



News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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Renaissance

Leaders Call For National Mobilization

[August 21, 1996] Today leaders of the major US gender organizations jointly announced a Mobilization Meeting to formally launch a nationwide movement against gender-based oppression under the name of GenderPAC. The Meeting will be held in suburban Philadelphia on Saturday, November 2, 1996. Joining in the call were IFGE, Renaissance, Tri-Ess, AEGIS, FTM International, the CTO, Intersexed Society of North America (ISNA), and the Transsexual Menace (NY).

Alison Laing, JoAnn Roberts, Angela Gardner, Dallas Denny, Jamison Green, Lynn Walker, Jane Ellen Fairfax, Cheryl Chase and Riki Wilchins said in a joint statement, "We are calling *all* gender activists to join us in Philadelphia to plan and map a strategy to end gender-based oppression in our time — not just for ourselves, but for our loved ones and for the youngsters coming up behind us. The moment has come to join hands and bend our communal will to launching this movement. The time for unity is now."

The mobilization meeting will kick off at 9:00 am sharp Saturday morning, and end at 12:00 noon the following Sunday. It will feature few breaks or presentations, devoting the time exclusively to planning policy, implementing tactics, and staffing all activities necessary to launch a nationwide movement.

A Broad Agenda

The meeting's aggressive agenda illustrates the leaders focus on making GenderPAC a broad-based combination of the gay community's Human Rights Campaign, National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, Gay & Lesbian Anti-Defamation League (GLAAD), and Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund. Activities scheduled for discussion, staffing and implementation include:

- Congressional lobbying
- Transgender & Intersexed Children
- Trans-related Violence
- Employment Discrimination
- Gender Legal Defense Fund
- Child Custody Laws
- National Gender Lobbying Day
- Minority Outreach
- Media Response & Anti-Defamation
- Public Relations
- Membership
- Corporate EEO Policies
- Fundraising
- Minority Outreach
- Research
- Marriage Laws
- Military Policies
- TransPrisoner Project

Rooms will be provided by those in the Philadelphia area for those needing some financial assistance to attend. In addition, GenderPAC will be renting a number of rooms in nearby motels, for those willing to share accommodations, and private rooms are available at moderate cost. Every effort is being made to make the Mobilization Meeting as affordable as possible.

Attendance Is Limited

Due to space considerations, attendance is limited to 50 people on a first-come-first-serve basis, so please make your reservations early. To make your reservation now, please contact Angela Gardner at [redacted]@ren.org> or 610-[redacted] or Alison Laing at [redacted]@lng.com> 617-[redacted]. For more information on the Mobilization Meeting, you can contact Riki Anne Wilchins at <[redacted]@Pipeline.Com> or call 212-[redacted].



Speaker's Bureau Training Date Set

Several people have requested another edition of the fabulous Renaissance Speakers Training Program. JoAnn Roberts, Co-Director of Outreach, has announced the next training session will be held Saturday, October 19, 2 PM to 5 PM at the Renaissance National office (see page 2 for address).

If you wish to attend the training, contact JoAnn Roberts at [redacted]@cdspub.com> or 610-[redacted] or leave a message on the Renaissance answering machine, 610-975-9119.

The training will provide tips and hints for both broadcast and college speaking engagements.



Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

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

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 770-939-0244, or email to <aegis@mindspring.com>. Information resources & referrals.

Atlanta: Atlanta Gender Explorations (A.G.E.), PO Box 77562, Atlanta, GA 30357, 770-939-2128.

Illinois

Chicago: The Chicago Gender Society, PO Box 578005, Chicago, IL 60657, 708-863-7714.

Louisiana

New Orleans: The Gulf Gender Alliance, PO Box 56836, New Orleans, LA 70156-6836, 504-833-3046.

New Jersey

N. Central Jersey: Monmouth/Ocean Trans Gender, (MOTG), write PO Box 8243, Red Bank, NJ 07701. Call 908-219-9094. Email: [redacted]@aol.com

Titusville: Meetings are 1st Saturday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Cross-ing. Call Terri [redacted] at 609-[redacted]

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. Phone: 516-283-1333

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, PO Box 3624, Allentown, PA 18106. Meetings on the second Saturday of the month in the Allentown area. Call for directions and more information, 610-821-2955.

Electronic Subscriptions

You can get RenNews&Views by email every month delivered automatically right to your email box for only \$10 a year. That's half off the regular paper subscription rate. Send your \$10 plus your email address to the Ren national office.

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

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the transgender community and the general public. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, make your check or M.O., payable to Renaissance and send it to our National office. Your contributions will help us continue our efforts to provide education about transgender issues. Donations can also be made through your local United Way agency.

Local Calendar

September

- 7 Ren. LSV meeting
- 7 New Jersey Support
- 14 Ren. Delaware
- 14 NEPTGA, Allentown, Pa.
- 21 Ren. GPC

October

- 5 Ren. LSV meeting
- 5 New Jersey Support
- 12 Ren. Delaware
- 12 NEPTGA, Allentown, Pa.
- 19 Ren. GPC

News Beat & Reminder



by Angela Gardner

I can't believe it kittens, Summer is very near the end of its one way trip into Fall and I've done it again. Oh yeah, I started the year with good intentions. I ran out as soon as the swimsuit clearances started and shopped for just the right little bikini to show off the sexy bod I planned to acquire through starvation... I mean diet and exercise. I stocked up on self tan cream. (UV is a no no.) I called my personal photographer, Miss Miranda, and told her to get plenty of outdoor film for our annual pilgrimage to the beach. (Or, as they say here in Philly, da shore.) Now, I look at my handy dandy computer calendar and I notice the days left in Summer can be counted on two hands (If you're a mutant) and I haven't been near the Atlantic Ocean in a lady's swimsuit even once this year. But never fear, I will get new swimsuit shots done. Who am I kidding, I'll be down there in October if that's what it takes. I'll put up with anything to get a great swimsuit shot for the February Swimsuit Issue, as should you. Now it's time to play....

Transpotting

Well, I don't know if it's me or if advertising agencies and filmmakers have finally caught on to the appeal of transgendered characters, but there have been a whole lot of us out there in the media lately. First the movies.

Anybody see *Transpotting*? It's a great film... if you like to watch Scottish junkies, well, shoot junk. It's a

comedy. Actually, kind of a dramedy. You'll laugh, you'll cry, etc. Anyhow, it really is a well done film that rises higher in my estimation due to one scene in a disco. The lads, who happen to **not** be on heroin at the time, go to a London disco to celebrate a big win at the races. Don't some of the ladies on the dance floor look a touch different? Could they be? You betcha, and the main character makes some pretty trans-positive comments after one of the other lads finds himself suddenly questioning his sexuality. Will I tell more? No way. Ya gotta catch the flick.

Hi, Yah!

Then there's **Jackie Chan**, that Asian martial arts dude, who has kicked more butt than that nancy boy Johnnie Van Damme and that other lightweight, little Stevie Seagal put together. You see it coming don't ya? Yep, Jackie Chan in pantyhose, heels and a red suit, spinning around and kicking somebody in the face. I caught a film clip on one of the entertainment shows whilst in the midst of something else. (Net surfing, putting on my eye makeup...) You can tell Jackie enjoys the dressing up and has some dress up experience, since as he twirls around you can see the cotton crotch of his pantyhose and it looked like a pretty good tuck to me. No amateur stuff there. The film? I didn't catch the title but **Kalina the Sexy Vampire** tells me it is *Streetfighter*, and Jackie actually plays all the main characters, in-

cluding this female martial arts expert. This isn't *Streetfighter* starring Jean Claude Van Damme. This is one Jackie did in Hong Kong and while I'm not sure that's the title I knows what's I seen, as Popeye might quip.

Get it Right Snake

Rosie Grier is known as the ex-football star who ministered to O.J. in jail and relaxes by knitting. **Pam Grier**, on the other hand, is not about to be caught doing any knitting. She's currently strutting her stuff and kicking some... (*shut your mouth*, I didn't say nothin'!) on the silver screen in the latest *Escape* film, *Escape from L.A.* and her character is a TS. Snake Plisskin keeps screwing up and calling her by the characters old male appellation and she has to keep correcting him. Now, I know what you're saying, another genetic female portraying a trans person. I guess **Tula** wasn't available so they had to make do. They help the illusion, and film is about nothing if it ain't about illusion, by electronically lowering her voice a bit. Pam may not be a transgendered actor but remember, **Dustin Hoffman** wasn't autistic when he did *Rainman*, or transgendered when he worked on *Tootsie*. (That we know of.) At least heres a movie with a transgendered character who's one of the good guys... gals... er, you know - even if the good guys are violent criminal types.

Yo, Cabbie!

Keep your cable box set to **HBO** and watch for *Taxi Cab Confessions III*. If you've seen any of the others you know the premise, New York cabs are equipped with five lipstick sized cameras (Ooo! Hope it's Wet & Wild) and the cabbies are more than just cabbies, they're trained inquisitors who get even the most reluctant fare to bare their soul for the edification of the viewers. I mean, it's actually incredible what these people will say to a total stranger, and what's even more incredible is the fact that they sign the release form and let the things they

continued next page

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said to the cabbie, in what they thought was privacy, be transmitted into millions of homes across the land.

One young lady, who looked like someone's nice daughter, used the F-word liberally in every sentence as she told the cabbie about her boyfriend who cheated on her, and she was gonna fix him, and she shot him once, and he worked her over with a pistol butt. Unbelievable. Does the word dysfunctional ring a bell?

But, what does this film hold for us, the transgendered viewer? They save it for the end cause they know we make a big finish. The last young lady who hails an HBO cab works at **Club Edelweiss** and she tells a poignant tale of parental abandonment because of her transgenderism. Her boyfriend broke up with her too, since she didn't have all the sexual equipment he wanted her to have. She's not a tragic character though. She makes a strong statement for transgender rights that closes the film. As America goes to the kitchen for a beer it may pause for a second and say, that chick dude has got it going on, or something like that.

Also keep an eye cocked to catch a look at **Jason Alexander**, George from *Seinfeld*, playing a gay man who participates in an all male ballet. He looks charming in his tutu with more than a hint of chest hair hanging out. The movie is called *Love, Valor, Compassion* and it will hit theaters sometime next year. Alexander said he wanted a break from the George character, a tutu is just about as far away from George Costanza as you can get.

And Now This Word From Our Sponsor

On now to the media manipulators from Madison Avenue. The trans-factor in commercials has definitely gone up. Can you say **Dennis Rodman**? **Victoria's Secret** can and they used Mister Rodman in one of their bra commercials. Before you get all excited

let me calm you down by telling you up front, Rodman did **not** model the bra. What he had on under his shirt is anybody's guess. What he does in the spot is talk and walk around a little while lovely women lounge in their scanties. Maybe next time Dennis will do the modeling, or maybe they'll decide to use RuPaul.

Ford Motors has leapt into the flurry of trans-inclusive ads with an addition to their series of spots featuring the dealers across the street. These guys have tried all kinds of ploys to learn the Ford dealer's secret. How can the Ford dealer sell cars that cheap? In one of the spots they use a sophisticated listening device to hear what the salesmen across the street are offering. In another they sneak in to the Ford dealership dressed as Navy SEALs. In the trans-spot they decide that one of their salesguys has to get dressed in drag to infiltrate the Ford dealership. He's kind of roly poly and looks like somebody's mom, in fact, I think I've seen him at a meeting.

This kind of premise always gets me. I mean, how unobtrusive is it for an old guy to get into a dress and sneak into the supermarket hiding his mustache with his hand to check out the donut competition? Isn't a guy in a dress going to attract more attention on a secret mission than a guy in a conservative men's suit? Whatever the case, even though they may be using what we hold sacred for a chuckle, it helps us for people to keep seeing men in dresses on their television. That kind of exposure could lead to the point where a man in the dress at the mall might be dismissed as just another guy with a secret mission. Hey, hand me my secret decoder ring and drop the cone of silence. I have to get my orders from the chief.

All is Not So Rosy

It seems that as much as we advance there are places that just won't stay abreast of the times. (Or a-falsie of the times.) *La Cage aux Folles* has been around for several decades now, as a film first, then a musical, and then

a film again. (*The Birdcage*.) The characters are beloved by millions both straight and gay, and yet... it just ain't wholesome enough for some states. North Carolina (ain't that where that Helms character hangs out?) says that it's just not right for them. Even more disappointing is the reason it's not right for them. Is it the fact that the characters are gay? The fact that the main bad guy of the film is a religious conservative? Nope. The North Carolina Theater in Raleigh won't be presenting *La Cage* next season cause the characters appear in drag.

It seems that Raleigh is blessed with an archaic ordinance that prohibits a business from offering entertainment featuring female impersonators. Having FIs in your show means you're running an "adult establishment." So, the theater is worried that they'll be shut down if the actor playing Alban appears on the stage in a dress and heels.

Of course it's more complicated than that. A club in Raleigh called Legends has already filed suit to have the ordinance tossed, but rather than join forces with the club and fight the good fight for artistic integrity together, the theater has caved in cause of other considerations. Considerations like possible budget cuts. The city contributes about \$133,000 a year to the North Carolina Theater and the conservative forces who control the purse strings are more likely to cut the funds off if *La Cage* goes up than if they produce the play they're replacing it with - *Annie*. Personally, if I was in charge of the money and I heard another lovable little moppet sing *Tomorrow* in that phony stage voice those little girls get from somewhere, I'd pull their subsidy in a heartbeat.

But, in the final analysis it's all pretty murky. The local paper, the *News & Observer*, wrote, "The root of the issue, of course, is not really cross-dressing at all. Otherwise, the furor would be about N.C. Theater's production of *Peter Pan* ... or the recent revival of *Charley's Aunt* by Play Makers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill. Let's face it: the problem is that a

gay man in feathers is more unsettling than a straight man in feathers." Guess that depends on your point of view. Why not share your point of view with the city of Raleigh and the North Carolina Theater? Perhaps we should mobilize the **Transexual Menace?**

Oh, Go On Ya Old Bag

Are you a crossdresser of a certain age? Have you stopped trying to get rid of your wrinkles with alpha hydroxy acids and started to trowel them in with grout? Then have I got a newsletter for you. Our good friend and administrator of the PenPal Program, **Georgia** [redacted] has gotten together with some other golden girls and started a little rag for *Old Hags & Sagging Bags*. To keep things simple that's what they named it, too. It's "a newsletter for the aging crossdresser and other older transgendered persons." They add, "With a need for an AARP for the Transgendered we decided to create a forum for our special concerns. We want to cover subjects like: How to reduce those nasty wrinkles. What styles go well for the aging crossdresser. Should I think seriously of living full time or nearly full time now that the children are gone?" Valid questions that we may all be asking ourselves one day since Mother Time eventually takes off her four inch pumps and slips into Cobbie Cuddlers. You can check out their newsletter at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/georgia_h/ohsb.htm> and drop her a line with comments, suggestions or subscription requests (hard

copy) at [redacted]@compuserve.com>, snail mail at PO Box 10723, Midwest City, OK 73140-1723. Pass the bran girls, I'm on my way.

Those Crazy Foreigners

Before I get hate mail from overseas let me say I love the foreigners. Some of my best friends are... oh, never mind. Seriously, I love foreigners so much, that Renaissance has decided to expand the **Community Film Project** "doco," as they say in Australia (documentary to us Yanks) to cover how crossdressing is viewed around the world. PBS took you around the world in 80 days with Michael Palin, we want to take you around the world in 80 gowns. What we need at the moment is input from various countries about how crossdressing fits into their culture. Japan, South Africa and England are of special interest at the moment but if you know someone in Greece or France please let us know what it's like there for girls like us. The information will be used to write a funding proposal to help the project "get its legs" as they say in the biz. If it does get the funding camera crews could be coming to your town soon so let know if you'd be willing to be filmed. Send your info to me by email, [redacted]@ren.org> or to the Renaissance office and I'll pass it on to our award winning director, Terri Randall. But now, back to those foreigners

Japan Gets a Clue

They're cool about Kabuki but a little slow on transsexuality. Japan has

finally started to get the fact that transsexuality may be treated by gender reassignment surgery. Like duh! The Saitama Medical College outside Tokyo is the first Japanese med college to admit that they should provide the treatment. Japanese citizens who want reassignment have had to go out of the country to get it since Japanese laws forbid the procedure. The Japanese TS has had to go to South Korea or Taiwan to obtain the treatment they need.

Currently the college feels it must create, "an environment for wide-ranging debate" on all the issues involved with GRS and they plan to start doing the operations sometime in the future. Can you say *Standards of Care*? Somebody give them the Benjamin Foundation phone number. Even better, tell them to crank up their web browsers and check out Doctor Anne Vitale's website <<http://www.avitale.com>>. She has the *Standards* there for one and all to peruse. (Lot's of other good info, too.) While the Japanese were busy making great strides in miniaturization we already had begun developing that "wide ranging debate" and it's still evolving today.

No More Heading

The gold medal winners in men's volleyball from Thailand are not going to be heading the ball in any international competition. The reason the boys won't be playing? They like to dress like girls. Most of the team admits "... we want to be beautiful, to wear makeup, long hair." I can relate

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Gender Reflections

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

Gender Defencers

The title of this article is borrowed from Kate Bornstein who coined it as a term describing people who fear, hate, pathologize and discriminate against those TC individuals after whom Bornstein titled her book, *Gender Outlaw*.

What is it with these folks? Why are they "sickened," "threatened," "scared," and "resentful" of transgender behaviors? Why are they "transphobic?"

For a change, let's analyze those who target others as needing therapy, religion, or a good beating.

Several explanations present themselves. Bornstein sees the other side of revulsion as desire. An upheaval, a *mal de mer* of desire will express itself in nausea. And what is more disorienting than a straight male feeling desire (or admiration, or even appreciation) for a beautiful woman who reveals herself to be a biological male? Think of the questions he must face about his sexual orientation and consequently his highly valued place in the dominant culture. It could make anyone sick!

A catch-22 created by gender defenders is the claim that transgendered people are deceptive by not being up front about their gender ambiguity. But those who are out of the shadows are then vulnerable to attacks upon person, reputation and status. In balance, it seems that secrecy is always more damaging to the keeper of the secret than to the deceived.

Another button that gets pushed in the gender defender occurs upon realization that transgendered people often refuse to adhere to the dictum that sex is for procreation. A transgender woman cannot be impregnated and a transgender man cannot inseminate. What, have sex just for fun?

Lastly, transgendered people represent an underpowered community, vulnerable to the slings and arrows of others who are disadvantaged mentally, intellectually, academically, socially, politically and in any way you can think of. Instead of banding together for strength, disempowered groups, including the TC community, splinter in the hopes that their subgroup will escape society's bottom rung. Post-ops ignore their pre-op and non-op brothers and sisters; passers bypass those who cannot pass; the financially secure provide too little help to their indigent siblings.

This is a fertile field for exploitation and humiliation.



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to that. What gets my panties in a bunch is how the country, which is very accepting of crossdressing in general, decided to adopt a hard line on the team's glamour aspirations and not send them to international matches just cause they were worried about their reputation. I guess "real" Thai men don't wear dresses. It's not as if the team would have been playing in gowns by Dior, although that would make for a more interesting match, but apparently they're feminine enough to still cause the powers that be to have a problem. They're also feminine enough to win gold medals playing men's volleyball. I don't think they're sissies and I have one word for the Thai government that sums up how well people can accept crossdressing in sports if the CDs are winners: Dennis Rodman.

And now fair readers, I must bid you adieu. The demands of maintaining my manicure make it necessary for me to have some cuticle work done. See ya next month.



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Mi casa es su casa. Need a place to change before the Renaissance GPC meeting? The perfect location awaits you just off exit 33 Rt. 76. Call CDTips 215-878-3383.



Resources



Background Papers

Background Papers are \$1.25 each:

1. Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing
2. Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing
3. PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others
4. The Matter of Children
5. Annotated Bibliography
6. Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View
7. Understanding Transsexualism

Significant Other Support

To network with other partners of transgendered people contact Evelyn Kirkland, 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087.

Pen Pal Program

If you would like to correspond with other people around the country, contact PenPals, attention Georgia Hilbert, PO Box 10723, Midwest City, OK 73140-1723 or email to: <75474.1025@compuserve.com>

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The Community Center — Your online source for information about transgender support organizations. If your organization would like to be on the World Wide Web, contact us at the CC web site <www.transgender.org/tg/>.

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By now, everyone has read the amazing — if not quite substantiated — finding of fossilized microbes in Martian rock samples. But there was another unsubstantiated finding about the extraterrestrial microbes.

While the scientists found no evidence that the female Martian microorganisms were engaged in the universe's oldest profession, there was evidence that the male organisms dabbled in the universe's oldest hobby. Yep, the scientists theorize that the male microbe was a crossdresser, based on the fossilized remains of a tiny pair of high heels and a well-worn teddy found near the petrified micro-organism. And as scientists are wont to do in cases like this, they further extrapolated that the micro-queen was a contestant in a Miss Gay Mars pageant cut short by whatever cataclysmic event wiped out life on the planet.

Well, here is some more evidence of crossdressing activity, albeit a bit closer to home. And you won't need an electron microscope to see it for yourself, namely this month's *Vis a Vis*...

Writer's Block (Head)

The May/June issue of the *Twenty Club Newsletter* (published by the Gender Identity Clinic of New England in Manchester, Connecticut), carried a front page article called *Writing Rules* by Jacob Hale. The subtitle of the article is *Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing About Transsexuals, Transsexuality or Transsexualism*. There follows a list of fifteen, sometimes lengthy and very involved, rules that sound nothing like "suggestions" for anyone writing about TS topics. In fact, the "Rules" are as

much like "suggestions" as a lynch mob's "suggestion" that its prey confess to the crime for which they are about to be hung.

The first rule for writers bound to take their first misstep with Mr. Hale is: "Approach your topic with a sense of humility: you are not the experts on TS [issues]; transsexuals are." Rule 12 is similarly threatening: "Ask yourself if you can travel in our trans worlds. If not, you probably don't get what we're talking about. Remember that we live most of our lives in non-trans worlds, so we probably do get what you're talking about." That strikes a nice balance between condescension and derision even before the third party sets pen to paper, don't you think?

The rest of the rules, er, I mean, "suggested rules" are equally arrogant. In the case of Rule 10, it is almost counter-productive. "Be aware that if you judge us with reference to your political agenda taken as the measure or standard, especially without even asking if your agenda might conflict with ours and might not automatically take precedence over ours, that it's equally legitimate for us to use our political agenda as measure by which to judge you and your work." Well, if you warn somebody that their lack of understanding will be met with your own lack of understanding... what have you gained? And then why should the other party pay any attention to your "rules"? The twelve other "rules" (even God only handed down *ten* commandments) are filled with references to other writers, and the new transsexual politics, and a good deal of academic mumbo-jumbo that left me scratching my head. The bottom line was that

only transsexuals themselves, and more particularly, only transsexuals or those select few non-transsexuals who are in tune with the viewpoints of Mr. Hale and his cohorts can possibly write intelligently on the subject of transsexualism. Anyone else's viewpoint is therefore invalid. Well, those are the rules, sweetheart.

This is an age old argument and the one that is often levied at journalists or academics who write or study in areas in which they do not have direct hands-on experience. Can a sports-writer cover professional football without ever having played the game on that level? Can a theater critic make a valid point having never trod the boards in front of an audience? Can a social scientist understand public policy without ever having held public office? Of course. The validity of research and criticism is that it is objective, not tarnished by subjective reasoning or personal agendas. Mr. Hale seems to be calling for the exact opposite of this type of study. It is a form of intellectual fascism that should be rejected out of hand. I'm surprised that the Twenty Club, which I always thought to be a forward thinking organization, would go down this road.

And I think I just broke rules number 4 through 13.

Fear of Flying

Leann [redacted] wrote a piece for the *Emerald City News*, published by the group of the same name in Seattle, Washington. It was titled, *A Trip to Los Angeles or... Some Do's and Don'ts of Travel*.

Leann and her GG friend, identified only as "S" in the article, decided to fly down to Los Angeles, with Leann crossdressed for the flight. Leann made the airline reservations for herself (i.e. in Leann's name) and for "S", who is a professional writer, in her "pen name" and paid with a credit card issued in Leann's male name.

When they arrived at the Seattle airport for check-in, there was a problem. Airline security required passengers to show photo-ID proof for anyone holding tickets and boarding the plane. Ironically, Leann — the cross-

dresser — had photo ID proof of herself crossdressed but “S”, the GG, flying under her pen name, did not have ID under that nom de plume.

So the airline people wouldn't let her board. And since the tickets were issued under a “companion-fare” scheme, Leann's ticketing was now in jeopardy. The wrangling took so long that they missed the original flight and had to purchase new tickets all together. Even getting a credit towards another flight was a hassle because the credits were only good for the original purchasers, two people who legally did not exist!

I know you can get a headache just thinking about all the red tape, pseudonyms, and airline bureaucracy run amok. But it's all for our own safety.

There are a lot of common fantasies among crossdressers. (In addition to those other common fantasies, I mean). One of them is flying in drag. I'm not quite sure what the attraction might be to sit in an uncomfortable chair for a few hours and eat beer nuts while the kid in front of you stares at your wig the entire flight but, still, the fantasy abounds in our community. So if you're thinking of taking “a cuckoo flying honeymoon” (as Sinatra once sang), you better check on this new photo ID angle. Imagine having that bit of unpleasantness at the check-in counter, then schlepping your bags and spare wig cases back home again. Flying is dangerous enough already. At least let yourself get airborne before you're shot down.

Psst! Anybody Get The Answer For Number Six?

Barbara Chambers presented a TS quiz in the July/August issue of the *MFGE Newsletter* from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Barbara admits that the test is biased because she designed it and scored a perfect 20. The test is designed so that “yes” answers indicate a high TS quotient. Let's try a few of these questions, what say? So everybody get their blue books out, put all study aids under your desks, and please use only a number two pencil...

1. *Did you begin crossdressing well before puberty?* Actually, I started

crossdressing at the **exact moment of** puberty — and I ruined a perfectly good pair of crushed velvet hotpants that day.

2. *Did you find in your first cross-dressing experiences that there was nothing erotic about wearing girl's clothes?* Yes. There was nothing erotic at all about ruining my lovely crushed velvet hotpants. I scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed but they were a lost cause and it wasn't a turn-on.

3. *Have you always felt extremely uncomfortable exposing your body in men's locker rooms?* Yes. I always felt it was rude to make the other boys seem so inadequate compared to my immense endowment.

4. *Does being addressed as “sir” or “mister” send a shock through you, even when dressed as a male?* Yes. Growing up in Philadelphia, being addressed in any way other than “YO!” has always been disconcerting.

5. *Have most of your lovers noticed a feminine side to you in bed, even when trying to be as masculine as possible?* Yes, but I always thought it had something to do with the garters, stockings, and high heels I insist on wearing during romantic interludes.

6. *Do failures to pass in public just make you more determined to correct the deficiencies in your image?* Yes. So each time out, I wear shorter and shorter skirts and higher and higher heels. Someday I'll get it right.

7. *Have you always had some aversion to urinating while standing up?* Yes. Particularly after that “incident” at the Vince Lombardi rest stop of the NJ Turnpike a few years ago.

8. *Have you always had difficulty or felt bad about using strongly abusive or obscene language?* F_ckin' A!

9. *Are you terribly unable to accept the possibility of male pattern baldness?* Yes. And it gets more terrifying with each passing year.

10. *Do you often prefer indirect stimulation during autoerotic activity?* Yes, but it's just not as much fun spanking myself with a ping-pong paddle while wearing latex panties.

Well, heck, I didn't do too bad after all. And it's a helluva lot better than the “Gentlemen's C” I usually score.

Mirror, Mirror

The Sweetheart Connection is a newsletter for wives and partners of crossdressers published by Tri-Ess in Richmond, California. The Spring '96 issue included a column called *Onnalee's Bag* that dealt with self-esteem issues and I found one comment particularly insightful for its simplicity.

Onnalee writes, “Crossdressing as an art-form seems to be an idea that many of you find interesting, if not fascinating. A few of you have suggested that it beats trying to ‘pass.’ ‘Pass’ as what? Cindy Crawford, Sophia Loren or Lauren Bacall?” Onnalee acknowledges that many crossdressers have written about the insurmountable physical obstacles that prevent passing for many of us. “The art-form lies in making the best of what you have. Success in ‘passing’ also depends on the image or vision of quintessential femininity you hold. Given the heavy media coverage of super-models and celebrities, the goal can appear nearly unattainable. Hell, given that, I haven't even ‘passed’ many times.” And that is the wife of a crossdresser speaking.

The point is that if we seek to create ourselves in an image of femininity that we admire, our self-confidence is affected by the degree to which we measure up to our own ideal. That is why “passing” is such a subjective state of mind. How many times have you heard someone say they “passed” when it seems obvious they couldn't pass at all? The answer is that their self-image equated close enough to their ideal that they believed it and it has nothing to do with an objectively measurable standard of “passability.”

“Passing,” therefore, is not so much in the eye of the beholder as it is in the head of the beholdee. If we look in the mirror and see what we want to see (Cindy, Sophia, or Lauren, for example), then we have conquered our self-doubt. On the contrary, if we fall short of our mind's eye ideal, we feel inadequate somehow. And in the image-conscious media culture we live in, that is exactly how many real women

continued on page 10

VisAVis...

feel every day. Given that, feeling "unpassable" may be the closest we will ever be to feeling like real women.

Get With The Program... Or Get Out

Sarah Wade Smith wrote a very interesting article in *Chrysalis* magazine, published by AEGIS in Decatur, Georgia. It was titled, *A Cup of Bitter Yaupon*, referring to a native American purification drink.

Sarah was formerly a member of the TSG transsexual support group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She would still be a member of that organization had the leadership not decided to toss her out of the group. The reason for her expulsion was that she "may not be at the appropriate level in...transition to fit TSG's mission criteria."

Sarah writes that the group has adopted the position that anyone not moving fast enough toward complete transition is hindering the progress of the other members and hence no longer welcome in the group. The expulsion is for a minimum of three months, after which the board will re-evaluate Sarah's and the other expelled members' commitment to transition. Among the criteria under consideration in the evaluation will be "stable housing; a job or volunteer position in your new gender; and hormone approval, etc."

The stridency of this way of thinking was also evidenced first-hand when one of Sarah's TSG friends informed her that she was no longer welcome as a friend because she considered her not a transsexual, but a transvestite. Ironically, Sarah tells us, this same person was also later thrown out of TSG for lack of "stable housing."

Sarah's "crime" against transsexual-ity was that she needed to acquire medical insurance for her then-wife, who had a heart condition, and had taken a job that involved "cutting my hair. To my friend, the retreat from femininity was unforgivable." Apparently, caring for a loved one was also

unforgivable for her TS "support" group. So they threw her out until she could get her act together i.e., started caring only about herself and the all-important march to transition.

As an outsider and lowly transvestite, I can understand that transsexuals have special support needs and may be justified in keeping a certain "integrity" within their organizations. But Sarah's intelligent and level-headed reasoning (even in the face of the outrageous and hurtful reasoning used against her), makes it seem obvious that she is not some crazy, mixed-up kid. In the opening item of this column, I referred to "intellectual fascism" practiced by some transsexuals and I think that Sarah is a victim of just that type of wrong-headedness.

It may be small consolation to Sarah, but she may have found out the hard way she doesn't need those kind of people for "support." No one does.

And In Addition To That...

The Grace and Lace Letter is a singular publication for Christian transgenderists published by Lee Frances Heller in Jackson, Mississippi.

The Grace and Lace was started in 1990 as a free publication, underwritten by Lee Frances (who was and is a retiree on Social Security) and voluntary contributions from its readership. In a March, 1996 letter to readers, Lee Frances regretfully informed everyone that she would have to begin charging for subscriptions to make up for a drop-off in contributions. The charge will be \$6.00 per year for four quarterly issues. A pittance, really.

If you would like to receive the *G & L Letter*, or just make a contribution towards its continued publication, the address is: *Grace & Lace Letter*, P. O. Box 31253, Jackson MS 39286-1253.

I would also like to thank Dallas Denny for drawing on one of my past columns (the membership survey of Alpha Zeta Sorority and their amazing "but we're not transsexual" transformation practices) in her critical essay *Heteropocrisy* in *Chrysalis Magazine*.

Likewise, it was heartening to read some nice comments about me personally and my earlier column item

about Phaedra Kelly in the Tennessee Vals newsletter in president Marissa Richmond's column, *The Queen's Throne*. Thank you for your southern hospitality, Marissa.

And a final billet-doux to a newcomer to the transvestite newsletter circuit, Donah [redacted] who writes a smart little column for the *Emerald City News* from Seattle. She writes in a breezy, humorous style... and cuts quite a figure in front of the cameras too. I'll be keeping an eye out for more, more, more Donah in future issues. And I know, I know, you've had enough, enough, enough *Vis a Vis* to last you a month.



GPC Report

by Jessica Brandon

The Greater Philly chapter had a decent turnout, thanks in part to unusually comfortable temperatures for this time of year, although it seemed more people spent the meeting outside the building than in it!

The program for the evening was a viewing of the highly acclaimed documentary, *Paris Is Burning*, which was well attended and followed by a rap session headed by Renaissance National Librarian, Lee Etscovitz.

Future meetings will feature a costume party in October for any members who might not be able to attend the annual Henri David Halloween bash, followed by chapter officer elections in November. At present, I am seriously contemplating running for a second term as chapter leader.

As for the Renaissance Christmas Party, everything is being put together for the event which will be held at the Ship Inn in Exton on December 23rd. I hope to have the menu for the event in time for next month's meeting. Also, I talked to Terri [redacted], and she wants to have her band perform at the bash. Details to follow.

Plans are in the works to have members of the local Gay and Lesbian Task Force will drop by in September to discuss the findings of a survey on violence against the gay/lesbian/transgendered community.



Hot•Buzz

JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



"If you can't go over, you must go under." — Jewish Proverb

I see a "situation" shaping up as our community attempts to find its political center. One the one side is a coalition of national organizations working together and on the other is a loose-knit collection of activists that work on their own, each side vying for the hearts, minds and purses of the community. In most endeavors, I believe competition is healthy. It keeps one from becoming complacent. In this case, however, I believe competition (perceived or real) between these two camps will cause damage in the community. Egos and super-egos are involved. This person won't work with that person. That's so childish and self-centered. Our political efforts need to be developed and coordinated through our organizations which are our greatest strength right now. Forget about the individuals involved. If the representative of organization X should die tomorrow, will that stop X from participating in the political representation process? No, I don't think so. **Ben Franklin** said it well, "If we don't all hang together, we shall all hang separately." Our ability to participate in the political process as a peer group depends on our ability to put aside egos and develop a clear vision of community. Those who need their egos boosted at the expense of community will find themselves alone.

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Movement in the right direction (IMHO) seems to be coming from **GenderPAC**. There is discussion afoot to make this informal committee into a legitimate educational organization. More on this at a later date. Meanwhile, please keep sending your tax-deductible contributions to GenderPAC, c/o PO Box 229, Waltham, MA 02154.

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I felt so sorry for former IFGE Executive Director and founder, **Merissa Sherrill Lynn**. She wrote an OpEd piece for *Transgender Tapestry* #75 titled "What's Wrong With this Picture." Lynn clearly demonstrated in the piece why she is no longer one of this community's leaders. According to Lynn, "I come from a place of love and respect ...the March was the antithesis of what I was about." The "March" as Lynn calls it was the First National Gender Lobby Day last October. Lynn says that those of us who were in Washington to lobby Congress had no idea what we were doing there or who we represented. Well, I certainly can't speak for others, but I was there representing myself as a transgendered person making my voice heard. But, more importantly 100 t-people showing up in one place to represent themselves and speak out brought us together for a common purpose, and, for at least two days, we had a common identity. That had never happened in this community before.

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You don't have to wait for GenderPAC or any other organization in order to make your voice heard. Write a letter to your Representatives and Senators. According to Washington insiders who know, one well-written letter is assumed to represent the views of about 500 people because only about 1 in 500 take the time to write. So, if a given issue generates a lot of mail, it will be considered important. Here are some guidelines for writing... Tell your policymaker you are a registered voter in their district... Keep

your letter brief and to one page if possible... Address only one issue... Handwrite your letter unless you have an unreadable scrawl. Otherwise, type it and handwrite a PS under your signature... Write from your heart. The best letters describe how an issue affects you personally... Need to know what the issues are? Here are a few places on the Web to find out: **20/20 Vision** <<http://www.2020vision.org>>; **The National Political Index** <<http://www.politicalindex.com>>; **GenderPAC Reports** <<http://www.gpac.org/>>.

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The **Defense of Marriage Act** (DOMA) may seem like an issue that has little to do with transgendered people, but think again. If DOMA passes as written, it could cause countless problems for lots of people who are legally married. First, there are the post-op transsexuals, both FtM and MtF who are now legally married. DOMA would effectively undo their unions. Second, there are millions of *apparently* heterosexual married people who are **intersexed**, i.e., neither 100 percent male nor 100 percent female according to **Wm. O. Beeman**, an associate professor of anthropology at **Brown University**. DOMA does them in as well. Sure, the GLB community is against DOMA, but maybe we ought to be as well. Some transgender activists, GPAC included, are trying to get some amendments tacked onto DOMA that will protect these present marriages. There's also a few firebrands who can't wait for Clinton to sign the bill so they can start a lawsuit.

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Transgender continues to be popular with the Hollywood crowd. **Dennis Rodman**, the crossdressing roundball superstar, will make a guest appearance on **3rd Rock from the Sun** Sept. 23rd. *3rd Rock* features a transgendered character of sorts. **Kristen Johnston** plays a male alien who must inhabit a female human body. On top of all that, *3rd Rock* is one of the funniest shows on the tube.

HOT•BUZZ

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Kurt Russell has been known to do it up in drag for a film (*Tango and Cash*), but in his latest outing, *Escape From L.A.*, Russell teams up with 6 foot tall actress **Pam Grier** who plays a post-op transsexual. With a little Hollywood technical magic, the sound studio drops Grier's voice an octave or two making her sound both masculine and feminine.

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The fashion industry is "all in a heap," as one of my friends is wont to say. According to several articles appearing in the *New York Times*, several fashion "standards" have taken big hits on fashion trends that were big misses. **Anne Klein**, **Donna Karan**, and **Escada** are just a few of the recognizable names that are in the dumps. The reason? Women don't want fussy clothes anymore. The look and fit is casual. Khakis are the uniform of the moment and they're much less costly, even with a **Liz Claiborne** tag, than so-called "high fashion" looks. The result? Stock prices reflect what's going on. Donna Karan stock opened at 28¼, slid down to the low 20s and still hasn't recovered. Meanwhile GAP stock soared from \$16 to over \$32 in the last year and a half. Believe it or not, one of the best places to find affordable, good looking clothes these days is **Sears**. While you're there, check out their new cosmetics department.

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As a result, fashion for Fall '96 seems to be much more sensible than ever. Here are the hot trends... The **color** of the season is **deep purple**... The **fabric** of choice is anything that's **knitted**. It travels well and resists wrinkles... The **purse** for fashion mavens is **big**. Little bags are "out"... The **overall look** is one long and lean line of **monochromatic color**.

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At least they didn't use "cyber" in the name... **Revlon** is introducing a new cosmetic collection for Fall called **Virtual Violet**. The "look" they say is Sheer to Shocking. Many fashion magazines are carrying a **Revlon Report** insert that shows the colors and how to apply them. The new color I like best is **Violet X-**

treme. It comes in lipstick, nail polish and eyeshadow. Not wanting to be left behind, **Maybelline** is offering its own brand of deep violet cosmetics called **Rogue Vogue**. Also look for Maybelline's Gold Lights Natural Accents. It will add shimmery highlights to your face or even your hair.

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The word is silicone and it's appearing everywhere. Silicone based cosmetics are the hottest and greatest advance since sliced bread. Following the lead of **Max Factor Lasting Performance** and **Revlon Colorstay**, **Almay** introduces **Amazing Lasting Makeup**.

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Among the new colors for Fall, you'll find some scary ideas like Baby Blue and Gold lipstick. Fear not. These are not opaque colors; they're sheer stains that give your lips a nice but different look. If you're too conservative to risk a trendy mouth, take a look at some of the more bold colors of nail polish being offered. Among them are **Estée Lauder Naughty**, **Cutex Gilded Burgundy**, **She Umura 069** (which is almost glossy black) and **Hard Candy Haze**.

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For those of us who are large, fear not. You too can be fashionable. Stop by a **Lane Bryant** shop and you'll find affordable and fashionable clothing in sizes from 14 to 28. One example, a leather skirt, is just \$69. Which reminds me, Fall is always the time for **suede** and **leather** clothing and accessories.

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Keep an eye out for **Cindy Crawford's** latest effort *Cindy Crawford's Basic Face*, a makeup workbook that covers everything from skincare to application tips. It's published by Broadway Books and costs about \$25.

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Every so often, especially for the part-time women out there, I have to remind you to dump your cosmetics. Nothing lasts forever (well almost nothing). So: lipstick – toss after 2 to 3 years... mascara – toss after 3 months... pencils – toss after a year... powders – the exception to the rule... cream or liquids – 1 year.

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Fall fashion for less than \$100: Purple lace top by **XOXO** – \$28... Black satin

shoes by **Ann Marino** – \$62... Purple velvet pants by **Joe's** – \$68... Khaki pleather skirt by **Trina Turk** – \$88... Shimmery colored tights by **CK Calvin Klein** – \$13... Jean jacket in "waxed" leather by **Gap** – \$68... Striped sweater by **Gap** – \$38... Schoolgirl plaid pleated skirt by **Betsey Johnson** – \$85... High-heel loafers – \$65... Army-green wool skirt by **Banana Republic** – \$78... Purple velvet pants by **Rampage** – \$58.

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Did you get the idea? Purple is the color for Fall. But, if purple seems too extreme for you, try **deep blue** in a fabric with some shine, like satin or velvet or cashmere, or a matte surface like wool crepe (my fave). Try it, even if you only add a hint like tights or gloves.

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Tricks and tips for the pros — **Kevin Aucoin**... curl lashes... apply cream blush with fingers not only to cheeks, but to bridge of nose and temples. **Dick Page**... make your own "creamy" eyeshadow by mixing powder shadow with a little Vaseline... finger-apply lipstick instead of blusher to cheeks. **Mary Greenwell**... apply eyeshadow powders with a quarter-inch rounded brush. **François Nars**... always use loose powder... iridescent dark green eyeshadow is great for evening, especially blended with gold powder... instead of a pencil, brush on dark green shadow to line eyes. And the latest "trick" is for Caucasian women to use dark blush intended for African and Latina women.

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I never quite understood it; some guys love to wear lingerie under their masculine clothes. I remember talking to one guy who went to work like this everyday. Of course, part of the thrill, I suppose, is the risk in getting caught. I mean it's hard to hide a bra strap under some circumstances. At least it was until now. **Bestform** has introduced the **Invisibra**. It's meant to be worn under clingy knits and tees with no seams showing through.

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So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? I think we can work toward unity, not uniformity. Comments? Write care of this publication or email them to [redacted]@cdspub.com>.
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Multiple Choice

By Vanessa & Linda Kaye. This article may be of some help to married crossdressers but it will be of more assistance to your marriage if your spouse reads it and you both discuss it.

There are several methods of testing used in schools, seminars and the like. For example, there are *True/False* tests, *Fill-In-The-Blank* tests, *Essay* tests and *Multiple Choice* tests. Our favorite has always been the *Multiple Choice* test. We say this because, even if one does not know the answer immediately, with a bit of reasoning, you stand a very good chance of selecting the correct response.

Generally, the multiple choice has four responses: Two of these tend to be so far removed from the reality of the question as to be absurd. These two options can usually be eliminated immediately. Then, we are faced with the two remaining responses which both "appear" to be good answers; yet there are subtle differences which result in only one of them being the correct answer. Careful reasoning can usually help to discern which one of the two remaining answers is the right one.

In our daily lives, seldom are we faced with important decisions that are as clear cut as *True or False*. Very little seems to be black and white anymore, there are so many shades of gray in between. Even less seldom are we faced with problems that can be answered by merely filling in the blank with one word. *Essay* questions in life wouldn't work well either. These never seem to "get to the point" and meander endlessly while filling up space. As a result, life tends to be more of a *Multiple Choice* test than any other type. Each day, almost every moment, we are faced with choices. Whether it is at work, at home, or at play, we constantly have to make decisions. Time is also a factor. The decisions or choices we must make need to be made in order to proceed to some other step, or decision making procedure. So it is for those within a transgender relation-

ship.

Let's pose a test question:

You have just discovered that your husband (or partner) has been secretly crossdressing for years. You should:

- A. Accept it immediately without question.
- B. Leave now.
- C. Demand that he stop this disgusting behavior.
- D. Obtain as much information about crossdressing as possible and discuss it with him.

Okay, now let's see.... which two answers can we throw out? How about B and C? Leaving now, what would this accomplish? You've found out that your partner enjoys wearing the clothing of the opposite gender. Does this mean that he is no longer a good person, provider, partner or friend? No. Aren't there enough qualities about your partner that you still admire and respect? If you were to leave immediately, you leave questions unanswered and give up all that you have experienced together. In short, this is not a good answer.

What about demanding that he stop doing this? That might work, but first, ask him to stop breathing for a day or two. He can no more stop being transgendered than he can stop breathing. His alternate gender personality is a natural part of him. It was most likely there at birth and will be there until he breathes his last. The terminology "disgusting," has to do with our culture. In some cultures, transgenderism is actually revered. The fact is, our Western society often condemns those who are different from what is perceived to be the norm. If you will not let others decide what is right or wrong for you, then this is another choice you can throw out. In fact, transgenderism can be, and is, viewed as a gift by many.

We are now faced with two remaining choices: A. Accept it immediately without question; and D. Obtain as much information about crossdressing as possible and discuss it with him.

It would be a rare woman who

could manage answer A. In fact, we don't even recommend this answer. Regardless of what activities or interests your partner has, wouldn't you like to know something about them and share with him? It is unfair to ask that a wife or partner simply "accept" without question that their husband enjoys wearing women's clothing. To accept this new part of your mate without question, could also be construed as complete disinterest. If this is not what you wish to convey, then we suggest you also discard this answer.

The choice that remains appears to be the most logical. There is a distinct difference between wanting to learn more about something new to us before accepting and simply rejecting that which we do not understand. There are numerous resources available from books and videos to counselors and support groups, which can and do provide the information you need to make your own decision. If you are among those who felt a great betrayal at suddenly discovering this secret side of your partner, then you need to be able to make a rational decision. Your feelings are real and justified and they should be considered. Yet, there were reasons your partner kept this information from you. Talk to him, make an attempt to understand. We cannot change the past; however, we can leave it behind.

We nearly forgot! *Multiple Choice* tests often have a fifth choice; E. None of the above. Perhaps the answer for you and your partner isn't even listed among our selections. There are far more serious and difficult issues in a relationship than what one wears. Transgenderism is something that can be integrated into a loving and caring relationship, if so you desire. The choice is yours to make.



Please Note:

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Ms. Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.

Making Sense Of It All

A Clarifying Moment

There are moments in life when the meaning of existence is suddenly and dramatically clarified. This is not to say that we are left with no more riddles, but it does mean that we have taken a significant step in the direction of personal wisdom, often in the form of greater self-awareness. One such moment occurred in my own life when my wife nearly died, a moment even more powerful than my own serious car accident two years earlier. I received a call at work one day informing me that my wife had been rushed, unconscious and vomiting, to a nearby hospital. It was pretty clear from the outset that she had had a stroke.

What happened after that phone call is fairly predictable but no less painful. I rushed to the hospital in the pouring rain, an extremely anxious half-hour drive, and became immediately involved in all the shock and pain of seeing a dearly loved one helpless in a coma, with a fifty-fifty chance for survival. But after two days she opened her eyes, began to smile, and then began to talk. A two month period encompassed not only this medical emergency and initial recovery but also brain surgery to repair a damaged blood vessel as well as rehabilitation, and finally a return to a slightly altered lifestyle. Overall, her recovery has been amazing.

It was this shocking event which, in spite of the temporary cloud it created, turned out to be a clarifying and life-changing moment etched permanently into my very being. What had started out as an ordinary day had suddenly become an extraordinary moment in time. It was a moment of darkness which became a moment of light. In one fell swoop I saw both the fragility and potentiality of my existence. I realized in a felt flash that my life is truly precarious and at the same time open to possibility.

Realizing that I, too, could die un-

expectedly at any time, I asked myself how long I could possibly go on living with my particular life-long secret, namely, my gender confusion. How long could I continue to hide this confusion? How long could I deny myself the gender fulfillment which only I could bring about and which the precariousness of life could deny me before I ever acted? I have not been the same person since that traumatic phone call. In fact, it was as if I myself had somehow been "called." A resolve was made in one clarifying moment, and my life has slowly but steadfastly changed. That change means I have come to recognize and to accept my feminine feelings and needs.

What amazes me in all of this is the fact that such a clarifying moment is possible. Apparently death, or the threat of it, or any traumatic event, can have a cathartic and catalytic effect. It can undoubtedly also have a paralyzing effect. In my case, however, I was ready—I was desperate—for some form of enlightenment and change. My wife's brief but frightening coma actually served to wake me up. I thus opened my own eyes to the reality of existence and began to see that life is truly temporary and that it is only as good as one makes it. Stated another way, I saw my own living death. I saw how I was already dead in terms of personal fulfillment. It was as if I, too, were in a coma, only a coma that gave the appearance, but not the full substance, of being alive. I had lost touch with my inner being, with my feelings, and with a real desire to live and to be with others.

The ensuing gender change process has been a testimony to the power of this clarifying moment which I have been describing. I have been told by my wife and children that I am now more present as a human being, more fully alive in the here and now, more loving. When I am with them I am truly with them, not somewhere else, even though

I do not look like the person they used to know. Although gender change is not a simple matter, at least I am no longer preoccupied with an inner emptiness which in turn put me at an emotional distance from others.

That emptiness and distance were really of my own creation, in that I was blind to myself and thus blind to others. The more I have been able to reach in, the more I have been able to reach out. And reaching in and reaching out both became more of a possibility when, in one clarifying moment, I found myself reaching up. I reached up to powers greater than me and asked: "Is this what it all means? What am I waiting for? Will not Death, that death which would even end my living death, find me first if I do not hurry up and take a stand for my own existence?" My answers to these questions have become the basis for my rebirth, both inner and outer, for my empowerment as a human being. It's good to be more fully alive. And when Death finally does speak to me directly, I will know that I spent some quality time with Life.



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SPICE 96: A Gold Medal Winner

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

What a dramatic moment! The neck bowed to receive the golden award for being the swiftest, the strongest, the most elegant. The eyes glistening with joyous tears as the stirring strains of the National Anthem resound through the night. Such is the thrill of triumph. Such is the ecstasy of SPICE 96, truly a gold medal effort.

Winning the gold is never easy. You have to put together effective program, and that's just what Peggy Rudd and her SPICE 96 Planning Board did. To achieve a smooth mount, they selected the Wilmington, Delaware Hilton as their site, in a state where there is no sales tax.

Judges look at elements of the program, but Peggy and her staff gave them such notables as Carol Cobb-Nettleton, Neila Miller, and Patti Klein. No one-tenth deduction there!

SPICE 96 was performed to the theme of "Unconditional Love." Participants themselves produced harmonizing ideas. "SPICE is about couples," came through loud and clear. Both wives and husbands must communicate, negotiate, and empathize to build and strengthen their relationships. Marriage is about we, not me. "Negotiation," proposed Peter, "must be a matter of the heart."

The interplay of these basic themes got a perfect 10 for clarity. An event should flow smoothly so that the senses never become exhausted by the intensity. This consideration is of paramount importance to SPICE, where

long hours of in-depth seminars can tire the brain. At SPICE couples work hard at their relationship-building skills. But the leadership was up to the challenge, providing fun and relaxing activities. The Philadelphia Harbor Cruise got everyone into the mood with great food and hot music, plus time for conversation while the scenery rolled past. Thursday featured intense sessions on relationship-building and children's issues. Flow was smooth, with husbands and wives taking synchronized seminars. Breaking up the intensity were no-holds-barred Q&A sessions. A panel of wives answered questions from husbands, and vice-versa. In this way, each could come to understand the other's issues.

Friday saw husbands and wives considering the tense topic of bedroom issues. That afternoon, however, participants took off on a tour of historic Philadelphia, a wine country tour, a shopping trip, or an excursion to the Atlantic City casinos. (Talk about risk-taking!) Those who wished to remain at the hotel could attend professional-led small-group sessions. And at the end of each day, we were treated to the manifold musical talents of singer-composer Jim Richards of Vancouver, Canada. "This is the best convention I've ever been to in the gender community!" rejoiced one connoisseur of gender vents!

When the audience gets into the act, you can usually predict a medal-worthy performance. Saturday afternoon featured a session on "What You

Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid To Ask." Participants plied the panelists with questions about children, religion, jobs, psychological profiles of husbands and wives, life stories and a host of other topics.

After an hour and twenty minutes we had to call a halt because of time. Even our dignified presenters caught the enthusiasm. One of my fondest memories of SPICE 96 will always be Neila Miller leading us in a rousing rendition of "Getting To Know You." For a moment I thought I could hear the wheels turning in Jim Richards' head, "What can I do to top that!?"

Perhaps the most important element of any program is the dismount, for it is the last glance the judges have of you. An inelegant landing can ruin the most artistic choreography and negate months of training. But Peggy and her staff were not to be denied. In the "Where Do We Go From Here?" ending, the men discussed building SPICE by writing articles and building an interactive presence on the Internet. Everyone shared some little nugget of wisdom he would share with his wife to enrich his marriage. Expanding on the SPICE vision, Peggy recruited a SPICE 97 Planning Committee to bring new workers aboard, and appointed two accomplished wives to be ambassadors to other programs. Landing? She stuck it! A 9.9 and a Gold Medal! Now, if someone would just compose a SPICE anthem!



The Blessing of the Wigs

By Pamela DeGroff

What the heck is a blessing of the wigs? Well, it is the idea of Rev. Jim Hawk of Stonewall Mission Church. It is a time of affirmation for any and all transgendered people; a time to come together at a place of worship and realize that we are accepted.

Rev. Hawk explained to me that the Catholic Church has a Blessing of the

Pets, when people bring their four legged, feathered, and even finned friends to receive prayers and special blessings for their health and well being. There is an Episcopal Church in New England that blesses motorcycles and those who ride them. So why not a blessing for the transgendered?

Originally Rev. Hawk thought of calling it the Blessing of the Pumps,

but realized some people would bring the wrong kind. Not good.

So, on August 18 people gathered for a time of fellowship, affirmation, and friendship with the congregation of the Stonewall Mission Church and many wigs were blessed. For info on the next Blessing of the Wigs, contact the Tennessee Vals, PO Box 92335, Nashville, TN 37209.



Be Thankful For Your Significant Others

by: Linda [REDACTED]

What would you do if you found your wife or girlfriend standing in front of a full length mirror wearing your old army uniform? Let's say she starts buying men's shoes in her size from wing tips to hiker boots in several colors. How about if she puts Rogaine on her upper lip in hopes of growing a mustache? Gets the name Harley Davidson tattooed on her upper arm? Because she doesn't wear shorts or shirts during the colder months, she lets the hair grow on her legs. In the spring it takes a weed eater to remove it? When in bad moods, she puts on one of your shorts, and magically feels better? If that isn't enough, when she is cooking dinner, she sings the old song by Village People, *Macho Man*. Are these things I just described much different than what we ask our partners and spouses to accept?

On June 9 my wife, Phyllis and I

were married 25 years. They were not easy years to say the least. I had my suitcase packed more than once and threatened to leave more than once, but for some reason could not bring myself to do it. It was the same old story. I wish she could do this better or that differently, and if other wives do it, why can't she, "because" I thought, "that's just the way it's done" and so on and so on. You get the idea though, raising two children, my abusing alcohol for 16 years, my being an over the road truck driver for 9 years, my suffering from post traumatic stress disorder due to Vietnam, my making a major career change after almost 23 years with one company, and my steadily increasing desire to wear her clothes. Through all of this she was there.

In March of this year we found out she had two malignant tumors which needed to be removed ASAP. Suddenly, the world as I knew it fell apart.

I began to realize that you never have until you face the reality of losing it. Today she is taking radiation treatments and chemotherapy treatments, and she has been given an 80% chance of staying in remission. By looking to a power greater than ourselves for help and guidance, we feel this gives her very good odds for a full recovery.

I have heard that to be transgendered is a gift, but I believe that to have an accepting wife is an even greater gift. A word of advice to you part time girls out there: Be thankful for your significant others. Phyllis, thank you for putting up with all my stuff over the past 25 years, and I hope you can put up with 25+ more. Over the past several months you have been the strong one, and I have pulled on your strength.

Sincerely, Bill [REDACTED]



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Tina Eckhardt





Letters to the Editor

Dear News & Views readers,

I'm really happy to see the apology (August RN&V) to Jane Ellen. I've just been personally involved with Jane Ellen, Mary, and Vanessa Kaye in the online debate (including being briefly outed on Vanessa's web page—ouch!) and have nothing but praise for Jane Ellen's diplomatic handling of the entire affair.

Jane Ellen and Vanessa have taken a lemon and made lemonade—they have agreed to partner and bury the hatchet. Jane Ellen and Mary were great, my hat's off to them! SPICE strikes me as an excellent organization, run by the wives and not by Jane Ellen.

I'd also like to express my appreciation to Dina and the RN&V staff for setting the record straight in the August issue. It takes guts and integrity to do that—thanks!

Hugs,

Mary Ann [redacted]

Dear Mary Ann,

To be accurate, we did not apologize to Jane Ellen Fairfax. The apology was addressed to Tri-Ess and SPICE.

Hi Angela,

Tonight I read the Renaissance newsletter sampler at <www.ren.org>. I just wanted to tell Dina that her humor in the *Rules of Crossdressing* section of

the *Vis-a-Vis* article was enough to make me scream with laughter! :)

A rather pious crossdressing friend of mine asked me if they would "send themselves to Hell if they had sex with a man." I think she would benefit from those "Rules":)

Hope things are well up there and I look forward to seeing some of you gals at Southern Comfort Conference.

Jennileigh [redacted]

Tennessee Vals Newsletter Editor/
Web Mistress/Alderanian Princess

Visit the Vals website <<http://www.transgender.org/tg/tvals/>>

Dear Angela,

I was just perusing June 1996 *News & Views* and got the inspiration to write a few comments — certainly not critical.

The article on breastforms omits one important source... breast implants, the same kind women have surgery for and sometimes leak silicone. I have a pair and they work fine. They have the weight and consistency and bounce of natural breasts. I believe they cost me about \$100 and they are still not leaking and in good shape. I got the idea from Joannie, who used to attend the GPC meetings.

I apologize for my being away for so long. If you see anyone who remembers me tell them I miss them very much and hope to see them again soon.

Affectionally yours, love,

Libby [redacted]

Dear Libby,

It's good to hear from you too. The breast form idea sounds good. Anybody got any ideas where we could buy them? Let us know and we'll pass the info along.

Hi there!

As a transgendered parent, both my spouse and I felt that the article entitled *Making Sense of It All* by Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D. (August Issue) was wonderful!

Sincerely,

Jane [redacted]

Dear Angela,

After receiving the RN&V, Volume 10, Number 8, and reading it from cover to cover as well as sharing it with several friends on the yard, I felt I must write to say "Thank you." The articles made me feel as if I knew something that was going on in the world I knew before entering this pit of hell. (Prison)

Your writing is only superceded by your good looks. You can almost tell I'm about to ask for something, right? Okay, so you're right. I actually have two requests of you and your beautiful staff.

I am asking you, JoAnn, Jessica and Dina as well as any other staff of your fine magazine for a picture that I may put in my "family book." If you have no pictures for your adoring fans, then I would beg, plead and promise anything for a personal picture. (Not that personal, you must be dressed.)

That takes care of the first request. Secondly, I would ask that you place me on your PenPal list or send me a list of persons I might write. I am 54 years old, have crossdressed since the age of 13, lived and worked in most of this country as a teen-aged hooker because I had no other way to support myself. (Clothes cost money then, too.) I am a bi-sexual transvestite and lonely as hell and need

continued on last page

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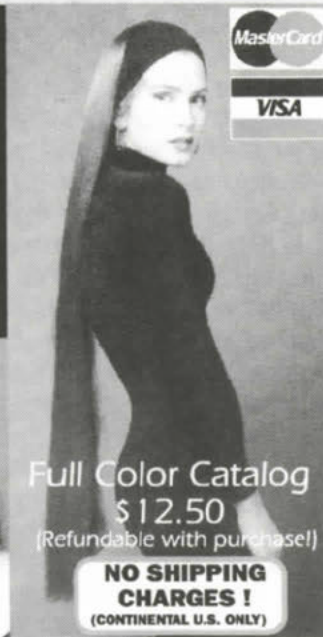


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Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Greetings, girlfriends! Here we are in September, a month of considerable change. The summer is winding down, school is back in session, and, more importantly, the goliaths of the gridiron are gearing up for combat! Even though I'm as wonderfully transgendered as the next soul reading these words, I can't help but feel giddy and excited about this time of year as I'm a huge football fan, and locally, the Philadelphia Eagles are ready for what looks like a great season. In fact, considering the duality of our personalities, you could say that I'm a football freak **and** a football widow at the same time!

I get some rather neat stuff in my post office box, and one such item is the topic of this month's column. For those of you in the audience who enjoy shopping by mail order, here's something you may find of extreme interest. A few weeks ago, I got a 50+ page catalog that contains nothing but catalogs! Called *World Famous Catalogs*, this publication lists some 450 catalogs of virtually every imaginable interest: toys, videos, music, arts and crafts, furniture, military collectibles, specialty foods, memorabilia, you name it, chances are, there's a catalog for it here. And, of course, there are also catalogs of clothes, lingerie, shoes — the whole nine yards.

To briefly go down the list, in the clothing department there's: Newport News (formerly Avon Fashions), Long, Elegant Legs and Tall Classics (for girls more than five feet seven), Silk collection (all manner of things in silk), Designers Unlimited (for girls size 14 and over), Cattle Kate (western wear)

and catalogs of purely exotic clothing like Flirt, Hot Tomatos, Dream Dresser and, predictably, Frederick's of Hollywood. Forty two fashion catalogs in all. For lingerie there's: Intimate Nights, Passion In Fashion, Fashion Fantasies and Personal Treasures, just to name a few. There are some ten catalogs devoted just to intimate wear.

In the footwear department there's: Comfort Corner with sizes from 4 to 12 (AA to EEE), Sexy Shoes, a regular advertiser in most transgendered publications and two companies I've never heard of before: Pierre Silber Sexxy Footwear (sizes 4-14, 3 1/2", 4 1/2" & 6" heel heights) and Unique Footwear, featuring really exotic shoes and boots. You'll also find One Hanes Place for hosiery, Paula's Hatbox if you're into hats, Dolly Parton wigs (What?!? No Dolly Parton breast forms? Bummer!) along with 18 health and beauty catalogs, and 12 swim wear catalogs, although beach season will be in it's last stages by the time you read this.

For a mail order maven, of which I'm one, this is a dream come true. There's literally something here for everyone. None of the hundreds of catalogs listed in this publication are more than five dollars, and some are free. For the sake of expediency you can order catalogs from this catalog over the phone, or by fax with your handy dandy Visa or Mastercard. Admittedly, I don't quite know how I got this book since I never asked for it, but if you want to get one write to: Publisher Inquiry Services, 951 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Building 190, P.O. Box 5057, Boca Raton, Florida 33431-

0857. This is worth looking into.

Speaking of catalogs, you must get your hands on the Sears fashion catalogs which you can get by calling 1-800-783-7577. The Fall Preview edition is out now and it has some absolutely terrific looking stuff, like stunning evening wear, a killer black jumpsuit with animal print trim on the cuffs and collar, a super stylish dress with matching shawl and belt, a boatload of classy shoes and more suits than you can shake a handbag at! J.C. Penney's has just come out with its catalog for talls and they also have some very nice things by names like Jacqueline Ferrar and Danny & Nicole, as well as Penney's own brand, Worthington. Call 1-800-222-6161 for a catalog.

Back in July I promised I would test out some of the so-called "long lasting cosmetics" and give you a report on them. Foundations were a wash since neither Revlon or Cover Girl had shades for African-American women. For lipstick, I went with Revlon ColorStay lip color along with the accompanying ColorStay lip liner. Both went on easily (the lip liner especially so) and stayed put through an entire Renaissance meeting. For eye pencil and eye shadow, I stayed with Revlon. Again, both went on smoothly. The eye pencil provided a good, thin line, however, it was impossible to smudge to soften the line, which I like to do.

At the end of the evening with everything firmly in place for over eight hours, I needed makeup remover to get the Revlon stuff off, proving that it does indeed live up to its claim of being long wearing. Revlon has a full blown web site (www.revlon.com), so I plan to write and tell them of my experiences and suggest they come up with long wearing foundation for darker skins. Speaking of makeup removal, I don't use soap and water which can be ineffective, instead I use Swiss Formula's St. Ives Facial Cleanser and Makeup Remover. This product does a great job for me and can be found in most drug and five and dime stores as well as supermarkets.

continued on back page



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New Job Discrimination Bill Would Protect Trans-people

Washington, D.C. — August 1996

On July 11, 1996, House representative Brian P. Billbray (R-CA) introduced a new a job discrimination bill that would protect transgendered people. The Workplace Fairness Act (H.R. 3784) bypasses the usual "laundry list" of protected classes: race, religion, sex, etc. Instead, it simply states that people would be protected from workplace discrimination for *any* reason not affecting job performance. The bill is co-sponsored by outed gay Reps. Gunderson and Kolbe among

others, and is considered by some to be groundbreaking in its simplicity.

One problem with the bill is that it still would let employers fire an employee for not getting along with coworkers. It's often the coworkers who can't getting along, not the transgendered worker. This problem could be fixed, but plenty of opposition to the bill is expected anyway—both from employers trying to protect their right to hire and fire who they want, as well as from activist groups favoring the unequivocal "laundry list" approach.

Said Dana Priesing, GenderPAC Congressional Advocacy Coordinator: "The Workplace Fairness Act is an important first step towards outlawing *all* discrimination if a person is a competent and effective employee, and it's the first bill we've seen which covers trans-people and genderqueers. Let your Congressional representative know you support the Workplace Fairness Act. Call 202-225-3121 and ask to speak to the representative for your district."



Renaissance Library News

Discussion Plus, the bimonthly Renaissance Library discussion group met on Wednesday, August 7, 1996. There were only four in attendance this first time, but the feedback was: "Please continue. Don't give up." True to the stated purpose of the group, the discussion was based on articles in the

RN&V from the previous two months (in this case June and July). One of the news items which gained the group's attention was Angela Gardner's comments on Dennis Rodman. The participants discussed that item and then its impact on them personally (the "plus" part). The discussion was interesting, and the process of participants introducing themselves and sharing some of their feelings, concerns, and purposes was involving and enlightening. The next such meeting will be on Wednesday, October 2, 1996 from 8 to 9:30 PM at the Wayne Counseling Center. Lee

Etscovitz, Renaissance National Librarian, will again conduct the meeting. Everyone is welcome. There is no charge. Come dressed as you please. The discussion will be based on the August and September issues of *Renaissance News and Views*.

The recent donation of two books (in hardcover) by Jessica Brandon is most appreciated. She has given the library *The Man in the Red Velvet Dress* by J.J. Allen (recently reviewed by JoAnn Roberts in the July issue of *News and Views*) and *Letting It All Hang Out*, an autobiography by RuPaul. Again, thank you, Jessica.

We are still in need of copies of RN&V from 1987 – 1992. Send copies to: Dr. Lee Etscovitz, Librarian
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Shopping...

One additional note on makeup: early last month, I got some email from Mary Ann, one of my loyal readers, who talked about finding a makeup artist sympathetic to us, and how you should bring a friend along to take notes on your experience so you can duplicate things later. Also, remember how I sorta scoffed at the notion of an Avon lady coming into your home to selling you stuff while en-

homme? Well, Mary Ann told me that many Mary Kay agents are happy to do in-home consulting, however, she also told me that while the prices are reasonable, it can take upwards of several weeks to get your stuff. But at least you have another option should you choose to use it.

Here's a quick shopping tip: If you're on the road for a transgender outing and can't get your outfit pressed in time for your event, I recommend you invest in a hand held steamer. These devices are small, simple to use, pack easily into a suitcase and can be

used with ordinary tap water to steam wrinkles out of clothing. I have one made by Sunbeam (priced around \$25.00 bucks) and it's a godsend. Well, that's it for now. If you want to respond to my monthly words of wit and wisdom, write to either the Greater Philly address on page two or email me at [REDACTED]@voicenet.com> Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, sisters!



Letters...

someone to live life through out ther as they will not alow me to live it here.

I will answer any who write me and they may write anything they wish as my mail is not censored except for photographs. Anyone having any literature that deals with the subject of cross-dressing or transsexuals may forward it

to me as no literature exists inside.

If you can do nothing about my situation I understand and love you anyway.

Bright Blessings!

With all respect and love,

Jimmie [REDACTED]
3225 John Conley Drive
Lapeer, MI 48446

I sent Jimmie a few photos to keep him company and signed him up for the

PenPal list. He knows how to suck up with that stuff about my good looks. If anyone wants to send him any "literature" it's up to them. He sounds like he may be for real, but since he is a prisoner we have to keep in mind he may be trying to get stuff to sell to the other inmates. We print his letter here for your consideration.



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