



Mariette Pathy Allen

From "If you take my picture, I'll break your camera", yelled in fear on my first visit to Fantasia Fair in '80, to this commemorative bouquet to you, we've wandered many miles together. What an honor to have been part of this most remarkable cradle for social experiment! As a newcomer to the Fair, I learned that crossdressing is more than a party: it's all about the difference between sex and gender; an essay punctuated by holding, hugging, tears, laughter, and dancing. Over the years, every time I think I understand what's going on, I'm surprised by some fresh variation, am giggled out of complacency, and thrilled to re-frame my view. I look forward to the euphoria that keeps arising from the breaking down of barriers.

Together, we've grown in our vision of the mission and potential of transgendered people. You have allowed me to be a catalyst to the emergence of your hidden self, and to help give that self permanence. With your increasing acceptance of your complete self has come pride in who you are now, the courage to reclaim your sacred traditions, and the beginning of a vision of yourselves as leaders, teachers, and healers.

Thank you for letting me be a part of your lives, for helping me to see who I need to be, and for allowing me to share this ever-evolving adventure. And now, let's get on with the party!

In love and gratitude,
Mariette

Fantasia Fair, October '94
Provincetown, Massachusetts

Looking Back:

A Transgender Retrospective

Honoring Fantasia Fair

Photography by Mariette Pathy Allen

It was 16 years ago and an oft-recounted chance meeting in New Orleans that brought Mariette to our community, if you could call it that back then. Her initial fascination with us invited her to take a closer look, and when she did, she saw something quite different from what had previously been shown. In her innate humanity, she recognized the important work that needed to be done.

So she set about changing the way crossdressers were seen. She photographed us the way we really are. She took us out of the sleazy nightclub, the combat zone, the hooker's outfits. She put us in the light of day, in presentable clothes, and, most importantly, with our loved ones. In the beginning, she didn't even know if she would be able to photograph families. But she worked hard to gain our confidence. As we saw her portraits of us which depicted crossdressing in a newly positive and palatable light, we learned to trust her good instincts. We welcomed her into our hearts, where she put her tools to good use in helping us to construct a positive self image and self-confidence. Today, we take work like hers for granted, and for that we have her to thank.

In honor of the twentieth anniversary of Fantasia Fair, Mariette has assembled a presentation giving special emphasis to this seminal event. The Fair was a major catalyst for Mariette. Although she knew crossdressers before attending The Fair, it was her experience at The Fair that galvanized and gave her purpose. For many of us, The Fair was the birthplace of self-esteem, a school in the best sense. It has been a specially vibrant playground for body, mind, and soul. Here we learned from our elders, acquired experience, debated among ourselves, and developed wisdom.

Mariette's deep concern for our sensibilities has always prevented her from showing photos which might compromise our self-image, despite the attention it could have brought her. Now that we're beginning to enjoy a measure of self-esteem and confidence, she can begin to explore with us a broader range of emotional imagery. Our public face as responsible, family-oriented people of dignity and substance is established. Let us reflect on our progress, and take pride in our accomplishment. Witness the growth of our spiritual seeking, where before self-esteem was goal enough. Witness our increasing political awareness, where before we dared not attract attention to ourselves. Witness our loosening up of categories, where before we found all differences great. Witness our humor, where before we were laughter's target. Remember the pain and shame of our past, where today we walk together in strength and pride.

Thank you, Mariette, for your gift of the insight gained from close examination of an instant in time. Thank you for showing us parts of ourselves that we might otherwise have overlooked. Thank you, most of all, for giving out of love.

∞ Nancy Reynolds Nangeroni, curator ∞



Fantasia Fair '94

Celebrating two decades of a
cherished destination, safe harbor, and
point of embarkation.

- ☯ A Cherished Destination: An offering of enjoyment, entertainment, sisterhood, and friendship, that in quality and quantity is available nowhere else.
- ☯ A Safe Harbor: An opportunity to explore personal issues about our own identity without fear of judgment or rejection.
- ☯ A Point of Embarkation: A place to begin the rest of our lives.