

Renaissance News

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Welcome to the first issue of the Renaissance News. It is hoped that this will be a monthly publication of the Renaissance group. It will contain all current information about the group and what it is doing. If you have a news item or an article you'd like to see in the newsletter, please send it to our address above.

Surely, everyone recognizes the picture of the Mona Lisa, above. Renaissance intends to adopt her as our "official" emblem and she will continue to appear somewhere on the masthead of this publication. Why? Because it is now believed that Mona Lisa is one of us, a crossdresser! And not just any ole person, but purportedly Leonardo DaVinci himself (herself?). A computer analysis of the

Mona Lisa's facial characteristics and those of a self-portrait of Leonardo has led an art expert to conclude that they are one and the same person. So it is only fitting that we adopt our Renaissance era crossdresser as a symbol for the group.

JoAnn Roberts and Angela Gardner have been working to get a lapel pin made of Mona Lisa in gold and silver. That project is moving along nicely and the pins should be available by the next issue. Watch for more news.

In coming issues, this space will be used for editorial comments about issues that affect us as a community. If you have something to say, let us know. If you like our newsletter, let us know. If you would like to see a feature included, let us know. After all, this is your news.

Contents of this Issue:

- Welcome 1
 - Next Meeting 1
 - Variety Show Report 2
 - Seminar Report 2
 - Incorporation Report 2
 - General News 2
 - Fashion or Style? 3
 - Your Support 4
-

Next Meeting To Be A Garden Party

Ms Paula Sinclair, late of Vogue (and she has the photos and letter to prove it!?) has graciously offered to be the hostess for the next Renaissance meeting, which will actually be a Garden Party. As a result, this will be a purely social gathering with no formal business meeting. So plan and dress accordingly.

The party will be held Saturday night, **August 22nd**, commencing at **8:30 PM**. Paula lives in center city Philadelphia. Please call her at **985-4812** to confirm your attendance and to receive a map.

Because of the street arrangement in her neighborhood, Renaissance will make every effort to provide valet parking. Simply pull up to her front door and someone will park your car for you. How's that for service?

Meeting Notes For July 11th

There were 22 people at the July meeting despite the heat and the lack of air conditioning. (I forget to tell the office people we were having the meeting that weekend, sorry!) About eight of the attendees were new faces. Most of the business discussed can be found elsewhere in this issue. The August meeting will be a Garden Party at Paula Sinclair's home in Philadelphia. The September meeting will be held on Saturday, the 12th, at our usual location.

Coming Events:

August

22nd, Garden Party Meeting

September

12th, Renaissance meeting

18th thru 20th, Pocono Fantasy

Weekend

29th, AIDS Benefit Show

October

4th, Cha-Cha AIDS Benefit

31st, Henri David Halloween Ball

Renaissance to Incorporate

Renaissance plans to file for Non-Profit Corporation Status with both the Commonwealth and with the IRS. "I was all set to file the state papers", says JoAnn Roberts, "when Alison gave me the Federal regulations. WOW! What a pile of rules and paperwork." The filing has now been delayed in order to get the state papers in line with the IRS rules. "It is only a temporary delay", according to JoAnn, "We collected enough money for the state filing fee at the last meeting, so that's no longer a problem. After filing with Pennsylvania, we have 15 months to file with the IRS, but I don't think it will take that long." In addition to incorporating, Renaissance is in the process of ratifying a set of By Laws and electing officers. A copy of the By Laws was distributed at the meeting. If you've been to a previous meeting a copy is included with this newsletter. The roles of the officers for Renaissance are included in the By Laws. Nominations are open through September .

Variety Show Goes Full Speed Ahead

"The AIDS benefit show is proceeding well", reports Angela Gardner, coordinator for the event. The name of the show is Travelling Trash & Talent Tuesday and will take place on Sept. 29th (a Tuesday) at the Mask & Wig Club, 400 Quince St. Philadelphia, PA. There will be a cash bar preceding the show at 8:00 PM and the show itself will start at 9:00 PM. Tickets are available by mail from Renaissance for \$25 per person. Ms Gardner has outdone herself in planning this event and has gone to great lengths to secure some extraordinary talent for the show. At this time, she has confirmed commitments from Fred Anderson, a local comedian who will be the MC, Mr Wayne from NYC, a professional FI who does a dynamite Bette Midler, and Mecal, a local FI performer, who imitates Patti LaBelle. Unconfirmed commitments include the opening chorus from the Greg Thompson review "The Ladies of Burlesque", now at the Tara Supper Club in Downingtown, Ms Janet, a fan dancer and Doug White, a comedian, both from the same revue, and Stella, the hostess of Channels 3's (KYW) Saturday Night Dead. Angela also has a couple of surprises in store. She has 'conscripted' the aid and support of Kate B., Paula Sinclair and Robin. "Right now, I need volunteers for the night of the show and we need people to help solicit advertising for the program book", she says. Rates for the program book are: \$50/quarter page, \$100/half page and \$200 for a full page. If you would like to help out, please contact Angela Gardner, POBox 866, Havertown, PA 19083, ASAP. JoAnn Roberts has arranged for the Transvestian to run an ad for the show, free of charge. We are deeply appreciative to Fred Barry and Tania Volen of the Transvestian for their support of our effort. Renaissance needs other supporters like them.

Planning For Professional Seminar Is Time Consuming

Trudi Henri, in charge of the seminar planning, along with Alison Laing, JoAnn Roberts and others have done a lot of talking about the seminar, but not much else. "This is one function that we cannot afford to rush", says JoAnn who conceived the seminar project. "In order to get the professional community interested, We need a 'Big Name' drawing card, and I know just the right person! No names will be mentioned until we have confirmation, but it will be a big feather in our cap if we pull it off", she says. JoAnn is working with Dr. Bill Stayton, our gracious host, in getting the keynote speaker. Meanwhile, Trudi is going over the details of the seminar format. Current plans call for an all day event to be held this Fall, probably in November. The morning session will feature speakers and the afternoon sessions will be panel discussions. Trudi needs volunteers to help with making arrangements and to work the day of the seminar. Because of Trudi's professional career, she cannot make the meeting arrangements directly. She also needs panelists, registrars, helpers, 'gophers', etc. If you can help, please contact Trudi at P O Box 45, Dresher, PA, 19025, .

Renaissance Goes On The Radio

Thanks to member Paula Sinclair, Renaissance has a continuous ad running in the Philadelphia Gay News and an occasional display ad. Seems the display ad caught the eye of Joan Carol Cherry, Executive Producer at WCAU AM radio. She wrote to us asking for two members to speak on the "Talk with Anita" radio show on Thursday, July 30th at 11:00 AM. JoAnn Roberts and Kate B. will represent us there. Stay tuned for a report in the next issue.

In addition, JoAnn and Dr. Bill Stayton will be heard on the Carol Seline Show on Talk 900 AM, Friday August 21st, from 11:00 AM to Noon.

Style Or Fashion ? Do You Have To Choose?

by Paula Sinclair

Perhaps no group of men better understand how consumers are manipulated than transvestites. Having to develop a sense of fashion on their own, they are often confronted by sudden and seemingly arbitrary rule changes. Hemlines are long, then they are short. Makeup must be natural one season, almost whorish the next. No wonder so many TV's are reluctant to appear in public. It isn't that they are afraid of being thought weird as much as they worry about appearing unfashionable. Consider this situation: A girl who has some great qualities and some really great thighs, shows up at a TV event encased in an 18-inch skirt that no doubt looked great on an anorexic model with terrific legs who wore it in the Vogue layout, but which now looks like the tutu on a dancing hippopotamus from Fantasia. But, nobody will tell her. Her friends will squeal and examine her skirt as though it were the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, making remarks such as: "Tiffany, it's absolutely darling! Where did you get it?" And Tiffany will waddle off, oblivious, while her friends will race to the ladies' room to laugh until their makeup forms stalagmites on the floor. Poor Tiffany has become another Fashion Victim.

The truth of the matter is that "fashion", as it is promoted by Paris houses, Seventh Avenue, or neighborhood ready-to-wear shops is nothing more than programmed obsolescence, a trick which designers and manufacturers play on us to get us to buy more, and more frequently. It is an annual or semi-annual campaign to assault our wallets (or purses, Ed.). And like after any campaign, there are victims, like Tiffany. The victims are those of us who buy as many of the clothes featured in Vogue as we can (or at least reasonable facsimiles) and then end up looking terrible. The reason is that we girls often confuse two totally separate concepts: fashion and style. Whereas fashion, or being fashionable, is only obtainable by those with unlimited money or sewing ability, style, or being stylish, is actually within everyone's reach. This is because style is, essentially, an individualized

expression of your unique personality or of the personality you wish to project to others.

But before you rush off to buy a leather jacket and blonde wig, hoping to project a "Madonna" persona, a word of warning. Although personal style can, to a degree, be created; to be believable it must be based in reality. Being a lady "of a certain age", Halloween is the only time I can get away with a Madonna masquerade. Other times I dress (and act) according to a female personality that is close to my own persona. The first step is to examine your own, natural personality, to find out what makes you unique and special. What you find will then be the cornerstone for the "look" you will create.

Unlike "real girls", most of us don't go out dressed for a wide variety of occasions. For most of us, our excursions are limited to an evening out with friends or perhaps a date if we desire (and are lucky). So the process of building our personal style is a bit easier. We don't need to look like, for example, a Main Line* matron in every setting, from the shore to the Academy of Music. But, we also have a disadvantage. Without the years of experience that genetic women have "under their belts" in finding what looks right on them, we are prone to make mistakes and often when they are most critical, like Tiffany and her new mini. One can forgive a teenager looking foolish (most of them do anyway). But it is a real saint who can overlook a fashion faux pas on a girl pushing 40. We also missed out on the chance to wear the appropriate, fun clothing that teenage girls and young women should wear. So, it is understandable why so many of us are caught in the fashion trap.

But (and here is where it gets tough) you cannot execute your personal style, unless it has an historical precedent like Elizabeth I, totally blind to fashion. The best example of this is what Paris does to the so-called classics. Last season, and perhaps next, some designers were cooing over the late Princess Grace and her Hermes bags, elegant scarves and camel polo coats. "Timeless", they called them, "An expression of a true lady." But if you put one of the items they were pushing next to an original from the Fab '50s, you would see subtle differences in cut, proportion and color.

Designers do this to keep us from recycling the same clothes every 20 years or so. If things didn't change, even a little bit, the big houses would be nothing but retro clothing stores. So, what's a poor girl to do? She finds a comfortable niche, crawls in and hopes to shut the door, only to be barraged by fashion mavens shouting "New!", "Today!", and "This Season!".

The answer, obviously, is to incorporate little bits of fashion into your style. While I, personally, prefer gold jewelry, a couple of seasons ago silver was touted as "It", probably by designers from Nevada. So, I bought some silver (actually "silvertone") earrings and chains to add to my jewelry wardrobe. The switch away from gold didn't catch on, and, had I bought a lot of silver, I could have been a victim, like Tiffany.

There are many ways you can make a nod to fashion and still maintain the integrity of your own style with other accessories or a good seamstress. Just use your imagination and educate your eye. The worst way to put together looks to match your style is by shopping.

Renaissance News is the monthly publication of the Renaissance Education Association.

Renaissance is a non-profit organization which has the purpose of providing information about transgendered behavior to the general public and professional counsellors. It also provides peer counselling and outreach services.

A subscription to the *Renaissance News* is \$12 per year.

Renaissance Needs Your Help

by JoAnn Roberts

As you can see from the preceding pages, Renaissance has made a commitment to become an active part of the local community, both in terms of providing support and services for individuals and providing education for the general public. In order to accomplish these goals we need two kinds of help from you, the reader of this newsletter.

First, those of you who are local, we need your active participation. In any group, club, or society that I've ever been associated with, the "90% Law" has held true. This law states, "Ninety percent of the work gets done by Ten percent of the people". Those of us who founded Renaissance knew that and accepted that we would carry the bulk of the workload. But it doesn't have to stay that way. You can join in and help. For example, we need, for the night of the Variety Show, stagehands, ticket takers, ushers/usherettes and the like. Since we have a mixture of people involved with the show, no one needs to know your affiliation and therefore no stigma will be attached to your participation. But, believe me, your support will be appreciated.

Second, we need contributions to provide seed money. The startup budget for the Variety Show is about \$600. We currently have \$95 on hand, of which \$75 is earmarked for the incorporation filing fee. The Professional Seminar budget is not estimated as of this date. However, since all proceeds from the AIDS benefit will go to charities, we will still be starting out in the red. All contributions, dues, ticket purchases, and any other monies sent to Renaissance are

considered charitable contributions and are tax deductible to the extent specified by IRS regulations. So, those of you who are distant, interested parties can participate, vicariously, by helping us with a contribution, however small it may be.

There are many projects that Renaissance has contemplated, most of which are merely ideas or concepts at this time. As the group progresses in time, we hope to bring these ideas into reality. And we can with your support.

Now, you might be asking yourself, "Why should I stick my neck out and risk discovery?". The greatest benefits that we, as a group, will derive from the Renaissance activities, are that we will have shown the world that we are united, we are concerned, and we are not ashamed of ourselves. We have contributions to make that are just as important as any other group's. By associating ourselves with public charitable and educational activities, at the highest possible level of professionalism, we will hopefully dispell the general belief that the transgendered community is composed of deviates and pitiable creatures.

In the course of preparing for the first two major Renaissance events, several of us have had to "come out" to friends, in order to accomplish our goals. The response, so far, has been very favorable and we have secured the help and support needed. For the most part, our friends have shown a new found respect for the courage it took to reveal ourselves and for the desire to actively participate in community affairs. And, by doing so, have confirmed the fact that they are, indeed, true friends.

Knowing that you are part of a group that is capable of accomplishing such tasks has personal, side benefits as well. The sense of pride that you may de-

rive from Renaissance activities will surely flow over into your personal life. Feeling good about yourself, as a person, is the first step in learning to cope with your transgendered behavior. To paraphrase the movie Network, you can say, "I'm proud as Hell, and I'm not going to feel guilty anymore!".

Finally, be assured that Renaissance will try to meet the needs of all its members, including the newcomers and novices. Our membership is composed of people at various levels of self awareness. If this means providing clinics and demonstrations at the most basic levels, so be it. To some, this may seem specious and trivial, while to others it may be one of the most important events in their lives. We were all there at one time, so don't forget that when a "sister" asks for help.

I know we can do great things with your support!

Renaissance meets once a month, on a Saturday night. The dates vary due to Holidays and other conflicts. Starting time is generally 9:00 PM in the late Spring/Summer, and will move to 8:00 PM in the Fall/Winter. Meetings serve two purposes, 1) a time to socialize and get to know one another, and 2) conduct the business of the group. Our regular meetings are held in the King of Prussia area. Occasionally, as with the August meeting, we will meet other places and these will be noted in the newsletter. Please come out and meet us; it may just change your whole outlook on life.