of my delivering a package to another location and what those receiving the package would think. There was no talk of any other place for me in the company.

This theme of my rejection, "I personally have no problem, but I worry about what someone else might think or say," is one I've come to recognize over the past year and a half as the transie theme of discrimination. It's a refrain loaded with fear, hatred, and loathing against persons who either appear different or who challenge the gender identity notions of the viewing individual.

Depression set in with a vengeance. My hatred of what I am and why I'm this way intensified. I now felt worthless, a failure in my real life test, a failed transsexual, a worthless piece of dogshit despised by others more than anything in the world. I wondered: should I call it quits? I gave considerable thought to driving up to the mountains and not coming back. I thought I could use my car one way or the other: an exhaust hose in my car, a bridge abutment at eighty miles an hour, or better yet, a trip over the railing and into the Chatahoochee River.

Over the following days, my life felt even worse. Through my self-

loathing, I kept asking, "Would I be happier, better off, or more satisfied if I stopped everything and resumed my old male persona?" The answer I kept coming back with was unequivocal. If I stopped living as a woman, then I did not want to live, period.

It was at this point that I could understand how many women who had spent only a very short time in real-life test had either committed suicide or gone back into therapy to deal with the issues and problems of being a transsexual in a male-dominated culture.

Part of my solution was to buy a large bottle of wine and spend the weekend speaking with close friends. By Monday or Tuesday I reached a point where I felt I could carry on with my life. I refused to give in. I turned to fight for my life, the life I have chosen to live and will continue to do so on my terms, thank you.

I applied to other courier services and a bus service. I was unacceptable to both, as I had recently been involved in a minor traffic accident and now had points on my driver's license. What was I to do? The walls of my life continued to close in.

Driving home one morning, I saw a sign in front of Domino's Pizza: "Drivers Wanted." I thought, "I'm unacceptable for cleaning houses and bathrooms, I'm not allowed to polish nails, and in fact I can't even deliver simple packages." Delivering pizza didn't seem anything more than a last resort for my sanity and life. I applied.

Three days later, I was reporting to the area supervisor for training. I worked myself silly. I could wear no jewelry, only the Domino's shirt and hat with navy blue pants, but I could wear makeup. I kept my hair in a ponytail.

I had a job and was supporting myself. I worked long hours, sometimes up to fifteen hours a day when others wouldn't or couldn't work. Then we got a new area supervisor.

This supervisor made it his goal to get rid of all those who didn't fit Domino's conventional conservative appearance and thought. It worked. He said I could stay if I cut my hair and didn't wear any makeup. In other words, if I were male, I could work for the homophobic and transphobic company.

I left in order to survive. I don't feel that Domino's would or could pay me enough to stop my transition and/or life just to deliver pizza.

During my last conversation with John, the store manager who'd hired me, he explained that he had convinced the previous supervisor to hire me based upon my ability to perform, despite my appearance. The new supervisor was mainly interested in appearance, not performance. In tears, I thanked John and walked out of the store. Someone had believed in me, a transie, and convinced another to give me a chance.

Six months later I met John outside Backstreet, a drag bar. During our brief conversation he said he was gay. He thought I had always known. The light went on in my head. I then understood why he had convinced his supervisor to give me a chance. Driving home that morning, I understood that opportunities only exist for transies when and where there are sympathetic persons in positions of influence.

A few days later I found a pizza delivery position with a company that was queer-owned and which actually hired gays, lesbians, and others. In fact, they hired a second transie. They didn't learn that fact until she came to work with a swollen face due to silicone injections. Now we have two transpersons working here: one who is passable, and one who is not. I've enjoyed working for them. They have been supportive of my trans nature and have encouraged other employees and customers to accept me. They even went so far as to tell one customer he could take their business elsewhere if he had a problem with me delivering his pizza. This was music to my ears.

Some weeks ago Rick, the lead partner, called me outside the restaurant to tell me he had a problem I needed to help him with. My heart was in my throat. I recognized all the signs of a transie conversation. Of course, it was prefaced with the usual, "I feel as badly about this as you do." I doubted it, but said go ahead. He said that our lunch business had been declining over the past few months. Through his research of lunch orders, he had determined that my delivering pizzas to businesses during lunch was the reason for the

decline. Gee, I guess transies are also responsible for late deliveries, cold food, poor and inconsistent quality. Isn't it amazing what one person can be blamed for?

I wouldn't blame Rick if in fact the reason for the business trouble was really me, but my records indicate that I had had the same lunch customers for the past four months, with little change.

Through the whole conversation I cried, and even though I was told I could continue to work at night, that didn't make me feel any better. At night I could deliver to the homes of those who lived literally in the shadows of the same buildings where they worked during the day. Presumably, they objected to having someone who looks like me in their office space, but wouldn't mind me coming to the front doors of their houses at night when they couldn't see me as well. Of course, they have no problem about who I am, only what others might think if they let ME into their office.

I now understand discrimination in its various costumes. I envy those who've successfully transitioned in their job. Even though some women have been forced to use toilet facilities outside of their building, they at least have maintained their income and career, and most importantly, their identity. I lost my career and most of my income, and must fight constantly for my identity.

Every day is a fight and a pleasure for me. When I ring a doorbell and I smile at the occupant and receive a pleasant smile in return, I feel better about myself and my life.

Many individuals I've talked to don't admit to hating me; they just wish to prevent others from having the experience of dealing with me. Isn't that considerate of them? Some have suggested that I have the option of stopping my transition and working as a male while saving my money for a future event. Yes, that is an option, but then so is the option of suicide, which to me seems like no option at all. Does it seem an option to you?

I think one of the most fascinating things about the transgendered is they are either quite strong or become stronger, as the weak don't seem to

make it through our society's censorship and hatred. In this case, the meek shall not inherit the earth.

I don't know if I've learned any lessons from my experience, but I have come to understand that unless you perform some task or occupation for which the cost of replacement exceeds the cost of retaining the transie, transition will be painful and difficult. I have learned how important it is to be able to acceptably pass in our society. Those who I've met that seem to do well are those short, slight males whose frame resembles that of a female. So is it no wonder that even in the gender community, we accept them as passable, and reject all tall, heavy, and deep-voiced genetic males as not really transgendered? Isn't it easier for us all to believe a 5'8" 130-pound person is really trans while the 6'3" 250-pound guy can't really be? He is such a drag queen! If my community has difficulty in believing my presentation, how could anyone else?

So far, I am fortunate in that I've not had to resort to sex work on the streets or to dealing drugs for survival. I see many of my sisters working every night along Ponce de Leon and know that "There but for the Grace of The Goddess go I."

One of my more enjoyable encounters delivering pizza occurred recently when I made a delivery to Grant Park. It was after dark. I'd made deliveries on this street in the past, but never to this house. I parked, reached for the insulated bag, and walked up to the door. I knocked with my keys, and two small dogs began barking. I heard someone inside, who peeked out through the metal blinds next to the door and shrieked, "I'm impressed! Very impressive!" as the door opened. Her housemate then came into view, and we exchanged money and pizza. I reached down to pet the dogs so they would quiet down. One of the woman asked, "Have you delivered here before?" I answered that I'd delivered to a number of houses on this street. She then added, "I'm very impressed," and again I said thank you and turned to leave, while all she could do was continue to repeat how impressed she was.

I never did find out what it was that she was impressed about. Was it my appearance? Was it that momentarily she was fooled into thinking I was a woman? Was she impressed because a six-foot man was allowed to deliver pizzas looking like a woman? Or was she impressed by my fortitude in presenting the way I did in her neighborhood?

I'll never really know unless I deliver there again. What I do feel, though, is that I'm beginning to cause people who meet me for the first time to really think about what they're seeing and who I am. For me, that is progress, as this is not the sort of reception I've gotten in the past. Perhaps it's because I feel much more natural now and I don't think much about being dressed in public. I am quite female and now seldom give it thought unless I'm applying for a job.

The last job I applied for was as an office assistant to a therapist. I called for an appointment and gave her my full name, not thinking too much about the fact she didn't ask for clarification of my gender.

The therapist's office occupied the upper floor of her house. Part of her routine was to have visitors take off their shoes. I did. I learned this was rule number one in her house.

Lying on a large cushion was a huge, skinny dog, a borzoi, I think. The dog never moved nor uttered a sound as I walked up the stairs to an office painted, carpeted, and decorated in shades of white. I began to wonder what sort of yuppie environment I'd stumbled across; even though she'd advertised in the local gay and lesbian newspaper I was picking up negative transie energy.

From the start she said I might have a problem. I knew I did. However, I wanted this job, one I was sure I could handle, meeting clients, keeping books and correspondence and brushing the teeth of her dog. Her eyes started to glaze over as I explained I was a transexual and not a threat to society.

She was quite quick to respond, saying, she didn't have any problem with me, but "you might upset my clients." She went on to explain how concerned she was for the peace and well-being of her clients. And, she'd have to give it some thought. Why

would lesbian and gay clients be upset with a transie?

As you can guess, I saw through the genderphobia of this person— this person who claimed to have clients of all sexual orientations and life styles. So what? Would I cause a latent homosexual to come out? Or to be upset because a transexual opened the door for them and brought them tea?

Somehow, my gender presentation, rather than showing this therapist to be a truly open and caring therapist, revealed her to be someone who instead worried what someone else might think about them for employing me. Such implied concern for a third party is a theme with which I'm now most familiar. I must admit I didn't really expect to hear all this negativity from a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

This experience taught me that education is no signifier of gender acceptance. Education and training in the psychological fields does little if anything to alter deeply-held beliefs of sexuality and gender discrimination. I have a genuine concern for all those alternatively-oriented clients of this therapist. I'd be willing to bet she is one of those who believes sexuality can be changed to conform to some group's notion of normalcy and correctness.

I am tired of hearing "My best friend is [Black, Jewish, Asian, Polish], and I have no problem with them." Just all the others, huh? Even though it might hurt, I would prefer to hear the truth: "I can't deal with you because I'm not sure of my own gender or sexuality, and subliminally, at least, I find you a threat of the first order to my own order." I can deal with truthfulness. I can't deal with anything less, and perhaps that's why I have trouble with those who respond as the therapist did. When challenged, they shift their problems to the third party, disguised as personal concern for me.

I'm quite tired of this fucking personal concern. I want respect, and I want to be able to earn a decent living. I'm deprived, and considered deprived by most. Life's a bitch and then you die.

One of the most exciting encounters I've had was when I delivered two

pizzas but a few blocks from the store to a home in a nice middle-class neighborhood. I found the house and walked up the steeply sloping yard to the front porch. I was out of breath when I knocked on the door. I waited as the door was slowly opened by a little person four or five years old. I heard her mother yell down that she was coming. As she descended the stairway, looking through her wallet, she glanced up to see me, then looked back into her wallet. And in the next instant, there was a picture-perfect double take as she looked back up at me and smiled.

I was all but rolling on the porch at the perfection of her reaction. One could see in her look the fraction of a moment that her brain took to process what she saw and react with a pleasant and accepting smile. On my way back to the store I smiled at the encounter and its success.

A week goes by, and Friday night I answer the phone and it's her, asking, "Who was that interesting person who delivered my pizza last week?" I laughed and said she was talking to her. She said her children were quite interested in me and wanted to know if I were moving into their neighborhood. I told her that in fact I was looking to move, and asked if she knew of any apartments. I added that I was the only transexual pizza delivery person in the South and we had a good chuckle.

The instant a new customer opens the door to me expecting a boy in a uniform to hand them their food is the instant I can read in their eyes all that need be said about how they feel and think about someone different from themselves. Few can cover their reaction. Some exaggerate either their acceptance or rejection of my presentation. Many try to be socially correct and smile their little plastic smile, you know, like you'd smile when looking at the bottom of your shoe after having stepped in a pile of dogshit. Others refuse to look me in the eye. They manage to avert their gaze either to my shoes or off to my left or right. This is a very interesting trick, as they still have to give me their money and receive their pizza. It does make for an interesting

balancing act. And many don't learn even after several deliveries that I'm OK. They still have problems with my appearance.

Is there any easier way in which to transition? I've come to the conclusion that no, there is no easy way if you're not one hundred percent passable. However, no genetic male is passable all of the time, in front of anyone, in any type of lighting.

To my way of thinking genetic males who come out as transexual in mid-life have the most difficult time passing. I believe too that many years of testosterone can't be obliterated by estrogen. For those of us in middle age, tall and of masculine proportions, transition is just a horrible experience. I know or can think of nothing about my transition that has been either easy or convenient. I can think of no reasonable, logical, or intellectual reason for anyone to endure what I have had to in order to live their life as a woman. Yet I wouldn't or couldn't live any longer any other way.

For me, the only reason for persevering, working, and moving toward my goal of assimilation in society is that I know of no other way to live. Through three marriages, relations with men, in attempting to live a conventional life, I know of no reason for my life to continue if I cannot live it as a woman. While for many that may seem illogical or even irrational, I know most of my sisters feel exactly as I do. Life as I know it is not worth living if I can't live in my chosen gender. Through the trials and tribulations, there is nothing more satisfying to me than living my transexual state.

One evening, while business at Domino's was slow, a gay co-worker and I were ragging each other. We were having a great time discussing men we've known and blown when she called me a bitch. I corrected her by saying that I am a Pizza Bitch, thank you! She agreed. I am the Pizza Bitch of Mid-Town, the only transie pizza driver in Atlanta.

I hope I won't retire from this job, but from one of consequence and satisfaction, with funds sufficient to enjoy the balance of my life. I have a dream. CQ

Penny's article has the same title as an article in the very first issue of Chrysalis.

Starting Over As A Woman

by Penny Huggins

Richmond is a lovely little Southern town which has seen many changes, from the witherings of the Civil War through the prosperity of the industrial age. Its complex character ranges from the stately Monument Avenue mansions and the business of the State Capitol to the rich and varied lifestyles of its residents; Richmond will fit most any taste. You can find yourself in Richmond, whoever you are.

This is the town to do it in. The section of Richmond where I work is named The Fan for the shape it forms on a map. The streets fan out from near the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Campus to a street named Boulevard. Within this section of Richmond are wide tree-lined streets with broad sidewalks and quaint and adorable row-houses neatly nestled like precious books on pretty shelves. Many, lovingly restored, are adorned with wrought iron from the Tredegar Iron Works on the nearby James River; Tredegar was a major supplier of iron cannons for the Southern armies of the Civil War.

I intended to find my new character in Richmond. Not unlike the old cliché of the 1960s of finding yourself, I am developing a person who has always been secret; now she can come alive. I believe I am in a town that will allow me to develop into who I really am with no pretense. Like the saying "One is not born a woman; one becomes one," I am forging an identity which will fit my heart, my soul. I can think of no better town in which to forge my new self.

A dear friend of mine who transitioned in this town years before I did once told me something about Richmond. She said that before she transitioned she checked all of the support groups going then, asking for the town where transition would meet the least resistance. She was told, "Why not transition in Richmond?" She took that advice and so did I. I am a woman now, and the big challenge is to allow a person to develop within. I can finally allow the real person within to come out and find new joys, new ways to nurture myself, and new ways to express myself.

I started working at a clinic in The Fan in October. This little medical clinic was formed in 1970 by professionals to address the needs of the poor and the many addicts who were denied services because they had no insurance. In the 1980s, with the rising tide of the AIDS epidemic, the Clinic formed the Richmond AIDS Information Network (RAIN). This was to provide counseling and referral to those who contracted this devastating disease.

This is where I work. I work with people trying to find some sense within this crushing diagnosis and help them try to get on with life. When HIV develops into AIDS, I help them sort the remainder of a shortened life. When they are too sick to get on with life, I try to visit. I have seen too many die in only four short months of working at this clinic.

When I came to work at the Clinic last Fall, I found many caring and loving people dedicated to providing resources and hope to those trying to learn to live with this disease. Even with a HIV diagnosis, there is often a 10 to 15 year process of living during which one can learn to live quite fully with this virus.

I never mentioned my background in my first months at the clinic. They never asked the right questions. I certainly didn't have any secrets to keep, but how do you bring up a subject like "Oh, by the way, I used to be a man?" When I walked into the clinic for the first time, for the interview, the first thing I noticed in the waiting room were copies of *The Advocate* and *The Washington Blade* on the table. I felt less threatened by the interview after seeing the gay publications openly displayed. I certainly had never even been in an organization in which these publications would even be discussed, much less openly displayed on the table in the waiting room.

I was offered the job two days later; I would start on October 2nd. Out the window went plans to be in Washington, D.C. for the first annual Transgender Lobby Day. Without a doubt, I would have to give preference to the job.

Many, if not most, of the clients we serve are gay. Some are transgendered. Several of the people I work with are openly gay. I felt at home there from the first day. I studied the employee handbook for the discrimination clause. It read: "The only criteria of discrimination is the employee's present ability to perform the tasks assigned." Why can't all places of employment have such a mature and logical means of hiring people?

In the ensuing months, the subject of my past never came up. I even worked with a couple of people whom I would consider transgendered. There was the occasional nod, the occasional wink from a client that would signal an unspoken communication about the subject, but nothing from the staff. I didn't want to keep any secrets. I was feeling the stress of not knowing what to do, and feared repercussions on disclosure of my past: after all, I had lost a job no more than five months ago due in no small part to my becoming a woman and being an activist about it. I discussed this issue with a long-time friend of mine who happens to be a Licensed Professional Counselor, and he said that I am entitled to a certain level of privacy concerning my personal past. Would I ordinarily discuss issues concerning my personal sexual past with a new employer? Certainly not. I kept my mouth shut.

My being an activist caught up with me in short order. *Our Own*, (a lesbian and gay weekly from Norfolk, Virginia), ran a picture of me with my full name and the words *transgender activist* under my picture. The photo appeared on the front page of the second section of the paper. I knew it was coming about. I was to speak at the upcoming Breaking The Ice festival on transgender issues, and they had requested a picture and a short bio. I also knew that the clinic was on the mailing list for about fifty copies. The weekly is on display with other publications in the hall at the clinic.

No one noticed this for almost two weeks after *Our Own* went to press and was delivered. One day the director of the clinic (of all people) walked up close to my right side and said, "Somebody's picture is in the paper!" He also added, "And you weren't going to tell anyone!" He promptly proceeded to cut the page out of one issue, circle my picture with a highlighter, and post it conspicuously in the hall so no one could miss it. The rest of the day he called me poster-child.

No doubt about it, I was out now. Within the next week or so, I was able to talk to almost everyone at the clinic about my being transgendered. Without exception, they all thought it was great having a transgendered activist working at the clinic. When I told one co-worker that it was great being out with everyone at the clinic, she said, "I thought Penny was always out at the clinic." Another co-worker said, "Everybody around here is out about something!" Still another co-worker said she knew I would talk about it when I felt comfortable to talk.

A burden had been lifted; they now knew, and I hadn't been fired for it. During the next several weeks I discussed more of myself and my past with individual co-workers. I found myself working with transgendered clients. I was discussing the option of hormone therapy, and discussing cautions and concerns of this option with clients. I was helping transgendered people with name-change processes. I was finding all of this within the realm of my job description, and I was loving it!

Little more than a year ago, I went with a friend to my first non-straight wedding. Wearing a cream-colored suit, I was riding with an activist who also works for Virginians for Justice, the state-wide lobbying group. I was working for a homophobic organization in Lynchburg, and I was still in the closet. I remember saying to her on the trip to the wedding that I was so tired of working and having to keep my personal life hidden. I remember saying how much I hated not being able to be who I really am, and how much I wanted to work helping our community.

My fondest dream and my wildest fantasies have come true. I am now working as I really am, without fear of homophobic and transphobic reprisal (at least within my working environment). I am now working within our community. I am now really working to help people instead of supporting the self-serving needs of an incompetent homophobic administrator. In addition, I am one more soul helping to promote understanding of the transgendered individual. There need to be many more of us to make a difference in how our society views transgendered people.

There is loss in my new position and my new life. I am a counselor helping people deal with AIDS. I facilitate a support group of people living with AIDS. Without exception, the people who have the strongest chances in the face of this disease are the people with the brightest outlook. Attitude is everything. I am learning a lot about living from those who live each day as a gift.

I was driving a client to an appointment one day when out of the blue she turned to me and said "You look really good." I said, "What do you mean, I look really good?" She said in a sly fashion, "You know what I mean!" I said, "Oh... I didn't think you knew." Out of the corner of her eye she squinted at me and said, "Yeah... It's the feet!"

Life is a gift, a fragile, absurd, yet beautiful gift. I am learning to be grateful for each day, and yes, even grateful for my big feet. CQ

For transgendered individuals, finding or maintaining suitable employment can be a challenge during transition. The results of transition on our employment seem to vary widely between the extremes of employer acceptance and on-the-job support, and total rejection with an abrupt termination. Most transgendered souls who choose to begin working in their chosen presentation will have experiences that fall between these extremes. It is for these folk that seek and find the middle ground that this article is written.

Successful Employment During Transition

by Caitlin [REDACTED] & Riki Anne Wilchins

In the last few years, several articles and conference seminars have addressed employment issues. Nangeroni's (1993a, 1993b) work concerned preparation and planning for entering transition on the job. Swenson (1995) spoke on issues of interest to professionals in transition. Denny's (1994) book contains a detailed treatment of document preparation (resume, references, name change, etc.) and planning. This article is directed more toward strategic planning for transition.

First, let's look at several preliminary considerations.

Is it in your best interests to remain in your current position? This depends on several factors:

- **Your financial requirements:** if you have fixed responsibilities that can't be met without continuing in your current job, you may have to remain in the same line of work and with the same employer.
- **Suitability of your current job for your new presentation:** if you are currently a new car salesman and are familiar with the discrimination against women in similar car sales positions, you may choose to change lines of work unless you are ready to help break down these barriers during transition.
- **Level of discrimination you expect to face:** if your position involves interaction with a wide group of people and depends on the good will of these people (as in retail sales) you should consider your current success in accomplishing similar positive interactions off-the-job in your new presentation.

It's difficult to make reasonable, objective predictions about the level of acceptance of your colleagues and customers. If you can reduce your cost of living for several years and are willing to make this sacrifice, you will have more flexibility in your approach to transition. Your available savings can also help expand your flexibility and options.

If you choose to stay with your current job and are faced with significant discrimination, you'll need to consider the long-term effects of the discrimination on your morale and ability to function. Possibly, you'll find it necessary to leave. At the best of times, it can be very difficult to recover from a lost job—and transition is usually not the best of times.

If you anticipate a possible loss-of-job situation, and if you need to remain in the same line of work, it may be best to hold your current position as long as possible. As you progress in transition, you will learn new ways of doing business in your new presentation. This knowledge can be invaluable in your next job in the same profession. Obtaining good references for your search for a new job can be simplified by building a job history in your new presentation.

Initial Transition

It's helpful to understand the pressures your employers may face as you prepare for and begin transition. They will probably be dreadfully unprepared to deal with your situation and usually will be very apprehensive about the effects of your changes on their business. Specifically, they may be concerned with the "tranquility of your fellow employees" and your effect on the company's external business contacts. If you can provide your employer with information to help them evaluate these situations, this will allow you to maintain some measure of control over the information they will ultimately use in their decision making.

In Caitlin's case, her employer used 1) company lawyers to determine the company's legal footing concerning discrimination and the possibility of lawsuits she might later bring against the company; 2) a psychologist to determine her mental stability; and 3) medi-

cal doctors to obtain opinions regarding her safety and any threat to the safety of her colleagues.

During the initial period, it will be very important for you to develop and maintain open communication and trust with members of your company such as the personnel director, counselors, and higher management. In your interactions with them, it's critical to be reasonable and flexible while retaining your right to make your own decisions.

Your success in maintaining your responsibilities and your earning power will depend both on your job environment and on your past record of productivity. State and federal government jobs often have statues offering protection against discrimination that are not found in many industrial positions. As Nangeroni (1993b) pointed out, the more productive you have been and the better your relations with your colleagues, the better your chances of remaining in your current position.

If you maintain a security clearance for work with a federal agency like the Department of Defense, your employer may be required to file an "adverse information report" on your anticipated change in lifestyle. If your work requires a security clearance, your continued work in this field will depend upon obtaining a favorable resolution of the resulting investigation

The federal government has two main concerns in granting clearances to transgendered people: your vulnerability to being blackmailed and your integrity and mental stability. The blackmail concern can be eliminated if you are very "out." If you are approaching or engaged in a real life test, most or all of your friends and colleagues will be aware of your transition. As more people become aware of your transgendered situation, the possibility of blackmail is reduced or eliminated.

It is very important to be forthright with the security people. Do not attempt to cover up your transgendered situation. A letter from your psychologist to the security department regarding your mental stability can be helpful. Typically, the security investigator assigned to your case will talk with you at the beginning of your investigation, and ask for a written release to speak

with your health care providers and your supervisor. You can give the investigator the letter from your psychologist at this initial meeting.

The requirements for a security clearances change from time to time; before Bill Clinton was elected president, it was considerably more difficult to maintain a security clearance during transition. With his re-election, this fortunate situation may continue.

You can use the internet to gather up-to-date information on maintaining security clearances. If you're not on-line or are on-line but are concerned about using your own e-mail address, simply get a friend to request information from other transgendered people who have been recently investigated and forward their replies to you.

The TRANSGEN news service can be used for this type of information gathering. In a survey Caitlin performed in June, 1994 on TRANSGEN, she obtained 20 responses from within the U.S.; 19 of the 20 who replied had successfully maintained their clearances during transition.

One Year Later

After a year of living in your new presentation, many aspects of your work situation will hopefully have begun to resolve themselves. Certainly, you will have a better appreciation of your specific employment challenges. In many cases, it can take twelve months or more for the impact of your transition to become apparent to those you see infrequently.

If you are anticipating sex reassignment surgery(s), you may have to prepare for further disruptions in your business during your recovery period, and even afterwards, due to maintenance. Two to four hours a day may be needed for six to eight dilations after MTF SRS using vaginal skin grafts. Trying to find the time (and place) for this critical therapy can present a real challenge. One post-op acquaintance, who shall remain unnamed for obvious reasons, participated in the 1995 Transgender Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. while dilating six times a day. And yes, she became familiar with restrooms in the Capitol and all the Senate and House office buildings.

If Your Situation Deteriorates

In your process of transition, you will be presented with many challenges. For example, your company may decide to isolate you in a way that interferes with your job performance. If you believe this to be temporary, you may choose to accept the situation—although it's wise to get your employer to clarify the reason for the isolation and its duration. You must determine if this is a reasonable and temporary change of employment or if it is a job-threatening change.

If you feel that your job is being threatened for any reason, you should begin to take defensive measures. A first step would be to start keeping a record of events that you think threaten your job performance, including the times, dates, and the individuals involved. You may ask for your job instructions to be given in writing. Keep a copy of your records in a secure location away from your workplace. Remember: if you are terminated, all records at your office, including your computer files, may be confiscated by your employer.

If the problem continues, and especially if you are harassed, you may consider filing a grievance if your company has such a procedure. You should make every reasonable attempt to resolve the problem(s) within the company structure where the costs of these proceeding is minimal (even if the mental suffering is not).

A group of supportive colleagues can be very helpful in maintaining your morale and in helping you to recall and document the chain of events. Their perspectives on events can be informative; after years of callous treatment on and off the job, your own perspective may be less than objective.

Another option would be to speak to an attorney specializing in employment law. A meeting with an attorney experienced with discrimination issues could help you understand your options for filing a lawsuit against your employer if your direct efforts with your employer fail. He or she can help you set up a record-keeping procedure for collecting evidence for possible later use in a lawsuit.

If your situation deteriorates into a lawsuit, superior records can strengthen

your case considerably. In such suits, the issues and occurrences or often in question. If your records are superior to your employer's, the burden of proof will hopefully fall on your employer.

In some situations, going public can help to mount pressure on your employer (or ex-employer). No company or agency wants your case brought to light on television or in the newspaper.

If transgendered people are willing to stand together as a group in extreme situations, and if employers knows this, they will be less likely to walk over even one employee because of the adverse publicity that such actions may create. This can be a powerful incentive to be more reasonable in negotiations with transgendered employees. The use of direct action by a political organization such as the Transsexual Menace provides an option which didn't exist two years ago. If your employer knows even indirectly that you have the support of such an organization, it can make a difference.

Summary

There is no single correct approach to accomplishing transition on the job. There have been as many different strategies as there have been successful transitions. By combining some of the suggestions described above with the specific needs of your situation, hopefully, your transition will be made a little easier. Although the challenges are significant, the rewards can be enormous. As Robyn Serven's e-mail signature message says, "When all is said and done, what really matters is whether or not you are happy." CQ

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Your Security Clearance

Surprisingly, a CIA report makes common sense recommendations about sexual behavior (including crossdressing and transsexualism). Crossdressers fare quite well, transsexuals less so.

Excerpt from: **Richard J. Heuer, Jr.** (1993, October). *Sexual Behavior and Security risk: Background Information for Security Personnel*. AD-663. Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, Analysis Division, Office of Security.

It is not the frequency or type of sexual activity or number of partners that is of greatest significance, but a pattern of out-of-control behavior that causes problems for the individual with employment, health, marriage, social relationships, or the law, or that causes a significant lowering of self-esteem.

To protect employee rights to privacy and civil liberties, adjudication of sexual behavior needs to be based on demonstrable security concerns, not on commonly accepted myths or the personal moral values of individual adjudicators. This will be aided by improved understanding of the wide diversity of human sexual behavior and the specific connections between various forms of sexual behavior and security risk.

The question to be asked about many reports of sexual behavior is not, "Are they true?" but "Are they relevant?" This section identifies four general categories of behavior that are relevant when considering approval of security clearance. These categories are drawn from current regulations, judicial decisions, analysis of past espionage cases, and review of the scientific literature on sexual behavior. The categories are: behavior that is criminal, that is out of control or indicates a personality disorder, that exposes one to pressure or coercion, or that qualifies as notorious.



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For more information about Julian Eltinge, Ms. Rose recommends: *Drag! Male and Female Impersonators on Stage, Screen, & Television*, by F. Michael Moore. Autographed copies can be obtained for \$45 plus \$2 postage by writing to the author at P.O. Box 669775, Charlotte, NC 28266-9775.

Mr. Julian Eltinge

Drag Diva of Hollywood & Silent Pictures

by Madeline 

Ships utilized for war are oftentimes named in honor of military heroes. One exception was the troop ship *Julian Eltinge*. The soldiers on board during the Korean Conflict probably had no notion the vessel was named after a female impersonator who died in 1941.

Julian Eltinge was born William Julian Dalton on May 14, 1883. Ten-year-old Bill Dalton performed in a Boston Cadets revue and was stagestruck. When he was fifteen, he took cakewalk lessons at Mrs. Wyman's dance studio. Arriving early one day, he watched eight chorus girls perform and was entranced by the awkwardness of one of them; she was large and clumsy. After they left, he mockingly imitated her.

Mrs. Wyman noticed Bill's attempts at imitating the girl. She stated none of her girls moved as gracefully as he did and suggested he became a female impersonator. Bill was reluctant at first, but considered it a good chance at performing. Mrs. Wyman instructed him on how to walk, talk, sing, dance, and dress like a girl. In 1899, he performed as a pert young woman in *My Lady*, receiving very favorable reviews.

Bill Dalton joined an amateur group, performing female roles in their productions. Meanwhile, he worked as a drygoods salesman and bank clerk. He toned up his feminine performances and made his first professional appearance in *Mr. Wix of Wickham* in 1904. The musical comedy ran for forty-one performances at the Bijou Theatre and was among the earliest Broadway shows for which Jerome Kern composed songs. Bill Dalton changed his name to Julian Eltinge for the production, and his professional career as a female impersonator was launched.

Eltinge realized to be success as a drag artist, he had to present an image which was feminine, glamorous, and pleasing in manner on stage; while offstage, he was masculine, tailored, and known to have

beaten a few ruffians. In his masculine guise, he endorsed products for men such as Patterson's Tuxedo Tobacco.

As a June Bride, Julian Eltinge endorsed products for women: Nemo Self-Reducing Corsets. The advertisements were serious attempts to use Eltinge's drawing power as a star. Actresses of the day also gave their names and images to products, but they were always beautiful women. Eltinge's ads proved the products not only could change a man into a beautiful woman, but could do wonders for the average woman consumer. Eltinge even had his own product: Eltinge's Cold Cream.

Eltinge's drag act differed from most of the female impersonators in vaudeville. His gowns were of the finest design, all in good taste. He relied on exquisite gowns and popular songs, and performed in musical comedies. Most of the other drag divas were unquestionably men in gowns, with a few displaying themselves as true feminine beauties. Bothwell Browne, whose act, "Serpent of the Nile" was his greatest triumph, was close in popularity to Eltinge. Bert Savoy's act consisted of swishy mannerisms and innuendo one-liners with his male partner, Jay Brennan. Mae West borrowed several of Savoy's one-liners in developing her character.

Eltinge was talented in the art of facial makeup. His female impersonation was a true version of contemporary femininity; however, he often allowed the man underneath the dress to emerge. It was as if he was entertaining his friends with his antics.

Eltinge introduced several songs from his many musical comedies. Among the most popular were Friends, I'm at Your Service Girls (from *Cousin Lucy*), Come Over on My Veranda, kids' songs such as I Asked Willie and I Know Now, and Smarty. His most successful songs came from his greatest triumph, *The Fascinating Widow*, with its melodies The Fascinating Widow, The Rag Time College Girl, Put Your Arms Around Me, and others.

After having appeared in vaudeville, Eltinge starred at the Liberty Theatre in *The Fascinating Widow* in 1911. The show ran 46 performances and toured until 1914. In the show, he strapped

his 210-pound body with its 40-inch waist into 24-inch waisted Paris gowns. As with his plays to come, he performed the role of a man forced by circumstance to wear women's clothes. In the role of Hal Blake, Eltinge defended the honor of a woman. Hal disguised himself as "Mrs. Monte," hiding in a girls' dormitory to avoid the woman's attacker. His drag cover was unveiled when Mrs. Monte was caught smoking a pipe.

In *The Crinoline Girl*, first performed in 1914, Eltinge disguised himself as a jewel thief known as *The Crinoline Girl*. For his efforts in capturing the woman, Eltinge was rewarded by being allowed to marry his girlfriend. Jeanne Eagels, who became a popular actress, was in the cast. The show played two full seasons and then toured.

Another success came with *Cousin Lucy* in 1915, again with musical numbers by Jerome Kern. The play toured for two years. Between appearances at The Palace and touring vaudeville, Eltinge appeared in *Her Grace the Vampire* in 1917; *The Countess Charming* in 1918; and *His Night at the Club* in 1919.

Eltinge was so popular as a star that a theater on 42nd Street was named in his honor. The Eltinge Theatre opened on September 11, 1912 with the melodrama *Within the Law* establishing Jane Cowl as a star. In 1930, the theater became a house of burlesque. It was raided many times and was closed in 1942. It reopened as a cinema named The Empire. Today, it remains a beautiful yet empty ghost of plays, farces, and other entertainments.

As with other stage performers of the day, Eltinge was lured to Hollywood. He and "Old Ironsides," his corsets, first appeared on film in *How Molly Made Good* (1915), which concerned Molly (Marguerite Gale), a newspaper reporter who interviews ten theatrical stars, with Eltinge among them.

Most of Eltinge's movies were silent film adaptations of his successful Broadway musical comedies. *An Adventuress* (1914) starred Eltinge as Clifford Townsend, with an unknown actor named Rudolph Valentino as

Jacques Rudzani. When Valentino became a superstar, the film was re-released several times with changes of title (e.g. *The Isle of Love*). Even as Valentino melted the hearts of infatuated females and certain males, the star of the film remained Eltinge and his female impersonations.

Among Eltinge's other films were *Cousin Lucy*, *The Crinoline Girl* (1914), *The Countess Charming*, *The Clever Mrs. Carfax*, *Her Grace the Vampire*, *The Widow's Might* (1917), *Over the Rhine* (1918), *The Fascinating Widow*, and *Madame Behave!* (1925).

War Relief (1917) was one of several films made to promote the sale of Liberty Bonds. The film starred Eltinge with William S. Hart, Douglas Fairbanks, and Mary Pickford. In addition to the film, Eltinge appeared in a war-relief benefit with a mock prizefight between Charles Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks, with Mary Pickford as referee.

A large poster of Eltinge was used in Buster Keaton's film *Seven Chances* (1925). Keaton was in search of a bride and entered the theater where Eltinge was performing. Eltinge was unamused by Keaton's marriage proposal, for which Keaton received a black eye, evidenced when he exited the theater.

Eltinge's only talkie films were *Maid to Order* (1931) and *If I had My Way* (1940). In *Maid to Order*, Eltinge glittered as a private detective in search of diamond smugglers. He performed as a female singer in a New York nightclub. The film was successful, but unfortunately was the only Eltinge film of that kind. *If I Had My Way* was a Bing Crosby film in which Crosby helped a poor orphan played by Gloria Jean. Eltinge made a very brief appearance in the film as an old fisherman.

After settling in Hollywood to pursue his cinematic career, Eltinge was among the first stars to build his home in Los Angeles. The result was Villa Capistrano, a Spanish style mansion. The house was later owned by Cary Grant, Betty Hutton, and Steven Spielberg.

Eltinge toured in vaudeville during the 1920s and 1930s, with an occasional tour of England and Europe. Then

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Weem

by Shirlene Holmes

Cousin Mildred was just about to pour her sardines over her grits and get her breakfast, when the phone rang. Elsa was way pass crazy on the other end of the line.

"Mildred, I done gone and found Mayretta dead on the couch in her living room and the police are looking for Weem! You seen him?"

"No Elsa. Last time I seen Weem, he was switching over to the post office. We spoke hello and that's all. That was day before yesterday. What the cops want with Weem?"

"They think he done killed his Momma."

"He wouldn't do that. I bet they can't prove it!"

"They sure gonna try. I'll call you later."

Cousin Mildred hung up the phone. Seem like her breakfast couldn't go down good no more after the news. Mayretta was Mildred's first cousin on her daddy's side and she didn't even want to think after attending another funeral this soon. Her baby brother Bill just passed last month.

Everybody in Cotsville knew about Weem and how he had a limp wrist and wore them women's clothes and a face full of make up nearly everyday. Thing is, he look pretty with it. He hat them features like a china doll. Weem was Mayretta one and only child and she suffered to have him.

You couldn't help but feel sorry for Mayretta. That sugar diabetes had been getting her for years. She battled with them insulin needles since she was a girl. Doctors told her she better never have no children; between the high blood pressure, her bad heart and the sugar, she wouldn't live through it. But Mayretta wanted a baby so bad. When her mother, Mae Frances, was living, she did all she could to talk Mayretta out of getting in the family way. But when Jimmie Lee Bushman came to town, there was nothing she could do. He was a sharp dressing man come to town just to work a while at the water plant. He'd come to Cotsville every evening to read to Mayretta, 'cause she had long gone legally blind in her eyes. One of them nights he put his book down and lifted Mayretta's dress tail up and here come Weem nine months later.

Jimmie Lee Bushman left town and never looked back. Mayretta couldn't see why, so she sat on that couch the rest of her days waiting for him. Miss Mae Frances would have to listen to her daughter's chatter about Jimmie Lee and answer everyday if the baby looked like him. Of course the child look just like Mayretta, who fussed and pampered over Weem till he wasn't no good to nobody, just fresh mouthed, hard headed and off in the head if you ask Miss Mae Frances. One thing for sure was that Weem was a pretty chile. You had to look hard to tell if he was girl or boy. His features was so smooth and chiseled, look just like a statue. Mayretta never did cut his hair, so he just spent his days flipping from boy to girl when he pleased. By the time he was a teenager, he flipped female and stayed there. Mayretta loved him just the same. His grandmother kept her distance.

'Fore she died of that stroke, Miss Mae Frances kept trying to tell Mayretta that something was dead wrong with Weem. She had caught him in the backyard smoking Virginia Slims cigarettes and wearing red lip paint. She even caught him in his bedroom slicing his arms and legs up with razor blades, blood just a-dripping over the sheets and thangs. Weem made Miss Mae Frances so nervous, especially when he got to stealing from her and Mayretta and they only had two SSI checks between them once a month to pay for everything.

Most folks in Cotsville laughed and snickered at Weem for a long time 'cause he had them habits of putting on cherry red heels, women's clothes and switching up the road. George, who usually was drunk on vodka first thing in the morning, would just whistle and say, "Hey, sweet thing!" every time them cherry pumps went by. Weem would just roll his eyes, glad he don't spend no mornings with George for so little money.

The teasing in Cotsville stopped after that night in the tavern when Tootie's beer got the best of him and he started jugging with Weem. When he couldn't get what he wanted, Tootie hauled off and slapped Weem right in the middle of the dance floor. Latimore

was crooning, "LET'S STRAIGHTEN IT OUT... oh baby let's straighten it out..." when Weem took out his blade and put a slash 'cross Tootie's face that he's wearing to this day.

So after that nobody mess with Weem. Not even when he be walking up the dirt road in his cherry red pumps with tears streaking his face. Mother Martha, when he happen to go by her house would just shudder and "rebuke that demon!" Clevretta called Teresa and remarked how Weem "wouldn't have to cry so much if he took the heels off." "That's right. Chile, you know them high heel pumps is hell. Have your dawgs barkin'," Teresa added.

Nobody knowed it, but Weem always cried. He woke up that way. He went to bed that way. The only time his eyes were dry was when he was eating Missionary Porter's sweet potato pie over at Mary and Lou's. They were his only friends in Cotsville. Lou would listen to his problems and Mary would rock him in her arms. That first time he tried to kill hisself, Mary and Lou was the only ones to come up to the mental hospital in Scarsboro and visit and pray over him.

One time, after Weem had cut his legs up real bed, he confided in Lou how he was just getting some of the pain out. His Momma had to have her other foot cut off and he was feeling sad about it. He was hysterical that day and talked about getting the hell out of Cotsville as soon as some fresh meat came to town. Weem was always waiting for a shining prince to roll his car into Cotsville and take him away. It nearly happen once, back 2 years ago now. But when it didn't work out, Weem messed up and took 25 of his Momma's Darvon pills and damn near died on Mary and Lou's bathroom floor.

Miss May Frances, who been dead about 5 years or more now, had done told Mayretta that Weem need to be put away. But Mayretta couldn't see it. All she know is that Weem was a pretty child and that Jimmie Lee would straighten it all out when he came back.

The night before Ella found Mayretta dead, Weem come to the room where she was laying on the couch. She hadn't slept in her bed in

God knows how long. She wasn't feeling herself, jumpy from her son's misery and loudness. He played his Aretha Franklin music and sang at the top of his lungs. YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE A NATURAL WOMAN!!!! WOMAN!!!! She begged him to turn it down til her throat got raw. Even though she couldn't see it, Weem had done got him a bottle and a fresh pack of razors. He wasn't but 22 and so pretty.

He stood in the mirror, his red negligee matching his heels. He didn't have nobody to love and that night it hurt worst than before. Not even his mother's raw shouts from the couch stopped him from putting the cutting razor to his flesh. Aretha was building a bridge over troubled water, when Weem wiped up the blood, and went to talk to his mother.

"Momma, got any money?"

"I got a coupla dollars, but I need it for my insulin."

"I git it back to you."

"When, Weem?"

"I have it tomorrow."

"What you need money for?"

"I wanna go out."

She reached into her fleshy bosom and handed her son the folded dollars.

"I hate for you to go to the tavern; they just drinking and fighting there. Why don't you read to me. I feel so bad right now."

Weem crossed over to where the Bible was, his cherry red pumps clicking against the floor. His negligee, red satin and lace. Aretha was steady crooning, AIN'T NO WAY in the next room.

"What you want me to read, Momma?"

"Read me some Revelations. All the way in the back."

Weem found it easy. Revelation 22. He cross his legs, the fresh cuts began to sting. He read softly: "And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits..."

"Skip on down," Mayretta urged weakly.

Concluded on p. 36

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This article is intended as a practical and constructive morale builder, to cheerlead the reader through the labyrinth of transition. The vignettes are drawn from interviews of a broad cross-section of the transgender community for my prospective positive book on transgenderism.

They are examples of transitions made successful by realistically meeting other people's priorities and filling in the gaps with a measure of humor. Not everyone has the opportunity to seize this kind of moment. But "Transitioning on the Job" can give you some ideas which may come in handy at some time.

Most of my research to date has been on male-to-female transitions. I would be happy to hear about the experience of female-to-males.

If you want a step-by-step guide, including technical and legal assistance on successful transition, you will have to go to another source. I defer to the experts and authorities in the field who have written many articles on the subject in leading gender magazines.

— Keith

Keith Rogers is a journalist who retired as a corporate vice-president in a Fortune 500 company. In more than 30 years on various organizational ladders, he has been both a subordinate and a supervisor. He is a spiritual and financial supporter of AEGIS, IFGE, ICTLER, and the Texas "T" Party.

Transitioning on the Job

(with a little help from your friends)

by Keith [REDACTED]

A good friend of mine near the top of the food chain at a major insurance company recently transitioned on the job from Larry to Lisa. She had campaigned quietly and effectively in her headquarters office and had visited among her colleagues and subordinates in the field offices. Her growing value to the organization over 20 years had been confirmed by top management with their complete and heartfelt endorsement of her decision, communicated to more than 6000 employees in 21 district offices where she had supervisory responsibilities. Now came the hard part: real acceptance. Could she make others comfortable with her by showing she was comfortable with herself?

Came time for the company's annual golf tournament, always a serious war between the Northern and Southern divisions of the organization. If you can believe that (believe it), the most serious question about her transition was whether she would hit from the ladies' tees or the men's tees. In the eyes of the Tournament Committee, hitting from the ladies' tees would be a decided advantage for her side. She discussed her situation with me and we came up with a solution.

At the first hole, Lisa went first to the men's tee. She took out her driver and went through the ritual motions. Then she looked around with a smile, moved down to the ladies' tee, and did the same routine. Then she turned around and paced off the exact distance between the two tees, teed up halfway between them, and smacked that sucker out of the park, to mix my metaphors. The president of the company high-fived her, and all her watching brethren applauded. The word then went forth over the company's "cafeteria telegraph" that she was

cool—in other words, she passed with flying colors, pun intended.

Obviously, you are free to confront, challenge, and legally pursue all your rights to your job and to try to keep it via the adversarial route, if you wish. But harkening to the heroic whistleblowers in the Challenger disaster and the Tail-Hook scandal and many, many other classic cases, you can be quietly and not-so-gently harassed and hounded right out into the street, regardless of your legal, ethical, and logical rights. From what I've seen, keeping one's job is mostly a matter of being accepted by corporate cultures.

Cynthia R. was one of the first male employees in a now-established and prestigious Texas computer company. She has always had the longest hair in the company bar none, male or female, and she has leaned toward declaring herself pre-op and dressing in the female mode for a long time. But until recently, she never did anything about it. Even with her seniority and the feeling that many co-workers were tacitly aware of her feelings, she was fearful of the repercussions. Then she attended a presentation I made at the Texas "T" Party on transitioning on the job. We talked afterwards. She has just written that she has selectively taken the first serious step to coming out in the office. "I received the information you sent and set right to work." Translated, that means she took a good sample of a transitioning letter I sent her for reference, piggy-backed her own letter on this, and sent it to some selected friends. She has begun to find active sympathy and support for what she wants to accomplish, and incidentally in the process has discovered a gay friend and another transgendered person in her firm, neither of whom she knew about before.

There may be some differences in style, but professionals deal in the same context of cultures as corporate employees. In the case of a very successful male lawyer in the tradition-bound deep South, some clients and a partner dropped away when he decided to transition. In order to successfully become she, she developed an aggressive individual plan. She was already living full-time as a woman when she decided she needed to go face-to-face with her clients, prospective clients, and the important judges in her community.

She gumshoed door-to-door with her key contacts, one at a time, one-on-one, with the salesman's understanding that you need to look at and listen to what people don't say to get a real feel for their feelings. Some transgendered persons send their colleagues a letter or letters of explanation. She achieved the same result person-to-person.

A guiding principle with any employer and associates or clients in any organization is "no surprises," especially if you're going to eventually evolve in a radically different form. Don't jolt, embarrass, or blind-side people. Give them time to digest the new evolving you. We all like to appear cool and rationally responsive; this is especially true of people who may be a little shaky in their own sexual identification. At any rate, as a result of intelligent spade work, the former Mike's professional debut as Andrea was boffo: in program print with complete biography as Andrea and on stage as faculty in a legal learning program in front of several hundred colleagues, most of whom had met only Mike, she "broke a leg"—meaning she, too, passed with flying colors, pun again intended. And most importantly, she did it the way nature does it, with no sudden surprises.

In all of this it goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway) that you have already proven that you're a good and valued employee. You've shown what you can do for them before you ask what they can do for you. No one is indispensable, but try and come as close as you can.

One of the rockiest parts on the road to transition is getting to the top decision-makers through the chain of command. If you can help it, the last thing you want to do is leapfrog over your immediate superior's head. And before you make your pitch to the ultimate boss, nothing will help so much as practicing your approach, or role-playing. It gives you the idea of having been there before. In other words, be comfortable with your approach.

I have coached several transgendered persons in this method, and it has worked most of the time. The system is simple. Meet with a knowledgeable friends as if he or she were your boss. You can have others witness and critique, if you like. Make your pitch. As your boss, the friend should ask you

some hard questions. He or she can also try some tricks like incidentally tipping glass of water on you to see if you fall apart or offering you a cigarette without an ashtray to see if you will react calmly and ask for an ashtray. Simple things, but, trust me, they've been used on me and I've used some of them over the years. Again, the advantage of this procedures is *déjà vu*. You will have practiced before you go in to see the key leader.

The chain of command applies to the self-employed also. Andrea heads her own law firm; nevertheless, she had an organized framework to deal with in the form of her local legal community. To deal with opinion leaders, she felt she couldn't start dealing with them directly herself. She used "mentors" to pitch and push for her. It's a matter of judgement, of course, as to whether or not others can do more for you initially than you can do for yourself. Everybody has a chain of command—it's just a matter of how you reach out to the top.

In another case, a pre-op executive in Chicago felt she had heard an unsatisfactory dress rehearsal of the pitch her advocate was to make to the boss before she saw him herself. So she bent the reporting relationship rules and went in herself, and she won. She rolled the dice, and she won. In contrast, Jennifer A. relied on her good friend and influential superior to make her case with the CEO, and she lost. The lead scientist in the consortium of energy companies, Jennifer was well-nigh indispensable, but her friend apparently couldn't translate her core beliefs to the ultimate decision makers. Her position was eliminated. She was flim-flammed out of her job. It also goes without saying that you deserve a personal shot at saving yourself. But following proper corporate and professional protocol will often pave the way to a more positive personal audience with the top person. And psychologically, it is harder for someone to fire you if they've gotten to know you up close and personal. You know that, but so does the decision-maker, who may resist seeing you for that very reason.

Try, try as much as humanly possible to get as much of your righteous anger and frustration out of your system before you go in to persuade your boss that you are stable, sincere, and worthy.

The boss doesn't need to see the side of you that is mad as hell and isn't going to take it any more. Studies presented at the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy have shown that most employers are much more interested in your stability and your work productivity than your gender goals.

Once you have properly conditioned your employer through emissaries, a coming-out letter and/or other literature (all with the help of your organization's employee assistance program, if possible), and have by personal contact shown them that the business person they can expect in the office everyday is going to be proper and normal, you can achieve your end results. So take that anger to a support group, friends, and/or a good therapist. Deal with it with the right people in the right place.

Again, Andrea sets a good example. She sees a therapist and she has an empathetic support group. Recently, she used the group to work through her anger at an "insensitive friend" who kept calling her by the male pronoun in public places. She didn't spray her frustration all over her business relationships. She brought the problem to the group.

Work, work on the right approach and process for keeping your job. As an incentive, paraphrase the old Ben Franklin proverb: the prospect of being hanged focuses the mind wonderfully.

Enough serious thoughts and sage advice for a bit. One of the best tools to use in a successful relationship is humor. Yes, we're still talking about serious issues: your livelihood and maybe your whole future, your vestments, your pensions. But try to kid yourself lightly and politely through this in the presence of all and sundry in your organizations and business framework. Reason? Your ultimate grace under this ultimate pressure will impress and persuade people more than any ringing declaration of personal freedom. Trust me. Then go find your support group and scream your head off.

An example: Laura S. was a very successful general counsel and CFO in an oil company. Well before her MTF transition, she had prepped her department with her own gentle but self-deprecating sense of humor. When she returned from surgery, her troops had shopped a maternity store and had a big

"It's a Girl!" banner over her door. We kid people we are comfortable with and care about. Enough said. Laura's supervisors had to accept her after that.

Other transitioning executives I worked with have been on target: when one said something dumb in a business meeting, she recovered nicely. She said with wry good humor, "That's what happens when you're going through a sex change—it sucks out your brains." Another time, discussing the dire predictions for people who break chain letters, another executive said, "Yes, I broke the chain once, and look what happened to me." Opportunities abound to put people at ease with humor. And humor can be used to put people in their place, too. Once I silenced a room full of religious fundamentalists with a one-liner. Some declared that the transgendered woman I was escorting to and through a difficult social situation was actually a man. I replied, "Nobody's perfect." You could hear the proverbial pin drop before the wondrous, bemused, and mostly sympathetic laughter started in the back of the hall. Granted, my "snapper" was straight from Hollywood's *Some like it Hot*, but it worked to diffuse the immediate discomfort abounding.

How do you handle the sexual harassment you may be subjected to while you're in transition? Again, humor helps, and you can always vent your frustration in the confines of your support group. But you still have to go into the office/arena and face the lions. Most of the gossip, suspicion, scorn and ridicule which can develop around your transition is born of ignorance. When you're able to go one-on-one with opinion leaders in your business community and otherwise spread the true word through close and sympathetic colleagues, the situation usually improves. The truth may not set you completely free, but it can make the work environment a lot more comfortable.

Inject information about yourself and transgenderism into your organization's "cafeteria telegraph" (i.e., the people at all levels in the lunchroom and the executive dining room who seem to know who's sleeping with whom and everything else confidential, including salaries, and sexual orientations). And be available to answer questions. Remember: in many cases you are deal-

ing with colleagues who are not that secure in their own sexual and gender identities. Another important point: I strongly suggest that you not waste your energy trying to find out exactly who said exactly what about you and your situation in the rumor mill. In most organizations, this is like punching feathers.

As you make plans to transition, and before you get started, try to cultivate some close female friends (or male friends, if you're FTM). They can be surprisingly sympathetic and protective, among your strongest up-front as well as back-channel advocates.

Even before she went into her full transition mode, Laura S. did some quiet volunteer legal work for some feminist groups. When she came out, the old girl network in the Denver legal community helped her maintain her standing in the profession without skipping a big beat.

Office politics is not unlike any other kind of politics—there are people who just aren't going to share your point of view, no matter how persuasive you are. They just aren't going to vote for you and your transition. What you need is a working majority of supporters to help you keep your job. Don't waste your time or your ego trying to convince everyone to be on your side. We're talking here about progress, not perfection.

A classic case involving many of the successful steps and techniques we've been discussing involved a sales executive for a national furniture chain. She was still in an androgynous stage when she first broached her transition plans to her local manager. He was an unsophisticated fundamentalist; to say the least, he was confused and very conservative in his reaction. So she used her considerable native intelligence and survival skills. She called across the country to the corporation's human resources department and told them what she wanted to do. It was a first for them, too. But since she wisely connected with the employee assistance program pros early on, she was officially approved and supported.

Meanwhile, back on the home front, she began applying cosmetics in slow degrees, taking seven months before she was fully made up. Her conservative store manager got used to a little lipstick one week, three weeks later a little mascara. She was already looking at offers in another field for reasons

other than transition problems, but had she opted to stay, her strategies were solid. Her best asset was her winning sales ways, and her hole card was her wry sense of humor and her honesty. Thus, some of her strongest advocates turned out to be her customers. The manager's wife was also one of her more sympathetic supporters. If our heroine had opted to have a long lunch with this lady to explain her husband's passive-aggressive attitude, she would probably have relieved some of the pressure.

Dress is one of the supposedly "small" things which people watch closely. Add the fact that you will be under double scrutiny in a glass bowl, and it's clear that dress is something to which you should pay close attention.

Try to walk the line where clothes are concerned. In other words, don't over or underdress. This is of course subjective. But do some research, look around you at what your co-workers are wearing, and consult with friends.

Consider Lisa and her successful transition. Not unlike the big decision as to which set of tees she would play from, the office pool was betting on what she would wear on her first day at the job as a female. I kid you not. Some, in their ignorance, weren't so sure what to expect. She dressed in a conservative, attractive women's business suit.

Most transgendered women want to be fashionable and make their own statement, but they realize they need to blend in. In their coming out letters, some transgendered persons mention how they will dress and subtly negotiate this condition with management.

Be prepared to answer co-workers' questions simply, specifically, and as completely as possible. Remember that most are coming from nowhere in their understanding of your situation. You will have to go back to Gender Identity 101 and explain transsexualism. What you tell them depends on how much you think they ought to know. Many people are satisfied with a superficial explanation; it's as much as they can digest.

If you're conditioning your company to accept your transition and you're being treated seriously, start gathering your facts and friends right now. Be ready to persuade and propose. Whatever the timing of your official meeting with your boss, he can move it

up or delay it at his discretion— he's the boss. Be ready whenever he is.

A case in point: a pre-op friend had reached the point at which it was necessary to either transition to a full feminine mode or leave the company. She had left the decision in the hands of the CEO. She called excitedly to say a "go" or "no-go" meeting had been set in three weeks. I advised her to be prepared for the meeting as soon as possible, to expect the unexpected. Sure enough, four days later the CEO had a change in plans, looked at his watch, and told her immediate supervisor to "Get her in here, now." She was ready. She won the day and, more importantly, a future with the company. Be prepared. And also be prepared at any point with physician's certifications and other official papers you have attesting to bureaucracy's approval of your transition decision.

A horror story: I met a woman in Brussels who was finally having her operation, five years after the projected date. She had been trying to get out of her native Ireland for several years, and she finally made it to the United States. In Ireland, she had the approval and unofficial understanding of her physicians that she was transsexual, but they weren't equipped to give her any kind of paper to that effect. Hence, when she tried to emigrate to the U.S., the bureaucrats in Dublin had no way of officially classifying her and were too lazy to establish a precedent. They just wished she would go away. It took three years of legal pushing and nagging by sympathizers for her to finally get out of Ireland (and, apparently, they still don't have the system systematized). In other words, the Irish officials finally got tired of blocking her and just let her go. A far-out tale from a faraway country, true, but the analogy applies.

Where your company and/or your professional colleagues are concerned, it helps if they can see somebody else's letterhead approving of your plans. Official endorsement may not be necessary so far as your feelings are concerned, but third-person approval always helps with others.

In addition to the known obstacles in your organization, be aware of hidden or subtle opposition. Be realistic. Any organization is a pyramid— there is less and less room the further you go. Even if you work for the most benevolent, benign, and accepting corporation

in the whole world, when you transition, you are handing extra ammunition to your logical and natural competitors for higher positions. And in the wonderful world of business, many people will use any ammunition they can get against any opposition.

It's wise to also be ready to handle religious "ranters." I'm not talking about the abstract and larger philosophical questions posed by official religious organizations. I'm talking about the in-your-face types who declare that if "Gaawd" had intended you to be an etc, he would have made you an etc. In other words, in the "ranters" best tunnel-vision way, they feel you have a moral problem rather than a medical one. Ask them whether if they had a hare lip, they wouldn't try to correct it cosmetically. Tell them that two-thirds of your being, your intellect and your emotions, is in the wrong physical frame. Ask them what's wrong with becoming congruent. If you're inclined to answer in kind, tell them God is not finished with you— yet.

Where possible, have legitimate and knowledgeable supporters with you when you meet with management to propose that you transition on the job. This is not just to protect your legal rights; it will give you a psychological lift.

If you've ever made a public speech or stood up to make a point in a public meeting, you know it helps to make eye contact with those who will react actively and positively to what you say. Do that, if possible.

Remember, it takes time to build towards your goal. It is a process to success, not a fact accomplished from the word go. As a long-time member of a 12-step program, I can tell you I didn't get sober all at once. Keep working.

Most successful transgendered persons I have met are bright, energetic, focused, and brave. You have to be in order to overcome the ignorance and prejudice of the general population. Some day, perhaps 50 years from now, there will be a respectable, accepted Transgender Association, with an office in every city and town. There will be an annual TA charity ball and the Junior League Ladies will vie to be on the Board of Directors of the Association— but not yet. Now, to mix my metaphors again, tee up your ball and smack that sucker out of the park. CQ

Don Narkevic has previously had published a variety of short stories and poems.

Compromises

by Don Narkevic

Gene woke up early, before the kids, before Ruth. He tiptoed through darkness to his writing desk where the touch lamp illuminated. The night before, Ruth had cleaned out her purse, and he had been too tired to clean up after her. A pile of used tissues, twisted gum wrappers, and unsilvered, melted kisses scabbed over the manuscripts scattered over his desk.

Gene's writing desk was off limits, and Ruth knew it. The day he bought the desk, Ruth invaded it. His repeated resettlements aggravated her. She resented his territorialism and never missed an opportunity to leave her mark of trespass: a half-glass of flat Coke, a stiff dishrag dried into a grotesque, a hairbrush in desperate need of electrolysis. The compromise, Gene ceded the top shelf, now littered with trashy novels, empty tampon boxes, and weeks' worth of junk mail.

This morning, he fingered through the debris, searching for the lipstick Ruth had also banished from her purse. But it was gone. He figured she must have changed her mind and put the lipstick back in her purse. Gene decided to search.

Her purse, the color of a malignant mole, remained where she had left it, on top of his keyboard. He liberated the suffocating letters and sat the purse on top of the kitchen table as carefully as a bomb. Since Ruth wasn't allowed to invade his territory, she guarded hers with equal zeal. He lifted the black leather flap from across the purse, half expecting an explosion. A cheap lighter and a pack of Virginia Slims nested in the largest fold. Gene shook his head. Before remarrying, he had made it clear to Ruth he wouldn't marry another smoker. She hid it for three years, just as he had hid his crossdressing. But when Gene hit forty, he came out, slowly at first. A phase, Ruth thought, mid-life crisis. Till he got his legs waxed, got on Michael Salem's mailing list, and got a pair of silicone breast forms. The first night he wore them, she lit up, in front of him. Blew smoke rings at him like a game of

ring toss. He said nothing. Such were their compromises. That's when he started to wear makeup around the house as casually as she would ask him to buy her cigarettes. Then came the ultimate compromise, a quiet mutual agreement: no sex. That was seven months ago.

Pushing the cigarette pack aside, he looked further and saw it. He recognized it. His first wife used it. Opening the compact-sized container, he noticed that Ruth was on her third week.

"She'll say they're for her period," Gene said to himself. Ruth's menstrual flow rivaled the Red Sea. Gene now specialized in removing blood stains from bed sheets.

Gene scolded himself. "I shouldn't be so cynical. She does have heavy periods."

But Gene continued to wonder. Why hadn't she told him? She made a point of telling him about all her medications: for sinuses, for asthma, for ulcers... but for affairs?

"No." Gene shook his head as if to clear his mind. "She just needs time to adjust. Lots of couples go through changes."

Then he found the spermicide,

four vaginal inserts tucked inside a zippered compartment. He continued the search. Secreted away among a stack of business cards, he found three condoms, female. He'd never seen one before. He examined one, holding it up against the light like a slide.

Was he more handsome? Did he have a hairy chest? Was he the kind of man Ruth wished she had married, the kind she wanted to help raise her young son, the kind of man who wouldn't be caught dead wearing a dress?

Gene closed the purse like a finished book and put it on top of the desk shelf. Tiptoeing down the hall, he peeked inside each bedroom, first her Zachary's, then his Amanda's. When the children fought for his attention, he told them that he loved them both the same, from A to Z. Opening his own bedroom door, he slid back the covers. To let him know he awakened her, Ruth moved and mumbled, her back toward him. Gene reached over and began scratching her back. Her tense shoulders relaxed. He worked his way down to her butt. Ruth moaned. In times past this maneuver would lead to sex.

"Don't go any lower," she warned. "I'm bleeding like a stuck pig."

"You should see a doctor. He could give you something to help."

"U-m-m-m," she purred. "I guess I should."

"That lipstick you left on my desk, where did it go?"

"Bathroom cabinet with my makeup," she said, stressing ownership.

"Oh, I thought you put it back in your purse, so I... looked... I just wanted to try... I found your birth control pills."

Gene felt Ruth's body stiffen.

Ruth rolled over on her back, stared at the ceiling, and exhaled through her teeth.

"I got those three months ago," she said, yawning, "for my period. I just started using them."

"Do you plan on being celibate the rest of your life?" Gene asked.

After a silence, Ruth said, "I don't know."

Gene believed her.

Feigning a compromise, Ruth said, "Cut your hair, take the polish off of your toenails, and I'll give you some."

After another silence, this one his, Gene whispered, "Sorry..."

Ruth believed him. Turning on one side, her back toward him, she said, "Scratch." CQ

(Weem) Continued from p. 30

"And there shall be no more curse..."

"Drop on down and read."

"And there shall be no night there; and they shall need no candle, neither light of the sun for the Lord giveth them light."

"Go down and read verse 17."

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hearest say, Come. And let him that is a thirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely..."

"I can't read no more, Momma," Weem exclaimed, quickly shutting the book, a tear caught in the corner of his eye.

"I hear the Spirit and the bride, Weem."

"They saying, 'Come,' Momma?"

"I hear it so strong."

"Don't leave me Momma. You all I got."

"Momma gotta go. I'll be able to see over there."

After that Mayretta got quiet and wouldn't answer even when Weem balled up like a baby and kept calling her and trying to tell her he was sorry. He wasn't

gonna go in her pocketbook no more and take her money or sneak her Avon perfumes. The house was dead silent. Aretha wasn't singing in the other room and only Weem was breathing.

He picked up the Bible and threw it against the wall. The picture of white Jesus on the cross shook off its hook and hit the floor. Weem paced, scuffling wood with his heels. He needed a cigarette, but he had promised Mayretta and his grandma that he wouldn't smoke in the house ever again. So he just cried, his whole slim body shaking like a leaf on a tree.

It was about 9:00 then so he went in the kitchen and fixed a plate like he usually did. "You want some of these chicken wings, Momma?" he said louder than normal. He broke a glass when she didn't answer.

After a long time, he wiped his greasy mouth and hands on a dish rag, and Weem put on his red dress and some fresh make up and went out the door. He was headed to Mary and Lou's just across the way nearby where the train run.

Mayretta lay there dead on the couch till Elsa come over to visit the next day and found her peaceful and

still. Elsa prayed for Mayretta's soul and called the police.

Cousin Mildred sat with her head in her hands. It was early evening now. The scent of the sardines was still stinking up the whole kitchen. You know ain't nothing worse than some cold grits, so Mildred walked out on the porch and lit her a Pall Mall. She was half way through her cigarette when she saw Flossie coming toward her porch in her car.

"Mildred, they done found Weem."

"Where at?"

"Dead on the railroad track. Said the 11:59 hit him."

"He dead as a macrel, ain't he?"

"Just gone, girl. I don't think he killed Mayretta."

"Me neither. That sugar took her."

"Weem was sure pretty."

"That boy ain't never been right, but he wasn't no killer."

"That's the truth."

Flossie pulled off as Mildred flung the butt of her cigarette over her porch and across her front lawn.

They had a double funeral. Everybody in Cotsville come just to see what they was gonna bury Weem in. They put him in a dark blue suit with a cherry red tie, and he still sure was pretty. CQ

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Gender & Genitals: Constructs of Sex and Gender

by Ruth Hubbard

The ways scientists conceptualize nature, the questions they ask about it, and the answers they accept as plausible or true are inevitably grounded in the beliefs they share with the wider culture of which they are a part. The resulting preconceptions and biases, though often unconscious and unacknowledged, are usually most blatant in relation to questions that involve the interplay of biology and society, hence to most questions to do with human biology and medicine. They are especially prevalent, but also particularly well concealed, when it comes to our understandings of sex and gender, since in Western societies sex and sex differences are linchpins of the way we conceptualize ourselves and our culture.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, a number of scholars and activists have tried to achieve fuller insight into the way the social and biological sciences have constructed sex and gender. In these discussions, it is still usual to draw a distinction between these two terms. In general, sex — whether we are male or female, women or men — is defined in terms of chromosomes (XX or XY), gonads (ovaries or testes), and genitals (the presence of a vagina or a penis — or, rather, merely the presence or absence of a penis). Gender, specified as masculine or feminine, denotes the psychosocial attributes and behaviors people develop as a result of what society expects of them depending on whether they were born female or male. However, as Kessler and McKenna and Barbara Fried have pointed out, the concepts of sex and gender are often overlapping and blurred, not only in ordinary speech but also in the scientific literature (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Fried, 1982). Thus, note that Money and Ehrhardt's classic *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl*, which popularized the distinction between the terms sex

and gender, confuses them in the subtle — Differentiation and dimorphism of gender identity from conception to maturity — since, surely, conception is too early to speak of “gender identity” (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972).

Not all languages have two words comparable to sex and gender. The fact that both terms are in common use in English may have encouraged American scientists to try to assign a different word to the biological aspects of sex difference and to their psychosocial manifestations. But, as with all attempts to sort “nature” from “nurture,” the resulting muddle is more than linguistic. The point is that many manifestations we decide to designate as natural are shaped, or at least affected, by cultural factors, while biology — genes, hormones, and such — affects manifestations we choose to attribute to nurture. Furthermore, in general, what we attribute to nature is no more immune from change than what we attribute to socialization. [1] And, in our technological and medicalized era, supposed biological factors often are easier to manipulate than are the forces thought to reflect cultural institutions and traditions or deeply-held beliefs. Despite these caveats, I shall, in what follows, accept the conventional, though blurry, distinction between sex and gender.

Sex is usually assigned when an infant is born by looking to see whether it has a penis. If it does, it's a boy; if it doesn't, it's a girl. Gender develops over time and the lore generally accepted in the social science and medical literature is that, for psychic health and to develop a coherent gender identity, children should know that they are a girl or a boy by the time their language abilities are at the appropriate stage, so by about age two or two and a half.

Embedded and unquestioned in this developmental formulation from sex to gender is the binary paradigm that, biologically speaking, there are only two kinds of people — women and men — so, two sexes and that people who belong to one or the other, through socialization and experience, come to emphasize the characteristics appropriate to the corresponding gender. Let us now look at this situation in greater detail.

When it comes to sex, the Western assumption that there are only two sexes probably derives from our culture's close coupling between sex and procreation. That coupling, if it does not grow out of the teachings of Western religions, is surely reinforced by them. Yet, this binary concept does not reflect biological reality. The biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling estimates that approximately one or two percent of children are born with mixed or ambiguous sex characteristics, though, for obvious reasons, it is difficult to be sure of the numbers. Such ambiguities can involve frank hermaphroditism — an infant born either with one ovary and one testis or with so-called ovotestes, organs that contain a mix of both kinds of tissues. They can also involve inconsistencies between chromosomal and gonadal or genital sex.

For example, the tissues of some children born with XY chromosomes, who as embryos develop testes, do not differentiate in the usual way in response to the hormones their testes produce. Though “male” according to their chromosomes and gonads, these children develop a vagina. In medical parlance, they are said to have “androgen insensitivity” and since they are born looking like girls, they are usually assigned and reared as females. Depending on the kind of medical care they encounter, no one may notice that they have (undescended) testes or anything else unusual until puberty, when they do not begin to menstruate at the expected time. They may, however, develop breasts, since their testes and adrenals secrete sufficient amounts of the necessary hormones.

In an analogous variation, some XX (so, “female”) embryos have what is called adrenogenital syndrome, which means that their adrenals secrete excessive amounts of so-called male hormones or androgens. [2] Though as embryos they develop ovaries, their uterus, vagina, and labia may or may not develop as usual, and their clitoris may be enlarged to the point that it looks like a penis. At birth, such children may be “mistaken” for boys or considered ambiguous as regards their sex. The existence of various intermediate forms has led Anne Fausto-Sterling

to refer to “the five sexes,” though there are likely to be more (Fausto-Sterling, 1993).

Other types of intermediate forms exist. For example, in several villages in the Dominican Republic a certain number of children who are chromosomally XY and develop embryonic testes (so, “male”) manifest a genetic variation in which the transformation of their testosterone into dihydrotestosterone (DHT) is impeded. Since DHT is the form of testosterone that ordinarily masculinizes the external genitalia in XY embryos, these children are born looking like girls and are therefore socialized like girls. However, at puberty their testosterone shows its effects: their testes descend into what have hitherto been thought to be their labia, their voice deepens and their clitoris is transformed into a penis. The U.S. biomedical scientists who first described this situation reported that, though these children have been raised as females, most of them accept their transformation and have it accepted by their society. They change not only their sex, but their gender identity. In other words, they become biological and social males (Imperato-McGinley, et al., 1979).

In fact, there is a good deal of debate about this situation. The original team of U.S. scientists seems to have been entirely unaware of their own enculturation in the binary paradigms of sex and gender and apparently did not ask any questions about how the people among whom this phenomenon occurs thought about sex differences, the immutability of sex, or the relationship between sex and gender.

The fact is that the villagers have special terms for these individuals. They call them *guevedoche* (balls at twelve) or *machihembra* (male female). This suggests that they do not regard such persons as either female or male, but as a third category, a third sex. The attempt to describe the Dominican Republic system in terms of our own binary sex/gender systems has been criticized by the anthropologist Gilbert Herdt (Herdt, 1994). He notes that unfortunately the lack of self-awareness of the biomedical researchers may have distorted the Dominican villagers' view-

point sufficiently to make it impossible to reconstruct the way they conceptualized this situation before the American researchers arrived on the scene and how they coded it in terms of either sex or gender, if this distinction is at all valid in their setting.

A hermaphroditism of the same biological origin has also been described among several peoples in New Guinea who clearly make room for a third sex in addition to male and female. However, Gilbert Herdt points out that the Sambia, which is the group he has observed most closely, make every effort to detect the condition, which they call *kwolu-aatmwol* or *turnimman* (turns into a man), at birth. If they do, though the infant may look "female" and be coded as a *kwolu-aatmwol* or third sex person, he is reared as male from the start. An occasional especially talented *kwolu-aatmwol* is honored as a shaman or war leader, but most are looked upon as "a sad and mysterious quirk of nature" (Herdt, 1994, p. 436). However, Herdt emphasizes that where there are options beyond that of male or female, there are ways of incorporating differences into identities which are obscured by our own medicalized system.

Other examples of the acceptance of more than two sexes have long been described among Native Americans, especially the Navahos and Zunis, where a person can be *nadle* or *berdache* (as it was called by the French colonizers), in which case they have a special status and function as neither male nor female. It is not clear to what extent *berdache* have been biological hermaphrodites or transvestites and cross-dressers. The point is that, either way, they are accepted as a third sex. This is true also of the *hijras* in India, who are considered neither man nor woman in their sex or gender identity and are able to function as a third group.

In our own culture, in the old days, people who were obviously intermediate in their anatomy or physiological functions had closeted lives whenever possible. If their indeterminate status became known, they lived more or less miserable lives because intermediate forms are not accepted in the West. In

the last few decades, in conformity with the binary paradigm, medical interventions have been developed to try to "correct" the genitals of infants who manifest any form of sex ambiguity.

I do not want to pass judgment about whether and to what extent such medical "solutions" benefit the individuals in question. Given the intense social pressure that sex be binary, so that people must be male or female, only very unusual parents would choose not to "repair" their child's genital or other sex ambiguities if physicians assure them that it can be done. To date, there is little information about how that decision affects the children when they grow up. [3]

A rule that appears to operate in such medical sex reconstructions — or rather constructions — is to concentrate on the appearance of the external genitalia and to make them look as unequivocally male or female as possible. Since chromosomal and gonadal sex are thus pushed into the background and it is more difficult to construct a credible looking penis than vagina (which is fashioned as a blunt pouch or tube), this means that the majority of children born with ambiguous genitals are turned into girls. Some effort is made to accommodate parents' wishes for a boy, but given the choice of a "real girl" or an "ambiguous boy," most parents will opt for the former.

Another rule is for the physicians to emphasize that, from the start, the infant has been of the sex they have decided to assign it to. The ambiguity is made to appear as a minor mistake of nature that modern medical methods can readily right. Therefore, the physicians try to determine as quickly as possible which sex assignment is technically most feasible and to stick with that decision. If they must revise their assessment, every effort is made to say that the baby all along was the sex to which it is being definitively assigned and that the physicians initially made a mistake. The goal is to make the parents feel sure of their child's intrinsic male- or femaleness as soon as possible so that they can act on this conviction in the way they raise her or him from earliest infancy (Kessler, 1990).

In this way, as Suzanne Kessler

points out, "the belief that gender consists of two exclusive types is maintained and perpetuated by the medical community in the face of incontrovertible physical evidence that this is not mandated by biology" (Kessler, 1990, p. 25). In other words, our gender dichotomy does not flow "naturally" from the biological dichotomy of the two sexes. The absolute dichotomy of the sexes into males and females, women and men, is itself socially constructed and the fact that we insist on sex being binary and permanent for life feeds into the notion that, for people to be "normal," their gender must also be binary and must match their genital sex. Where ambiguities exist, whatever their nature, the external genitalia are taken to be what counts for gender socialization and development.

Kessler and McKenna summarize the situation this way:

Scientists construct dimorphism where there is continuity. Hormones, behavior, physical characteristics, developmental processes, chromosomes, psychological qualities have all been fitted into [sex or] gender dichotomous categories. Scientific knowledge does not inform the answer to "what makes a person either a man or a woman?" Rather it justifies (and appears to give grounds for) the already existing knowledge that a person is either a woman or a man and that there is no problem in differentiating between the two. Biological, psychological, and social differences do not lead to our seeing two genders. Our seeing two genders leads to the "discovery" of biological, psychological, and social differences.

—p. 163

If, as we have seen, sex differences are not all that clear-cut, the situation is even more confused when it comes to gender. We admit in our everyday language that both males and females can be more or less feminine or masculine. And we know from experience that most of us play with gender, or "play gender." The degree of our masculinity and femininity is not fixed for life, but

changes over time and in different social situations. As we construct our persona and revise it at different times, we allow ourselves more or less leeway in the way we express gender. Our culture not only accepts, but admires and enjoys, the ambiguities embodied in a Marlene Dietrich or Greta Garbo as well as the deliberate "gender bending" of Grace Jones, David Bowie, k.d. lang, the Rolling Stones, or Madonna, to name but a few examples. Movies and the theater celebrate cross-dressing and many people, without ever identifying as "transvestites," enjoy cross-dressing and do it with verve, even if only at parties and "for fun." Unisex used to appall when it appeared in the 1960s, but now is an accepted part of our culture and it and cross-dressing provide so-to-speak legitimate outlets for our desire, or need, to allow our imagination to roam in the realm of sex and gender.

Lately, however, a more radical change has occurred as transgender theorists and activists have begun to insist that the binary model is hopelessly flawed and needs to be abandoned. They argue not only for an increased fluidity, but want to have gender unhooked from genitals and speak of a "rainbow" of gender. There is no good reason, they say, why the accident of being born with a penis or a vagina should prevent one from fully experiencing what it is like to live the life of either a woman or a man (Bornstein, 1994; Rothblatt, 1995).

Not surprisingly, transgender activists and theorists want to have their decisions about gender demedicalized and hence to abolish psychiatric categories such as "gender identity disorders" or "gender dysphoria." At the same time, many of them want to ease access to hormones and surgery so as to make it less difficult for people to transform their anatomies in ways that blur their sex/gender or change it outright.

Some, but not all, of the present-day transgender theorists are what used to be called transsexuals, though they prefer the term transgendered or transperson. However, there is a substantial difference between modern transpersons and classical transsexuals,

who by and large repudiated the genitals with which they were born and spoke of themselves as men "imprisoned in the body of a woman" or the other way around. Until recently, except for a few public transsexuals, such as Jan Morris or Renée Richards, most transsexuals hid the fact that they were living a different sex from the one into which they were born and invented personal histories to go with their transformed bodies. ("When I was a little girl, my mother used to...;" or "In high school, my girlfriends and I...") But as transpersons have come out of the closet, they have acknowledged their life stories and are exploring the personal, political and theoretical implications of their transformations. As a result, both the theory and the situation have changed.

Accounts by or about the newer transgenderists place less emphasis on actual surgical transformations of the genitals than used to be true and concentrate more on other satisfactions associated with becoming a transperson. Martine Rothblatt and Kate Bornstein say they never rejected the (male) genitals with which they were born and are not especially focussed on the genital aspects of their transformation. Rothblatt writes: "I learned how one's genitals are not the same as one's sex. And I experienced sex as a vast continuum of personality possibilities, a frontier still scarcely explored after thousands of years of human development" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 164). She looks forward to the use of computer technology for "cybersex," where people can "try on genders and...pave the way...[to] being liberated from single birth-determined sex" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 153).

Janice Raymond's erstwhile claim that male-to-female transsexuals merely reinforce gender stereotypes and represent the furthest reach in men's appropriation of women's bodies no longer fits the bill, if it ever did. Sandy Stone, a transsexual whom Janice Raymond chose to attack by name in the 1970s, writes in 1991: "Besides the obvious complicity of [earlier autobiographical accounts by male to female transsexuals] in a Western white male definition of performative gender, the authors also

reinforce a binary, oppositional mode of gender identification. They go from being unambiguous men, albeit unhappy men, to unambiguous women. There is no territory between" (Stone, 1991, p. 286). Her article is an attempt to address gender ambiguity in a positive fashion.

As a result of the greater openness, the demographics have begun to look different. The fact that most of the earlier public transsexuals had been born male gave the appearance that many fewer born women than men wanted to change their sex. Now about the same number of women and men approach medical providers about a sex change (Bloom, 1994). And among the female to male transpersons, for whom the techniques of genital reconstruction are fairly inadequate, genitals are assigned even lower priority. In her *New Yorker* profile of female to male transpersons, Amy Bloom quotes some of them as suggesting that the surgeons seem to be keener on the surgery than the clients are. They joke about preferring to save their money for travel, a condominium, and other ways to enjoy life. Neither do they insist on a rigid gender identity. Here is one of the transpersons who spoke with Bloom: "The gender issue isn't at the center of my life. Male, female — I don't even understand that anymore. And I find...it doesn't matter much" (Bloom, 1994, p. 40).

How different this is from "Agnes," one of the earliest transsexuals, whom Harold Garfinkel interviewed for several years during her sex change, beginning in 1958. Agnes was disgusted by her penis and her existence revolved around getting rid of the hated object and acquiring a surgically constructed and heterosexually serviceable vagina (Garfinkel, 1967).

To the extent that transgenderism is becoming just another way in which people construct a gender identity and gender transformations become more acceptable and easier to achieve, the changes need no longer involve the agonies experienced by people who had to overcome society's and their own sense that they were disgusting freaks. At the same time, surgical transformations, though still important, are becoming

more optional and less central to the transgender experience. As people can come out of the closet, they find it easier to think about what they really need or want, and sometimes that is a public persona (or range of personae) rather than a more private, genital transformation.

The question for social and natural scientists to ponder is how to reconcile these newer ways of looking on sex and gender with the barrage of sex differences research that claims to "prove" that there are clear-cut differences between women's and men's learning styles, mathematical abilities, brain structures and functions, and so on.

To understand both the motivation and the results of this research, we have to bear in mind that, as I suggested earlier, most Western scientists come to sex differences research imbued with the binary male/female model. Indeed, if they did not accept this model, they probably would not choose to focus their research around sex differences. If this binary model is their theoretical starting point, the scientists must begin their investigations by identifying the significant attributes that distinguish the two groups. When they find (as they must) that women and men overlap so widely as to be virtually indistinguishable on a specific criterion, they must go on to look for other criteria and to concentrate on whatever differences they unearth. Small wonder they come to highlight characteristics that fit in with their difference-paradigm, while ignoring the overlaps that contradict it. And so, the dichotomization into two and only two sexes or genders gets superimposed on a heterogeneous mix of bodies, feelings, and minds.

As far as medical "sex-change" interventions are concerned, just as pediatricians, confronted with a "sex-ambiguous" newborn, frame the situation in terms of the question "will we be more successful in producing a girl or a boy," so psychiatrists and surgeons look at their adult clients through the binary spectacles of "can we bring the psyche into conformity with the genitals this person was born with or had we better alter the geni-

als." Neither situation leaves room for a middle ground. Faced with genital or gender ambiguities, the professionals see only males or females. By contrast and largely under the influence of feminist theorizing about sex and gender, transgenderists have begun to see the distortions introduced by the insistence on such a polarity and to color in the rainbow between male and female.

The time is ripe for physicians and scientists also to remove their binary spectacles and, rather than explore what it means to be "male" or "female," look into what it means to be neither or both, which is what most of us are. All of us, female or male, are very much alike and also very different from each other. Major scientific distortions have resulted from ignoring similarities and overlaps in the effort to group differences by sex or gender. A paradigm that stresses fluidity will generate quite different questions and hence come up with different descriptions and analyses than those derived from the binary view. Social and natural scientists need to move on and explore the implications of the emerging paradigm of a continuum or rainbow for the study of sex and gender. CQ

Notes

[1] For a more detailed discussion, see especially the Introduction and Chapter 9 in R. Hubbard, *The politics of women's biology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

[2] For a discussion of the history of the concept of sex-specific, so "male" and "female," hormones from its origin around the turn of the century to its demise by the 1940s, see Nelly Oudshoorn, "Endocrinologists and the conceptualization of sex, 1920-1940," *Journal of the History of Biology*, 23 (1990), 163-186.

[3] For some personal statements, see *Hermaphrodites with Attitude*, Spring 1995, published by the Intersex Society of North America, P.O. Box 31791, San Francisco, CA 94131.

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Eltinge (Continued from p. 28)

the "Foremost Impersonator of the Fair Sex" appeared at the White Horse in Los Angeles in 1940. Men were forbidden by a city ordinance to wear feminine clothes in nightclubs. Therefore, Eltinge couldn't wear his feminine clothes for his act. Instead, he wore a tuxedo and gave appropriate impersonations while standing by each costume. The pathetic act closed after two performances.

Later in 1940, Eltinge appeared in Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe Jubilee. Due to illness, he left the show in 1941. The show closed the night after he died from a cerebral hemorrhage.

Eltinge never married. Although he denied publicly that he was effeminate as a man (in other words, denying he was gay), a few fellow vaudevillians hinted that he was a homosexual. This is not to say that all female

impersonators then as well as now are gay, nor that gay men are female impersonators, transvestites, or effeminate.

Eltinge, with his drag act, showcased female impersonation as a true art form with glamour and good taste. Female impersonation declined in popularity in the 1940s in America, with a brief revival in the 1950s with the talents of Karyl Norman, Francis Renault, and T.C. Jones. Renault performed for several years at Carnegie Hall. Norman had performed his own songs in vaudeville. Jones imitated such women as Bette Davis and Tallulah Bankhead in Broadway productions.

In the 1960s, female impersonation went camp in underground films with Andy Warhol and Ava-Graph Films. Camp went to Broadway with Ethyl Eichelberger and Charles Ludlum with the Ridiculous Theatre. Divine brought female impersonation back to film beginning with *Pink Flamingos* in

1972. Divine had made a couple of films before *Pink Flamingos*, but didn't achieve notoriety until then as "the filthiest person alive."

Glamour drag, which Eltinge regaled in, re-emerged with gay female impersonators in gay and drag bars. The drag performers imitated female singers and actresses such as Tallulah Bankhead, Bette Davis, Judy Garland, and Barbra Streisand—all of which resulted in the "Supermodel of the World," RuPaul.

The diva RuPaul sings, dances, wears fabulous gowns, and even endorses beauty products, the same as Eltinge did 75 years before. What goes around, baby, comes right on back. And as the great drag diva Eltinge wrote:

A little bit of powder

A little bit of paint

Makes a thing of beauty

Of a thing that ain't. CQ



Postcard for "The Fascinating Widow," 1925



Postcard for "The Crinoline Girl," 1914



Sheet Music "Friends," 1918

Julian Eltinge Materials in the National Transgender Library & Archive

The NTL&A, housed at AEGIS headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, represents the largest publicly available collection of transgender and transsexual related materials in the world. The historic Eltinge postcards and sheet music shown above were purchased from a private collector.

The Third Time's the Charm

My Three Transitions

by Dallas Denny

I n the summer of 1968, I came very close to transitioning. I was living in the Ross Fireproof Hotel, a crumbling flophouse on the corner of 3rd Avenue and Union Street in downtown Nashville. I was eighteen years old.

I was working six days a week as a busboy at Shoneys restaurant. In the evenings, and on my day off, I would leave my eight-dollar-a-week basement room crossdressed and go out the back door of the Ross, emerging on Printer's Row in the heart of the city. Sometimes I would walk up the hill to Church Street and window shop at Cain Sloan, Castner Knott's, and Harvey's, the three big department stores; eat at one of the many restaurants; or go to the movies. At other times I would go down the hill to seedy Broadway. I was not of age to go into the taverns, but I would enjoy the come-ons of drugstore cowboys and other bar denizens as I strolled past on my way to the Ernest Tubb Record Store.

My hair was cut boy-short, but when blended into a fall, it reached to my back. My face was hairless and my features delicate; in miniskirt and makeup, I made an attractive and believable girl. Women smiled and were kind to me, and men wanted to make me; no one had any idea that I wasn't what I seemed to be. Sometimes I almost forgot so myself.

I was only eight dollars a week away from being able to live full-time as a woman, but without some sort of guidance, and especially without a job, the difficulties in making such a transition seemed insurmountable. Although my name (Dallas) was quite workable in either gender, there was no one to tell me so and I didn't realize it on my own. I would fantasize about finding (or even stealing) a feminine ID. In fact, once, on the street, I came across a female driver's license, but as the birth year of the legitimate owner was 1914, I was afraid to use it. I feared—probably quite rightly—what would happen if I were to find myself in the police station. But even more,

We each of us must chart our own course based on our own circumstances and hope in the absence of any assurance that we are doing what is right for us. And then we must live with the consequences of those decisions. In an imperfect and in fact scary world, what is right for one person may be the worst thing for another. The better we educate ourselves about our options and the better we pave the way beforehand for our transitions, the better our chance of surviving them.

I was disgusted and horrified by what was happening to my body. I was starting to find hair in the sink, and for the first time more than a few scattered dark whiskers on my face. I saw no way, short of self-emasculatation, to stop the process—and although I seriously considered it, I wasn't quite ready to castrate myself in a hotel room.

My terror and my desire and my despair counterbalanced each other, and I never made that transition. Eventually, my fate was decided for me: I was spotted leaving my room by the hotel clerk, and promptly evicted for having a woman in the room. I tried later, in boy mode, to explain that it had been me, but he refused to believe it.

I wound up living back at home with my parents in the suburbs, my forays to Nashville limited to those times when I could save enough money to rent a motel room for a night or two. Eventually, my life and my changing body led me to adulthood, and not as the young woman I would rather have been. Certainly, I never got the chance to experience whichever job might have been waiting in 1968 for a trans girl named Dallas.

Ten years later, in 1978, I was newly divorced. A beard of nearly ten years was gone, and the long-buried feelings were stronger than ever after years of keeping myself too tightly scheduled to allow time to crossdress. As I unpacked after moving back to Nashville from Knoxville, where I had attended graduate school, I started to shove the secret box full of clothes and cosmetics under my bed, then stopped and did my first little bit of coming out. "Face it," I said to myself. "This is a big part and maybe the biggest part of who I am, and it's not going to go away. It's time to stop pretending it didn't exist and integrate it into my life."

And so I did. I put the clothes in the closet, the wigs on the dresser, and the makeup on my nightstand. I informed my friends that I crossdressed; they didn't seem to care much one way or another. And then I asked myself the Big Question: Did I want to be a woman?

The answer, of course, was yes. Those were the days of Renée Richards and Canary Cohn and Jan Morris and Wendy Carlos, and I had acquired a bit

of knowledge about how to go about making such a change. Looking in the mirror at the 28-year-old man I had somehow become, I asked myself the hard question: considering the limits of medical technology, would I, with the help of hormones and surgery, ever be able to achieve an appearance that would not get me instantly clocked everywhere I went? I decided that if the answer was no, I would not transition.

Ten years earlier, at age 18, the answer to the question "Will I someday pass?" would have been an unequivocal yes. Ten years later, at age 38, it would have been an unequivocal no. Looking at my thinning hair and hardening features, the best answer I could come up with was an unequivocal maybe.

Getting the medical technology I needed was not easy, but eventually I managed, starting hormones in January, 1980. But in 1978, successful crossdressing was becoming somewhat of a challenge. Now my hair was long, but even with teasing, it just wasn't thick enough to work; I no longer had even enough to blend into a fall. My beard had come in dark, and covering it required lots of makeup. I found that I passed casual inspection, but when I was around people for long periods, at least one of them would read me. Nevertheless, I ventured out with an illicitly obtained social security card and applied for—and got—a job as a Kelly girl.

The first placement was purely temporary, but at the second I came to realize that as a woman I might be able to have something that resembled a life. I had been called to fill in between semesters as secretary at the English department at Fisk University. No one questioned my identity, and in fact, everyone except the head of the department seemed to like me. Some of the professors flirted with me, and the other secretary taught me how to play the numbers and took me to lunch. The department head would stare holes in me, but others seemed to receive the same glare. I didn't think she had clocked me, but it nevertheless made me very nervous, and I spent a great deal of my considerable free time looking in the mirror and touching up my makeup and making sure that my wig was not awry. I felt insecure because I was so high-maintenance; I could make myself look like a

woman, but it no longer felt natural. Putting myself together in hopes that I would pass required a long time every morning. So when I learned that the position I was filling was open and that I stood a good chance of getting it, I didn't go to the administration building and apply. Nor did I accept a job as a key-punch operator when I got a call to tell me I had been hired. It wasn't that I didn't desperately want both jobs; it wasn't that there were any relationships or entanglements in my male life that would have made it difficult to transition; it was because something didn't feel right. I wasn't even sure what it was. With an opportunity to live full-time and make enough money to keep a roof over my head while doing it, I walked away from the very thing that I wanted most in the world. I didn't understand until years later that it had been because my body had not been prepared and I had felt at some level like an imposter.

Another ten years passed. It was 1988. Except for a couple of six-week drug holidays, I had been on estrogens for the entire decade. I had changed physically, profoundly so. Certainly, I was more comfortable in my own skin, for my hair had grown back, my body hair had diminished, and my sex drive had no key in the ignition. I was in an exasperating and unfulfilling relationship that had gone nowhere in eight years. My erstwhile transition had stalled, even if my feminization had not.

In January, I told my lover that we were wasting our lives, that if we were to remain together, we must start working on our relationship. I pleaded with her that we see a therapist. She refused. I told her that in that case there was no reason for me not to explore other life options, and that if things did not change for the better within six months, I was going to do just that. Things of course didn't change.

In September, I joined Tri-Ess, and in February of the next year, I made the decision to complete my transition and began taking steps (like electrolysis and coming out at work) to enable me to do so. Predictably, my lover said, "I knew you were going to do this!"

And so on 17 December, 1989, I found myself on the road in a U-Haul truck that contained everything I owned. I had changed out of my old

clothes (jeans and sweatshirt was about as "male" as I got) before leaving my apartment in Tennessee. I was bound for Georgia, and hopefully, a new life.

I had friends in Atlanta, and I had some savings and a place to stay for a while, and I possessed a variety of highly marketable skills, so I knew I wasn't likely to end up on the street. Although ten years of hormones had made me as passable as I had been in the old days at the Ross Hotel, I found myself wondering if I had consigned myself to a future of marginal jobs and temp work. Would I ever have another professional position, and if so, how long would it take me to work my way up to a paycheck that equalled the one from which I had just walked way?

By the time the truck was unloaded and my belongings were squared away, it was Christmas. I begin my job search just after the start of the new year. I surprised myself by being at perfect ease at interviews; it was the very opposite of my 1978 experience. This time I was for real; my femininity was bone deep, and not just an artifact of clothing and makeup.

The second job I interviewed for was perfect, the analog of my former position in Tennessee, with a salary close to what I had been making, and only three miles from the house. I wanted the position, and said so, and about ten days later the director of the facility called and told me it was mine. I started on the fifth of February, 1990, less than two months after leaving Tennessee. That was nearly seven years ago.

Having a professional position has done wonders for my self-confidence. From the beginning, I was conducting meetings, communicating with other professionals, and dealing with clients and their families. My transsexual status was and is neither known nor suspected, and that fact helps me keep my life in balance. As editor of this journal and Executive Director of AEGIS, my gender work is a major theme in my life—but not during the forty hours a week when I'm at my job. There, people make assumptions about my gender based on my appearance, dress, and behavior, and I do not disabuse them of their notions.

When I transitioned, I had been led to believe that I would be unsuccessful as a transsexual if I did not blend

anonymously into the greater society. That was, after all, the *zeitgeist* of the time. I quickly realized that being an activist and assimilation were mutually incompatible. I settled on a compromise: I would do my job as director of AEGIS, and if that led to the need to disclose, so be it; I would let matters take their natural course.

It's been amazing. Despite the frequent appearance of my name and photo in local and nationwide gay, lesbian, and transcommunity publications, despite having been interviewed for the local TV news on five separate occasions, despite having been quoted in the *Atlanta Journal/Constitution* and having my name mentioned on the Rush Limbaugh Show, despite articles and letters with my name appearing in popular magazines like *Esquire* and *Playboy* and *Utne Reader*, my transsexual status is not known at work. My supervisor found out in 1992 when I was outed by a phone call from someone in the community who was angry with me, but no one else has ever acted as if they might suspect. I'm quite sure they don't. One of my co-workers saw me on television in the 1995 Pride parade and awkwardly broached the subject. "Yep, that was me," I said. I imagine she thinks I'm a lesbian, although she might have figured out that I'm transsexual (I was, after all, marching with the trans contingent). She's somewhat less friendly than she was before (maybe she thinks that as a big old lesbian, I might jump her bones), but she has apparently decided (as did my supervisor) to keep the matter to herself.

Of course, the shoe might drop at any time. I'm prepared for it if and when it happens, and in fact, I'm quite blasé about it. My supervisor and her supervisor have officially known since 1992; it's unlikely that my transsexualism will suddenly become an issue after seven years on the job and five years after disclosure to my higher-ups. Perhaps my co-workers would be surprised, and perhaps they would say, "Oh, we've known all along." In either case, I can't imagine that things would change very much.

I've never tried to move away from transition, but I've tried to make wise decisions about moving toward it. At all

three of my transition points, I wanted to and was psychologically ready to make the big move, and employment played a major role in whether or not I decided to go forward. In 1968, I did not think I could get a job, as I had no credentials. In 1978, having the appropriate paperwork but a body which was not in my opinion ready for transition, I did not think that I could hold a job without my transsexualism becoming an issue. Ten years later, the porridge was just right, and I made the decision to go ahead.

Occasionally I resent the loss of twenty years in role, but most of the time I pat myself on the back for going with my gut feelings and not jumping into situations which did not feel right. I can't know intellectually what would have happened had I transitioned in 1968 or 1978, but in my heart, I know I would have been physically or psychologically damaged (or both) by transitioning at either of those times. But the third time was the charm; it's been marvelous since 1989, and I have absolutely no regrets.

Having a job is not only an important part of my personal identity; as I have no source of private income, it is necessary to work in order to stay off the street. If I had had money in the bank in 1968 or 1978, I would undoubtedly have transitioned. Even if I had physical characteristics that would make me unlikely to pass with hormonal therapy and electrolysis, I would perhaps have transitioned had I a guaranteed income. Had I had peer or family support in 1968 or 1978, I would have made the decision to transition. I made what seemed to be the wisest choices I could make under the circumstances. Had my life or body been different, my decisions might have been different.

We each of us must chart our own course based on our own circumstances and hope in the absence of any assurance that we are doing what is right for us. And then we must live with the consequences of those decisions. In an imperfect and in fact scary world, what is right for one person may be the worst thing for another. The better we educate ourselves about our options and the better we pave the way beforehand for our transitions, the better our chance of surviving them. CQ

Like everyone else, transsexual and transgendered people have a need and desire to work. We have the same motives, desires, and aspirations as the nontrans minority, and the same abilities. Many of us have long work histories—histories which show we are punctual, reliable, and productive; histories which document steady increases in responsibility, job title, and salary; histories which show that we are respected and respectable.

Being trans has no effect on our ability to work. Our intellect is not impaired, nor our character, nor our skills. Our education, training, and experience remain the same. And yet many of us run into brick walls when it comes to work. For some of us, it happens early: because we either cannot help expressing or choose to express via behavior and appearance our transgendered natures, we are discriminated against from an early age, either kept out of employment or forced into marginal or gay-identified jobs. For some of us, the problems come later, after we come out of the closet or are discovered; suddenly, after years in the mainstream, we are suspect, at risk of losing our jobs, or finding ourselves on the street looking for a new one. And for yet others, the problems come years post-transition, when we self-disclose or are outed by others and find our carefully reconstructed lives falling into ruin around us. Whatever our individual situations, most of us have problems with work at one time or another. Almost all of us worry about work, and not without reason.

Sociobiologist William Dragoin of Georgia Southern University has hypothesized that trans and gay people have played very important roles in human evolutionary history—so important, in fact, that our natures were actively selected for; we were essential for human survival, and Mother Nature invented us. Dragoin and anthropologist Timothy Taylor suggest that ever since the human race evolved, it has been predominantly gay, intersexed, and trans people who have been the shamans, educators, entertainers, musicians, artists, and storytellers of our societies. Certainly most of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersexed, transgendered, and transsexual people I know are exceptional in their intelligence and wisdom, and certainly we are well-represented in the fields of entertainment, health care, artistry, and education (and for some reason, *over* represented in the computer and engineering fields). Many of our greatest painters, dancers, and writers have been gay and trans. We are acknowledged for our specialness in many cultures, and yet in our

own, we are persecuted, shamed, and scorned. It's a terrible waste of human potential, because we have so much to offer and so few opportunities in which to offer it.

Why do employers discriminate against us? In most cases, it's because of bias, overt or covert. Some simply hate us. Many more have incorrect and limited information which makes them think that we are poor employment risks. Others don't particularly care that an employee is trans, but fear that their customers and other employees may be made upset or uneasy by transpeople in the organization—and some use this as an excuse so they won't have to let us know their own feelings about us. Some just don't want to risk hiring anyone "different." Others may not hire for (unjustifiable) fears that equal opportunity laws would make it difficult to fire a transperson who didn't "work out."

Some of the employers' fears are legitimate. Some customers *do* have problems dealing with transpeople, and may request another employee or may take their business elsewhere. Co-workers can and do ask all sorts of questions and may "put their foot down" about trans employees. Nonetheless, openly transgendered and transsexual people can be found in virtually every occupation, from prostitution to airline pilot. In some situations, they are fully accepted, in others, merely tolerated. And in other situations, they are not even tolerated; rather, they are targeted for persecution. Reactions vary widely from one company to another, at different company locations, and even at different departments at the same company: in one case, the trans employee may be dealt with with sympathy and understanding, and in another, with immediate dismissal.

It's a variable world, and transgendered and transsexual people are themselves variable. To some extent, we make our own realities. While I in no way mean to suggest that any transsexual or transgendered person should be discriminated against, I do believe it's true that to some extent we make our own realities. The way others react to us depends upon a variety of factors, including our appearance, history, and personality. Some of these factors are not under our control, but others are. If we dislike someone, we're unlikely to pass up an opportunity to make that person miserable. Transsexualism provides plenty of opportunities to gossip and complain, and our enemies will be quick to see the potential for causing us trouble. A charming and industrious person is more likely to receive a positive

reaction than is someone who is surly, or who lacks social skills, or who has made trouble for others in the past. All things considered, individuals who are well-liked tend to have fewer problems than those who are not. In some cases, sheer force of personality has carried the day. Certainly we can't all be Pollyannas, but it doesn't hurt to be pleasant and to keep one's enemies to a minimum. Bad karma has a habit of coming around to bite us on the ass. Those who ignore this tend to have sore asses.

We have some control over our appearance—we can be clean or dirty, dress nicely or sloppily, wear clothing which blends in or is simply over the top. We can modify our bodies with medical technology—hormones, electrolysis, plastic surgery—so that they are parodies of female or male bodies, or so that we approximate as closely as possible the bodies of other members of our new gender, and we can learn and incorporate into our behavioral repertoires new vocal characteristics and mannerisms. All of these things impact the way others relate to us. What we can't help is our stature, our body type, the size of our hands and feet, and other characteristics for which there is no medical fix. Unfortunately, people react to us on that basis as well. If we pass well, we are much more likely to create a good first impression than if we don't. We can blow that first impression if we are unlikeable, or if we haven't done our homework and sound and behave like a member of our natal sex, or if we dress inappropriately. Conversely, if we don't pass, we can win others over with our winning ways and warm smiles, provided that we find ourselves in a position to do so. Unfortunately, we often don't. An unfortunate fact of life is that the reality of someone who does not pass is very different than that of someone who does. It's not the fault of those who don't pass, and it's not the fault of those who do. It's characteristic of our dualistic society, and however much our activists work to change things, and however effective they may be, the short-term prospects are unlikely to change.

Regardless of what many people think, the purpose of the real-life test is not to pass. Rather, its purpose is to give you feedback about what life and especially work will be like in your new presentation. It's important to have an experience about what life will be like so that you can make an informed decision about surgery. Whether you find a job easily and blend in effortlessly, or whether you work the want ads for months without a nibble, you'll learn what the future has in store for you. It may not be what you expected or what you want, but it will be accurate. ☐

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— Richard Ekins

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Screening Male Femaling

Cross-Dressing and Sex-Changing in the Movies

by Richard Ekins, Ph.D.

This paper considers male cross-dressing and sex-changing in the movies (Bell-Metereau, 1993; Dickens, 1982; Slide, 1986) in terms of “screening male femaling.” “Male femaling” arises whenever and wherever genetic males “female” (Ekins, 1993). Screening male femaling arises whenever and wherever males, “femaling,” are screened.

Screening arises a multiple pun. An apparatus puts the male femaler on the screen. In Hollywood cinema, particularly, the apparatus hides the male femaler behind a screen. Furthermore, it uses the male femaler as a screen for its ideological agenda, and it screens out socially unacceptable and heterogenous cultural constructions of male femaling (Conan & Hark, 1993, p. 3).

My qualitative analysis (Strauss, 1987) of several thousands of male femaling sequences in several hundreds of movies, suggests that so-called “Hollywood cinema” uses four basic screening processes when screening male femaling. These processes are “medicalizing,” “ghettoizing,” “humorizing,” and “personalizing.” In addition, “Altering Eye” cinema— film “made in a spirit of resistance, rebellion and refusal” (Kolker, 1983) frequently celebrates male femaling. This celebrating I term “eulogizing.” The paper illustrates the five basic screening processes with reference to mainstream and “Altering Eye” cinema, which feature male femalers as central protagonists.

Medicalizing

Off-screen medicalizing of male femaling began in the late 19th century (King, 1981). Its first phase culminated in the mid-1950s, by which time Hirschfeld's term "transvestite" had become an increasingly applied diagnostic category. Its second phase was marked by Benjamin's popularization of the term "transsexual" and the obtaining of hormonal and surgical intervention for a small group of male femalers. In particular, the period 1965-1979 saw the rise of gender identity clinics and the legitimization of sex change surgery (King, 1981).

While fringe moviemakers have attempted to depict this medicalizing in the round (*Glen or Glenda?*, 1953, for the transvestite; and *Let Me Die a Woman*, 1982, for the transsexual), Hollywood cinema has elevated the male femaling "psychotic" serial killer to center stage. It then brings in psychiatrists to explain the psychosis in terms of the male femaling.

Three films are of particular importance: *Psycho* (1960), *Dressed to Kill* (1980), and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). As Whittle (1994) indicates, however, the latter two are simply the better made and more celebrated of a rash of male femaling serial killer films, all having *Psycho* as their inspiration.

In *Psycho*, Norman—neither woman nor man—Bates, a motel proprietor, lives under the influence of his aged invalid mother. "Norman takes care of mother and, in return, she protects him from temptation and corruption, particularly in the form of attractive single women who come to stay at the motel" (Monaco, 1992, p. 734). In her role as protector, mother stabs one of these women—Marion Crane—to death, leaving Norman to clear up the mess and dispose of the corpse. Suspicions are aroused and Marion's sister, boyfriend, and a private investigator start their enquiries at the Bates Motel. Mother is forced to intervene again. This time she kills the private investigator. It then transpires that mother has been buried these past ten years and "mother" is none other than Norman dressed up as his mother. Indeed, he has become his mother. How are we to explain this?

Quite simple, says the psychiatrist: Norman, brought up by his clinging, demanding mother, has never disidentified satisfactorily from her. When she meets another man, Norman kills her and her lover in a fit of jealous rage. Consumed with guilt, he is nor bereft. He preserves his mother's body and in due course becomes her. He becomes what he can no longer have.

"Why was he... dressed like that?" asks Marion's boyfriend.

"He was a transvestite," says a law enforcement official.

"Ar, not exactly," our psychiatrist continues. "A man who dresses up to achieve a sexual charge or satisfaction is a transvestite. But in Norman's case he was simply doing everything possible to keep alive the illusion of his mother being alive. And when reality came too close—when danger or desire threatened that illusion—he dressed up. Even to a cheap wig he bought. He'd walk about the house. Sit in her chair. Speak in her voice. He tried to be his mother. And... er... now he is."

In *Dressed to Kill*, DePalma gives the medicalizing an additional twist. Here, Dr. Elliott, the male femaling killer, is a psychiatrist herself. When Elliott is sexually aroused, his femaling alter ego, Bobbi, emerges to slash his tempters with a razor. As Bobbie, she is seeking authorization for her sex change operation from Dr. Levi, another psychiatrist, who in due course "explains" Elliott/Bobbi's conduct:

"What's wrong with that guy, anyway," enquires Liz Blake, one of Elliott's tempters.

"He was a transsexual," replies Dr. Levi.

"What?"

"A transsexual... about to make the final step. But his male side couldn't let him do it."

"Male side?"

"There was Dr. Elliott and there was Bobbi. Bobbi came to me to get psychiatric approval for a sex-reassignment operation. I thought he was unstable, and Elliott con-

firmed my diagnosis: opposite sexes inhabiting the same body. The sex change operation was to resolve the conflict. But as much as Bobbi tried to get it, Elliott blocked it. So Bobbi got even."

"By killing Mrs. Miller."

"Yes. She arouses Elliott, just as you did, Miss Blake."

"You mean, when Elliott got turned on, Bobbi took over?"

"Yes. It was like Bobbi's red alert. Elliott's penis became erect and Bobbi took control, trying to kill anyone that made Elliott masculinely sexual. When Elliott came to my office it was the first time I saw Bobbi's masculine self. When he told me that he thought Bobbi had killed Mrs. Miller, he was confessing himself. I immediately called Detective Marino."

The Silence of the Lambs medicalizes still further. Now it is the incarcerated former psychiatrist, Hannibal Lecter—himself a serial killer—who enables the police to catch the male femaling psychotic. His superior understanding of the male femaling mind enables him to drop cryptic remarks to the police which lead to the ultimate arrest of "Buffalo Bill," the male femaler who dresses up in a sheath made out of the skins of his victims.

Medicalizing separates the sick from the healthy, the crazy from the sane, and it individualizes. In *Psycho*, Norman, male femaling as his mother, is a crazed individual separated from himself. He is a danger to himself and to society. He must be removed from society and placed in an asylum. *Dressed to Kill* enacts the same story, with the additional twist that Elliott's escape and slashing of Liz Blake in the final episode turns out to be Liz' dream, not her reality. Elliott is still confined, after all. Purged of crazy male femalers, we can rest easy in our beds. They have found their rightful place. We are protected from danger. But are we? No sooner is one locked up than another might emerge—as Hannibal Lecter's escape and freedom at the end of *The Silence of the Lambs* signifies. The ritual is endlessly repeatable.

Robin: *I've never known anyone worth knowing who wasn't an absolute fruitcake. We're all nuts. You and me are here to love and look after each other. You're not dead. You just have a healthy case of craziness.*

Liza: *Craziness?*

Robin: *Yes. Make it work for you. Mad. M-a-a-d, Darling!*

Liza: *Mad.*

Robin: *M-a-a-d.*

Liza: *M-a-a-a-d.*

Robin: *You've got it! M-a-a-d.*

Ghettoizing

If medicalizing separates the sick from the healthy, the crazy from the sane, and it individualizes, what is to be done where male femalers are not so "obviously" crazy? What, when they resist medicalization? What, when individualizing is not so possible? What, when there is male femaling in groups?

This scenario is likely to give rise to ghettoizing. Male femalers will be screened in the ghetto. They will be depicted as a minority, isolated and segregated in a particular group of area, out of harm's way.

Ghettoizing takes two principal forms. In the first form, male femalers are depicted gathering in the ghetto, which is then destroyed. In the second form, the male femalers will be limited to the ghetto. This is likely to apply where the strength of a male femaling sub-culture makes it difficult to expunge.

In *Personal Services* (1987), a film inspired by a book about Britain's most celebrated Madam, Cynthia Payne, (Bailey, 1982), male femaling looms large. Here, harmless lost souls find a home from home, away from it all. Here, male femaling is screened as being part and parcel of the fringe world of prostitution. Dolly, apparently a harmless aging prostitute's maid, turns to have "a willy." "You're a man, Dolly!" "No, I'm not," she replies. Punter, Ex-Wing Commander Morton, the film's major male protagonist, is a male femaler: "Two hundred and seven missions over occupied territory, Madam, in bra and panties." "Shut up!" "Yes,

Madam." "Filthy mind." "YES, Madam." And yet, as Madam found to her cost, even male femaling in the ghetto is too much of a threat. As Dolly puts it, prophetically, outside the courtroom following Madam's first arrest, "Look at all these men. I know all their secrets. That's why they want to lock us up." Order must be restored. The ghetto must be expunged. And it eventually is, albeit with an ironic sting in the tale, when Madam finds herself in a Court presided over by one of her clients.

The subject of *Outrageous* (1977), on the other hand, is male femaling in the homosexual ghetto. Robin, a homosexual hairdresser, takes in Liza, a schizophrenic who has discharged herself from an asylum. Robin is pessimistic about his chances of making it as a drag artist, but at the encouragement of Liza, he takes part in a drag competition and wins first prize. The film then traces his gradual rise to stardom to a "supremely confident Peggy Lee (via a whole range of 'dazzling' ladies, including Bette Davis, Carol Channing, Mae West, Ella Fitzgerald, and a sensational Judy Garland" (Dawson, 1978, p. 203).

Simultaneously, Robin is ghettoized. When his male femaling is discovered, he is sacked from his job as a hairdresser in a "straight" salon. Then, as he gets further involved in the gay drag sub-culture, his links with the "sane" world outside the ghetto reduce to zero. Conversely, Robin helps Liza to cope with her hallucinations and rescues her from a depression that seems to have her heading for commit-

tal to an asylum. She joins the homosexuals and the drag queens. Both make themselves safe—from themselves and from us—in the "mad" world of the male femaling ghetto. The final episode sees them rejoicing together, in their segregation from conventional society, in a deliberate parody of lunacy. So long as they stay in the ghetto, we can all join in the fun.

Robin to Liza: *You know, there's only one thing. You're mad as a batter, Darling. But that's all right. Then, so am I. So am I. I've never known anyone worth knowing who wasn't an absolute fruitcake. We're all nuts. You and me are here to love and look after each other. You're not dead. You just have a healthy case of craziness.*

Liza: *Craziness?*

Robin: *Yes. Make it work for you. Mad. M-a-a-d, Darling!*

Liza: *Mad.*

Robin: *M-a-a-d.*

Liza: *M-a-a-a-d.*

Robin: *You've got it! M-a-a-d.*

Humorizing

Although *Psycho* is widely thought of as "the most astounding, audacious and successful horror film ever made" (Harris & Lasky, 1993, p. 219), repeated viewings highlight its grisly humor. *Personal Services* and *Outrageous* are very much played for laughs. Humorizing male femaling, however, reached its own screening apotheosis in *Some Like It Hot* (1959).

As Monaco (1992, p. 869) adeptly puts it, *Hot* is:

A master comedy that revels in inventive effervescence. *Unemployed musicians* ([Jack] Lemmon and [Tony] Curtis) witness the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago, flee in drag to Miami with an all-girl band. Dazzling work by Lemmon and [Marilyn] Monroe, memorable Curtis (his drag voice is dubbed), unforgettable supporting work from [Joe E.] Brown, Shawless, (George) Raft, et al. The best authentic capturing of roaring twenties atmosphere put on film, with flawless script by director [Billy Wilder] and I.A.L. Diamond. Hot was the most commercially successful of Monroe's films, and if she was hell to work with... it didn't show on film. Brown's closing line may be the funniest closing tag in the history of motion pictures... [Some Like it Hot] remains a tremendously popular film with both audiences and critics.

Stigmatized as male femaling may be, off-screen, how does it come about that it provides the basis for a highly successful commercial film? The answer lies in its particular use of humorizing. Lemmon and Curtis are two very definitely heterosexually oriented men. The audience knows it, and they know it. Vital to the plot is the fiction that both have entirely bona fide credentials for male femaling. Their lives depend on it, and look what good clean heterosexual fun they're having in the process. Much of the comedy comes, of course, from the fact that we're in on the joke and the gullible film characters are not. All these factors screen the "screen reality"—the invasion of women's private spaces by men, which in other contexts might be found distasteful. Private prurient fantasy becomes public humorized "screened reality." Therein, surely, lies the great appeal of *Some Like it Hot*. We can have all the fun of male femaling without any of the pain. This is Hollywood cinema at its finest, and it set the standard for scores of mainstream humorizing male femaling movies, from the more politically correct *Tootsie* (1982) to the more unashamedly sexist teen movie *Just One of the Girls* (1993).

Personalizing

Male femaling in the real world involves a lot of pain for the gain. The examples of medicalizing, ghettoizing, and humorizing that I have introduced give no inkling of this. It is personalizing which emphasizes the subjective aspects of male femaling, particularly the personal journey and its pains and gains. Here the emphasis is upon "experiencing" male femaling (King & Ekins, 1995, Part 1).

Ekins (1993) outlines an ideal-typical career path of the male femaler. The phases denote increasing involvement in femaling: from "beginning" to "fantasying" to "doing" to "constituting" through to "consolidating." King (1993, p. 161) emphasizes the fact that stages may vary in duration, may be skipped, or may occur in different sequence. He stresses, too, how he might devise different patterns or stages for different types of male femalers.

What is noticeable, however, in personalizing screening male femaling, is the stereotyping of the route to personal fulfillment. All sorts of personal horrors and unhappiness are met with on the way, but in the end, our male femaler is likely to be living (more or less) happily ever after as the woman she "really" always was. In such personalizing, there is rarely much deliberate humorizing. Rather, medicalizing is co-opted in the service of personalizing, with particular emphasis upon the paraphernalia of gender role stereotyping.

Personalizing takes two major forms. In its sadder, more overtly narcissistic form, the male femaler is left alone and isolated at the end of the film. Her integration as a woman is left uncharted. She has gotten what she wants within practical possibilities, but we're not quite sure what she will do with it. *I Want What I Want* (1973), for instance, leaves Roy, who has now become Wendy, alone in her bed-sitting-room. She has just had her reassignment operation. She is elegantly made up and surrounded by the trappings of femininity. Lost in a reverie of self-absorption, she is reciting: "I must always remember... how lucky I am... to be a girl."

In the second form, complete normalization and integration is portrayed down to its favored enouement in a white wedding.

I Want to Be a Woman (1982) tells "a poignantly true story about a female mind born trapped in a male body." Sixteen-year-old Jose Maria's father tries to "make a man" of him. But Jose Maria prefers (i.e., cannot help) to be Maria Jose. She prefers tending to babies, dressing up as a girl, and dancing with her sister—until, that is, a man takes a fancy to her. Beaten up by her intended lover when he confronts her male genitalia, she attempts self-castration. Befriended by Bibi Anderson, who is a male femaler herself, Maria Jose sets about her course to womanhood with renewed vigor. She must act like a woman, sing like a woman, move like a woman, and have the attitude of a woman. Despite setbacks on the way (she turns to alcohol for comfort and disgusts her prospective lover with a dance in the ghetto, peoples by drag queens and sexual perverts, no less), normalization and integration prevail. Finally, in reciprocated love, she is ready for her big day.

In the finale, Maria becomes the woman she always was. She is lying on the operating table with her long tresses attractively adorning the head of the operating table. She dreams. She is dressed in her bridal gown and is in the arms of her groom. As she spins around in his arms, she falls to the ground as if dead. Her wedding dress is stained with blood. She awakens.

"There, Butterfly," says her husband-to-be. "They've done it already. They've operated."

"Then—then I'm a woman now," says Maria.

"Don't talk, you need a rest."

"I dreamt that I died.. when I became a woman."

"You're alive. And you're a woman. You've always been one." (Maria's husband-to-be leans over the bed and gently kisses her.)

Eulogizing

Medicalizing, ghettoizing, and humorizing distance us from stigmatized people and stigmatized activities. We can be fascinated, enthralled, or appalled, but at arm's length and in relative safety. Personalize distances, too. We are watching unique and rare individuals. In mainstream cinema, moreover, the troubled individuals cease to be a trouble to themselves, to others, and to ourselves once they have been normalized and integrated into mainstream society. Stigma has been managed (Goffman, 1968).

"Altering Eye" cinema, on the other hand, makes it its business to celebrate the rebellious, the different, and the perverse. Here, the radical potential of male femaling can be celebrated.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that male femalers were to very important in Andy Warhol's radical cinema of the 60's and 70's (Koch, 1985, pp. 122-127; Woodlawn, 1992). Warhol superstar Holly Woodlawn, in particular was "eulogizing" embodies, as Lou Reed was quick to immortalize:

*Holly came from Miami F-LA
Hitchhiked her way across the U.S.A.
Plucked her eyebrows on the way,
Shaved her legs and then he was a she
She says, "Hey, babe, take a walk on the
wild side."*

This is well-illustrated in the final episode of *Trash* (1970). In this sequence, Holly (Miss Santiago) attempts to convince a welfare worker she is pregnant. The welfare worker wants her Joan Crawford

shoes in exchange for a guarantee of welfare. Holly won't accommodate him.

Here, *Trash* turns the medicalizing, ghettoizing, humorizing, and personalizing of mainstream screening male femaling on their heads and co-opts them all in the service of a sequence of classic eulogizing. As one reviewer puts it:

Holly Woodlawn is the major revelation: the first transvestite to be allowed her fantasy without parody or question in a Factory movie, she establishes herself as a master of everything from stream-of-consciousness monologue to situation comedy... [In] [T]he final scene with the welfare officer... the film... takes on the edge of real social comment. (Rayns, 1973, p. 38). CQ

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Editorial

Janie Hutton

As a wife, I have been encouraged, urged, and even commanded by various leaders in the gender community to accept the theory that most crossdressers are heterosexual—a theory which has been used as a tool to comfort, console, cajole and, sometimes, “con” the spouses and partners of crossdressers, most likely since Virginia Prince published her first book. Unfortunately, like the 45 rpm adapter for a phonograph, it is a tool which is outdated and serves no truly useful purpose. It can, in fact, be the direct cause of the deepest pain and anguish for a wife when it turns out to be not entirely true.

In her article “Heteropocrisy,” Dallas Denny accurately addresses the disservice which the perpetuation of that theory within the organizations that limit their membership to “heterosexual” crossdressers actually does to the members of those organizations. I would like to address the even greater disservice it does to spouses and partners. Most likely I will not find myself applauded or commended for my beliefs; I have, on more than one occasion, been accused of being so liberal that my brains were falling out—but I would far prefer to err as the result of having an open mind than as a result of having tunnel vision.

It has long been my contention that the deliberate minimization of the sexual aspects of crossdressing by Tri-Ess and other supposedly heterosexually oriented groups has actually done far more harm than good to the spouses and partners it has supposedly been perpetuated to “protect.” The idea that as the crossdresser gets in touch with his “feminine side” sexual arousal becomes unimportant borders on ridiculous, and to intimate that it actually disappears altogether is ludicrous! If such were in fact the case, very few crossdressers’ wives would ever need to be concerned about what their husbands were wearing to bed. No one will ever convince me that any crossdresser wants to wear a silky nightie or a bra and panties to bed because it helps him to get in touch with his feminine side!! And, frankly, in my humble opinion, the concentrated effort to convince wives that this is true is an insult to their innate intelligence. Worse, for both the crossdresser and his spouse, it places an almost insurmountable roadblock in the path to the development of a sexual relationship that should be based on honesty.

Honesty must be the solid foundation upon which any truly successful relationship is built. That is a basic truth regardless of sexual orientation and applies to every area of the relationship. Terrific sex can and should be the frosting on the cake of a great relationship, and it usually will be if both partners feel free to express themselves honestly. Unfortunately, the espousal of the theory that the majority of heterosexual crossdressers do not have a sexual agenda makes that kind of honesty next to impossible. If the “mature” heterosexual cross-

dresser has been told that he has or should have outgrown the sexual aspect of his proclivity for things feminine, and he has been assured that by so doing he has now made his crossdressing far more palatable to his spouse, then what crossdresser in his right mind, who wants to be understood and accepted by his spouse is going to make waves and upset the apple cart by admitting to that spouse, “Whoa, wait a minute, bras and panties really do turn me on!”

Unfortunately, once the heterosexual crossdresser has bought into the myth and exposed his spouse to the same propaganda, the die has been cast and the entire scenario becomes one of denial and dishonesty. What a sad situation for the crossdresser and how unfair to his wife, who, now believing it isn’t a sexual issue, will probably never have a real opportunity to share his fantasies. That does not mean that he isn’t going to still have them; most certainly he will—but now he has to pretend they don’t exist, he has to hide them, and worst of all, he has to feel guilty about them.

Let me state here that although I am willing to listen to and even argue with those who wish to dispute it, it is my firm belief that for “heterosexual” crossdressers the crossdressing is not only sexual in origin but remains primarily sexual throughout their lives. I believe that if the organizations which suggest they exist to serve the heterosexual crossdresser and his partner could and would deal with that reality in an honest and straightforward manner rather than perpetuating the “woman within” theory (which is in my opinion the real myth), those organizations would be making giant strides toward actually strengthening and preserving relationships to which they are presently merely applying bandaids!

Dallas suggests in “Heteropocrisy” that many of what I call the “rag mags” are purchased by bisexual men because of the personal ads. Some of them probably are, but I can tell you from personal knowledge that a great number of them are purchased by “heterosexual” crossdressers, many of whom are married, and are used as masturbatory tools to enhance fantasies that most of these men would far prefer to be able to share with their partners.

I can visualize certain members of “heterosexual” only organizations recoiling in horror at that statement, but I am not talking perversion here; I am talking about good, decent, family oriented, churchgoing heterosexual men who have probably since puberty been sexually aroused by feminine clothing and who have had intense fantasies of all kinds associated with that clothing. Why must there be something “wrong” with that? Why should anyone suggest that those fantasies are immature and should be “put away with childish things”? Why should spouses and partners need to be shielded and protected from those fantasies? Wouldn’t it be far better to urge their honest and open expression and encourage their incorporation into a loving sexual relationship than to deny them and attempt to sweep them under the carpet? I certainly believe it would be.

If I am to believe my last husband, my

present husband, and the great many other “heterosexual” crossdressers with whom I have had soul-searching conversations, having homosexual and/or bisexual fantasies appears to be the rule rather than the exception. The operative word here is fantasies. We all have them. Psychologists and psychiatrists tell us they are normal and healthy; Some may be wilder than others, but the bottom line is that fantasies are illusions, daydreams, perhaps even wishful thinking. It doesn’t mean they are things we feel we need to run right out and actually do. More likely, if those who love us are willing to experiment and play with our fantasies, that is all the fulfillment they will ever need.

I do not believe that we wives are so sensitive and so fragile that we need to be protected from our crossdressing husbands’ fantasies. The majority of us are intelligent and capable women who are far more realistic and resilient than the Virginia Princes of the world give us credit for—and most of us would far prefer that the men we love tell it like it really is than attempt to sugar coat the truth in the name of “protecting” us. I wish I could tell you how many times I have heard wives who are getting incredibly mixed messages, say “If he would only tell me what it is he wants it would be so much easier!” These women wonder what it is their husband really wants in the bedroom because they are smart enough to recognize that he isn’t being honest with them.

And on what authority do I speak to these issues? For the second time in my life I am married to a crossdresser, and it is by my choice. He is a wonderful husband, a great lover, my best friend, and we have every intention of spending the rest of our lives together. He is primarily attracted to women and he considers himself to be for the most part heterosexual. Personally, I’d call him a heterosexual with homosexual fantasies and bisexual tendencies—and there is nothing wrong with that as long as it is something we are both aware of and comfortable with. What is most important is that he has from the beginning been open and honest with me about his sexual fantasies, and I have been willing, within the confines of our marriage vows and the walls of our bedroom, to experiment with those fantasies. The payoff for both of us in terms of emotional closeness and sexual fulfillment has been nothing short of phenomenal. I believe there is that same potential in every relationship with a crossdresser but that potential is certainly not being addressed by the present philosophy within the community.

When the organizations that have been established to support the heterosexual crossdresser and his spouse do just that in a manner which is constructive and truly supportive; when their leaders, and hence their members, come out of the closet of hypocrisy and deal with the sexual issues from a straightforward, nonjudgmental, and positive position instead of one that is archaic and homophobic; then, and only then, will there be a definitive future for the vast majority of “heterosexual” crossdressers. CQ

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Dr. Toby Mayer and Dr. Richard Fleming are plastic surgeons who practice in Beverly Hills, California. They are pioneers in scalp reduction and hair flap surgeries. In Part 1 of this 3 part article about plastic surgery, Drs. Mayer and Fleming discuss various types of hair surgeries. Parts 2 and 3, which will appear in upcoming issues, will look at various types of facial plastic surgery.

Aesthetic Surgery in Male-to-Female Transsexualism: Part I

by Toby Mayer, M.D., & Richard Fleming, M.D.

In addition to genital sex reassignment surgery, male-to-female transsexual persons have available a wide variety of surgical techniques to feminize their faces and bodies. This article surveys these techniques.

Surgical Hair Replacement

The ultimate goal of hair replacement surgery is to permanently eliminate baldness and to evenly distribute the existing hair over the entire scalp. There are two procedures which surgically treat baldness, flaps and punch grafts (plugs). With these techniques patients do not actually gain hair; it is merely redistributed from one part of the scalp to other areas. Scalp reductions and tissue expansion are two additional techniques used to improve the result achieved with flaps and plugs.

The individual's own scalp hair is the only suitable donor source. Since we know that for most males (including male-to-female transsexuals who are not receiving hormonal therapy), the hair on the sides and back of the head is genetically programmed to grow throughout life; it is this area from which flaps and punch grafts are taken. This hair will continue to grow forever, even after it has been moved to another part of the scalp.

Hair Transplants (Plugs)

Circular plugs containing 10-15 hairs are removed from the scalp on the sides and the back of the head. A linear scar results where the grafts have been removed. The hair-bearing grafts, which are approximately 1/6 inch in diameter, are then inserted into prepared holes in the bald area (Figure 1, p. 57). The grafts are separated from each other in their new location to allow enough blood to reach each one. If too

many grafts are done at one time or placed too closely together, poor hair growth may result. For this reason, it takes at least four sessions of 25 to 100 grafts to give basic coverage. Fill-in sessions are done later to complete a given area.

After each session, the punch grafts form a crust which falls off in approximately two weeks. The transplanted hair falls out several weeks later because the blood flow to these grafts has been interrupted. Visible hair growth begins in about three months at a rate of 1/4 to 1/2 inch per month. Nine to twelve months after each session, the hair is long enough to comb.

Mini-grafts are another form of punch-grafts. These can be placed to soften the spaces between grafts or can be done (several hundred per session) to give a thinning look. Although these techniques yield much less density than standard punch grafts, mini- and micro-grafts produce less of a "corn row" effect, but at considerably more cost than regular sized grafts.

The results of punch grafts depend upon several factors, such as hair density and texture, balding pattern, and hair color. Careful hairstyling is essential for the best effect in punch graft transplantation.

The main advantages of punch grafts, when performed by an experienced surgeon, include simplicity, small incidence of complications, and reasonable results for individuals with minimal hair loss that will never extend beyond the front of the scalp. There are multiple disadvantages. The texture of the transplanted hair is always different (it is kinky or wiry), and the density of the transplanted hair is not as great as patients would like except in unusual cases of very small areas of baldness. In patients where the baldness is more extensive, punch grafts have to be spread over a greater area with a less desirable result. The "picket fence" or "rows of corn" appearance means that hair must be carefully styled to cover the hairline. Although minigrafts and micrografts can be used to refine the hairline, the plugs are visible throughout the remainder of the transplanted scalp. This creates problems for patients because they must avoid activities which will expose the punch grafts.

The process takes at least two or three years to complete, even if the patient has only a small area of frontal baldness. If mini or micro-grafts are done over the entire scalp one will have very low density "see through" hair. This result may be acceptable to some patients.

The cost of plugs appears to be lower than for a Fleming/Mayer Flap, but this is misleading: although the payments are spread out over time because it takes so long to complete the surgery, the cost is ultimately much greater.

Fleming/Mayer Flap

We have spent twenty years enhancing and perfecting a procedure conceived by a South American surgeon. We have made so many major innovations to the technique that it is now known as the "Fleming/Mayer Flap." The surgery is performed in three stages. The first two are performed one week apart and are done under local anesthesia. These preliminary steps separate the flap from the surrounding skin except at the forward end of the flap, which will be the entire source of nourishment when the flap is moved to the bald area.

In the first procedure, the patient and the doctor design the new hairline. The doctor marks the outline of the flap on the side of the head. Then incisions are made along both edges, 3/4ths the length of the flap (Figure 2). No incisions are made around the tail end at this time. The incisions are immediately closed and a dressing is applied. After the dressing is removed the next morning, the patient can go back to work.

One week later, the patient returns for the second procedure. This time, incisions are made around the tail end of the flap and the edges of the incisions are sewn together (Figure 3). Again, the patient wears a dressing overnight and can return to work the next day. Up to this time, no hair has been moved and nobody other than the patient is aware that surgery has been done.

The flap is transferred one week later (two weeks after the first procedure). Using light general anesthesia, the bald scalp is removed and replaced

with the flap, which has hair of normal length, texture and density (Figure xx). The area from which the flap was taken is closed by stretching together the surrounding normal hair-bearing scalp, leaving only a fine line which is undetectable within the hair (Figure 4).

The discomfort after this operation is minimal. A dressing is worn for 3 to 4 days; no hair is cut during any of these procedures, so the hair may be shampooed and styled immediately after the dressing is removed, and the patient may return to work. The stitches are removed in the hairline after six days; after ten days the stitches behind the flap and on the side of the head are removed.

Because the flap is never totally separated from its blood supply, there is usually no temporary hair loss as occurs in punch graft transplantation, so coverage is immediate. This means that a patient with frontal baldness can return to work one week after a Fleming/Mayer Flap procedure with a full head of hair. Since the flap involves a basic rearranging of hair which is already in a normal growth cycle, the hair itself remains unchanged. There is no rows-of-corn appearance or change in hair texture as occurs with plugs. A large amount of hair, the equivalent of 10,000 individual punch graft transplants is immediately transferred. Furthermore, once an area of baldness is replaced with a flap, no additional surgery will ever be needed in that area.

We have developed a procedure designed to create an extremely natural hairline. The new hairline is created so the hair will grow through and in front of the scar (Figure 5). Hair that can be styled in any way the patients choose, enabling them to engage in any type of activity without worrying about what it will look like. The hairline can be made even more natural (especially with coarse dark hair and light skin) by feathering the hairline with 1-2 hair micro-grafts. This "softening" of the hairline can, however, be done after any flap and depends on how much of a perfectionist the patient is.

Results of flap surgery are natural and dramatic. Thick hair without any change in texture, immediate results,

and the ability to return to work four to six days after the flap transfer makes this procedure the state-of-the-art in hair replacement surgery. Patients now have the ability to maintain an active life with freedom from an unnatural appearance.

In patients with more extensive baldness, a second flap can be moved from the opposite side of the head in about 3 months and placed behind the first flap. Scalp reductions are then done between the flaps and behind the second flap. Some patients with tight scalps will require tissue expansion in conjunction with the Fleming/Mayer Flap.

The hair density provided by these procedures permits easy and varied hairstyling because it is uniform and as thick as the hair on the side of the head. Plugs (hair transplants) require careful styling to give the illusion of coverage of the bald area. This illusion quickly disappears when the patient goes swimming, plays tennis, or engages in any other physical activity. Fleming/Mayer Flap patients do not worry about this. They can comb their hair straight back, part it anywhere on the head, and engage in any type of activity without worrying about their appearance.

We have performed the Fleming/Mayer flap on nontranssexual men and male-to-female transsexuals who were dissatisfied with the results of previous punch graft transplantations. We are frequently able to salvage these unsatisfactory results done elsewhere. But if punch grafting has left too much scarring, the patient may not be a candidate for the Fleming/Mayer Flap.

Tissue Expansion

In some patients, scalp tightness will limit what can be achieved surgically and compromise the results, even with the best surgical techniques and a strongly-motivated patient. The process of scalp expansion provides the opportunity to decrease or eliminate baldness that previously was beyond surgical repair.

Pregnancy and obesity are two examples of the natural phenomenon of slowly stretching body skin. Taking advantage of this characteristic of skin,

the surgeon can increase the quantity of hair-bearing scalp on the sides and back of the head, appearing to "make more hair."

Under sterile conditions, a deflated silicone "balloon" is placed under the scalp to be stretched. This expander is not visible because the entire unit is placed under the scalp. The patient can return to normal activities the day after surgery. The expander is gradually filled by periodically injecting small amounts of sterile water. This is done in the office or in the privacy of the patient's home by a friend or family member.

After several weeks, during a second surgical procedure, the expander is removed and additional hair-bearing scalp created by expansion is used to eliminate baldness with a scalp reduction or a Fleming/Mayer Flap. After removal of the expander, the area which was stretched remains normal without distortion or deformity. The expansion of normal hair-bearing skin is an extremely valuable technique for use in both reconstructive surgery and the treatment of male pattern baldness. It allows us to "create" extra hair-bearing scalp to resurface the bald head when not enough is available. Furthermore, it allows us to repair scarred scalps that have previously undergone punch grafting with resultant scars in the donor area. In this way, we are able to more safely transfer the flap and know prior to the transfer if the flap will have a problem with viability. The end of the flap may be discarded prior to the rotation.

Hairline Aesthetics and Design

Aside from cost, the two most common concerns of patients seeking hair replacement surgery are hairline placement and design. Unfortunately, the most common complications referred to our office are poor hairline configuration and/or placement. These problems can be totally avoided by careful aesthetic planning.

Frontal Hairline Placement

Whether one does punch grafting or flap surgery, the first decision prior to surgery is where the hair line should

be placed. Leonardo da Vinci divided the frontal view of the face into thirds. The lower one-third extends from the lower border of the chin to the nasal spine, the middle one-third from the nasal spine to the glabella, and the upper one-third from the glabella (the smooth space between the eyebrows) to the frontal hairline. The first aesthetic rule, therefore, is never place the hairline below the superior border of the upper third of the face. In the adult male and female, hairlines below this point look abnormal. Second, never place the hairline lower than where the patient requests it be placed. It is acceptable and often desirable to place the hairline somewhat above this point for several reasons. First, the lower the hairline is placed, the greater the area of baldness that is "created" posterior to the hairline. It is often better to make the hairline higher and have a smaller bald area with which to deal. This will allow a greater density of hair than could be achieved if the bald area was larger. This is especially true with plugs.

Second, the patient's degree of baldness in the future may be greater than anticipated when hair replacement surgery begins. Thus, in time, demand may exceed the supply of available hair-bearing tissue and diminish the end result. Therefore, if one is uncertain as to how much future loss will occur, it is better to err on the side of placing the hairline in a higher position. However, in male-to-female transsexuals, the appearance of a receded hairline is to be avoided, if at all possible. Fortunately, hair loss is stopped or minimized by ingestion of female hormones, so future hair loss is not generally a problem in make-to-female transsexuals.

Third, using the punch graft technique, the hairline can be lowered later one row at a time if one has overestimated the eventual balding pattern, and nothing will have been lost. With a flap, this is more difficult to do. Therefore, the patient should be informed of this preoperatively.

Especially in transsexuals undergoing Fleming/Mayer flaps, some patients may wish to leave the crown bald forever and have a lower frontal hairline placement (the hair in the second flap

will cover a bald crown because the hair is directed posteriorly). Often we will draw in two frontal hairlines (or more) and give the patient his/her choice of which location he prefers.

Most people see themselves from the frontal view. The height of their frontal hairline (even a one centimeter difference) will alter "their look" considerably. Therefore it is an individual decision and should be discussed thoroughly with the patient prior to surgery. Should the patient choose a lower hairline and later change her mind, it can easily be raised. The converse is much more difficult but can be done as well.

The more density and the more elasticity a scalp has, the more the flaps can be stretched (before or after flap rotation) and therefore the lower anterior hairline can be placed (Figure 6). Conversely, a patient with a very tight scalp and low density donor hair may require higher placement of his hairline (see Figure 7).

Frontal Hairline Configuration

All frontal flaps are performed with the creation of an irregular hairline. The irregularity of the flap design must be recreated in the frontal forehead skin to achieve a more natural configuration. When the flap is done without this modification, the results can be quite satisfactory, but are never outstanding. The configuration of the hairline is equally as important as its location.

Inappropriate hairline design with either punch grafts or flaps is still the most common problem referred to our office.

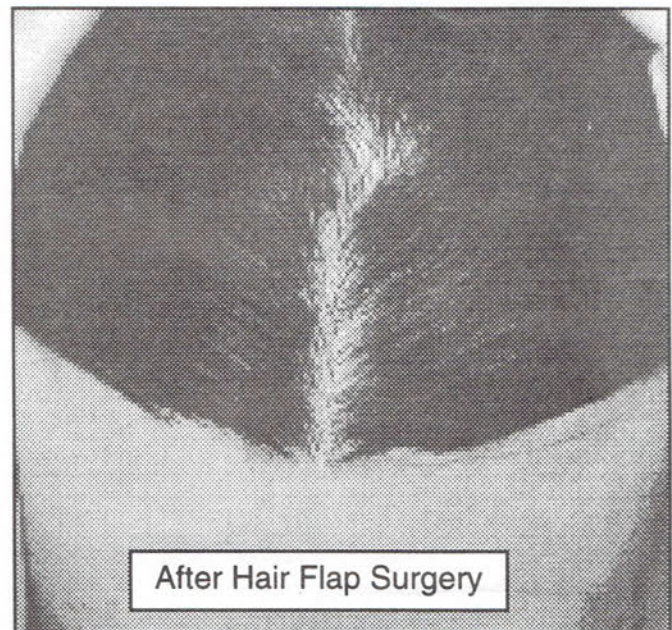
The flap design in women (and male-to-female transsexuals) is different from that in men in that the end of the flap should be straight (have no curve whatsoever) in its design, and is often actually curved somewhat concavely at its distal end. If the tail of the flap is convexly curved, as it often is in men, it causes a male pattern-type recession anteriorly, which is not desirable. The location of the flap in these patients is also different. The flap is often placed lower on the forehead and has blunted frontotemporal recessions). Normally, women have frontotemporal recessions, but these are filled with fine sparse hairs which become progressively more dense posteriorly (Figure 7). However, the hairline can be made in such a way (Figure 8) that hair can be placed across the frontotemporal recessions. In women, this hair is grown long and permits a greater ease of styling than could be accomplished with a wig or punch grafts. Furthermore, long hair allows women to comb the hair back, provides more volume of hair, and fills the frontotemporal recessions. Additional micrografts can be placed in front of the frontotemporal recessions to greatly soften the abruptness of the hairline (whether with punch grafts or flaps) and mimic a natural female hairline (Figure 5).

In women our first choice of hair replacement is to simply advance the frontal hairline anteriorly, with or without browlifting, to produce the best aesthetic result. If the frontal scalp is tight and density is sufficient, tissue expansion is our next choice. The Fleming-Mayer flap is our third choice if the frontal hairline is too high, has low-density hair, or is too posteriorly receded. Especially in these areas, the tufting associated with punch grafts gives a far less natural result than that achieved with flaps. Therefore, punch grafting is in all cases our last choice.

Hair loss in male-to-female transsexuals is managed as it is for genetic females, so far as flap design is concerned. Whenever possible, if we can advance the hairline forward and laterally, this procedure is performed with or without tissue expansion (see Figure 9) to achieve the best possible result. Often, this procedure is not possible because of low-density, sparse hair or frank baldness even after hormonal therapy. In these patients, flaps give a much better result than punch grafting. CQ

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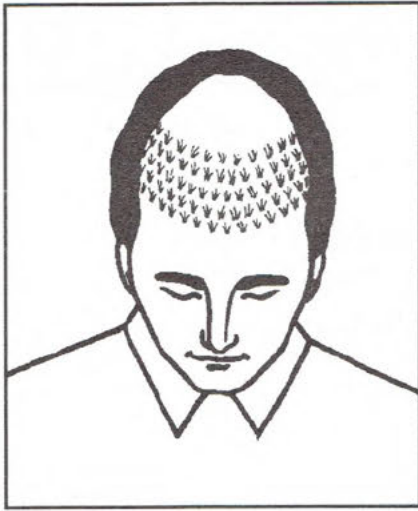


Fig. 1 Hair Grafts. Note "corn row" pattern.

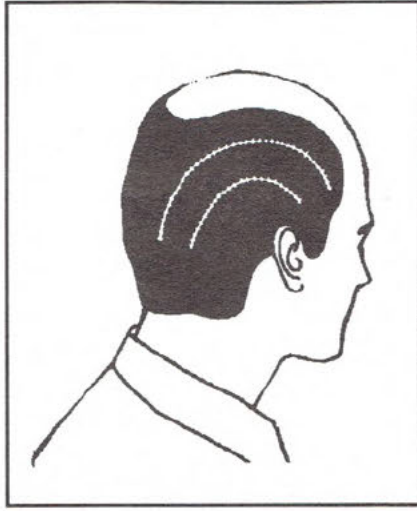


Fig. 2 Flap Surgery, step 1. Note Parallel incisions.

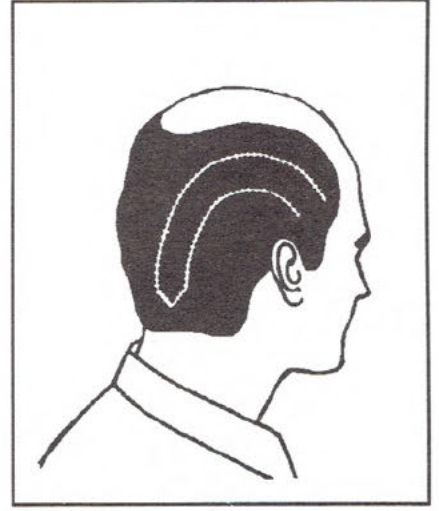


Fig. 3, step 2. Edges of incisions are sewn together.

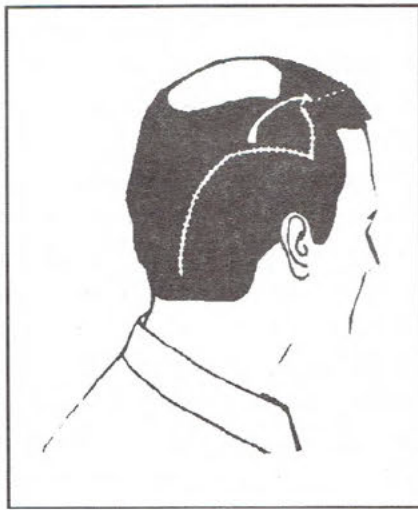


Fig. 4 Bald frontal area is covered by flap.



Fig. 5 After flap heals, natural hairline results.

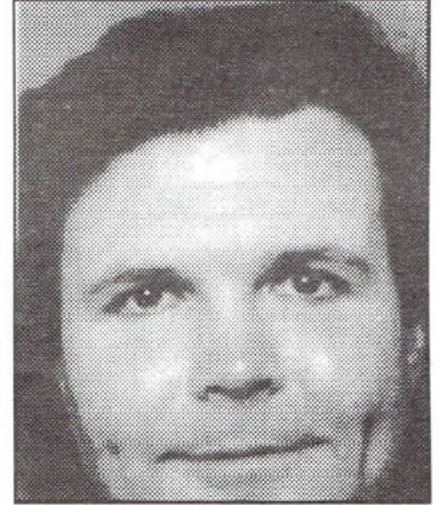


Fig. 6 Sufficient hair allows lower hairline in this person.

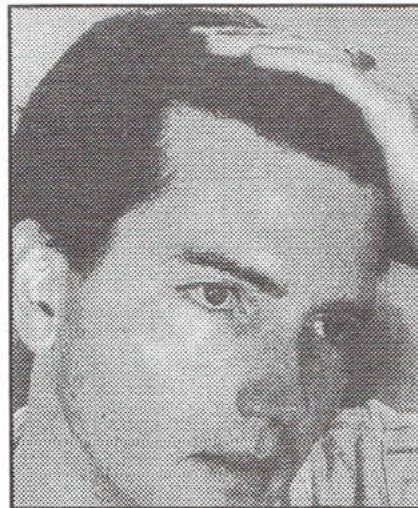


Fig. 7 If there is less hair, hairline will be higher.

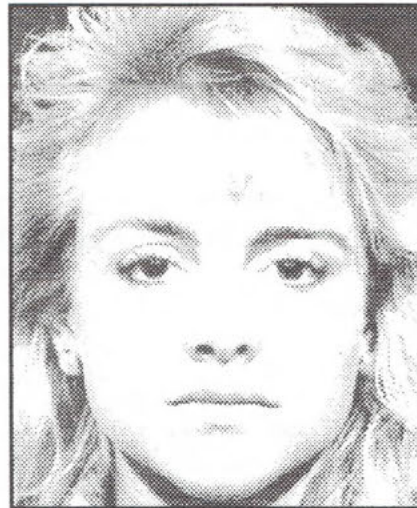


Fig. 8 Hairline of a female. Note temporal area.



Fig. 9 Compare this result of punch grafts with Fig. 5.

Bits n Pieces

Transgender Studies in Recent Academic History

By Marisa Richmond, Ph.D.

The 1996 annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians included a session that featured two papers on transgendered topics. The session was titled *Perverse Methodologies: Interpretive Problems in the Historical Representation of Queer Identities*. The first paper was delivered by Nan Boyd, an Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Colorado, and it was called "Queer History: Methodologies in the Recuperation of Lesbian and Transgender Subjects."

Boyd's paper is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes the life and activities of Babe Bean, who lived in Stockton and San Francisco, California at the end of the Nineteenth Century. In 1898, Bean became Jack Garland and fought in the Phillipines for the U.S. Army during the Spanish American War. Boyd acknowledged Louis Sullivan's earlier work, which noted that Garland was not a lesbian since he preferred men. Garland, however, did face tremendous hostility from society in other ways. Garland was Mexican, and despite the anglicization of his name, the intense nativism that existed in American society at the turn of the century meant that he lived poorly in spite of his upper middle class upbringing. The author shows that transgender identity crosses many lines, such as class and ethnicity. But most importantly, she maintains that female-to-males such as Garland

were most definitely transgendered and were happy living as men despite the prejudice directed towards them, not as a way of escaping it.

The second half of Boyd's study looks at the controversy surrounding the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. She observes that until 1991, the organizers had no official policy regarding transsexuals, and only created a policy in the aftermath of the expulsion of Nancy Jean Burkholder. Burkholder was expelled from the festival in August 1991 after refusing to reveal herself to be transsexual. Burkholder had actually attended the festival the year before without incident. It was in 1992 that the organizers officially announced their "Womyn born Womyn" policy, although no transsexuals were expelled from the festival that year. The issue began to come to a head in 1993, when four male-to-female transsexuals were expelled for violating the rule; this, in turn, led to the origins of Camp Trans. The protests were organized by numerous transgendered activists, including several female-to-male transsexuals, finally led to a "Humyns born Humyn" policy in 1994, when six openly transsexual women were allowed to attend the festival. In essence, they left gender identity to self determination and even decided not to get into the categories of transsexuality. Boyd uses the controversy to show how divisive the issue of gender identity is even within the gay community and how many outside the transgender community see this emerging group as competitive in some way.

A second paper was delivered by Susan Stryker, an independent scholar based in Oakland. It was titled "The White Lady of Dachau: Transsexual Autobiography as Epistemological Critique." This paper is part of a book on which Stryker is working. She stated that the origins of the work began during her visit to the U.S. Holocaust Museum in April 1993. Many within the gay and lesbian community were outraged over the lack of inclusion, but as a transgendered person, she said she felt excluded from the gay and lesbian community. In the early part of this century, German psychoanalyst Magnus Hirschfeld argued that transvestites were distinct from gays and should, therefore, be treated separately. He urged many crossdressers to register with the Weimar government in order to prevent arrest and prosecution as prostitutes. Unfortunately, those records were then used by the Nazis to identify transgendered citizens for incarceration at the Dachau concentration camp. Many were the victims of Nazi medical experiments which, ironically, may have paved the way for Christine Jorgensen's pioneering surgery in 1952. One of the most persistent legends surrounding Dachau, however, is that of the "White Lady," one of the victims of those experiments, whose spectre can reportedly still be seen. Stryker lived near the camp from 1968 to 1971, and heard the legends of this person who, she suggests, may well be the first true transgendered martyr. Although doing autobiographical history is difficult because of our professional desire for subjectivity, Stryker acknowledged that she does bring a unique perspective in bringing more understanding to this legend.

Overall, the panel marked a significant step forward in the treatment of the transgender community by the historical community. It may well have been the first session at a major historical conference to include two serious studies of transgendered people, as well as to have openly transgendered historians discussing their work. As the histo-

ry of the transgender community continues to be written and expands, as the finished products of their research reach the publication stage, the work of Boyd and Stryker will undoubtedly be in the forefront.

Update From Phillida

by Phillida Charlene Hutcheson

I want to do an update on my article "Male-to-Female Transitioning and the Physically Challenged" in Vol. 2 No. 3 of *Chrysalis*. While what I said in the article represents where I was in January 1995 and is still true, a personal item should be updated and two additional items mentioned. In the article I said I did know whether SRS was in my future. Well, that internal debate is resolved. My path led to SRS on October 4, 1995.

While the surgery went fine, I did have a reaction to Demerol which caused some complication in the days immediately after surgery. That does bring up something I did not mention in the article but for which I am very glad. I was in a large medical center, and when there was a problem, other medical specialists were there immediately to help resolve the situation. To reduce some of the risk of surgery, one should take into account the type and size of the hospital where the surgery is performed.

The other is a warm fuzzy issue, and again I was lucky. The way the surgeon and nursing staff deal with you is very important. While they did treat me in a professional manner, there was more than that, because they cared about me as a person. While I was glad to go home, I was also sad to be leaving friends.

How can you tell what the surgeon and staff are like? I am not aware of any detailed exhaustive studies. What you are left with is what accountants call anecdotal evidence. If anyone wants some testimonial evidence about Dr. Eugene Schrang and Theda Clark Medical Center, send me e-mail to phillida@mindspring.com. CQ

Medtalk (Continued from p. 60)

back in the person's history. You may have no interest in pursuing reasons for your disinterest in sex. It may not be important to you, and this is perfectly fine. You exchanged your anatomy to find congruence with your identity—not to necessarily function in that way. That is the important consideration. Lack of sensation may have an anatomic component because of the lack of nerve tissue to the genital area, but it may also have strongly to do with psychologic factors involved in the lack of libido and inability to achieve orgasm.

If it isn't important to you, don't think twice about it. It is a matter of concern, rule out an anatomic reason by visiting a gynecologist and then seek counseling and therapy with a sexologist.

When I have sex, I have pain and often bleeding. I had surgery about 10 years ago, but I have not been examined by a doctor since a surgeon took out a few stitches two weeks after the operation.

Many nontranssexual women have dysparennia (painful sex) and for the same reasons as may exist for you. Pain can be due to psychologic factors, but most often it is because of anatomic concerns. Bleeding certainly has an anatomic origin. Poor healing, tight and restricted vaginal opening, shallow or shortened vaginal length, misdirection of the vaginal canal—these and other anatomic aberrations can be responsible for your discomfort. You must be examined by a gynecologist who has access to your operating surgeon and the surgical reports. As noted, reasons can be varied, and some are simple and easy to eliminate. Others may have some serious healing problems requiring major surgical revisions. An informed and experienced professional is needed to diagnose and treat accurately what is found. By the way, yearly gynecologic evaluations are a must for you in the years to come.

You can write Dr. Kirk with your questions in care of AEGIS at P.O. Box 38114, Blawnox, PA 15734, or via e-mail at SheilaKirk@aol.com. CQ

Medtalk

By Sheila Kirk, M.D.

Why do some surgeons use skin grafts in the creation of a neovagina, while others don't?

For most male-to-female transsexuals, hormone use before surgery will change the diameter and length of the penis. Those surgeons willing to use only penile skin with or without scrotal skin will in most cases sacrifice the size and length of the new vagina. Skin grafts, whatever the arguments pro or con, will afford a more functional vagina. It's a question that must be discussed thoroughly with your surgeon before the procedure takes place. Are you going to engage in sexual relations? "How can I answer that?" you may ask—and rightly so! Often lovemaking just happens no matter what your intentions. Many factors will enter into your consideration. Were you sexually active before surgery? (and that may not be very important). Will you be comfortable psychologically with your role as a female sexual partner? Will you be content to be an asexual individual through your post-operative lifetime? It would seem that the more important questions to pursue have to do with your surgeon's experience with grafts and the results obtained in post-operative evaluations. Ask for accurate statistics about graft failures in patients for the last two or three years. If the surgeon is reluctant to discuss this or seems to be hedging, seek another. But don't shut the door on skin grafts. You may be glad you had such a procedure.

In the past, skin grafts were harvested from the thighs, buttocks, or abdomen. There was considerable pain at the donor sites, and the scars were large and rectangular and quite visible years and even decades after surgery. A technique developed by SRS surgeon Dr. Eugene Schrang results in linear scars which are much less disfiguring. Other surgeons have become adept at using skin flaps to augment penile and scrotal skin (flaps differ from grafts in that they are not detached from and then reattached to the body, but remain connected, preserving blood and nerve connections). Skin grafts require more vigorous dilation than simple inversion surgery, as the body treats them as foreign objects and forms scar tissue. Grafts do provide extra tissue, allowing the surgeon to extend the vagina considerably further than would otherwise be possible. Those who have limited amounts of penile and scrotal tissue

should, as Dr. Kirk advises, consider a skin graft, especially if great vaginal depth is desired— Ed.

I am a postoperative male-to-female transsexual. My surgery took place 2 years ago. Urination is very much a problem for me. I have urinary infections frequently. I don't always have control and I'm up to void at night. Please help!

In the creation of a new urinary passage from the bladder to the urethra, a number of postsurgical complications can take place. The urethral opening may be placed incorrectly (too high or low, with the result that the urinary stream will go to the left or right instead of straight ahead). It may become obstructed or narrowed at the opening (ureatus) or further up its length (a stenosis). Conditions may be such that chronic infection in the bladder may develop secondary to urethral problems or because of the Foley catheter worn for several days post-operation. Infection originating in the bladder, if not properly and completely treated, can result in ascending infection in one or both kidneys. Lack of control and inopportune voiding can take place because of these anatomic misarrangements and/or infection.

Don't suffer with this. See a urologist. Bring your complaint to that specialist and have a thorough and complete evaluation of the urinary system. You should have X-rays and cystoscopy as well as urine cultures initially. With proper diagnosis, proper therapy and management can be instituted.

Sexual relations are just not on my agenda. My surgery took place 5 years ago and I have had sex only a half dozen times since. I have no pain, but I have no sensation or orgasm either. Obviously I have no libido as well. What could be the reason for this?

Some individuals have very low sexual appetite and drive. And to accompany this, sexual performance is unrewarding as well. It's like broccoli: they can take it or leave it— mostly the latter. Many factors are involved, some extending

Concluded on p. 59



Photos from Greece, courtesy of Phaedra Kelly: 1: Botched mastectomy on transwoman. 2: Transwoman who was "necklaced" (set afire) by fascists; 3, 4: Results of police attack on peaceful demonstrators; 5: Group of trans activists. For more information, send e-mail to steen@globalnet.co.uk or write Phaedra Kelly, c/o IGTA, 2 Bank Buildings, School Green Road, Freshwater, I.O.W., PO40 9AJ, UK. To complain to the Greek authorities, write Evagelios Vannopolos, Minister of Justice, Mesogeion 96, 11526, Athens, Greece.





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