

HEY DAD ... DO I HAVE TO
WATCH THE TV?



by Ricky [REDACTED]

HEY DAD ... DO I HAVE TO WATCH THE TV?

by Ricky [REDACTED]

So you just found out your Dad has an unusual hobby, one that most kids would think is really weird. You are not so sure yourself, but you love your Dad and want to know what goes on. Most kids think Dad is a bit strange in the first place, but I mean when Dad wants to wear dresses and makeup and earrings and things he has to be really weird, right? And if you are a boy does that mean you are gonna be weird like that too? Is he going to get weirder and run off with another woman, or even another guy? Just what the heck is going on here anyway? Until you found out you were just a kid like any other kid at school and maybe you had a few worries but now there is something in your life that calls for some heavy-duty worrying.

So that's what this is all about, some questions and answers about transvestites, which is what a man who wears women's clothes is called. Before I go any further, let me tell you I am a TV (the abbreviation for transvestite) myself, but I will try to be honest in what I tell you. What I'm going to do is try to ask myself some of the questions you want to ask and the answer them. Since I talk to myself all the time, this comes naturally to me. All you have to do is listen to the conversation. But don't expect any easy answers: As you can see from all the pages in this pamphlet there is a lot to talk about. You don't have to read it all in one sitting, you are going to want to think about what you are reading. I have tried to keep the technical stuff to a minimum, but there are some words you may need to look up. Don't worry if you run to the dictionary once in a while; you have to know what a word means to make any sense out of what your are reading.

We will also be doing some plain talking about sex. I am not going to try and be cute and get around the subject, and I expect you not to giggle and get embarrassed. I don't know how old you are, and I don't know how much your parents (or the kid next door) has told you about sex. If you haven't had your talk about "the birds and the bees" yet then get cracking. You and your folks need to talk, and talk

honestly. It won't be easy for either one of you, but do it.

SO WHAT IS A TRANSVESTITE?

Transvestite is a chunk of word, it's what psychiatrists would call your father. The word comes from the two Latin words for "across" and "clothing", and was coined by Dr. Magnuss Hirschfeld in 1910. So you see it is no more than a description of what your father does, wear clothing society says is "for" members of the opposite sex of the person involved. Some of you may have picked up on the fact there is no direction in the word, a transvestite could be a woman dressing in men's clothes. As far as that goes it's true, but since women have been dressing in pants for a long time and no one gets excited about it, a female who was a transvestite would hardly be noticed. There is a double standard here; I will leave to your imagination what would happen if your Dad went for a walk in a skirt. The truth is that a lot of males wear dresses, and many of them are so good at looking like women that they can "pass" and no one knows that they are men.

There's one thing that we should get out of the way at the start. A woman who wears "man-styled" clothes is not trying to look like a man, and probably doesn't get anything special out of doing so. A transvestite who wears women's clothes does so to express femininity, or for sexual excitement, or for many other reasons. There is no doubt that the transvestite is trying look and feel like a woman. So the so-called "fashion argument" (If a woman can wear men's clothes why can't a man wear woman's clothes?) does not apply here.

IS HE THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD OR ARE THERE OTHERS?

There are hundreds and hundreds of others. No one is really sure how many, because if someone came up to a man with a survey and asked if he wore dresses, how many do you think would tell the truth? There was some research done that said 15% to 20% of men were

crossdressers, but most people accept that 1/2% to 1% of adult men are transvestites. If only 1/2% of men are transvestites, that makes over 300,000 in the United States alone. No, he is not the only one.

There have been transvestites in every culture that gives women and men different roles. There were transvestites in ancient Rome, the tribes in Africa, the American Indians, and the Chinese. Japanese Kabuki singers are men who perform as women on stage, and in Shakespearean time women were not allowed to act, so men played all the women's parts. There are many English Ballads about the girl who dresses as a sailor to find her true love, and there was a French spy who dressed as a woman to spy in the court of the Russian Tzar, and later lived as a woman when he returned home. While being a transvestite or crossdresser is different, it is nothing new.

ARE THERE OTHER NAMES FOR A TRANSVESTITE?

You bet, there are plenty, not all of them nice and some downright nasty. Some are technical terms used by psychiatrists, some are from the street or the gutter, and many are associated with homosexuals. Almost everyone has heard of a "Drag Queen", but this is misleading. Many people would think crossdressers were homosexuals, but this is simply not true. A homosexual was originally a technical term for a person who prefers sex with a person of the same sex as themselves. Recently female homosexuals have become known as lesbians and homosexual is usually used for a male. However, almost all crossdressers are **not** homosexuals, and almost all homosexuals are **not** crossdressers. In general male homosexuals tend to. Sure, there are gay crossdressers, but not many.

These terms all mean a man who wears women's clothes, but the connotations (the feelings the word causes) are different. Crossdressers, like your Dad, are real people, they can hurt inside when someone uses a hurtful word.

Crossdresser (CD): The English translation of "transvestite". Since transvestite was coined as a psychological term, many people think of it as

cold or clinical or too close to mental illness. So they started using crossdresser instead, and it is very widely used. It is neutral in connotation -- that is, it doesn't get people excited easily.

Drag: Said to have been invented by Shakespeare and stands for *DRessed As a Girl*. These days it is used for homosexuals who wear women's clothing in public. Drag also implies exotic, flashy or sexually attractive clothing. It is vulgar and offensive to many people.

Drag Queen: A homosexual who usually wears women's clothing.

Eonist: Before Transvestite was widely used, men in women's clothing were called "Eonists", after the Chevalier Charles D'Eon, the French spy I mentioned. Most TVs admire the Chevalier. You almost never hear this term used today.

Female impersonator/impressionist: A man who performs on stage dressed as a woman. They are sometimes very convincing. A female impersonator is a professional entertainer and may or may not dress as a woman off the stage.

Femme-Personator (FP): This is another attempt to get away from the negative images of "transvestite" but it never really caught on. It is also neutral in connotation.

Femmiphile: Another neutral word for transvestite.

She-male: A gay man who lives full time as a woman. A vulgar term often associated with sexual activity and homosexuality.

Spit drag: Usually a joke. A man with a beard or mustache in drag. Both gutter talk and gutter behavior.

Street Queen: A gay prostitute.

Each word describes a man in women's clothes, but the emphasis is quite different. It's like calling someone "gay" or a "fag". It means the same thing, but one of them, and I bet you know which one, will get you punched in the mouth.

ISN'T A DRAG QUEEN A HOMOSEXUAL?

Yes. However, not all gay men are drag queens. Drag queens are usually a small percentage of the total homosexual population. Generally they are hated by most gays who make fun of them and refuse to have much to do with them. Homosexual men tend to glorify the male body

and the macho attitude; many despise females and all things feminine. So the gay man who crossdresses is usually ridiculed, even in the homosexual community.

We run into a problem here. I'll bet every time you have heard about a homosexual it was someone making a nasty joke about something or someone he knew nothing about. "Everybody knows" fags talk funny, have limp wrists and do nasty things to children. Everybody knows Superman flies, can see through walls and can leap over tall buildings in a single bound. Well, I ask you, when was the last time you saw Superman outside the comic pages? He is about as real as that description of a homosexual.

Have you ever heard of a stereotype? The word means roughly "two images" (your stereo has two speakers, right?). So a stereotype is when you describe someone only by what group they belong to. All jocks are 6 feet tall and built like a Mack truck, and couldn't think their way out of a paper bag; all smart kids at school wear big black glasses and have a plastic pen holder in their pocket; all men who cut hair are fags. I hope you are smart enough to see that's a lot of bull. Anytime you hear the words "all", "only", or "Everybody knows" a large red flag should pop up in your head. It is much easier to use stereotypes than to use your head and give everyone else credit for being a unique person, and it is completely unfair too. But for someone who is probably still going thru puberty and never had sex with anyone it may be a little hard to understand. Trust me, you will figure it out sometime.

BUT I STILL HAVE TO ASK. IS THERE ANY CHANCE MY DAD IS A HOMOSEXUAL?

That's the \$64,000 question. Watch your stereotypes here: Just because your Dad likes to wear lacy undies and a garter belt doesn't automatically mean he's gay. So without even having met your Dad I can still say the answer is uh-uh, no, nay, negative, nope, nein, negatory good buddy. If your Dad is married and has kids it is virtually certain he is **not** gay, and has no interest in running off with his lover Brucie and opening a hair salon. I'm not saying there are no other problems, but this is one you simply do

not have to worry about.

At your age you may not understand all this stuff about sex. Believe or not all of us adults were once kids too. We had parents who were uncomfortable (or just plain scared) to tell us about sex, and we had buddies that took us behind the barn and told us all about this sex stuff. The problem was that our buddies had some good stories, but they were just as ignorant as we were. So what do you do? It may sound simple, but sit down with your Mom and Dad and talk to them, fer cryin' out loud. This is going to be difficult, don't be fooled. Learning about the birds and bees when you are an average teenager with an average father is tough enough. So what makes you think you will breeze thru an honest discussion of sex with him? After all, both of you have probably grown up with sex as something you "don't talk about", and I don't care if he did grow up during the "sexual revolution". Remember there is no need to go into details, this is not an X-rated video. All I can say is if all of you are honest you will feel better when everybody knows the score. Note to Mom and Dad: Be cool with the kid, blame me 'cause I told him to ask, OK? And be honest.

BUT WHY DOES HE WANT TO DRESS UP?

Just what does he get out of wearing a bra and stuffing it with whatever comes to hand? If you walk into any bookstore you will find a bookcase loaded with so called "self-help" books, where some psychiatrist tells you how to handle anything that goes wrong and if you read his book you will have whiter teeth, lose 100 pounds while eating like a horse and find a cure for cancer. If all these shrinks can find an answer to all those problems, they have to be able to explain your Dad's nightgown in words of one syllable, right? Wrong. I'll save you a lot of money, time and effort. Have you ever seen Bill Cosby doing his brain damaged children routine? You know how the punch line is always "I don't know!" So ask any shrink for the answer and he will have a bunch of interesting things to say, but the answer is still boils down to "I don't know."

Crossdressing is called a compulsion by the psychiatrists. A compulsion is something you

have to do, and it doesn't make have to make sense. Many compulsions are harmless, like the urge to collect shoes or have everything in your bedroom in exactly the right place all the time. Some compulsions are destructive, like being an alcoholic or stealing anything that isn't tied down. Crossdressing falls somewhere in the middle. If you simply lock yourself in a room once in a while and put on a dress there is not much chance of hurting anyone. But if you lock yourself away from the family every night or go down the street with a frock and a beard, someone will notice and call the men with the butterfly nets unless it happens to be Halloween. So crossdressing itself is not destructive, but if the crossdresser and his family cannot work things out together there can be big trouble.

Crossdressing is a compulsion and, like all compulsions, will never simply go away. But like alcoholism it can be controlled. It may take outside help like a psychiatrist or counselor, or maybe your family can work it out yourselves, but it **is** possible to control the compulsion if everybody involved will compromise and work together.

But even if the answer boils down to "I don't know" there are still some reasons for wanting to crossdress:

It feels good. This one is the biggie, the one that applies to each and every one of us who crossdresses. It doesn't matter if you are seven feet tall and hairy as a gorilla, it still feels good and you don't have to look in a mirror.

Some people enjoy the silky feel of women's clothes. Men's clothes are not supposed to be soft and slippery.

Men are supposed to be in control, to make the decisions and get things done. Women are supposed to be accepting and let a man do things for them. Stereotypes again, but there is a lot of truth to it. By taking off his regular clothes and wearing a woman's clothes, many men can completely relax for the first time in their lives. So why can't they relax in their jockstrap, you ask? Remember this is a compulsion: It doesn't always make sense.

It is a challenge. Trying to pass as a woman takes a lot of work and if you succeed it is a good feeling. "Passing" means looking so much

like a woman that no one guesses you are a man.

Once again we come to the area of sex, not male-female sex but lovemaking-type sex. **The plain and simple fact is that some men are sexually turned on by wearing women's clothes.** Most CDs who started as teenagers found that the stimulation of the clothing helped them masturbate. Please don't giggle, this is serious stuff. You will find a lot of crossdressers that absolutely, positively say that getting sexually excited is **not** a part of getting dressed, but there are many that get excited wearing women's clothes. Many crossdressers find that the sexual excitement becomes less if they can dress regularly. This is very much an individual thing. There are some women that find a man dressed in women's clothes sexually exciting too, so this may work out well for some couples. On the other hand many women are turned off. Your parents would be unwilling to discuss what goes on in their bedroom with you even if Dad wasn't a crossdresser, and I can't say that I blame them. Sorry to get you interested without being specific, but there's the breaks.

WHEN DOES CROSSDRESSING START?

Almost any time. From what I have seen and read, and from the people I have written to, it seems some start as very small children when someone dresses them up in a girl's outfit for a party or playing dress up and they like it enough to keep getting dressed up. Some start as teenagers, and most of them dress in girl's clothing for the sexual thrill. (More on the sexual thrill later ... stay tuned.) The rest start later in life, even as late as 50 or 60 years old. In other words there is just no one time in life a man starts to crossdress.

IS CROSSDRESSING A SIN?

That's a tough one. So far I have tried not to make any moral judgments. There is a passage in the bible, Deuteronomy 22:5, that says "The woman shall not wear what pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are an abomination unto the Lord thy God." Seems pretty clear to me, the Lord doesn't like it. It has been said you can

prove anything with the Bible, and this is no exception.

There are two sides to the argument. A fundamentalist would say anything that is in the Bible is correct and if God said it is a sin then it's a sin. However, if you read before and after this one passage, you will find this passage is in with a bunch of rules and regulations for the Israelites that we no longer follow, things like stoning a bride to death if she isn't a virgin, not eating pork and not plowing your field with an ox and an ass together.

Some people say Jesus made new rules for his followers and the old rules no longer are to be followed. He came to fulfill the law and set men free. His law is the command to love one another, and he would keep us free of sin if we walked as a simple child in the faith of the father.

I can't tell you if it is a sin or not. If both you and your father can trust your priest, minister or rabbi with this, talk to them. But be sure your father knows you want to talk about this, please! If anyone outside the family knew your Dad was a TV there could be big trouble, and some clergymen have not kept this kind of thing confidential.

OK, SO MAYBE I CAN HANDLE MY DAD IN A DRESS, BUT WHAT IF HE WANTS TO GO TO SWEDEN AND GET AN OPERATION AND I HAVE TWO MOTHERS?

Ouch -- you ask hard questions. The simple answer is that it is very unlikely. There are very few people who actually have surgery and change sexes. Of those who actually have surgery almost none have wives or children. So don't sweat it, there is just about no chance that your Dad wants to become a woman.

Men who wear women's clothing generally fall into three categories: transvestites, transgenderists and transsexuals. Before I can answer this question I have to define some terms. When you are talking about crossdressing, sex means the physical body you were born with; male or female organs. Thus a male has a penis and a female has a vagina. Your sex is coded in the genes you inherit from your parents and cannot change, even if you go to Sweden for an operation. (Don't get this

confused with sex as in making love ... the English language makes this confusing.)

Gender is a lot harder to explain. Gender is in your mind; part of it comes from your physical sex, but your gender is mostly learned. Gender is referred to as masculine and feminine. You have seen how little girls are dressed in pink, play with dolls, bake cakes in the kitchen, and act helpless for the big strong man. (Remember stereotypes? Here's another one.) Boys wear blue, play with baseballs and grow up to be jocks and football players. This is all just great, but what if Joe wants to play dolls and Mary wants to drive a bulldozer? When that happens their gender (what they think of as masculine and feminine) is different from their sex (whether they are male or female). Is that clear? The difference is important and not so easy to understand. Sex is how you are born, gender is how you think of yourself. Almost everyone grows up with their sex and gender the same, but when there is a difference, you get problems. Now you know the difference between sex and gender lets get back to those three types of men who wear women's clothes.

WHAT IS A TRANSVESTITE?

A crossdresser is the simplest ... just someone who dresses in clothes the opposite sex usually wears. Once again, a woman can be a crossdresser as well as a man, but in our society no one gets excited about a woman wearing a man's clothes. Crossdressers come in all kinds, by the way. Some CDs will only wear women's panties, pantyhose or maybe even a bra under their men's clothes. Sometimes a CD will only wear underwear and never be interested in putting on a dress. Many crossdressers want to wear the whole works, put on a wig and get made up. They try to look as much like a woman as they can and many try to "pass". A crossdresser can pass if they look enough like a woman to go out on the street or to the shopping mall without anyone guessing they are a man. There are many men who can pass, but most of us just look too much like men and are "read". Your Dad most likely has some pictures of other crossdressers he knows or writes to, and some of them would shame Miss America

(until the swimsuit competition, that is). But many men are too big or too masculine or too hairy to fake anyone out. Not being able to pass doesn't stop anyone from dressing, because dressing feels good. There are even crossdressers with beards and hairy chests, and your author is one of them. It sounds funny and I look funny, but wearing women's clothing still feels good no matter how you look.

OK, I HAVE THAT DOWN, SO NOW WHAT'S A TRANSGENDERIST?

Since Trans means "across" and gender is how you think of yourself, a transgenderist feels they are one of the opposite sex. Most are men and, like a crossdresser, a transgenderist wears a woman's clothes. But the transgenderist's ambition is to live as a woman. A crossdresser only dresses once in a while, and is known to the world as his masculine self. A transgenderist always dresses like a woman and is known to the world as a woman. A transgenderist may have surgery for artificial breasts, but still keeps his male sexual organs. In other words the sex remains male but the gender becomes female. You can relax, transgenderists generally do not marry or have kids, so it is unlikely your Dad is a transgenderist. After all it would be a dead giveaway to the world for a family to have two mothers and no father. By the way, it is possible to have a female be a transgenderist and appear to be a male, but is very rare.

SO WE HAVE THAT OUT OF THE WAY, NOW I WANT TO ASK ABOUT TRANSEXUALS. IS HE GOING TO GO TO SWEDEN?

A transsexual is someone who is convinced they were born the wrong sex. Unlike crossdressers or transgenderists who are mostly men dressing as women, there are a good number of women who feel they should be men. But the male to female transsexuals far outnumber the female to male kind. A transsexual wants to have surgery to remove their male or female sexual organs and have the surgeon create organs of the other sex. This can be done, and you don't have to go to Sweden anymore, but the transsexual will no longer be fertile. That is, they can no longer produce sperm or ova to make a baby. The new

organs are functional: The transsexual can make love as the man or woman they have become.

It is possible someone can consider himself/herself a transsexual but not have the surgery. For one thing it is very expensive, takes a long time and after the surgery it is often hard to find a job. In fact, before an honest surgeon will operate, they will require the person live at least a year as the sex they will become, in other words be a transgenderist. The surgery is not easily reversible ... you can't change your mind and go back. Thus everyone wants to be sure you really want to change your sex before you make it permanent.

But what you are interested in is whether your Dad might be a transsexual who has not had the surgery. I can't tell you, you have to ask him. Now don't get excited by this, but many transsexuals have joined the Army or the police or gotten married to try and prove to themselves they are a man, not a woman. The problem is that if they are really a transsexual it didn't work, and they are miserable living as a man when they think they should be a woman. So the only way to find out is to gather your courage and ask your father. If statistics are any help, only a very small percentage of crossdressers are transsexuals. If he says "no" then it makes life easier, but if he says "yes" then you and Mom and Dad have some serious talking to do. I hate to sound like the great guru that knows the secrets of the universe, but an outside counselor can help all of you. Your author's family has been in counselling (not for my dressing, one of my children was clinically depressed and needed help) and a referee can help you talk about what is wrong and how to make it right. Remember the first counselor may not be the right one, and you may have to try a few to find the right one, but with or without a counselor, keep talking!

WILL IT GO AWAY?

Will Dad wake up one morning and throw his dresses in the Goodwill box and be normal again? Nope, it won't go away. This is a compulsion we are dealing with. It may get stronger or weaker, it may even go away for a week or a month or a year, but it will still be

there. Talking to a psychiatrist might help, but there have been few if any "cures". What counselling can do is help your Dad control his compulsions so you and he can live with them, but it simply will not be cured with the wave of a magic wand.

Some crossdressers get so guilty or embarrassed or shamed or frustrated by their need to dress or the reaction of those they love that they will throw out all their clothes and vow never to do THAT again. So what happens? A week or a month or a year later they start twitching and itching and go out and buy a bra or panties and start all over again, but this time they feel even more guilty and embarrassed and ashamed. Look, if any of us could find a way to press a button and not have this overwhelming urge to dress in woman's clothes most of us would break a finger pushing that button. But this is reality and it is not going to go away, but it can be controlled with love and trust and willpower.

I'M A BOY AND I HAVE MY FATHER'S HAIR AND MY FATHER'S NOSE. AM I GOING TO INHERIT HIS DRESSES TOO?

Nope, they wouldn't fit anyhow. Seriously, folks, there is absolutely no evidence the urge to crossdress is inherited. Like I said before, no one knows where it comes from or why it happens. There have been a few rare cases of relatives who were transvestites, like singer Marvin Gaye and his father, but it is almost unheard of. It's something you don't have to worry about.

HE'S STILL MY DAD EVEN IN A DRESS, SO WHY DOES HE USE A NAME LIKE ANGELA LOUISE?

Maybe because when you look in the mirror at the curly hair and makeup it just doesn't look like Joe staring back. Names are linked to our identity. When your Dad dresses in women's clothes he is expressing the feminine side of his identity. The feminine side of him is on view and a feminine name is appropriate.

Using a feminine name while dressed is often part of the costuming, a way of becoming more feminine. The name can also be a simple

shorthand to other people. If you are told Joe is coming then you can expect to see a man, if Jane is expected then you will know he will be dressed. I don't know why so many TVs use two feminine names ... maybe it makes it twice as much fun if you use two.

DO I HAVE TO SEE HIM WHEN HE IS DRESSED?

I certainly hope your Dad will leave that up to you. It is one thing to be told your Dad dresses up and another to actually see him in a dress. This is one of those areas of compromise I talked about. If you don't want to see him, then you shouldn't have to. Maybe you want to simply see a picture, and all transvestites have pictures of themselves around.

On the other hand, sometimes kids like to see their father dressed, and may even take Jane to dinner or the movies. This is OK too, but it is really up to you how much you want to see of Jane and how much you see of Joe. If it really bothers you then talk with your Dad. Maybe he can stay in one room while he's dressed or you could go visit a friend for a while. You can work this out if you try.

I GOT UP THE NERVE AND SAW DAD IN HIS DRESS AND HE LOOKED LIKE A FRENCH HOOKER THAT WAS 40 POUNDS OVERWEIGHT. WHY DOES HE DRESS LIKE THAT?

Have you had a chance to look through any of the directories in the TV magazines? There are a lot of guys that look like that. Remember your Dad is trying to look like a woman, and maybe to him that is what a woman should look like. If he is one of those who gets a sexual thrill in dressing, then wouldn't it be reasonable to dress like a French hooker? Remember no one is going to see him dressed like that, the pleasure is in how the short skirt and tight bra feels. He may be trying to look sexy and this is his idea of sexy. It is a matter of personal taste, let's let it go at that.

HOW COME DAD TURNS GREEN AND LOOKS SICK WHEN HE THINKS ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE FINDING OUT?

As if you had to ask, huh? The answer is fear. Fear of being ridiculed, fear of being rejected, fear of being hurt. He needs to know that he is not alone, and virtually everyone he knows would reject him if they knew.

So OK, being different is always a problem, people get upset when someone is different. Look at how having the "wrong" skin color or the "wrong" religion has caused wars. Since most people do not know anything about transvestism they will automatically think any man who wears women's clothes is gay. If your Dad works at a bank or teaches school he could be in big trouble. Not many bosses will take the time to find out the whole story, they may just say "You are a freak, you're fired." Or if he works in a factory his co-workers will do a number on him, or make comments like "Don't get your boobs caught in the machine!". What if your best friend's parents decide that since your Dad is a freak and you can't see your best friend anymore? There are lots of things that can happen, and most of them bad. So that's why a transvestite is usually "in the closet."

There are a few TVs who are willing to appear publicly, and some have even been on television talk shows. Like just about any group, there are always a few who are willing to take a chance and make a fuss. But most of us are content to stay in our closet and not call attention to ourselves.

THE LAST TIME DAD WROTE TO ANYONE WAS WHEN MOM MADE HIM SIGN THE CHRISTMAS CARDS. SO HOW COME HE WRITES LETTERS TO TWO DOZEN TVs?

A CD often feels very alone with his need to dress, and wants to know someone else out there understands. Besides, it is always interesting to find out about what someone else thinks. It's fun to look at pictures and say "I never would have guessed she was a man" or "That one will never pass." The best way to learn about something is to talk to someone who knows. Most groups of TVs have a directory of their members so they can write to one another. Usually a TV will rent a Post Office Box in a nearby town to keep anyone from suspecting what they are doing. In addition there are some

nuts out there you don't want to know your real name of address, so a P.O. Box is very useful.

The way it works is you look through the directory and find someone that sounds interesting and write them a letter. You send the letter to the TV group that published the directory and they send it to the person. That way there is no way someone can accidentally find out your address and cause trouble. Once you have heard from the person you can then write to them directly and the TV group is no longer involved.

DON'T ALL THOSE WIGS AND DRESSES AND STUFF COST A LOT OF MONEY?

It sure can. This can be a real problem in some families. If Dad goes out and buys a dress when Mom needs the money to buy food you have real trouble. This sort of thing can happen, remember we are dealing with a compulsion, something that does not have to make sense.

You can make stupid decisions when the compulsion gets strong. This is another of the things the family has to discuss. If you are J.G. Gotbucks and inherited a few million from daddy there is no problem, go out and get the best money can buy. But most of us only get so much in the paycheck and it is easy to spend a lot of money if you are into designer dresses, realistic breast inserts and good looking wigs. If you keep your head it won't hurt anyone, but it can wreck a marriage if uncontrolled.

GOOD GRIEF, DAD SHOWED ME HIS COLLECTION OF SHOES (OR HAIR RIBBONS OR GARTER BELTS). WHY DOES HE HAVE SO MANY OF THEM?

Sounds like what the shrinks call a fetish. Anyone can have a fetish; it just means you have an abnormal interest in some object. Like a compulsion it doesn't have to make sense. Why does anyone collect anything? A fetish just takes it to the extreme. Fetishes are often sexual in nature, like collecting sequined G-strings or six-inch spike heels, and you cannot function sexually without the object of the fetish present. This is another of those things you may have to discuss with your Dad.

HOW CAN I FACE MY DAD WHEN I KNOW HE DRESSES UP?

The same way you always did. Remember he is the same person you always loved, but now you know more about him. If it bothers you, talk to him or your Mom and work it out. It may take time, but it is worth it.

Just because he is a TV does not mean he will never play football or go fishing with you again. Remember being a TV is only part of his life, just as going to school is only a part of yours.

MOM AND DAD ARE ALWAYS FIGHTING ABOUT HIS DRESSING. WHAT CAN I DO?

Just love them both like you always have. I'm sorry to tell you this, but sometimes a couple just cannot cope with transvestism, and there are fights and even divorce. This is something between your parents, there is not much you can do but wait and hope. The only advice I can offer here is don't take sides. Be an example of love to both of them and maybe they'll learn from you. It may make life hell for you, but they have to work it out for themselves.

Here are some of the things wives worry about when they find out their husband is a TV. This doesn't mean your mother worries about all of these things, but he may be worried about some of them:

"He's going to get caught and everyone will laugh at us or he will lose his job."

"He might be gay or a transsexual."

"I married a man, not a woman. I want my husband back."

"I feel cheated because he dresses better than I do."

Ricky [REDACTED] is a regular columnist ("The Bearded Lady") in *Cross-Talk, The Transgender Community News & Information Monthly*. His monthly column has been described as a cross between Andy Rooney and Dave Barry. In addition to his column, he has written more serious articles for the magazine, the most recent being "The Abusive Factor in Crossdressing", which appeared in *Cross-Talk* #54. For subscription and back issue information, write to *Cross-Talk*, P.O. Box 944, Woodland Hills CA 91365.

Cover Artwork by Rita (who illustrates Ricky's monthly columns).

"He might get worse and leave me."

"Will our son want to get dressed up too?"

"He dresses all the time and we can never have our friends over."

These are real problems, and your folks will have to work them out together.

WHAT ABOUT THIS CONVENTION THEY ARE GOING TO? WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

Remember what I said about being lonely and wanting to know you are not the only person in the world who likes to dress up? This is one way your Dad can meet other crossdressers and spend a good long time dressed up without having to worry about getting caught, since everyone at the convention knows what is going on.

These conventions take place at major hotels just like any other convention and there are dinner parties and workshops where you can learn about transvestism, makeup, dressing well or any of the many things a transvestite is interested in. They could also be a help for your Mom, as she can meet other wives and discuss her worries with them.

ENOUGH WITH THE QUESTIONS, I'M SICK OF READING.

Well, that's a good thing, because I'm sick of writing. I have tried to cover everything I could think of, but I must have left something out. If you want to ask me anything, or just want to write to me, I would be glad to hear from you and I promise to write back. My address is: Ricky Hunt, P.O. Box 3, Clarendon NY 14429.

