



A Publication of Transgenderist's Independence Club, Albany, NY

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN - Winnie [REDACTED]

Despite the best ministrations of software doctors Callan and Dorothy, for which I am grateful, my computer hard disk crashed completely soon after I finished the June newsletter. My system didn't even recognize that I had a hard disk, giving the message "1790 - Disk 0 Error". Fortunately, another friend who had recently upgraded his system donated his old hard disk, so after reinstalling my files from floppy backups, my computer is now running again and this newsletter is its first job.

I attended the Be-All convention in Cincinnati June 8-11. There were many excellent seminars by Sandra Cole, Dr. Richard Docter, Anne Johnson, Alison Laing, surgeon Dr. Eugene Schrang, and others. Among the vendors were Jim Bridges, Rachel (Naomi Owen's S.O., for wigs), and the IFGE Bookstore. For me, the highlight was the Thursday evening dinner cruise on the Ohio River. Our paddle-wheel riverboat (named the Becky Thatcher) slowed to a crawl for pictures against the city skyline by Mariette Pathy Allen. Unlike the American Queen, we didn't get stuck in the mud and returned to port safely. While some stayed at the dock disco until the bar closed, I was too tired and returned to the hotel on the first bus.

Riki Anne Wilchins gave a rousing, well presented speech on the need for political action to gain civil rights for the transgendered at the luncheon on Friday. Despite her "Transsexual Menace" T-shirt, Riki is really very nice and a menace to no one. The Miss BeAll Pageant was featured that evening, with some amusing skits by the talented contestants.

The summer board meeting of IFGE occupied my day on Saturday. With careful control of expenditures, the financial problems of IFGE can be surmounted and the organization can continue to provide the educational and other services for which it was founded by Merissa. If IFGE were allowed to fold, the transgender community would have to re-invent another like it. At the luncheon, the new executive director, Alison Laing, spoke confidently of her ideas for the future of IFGE, supported by the Board. I would urge that all members of TGIC give their support by joining IFGE, at least at the basic \$25 level.

The formal dinner-dance on Saturday night was a smash, featuring Johnny Mack and his real, live 21-piece Big Band! Hearing the hits of the 1940's again was nostalgia for me - that's when I was a teen-ager. That music sustained the morale of the troops and civilians during World War II.

Jennifer [REDACTED] is back from Trinidad, a Biber-Baby New Woman. She reports that everything went well, and she enjoyed the bouquet of flowers sent by TGIC. Best wishes for your future happiness, Jennifer. Those seeking to follow in her high-heeled footsteps should read Jennifer's article.

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DINNER MEETING IN SARATOGA

Tuesday, August 8, 6:00 pm cocktails

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TGIC MEMBER GRADUATES FROM SUNYA

On May 21, Katherine [redacted], a member of the Transgenderist's Independence Club since 1989, graduated *summa cum laude* from the State University of New York at Albany. Katherine received a bachelor of arts degree in English and Women's Studies.

Ms. [redacted] was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa and Golden Key National Honor Societies. She received a University President's Undergraduate Research Award and a Women's Studies Excellence in Scholarship Award.

As a Women's Studies major, Katherine interned with the Empire State Pride Agenda, the lesbian and gay legislative lobbyist organization located in Albany and New York City. Her mentor was Sherri Salvione, field director.

Katherine has lectured on transgender issues at the University at Albany and SUNY Cobleskill, where she earned her associate in arts degree in 1993. She appeared with photographer Mariette Pathy Allen on the Boston television talk show, People are Talking, in 1990 and The Donahue Show in 1994.

Katherine has attended Fantasia Fair in Provincetown in '89, '90, '91, and '94, as well as the Coming Together conventions in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. In 1989-90, Katherine facilitated TGIC's Thursday evening rap sessions.

In the fall, Ms. [redacted] will further her studies in the University at Albany's graduate program in English.

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TILL THERE WAS YOU - Melodie

There were bells all around
But I never heard them ringing,
No I never heard them at all
Till there was you.

There was birds all around
But I never saw them swinging,
No I never heard them at all
Till there was you.

And there was screwing
And beautiful two-ing.
Sweet gentle wooing so strong, so long.

And there were sheep all around
But I never heard them bleating,
No I never heard them at all
Till there was ewe.

There were gays all around
But they never was so happy
That name just stuck around
Till there was you.

There were balls all around
But no one danced very snappy
No-o no one did a high kick
Till there was you.

And there were lesbians
And beautiful sisters
Sweet gentle flowers of joy
And a dyke or two.

But there was love all around
And now I feel the wonder
And I hear that heavenly sound
Because of you.

Now our Umar is graduating
And we're glad you're matriculating
But most of all we're glad
That there is you.

And we know how hard you're trying
To escape the game of crying
To be more than we ever knew
Girl that is you.

And we are jealous (well maybe a little)
And wished we could do that
Be who you're going to be
What you want, you are free.

Still there are girls all around
But none so sweet and real,
No none so sweet as you are
Umar, just you.

Happy graduation, Hon
Melodie

(For those who do not know Umar: she
is a young TS living full-time and has just
completed schooling as a licensed beautician
- Ed.)



Mind Wires

Callan ██████████, Copyright © 1995

For a long time, I have known that my brain was wired in special ways.

One of those ways, I have a name for. We call it transgender, the drive to transgress gender lines, to wield symbols not normally associated with my sex. It is a key component of who I am, both in it's primary effects of urging me to crossdress, but in it's secondary effects, the shame, social stigma, closeted behavior and self image damage that goes with being transgendered at this time in history.

One other way that my mind is wired I didn't have a name for. I am very bright, with a low tolerance for boredom, a continuing quest to find the new and exciting, the predilection to speak my mind, and a whole mess of energy and enthusiasm. I can focus deeply on things, creatively see the connections, but I can also get lost in my own thoughts, having trouble getting stuff done that others see as ordinary. I'd rather do 90% of a big project than 100% of a small one, linking to do many things at once. I have trouble with bureaucracy, see the possibility of impending doom in all things and have a tendency to obsess, get compulsive. I often feel like I am at the edge of control, working hard to keep my mind from exploding.

This way of thinking has been part of me since I can remember. It has been a real gift -- and a real challenge. I read a 1989 book *The Hamlet Syndrome: Overthinkers Who Under Achieve*, and I saw much of my history -- the years of teachers who were frustrated with my lack of performance at doing the tasks they assigned me, who couldn't stand my roaming and distracted-ness in the classroom, the many parent-teacher conferences my mother still talks about, the frustration of my parents at my inability to get things done.

I thought *Hamlet Syndrome* described the problems well, but when they got into solutions, they blew it big time.

This "overthinker" (and to some degree in this culture, under-doer) part of me is very deep, but I never found anyone who talked about it in a way that I understood -- until I heard the tape of Hallowell's *Driven To Distraction* (Touchstone Books, 1995) a guide of children and adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

I never thought of exploring ADD until a friend who is a therapist said that I was a classic ADD case. I didn't think that I had a deficit of anything -- in fact, I thought I had a surplus! I had no interest in reading anything that was simply about how to sedate hyperactive kids.

It turns out that ADD is not named by the people who have it -- it is named by the people who are frustrated by it! These parents, teachers and therapists are frustrated by the refusal (and/or inability) of kids to pay attention and complete assignments. Clearly, these kids, with a low tolerance for the boring work of most classrooms, have a problem, an attention deficit disorder.

I have spent years learning to cast off the medical structures around transgender, the assumptions that because the world is perfect, something is wrong with you if you don't fit into it well. Doctors want to help you fit in -- through surgery, or through drugs.

But Hallowell, an MD in Boston who has ADD, while still advocating the medical position, also advocates another more simple position: people with ADD need to learn how to manage their own minds to be effective in this world. While drugs can sometimes be useful, figuring out how to maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses is key. Since I had figure this out some time ago, I was willing to listen.

Listening to the tape was tough. The case histories, presented in a dramatic way, brought me right back to my childhood. As a mother fought a 15 year old boy to do his homework, I heard the echoes of the well meaning toughness that was piled on me, year in and year out. Lazy, loser, stupid. These were my names, and I quickly became the scapegoat of the family -- not an unusual occurrence, according to Hallowell. The destructive spiral of being labeled a stupid, lazy, underachieving loser year after year is very difficult.

In fact, ADD and Transgender are alike in that while the ways of thinking are not in themselves bad, the secondary problems, the attempt to force the child to be normal, though stigma, humiliation and oppression can leave long lasting damage. The Japanese say "*the nail that sticks up must be pounded down.*" and I can testify that pounding can as easily lead to damage as to normalcy.

Hallowell makes the point that if the meaning of ADD is to be maintained, it must be effectively diagnosed, and not turned into a fad in a world where our collective attention span declines everyday. But as of now, the only diagnosis is a history and a ruling out any other cause. Hallowell, as a doctor, is comfortable with the disease model -- and has seen other overthinkers find comfort in being able to tell their loved ones that they have a disorder, it's just not sloth and inattentiveness.

Of course, for me, I have come to grips with the notion that our brains are all wired in certain ways, and we need to make a world that works with those natural impulses, not against them. I am who I am and I have the gifts the gods gave me -- and the tradeoffs that come with them.

With this one book, I have the *aha!* feeling that many have when they learn that they are not the only one who is transgendered. These are my people.

Be A Rock & Roll *Tempress!*

The drag rock band *Tempress* is currently holding auditions, for musicians, singwriters, backup vocalists and dancers. Auditions open to the transgender community and to non-cross-dressers willing to dress the part. Musical ability, professional attitude, and visual presentation will be considered for all applicants.

Tempress is a drag rock band that has appeared on many talk shows including Howard Stern, MTV, Joan Rivers, Jenny Jones, Sally Jessy, Nighttalk, Evening Magazine to name a few. The band has also appeared in many tabloid articles and pictorals like the *Enquirer*, the *Globe* and the *Star*. The band has recently signed with a major management company and is in negotiation with record, movie and television companies. Also the band has high levels of interest from major sponsors including makeup companies, liquor companies, and womens' apparel companies.

Those interested should respond to Chuck [REDACTED], Dragstrip Publishing Co., 191 Chandler Road, Andover MA 01810 or Lois Kennedy, Kennedy Management Co., 21 Ann St, Norwalk, CT. Chuck can be reached by email at Tempress5@aol.com or by telephone at 508-688-4070 days or [REDACTED] nights. Kennedy Managements' office number is 203-838-3552. A full press kit is available to other interested parties and publications.

Chuck [REDACTED]

Gay & Lesbian Jews Include Transgender

The 14th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews will be held in New York City from July 27th to July 30th, 1995, and will take place at the New York Sheraton Hotel.

The event is to be co-sponsored by New York City's Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, the world's largest gay and lesbian congregation, and the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations.

This year's conference is the first (of the 14 International Conferences of Gay and Lesbian Jews) to be explicitly inclusive of transgender/transsexual people. For the first time, the conference's education committee is planning seminars about transgender/transsexual issues in the Jewish Community.

Conference organizers are expecting over 1,000 lesbian, gay, transsexual and transgender Jews from around the U.S. and the world, who will gather for presentations, seminars, and panels; social events and entertainment; a variety of Friday night and Shabbat morning services; Sightseeing, Broadway shows; and more!

The theme of the Conference is: "Gay and Lesbian Jews: Taking Our Place in the 21st Century". Highlights are a keynote address by Yael Dayan, a prominent member of Israel's Knesset (Parliament); comedians Sara Cytron and Jaffe Cohen; and a capella group Sons & Lovers.

For information and registration materials contact Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, by phone (212)929-9498 or by e-mail: cbst@haven.ios.com.

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Transition and Goal Setting

or

"A Journey of 1000 miles..."

As you may have realized by now, most of these articles, although often very personal in nature, have some form of message which I hope will be of value to my readers. Often, the nature of the message is to try to teach some lesson in which others may find some helpful value. This is definitely one of these articles.

Many of us find that the road to transition is overwhelming in nature. As is often true of any overwhelming, major life-altering task, whether that task is losing weight, marrying, whether or not to have children, get a degree, or transition to deal with gender dysphoria, we often find ourselves drowning in a sea of, "Oh God, how am I ever going to deal with this?" We stand at the beginning of the journey, and ask ourselves this question over and over. Often, fear and the overwhelming nature of the task before us can be paralyzing, and ultimately, depressing or perhaps worse. Sometimes, the overwhelming nature of the greater task at hand, causes us to subconsciously undermine our efforts (we see the task as un-accomplishable and set out to prove it undoable).

We set unrealistic, nebulous, unclear, and unobtainable goals, to keep us from achieving our ends. Who among us hasn't heard someone else express the sentiment that everything will be okay after surgery. Surgery is often perceived as the end result for transsexually inclined persons, and may indeed be a valid long term goal for some. But focusing on the abstract long term goal can add to the overwhelming nature of the task at hand. A task which, for most if not all of us, should be to find a way to be happy with who we are regardless of the long term outcome. By focusing on the journey of self discovery which is transition, we are able to deal in a positive manner

with immediate, obtainable, and fulfilling tasks. Tasks in which once completed we have every right to take pride, and this pride can add to a positive sense of self worth - a positive sense which is essential when the overwhelming nature of the greater task gets us down.

In short, instead of being overwhelmed by the immense long term objective (in our case, obtaining sexual reassignment) we focus on the process of becoming a woman, the steps involved, in a logical - and hopefully minimally disruptive - journey toward that possibly unspecified end.

What does this all mean? Well, if you have been around other transgendered persons, chances are good that someone has announced that they were transsexual and asked for help getting started on hormones. Often this is before they did anything else toward becoming a woman other than perhaps going out dressed on occasion. Have they thought about identification, employment, family obligations, told friends, sought counseling, looked at other issues in their lives which may have clouded their judgment, lived part of their life as a woman? Have they sat down and honestly thought about who they will be in the end? Are they lost in fantasy, looking for some Prince Charming to solve all the problems?

Dealing honestly with ourselves is what transition is all about. Most support groups can give you an idea about the order in which things should happen (i.e., Sharing feelings with friends and family, electrolysis, living part time as a woman, therapy, dealing with false expectations, gathering information, establishing an identity, starting hormones, living full time, obtaining legal identification, employment issues, surgical interventions). As you can see there are a lot of manageable goals which can be set and should be reached before complicated legal or irreversible hormonal and surgical goals are even to be considered.

Even the best transitions are painful for all parties involved. Most who finally obtain reassignment report that they are happier following surgery than before. Most who make it have followed the path (Benjamin Standards of Care) or stepping stones through the shoal water if you will, instead of trying to swim unassisted through the depths of a seemingly interminable sea. Many have found strength by in turn trying to help others. If you are thinking of exploring out into the deep water of transition, stay on the stepping stones. Set yourself reasonable and obtainable goals, and, give yourself time. Perhaps more importantly, give yourself the benefit of the doubt, and move ahead only when you are ready and sure that you can deal with the next "step".

Gender transition, like most of life's other challenges, can be manageable if you keep an open mind, and set realistic and easily obtainable goals, nurture your positive sense of self worth, and give as well as take.

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TGIC

PO Box 13604, Albany, NY 12212-3604
(518) 436-4513 (live Thurs. 8-10 pm)

Transgenderist's Independence Club (TGIC) is a nonprofit, educational, non-sexual social support group for persons wishing to explore beyond the conventional boundaries of gender, including crossdressers, transsexuals and their friends.

TGIC Officers

President	Winnie [REDACTED]
Vice President	Joan [REDACTED]
Secretary	Joyce [REDACTED]
Treasurer	Winnie [REDACTED]
Newsletter Editor	Winnie [REDACTED]

The Transgenderist is the newsletter of TGIC, published monthly and mailed First Class to members, prospective members, friends, professionals, and exchange publications.

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ONE DAY AT THE HAIRDRESSER'S...



Stop Abusing Shame!

Callan ██████████ Copyright © 1995

We have a paradox. Many people in this country are concerned about our national lack of shame, how we seem to be self centered, shameless, with a failing morality that is driving this country into a criminal morass. Others, like those in the recovery movement, are concerned with getting rid of shame, an internal feeling that something is wrong with them and they deserve to be punished. They are working to be more authentic and whole, not shame based.

Shaming people is a powerful weapon. We, as a human culture, have learned to use shame to stop people from certain behaviors. We want people to feel ashamed of theft, abuse, greed, violence and other behaviors that can be damaging to the fabric of this society. It is important that we work to limit these behaviors.

Unfortunately, we have been using shame for other reasons. We have attempted to use shame to enforce not simply a code of deep, shared morality, but also to enforce compliance with an image of who we should be as Americans. As we became an itinerant culture, moving from ancestral homes in cities and farms, we became a suburban culture, where our worth was valued not from a deep knowledge of our roots and our inner lives but by our compliance with a set of images. TV and the media delivered these images, planted deep in our brains, and the vast malls, a homogenous merchandising structure, gave us a way to look alike.

The pressure to keep up this front was, and is, shame. We are ashamed of the way we look, ashamed of our parents, ashamed of our kids, ashamed of our pimples, ashamed of our thoughts, ashamed of who we are.

The problem with this is that it debased the value of shame. If we live with shame everyday, we can soon become sick -- so sick that we get ill, or so sick that we become shameless. Shame loses its sting when we don't have a strong context of pride in who we are to contrast it with. It is impossible to shame those who have lost their pride, or worse, have learned to take a perverse pride in activities that should be shameful.

We can look at prisons, where shameful acts become a badge of pride, turning the entire moral structure upside down. If there is no building of pride, even in prison, there is no way to control prisoners with healthy shame about destructive behavior. Even in finance or politics, the excuse

"everybody does it" signals that people don't feel shame about lining their pockets through behavior that is destructive, illegal, immoral -- behavior that should be shameful.

Kids in inner cities are especially prone to overdosing on shame. They feel the shame that our moralistic, suburban, materialistic culture imposes, yet they have no way to buy the things that will stop the shame. They learn to live without pride, hardened to shame. To complain that they are without shame is to not understand how they have been abused by shame, forced to become shameless.

Like creating resistant diseases by the overuse of antibiotics, destroying our weapon by overuse, we have created a shame resistant culture by overuse of shame.

This process goes on. We see people who call themselves Christians pulling out the big guns of shame to stop behavior they don't like, such as birth control and homosexuality, and who then ask why the big guns don't work on the big crimes, like murder and rape. They don't acknowledge how the abuse of shame has left them defenseless.

As a culture, we must come to an agreement on a set of core values that we can and must enforce. These cannot be simple lifestyle issues, or marketing tools. We cannot try to enforce homogenization, for that is unenforceable. People understand that the creation of unenforceable laws diminishes the respect for all laws, and we must also understand that the use of shame to enforce surface similarity will diminish the respect for shame.

We must allow people to find and have pride in their lives, however diverse they may be, and however much they make choices that we find odd or unpleasant. Only then can we all find ways to enforce destructive acts as the truly shameful things that they are.

Many of us are learning to move away from our legacy of shame, the pain of the constant humiliation that was applied to try to make us conform. We are trying to heal the hurt and find our true self, figure out what we really should be ashamed of enough to change, and what is simply an essential part of us that doesn't fit into the images of conformity that were pumped into our brain.

As we do this, we must also keep in mind that all others deserve the same privilege to be proud of their own unique expression, and that we must be sparing with our expressions of scorn and humiliation, because they don't need to be ashamed of themselves. They -- and we -- simply need a healthy sense of shame.

NEWS ITEMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

COURSE TO CALM CROSS DRESSERS

LONDON: A summer school is offering a course in dressmaking and dress design - for men.

The five day course at Loughborough College of Art and Design is aimed at men who enjoy cross-dressing and promises to teach transvestites the skills needed to create their own outfits.

There will also be a fashion parade on the history of transvestism by a drag queen named David Dale, who once appeared in the TV soap EastEnders.

Staff at the Leicestershire college hope the course will attract vast numbers of transvestites from all over Britain.

Organiser Alan Bunkum said they were keen to bring in non-traditional visitors and he believed transvestites were a niche market which could be tapped.

"This is an introduction on how men would go about making dresses for themselves that would include all the basic principles of pattern-cutting, and more traditional aspects of design" he said yesterday.

"I think it is very exciting."

The college will advertise the course in specialist newspapers and magazines.

The Daily Mail, London

ROMANIANS SEE ALL IN FIRST SEX-CHANGE

by Rex [REDACTED]

Romanian newspapers and television reported the nation's first sex-change operation April 27 complete with gory pictures of severed genitalia.

The penis and testes of 19-year-old Sorin Ratiu were shown to cameras by Bucharest surgeons who worked eight hours to make him into Sorina. State TV news showed the operation in detail.

A week earlier, a court in Transylvania OK'd the operation for fear Ratiu might otherwise mutilate or kill himself.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

TRI-ESS MEETINGS IN SCHENECTADY

The next meeting of Lambda Chi Lambda Chapter of Tri-Ess in Schenectady is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 16.

THIS CAN'T BE MACY'S

An independent film producer is seeking financial backers for a feature film project about the crossdressing community. Currently in development, "*This Can't be Macy's*" is a contemporary campy comedy about the American Dream, based on an actual middle-aged couple who owned a clothing store for crossdressers. This film will not only portray one man's struggle to own his own business, but will represent the transgender community more specifically than other films in the past. Through laughter, the producers hope to make society more tolerant of crossdressing. So, if you are interested in:

- (1) Doing something positive for the transgender community.
- (2) Getting involved in the film business.
- (3) Taking a risk for a potentially large return.

For more information contact:

Bill Moser
Elizabeth St. Productions
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IFGE MEMBERSHIP

The International Foundation for Gender Education is now a membership 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Membership brochures and forms are available in the Club Room. Please contact TGIC, or write to:

IFGE
PO Box 229
Waltham, MA 02154-0229

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CALENDAR

Regular Meetings are held every Thursday at the TGIC Club Room on Central Avenue in Albany, 7:30 - 10 pm. Some come earlier and stay later, but it is wise to call if you are not a Keyholder or if it is your first visit. Come dressed either way, meet and talk with friends. Many continue to socialize at one of the Central Ave. night spots after the meetings.

JULY 1995

July 6 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
July 13 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
July 20 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
July 27 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm

AUGUST 1995

Aug 3 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
Aug 8 *Dinner in Saratoga*, 6:00 pm
See Announcement, page 2
Aug 10 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
Aug 17 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
Aug 24 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
Aug 31 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm

MAJOR COMING EVENTS

- Contact TGIC for more information.

Jul 26-30 *Spouse/Partner International Conference for Education (SPICE)*, Memphis, TN
9/28 -10/1 *Southern Comfort*, Atlanta, GA
Oct 15-22 *Fantasia Fair*, Provincetown, MA
Oct 26-29 *Fall Harvest*, St. Louis, MO
Nov 15-19 *Tri-Ess Holiday En Femme*, Calgary, Alberta, Canada



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