

News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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RENAISSANCE

2nd Transgender Lobby Days Announced

New York City

GenderPAC (GPAC), the national political coalition of the transgender community dedicated to gender, affectional and racial equality, has announced the second National Transgender Lobby Days (NTLD) to be held on Monday and Tuesday, May 5-6, 1997 in Washington, DC.

Last year's Lobby Days on October 2nd and 3rd drew over 100 activists to Capitol Hill to lobby for gender rights issues, including trans-inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Bill (ENDA) and the Hate Crimes Statistic Act (HCSA), as well as issues around trans-health care and the treatment of t-people in the military. In two-plus days of intense lobbying, activists visited the offices of nearly every one of the 503 Senators and Representatives.

The second NTLD was originally planned for October 1996. However, it became apparent that most members of Congress would be in their home states, working on re-election. After much discussion by the Congress of Transgender Organizations (CTO) at the *Coming Together* convention last March, as well as consultation with several Congressional offices, the dates were moved to May 1997.

In keeping with GPAC's commitment to "gender, affectional and racial equality," lobbyists will be asked to focus on ENDA and HCSA, but also note

GPAC support on issues of women's rights, gay rights, and the increasing tide of racial intolerance.

Alison Laing, a member of the GPAC board and Executive Director of the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE), said, "This is a chance for anyone concerned with gender, affectional or racial equality to show up in Washington and have their voice heard. GPAC welcomes all people to participate and let the incoming Congress know that we are not going away, that no American is free until *all* of us have our rights."

Dana Priesing, Washington DC lobbyist for GPAC, said, "Based on my recent visits to Capitol Hill, it's clear that transgender people made a real impression in 1995. Telling our stories humanized us; it made them see us as real people instead of tabloid television subjects. This time we'll return in May 1997 with a focused, polished and more professional approach, identifying the bills and the language important to us and working to educate everyone with whom we come in contact."

To get on the mailing list for the second Lobby Days activities contact: Riki Anne Wilchins, Exec. Dir. of GPAC at <riki@pipeline.com>; or Dana Priesing, GPAC lobbyist at <dpriesing@aol.com>. Or write to GPAC care of this publication.



An Open Apology to Tri-Ess & SPICE

By the News&Views staff.

This newsletter has never shied away from controversial issues and will continue that policy in the future. However, it is not the policy of this newsletter to knowingly disseminate erroneous or incorrect information. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened in last month's *VisAVis* column.

Last month, Dina Amberle wrote two pieces related to Tri-Ess in which she reported on Dallas Denny's (AEGIS) personal opinions of Tri-Ess membership policies and Vanessa Kaye's (COTA) personal opinions about SPICE. The staff at *News&Views* gives great leeway for the expression of differing opinions. Ms. Amberle was simply reporting what other people were thinking.

However, the quotes regarding the upcoming SPICE conference were filled with statements known to staff members to be incorrect. JoAnn Roberts, an associate editor said, "I feel it's my fault. I have personal knowledge of details concerning SPICE and I did not take the time to read Dina's column before it went to print. If I had, we would have corrected the mis-statements." To wit:

Statement – SPICE has been "taken over" by Tri-Ess. **Fact** – While SPICE has its own planning board, the conference has always been dependent on Tri-Ess for its funding and sponsorship.

Statement – The upcoming SPICE conference is

continued on back page

Chapter & Affiliate Information

Chapters

Delaware

Wilmington, Delaware: meets second Saturday of each month. Write for info to: PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808.

Pennsylvania

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

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122 Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets on the first Saturday of the month. Call 717-780-1LSV (780-1578) for location and meeting times.

Affiliates

California

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

Connecticut

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

Georgia

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

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

Illinois

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

Louisiana

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

New Jersey

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

Titusville: Meetings are 2nd Saturday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Crossing. Call Terri Risley at 609-933-2233.

New York

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

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

Long Island: Long Island Femme Expression (LIFE), PO Box 3015, Lake Ronkonkoma, NY 11779-0147.

Oklahoma

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

Pennsylvania

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

Renaissance News & Views

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

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the transgender community and the general public. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, make your check or M.O., payable to Renaissance and send it to our National office. Your contributions will help us continue our efforts to provide education about transgender issues. Donations can also be made through your local United Way agency.

Local Calendar

August

- 3 Ren. LSV meeting
- 10 New Jersey Support (TBA)
- 10 Ren. Delaware, video *The Transformation* and a discussion after.
- 10 NEPTGA, Allentown, Pa.
- 17 Ren. GPC

News Beat & Reminder



by Angela Gardner

Boy I hate humidity. And let me tell ya, it must be the Summertime Blues but I actually felt unglamorous the other day. (Say what!?)

It started out as a typical weekend of crossdressed fun. First a visit to an evening of art gallery openings (Philadelphia's First Friday event) with two female friends, then a little dinner and on to some other galleries where, heaven's to Betsy, I found I was on display in a photographer's portfolio. The photo was a shot from last year when I had had a few shots at the now infamous **Swingers** parties in Olde City Philadelphia. My naughty Y.E.S. babydoll mini had a see thru skirt and I was displaying a bad girl attitude, and a lot of flesh. (So what's new?) I really didn't even remember having my photo taken since most Swingers parties are only a blur to me now. The photographer was totally embarrassed she hadn't sent me a copy of the shot. I went along with it and told her how much I had been pining for the picture and how I'd love to have a copy. She decided to pull the photo from the show and gave it to me on the spot. Well, I don't know whether to be relieved no one is looking at me in such a silly pose or to be miffed she took me out of the show. But, I digress.

Back to the tale of...

How I Felt Unglamorous

The next day I had Renaissance office work to do. (So dedicated, working on Saturday.) I wore shorts since the weather was hot and steamy. My legs, which had been freshly shaven for the

previous day's adventures had sprouted an annoying stubble... and were beginning to get on my nerves. I made it through the day, and by covering the offending appendages with black stockings I was able to go out that evening with old friends Tina and Wilma (oh, we could cut a rug back in the '80s, dearie) for fun and frolic in New Hope at the Cartwheel, but I was having an eye problem and couldn't wear my contacts. (Can't see a thing without 'em.) I had to wear my glasses. I look a lot like the woman JoAnn used in her CDS ads when I wear my glasses. A trifle secretarial for clubbing. Sexy, but secretarial.

Sunday morning my friend Jayne called and said she was going shopping. Shopping! I can't pass up a bargain and a local department store, (Strawbridge & Clothier) was going out of business. I hopped into the bathroom and quickly shaved the only part of my legs that will tolerate a shave that soon without bleeding; my lower legs, and put together a conservative, long skirted look. Not that conservative, since I chose a white silk broomstick skirt that definitely, uh oh, showed my panties. I quickly added some bike pants underneath for decorum sake and raced off to meet Jayne.

The Car From Hell

I have no air conditioning in the car so the temperature inside must have been about a hundred and five. Oh sure, I got it cooled down to livable temperatures (only some of the softer metals, like lead, were still melting in

the backseat) by opening both windows and driving seventy miles an hour, but do you have any idea what that will do to your hair style? Of course, I had forgotten my brush. At Strawbridge, after frenzied fixing of the hairstyle with my fingers, Jayne and I wandered along, idly checking out the seventy percent savings. Only your oldest and closest friend can tell you how you really look and Jayne took advantage of that status to inform me that my hair looked flat, and my panties were visible. I told her they were bike pants, but she wisely pointed out, since I had rolled them up, how were people to know that? Then, just when all seemed darkest... a saleswoman called me "sir."

I ran screaming from the store. Not really. I stayed the course. It was, after all, my own fault. Along with not feeling feminine since I was having such a decidedly unglamorous day, I had made the mistake of becoming preoccupied with the seventy percent off rack and not noticing that the saleswoman was trying to get my attention to let me know not all of the pantyhose were seventy percent off. She had called "miss" about four times before it finally sunk in and I turned abruptly toward her with a stupid expression on my face and said something really feminine like "wa?" Well, when I went to buy my bargains that's when the awful "sir" incident occurred.

I really took it well. The spots on my palms where my nails dug in stopped bleeding within a few minutes and I really didn't bite all the way through my tongue. No, I handled it with grace because I realized she had no intention of trying to hurt my feelings. Like most of the non-transgendered world she just didn't know what to call me. (Call me anything but never late for dinner.) I could have, and should have, corrected her by saying "miss" was all right with me... but I just didn't have the energy.

We shopped a bit longer and then I (wisely) decided to go home. I took my wig off and put it right in the sink for a good wash. I quickly shed the rem-

continued next page

News Beat...

nants of my shattered femininity and took refuge in a large meal. It was definitely one of those days.

I Regroup

All was not lost, however. After recharging the glamour battery I was out again within days. **The Philadelphia Gay & Lesbian Film Festival** opened last week with the film *Stonewall*. Last month I told you I had my fingers crossed that the footage I worked on would be included. I'm happy to say it was and if you keep your eyes open for the hooker in the leopard top you'll get to check out my moves. It was shot two years ago so it's a glimpse back into my more glamorous younger years. Yes, there were none of those dowdy, unglamorous days back then. Right.

Stonewall is a very moving story of the beginning of the gay rights movement and the drag queens act as a sort of Greek chorus that lip sync to girl group hits of the Sixties. The songs all tie into what's going on with the characters. They're great. It's slated for a limited release later this month, so check it out at an art house near you. You'll see parallels between the start of the gay rights movement and the present transgender rights movement.

The film was introduced by that grand olde pouf, **Quentin Crisp**. (*The Naked Civil Servant*, *Resident Alien*, the Queen of England in *Orlando*.) He's a legend, not a bit crisp and amazing at the age of 88. We chatted at the after party and Quentin told me he's slated to work on a film in the Midwest called *Homosexual Heights*. We partied. Quentin had a pint or two and I knocked back a Martini. Michelle Lynn and Michelle Holly were chased out by the probing Channel 6 Action News cam that was attracted to their twin blonde loveliness. Then my part time drag queen buddies from the Philadelphia gay activist group, **Grassroot Queers** showed up (They heard you could get in for free if

you wore drag) and the fun really began. (They wore the cutest mod attire.)

Five of us stuffed into my car and headed over to **Bob & Barbara's Lounge** on South Street for the regular Thursday night drag show. (I'm still cleaning out the feathers and sequins.)

The queens at B&B's were hot and the crowd was cool but soon it was time to head on home, safe in the knowledge that glamour was still an achievable thing. Of course, my biological clock is ticking.

If you want to get music that was included in the soundtrack of *Stonewall* (and more), get in touch with the **Imperial Queens & Kings of New York**. They have put together *Songs of The Stonewall*, a compilation of all the tunes that the folks at the Stonewall "got down" to back in '69. Give Queen Allyson Ann Allante a ring for more information at 212-580-9858. To paraphrase Quentin Crisp when he introduced the film, it's a good thing the place was named the Stonewall. Imagine what it'd be like if it had been called the Pig and Whistle.

POV and The Transformation

The Usenet newsgroups and email lists were a buzz in June with messages about *The Transformation*. The basic message was, "Oh there they go, exploiting the transgendered and presenting street queens with HIV as representative of all of us."

Well, hogwash. I watched the film when it ran here in Philly on July 9th and I found it to be a moving film about people in extraordinary circumstances making hard choices.

Ricardo was a street queen named Sara back in the 80's. Sara lived on the street and hooked for a living. In some of the footage we see Sara putting on her makeup while she and her other street friends huddle around a campfire in the middle of a rubble strewn lot. Her life would be completely unbearable to people like us who have homes, computers, vanity tables and productive lives. At one point when Ricardo is asked about why he left his life as Sara on the streets of New York he says "I was lonely. I had no help."

Help was offered by a minister from Texas who prowls New York to "rescue" queens from the streets. He told Sara she could move to Texas and live in her own apartment if she would give up her transgender ways and start to live as a man. Sara decided to do it and her new life in Texas brought her a home, a wife and a new career as a successful "rescuee" for the church to trot out at fund raisers. That was the exploitation I found in this film. If the minister truly cared about transgendered hookers there would be no condition of masculinity on their "rescue."

Other queens in the film are offered the choice and decide to decline the offer. One girl had saved herself from the street and gotten off drugs with the help of her sister and brother. She said that she could never make the deal Sara had made.

This is a film that support groups around the country should show to their members and then discuss. I think the big question we all have to answer is, how come this minister is the one rescuing our sisters? Shouldn't we be doing it?

In the end, as Ricardo's health fails he says if he had to make the choice again, or if he could make it happen right then and there, he would, "...choose to be a woman." It is a powerful statement about the nature of this thing we call transgenderism.

You can get a copy of the film from: Starfish Productions, Inc., 330 West 42nd Street, Suite 2410, New York, NY 10036, Tel: (212) 564-5138, Fax: (212) 684-1208.

Bits & Pieces

For those who are transgendered and religious, it's often tough to find a church that will accept them. The PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians & Gays) newsletter had a paragraph about the **Old First Reformed Church, United Church of Christ** in Philadelphia. It was founded in 1727 and they have declared themselves to be an "Open and Affirming" congregation which means they welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual people to worship and participate in

their church. Contact the Reverend G. M. Butz at 215-922-4566 and find out how they feel about transgendered people. It might be a good place for those who feel the need to worship.

Our friends, the Erie Sisters, from the home of our Governor (bet they don't enjoy that) are busy again planning their Fifth Annual Riverside Gala Weekend in Cambridge Springs. Since many crossdressers are scared to go out dressed anywhere within a hundred miles of their home this offers the perfect place for all of the Philadelphia closet CDs to slip into their feminine finery... it's four hundred miles away. They have all kinds of things planned and if they can book all the rooms in the hotel by August first they'll have the whole place to themselves. Contact the lady running the show, Muriel L. Chandler at PO Box 1571, Erie, Pa. 16507 and see if there are still any spaces available. A grand time is most often had by all.

If you need something to wear for the event you might want to visit Le Chateau Exotique, Ltd., in New Hope. They specialize in corsetry, "scene wear," leather and all that's naughty and nice. They also advertise breast forms. They're at 5 West Bridge Street in New Hope and you can call them at 215-862-3810. Come to think of it, you'd better wear their stuff to Henri David's Halloween Ball and forget about it at The Riverside Gala. The girls at the Gala are a bit too refined to put up with any of that Spandex and PVC trash. Of course, you could always wear it under your Liz Claiborne.

Just to show you Philadelphia has always had a big TG thing going on, not only did we give the world Harlow, star of *The Queen*, we had another transgendered movie star who appeared in John Water's first cult hit, *Pink Flamingos*. In that early Seventies flick, there is a scene in which a flasher gets his comeuppance when he victim-

izes a beautiful model and she whips out her breasts and then shows him that her penis is bigger than his. The young "lady" was Elizabeth Coffey and she met John Waters while she was visiting Johns Hopkins for treatment. She used to work at Lickety Split (a restaurant that has since split) and Waters would hang out there when he was in town. They partied there after the premier of the film.

It should be noted that John Waters loves Philadelphia since we have great serial killers. That'll get ya listed among the top cities to raise your kids.

That's it for this month kids. The moral of the story, always help your transgendered sisters before some slimeball minister gets his hooks in 'em, John Waters will visit your town if you kill a few people and don't be stopped by the Summertime Blues or a few misplaced "sirs."

See ya on the scene, babies.



Resources



Background Papers

- Background Papers are \$1.25 each:
1. Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing
 2. Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing
 3. PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others
 4. The Matter of Children
 5. Annotated Bibliography
 6. Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View
 7. Understanding Transsexualism

Significant Other Support

To network with other partners of transgendered people contact Evelyn Kirkland, 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087.

Pen Pal Program

If you would like to correspond with other people around the country, contact PenPals, attention Georgia Hilbert, PO Box 10723, Midwest City, OK 73140-1723 or email to: <75474.1025@compuserve.com>

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Classified Ads are \$3.00 for 3 lines for 3 months.

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Ren National Wins \$2,000 Grant

On July third, Renaissance received a grant of two thousand dollars from The Philadelphia Foundation. This is the first grant that Renaissance has applied for and the National Board is encouraged that The Philadelphia Foundation has placed trust in Renaissance. The Foundation administers many different grants. The Renaissance grant comes from that portion of their funds provided by the Delaware Valley Legacy Fund, a fund established for the support of gay, lesbian and transgendered organizations.

The grant money will be used to help reach more transgendered individuals in urban Philadelphia. Managing Director Angela Gardner said, "Being an all volunteer organization it has been hard to help everyone. This grant will allow us to expand our outreach efforts into Center City and know that we will be able to cover the cost of ad-

vertising and meeting space. We intend to work closely with other groups that have become active in town, so anyone who is transgendered will have a place where they can learn about and meet others like themselves."

Among the ideas discussed at the last Renaissance National Board meeting were establishment of a Center City Philadelphia meeting, production of informative brochures on transgender issues and outreach to the transgendered street population. The possibilities of producing either a radio or television public service announcement to be distributed to local stations was discussed, as well as increasing advertising in newspapers.

"With some extra cash we can definitely improve our outreach efforts," said Gardner. She went on, "What we need now are people who are interested in guiding a Center City meet-

ing. We have done it on a small scale before, but we have relied on national board members and GPC officers to take charge. It would be great if some folks in the general membership would step forward and be a big sister for a downtown group."

The Philadelphia Foundation, founded in 1918, guides income from 249 individual and family trusts to non-profit organizations in the five-county area. In 1995, the Foundation awarded \$6.4 million in grants to 554 organizations for programs in arts and culture, children and families, education, environment, health, human services, and public and community development. The Foundation has assets of \$120 million and donors continue to establish funds to increase the philanthropic resources available to meet community needs.



Transgender Activists Meet With Democrats

by Terry McCorkell

Thanks to the efforts and determination of the New Jersey Lesbian & Gay Coalition, three transgender activists had a rare and historic opportunity to discuss issues, vent anger, and educate some of the leadership of the Democratic Party on June 26, 1996 at the Democratic National Committee Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Riki Ann Wilchins of Transsexual Menace, Dana Preising of Gender-PAC, and Terry McCorkell of Monmouth Ocean Transgender (MOTG), a Renaissance Affiliate, joined fifty gay, lesbian and bisexual activists in a day long event sponsored by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) Lesbian & Gay Outreach Office, headed by Brian Bord.

This unique forum allowed transgender issues to be put forth face to face with a variety of federal government officials, congress people, and Democratic Party officials. Most of these officials have been inaccessible to our community and, therefore, were

hearing about our issues for the first time. (Most are out lesbian and gay Clinton appointees.)

Among those present were: Richard Sacaridis, White House liaison to the lesbian and gay community; Richard Sorian, Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy; Ann Lewis, Deputy Campaign Manager Clinton/Gore '96; Daniel Zingale, Political Director, Human Rights Campaign; Roberta Achtenburg, HUD; Don Fowler, Chairman, Democratic National Committee; Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.); Congressman Bob Torricelli (D-NJ); Bob Hattay, White House Liaison, Dept. of the Interior; and Paul Richard, Senior Advisor, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Many issues were brought forth, but, by far, the issue of the day was the President's opposition to same sex marriages. All of the Clinton administration gay and lesbian speakers shared the disappointment expressed by the New Jersey Coalition. However, most

emphasized how much the Clinton presidency has done for the gay and lesbian community overall.

In this vein, this event was clearly orchestrated to parade as many *out* gay and lesbian Clinton appointees as possible in an attempt to do damage control around the issue of same sex marriage. The Democratic leadership clearly needs and wants every vote it can get from the queer community. Thus, in one sense, it was very much a staged political stunt designed to drive home the advantages of re-electing Clinton and Gore. In fact, the lure of a visit to the White House itself for a reception with either President Clinton or Vice President Gore fell through at the last minute. Many of us are of the opinion that the White House visit was never more than a bait and switch tactic in the first place.

On the positive side, Rep. Barney Frank was especially insightful in discussing transgender issues. He indi-

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Allen gives us an insider's view of the psyche of the tg community. This one's sure to cause a stir in some circles.

216 pages, \$22.90



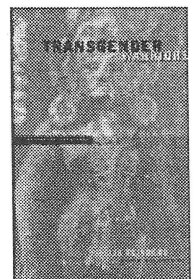
NEW ARRIVAL!

Transgender Warriors ▶

by Leslie Fineberg

Feinberg chronicles tg people thruout time & across cultures, woven into a personal narrative

212 pages, \$28.50



◀ *Lettin It All Hang Out*

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◀ *Gender Outlaw*

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The philosopher Yakov Smirnov used to ask "Is this a great country...or what?" The news this week is that guys who play basketball really, really well are signing contracts for upwards of \$100 million over seven years. The other news is that the President and Congress are debating how to cut welfare benefits for people who don't play basketball nearly that well.

It seems that the best paid people in America today are either ridiculously tall athletes, about six actors in Hollywood, or S.O.B.'s who fire 40,000 employees at a clip.

I think the answer to Mr. Smirnov's incisive question is "Or what? indeed."

Hooray For Hollywood

In last month's Hot Buzz column, Joann Roberts said that she thought that I would address the topic of basketball star Dennis Rodman's cross-dressing. I thought that the reporting of Rodman's public appearance in drag and his stated affinity for women's clothing would be better left for Angela Gardner's *News Beat* column. But now that the dust has settled, I thought I'd offer a few thoughts on the subject of celebrity crossdressing.

In case you don't follow basketball or celebrity gossip in general, Dennis Rodman is a member of the championship Chicago Bulls team, well-known individualist, and former boyfriend of Madonna. During his early summer book promotion tour, he appeared at a book signing event in heavy eye makeup, pink feather boa, a metallic blouse, and dangling earrings. When asked about his shocking (even for him) new look, he answered that he enjoyed the texture of women's cloth-

ing. He has also been cagey about his supposed bisexuality.

It is noteworthy that although this whole episode received a lot of attention, it was hardly a scandal. Rodman's public persona is so outrageous that people took it pretty much in stride. Even the fact that a professional athlete would dare to flirt with crossdressing and bisexuality, seemed hardly to raise any eyebrows due to his well-known proclivity to shock the public.

Likewise, morning radio personality Howard Stern also took on the cross-dressing mantle while he promoted his new book, aptly titled *Miss America*. Again, it raised a few eyebrows but because of Stern's public persona, it was hardly scandalous. As far as we here at the *Vis a Vis* desk know, General Colin Powell did not dress in drag to promote his recent autobiography... but if you know differently, please inform us.

The question for our community is whether these celebrity flirtations with crossdressing hold any real promise for breaking down barriers in public feeling about crossdressing. My own belief is that, while it doesn't hurt our cause, the nature of celebrity in our culture makes it unlikely to advance our cause, except marginally.

The Nineties, so far, have certainly been a banner decade for celebrity transgenderism. From Tula to Jaye Davidson to Jahna Steele; to the fashion industry's fascination with drag models; with a big push from the ubiquitous RuPaul; to the spate of cross-dressing-related movies of the past couple years; and finally the two bizarre book promotions of Rodman and Stern. There is no doubt that the surface visibility has risen, even if the

more substantive issues have not been equally covered.

My earlier point about the nature of celebrity in our culture can be borne out by a brief look back in time. I'm not admitting that I'm old enough to remember Milton Berle doing drag on his early TV show but I'm certainly aware that it was so prevalent that it became one of the defining images of his celebrity. Likewise, Flip Wilson's wildly popular Geraldine Jones character cemented him in the public consciousness. Okay, it was all done for laughs. Or was it? I think many people (myself included) felt somewhere in those comedic ploys was a bit of crossdressing enjoyment. And that too became a part of those two gentlemen's public image.

Taking this point out another step, we can look at comedians like Paul Lynde, Rip Taylor, and comic actor Charles Nelson Reilly, all of whom played off slightly effeminate mannerisms to become popular celebrities in mass entertainment media. Did their 'act' help the cause of gay rights? Well, it may not have hurt insofar as 'regular' people became familiar with sexually ambiguous celebrities but they hardly became poster boys for gay causes. And so far as I know, none of them ever 'came out' one way or the other.

As our culture becomes more saturated with wild celebrity stunts, the stakes to grab attention are anteed up with each new promotional assault. The public and the media may write off these stunts as mere gambits for our attention. The question somebody should be asking in these instances of crossdressing stunts is: "why do they choose that particular form of stunt?" The answer may be that there is a measure of secret desire behind it. The fact that the question goes unasked is evidence in itself that our favorite activity is still seen as too far beyond the understanding of the mass media and the vast public it serves.

I'm Not The Only One Getting Trashed Around Here

Our Special Joy is the name of the newsletter of the Chi Delta Mu sorority of Tri Ess in Northern New Jersey. In the April issue, their chapter Secre-

tary, Sandi, took exception to an item that JoAnn Roberts had in her *Hot Buzz* column here in *News & Views* a few months ago. The item in question was JoAnn chiding Linda and Cynthia Phillips about their Texas “T” Party profits and the role it may have played in their decision not to drop the “T” Party as previously announced.

Sandi complained that the item was another example of the type of “strife and bickering” that has characterized our community for years. In fact, she said that JoAnn’s item was “pointless, cheap and demeaning.” Sandi wondered whether JoAnn or any of her “spies” had talked firsthand with the Phillips’ on their decision to continue or discontinue the “T” Party. Sandi finished her piece by saying: “I feel sorry for the author (JoAnn)...If you have nothing good to say, then don’t say anything at all.”

Oddly enough, it was only a month or two ago that the Phillips’ accused me of trashing people in my column. Now Sandi is trashing JoAnn for trashing the Phillips’.

Trash happens, I guess.

Hobson’s Choice

The Ingersoll Gender Center in Seattle, Washington puts out the *Ingersoll Message* and the May issue had a cover article by Margaret Deirdre O’Hartigan titled *And Yet Another Viewpoint*.

Margaret’s article continued the discussion prompted by the hypothetical debate that might occur if genetic proofs of transgenderism (or homosexuality) in individuals and fetuses could be determined. The “debate” was mentioned in this column two months ago.

Margaret offers a brief historical perspective to begin her argument. At one time, sex reassignment surgery was performed only after a person “proved” her (or his) need for the surgery through established gender programs. This created “anger and anxiety amongst transsexuals” since they were forced to legitimize their own belief of transsexuality in arbitrary measurements by others. The wider availability of SRS and a more liberal outlook on

transsexuality made meeting these “proofs” less necessary. Now, we are faced with the real possibility that scientists may soon be able to determine if a person is a “true transsexual” based on some biological evidence. If so, transsexuals may once again be forced to meet some scientifically determined criteria to receive SRS. Especially with regard to insurance funding of SRS, this is a frightening possibility for transsexuals who believe they need the surgery — no matter what the scientific evidence may be.

If we look ahead, (assuming the scientific “proof” is uncovered) we can see a situation arising where some individuals will be medically validated for SRS based on biological evidence, while others are not. From this point, Margaret jumps onto another potential controversy spurred by the discovery of scientifically provable transsexuality and homosexuality.

While the discovery of scientifically proven transsexuality or homosexuality would open new understanding of the phenomena, it would also open the possibility for pregnant women to terminate fetuses who have the genetic makeup for either transsexuality or homosexuality. Transsexual advocates would likely be militant against this use of scientific evidence to eradicate unborn children with the “T” gene.

Margaret points out the potential conflict inherent in this possibility. If transsexual rights advocates currently take a “pro-choice” position, how can they adopt a stance against the termination of transsexual pregnancies. She writes, “[if] we can have it both ways in demanding SRS from either “choice” or medical necessity, isn’t it hypocritical to demand control over our own bodies while denying genetic women that same right.”

All of this shows that the advance of science provides great opportunities as well as a host of new questions on how we humans deal with the consequences of those advances.

Crossdressers Need Not Apply

Cross-Talk magazine published in Woodland Hills, California always has a slew of interesting articles. Issue #79

carried a piece by Daralyn Maxwell titled *Notes From The Deep End*.

Daralyn is a pre-op transsexual and writes “I don’t want a man who dresses up!” She means a man who dresses up in women’s clothing. I don’t think she has anything against men who wear suits and ties.

To be fair, Daralyn writes her essay with some humor and recognizes the irony of a male wishing to become a woman disdaining to share her life with another man who wishes to become a woman — even if only on a part-time basis. But she is serious in her statement about eschewing a relationship with a crossdressing male. Her feeling is that her lifelong goal to become a woman would be spoiled if she had to deal with a partner who felt a need to express his own feminine feelings. She sympathizes with other women who cope and accept crossdressing spouses but she thinks she couldn’t pull it off. A real woman has “had the time to grow into womanhood, [to] deal with deference and discrimination.” Daralyn’s life, on the other hand, “has been filled with deceit and denial, lack of orientation and assimilation.” In other words she hasn’t had time to enjoy her own womanhood and couldn’t cope with a partner who needed to explore those same feelings in her relationship.

So if any of you guys — crossdressing guys — were hoping for a shot at Daralyn, forget it. (That’s the public service portion of this month’s column). And since it’s been months since my last limerick:

*There was a transsexual named Daralyn
Who didn’t want her man to dabble in
Wearing ladies’ stuff
Nah, you gotta be rough and tough
Not some nancy boy who wants to be
Marilyn*

Instructions For Use

Last month I wrote an item about S.P.I.C.E. and criticism of Jane Ellen Fairfax’s role in that organization that appeared in another newsletter. Apparently, some of the criticisms leveled against Jane Ellen were unwarranted

continued on page 16

Crossdress? Sorry I'm Not In The Mood

by Jessica Brandon

Every now and then, I find myself confronted with a sort of philosophical dilemma in regard to crossdressing, that passion which brings us together in a special community where we share our burning desire to express latent femininity. And this dilemma is perhaps the most vexing to me: the overall importance of crossdressing in my life, and the degree to which it holds sway over me. The reason I'm mentioning this is relatively simple, at present, that hold is very tenuous, in some ways, almost non-existent. To some of you, perhaps most of you, what I'm about to talk about might just mirror your own feelings as to how you fit crossdressing into your lives.

I arrived at the conclusion that crossdressing has lost some of its power over me several weeks ago when I attended the February meeting of Renaissance's Greater Philadelphia Chapter in my male guise after a long, hard day at work. I was bone tired and originally had no intention of staying very long, however, since I was the Chapter Leader, it was my responsibility to be in attendance. Before leaving home that morning, it would've been easy for me to bring everything I needed to transform into Jessica at the meeting site, but that idea never occurred to me, which was just as well. I was so exhausted, I wouldn't have bothered, even if I had the stuff.

Prior to having landed a job in mid February after my retirement from the Navy, I was, for lack of a better term, inactive for over four months while I submitted loads of resumes and looked diligently for work. Of course I still had plenty of free time to dress and go out as much and as often as I wanted, but that never happened. With the exception of the monthly Renaissance meetings and two functions I attended in October, not once did it occur to me that I could've taken advantage of that opportunity until it was way too late. And while I sometimes curse myself for missing any sort of opportunities, I

wasn't angry or upset over missing this one.

Now that I'm working again, I have precious little time for recreational pursuits, for which crossdressing currently is for me. Week nights are totally out of the question at present, I leave home at seven a.m., get back around six p.m., then, four hours later, I'm in bed resting up to do it all over again the following day. And while my weekends are mostly free, surprisingly enough, I find that I have neither the inclination, or even the desire to dress, save for the monthly meetings. The rest of the time, I'm usually goofing off during the day and looking for something to watch on ESPN at night. That's my idea of a fun weekend.

While both crossdressing and Renaissance are important to me, I must admit they fall short on the list of priorities in my currently busy life. If that constitutes an oxymoron, so be it, that happens to be the truth. There is so very much I do nowadays as Jeffrey, between a full time job, working on a monthly Archie Comics newsletter which I publish and other personal and family concerns, a twenty four hour day just doesn't seem to be enough for me. With that in mind, there is often so little, or next to no time left for my activities as Jessica, and you want to know something, that doesn't worry me one bit.

I must admit I find that curiously ironic, if not flat out strange. In the very beginning when I started crossdressing, I couldn't go so much as a day without putting on women's clothing and would all but go crazy when I wasn't able to. It was a harmless hobby that quickly turned into an obsession while I was a teenager, and during my early years in the Navy, it was a near intolerable situation, what with my being out at sea so much. But now, things have changed, today, I dress so infrequently, it's come to the point where it doesn't bother me at all if I can't. And, for the life of me, I honestly don't know what to make of that.

Does this mean that I'm slowly being cured of what some narrow minded, wrong thinking people might call a sickness? Not hardly. Even though I don't have the time to dress, that doesn't mean I don't think about dressing, and believe me, I think about it a lot. I still write about crossdressing through my shopping columns and other articles, I still pour through catalogs and browse through stores ogling the latest fashions. Hell, I took a job at a department store so I could be close to women's clothes! And, most of all, I still support the mission of Renaissance, that being to help other crossdressers like I had been helped some five years ago.

I often dream of winning the local lottery for an obscene amount of money so I could move to some secluded suburb where I would have both the time, and the means to dress and go out as much as I want. Sadly, I know that's one fantasy that will never come to true. While crossdressing still means the world to me, I just don't have the time to enjoy it as much as I would like, so I enjoy it whenever I can. And that's when this passion becomes truly special to me.

Shopping...

then, opinions are like bodily orifices, everybody has them.

To sum everything up, I say if you want the best cosmetics, along with lots of helpful advice to boot, hop in your pink Cadillac and motor down to Expensive Boulevard. It'll be worth the drive. If you want to praise my brilliance, or say I don't know what I'm talking about, drop me a line at <treetop@voicenet.com>. Until next month, be smart, buy smart and look smart! Happy shopping, sisters!





GenderReflections

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

DSM: A Mixed Blessing

It's hot off the press. Get your copy! Be the first on your block to learn the new categorization of transgender behaviors in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*. Now, before you shred this column, assuming it is written by another therapist eager to pathologize transgender individuals—wait! For those of you who have negotiated the terrain of gender without difficulty, having had supportive family and friends, who have never doubted your sanity or sexuality, who are absolutely comfortable with being open about your transgender status with those worthy of that information and secretive with those who are not, who have never despaired over buying a size 42 nightgown or thinning hair, this article will add little to your need to know about how you are viewed by the psychiatric community and how you can make it work for you.

This manual, otherwise known as the *DSM-IV*, is the definitive book of diagnoses by which the behaviors/symptoms of all individuals seeking mental health services are classified. Insurance companies require that any patient seeking reimbursement be diagnosed with a classifiable disorder. Those transgender individuals who seek counseling but who do not wish to be so classified, usually because of their resentment of being considered mentally disordered, have the right to pay for their treatment out-of-pocket.

In addition to the commonly thought of mental disorders such as depression and schizophrenia, you will find listed and defined others such as learning disorders, substance abuse, panic attacks, bereavement and many

other problems not associated with mental illness. The categories that might be of most interest to readers are the following:

Transvestic Fetishism

Transvestic Fetishism is described as the activity of cross-dressing accompanied by erotic arousal. Individuals with this behavior are usually heterosexual men whose interest in dressing ranges from occasional solitary activity to active involvement in the TV subculture. Some are focused on specific pieces of female attire while others dress and makeup entirely. In some individuals the reason for crossdressing changes over time with erotic arousal becoming less important and feelings of comfort and contentment taking its place. For a few people, feelings of gender dissatisfaction (dysphoria) may emerge, with the individual feeling increasingly dissatisfied and seeking to dress and live permanently as the opposite sex.

Gender Identity Disorder

Gender Identity Disorder is one in which individuals express strong cross-gender identification, feel inappropriate in the role of their assigned gender, and are significantly distressed or impaired in social, occupational and other areas of living. There is a pre-occupation with the wish to live as a member of the opposite sex. This may be satisfied by crossdressing, making cosmetic modifications to the body, taking hormones which increase desired physical and emotional characteristics, and/or sex reassignment surgery.

Individuals in either of the above described categories may seek psycho-

therapy if they feel the need to deal with the emotional concerns aroused by their transgender feelings or behaviors or those concerns of their significant others, parents, children and friends.

Please note, the treatment deals with negative attitudes, behaviors and emotions, not with the existence of transgenderism itself.

Transgenderism is not amenable to change, although its expression may be modified in more appropriate and respectful directions.

When a therapist knowledgeable about gender issues is consulted s/he can make an appropriate diagnosis which will fit the requirements of third party-payors and maximize the likelihood of reimbursement for treatment. Those of you who rightly resent being categorized as mentally disordered may benefit from thinking about the *DSM IV* differently. Instead of viewing it as an oppressive and insensitive manual designed to de-humanize individuals, perhaps it can be seen as an educational tool, which upon careful reading stresses that it is the person's emotional and behavioral response to transgenderism rather than TGism itself which requires treatment. Even if you cannot find it in your heart to accept the inclusion of transvestic fetishism or gender identity disorder in a manual of mental disorders, consider its usefulness in getting your counseling fees reimbursed!

Ed. Note: This article was originally written in early 1995, just after the release of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition, was published by the American Psychiatric Association. It is also important to note that the DSM-IV, like its predecessor, the DSM-III-R, does not consider transvestism a mental disorder. It specifically states that, "Neither deviant behavior, nor conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are mental disorders, unless the deviance or conflict is a symptom of a dysfunction in the person..."



Hot • Buzz

JoAnn Roberts • CyberQueen



"Happiness is something that comes into our lives through doors we don't even remember leaving open."

— Rose Lane

It's still touch and go on the political front. **GenderPAC** (GPAC) and **It's Time America!** (ITA!) have both announced plans to formalize their respective structures with boards of directors, etc. GPAC submitted congressional testimony late last month. Meanwhile, ITA! has made some impressive progress at grassroot levels lobbying state legislatures for trans- inclusive laws. If we can get GPAC and ITA! to work together, wouldn't that be nearly perfect. Imagine, a united front, working toward the same goals at both the state and federal levels. Hey, it could happen. I hope it does. If you're wired to the web, you can find out more about GPAC activities at this page <<http://www.cdspub.com/gpac.html>>, including information on the **Second National Transgender Lobby Days**.

I received the most feedback last month on my piece about **Stephanie Lloyd** (Transformations, U.K.) The responses ran 2 for 1 on negative/positive experiences with Ms. Lloyd's company. I guess let the buyer beware.

MTV announced they're giving Chicago Bulls star **Dennis Rodman** his own

show. At a press conference where Rodman was wearing pink nail polish, he said, "I could be [transmitting] in a gay bar, dancing with gay guys, even kissing a gay guy." When asked if he was gay, Rodman said he wasn't. Interestingly enough, the gay/lesbian community seems to understand Rodman quite well. One lesbian activist said Rodman was a transvestite and that was just fine with her since he is calling attention to people of difference. Rodman may be the greatest thing that's happened to this community since **RuPaul**. Someone ought to invite him to a gender event.

I see **Linda** and **Cynthia Phillips** have formally announced they will be doing the **Texas "T" Party** again next year. I told you they would.

The **Renaissance** powers that be have asked me to remind you that you can receive *News&Views* by email every month and save a few trees in the process. Anyone interested should send \$10, plus their email address to the Renaissance national office. If you already subscribe to the paper version, we'll convert you over to e-news no charge.

There's been a mini-explosion of tg related vendors on the net. Just last month **Lee's Mardi Gras Boutique**, **Lola Inc.**, and **Melody Products International**, opened online stores associated with the **TG Forum Shopping Mall** at <<http://www.cdspub.com/vndr.html>>. There are now 11 vendors at the Mall and you can buy just about anything you can dream of online and discretely. There's nothing quite like surfing the net at 2 AM in your nightie searching for fishnet hose. Visit Lee's at <<http://www.lmgny.com>>; Lola at <<http://www.lolainc.com>>; and Melody at <<http://www.melpro.com>>.

The **Second International Congress on Sex & Gender Issues** is coming along nicely. Registrations have started

coming in and Sheila Kirk reports that a major name in transgender research has agreed to be one of the plenary speakers. Watch for an official press release in September. By the way, should anyone ask, the deadline for program and workshop submissions is Jan. 15, 1997.

Okay, onto kewl stuff... Hair fashion for Fall is the slicked-back look. I envy those who have their own hair they can pull back into a bun or chignon. That look is so elegant and graceful. I've seen this done with a wig, but in order to pass close inspection at the hairline, we're talking mucho denaro and a custom-made hairpiece. Most of us can't afford that cost for realism. Other fads we'll be seeing are military looks and lots of metallics, especially gold.

Sexy shoes seem to be back in the Fall lineup after several seasons of what amounted to combat boots with heels. The latest **Speigel** catalog has a pair of high heel (3/4-inch), ankle strap, suede pumps (a.k.a., knock me down and... well, you get the idea) in sizes up to 12 medium and 11 wide for about \$65. In fact, ankle strap heels are among the really hot items for Fall. The styles range from the sexy (as above) to the utilitarian Mary Jane.

Some genetic women are just learning about a special kind of **cosmetic surgery** that many post-op transsexuals have known about for years – the **labia lift**. Yes, ladies, you too can have more sensitive labia with a simple operation. One woman reported she became so sensitive that every time she bumped against the washing machine while it was running, she just stayed there. Must take a real long time to do the wash in her house. And, just so you guys don't feel left out, there is a procedure that can lengthen and thicken the penis. Who says size doesn't matter?

The color of the season for Fall is brown

HOT•BUZZ

and anything close to it. I always like chocolate and camel tan for the Fall. And, most browns are neutral enough they can be worn by anyone.

The metallic look is hot again (nothing in fashion is ever really new). If you have Fair skin try: Eyes—any gold eye shadow... Lips—**Chanel** Hydra Soleil Sheer lipstick... Nails—**Only** Bronze Metallic. If you have Medium skin try: Eyes—**Guerlain** Liquid Gold liner... Lips—**Benefit** SSHI lipstick... Nails—**Maybelline** 24K polish. For Olive skin try: Eyes—**Maybelline** Gilded Bronze shadow... Lips—**M•A•C** O lipstick... Nails—**Revlon** Coffee Bean polish. For Dark skin try: Eyes—**Stila** Kitten shadows... Lips—**Valerie** Kissing Kit... Nails—**Creative Nail Design** Burgundy Foil.

The really **HOT BUZZ** for Fall is the **pant suit**. Remember in the '70s when women were being excluded from restaurants for wearing pants? I guess I'm old fashioned. I like skirts and dresses, but pant suits are hotter than ever. If you must be up-to-date, then it better be pants for Fall. The most flattering look is long, lean trousers under a tunic length jacket. You'll look tall and slender. The right shoe to wear with pants this Fall has a sturdy stacked heel and the pant cuff should fall just to the back of the heel.

With all the slinky new apparel made from microfiber, you have to be careful what you wear under it. Microfiber tops and dresses are very unforgiving and show every line of undergarments. That's why companies like **Victoria's Secret** and **Warner** have introduced seamless underwired bras and seamless panties, and now seamless pantyhose. *Glamour* staffers tested **CK** (\$10.50), **DKNY** (\$11) and **Wolford** (\$50) [that's not a typo] brands of seamless pantyhose and universally loved them. Believe it or not, the Wolford brand lasted longest and were, therefore, the least expensive on a per wearing basis (\$2.50/wearing).

First, there was the **Wonderbra** to lift your bust. Now, there is the

Wonderbody shaper to lift your butt. All brought to you by those crafty folks at **Sara Lee Intimates**. Well, it makes some sense. They used to make buns and now they lift them.

I just picked up an old **Pattern Making & Draping** book for my daughter, who is studying fashion design and marketing in graduate school. (I wonder where she got that idea?) The book, from 1948, is extremely interesting when compared to what we call fashion today. There was an illustration of how to correct a side seam for a woman who is sway-backed, i.e., rump out back and tummy forward. Just look through any fashion mag and you'll see every model standing that way. I also compared the size chart from then to now. A size **6** today was a size **12** back then, and my size **14** was almost a **22**.

While I'm on the subject of sizes, some manufacturers, like **J. Crew**, are actually offering size **14** and **16 Petite**. Now a 14 Petite may seem like an oxymoron, but realize that Petite, in the fashion world, refers to height, not girth. A Petite version of any given size will have the same bust, waist and hip measurements, but the vertical distances between these measurements will be shorter, often by as much as an inch in the larger sizes.

Last year it was **Vamp**, the nail color of the hour. This year **Chanel** follows up with **Very Vamp** and **Metallic Vamp**, in both nail and lip colors. Not to be left out of the picture, Lancôme hits the street with Platinum Rouge for lips and nails. If gold is good, platinum is better.

I know this has nothing to do with being transgendered or fashion, but I have to tell you – go see the movie **Independence Day**. It is perhaps the most awesome and awe inspiring SciFi movie ever. The special effects alone are fabulous. But I liked it on another level beyond the technically fabulous. It's a ground breaking movie in that the "heroes" of the film aren't blue-eyed, Anglo-Saxon, Christians. A Jewish American and an African American, as played by **Jeff Goldblum** and **Will Smith**, are the most unlikely team to save the world, but they do. And, on an even deeper level,

it is a story about family and relationships. Go, see, you'll love it. Oh, yeah, watch for **Brent Spiner** (Commander Data from STNG) as the geek-scientist. He's great in the role.

According to *Vogue*, one of the five best lingerie shops in the world is in Los Angeles. No, it's not **Fredericks of Hollywood**. Angelinos in the know, know all about **Trashy Lingerie**, 402 N La Cienega Blvd. I found it on a business trip 13 years ago and was amazed at the selections. Trashy makes a lot of custom items for movies, too. If you're in L.A. and love lingerie, don't miss it.

Does anyone remember the original **Pulsar** watches? The ones where you needed two hands to tell the time? It seems these and other first run digital watches have become hot after almost twenty years of cooling off. I have one of the first Pulsar's and I stopped wearing it because the batteries, which last only a year, cost a small fortune.

If you have a favorite cosmetic color that is either out of stock in your local area or completely discontinued, try one of these... **Nordstrom** Beauty Hotline 1-800-7-BEAUTY (will search for products from the lines they sell, **MAC** included)... **Clinique's** Find Line is 1-800-444-FIND... **Estée Lauder** Preferred Treatment phone number is 1-800-945-ORDER... **Revlon** is 1-800-473-8566.

Fashion invades the WorldWide Web as it has everything else. Here, then, are some of the coolest and best of the fashion sites... Fashion Cafe <<http://www.nylink.com/fashion-cafe/>>... The Fashion Page (original) <<http://www.charm.net/~jakec/>>... Made in Italy <<http://www.made-in-italy.com/>>... Ocean Drive (Miami hip) <<http://www.oceandrive.com/>>... Women's Wire: <<http://www.women.com/>>

So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? I think you make your own happiness. Comments? Write care of this publication or email them to <CyberQueen@cdspub.com>.

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Ms. Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.

Making Sense Of It All

A Letter to My Son

Dear Son,

I have been thinking a lot about our recent phone conversation. At first I was surprised by your anger over my way of storing the family pictures. It is true that they are not in an actual safe, but they are dry and well preserved. So now I am beginning to wonder if your anger has to do with more than just my storage methods.

When you were two years old, you used to put each of your feet (actually each entire leg) into my work boots and walk up and down the apartment hallway. You were apparently doing the normal thing for a son: be like Daddy and even try to fill his boots. As a father, I was impressed. What more could a proud father want from a son than to have him copy him and even try to fill his boots. And there are some things about me which, as an adult, you have continued to copy, though in your own way, such as your interest in various vehicles and your purchase and maintenance of a house.

But now, many years later, I turn out to be a father who, in a lot of other ways, is not exactly what you, or any son, for that matter, might want to copy. I have changed. I have sold my motorcycle, and I have obviously changed my appearance. I thus hear in your anger towards me more than anger about the pictures themselves. I hear what you yourself said on the telephone, namely, that I do not seem to care about my family roots. Well, I do care about my roots, I do care about you, and I am not running away from dealing with this matter with you. But I also cannot run away any longer from myself nor from my own inner roots. That is my own personal growth issue, and I have to state it as such if you are to understand what your own deeper anger may be about.

You may very well be angry at the fact that the pictures are all that seem to be left of the father whose boots you

once tried to fill. To lose even the pictures would be to lose the only tangible reminder of what you have valued so deeply all your life and what has given you a basis for doing many things, namely, your father with his family name and history.

At this point in time, the pictures are in my possession. They mean something to me, and I am taking care of them in a way intended to preserve them. So in a sense, the pictures are out of your control, just as what I do with my own life is out of your control, though I am not ignoring your concerns. But one thing you can control is how you handle your own situation and your own life, even though at times you may feel somewhat rootless with a father who seems uprooted. The fact is that I am still your father; I always will be; and I do know what I am doing.

I am proud of the fact that you value so highly what we both share: our family name and our family history. But none of that is really changing, even though I am personally changing. The fact is that I have to be true to myself if I am going to feel alive in this one life of mine. I do not want simply to exist. I want to feel alive as much as possible, and I feel alive by being the person I have to be. Yes, my appearance has changed, but I am still me, still striving to do things and to enjoy life and to have whatever family life I can arrange.

So, too, do you have to find within yourself the strength to go on in life, even if the meaning of our name seems to be threatened by my "strange" development as a person. The pictures are a symbol of that meaning, but they are not the meaning itself. The meaning is in **you**. It **is** you. The pictures are a reminder of our common heritage, and they tell us of our roots, but even without the pictures, we could still go on. You and I each have to find the strength to accept the fact that there are forces

greater than us which we cannot always fight, forces which we may not even fully understand. Your inner unrest and distress will not determine how I run my life and do things. I am living the way I live for reasons that fit into my life. I am not leading my life the way I do simply to be selfish or self-centered in some uncaring way. I am living the way I do, just as you live the way you do, for self-preservation, for peace of mind and heart, for personal sanity and meaning.

Perhaps the boots you should now wear are your own boots, your own inner boots, so that regardless of what mine, both inner and outer, may look like, we each know what it means to stand on our own two feet. Maybe we each have to wear boots that fit us individually, inner boots that reflect who we really are. Pictures of the outer boots are pleasant reminders of our travels in life. Ironically, there are no pictures of the inner boots, and yet those are the ones that really count, for they fill the outer ones.

I love you always,
Dad



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Update on Tyra Hunter

Transgender Nation-Washington

June 2, 1996: This is both an update and recap of the events that followed in the wake of Tyra Hunter's tragic death. In the swirl of politicized events, occasionally the truth becomes obscured. Transgender Nation - Washington issues this press release to clear up some of the misconceptions surrounding this tragedy.

As you may recall, Tyra Hunter died last August 7 as the result of injuries received in an automobile accident at 50th and C Streets SE in Washington, D.C. A D.C. firefighter (not an Emergency Medical Services Technician, the District has no paramedics) responding to the scene was administering care to her until he discovered her male genitalia. He then allegedly stopped care and began to mock her. According to one press account, his first words were, "This ain't no bitch. He's a nigger." Some witnesses reported that he continued to joke and ridicule her for as much as five minutes, allegedly withholding care during that period. It also has been reported that Tyra Hunter was still conscious at that time, and thus it is likely that she heard all the derisive remarks spoken over her as she lay severely injured. According to eyewitness reports, care was eventually resumed by other firefighters at the scene. Shortly thereafter, Tyra was transported to DC General Hospital where she later died from massive internal injuries.

A coalition composed of twenty diverse straight and gay community groups lead by GLOV (Gay Men and Lesbians Opposed to Violence) and including Transgender Nation began to issue cries for an investigation. D.C. Fire Chief Otis Latin's first investigation consisted of a group interview with the firefighters at the scene. All of them denied knowledge of the remarks made and that care was withheld.

But Chief Latin later admitted to the press that inappropriate remarks were indeed made and apologized to Tyra's family for them. However, he refused to admit that care was with-

held at any point, and no firefighters were disciplined as a result of the investigation. The appearance of a white-wash created an uproar within the local D.C. straight and gay communities.

The coalition held a candlelight vigil in front of D.C. Fire Department headquarters on September 20, attended by members of many different Washington and Baltimore transgendered groups. On October 3, members of the transgendered activist group The Transsexual Menace in Washington for National Gender Lobby Days protested the actions of the DCFD in front of the Mayor's office. Members of the transgendered law enforcement organization TOPS also met with D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and Fire Chief Latin. But the chief refused to reopen the investigation.

Both GLOV and *The Washington Blade* filed Freedom of Information Act Requests and from them, the identity of the firefighter who allegedly made the remarks (Adrian C. Williams) was revealed. The coalition continued to apply pressure for a new investigation, and a follow-up meeting with Chief Latin was held on Friday, December 1. Attending the meeting were Tracy Conaty and Darryl Cooper of GLOV; Darren Buckner of the DC Coalition of Black Gay Men, Lesbians and Bisexuals; Dee Curry of TADD (Transgenders Against Discrimination in the District); and Jessica Xavier of Transgender Nation - Washington. The Chief was confronted with overwhelming evidence contradicting the previous statements he had made, facts which undermined the DCFD's official position. On the following Monday, December 4, 1995 the Chief announced that he was reopening the investigation.

The ABC Television 20/20 story on TOPS, National Gender Lobby Days and the Menace that has been widely miscredited with forcing the reopening of the investigation ran more than six weeks later, on January 19, 1996.

The first round of interviews with individual firefighters in the new inves-

tigation revealed nothing new. Then in February, Mrs. Margie Hunter, Tyra's mother, filed a \$10 million civil lawsuit against the D.C. Fire and Emergency Services Department and D.C. General Hospital, charging them with malpractice and violating her child's human rights. Mayor Barry then ordered the new investigation shut down on the advice of his city attorneys. A trial date has not yet been set.

Members of the coalition also began working with Chief Latin behind the scenes as part of an ad hoc advisory committee to help the fire department develop a diversity sensitivity training course for all D.C. firefighters. Transgender Nation-Washington requested and received assistance from members of TOPS in developing the materials for the transgendered component of this training. An announcement from the DCFD for solicitations for proposals for a contractor to conduct the diversity training is expected shortly.

Most recently, Chief Latin received a vote of no confidence from the District of Columbia Firefighter's Union. A Union spokesman stated that the vote became necessary due to their membership's concerns regarding the DCFD's ability to perform its firefighting and emergency services missions, and the Chief's lack of leadership in contesting the budget cuts that have crippled his department. Over the past few years the District of Columbia Government has been in a severe financial crisis which forced Congress to appoint a Control Board to run the Capital City's finances. This financial crisis has hurt the delivery of nearly all services provided by the District Government, from police and fire to HIV services.

Transgender Nation-Washington will continue to monitor the efforts of the D.C. Fire Department to date in this matter. The tragic death of Tyra Hunter will not be forgotten.

Contact: Jessica Xavier, TN-Washington, TheXGrrrl@aol.com, phone: (301) 949-3822, vm box #8.



First Ever Congressional ENDA Hearing

by Dana Priesing, GPAC Lobbyist

On July 17, 1996, Representative Peter G. Torkildsen's Government Programs Subcommittee of the House Small Business Committee held the first ever Congressional hearing concerning the House version of the Employment Non Discrimination Act, H.R. 1863, which would bar job discrimination based on sexual orientation. The hearing lasted just over 2.5 hours, and included statements by Rep. Torkildsen and other subcommittee members, testimony by several Congressman (including Reps. Studds, Frank and Morella), and three witness panels: first several business representatives, then public witnesses with gripping stories of discrimination, and finally advocates (including HRC's Elizabeth Birch and Georgetown Univ. Law Center Professor Chai Feldblum). All of the witnesses who testified supported the bill.

Poshard Shows His Class

The "Class Act" prize goes to sub-

committee member Rep. Poshard, who stayed for the entire hearing, calmly and respectfully articulated his qualms as a conservative and a religious person (ostensible endorsement of a "lifestyle" his religion disapproves), questioned several witnesses, and generally showed that this subject can be discussed by reasonable people without the inflammatory rhetoric which disgraced the recent DOMA hearings and floor debates. His behavior was in marked contrast to that of the Family Research Council, which was invited to testify but boycotted the hearing, instead leaving nasty written statements on the table outside.

The Word Unspoken But Not Untyped

ENDA currently doesn't protect transgendered people, and to my frustration, during the entire hearing, not a single witness uttered the word "transgendered." There was much use of the phrases "gay and lesbian" and "gay, lesbian and bisexual." Sitting listening,

feeling invisible, I silently mouthed the missing word each time. However, I did submit written testimony noting the bill's lack of coverage of transfolk, and arguing for their inclusion.

Ed. Note:

The full text of Dana's testimony can be found at the GPAC web page <<http://www.cdspub.com/gpac.html>>. For those of you not wired to the net, send a SSAE to the Renaissance National office (see page 2 for the address) for a copy.



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Vis A Vis...

and are being corrected elsewhere in this issue. This is exactly what I said I hoped would happen when I wrote my report on the controversy.

Over the nearly three years that I've been writing this column there have been several criticisms leveled at me for reporting and editorializing on ar-

ticles I've picked up from other newsletters. I've been told to "mind my own business," or accused of criticizing people myself, when all I was doing was reporting what someone else said.

The purpose of this column (originated even before I took it over from Brenda Davidson) was to generate discussion or debate on interesting topics that appear in the dozens of TG newsletters around the world. I think this is

a valid and extremely useful pursuit. And yes, there are times when I take a contrary position or needle someone's viewpoint. This, too, is a valid pursuit and I welcome rejoinders, debates or salvos from the opposition.

I'm not going to change my name to Pollyanna and only write about all the cats that didn't run up the tree.

This is *Vis a Vis*. Read it and weep... if you must.



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Chapter & Affiliate News

Phone Watch Expands

The Renaissance National Phone Watch will expand from its current two day a week schedule effective in August. The three person Phone Watch Team, responsible for providing information to callers wanting to get in touch with the transgendered community here in the Delaware Valley area (Philadelphia and its suburbs, New Jersey and Delaware) as well as Background Papers and materials on Renaissance has gained two new members, Lisa Cross and Barbara Kay who will join current members, Wendy, Sharon and the author, who's in charge of the team. The plan will be to expand its schedule of Monday and Thursday night activity to Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays beginning August 1st on a one to two month trial basis. Arrangements are being made with the Phone company for a call forwarding system so team members can accept calls from their homes if they are unable to traverse to the Renaissance National office. After the trial period ends, consideration will be made to further expand the schedule to every week night so more opportunities exist for people to reach Renaissance.

GPC Highlights

The July meeting of the Greater Philly chapter, conducted under considerably more comfortable weather conditions than last year at this time (100 degrees all day long and no better

after dark) drew a surprisingly large crowd, considering the time of year when most folks are on vacations of one kind or another, or are just too lazy to come out to The Woods.

The topic of the meeting was a showing of a video called *The Blank Point: What Is Transsexualism?*, an excellent video on the transsexual experience, followed by a discussion session held by Lee Etscovitz which was well attended. As the Chapter Leader, I only saw half of the video as I was pretty busy making sure the meeting ran smoothly, still, I was impressed with what I saw.

Kalina Isato, web mistress for Renaissance brought several copies of the latest issue of her well-made magazine, *Transvamp* to the meeting to sale in the bookstore. For those of you unfamiliar with *Transvamp*, its a local mag devoted to crossdressing in the Philadelphia area, featuring a shopping column by yours truly.

GPC Holiday Party Plans

Plans are currently in the works regarding this year's GPC Holiday Party which will be held at The Ship Inn in Exton, Pa. on Monday, yes, you read it correctly, Monday December 23rd. I am mentioning this now so people will have more than enough time to make plans for the gala event.

NEPTGA News

Keeping a support group up and running is no small task so congratula-

tions are due to Renaissance affiliate, NEPTGA (North Eastern Pennsylvania Transgender Alliance). They have weathered the birth and growing pains associated with the first year of operation and are celebrating their one year anniversary.


If you'd like to send them a birthday card their address is: NEPTGA, PO Box 3624, Allentown, Pa. 18106. They like to taunt New & Views with the fact that their newsletter, Valley Girls, is printed in color while we still languish in the old days of black & white. Well, it's only their front cover, so take a crayon and go to our first page, color Mona to what ever color you like. It's so simple.

LSV Mugs for the Crowd

The ladies at the Lower Sussquehanna Valley Chapter are always thinking. One thought that they decided to act on was having Renaissance mugs produced and offering them for sale. These stylish mugs come in one color and are guaranteed to hold your beverage. They say Renaissance Education Association on the side and have a lovely triangle symbol. (No Mona, she was too expensive.) If you would like to add a Renaissance mug to you collection contact LSV. They're selling for \$10 each. (Address on Page 2.)

Affiliates Getting Wired

The latest additions to the Ren Web site <www.ren.org> are MOTG and NYGIRL&Partner. Contact national if you want your affiliate included.

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Letter to the Editor

Greetings,

I have been meaning to write to you since your June issue came out and I'm sorry I'm just now getting around to it. Now I have some more reasons so I figure it's now or never.

I originally wanted to write when I read Maryann Kirkland's story *The Little Mac That Could*. I thought the article was well written, but as an ex-computer geek myself I thought I would like to pass along some advice that could save even more cash. Macintosh is a good system (the new ones are great!), but sadly they are not quite as popular as the IBM compatible, nor is Apple as open in who they let build things for the Apple line, therefore, when you shop for a used computer you can expect to save more money by looking for IBM equipment. Also, get a book like the Winn Rosch Hardware Bible, it will show you everything you need to know about your hardware including how to build a machine. Believe it or not, it is fairly simple if you read the books. A trip to a swap meet or yard-sale (etc. . .), a few hours of simple work, and for about 200-\$300 you can have a system that will perform above the stated minimum.

In reference to the question of E-mail raised in the July issue, I thought I would like to offer some advice on that too. There is a nifty little program out called

Pretty Good Privacy and some other programs like it that you can get for free on the Internet or a BBS that will scramble your E-mail so prying eyes can't read it. However, the person you are sending it too must also have a copy of the program. They work great, the countries top spooks (The NSA) can't break some of them plus they're easy to use and simple to install.

I used to be a computer technician but I haven't been in business for a while, however I've been keeping up with the market so I think this is good, safe advice.

I also wanted to add my testimony and gratitude to Ms. Hilbert and the Pen-Pal program. I met a wonderful lady in England who is just great to talk to. I hope other members who, like me, kept their TGism to themselves get to find out how wonderful it feels to have someone to talk to. It is amazing just how much being accepted as a lady will make you feel like a lady.

Also, I wanted to write to share an idea I had that I hope you might pass on to your readers. I was thinking that it would be really great if some of the chapters or even some non-chapter people would get together and do some community oriented things. For example: I think it would be really great if a group of us girls (and guys too) got out into the community and did something like a canned food drive for the poor or cleaned up a neighborhood park. I think this would be wonderful because it would not only help the community but it would also give the community a chance to see that we are good people, not the crazy perverts that the media sometimes

shows us to be. Maybe even get some of the non-TG members of the community working with us. Sure it is a great thing to try to get the government and employers to accept us, but I think this idea would be really great to give a chance for the average ordinary citizen to see us, meet us, and see that we're "OK." Maybe the teenagers and young adults we would help would eventually be employers and they would remember our good turn. Besides, helping others is still a good thing to do. Also, who's going to harass you for being a manly looking woman or a girlish looking man when you're helping to feed them or provide them a clean place to play?

I'm sorry this letter became so long, but I just wanted to help. I think you at Renaissance are just wonderful for all the support you give to your sisters and brothers. Please keep up the good work, it helps many.

Oh, I just had another idea. I was recently reading a list of the friendliest small towns in America. I have also seen a list of the 100 best places to raise kids, the best places to live to make money, etc. Perhaps one day you could do a story on the TG friendliest towns?

Anyway, thanks for your time in reading this. I hope you pass along the idea of the TG community support (if you think it's a good idea.

Love,

Ashly L. Thomas

continued on page 21

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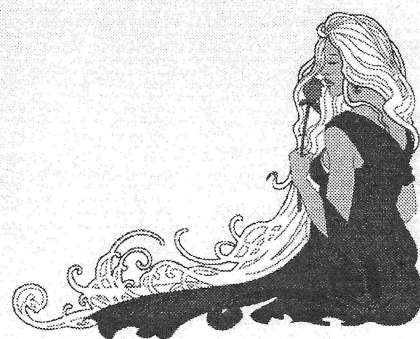
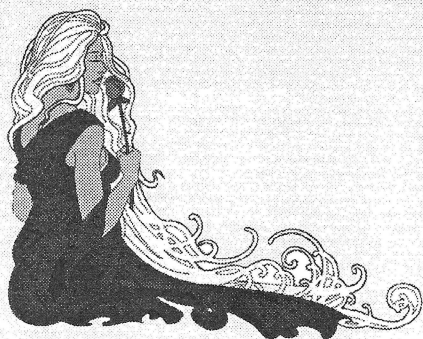
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Shopping With Jessica

by Jessica Brandon



Greetings, girlfriends! As the summer of '96 broils merrily along, basking one and all in its ever oppressive heat (don't you *dare* let me hear you complaining! Six months from now you'll be begging for this kind of weather!), allow me to humor you with a charming little anecdote which ties perfectly into this month's topic: Cosmetics And Where One Should Buy Them.

I'm ashamed to admit what I'm about to tell you is absolutely true. Some 8 years ago when I decided to experiment with cosmetics, I was rock stupid about what I needed. With no one to assist me, I had to experiment on my own, so I sauntered into the nearest drug store and bought literally the first bottle of foundation I saw, Cover Girl I think, and rushed home with my purchase to try it out.

Behind closed (and locked) doors, I slathered the stuff on my face and freaked out when I saw the end result: I looked like Al Jolson in reverse! The problem was I had bought foundation tailored to Caucasian skin types, which I'm not. (I told you I was dumb.) Needless to say, I set speed records washing the stuff off, then spent days trying to figure out what went wrong.

Had I been bold enough, or brazen enough, to ask for assistance, I might've avoided that dreadful little faux pas. But then, getting help in a drug store for anything, let alone cosmetics, is next to impossible unless you're getting something with a prescription. At the time, I honestly had no idea that cosmetics were sold in department stores where one could get loads of help.

You have two "routes," as I like to call them, as to where to buy cosmetics: Cheap Avenue (drug stores, five and dimes like Woolworth's and supermarkets) and Expensive Boulevard (department stores). Actually, you could add a third, Home Shopping Street (Avon), but you would really need nerve to have an Avon Lady come to your place to sell makeup.

I'm sure we all started our cosmetic journey on Cheap Avenue, using such familiar names as Revlon, Maybelline, Cover Girl, Max Factor, L'Oreal and, for women of color, Zuri and Posner. With the most expensive item (usually foundation or powder) costing no more than \$10, it didn't take much money to build a sizable collection of cosmetics.

The rap against Cheap Avenue stuff was just that, it was cheap. You had outdated colors, inferior formulations and less that top notch materials. Also you can't get any help on making a selection. You're left to your own devices, guessing like mad as to what might work best on you from just looking at a product... which isn't nearly enough help to make a good decision. I am living proof of that.

Now we take a drive down Expensive Boulevard where you see brand names like Christian Dior, Clinique, Prescriptives, Chanel, Estée Lauder and Lancôme, just to name a few, while women of color could only select from Fashion Fair or Flori Roberts, although, nowadays, virtually everyone mentioned here carries cosmetics for African-American women.

The one thing that sets Expensive Boulevard cosmetics head shoulders

over the pack, beyond the quality of the materials is that you get excellent, one-on-one service for the money. And make no mistake, you do pay for what you get on this particular street, but I happen to think it's more than worth it. However, the culture shock for a first time buyer can be considerable.

When I first purchased department store cosmetics three years ago, I was stunned at spending nearly \$150 for everything I needed to bring Jessica to life. WOW!! But it was well worth the cost for the assistance I received from the saleslady who took the time to test each and every product on me while *en homme*. That meant a lot.

Even though the quality of Cheap Avenue cosmetics has dramatically improved, thanks to state of the art technologies, impressive research facilities and high class ingredients like hydroxy acids, silicone and vitamins, I still prefer to buy my cosmetics on Expensive Boulevard because of the one-on-one contact with a salesperson to help me make the right choice.

But now, we come to one particular question, stemming from my March column where I expounded on how much one should spend on crossdressing: do you have to spend a lot to look great? I'd say that depends on the extent of your dressing. If you're a recreational dresser who doesn't go out very much, then perhaps you don't need the high priced stuff in order to look as good as you can

Then again, if you're out and about regularly and want to really stand out (or blend in), then you should buy and use the best. The perfect analogy would be as you should treat your feet to only the best shoes, no matter what the price, the same should apply to your cosmetics.

Now, I've given shopping lectures to the local Renaissance faithful where I've mentioned how one should never buy makeup in drug stores and their ilk, and have been told by sisters who swear by Cheap Avenue stuff (how many of you swear at it, eh?), saying it's just as good as Expensive Boulevard brands. Maybe they're right, but

continued on page 10



Ask The Dermatologist

Dear Dermatologist,

I've noticed that if I wear clip-on earrings for several hours at a time, the next day I have matching red pimples on each ear lobe. They are very noticeable and hard to explain to curious people. Pierced ears would be even harder to explain. Is there anything I can do to prevent this from happening? If not, are there any quick fixes?

Rhonda the red-eared Ren Girl

Dear Rhonda,

Those must be some clip-on earrings! If the "pimples" occur on both ear lobes every time you wear the earrings, we can probably rule out inflammatory acne papules. Compression of the blood vessels in the earlobe causes them to constrict. When the pressure is released, the blood vessels overcompensate, becoming dilated and engorged with blood. Usually, this phenomenon lasts several hours. Then, the overcompensation adjusts itself and the color returns to normal. If it lasts longer than that, you are probably suffering a significant cutoff of circulation to the lobes. A jeweler can almost always adjust the earrings so they do not clip on so tightly. It may also be possible to apply a rubber pressure-relieving device. It's time to tell those crabs fastened onto your earlobes to let go!

Dear Dermatologist,

Like all good sun bunnies in the 60's and 70's I got quite a bit of UV exposure. Now, since I shave my legs to dress en femme and the disguising fur is gone, I have spotted a few small dark (almost

black) spots on my legs. Could these be the dreaded Melanoma? How can you tell?

Anxious in Altoona.

Dear Anxious,

Only a dermatologist's visual examination can tell you with reasonable certainty what those pigmented spots are. They sound, however, like junctional moles (nevi). These are benign lesions in which the nevus cells are located at the base of the epidermis. There can be quite a number of these 1mm to 4mm dark flat moles, and they are common on sun-exposed areas.

However, because of increasing defects in the ozone layer, malignant melanoma is becoming more common. One danger signal is asymmetry. Benign moles usually have smooth clear borders. Active, potentially dangerous moles have scalloped or vague borders, or pigment streaming outward from a border. Beware if a previously flat mole rises above the surface. A uniform color is a sign of benignity. Melanomas tend to have various shades of brown, black, blue-black, white, and red. Some may not appear pigmented, but show a red color. These "amelanotic" melanomas are particularly dangerous, because their lack of pigment can imply to the patient that they are something other than melanomas. Growth or bleeding from a mole are clear danger signals that should always prompt a visit to a dermatologist.

You are absolutely right to bring up the subject of sun exposure. People who have suffered at least one severe

sunburn are several times more likely to develop melanoma than those who have not. Also, there appears to be a familial factor. Anyone who has a positive family history of malignant melanoma should have a professional evaluation of pigmented lesions at least yearly. It is important to apply a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and a water-fastness of 80 minutes, at least 15 minutes before sun exposure.

A word of warning - Some melanomas show only very subtle changes. If people will do a self-evaluation of their pigmented skin lesions, they can pick up these changes and seek dermatological consultation. In this way many lives can be saved.

A Word About Bras

Usually I tell people that my territory extends down only 1 cm from the body surface. A study has come out, however, of considerable significance to the crossdressing population. There appears to be a definite increase in breast cancer in women who sleep in bras, as opposed to those who wear them only during the day. It may be that constant pressure causes tissue toxins to accumulate in the breasts, where they eventually trigger malignant transformation. For transgendered people on hormones, these findings may be particularly ominous. Sleep shirts and silky nightgowns are fine, but it appears that the breasts need relief from constricting straps and underwires.



Letters...

Dear Renaissance members,

Last evening I attended the BYO party at Debra's Closet. What a disappointment to discover I was the only person there. Needless to say Debra is trying very hard to make shopping easier for

those members who feel uneasy about shopping in her store. If we don't patronize her store or take advantage of her special shopping privileges she won't offer them and she will stop advertising in the newsletter. This is true for all our advertisers, if the people do not get a response from placing them in the newsletter. Renaissance derives a great deal of revenue from ads, we shouldn't lose it.

Debra made up 600 flyers, she received five or six R.S.V.P.s; then one person shows up. This is a terrible response. Support our advertisers.

Randi Schwarz

If you have something to say, let's hear from you. Send letters to RN&V Editor, PO Box 530, Bensalem, PA 19020.



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Dining Out With Carol & Babs

Lucking Out In Chelsea

Approximately once a month we get updated listings of restaurants that participate in our discount dining programs. Babs, in particular, likes to focus on restaurants in Manhattan, especially in Greenwich Village and Chelsea, as well as in New Hope. Never let it be said that she's all dressed up with no place to go! It was with more than a little curiosity and excitement that she noticed a new listing, Good Luck Chengs on 23rd Street in Chelsea. This place just had to be a take off of the now famous oriental restaurant chain with drag waitresses, Lucky Chengs. This was too much of a coincidence, we had to call! Yes, they did have Asian drag queens as waitresses and yes they would accomodate a group of "crossdressers." We didn't think the girl on the phone would understand the "T" word (transgen-

dered). On our first visit, a group of nine entered a small to moderate sized bar and restaurant and were welcomed by an attractive and friendly Asian waitress, who greeted us with a wide knowing smile! We then met Mr. Cheng who claimed to be an original owner of Lucky Chengs and creator of the concept. We chatted a while, he took a picture of our group and made us feel welcome.

We found an eclectic menu, one that might be best described as American with an "Asian flair." Our favorite dish, consistently very good on repeat visits and universally enjoyed, was a tender salmon filet with Lo Mein noodles that was also fun to eat with chopsticks. Recommended appetizers ranged from a tasty Dim Sum, (the pork filled dumplings) to a lightly battered fried calamari. Other excellent

entrees ranged from a mildly flavored chicken with fettucini (al dente, of course) and Chinese vegetables to a good old American surf and turf. The best sounding dish, the "34B Breast of Duck" was very tasty with a subtle orange based fruit sauce, but if you like duck served

crisp, you must order it that way!

There seemed to be something for everyone, whether creative new combinations or good old standards. For lovers of chives, the mashed potatoes were a treat. Those with weaker stomach's opted for the steamed rice. Dishes were served hot and steaming where necessary. There is a "no smoking" section available. Prices were generally moderate, most entrees were in the \$10 to \$15 range. The only glitch was a problem in their processing our IGT dining card.

Restroom facilities are always a matter of personal judgement depending on who, what, where, and when of the situation. During our second visit, our "sister" Dyan found a line at the ladies room. Seeing that the mens room had no line, she entered and it was, in fact, empty. Shortly afterwards, as she was about to leave the private stall and enter the washing area she overheard one of the three young men in there loudly comment, "At least there aren't any transvestites in here!" Hearing that, she burst forth from the stall and in her ex-military officer voice boomed, "Look again, sport!" the three men froze, just like "deer in a headlight!"

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Apology...


in New Jersey. **Fact** – The 1996 SPICE conference is in Wilmington, Delaware.

Statement – "... it is incongruous that the conference be directed by a crossdresser." **Fact** – SPICE is di-

rected this year by Peggy Rudd, Ed.D., well-known author of *My Husband Wears My Clothes*, and most assuredly not a crossdresser.


Statement – "... at least one highly qualified speaker has been 'banned' [from SPICE]..." **Fact** – No speaker has been banned from SPICE. Each year the SPICE planning board (not Tri-Ess) invites different speakers

based on locale, availability, skills and feedback from the participants. Not every speaker is invited every year to avoid staleness in programming.

The staff regrets the errors and apologizes to both Tri-Ess and SPICE. We remind everyone that the opinions of staff writers and others quoted in this newsletter do not reflect any official position of Renaissance. 

Activists...

cated that being transgendered is no longer a bar to getting a government security clearance. In addition, Roberta Achtenburg (HUD) as well as Bob Hatlay (Dept. of Interior) and Paul Richard (EEOC) were also very receptive to transgender inclusion. Most of the other speakers still, unfortunately, seem to need education on the subject.

It was a proud day for the New Jersey Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community. We demonstrated how far ahead of the political curve New Jersey is, as compared with what is passing as queer politics inside the Beltway. Our very dynamic and often confrontational presence at the DNC really underscored how little the Democratic leadership knows or understands what is happening at the grassroots political level, especially in New Jersey. 

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