

Renaissance News



Volume 4, No. 4

Vision - Integrity - Foolishness

April 1990

2nd Annual MONAs

For those of you who were not with us last year at this time, a MONA is a Meaningless, Obelized (look it up), Nonsense Award, given to an individual or organization. Sometimes a MONA is given for silliness. Sometimes a MONA is given for ignorance. Sometimes a MONA is given for stupidity. But a MONA is always earned. So, here are the 1990 MONAs.

+ "Rubber Cement" Award: to *Lifelines*, the cut 'n paste newsletter from Long Island Femme Expression. Includes scissors and tape.

+ "Federal Express On-time" Award: to the TV/TS Tapestry, the only quarterly magazine to be published semi-annually.

+ "Masturbation is Self-Abuse" Award: to Dominique [redacted] of NWGA who doesn't believe that crossdressing has erotic, sexual content.

+ "Martin Luther King Anti-Discrimination" Award: to Tri-Ess for their closed membership policy and

their closed minds.

+ "Not in Front of the Children" Award: to the Gulf Coast TV Chapter (Houston, TX) for their stand against children attending the Fantastic Weekend in Galveston.

+ "My Ball, My Rules" Award: to Tau Chi Tri-Ess (Houston, TX) for pulling out of the Fantastic Weekend because children would not be allowed to attend.

+ "New Age Psychology" Award: to Eileen [redacted] for her statement that society does, "... all it can to insure that there will be a continual supply of homosexuals."

+ "Silly Title" Award: a three-way tie between *Femarine*, *The Transie Times* and *My Husband Wears My Clothes*.

+ "Flash in the Pan" Award: to Grace Bacon and the National Association of Crossdressers.

+ "Wall Street Greenmail" Award: to International Foundation for Gender Education for their attempted takeover of Fantasia Fair.

Power/Beauty

Men are Powerful; Women are Beautiful...

Women aren't supposed to be Powerful; Power is ugly.

Men aren't supposed to be Beautiful; Beauty is weak.

Women appear more Beautiful by acting weaker; Men appear more Powerful by acting uglier.

Men are supposed to express their repressed Beauty through superficial Power.

Women are supposed to express their repressed Power through superficial Beauty.

Men's egos lie in their False Power; Women's egos lie in their False Beauty.

Gender specific egos, with their roots deeply entrenched in falsehood, fosters segregation.

Reaching beyond these egos, to discover our gender-common Truths, fosters communion.

True Power is Beautiful; True Beauty is Powerful.

The most Beautiful woman in the world has found her True Power.

The most Powerful man in the world has found his True Beauty.

Women who are true to themselves are Powerful; Men who are true to themselves are Beautiful...

...Truly.

Ronnie (Fluff) [redacted]

Date set for Spring Ball

The first warming days of March may put you in mind of Spring training or tulip season. But Spring is also the time of year for Formals and Prom dances. While baseball may be fun for most guys, wouldn't you really rather trip the light fantastic in taffeta, satin or chiffon on a beautiful Spring evening?

Of course you would. That's why the Greater Philadelphia Chapter has scheduled it's first Annual

Spring Ball for Friday, May 11 at 9:00 PM at the Great Valley Hilton. The Ball will not only be the inauguration of what we hope will become an annual event—it will also mark the third anniversary of Renaissance itself.

Managing Director, Angela Gardner, has arranged for the Ball to held in the Hilton's Grand Ballroom, which has a private entrance.

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Chapter notes

New Jersey

South Jersey: Kelly [REDACTED], chapter leader. Write Renaissance SJ, c/o P.O. Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ 08330. Meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, Inc. 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee, N.J. Meetings start at 9:00 p.m. Call (609) 641-3782

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia area: Angela Gardner, chapter leader. Write Renaissance PHL, Box AD, Bensalem, PA 19020. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia, Pa. Meeting starts at 8:00 p.m. No phone.

Pennsylvania

Reading: Susan [REDACTED], chapter leader. Write Renaissance RDG, Box 14421, Reading, PA 19607. Meets twice a month. There is a dinner-social held at THIS IS IT, 801 Walnut St., Reading, second Wednesday of the month and a membership meeting on the second Saturday. Call (215) 376-8886.

Lower Susquehanna Valley:

Elsa [REDACTED], chapter leader. Write Renaissance LSV, Box 7412, York, PA 17404. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call (717) 767-4095.

Important information

✓ Renaissance has a new mailing address, please correct your records: P. O. Box 552, King of Prussia, Pa., 19406.

✓ Renaissance has a new phone number as well. Call (215) 630-1437 24 hours a day for current information about events and activities.

✓ The board of directors has approved a new policy for the development of chapters and affiliates.

—Any group that wishes to become a Renaissance chapter must be incorporated as a non-profit in-

stitution in their home state (except Pa.) before asking for chapter status.

—Any group that wishes to become a Renaissance affiliate will pay a small annual fee for services normally afforded to chapters for free. Affiliates have no legal connection to Renaissance and remain autonomous. Services include unlimited access to reference publications and newsletter copy.

Write for details to Alison Laing, Co-director of Outreach, P. O. Box 552, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406.

And, don't forget about...

• Background Papers are available for \$1 each plus \$.25 postage for each pair ordered. Eight papers are available: 1-Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing, 2-Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing, 3-PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others, 4-The Matter of Children, 5-An Annotated Bibliography, 6-Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View, 7-What Is Renaissance?, and 8-AIDS & HIV Safety and Ethics. A

paper on transsexualism is in work.

• 3R addiction recovery support group meets at King of Prussia on third Sat. of the month.

• The Pen Pal Project. If you are willing to write letters to pen pals, please let Alison know. Write to the office, c/o Dept. PP.

• A few copies of the Deluxe Edition of Dr. Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* are still available at \$39.95 postpaid. Make checks payable to Renaissance.

Renaissance News

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For current information call (215) 630-1437 24 hrs. a day.

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the gender community at large.

Events Calendar

April

7th Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
7th Ren LSV Chapter
14th Ren. Reading Chapter
Magic of Aloe cosmetics
21th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter

May

5th Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
5th Ren LSV Chapter
11th Ren. 3rd Anniv. Party
Great Valley Hilton
12th Ren. Reading Chapter
19th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter
17-20 Spring Paradise Poconos

June

2nd Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
2nd Ren LSV Chapter
6-10 "Be All"-Pittsburgh
Contact Transpitt
9th Ren. Reading Chapter
16th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter

July

7th Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
7th Ren LSV Chapter
14th Ren. Reading Chapter
21st Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter

JoAnn Altman Stringer **SURVIVAL™**

What are you willing to give up?

Most post operative transsexuals will say they didn't have any choice in jumping over the gender fence. It was something they had to do regardless of the consequences. That thought stands on its own merit, for most people don't have an "or else" scenario. Several years ago the general perception was that the suicide rate among transvestites and transsexuals was very high. The misconception was if these people didn't get what they wanted they would commit the final act of desperation. Today we know that is not the truth.

Yet it's interesting that high percentages of transsexuals state they had no choice doing what they did with their lives. If you ask them what if they couldn't have SRS and had to live in their previous personas, most would not have an answer. They have a "Plan A" but no backup "Plan B" if "A" fails. Quite simply, many gender conflicted people don't think through the consequences, focusing totally on a singular, final goal.

This thinking (or lack of it) permeates other areas as well. Just as they don't have backup plans, many transsexuals don't think about the total impact this change will have on their lives. The Standards of Care stipulate a period of time must be spent with a professional counselor prior to surgery. Some therapists may be astute enough to discuss the total ramifications of a sex change. Judging from the minuscule number of psychotherapists who specialize in this area, it would be a good guess that many people are being treated by professionals with little expertise in gender issues. As such, some of the more personal problems that can come up simply don't get highlighted because the transsexual didn't know to ask and the professional didn't know to tell.

I know that sounds like placing the blame in the counselor's court. They don't deserve all the blame, but they should share some of it.

The point is tremendous numbers of transsexuals don't fully comprehend the consequences of their actions on both their lives, and the lives of their families.

When I ask the question "What are you willing to give up?" I mean just that. Understanding that you feel you must go ahead with this change, are you willing to give up everything from your previous life? Everything means everything!

How about your family? Would you be willing to give up every member of your family, forever? You have to understand, no one in your family may understand or accept you after changing your lifestyle. It's impossible to predict how anyone will take the news of your decision. They may seem fine before surgery and suddenly turn away after the hospital doors swing shut. That may be the harsh reality of your actions. It happens! My story is a hodgepodge of acceptance and rejections. My father doesn't totally accept me, even though we talk often, whereas my sister totally rejects me. Most of my uncles, aunts and cousins have rejected my change. Only a few of them understand without question.

Maybe you've lived in one town all your life and changing sex prompts the need to move. Can you do that? Are friends really important? I mean those friends you've had for years. Will they understand? Can you get along without them? Since I moved often, I really didn't have any 'old' friends. But, yes, I had to give up a lot where relationships were concerned.

Are you sure you want to give up a profitable career as a doctor, lawyer, or military officer? Some people are able to stay in their chosen profession, but many cannot. If you

have to give up your profession, how dependent are you on your income? Do you have a beautiful \$250,000 house with \$1400 monthly mortgage payments? Do you have a bunch of charge card bills you pay each month? Are you paying \$500 a month in child support or alimony? Do you pay another \$300 each month for car payments? How about the basic living accommodations like heat, electricity, water? If you lose your career you could lose everything I've mentioned, except the bills - they will continue.

To rid yourself of thousands of dollars of debt, as you go from your once lucrative career to a \$12,000 a year checkout counter job, more than likely you'll file for bankruptcy. Have you thought about how a bankruptcy will affect your life five years down the road? A bankruptcy court action will follow you for years, preventing you from obtaining credit of any type, and may keep you from getting some jobs. I know from personal experience. After ten years as an Army Captain, I was asked to leave the service because of my transsexualism. The loss of salary forced me to file for bankruptcy and I still can't get credit today.

In the nonsensical world of crossing gender lines there are no rules to follow and few directions. You'll bump into plenty of "stop" signs along the way. Before you take the first step on this long journey you must decide that you can and will give up everything to do what must be done. One nurse told me years ago that I had more courage than anyone she had ever known. Yes, it does take courage and commitment, once you understand all the issues involved.

Before you start on this journey with your "Plan A" in hand, make sure that you have also planned for the "what ifs." To give up everything is harder than anything you could possibly imagine.

Climb the ladder or settle in a comfortable chair... Alison Laing

There is a tendency in our community to look upon the happy and successful transsexual as having achieved the ultimate goal in our transgendered social system. This is especially true for those of us born and raised in a normal, masculine role. Perhaps it is purely cultural, or possibly it is due to aggressive attitudes, engendered by male hormones, but most males look at almost any social system in a hierarchical sense. If the game involves being the opposite gender, then let's play it to the hilt and go all the way.

In the Boy Scouts, Eagle Scout is the highest achievement in rank. Indeed, some males see the Eagle Scout as the ultimate goal of scouting. You begin with the Tenderfoot and work your way up the ladder. Similarly, some transvestites may see 'becoming' a transsexual as the gender equivalent of the Eagle Scout.

There is no question there are persons who have known from their earliest recollections that, at whatever cost, they must change their entire physical appearance to match their psychological state of mind as the opposite sex. Dr. Richard Docter, labels these people Primary Transsexuals. Docter also describes another category of person seeking sex reassignment surgery (SRS) as Secondary Transsexuals.

Secondary Transsexuals are usually people with a long history of crossdressing who decide on SRS later in life, often in response to some major life crisis. It appears that many Secondary Transsexuals are caught up in the Eagle Scout syndrome when they really ought to be content with some degree of a crossdressing lifestyle. They see SRS as an escape or a 'cure' for their problems. Any Primary Transsexual will tell you that SRS is just the

beginning; it only clears away one barrier to problem solving.

What we, as transgendered people, should be looking for is not the top rung of the ladder, but that comfortable chair in this very large room of people with different manifestations of behavior. A permanent change, such as SRS, may limit you from finding that chair and leave you in a most uncomfortable position, forever.

It is better to explore all the options and be fully aware of the penalties and rewards of each one. There is nothing wrong with compromise if it results in your optimum satisfaction and a comfortable chair in this exciting room.

Think about it

If man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God, then God is neither male nor female, but both. We are but imperfect reflections.

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THE Paula Jordan Sinclair NEWSQUEEN™

Bette Davis is still dead. But Charles Pierce, her most noted impersonator, is *not* still retired. He started a long engagement at The Ballroom in New York City last month. No word yet as to why Pierce returned to the stage. The gay community has so many bad Davis impersonators ("What a dump!"), perhaps Pierce figured that with the passing of the original article it was time he show folks how that line should be delivered.

♦ ♦ ♦

Like Bette Davis, Divine is a legend that refuses to fade. Last month we learned how he was the muse for several unlikely creative forces, including the Walt Disney studio. Now comes word that his influence has reached Broadway.

Producer Scott Rudin has purchased the stage rights to Divine's last John Waters film "Hairspray." No word, though, on casting.

♦ ♦ ♦

Waters set most of his films in Baltimore. With Divine's death, there were those who thought that Maryland would sink into boredom. They hadn't counted on L.A. Bowie.

Last December, police in Prince George's County arrested the bearded, 250-pound suspect in an armed robbery, but they faced an immediate problem when they performed a strip search at the jail. Questioned about certain physical discrepancies, Bowie, first said there had been an accident, then said he had an operation, then he gave police his real name: Linda Ann.

Bowie was also suspected of leading a gang that robbed a dozen Maryland businesses. When police arrested the other gang members—including Damon Bowie, 19, and Christian Bowie, 21, the older Bowie claimed to be their father. Police are now trying to determine if L.A. isn't really the youths' mother.

The point has some importance. The younger Bowies have been charged with first degree murder, and legal experts speculate that the

traumatic event of L.A.'s apparent sex change may be used by defense attorneys to reduce the severity of the murder charge.

♦ ♦ ♦

Dressing like a man seems to have gotten Linda Ann's clan in a heap of trouble. But dressing like a woman can have the same result. Consider the case of Paul Nowlin, 35, of Jasper, Tex.

Police in the East Texas town had been mystified by a series of burglaries. Someone was breaking into homes and stealing dresses, heels, makeup and lingerie. Police naturally suspected a woman. But strangely the clues pointed authorities to Nowlin. They knew they had their man when a search of his attic turned up some of the missing items.

Jasper County Sheriff Aubrey Cole said folks thereabouts were upset with the burglaries. "People don't hold to nobody breaking into their homes and trifling with their undergarments," he said.

♦ ♦ ♦

Sheriff Cole was lucky; by all accounts Nowlin was unarmed at the time of his arrest. Police in Nampa, Idaho, weren't so fortunate when they recently arrested an 11-year-old crossdressed shoplifter. In his large handbag police found a .357-Magnum. The red dress he was wearing belonged to his mother and the gun was his dad's.

Police said they were puzzled, not by the boy's attire ("That was a deeper than we wanted to get into," said Officer Rick Watkins) but because the boy shoplifted a pack of cigarettes, yet he said he didn't smoke. At the time of his arrest, the boy also claimed to be a 20-year-old woman. He also told police he carried the gun "for protection."

♦ ♦ ♦

It is clear that the Idaho incident was on the minds of parents in Hawaii when they canceled a student-planned dress-up day at Hahaione Elementary School. During the special day boys were to dress

like girls and girls like boys.

The parents' reaction was especially disappointing to one sixth grade boy; he had his skirt and blouse all picked out. Another boy said the kids just wanted to have fun and didn't mean any harm. But the parents knew better. It would be dressing as girls one day, carrying guns the next. And before you know it, the kids would be stealing "La Cage aux Folles" costumes out of trucks on New York streets.

♦ ♦ ♦

That may be what happened to the tulle and chiffon gowns that disappeared in January outside the Big Apple's Cafe Society just before a final rehearsal of the crossdressing musical.

"We just had to have the dress rehearsal without the dresses," said impresario Steven Minichiello. "Luckily, all the guys had their lipsticks with them."

♦ ♦ ♦

Was it a coincidence that just two days after the gowns were stolen, the *New York Observer* reported that the initiation of pledges into Kappa Beta Phi at the Plaza Hotel featured the new members in full drag? The secret fraternity counts among its members the leading names in the world of business, finance and law. Here's how the newspaper covered the event:

"The tumult behind the doors of a room on the first floor of the Plaza threatened to rock the chandeliers in the plush hallway. Suddenly, silence. Then a door was flung open admitting a procession of husky men, dressed in skirts, dresses, and pumps. The hair from a long-haired wig hung between the massive artificial breasts of one man."

The membership rolls of the fraternity include a former president of the American Stock Exchange, partners in the investment banking firms of Solomon Brothers, Inc. and Sherson Leman Brothers, Inc., and the board chairman of Carnegie

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NewsQueen...

Hall. One of these older members said the fraternity allows its "brothers" the opportunity to have a "good time." But with the exception of the crossdressed pledges, women are excluded from the Kappa Beta Phi fun, as are blacks, Hispanics and Asians.



Corporate types on the West Coast also had fun at the expense of transgendered people, or rather one transsexual in particular.

In preparation for his sex change, a software engineer at the Boeing Co., began acting more like a woman. The company thought that was okay until one day the engineer came to work wearing a necklace and used the women's rest room. She was fired.

"Jane Doe" filed the first lawsuit of its kind in state, charging that Boeing violated a Washington law banning discrimination against the handicapped. She claimed that being a transsexual was a psy-

chosexual condition equivalent to a handicap. Superior Court Judge Fred Rasmussen agreed that transsexualism was a handicap within the meaning of the law, but he said Boeing had provided Doe with reasonable accommodations before the justified firing.



But if Terri Pohrman gets her way, she will show them how it's done. The 37-year-old former Las Vegas showgirl is running for mayor of Yountville, a small town in the heart of California's Napa Valley. A large share of the town's residents live in the California Veteran's Home. Pohrman showed up there on roller skates and wearing tight body stocking. Later she wore a red-sequined cocktail dress with a plunging neckline. "All the guys got a big kick out of her," said one of the home's residents. But those who don't live in the home aren't so excited about this political newcomer.

Pohrman, who had a sex change in the '70s, sloughs off the critics and continues her campaign under

the slogan "The Change Will Do You Good."



Yountville, Jasper, Nampa, Portsmouth, even Baltimore make this column a veritable index of small towns. To that list we'll add Dayton, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Louisville. Why? Because, according to one drag expert, the show bars in those cities make the Midwest the "drag entertainment capital of the world." By the way, the giant Connection show bar complex in Louisville is the site of the 1990 Miss Gay USA pageant April 3-8.

And speaking of beauty pageants in the Midwest, the Miss Gay Indiana contest later in April is *not* open to those who are on hormones, have breast implants or silicone injections below the neck.

Miss Sinclair claims to read several newspapers regularly. But the silicone injections above the neck may have dimmed her eyesight, and so she welcomes contributions from readers. Send articles, along with the name and date of publication, to the Renaissance office.



Fragrances

- Jean Patou
- Christian Dior
- Giorgio Armani
- Yves St. Laurent
- Ralph Lauren
- Chanel
- Gucci
- Lagerfeld
- Givenchy
- Halston

Cosmetics

- Ultima
- Lancome
- Elizabeth Arden
- Rachel Perry
- Flori Roberts
- Celli
- Inverness
- Almay
- Revlon
- Prestige

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Remember when?... Dina Amberle and Gloria A. [REDACTED], Greater Phila.

It started one Saturday night when a small group of Renaissance members gathered at a club in New Hope, Pa. In conversation, we all began to think back to our own crossdressing beginnings. The remarks that followed made us realize there is a litany for crossdressers. The progression from novice to accomplished crossdresser has so many similar experiences that, as we're sure you'll see, we can all relate to it. Join us now as we walk down memory lane and ask the question, "Do you remember when?"

Remember when you thought that you were the "ONLY" guy in the entire world that wanted to dress in women's clothing.

Remember when trying on a pair of panties was a quick thrill (don't get us wrong, we still enjoy them). Now, they're worn every day.

Remember when you tried to get into our mother's/sister's stockings without leaving those tell-tale runners as evidence.

Remember when you had naturally hairless legs.

Remember when you looked at that garter belt thing and wondered, what if I ...

Remember when the biggest problem with brassieres was getting those back hooks attached.

Remember when you took that first step in those high heel shoes. Would have been great if they were the right size.

Remember when you had the house to yourself and spent the day in panties, stockings, garter belt and heels.

Remember when you got caught. (Oh yeah!)

Remember when what you've done so far was satisfaction enough. (Geez, if we only knew then.)

Remember when you thought, "I think it's time for a dress."

Remember when the disappointment set in because the dress didn't fit and just looked terrible. (Well, for most of us it did.)

Remember when, in our younger days, the only way to get your own stash (clothing) was clothesline shopping at night. (What can we say, things were tough.)

Remember when you tried to find the perfect place to hide your stash.

Remember when you looked at your collection of lingerie and said, "This is all mine."

Remember when you experimented with makeup the first time. What goes where and how much. Color didn't matter much back then.

Remember when you wondered, with terror, if the makeup would really wash off with soap and water.

Remember when you first saw the total package. Hair, makeup and clothing, all in their proper place.

Remember when you thought, "Hey, this has possibilities."

Remember when you thought you looked the epitome of feminine beaut, in your first cheap wig. I had a picture. I ate that picture. Maybe the wig too, can't say for sure.

Remember when you would dress, every spare moment, just to sit around the house.

Remember when dressing around the house was enough. Leaving the house, dressed, was just out of the question.

Remember when you thought, "Hmmmm, it's dark, maybe a drive."

Remember when just driving around was enough, until you thought, "Hmmmm, I'd love to get out of the car, just for a moment. It's dark, no one would see."

Remember when you walked to a MAC machine in women's clothing. Then thinking, "Is this thing taking my picture (SMILE)." For some of us, window shopping at night, while the stores were closed, became a regular occurrence. How about those walks through the apartment complex parking lots. Maybe it was a walk to the mall box or jumping into that dark phone booth, calling your-

self and hoping nobody was home.

Remember when you wished they made a quiet pair of high heels to use while you were sneaking in the shadows.

Remember when you thought that all this was enough to satisfy you.

Remember when you first saw another man dressed like a woman, on the television, of all places. Is that what I'm about? Where's the pencil and paper when you need them.

Remember when you first talked to another crossdresser. How about the first time that you met another crossdresser in person?

Remember when you went to a Renaissance meeting for the first time. WOW, look at all these men dressed like women. How about when you listened to another crossdresser's story and thought he was telling you your life history.

Yes, there are many memories that we all share. Hopefully, they are pleasant memories. Now, it's going to night clubs, parties, and out to dinner regularly. We've come a long way. We've grown. We continue to grow. Now we try to figure out how many body alterations we can get away with before anyone at work will notice. As you look at yourself in the mirror, say to yourself, "I do remember when."

Renaissance nominated for Lambda award

Each year the *Philadelphia Gay News* presents service awards (Lambdas) to groups, businesses and individuals in the gay community. Selection is by popular vote.

Renaissance has been nominated for the second year in a row in the category for Best Community Group (Service). Ballots are only available in copies of PGN. We urge all members to pick up a ballot and vote for Renaissance.

3rd anniversary

The festivities will include a full course sit-down dinner (vegetarian platters available by advanced request), a live band for your listening and dancing pleasure, plus other goodies (among them, a professional photographer to capture you on film).

The Spring Ball will be a formal affair and it would be nice if everyone would dress accordingly — or as close to formal as possible. Gowns, Prom dresses, cocktail dresses, or simple evening wear will help add to the special feeling of the night and make it an evening to remember. Leave the vinyl minidress in the closet. A suggestion, and it is only a suggestion, is that escorts (male or female) dress in masculine attire to lend a balance to the crowd.

The cost for the evening is \$30 per person in advance (see the coupon enclosed with this issue of the newsletter). A special \$2.00 rebate will be available to anyone who brings canned good to the event. The canned food will be donated to a local Red Cross chapter.

The Great Valley Hilton is located off the Route 29 exit of Route 202, just minutes south of our regular meeting site. The Hilton has special weekend rates, should anyone wish to stay overnight (~\$65), call (215) 296-9800 for information.

For the past several months some Renaissance members have been staying at the Hilton on our meeting night. After the meeting, as many as 30 of us have returned there to take over the lounge in the hotel. We have been treated with respect and courtesy every time. That's why we chose this hotel for our special Spring event. We are very hopeful the Ball will be a successful warm-weather complement to the very popular Holiday Party.

If you ever harbored the fantasy of being a Prom Queen, bridesmaid or a society grand dame, then this is your night to howl — oops! — party, in a ladylike fashion, of course.

Comments on Transsexual Issues

Leslie V.

LSV Chapter

I just received the February [1990] issue of the *Renaissance News* and a few comments are in order.

My observations of the problems and pitfalls of a transsexual are well stated by JoAnn Stringer and Louise Raeder.

In the few years since my operation, I've met many pre- and post-operative transsexuals. A great number of them possess the attitudes outlined by Stringer and Raeder in their articles.

The positive tools of self-esteem and proper image are the most important tools to have. If you do not believe in yourself, then how can you expect others to believe in you?

I went through my transition from male to female while employed at the same job I'd been in for over 15 years. To say that it was not difficult would be a lie. I chose, from the start, to break the myths about "those people" and I feel I succeeded.

Since my transition, I have changed jobs several times, not because I had to but because I wanted to. When it became clear to me that the real person I am was in control of my life, I knew I could mold my life in any direction I chose.

If you are one of those transsexuals who is living in constant fear of being discovered, let me assure you if you are in any type of visible position, the chances of discovery are great. My past is no secret to my co-workers and members of the various professional and social organizations to which I belong. These people think of me, treat me and respect me as a woman. I have not let fear of discovery destroy my life. You can develop this same attitude.

Some of you are aware I hold a position within the state government. I've also started my own business. I have not let my past stop or slow me in my pursuit of happiness. I feel that anyone can live their life to the fullest if they just stop trying to find someone or some-

thing to blame for their setbacks.

Everyone who has gone through the hoops knows that it is not easy. Each of us, male and female, must reach inside and find the strength needed to follow through in our everyday lives.

As JoAnn [Stringer] pointed out in her article, gender issues do not have to get in your way if you project the positive image and attitude of the person you fought so hard to be.

If you are one of the "Truly Serious" that Louise [Reader] wrote about, then a fulfilling life is ahead of you. The future is yours my friends; don't let anything or anyone destroy it for you.

Jackie K.

Greater Phila. Chapter

As a post op transsexual enjoying my freedom as a woman, I would like to comment on the article "Paradise Lost" (*Renaissance News*, February 1989).

First, I strongly suspect the author was a transvestite or possibly a Type 3 transsexual*, who found to his chagrin that he was not a candidate for sex reassignment surgery (SRS). "Bouts of depression" and anxiety are common for some types of transvestites who try to live [as a woman] full time. In fact, it is one of the diagnostic signposts for spotting someone who is not a transsexual. The inability to adjust to the role is another one. I would have to question his subconscious veracity irrespective of what he verbalizes.

Second, if you are a loner prior to SRS, you will be one afterwards.

Third, I believe that Dr. Reid, as quoted in the article, was correct. Most transsexuals who go through a legitimate reassignment program are successful. A "total fantasy world," I doubt it.

Fourth, anyone who thinks that changing their sex entitles them to a free ticket to Valhalla is sadly mistaken. There are advantages and disadvantages to living in either

continued next page

Comments on Transsexual Issues

sex role. The question is: which one are you most comfortable in?

Fifth and last, Tony made the right decision to stay male. He would have never made it as a woman, as it takes balls to be a woman.

(* A Type 3 transsexual was defined by Dr. Harry Benjamin as a Non-surgical Transsexual [NSTS]. The NSTS or Type 3 TS is not suitable for, or not encouraged to seek, reassignment surgery.)

Editor's Comments

I'd like to thank both Leslie and Jackie for responding to the February issue. It always makes an editor feel good when a particular issue stimulates a dialog.

Tony's experience is not an uncommon one. I see it happening to people and I read about it happening to members of other groups, even the so-called "closed" groups. There is a strong "pull" towards the label of transsexual. Is it some other

form of gender elitism at work? I don't know and neither do the professional care-givers. What we do know is that the number of people who label themselves transsexual is on the rise. I think most of these people are making a mistake and that concerns me.

My concern is that our support groups facilitate or enable these people into believing they can make a gender transition. There are two scenarios that occur to me here.

In the first, a transvestite finds acceptance and support from the group. He is having the time of his life and he wants it to go on forever. He thinks, "If I'm having so much fun when I'm crossdressed, why not go full time (as Jackie says) and have this much fun all the time?"

In the second scenario, the transvestite can't accept the label "transvestite." He thinks "transsexual" will be a much better label. After all, won't society be more tolerant of

a transsexual, a "poor soul" trapped in the wrong body, than a perverted, sexual deviant like a transvestite?

I don't believe that excluding any sub-group of the transgender population helps; it probably only delays the inevitable, if it does anything. I certainly don't advocate dissolution of support groups; they do so much more good for the majority than the "harm" I might perceive for the few.

I don't believe the professional care-givers have an answer either. One professional I queried thinks the Real Life Test should be extended to 5 years. I don't think that's an answer. Enough of the proper information has been spread around so that even I, a humble transvestite, could pass myself off to a therapist as a transsexual well enough to obtain hormones. And, more and more, people are finding ways to circumvent the Benjamin Guidelines, even to the point of obtaining surgery with forged documents.

There are things our groups can do to help. We need to do a lot more education about gender roles vs. sex roles. We need to let people know they have many life-style options available to them. We need to expose the "Eagle Scout Syndrome" for what it is, over-achievement. We need to take the position that no one label is better than another. We need to strongly disapprove of surgery without the proper guidance, yet we should neither approve nor disapprove any individual's decision to seek it.

Ultimately, every person should be responsible for their own actions and they should have the right to make mistakes. But, we need to be certain that their decisions are made with all the relevant information and that we, as support groups, have done everything possible to insure that information is available and dispensed.

I hope I never hear someone say to me, "I'm not a transsexual. Why didn't you stop me?"

Prisoner Project gets fan mail

Renaissance has been providing copies of its monthly newsletter to transgendered inmates in prisons around the country. Now, fan mail is beginning to come in.

Crystal, a transsexual who is in a work release program in Nashville, Tenn., writes "how thankful I and my two sisters here are to be able to receive your newsletter... I would just like to express our gratitude and appreciation for opening the doors of information to the sisters who have become incarcerated. We share and discuss this newsletter you all have so freely provided".

She added that the report about Tri-Ess banning the distribution of publications to prisons disturbed her. "I really enjoyed *The Femme Mirror*, hoping to get a subscription started when I got back on my feet... But unless Tri-Ess discontinues their prejudice towards all transgendered people inside and out, I could not be a part of such a [group]."

She concluded, "Thank you from all of us, and may God bless your unprejudiced, continually informative gender related work."

Crystal is close to parole, and she asks from some information about the Nashville/Memphis area: the existence of transgendered support groups, experienced therapists or gender clinics in the area, good electrologists, and other businesses that cater to transgendered persons. Readers who may know of these services are asked to write to Renaissance, the Prisoner Project.

The Prisoner Project is now under the direction of Vickie [redacted] who recently took over the job from the project's originator, Paula Jordan Sinclair. The board approved the project as a way of reaching out to the members of the community who may have the most need for information but who have the least access. As in all Renaissance matters, privacy is strictly enforced.

From around the TV/TS community NATIONAL GENDER NEWS™

transvestites and transsexuals in their ordinance, North Hollywood, Calif. and Cambridge, Mass. are the only two cities in the country that have all-inclusive ordinances protecting the civil rights of everyone, gay, straight, or transgendered.

NGN

WITS, R.S.A. — Our South African correspondent, **Thelma** (Phoenix, RSA) tells us one of our NGN items triggered some interesting revelations here.

We've commented several times on the coincidence of crossdressing and an interest in model railroading. **'s** remarks in the Dec. '89 NGN prompted Phoenix founder and president, **Marlene Knoetze**, to "confess" a predilection for modeling the Iron Horse. So, it seems, does a sister from Port Elizabeth who recently hand crafted a OO scale saddle-tank locomotive and gave it to Knoetze as a present.

The little engine brought back to Pine pleasant memories of vacations on the Isle of Wight (where the locomotive ran) and staying in the absent daughter's room of a friend of the family, complete with closets full of dresses, dolls and feminine bric-a-brac (sigh).

NGN

HOUSTON — We reported in February that the **Fantasy Adventure Weekend** in Galveston had been cancelled due to a rift between the host groups, **Gulf Coast TV** and **Tau Chi Tri-Ess**. The ruckus was about allowing children to attend the event. (Remember, we took the Tri-Ess side to allow children.) It seems that **Jane Ellen Fairfax**, leader of the Tri-Ess group, took the children issue personally. Her children were the only two in attendance at the adventure last year. The family that dresses together...?

Now it appears we must eat our garter belt; GCTV will host the event by themselves. The dates are May 4-6, 1990. For more information

contact **Jackie Thorne**, P. O. Box 441754, Houston, TX 77244.

NGN

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF. — A television show, based on a science fiction movie, has probably done more to foster the understanding of transgender behavior than all the transvestites and transsexuals on all the talk shows combined.

Alien Nation, a Fox Broadcasting television show, based on the movie of the same name, has taken the opportunity of using an alien species to explore our concepts of masculine and feminine. The Newcomer aliens share the birth of their children. The fetus begins to gestate in the female alien and is then transferred to the male alien, who then carries it to term.

The two-part show dealing with the birth of **Vesta**, the baby alien, brought into question many of our society's inconsistent views of masculinity and femininity. At one point, **George Francisco**, the alien father played by **Eric Pierpoint** says, "Many Newcomer males don't feel truly masculine until they give birth." The second show ends with Francisco's partner **Matt Sikes**, played by **Gary Graham**, helping to deliver a premature Vesta.

The writers and producers of *Alien Nation* are to be commended for their courage and foresight to explore these sensitive issues.

NGN

MINNEAPOLIS — A member of the **City of Lakes Crossdresser's Club (CLCC)** has suggested the club develop a unique handshake to identify themselves as CLCC members, "a departure from the traditional 'male' greeting."

Shades of the Illuminati! What could be more macho male than a secret handshake?

A more appropriate idea, we think, would be a special pin or rosette. It would be innocuous and inconspicuous, yet distinctive.

NGN

SPRINGFIELD, MASS. — In case you missed it, the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1989** specifically excluded transvestites and transsexuals from the definition of disabled persons. **Louise L. Raeder**, writing in *Twenty Minutes* thinks that we need some kind of legislation that would specifically forbid discrimination against us.

We see no advantage to being classified as "disabled" and we see no reason to expect special treatment for being a transsexual or a transvestite. We also do not see any progress to be made in the area of transgender rights until people in this community are willing to say out loud, "My name is Joe (Jane) Public and I'm a transsexual (or transvestite)."

Gay and lesbian rights were not earned by whining but by coming out in the open to fight. Take a lesson from their experience.

NGN

NW YORK CITY — Unless you live under a rock, you've heard about *Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them*, by **Mariette Pathy Allen**. This wonderful book has provocative photographs and insightful interviews about many of the people you read about in this column. Our own **Alison Laing** and **Paula Jordan Sincalir** are included.

The book is available from several sources in the transgender community, I.F.G.E. and the Outreach Institute, to name only two.

But we think it would be a much more bold and political statement to order the book through your local bookstore. All you need is the title, the author's name, the publisher, Dutton, and the ISBN number (ISBN): 0-525-24820-X. The cost is \$30.

Show your colors; order one today. And, keep your head up high as you leave the store with your copy.

NGN

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