

The Femme Mirror

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The Femme Mirror

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- 1) *The Femme Mirror* will not publish the last name of any Tri-Ess member without the expressed written consent of the member, unless the surname is known to be a pseudonym.
- 2) We encourage all contributors to the Mirror to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.
- 3) We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
- 4) Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner.

Thank you. Frances Fairfax

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MOVING ???

Please Notify Membership Director
Donna [REDACTED]
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659

A Note of Thanks

A Note of thanks from your Mirror Staff to all of you who contribute your articles, photos, cartoons, poems, as well as your typing and envelope-stuffing skills. Your service is enriching the lives of all your sisters. This is YOUR journal. You, the readers, are the source of its contents and the reason for its existence. Ya'll are doing GREAT! Just keep it coming now, hear?

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Executive Director's Message

By Carol Beecroft

After spending many hours on the phone and in writing letters to a number of librarians throughout the country, I have finally persuaded a number of librarians to accept our book packets. As you no doubt remember, many of our members have indicated they would be willing to donate a set of books about crossdressing to their local libraries.

Some librarians responded quickly to my first letter, but others apparently have ignored a number of letters sent from this office. Most of the librarians in this latter category were finally contacted by me via the phone. I don't know why they would not respond to my letters. Even when I used the telephone, I had problems getting through to the acquisitions librarians. Many were out to meetings or on vacation or what have you. But I persevered, and after four or five calls I usually got hold of the librarian with whom I needed to speak. They agreed to accept the books after my serious conversations with them.

I have just written to those Tri-Ess sisters who have been waiting for some time. I indicated to these nice people that the librarian in their chosen library would accept the book packet. Once the checks for \$30.00

arrive here, I will promptly send the packets to the chosen libraries. The local sisters need to follow up to make sure the books are put out on display. I'll work with the donors of the packets to make sure the books are available to the public. It's been a lot more frustrating and complicated than I thought it would be. But, we are making good progress, and that is what is important! The next 30 days will see a number of libraries filled with books to help people learn about us.

Don't be left behind in this project to educate the public, including crossdressers, wives, therapists, teachers and the general public. The great news is that Tri-Ess will match your gift to a local library, in full. That means you can not only place books in a local library, but now it will be two libraries because of the matching gift from Tri-Ess. And do remember that in each book we are placing a special notice that the book has been donated by Tri-Ess, with our national address and phone number.

Did you go to the SPICE conference? I really looked forward to it, but then circumstances arose that kept us from coming. I hear that the wives, especially, got a lot from this conference! And the husbands who attended had a lot of fun, also.

There's nothing very exciting going on here. I'm answering a lot of letters and doing some phone calling. A necessary thing, although a bit boring at times. I do hear from more and more people from all over who want one of our brochures.

How to Contribute to Your Chapter Newsletter **

By Diane V.

In order to assure that your newsletter is kept productive and stays out of trouble, here is a simple instruction manual for maintaining your newsletter:

1. Pick up pen (or pencil) and paper.
2. Enter writing chamber. (Could be office, den, porcelain facility, etc. You get the idea.)
3. And speaking of ideas, engage brain (but do not clutch!)
4. Proceed to transmit signals from brain through digital process on either right or left hand with writing instrument connected.
5. Warning! Do not exceed personal limitations, commonly diagnosed as writer's cramp, or diarrhea of the pen (similar to diarrhea of the mouth).
6. Do avoid, however, another malady known as writer's block.
7. To aid in evading point number 6, a series of ideas follows: personal experiences; shopping trips; dining out en femme; embarrassing moments; fuzz busting and fuzz-busted; other busty experiences, such as stops at Jiffy Boob; recipes for almost anything; your autobiography; personal discoveries on makeup techniques, clothing, etc., worth sharing; personal triumphs and tragedies to the extent you wish to reveal them.

How about it, Gals!!

** (and your Mirror)

(Reprinted from Alpha Omega's Femme Silhouette, Oct. 1966)

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Is This You?

Are you an active member,
The kind that would be missed?
Or are you just contented
That your name is on a list?

Do you attend the meetings,
And mingle with the crowd,
Or do you stay at home
While crabbing long and loud?

Do you take an active part
And help the club along,
Or are you satisfied to be
The kind who "just belong?"

Do you help to plan the programs,
Get more new members, quick,
Or leave the work to just a few,
and then call them "the clique?"

There's quite a lot of work involved
That means success if done.
But it is best accomplished
With the help of everyone.

So I'll attend the meetings
And help with hand and heart.
I won't be just a member.
I'll take an active part.

Think this over, Member.
Am I right or wrong?
Are you just a member,
Content to just "belong?"

Reprinted from The Rainbow, Sept/Oct, 1996

Dear Frances,

After reading Donna's letter in the Spring 97 issue and your request for "this happened to me" stories, here is my tale.

My male body has long arms and a long upper body that makes finding male shirts long enough difficult at times. Because of this I sew many of Penny's blouses and dresses. Penny decided that she would like a new culotte dress for the next chapter meeting. So I, dressed in male attire, went shopping for material.

After selecting the material, I took it to the sales lady to be cut. Her name tag said her name was Laura. Well Laura asked what I was making. PANIC!! What do I say? After a moment of hesitation, I decided that when in doubt tell the truth. So I told her that I was going to make a culotte dress. Laura noticed the pattern instruction in my hand and asked to see them. After looking at the drawings of the outfit, Laura said, "What a cute outfit!" Of course I agreed. What a boost to the ego.

After the material was cut and I was on my way out, Laura suggested that I bring the finished outfit in for her to see. And maybe she could make some helpful comments. My reply was that I might. To myself I wondered how Laura would react if I wore the culotte dress for her to see. Unfortunately I am not ready for such a trek.



Dear Frances,

Thank you for your continued great job on the Femme Mirror. I noticed in the last issue (Spring 1997) that a "Tri-Ess BBS" is advertised on page 55, center column.

This Bulletin Board is no longer operated as a function of Sigma Epsilon. Our official Sigma Epsilon outreach on the internet is Karen [redacted]' web page.

I see the "name: Sigma Epsilon" and the

"password: Tri-Ess" make it look like it's part of our outreach, but it is not! Rachel is a member, but is no longer active and does not serve on our Board.

Some of the material is tasteless and not in the best interests of Sigma Epsilon or Tri-Ess.

Sincerely,

Stephanie [redacted]

(Ed.Note: Thank you for alerting us to this situation. We have pulled the ad and put a warning notice in its place.)



Dear Frances,

I wrote this little piece one day when I was bored, and all of a sudden this thought came to me. I hope that you and others enjoy this thought.

Crossdressers Are People, Too!

Crossdressers are people, too. We have our separate lives. We believe we have two separate identities, our male side and our femme side.

The male side is most always what people see. The feminine side is what a lot of people don't see, because a lot of us are afraid to let the outside world see, for fear of being ridiculed and scoffed at.

We are humans who live and love and bleed when we are out. We feel pain when we are hurt.

People don't realize that, when they ridicule and poke fun at us. If it weren't for that, there would be more crossdressers out of the closet. But until society stops looking down their noses and judging people, there will not be a lot of crossdressers out in public.

Your sister,

Joan C. (NY-2354-C)

Dear Frances:

I just got my Tri-Ess membership card and packet yesterday and I am very excited about being a sister in this lovely organization!! I joined the Beta Gamma Chapter in the Twin Cities and have had much fun and support meeting Sofronia Anne and Onnalee!! I have been especially blessed by having Sharon O. as my Big Sister. She has been wonderful and has made my finding and loving Stephanie a miracle come true for me!! I cannot say enough about this chapter and I am glad that you have given them recognition also! I plan on becoming an enthusiastic active member and am already dreaming of being a part of Holiday En Femme 1998 here in Minnesota!! I look forward to meeting you then!! I know it will be lovely for everyone!!

I thought I would send along a copy of my first time story. I read some of the others in the Femme Mirror. I am still amazed by how smoothly it went and how happy I was and am!! I hope you find it worthy to include in Femme Mirror sometime. It was fun writing it!! Thanks for your consideration!

Love,

Stephanie

(Ed.Note: Look for "Finding Stephanie" elsewhere in this issue.)



Editorial Policy

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Dear Editor,

I've wanted to write before and share my experiences with my Tri-Ess sisters, but I've never had any that have been outstanding or that different from what I'm sure many others have had. I haven't been able to contribute anything I've learned on my own, either, that would be new or helpful. I've learned so much from reading others' stories, what to do and not to do and how to be better as a part-time woman, and just from knowing there are others who feel as I do, I wish I could contribute something in return, to maybe help someone else do better or feel better about themselves. I may finally be able to relate something now that I don't think has been covered before, it will not apply to everyone of course, but has worked well for me. I've found a way to be dressed more often, and to be doing something else I like at the same time.

I have been dressing all my life, since age twelve, but it has only been in the last year or so that I have really been going out while dressed on a somewhat regular basis, and trying to do it right. I don't have that much opportunity to go out while dressed, because of family considerations; my wife knows, my children don't, but I try to get out when I can. There is no Tri-Ess chapter in my area but there are several local gender groups in the San Francisco bay area, I belong to one and try to attend their meetings and functions. I do go out on my own occasionally, but these outings usually have no purpose other than just to go out while dressed. This is fine, but I really like it when I can go and do something specific while dressed, something I would have done anyway, and have been able to do this once in a while. The problem here is that except for work or special occasions, most real women don't wear dresses or skirts that much anymore for ordinary things. While this is what I, and I think most other C/D-ers prefer to wear, it sometimes makes me feel that I stand out even more, something I don't need. While I've been fairly successful going out so far, I know that I can't expect to pass all the time, but I can't really enjoy it when I'm out if I'm worrying some of the time about being read, mostly because of not blending in.

I like to go on hikes, there are many parks and open spaces nearby, and on one of these walks it came to me, why not hike dressed as a woman would? This really would be combining the two. Like everything else concerning women's cloth-

ing, there were many choices here as to what to wear. I settled on leggings, tucked into sox, with a large, loose big -shirt type top. I used my own walking shoes, they are pretty much unisex anyway, but I think I will get a pair of ladies' shoes. I almost hate to say it, but I can see why the real women like wearing these so much, it really is a comfortable way to dress. Especially the leggings, that's one thing I now wish men could wear, and not just because they are female. I got a small waist pack to use instead of carrying a purse. I do use some makeup for these outings of course, foundation, light lipstick and mascara, and small earrings, although even this is probably too much. A lot of the real girls don't seem to be using anything. Well, us older gals (I'm 48) are entitled to use a bit more, I think, and besides I can't see me getting by without. This is also a chance to wear big sunglasses, and I've even pulled my wig back with a scrunchy a few times.

This style of female dressing is pretty far from my favorite, and yet I really enjoy it, it has allowed me to experience something else from a feminine viewpoint. And I have come to like dressing this way too. It surprised me at first, but I can and do feel feminine this way. I certainly like dresses and skirts and wearing more makeup and jewelry but it's been nice finding and having this option of dressing in a different way, an option a real woman has. It seems to be a great way of passing, also. I wondered about this at first, thinking that if you are in a dress or skirt people will be more inclined to think that you are a woman, at least to start out with, but it hasn't been a problem I'm very pleased to report. If anything it's the opposite, I feel more confident and sure about myself when I'm dressed this way, I'm not really sure why, I guess your attitude does have a lot to do with it. I've been on a number of hikes, some fairly lengthy and have met or passed quite a few people. Usually, when meeting or passing other hikers or strollers, a nod or some sort of greeting is exchanged, it almost seems like this has become trail etiquette. These I have no problem with, but a longer conversation might trip me up. I always let the others go first, to judge what their reaction is going to be. It's so nice when this happens, especially when it's a real woman who does it first, to be passing and know it. I know that passing isn't everything, and that it



Michelle CA-3354-N

shouldn't even be the most important thing, but it sure is great when it happens.

Yours, Michelle CA-3354-N



Dear Frances,

Hello from Alaska. Almost all dressed up and no where to go, so I thought I'd drop you a line.

Bought me a couple pair of ladies' shoes this weekend - a pair of soft flexible flats for around the house (boy are they comfortable) and Keds walking shoes. This makes 3 pair of ladies' shoes, all of which I can wear outside the house without controversy. Except for the flats, all the shoes have built in arches - which beats the heck out of men's shoes.

The fun part about buying shoes is the shoe store I go to. The first time I went in looking for men's shoe with an arch. Of course there were none, so I tried some square toed slip-on's. This caused somewhat of a stir. I commented on how good they felt to wear.

A few weeks later I stopped in and thanked them for the shoes (small town, you do things like that) and told them again how good they felt. It seems they have sold several pairs to other men looking for shoes with arches, and they ended up thanking me. What strange things happen in the midnight sun of Alaska!

Perhaps higher heels in men's shoes.....

As ever, your sister, Claire

Acceptance

By Bobby G.

I've never met one. Face to face, that is.

Oh, I've read all about crossdressers and transsexuals, and seen them on television talk shows. I've scanned their homepages on the net, gone from link to link, and read their stories. But I've never visited with one in person. Never had the opportunity. And I've never spoken to one personally either. We've exchanged e-mail, but that's as far as it ever got.

I'm not a therapist or a counselor, or a merchant who caters to their special needs. Nor am I transgendered. So why do I feel this way? Why do I have this desire to know them, to join with this society of people who walk a different path, to be their friend? What strange magnetism do they have for me? I don't know. I can't explain it any more than they can explain their transgenderism. I'm just this way.

I guess it all started a long time ago, when I was fascinated by the Christine Jorgensen story during the early 1950's. Just the thought that one could change sex was mind-boggling to me. I've had an avid interest in the subject ever since, and learned all I could about it. More recently, I've had the time and a good computer, so I've been able to cruise the net. That's how I found the TGF and the many homepages in the TransGender Ring. It didn't take long to realize that there existed a very special feeling, a unique oneness among the authors. As "Angela A" so eloquently wrote in "What We Are, Or, Who We Are":

"One of the things so remarkable about the transgender subculture is the incredible speed with which we can form deep, lasting friendships after knowing each other only a very short time. A singular phenomenon occurs in the military and in law enforcement, occupations where people work long hard hours in close proximity to one another, separated from loved ones, often under great physical and emotional stress, and sometimes at great risk to life and limb. It seems that shared adversity tends to quickly build strong bonds between people. Whether CD, TG, or TS, all of us in this subculture share a common burden, differing only in its degree of severity - that of having to pretend to be someone we are not, presenting to the world a facade of 'imaleness' that society demands of all children born with the XY configuration in their 23rd pair of chromosomes."

"Our empathy toward each other is what makes our support groups such warm, comfortable, and joyous places to spend our

time. We have all been through similar hells, and therefore share a special insight into how our sisters feel, an insight that even the best, most sympathetic, most well-informed mental health professionals will never know (unless they themselves are transgendered)...."

And so, there is this special bond that you share; this strong empathy that supports and strengthens you, and keeps your sanity in a world that would ridicule and destroy you. But this bond, while your defense, also stands as an almost impenetrable wall of suspicion and doubt to those who truly want to know and reach out to you. Although I've had some success in breaching it, at times I've felt like an outsider looking in, an intruder into a world that I didn't belong in and that didn't want me, constantly having to justify to some why you should trust and accept me. How can I convince you otherwise?

You tell me that I can't possibly know how you feel. That to attempt to describe a transgendered person is like trying to describe a sunset to a colorblind individual. I reply that there's an old Indian saying, "To truly know a person, you must walk a mile in his footsteps". I've walked that mile with the transgendered, and more. No, not in the flesh. Not in any physical way. But through their words, their lives. I was there when Christine Jorgensen was born. I know the stories of Canary Conn, Nancy Hunt, Jan Morris, Renee Richards—of all who have traveled their path. Who can read the journals and writings of Melanie Phillips and Becky Allison and not hear their torment and feel compassion, not share their grief and pain? And the agony of countless others whose stories of guilt and purges, of tormented lives and shattered relationships, of unfulfilled dreams and unbearable reality scream across the pages of the internet. No, I may not know from personal experience. I may not have suffered your reality; but I know, and I empathize, and I care.

So I ask you to accept me, and others like me, into your community. Don't reject us out of hand because we can't possibly know how you feel. The internet has changed all that. You have changed all that. Welcome and include us, if not as sisters, as brothers. Let us earn your trust. We can all learn, and share, and benefit by it.

(Ed.Note: This article was originally published on the Transgender Forum on May 19, 1997, and is reprinted by permission.)



Don't Step Back, Sis!

by Jane Ellen Fairfax



Off they go into the darkness. Perhaps the mere act of inquiring has cost them their last ounce of courage. Or, having joined the Tri- Ess family, they panic, afraid to go any further. What might this lead to? Exposure?

Loss of job? Alienation of family? Perhaps even eternal damnation? Oh, there are lots of reasons to retreat to good ol' secrecy, where it is dark and lonely, but safe. Some of the reasons sound plausible. Others seem like excuses; still others smack of self-pity. Most bear poisonous fruit. For the health of your mind and body, don't step back, Sis!

I have been where you now are. When I first joined Tri- Ess, I was so afraid I submitted a pseudonym on my membership application. Hampered with a poor self-image and fears for my family and professional standing, I had one foot poised to dash back into secrecy. One little look askance, one little criticism, however well-intentioned, one imagined slight and guess where I would have gone! When I attended my first Holiday EnFemme, I cut off any possible retreat by taking only feminine clothes and making the journey in a friend's car. Panic assaulted me, but I had no choice except to let the tender caring and love of my sisters wash over me and start me on the road to self-acceptance. I've never been sorry I tied myself to the mast so as not to be lured back into the darkness.

How seductive those siren songs can be! Have you ever been on a diving board and been intimidated by the height? "You go ahead, I'm not ready yet," you argue. Sounds like many crossdressers I have met. "I don't look passable enough yet," they reason. Well, you aren't going to get more passable in solitary confinement! Come on out! Share your feelings and needs. The most beautiful crossdresser in Tri- Ess was once a timid novice just like you. Count on it! In Tri- Ess there are many caring sisters and sympathetic businesspeople who will help bring out the butterfly in you. You have nothing to lose but your cocoon!

"But I am a charter member of the Linebacker's Club! I'll never pass!" That may or may not be true, but you can create a credible, feminine image and enjoy the fulfillment of expressing both sides of your personality. You may not be a counterfeit woman, but you can be a real lady!

"Well maybe, but how can I be a Christian and a crossdresser?"

Deuteronomy 22:5 seems perfectly clear. Men aren't supposed to wear women's clothes, and women aren't supposed to wear men's clothes." This subject could be expanded into a dissertation, but the bottom line is this: If one of the old prohibitions is valid, they all are. I would imagine that even the more orthodox devotees of the law would sidle away from stoning an unruly son. While these old legalisms once had their purpose, they have been superseded by the new commandments that we love the Lord our God with our whole hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. There is no reason one cannot be a devout Jew, Christian, or anything else and enjoy crossgender expression. Satan is our Great Accuser. It is he who would drive us to despair of God's love. We can bow to the load of guilt he tries to impose or toss it aside as the delusion it is.

"Yes, but you in Tri- Ess are always talking about crossgender expression, feminizing the soul, etc. I am not into that - at least not yet. I enjoy crossdressing because it makes me feel sexy." Of course it does! Genetic women themselves glory in the sassy little black dress, the patent high heels, the caressing lingerie, the scented hair, the romantic candlelight dinner. Our sexuality is a normal part of us, and our fantasies heighten the enjoyment of sex. God gave us a superego to distinguish where fantasy ends and reality begins. Within the bounds of propriety, explore and enjoy your sexual feelings. You have many kindred spirits in Tri- Ess!

"But so many spirits in Genderland are not kindred, or at least they don't seem so. There is so much bickering and infighting! It's a turnoff! Why don't I just drop out of this 'crossgender community that isn't' and crossdress in the peace and quiet of my own home?" You are right about the infighting, Sis. It does indeed drive many people away. There is, however, no reason why you should get caught up in it. Your Tri- Ess family stays out of the melee. Our no-bashing policy stands as a shining example for all Genderland. Our opposition is not our crossgendered brothers and sisters, but the ignorance of those who still cannot accept or relate to us. Let none of the noise outside deter you from building sisterhood and friendship. Sisters helping other sisters - that is what Tri- Ess is all about!

"Okay, but have you ever tried to intervene in a dogfight? Seriously, though, there is no chapter in my area. Although the publications are nice, I can't work up much enthusiasm when there

is no place where I can go to meet sisters and have fun." That is exactly why you should be involved, Sis! You are a candle shining in the darkness of your area. If you don't snuff yourself out, another sister will light a candle near you. Then another, and another. Remember the example of our founder, Dr. Virginia Prince. For 13 years she struggled in an atmosphere of stifling fear to bring a few crossdressers together in one room. I would also lay before you the work of latter-day heroine, Sofronia Anne Strong, who built a thriving Tri-Ess chapter in a hostile environment. If every Tri-Ess sister would pledge to remain part of our team and communicate with her sisters to form a committed friendship web, we could light fifty new Tri-Ess lamps across America and Canada. "Not possible," you say. Ask Lori [redacted] of Oregon and sisters Melissa, Kath and Beverly of North Carolina. They dared to make a firm commitment in 1997. Now they and their sisters are reaping the rewards!

"All right, I'll give it a go! My figure is not svelte, but my heart can love and my hands can reach out. Maybe I can be a Big Sister or a Pen Pal, or post on the Tri-Ess members' online forum. At least I will make some new friends." "I am not ready to talk to college classes or (shudder!) police academies, but I can write articles and letters for the Mirror." "Perhaps there is no chapter near me, but if I have anything to say about it, there will be. Until then, I'll write the nearest local chapter and participate from a distance." "Although I am only a home-dresser, I know computers. I'll see if I can help with Mirror layouts or mailings." "Because I live across the ocean, you won't see me at a Holiday EnFemme, but I can share what it is like to be a crossdresser in my country, translate Tri-Ess literature into my native language and see what I can do to help my sisters out of secrecy where I live." "I still don't like politics, but perhaps I can share a word of encouragement with my Tri-Ess sisters. I like bringing rays of sunshine into people's lives." "I've had a difficult time adjusting to my husband's crossdressing, but if he is going to crossdress, he can do it in a family-friendly atmosphere. I've got a voice and I will make it heard in Tri-Ess, especially through the Sweetheart Connection and the wives' online forum." "I'm still a linebacker, but I am a feminine person and proud of it! Nothing can shake my commitment to my Tri-Ess sisters. I'll find a place where I can help someone. I don't know how much I can do, but I'm in for the long haul!"

Can you imagine the powerful work of love that would happen if these commitments were to be echoed in the thousand homes throughout Tri-Ess?

But something like this could never happen!

Wanna bet??

Stay Balanced

By Melanie Yarborough

Transgenderism isn't just another addiction like alcoholism or compulsive gambling. It's part and parcel of our own sexual orientation, rooted in our psyche and maybe even biology. It's not something you can readily cure. It would be like trying to "cure" somebody from having five fingers per hand, or from being Chinese, or from being heterosexual.

It's a hard reality to face: we probably never stop being transgendered. However, it's something we can learn to keep in balance with the other parts of our lives.

Several years ago, I read an article in the Tri-Ess Femme Mirror, which was highly critical of crossdressers. The author blasted many crossdressers as too focused on their dressing to the exclusion of all else. Outside of work, family, and crossdressing, they didn't have time for much else. At the time, I dismissed this comment as coming from a would-be purger. But over the last few years, I've seen it first hand: many of us really do make this the totality of our lives. I dress, therefore I am.

Balance means taking into account how crossdressing affects those around us:

spouses, children, family and friends. Balance means the fiscal responsibility to not spend sums of money we can't afford on dresses and makeup. And yes, balance means having interests and hobbies outside of the gender community.

Balance means exercising self-control and restraint once in a while. As our sister Theonie once pointed out to me, control over drives and passions is what distinguishes people as "Civilized." Assuming a female role can be one of these drives and passions.

It's all too easy to submerge oneself into it or even make it a crutch.

Addiction is never pretty.

We don't have to substitute "Transgender" for having a personality. We can integrate transgenderism into our lives, as just one part among many. It can be a periodic expression of softness, sensitivity, our feminine half. Or, it can be a Walk On The Wild Side into a glamorous world denied to most men. It can be a whole lot of fun; it doesn't have to be a consuming be-all and end-all.

(Originally published in the Neutral Corner newsletter.)

VIDEO REVIEW

Roman Polanski's
Tenant: Crossdressing As Insanity

By Melanie Yarborough

Trelkovsky sat by the window of his Paris apartment in full drag. His long and wavy wig was light brown with reddish highlights. Heavy makeup: thick blue eyeshadow, mascara, blush, bright red lipstick. He wore a green/yellow/black floral print knee length spring dress. The shoes were admittedly mid-70's, clunky black platforms. Trelkovsky was going insane, taking on the clothing and personality of the young woman Simone Choule. She was the previous tenant of the apartment Trelkovsky now rented, and she'd committed suicide by throwing herself out the window onto the pavement several stories below.

Director Roman Polanski's 1976 movie "The Tenant" has a major crossdressing component, but it isn't about crossdressing. In other movies, crossdressing is comedy—"Some Like It Hot" (1959) or "Tootsie" (1982). But Polanski's film shows it as something darker: paranoid schiziphrenia.

The premise: Polish-born /French-naturalized Trelkovsky (played by Polanski himself) rents an apartment whose previous occupant killed herself. A series of strange events indicate a plot to make Trelkovsky "become" Simone and also end his life the same way. In his own madness, he resolves to fight back by becoming Simone completely—clothing, wig, and makeup.

After moving in, he finds her dress hanging in the closet, along with other objects of hers: a white underwire bra, silk stockings, red nail polish, assorted cosmetics. He wakes up one morning, goes to the window to look outside. Some workmen repairing the glass which Simone's body crashed through see him, point, and start laughing. He is wearing full eye makeup, foundation, blush, and lipstick. He looks in the mirror, horrified. "They're trying to make me commit suicide, but I'll show them!" he snarls.

He buys a wig and black platform shoes, a la mode in 1976. We then see him totally "in face" for the first time, adjusting the suspender tab of his garter belt, attaching it to his silk stockings. He admires himself in his full length mirror, and tries to practice saying things he imagines a woman might say: "Beautiful", "God, that's divine," and "I think I'm pregnant!"

This is not a transvestite film. This is a film about an already borderline man progressing into delusions of conspiracies. Wearing woman's clothing and makeup is just one manifestation of this. Revealingly, this film can be found in the video rental store in the "Horror" section.

On an artistic level, we may possibly respect Polanski's work. He sets a scene and creates very effectively the mood of encroaching madness. However, the film seems to be another negative transgender portrayal, like the transsexual killer in *Silence of the Lambs*.

The message for the viewer seems to be "If you're a man who wears women's clothing, you're either a psycho, a deceiver, or a clown". Overcoming these Hollywood stereotypes is part of our struggle as transgenderists. We must create a positive counterimage.

(Ed. Note: This article was first published in the Neutral Corner newsletter.)

Serious Answers from Loving Women Wives and Partners Speak Out

By Melanie Yarborough

Last fall, Neutral Corner hosted a panel on spouse/partner issues. Participants included Janet (wife of Neutral Corner's Treasurer), Kathy (Leader of spouse support group Pathfinders) and Jeanette (SO of Neutral Corner's President). They spoke candidly and movingly of the challenges they face. While some of what was said may have been controversial to some, the panel and the audience broke new ground with this dialogue.

The emergence of Pathfinders as an advocacy group for spouses and partners has been greeted by the community as long overdue. However, Kathy warns us that "[One problem is] a lot of the way guys see it is that we're going to fix everybody. We're just going to all get together and you guys are going to get everything you want. [But] this is an ongoing process. There's some days where it's really easy, and there's other days where it's very difficult to deal with. It just doesn't happen overnight.

Below are excerpts of some of the questions and responses:

Q. When should a crossdresser tell his partner?

Janet: "I also believe that if involved with a woman, you should tell her as soon as you think it's serious. Maybe not on the first date, it might be a lot to handle, but as soon as you think you're going to have real relationship. I think it's real important that it's not something that should come out later. I think that some crossdressers think that it'll go away once they get married, and it doesn't, and so it's a good thing to deal with beforehand. I knew before we got married, but I didn't really know, if you know what I mean....

He told me it was something he used to do and was something he would probably never want to do again. But of course that wasn't true. I think that at that time neither one of us had a lot of information. He thought that perhaps that was true or maybe even hoped it was true. I had never [even] heard of such a thing, so I was ready to accept that too. And then when it came back, it was very difficult to deal with.

Would I have married him [if I'd known]? Probably yes, if I'd understood the full implications. It's hard to say looking back, because it's not something I would wish. I wouldn't go out seeking a crossdresser, but it comes in with the package. It's like a lot of things in life; it's part of the package.

What's right for one couple isn't what's going to be right for another couple. It's really important that crossdressers remember not

to compare their wife with other wives, or what's going on in other couples' relationships. That just isn't fair..."

Kathy: "Honesty is the best policy. I wish I would have known right off the bat. I just don't like secrets and I've had too many secrets in my whole life I've had to deal with. And I think everything always comes out in the wash and it's better up front, get mad or upset upfront and just deal with it."

"I did not know when I was married, it broke down a lot of boundaries and it nearly broke our marriage up. It's done a lot of emotional damage to myself, feeling that I wasn't good enough, that I wasn't a whole woman...Our relationship has gotten better, stronger, better than it ever would have, because we have something we can grow with, we've met so many wonderful people [in this community]..."

Q. What's the role of communication in this?

Jeanette: Our second or third conversation he told me he was a transvestite and I didn't know what that was... I said, "Well, tell me what that is," and he said "I like to dress up in women's clothes"...I was totally stunned, and we talked about this at length....he told me he was heterosexual for sure. He wanted me to be sure and clear about that...

And then we did have some problems that crept up, because I kept telling him about certain things that I didn't like and he wasn't listening. I just told him I didn't want to deal with it anymore, as I didn't see any action on his part as far as trying to work with the relationship. He was very self-centered, and he wanted to do what he wanted to do. He has come around; he is listening now. We worked out a lot of problems, and are still working out problems. But they're getting better. I think I'm understanding a little more, and he's understanding where I'm coming from. So to me, that's a good feeling of knowing that we're trying to work out some situations.

If a crossdresser didn't tell someone until after marriage, how would one feel? Completely betrayed. It would have been the most dishonest thing. If you couldn't trust him to tell the truth, how can you trust him in anything?

Kathy: In our relationship in the household, there's a respect. Dad doesn't just walk around the house and dress however he wants. If

Continued on page 13

he has a need to dress, he tells whoever's home, "Hey, would you mind if I go put something on?" There's that respect. There's some common things that we as a family have agreed on. We give the respect to the kids because they have friends that come over. We don't announce this to the neighborhood; it's nobody else's business. I have a comfort zone as a Mom, not only as the wife but as the Mom, because we brought them into the world, and so he's respecting those wishes.

Now if he goes and he shaves his legs and doesn't ask me, and I've told him, "Please don't shave your legs. We're going to go to the beach, and I want you in guy mode. I don't want to deal with all the other crap." And if he then goes and [still] shaves his legs, that's a problem. And I think he wants to avoid problems, just like I do. It's common courtesy, not because you're reporting to Mommy, but courtesy. Don't ask my permission, but at least ask me how I feel before you do something.

Janet: Men can be willing to talk about it, but what they want to talk about is how the wife can accept it. "What's wrong with you, Honey, that you can't accept it?"

Q. What are some of the most difficult things to deal with?

Kathy: Relationships are give and take. All the lies I dealt with because of this crossdressing have done damage. I do not set limits for him, only in our situation with the children. At this point in our lives, you can't have everything, just because you want it.

I could think of a lot worse things that my husband could be doing. That's one motivation that gets me through some of the hard times. In the beginning, I really didn't want to see anything. I just said, "Fine! Go lock yourself up in the bedroom. Do what you have to do. I don't want to deal with it."

Jeanette: We have had problems, as anyone would imagine. We are single and I'm a very strong-willed person. I told him that before we got any further in the relationship, I wanted to go to the meetings. He was absolutely astounded that I pushed myself in, and I told him that I want to know what this is really about. He was really stunned. So I came, talked to everyone, and really tried to find out what it was all about.

Listening is very important, I can't stress that enough. He wanted to dress whether I liked it or not, I just said, "Well, fine, you can dress by yourself." I didn't think that I should have to put up with that every time he wanted to dress, I didn't feel comfortable with him, I wanted to go with him as a man to the show, that kind of thing.

Q. Is Transsexualism a wife's worst nightmare?

Kathy: I know that in the beginning, when you don't know anything in the community at all, it's very overwhelming. You just don't know; there's no textbooks. It's like bringing a baby home

from the hospital the first day. There's no manual on it. What are you gonna do when the baby cries? You feed it or change it.

It's that long train ride. Where are you going to get off? What stop are you going to get off? I don't fear anybody that goes on for surgery. I'm intrigued by it. If he decides to ever want to go all the way, it's his life. If we stay together, we stay together. If we don't, then we'll respect each other. But it's a decision we'll make together. I'm comfortable and he's comfortable, and I don't think he'll ever want to go all the way.

Janet: I think that when you are first finding out about your husband's crossdressing, a lot of women know about it, but don't deal with it for years. They don't want to know about it, don't want to talk about it, don't even want to think about it. But when they first start to deal with [the issue of transsexualism] it is a threatening thing because it threatens the marriage.

Q. How do you tell the children?

Janet: As far as telling our children, we didn't tell them when they were young. We felt that it was a big responsibility, too big of a burden to put on small children. We did need to keep it private. We did need to protect our privacy. We didn't want to have to tell the kids something that they had to keep secret, because I don't like the idea of having secrets. But we did keep it from them when they were little.

As they got older, we told the older ones. They've been pretty accepting. I found that our boys were actually more accepting of their dad. They don't feel threatened, and they don't feel like something's wrong with them or that they could have hidden gender problems. Our daughters are a little more like, "Oooh, I don't want to see Dad like that." They're a little more uncomfortable around it. They're not quite as accepting. I thought about why. It interferes with their image they have of their dad, and they want to keep that image.

Kathy: If anybody found out, we'd deal with it the best we could. We feel as a family that it's nobody else's business. What goes on in our household [isn't] hurting anybody. My children, we don't raise them to be prejudiced in any way. I think what we've given this community is another generation with an open mind, that when this topic comes up, they're educated.

Q. Do Crossdresser groups serve as encouragement groups?

Kathy: The most productive thing that these support groups could do is let the women speak like they're doing tonight. It's important because it's part of the healing process and it makes us feel like we're not alone. These support groups are changing. They were basically set up as a safe haven for the guys to dress and be comfortable. But I find it more of a learning experience for the women also, to come and be able to ask the questions. I encourage women

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to come if they feel up to it. There is so much that we can learn also.

The guys generally want to push and push and push and get their own way. The biggest fear I see is that guys are very competitive. They always want to do something better than the next guy. They want something bigger, better, like a hot rod or whatever. In this case, it's the boobs. "Oh, they got boobs, so I want boobs now. I'm going to take hormones and get boobs, just because he's got boobs. And his wife doesn't mind." Well, maybe the wife really does mind. Did you ever stop and ask her? There's a lot of assuming on the surface.

But the biggest fear is the pushing. Don't push so much! Why can't you just be happy with what you've got? And take it slow, at a pace you both can live with.

The crossdressers have all their lives up till whenever they come out of the closet to deal with this and get a handle on it. They may not during this whole time be able to dress and get the look that they want. So now all of the sudden they're comfortable with the inside, and they want the outside to look like what the inside is. And they start experimenting. Of course they're experimenting over weekends and in every little bit of time. On the other hand, the women have all their lives to get their insides and outsides to look like, so we get to a comfort zone.

Now you guys in this corner are trying to get the look on the outside, and you want more and more and more. And you're going faster, and we [the wives] have only now just learned about it. Slow down, Jack! There's this different image that attracted me to you, so we're going at different speeds. It could take years to get caught up. That's the battle. I was attracted to this man, I've got to get accustomed to it at my rate. If I don't want to see it, I don't want to see it. Don't make me do something I don't want to do! Give me the time I need and the space I need.

Janet: I think it's helpful for spouses if people are appropriately dressed, for a spouse coming for the first time. [Sometimes] we see too much of some people (audience laughter.) It's happened before. No one's really brought that up, but it does happen. I remember my first time going to one of these meetings. I thought, "Oh my God, I don't want to go. There'll be perverts there and weirdos and who knows what." And then you come and it's just normal everyday people.

Q. Can Crossdresser overpurchases on clothes and makeup become a serious problem?

Jan (moderator): We come right back to communication and negotiation between two people. You have to talk to one another and you do need to negotiate. What I see a lot of is women who will say to me that, "He goes out and he charges and he doesn't tell me. And then I get the bills or collection notices". And then the women

start resenting how much money the guy just goes out [and spends] and he's not talking to her about it.

I even know of men who use their wives' charge cards without telling their wives. Well, that's overstepping a boundary. And then she's starting to resent what he's doing and the fact that he's spending money elsewhere and not on her. So he's building a male wardrobe and a female wardrobe too, and is not devoting some of the resources towards her. And now he has two wardrobes and she has one, and he's not giving her as much time.

Kathy: What really irritated me personally was the avenues [for purchases] that you have at your access, [For example] those mail order catalogues and the trashy magazines. It's like all you're buying is the 10" heels. Who wears these damn things? It didn't make sense to me. Why would you spend that much on that when you could go down to Sears or JC Penney or the normal stores? It did irritate me when I started finding receipts for this expensive stuff. We had a budget; where do you get off doing that? It wasn't fair. But that was one of the things I had to work through because I didn't have all the facts.

Jenny: (from audience): All you need to do is talk about it, and most reasonable women can accept your needs if something's very important to you.

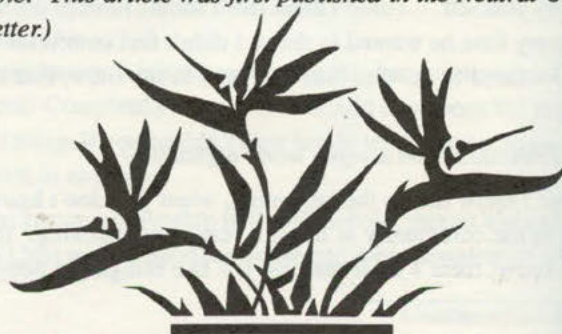
I will make sacrifices for something that's important to my husband: clothes, shoes, jewelry, whatever, if it's possible.

Q. What's the bottom line on all of this?

Jan (Moderator): It never ceases to amaze me at the women themselves. They've shown me what really unconditional love is. Not every woman can do it, and not every man can accept things about the woman he's involved with. But I've found that the women who have stayed in the relationship and are working with their partner, these are really remarkable women. Not everybody can do it. And it's not really for the husband to keep pushing his wife to accept something that she just can't do.

Kathy: A lot of the women I've met are very smart. I think they look beyond the crossdressing. I think they're smart enough to see that there's potential there. There's something that attracted you to this person, and it's workable.

(Ed.Note: This article was first published in the Neutral Corner newsletter.)



The Wife and Times of a Crossdresser

By Juana Smith

Anniversary Gifts

I'd like to discuss anniversaries, because January marks the fifth year since Hubby came out to me about his desire to cross dress and February 14 will be the eleventh of our wedding

Hubby has always done a good job making 2/14 a special day, whereas I sometimes have a hard time knowing what to get the big lug. But the month after he said he had always wanted to experience some of the things girls do, I thought of the perfect gift: Why not have a "sleep-over" with my new girlfriend, Veronica, just like teenagers! Having grown up in a household of boys, my husband had never considered this popular teenaged girl pastime for Veronica. (Of course, I also envisioned adding a slight adult twist to the sleep-over.)

We spent the week arranging time off, cleaning the apartment, buying delicacies (including Snickers - what teenager would be caught without some sort of chocolate?) and getting the appropriate beauty supplies. With everything in place by the 13th, we only had to determine the scenario. I thought I gave Hubby a pretty good idea of what to expect.

Valentine's Day arrived with a typical February fog and chill, but the forecast looked promising and our excitement warmed us up. While Hubby busied himself becoming Veronica, I went downtown to shop for some special nightgowns (not like when I was a kid) and have lunch at a quaint, little place I really like. As I swirled the last McNugget in its special sauce, I reminisced about sleep-overs and what my sister and I sometimes did on Saturday nights when we didn't have dates. I called to confirm the evening's invitation (just like I did when I was a teenager). To make it more realistic I had my toothbrush in my backpack. Veronica answered in a sing-song falsetto and told me to come right over, or maybe pick up a video along the way. She'd provide dinner. I picked up the perfect movie and headed home - or rather - to my girlfriend's house.

When I arrived, I was surprised (and amused) to be greeted by a heavily made up tall woman in a flamboyant red evening dress and four inch heels. "Just like a teenage girl," I thought and I said. "My, my, Vita, don't you look grand tonight!" By Veronica's puzzled look I could tell she had never seen "Mildred Pierce," the movie I'd picked. I suggested that she might want to change into something more casual, like jeans and a sweater, for the first part of the evening. She sprightly agreed (she loves trying on different outfits) and as I shut the door behind me, I knew we were in for a silly but fun night.

I thought I'd take a short nap while Veronica redressed and began preparing dinner. She gently awakened me a half-hour later with a glass of champagne and raspberries. What a way to begin! Then we snacked on lemon-basted chicken, steamed artichokes and a fresh baguette and we gabbed about school projects (we were both taking grad classes). I popped the movie in the VCR, and we gave each other masques and manicures. Our talk changed from theoretical styles to hair styles.

As we painted our toes "Jungle Red" we heard the world's most ungrateful daughter snap at her hard-working mom, "I'm sick and tired of your chickens and pies." And by the time Mr. and Mrs. Pierce confessed to the police, our polish might have been dry, but our eyes were wet. But Veronica soon lifted me out of my melancholy mood by giving me a heart shaped box of chocolates. (I had the Snickers later.) And when the movie was completely over, I told Veronica we had better get to bed.

Over a relaxing, intimate evening, Veronica had the opportunity to explore an event most girls experience, while I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that this make-believe sleep-over evoked long-forgotten and fond memories of when I was a kid. But we were adults as we turned off the lights and felt smooth skin touch smooth skin.

Ways to Tell Men & Women Apart

Reprinted from News Briefs

Women always know what to get at the grocery store.
Men always need a list and never know what brands to buy.

Women look at their nails with palms down and the fingers pointed away from the body.

Men look at their nails with palms up and fingers curled toward the body.

Women give directions by landmarks (turn left at the Shell station, pass the park on the right, etc.).

Men give directions based on a map (go 1.3 miles, then go north .8 miles, etc.).

Women's magazines have sexy women on the cover.

Men's magazines have sexy women on the cover.

Women look better than they give themselves credit for.

Men give themselves too much credit.

Women replace toilet paper before it's empty.

Men will leave one sheet on the roll to avoid changing it.

Women comb their hair in traffic.

Men pick their noses.

Men rely on the Weather Channel.

Women just stick their head out the window to see if it's going to be a bad hair day.

Men "instinctively" know how to get to any place.

Women ask for directions.


Men will carry all the grocery bags they can lift at once in an attempt to make one trip.

Women will carry one bag in each hand and make as many trips as necessary.

Men will pay for purchases with bills and throw the change in their pockets.

Women have a wallet with a built-in change purse and always pay with change - many times with exact change.

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The Normalcy of Crossdressing

By Lisa

Alpha Zeta Chapter's "Second Lady"

At the January meeting of Alpha Zeta, Sheila Dixon-Friedeman was our guest speaker. Her subject was the "Normalcy of Crossdressing." Thank goodness, after all these years it's nice to learn that I'm almost normal!

She started the session with a dissertation of "just exactly what is normal?" She indicated that "normal" in many cases is what is also known as "average." Or to put it another way, normal is the center value of a distribution about a bell curve. Of course there may not be always be a single item, person, or thing which exactly conforms to this mathematical "central value." All items in a random sample will vary to some degree and some will fall far from the central value. Does that make them unacceptable? No, not necessarily. Go to an Alpha Zeta meeting and you may find that the central value of the group may be about 2.5 on the Benjamin Scale. on the other hand, go to an "A Rose" meeting and you will probably find that the central value is 5 on the Benjamin scale. So what is normal? I guess it depends on the sample you're using.

She also made several statements that I found interesting. For instance, back in the early 50's in New York City, women were often arrested for the crime of wearing pants in public. Yes, even I am old enough to remember back when women started wearing pants. It was considered quite controversial at the time.

I have suspected it and Sheila confirmed it, that the public in general is becoming more aware of crossdressing. Not necessarily more accepting, just more aware. She brought with here a set of refrigerator magnets she had purchased at the Scottsdale fashion square. One was of the statue of David and the other was of another female figure whose name escapes me at the moment. David, the naked statue, comes with his own set of clothes, including a female wardrobe. She passed around the magnet set and we all had fun dressing David in his various outfits.

(Reprinted from the Cactus Flower, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter.)

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Our Gender Family #5

Creating a Gender Friendly World

By Rachel Miller

Society has created a firm but arbitrary connection between sex and gender and that link is THE MAIN SOURCE of our problems. Transvestite or transsexual, male or female, gay or lesbian—all face the same issue. We know the role of outcast; someone who just doesn't belong. We have felt shame and fear of rejection because society says there is something wrong with us. We have learned to hide our true selves in order to achieve acceptance, but that level of self-denial creates unbearable internal turmoil. We share anguish, isolation, desperation. We share pain...

Whether the gender community actually exists is disputed by many, but most agree that the gay/lesbian community is real. Whatever their official status, the two groups have not effectively linked themselves as a unified force. Even within the groups, actions are often fragmented. Each includes people with significantly different views, life styles, personalities and agendas that frequently lead to power struggles, petty-bickering, personal attacks, finger-pointing and fragmented actions. Attacks on individuals and groups are commonplace and ugly. Individuals and organizations act independently. Coordinated action is the exception, not the norm.

We do open battle with each other while complaining about the prejudice society shows towards us. From mainstream society's point of view, we appear as one ragged group. As they observe our internal squabbling, we extinguish any hope of their acceptance. We show disrespect to each other. Why should they respect us?

While we share strong underlying bonds, they are largely ignored. Each of us is trying to bend, shift, stretch or break that culturally enforced link between sex and gender—the primary cause of our problems. We strive for self-expression. We want everyone to accept our gender expression. But we quite often fail to accept other community members' expression because it differs from ours. What will it take to recognize and value our common bond?

The ultimate sadness is that we consistently fail to take advantage of an obvious solution that would benefit all of us. Suppose we lived in a society where it was impossible to distinguish men from women based solely on their clothing, makeup or behavior. A world where no gender rules were attached to wearing dresses or pants. A place where labels such as transgendered, transsexual and transvestite were insignificant—where no stereotypes were attached to bisexuals, heterosexuals or homosexuals. Then we could quit hiding and be ourselves. But everyone knows that's impossible—isn't it?

That open society was envisioned when the International Bill of Gender Rights was first drafted—"It is fundamental that individuals have the right to define, and to redefine as their lives unfold,

their own gender identities, without regard to chromosomal sex, genitalia, assigned birth sex, or initial gender role....(and) have the corresponding right to free expression of their self-defined identity." Notice the statement extends coverage to everyone. Unfortunately society doesn't accept free expression. Tragically, we don't either. How can we allow that to continue?

I know that we can't, but nothing changed for me until I realized that I personally can't allow that to continue! Converting generalized rhetoric into a personal commitment, is the key ingredient for change. The power generated by an individual acting with passion and principles, creates new realities once deemed impossible...we must accept responsibility for a problem before we can solve it. We cannot solve a problem by saying "It's not my problem." We cannot solve a problem by hoping that someone else will solve it for us. I can only solve a problem when I say, "This is my problem and it's up to me to solve it."

M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*

The problems caused by linking sex and gender expression are my problems. My personal Objective is to work to educate people so that—"The gender family is understood by and accepted into mainstream society."

I pledge to accept every individual who considers themselves part of either the gender or gay/lesbian communities as a member of my gender family. I will treat their view of gender expression with dignity and respect. When someone doesn't accept me, my view or my principles, I will explain my position and invite them to share their thinking. I will NEVER attack them or their position. I will seek to understand first, then to be understood. I will; however, insist that they communicate in the same constructive manner. If we cannot interact in a respectful manner, I will disengage as gracefully as possible while leaving the door open for future discussion. Inevitably I will fail to honor the pledge fully. When that happens, I ask that you remind me of my commitment.

By: Rachel Miller On: March 30, 1997

By acting this way, I move towards the objective. By encouraging others to act this way, I expedite the process. My Goal in 1997 is to find 7 individuals, call them The Magnificent 7, who share these ideals, help each of them find 7 more and encourage those 49 to each find another 7.

You know where I stand. You understand my reasoning. You see where I plan to go. My question is: "Will you take the same pledge?"

A Thought

By Tasha

Just as Transvestism is a broad spectrum, I also believe gender conflict or Transsexualism is a broad spectrum. Because of this diversity, borders are rather fuzzy. Some on the path to sexual reassignment surgery have found they are perfectly content to undergo feminization and to live as a woman without the final surgery. These Transgenderists are a relatively new category, and are recognized as an off-shoot to Transsexualism. Just as some approach Transgenderism from the transsexual side, couldn't there be a subset approaching from the crossdresser side too?

This thought came to me while examining the chapter's challenge of getting people involved. Instead of just accepting this progression, I challenge those, so inclined, to consider the agenda put forth in the remainder of this article.

A very simplistic view is to divide crossdressers into three types. At one end, are crossdressers who are very much in the closet. Some haven't even revealed their crossdressing to their significant other. In the middle are those that have accepted their crossdressing but are at varying degrees of coming out to others and society. At the other end are those whose crossdressing is very central to their lives. They go out in public freely, and may even live all or a significant part of their lives as women. If passing is the goal, then hanging around with other crossdressers is a detriment, because if one person is outed, it is likely that all in the group will be outed. It is this last subset that could actually be considered to be transgendered.

It is hard to get those at the "closeted" end to get involved. The barrier is their lack of self-acceptance. Many of us have gone through this soul searching so we can understand this hesitancy (although we strongly encourage them to face this much needed journey). Getting involved places situations in front of you that force you to examine their significance and your own importance. It becomes equally hard to get those at the "accomplished" end to get involved because they are trying to distance themselves from the group. I have dear friends in this group and am happy that they have found some fulfillment, but, at the same time, saddened that I see less of them. If they are truly transgendered, isn't this just an illusion of quick gratification? The thought of passing is intriguing to many, myself included. To be undetected would mean we could be taken into the confidence of women. It would also bypass the possibilities of exposure, rejection, embarrassment, and more.

Everyone must follow her own path and no one has the right to tell another how to live her life. I cannot help but be bothered, though,

by losing these experienced members.

It seems we lose people in denial at both ends. At one end is self denial; and at the other, it is denial of their heritage. How can we ever move society to tolerance if society doesn't know we are here and that we are people of quality and commitment? (Our experienced members are our best example.) It is analogous to light skinned black persons passing themselves off as caucasian. Yes, it may mean less hassles for them in the here and now, but what does it do for their families and the generations to come? What does it say to those who have gone before and faced obstacles far greater than those faced today? Isn't it the ideal that all people, whatever their difference, should be accepted for themselves, not that they need "permission" to join the acceptable establishment?

Society has been intrigued lately with crossdressing, evidenced by the movies, *Tootsie*, *The Crying Game*, *Ed Wood*, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, and *Mrs. Doubtfire*. An article in *CrossTalk* even talked about how Transvestism isn't unusual enough for scandalous talk shows anymore unless they can layer on an additional trait of bizzareness. Now is the time for each of us to sacrifice that extra bit of time and energy in order to take advantage of this unique moment when social curiosity could be guided into tolerance.

Those crossdressers who are "waiting" must take their first step and join in.

Those who are "tiring" must resist the temptation of passing the torch. Only then will our numbers swell and our presence be known. How can a force continue and how can a force grow if it loses a generation? Those who "can" are desperately needed to help those who are struggling. Those who are developing must realize that when they help the group, they help themselves.

Think back to the day when you, personally, reached out to make that initial contact. Who was that person who talked to you, giving you the calm assurance that you were not alone? What would it have been like if they had not been there?

This article is not one of condemnation but a call to selflessness. All of us need to push ourselves that little bit more if we as individuals and as a group are to grow. I share the late Rev. Martin Luther King's dream that someday people will not be judged by their differences but by their conduct and by the content of their heart. A freedom march cannot be if we stand on the sidelines watching. We must fall in to the procession and step proudly.

(Reprinted from the Delta Chapter Chatter.)

The Function of The Church

By Dr. Jaye [REDACTED]

Transgendered people continue in our day to face condemnation, censure, rejection, and humiliation at the hands of well meaning people who make up The Church. This happens all across the land. It happens every time a transgendered person ventures forth to allow their transgendered nature to become known to their churches. There are exceptions, but they are not common.

When I speak of The Church, I am not speaking of any particular denomination, but all who call themselves Christian. In common speech, the Roman Catholic Church is ordinarily spoken of as "The Church". This is NOT my intent. The Church, as I address this issue, is made up of all who lay claim to the name of The Christ and call themselves by that name.

The following is a quote from a book I read recently: "I hope, too, that the church will someday reject the behavior control business as a blind and alien path that we have traveled in ignorance. The business of the church is to love people into life. When we confuse that and begin to think that our job is to judge one another, out of some self-imposed standard of righteousness, we have then, in my opinion, misread the whole message of the Gospel." (Bishop John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection, Myth or Reality-A Bishop's Search for the Origins of Christianity*, Harper Collins, San Francisco.)

A brief word about this author is appropriate. Bishop Spong is the Episcopal Bishop of Newark, NJ. He is admittedly a controversial author because he writes and speaks strongly against many of the positions taken by ultra right wing selectively literalist fundamentalists in the Church. He is often criticized by many who are put off by his candor and down to earth acknowledgement of the fundamental facts of history and scholarly examination of the Scripture. Many vicious critiques are leveled at him by people who have obviously not read him with an open mind and have not tried to see what it is he really does say.

As transgendered people, Crossdressers and Transsexuals are a distinct minority who are not greeted warmly with happiness on the part of society in general and a vast majority of the Church in particular. As I said earlier, there are exceptions. In those exceptions we can glory and for them give thanks to God who loves up because we are the very product of God's creative will.

What I believe Bishop Spong is saying in the quote set forth above is the expression of a sincere hope he feels that the Church will eventually shift its focus from trying to scare or dictate the hell out of people and begin to live in the God-like way of loving people

into the fullness and richness of the life God wills for each of the creations of the Divine One.

If you, as a transgendered person, have been rejected or made to fear rejection on the part of the Church you attend, and it is likely many of you have been, take courage. Take courage in knowing you are beloved of God. Take courage in knowing you are not alone. Take courage in knowing our loving and unspeakably merciful and gracious Lord loves you and is with you. Take courage in knowing where you have fallen short (and being who, being how, and being what God has created you to be is NOT falling short) God forgives you and has for you an endless supply of love, mercy, and grace.

Do not listen to the wisdom of humans who set forth to pronounce the judgements of God, for God alone is the judge and needs no human mouthpiece. Read again Bishop Spong's comment above and see what this learned churchman has to say about what he believes the function of the Church really is. See and ask your church, does it proclaim the love of God and does it refrain from standing in judgement of those who are different? If it does not, then it needs your forgiveness and your prayers so the Love of God can ultimately be proclaimed and come shining through it.

Be at Peace with God...



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Will I Keep It Up?

By Sofronia Anne

It is such a fulsome blessing to be a crossdresser. How many men have an opportunity, as I had this Spring, to get all dolled up in a prom gown and spend an evening acting like a pretty girl?

I don't see why it upsets us so. After all, we are just being ourselves. Being one's real self seems such a difficult thing to do. Most of us don't actually want to know who or what we really are. That kind of introspection is frowned upon all the way down by teachers, parents and especially peers. Studies have indicated that the creative juices are pretty well squeezed out of us by the time we reach junior high.

Too many people with self-knowledge would really upset the hypocrisies that form the web of society. If a lot of us went around just being ourselves, everyone else might not look so good by comparison. Besides, others might get the idea that they could be themselves as well, and then where would we be? We have to keep up appearances, as opposed to being real, because reality is too scary.

Anyway, it seems a blessing to me to know what I really am, even if being a crossdresser might not be what I would have chosen. (Actually, I probably did choose it by arranging it through prior choices and acts.)

It all has to do with why we are here. I think each of us knows, really. We come here in the expectation of learning something, something specific, such as how to be rich, funny, or beautiful, disabled or whatever. Maybe we came to acquire some skill or learn some particular lesson. John Lennon said that life is what gets in the way of what we came to do. If something didn't get in the way it would be too easy. What gets in the way is staying alive, housed, clothed, transported, work, etc.; all the things we have to do to keep our ducks lined up and ourselves glued together and functioning. Once all that is taken care of we can reflect a little on what we really came to do.

That's when it starts getting scary, so most of us don't do it. We do rationalisation, projection, denial and avoidance instead. We actually came just to be who we really are. First, however, we have to discover what that is. Who is this person walking around selling marbles and munching Twinkies, twitching and squirting through each day? It's you! But who and what is that;

I mean, really? To discover that you must first find out what your joy is. It's funny how that works. Find your joy and you find yourself. Why is that so hard? Because no one wants you going

about doing pretty much as you please, getting turned on to life. It makes them envious. (Misery loves company.) We do Schadenfreude. That's a wonderful German word for taking pleasure in other's misfortunes.

Joseph Campbell has said that we will be fulfilled if we discover our bliss and live it. (So did a lot of other wise men through a lot of myths and stories.) The problem is that most of us don't know what our bliss is. Weren't you told as a child that you couldn't be allowed to go through life doing just as you pleased? (That's the thing that squeezes the creative juices out.) If you are allowed to enjoy yourself too much you might discover what your bliss is. Worse yet, you might get the idea that you could live it. When you are filled with joy you are experiencing your bliss!

For crossdressers it is always the same - our bliss is emulating women. Then you have to have the courage to live it in the face of all that disapproval from those who aren't living theirs. If you do live your bliss, you will find happiness and fulfillment. Despite the fact that you have been taught to believe just the opposite, it is your bliss that will fill you with ecstasy. So my bliss is expressing my femininity, my second self. I do that by dressing up as a female and learning how to express that part of my nature. That makes me a crossdresser. Is that so bad? You would think so, in talking to many other crossdressers.

It does take a little courage to live a bliss that upsets other people so much.

We know why it does. It's too close to reality. It expresses too difficult a truth, that life is seldom what it seems and what you are doing here isn't what you came to do. Odds are that what you came here to do will not please the conventional wisdom. (That's the wisdom of all those who are avoiding their bliss.)

The other argument against living your bliss is that it is selfish and inconsiderate of others. I mean, you go around blissing out while everyone else is writhing in unhappiness. What kind of life is that? It's a happy one. Ask yourself this: Is my being miserable helpful to the happiness of others? I think not! In fact, if we don't set an example to others, how are they going to know that blissfulness is even possible.

Wow! Look at the blisshead over there. What joy! I mean, it's like he's ecstatic, man. Can I do that too? Yeah, but he's a guy in a dress. I mean, like he's major league weird. What kind of bliss is

Continued on page 23

A Declaration

By Jane Ellen Fairfax

I am a crossdresser. Although a genetic male, I have a healthy feminine side which I express, among other ways, by wearing feminine clothing. Outmoded social stereotypes concerning my sexual orientation or motivation do not upset me, for I know and accept the truth about who I am. Nor do I feel any obligation to abide by Genderland's stereotypes. Some do enjoy the bars and impersonation shows. Once those were the only places we were accepted. But smoke in bars makes my mascara run, and impersonation shows seem exploitive. I feel free to prefer my favorite activities - shopping, dining out, and attending the theater. I do not "pass" and do not want to delude myself into thinking I do. While I strive to create an appropriate feminine image, I would rather people relate to me as who I am. For I am a crossdresser, not a counterfeit woman.

About my feminine side, I feel neither guilt nor shame. Rather, I consider my femininity to be a gift from God. Although I am a crossdresser, I see no reason why I cannot be an active Christian. Should I embrace an alternative spirituality, in which I do not believe, just because some Christians do not understand crossdressing? It is my job to educate them, not only by my words, but in how I live my life. I feel an obligation to do my best to educate all of society. I do not feel I can afford to bypass whole classes of people. Jane's presence in my life has softened my rough masculine edges. Through her I have learned how to listen, how to empathize, and how to be gracious in victory and in defeat. On her wings I have escaped from the macho prison. Freedom is beautiful!

This does not mean I have annihilated my masculinity to develop my femininity. Cancellation is not growth. Both sides need nurturing. As "Jane" has developed, so has "John." To explore for new interests, both masculine and feminine, is exciting. The man my wife married will always be there for her. Our sons can count on a father who serves as a masculine role model. At the same time, our sons know about Jane. If crossdressing is not wrong, why hide it? Honesty and communication are the cornerstones of our family life.

Masculine/feminine balance is very important to me. Balance is like a seesaw. Life circumstances exert influences, sometimes toward the masculine, and other times, toward the feminine. While I like to express myself according to mood and circumstances, I do not let either gender dominate my life. Because society has not completely accepted crossdressing, there are times when I must postpone the gratification of dressing en femme. Since professional and community considerations are important to my family, I do not take inappropriate risks. Still, I long for the time when freedom of gender expression will prevail. That is why I support the efforts of those involved in the struggle for our human rights.

Crossgender expression is entirely compatible with family values. It has led to insights that have made me a more sensitive husband and father, and a better overall person. Thanks to that special extra dimension, I feel I am one lucky guy - and gal!

(This article first appeared in Transgender Tapestry.)

that? I don't know. What's it matter? He's got the joys, man. (My bliss is crossdressing. His may be something else, hopefully only minor league weird, like doing watercolors.)

Actually, I can take joy in the knowledge that when I am expressing my femme persona, blissing along in my prom gown, I am helping myself by helping others. I am at the cutting edge, calling the stereotypes into question. Marjorie Garber says that is our function and it is an important contribution to society. (I'll try to remember that when I am struggling to get into my panty girdle.)

Every moment I spend en femme is blissful. Will I keep it up? I think so!

(Reprinted from En Femme newsletter Beta Gamima Chapter.)



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**Write For A Price
List of Books**

"Hey, Good Looking!" Buying a First Wig

By Allison [REDACTED]

The first wig I ever bought was in a Bon Marche department store. I asked if there was some secluded place I could try one on. Not wanting to prolong the embarrassment, I bought the first one I tried on. Alas, the cap was too small, attesting the fact that even TV's heads are larger than the average woman's. Even estrogen won't fix this.

It's better to go to someone whom you have called and asked about privacy. My second wig purchase was made in a nearby city in a combination beauty and barber shop. The beautician told me her stall was private, but it turned out to be separated from the barber chair by a low partition. I was glad I was 30 miles from home in a place where no one I know would go for a haircut. That wig fit better, and was the best I could choose from her quite small stock. I didn't know how much better I could look in a style that matched my face.

My third purchase (moving upward in price) was from a lady who specializes in fitting wigs for cancer patients who are losing all their hair. She was totally non-judgmental about my wanting a wig I could wear while crossdressed. But I was still reluctant to express how I wanted to look, or why. Later, when I learned that she was very supportive of people in our local crossdressers' club, I realized that I had made a mistake in not being more frank. That wig looked passable, but didn't enhance my looks.

I have since bought three wigs from another person in a one-person wig shop who loves to deal with crossdressers. She loves to tease us, and we tease her back. She told me once that her TV customers are the politest people who come into her shop. She has a very good eye for matching wigs to the customer's skin tones, face shape, etc. And she doesn't encourage men to make the mistake that many crossdressers do, i.e. buying a wig with too much hair to look natural. All of the wigs I bought from her make me look more attractive than I do as a man, and the enhance my appearance as a woman, rather than just help me not to be read.

I don't think there is any way to avoid feeling like you're on the hot seat when you first purchase a wig. But I think there are some things you can do to minimize that embarrassment and make a better purchases:

- 1) Go out of town where you are unlikely to sit down next to your neighbor. This helps you be at ease, which results in your paying more attention to how the wig looks on you, rather than

how soon you can leave. After all, you're going to spend \$90 to \$110, and you should feel comfortable about yourself while you're doing it.

- 2) Try to find a wig shop which specializes in fitting wigs for cancer patients. They are far more likely to be supportive in suggesting wigs that really look good on you, rather than ignoring your best interests.
- 3.) Ask to make sure the vendor will style the wig at the time of purchase, if it needs it. People who style wigs are much more conscious about making you look good than people with only a big store full of wigs and a cash register.
- 4) Because of that twinge of embarrassment we nearly all have, call the owner first and tell them you are a crossdresser, and that you would like to have some place to try on the wig or wigs where you won't be observed by other customers. If the person you talk to says they have no really private place, but encourages you to come in anyway, don't overlook the invitation. You're not going to be hurt if one or two women customers are in the shop unless one of them is your church choir leader.
- 5) Ask if they stock wigs with caps large enough to fit most men. If they don't, you'd probably be their first man customer. That can result in their being more anxious for you to be somewhere else than you are.
- 6) When you go, explain that you want to look as feminine as possible in the wig, and tell her you want to look within 20 years of other women your age. If you're only 20, you might want to narrow that range.
- 7) Relax and help the sales person enjoy waiting on you. Be frank about what you think of each wig you try on, but ask her advice, and thank her for her opinion. Make sure when you leave that she will think of you as a nice person. If she doesn't have what you want now, she may notify you when she gets something in that she thinks you would like.
- 8) Avoid shopping for wigs until you are really ready to shell out the cash for a good one. Synthetic wigs are often easier to keep pretty than human hair wigs, but the cheap ones usually look more like straw. Avoid the attraction of a bargain. Don't buy a wig unless you can put it on, look in the mirror, and say, "That's how I WANT to look." Keep shopping.

The Feminine Mirror

Our Gender Family

The Little Engine that Could

By Rachel Miller

The little train was carrying toys and candy to the good little boys and girls who lived on the other side of the mountain when the old engine suddenly quit working. How would the toys and candy get to the children? A new engine was needed, but the shiny new passenger engine was too proud to pull a train of toys. The big strong freight engine felt that he was too important for such a small job. A kind engine approached and wanted to help but he was old and rusty and too tired to pull the train. The situation seemed hopeless until a little blue engine came chugging merrily along. The little engine wanted to help the sad children, but she had never done anything more than switch trains in the yard. Yet the children's need was so great that she just had to try. She hooked up to the train and tugged and pulled and very slowly they started. As she puffed along she kept whispering I think I can...I think I can... As the little engine gained confidence in her abilities the train went faster and faster. When she passed by you could hear her shouting, "I know I can... I know I can..." She finally reached the top of the mountain and rolled down to the other side. The little blue engine was so happy because she had gone beyond anything she'd ever done before and helped the good children who needed her.

Like that little engine I lacked the self-confidence to take on new situations and always deferred to those whom I perceived as the "qualified people"—the shiny new MBA graduate, the big strong corporate executive and the kind old retired school board member. I complained instead of getting personally involved in issues and waited for someone else to take action.

A few years ago, due to a planned construction project, the city in which I lived closed a commuter train parking lot. I was upset because parking was difficult but there didn't seem to be any point in arguing. Several months later I learned that the project had been postponed indefinitely but the parking lot remained empty. I did my normal complaining until my wife Marsha asked why I didn't do something about it. My response was typical for me, "What the hell can I do? Everyone knows you can't fight city hall." Marsha persisted and said that if I wasn't going to do anything I forfeited the right to complain. So I sulked around the house for several days mumbling that her expectations were clearly unrealistic. I checked the local paper thinking it would supply some information that would prove my point but found instead that ordinary citizens frequently addressed the city council on issues they considered important. I recognized some of the names of the petitioners, and they didn't seem like the "qualified people" I expected to speak

out. If they could do it, why couldn't I? After arguing with myself for several days, I finally decided to attend a council meeting. I took my turn at the microphone and described the situation. They listened, asked a few questions and said they would consider the request. I didn't agree with their ultimate decision to retain the parking ban but the experience forever changed my perspective. I realized that I didn't have to sit on the side line while supposedly more "qualified people" made decisions for me. I could take an active role in determining my destiny. After years of saying, "I know I can't," I started saying, "I think I can" and ended up saying, "I know I can."

Do you know what? You can take an active role too! You can make something happen. You can make a difference. You can change the world. But to do so you have to quit complaining, quit downgrading your capabilities and TAKE ACTION! We are all capable if we just start. There are as many courses of action as there are individuals but let me suggest a simple way to begin to transform your inaction into action.

I have received many positive responses to my articles but the percentage of respondents is still relatively small (3% of the audience is considered a big response). The percentage who report taking active steps is even smaller. Other writers and editors report a similar lack of response. So as a first step in breaking the cycle of inactivity, why not respond to the following questions from my previous letters:

- 1) In January I asked if you would - "Make a written commitment that in 1997 you will take one step beyond wherever you've been before, share that commitment with one person and give them regular progress reports!"

Did you make a commitment? _____

Will you? _____

What are your next steps? _____

- 2) In March I asked if you would support a shared objective - "The gender family is understood by and accepted into mainstream society."

Did you support the objective? _____

Will you? _____

What are your next steps? _____

3. In May I asked if you would take a pledge - "I pledge to accept every individual who considers themselves part of either the gender or gay/lesbian communities as a member of my gender family. I will treat their view of gender expression with dignity and respect. When someone doesn't accept me, my view or my principles, I will explain my position and invite them to share their thinking. I will NEVER attack them or their position. I will seek to understand first, then to be understood. I will; however, insist that they communicate in the same constructive manner. If we cannot interact in a respectful manner, I will disengage as gracefully as possible while leaving the door open for future discussion. Inevitably I will fail to honor the pledge fully. When that happens, I ask that you remind me of my commitment."

Did you take the pledge? _____

Will you? _____

What are your next steps? _____

The wonders of technology make it possible to answer these questions in a few seconds. Just key in the answers, highlight the material, press reply and press send. That's a beginning. If you don't believe yourself capable, consider these:

"We all have possibilities we don't know about."

"We can do things we don't even dream we can do."

-Dale Carnegie

"I am where I am because I believe in all possibilities."

-Whoopi Goldberg

"You must do the things you think you cannot do."

-Eleanor Roosevelt

"What you lack in talent can be made up with desire, hustle and giving 110 percent all the time."

-Don Zimmer

Notes

In May Marsha and I spoke with a Critical Thinking History class at Diablo Valley College (Concord, California). I had been interviewed by one of the students for a report on people who have experienced discrimination based on an alternative life style. The discussion pointed out the impact that discrimination has on all of our lives.

We are on the program at S.P.I.C.E. (Spouses and Partners International Conference for Education), July 16-20 in Ontario, California. If you or your partner have issues about cross-dressing, this is an incredible opportunity to move towards resolution in an open, supportive environment with significant resources available to draw from for both partners. For details contact S.P.I.C.E. at <http://www.pmpub.com>

Thanks to those who voted for my web site: <http://members.aol.com/RachelMill> in sufficient numbers to make it a recipient of the 1997 GLBT DVA award for web excellence. If you haven't checked it out lately, stop by. It has grown to six sections and 23 pages covering past editions of "Our Gender Family" letters and articles previously published in "The Femme Mirror." The newest section for Spouses and Partners was just launched with my first article (Marriage and the Cross-Dresser - How It Can Work) in the Spring edition of "The Sweetheart Connection."

"The Bliss of Becoming One!" is now available from the new Barnes & Noble on-line bookstore at:

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This monthly Email letter is available at no charge. Pass it on to anyone who may be interested. To receive it directly send an E-mail to [REDACTED]



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**Write For A Price
List of Books**

Attitude Is Everything

By Francie Baltazar-Schwartz

Jerry was the kind of guy you love to hate. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I'd be twins!"

He was a unique restaurant manager because he had several waiters who had followed him around from restaurant to restaurant. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee were having a bad day, Jerry was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, 'Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood.' I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining, or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested.

"Yes, it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, I left the restaurant industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Jerry did something you are never supposed to do in a restaurant business: he left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found relatively quickly and rushed to the local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body.

I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?"

I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I choose to live."

"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked.

Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really

scared. In their eyes, I read, 'He's a deadman.' I knew I needed to take action."

What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied.

The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply... I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I'm choosing to live. Operate on me as if I'm alive, not dead.'

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

You have two choices now:

1. Save or delete this mail from your mail box.
2. Forward it to your dear ones and choose to pass this on.

I hope you will choose #2.



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Three Letters To A Wife

By Lisa

26-Oct-96

To my Precious and Dear Wife,

I would like to acknowledge to you a lifelong struggle within myself in order to break down a personal emotional barrier that inwardly isolates a part of me from you. My love for you gives me the strength and courage to attempt to be open with you about this situation, however I need to know whether your love for me has the strength to be sensitive and compassionate. What I offer to divulge to you is personally embarrassing for me but the guilt associated with repressing it within myself all my life (especially from you) has recently become overwhelming. Although you may react with shock and bewilderment about my predicament you should never be embarrassed by it because you are not responsible for its cause and I will never embarrass you. In fact the subject matter of my therapy is to understand the cause of this lifelong personality affliction, why it fell upon me, and how to best deal with it in my life. The intensity and duration of my therapy sessions depend on how well I can learn to cope with it within my core self but it also depends on how open and trusting I can be about it within the other part of me (you). I would prefer that there to be no secrets within our relationship but this may need to remain a secret unless you have the state of mind to accept this disclosure with compassion, sensitivity, and understanding. I would favor your support and understanding in this matter but only you can decide whether you can accept this knowledge with the positive intention of helping me cope with the situation.

I understand that it is less than fair to ask you how you think that you will respond to this information without knowing what it is. This is a big dilemma for me because unless I know that you will continue to love, accept, and support me... I cannot move to eliminate the secretiveness between us. You need to decide and tell me whether you can accept me no matter what my situation is.

To help you decide... let me tell you a little more about the nature of this secret. First of all, understand that this emotional condition has been with me for as long as I can remember. Although not common in our society, this predicament is experienced by many people and is well documented and widely supported by professional therapists. This condition is not classified as a mental illness but could potentially fall into a category of compulsive behavior. I intend to follow through with such therapy to understand the nature and depth of the condition and to learn how to best cope with it. This condition has never impacted and should never impact our family and social lives but it may present some coping strategies in our private relationship.

I would like to believe and hope that you might be my trusted and personal confidante in this challenging endeavor but I cannot and will not force you to accept such a responsibility and I would understand if it is too difficult for you. If this be the case, I will continue my efforts to resolve my concerns to the best of my ability within the privacy of therapy.

With all my love,

Lisa

Letter 2 - My Hope

To my Precious and Dear Wife,

My purpose in sharing my secret with you is to release a self inflicted emotional burden that has resulted from hiding a part of my inner personality from you and in affect from myself. It is my hope that if I can relieve the emotional strain imposed by carrying this secret that I might better cope with all of the other challenges in our lives. I pray that this openness will preserve and protect the integrity of our relationship by building a higher level of trust and honesty between us. I love you with all of my heart, my soul, and my mind and I want our relationship to be rooted in trust and mutual understanding.

My Apprehensions

I hope that you might respect if nothing else the courage that I have had to muster in order to bring this very personal and sensitive concern to the most important person in my life. I pray that you will find compassion, sensitivity, and support as this is an intensely emotional lifelong situation with which I have had to contend with. Many times I have thought about revealing this secret to you but I have always been apprehensive that you might not be sympathetic to my plight and that you might pass an immediate negative judgment upon me. I have chosen then to put them down in writing so that you may fully digest the entire message as a whole (instead of me stumbling to deliver one line at a time and messing up... which could then breakdown into an undesired confrontation instead of a compassionate dialogue). I want to live in total honesty with you in our relationship, but I worry that this disclosure may adversely affect the way that you feel about me, which would hurt me dearly. The fear of potential rejection by you haunts me more than anything else in the entire world and I intensely hope and pray that it is unfounded.

My Journey

Over the past two months I have labored with countless revisions on how to best present my thoughts to you in this letter. Putting this together has been somewhat therapeutic in itself because it has forced me to repeatedly examine and look within myself before disclosing this situation to you. My difficulty is not classified as a mental illness but a personality confusion experienced by certain individuals who have a unique inner perspective of who they are. Because this perspective differs from the normal expectations of society, individuals in this group often repress and deny a very important part of their identity. This self denial leads to unhealthy feelings of guilt and shame and these individuals often suffer more emotional stress than the average person. I have come to realize that hiding and denying this part of my personality contributes a certain degree of stress in my life that serves no healthy purpose. Concealing this part of my individuality from you has recently become more burdensome because I am realizing that it has the consequence of denying it from my very self since I truly believe that you and I are united as one! For this reason and at this time in my life I find it necessary to directly confront this difficulty with honesty within professional therapy. To continue to hold this secret between us concerns me that it might someday undermine the emotional closeness of our relationship. It has often been suggested that the perpetuation of deep secrets between two intimate partners is a greater destructive force (both personally and within a relationship) than the content of the secrets themselves.

Continued on page 30

Letter 2 - *My Hope (cont.)*

Who am I

Please take a moment to close your eyes, look deep inside of my heart, and reflect on who I am as a person... (a loving and caring husband and father, active in religious and community life, frequent platelet blood donor, one who helps others whenever I can, sensitive, caring, dependable, good worker, consistent provider,... [you don't have to stop... but I will]). Now also keep in mind that this revelation does not make me any different of a person than the one that I am today and the one that I will be tomorrow. This disclosure is merely an additional awareness of a minor part of my personality that has been present in me since my early childhood. I feel that you are a part of me and I find it difficult to carry this lifelong burden without all of me being informed. I need to know that you can accept me as I am so that I can in turn accept myself and no longer live in secrecy from you and in fear of what you might think.

My Secret

Maintaining this secret has been a troublesome emotional burden in my life. Only my intense love for you gives me the courage to open myself up for the very first time to anyone so close to me. It is not my intention to reveal this secret to any other members of our families. I intend to deal with this situation as discreetly as I have always handled it in the past so that our children, our parents and no one close to us needs to know anything about it. (Question: How have I done so far?...I had thought that you might have already known.) How can I put this in the most delicate manner possible? During my lifetime I have had a occasional attraction to something you have been doing all of your life. While it has always been encouraged in your life it is not considered permissible in my life. Have you ever noticed that when the Sears and JC Penney catalogues come out that I usually check out the women's clothes section first? Ever since I was a child I have always been interested in women's fashion. The secret is that I have had during my life an occasional compulsion to be privately dressed in women's attire. This is not a full time interest but there exists within me a minority person that admires femininity. This revelation absolutely does not mean that I want to cross over to being a woman, that I am gay, or that I want to come out in public. My perspective is that I prefer to be a man in every sense of the word with an occasional need to experience a certain feminine side of my personality in a private and safe environment.

Understanding of Impact

I do not underestimate the significance and impact that this disclosure may have on you personally. I expect, acknowledge, and understand that it may cause apprehension and concern on your part, which I hope to put at ease through discussion and support with my therapist. Perhaps you yourself as a woman can identify with the human urge and desire to dress and feel feminine even though it is sociologically not accepted that a man could occasionally have this same human instinct. Although this activity may seem peculiar to most people... it is harmless in and of itself except for the personal psychological impact of inner repression and denial. Please understand that I absolutely prefer to maintain my image as a man in our family and public life but that there exists an additional individuality that expresses occasional private needs involving femininity. Reaction?

Letter 2 - My Hope (cont.)

I am concerned about how you will react to this personal disclosure ... maybe with a sense of relief that I can confide in you, maybe with a sense of support and sensitivity that you will help me to cope with the situation, or maybe with no sense of understanding at all. I prefer that you find this out in this manner rather than to have you discover it someday by accident. This disclosure is a preemptive move to avoid such a potentially traumatic event for both of us. I am paranoid that someday something won't be put back in exactly the right way and that this secret would be found out without any benefit of explanation. I need to loosen the emotional weight of continuing to hide myself from you but at the same time I do not want this to cause you any emotional anguish. This secret has become too big to hold within myself and against myself.

Where do I (we?) go from here?

I intend to examine this difficulty with the support and guidance of a professional therapist. I hope to understand more about why this compulsion has been a lifelong occurrence in my life and then how to best cope with it personally and within our relationship. I am at a crossroads between dealing with this issue with continued concealment from you or selecting a new path of trust and honesty with you as my confidante. The current path leads to a potential risk of increased alienation from each other while the second path supports a relationship of continued companionship, trust, and bonding. The second path is much less familiar and difficult to enter but I believe that it leads to where I want to be with you. I ask and beg you (with tears in my eyes) for your continued love, understanding and support because the second path is the one I have chosen and the one that I would hope you will choose as well. As awkward as this may sound, I have a desire to share this hidden part of me with someone else... preferably someone else I can trust ... preferably you. Perhaps if we treat this situation with lighter hearts we can both better cope. Maybe having someone to laugh about this with is the best medicine for me that money could buy!

Misc. thoughts

Through research I became aware that crossdressing is an activity shared by a substantial number of individuals and couples throughout the United States. This information is not commonly known or publicized because of the secret nature of the experience. Researchers have stated that those couples who handle it with openness and honesty actually share a better improved relationship versus those who choose to deny and hide from it.

It has been suggested that this difficulty can be considered a gift that puts one at an advantage to understand life from both gender perspectives which increases the persons sensitivity to humanity as a whole.

Society perceives that we must be either male or female according to our genitalia. But it is being widely recognized in the therapeutic world that one's sexual classification by body parts is different from one's sense of gender. Gender identification is not a polarized determination of man or woman but it is an identification of individual within a sliding range. Who we feel we are as a person on the inside has nothing to do with what parts we wear on the outside.

I Love you with all of my Heart, my Soul, and my Mind.

—Lisa

Letter 3 - *My Reasons for Being Open with You*

To my Precious and Dear Wife,

The first reason that I felt compelled to share my lifelong secret difficulty with you was that I was feeling very distraught about not being completely open and honest with you in our relationship. Over the past 2-3 months many of my waking hours have been preoccupied by a sense of severe inner betrayal that I felt solely and terribly responsible for. I had always felt that there should never be any secrets between us and yet I was keeping the biggest and most personal secret of my life from you. I honestly value our relationship so much that I courageously and painfully sacrificed this secret up to you in the hope of fostering a relationship which is rooted in trust, compassion, support, and mutual understanding.

The second reason was my hope that if I could release the emotional baggage imposed by carrying this lifelong secret that I might better cope with all of the other emotional challenges that we face in our lives.

The third reason was that I was tired of denying and repressing this small but significant part of my inner identity. I have humanistic feelings and needs that are different from most people's expectations but that does not mean that these feelings are absolutely bad. I am learning in counseling that it is all right to have feelings and needs that are different from the norms of society as long as they do not violate any laws by causing physical harm to others. I am learning that acknowledgment of these feelings and accommodation of these needs is a much healthier response than to suppress these feelings simply for the sake of being compliant with someone else's definition of what they perceived to be normal.

I'm Sorry !

I cannot express any sorrow for having these feelings but I am very sorry that the truthfulness of this situation has caused you such distress. You have a right to feel this way for a time because this disclosure has altered your ideal external perception of who I am as a man. I only hope someday that you can value my predominant inner qualities as a person more than you value your external image of me as a man, which I unintentionally deflated. I was happy that we could at least spend the rest of the day in some degree of peace by shelving the matter for a while. I admire the way that you have treated me well since I made my initial confession to you. Even though you have a right to feel ashamed of me, you have not done anything to make me feel more ashamed of myself. I pray that some degree of peace regarding this situation is finding its way into your heart and soul. Thank you!

I Had to Confront This

Despite the severe risk of embarrassment, I have finally mustered the courage to deal with this situation with a positive attitude in counseling. Despite further embarrassment, I felt that I could not be honest within myself until I was honest with you. I pray that someday this manifestation of honesty will have its reward! As heartbreaking as my disclosure was for you, can you experience any sense of empathy for the difficult feelings that I have had to struggle with all of my life? Can you put yourself in my shoes and recognize the intense inner strife that I am experiencing? I hope that you might someday feel and express some degree of heartfelt compassion and understanding for my situation. This process of self acknowledgment can sometimes be frightening without the constant reassurance of your love, support, and comfort.

Solutions ?

I did not choose to have these feelings but to deny that they exist would be a lie. When you think of all

Letter 3 - *My Reasons for Being Open with You (cont.)*

of the problems that a couple can face, this situation is not nearly as insurmountable. Alcohol, drugs, infidelity, abuse, violence, crime, etc. are all very harmful problems that are faced by many couples today. The harmless and soft aspects of this situation cannot be compared to anything even resembling these harmful problems, so its presence should not be perceived to be anything nearly as devastating. The only thing that is being challenged within this situation is our culturally imposed historic view of what a man should be and how a man should play out his role.

I absolutely acknowledge that you have given so much of yourself to me and our family but also realize that I have given a lot as well. I have always placed other people's needs before mine. I donate platelets and volunteer service to community, church, etc. I have given, given, and given everything that I can to you and the kids and others. Is it too much for me to expect something so meaningful and private for myself that it quenches a very deep human need for self affirmation? How much can this activity hurt anyone else if it is done privately without anyone else's knowledge? This can only have a negative effect on you to the degree that you improperly measure my whole identity as an ultra-magnification of this very small fraction of my personality. A more positive approach to dealing with this situation might be to choose to glance over this minor component of my personality and instead focus more appropriately on my entire identity which has predominantly positive qualities.

I want to work out a solution to this situation that is acceptable to both of us. I want us to develop a sense of relaxation with these circumstances even to the degree that we can allow ourselves to laugh about it when the need arises. I need you to understand more about the subject matter in general and also more about my specific feelings. I have a better understanding of my feelings now and I have a developing sense of what my needs are. But we will need to evaluate how my needs might directly conflict with your needs. I cannot deny my feelings but I can make every reasonable accommodation to minimize the impact on you and with your help make these circumstances absolutely transparent to our children. I have lived with this secret for 35+ years and I have successfully kept it hidden (until now when I voluntarily decided to be honest with you). You must have a lot of questions, feelings, and apprehensions that need to be addressed and I would welcome your occasional participation with me in counseling. Please consider this opportunity because we both need to deal with our emotions and responses to this situation.

Through research I became aware that crossdressing is an activity shared by a substantial number of individuals and couples throughout the United States. This information is not commonly known or publicized because of the secret nature of the experience. Researchers have stated that those couples who handle it with openness and honesty actually share a better improved relationship versus those who choose to deny and hide from it.

I Love you with all of my Heart, my Soul, and my Mind.

—Lisa

Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5

Laura [REDACTED], 1997 (email: [REDACTED])

Those of us transgendered folks that were raised in the Judeo-Christian tradition and observe our religions are often particularly vexed by Deuteronomy 22:5 because this verse is a prohibition against cross dressing. Discussions of Deuteronomy 22:5 in TG sources are generally written by Christians who are usually unfamiliar with the Hebrew language and Jewish biblical research and commentary. Since Deuteronomy is part of the Five Books of Moses (the "Old Testament" to Christians) and originally written in Hebrew, Jewish sources may shed some additional light on the meaning of this verse. It is important to note here that TG authors writing about this verse have targeted its Old Testament origins as a means to discredit its relevance. They have argued that the verse responds to practices of religions contemporaneous with early Judaism. For example, it is believed that the prohibition distinguishes Jewish practices from those of rival (idolatrous) religions, e.g. crossdressed temple prostitutes. These writers have further criticized the verse by using the argument that the New Testament effectively negates sections in the Old Testament that are outmoded and irrelevant to Christians. In fact, they use this verse as a broader example of how Christianity has been liberated from the "old prohibitions" as Jane Ellen Fairfax called them in her article "Christ and Crossdressing" (Femme Mirror, Winter, 1997) while this argument may be good for Christians, it doesn't work for Jews because the Old Testament is still the key religious text in Judaism and Jews do not accept the New Testament as a holy book. There is a need to examine at the verse, then, from a Jewish perspective, one that does not rely on the New Testament argument. Regardless of one's religious beliefs or lack thereof, all of us can learn much from the study of religion because dominant religions influence secular culture. Much of Western law, for example, is heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian concepts and values. By studying their origins in religious texts we can uncover the core ideas behind both religious and secular practices and thus have a more informed perspective on the culture as a whole. Please note that I am not an authority on Hebrew, the Jewish religion or biblical scholarship. I am offering these observations from the perspective of an educated lay person. My conclusions are therefore preliminary. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who might find inaccuracies or gaps in my knowledge of Judaism and those who have alternative views on the subject.

In 1996, Everett Fox published a new translation and commentary on Deuteronomy. The publisher is the Jewish Publication Society,

a well respected press in Jewish religious circles. This work brings together the results of contemporary biblical research to provide the most up to date source on this book. The English translation of Deut. 22:5 reads: "A woman must not put on man's apparel, nor shall a man wear woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord your God." The original Hebrew, however, is not so simple and straightforward to translate as this English rendition may suggest.

There are several problems to contend with in translating the biblical Hebrew into any contemporary language. First, the Old Testament itself is not consistent in its use of words. Often two sections will use different words to refer to the same concept. These differences may be attributed to changes in word usage over time, scribes who took editorial license with previous copies or intentional revisions of a theological or political nature. However, it may also be that slightly different words were used to make subtle distinctions that we do not understand today or because the text referred to archaic practices or objects unknown to us. Second, the mechanics of writing by hand could play a role.

Copies were made by hand with quill pens on parchment, a tedious task to say the least. It was easy to make mistakes both in letters and through inadvertent ink marks that distort letters. Later scribes could have perpetuated the errors or attempted to correct them and introduced further distortions. Third, Hebrew is unusual in that only the consonants are printed. The vowels are implied. There are also silent letters that carry vowel sounds. It is as if I were to spell English like this: "Th qwck brhwn fx jhmpd -vr th lhz-dg." Words can actually be spelled the same in script but pronounced differently when spoken. A fourth problem in translation is that when early Hebrew was a living language, many words were adopted from languages of now obscure neighboring tribes. Finally, there were probably different versions of each section of the Old Testament necessitating, at some time, decisions by religious authorities to establish one authentic "original" and expunging the deviant texts. Thus, original meanings could have been lost or obscured through loss of earlier manuscripts or revisionist practices. Our translations today are based on older translations but also incorporate the results of very detailed research that seeks to clear up confusion and inconsistencies.

Such research, for example, uses cross comparison of word usage in the Old Testament, other Semitic languages and different an-

Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5 (continued)

ences created by God and thus those that practice it are rejecting God's wisdom. A third reason is that it is considered a means of sexual stimulation and homosexual role playing, both considered perverse by traditional authorities. Finally, since cross dressing was practiced as a part of certain pagan rites and magical practices of the time it can be argued that it was considered not fit for the monotheistic and more "rational" practices of Judaism (the temple prostitute argument). Do any of these reasons make sense and are they relevant today? In Biblical times, Judaism was one of many small religious cults that was distinguished from others not only by the monotheistic idea but also by its sacrificial rituals as practiced in the Temple at Jerusalem. Many of these observances were not really that different from those of other religions of the time. In fact, we know that there was always a problem in biblical times keeping Jews from drifting off into other practices. After the destruction of the Temple, Rabbinical Judaism introduced a new form of religious observance, which is still practiced, that was no longer based on animal sacrifice but on study, prayer and moral action. I would agree with Jane Ellen that the need to distinguish Jewish ritual observance from Pagan or magic rituals had little meaning after that. But, there are still the other arguments.

Illicit sexual intercourse (adultery), homosexuality and sexual stimulation (masturbation) are addressed in other places in the Old Testament in much more significant ways. All these proposed reasons seem to be an indirect means, on the part of the religious establishment, to link cross dressing to the other prohibited practices. They do not form a convincing argument; rather, they seem to indicate that the sages were trying to find a strong reason for a relatively innocent activity, a reason that would stay relevant through the ages. Again, if we remember that it was men who wrote these commentaries, their emphasis on these concerns can be understood as the manifestation of what Sandra Lipsitz Bem calls the "Lens of Androcentrism." Cross dressing, from their perspective, could be used as a means of sneaking in and out to fool around with someone's wife, or, by a male prostitute, to trick a naive heterosexual into making love to another man like the story of M.

Butterfly. In other words, they were concerned about the specific impact that cross dressing may have had on their own lives or the lives of their peers. To me, the only reason that seems to make sense not only in the context of the time it was written but also through the ages is that cross dressing blurs sexual differences created by God. To me, this is the key issue that needs to be addressed. And, of course, it is a central focus of almost all discussions about transgendered behaviors of all sorts. It is another way

of saying "boys and girls are different", why mess things up? Moreover, it is consistent with many other prohibitions related to difference. Judaism puts a strong emphasis on distinctions, separations and boundaries. There are many prohibitions about what food should not be eaten, what crops not to plant next to each other, even what textile materials not to weave together. How many Jews today realize that there is a major prohibition in the Old Testament about mixing wool with linen in a garment? Garments with both materials are not considered "kosher" and the most traditional Jews make sure that their clothes do not have mixtures like this. In short, the authors of the Old Testament (many believe that God was the only "author") found ways to make distinctions, many, many ways. And, to put Deuteronomy 22:5 in perspective, the Old Testament says it is a "sin" to wear a garment of unkosher mixtures of yarn as well as one that is reserved for the opposite sex.

One can raise questions about what constitutes the "dress" of a woman or the "clothing of a man." Fox actually completes the sentence quoted above with interesting language: "...nor may men wear what is characteristic of women..." Furthermore, he follows his commentary with a parenthetical remark that I saved for last because it is so TG friendly: "(what is characteristic of each sex is defined by local practice)." Why would Fox, and the relatively conservative Jewish Publication Society include this statement? In fact, why would they use the term "characteristic" at all?

The TG community tends to see cross dressing as primarily a man's problem because biological men and MTF TS's make up the visible majority. We argue that today women can wear practically anything that men wear without censure. The current fad for combat boots and the ads showing women wearing men's briefs are the latest example of the lack of limits. But, the history of cross dressing demonstrates that, in the past, it was usually women who were most severely restricted in dress. In fact, the position of the prohibition against gender transgression by females is first in order, indicating that it is viewed as a more important a concern in the Old Testament and, as described above, the interpretation is more inclusive, giving women less freedom of action than men. Of course, the contemporary literature such as Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* and the murder and rape of Brandon Teena, demonstrate that, even today, women who appear and act masculine can be putting their lives at risk. The "punishment" for their transgression is often more severe than that of a transgression by men. In Orthodox Judaism, there are still many restrictions on women's dress. In fact, because of liberalization in contemporary women's fashions, the major focus in Deuteronomy 22:5 for Jews should be the first

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Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5 (Continued)

cient versions as a means to "discover" the most "accurate" version. Periodically there are new archaeological discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls that produce new information. In effect, scholars are constantly reinventing the text. As you would expect, some religious authorities do not subscribe to such "tampering" and adhere to traditionally accepted translations. But, how do they know that similar "tampering" did not take place in earlier eras before strict controls were instituted for checking copies, resolving inconsistencies and controlling editorial license? Fox addresses a major translation problem with the verse. The sentence is divided into three parts. The first uses the word *keh-li*, which, in Fox's translation, is "apparel." But, it turns out that *keh-li* is one of those inconsistent words. A literal translation of the first part of the sentence is "a man's *keh-li* may not be on a woman." In rabbinical Hebrew, the plural of *keh-li* means "clothing." But, scholars are not sure that it meant clothing in this verse because in the earlier biblical Hebrew *keh-li* normally meant "implement, vessel," and even "weapon." In the long history of commentary that forms the oral law of Judaism called "halakhah," both translations of the word were combined. In other words, when in doubt, the rabbis took the most conservative inclusive approach and came to the conclusion that, in Fox's words: "women may not wear armor, clothing, hairdos or other adornments that are characteristic of men..."

Fox does not address the translation of the second part of the sentence. That part does not use the word *keh-li* at all. Two other words related to clothing are found there instead. The first is *yih-leh-bahsh*, a form of the verb "to wear." The second is *shih-meh-laht*, the noun "skirt"; it does not translate literally as "clothing." It should be noted that there are many other words related to dress or clothing in Hebrew. My pocket English-Hebrew dictionary, for example, gives two other modern words for "dress": *hah-lih-fah* and *mah-leh-boosh*. In English, "dress" can refer not only to a specific article of clothing but also to a more general type of clothing such as the "dress" of an English gentleman. What, then, did the word "skirt" mean in biblical Hebrew? Could it, like *keh-li*, have had a different meaning than our common understanding today? Remember that in biblical times, what we consider to be a "skirt" may have been worn by both women and men. What can we conclude from this? Obviously, there are several alternative translations for this verse. If we were to accept the translation of "implement" or "vessel" as the original meaning of *keh-li*, the first part of the commandment could actually be translated as: "A woman must not put on a man's implements..." This might not necessarily refer to everyday clothing but to special clothing or adornments of ritual significance. Using the translation of "weapon," one might

argue that this verse might have originally been a prohibition against women taking up arms that was later extended to cover other transgendered practices. The second part could be translated as "...and a man shall not put on the skirt of a woman..." One interpretation of course is to treat "skirt" literally as a particular kind of garment that woman often wore, which, in fact, may not resemble a modern "skirt" at all. Of particular interest is that the word *keh-li* is not used in the second part. The traditional interpretation is that *keh-lih* was intended as a more inclusive word, including "vessels", "weapons" and "adornments" thus placing a stronger prohibition on women than men. Could this have been due to alterations of the original text of the first part or, alternatively, alterations to the second part? Does a debate about the specific words and meanings really matter? Well, yes. Regardless of the translation one chooses, there is clearly a difference between the prohibition against "cross dressing" by women than the one against "cross dressing" by men. The words are different. In fact, regardless of whether the text we have is the original or a later revision, it appears that the intent may have been to prevent a more significant social transgression for women than simply wearing the "wrong" clothes. The idea may have been to prevent women from using weapons and participating in certain religious rituals. Moreover, understanding the options makes it very clear that attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and femininity are incorporated in the writing and in the translation by the way choices in wording are made. Who had the authority to make those choices? You know the answer to that - men.

We cannot have a full understanding of this verse without considering the reasons for its inclusion in the Old Testament. The prohibition does not show up anywhere else in the biblical writings and reasons are not given in the text itself other than the last part of the verse which seems to be less of a reason than an admission that the reason is not known.

Fox lists the different reasons that have been given for the prohibition. He draws these from commentaries of rabbis and sages through the ages. Some of these reasons come from the Talmud, a compilation of the oral law of Judaism set down in writing after the destruction of the First Temple. It also includes reasons drawn from later commentaries.

Some commentators believe that prohibiting cross dressing reduces the possibility of using disguise to pursue illicit sexual encounters. Others focus on the fact that cross dressing blurs sexual differ-

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Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5 (continued)

part of the verse, not the second. When a genetic Jewish woman wears men's jeans or a unisex t-shirt, is she committing a sin? Does a young Jewish girl break the prohibition when she wears a baseball hat in a little league game or even when she picks up the bat (a male implement)? Does a female Israeli soldier break the commandment when she puts on her uniform and takes up her weapon? Once we recognize the wide ranging implications of contemporary fashions, life styles and customs for Fox's reasonable interpretation, we can understand why the author used the language he did and why the Society published it. If we were to take it literally, as typically translated, practically all Jewish women in the world today who wore men's jeans, t-shirts, shoes and watches would be constantly breaking the prohibition. So would all the Israeli women serving in the armed forces and all women doing other jobs (with implements and vessels) that used to be only for males. This includes people like Ruth Ginsberg, Barbara Streisand and Dianne Feinstein. Can they all be sinners?

There is a Jewish tradition that one does not make a law that practically no one will follow because such an obvious hypocritical rule places the entire foundation of law in jeopardy.

Today, none of the examples above would be considered a sin except to ultra-Orthodox Jews (a small but growing minority) who restrict women to only the most traditional gender roles. The problem for genetic male cross dressers is that men's fashions are not nearly so liberal as women's. Men don't "characteristically" wear panties with lace or padded bras. Fox's parenthetical remark recognizes that what is "characteristic" of men and women changes from place to place and from time to time. Women's and men's apparel are social constructions. What is "women's wear" today is defined by the fashion designers, the manufacturers, the retailers and the consumers all acting together. Change can occur much faster than in the biblical past because we have technology and media that fuel fashion cycles. It just happens that men's fashions today do not change as fast as women's nor are the shifts as radical. The reasons why deserve another essay.

Today we can view the detailed prohibitions in the Old Testament as symbolic of a larger, more abstract concept that still does make sense in religious practice. There is a need for distinctions and boundaries that give us a clear sense of right and wrong, in other words a moral code to live by. However, all except the extreme fanatics would probably agree with me that wearing any article of clothing without a specific evil intent or for immoral purposes is not a "sin." Crossdressing, or for that matter, altering one's body through hormones or surgery, or being in love with someone

of the same biological sex is not an issue for moral indignation because they blur "natural" distinctions created by God.

Distinctions are important, but all spiritual people should be focusing on the important ones, the lessons we really have to learn ourselves and teach our children. These are distinctions like knowing what is love and what is hate; knowing what is honesty and what is deceit, knowing what nurtures life and what destroys it. Deuteronomy 22:5 was important at the birth of the Jewish people; in those days, it helped to insure that Jews would not be enticed into diluting their religion with pagan practices. But, just like the abandoned ritual of animal sacrifice and many other practices, it should be viewed today as a reminder that our understanding of life is constantly changing. Throughout history people have been led astray from the ideals of religion by fanatically following rules with little spiritual significance. In fact, far too much killing and hatred has resulted from the blind adherence to rules instead of ideals. Maybe the rules are just there to test our ability to put ideals ahead of dogma? It is interesting to note that, in the end, my perspective on Deuteronomy 22:5 is not all that different than Jane Ellen's. We just come to it from different places.

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Being Different

By Jodee [REDACTED]
(CA-3090-H)

One thing about being human is that we're all different. There are more differences between humans than there are similarities. We're all individuals. Being an individual is good. Being different is good. Of course that's easy for me to say; I've always been independent and I've always been different. So, it's easy for me to accept that I'm different.

Why am I a cross dresser? I think I was born that way. So, being a cross dresser is for me, normal. Average and normal are statistical terms that were never meant to reflect anything else. (You remember statistics; Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics!) Average and norm are just mathematical possibilities. The term normal is derived from norm or the mean, average pattern of behavior. The middle point between the two extremes of a linear phenomenon. Then look what happens when you change this phenomenon to a circular configuration. Just take hold of both ends and stick them together. Now there is no point of mean, average or norm.

As I said at the beginning, we're all different. Humans spend lifetimes trying to categorize human behavior (and everything else), but human behavior has too many variables. Too many individual differences. Different is good.

Yet we also have many similarities. We all want many of the same things: acceptance, friendship, respect, protection, good looks, money, health, love, happiness, and a host of other things. However, while we may want a lot of things in common, we are still each and every one of us, individually different. Being brought up to be independent, I was also taught that everyone else is different and that being different was OK. This makes each one of us unique. Being unique is good.

Tolerance and Intolerance

Why do some people feel more comfortable if it appears that everyone else is the same as they perceive themselves to be? Why do they fear someone who is different? Could they really be that insecure? Why are they insecure? Maybe they do not know who or what they are? Are they insecure because they do not know who they are, or is it that they do not know who they are because they are insecure? Do they fear the unknown? Why do they fear the unknown? Of course their unknown is probably someone else's familiar. I was also brought up explore the unknown and not fear it.

What makes us want to be a part of a group? In the good 'ole days it was for self protection from those wild beasts that would eat us if they could. Then it was to protect ourselves from those murderous "others" who wanted what we had and would kill us to get it. Human kind has a long, long cultural memory. These stories were passed down through the generations by oral tradition, and eventually by the written word. Many of these stories taught distrust of others who were not our kith and kin. Eventually they had to become our kin, or our kith would have died out.

Communication

The Femme Mirror is a really great way of communicating among crossdressers. It's a shame that more folk don't participate. It's especially comforting to share others' experiences and realize that we do share a lot of the same trials and tribulations. It's amazing how similar our lives have been, and yet each of our experiences are somewhat different. Just reading of how others meet the challenge of being a crossdresser, has encouraged many of us. By sharing, we all benefit from these common experiences. Knowing others' experiences helps the rest of us feel more secure that we're OK.

Should Tri-Ess be an "exclusive" group? Tri-Ess is doing just fine as a support group for heterosexual crossdressers. However, we should as a group as well as individually, support other transgendered folk and their groups. How do we know that all of our members are strictly heterosexual crossdressers? Once everyone accepts the fact that we're all different and that being different is OK, we won't need these support groups anymore. In the meantime, support the educational efforts of your local chapters and Tri-Ess.

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"Hey, Good Looking"

Hard as Nails

By Stephanie [REDACTED]

There are "Nails" which are used to hold two pieces of wood together, stronger yet, for driving into cement, imitation paste-on finger "Nails", and natural finger "Nails". No similarity exists between "Nails" used in construction and those on the human hand. One is strong and the other fragile. How they came to have the same name and spelling I don't know. I have used building nails for years successfully without breaking a one. Bending "yes", breaking "no". For three years, I have had limited success maintaining long, strong and well manicured fingernails.

It is easier (and accepted) for a man to bite his fingernails off, to the point where his fingers look ugly, than it is to grow long fingernails. Let him try to grow long fingernails, and he reaps the wrath of his family, society, and the environment. Then why would any cross dresser want to grow long, great looking fingernails?

It is the image of the feminine hand, projected in the advertisements, movies and television. Have you ever seen short fingernails in an advertisement promoting fingernail polish? Take a moment to view the fingernails on the hands of females around you. Most have short fingernails. Very few generic females, that are married, or work with their hands, have great, long fingernails as seen in the advertisements. Long, well manicured fingernails are predominately on the hands of teenage and young adult females.

There are a number of clear nail polishes sold, which are advertised on the container to strengthen and increase growth rate. They all work to some degree. I found that Nailene "Professional Solutions" helped to get them to grow quicker only. Sally Hansen's "Hard as Nails" helped them to grow fast and stronger. The best results I found was with Formula 10. It is by far the most expensive, yet best in results. Putting a coat on the top and underside of the nail gave me the best results. I have also tried putting Nailene on as a base coat, and Hard as Nails as a cover coat, with very good results.

Along with growing long fingernails came, "Take that polish off your nails and cut them short. Aren't you afraid someone will see your long polished nails and wonder?" "So, they wonder. That doesn't bother me," would be my response. That goes over like a lead weight. I believe that some times females are intimidated by men with great looking, long nails. A few women are

envious how some men can keep them that way, when they can't.

Another example of social pressure, is at the dinner table with company or family, and you see them staring at your hands when they pass you something. "So shoot me," I think to myself, and my wife gives me the stare, "See, I told you." I just love how people can be jealous or intimidated by great looking fingernails on a man. Bite your fingernails down to the skin, and they notice but don't care. It's accepted.

There is the environment. It is always out there, to get at your finger nails. Ready to do them harm. Opening a flip top beer can could cost a finger nail. I use the end of a spoon or fork, and hear, "Worried about breaking a finger nail?"

Doing chores around the yard can be hazardous. I wear a thin gardening glove over my hands. Caution! Not everything can be done with gloves on, and "Bingo!" There goes a fingernail. Moan and groan about loosing a fingernail out loud and you get, "Good, I hope they all break."

Even the family car is booby trapped. Reach too fast in the dark, for a switch or knob on the dash board, and there goes another fingernail. About then, I wonder why the human species has fingernails. Fingernails are of limited use and fragile. Bite them off.

Have you ever tried the "Quick Dry Nail Glue" sold for fixing cracked nails? I asked my wife about them, as to whether they worked. My wife's reply was, "They don't work." I figured she was just saying that, but it wasn't true. My wife was right. I tried two brands, and neither stopped the cracked fingernail from fracturing more. Is there no easy way? Sure, paste on fingernails.

After three years of fighting the war, I've come to accept defeat. Recently I have been keeping the white tip of the fingernail no longer than 1/8 of an inch. The fingernails are less susceptible to chipping or breaking as often.

My wife wishes that I would stick with long hard metal nails to hold things together, and short well trimmed nails on my hand. Some times I think she is right. It's easier and less frustrating.

Are You Wearing The WRONG Panties?

From the October, 1996 Ladies' Home Journal:

They come in a bewildering array of shapes fabrics and sizes. A line-free look? A perfect fit? Both are possible, if you know how to shop. Here's the bottom line on panties.

What panty is best for my figure? "Although every woman has her personal panty preference, the best way to minimize a figure flaw is to match panty style to body type," according to Colette Wong, adjunct assistant professor of fashion design at The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

Her solution:

Hip Bulges and Saddlebags: a high-cut brief sits at the waist but offers along, leggy look. Panties with stretch lace won't pinch or bind, for smooth lines under clothes. Try: Bali Cotton Light and Lacy Skamp Hikini #2524 (\$9.50)

Ample Derriere: For minimum panty movement, a full-cut brief offers more coverage in back than its high-cut cousin. Those made with synthetic fabrics prevent clothing from clinging, for a flattering line. Try: Maidenform #40530 (\$7.50)

Tummy Troubles: A stretchy, high-cut panty covers the tummy and offers the same hold-in benefits as control-top hose. Choose a style made with 2 to 8 percent Lycra or spandex in the body. Try Olga #20209 Hi-Leg Brief (\$13)

Thigh Bulges: There are many ways to slim your thighs—and they don't all require lengthy sessions at the gym or with the Thigh Master. The trick to camouflaging upper legs is to wear high-cut panties that don't cut into skin, emphasizing bulges. High-cut briefs, bikinis and hip-huggers all work. Try Jockey For Her French Cut Brief (\$7), Olga #913 Hip Huggers (\$10) and Banana Republic Double String Bikini (\$8). For guaranteed line-free looks, wear the models' favorite—a thong. Hanky Panky #312 (\$18)

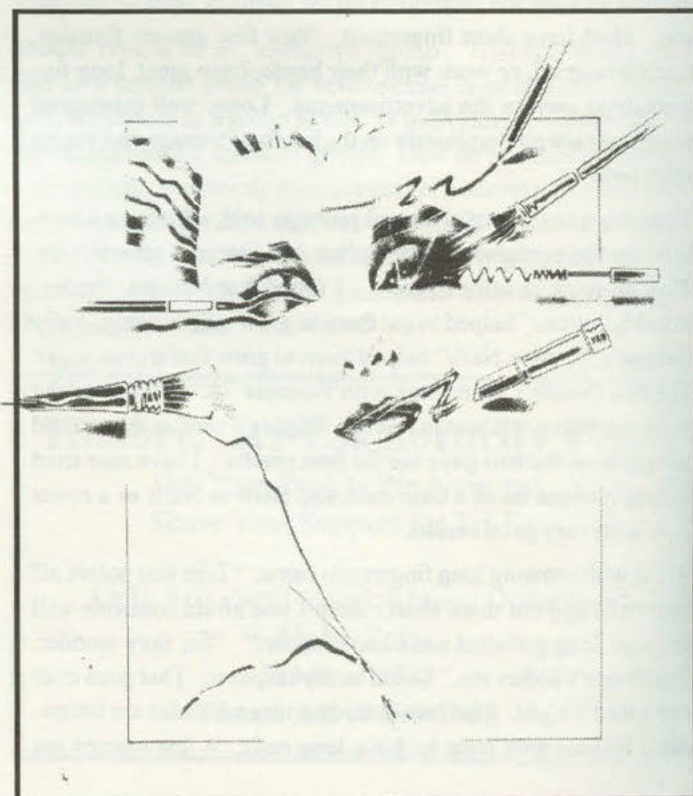
What style do most women buy? Despite the allure of the new, sexier styles, American women are still puritans at heart. The best-selling panties nationwide are basic white briefs ... these panties comprised 54.4 percent of all panty sales for year ended April 1996.

Although American women like the price and availability of cotton and nylon, new fabrics are edging into the market. Calvin Klein, Playtex, and Warners are all including Microfibers—fine, silky, soft, synthetic yarns—in their lines. Some manufacturers are using "performance" fabrics such as Supplex nylon and Coomax for improved comfort, fit and style. Others are using eco-fibers, which

are hypoallergenic and therefore better for women who are sensitive to chemicals.

How do I keep my panties looking new? For hand-washing lingerie, the experts at LaPerla recommend Ivory soap. Dishwashing detergent and shampoo work, too, because they are petroleum-free and do not cause yellowing. When machine washing panties use only lukewarm water. Hot water can cause fibers to break, making panties look worn and frizzled. For stain removal, apply Brite White with a toothbrush—no additional soap needed.

There is no industry standard for sizing panties. However, generally a size 5 is small, a 6 is medium, and a 7 is large. The number-one size in the US is a 6, but as baby boomers age, the preference is nearing 7. The average woman buys 10 panties a year. Although it's not necessary to wear panties under hose, most women feel more comfortable wearing both. According to a study by Hanes Hosiery, that's what 92 percent of American women do.





Dear Paula



Dear Paula: I recently read some information about the "latest and greatest" in anti-aging and anti-wrinkling called pycnogenol (beta glucan). After reading about it in a magazine I searched on the Internet and found additional information and products to order. It sounds fantastic if it really does what has been said it can do.

The two products I found for sale were Martin Pycnogenol Ultra Moisturizing Gel by Martin Health Care Products (1-888-867-9673) and Pycnogenol distributed by Healthy Source (505-856-5004). The product seems to be formulated as both a capsule and a cream.

Can this product really do what it says it can do: Is it anti-aging and anti-wrinkling? If so, does it take the place all the AHA products on the market or can it be used in conjunction with an AHA product?

Dear Reader: I am familiar with the studies regarding pycnogenol (a plant derived substance), and I am not convinced. I don't think it is a bad ingredient, and it does seem to be a good antioxidant, but that is neither spectacular nor unique.

There are thousands of anti-oxidants in the plant and animal worlds, and are being used in cosmetics. "Antioxidant" is merely the buzzword of the moment in the cosmetics industry, which means everyone has to have his or her own super-duper antioxidant. Pycnogenol is just one of many. Products from Cellex-G, which uses a form of vitamin C (Avon is coming out with their version next month), to Estee Lauder's Day Wear, which uses super oxide dismutase, are the reigning celebrities in the antioxidant world. I have been looking into this topic from day one, and there is no evidence, and I mean none, that indicates antioxidants can change, prevent, or stop wrinkling. All the

commotion is generated because the theory behind antioxidants and some lab work done in this area are compelling, which is why they sound so good, but translating what you can prove in a petri dish to human skin is a monumental leap.

I have interviewed one of the top cosmetic chemists and dermatologists researching cosmetics and all of them said the same thing about pycnogenol or beta glucan: "It won't hurt your skin, but the hoopla around it is absurd and will be replaced by the next super-anti-oxidant to come along and that still won't mean anything for the skin."

Even if antioxidants work, their effect isn't anything you would see overnight or even over months. They are still, in theory, a preventive measure.

Dear Paula: I have incredibly dry skin from head to toe during the winter and would love to find an inexpensive moisturizer that I can apply generously all over that will help reduce some of the itchy feel that goes along with the dryness.

Dear Reader: If you like slathering a really emollient moisturizer on your dry legs, hands, arms, face, you might want to try the new Eucerin Light Moisture Restorative Creme (\$6.99) or Light Moisture Restorative Lotion (\$6.99). They aren't all that light, but compared with the original Eucerin cream and lotion, they are amazingly light. Neither will restore anything, but they are very rich and easily absorbed, leaving a silky smooth feel on the skin. If you want to start winterizing your skin with generous amounts of moisturizer, these are a great option. The cream contains mostly plant oil, glycerin, thickeners, vitamin E, water-binding agents and preservatives. The lotion contains mostly water, plant oil, petrolatum, glycerin, thickeners, vitamin E and preservatives. If

you tend to break out, these products aren't for you. Also, they don't contain sunscreen so daytime use on exposed parts of the body is not recommended.

Dear Paula: Chanel has come out with a new group of products called Caresse. I don't want to spend a lot of money at the makeup counters before I know what you think first.

Dear Reader: Chanel's strong point is certainly its foundations, and its new Teint Caresse Naturel (\$40) maintains that strength. This extremely lightweight foundation blends on smooth and even, providing sheer to medium coverage, but it doesn't erase lines or perfect skin. It's just a good foundation.

By the way, Teint Caresse is another one of those foundations that claim to diffuse light to make skin look flawless and natural. If you're hoping the effect will be something like a soft-focus photograph, think Caresse is surprisingly similar to some other new foundations, particularly Virtual Skin from Prescriptives. Where Chanel's falls short in comparison to the competition is that it comes in only eight Shades. They are all great neutral colors, but eight is just too limited given the myriad nuances of individual skin tones. All in all, you don't need to run out to invest in this foundation, but it is a possibility and worth a look next time you're at the cosmetics counter.

What doesn't deserve your consideration is Chanel's new Caresse Super Hydrating Lipstick (\$22.50). It is just a fairly greasy lipstick that feels like a lot of other glossy lipsticks. Avoid it if you have any problems with feathering; this one moves into the lines around the mouth almost the minute you put it on.

Memories of Connie

By Nancy Jean [REDACTED] VA-1460-B

I was very saddened a few months ago to learn that Connie Nichols had passed away. I have also been surprised that no mention of that fact has been made in the Femme Mirror. I feel sure that there are scores of Tri-Essers who have corresponded with Connie and will miss her sorely. For a long time, perhaps many years, Connie's name appeared in the list of Tri-Essers who welcomed correspondence and who promised to faithfully answer all letters received.

My last letter from Connie came in September 1996. It was extremely short. I will quote the last two paragraphs: "Sorry to tell you that this will be my last letter to you. My medics have told me that I am in the final stages of advanced leukemia and shall not be around for but very few more weeks, very few indeed.. So, rather than dwell on this matter, I shall just say that I'm sorry that we must bring things to a close just as we had once again established contact. Life goes on and we have to take it as it is dished out to us. Trust all goes well with you both for a long time to come.... Please don't bother to reply to this letter. Our love to you both." signed Connie and Jeanette.

I will now back up and try to fill you in on a bit of background. I first wrote to Connie in 1975. We had a fairly vigorous correspondence for a couple of years until I let it drop. I have no good excuse for letting it drop. I guess that the pace was faster than I liked. I was working full time and did not feel like writing long letters every two weeks or so.. I recall that Connie told me that she was 70 years old at that time (I was only 50). I also recall that she told me she had been a cross dresser all her life, that she had been married for 40 years or so, and that her spouse knew nothing about her "hobby". She was able to secretly dress by going to a furniture warehouse, (which she owned) on Sunday

mornings when no one else would be there. She was addicted to super high heels. She had never had the nerve to tell her wife about her TVism. Incidentally, they had no children. During the two years of our initial correspondence, back then, Connie's wife had to be hospitalized for some medical condition. after she returned home Connie finally got up the nerve, after 40 years of keeping silent, to tell Jeanette about her secret activity. Connie was astounded and delighted to learn that Jeanette was not at all disturbed by the news and immediately offered to assist in any way Connie desired. It is ironic that Connie had kept the deep dark secret for 40 years when all the time her silence had been quite unnecessary. What a wasted life!

About two years ago I happened to notice that Connie's name was still on the list of Tri-Essers who welcomed correspondence and I decided to write again. Connie was surprised but pleased to resume our correspondence. Connie told me that her wife was now quite ill on a permanent basis and that they were spending about 300K(!) annually for around-the-clock nursing care for her in their home. Obviously, Connie was very well heeled, indeed. Connie said that with a nurse in the home all the time she had completely given up dressing. I never knew the nature of the wife's medical problem. Connie never mentioned any health problems of her own and so I was taken by surprise to learn in her last letter that she was heading for the last roundup. I can't say that I was astonished, however, since I knew that Connie was over 90 years old.

I have no doubt that there are scores of Tri-Essers, past and present who corresponded with Connie. My friend, Linda of Springfield, VA is one. Another is my friend Jan [REDACTED] who dropped out of Tri-Ess a few



years ago. Another is (or more correctly was) Susan Reynolds who was very active in Tri-Ess but who died a few months ago in her middle fifties. It was my friend, Jan, who told me that she had been definitely informed that Connie was deceased.

Well, that's about all I have to say. I guess you might regard this letter as a sort of obituary for Connie. I never met her in person but feel like I knew her from our lengthy correspondence. I will enclose of the many snapshots which she sent me from time to time. Perhaps you would like to print it in a future issue of Femme Mirror.

I feel sure that there are scores of Tri-Essers around the country who have been wondering whatever happened to Connie. So, I thought I would try to dash off a bit of an obituary. I wish I had more information around which I could have prepared a proper obituary.

Could These Emotions Be a Good Thing?

By Rachel Miller

My desire to cross-dress and act out a feminine role had become clear, but a book by Daphne Rose Kingma, *The Me We Never Knew*, opened my eyes to new possibilities. Ms. Kingma is a psychotherapist with significant experience working with men who have difficulty handling emotions. Her work confirms that women desire an intimate relationship with men yet often feel they haven't been able to establish it. They end up berating men for their in-sensitivity and aloofness. Rather than continuing this mutually destructive path, she says women need to understand that men have feelings. Men have been victimized by society's insistence on hiding their softer traits. Women can build bridges to their desired intimate relationships by making it safe for their man to explore and express his emotions. Think about that. Women want intimate relationships with men. That intimacy requires men to be in touch with their feelings. Most men have difficulty dealing with their feelings. Who would argue with that? There appears to be a higher level of sensitivity, compassion, feeling and caring in our community compared to the general male population. We don't seem to have as many macho-male bulldozers. What does that mean? It means that, in general, we are more in touch with our emotions and feelings. It also means that we are closer to being able to provide the intimate relationships women want. That is great news because we could become the vanguard of a significant social improvement. What if we understood that integrating our softer side into our lives was what women want from us? Would we have a more positive view of ourselves? What if women understood that the underlying softness that led us into dressing and acting differently is also a key to achieving intimacy? Would they be more supportive of us? What if we integrated the male propensity to act and the female propensity to feel to create an intimate relationship with our spouse or significant other? Would that form the basis of a new standard for being human? We can make those "What ifs" come true by modifying our behavior. Sometimes we choose not to acknowledge certain aspects of ourselves because we don't like or are uncomfortable with them. We are afraid to open our closet doors and look inside. For a long time I worried about what devils were lurking in my inner darkness. I tried to deny their existence but that didn't make them go away. The way to freedom was to open the door, turn on the light and confront the devils with eyes of understanding. My fears were far worse than any-

thing that I found. Some people tried to point out my shortcomings and tell me that I didn't quite fit the acceptable mold. They tried to get me to deny who I was by making me believe that I was not good enough. That is a lie, and it is the lie that drags people down. The problem is not who I am. The problem is denying who I am.

When we face the truth, we find that we are better than we thought and often start to fix the things we don't like about ourselves. By tearing down the walls we hide behind, we start to build those intimate relationships. Some of us have wished to wake up in the body of a woman. Then we could be happy. That is not likely to happen. Instead of wishing for the impossible to occur, we need to accept ourselves as we are. The remaining question that must be answered is "Who are you?" If you shed all the imposed male images, preconceived notions, impossible dreams and facades, who would you be? Not whom you think you should be, not who society says you should be but who you really are. Don't be blinded by your fantasies, just recognize them. Don't judge what you think or feel is good or bad, just find the truth. Would you describe yourself, your emotions, your feelings, what you enjoy doing? What is your personal vision of life and how does your view of gender fit? What relationships do you want? What do you want to achieve in life and what stops you from getting it? What can you do to overcome those barriers?

Are You Ready?



THE ANSWER IN MY MIND

By Laura J. [REDACTED]

There are events and conditions that somehow lead us to this.
We cannot understand, as they lie in some inner abyss.
We seek the knowledge to learn the reason.
While our families and friends only talk of treason.
We want understanding from those around us.
Even while we ourselves try to understand us.

Do we have a problem or don't we?
For most of us, we don't just see.

The questions are typical: who, what, where, when and why.
Sometimes no answer can I provide.
The answer is somewhere that I cannot find.
Maybe hidden deep within my mind.

The world is made up of individuals, each one different in their own way.
Criticized on our race, religion, sex and what we say.
I bowl, golf and ski - I try to have some fun.
Whatever I do, I try not to hurt anyone.

Variety is the spice of life, so they say.
Are we so selfish that no one must go astray?

Shall God pass harsh judgment on me for what I do?
Only then may I know if I've been one of the few.
I believe His forgiveness will be real.
For understanding me and how I feel.

I've had this feeling, an urge to explore.
This community of ours that I find many people abhor.
I've come out of my closet, to explore this life of mine.
To expand my mind, and yes to also feel fine.
I have no urge to change this life.
This is me, through all the strife.

The future looks promising, the more I explore.
Cherishing these times that I adore.
Will my life be as good as it can be?
Can it grow as far as I can see?

The answer is somewhere that I cannot find.
Maybe hidden deep within my mind.

TRI-ESS Chapters and Forming Chapters

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New York City Metro Area

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LAMBDA CHI LAMBDA

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Buffalo, NY Metro Area

NU PHI CHI

Buffalo Belles

P.O. Box 1701, Amherst, NY 14226

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Region 2 (Middle Atlantic/Ohio Valley)

Trenton, NJ Metro Area

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Endless Mountain Girls

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Lansing, MI Metro Area

FORMING CHAPTER

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triess/kb/

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Tri-Ess Helpline!

Do you have a question about Tri-Ess? Do you need help regarding media outreach in your area? Tri-Ess Executive Director Carol Beecroft may be reached at the Tri-Ess National Office in Tulare, California at:

(209) 688-9246

Carol is often available to speak to radio audiences via long-distance telephone hook-up, and she is compiling a list of members who are able to appear on radio or television, or speak before college classes.

Do you have a question about the Femme Mirror or other Tri-Ess publications and services? Tri-Ess Chair of the Board Jane Ellen Fairfax and Mirror Editor Frances Fairfax may be reached at:

(713) 349-8969

Are you interested in starting a Tri-Ess chapter? The new Tri-Ess Liaison for Chapter Support and Services, Judy Daniels, may be reached at:

(417) 831-3433

Does your local chapter have a Helpline? Ideally, each Tri-Ess chapter should operate a Helpline and list the number with the local Crisis Hotline, Gay Switchboard, Mental Health Clinics, etc. The expenses involved would vary with local phone rates and installation charges. As a second, unlisted line in a sister's home, a Helpline does not take a lot of money. What it does take is considerable dedication on the part of the sister volunteering to answer the Helpline. How about it, ladies? Does your chapter have a Helpline yet?

Tri-Ess-Sponsored CDSO Online Forum for Spouses and Partners of Crossdressers Signs 25th Subscriber!

Our subscription list for support of crossdressers' wives and significant others has signed its 25th subscriber! Operated by a wife, Beverly, the listserv is a forum for all genetic women involved with crossdressers. Subscription is free. It is not limited to spouses or partners who are members of Tri-Ess. However, it is "for women only" as there are many, many forums available for transgendered men.

Now, a few words from Beverly:

Hi! Welcome to our very own support list for wives and/ or SO's of crossdressers. Just a few rules here....

1. No flames. If you disagree with an opinion please do so with courtesy and respect. Don't attack the person.
2. Those of you with strong, militant transsexual attachments, please move on. This list is not for you. If you'd like to E-mail me privately, I can pass on to you several addresses for support of SO's of transsexuals. There are many out there.
3. No advertisements! If you are in doubt about the acceptability of something, please forward it to me.

That's just about it for now. This list is still new. The rules may change along the way. If so, I will post a general announcement. If you have any suggestions, comments, or just want to talk.....feel free to E-mail me at [REDACTED].

Regards, Beverly

To subscribe to the list, send e-mail to:

[REDACTED]
with <SUBSCRIBE CDSO first name last name> as the message.

You will receive confirmation from the listserv with complete instructions.

Then, you may send a message to all the people currently subscribed to the list, by sending mail to a single address.

It's simple! It's fun!

SIGN ON NOW, AND HELP SPREAD THE WORD TO ANY OTHER WIVES/SO'S YOU KNOW!

Jayne Thomas Stresses Challenges, Responsibilities For Transgender Community

By Melanie Yarborough

Jayne Thomas, PhD, likes to relate one of her favorite stories about a class she taught on Human Sexuality. She once posed this question to the students:

"If you woke up one day in a body of the opposite sex, not would you live as that sex, but could you?" One of the girls when asked replied tentatively "Yes", she might not like it, but could probably live as a man. Then, turning to a strapping football player, Jayne asked if he could live as a woman. "For a day only?" he asked. "No, for the rest of your life," was the reply. There was a long pause as the enormity of this dawned on him. "Oh, shit!" he yelled.

This anecdote shows how men and women view transgender issues. Many women do have the sensitivity to appreciate life for men. Many men, on the contrary, are at a total loss to understand what women experience daily.

"We live in a society that is uptight because of its own insecurities," Dr. Thomas notes. "When men grow up, they have to follow a much narrower road....When we crossdress, we make a statement about ourselves and our society. [We] want to be able to express a tenderness and sensitivity that [we] can't express in [our] role as men. We live in a society that doesn't let men express that".

Dr. Thomas ironically looks in some ways like a stereotypical lesbian psychology professor: Her blonde hair is styled in an austere pageboy with sharply cut bangs, her no-nonsense wireframe glasses fit snugly over her face, and she was on the occasion she spoke attired in a sober black blazer and slacks, with a white jewel-neck blouse. However, in conversation, she soon revealed herself to be a warm and disarming person, frequently indulging in humorous asides.

The difficulty for many transgendered people, she points out, is "You're trying to do this without the education that genetic females have". As a reassigned woman herself, Dr. Thomas jokes that "They didn't give me an owner's manual for the new equipment," on things such as how to behave as a woman in public, how to interact with men, etc. But how do genetic females themselves become women? They go through an adolescence - experimenting, making mistakes, surviving blunders, learning, and moving on.

"Being able to have these experiences in a safe way" is crucial for the transgendered. While there are a lot of books on how to dress, talk, and act like a woman, the only way to learn is to get out there and practice. Could you learn to be an auto mechanic or a surgeon just by reading about it? The principle is the same.

Also, it's important that the entire family be involved in the counseling process around transgender issues. "Excluding people leads to sorrow....and I don't think it has to be that way," Jayne notes. Ironically, in many situations, the problem is that the husband is transgendered in a nonproductive way. One spouse once commented "I wish my husband was more of a woman; concerned with meeting the needs of his mate, and not just looking pretty". A successful relationship requires COMMUNICATION- TRUST -SELF DISCLOSURE-ALLOWING YOURSELF TO BE VULNERABLE.

Children and their being informed is another delicate matter. Jayne is emphatic on the need to not force these issues on them. For the first half-dozen years of a child's life, they're forming their own ideas on gender differences and their own identity. Mixed messages may confuse them.

One member of the group in attendance told this story: One crossdresser he knew was a widower with a 5-year-old daughter. The child had periodically seen her father in female attire, and once in a bikini, at a private pool party. She unquestioningly accepted all this. However, one time they went together to a public beach, and the father wore his usual male swim trunks. "Pssst, Daddy!" said the little girl "Put your top on so they don't see your boobies!"

On the whole, Dr. Thomas sees many positive developments for the transgender community. While shows like "Geraldo" may present a distasteful view of Crossdressers and Transsexuals, they do desensitize viewers, who will no longer see it as a menacing unknown. And in the past, when a husband revealed his cross-dressing to his wife, the marriage more often than not ended in divorce. Jayne now sees more couples trying to work out these issues. And the importance of what we are doing should not be overlooked: "We're trying to let society get a glimpse of what it means to be a complete human being." (Ed. Note: This article first appeared in the Neutral Corner newsletter.)



Boundaries & Reciprocity Spouse/Partner Issues At California Unity

By Melanie Yarborough

At the IFGE California Unity conference in Long Beach, one workshop was dedicated to couples' issues. Panel members included Jane Ellen Fairfax (Tri-Ess Board of Directors) and Frances Fairfax (editor of *The Femme Mirror*), Pam G., Treasurer of the San Diego Group Neutral Corner and her spouse Janet, and Sharon and Sharlene (member of the wives' support group Pathfinders). During the course of the workshop, a number of important points about transgendered behavior and its effect on a relationship came out which deserve emphasis.

How do crossdressers inform their wives of their situation? In all too many cases, unfortunately by accident: for example, when unfamiliar women's clothing was discovered around the house. In Pam's case, she told her then-fiancee Janet "This is something I do because I live alone, and once we're married it'll go away". They may have both wished this were true, and it initially gave a face-saving way out. Yet as they both later learned, it didn't just "go away".

Jane Ellen broke the news to Frances by first doing research on the subject, and then telling her this was an extra side of her personality, a feminine side expressed by crossdressing. Jane Ellen was careful to let Frances know from the outset, "You're not going to lose me to this." One audience member, Dana, underscored this by saying, "It's the crossdresser's responsibility to educate his partner."

The wives initially had many fears when told. The first was that they were going to lose their husbands to this strange new "third person." They valued their husband's masculinity, and feared the loss of it. Another concern was if this would become public knowledge, and adversely affect a family's livelihood or make them social outcasts. And on a more basic level, it was a fear of the unknown: where was this going to lead?

Sharlene candidly admits, "When I first found out about it, I wasn't willing to accept it. I was pretty much in a state of denial. I'd ask him how he and his 'condition' were doing." Sharlene also felt the urgent need for someone to talk to on this, but didn't know where to turn. She set an initial boundary of sight; crossdressing was tolerated, but only as long as she didn't have to see it. Janet also observed, "It felt like I

was in competition with another woman."

Why do some marriages break up over this issue? The panel agreed that it has to do with selfishness, a crossdresser focusing on his own needs and not caring about or respecting his partner's needs. Jane Ellen emphasizes, "Crossdressing by itself doesn't break up a marriage, but it can become the lightning rod, the big bad thing that's dragged into everything else." Sharlene also pointed out that it's important to have a strong foundation in the marriage to begin with. There has to be a communication level to build on, to be able to address not only transgender issues, but other marriage and family matters as well.

A significant issue addressed during group discussion was "Gender Euphoria," that exhilarating time when a crossdresser first comes out. Janet sees that, "It seems the freedom goes wild-they want to go out dressed every weekend, then more and more....it becomes an all-consuming need where there's no end." Frances also observes that, "He's making up for lost time [of having not grown up as a girl] and is learning a lot about makeup and clothing"- to the detriment of attention to other things in the marriage. For example, if the crossdresser's femme side starts taking the lion's share of the family budget and time, it's a problem.

Kathy Helms, President of Tri-Ess's Alpha Chapter, brought up a significant point in the group discussion: Many males can express transgendered behavior in a male way. Men are more visual than women, and accordingly will focus on the more visual aspects of femininity: hair, makeup, wardrobe, breasts. They are also by definition more action oriented than women. They tend to want to DO things rather than BE things. As a result, the more subjective aspects of female behavior are often disregarded in favor of the more visual ones.

Wives can set boundaries, but it's a quintessentially male thing to test boundaries, to see how far things can be pushed. It's crucial that women understand boundary-testing isn't necessarily a male imposition. It's a natural component of masculinity-that same masculinity they value in their mates.

Organizations like SPICE and PATHFINDERS have recently become a part of this debate. Many husbands send their wives to these groups with the hope that they'll get their wives

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"fixed," to be more accepting. Frances points out unequivocally that "Neither SPICE nor women's support groups are here to turn us into perfect little Stepford wives." The flip side of this is that many husbands keep their wives away from such groups for fear that the wives will become empowered to the point of demanding a stop to crossdressing behavior. Neither approach reflects the reality of such groups. Their role is to provide a forum for genetic women to discuss issues and come up with workable solutions.

Jane Ellen says "You've got to give your wife time, and listen to her concerns." An empathetic crossdresser will learn to listen and cut back. However, "There's nothing that says that lack of empathy pertains only to crossdressers. There must be compromise on both sides." Wives also need to be willing to dialogue about it, not to draw inflexible boundaries which can never be negotiated. But, as Sharlene says, "Respect your wife's right to not have to be a part of it."

Janet asked, rhetorically, "Why can't a crossdressing husband act like a woman in other ways that matter, like talking, discussing things?" Jane Ellen addressed this in conclusion by saying, "The best thing a crossdresser can do is to feminize his soul. They've never learned to listen or to develop those same traits they love in women. If we become more feminine in our outlook, our wives may become more comfortable when we become more feminine in our clothing."

(Ed. Note: This article first appeared in the Neutral Corner newsletter.)

About The Cover Girl

Eve Burchert

Eve Burchert is well-known to many both in Tri-Ess and in the larger gender community. She is one of our community's pioneers, having co-founded the Chicago chapter of FPE in 1962, not long after FPE's creation by Virginia Prince. An accomplished linguist, public speaker and fashion expert, just to list a few of her many talents, she is particularly good at outreach, having appeared on many television talk shows and before professional organizations, law enforcement seminars, and over 300 college classes. Best of all, she is a warm-hearted, sympathetic sister and friend, who has personally helped hundreds of transgendered persons find self-acceptance, peace and fulfillment with their "second self."

Offices Held: Vice-President, Chicago Chapter, FPE, 1964-1970; Vice-President, Chi Chapter, Tri-Ess, 1983-1990; Member of the Board, Outreach Institute, 1982-1986; Member IFGE Board of Directors, 1987-present; Chair IFGE Educational Resources Committee, 1987-1993; both IFGE and Tri-Ess Liaison to international organizations outside North America, 1990-present.

Accomplishments: Co-founded Chicago chapter of FPE, 1962; Coordinator of Fantasia Fair Fashion Show, 1980-1989.

Awards: Miss Dream, 1977 & 1980; Miss Congeniality, Fantasia Fair, 1982; Miss Best Dressed, Fantasia Fair, 1984; Miss Fantasia Fair, 1985; IFGE Trinity Award, 1992; IFGE Virginia Prince Award, 1997.

WANTED: BIG SISTERS

MARLENE, your Big Sister Program Coordinator, needs your help. Your new sisters need your help. All it takes is a little sisterly compassion, and the willingness to spend a few minutes writing letters. New sisters are joining all the time. Few things are more rewarding than welcoming them aboard and supporting them in their first year. Won't you write Marlene today, and see for yourself?

MARLENE, PO BOX 4067, VISALIA CA 93278

Grace And Lace Feature Living in Controversy

By J. [REDACTED] D.D. Ph.D

We are in our day, living in controversy. We who are "different" are constantly under stress and under pressure to conform to the patterns, the ways, and the stereotypes of the culture in which we live. When we do not comply with this, we risk being held up to ridicule and scorn, and are constantly faced with rejection. We are rejected by employers, by peers, by family, and perhaps even worse, by the churches in which we seek to experience the life of the Living Christ as being for us, available to us, and where we can be encouraged to take this Living Christ experience into our being and in so doing, walk in the unmeasurable and undefinable unconditional Love of God.

The early Christians were in the first century when the texts we call The New Testament were written (as a means of recording the traditions which were emerging in the minds of the believers as a result of what the early apostolic missionaries had taught them as these elements of their lives had developed in their experience) were likewise living in a time of great controversy. In AD 70 the Roman Army had destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple, and the traditional forces of Jewish religious tradition and law. As a result, as is common in human religious systems during times of stress, those remaining among the teachers and keepers of Jewish Orthodoxy became all the more insistent on orthodoxy, rigid compliance with the most stringent kinds of interpretations of Jewish tradition, practice, and keeping of the Law. This served to exclude those Jews who had become followers of "The Way," which is what the first believers in the Messiahship of Jesus were called. Over about a 15 to 20 year period in the latter part of the first century, much of the Jewishness of early Christianity was lost. The heritage was lost. Contact with ancient Jewish tradition was lost. In this loss, these early Christians and those who have now for nearly 2,000 years followed them lost the richness of understanding of the symbolic nature of these early Christian writings which are in our New Testament.

We face, in part, a consequence of this loss in our day. This is especially the case of those of us who are "different" because one of the primary results of the loss which occurred in the first century and the early years of the second century is a sort of simple minded literalism in human attempts to study and to comprehend the writings of those ancient traditions which when written became frozen in time. We are under stress, condemnation, and social rejection because people, literalistically minded people,

read those texts with literal minds and in so doing fail to see the essence of the Love of God for all created beings. Literalism results in fault finding, in literalists becoming "holier than thou" and in cases of severe passion, violent action directed toward those who don't fit the molds the literalists consider to be the only right ways to be.

Transgendered people don't fit society's molds. Western societies are far more shaped in their stereotypical thinking patterns by literalist readings of the Bible than most people realize. Here in the United States, for example, forty nine of our fifty states have legal systems which are based directly on English common law which was founded in the Monarchy upon literalist readings of Bible texts.

Here is a quote from a book which you may find interesting. "By exploring the divine power present in the Christ, John carried his readers far beneath the level of the literal words and even the historic deeds of Jesus' life. Those who looked only at the literal would be as absurd as Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman by the well. Jesus was inviting the world to allow the essence of God to be born in them. The Johnine message was not to be literalized, it was to be lived. How can one worship the source of being, the Great I AM, except by having the courage to be the self God created each of us to be? The Christian is the one called so deeply into life, into love, and into being that he or she can say with Christlike integrity: "I AM." (italics mine) (* from: *Rescuing The Bible From Fundamentalism*, John Shelby Spong. Harper, San Francisco...)

Bishop Spong speaks to a truth we transgendered folk need to hear, to take into our inner core of being, and to begin to live. We are, I believe, called so deeply into life, into love, and into being we can truly with total integrity declare: "I AM." This "I AM" includes ALL of who, ALL of how, and ALL of what we are as creations of God, the infinite divine mystery which transcends all human understanding.

Being ALL of how you were created to be, being ALL of Who you were created to be, and being ALL of what you were created to be definitely includes living, experiencing, expressing, accepting, and loving the transgendered nature God in infinite wisdom placed in you.....

6TH Transgender Law Conference A Success

For the sixth time in six years, TG and TG supportive friends from the United States, Canada and England met in Houston, 11-12 July, for an intensive conference devoted both to learning how law helps or hinders transgendered people and to developing strategies for legal change beneficial to transgendered.

Called ICTLEP, the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, is a 501-c-3, non-profit corporation, headed by long-time activist and attorney Phyllis Randolph Frye. They may be contacted at their web page of www.abmall.com/ictlep or on AOL keyword ICTLEP, by e-mail at [REDACTED] or by telephone at 713-SRS-TGLC (777-8452).

"This was our best turnout," Phyllis reports. "We fashioned it after the FTM events by keeping it short, sweet, to the point and under \$100 for the entire registration." The conference was co sponsored by FTM International, Tri-Ess International, It's Time America (ITA), The American Boyz and Transgendered Officers Protect and Serve (TOPS). "We were very thankful for the support and attendance we received from the full spectrum of our community," Phyllis added.

Indeed, workshops were not limited to the usually stereotypical white, MTF, transsexual legal problems. A full day was spent with four workshops on FTM issues. A half day was spent on people of color legal issues and another half day was devoted to the legal concerns of those transgendered who are not transsexual, but who are heterosexual crossdressers. Half a day was spent in learning how to deal with and how to educate local police departments. Grassroots lobby training and organizing filled a full day in another track of workshops and still another track was devoted to resolving the GID pro and con that still embroils portions of the transgender community.

Phyllis added, "In the coming weeks, ICTLEP will promulgate a revised Health Law Standards of Care that was revised during the FTM workshops to be FTM inclusive. And hopefully in the near future, we will issue another joint statement with the National Center for Lesbian Rights that brings us closer to getting GID out of the psychiatric DSM protocol and into either a physiological or an endocrinological protocol that protects us medically but does not carry the current psychiatric stigma."

The conference received continuing legal education credits for the sixth time and is currently being transcribed by volunteer court reporter students to be placed into the Proceedings, Vol. VI. "I

hope that the LGBT community will help us get the work OF TG folks into university libraries. I emphasize the work OF TG folks rather than the work ABOUT TG folks as theorized by non-TG's," Phyllis concluded, "by pushing their local libraries to order the full set of Proceedings in its six volumes. Just imagine how the literature and law reviews and student theses and dissertations will change in the future if the students have the use of ICTLEP's Proceedings with strategies and ideas OF TG folks!"

The next conference will be in the fall of 1998 or spring of 1999 and most likely on the west coast of the USA. Anyone interested in helping or presenting should contact the ICTLEP 7th Transgender Law Conference co-chairs, Spencer Bergstedt at [REDACTED] or Melinda Whiteway at [REDACTED]

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Planes, Buses and Autos or Paula's Great Adventure

By Paula K. (IN-4054-K)

This adventure started over 2 months ago. I knew that I had to travel to Greenville SC to attend a seminar. This was a business trip. Having met one of our sisters last year at the Detroit Be All from Charlotte NC was the catalyst I needed to make this trip En Femme.

I called Dyana to confirm my trip and make sure that I could meet her and spend some time together. She was very enthusiastic about my trip and offered her place for the time I would be down there. Dyana is a very warm and caring sister and has many friends in the community. She is a member of the Kappa Beta Tri Ess Chapter in Charlotte.

Next I called my travel agent and made the air fare arrangements. (U.S. Airways). I should have remembered and booked my flight with the name "Paula," but being a creature of habit "George" made it onto the tickets. Oh, well... another reason to get my ID.

I called the airline and asked about traveling En Femme and was told it was OK as long as my ID was government issued and my picture was as I would be traveling. Well, here comes the next step to the adventure, the ID.

As most of you know from last month's newsletter, Jennifer and I secured our ID's. This was easier than we thought. The State of Indiana had no problem issuing the ID's with our "Femme" picture. All we had to do was show up and file the paperwork as for a drivers license. Note: in Indiana the photo ID has to have the same personal identification as your issued driver's license. This proved to be good in a way especially for this trip because my tickets were in "George's" name.

Now, with all the paperwork in hand, I called the airline to double check. Sure enough, I was given the OK. A big sigh of relief was let out here. Now to the next step.

The big day was closing in as well as the walls of fear. Do I do this or don't I do this? I had to do it to prove to myself that I am OK and that I would be accepted by the majority of society.

The day before the big day I was nervous as expected, I guess. By the way I am sitting here at Gate F6 at O'Hare writing this. The young lady in front of me has figured out what or who I am, she smiles and looks away after a few minutes. The night before, I decided to get my nails done. As usual I wore clothes to blend

in at the mall. I always go to the same nail shop. They are used to me by now. I have been there in both modes of dress, so it was nothing for them to see Paula show up. The nail shop was crowded. This was unusual, but I had to get my nails done, and besides, this would be a good test of my fortitude around a crowd of people I did not know and with whom I would be in close proximity for a period. I spent 1-1/2 hours there, most of the time being scrutinized. The silence was finally broken by a woman who made a comment regarding the wait and I responded. Small talk, but conversation, and I felt better.

I went home and decided on an outfit to wear for the trip. I picked out a white pullover top, black and white skirt (long), black flats and matching jewelry. I tried everything on for inspection by my spouse. She said I should wear my black blazer also. Even though she was not thrilled about the adventure she said I looked great.

Well, the big day is here. I had packed the night before and double checked.

I almost forgot to pack the kitchen sink, but I had everything I needed. I got up at 6AM for my 11 am flight. I live about 50 miles south east of the airport. I got dressed and made up, my spouse checked me out. Everything was OK.

Next was the trip to the bus station. I took the Tri State to O'Hare.



Picture taken at Dyana's home during my "Great Adventure" Paula (left) with Dyana

Continued on page 55

Our Grand Slam Weekend

By Alice H.

The weekend started for me on Friday by going to Princeton Airport to pick up Georgia Ann and Donna. Just like last time Donna was right on time. We packed up the car and headed for the Ramada Inn, in Flemington NJ. The inn is right in my backyard—almost.

Georgia Ann had no problem registering with George's credit card and no one seemed to notice. That afternoon I picked them up, after I had freshened up.

We then started for New Hope and the Hacienda Inn, for dinner. We were a little early, but Joyce and Carol Ann were already there. We all decided to take a walk around New Hope, to explore some of the shops.

When we arrived back at the Hacienda, Stephanie was already waiting for us. The food and service was very good. We ate and talked until 11:30. We had 10 or 11 sisters attending our Girl's Night Out.

On Saturday I picked George and Donna up at about 10:30. We then continued on to the Columbus Farmer's Market, where George bought a romper and Donna bought some other things.

At 12:30 we arrived at the Ramada Inn in Bordentown. There George registered for all our Southern sisters. As Georgia Ann started to dress and wait for the remainder of our Southern Connection, Donna and I went to get lunch for all of us.

Think—where would you get a quick lunch to go? Why Burger King, of course, at the inside counter, we had no problems.

At about 3:30 the picnic started. We had a good turnout. Carol Ann put the food out and Georgia Ann was our cook, until she ran out of charcoal so Donna and I drove over to the 7-11 and picked up some. I think a good time was had by all.

After the picnic we had a short meeting where it was voted to ban alcohol at our meetings.

Sunday morning I got ready so as soon as Judy got home from church we could leave to pick up our daughter on the way to the Golden Pheasant Inn. Guess what? Stephanie got there first again. We had 12 sisters show up for the brunch. The brunch was excellent, and we spent all afternoon, until 3:30, eating and talking. After brunch Donna Marie took Donna and George back to the plane at Princeton Airport.

But the weekend was not over yet. Joyce, Carol Ann, Judy and I went to New Hope shopping. It was wall to wall people. Judy bought an anklet. We also stopped at a corset shop where we were very welcomed. I was told how pretty I looked and Carol Ann had to have her picture taken with about 100 motorcycles. We must have walked several miles in New Hope.

What a weekend!!!

(Reprinted from News Briefs)

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This was the best way to go. My wife dropped me off and wished me well or something on that order. My mind was racing a mile a minute. I went in and purchased my ticket. No problem there. When I gave the driver my bags and told him the airline he looked at me a little harder but said nothing. The trip was uneventful and it gave me time to reflect. What am I doing here ? !!!!! I tried to relax but all kinds of thoughts raced through my head. What if I am stopped and not allowed to fly? What if I have to change back to George to fly? What if I go nuts thinking about all this ?

Well, I arrived at the airport, still intact. I was let off in front of the US Airways skycap check-in. What luck! I summoned a skycap and gave him my bags and tickets. This is from habit. He looked at me and asked for ID, and PANIC ! I fumbled through my purse and what seemed like minutes was a few seconds. I handed him my ID, he looked at it and at the tickets and said, "This is for a 'George'." I smiled and asked him to read the profile on the ID. He looked at me and smiled as he said that I had fooled him, and that I looked great. Now I feel good !. I left him for the terminal. As I entered the terminal there was that panic attack again. "Look at all those people, and I bet they are all looking at me. Boy am I paranoid!"

Well, here goes. I walked right up to the security check point and went right through. Now here I am heading for gate F6. I went down the 6 mile long corridor, really about 700 feet. I tried not to look around but I had too. Nobody was paying attention to me. Boy, am I upset, but not really. My heart is pounding, my mind is going in a whirl, and I need a restroom. Well, here I am Gate F6. I find a seat and start reading the newspaper to avoid eye contact. After a few minutes I get the feeling that I am being watched. Ever get that feeling? As I look up, there is a young lady, maybe 15, and her mother in the next row of seats. She is watching me, trying to figure out what I am all about. As I make eye contact with her, I smile. She smiles back and whispers something in her mother's ear. Her mother glances at me and turns away. It's all over that fast.

They just called to board our flight, and I decide to wait till last. As I walk up to the agent to turn in my pass I ask myself, "Will they check the name and look at me ? Will they call me out and make me show ID again ? I need a stiff drink."

I am sure many of you reading this have flown before and this is a "Been there, done that" situation. There is a point to all of this, for me personally and to the many reading this. I will share it with you at the end. I have only been out for three years and am still trying to perfect "that look." I try to blend with the main-

stream when at all possible. I found it very important that you girls don't want to over dress or use more makeup than necessary. If you travel or spend time in the mainstream public as I am doing, you need to create a blending look. I found this to be very important. Most of the public is willing to forgive if you at least make a good attempt to be one of the girls. Don't do anything that will attract attention!

I am on the plane and foot traffic is stopped. I am one row away from my seat. I want to sit down so bad. I am stopped right along side of a young couple and their infant. The young lady, at this close range, reads me. She immediately tells her husband. It's very obvious. He just stares at me the whole time. I would love to be able to say something to them, but remembering one of my rules, "Don't initiate conversation with strangers unless spoken to first."

It's getting hot in here. Maybe my makeup is melting. Finally my seat, a window. Just relax and cool off; that's the ticket. I look at my pass to make sure I am in the right seat. I don't need a hassle here. Seat 10A, OK. I chose the window seat this time in order to avoid the contact that comes with being in the aisle. This is a three-seat-wide row. A gentleman sits down in the aisle seat. I have my purse and valise in the middle. The attendant comes on and says this is to be a full flight. Oh, boy! A person sitting next to me! Panic! I am getting paranoid, why am I doing this to myself ?

People keep coming, from where I don't know, but it seems endless, or so I think. Now the attendants are going row to row checking for empty seats; the one next to me is still empty. I continue to pray. All at once the air conditioning system kicks in and it feels good. The pilot comes on and announces that we are ready to depart. Wow! An empty seat! Somebody up there is looking out for me.

The stress is taking its toll. My back aches and my neck is stiff. I have to relax. The pilot comes on and tells us it will be 1-1/2 hours to Charlotte and we will cruise at 33,000 feet. As I sit here writing this my hand is shaking. I can't even read my own writing. I am convinced the flight attendant is going to announce that the passenger in 10A is a crossdresser and we all should be kind to her/him. Boy, am I paranoid! I could swear that I have been on this plane for three hours, but my watch lies to me and says it's only been 15 minutes.

We are now in flight and I am starting to relax. Do I go to the restroom or not? Can I make it to Charlotte ? Sure. The flight attendant announces that they are going to bring around a drink

Continued on page 56

Paula's Great Adventure (cont.)

and snack. As the attendant approaches my row he asks what I want to drink. "Water," is my answer. He smiles at me. This is somewhat assuring. The next attendant brings the snack. This is a large sandwich. I preceded to cut it up in small bite size pieces, like a lady should.

I am here among 140 other passengers. If they make that announcement as I mentioned earlier, can they throw me off the plane? Do they have an ejection chute? Am I stir crazy? The pilot comes on and tells us we will be landing in a few minutes, the best news to date. The plane makes a flawless landing and now panic sets in again, but why? What did I do?

As I leave the plane I feel as if everyone is following me. They are, to the baggage claim area. Look at all the people! Where do I get my bags? Are all the guys down here? Good Boys! Will I get out of here alive? I have got to stop thinking like this. Where is the restroom, now?

I decided to look outside for Dyana. She said she would be there. I went outside and immediately saw her. What relief!!!!!! We hugged and spoke. Several pictures to capture the moment were in order. Dyana asked a passerby to take our picture. He smiled and complied. I got my baggage and put it in her car and off we went. I asked her to find the nearest lounge to have a nice drink and relax. She knew just the place. Now I had to use the restroom. Relief!!!! I am on the ground and around someone I know. I did not use the restroom on the plane because I would have had to walk past 100 people. You know how it is on a plane, being cooped up. What is there to do but look at other people who move in any way? I did not want to be the talk of the plane. I already had enough for one day.

This trip was not as bad as I feared. It was stressful, but not bad. I was now contemplating whether I should fly back to Chicago en femme. I have 6 days to think about it. Do I do it or not? That is the question. Stay tuned for the result later in this story.

I spent the next several days with Dyana and Michelle, who came up from Greenville SC. We had a fantastic time. Dyana's cooking was superb. She has a great house and fantastic attitude. To know her is a pleasure. I am sure all the sisters from Charlotte are aware of this. The weather cooperated nicely and allowed us to roam the area around her house. The trees and flowering shrubs are at their very finest. I was able to take some very nice pictures.

Sunday Michelle drove me to my hotel in Greenville where my conference was being held. It was tough getting back into the routine of George, but I did it. Michelle and I met several times during the week to go shopping or out to eat. It was nice to have

someone to relate to while away from home. The nice thing about being transgendered is you can meet many nice TG people out there. We all share the same common desires and can relate to our experiences. Both Dyana and Michelle are out in public, not full time but enough to have the confidence to carry themselves wherever they go.

I learned some interesting facts while down there. The one observation that I did get was that a lot of people from South Carolina are not warm and fuzzy, they are cold, not only to the transgendered but to the everyday folk also. This was very evident during my stay. Every time I was treated warmly, I asked where that person was from, and the response was from some far away state. Michelle is not from SC. I guess that explains her more caring attitude.

My conference ended Wednesday morning. Michelle met me at the hotel and we traveled back to Charlotte to Dyana's house. I could not wait to transform back to Paula. This would be the last evening we would be together. I changed into several different outfits until I found the right one for the evening. I did manage to have pictures taken of each one before changing. After dinner we sat around and watched Ellen's "coming out." It was a great night. Dyana did tell me she was coming to the Be All in June. I would get a chance to meet with her again. Michelle was not sure. She is managing to keep herself busy with various personal affairs. Then it was time to retire for the night, for tomorrow was to be the second big day, or was it?

As I mentioned earlier, here are some of the reasons that I chose to make this trip the way I did. I am a crossdresser, tried and true. I enjoy who I am and have no difficulties with it. I do not have the desire to go any further and full time is not in the cards. I believe anyone who wants to do something can. The motivation is positive thinking. I positively think I can do this at any time and I don't feel I am offending anybody. The right attitude and mind set is all that's required.

I have spent many hours perfecting the look I project, and continue to improve on it each time I go out. I watch the "genetic" woman and emulate her as best as I can. I find it important to develop the "blend" attitude. Even though I like the short skirts and "cool" fashions, I find the everyday woman is not into that. If I chose to go on this trip dressed as I would like, I am sure many more people would give me that second look, attracted only by the "statement" I was wearing. Don't get me wrong. I enjoy getting dressed up as I would go out for a Saturday evening social, but you don't see women dressed that way everyday. As

Continued on page 57

Paula's Great Adventure (cont.)

with a lot of our sisters, I don't use a lot of makeup. I don't want to attract attention.

Many girls wonder why they are "read" when they go out. I found out for myself this way. Get dressed up and look into the mirror, see that beautiful woman? Now take a picture of yourself, if you have a Polaroid, and take another look. You will see a difference. Try a video, and put on a fashion show for your spouse or yourself. Look into the mirror each time. Take a good look. Beautiful, aren't you? Now look at the video. Wow! Who is that person? When we look into the mirror we see what we want to see. The still or video pictures don't lie, but our eyes deceive us. I found out, it's not easy to be a woman, or to look like a woman. I can appreciate what my spouse goes through. Remember your etiquette. Watch what you say and how you say or express it. Your walk, talk, and mannerisms all play an important part in what you make yourself. Your body is an accessory rack. It's how you make the package come together that counts.

Then it was Thursday morning. Guess what? I decided to go back to Chicago "en femme." OK, I learned a few things on the trip down here. Most woman don't wear dresses or skirts. So I decided to wear my beige slacks with a tangerine pull over and cream sandals. I had matching jewelry and a blazer. I decided to wear my "business" style glasses to make my face smaller. I looked into the mirror and looked stunning! Now I took a picture to come back to reality. I made few adjustments. Ready to go. We all had breakfast and I said my good byes to Dyana. Michelle drove me to the airport and dropped me off. I bid her good by and headed into the crowd.

Well here I am again? What did I learn from the trip down? Nothing! I am panic stricken again. Well, when in Rome do as the Romans do. Get on with it. I did my usual ticket and check in. It was easier this time, though. I am a pro now. Ha! I had to wait for over an hour this time, but I did not have the uneasy feeling as before. I boarded the plane and got to my seat. This time it is a two-seat row, and there is a gentleman next to me. During the flight I get my drink and snack and talk to the attendants several times. The person doesn't even flinch.

The flight was great. As we landed at O'Hare the person next to me starts staring at me. This goes on for about three minutes. As the plane stops he gets up and keeps looking. I would have loved to say something, but rule #1 kicks in. I deplane and go my way to the baggage area. I do have to mention that while waiting for my luggage a couple spotted me and started to giggle. As they looked at me the third time, I smiled and waved. That stopped

that, and they ignored me the rest of the time.

Now to the bus loading area. I do need that restroom now. I look around and not many people are there. I checked inside and all was clear. The long wait for bus trip back to the lot to my car was uneventful and, after all the above, boring. On the bus trip home the driver and another bus company employee started to talk about Dennis Rodman and how he was able to cross dress and nobody cared. I was sitting behind the driver. I don't know if he read me. To me it was a chance encounter conversation. Neither one of them ever looked at me. At last I am home and I changed into something more comfortable: my short denim skirt and soft blouse. I feel great!!!!!!

I made this trip to prove to myself and not anyone else, that you can do anything you want given the opportunity and a positive attitude. I have to thank my spouse Sandi for her courage in putting up with me and Paula. With her cooperation and tolerance of me we have grown together, I believe, into a stronger bond. She still does not understand why I cross dress and as a matter of fact neither do I. We have a common set of ground rules that seem to work. Paula can be Paula as long as Sandi still has George to spend time with. That is necessary in a good relationship.

Don't get me wrong. There have been some trying times, but we have come through them. I have been able to read her signals when Paula is not wanted. I can understand some of the fears spouses can have. What is important is good communication and understanding. Do not hide anything from her, that will only make her fears worse. We have the luxury of our children being grown and living out of state. Being by ourselves has some advantages. It can still be tough at times, though. A lot of what I have done has been with her help. She is not an advocate of Transgenderism but tolerates it. I have to know when to say when. This trip did press her a little but she knows I love her, and that won't change. Without her support I would not have made it this far. Quite possibly, I'd be still in the closet.

Well, that the story of "Paula's Great Adventure." Anyone wanting to discuss various aspects can contact me at [REDACTED], or by "snailmail" through Tri Ess.

I would like to thank US Airways and their employees for the courtesy and professionalism shown me on both phases of my trip. Also to Dyana and Michelle for their time and hospitality. The Bus trip was also enjoyable and provided by Tri State Coach line.

Would I do it again? You bet, and in a heartbeat!!

Tri-Ess Pen Pals

Many sisters have written over the years to express their disappointment in not receiving replies to their letters to other Tri-Ess sisters. It seems that while some sisters are wonderfully prolific pen pals, others (for a variety of reasons) are not. To assist those who would like to receive lots of letters, we have compiled a "Pen-Pal List". All you have to do is promise to reciprocate. Just fill out and sign the form below and send it to:

Carol Beecroft
P.O. Box 194
Tulare, CA 93275

"I promise the courtesy of a reply to all correspondence from my Tri-Ess sisters."

Femme Name _____

Code Number _____

Here's how to write a Pen Pal through the Forwarding Service:

- 1) Write your letter to your chosen Pen Pal. Include your picture if you wish. If you choose not to include your own return address at first, be sure you include your own Code Number in your letter.
- 2) Place your letter in an envelope, affix correct postage, and lightly pencil in the name and Code Number of your Pen Pal on the front.
- 3) Place this envelope inside another envelope and address this outer envelope to:

Tri-Ess Forwarding Service
P.O. Box 194
Tulare CA 93275

- 4) Include your return address on the outer envelope and be sure to apply correct postage. Once received at the Forwarding Service, your inner envelope will be properly addressed to your Pen Pal and sent on its way. If or when you and your Pen Pal choose to exchange letters directly is up to you. Have fun, Sisters!

If you wrote us asking to be placed on the Pen Pal List and your name does not appear above, please write us again. We are sorry, but sometimes we do "drop the ball." (Or, in this case, the name!)








NEW!!! We have a sister who wants to be a Cyber-Space Pen Pal. Kimmie (FL-4532-D) says she loves answering her E-mail and would like to have you visit her Web Site, too. Her E-Mail address is: [REDACTED]

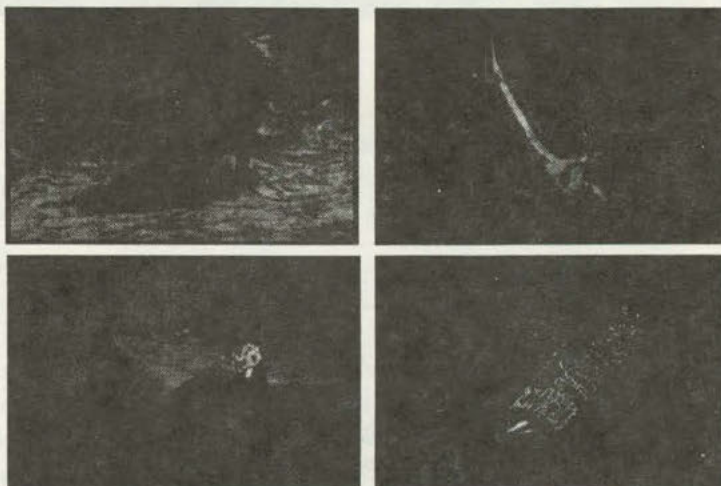
Her Web site is at: <http://members.aol.com/kimmiecd/index.html>

List of Pen Pals

AZ-3954-B Rebecca
CA-3800-M Charli
CA-1282-V Fran
CA-4470-S Julia
CA-3354-N Michelle
CA-4249-F Shirley Louise
FL-3434-C Debi
FL-3433-T Donna
FL-3892-B Jeanne
FL-2520-B Joan Ann
FL-3720-R Karen Rose
FL-3640-C Norma
FL-4046-J Rita
FL-4379-G Roni George
GA-4158-B Franki
IL-3623-G Nancy
MD-4435-S Diane
MN-3996-L Carla
MO-3752-B Laura
NC-3743-H Ann
NC-3723-C Sherri
NJ-3818-L Carol Ann
NY-4022-B Cathy Ann
NY-3277-H Evelyn
NY-4502-R Fiona
NY-4506-K Patricia Ann
NY-3717-P Tammie
OH-1617-H Razilee
PA-4046-J Rita
TN-1230-H Rita
UT-3779-E Genevera
VA-2642-I Madelyn
VA-3401-W Samantha
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Finding Stephanie

By Stephanie K (MN-4674-K)

I finally found Stephanie!! It was about 6:00 PM, Friday, May 16, 1997. I was looking in the mirror and I was seeing Stephanie for the very first time. Beautiful hair, tasteful makeup, large dangly gold earrings, and a very smart black skirt-suit with red trim and gold buttons. I really liked the person I saw in that mirror!! I had been so afraid that I would just see Steve in a dress!! But that wasn't the case and I was thrilled! I couldn't take my eyes away! My Big Sister Sharon noticed my wonder and said quietly "That's really YOU in the mirror!" I was stunned! I loved the person I saw in the mirror. I loved her unconditionally!! At that very moment I experienced a very large dose of compassion and love for that person! I experienced a very large dose of love and compassion for myself!! Finally, I was experiencing something I had been yearning for all of my 49 years. I was finally allowing myself to love this part of me!! I felt wonderful!! I intend to always love her, now and forever! She is a part of me!! Magical! Mystical! Real!

But I have to tell you, it was a hoot getting to that point! I had decided to attend my first Tri-Ess meeting, the May meeting of Beta Gamma Chapter in Minneapolis. I met Sharon at the hotel about 11:00 AM after a two hour drive to the Twin Cities. I had never ever knowingly been in the presence of another CD who was dressed. It was a powerful and pleasant experience.

Thirty minutes later we were en route to Don Murnane's to get my first "really nice hair." I met Patty, and she had me sit in front of the mirror as we all surveyed the territory trying to decide what might look good on me!! I was surprisingly calm, but quite focused on getting a "look" that I really liked.

"No, that one makes me look like the lead singer from REO Speedwagon!"

"Ugh, that one makes me look like a WWF contender and I don't intend to go 3 rounds with Hulk Hogan!"

"Hmmm, pretty, but I don't think I'm a blonde."

Finally, I fell in love with the auburn shag that just touched my shoulders and framed my face with random curls! OK, with no make-up yet and my male attire below, I still wasn't sure I would find Stephanie! At least we all agreed that I looked NICE! (Though I felt a little nervous doing this, Sharon and Patty made the experience of getting my first wig very delightful! I know I will be going back there again!)

Now, back to the hotel. It's make-up time! On the way back, we stopped for gas at a SuperAmerica and I watched Sharon touch up her lipstick, get out of the car, and proceed to pump her own gas and go into the store! I was intrigued. Yikes! Could I possibly do something like that as Stephanie!?! I shivered as I thought about such an adventure! (Little did I know what the future had in store for me that very night!!)

Back at the hotel, I spent several rather intense but very pleasant hours learning how to do my own make-up! Good teacher! Good learner! And everything came out better than I ever expected! Pretty, but not outrageous! Down right dignified! Love the red lips!!

Now the clothes! Oh, my, the CLOTHES! Pretty black lingerie purchased especially for the occasion. My Big Sister graciously donating a pair of lovely breast forms! Pulling the long narrow skirt up over my hips! Gosh! Is this really happening to me? Is this really going to work?? By this time Joanne has arrived to give encouragement and I AM TREMBLING! Get the hair right! Slip on the shoes! Earrings! Perfume! FEELS GREAT! HOW DO I LOOK? Let's try putting on my glasses! Sharon says "Wow!" I step in front of the mirror! WOW, is right! HELLO, Stephanie!!!

I was very happy! In fact, I was quite proud of the way I looked, so proud and happy that I knew I needed to have my picture taken. I was afraid that this apparition would disappear at any moment and so needed to be preserved immediately or she would be forever lost! Both Sharon and Joanne had digital cameras and I don't think I have ever had so many pictures taken of me in one weekend ever before! Sure was fun!!

So, I am so proud and happy with the lovely way I look, I can't just sit in the hotel room all evening, can I?? "Of course not!" say Sharon and Joanne, "So let's go!" I grab my purse and out the door we go! Oh, my, I am really walking down this hallway as Stephanie! Oh, my, I am really walking out the hotel door into the light of day as Stephanie! Oh, my, I am really getting my first lesson in getting into a car with a tight skirt on! Oh, my, sit first, keep your knees together and swing your feet in!! I MADE IT!!

Where to, girls? How about visiting Sofronia and Onnalee at their place to introduce Stephanie! "S-s-sure," I stutter. Three gals just cruising Minneapolis! What fun! Then, parking in front

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of the apartment house. Let's see if I can get OUT of this car gracefully!! A completely different experience!! Stand up and straighten out that skirt! Made it again! Now, stroll up the walk! I don't THINK anybody is looking at me!! Then into the vestibule. The door is locked and Sharon pushes the buzzer. I'm nervous, TRAPPED in this glass entryway! Oh, no, here comes a formidable looking fellow in green work clothes. Oh, my, it's the apartment manager and he is coming to read the riot act to these three lovely and equally formidable ladies, though one is VERY NERVOUS, milling around his entryway! He opens the door and says, "Well, what do we have here??" I AM STARTING TO SWEAT!!! I don't believe it?! He welcomes us in!! I am then introduced to Sofronia Anne, president of Beta Gamma (as his male self)! He greets me warmly and we spend the next half hour in his apartment chatting up a storm!! I am really liking this!!

Time to go, and Sharon and Joanne are thinking about getting something to eat. I don't care. Eating, which has always been a passion for most of Steve's life, has somehow paled in the light of a newly discovered PASSION in Stephanie's smile!! But what the heck! Lead on, girls!! What'll it be? Drive up window at McDonald's? Quick foray into Subway for a sandwich to eat back at the hotel? Snacks from SuperAmerica? Noooo, unbeknownst to me, Sharon has made reservations at the Dakota Bar and Grill in Bandana Square! Yikes! A REAL restaurant! Upscale! A very PUBLIC place! We have to sit down to dine and be there for a seemingly incredibly long time!!! Can I really do this? OK, as long as it's the three of us, let's do it!!

Well, the room is dimly lit, and we sit, order, eat, drink, and be merry! Sure, a few people are noticing us, but this is really fun! I feel so comfortable. Dessert, more pictures, collect my purse and off we go again! Sharon needs to visit the ladies' room. Joanne and I drift out into the mall to wait. Joanne says she has to go too, and will I be OK waiting out here by myself? I think so, and I don't think I'll try the ladies' room just yet!! But as she leaves I realize, "Yikes, I am standing here ALL ALONE as Stephanie!!" A few people walk by. I turn to read the entertainment calendar on the wall. Am I being noticed?? I reassure myself, "It's OK, Stephanie, you look great! Perhaps a little tall, but you look great! Take some deep breaths!" Sharon and Joanne pick me up and whisk me out to the car again! Now what?

Sharon says "Well, let's go someplace and get some stuff to bring back to the hotel for breakfast!" We drive to a full-service all-night grocery store. Before we go in we all touch up our lipstick. Then, into the VERY bright lights of the grocery store. Not many

customers but a lot of workers stocking the shelves. More amused looks, but "Hey! I'm Stephanie and I like myself and I like string cheese, so I'm going to get some! Does this girl have the ATTITUDE or what!?"

But now it's about 1:00 AM. Hey, midnight has passed and I didn't turn back into a pumpkin!! Wow, this is really happening!! I don't want it to EVER end, but it's way past my bedtime and we make it back to the hotel. Thanks, Joanne! Thanks, Sharon, for a most amazing and exciting night! I say goodnight and stroll back to my room! Now the really hard part, taking off my beautiful clothes, wig, and make-up! SIGH!! But I am still Stephanie and I slip into my nightgown and dive under the covers! As I fall asleep I have a universe of wonderful memories of finding Stephanie and anticipation of attending my first Tri-Ess meeting the next day. My last waking thoughts are filled with a deep appreciation for my Beta Gamma Big Sister, Sharon! It's been Magical, Mystical, Real! Thank you, so much!

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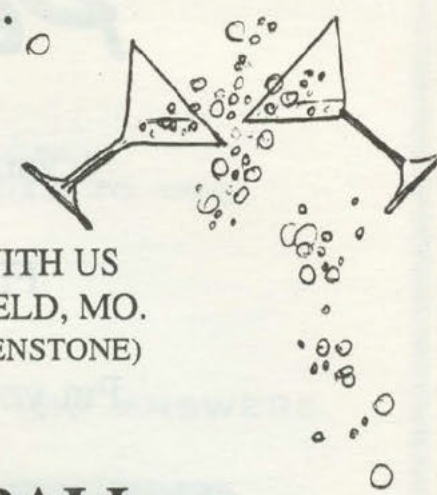
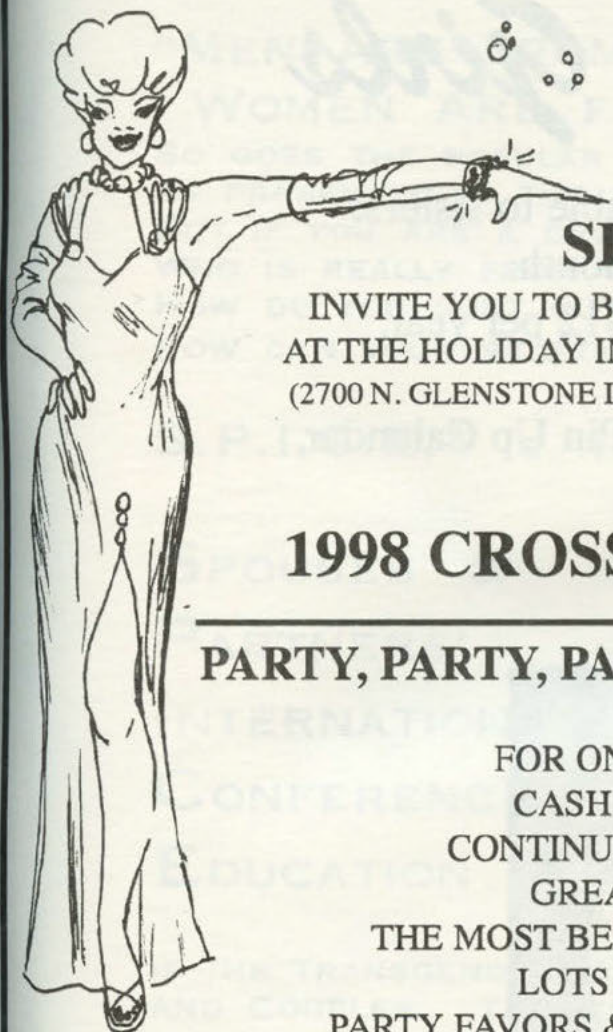
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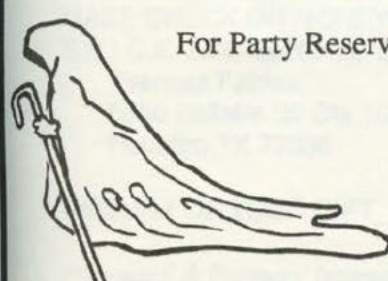
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NAUGHTY!
STOP!
THAT!
THAT'S YOUR
DADDY!!
NO! NO!

NOTICE!
(TO WHOM IT
MAY CONCERN)

THIS IS MY
TERRITORY!!

NO! NO!
GET AWAY
FROM ME
YOU*!!*!!*!!*!!*!!*!!

CRAZY MUTT!

NO!

NO!



Paula (WI-2507-M)



Me and Eve

A poem dedicated to Cover Girl Eve Burchert
Written by Ms. Ruby [REDACTED] at Dream 1978

There's a girl who lives inside of me
who keeps on begging to be free.
When I was young she used to cry
and in confusion, I would sigh
and say, "Be quiet, go away!"
yet she begged, day after day.

Then as I grew, I somehow knew
that on some future day
That little girl would have her way.
So slowly, I let her come outside.
One quick shy look, and then she'd hide
inside of me and and safe again.
Then she'd beg to be set free again.

As I grew she also grew, and through the years
we lived and felt each other's fears,
I wondered then, "How could this be,
to have this woman inside of me,
who wanted so much to dress in style
in beautiful things, and all the while
I was a man in a man's world.
How could I also be a girl?
What twist of fate created me,
that man nor woman could be free?

So I named her Eve and dressed her well.
Even my mirror couldn't tell.
As she learned to use her female charm,
she grew both beautiful and warm.
I loved both parts each self could play
until I finally reached the day
when I could honestly, truly say,
"I'm glad Eve finally had her way!"

