



News & views

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Vol. 11, No 5 • May 1997

Renaissance

HBIGDA Pres to Be Selected This Year

An election to fill the positions of President-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer, and three Director seats on the Board of Directors of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association will take place this year. Ms. Alice Webb, a charter member of The Harry Benjamin Association, and one of the signers of the incorporation papers along with Paul Walker, Ph.D., and Walter Meyer III, M.D. in 1979, has announced her intention to run for the position of President-Elect. The President-Elect will serve as an officer of the Board under Dr. Richard Green, the incoming President of The Association for the years September 1997 thru 1999, and then will be seated as President of The Association at the XVI Symposium in September, 1999 for a two year term.

Ms. Webb is a licensed clinical social worker, certified sex therapist and clinical sexologist who has practiced in the field of gender identity and human sexuality since 1978. She first worked with Dr. Paul Walker at The University of Texas Medical Branch as Coordinator of The Gender Clinic, and was a primary psychotherapist for transsexuals who came to that clinic. Subsequently she was in private practice in Texas and California and is presently liv-

ing in California, but plans to relocate to Houston, Texas in July when she will go back into a group psychotherapy/psychiatric practice with her colleagues Doctors Larry Nahmias and Blanca Diez.

Ms. Webb was Executive Director of the HBIGDA for the period of October 1992 to February 1996. During that time she reorganized and computerized the administrative structure of the Association, started a computerized bookkeeping system and was responsible, along with the President, Dr. Leah Schaefer, for an increase in the membership from under 100 members to 300 plus members. After the passing of Dr. Roger Peo, the previous HBIGDA newsletter editor, Ms. Webb took over the editing of that quarterly publication and constructed a new database and directory of members which was updated with each newsletter to reflect new members and address changes.

In a statement issued over the Internet on April 11, 1997 Ms. Webb said, "If I am elected to the Board as President-Elect, I shall make it a priority to continue to encourage this open communication and the updating of the administrative structure into a professional and modern instrument of the Association."



2nd Congress Schedule Set

The schedule of the 2nd International Congress on Sex & Gender (June 20th through 22nd at the Park Ridge Hotel at Valley Forge in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania) has been announced.

Friday morning highlights include: Neila Miller's (M.A.) *Counseling In Genderland Workshop*, Virginia Prince, Ph. D., *Sex, Gender & Object Choice*, *The Invisible Revolution*. The 11:00 am Plenary Session features guest speaker, Kate Bornstein, author of *Gender Outlaw*.

After lunch there will be workshops and presentations by Dallas Denny, M.A.; Alison Laing; Roger Millen, Ph.D.; Merissa Richmond, Ph.D.; Holly Devor, Ph.D.; Louis Swartz, Ph.D. and others.

The Saturday schedule is highlighted by the Plenary Session featuring Professor Doctor Louis Gooren of the Netherlands. Dr. Gooren is the

researcher who found similarities in brain structure between the brains of women and MtF transsexuals.

There will be workshops and seminars in all areas of the phenomenon we call "transgender behavior." Everything from issues affecting female to male transsexuals and aging crossdressers, to the history of female impersonation and the special health care needs of transgendered people will be covered.

Registration is \$80 before June 1st, and \$100 after. An additional \$37 gets you a seat at the Saturday night banquet—Renaissance's 10th Anniversary Celebration. Kate Bornstein will be the special guest speaker. Banquet tickets and registration are available through the national office. Check the Renaissance website, <<http://www.ren.org>> for the complete schedule, or call the office to receive a brochure.



Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Wilmington, Delaware: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808. Phone: 302-376-1990 or email to: SadeCD@aol.com

Pennsylvania

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

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

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122 Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call 717-780-1LSV (780-1578) or send email to: <lsv@ezonline.com>.

Affiliates

California

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

Connecticut

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

Georgia

Atlanta: The American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), PO Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 or call 770-939-0244, or email to <aegis@mindspring.com>. Information resources & referrals.

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

Illinois

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

Louisiana

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

New Jersey

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

Titusville: Meetings are 1st Saturday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Crossing. Call Terri Risley at 609-933-2233.

New York

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

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

Long Island: Long Island Femme Expression (LIFE), PO Box 1311, Water Mill, NY 11976-1311. Phone 516-283-1333. email to joed2viola@aol.com

Oklahoma

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

Electronic Subscriptions

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

Renaissance News & Views

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

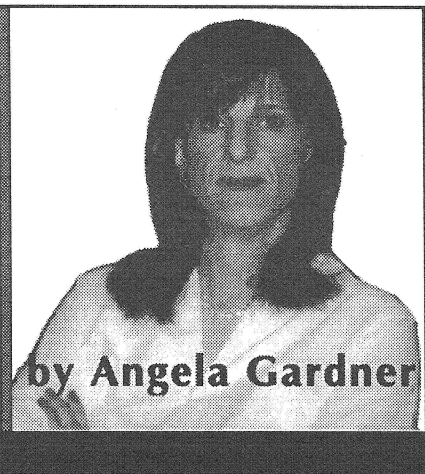
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Local Calendar

May

- 3 Ren. LSV
- 3 NJ Support
- 10 MOTG
- 10 Ren. Lehigh Valley
- 10 Ren. Delaware
- 11 Ren National BoD Meeting
- 17 Ren. GPC

News Beat & Reminder



It's May, so may I remind you, yet again, that the 10th Anniversary Party is next month. I won't go on and on and on about it since there's a flyer in this issue with the menu, price and so on. Cocktails at 7:30. Wear something pretty. And now, the news and beats.

First One Up For A Beating

Hey, how about that **Ellen**, huh? She's getting the smell of mothballs off and is boldly going where no femme butch, lesbian comic has gone before... to the hospital to have her foot removed from her mouth.

Apparently the word "inclusive" is not in Ellen's vocabulary. She was quoted in *Time* magazine saying, "If other people come out, that's fine, I mean, it would be great, if for no other reason than just to show... it's not just the extremes. Because unfortunately, those are the people who get the most attention on the news. You know, when you see the parades and you see... men dressed like women. I don't want to judge them... It's just that I don't want them representing the entire gay community."

Okay Miss Repression, guess who's little comedy show I just might not have time to watch anymore. Now, I know that Ellen is talking about gay guys at Pride parades who mix genders or do less than an exemplary job of female impersonation, but, her attitude is the exact same one that keeps the "straight" homosexuals determined to keep the word "transgendered" out of legislation designed to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in employment, and from hate crimes. Of

course some of those guys at the parades *are* an embarrassment (where **do** they get those outfits?) but, like Ellen said, it's not up to anyone to judge them. The conservative gays feel that the wild, outrageous types are going to keep them from getting their legislation passed. I've got news for them... even if they wear nice business suits and brown shoes, Mister and Missus straight America are gonna be just as scared by the conservative gay guy as they are by a group of queens... if they know that the guy in the conservative suit is gay. Trying to look and act like straight conservatives will not make straight conservatives your pals.

So Ellen, embrace your sisters with beads, bad gowns and beards. Don't judge them, even if they do have bad taste. Speaking of bad taste...

What'll He Wear For This One?

Dennis Rodman's *Bad As I Wanna Be* (Delacorte) did such big business for the groin kicking, crossdressing B-baller that he's just put out a new book with the same publisher. This one's called *Walk on the Wild Side*. If he had a fab makeover and wore a wedding dress for his promotional book signing on the first one, what will we see him in this time?

If he was really smart he would dress up as Howard Stern. Not Howard in drag, just as Howard. Or, taking the title into consideration, Lou Reed could work. Run out and pick one up. I'll see you at the book signing.

Speaking of Books

The Lambda Literary Awards, the

Lammies, are the prestigious gay book awards that are scheduled for May 30 at the Midland Hotel in Chicago. The Awards offer a Transgender Category and it's my privilege to tell you the Finalists in that category. (Slow down that teleprompter please...) And the nominees are, *Honey Honey Miss Thing* by Leon E. Pettway, *Body Alchemy* by Loren Cameron, *Gender Shock* by Phyllis Burke, *Lieutenant Nun* by Catalina de Erauso and *Transgender Warriors* by Leslie Feinberg. If you're in, or are going to be in Chicago, and would like tickets call the Lammy Line, 202-462-7924. It'll cost you \$75 for cocktails at six and dinner at seven. Black tie is optional and if you wear a dress, please don't embarrass us, Okay?

Name Game

How come the TG community seems to have a problem with names? Sure, it's complicated cause we have to pick our own, but doesn't that give us a better chance of having a good name than if our parents gave it to us years ago? Looking at some of the types of names people pick it makes you wonder.

There seem to be three main types of name pickers at work. Number one: The Three Name Club. These gals all have three names. For example, Peggy Denise Smith, Bobbie Ann Smith, et cetera. Are they all Catholic and the middle name is their confirmation name? Maybe they're all Southern. That three name thing is big in Dixie. I say, why have a middle name? I have one in my male mode and I hate it. It only serves to make my initials interesting.

Speaking of initials, that's type number two: The Initial People. They go to the trouble of picking out a first name like Debbie or Sue. Then they ruin it by not having a last name... just an initial. Debbie W., Alice K.. (See how it screws up the end of a sentence?) It's annoying. At least to me, but then again I *am* a cranky old columnist. I just can't understand why, if they went through the trouble of picking the first name, they can't pick a last name. I mean, do you think you'll find

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News Beat...

Gardner on my birth certificate? No way. I made it up. My real name is *much* harder to pronounce. Actually Gardner is the name a friend of mine's family used when they made dinner reservations. Most people couldn't handle their ethnic name so they picked Gardner as a close approximation, and it sounded good to me. That way, when someone asks me my name I just smack them in the chops and declare, Most Revered Editrix Angela, you chump! Oops, sorry, I got carried away. What I meant to say was, I just tell them I'm Angela Gardner. Having the second name give's one greater credibility, don't you think? I do.

So, all you Initial people... get busy. Pick a last name. Be all you can be! Strike a blow for name freedom. Don't be trapped as an initial with a first name for the rest of your lives. You are somebody. Let your new last name reflect it.

I got so carried away with the first two types I almost forgot the third type of name in the TG community—Postal Names. This category only applies to those girls living in their PO Boxes and mail slots and they only have a limited number of names to choose from. The most popular on the Renaissance mailing list are Occupant, Resident and Boxholder. Not very creative at all and certainly not very feminine. Come on ladies, if you pick a name you can build up a persona and maybe then you can get out and meet some other folks and have fun. Besides, you don't want to be addressed as Ms. Occupant, do you?

Speaking of Names

A name mix-up lead to comedy hijinks on the sitcom *Men Behaving Badly*. The worst behaving of the men, played by Rob Schneider of SNL, is named Jamie. He is an amateur photographer, and male chauvinist pig. One day while surfing the Net, probably on his roommates account cause he's that kind of guy, he sees a photography contest with a \$5000 prize. It's supposed to be images of women so he submits a shot he took of a beautiful

woman in top condition running by two women of more than ample proportions. (I put that so PC. They were fat, OK?) He gets a letter that says he has won the prize. Of course he get's all excited and quits his job at the pretzel stand and makes plans for how he's going to spend the cash.

Then, his roommate points out that it seems to be a women's photography contest. A careful reading of the letter indicates that his name has made the contest people think he's a woman. He quickly decides to do what any red blooded guy would do. He decides to dress up to claim the prize.

His outfit is not too good. As his roommate's girlfriend points out, he looks like a Mexican hooker. A red sequined dress, red sequined platform shoes and a cute page boy bob wig complete his ensemble. He claimed that he found the dress hanging in his closet. His excuse, many women have exited his bedroom in great haste.

Then, at the last minute he get's an attack of conscience. He decides to go to the award ceremony as himself, wearing a really bad, pastel tuxedo from the Salvation Army. As he arrives at the podium, after being introduced as Jamie. He starts to tell them he's a guy but the words he chooses make the audience, which includes many butch women, think he is a drag king. When he hears them yell out, "Go on girl!," he remembers the five grand and goes with the flow.

I never watch *Men Behaving Badly* and only caught this show because I saw a promo featuring Schneider in a dress. I enjoyed the drag king twist on a plot that could have been pretty predictable. Keep your eyes on the television listings in case it reruns.

Did Someone Say Photo Contest?

Boy do I have some hot dish. It seems (according to my unimpeachable source) that the US Postal Service had a contest to provide an image for a Breast Cancer Awareness commemorative stamp. Well, they found a winner, printed the stamps, and also did promotional poster sized prints. One of those prints came to be framed and

put on the wall of the meeting site of a certain transgender support group in the Philadelphia area. The picture has been there for months and it has only recently been revealed that the woman in the picture is not really a woman. According to my source, who I refuse to reveal on pain of imprisonment, it's a transvestite.

This is possible since the photo is of a woman's (or TV's) back. Her head is turned to the right and we don't see her whole back. No actual mammaries are in the shot. She has rather short hair and, after I was told the truth I noticed, if you look closely at the base of her neck it starts to protrude ever so slightly right where an Adam's Apple would begin. Now, I'd like to say I had a feeling about the picture but, I really didn't. Well, maybe just the vaguest subconscious feeling. Apparently it caused quite a scandal at the Postal Service when they found out.

To me, the weirdest part (maybe we should call in Scully and Mulder) is that this picture came to be placed on the wall at a transgender meeting site with no one aware that the subject of the photo was really a TV. The therapist who had it framed and hung had no clue until just recently.

Cue the *Twilight Zone* music and pan to Rod Serling in a Chanel suit with matching bag. "Submitted for your approval, a Postal contest submission that does more than decorate the wall at the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of Renaissance. It's a photo that takes you beyond the self examination area and into... *The Twilight Zone*."

Oh, darn that Rod. He gave away the location of the picture. Well, if you visit Ren. GPC you'll know to look for it.

Do We Need Another Fund?

Here's a question for my loyal followers. No, it has nothing to do with preparing to leave for space. It concerns conditions here on our little portion of this ball of mud we call Earth. There has been a suggestion made to major groups in the TG community that a new organization be formed to manage a fund for transgender activ-

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6th Annual TG Law & Employment Policy Conference Planned

The transgender organization for lawyers, ICTLEP, will hold its 6th annual law conference Friday and Saturday, July 11-12 in Houston, Texas. This year's conference is co-sponsored by FTM International, Tri-Ess International, Its Time America (ITA), The American Boyz, and Transgendered Officers-Protect and Serve (TOPS).

Topics covered will include: How religious law affects secular law dealing with transgendered people, FTM legal workshops, workshops dealing with being TG but non-TS, with being a person of color and TG, with gender dysphoria and the DSM, with educating your local police, with activism and lobbying techniques, and more.

The Friday night speaker is Reginald E. Jones, Commissioner with

the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The Saturday speaker is Kerry Lobel, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force NGLTF).

This may be the last TG law conference for a while since ICTLEP has documented all of the past conferences and will have, after this conference, about 98% of transgender legal thought in print and available through Indexed Proceedings which are available on ICTLEP's two web pages. (On AOL, keyword "ICTLEP" and on the WWW, <www.abmall.com/ictlep>

In order to make the event less of a financial burden ICTLEP has planned this year's conference to be a shorter duration event (Friday morning through Saturday evening), and pro-

vided assistance with roommates to reduce the cost of hotel room rental, as well as arranging airfare discounts with Southwest Airlines, and setting low registration prices (\$46.50 per day, including luncheon, with additional early registration discounts). Scholarships are also available. (As low as \$18 per day, including luncheon, if you register early.) The conference will apply for continuous legal education credits for attending attorneys.

For more information contact ICTLEP, P.O. Drawer 35477, Houston, TX 77235-5515. The conference is being held at the Ramada/Astrodome-Medical Center. The street address is 2100 South Braeswood at Greenbriar, Houston 77030, and the phone is 713-797-9000.



News Beat...

ism. Currently we have the Winslow Street Fund to dole out cash for activism, et cetera, but those who propose this new fund want it to take a much more proactive approach to getting the cash out of your purse and into the fund. Then the money could be utilized to do good works for transgendered people, whether it is something in the form of providing pay for lobbyists to champion our cause to state and Federal government, to pay for protests over mistreatment of our sister and brothers, or to eventually be slipped to candidates as soft money so that they can buy new dresses. The

funds' proponents' are correct when they say that the transgendered community will only become a recognized force for change when it gets large quantities of cash available. Money talks. No doubt about that. The question is, should we set up a new fund? Is it necessary? This fund would be there to benefit you and the TG youth of tomorrow. (Bridge to the future, and so on, blah blah.) Let me know what you think. Send me an email or drop me a line and I'll let you all know what my readers think. If they think about anything but their feminine finery... they're *my* readers after all.

I have to get serious for a minute and end with special thanks to every-

one who sent us an additional donation. Thank you! While the community debates starting a new fund for activism, we still have to pay the bills at the National office. Everyone who has dug a little deeper has really helped us out. We want to stay around for our 20th Anniversary and with your help we'll make it.

That's enough with the serious stuff. And with that I must take my leave. My cucumber facial and manicure await. Ta ta till next month my little chipmunks. See you at The Park Ridge.



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Issues of Psychiatric Classification of Gender Expression

by Katherine K. Wilson, Gender Identity Center of Colorado, Inc.

Presented at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Sponsored by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Association and the Departments of Psychology and Women's Studies, March 19, 1997.

Transgendered people have been known by many names in many tongues throughout the course of human history. For instance, here in Colorado there were the Cheyenne *he man eh*, the Lakota *winkte* and the Navajo *nadle*. In our "enlightened" Western culture, however, transgendered people are known as "mentally disordered."

The psychiatric classification of gender identity expression as defined in the *Fourth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or DSM-IV, is a complex issue that has divided the transgender community in recent months. Many questions have emerged around the diagnostic categories known as Transvestic Fetishism, 302.3, and Gender Identity Disorder, 302.85.

Are the diagnostic criteria consistent and clear?

No. Recent revisions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* have made these categories increasingly ambiguous and reflect a lack of consensus within the American Psychiatric Association. The result is that a widening segment of gender non-conforming youth and adults are potentially subject to diagnosis of psychosexual disorder, severe stigma, and loss of civil liberty.

For example, criterion A of the Transvestic Fetishism disorder is grammatically ambiguous: "Over a period of at least 6 months, in a heterosexual male, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving cross-dressing."

The description, "sexually arousing," could be interpreted to apply to only "fantasies" or to all three of "fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors" with

very different meaning. The first interpretation would implicate all recurrent crossdressing behavior. The second would limit the diagnosis to only sexually motivated crossdressing, as did the DSM-III-R, and imply the unlikely phrase, "sexually arousing sexual urges." Although labeled a "fetishism," it is not clearly stated whether or not transvestism must be sexual in nature to qualify for diagnosis. The distinction is left entirely to the clinician.

In another example, the Introduction to the DSM-IV states, "Neither deviant behavior, nor conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are mental disorders unless the deviance or conflict is a symptom of a dysfunction in the individual." This squarely conflicts with the following in the GID section: "Gender Identity Disorder can be distinguished from simple nonconformity to stereo-typical sex role behavior by the extent and pervasiveness of the cross-gender wishes, interests, and activities." It implies that you may deviate only so far from social expectations without a diagnostic label.

Conflicting language in the DSM serves as ammunition for psychologists and MDs who may be employed as expert witnesses by intolerant parents, relatives, and employers who seek to deny transpeople their freedom, children, and jobs.

Doesn't the DSM-IV exclude TGs from diagnosis who are comfortable with their lives and gender expression?

This is not what the DSM-IV says; it is what many wish it to say. It refers to the "clinical significance criterion" added to most diagnostic categories in the DSM-IV. It requires a "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning," for a diagnosis of mental disorder. The problem is that distress and impairment are not defined for transgendered people in the DSM-IV. They are left to the interpretation of the practitioners. Tolerant

MDs and therapists believe that TG identity or expression is not inherently impairing, but that societal intolerance and prejudice are to blame for the distress and internalized shame that the transgendered often suffer. Intolerant MDs and therapists presume the opposite: that crossgender identity or expression by definition constitutes an impairment regardless of the individual's happiness or well-being.

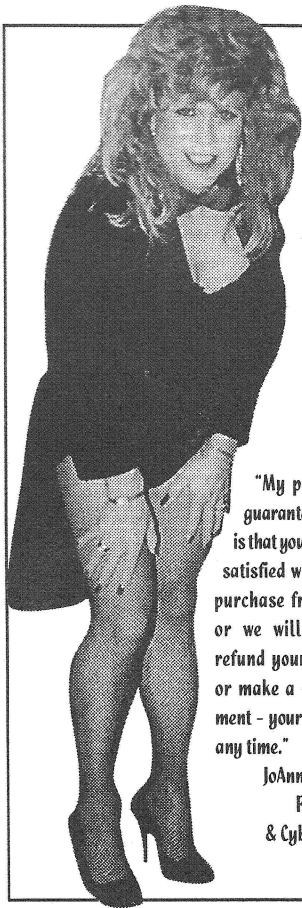
Both views are unfortunately justified by the current wording of the DSM-IV. Kenneth Zucker, of the GID subcommittee, acknowledged that these conflicting views were not resolved when the GID criteria were written. As a case in point, Zucker and others have pointed out that the same clinical significance criterion to the pedophilia disorder could be interpreted to exclude ego syntonic (self-accepting) child molesters from diagnosis. The APA emphatically denied this, stating that pedophilia "by definition constitutes impairment." Clearly, the present GID and TF diagnoses may just as easily be interpreted to constitute impairment by definition.

Is the treatment of gender identity and expression consistent with the treatment of sexual orientation?

No. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association deleted homosexuality as a mental disorder from the DSM-II. No one has reasonably established why gender orientation is treated so differently in the DSM excepting differences in political organization and influence.

Much psychiatric literature about transgendered people is shockingly similar to that published about homosexuality before it was depathologized. It is based on a presumption that cross-gender identity/expression is by definition pathological, is focused on unsubstantiated theories of psychodynamic (mother-blame) cause and anecdotal case studies of institutionalized subjects, denies the existence of healthy productive TG people in soci-

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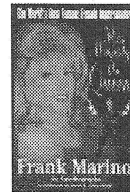
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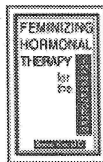
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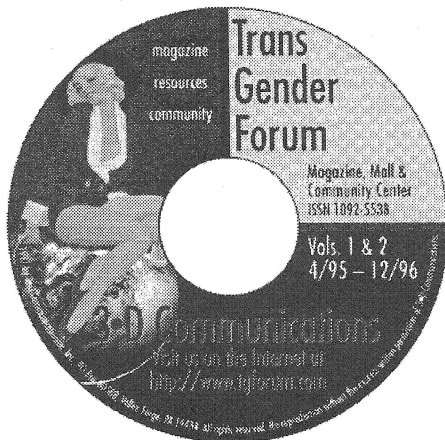
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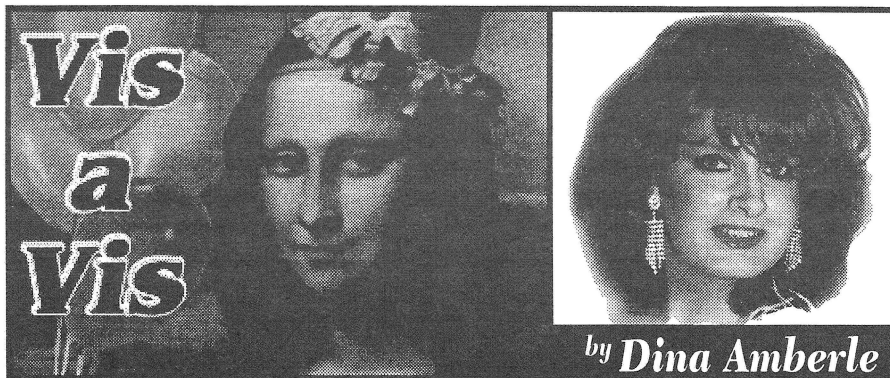
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The 3-D partners are Cindy Martin, Jamie Fenton & JoAnn Roberts



I usually try to come up with something that I find humorous to open the column but this time I got nothing. I was going to do something with the Hale-Bopp suicide cult but there's nothing funny about suicide.

Alright, in this case it is a little funny. But what's the crossdressing tie-in? Maybe if they had all worn high heels instead of Nike sneakers I could have had something. Or if they laid down with back issues of *LadyLike* magazine instead of purple death shrouds, then I might have been able to make hay.

Okay, so there's nothing funny about suicide. And there's nothing funny about crossdressing either. Witness the item below where we delve into the very serious topic of transvestic governance...

Damn Government

Perhaps what separates man from lesser creatures is our ability to befoul our existence with self-made complications. Take, for example, our various bodies of government, including our crossdressing organizations.

Two recent newsletters from Sigma Nu Rho in New Jersey and the *Primrose* in Chicago carried items that left me shaking my head wondering how we get into unnecessary controversies over arbitrary rules and regulations.

The Sigma Nu Rho *News Briefs* printed their president's letter in which she had to scoldingly remind individual members that they must be members of the National Tri-Ess organization as a qualification for local sorority membership. The local sorority allows a 90 day grace period for individuals to get signed up with National

and, you guessed it, some ladies are dragging their feet about joining the National now that they have the advantages of the local sorority membership. The National organization tracks this sort of thing somehow and they know that the Jersey girls are behind in their National numbers, and this causes flak to be directed to the sorority president, which causes her to scold recalcitrant members.

In the beginning, men put on dresses and it was good. Then one transvestite found another transvestite and they begat a sorority. And the sorority begat a national organization of sororities. And the national organization begat regulations so that they could measure membership ratios and police anomalies therefrom. And that begat headaches for everybody.

Meanwhile, the *Primrose* (Chicago Gender Society, a Renaissance affiliate, by the way) recounted a tempest in a teapot that blew through the windy city at the February meeting of their cross-town rivals, the Chi Chapter of Tri-Ess. The newsletter article titled "No Valentines at Tri-Ess" said that the current Chi Chapter president and past president got into a heated verbal exchange "stopping just short of a physical confrontation" over the adoption of by-laws. That's right, they almost came to blows about by-laws.

The content of the by-laws in question was not mentioned in the article. Apparently, it was the manner in which the by-laws were adopted (without chapter membership ratification) that caused the brouhaha. Interesting comments regarding the by-laws were as follows: the current president said that the by-laws had been written over

a three year period and an impromptu poll of the membership "found most members indifferent to the issue."

So there you have it. Three years of work, one knock-down drag-out fight and most of the members couldn't give a flying farkel about by-laws. They probably just wanted to come to the meeting so they could put on a dress and high heels. And you know... there ain't nothing wrong with that.

Life Imitates Art

The Dresseret News of the Alpha Rho Chapter of Tri-Ess in Salt Lake City, Utah carried a long essay titled "The Art of You" by board member Gwen. Gwen expanded on an idea she read in *The Femme Mirror* that crossdressing should be promoted as an art form. I have long believed that we have been barking up the wrong tree for public acceptance by burdening ourselves with the concept of deep psychological compulsion as a reason for crossdressing, so I was interested to read a different take on promoting ourselves as "artists".

Gwen starts off by applying Webster's definition of art to the practice of crossdressing. Sure enough, the effort and effect of cross-dressing matches every requirement of "art." If you set aside the psychological motivation we may feel to crossdress in the first place, we are basically trying to create something that resembles something else entirely. Our creation is an expression of who we are and how we feel about the opposite sex.

She rounds out the rest of her essay by talking at length about how the act of crossdressing is akin to the creative process of all art forms. Even the fact that many artists destroy or purge their less pleasing work parallels the unhappy purging many crossdressers go through. The fact that the public oftentimes does not appreciate an artist's efforts certainly dovetails with our experience as crossdressers. The artist always persists in his efforts to perfect and create his vision knowing that most potential patrons just "don't get it."

All in all, it's an interesting way to look at what we do. It may seem more than just a little presumptuous to call

ourselves “artists” but if the high heels fits... why fight it? For most crossdressers, even those who feel strongly transgendered, the idea of thinking about what we do as “art” is a good way to get away from all the mumbo-jumbo that masquerades as explanation for our motivation. An artist may not be able to articulate why he or she is compelled to create their art... they simply must do it, and the psychological need to create their art is almost never questioned by the public. We should be so lucky—and perhaps we will be if we could get people to think of crossdressing on the same terms.

Our Biggest Fans

Michelle Lynn of Renaissance’s Greater Philadelphia Chapter contributed an article to the *Liberty Belles* newsletter titled “The Language of the Fan.” In the olden days, women used those hand-held fans to send overt or subliminal messages to potential suitors. Michelle, no doubt drawing on extensive historical research (unless she’s older than she’s letting on) interpreted some typical fan techniques as follows:

Twirling the fan with the left hand meant “we are being watched.”

Holding the fan in the right hand in front of the face meant “follow me.”

Resting the fan on the right cheek meant “yes.”

Resting the fan on the left cheek meant “no.”

Holding the fan handle to the lips meant “kiss me.”

Drawing the fan across the cheek meant “I love you.”

Twirling the fan in the right hand meant “I love another.”

Drawing the fan across the eyes meant “I am sorry.”

And there were a few others listed as well but you get the drift. Now that is a hell of a lot of information about the use of fans. In fact, as Ed McMahon would say at this time, I bet everything we ever wanted to know about using fans is in that article!

Well, not quite. There were a few interpretive movements of the fan that were left out and I pass them along to you now:

Whacking the fan across your

suitor’s face meant “you better get your hand off my thigh, buster.”

Drawing the fan slowly across your bosom meant “I have a pretty nice rack, don’t I?”

Batting your eyes over the top of the fan could mean two things: “I am wearing new false eyelashes” or “My contact lens just went crooked.”

Placing the fan atop your empty glass meant “Buy me another drink and we’ll talk about it.”

Softly patting your backside with an open fan meant “I’ve been a bad, bad girl and I need a spanking.”

And, finally, putting the fan down and picking up *Renaissance News & Views* meant “I’m going to read this month’s *Vis a Vis*.”

What’s In a Name?

The April issue of *Renaissance News & Views* included Dr. Barbara Anderson’s “Gender Reflections” column titled “A Rose By Any Other Name” where she explored the choice of one’s femme name. As Dr. Anderson points out, we don’t get a chance to choose our birth names but we do get a chance to pick our femme names (or masculine names for FtM’s). She raises the question of whether we look into the origins of names we choose.

All names have some etymological or historical root from which they derive. Most of us choose a name based on closeness to our real names or for some personal affinity. But I’m sure many of us don’t know where our names come from or what deeper meaning they may have.

I picked up a library copy of *A Treasury of Baby Names* and perused some of the meanings of common crossdressing names. One of the most common femme names is “Michelle” which is the feminine version of Michael. But did you know that “Michael” means “who is like God?” And doesn’t that explain some of the divas operating under the moniker Michelle? Barbara—another popular name for guys named Bob—means “stranger,” deriving from “barbarian.” someone from the outside. Which is a curious choice then for someone looking to make friends. Perhaps a good

friend to make would be a girl named “Jessica.” which derives from the masculine “Jesse,” which means “wealthy,” an outstanding trait in any new friend.

Some names are easily understood. “Angela” means “heavenly messenger,” perhaps with her own column in a newsletter somewhere. “Diane” derives from Diana, goddess of the moon and the hunt, which means she probably has a nice can and plays hard to get. “Virginia” is a derivation of “virgin” and may actually have some truth behind it if heterosexual crossdressing is to be believed. The name “Elizabeth” and the many diminutives of that name mean “consecrated to God,” which means they might as well call themselves Virginia. Contrary to popular belief, “Dina” does not mean “one who loves spandex and false eyelashes” but rather “the judged,” which explains why I always place second in Halloween contests.

So you see, a little research into our names can be informative. Perhaps some of our Barbaras will consider changing their names from “stranger” to something a little friendlier, like “Amy” which is French for “beloved.”

And In Summation

Crossdressers have a great fondness for lesbians—of course, it’s all for the wrong reasons—and the Ellen DeGeneres story is all the talk this month. But my favorite lesbian news story recently was the one about best-selling mystery writer Patricia Cornwell, who admitted to a lesbian affair with a married FBI agent. The whole thing came out in public a few months ago during the agent’s messy divorce. In early April, Ms. Cornwell made a public statement saying she thought that too much was made of her indiscretion. “It was just a couple of trips across the rug” was the way she characterized her affair.

I’m sure some of you have heard lesbian lovemaking disparagingly referred to as “carpet munching.” I’m still trying to figure out if Ms. Cornwell’s statement about the rug was a variation of this slang, or maybe

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Gender Reflections

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

Be Prepared

How many times have you prepared for a night out, dressed to kill? What was on your mind as you anticipated the evening, adorned yourself in your best, and left for your destination? Probably you planned your wardrobe — colors, accessories, etc., checked the time and place of the event, packed your purse with essentials and were on your way with thoughts focused on enjoying yourself to the max.

Or are you at the opposite pole — yearning to go out on the town but so fearful of discovery, and worse, ridicule or aggression, that you abandon the thought almost before it is formed.

Each of these mind sets has its dangers, but neither needs to be abandoned completely. Moderation is the word. Although going out dressed should be fun, total oblivion to hazards is an invitation to disaster. And paralysis by fear of the worst possible scenario is similarly unproductive.

The danger of being “clocked” or “read” may be greatly overrated—not because you pass so well—lots of new CDs and occasional dressers don’t, but because the vast majority of people who might recognize you as a CD are not aggressive or violent. It is probably more important for you to be prepared, mentally and emotionally for the insensitively curious and those whose inhibitions are loosened by alco-

hol. The former may be best handled in a variety of ways depending on circumstances. If you are walking past them, indifference is the best response. If they are moving in the same direction, or you are cornered with them in line waiting for a traffic light, etc., a flippant, or friendly rejoinder may smooth over an awkward moment — “I heard you mention my dress. It’s Donna Karan and I love it too.”

The drunkenly loquacious can best be dealt with by adopting an attitude of kindly condescension followed by moving on, even if it takes you out of your way. Drunks are unpredictable, unreasonable, and uneducable; don’t waste your effort on them.

Some CDs are the instrument of their own danger... in their choice of clothing. Shoes that do not fit properly, cut off circulation to the feet, that slip off when walking, that have unsteady or very high heels, and those with platform soles are truly dangerous. Not only is there the danger of tripping when walking under normal circumstances, should the unlikely occur and you wish to beat a hasty retreat, your shoes may impede you avoiding a dangerous or threatening situation. Ditto tight skirts, long shawls and lengthy chain link jewelry. Make sure your clothes are comfortable, that you are practiced in their wear and manage-

ment and they do not impede your movement.

Because even the unlikely may occur, you should have a game plan in mind. If at all possible travel in pairs. Should you have an accident such as a fall or a minor traffic mishap something that attracts a crowd, do your best to maintain your dignity. If you are uninjured and there is no need to involve any authorities, move on quickly. If you need help, either medical or the police, call for it yourself on your cellular phone (a great help, these days).

Should you find yourself the target of physical aggression, assess the danger and your ability to defend yourself. This is not the moment to try your feminine wiles or to go limp. If you are very matched with the aggressor and no weapons are flashed, take an assertive stance. Avoid physical engagement unless you are secure in your competence. Do what you would do if you weren’t crossdressed. Put aside your pride. Try to position yourself in a way to attract attention —run into a store or even into slow moving traffic. If they want money, hand it over.

If you feel you have been the victim of hate violence targeted because of your transgender status, get any necessary medical care and then report the incident to the police. Last but not least, if you are in the SF Bay area call CUAV (Community United Against Violence) at 333-HELP or a similar local organization. This organization works to end anti-gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender violence in a confidential manner. They provide empowering services to survivors such as crisis intervention short term counseling, advocacy with the criminal justice system, support groups, and a 24 hour crisis line.



Renaissance Library Report

Dr. Lee Etscovitz, the Renaissance National Librarian, reports that the Library Discussion Group met at The Woods on Wednesday, April 2, 1997 from 8 to 9:30 PM. With 1997 being

the tenth year for Renaissance as an organization, the discussion involved some reminiscing and discussion of Renaissance’s historical roots. The next meeting will take place at The Woods

from 8 to 9:30 PM on Wednesday, June 4, 1997. Who knows what will be discussed at the next meeting, for each meeting’s discussion is a direct reflection of its participants’ interests.

Vis...

just an innocent remark about the harmlessness of the fling.

Speaking of Ellen DeGeneres, though... The popular media hasn't seemed to mention it but there has always been wide speculation that she was a lesbian in the gay media. Her announcement that she was indeed gay seemed anticlimactic to me. And now I hear that *Time* magazine is going to run a cover photo of Pope John Paul II with the caption, "Yep, I'm Catholic!"

I visited the TV bar Edelweiss in

New York City recently on a Saturday night and found the place almost deserted. Every time I go, which is infrequently, it seems to get less and less crowded. At one time, the place would be jumping by ten o'clock. Now it's well after midnight before any sizable mass of people are there. One new barmaid even asked me if it was usually this empty. We talked about why it doesn't attract the crowds the way it once did and one thing that occurred to me was that in the past few years, with drag becoming more popular, there are so many more nightspots to visit that Edelweiss seems a little old hat. It's still an interesting New York

experience to skulk around in there, though, and I hope that it's able to hang on.

And speaking of hanging on, Joann Roberts mentioned that Kym Richards' *CrossTalk* magazine may be a thing of the past. Too bad for all of us, because it always had interesting features and articles and over my time writing this column I found many items from which I drew material. Thanks for the good stuff, Kym, and best wishes for reviving *CrossTalk* on the Internet.



Gender...

ety, and ignores anthropological evidence of accepted cross-cultural TG roles. These tired old myths were debunked for sexual orientation 25 years ago and have been recycled to target transgendered individuals.

Is GID used to institutionalize gender non-conforming children and youth?

Yes. The GID criteria for children are significantly broader in scope in the DSM-IV than in earlier revisions, to the concern of many civil libertarians. A child may be diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder without ever having stated any desire to be, or insistence of being, the other sex. Boys are inexplicably held to a much stricter standard of conformity than girls. A preference for crossdressing meets the diagnostic criterion for boys but not for girls, who must insist on wearing only male clothing to merit diagnosis. References to "stereotypical" clothing, toys and activities of the other sex are imprecise in an American culture where much children's' clothing is unisex and appropriate sex role is the subject of political debate. Equally puzzling is a criterion which lists a "strong preference for playmates of the other sex" as symptomatic, and seems to equate mental health with sexual discrimination and segregation.

Gender Shock, Exploding the Myths of Male and Female, Phyllis Burke (1996) describes cases of children as young as age three institutionalized or treated with a diagnosis of GID for widely varying gender nonconformity. She presents evidence of increasing use of GID for children suspected of being "prehomosexual," and not necessarily transsexual. Diagnosis and treatment is often at the insistence of unaccepting parents with the intent of changing a perceived homosexual orientation. This use of Gender Identity Disorder for children and youth was recently condemned by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Do gender diagnoses promote unfair social stereotypes?

Yes. The transgender diagnostic categories are open to interpretation that promotes invalid stereotypes; sexualizes self-expression that is often social; and fails to reflect the diversity of the transgendered community. Moreover, Transvestic Fetishism is classified as a paraphilia, legitimizing stereotypes that associate crossgender role with criminal or harmful conduct. TSs who are out of the closet must bear the greatest brunt of stereotypes that presume mental illness or incompetence in the home, workplace, and community.

Does the DSM-IV adequately consider socio-cultural research?

No. A growing body of sociological

and anthropological literature that regards gender as a social construction, not a biological imperative, is inexplicably ignored. There are many examples of "supernumerary gender" precedents in non-western cultures. These were accepted, often highly respected, societal roles where gender variation and fluidity were considered a normal part of human life. Are we to infer now that all of these people were mentally ill?

Won't TG people suffer intolerance anyway, whether the DSM is reformed or not?

Irving Bieber and Charles Socarides, who led the opposition to declassify homosexuality in the 70s, made similar arguments. These were disputed by Robert Spitzer, who noted that gays and lesbians were denied civil rights, because their status as "mentally ill" placed a "burden of proof ... on them to demonstrate their competence, reliability, or mental stability." History has clearly vindicated Spitzer's view for GLB people.

The declassification of homosexuality was a powerful message that discrimination in the community and workplace had no scientific justification.

Reforming the DSM will not eliminate transgender stigma but will remove its legitimacy. The lessons of history are clear for the case of gays and lesbians who suffer very much the same prejudice that transpeople do.

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Hot Buzz

JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



“Delusions are often functional. A mother’s opinions about her children’s beauty, intelligence, goodness, et cetera, ad nauseam, keep her from drowning them at birth.”

— Robert Heinlein



Before I forget, **Happy 10th Anniversary Renaissance.** May you have ten times ten more.



If you haven’t registered yet for the **Second International Congress on Sex & Gender Issues**, now is the time to do it. This repeat of the fabulous congress that took place in February 1995 at Cal. State University at Northridge will be just as great if not greater. Plenary speakers are Kate Bornstein, Prof. Dr. Louis Gooren, and Dr. Steven Levine of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. Sandra Bem (The Lenses of Gender) may make a special address as well. In addition to two and a half days of sessions, the congress is pleased to host the **Magnus Hirschfeld** exhibit. This exhibit, titled **“Seventy Five Years of Sexual Science,”** is a rare and wonderful review of the contributions of Dr. Hirschfeld to the field of sexual science, particularly with respect to gender role and identity. Dr. Hirschfeld is credited with inventing the term “transvestite.” The registration fee for the congress is \$80 until June 1 and then it increases to \$100. On Saturday evening, June 21, Re-

naissance will host a 10th Anniversary banquet with **Kate Bornstein** as the guest of honor and dancing to a tg band. The cost of the banquet is \$37. The congress and banquet will be held at the **Park Ridge Hotel** in King of Prussia, Pa. For complete details, contact Renaissance at <www.ren.org>, call the office at 610-975-9119, or write care of 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, Pa. 19087.



First there was **Transexual Menace**. Then **Transgender Nation**. Now the transgender community has spawned yet another activist group, **TransVestite Nuisance**. Yes, friends, TVNuisance is the organization that truly represents the needs and desires of the transvestite segment of the tg community. What is it that TVN wants? Here are a list of their demands: Price Controls on Beaded Gowns! Now!... Decriminalization and Destigmatization of Middle-aged Adolescent Narcissism (MAN) Now! ...Restrooms Without Borders! Hurry! ...Electrolysis on Demand! Soon! ...Amnesty for Clothesline Shoppers! Free the Victoria’s Secret 7,893! ...Haute Couture in Plus Sizes! Though satirical in nature, TV Nuisance is a legitimate not-for-profit operation intended to be fundraising mechanism for legitimate transgender issues and projects including: Lobby Days, Political Action, Education & Research, and Legal Advocacy. TVN is the brainchild of Erin Souza, Cindy Martin, Jamie Fenton, and moi. TVN will begin a merchandising campaign with membership cards, coffee mugs, t-shirts and maybe more. All proceeds will go to real charitable projects. If you want to know more about the goals and projects of TVN (like picketing all Payless Shoe Source stores until they all carry size 13 double wide 4-inch stilettos), write to 3-D Communications, Inc., PO Box 80588, Valley Forge, PA 19484, or send email to <tvnuisance@tgforum.com>.



I spent some time in **Las Vegas** losing my bra at the crap tables and interviewing **Frank Marino** for *LadyLike* Magazine. Marino is the female impersonator who mimics comedienne **Joan Rivers** in the **La Cage** show at the Riviera Hotel. I found Marino to be extremely personable and easy to talk with. I asked him if he felt differently in and out of drag. In particular, there is a photo of Frank and his partner in Frank’s autobiography *His Majesty The Queen* with Frank in a wedding dress and he just looks too natural. He confided in me that the photo was shot that way and with him in male clothes and that he felt really uncomfortable in the male clothes for that photo. I think that Mr. Marino is an extraordinary impersonator and transgendered, at least to some extent. If you’re in Las Vegas, drop by the Riviera any night but Tuesday for one of the best FI shows I’ve ever seen. Also, if you’d like to read his autobiography, it is available through CDS.



On the political front, companion joint resolutions were introduced on March 20 in the House and Senate, according to transgender activist **Dana Priesing**. The resolutions are **House Joint Resolution 66**, and **Senate Joint Resolution 24**. Each proposes the following amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

- “Article —
- “Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
- “Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
- “Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.”

Priesing says, “A construction of the meaning of *sex* in these resolutions, broad enough to encompass sexual characteristics, expression and/or identity, would be enormously beneficial to

HOT•BUZZ

transgendered people, as well as bisexuals, lesbians and gays (sexual orientation, after all, either is a sexual characteristic or sexual expression). No word yet on how broadly, or narrowly, the term is intended to be construed.”

I must have hit a nerve last month because that column generated more mail than ever. Here's a sample: "I felt compelled to comment about the HRC/ENDA issue, after reading your comments [last month]. I was one of the activists who traveled to DC in late February. I believe, after having visited and spoken to [staffers] of Senators **McConnell** (KY), **Ford** (KY), **Baucus** (MT), **Dorgan** (ND), **Harkin** (IA), **Daschle** (IA) and **Moseley-Braun** (IL), that those who support ENDA or legislation similar to it will do so regardless of trans-inclusion. Those who are resistant, as Wendell Ford was, will remain so. The fence-sitters (McConnell) are the ones to work on... That does not mean we should expect passage this year. This is a Congress largely funded by and representing the interests of the religious right, and in my part of the US, they are very, very strong.... I say to heck with the **HRC** (Human Rights Campaign) and when my lesbian friends saw what HRC has done to transpeople, they agreed with me. HRC is not our ally, and should be shunned by transpeople. Any transperson who gives a donation to HRC is not getting enough beauty rest. Thanks for the Forum, once again. **Anne Casebeer**, Bluegrass Belles”

Onto the fashion news! Last month I mentioned the **Dinair** airbrush makeup system. That elicited this reply from **Andie Blank**. "I contacted Dinair about a year ago, and purchased the full package. It was more like \$800 complete with makeup! Unfortunately, I am a spaz with tools, and this was no different. Besides, spray painting myself was very awkward. I think I would have been more successful doing it on someone else. But Dinair *was* completely reputable, and tried to help me through my problems. When I finally gave up, I re-

turned the unit, and they promptly credited my account." Anyone who wants more info on the Dinair should contact Andie at <Andieblank@aol.com>.

The BUZZ for Spring are pastel colors in yellows, blues and pinks. But we're talking makeup here, not clothing. Why not try these blue lipsticks: **Bleu Satin** from **Guerlain**, **Hard Candy Sky** or **Urban Decay's Vapor**. For a more traditional Spring pink try **Helena Rubinstein no 47**, **Estee Lauder Cannes Coral**, or **Clinique's Watermelon**. Another HOT color for Spring is orange and the lipstick isn't being left out here either. Try **Guerlain's Orange Insolent**. Looking for peach? There's **Estee Lauder All-Day South Beach Peach**. Looking for a tasty plum? Try **Estee Lauder Perfect Bloom**.

Summer is just around the corner and our editrix, **Ms. Gardner**, will soon be exhorting you to take photos of your beach excursions for the February '98 **Swimsuit Issue**. So, you'll want to look your best on the beach and too much makeup on the beach is scary. The idea is to look natural, not made up. One trick is tinted lipgloss rather than lipstick. The **Estee Lauder Suddenly Summer** collection is based on colors you'll see in sand and includes lip gloss, lipsticks and nail polish. Mix them rather than match them. Use mascara, but make sure it's water resistant. If you **must** use foundation (and most of us *must*) then use one of the silicone based makeups that won't slide off in the hot sun.

Laurie909 from AOL commented on my piece about **MODE** magazine last month. She says, "...though most TV/CD/TGs may be able to take advantage of a magazine like **MODE**, not all. I am 5'3" and weigh 128 lbs. I wear a size 8 or 10 petite (am I making you jealous... well, I use to be able to wear a 7 or 9.) But it's not all glory over here either. Although 8's or 10's may be easier to find than 16's or 22's, unless they're petites, I have to have them altered, too. The sleeves or legs or skirt hems are too long. [My] point being: No matter what size you are, you just can't win." Gawd, is she braggin' or complainin'? Seriously,

I know what she means. At 5'6" myself, everything I buy has to be hemmed and I have all my skirts taken in at the hips.

What's in a name? Back in 1986 there was simply the **Donna Karan Collection** and the eponymous line made an instant hit. That success was repeated in 1989 with the release of **DKNY**, a younger, more hip, and less expensive line of clothes. These were followed by **Donna Karan Essentials**, a line of basic items with which one could build a wardrobe. So, what happened this spring? Ms. Karan got positively wild and released a whole slew of new lines. First there's **D**, a derivative of DKNY that is supposed to fill in (price-wise) between DKNY and the Donna Karan Collection, ranging in price from \$200 to over \$600. **DKNY Classics** is a line of basics (again?) starting at about \$100 and topping out at \$250. Then add DKNY Active to the list with stretchy logo'd pieces like stretch tights and nylon mesh tank tops starting at \$35 for t-shirts and peaking at \$250 for a power-stretch all-in-one catsuit. Finally there's **DKNY Jeans** sporting, ta da... jeans and more t-shirts. Methinks LaDonna has split her personality once too often. But, it's not just Karan doing the splitting. In 1976 **Liz Claiborne** started her company to fill the wardrobe needs of the emerging career woman. Today there's the **Liz Claiborne Collection** of careerwear, **Lizsport** (sports-wear), **Lizwear** (youth collection), **Liz & Company** (weekend wear), **Lizgolf** (golf wear), **Liz Night** (evening wear), and **Elisabeth** (Plus sizes). **Ralph Lauren** is another designer splitting lines. In addition to the **Ralph Lauren Collection**, (Do you get the idea that if it's a "collection," then it's expensive?) there's **Ralph** for the younger woman, **Lauren** for less expensive classic pieces, **Polo Sport** for those who like flashy athletic wear, and **Polo Jeans**. However, it's hard to tell the pieces apart except by the prices.

So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? Drowning a delusion might be a bouying experience. Comments? Write care of this publication or send me email to <CyberQueen@cdspub.com>. © 1997 by Creative Design Services.

Gender...

Isn't a medical diagnosis necessary for sex reassignment hormones and surgery?

Yes. For sex reassignment procedures, the *Standards of Care for the Hormonal and Surgical Sex Reassignment of Gender Dysphoric Persons*, from the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, specifically require a diagnosis of transsexualism as listed in the DSM-III-R. The rationale is that crossgender identity is legitimized by psychiatric classification as a condition worthy of evaluation and treatment. By implication, SRS procedures might cease to be offered to transsexuals without a diagnosis to validate their medical necessity and justify their risks.

This rationale is inconsistent, however, with the APA's decision to merge the DSM-III-R categories of Transsexualism and Gender Identity Disorder of Adolescence or Adulthood, Nontranssexual Type (GIDAANT). They were replaced by a nebulous category, Gender Identity Disorder, which could be interpreted to implicate a very broad slice of gender non-conforming children, adolescents, and adults who are not necessarily TS.

Transsexuals who openly face stigma and discrimination every day are poorly served by the DSM-IV. The label of mental disorder burdens them to continually prove their mental competence. Fraught with murky and ambiguous language, Gender Identity Disorder has failed to provide a compelling "medical necessity" for many hospitals and nearly all U.S. insurers, who have dropped SRS procedures and coverage. Furthermore, the current wording has no clear exit clause for post-operative TSs.

It lists postsurgical complications as "associated physical examination findings" of individuals with GID.

Curiously, the Harry Benjamin standards of care have not been revised since the publication of the

DSM-IV or reconciled with its broader definition of Gender Identity Disorder. If gender identity and not sexual orientation is defined as a mental illness for the purpose of legitimizing surgical and hormonal procedures, then two questions emerge: Why was Gender Identity Disorder expressly "uncoupled" from SRS approval criteria, and what is the purpose of diagnosing non-transsexual gender dysphorics?

Perhaps in the future, a physical diagnosis for transsexualism will be offered that is more consistent with surgical and hormonal treatments than the current mental disorder model. In the meantime, the benefits of reducing the stigma of psychosexual illness, while maintaining a clear and specific justification for SRS procedures for transsexuals, merit consideration by the APA.

What should be done?

Psychiatric perceptions of causality, distress, and treatment goals for transgendered people are remarkably parallel to those for gay and lesbian people before the declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973. The diagnostic categories of Gender Identity Disorder and Transvestic Fetishism, like Homosexuality in past decades, may or may not meet current definitions of psychiatric disorder depending on subjective assumptions regarding "normal" sex and gender role and the distress of societal prejudice.

Ambiguous and conflicting language in recent revisions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* serve to subject more gender non-conforming youth and adults with the stigma of psychosexual disorder.

The transgender community is deeply divided on this issue, but needlessly so. *It is possible to retain a diagnosis that specifically addresses the needs of preoperative transsexuals, requiring medical sex reassignment, with criteria that clearly and unambiguously exclude others for whom diagnosis serves no constructive purpose.* This would address the misuse of GID for suspected "prehomosexual" children. It would also free non-operative and post-op transsexuals from the stigma of

psychiatric diagnosis. At the same time, the diagnosis of Transvestic Fetishism should be limited to those for whom crossdressing represents a legitimate sexual fetish that truly interferes with their life, or perhaps deleted altogether. Currently, TF may broadly implicate many transgendered people regardless of sexual motivation or self-acceptance.

These reforms would acknowledge the existence of transgendered people who are capable, happy, and healthy despite severe societal prejudice. Instead of legitimizing unfair stereotypes upon all TG people, a revised DSM would acknowledge the fact that many many TG people are not mentally disordered, distressed, or impaired and do not deserve to be treated as such.

It is crucial that the transgender community reach a consensus on this important issue and with a united voice communicate our needs to other civil rights groups and the medical professions. Medical policy in our society should be open to the possibility that

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difference is not disease, nonconformity is not pathology, and uniqueness is not illness.

Further reading

The most recent text representing the psychiatric view is *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adults*, by Kenneth Zucker and Susan Bradley, Guilford Press, 1995. They are with the Clarke Institute in Toronto and were on the DSM-IV subcommittee that authored the GID section.

The opposing view is presented by Phyllis Burke, *Gender Shock*, Anchor, 1996. This a must-read for anyone concerned with transgendered, gay or lesbian children and adolescents. She documents cases of young boys and girls incarcerated and subjected to cruel treatment for the crime of gender nonconformity. She also illustrates the disturbing practice of using childhood GID as a justification for 'fixing' the sexual orientation of suspected gay children. One of her subjects was featured in an ABC 20/20 episode last year.

Les Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors*, Beacon, 1996 is a fascinating tour of historical and current gender diversity from a social activist viewpoint.

Perhaps the best insights into why gender identity is not a mental illness lie in the history of the pathologization of sexual orientation. See R. Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry*, Princeton, 1981.

In Search of Eve, by Anne Bolin, Bergin&Garvey, 1988, is a classic reference from an anthropological view of TS people and their care givers.

An excellent overview of the cross-dressing phenomenon is given in *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender*, by Vern and Bonnie Bollough, University of Pennsylvania, 1993.

The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture, W. Williams, Beacon Press, 1986, is the best known reference for Native American transgender traditions.

See K. Wilson and B. Hammond, *Myth, Stereotype, and Cross-Gender*

Identity in the DSM-IV, 21st Annual Feminist Psychology Conference, Association for Women in Psychology, Portland OR, March 1996, for more details and references on the pathologization of gender diversity.

WWW: <http://www.transgender.org/tg/gic/awptext.html> or, <http://www.transgender.org/tg/gic"> www.transgender.org/tg/gic/>

Or call the Gender Identity Center, Lakewood, Colorado, (303) 202-6466.



Don't forget to send in your questions for Dear Dr. and Ask the Dermatologist. These are two recurring features authored by Bill Stayton, Th.D., and Jane Ellen Fairfax, M.D., respectively. Dr. Bill will answer questions on a range of subjects from philosophical and theological issues to clinical psychology. Dr. Fairfax will answer your questions concerning skin care. See page 2 for the office address.



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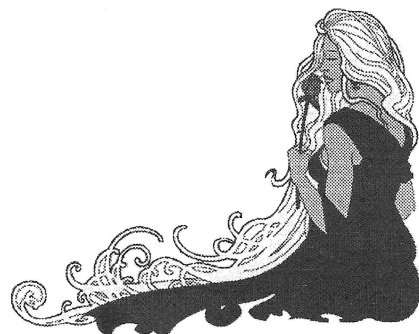
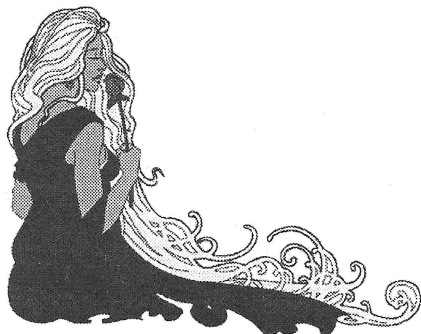
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Letters to the Editor

Dear Angela,

Mea culpa! A check of the manuscript of *As We Were-Transgendered* (April issue) reveals that I said that boys began to crossdress at age four to five, when I meant that they ceased to crossdress at that age. Boys were dressed as girls until three, four, or apparently even five. As a subsequent part of the article reveals, my father was photographed when he was about three, and my uncle was apparently photographed at an even younger age. My father (deceased) remembered being dressed as a girl. I was shown my uncle's photograph many years after his death by his widow, my aunt, so I never had the chance to ask him if he remembered his girlhood days.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Barnes

Dear Angela,

I believe our community is far larger than any of us can imagine. For those who are actively, semi-actively, or even passively participating in its activities, the security of having a "structure" supporting the mystery, uncertainty, and, indeed at times, the aloneness of our lifestyle is an immeasurable benefit. Where else but from organizations such as Renaissance, can we get the spiritual glue to hold our lives together?

I grew up during the Sixties. At that time, to my knowledge, there were no legitimate organizations to which one could turn for understanding and guidance. As Paul Simon once wrote in his wonderful song, *The Boxer*, "I do declare there were times when I took comfort in the whores on Seventh Avenue..." The "fringes" of Society were among the only places to seek out relevancy; and, indeed, to discover that you were not the only one to have had these "feelings."

Over time, magnificent organizations representing our culture sprang up... pioneered by such courageous sisters as JoAnn, Alison, Merissa, Virginia, Abbe,

and so many others. The key to these groups is that they recognize that the main part of our lives is not transacted in society's twilight. Many of us have successful careers; have families; go to ball games; have kids attending college; kids getting married; and, yes, kids having kids.

Naturally, not all of us fit the *Brady Bunch* model, but most of us certainly fit solidly into mainstream society.

And, everyone, no matter where they fall, has to thank God for the people and organizations that serve our transgendered needs.

Yet my "gratitude" is tempered with a great deal of frustration and concern... for the future of our Community. Many groups perceive themselves as a faction... disparate, unique, and an "island" unto itself. We are often jousting with one another... undermining the very purposes for which we were established... those being of "unifying, caring, nurturing, educating, and promoting" the ideals so fundamental to the well-being of our present and future members.

First of all we must acknowledge that no organization is always "all things to all people." There are many colors in our Rainbow. Each group to a degree has its own character. But the one common thread is that we are all transgendered.

Let's lay down our Ego's, and recognize that we are on the fringe of a great opportunity... an opportunity to band together, to further temper the strength that we intrinsically possess in a cause to take the TG Community to the next level of visibility, influence, and acceptance. Let's cease these petty attempts "to stone each other to death with popcorn!"

We are a movement that has power in its aggregate numbers. Look at all of the organizations, both nationally and worldwide.

Let's play a game for a minute: Let's take it as a given that there are roughly 250,000,000 people in the United States. Studies show that approximately 10% have a "gay" orientation... 25,000,000. I'll be very conservative now and assume that only 10% of gays are to some acknowledged degree transgendered... 2.5 million. And, finally, let's conclude that only 10% of those would be predisposed to join a formal group. I've

really whittled down the numbers, but that leaves about 250,000 people that would be "card carrying" members of the Transgendered Community. I know many of you are arguing that being "transgendered" does not necessarily imply that one is "homosexual." True. But, since I have no other statistics, let's use the above... OK? (If we did have accurate TG "numbers," my intuition tells me that the ratios would be even more strongly in our favor.)

Dues are a part of belonging to any organization that wants to maintain its viability. While, each "Local" would have its own dues component, \$50.00 would go "National." The last time I looked, 250,000 times \$50 was \$12,500,000. Twelve million bucks a year can finance an awful lot of magnificent full-time leadership talent, outreach, publications, seminars, meetings, political support (and, I don't mean renting the Lincoln Bedroom for the night!), membership services, professional research, education... both internal and external; and other C/community projects contributing to the overall well-being and acceptance of all of us who are transgendered.

So many of our organizations are struggling for financial survival. The answer has to lie within ourselves... marshaling our own... already available financial resources, by putting our egos aside and joining together to create the strongest union since the Civil and Gay Rights Movements.

It's been done before. It can be done now. Let's do it! We need a National Leader to bring us through the turn of the Century, and strongly into the Millennium. Could that person be you?

Sincerely your Sister,
Diane Dale

Thank you for thinking I might be the one for the job, Diane. I try my best to make a dent while working for Renaissance. You are correct about the vast, untapped financial resource that is out there, but there's no need to limit your figures to homosexual people who may be transgendered. The experts, who can't agree since, as you pointed out, no one has done a definitive study, think there may be between one and

continued on next page

Letters...

ten percent of the total population that has transgender tendencies. I believe that it's actually higher than ten percent, and, remember, it should include women who want to act or be like men. All of these folks spend money on all kinds of needs and desires and if they each spent just ten dollars a year on us we would have more than enough cash to do a fabulous job of championing the rights of all transgendered people.

Speaking for myself, I'm in this for the long haul. There won't be dramatic changes in the next year or even the next ten. We have made great strides toward acceptance in the past decade but there's still a long way to go. Maybe someday students in a transgendered studies class will look back and say, "Renaissance was one of the turning points in TG history." If they do it will be not just because of me, or JoAnn, or

any of the many folks who turn their efforts to helping others through Renaissance, but because of each and every member, from those who send in their minimum dues every year to those who take on leadership roles or make large cash donations. Renaissance is a vehicle, a vehicle to take transgendered people out of the twilight and into the light of day. You can help drive, help navigate or pump the gas that keeps us going. If you care about helping other transgendered individuals jump in.

Thanks for your support Diane and thanks to everyone else. Let's make our 10th Anniversary just the beginning.

JoAnn Replies: I couldn't have said it any more eloquently than Angela did. What makes not just Renaissance but every organization work is the teamwork and participation of the members. It is a challenge to keep an organization alive and well. As the First Lady says, "It takes a village." Are you just visiting or are you going to become a resident?



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Making Sense of It All

When I Turn Off the Television

Like most people, I watch television. I watch some programs for news, some for education and insight, and some strictly for entertainment. In any case, television is always an outside presence which I have essentially invited into my house and which I selectively enjoy.

It was in terms of this general viewing activity that I once found myself suddenly frightened by my turning off the television. I don't remember why I chose to turn it off at that particular moment. Maybe I was simply trying to escape a commercial break. But, selective as I am about watching television, I do know that I suddenly became aware of the stillness, the quietness and peacefulness, in the house. And, as I have said, I became frightened. The following poem, called, "When I Turn Off the Television," grew out of that experience:

When I turn off the television

I am suddenly facing God.

He stares at me
from an empty screen
until I see
my own reflection
staring back,
like an alien
from another world.

There is no sound
except the pounding
of the silence
and of my heart.

God
is not easy to face,
especially when
I see and hear
myself,
and that scares me more.

Maybe
if I were to hold
my own hand,
then maybe
I could begin to live

in my own house,
even with the television
on.

What, you may ask, does all this have to do with my life as a transgendered person, especially since the ostensible purpose of this monthly column is to make some sense of gender change, whatever that change may entail? Actually, the turning off of the television represents for me both my decision to embark on a male to female transition and then my effort to make something of my life following that decision.

I never would have been able to deal with my transgender feelings if I had not been able initially to look away from the show of life and begin to look at my own inner show. I had my own screen test to pass, if you will. I had to be able, at least temporarily, to look away from a screen full of pleasant distractions and begin to look directly at my own life with all of its confusion and potential. Where was I going with my gender feelings? What did I intend to do with those feelings, for they threatened to destroy me if I did not face them once and for all?

But it was not easy to turn off the outer television and to begin to tune into my own inner station, my own show. I had to begin to see and hear myself for who I really am. I was finally able to examine more closely the script I had been following, only to discover that it was the wrong one for me, wrong in a fundamental sense. I was on the stage of life, but I was in the wrong gender. I was miscast, almost from the start. Maybe that is why my own inner ratings were not very high.

And so, in a very real sense, I turned off the television and began to look at myself, not selfishly but instead honestly and realistically. How ironic that when I was living unhappily but appearing to be adjusted, I was socially acceptable. But when I started to live

happily, though markedly changed, to be sure, I lost a certain measure of social approval.

In any case, now that I have essentially made the gender transition, I still face life's normal problems: earning a living, paying bills, staying healthy, getting along with others, finding enjoyment, and just living life. I first had to face God and myself in order to deal with my gender confusion. I now find that I still have to face God and myself, but this time in order to deal with life's challenges in general. It is not that I have never dealt with life, but I have never faced it without my gender struggle. That struggle is essentially over, and so now I have no excuse for not facing life's challenges in terms of myself as a whole person.

Simply being a person, not primarily someone with gender confusion, is really not so simple. For example, I have difficulty sitting still and just being comfortable with myself, both physically and mentally. I seem to be my own distraction. So I practice sitting still on a regular basis. As my poem suggests, I need to hold my own hand first. Then perhaps I might really have a chance to become more aware of my own mind and my own soul. In other words, maybe if I can control my body and stop my outer fidgeting, I might give myself a chance to find the inner calm with which to face life in general. The goal is for nothing to distract me from who I really am, from my total sense of self, and from my general involvement in life, regardless of whether the television is on or off. I would then be able to pass any and every screen test. But first I must turn off the television and sit still with my own inner show. That's the screen test I must pass right now. My inner ratings might even go up just by my trying.



Reasons To Continue

News & Views received the following via email from Joanne Higgins. Like many gender variant people Joanne had arrived at the point where suicide was a real possibility. She turned away from that choice through the intervention of good friends who helped her find reasons to live. Here is her list of reasons in the form of a letter to her cyber pals. All in all Joanne has come up with several great reasons to stay on the this side of the grass.

Dear Becca and Patti:

I finished writing this list Thursday morning, but never got a chance to type it out and really look at it until now. Since you both had asked me to do this, I thought you would both like to see it. And I want to once again thank you both for the gifts you have given me this week.

Why do I want to stay alive?

1. For Timmy. I want to see how my son turns out, even if I am not destined to be with him. Also I do not want to set an example of quitting for him, nor do I want my suicide to haunt him.

2. For Rachel. When I have someone in my life who loves me as much as Rachel does, who makes me feel loved and worthy and alive, what sense does it make to leave? It can't get much better than this.

3. To see Sunrises over the Atlantic Ocean. When I was young, I lived on the New Jersey coast, and my favorite joy was to get up early, go to the beach, and watch the sun come up over the ocean. I want to experience this wondrous event again and again.

4. So that I can help others. I feel best about myself when I have the chance to help other people. If I leave,

I can't help anybody.

5. To see how my journey turns out. I believe that there is a higher power of some sort, be it God or the Goddess or some other entity whom I cannot yet and will never understand. I believe that this Being or Entity or Force has put me here and given me my transsexuality for a reason, and I want to learn for certain what that reason is and whether I achieve the purpose for which I was placed here. I think I understand the reason why I am here, but I want to learn for sure.

6. To fight for understanding. Having lived my life as a member of the class that has the power in this society, and now trying to make a new life for myself as a member of one of the oppressed classes, I have been given a unique opportunity to see the evil and inequity that people can sometimes be subjected to. As a transsexual woman, I have either seen or experienced firsthand some of the worst that this society has to offer to people who are. If I raise my voice in protest of what I see happening, I am strangely in a position where people might actually listen and learn something from me. I cannot ignore this responsibility.

7. My "kids." Through the magic of cyberspace, I have been lucky enough to meet several individuals, all of whom are college freshwomen at different universities, and who are going through very difficult times. I have "adopted" these three women and taken them into my heart as the daughters I always wanted but will never have. I am trying to be there for them, to help them through the hell that they are living with. They are all dealing with some very difficult stuff, and they seem to appreciate my help. I

love them all very much, and thanks to them I am feeling useful.

8. My writing. For me, to write is to be able to fly, to soar above it all and to see the beauty that really is around us. To create, to make something that can be enjoyed and used by others to help them. I cannot write once my ashes are spread over the ocean.

9. For my Mom. My mother died two years ago, and never really could understand that all I ever wanted in my life was to be her daughter. She was by no means a perfect woman; she could be hard, crusty, bitter, resentful and sometimes downright mean. But she also had a heart as big as Texas, in her own way, and never stopped doing for people until she went to the hospital for that final time. I want my mom to be proud of me, her daughter Joanne, and when I finally do die and get to see her again I want her to see me as a woman who carried on her life's work of helping other women.

10. The glory of nature. I originally thought of this just as birds in flight and deer in the woods at twilight, but I realize that there is beauty everywhere around me. With my partner at my side, I have watched a beaver from 8 feet away, working to build his lodge. Geese have flown within 10 feet of us, and we looked in awe at their faces and bodies as they powered their way past us in search of a resting place. It just doesn't get any better than that, and I want to be able to experience those things again.

Thanks in large part to the two of you, I am no longer in the same place I was on Tuesday night, just three short days ago. Right now, for now, I do not want to die. And I have you two women, my newest and dearest friends, to thank for helping me to see the precious gift that was here in front of me all along. I love and cherish you both.

Joanne



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Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Greetings, girlfriends! Well, I think it's pretty safe to say Spring has fully arrived now. After the rather hideous joke Mom Nature pulled on us East Coast folks when we found snow on the ground on April Fool's Day, I wasn't sure when I could put my shovels and rock salt away!

I'm starting this month's column in a state of complete and utter dismay. After reading the opening comments in Dina Amberle's column last month, I was shocked, absolutely shocked to have discovered the influence insider money has had on the board members of Renaissance! Ladies, where are your morals? However, I'm also quite surprised about these revelations, too. I mean, considering that Dina's been seen in just about EVERY glossy magazine in the land save for *Soldier of Fortune* and *Popular Mechanics* (And I wouldn't bet against seeing her in those either!), I thought sure she was in the back pocket of the Kodak lobby!

While we're on the subject, I too am forced to make a confession. Even though what I'm about to say is in direct violation of my Sixth Commandment of Shopping, I'm afraid I must admit that I've been seduced by the growing power of the drug store lobby as Revlon continues to come out with products that amaze me with their quality. A few weeks ago in the April issue of *Glamour*, I read that **Revlon** has added new items to their popular ColorStay line of cosmetics, the items in question being liquid eyeliner, brow color, moisturizing lipcolor and cheek color. This has me considerably excited, and once these items hit the

stores, I'll do a review on them.

Since Spring is here, the more adventurous among our group will no doubt be shopping for swimsuits to hit the pool or beach. **Victoria's Secret** has come out with a swimsuit edition of their ever popular mail order catalog. If you look for it in their stores, you can't miss it as the cover has **Tyra Banks** in a drop dead gorgeous, silver lamé, tank suit. Be still, my beating heart! This catalog is a feast for the eyes, featuring famously lovely ladies like Tyra, **Naomi Campbell**, and *Baywatch's* **Yasmeen Bleeth** among others. And the prices were quite reasonable. To get a Victoria's Secret catalog, call 1-800-888-8200.

While I'm on the topic of mail order, **Newport News** (1-800-688-2830) has some very delectable things in their Spring catalog. In particular, I saw a killer white jacquard suit with a textured floral pattern for only \$59.99, and a stunning black crepe column dress for \$54.99 along with lots more good stuff. (But those two items in particular I might just invest in.) Newport News has a fair amount of clothes in tall and women's sizes, plus swimsuits (none more than \$45) and eight pages of shoes. The only drawback was that their shoes go no higher than 10. Sigh. Still, it would be worth your time to check out this resource.

Meanwhile, **Chadwick's of Boston** (1-800-525-6650) has come out with their Spring catalog, and their clothing is quite delightful. Gobs of Spring and Summer dresses, suits, smashing silk crepe de chine separates, and plenty of bright, sunny and super dressy outfits

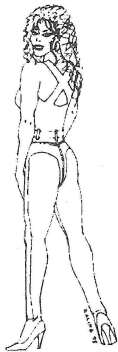
for those fancy, seasonal parties that'll be coming around the bend, not to mention a boatload of sharp and snazzy looking blazers in virtually every color of the rainbow, for as low as \$29. Chadwick's continues to impress me with the quality and amazing value of their clothing.

Sears (1-800-944-3671) which no longer publishes their "big" catalog, hits you six ways to Sunday with smaller, specialty catalogs, and their Spring editions features some winners. Being a suit freak, I'm happy to say Sears has tons of them, my faves being a mondo cool, black and white, color blocked number for only \$46.99 and a three piece wardrobe set with both a skirt and trousers for \$49.99 (\$52.99 in tall sizes). There's also a between season pullout that has a to-die-for leather suit for \$139.99 in black or brown. Outside of **Penney's**, Sears has the largest selection of clothes for talls which makes this a catalog I always enjoy.

Now, some timely advice for you, my loyal readers. For those of you in the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware areas who had been blessed to sit in on my shopping lectures for the local chapters of Renaissance (Once I hit the lottery and become a woman of leisure, I'll be available to do my lectures nationwide!) you've heard me say that the most important thing about shopping for women's clothes in department stores, whether you're en femme or not, is that you have to act calm, relaxed and collected at all times, just like any other shopper. There's a very good reason for that. To put it bluntly, Big Brother is watching.

The next time you visit Sears, Penney's, Macy's, **Nordstrom's** and the like, scan the ceiling. Every hundred feet or so, you'll see dark colored globes. Those, ladies, are television cameras in which the store's Loss Prevention Personnel (the hi-tech equivalent of floor walkers) watch everything that goes on in their search for shoplifters. Because I happen to work in a department store, I've seen the L.P. hard guys (and gals) pounce on unsuspecting thieves who think they aren't

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Shopping...

being monitored from the minute they enter the store to when they attempt to make their heist. I've even helped out on a couple of busts (Heh, heh! She said bust!).

The Loss Prevention people, most of them usually ex-cops, are trained to look for anything out of the ordinary, and believe me, a man in a dress, looking furtive and nervous in the women's section is bound to attract lots of unnecessary attention. If you've got an itch to shop in a department store while dressed, it's vital that you be like Fonzie and act cool. If you think you can handle that, and the scrutiny that goes along with it, then, by all means, go for it. On the other hand, if you

don't think you can, then don't bother. I'm not saying you'd run the risk of being arrested, but you'd certainly wind up getting plenty embarrassed. And that can be awfully traumatic.

Well, girls, that's it for now, the clock is closing in on 6:30 PM, time for the most important news program of the day, *SportsCenter*. My electronic mailbox is open and ready to receive any and all comments on shopping, so drop me a line. As always, I can be reached at

<treetop@voicenet.com>.

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



Resources

Background Papers

Background Papers are \$1.25 each:

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

All of the Background Papers and Community Outreach Bulletins are available for free at the Renaissance web site <www.ren.org>.

Thinking About Mom

by Vanessa Kaye

Mothers' Day seems to bring out the nostalgia in all of us. For me, it's my mother's cooking. How she was able to do such incredible things with ground beef so many years ago, still amazes me. I say this because back then she didn't have a box of pre-measure ingredients to assist her in disguising an inexpensive meat. Come to think of it, I wonder if my mother gets some sort of royalty from the Hamburger Helper folks. If not, she ought to.

There are other wonderful memories of my mother that drift through my mind. One, that I remember well is the magical way she had of making me feel better when I had a cold or the flu. Only my mother had the "magic" of correctly applying Vick's Vap-O-Rub on my chest to make it all better. I can actually smell that stuff now as I write this.

Now, as a parent myself, I marvel at how my mother raised three children on her own, without a husband or partner. Financially and emotionally, it must have been an incredible burden. What the Japanese say is indeed true, "By the time we come to appreciate our parents, they are not." Thankfully

for me, my mother is still around, and continues to give me the benefit of her wisdom. This leads me to something else that I have discovered. It seems quite apparent that the older I get, the smarter my mother has become. When I was a teenager, she was really uninformed about the world. Somehow, with age, she has really become quite wise about a great many things. A friend of mine, who is transgendered, told me a story that I want to share with you, which illustrates just how a mother's intelligence increases with time.

My friend, let's call him "Jim", is now in his forties. Jim's femme persona is Jessica. Finally, after all these years, Jim had the feeling that his mother knew about his crossdressing. There had been "hints" across the years. Jim remembers his mother occasionally calling his

Hanes underwear "panties." Yet, at the time, Jim gave no thought to the veiled reference.

Thanks, in part, to a disgruntled ex-wife, Jim was quite sure that his mother had been told about Jessica's existence. He was quite sure that the revelation had not been done in the best of taste and that the crossdressing had been described as disgusting and perverted. Since his former spouse had promised to make sure that everyone, including his family knew about Jessica, he had no reason to doubt she

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Mom...

would follow through on the threat. Yet, Jim's mother never directly mentioned a word about it. During telephone conversations, Jim was sure that his mother knew all about his cross-dressing, but there just never seemed to be "the right moment" to bring the subject out into the open. As a result, he continued to treat it as a secret, though, in his heart, he felt that it was something that was known, and simply not talked about.

Last year, Jim's life changed dramatically. Not only was he living as Jessica each weekend, but his parents had retired. That meant they would, most likely, be driving through town "unannounced." This posed a potential problem and Jim thought that it was time to clear the air, especially with his mother. He wasn't quite sure how his father would take the news, but he felt

his "mom" would understand. Jim took some vacation and went to visit his parents. While his dad was out running some errand, Jim asked his mother if they could sit down together, have a cup of coffee and talk. He began the discussion by saying that he had always liked different things than most of the guys he went to school with. Jim went on to talk about how he was just never really interested in sports, and really enjoyed helping out in the kitchen when he was growing up. Jim's mother asked what the point of all of this was. He hesitated for a few moments and, after gathering all of the courage he could muster, said, "Mom, did you ever notice that some of your lingerie disappeared and that I kept it in a box in the back of my closet?" Jim's mom, took a sip of her coffee and without even so much as a blink, replied, "Did you ever notice that it was always washed and folded?"

Maybe our secret isn't quite as se-

cret as we think. And maybe, just maybe, our mothers have really become a great deal smarter as we've gotten older. I know mine has. Thanks mom, for everything. Especially for the things you never said.



Remember TG Lobby Days

Here's a chance to let your representative in Congress know how you feel about transgender issues. The 1997 Transgender Lobby Days will take place on May 5 and 6 in Washington, DC. If you are interested contact: Riki Anne Wilchins at (212) 645-1753, or send email to <riki@pipeline.com>.



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10th Anniversary Banquet Menu

Vegetable & Cheese Strudel

*Fields of Green Salad with Feta Cheese and
Balsamic Vinaigrette dressing*

*Beef Tenderloin with Green Peppercorn sauce &
Breast of Chicken with Wild Mushrooms**

Bread Pudding with Creme Anglaise for dessert

** Vegetarians may substitute a vegetable lasagna for the
main course. Notify the Renaissance office at
least 72 hours prior to the banquet.*




Although May is really our anniversary, next month (June 21st) we would like to invite you all to bring your smiling faces to a party that will celebrate ten years of Renaissance service to the transgender community.

Special Guest: Kate Bornstein

The Renaissance

10th Anniversary Banquet

Saturday, June 21, 1997, 8:00 PM

Cocktails
at 7:30!


(Cash Bar)

at the Parkridge Hotel in King of Prussia, Pa. Call 610-337-1800 for directions

Registration for the Renaissance 10th Anniversary Party

Please reserve ____ places for the 10th Anniversary Party at \$37 each.

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