



News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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Renaissance

USPS Sex Policy May Cover TGs

On November twentieth 1995 ICTLEP received a fax of "NAPS" Vol 47 #16 with an article, a portion of which reads as follows:

The US Postal Service has completed a new policy that prohibits discrimination in the postal workplace based on sexual orientation or identity. Postmaster General Marvin Runyon issued the following statement about the policy: "The Postal Service is committed to ensuring a workplace that is free of discrimination and to fostering a climate in which all employees may participate, contribute and grow to their fullest. We recognize and value our diverse workforce and are committed to fair treatment of all employees.

"Harassment and disparate treatment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or identity will not be permitted or condoned in the Postal Service. This policy does not alter current standards of conduct and dress for postal employees. All Postal Service employees have the responsibility to support this policy and to take appropriate steps to ensure a workplace free of discrimination against any person based on his or her sexual orientation or

identity." [emphasis ours]

Upon receiving the fax, ICTLEP Executive Director, Phyllis Randolph Frye, offered the following observations: "I believe that the 'or identity' language along with the 'or perceived' language was probably designed to cover the transgender community. I believe this even more because of the care that was taken to mention that dress standards were not altered.

"While ICTLEP cannot take credit for this policy, we do hope to honor the person or persons who did. ICTLEP began to educate the community in 1991 about the dismal state of transgender law, to design strategies for progressive change, and to provide tools for transgendered people to work on their own for legal change. In 1991, there was a lot going on in the transgender community, but there was a vacuum with respect to transgender law.

"Employment Policy has been in the ICTLEP name and focus since it began. While we're not the only organization in the the movement for transgender employment protection, ICTLEP has been and remains one of the leaders in the struggle."

Another Boston Transsexual Murdered

by Nancy Nangeroni

Following the May 15 strangulation-stabbing of Deborah Forte in Haverill, Mass., another Boston-area transsexual, Chanel Pickett, 23, was strangled to death in nearby Watertown, Mass., early on the morning of November 20, 1995. Arrested in the case was William C. Palmer, 34, a manager of computer programming for Unisys in Somerville. Pickett was found dead in Palmer's room around 1:00 PM, about eight hours after the murder occurred. Palmer's attorney called the police.

Palmer is reputed to be an admirer of pre-op transsexuals who frequented the Playland, one of Boston's two transsexual pick-up bars. On the evening of November 19, Palmer drove Pickett and her twin transsexual sister Gabrielle to their Chelsea apartment, staying for about 90 minutes to drink, and do cocaine he had purchased near the Playland. Palmer apparently attempted to persuade the twins to participate in a three-way tryst. Only

Chanel packed an bag and went home with him. According to Gabrielle, Chanel did not regard Palmer as a trick, but as a potential relationship partner.

Palmer's roommates stated he and Pickett spent five hours in Palmer's room, during which time an argument broke out. The roommates knocked on the door, but were assured everything was all right. Shortly thereafter, the conflict escalated and Pickett was strangled to death.

Despite admitting his guilt, Palmer entered a "Not Guilty" plea in Waltham District Court, basing his defense on grounds he was unaware Pickett was "a he," and that this discovery led directly to her strangulation. Buttressing Palmer's claim of ignorance, defense attorney Walter B. Prince, quoted in the *Boston Globe*, branded allegations "absurd" that Palmer dated transsexuals or knew Pickett had male genitals. He said, "We have it on pretty solid ground that any accusations of that nature are certainly false

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Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Wilmington, Delaware: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808.

New Jersey

South Jersey/Shore Area: Chapter operations have been suspended pending the location of a new meeting site. Call 610-975-9119 for info.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia: Write Renaissance GPC, 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, Pa. 19087. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia. Doors open 8 pm all year 'round. Call 610-975-9119 for information.

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

Affiliates

California

Orange County: Powder Puffs of California, PO Box 1088, Yorba Linda, CA 92686, or email to <ppoc@aol.com>

Connecticut

Bridgeport/New Haven: connecticutView, c/o Denise Mason, PO Box 2281, Devon, CT 06460. Monthly newsletter and activities.

Georgia

Atlanta: The American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), PO Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 or call 404-939-0244, or email to <aegis@mindspring.com>. Information resources & referrals.

Atlanta: Atlanta Gender Explorations (A.G.E.), PO Box 77562, Atlanta, GA 30357, 404-939-2128.

Illinois

Chicago: The Chicago Gender Society, PO Box 578005, Chicago, IL 60657, 708-749-1202.

Louisiana

New Orleans: The Gulf Gender Alliance, PO Box 870213, New Orleans, LA 70187-1300.

Maryland

An affiliate is forming in the Baltimore area. Write Tran°Quility, c/o Colleen N. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] Baltimore, MD, 21218-3912.

New Jersey

N. Central Jersey: Monmouth/Ocean Trans Gender, (MOTG), write PO Box 8243, Red Bank, NJ 07701 or call 908-219-9094.

New York

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

Long Island: New York GIRL & Partners, PO Box 456, Centereach, NY 11720, Call 516-732-5115 for info.

Long Island: Long Island Femme Expression (LIFE), PO Box 3015, Lake Ronkonkoma, NY 11779-0147.

Oklahoma

Central Oklahoma: Sooner Diversity, part of the Central Oklahoma Transgender Alliance (COTA). Contact, Rachel [REDACTED], P.O. Box 575, Norman, OK 73070.

Pennsylvania

Lehigh Valley/Pocono area: Northeastern Pa. Transgender Alliance, NEPTGA, meetings on the second Saturday of the month in the Allentown area. Call for directions and more information, 610-821-2955.

Renaissance News & Views

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

Local Calendar

January

- 6 Ren. LSV meeting
- 13 Ren. South Jersey-suspended
- 13 Ren. Delaware
- 13 NEPTGA, Allentown
- 20 Ren. GPC
- 27 Balto. Affiliate

February

- 3 Ren. LSV meeting
- 10 Ren. South Jersey-suspended
- 10 Ren. Delaware
- 10 NEPTGA, Allentown
- 17 Ren. GPC
- 24 Balto. Affiliate

News Beat & Reminder



Oh, what a year! We found out that **Tom Cruise** dressed up when he was twelve. **Howard Stern** dressed up for his new book, and **RuPaul** signed contracts to dress up ads for **M.A.C. Cosmetics** and **Bailey's Irish Cream**. **Charles Busch** did his first acting role in male attire. **Wesley Snipes** and **Patrick Swayze** did their first acting in dresses (as far as we know) and the costumes from **Priscilla Queen of The Desert**, which went way beyond simple dresses, picked up an Oscar. Yes it was a year fraught with drag happenings. Let's hope the trend continues and we get even more good transgender films and exposure in 1996. Now, look out..... here comes my first column of the year.

Return of The "Sex Change Cop"

Janet Aiello seems to be doing all she can to provoke the Hoboken Police department. New York's Channel 11 reported Aiello was called in for a disciplinary hearing. Her attorney used the occasion to maintain the department was watching every little move she made and would essentially hound her into an early retirement, since she makes the big macho cops uncomfortable. Now that's an easy position for us, as members of the transgender community, to sympathize with. However, every report I have seen about Lt. Aiello indicates that she has not tried to cooperate with the department at all. The hearing on December first took place because she went on an eight month leave of absence and

never responded to the Chief of Police's request for her to meet with him and let him know when she was coming back to work. Refusing to do that sounds a little like insubordination to me, and possibly, a way to generate a hefty lawsuit and pick up a little spare change.

Whatever Aiello's hidden agenda may be, it's nice to note that Channel 11 was politically correct throughout its report and used the proper pronoun when they referred to Aiello. Aiello's mother talked on camera about how she supported her "daughter" in everything. Apparently Aiello was more communicative with her mother than she was with her employer. In any case, good luck Janet. A girl does have to eat and pay the rent.

Look At The Hooters On That Guy

The oh so tasteful restaurant chain, **Hooters** (it's not called that cause owls live in the kitchen) is being hassled by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to hire male wait staff. The EEOC's position being that Hooters is discriminating against qualified men who need a job and are kept out of work because of the female only hiring policy. I say they *should* hire men. Oh, not like the guy in the ads Hooters has been running to win their case in the court of public opinion. (Jessica Brandon sent me a story from the newspaper and I even saw a billboard with a photo of the "Hooters Man." He looks a little like **Tom Selleck** and is

wearing a wig, mustache, Hooters Girl costume and simpering a bit. Of course, he looks ridiculous, and I wouldn't want to order a burger off of him.) What I contemplate is a method whereby Hooters could satisfy the technical letter of the law and do a public service to the transgender community. They should hire transgendered Hooters Girls. Many of us have the necessary equipment for the job and need the money to maintain that equipment. If Hooters could offer a great health plan that covered a girl's endocrinology bills, and maybe, after a few years as part of the "male" wait staff, covered transition costs, I'm sure they'd have no trouble at all filling out their employment roster. It wouldn't be quite what the government had in mind but I think it's a great idea. Why don't we all at least send our photos to Hooters and offer them this solution to their dilemma? I know they're gonna thank us for it. Maybe we can get free food coupons!

Here She Is...

Gentle readers, 'tis the season for pageantry and spectacle. Female Impersonator beauty contests have been going strong as an outlet for gay cross-dressers with a yen for glamour and this year is no exception. Back in December I witnessed the **Miss Bucks County, Miss New Hope Female Impersonator U.S. of A. Pageant 1996** (what's up with these long titles?) at the local fire hall in New Hope, Pennsylvania. **Monica Rey**, the Queen of New Hope, was co-MC along with an entertaining lady called **Harmonica Sunbeam**. I cheered the winner, of the Miss Bucks portion, **Cherry Pie**. (I was seated at a table with her boyfriend, so I had to cheer) All of the girls performed flawlessly in their talent competition, but Miss Pie took us to Broadway with a production number from *The Kiss of The Spider Woman*. The only thing that came close was **Joy's** rendition of a number from *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*, featuring a full line up of happy go lucky prostitutes (even a GG) and

continued next page

News Beat...

dancing cowboy Johns. (Oh, those country folk know how to have a good time.) That, along with her other attributes brought Joy the Miss New Hope title. Jody Lynn was appointed First Alternate.

The Grande Dame of New Hope, **Mother Capalucci** (one of the oldest drag queens I know) presented the **Daneé Russo Miss Congeniality Award**, so named in honor of Daneé Russo, a longtime member of the New Hope scene who recently passed away. There were special performances by past winners and the emcees. Afterwards we all hurried off to The Cartwheel for the pageant after party.

All of the winners will participate in the **Miss Liberty State U.S. of A. Pennsylvania Pageant**, March 29th and 30th at the Doubletree Hotel in Center City Philadelphia. (Site of the 1993 IFGE Convention.) The extra entertainment is a little more high-powered, to go with the upscale venue. The special guest is **RuPaul**. Gee, if someone planned ahead, maybe we could have a Renaissance table at the event. Anyone wanting more information on the pageant just past or the March event may contact the promoter, producer and director, Rick Crosby at 215-██████████.

...But Before That

You'll have another chance to glam up in February when they hold **The Second Annual Miss Northern States U.S. of A. Pageant** on the 10th, at the Warwick Hotel. The festivities begin at six thirty in the evening with a VIP reception hosted by Miss Northern States 1995, **Kierra**, and **Maya Douglas**, Miss U.S. of A. 1995. General admission ticket holders are let in at 7PM and the show starts at eight. Miss Northern States is a preliminary pageant that sends the winner and runner-up to the **U.S. of A. National Competition**. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to *People Living With AIDS*. For ticket informa-

tion and reservations, call 215-232-2391 or 215-735-6114.

...And After That

You are cordially invited by **H.M.I.S.M. Empress IX Philomena of Faith, Hope and Cartier**, and **The Imperial Court of New York** to buy yet another formal gown and attend the **Tenth Annual Night of A Thousand Gowns**. This is a must for those seriously addicted to glamour. There really will be a thousand gowns, give or take five hundred. It happens Saturday April 20th, 1996 at the Sheraton New York Hotel on Seventh Avenue at 52nd Street in New York City. Tickets are a bit pricey but if you've got the spare change it is a glittering evening. For more information call: H.M.I.S.M. Empress Philomena, 212-██████████, Thom Hansen, President ICNY 212-██████████ or Empress VII Coco La Chine, 212-██████████. Imagine that, you can get the Empress on the phone just like any other person. If the thought of talking to royalty is too much, try writing to: Imperial Court of New York, 61 East 8th Street, No.149, New York, NY 10003. Keep an eye open for me. I'll probably be sitting in the lobby watching everyone come in. I've never been able to afford a ticket so why should '96 be different?

Whip Me, Beat Me, Buy Me A Leather Bra

The female-only S/M club in Philadelphia, **Female Trouble** (I love that name) made a major decision that affects those in the transgender community who enjoy sadism and masochism, as they wrestle with gender issues. After debating for nine months, about whether or not they should admit transgendered members, the group finally reached this decision: "Membership is open to all women over the age of 18 who have a legitimate interest in S/M play with other women... Female Trouble recognizes that gender identity for some of us is fixed, and (for) others fluid. To that end, membership is extended to those who self-identify as women, and to those who have been raised as female but are now exploring

their gender identity..."

This means that both MtF and FtM individuals are welcome at Female Trouble. So, if you enjoy that kind of trouble, why not give them a call. The number is 215-732-6898.

Another Type of TG Trouble

It seems that *one* segment of society appreciates transsexuals. Unfortunately, it's the criminal segment. A number of criminals have caught on to the fact that when someone transitions they leave an old identity just hanging around, collecting dust. Those old identities have credit histories and the crooks use them to obtain new credit cards. Be a smart gender-swapper and take a tip from Miss Gruff, the transgender crime dog, actually, several tips. Make sure your Credit Bureau Information is changed. Notify all your creditors, current and past that you have changed your name and give them specific orders to never issue cards, information or mailings in your old name. Be sure to keep a certified copy of your name change paperwork in a safe place, like a safe deposit box, and just to be sure, carry a copy with you at all times in case you have to prove that while you may be a brand new person, no one else is entitled to make nefarious use of the "old" you.

Be a Writer, Or Just Look Like One

Don't spend your life in obscurity. If you've read a book you know would be of interest to the transgender community, or viewed a video that tells it like it is, write us a review for **Book Nook**. The Book Nook Babe needs more stuff to watch and read, so do your part and type up a short review (please) and send the hard copy or floppy disk to our Editorial Office, c/o Renaissance, PO Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020. See ya in print.

New Leaders Take The Reins

Congratulations to all new Chapter Leaders and officers. If you send us a chapter press release with everyone's name and title, we'll publish it so the whole Renaissance organization will

know who you are. If you have good photos of the new chapter team send those as well. Get everything to the Editorial Office by the middle of January and look for yourselves in the February issue. My, that's the Swimsuit Issue. How time flies when you're grinding out twelve newsletters a year. We got a good response to our swimsuit requests so several bathing beauties will brighten your day in February.

Many thanks to Linda Chenoweth who led the National Board of Directors in 1995. She is the first genetic female to lead a national transgender organization and she did a great job. Stepping into her power pumps for 1996 is someone who has prior experience in the job, Angela Gardner (hey, that's me!). My focus for 1996 will be the streamlining of our organization. Sometimes people who come to Renaissance for help with gender issues end up falling through the cracks. It's sometimes difficult to maintain a high level of commitment in an all-volunteer organization (no one at Renaissance is paid for their work). So, while we do our best, when we fail to help someone and they disappear, we know we could have done a better job. I'll be working on plugging up the cracks and making sure that everyone who comes to us is properly served because, "The transgendered customer is always right."

A Loan To The Library

The Renaissance National Library could use your help. If you are in the Greater Philadelphia area and would

like to donate some time to help get the library more user-friendly contact the Library Boss Lady, Lee Etscovitz at the national office or by email lee@voicenet.com and see what kind of filing and organization she needs to have done. If you are not in the area and would still like to help out the Library, consider donating a book or giving us a donation to purchase a book. Talk to Lee about what she would like to add to the Library.

What The Heck Do You Think?

This newsletter is your window on the transgender community. For some people, it is their only contact with others like themselves. For others, it is a few pieces of paper they get in the mail and glance at now and then. Whatever purpose the newsletter serves for you, we'd like to know about it. Without feedback on how we're doing, we can't adapt to serve your needs. Write us a letter, send us email, throw a rock with a note through the Editorial Office window, but let us know if you like something, don't like something or wonder what the heck we meant by that. All the contact info is on Page 2.

Casting Call

Ok girls, here's a chance for all of you transgendered Norma Desmond's and Marilyn Monroe's to take a shot at stardom. A feature film (untitled so far) is going to shoot in New York City this coming Spring. **Bambie Sente Casting** has the task of finding four transgendered actresses for principal

roles. That's what those of us in the business call "a speaking part" or, "Oh Boy! Big Bucks!" Of course, since I heard about it first, I've already sent my picture and resume but there are four parts available so there's plenty of room for all of us.

The breakdown is as follows: One she-male/pre-op TS, forty years old, and preferably African/American. One MtF, TS, forty years old. One MtF/androgynous TG, 18 to 25 years old. One MtF, thirty to forty years old, of the Asian persuasion. Those who know me will attest that I am not suited for either the Asian or African-American parts but, maybe with a little coaching... Nah, I'll be satisfied with the other older part. (I can't play 18 to 25 either.) If you have acting ability, experience and commitment, send your photo and resume to Bambie Sente Casting, 48 Eight Ave., Suite 224, New York, NY 10014. The breakdown says "Serious answer only" at the bottom. So, don't be a dilettante, be a pro. Make sure your phone number is on your picture and don't send anything kinky or naughty.

That's it for another sparkling column of news you can use, and abuse. Keep those cards and letters coming and auf weidersehen my little muffins.



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TS Murder...

and out of character for a gentleman who has lived the normal upstanding life that he has. He has worked every day of his life since high school and has deep roots in the community." Prince was further quoted in the *Boston Herald* as stating, "clearly [there] was a horrendous fight that occurred, and my client [Palmer] received multiple bruises and bites from this assailant." Prince did not address whether the bruises Palmer suffered might have been incurred while the victim struggled for her life.

Palmer's assertion of ignorance was refuted by patrons of the Playland in the strongest possible terms, including Gabrielle Pickett, the dead girl's sister. Typical of comments were those of one transvestite patron, who declared, "[Palmer] had approached me one time. He asked me if I had real

breasts. I said, 'No, because I'm not a pre-op.' That's when he seemed to lose interest." Another patron, 30-year old transsexual Toyaer Shearrion, who dated Palmer four times, stated, "He knew what he was doing. He loves them [transsexuals]."

Prosecuting Assistant District Attorney Thomas O'Reilly reputedly accepted Palmer's plea of initial ignorance of Pickett's gender. However, according to newspaper accounts at the bail hearing, O'Reilly quoted Palmer as declaring to the dead woman, just hours before he strangled her, "You're the best-looking pre-op transsexual I've ever seen."

In the words of Toyaer Shearrion, Chanel was "a beautiful person. She was always there for you if you needed something." As with Brandon Teena and Deborah Forte, the Transsexual Menace and friends will hold a Memorial Vigil on the opening day of the murder trial.

Editorial Comments by Ms. Nangeroni

Chanel Pickett had been fired by NYNEX last February, after defending herself against a co-worker's harassment. Currently, there is no legal recourse for transsexual persons who are fired from their jobs for reason of their gender, and honest transgender folks are rarely hired. Chanel turned to sex work to save money for surgery and medical needs. It is fair to ask if Chanel would be alive today had NYNEX supported her instead of joining with the worker who harassed her and firing her. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) will, if amended as planned, provide legal recourse in these situations, securing for transgender folks the right to work without harassment for their gender. Unfortunately, ENDA is not yet law.



Labels: Who Needs 'Em?

by Jessica Brandon

After reading Rachel [redacted]'s rather interesting piece on gender terminology, I felt compelled to add my five cents (factoring inflation) because it amazes me how so many terms for transgendered people have cropped up over the last several years, like roaches crawling out of the woodwork. Jeez Louise! This community has more labels for it's members than items on a Chinese take-out menu!

So, I come to you with this question regarding terminology, please forgive me if I sound Forrest-Gump-stupid when I ask this, but—Why?

When I started wearing women's clothing at the tender age of 14, I had no label to attach to what I was doing. It was ten long, frustrating years before I finally stumbled onto an issue of *Penthouse Forum* which featured the magic word right on the cover—CROSSDRESSING! Seeing this, I said to myself: "So that's what it's called!" Later on, I learned the other word, transvestite, which I didn't par-

ticularly care for then and don't now.

In the good ol' days, I was content with just those two terms, thinking that was all there was. Then I entered the wide, wonderful world of the transgendered community and things suddenly became somewhat confused. All of a sudden, I learned there were heterosexual crossdressers (or transvestites), homosexual crossdressers (or transvestites), transsexuals, drag queens, female impersonators, androgynes, transgendered, bi-gendered, cross-gendered, etc., etc., etc. More labels than you can shake a WonderBra at!

Okay, okay! Before someone gets their panties in a bunch, I know full well that our community is incredibly multi-faceted, made up of all sorts of different people, each laying claim to a specific term, and, in some cases, protecting it with ferocious fervor, but where does the labeling end?

When I came out of the closet in 1991, I was already safe and secure in the knowledge of who and what I was, without the benefit of therapy, which

might be viewed by some as a minor miracle. (It didn't hurt that I didn't suffer from gender dysphoria.)

But what about today's newcomers? To enter this community and be bargained by all these terms, not to mention the lack of knowledge regarding the division of sex and gender certainly won't help ease a newcomer's bewilderment over her own identity. In my position as a local outreach representative, I try to de-emphasize the importance of labels, especially to someone who might be unsure as to what they are in the first place. I think it's crucial for a person to decide on their own just who and what they are, minus outside influences.

As for me, whenever anyone asks what I am, I look them straight in the eye and tell them I'm a Democrat. That's a hell of a lot simpler than "African-American, Heterosexual, Retired Military Crossdresser." Beyond that, the only other label I'll answer to, the one label that should count the most in the hearts and minds of all of us, is this one... Human Being. Nothing more, nothing less. Think about it, people.





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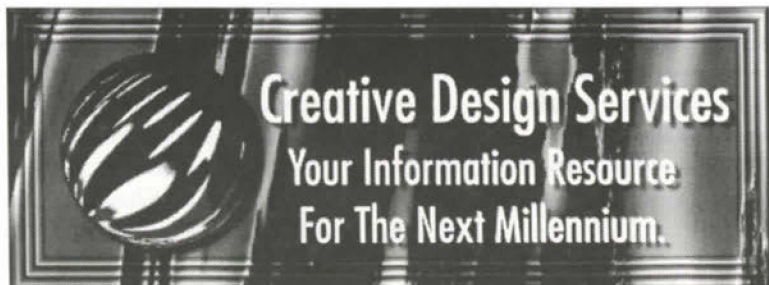
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The much anticipated "Anthology" collection has been released memorializing the milestone 25th Anniversary and I'm sure it was in everyone's Christmas stocking. No, not the Beatles' CD. I'm talking about the Vis A Vis "Anthology" marking my 25 monthly columns since I began.

It's all in there from my first column, where I trashed Jane Kemper Bentley, to the ones in which I trashed Cassie [redacted] and Kiki [redacted] to the most recent ones where I called Phaedra Kelly a horse's patoot. Yes, it's just chock full of that kind of community building spirit this column has become known for. Maybe I should turn over a new leaf for 1996 and be nice to everyone. What d'ya say? Nah, I didn't think so...

And The Survey Says...

Allison Marsh's column in the *Emerald City News* from Seattle, Washington, carried the results of a survey conducted by the Tempe, Arizona, Alpha Zeta chapter of Tri-Ess. The survey results were pretty interesting and represented the answers of 73% of the Zeta-girls' 47 members.

Some of the questions were rather mundane but some were very revelatory. So, without further ado, this very special episode of *Vis A Vis* takes a look at...

The Private Lives of Crossdressers.

To the question how often would they dress as women if they lived in an ideal universe, 36% of our Tempe Sun-goddesses answered, "all the time." When asked if they would take a hypothetical pill that would transform them

into women without surgery, a whopping 64% said, "Gimme that pill, girlfriend." On the converse, only 27% said they would take a hypothetical pill that would "cure" them of the desire to crossdress.

On more reality-based questions, the number of members who have had some electrolysis was 24%. That's close to one in four for you mathophobes. And 21%, or one in five, have used female hormones at some time. The survey upped the ante in a series of questions as follows... "fantasized about having sex reassignment surgery" got a 73% positive answer... "Seriously considered SRS" got a 21% positive response... "presently planning on SRS" was answered "yes" 9% of the time.

And before I analyze the answers, let's take a look at a few more survey questions. Asked how often they go out in public dressed as women, 61% said only once a month; 21% said once a week. Nobody admitted going out dressed daily, and 3% said they never went out in public crossdressed. To the question "how often do you wear some article of women's clothing while dressed as a man" a surprising 43% said "always." Also noteworthy was that 70% of respondents were married.

I always take survey results with a large grain of salt, but I find it remarkable that a Tri-Ess chapter has 64% of its membership who would like to magically transform themselves into women; 36% who would like to live full-time if circumstances were perfect; 21-24% who have experimented with either hormones or electrolysis; and a huge 73% who have even fantasized about TS surgery. That's a helluva lot of real and fantasized trans-

forming going on in an organization that is devoted to the ideal of heterosexual crossdressing without a taint of transsexualism in its ranks. A less diplomatic person than myself might even say this particular sorority of Tri-Ess girls are a bunch of secret transsexuals.

So are the members telling the truth in their survey answers? I think so, because they seem to be honest in the answers about the amount of time they really spend dressed as women. Only one in five go out publicly even once a week. Not a whole lot less (15%) admitted they only go out once a year. So they aren't inflating their level of real activity to match their fantasy transformations.

I wonder what the leadership of Tri-Ess would have to say about this survey. I can't imagine a similar survey culled from open membership groups would be any different insofar as the members might fantasize one thing while living quite a different thing. But as *Seinfeld* once quipped, "Not that there's anything wrong with that..."

Meet me In St. Louis

The Gazette is the newsletter of the **St. Louis Gender Foundation** and it's one of the better group newsletters in the country—and I've seen 'em all.

The St. Louis girls seem like a lively bunch and they have an interesting mix of group events to spice up their monthly routine. In September, they held a "Sexy Legs" contest and there is a group photo of the fifteen contestants. The three finalists all look pretty sexy indeed, although you can't actually see their prize winning gams.

Keeping up the level of fun, they had a "Undercoverwear" lingerie party and demonstration scheduled for November. For December they planned a "Big Hair" contest, the winner of which receives the "Wigstock" award.

A few of the support groups around the country—including the venerable Tiffany Club in Massachusetts—are having problems with membership retention and are battling a growing feeling of ennui among their core member base. Maybe if more leaders threw a little good-natured fun into the activities, as the St. Louis ladies do, some of

the boredom of the usual meeting routines would be dispelled. There are a lot of different ways to offer support and having a few laughs every now and then is a nice way to show that we're here for each other.

Lead, Follow, Or Get Out Of The Way

Vicki [redacted] wrote a long article titled *The Four Signs of Dysfunctional Leadership* in the November issue of *Femme Forum* for the **Tau Chi** Chapter of Tri-Ess in Houston, Texas. Vicki's article was written in anticipation of their sorority's board elections and her hope that voters will be able to recognize good leaders from poor leaders. She pointed out four areas that separate good leaders from bad. They are "Ego," "Integrity," "Responsibility," and "Change."

The ego-driven leader is likely to run the group in a manner that maximizes her own image and recognition factors. They are prone to go outside the group's bylaws because they think they are too big to be held back by someone else's rules. And they drive other good people away from leadership positions because they do not appreciate their assistants.

Integrity as a desired quality in leaders should go without saying, but Vicki points out because leaders lacking in integrity can be hard to recognize before it's too late. She says that while the ego-driven leader is often tripped up by her overt behavior, the integrity-poor leader will be operating "behind closed doors." She also says that it isn't only personal integrity that is important in leaders, but that they govern with integrity to the principles on which the group was founded.

In the area of Responsibility, Vicki warns against the power-seekers who crave the idea of leadership while abdicating the true responsibilities of the job. This is a real danger in crossdressing groups where the masculine ego can feel compelled to "be in charge" while the realities of leading a support organization can be difficult, i.e., integrating the job into a person's everyday schedule, perhaps being more open about her crossdressing.

Leaders must be open to "Change" when called for by circumstances, but careful not to abandon successful traditional policies purely for the sake of change. Personal growth is a form of change. Likewise, the evolution of a group is a form of change. Leaders must be responsive to personal and group growth for continued success without stagnation. Leaders of groups in trouble (and there are several distressed organizations around the country right now) need to analyze the true nature of the problem and make critical changes to address the problem. Otherwise, as Vicki points out, it is simply "rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

The quality of leadership in transgender organizations is always a hot topic. A really poor leader—or group of leaders—can set back, or ruin a good organization. But even a great leader will only have limited success if the membership is apathetic. The success of our support groups depends on leadership, yes, but also on the amount of input and enthusiasm of the membership. As members elect new leaders, they should bear in mind that they, too, have a responsibility to help make the organization successful by supporting the programs, policies, and activities of those they elect.

Hooters, And The Men Who Grow Them

The Seahorse Magazine from New South Wales, Australia, carried an article called *Man Trouble*, originally published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper.

Of all the many forms of trouble men get into, this article dealt with men who grow female-like breasts. While this may seem like a blessing for certain transgenderists, most men who experience over-development of breast tissue find this embarrassing and troublesome.

Breast development (gynecomastia) in men is not uncommon and usually comes about at very early ages or in later years. It is usually associated with changes in hormone levels, e.g., in newborn males the breast are swollen as a result of higher than normal estrogen levels received from their mother's

womb. In later years, breast enlargement may indicate medical problems with the liver, thyroid, or kidneys. Certain medicines that either contain estrogen or other female hormones can account for some breast enlargement.

There are certain circumstance that are more interesting than the natural reasons for breast enlargement in males. Alcohol abuse damages the liver and can alter the male hormone balance causing breast swelling. Illegal use of anabolic steroids has accounted for breast development in some athletes. Amphetamines, heroin and marijuana also can affect hormone levels and cause breast enlargement. Some workers at a maker of oral contraceptives began noticing breast development due to absorption of estrogen through their skin. Likewise, vaginal creams have caused breast development in males who came in contact with it, presumably in large quantities.

They say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing and this brief synopsis of male breast development should not be the basis for anyone to go out and experiment in self-hooter enhancement. If I see any of our subscribers taking deep breaths outside the birth control pill factory, or with fingers sticky from gobs of vaginal cream, while at the same time drinking cheap whiskey straight from the bottle and toking on a joint in hopes of being the next Dolly Parton, I'll be very disappointed. Not terribly surprised... but disappointed nonetheless.

Busted-In More Ways Than One

The Paradise Tales newsletter of the **Paradise Club** in Parma, Ohio, carried a news piece from Colorado Springs, where authorities charged Sean O'Neill, a FtM impersonator (she does not identify herself as a transsexual) with criminal deception and sexual assault after she had consensual sex with four teenage girls who believed she was a man, as she had presented herself. The young women in the case originally declined to cooper-

continued on page 11



Gender Reflections

by **Barbara F. Anderson**
M.S.W., Ph.D.

The Silence of the Lambs

No, this is not a review of the cannibalistic thriller but a paraphrase of a chapter title in Kate Bornstein's **Gender Outlaw**. (Thank you, R., who lent me this book because she knows how much I have to learn about the transgender situation.)

Kate writes of the silence of transgendered people who not only linger in the shadows of society at large, but do not even talk to one another. To those of you active in Renaissance, you may think I am preaching to the choir. After all, you attend meetings, go to parties, hold office in an organization dedicated to the support of the TG community and are not the silent ones. But there are those who dare not emerge even to the safety of such an inviting environment. Quoting Kate, "Simply saying 'Come out, come out, wherever you are,' is not going to bring the multitudes of transgendered

people out into the open. Before saying that coming out is an option (and I believe it's an inevitable step, one we're all going to have to take at some time), it's necessary to get transgendered people talking with one another. The first step in coming out in the world is to come out to our own kind."

What keeps transgendered people silently in the shadows? For one, fear of loss of acceptance by the dominant culture which expresses its disapproval of non-conformists by imposing numerous penalties upon those who stray from its strictures, such as discrimination on the job, in housing, custodial rights, and social stigmatization. For another, the inability to accept oneself as differing from others who have never questioned their gender identity. Language can be one's enemy as the transgender individual tries to conceptualize his/her difference and comes up with words like "freak," "deviant," or having a "condition of transgender-

ism," all of which have pejorative or pathologic connotations.

Another reason to keep shadowed and silent is the fear of not cutting it with other transgendered people. Even the most supportive communities have members who are elitist, exclusionary and doctrinaire with regard to whom they allow into their circle. No one emerges from the shadows a finely turned out image of their experienced gender. Contempt by their own adds insult to the injury inflicted by the larger society and contributes to continued isolation and silence.

This is hardly an inclusive list of conditions mitigating against TG's emergence. But to enumerate more of the too well-known conditions operating is to restate that which has been discussed ad nauseam. Moving on to solutions is more challenging and less frequently addressed. Tune in next month for one person's view of a better world adorned and enriched by the presence of TVs, TSs, androgynes, drag queens, she-males, pre-ops, post-ops and no-ops.

© 1995 by Barbara Anderson. Dr. Anderson is a therapist in the San Francisco Bay Area. She can be reached at 415-776-0139. This article originally appeared in *Devil Woman*, the newsletter of the Diablo Valley Girls.



Groups Celebrate Holiday Season

SoCal Groups Celebrate Together

by Dee Grady, President PPOC

It maybe cold and snowy in the East, but out here in Southern California, we are basking in 70 degree sunny weather. The local weather forecasters are trying to make big news on just how bad the next rain storm is going to be. (Editor's chilly note: Stop yer braggin'.) Meanwhile, any storm which comes in fizzles out, but that doesn't stop the local TG groups from celebrating the Holidays.

On Saturday, December 16th, 77 people gathered at the Beverly Garland Holiday Inn, in Studio City, California. The night's festivities were hosted by **Tri-Ess Alpha Chapter**.

Other groups represented included members of **Neutral Corner** of San Diego, **Born Free** of Riverside, and the Renaissance Education Associations' West Coast affiliate **Powder Puffs of California**. Also, attending the Holiday Party were two of the Community's pioneers, **Carol Beecroft** and **Virginia Prince**.

We had a cocktail hour, dinner, and listened to a duo named Mary and Denise, entertain us with their music and songs. We socialized. We laughed. We danced. Most of all, we took time to relax during this busy holiday season. Next year, it's back to planning meetings, conventions, and outreach. But, on this night we celebrated being ourselves with our friends and loved ones.

Oh, and one more thing! We collected lots of toys for the needy children of Southern California. The toys were divided up among Alpha Chapter, Born Free, and Powder Puffs, to give to local children's charities. I took the toys designated for Orange County to one of the local fire stations, where they were collecting them for the Orange County **Toys for Tots** program.

Renaissance Holiday Party

The Renaissance Holiday party was held the same night as PPOC's, but we weren't blessed with 70° weather.

About 60 brave souls slogged through snow to share a little holiday cheer and dinner. It was a pleasant but quiet gathering.



The Bar People's Ball

by Carol and Babs

"At the Copa! CO-PA-CAH-BANA-NAH! The hottest place north of Havana!" It was hot! It was cool! Formal and classy, yet warm and cozy! It was something of an anachronism, from another era, a setting and happening from an Hollywood movie set. A very special night in the Big Apple, it was the 15th Annual Bar Peoples' Ball.

After leaving our car in the underground garage on 57th street we passed limos pulling up to the Copacabana entrance. Inside, we were greeted at the door and ushered up a short flight of stairs through a hallway to a large, crowded room teeming with voices, where drinks flowed from the open bar and butlered hors d'oeuvres were served. We nibbled, we drank, we mixed, we forgot too many names, and our smiles were met by others.

Too soon, we entered the main room for dinner, and were immediately impressed by the art deco inspired palm tree columns around the inner perimeter of the large, yet cozy, tiered ballroom which helped create a classy, bold, but not garish ambience. This was a strictly "Black Tie Affair," gentlemen in tuxedos, ladies in cocktail dresses or gowns. The mode of dress reflected one's chosen gender of the evening. Glamorous and glitzy, the full house of 350 teemed with animated, yet subdued excitement to the continuous music of a live big band. This was not a show, not a costume ball, but a celebration of the celebrators, the owners, managers and workers of New York's gay bars, cabarets and restaurants.

We were seated at the "Royal" table, one of the tables reserved by the **Imperial Queens and Kings** of NY, LI, NJ, CT, & PA and were surrounded by an impressive group of non-pretentious people that happened to sport impressive titles: Queen Rayette, Lord Tom Tom, Duchess Lisa, Lord Vinny, Princess Sylvia Rae, Lord Tom B., Baroness Nancy from Pennsylvania, and our Royal art expert from New Jersey, the monocled Sir Stefan. The dinner was a feast fit for royalty, not only in portion size but in quality and presentation, and why not, for most of the people there were in the food service industry and were treating themselves! Everything was first class, from the traditional "French service" where our glistening napkins were refolded every time we got up, to the large multicolored salad, the King sized yet surprisingly tender filet mignon, the pleasantly dry Chardonnay, the medium-light yet balanced Cabernet Sauvignon that was constantly available, as well as butlered drinks from the bar. For the tea drinker, a large selection of flavored and herbal varieties were offered in lieu of coffee. Complimenting the large dinner portions, dessert was refreshingly light and well presented; three different sorbets surrounded by a dark chocolate custard arranged in a clever design on a mini tray.

Time literally flew, we danced, we met so many interesting and friendly people. Babs even had her first real experience "following" on the dance floor as two of the gentlemen danced with all the "ladies" at our table. All of

their toes were intact after dancing with her, but just barely! People danced with people. They smiled and laughed and held each other. The evening's only formality was when the people of our table were called up to join Imperial Queen Allyson, King Hassan, Viscountess Lucille, Princess Patti Such, Marquessa Mystique, Kontessa Kittie Holliday, Hurricane Dave West, and others, to honor the **Stonewall Veterans**. Imperial Queen Allyson Allante then read a congratulatory letter from New York's Mayor **Rudy Guiliani** written to extend his appreciation to The Imperial Queens for their accomplishments. We were surprised to be up there but felt honored that we were included.

The evening seemed to be a fantasy: black, white, queen, king, gay, straight—people enjoying each other. The big band sound was certainly audible but did not overpower, conversation was possible for those that wished it. We met the owners and staff of some of the bars and restaurants we frequented and those which we now plan on visiting. We did meet friends we had met at prior Greater NY Gender Alliance functions.

It was an "Evening of Class." Hard to believe, for all the available alcohol, everyone appeared to be under control and appeared to act responsibly. A cozy, classy place to congregate, to communicate, and look "mahvelous." It was almost too good to be true! **Lady Carol and Grande Duchess Babs of Transylvestia** will be there next year! Yes, dahling! You may rise, and take your leave now!



Vis a Vis

ate until pressured by police, their parents, and the D.A.'s office.

As mentioned in the article, this case raises serious questions for any pre-operative or non-operative transgenderists, whether genetically male or

female. On the face of the charges, it appears that not disclosing one's true biological sex could leave that person open to sexual assault charges, even if the act was consensual. The article brings in the case of a MtFF transgendered person who was murdered by her date after her true biology was discovered (see the front page). If non-

disclosure of biology is considered criminal assault, this type of homicide could be "justified" as self defense.

We can only hope that someone in a position of authority in this case will take a step back and examine the ramifications of the hysteria that prompted the charges. May cooler heads prevail.



Hot•Buzz

JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



"There is no truth. There are no facts; just data to be manipulated."

— Glen Frye, The Garden of Allah

Truth? Truth! We don't need no truth. At least **Merissa Sherrill Lynn** didn't need truth or facts in her article *Farewell*. This article has generated some controversy because it was rejected by *Tapestry* the magazine started by Lynn. But *Farewell* managed to get published first in the *Tri-Ess Femme Forum* and more recently in *Cross-Talk* #73. *Cross-Talk's* editor/publisher Kymberleigh Richards felt Lynn's article deserved a wider audience than that afforded by the *Tri-Ess* publication. *Farewell* is a osly fictitious account of why and how Lynn resigned from IFGE. Lynn calims she was forced into retirement which is untrue. The plan for Lynn's transition out of the Executive Director's position was developed, with Lynn's assent, at the IFGE board meeting in March of 1994. Perhaps Lynn never really believed that the IFGE board would find a suitable replacement and when they did, she decided if she couldn't have **all** the marbles, then she's have none. Several board members tried to convince Lynn to stay on the board (her resignation as Exec. Dir. would not have affected her position as an elected board member). She chose to leave the organization, just as she chose to defy the board at almost every turn over the past three years.

Whether you love her, hate her, or are indifferent toher, one thing is absolutely certain: no one but Merissa Sherrill Lynn is directly responsible for her leaving IFGE. And that's a fact.

Get out your markers. It's calendar update time. For 1996, I want to mention the **Night of a Thousand Gowns** on April 20 at the Sheraton New York hotel, 7th Avenue and 52nd Street. For more details contact The Empress Philomena at 212-██████████. Now, jumping to 1997, mark June 19 to 22 as the date for the **Second International Congress on Crossdressing, Sex & Gender Issues** to be held in King of Prussia, Pa. A Call for Papers was issued in December and proposals for workshops are already coming in. If you would like to present a paper or a workshop, please contact **Dr. Sheila Kirk**, care of IFGE, 123 Moody St., Waltham, MA 02154 or call 617-██████████.

For those of you who suffer from modem-deprivation or slow-modem syndrome, the transgender community on-line got a big surprise last month when two of the largest transgender websites and the only non-profit transgender domain joined forces to create a transgender "supersite." The new entity, 3-D Communications, combines **Cindy Martin's Transgender Forum**, my *On-Line Transgender Resource Guide* and **Jamie Fenton's** non-profit webspace known as <transgender.org>. The supersite offers a weekly e-zine, several monthly newsletters (including excerpts from RN&V), user pictorials, personals, magazine archives, national and international support group listings with email and web addresses, and shopping with several on-line catalogs. Additional services are planned for early 1996 including Chat and subscriber-only areas. If you are wired to the web, you can visit from any of the following pointers:

<<http://www.tgforum.com>> or
<<http://www.cdspub.com>> or

<<http://www.transgender.org/tg/>>

There's a new organization in Center City Philadelphia. **TransYouth Services** (pronounced *ties*), a division of Unity Inc., focuses on the needs of African-American transgendered youth, inclusive of MtF/FtM transsexuals and transvestites. The goal of TYS is to provide peer-counseling and referral services, health education, distribution and demonstrations of safer-sex materials, and support group meetings. **Dee Stallworth**, the TYS coordinator, has had meetings with **Alison Laing**, of IFGE, and she's been in contact with Renaissance. Both organizations have pledged to support the fledgling organization. Outreach to transgendered youth, especially minority youth, is an area that has been little explored. Anyone interested in TYS may contact Ms. Stallworth at 215-██████████.

Let's hit the runways... the color for lips this winter is red. No, not chapped and blistered red. Makeup experts now agree that women don't want to think about blue-red, or yellow-red or orange-red, so they're recommending a "burned" or brick-red as a universal color that compliments just about everyone.

Do you look like a raccoon after just a few hours in makeup? Maybe it's not what you're using on your eyes but *where* you're using it. Lower lashed tend to be thin and don't hold mascara pigment as well as uppers. So, don't use mascara on your lower lashes (Doh!). But oil can also be the culprit so be sure your foundation under your eyes is well-powdered if you *must* apply mascara to your lower lashes.

We've been here before... *Glamour* magazine (Dec. 95) did another Taste-ful vs. Trashy survey of it's female readers about Evening wear. Here's some of the results... Long slim black skirt slit thigh-high – Taste-ful (88%)... Slim red

HOT•BUZZ

satin pants – Trashy (69%)... Velvet scoop neck bodysuit – Tasteful (67%)... Velvet hip-huggers – Trashy (67%)... Strappy high heels – Tasteful (79%)... Fishnet stockings – Trashy (83%)... Silver satin slip-dress with black lace – Trashy (85%)... Rhinestone choker with matching tennis bracelet – Trashy (only slightly at 54%)... You know, this could easily have been a test to determine if you are a TV or not. If you liked all the “trashy” stuff, you’re a TV.

Top dress of the season – the little black sheath with a touch of shine and bare shoulders. Pair it with sheer nude pantyhose (like Donna Karan NUDES, \$12.50) and you’ve got the HOT look for the cold weather.

No one knows the things I endure to write this column every month, like the four hours I spent one Saturday afternoon wandering the web checking out every lingerie site listed by **Yahoo!**, the premier search facility. Off I went on my odyssey visiting almost 100 sites. My conclusion—they’re all pretty boring. Many of the sites offer the exact same items, even using the same photos scanned out of the same franchise catalogs. Gimme a break! Almost anything you can find on the web can be found in local stores, or by mail order from **Victoria’s Secret** or **Frederick’s of Hollywood**, and it’s usually cheaper by mail. There are three exceptions of note: **Northbound Leather** (Toronto) at <<http://www.northbound.com/>>, **Romantasy** (San Francisco Bay Area) at <<http://www.romantasy.com/>> and **Fashion World International** (Sacramento) at <<http://www.quiknet.com/fashion/fwi.html>>. Not only are these sites interesting for their products, they’re visually exciting as well.

We all know that fashion is fickle so it should not be a surprise that a few past fashion “Do’s” have become “Don’ts.” Please consign to Goodwill bins the following items: linebacker sized shoulder pads... bell-bottom pants... white opaque pantyhose... and baby doll dresses. You

can also give up the following habits: compulsive color matching (black is the exception to this rule)... buying clothes for the body you *wish* you had... compulsive shopping... wearing clothes that are stained or ripped thinking no one will notice. The Fashion Police *never* sleep.

This has been an amazing year for me. I’m actually going to apologize for the second time. Last month I said that **NS Products** was on the verge of bankruptcy. They’re not according to a source close to the vendor. I regret the error. It seems I also led quite a few people to the conclusion that both *LadyLike* #25 and the new *Transgender* (formerly *Tapstry*) from IFGE were on the street. Wrong again. *LadyLike* arrived mid-December and should be in subscribers’ hands by the time you read this. *Transgender* went to the printer in mid-December and due to the holidays may or may not be available at press time.

Renaissance begins its ninth year as one of the largest transgender organizations in the world. Last year saw unprecedented growth for the suburban Philadelphia-based organization with the addition of six new affiliates. Renaissance affiliated organizations now stretch from East Coast to West Coast and from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes. You don’t get more “national” than that. The “secret” of Renaissance’s success is empowering people to take responsibility not just for themselves, but for their sisters and their community. For some people, this concept is just too scary; treating people like adults and trusting them to do the proper thing. But this empowerment attitude is why Renaissance has grown from a single support group to a network of 17 organizations in 11 states. So, which group is going to be the first international affiliate? Hey, you up there in Canada. Anybody interested?

From First Lady Hilary Clinton: “It is no longer acceptable to discuss Women’s Rights as separate from Human Rights.” Likewise, we need to get people to understand that gay/lesbian/bi/transgender rights are inseparable from Human Rights as well.

One of the best things that has happened to the transgender community in the last two years is the increased accessibility of the Internet. I seriously doubt that the **Lobby Day** activity last October would have drawn 100 people if we had to rely on phone and mail communications. For all the gains the net has given us, we are in great danger of losing this wonderful resource. Both the House and Senate are considering proposals to effectively censor the Internet. Under these proposals, any “indecent” communication may be subject to a \$100,000 in fines and a jail term. The problem is who gets to define “indecent?” Right now, local community standards prevail in most pornography related cases. How do you define a “local” standard on a global network? Would the word *transvestite* be considered indecent in New York City? How about Tupelo, Mississippi, or Little Rock, Arkansas? How about the words *penis* or *vagina*? Will Congress lower the standard of Free Speech to the point where a library could be fined if they put James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or *Catcher In The Rye* on-line? I support protecting juveniles from harmful and inappropriate information, but I also feel that parents have the first responsibility to monitor what their children do in real space as well as in virtual space. The technophobes in Congress sponsoring these proposals (and they’re on both sides of the party fences) will use the bogeyman of the message-encrypting pedophile to push their measures through. These measures endanger not just Free Speech but digital commerce as well. Both the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Freedom Foundation have vowed to take any net censorship law to court, but why wait until the damage is done? You can make a difference now. Call or write your Senators and Congressional Reps. Tell them you oppose any government censorship of the Internet and that this is an important 1996 election issue for you.

So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? I think responsibility means not crying and whining when you screw up. Comments? Email them to <CyberQueen@cdspub.com>.

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Dear Doctor

Dr. William R. Stayton answers your questions in a monthly column.

Send questions to PO Box 530, Bensalem, Pa. 19020

Dear Doctor Bill,

I go out shopping as a woman about once a month and I am concerned that I may be breaking some law by crossdressing in public. Of course, I don't want to stop but I would like to know how I could find out if there are state or local laws in the areas I frequent that might be used to arrest me. Thank you for any assistance you can render.

Looking Over Her Shoulder

Dear L.O.H.S.,

You have asked an excellent and important question! As far as I can find out, there are no specific laws that pertain to crossdressing in public. However, there are several things to take into consideration. First, there will probably be ordinances against using the toilets of the other gender. As you probably already know, one of the biggest problems that crossdressers have is finding a toilet that he/she can use. This tends to be the one major, common issue all transgendered persons face in a public setting. I have had clients who were arrested and prosecuted just because they used the toilet of the other gender. Yet to use a toilet of their biological gender would have created an uproar, too. This is a no-win situation.

Second, there may be local ordinances against crossdressing. It is helpful to get information about local ordinances before going into a community. This can be obtained from the local police department, a lawyer, or the town/city hall. I would think this would be more of an issue in a rural community or small town, rather than a large city or suburban area.

Third, while there may be no laws prohibiting crossdressing in a community, it is likely that there are no laws protecting the rights of transgendered persons either. This can even be more problematic because charges can be made or harassment can occur and you may not be protected by the law against such events. In my judgment, this is where the transgendered community needs to be politically active. I was so pleased to read this month the Presidential address for the Society for Psychological Study of Lesbian & Gay Issues (Div. 44 of the APA) when he said: "I would like to consider the subject of the bisexuals, transsexuals and transgendered among us. It is time for us to find ways to make these people visible among us. It is time for us not simply to find a place for them at the table but to protect their place at the

table as we do with ethnic minorities and the balance of genders."

Dear Dr. Bill,

Recently, I had the opportunity (I am a CD) to spend a weekend en femme. I checked into a hotel as dressing at home is a no-no. I wanted to check in en femme, but I began to think about what if they ask me for ID. I thought about saying I left it in my other purse but finally just checked in as a guy. I had a great weekend but I still wish I had been able to check in dressed. Is there any kind of ID I can get in my femme name so when I spend another weekend dressed I can be en femme the whole time?

Alicia

Dear Alicia,

Pay cash for the room. There is no reason for the clerk to ask for any ID, unless the clerk is reading you and unsure of what to do. It is not appropriate to be asked for an ID if you are paying cash. Some hotels may ask for a security deposit in case of any damage.

Secondly, you could get a couple of credit cards in your female name and use them for ID. I believe that legally this is considered an "alias" and is not illegal as long as you pay your bill.

Finally, you could be very open and say you are a crossdresser. Act like you are proud of it and insulted by their narrow-mindedness. Usually this will put them off-guard and he/she will ask no more questions. You could offer to educate them about crossdressers, so they will understand when the next one comes in. Have another good weekend!



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The Operation

A new video has been released by **Nu-Woman Video Productions** which details the surgical procedures of MtF genital reassignment surgery entitled *The Operation: Sex Reassignment Surgery and Breast Augmentation* by Eugene A. Schrang.

The video opens with an introduction by Dr. Carl Bushong, a Tampa, Florida based psychotherapist who deals extensively with the gender community. Dr. Eugene Schrang, the well-known SRS surgeon, then narrates the complex surgical procedures that transform male anatomy into female anatomy in a straightforward, easy to understand way. As he goes through the surgery, Dr. Schrang also makes note of the important refinements in this ever-improving field of genital

plastic surgery. Labiaplasty (a follow-up procedure which refines the external appearance of the genital area), and breast augmentation are also shown. Later, before and after comparisons are made showing several of Dr. Schrang's patients. The most asked questions about SRS are also answered by Dr. Schrang. For anyone contemplating this surgery, or those who are curious about SRS, this video will provide the necessary education to fully understand the risks, benefits, and likely outcomes provided by sex reassignment surgery. More information about *The Operation* is available at the Nu-Woman Transgender Cabaret on the Web at <http://users.aol.com/nuwoman1/> or from the video's producer, Kimberly L. Westwood, CPE, at KWestwood@compuser.com or KWestwood@aol.com.

Renaissance To Get Wired To The Net

Not to be left out of the electronic communications revolution, Renaissance will establish itself in 1996 on the World Wide Web with its own web site at <http://www.mona.org/>.

Basic information about the group, its Chapters and Affiliates will be available on the site, along with copies of the Renaissance Background Papers and the Community Outreach Bulletins. Renaissance National will develop home pages for each of the Chapters. Renaissance Affiliates that wish to have home pages should contact JoAnn Roberts at JoAnnRoberts@cdspub.com for information on how to accomplish this. The Powder Puffs of California, a recent Affiliate, has already started constructing its page.

Angela Gardner, editor-in-chief of Renaissance News & Views, has said she would like to start an electronic version of the newsletter to be delivered by email on a monthly basis.

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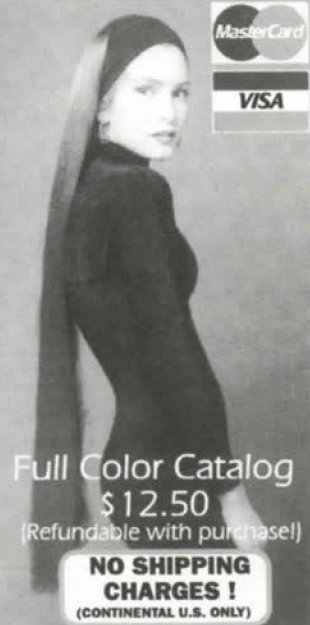
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Letters to the Editor

Dina Amberle has incited the masses to put finger to word processor. Here are a couple of letters inspired by recent Vis A Vis columns.

Dear Dina,

My intentions with the article, *A PC & Un-PC Guide to Genderland*, were to be a little lighthearted with transgender terminology. I agree with you 100 percent when you say transvestites have a "burning need to define and categorize all the many bumps on the transgendered spectrum." I'd say the same of all people. You said you've seen about a dollar fifteen worth of definitions. I have too. I figured it might be a fun twist on those. Maybe not. I suppose the real Un-PC thing was

to write the article and make labels. As far as labeling goes... well, maybe we shouldn't, but we do, and will continue to. What do you call yourself? What do I call myself? They're still labels. Refer to the second paragraph of the article. I think you can see how I feel about labels!

As far as superiority... it goes both ways. I've known TSs who think all cross-dressers are TSs in denial. That's just as bad. I joined Renaissance specifically because I wanted to avoid elitist cliques. Isn't that part of our purpose? You won't find cliques in Sooner Diversity and I'm proud of that fact.

Transvestite: Ok, I dropped the ball on that one! Never send your first draft to the editor! I do have friends who are proud transvestites and they include you people who let me know that! It is kind of a bad-ass term actually; something like "queer" or "transgender," my personal favorite! I guess I deserve a spanking for that one! Mmmmm... sounds like fun. Any volunteers?

Rachel Elaine [REDACTED]
Facilitator, Sooner Diversity

Dear Dina,

Greetings! So you're thinking of kicking over the traces and moving your team across the street, eh? Have your agent contact me, your bottom-line Buddy. I'm sure the fat signing bonus and long term contract will be no problem; after all, you know we're getting all that TV money. Only problem is your decamping from Philly might create an anti-trust issue at Renaissance. But, I'm sure we can find you some sort of exemption.

I also have misgivings about your writing style. If you join our team, you'll have to keep your claws in reserve. And by the way, if you want to move, 21 of our 27 chapters will have to give their OK. As you know, those large-market chapters like Chi and Sig Ep can be tough. Knowing you, though, you will always be a contender. If you continue to devote yourself to your art, I'm sure you will be a Modell of efficiency. Hope we can do bidness!

Your home-gal,
Jane Ellen Fairfax

PS: You'll have to build your own stadium!

continued next page

American Boyz Join ACLU To Protect Net

The American Boyz, a gender education organization in the Mid-Atlantic region, has announced its intention to become a co-plaintiff with the ACLU and many other organizations opposing the restriction of First Amendment freedom of expression in cyberspace posed by the Decency Act currently before Congress. In the event that this bill becomes law, the ACLU and its co-plaintiffs will seek an injunction against it being enforced while the constitutionality of the law is examined.

Supporters of the Decency Act urge an even more draconian version of the current bill, essentially dumbing down online communication (phone, fax, email, newsgroups, etc.) to a level not offensive to a child. Gender variant people, who already have a difficult time obtaining information and support for their situation, rely heavily on electronic communication. Should the Decency Act become law, information regarding the medical, social, psychological, personal, educational, and

other needs of gender variant people could result in severe criminal and civil penalties. The American Boyz urges all fair minded people to support freedom of expression in cyberspace, and to let their Congressional Representatives know how they feel.

For more information about the ACLU contact: beeson@aclu.org (Ann Beeson). For more information about The American Boyz, contact: <[REDACTED]@tantalus.clark.net>.



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Classified Ads are \$3.00 for 3 lines for 3 months.

Furniture, Appliances, Household goods, Records, Antiques, Toy trains and other goodies - Bought and Sold - Beth Marshall: 610-259-4945 - Leave a message
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Prosthesis custom made for a man's chest. Dorothy M. Thompson, 215-744-4746, before 10 AM or after 8PM

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Letters...

Dear Dina,

Hello dear, I just received Dec. 95 RN&V and would like to present a few comments to your *Let's Pretend*.

"If we are trying to express our feminine personality, why do we feel the need to bury it under wigs, makeup, and foundation garments," or in short, why do we pretend to be women? Well, I think the clothes are but a tool to bring out and to develop that feminine personality that lies within us. Can a person drive a nail without a hammer, can you drive a screw without a screwdriver? Of course the answer is yes, but how much easier is the job with the proper tool? Perhaps crossdressing is the best tool we know to bring forth and develop the feminine persona with us.

But too, there is another reason for the "Pretend," and that is escape. Ask a crossdresser why they do it, and very commonly we hear, "It relaxes me." I think the truism in this is we are escaping the

real person we are and entering a world of our fantasy person. Perhaps the changing of the sex helps to make a further and more complete escape from our world of reality than in changing to, say, something like a Civil War soldier.

But the escape, the feminine persona, the fantasy woman, who is she? Considering that so many women wear slacks and flats, why do we insist on dress and heels? I think the answer is she is our epitome of a woman. She is not the woman that women are, but rather she is the woman we think women *should be*. One wonders if we are more or less chauvinistic than male society as a whole.

It brings up the age-old question once again, what is the cause of crossdressing? The vast majority of us did not choose to become crossdressers, but we are. Does the cause lie in biology as we prefer to think, or does it actually lie in early childhood social standards? If parents raised boys exactly as they raise girls, if the expectations for boys were the same as the expectations for girls, would we have become crossdressers in the first place? Crossdressing starts for

us as a compulsion, but what is it that keeps us within its clutch? I have often thought how nice it would be to notice someone cast an affectionate or admiring glance my way, to hear a cat-call or wolf-whistle directed at me, or to get the feeling that someone was undressing me with their eyes. Yes, it would be nice to have someone sending me the little things like candy and flowers and asking me out on a date. It would be wonderful to hear someone ask me to marry them instead of the other way around. The question is, if women treated men the way they are treated, would we continue to feel the need to crossdress?

And now, Dina dear, here is a question I pose to you, and to anyone else that may even remotely think they may have the answer; in almost all surveys of crossdressers it is found that only a minor percentage of us are gay. Anyone with any knowledge of the gay community will also notice that only a minor percentage of gays are also crossdressers. Look at any male seeking male ad, and it

continued on page 23



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Alright Ya Varmint!

Activist groups are crawling out of the woodwork. Here's one that's also got a sense of humor.

BILLISSTIC USA is a small, Southern, militant, bisexual organization of varmints. The definition of "varmint," according to most dictionaries, is a Southern derivation of "vermin," which is a "noxious, objectionable animal; an objectionable or troublesome person." Bisexuals are often identified as such critters, as our definitions of fluid sexuality are often noxious to monosexist constructs of gay-straight dichotomies and homosexual-heterosexual thinking. As varmints, bisexuals often find themselves as small organizations or individuals who annoyingly yet persistently gnaw at the tethers of

monosexism that tie the Sexual Freedom Movement down and keep it from moving forward.

Varmints tend to be considered of little value, but also tend to be numerous, hard to kill (physically and in spirit), and will probably endure long after more limited paradigms try to spray them away, squish them, set traps, or otherwise try to eliminate them for being a nuisance. Bisexual activism has often been looked upon by the gay and lesbian establishment and the heterosexual equivalent as just such a persistent, minor nuisance.

Varmints come in many diverse shapes, sizes, and types. Consider the following varmint identities if you would like to become part of

BILLISSTIC's efforts:

Rats, Badgers, Cockroaches, Fruit Bats, Gnats, Tasmanian Devils, Black Widows, Moles, Possums, Wolverines, Porcupines, Foxes, Platypuses, Alley Cats, Hyenas, Spiders, Hedgehogs, Fire Ants, Termites, Granddaddy, Longlegs, Vampire Bats, Mice, Scorpions, Stinkbugs, Brown Recluses, Polecats, Armadillos, Packrats, Leeches, Ticks, Fleas, Prairie Dogs, Chiggers, Dingo Dogs, Slugs, Sharks, Maggots, Beavers, Wild Boars, Jellyfish, Warthogs, Wombats... and many, many others.

If you'd like to identify with your particular type of varmint and get more information on BILLISSTIC USA email them at <taza1@aol.com>.



Transgender Discrimination or Lookism?

by Angela Gardner

We live in a world of "isms," sexism, ageism, racism, fascism and a few more so obscure they're not even worth mentioning. I'm going to add to the confusion with lookism.

I was first victimized by lookism as a little kid. I had to wear my "school clothes" and Mom's idea of what the well-dressed child wore to school and that of the other kids was slightly divergent. (There was the matter of that crewcut, too.) Since I didn't look like everybody, else I became a target. This kind of thing has gotten even worse in our modern world of designer fashions and "must have" accessories.

I was in serious fashion trouble by High School. In those dark old days, nobody hip would wear white socks, "highwater" pants and brown shoes. At home I could dress as I liked to an extent. Sequined gowns were definitely **not** allowed. No women's clothes at all, come to think of it. I had to sneak those.

If Mom would have let me wear the clothes I wore at home to school I would have had an easier time fitting

in. I didn't fit in since I didn't look like everybody else.

Now, what's all of this about my dysfunctional childhood have to do with transgender issues? It's an unfortunate fact that the majority of the world will categorize you, judge you and treat you accordingly, based on how you look. Since this is the case, the transgendered person who looks the best in their chosen gender role is least likely to experience problems interacting with society. Even if people tumble to the fact that all is not as it seems, if you look fabulous, they will accept you more easily. *Well, sure she's a man, but he's so beautiful you can see why he does drag.*

What does this mean for the cross-dresser who wears a size 16 frock, stands six foot two in flats and has a very manly face? If she wants to go out and interact with the world at large she's got to be prepared for problems, problems based more on lookism than any other 'ism. *Look at that woman! She looks like a man in a dress. It is!* If she could play the passing game and fit in, she would be a lot more comfort-

able in public. She can't, and she shouldn't try. She should remember that she has the same amount of "need to dress up" as the girl who looks like a supermodel, maybe more, but she has to be aware that lookism will rear its ugly head when she sets about satisfying her need. If she is prepared for comments, adopts an open, rather than defensive attitude, and responds in a ladylike manner, by either ignoring them or giving the commentator positive information about crossdressing, then she will be able to enjoy herself on public forays. If, on the other hand, she becomes so paranoid that people will recognize her manly nature, she won't even notice if she does happen to have a good time. Lookism can only make you a victim if you subscribe to its belief system, which says there must be something wrong with anyone who looks different. You know there's nothing wrong with you. If you ask for respect most people will put aside their lookism and see you as a human being. If they can't do that, then they are the ones who have something wrong with them.



The Vinegar Tasters

by Vanessa Kaye, COTA

I frequently hear and read about religion and transgenderism. These conversations are exclusively centered around how to interpret Christian teachings and tenets in such a way as to "justify" our right to be who we are. I find it odd that a relatively "new," predominantly Western, minority religion is used as the spectacles through which to view a universal and timeless phenomenon. Among the Five World Religions are Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. There is value in all "good books" and in all "good teachings." Without a doubt, when we are dealing with such an issue as transgenderism, which is certainly not only a Western issue, we should expand our scope.

Let me talk to you about an ancient Chinese painting. Roughly translated, it is titled, "The Vinegar Tasters." In this painting, composed long ago, we see three men standing around a vat of vinegar. Each has dipped his finger into the vinegar and tasted of it. The expression on each man's face shows his individual reaction. The painting is intended to be allegorical and each of the three men represent one of the "Three Teachings" of China. The vinegar they are tasting represents the Essence of Life. The three men represented are: K'ung Fu-tse (Confucius), Buddha, and Lao-tse (author of the oldest book of Taoism). For the purposes of this story we shall call them Confucius, Buddha and Lao-tse.

The first man has a sour look on his face, the second wears a bitter expression, but the third man is smiling. Why the difference?

To Confucius, life seemed rather sour. He believed that the present was out of step with the past and that the world would be a much better place if there were strict rules. Confucius emphasized a strict order which ruled the affairs of all in his land. Anything that did not fit into the established order, was bad and not worthy.

To Buddha, the second figure in our painting, life on earth was bitter. This world, according to Buddha, was filled with attachments and desires that led to suffering. The world was seen as a setter of traps, a generator of illusions and a revolving wheel of endless pain. In order to find peace, Buddha maintained that it was necessary to transcend this world. The Buddhist sees the path to happiness constantly being interrupted by the bitterness of this world.

Now we come to the third man in our painting, Lao-tse. According to Lao-tse, the world was governed by the laws of nature, not by those of men. He maintained that the more man interfered with the natural balance of things, the more out of balance the world became. As things became unbalanced, trouble followed.

So why is Lao-tse smiling? We all know what vinegar tastes like. And, if the vat of vinegar represents the essence of life, should he not also have the bitter expression on his face? From the Taoist point of view, sourness and bitterness come from the interfering and unappreciative mind. Life itself, when understood and utilized for what it is, is sweet. That is the message of "The Vinegar Tasters."

How does all of this relate to transgendered behavior? Let us look at ourselves through the eyes of the three men in the painting and we shall see.

Confucius, set rigid standards of behavior. This is much the same as with Christianity. To step outside of these guidelines, is the determining factor for what is right and wrong, what is good and bad. Under this type of system the individual is not allowed to explore and "shame" as well as "guilt" are often the tools used to keep people in line. It is no secret that any type of transgendered behavior falls outside of these guidelines. As a result, many of our sisters feel tremendous guilt immediately following the joyous exploration of their alternate gender roles.

This leaves them with a sour taste in their mouths that is always associated with their feelings and need for self expression.

Through the Buddhist's eyes, while there exist no clear black-and-white definition or right and wrong, the key is desire. Buddha emphasized that desire causes suffering. He explained that when one strives to become or achieve something, failure results in sadness and misery. If, on the other hand, one had no desire, there would be no suffering. In GenderLand, we all have desires. We want to achieve a complete expression of the alternate gender within us. If we fail to reach the level of experience we wish for, we feel a "let down." According to Buddha, we would be happier if we never tried.

Now, let's look through the eyes of Lao-tse. To the Taoist, the femme nature within us is much like a reservoir of water waiting to be released. The water will flow eventually and cannot be stopped. In time, cracks or leaks will develop, and the water will flow. Trying to impede the natural tendency of the water to flow its course results in disaster. To Lao-tse, only by working within the laws that govern the flow of water will happiness be achieved.

To further illustrate, imagine washing your hands in the sink. If your hands work with the water, the task of cleansing you hands is accomplished quite well and without incident. Now, put your finger into the faucet to try to stop or alter the direction of the flow of water. What a mess! The water is going everywhere and you really can't stop it or control it. We all have had experience with trying to "stop" our transgendered behavior, and the result is calamity. Trying to "control" it with artificially imposed rules is often equally disastrous.

Lao-tse would encourage us to explore our gender roles. He would also caution us to neither impede nor force the emergence of our femme self. For the gender-gifted individual, the development of our femme selves should be natural and balanced, only in that way, will we find joy, and not bitterness.

Reprinted from the September 1995 issue of *Sooner Belle*



Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Happy New Year, girlfriends! Hope you didn't consume too much egg nog when you rang in the arrival of '96! Now that we're deep into winter, there's nothing (well, almost nothing!) I like more than to curl up under the covers on a frosty evening with something to read. And, this month, I'm going to chat about transgendered magazines which, like everything else is something we all shop for, provided of course you don't already subscribe.

If you love to read about transgendered behavior, without feeling like you need a shower afterwards, start with *Transgender* (formerly *Tapestry*), the quarterly magazine published by the International Foundation for Gender Education. Just as in it's earlier incarnation (this column went to press before I got the newest version), *Transgender* presents many interesting articles on crossdressing, transsexualism and spouses/significant others with dignity, caring and devotion. You absolutely can't go wrong with this mag.

Next up is *LadyLike* from JoAnn Roberts of Creative Design Services. Under the guidance of the legendary "CyberQueen of Prussia," *LadyLike* is as classy as they come with articles, short stories, fascinating profiles of crossdressers from sea to shining sea, JoAnn's own advice column (which I never miss), and my favorite part of the mag, the "Mirror Mirror" section with loads of pictures of the most beautiful ladies around. Any mag that features pictures of me definitely gets high marks.

From the Left Coast comes Kymberleigh Richard's *Cross-Talk*, the only monthly mag on my list. Highly informative, entertaining and thought provoking, *Cross-Talk* has columns by such luminaries as Virginia Prince, JoAnn Roberts, Angela Gardner, Paula Jordan Sinclair (I absolutely love the hat she wears in her photo!) as well as articles on transsexualism and spouses and partners. There's also a good amount of humor here too with the *Cross-Talk* Comics, featuring the work of Christine Jane Wilson and Great Moments In TV History.

Then there's *Femme Mirror*, a magazine I haven't seen very much of since, as far as I know, it's available only to the members of Tri-Ess, still, it's an excellent publication. As with the other magazines, *Mirror* has many interesting articles on transgendered behavior as well as news on Tri-Ess chapters in many states, it's own advice column and pen pal section and "big sister" sections (the latter for newcomers into Tri-Ess). I wish *Mirror* was more readily available in the community because it's a great read.

While the aforementioned magazines represent the pedigrees, we also have the runt of the litter, that being *Transformation*. When it first came out, I thought this would be something special. Hell, I even subscribed to it once, but it's turned out to be extremely trashy, easily on par with *Hustler* in terms of smut, with numerous photos and drawings displaying genitalia. It's publisher, Jeri Lee, touts

Transformation as classy, but I find the opposite to be true. Let the buyer beware when it comes to this mag.

Lastly, here's a chance for everyone out there to be a part of this column with my first "Shopper's Survey." I'd be interested in knowing what kind of stores you shop in regularly, if you shop "en femme" or "en drab" (tell me how you were treated in either guise), what one item you spend the most money on and why, and what item(s) you think aren't worth your money.

The answers you provide could prove most helpful to your sisters in their future expeditions to the stores, so break out the pen, or keyboard and tell me what you think!

I'm planning on this being a series of informal, bi-annual surveys to gauge the climate of the shopping populace in the transgendered community and, more importantly, to share information with everyone. After all, knowledge is power! I'm sure you all have something of importance to say when it comes to shopping. Well, girls, here's your forum! Send your responses to Angela via the e-mail or snail mail addresses on page two and she'll forward them to me.

Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, sisters!



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Wong Foo: Queen On The Street Inter-Review

By Angela Gardner

A new day has dawned. In this brave new world, the positive role models are tall, attractive, well dressed drag queens, darling! *To Wong Foo...* arrived and went but the box office receipts indicate the sight of Swayze and Snipes in frocks and pumps definitely did not scarie people, girlfriend.

Sure, there have been men disporting themselves on the silver screen in traditionally female attire for many years. Back in the beginning of silent movies, Julian Eltinge was a superstar, the RuPaul of his time. He was so popular they named a theater after him in the Big Apple. That was back around the turn of the century. But then, drag went through a dark age. From the '20s to the '60s there was very little glitter to be found. (And, as a friend of mine, Miss Jesse, always says, "More glitter!") Milton Berle and Flip Wilson both played it for laughs. "Serious" female impersonators who did gain some acclaim were very careful to never admit they might actually enjoy the glamour. Heavens to Betsy, no! (Betsy Johnson, my fave designer!)

Until recently the idea of a man performing in drag on a theater stage, or in a film, has been limited to dressing up for laughs, or dressing up for a nefarious purpose. In the opinion of *this* drag queen, we've had far too many villains who use drag as a disguise, or because of a mental problem.

That's where *To Wong Foo...* devi-

ated from the norm: these girls **love** their drag. They love it so much, they seem to never take it off. But, we'll get to that later. First let's see what some of the real "girls" think. Ladies who have actually worked the runway and thrilled a crowd with their feminine pulchritude, not just any queens. These are ladies with credentials. Dim the house lights and hit the music, Blanche, It's show time!

Our first contestant is **Berrie Lyndon**. She's been performing as a professional female impersonator for ten years, holds the **Miss Cartwheel, 1990** title and was **Miss Gay New Jersey, 1990**. What did she think?: "Quite entertaining and a great movie. A bit farfetched the way it happened. It was a true "fairy" tale, so to say. They (Swayze, Snipes, Leguizamo) gave good attitude. They had the campiness down. Drag was presented in a very positive way, but I'd like to know when they shaved."

Miss Lyndon makes an excellent point. Most of us who crossdress regularly practically own stock in razor companies, yet the girls in this picture only seemed to shave once.

Oh, I could nit pick all night, but I think our next contestant sums up the all the little reality flaws. **Miss Monica Rey** has been in the biz for seventeen years. She started her career in couture in Portland, Oregon. Like the *Wong Foo...* queens, she dragged her way across the country, but she did it

one drag show at a time and ended up in New Hope where she is the Mistress of Ceremonies for the **Cartwheel's Monday Night Drag Search**. Then on Tuesdays she hosts the **Monica Rey Drag Attack** at the Colosseum in Sayreville, New Jersey. As Monica says, "You just have to understand it's a movie. If you believe everything you see in the movies you'd think we lived on a planet where intelligent apes rule and Darth Vader is king of the universe."

Actually dear, he's been deposed, and those apes look simply marvelous in dresses that feature an empire bodice, but that's a couple more articles. Gotta keep the show moving.

Now our next contestant. She's the **Outreach Director** of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of Renaissance and a columnist in this newsletter. Not a professional female impersonator, but a talented amateur crossdresser who has created her own femme persona, please welcome **Miss Jessica Brandon**. Jessica helps spread the word that it's okay for a guy to slip into some satin now and then. What did she think of *To Wong Foo...*? "All things considered I thought it was handled quite well. As far as Patrick, Wesley and John, they portrayed the characters fairly convincingly. But it did stretch the boundaries of believability at times. I mean everyone in the small town seemed to think they were really woman. I think it was a positive image

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On The Street...

of crossdressing as a whole, although not all queens would be as giving."

An excellent point Jess, but that takes us back to what Monica said about movies modifying reality. You know you're in for some fantasy when the trip from New York to Los Angeles takes the ladies through Bala Cynwyd. (Played a little too upscale by some town in New York state.) Drag is about illusion and fantasy, so what does it matter if things don't make that much sense when you examine them. If you look too closely at any great female impersonation you'll see those annoying little flaws. (Kind of like Swayze's giant size pores and the crow's feet I've been seeing in my mirror lately.) As long as the light is low and the plot keeps barreling along, the "girls" look great.

One of the flick's major departures from reality is in it's first premise: Noxema (Snipes) and Vida (Swayze) beat out the hottest talent in the New York drag scene to win the drag contest that sends them to L.A.. Not only do they win, but they tie for first place. Leslie Foster is another amateur crossdresser and member of Renaissance GPC. After seeing the show she said, "[John] Leguizamo was definitely the best of the three. I found myself identifying with the characters, and for three guys who probably never thought of playing this type of role before, (Leguizamo has portrayed drag characters and women

in his HBO specials and on his Fox-TV show, *House of Buggin'*) they were phenomenal."

Phenomenal, but not flawless. It takes the "willful suspension of disbelief" for us to believe last year's Queen of The Year was **Rachel Tensions** a statuesque beauty (played by the flawless RuPaul) and this year we get Wesley Snipe's with muscles bulging all over and Swayze wearing gloves almost the whole time to cover his large manly hands. (Come to think of it, I know crossdressers who do that.)

Don't think I'm some evil queen dishing the Hollywood actors. They did a great job and if Vida and Noxema had not been portrayed by major stars, the film would really be another *Priscilla*, a little art house movie that only the lucky few would see.

To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar was a groundbreaking film. Its message is acceptance, from society and from within, and while other films in recent years have promoted tolerance of people who society views as "different," this is the first big-budget, gonna-be-seen-by-a-bunch-of-folks film that should make it a little easier for people to see that drag queens, crossdressers, transvestites and others with gender identity issues are not strange or perverted. They're just people. People with, as Noxema says, "Too much fashion sense for one gender."



Letters...

is not uncommon to see the words, "No Fems." So if homosexuals are a minority within the gender community, and crossdressers are a minority in the gay community, why does society consider crossdressing to be a gay thing?

Sincerely,
Barbara Jean Jasen

Editor's reply:
Barbara Jean,

I give you my opinion on the "crossdressers must be gay" issue. The general public was raised to think that any male who dresses like a female must be a sissy. Everyone knows sissies are faggots. So, anybody who crossdresses must be one of those queers. It all comes down to ignorance.

I invite anyone with answers or comments on Barbara's letter to send us their opinions and we'll publish them in the letters column next month.



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True Confession: I'm A Transvestite Cat

by "Lucky Cat" Kirkland

Hello, my name is "Lucky Cat." I am a solid black house cat, formerly male. I live at the Kirkland household, and a better home no cat could want. Meet my family. My real mother was soon replaced by a human "mom," a chatty young woman called "Peanut." Her mom, known to you as Evelyn, is then called "Grandmom." A third human called "Poppie" is grandmom's mate. Just like me, these three humans wear nametags. However Poppie's necklace says "Maryann." That I can read English is a big secret—do not tell anyone.

I can tell these family members apart by voice and smell. They all appear to wear the same clothing especially at night. All three put on pantyhose which amuses me greatly. I pull them down as they pull them up. I put them in a pissy mood when I trespass on the lingerie drying racks. It looks like a "jungle gym" for kittens but covered with bras, stockings, and panties. When Poppie sees the collapsed racks and garments askew, he becomes a "Jungle Jim." I

get punted like a football and squirted with water. I think he has a hormone imbalance.

All three have long hair on their head but Poppie's hair comes off. I am fed generous amounts of real tuna which gives me lustrous, shiny and silky fur. Poppie eats tuna too and grows dark hairy fur on his body, then he shaves it off! I watched him for hours. Yes, he spends hours in the bathtub removing his fur. How awful to be completely covered in bubbles and perfumed water! Yet he beams a smile. Being a curious tyke, I usually wear soap bubbles, much to Poppie's amusement.

Despite Poppie's efforts to look like the other two females in the house, I know he is different. He spends time in a real neat room down the hall. It has a bed, but he cannot sleep in it because of the books, papers, crinolines and petticoats heaped upon it. He calls it Maryann's room but it looks like a ballerina's dressing room. This Maryann person doesn't stay long in her own room. She's always in a rush to leave the house. I am suspicious. She looks like

Poppie with long hair!

I'm sure you dear readers know how sensitive a cat's paws are. Like many of you, I like the feel of nylon, satin, and silk. Many a day I crawl inside these chiffon petticoats and take a nap. If I see an open dresser drawer, I jump right in. My favorite one is Poppie's underwear drawer. My mom, Peanut, used to frown on my underwear antics. Heck, now she encourages me and opens up drawers for me as long as the undies belong to someone else.

Poppie calls me a transvestite cat. This is nonsense as cats do not wear clothing to connote gender. Perhaps Poppie, being so smart and smug, can find a transvestite in a nudist colony. But wait a minute, perhaps he is right. I was reading the DSM-IV just the other day. I have been thinking about and romping in Poppie's saintly undies for over 6 months. Am I a fetishistic transvestite or a transvestic fetishist? Who cares?

Why can't humans, who think they are so brilliant, take a lesson from a simple house cat: love yourself, eat well, and take plenty of naps.



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