

Renaissance News



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October, 1987

Conference On Gender Issues Takes Shape...Keynote Speaker Dr. John Money

Trudi Henry and JoAnn Roberts report that the plans for the first annual *Renaissance Conference on Gender Issues* have been finalized. The conference, which will present our community's views on transgender behavior to the professional counsellors and therapists, will take place on Saturday, January 16th, at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.

With the help of our advisor, Dr. Wm. R. Stayton, Renaissance was able to secure Dr. John Money of the Johns Hopkins Psychohormonal Research Unit, as the Keynote Speaker for the conference. Dr. Money is one of the premiere sex researchers in the country today. His department was involved with the first sex reassignment surgeries performed in this country.

The all day conference will begin with an Introduction and Welcome statement by JoAnn. Trudi will then present an historical perspective on transvestism and transsexualism. After a short

break, Dr. Stayton will introduce Dr. Money who will present some of his recent research and how it relates to transgender issues. The afternoon sessions will consist of panel discussions with the active participation of the audience. The first panel will be composed of transsexuals, while the second panel will consist of transvestites. A final wrap-up session will combine both panels.

The conference is open only to counselling professionals. The cost of the conference is \$75 and includes lunch and a cocktail reception after the meeting.

Renaissance is seeking co-sponsorship of the conference with *The Society for the Scientific Study of Sex*, and with *The Gathering*, a support group for transsexuals. Trudi Henry is the coordinator for this event and she needs your help on the day of the conference to assist in registration and she needs panelists. If you wish to participate please see Trudi at a meeting or write to her at P.O. Box 62, Penllyn, PA, 19422

NYC Performer To Appear In Benefit

Wayne Berger, a well known impersonator in the New York City area, will be a part of the *Travelling Trash & Talent Tuesday* AIDS benefit show on September 29th. Better known to fans as *The Divine Miss Wayne* his forté is an impersonation of Bette Midler.

This reporter has seen his act and it is sensational, particularly the surprise ending. Renaissance is very pleased to have Wayne as part of this special AIDS benefit.

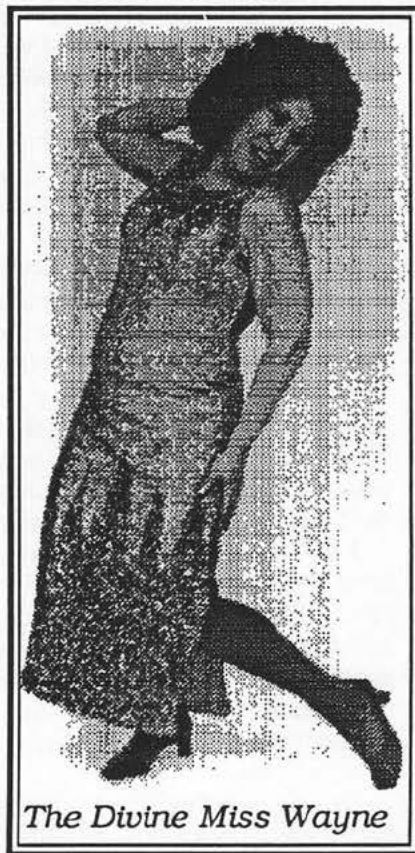
Members who wish to attend dressed, but have no place to change, may use the dressing room at the club. Plan to arrive early as we need the room by 8:00PM. Call JoAnn for a reservation.

Board Named For Renaissance

A Board of Directors has been chosen for Renaissance and the members present at the September 11th meeting voted them into office. The board members are:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| JoAnn Roberts | Managing Director |
| Melanie Bryan | Secretary |
| Alison Laing | Treasurer |
| Angela Gardner | Co-Director Membership |
| Trudi Henry | Co-Director Membership |
| Paula Sinclair | Director of Outreach/Public Affairs |

Renaissance Information: 215- [redacted] after 6:30 PM for more information about events. There will be no answer if JoAnn is not available.



The Divine Miss Wayne

Progress Report: Tax Exemption

As reported earlier, Renaissance intends to file for tax exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. The process is not that complicated but it is tedious. The entire structure of Renaissance will come under the scrutiny of the tax service. Having been in existence less than one year, budgets for this year and the succeeding two years must be developed and submitted with the request for exemption.

Achieving tax exempt status will be of great benefit to Renaissance and its members. Right now the confidential mailing list contains over 100 names. That's over

\$22 a month in postage. The mailing expenses for the show were almost \$100. Exempt groups may apply for a bulk mailing permit, thereby greatly reducing monthly operating expenses. In addition, there is the ability to apply for grants to assist in achieving the main goal of this organization, i.e. education. One such source of funds is the Playboy Foundation. Several sex researchers have been funded by Playboy. Renaissance might seek a subsidy for this publication in order to increase its circulation, expand its content and improve its reproduction quality to include halftone photographs.

Living With Yourself And Loving It

by Trudi Henry

"Why do I have to be the way I am? I didn't ask for this!" You've heard those lines before and they may well have been coming from your own lips. I think we've all wrestled with the issue of what made us the way we are and we've all come away frustrated. The truth is: nobody on this planet knows why some of us have two gender identities and others have one that's out of synch with their physical sex.

Oh, there are plenty of theories around about us (our mothers messed us up as children; we have some sort of genetic defect; we were women in our last lives), but nobody has yet proven any of them. Most likely, there are as many causes of transgendered behavior as there are transgendered people.

I used to spend a great deal of time searching for "The Answer" to "The Question". I read anything I could get my hands on and spent a good deal of time contemplating my past to see if I could find a moment or event that caused me to be what I am.

At long last, I reached a conclusion: *I really don't care.* I would be

interested to know if someone ever does come up with a provable theory, but that's not what I live for.

It's true that I didn't choose transvestism - it chose me. I know, though, that without it I couldn't be the person that I am. I've been forced to see grey in a world that could have been very black and white for me. Since I could see that there was no easy way to explain myself, I could apply that perspective to other issues and other people's circumstances. Despite the annoyances and inconveniences, I honestly feel that my feminine side has made a positive contribution to my overall personality.

Next time you start to wonder why you, of all people, had to end up this way, just stop. Consider the added perspective your feminine side has given you: a perspective most males will never have. Think about what it's taught you about sensitivity, compassion and acceptance. Then, don't despair, celebrate! You've been given a gift, not a raw deal. Let all the facets of your life contribute to the one unique you.

Time For 1988 Dues

The installation of the Board of Directors was followed by a request for payment of membership dues. Full membership in Renaissance is \$30 per year, while Associate membership is \$12 per year. The difference is that full membership confers the privilege to vote on issues affecting Renaissance and includes a \$5 discount on all Renaissance activities. Associate members will receive the Renaissance News and are welcome to attend all Renaissance functions, but will be required to pay a \$5 fee at meetings. Associate members may upgrade to Full membership at any time.

Business Report For September

There were 25 people in attendance at the September meeting.

Starting Balance: \$235

Income:

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| Show Ads&Contrib | \$442 |
| Show Tickets | \$175 |
| Member Dues | \$120 |
| Meeting Fees | \$70 |
| Subtotal | \$807 |

Expenses:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Postage | \$86 |
| Stationery | \$47 |
| Mask&Wig Club | \$450 |
| Meeting Expense | \$30 |
| Subtotal | \$613 |

Ending Balance \$429

Coming Events:

September

29th, AIDS Benefit Show

October

4th, Cha-Cha AIDS Benefit

17th, Renaissance Fall/Winter meetings start at 8 PM

30th, Henri David Halloween Ball, Tickets \$8

November

21st, Renaissance meeting

December

19th Renaissance Xmas Party

The Opinion Page

How Do You Handle A Read?

by Angela Gardner

You've just spent hours shaving, putting on makeup, slipping into your nicest conservative daytime outfit. You've primped and plucked and powdered. You top it off with your sexy new lipstick, take a final look in the mirror at the gorgeous, passable woman there and climb into your car. As you drive to your objective for the day, perhaps a trip to a friendly store, a walk through a distant mall or dinner with a friend, you feel confident and feminine. The jangled nerves of getting to the car and out of your neighborhood are beginning to settle down.

Then, as you wait at a red light with your hands on the wheel in your most graceful pose, you hear an ominous sound. A strange cackling and hooting is coming from the car next to you or behind you or across the intersection. Yes, you've just been read.

At this point, most of us are more than a little red at being read. No one likes to feel that she wasted the two or three hours of preparation time spent that day, not to mention the hours and hours of perfecting her feminine ways in the past years just to be read by the first carload of cretins to drive by. How do you deal with being read? What should you do and what shouldn't you do.

You should not try to hide. Get away from the area certainly, but don't hide. That only draws more attention to yourself. Lying down on the car seat or jumping behind a bush may seem like the only thing to do, but it is not something a woman would do. The act of hiding will only confirm your reader's assessment of your gender. Move away from them with dignity. As for their derision, take it till you can move away.

The words, 'Take It' really sum up what your attitude must be. If a group of immature jerks were

laughing and pointing at a woman, she might wonder what they were so excited about, but she would not do anything other than ignore them. There is nothing you can do to convince your tormentors that you are a real woman or that they should pick up a dictionary and learn the meaning of the word 'tolerance'. If they decide you are a man in drag, all you can do is not react and hope to leave them with some doubts. Try to appear as if you don't know that they even exist. Look straight ahead, play with the radio or study your manicure. Don't get aggressive yourself. Don't make obscene gestures or tell them what you think of their manners or parentage. That type of response could make you a candidate for plastic surgery, even if you didn't need it before. Of course, you could adopt a belligerent attitude if you packed a .357 in your purse, but we get enough bad image stuff from TV-killers in the movies. Besides, it isn't ladylike!

To some, it may sound sexist to insist on your acting passive. Passive worked for Gandhi. Give it a try. Granted, there are women who would not take the kind of harassment you might be subjected to, but one of them is not there to help you out. Violent responses will not help you or change your tormentor's attitude. It's a lot more embarrassing to be in the emergency room with a ripped dress, torn stockings and a fat lip than it is to take a little abuse while remaining dignified and demure.

What does it mean to be read? Not all reads are as raucous as the example I've just used. Sometimes you will be in a public place and you will see someone's lips move in the, "It's a man" pattern. What do you do about that? Well, you're most likely not facing any physical danger so what's the big deal? You've just entertained a bored housewife or an accountant whose idea of excitement is a new calculator. Ignore them. Go on about your business and continue to act like a woman. You will stop being a novelty if you just continue to do what

you're doing. If they absolutely won't stop staring, try staring back and smile! Most likely they will turn away and try to ignore you.

If you're going to be read at all, the nicest way is to hear someone whisper, "That's a man?" The question in their voice lets you know that all though they suspect you're not exactly what you appear to be, your beauty and poise have left large doubts in their mind.

Of course, any read, even the nice one, can be a pain. What should you do afterwards? Do you drive home, rip off your wig, wash off your makeup and vow never to indulge in this humiliating behavior again? Of course not. That impulse, like the urge to hide, will get you nowhere. For every read you detect, there are a few you are not aware of at all. There are also hundreds of people who see you on your public outings and have no idea that you are anything but what you appear to be. Don't let being read discourage you. No one passes all the time. As long as we only cross the gender line a few times each month, there will always be something masculine about us that, from the right angle, in the right place, to the wrong person, will give us away.

What's important is your attitude. You have as much right to be where you are, dressed as you choose, as anyone else in the place. Ninety percent of the time, if you look and act relaxed, as if you belong there, you will pass. Don't worry about the other ten percent. As long as people who notice don't think it's their duty to rearrange your body parts, then don't let their attention bother you.

Another component of passing that is hard to gauge is the 'getting away with it' factor. Many members of the general public are perceptive enough to notice that there is something wrong with this picture, but they have manners, breeding, style, or they're just too apathetic to care. The point is,

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Catalog Shopping: Part 1

by Paula Sinclair

Mail Order industry experts say that in the future more and more Americans will be buying by mail (or even by video). This is because more and more people are finding that they don't have time to go shopping in a mall or downtown. This change in shopping habits and the expansion of mail order choices is a big boon to crossdressers who sometimes lack the confidence to shop in person for their feminine wardrobes. But mail order shopping, although easy, is not worry-free. There is the concern that what looks good in the color catalog will look terrible when you get it on. Then there is the worry that the company will take your money and take their sweet time shipping you the goods, or worse, that they won't send anything at all. To help alleviate those fears, here is a review of several companies who have gotten my business over the years as I did my part to boost the mail order share of the retail clothing market.

For years, crossdressers have been sending orders to Indianapolis, Indiana or Hollywood, California the home of the two standby companies—Lane Bryant and Fredericks. You have probably seen their catalogs, but if not, here are their addresses. Lane Bryant: Box 8301, Indianapolis, IN, 46282-8301. Fredericks of Hollywood: Box 229, Hollywood, CA, 90078-0229.

Lane Bryant's clothes tend to be, shall we say, dowdy. Their line represents what mail order used to be—a service for women stuck away in the hinterlands who either had no interest in fashion or who would kill to get into a size 24 again. The Tall Collection is a bit more stylish, but still, I consider myself fortunate if I find one thing I like each season. The clothes tend to be made sparingly; cheaply might be a better word, so read the catalog description very carefully. The company is heavy into polyester, which, despite the advances in organic chemistry, still looks like a petroleum by-product. The prices are very reasonable, the return policy is very good, and once in awhile I find a dress that is marvelous. Shoes are good too. They

come in large sizes (up to 12WW) but not in the towering heel heights that I prefer. It seems like Lane Bryant is always having a sale, so if you see something you like in one catalog, chances are it will be marked down in a later edition. It also seems that there are only one or two price cuts per season but they publish at least three or four catalogs touting sales. Don't be taken in.

Frederick's lingerie and clothing is certainly every drag queen's dream. The catalogs have entered American folklore as mildly erotic literature. That image has decreased somewhat since they abandoned their practice of using color drawings to illustrate the clothes. The color photographs don't have the same visual impact. The clothes come in only one size—"Too Small For Me." To those of you who can wear them, I say "I Hate You!" Just kidding, I think. The quality leaves much to be desired and I've had problems with some orders not being shipped promptly. The return policy is good, but is also sometimes slow. Perhaps this is a reflection of the laid-back California atmosphere. A new addition to the recent catalogs is Frederick's famous "sky high" heels in sizes 12 and 13. Although they come in only medium width, they will fill the need of some of us. Prices are generally under \$80 which is cheap in comparison to what some of the TV specialty places charge. The shoes are of good quality. One thing to remember with Frederick's is that you get what you pay for.

One of the benefits of mail order shopping is that you don't have to pay sales tax on orders out of state. That advantage is lost for me with a company I just learned about that is in Hanover, Pennsylvania. I don't know the real name of the company because they publish many different catalogs. But all have the same address; Unique Merchandising Mart, Hanover, PA, 17333. One nice thing about this company is that they will send you all of their catalogs once they get your name. The "Hall of Hanover" catalog featured very stylish, but young clothes. "Night 'n Day Intimates" has won-

derful lingerie. Most things offered in all the various catalogs come in at least size 16 or 18. The company's service is good as is the merchandise. Prices are reasonable. The companies also offer a wide variety of merchandise, ranging from swim suits (in season) to sequined evening tops.

Next time I'll review some lesser-known companies. Meanwhile, if you want to praise a company or blast it, let me know and I'll share it with your sisters. Write me care of Renaissance.

"Read" from page 3

don't worry about what they think. Project the image you want to the best of your ability and enjoy yourself in whatever activities you want to try. Use discretion about where you go and how you dress. Look appropriate and stay relaxed. It's up to you to make your outings into the public arena a fun time that can help you grow personally. Try to remove the anxiety from the experience and enjoy!

Renaissance News is the monthly publication of the Renaissance Education Association, Inc. Subscription and Associate Membership is \$12 per year. Full Membership in the group is \$30 per year.

Renaissance is a non-profit corporation which has the purpose of providing information about transgendered behavior to the general public and professional counsellors.

Renaissance meets once a month, on Saturday night. The dates vary due to Holidays and other conflicts. Starting time is 9:00 PM in the late Spring/Summer, and moves to 8:00 PM in the Fall/Winter. Meetings serve two purposes, a time to socialize and get to know one another, and to conduct the business of the group. Regular meetings are held in the King of Prussia area. Occasionally, we will meet other places and these will be noted in the newsletter.

Please come out and meet us; it may just change your life.