

Phoenix

MONTHLY / INTERNATIONAL

SEPTEMBER, 1982

Vol II, No. 9



Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another,
"What! You, too? I thought I was the only one."--C.S. Lewis

8-20-82
SUBMISSION DEADLINE
Items must be received not later than the first Monday of the month preceding the issue date in which they are to appear.

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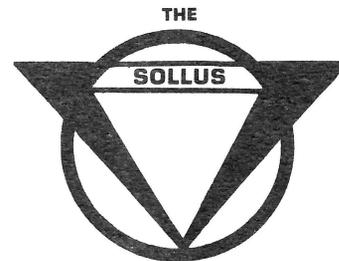
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IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A CURE?

by Glenda Renee Jones

Every once in a while, the question of a cure for crossdressing is raised. Let us consider a story that, while hypothetical, will probably ring true, at least in part, to many of us.

The hero of our story is a lad in his teens; active, smart and interested in computers and space travel. He wants to be an engineer (no, not of a train), when he goes to college. One fine day his parents become aware that he has a small stash of female underclothing hidden away with evidence that he has come off a number of times in same. In addition, he likes to sleep in silky nightgowns.

After discovery our hero finds himself the center of hysterical parental attention. The parents are frantic, asking themselves "Where did we go wrong?"

After suitable weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth our hero is taken to the friendly neighborhood shrink with Mother plaintively crying "You must make my boy well. Surely you must have a way to cure him of this!"

Our hero has several sessions with the shrink, who has (if our hero is lucky) read Benjamin's book and maybe one by Green and Money, so he is, of course, an acknowledged expert in the area of gender and transvestic behavior. Everyone knows, after all, that TVism is caused by a male child retreating in to feminine role so as not to be a competitor with his father. A bit of rearranging will take care of this. (I personally think this theory is a nine foot pile of heifer dust, but it is still accepted by many shrinks as chiseled in marble and therefore "gospel".)

Our lad quickly gets the message that this "thing" is just not kosher. In fact, his whole ability to relate to his family is going down hill rapidly and will continue on the down hill slide until his attitude changes. Also, he is beginning to feel enormous degrees of guilt for doing this "terrible thing" that is, after all, a "sin in the eyes of God." It says so right in Deuteronomy 22:5. So, he starts to sing a new song to the shrink and his family about how sorry he is and that he has now seen the light. So when, after a few sessions, our hero declares that he is definitely cured and that he'd like to get on to other things. Moreover, the shrink's bills are starting to arrive, so when he tells his parents that

he has no more interest in wearing female underclothing, they are disposed to believe him. The matter is more or less forgotten as he goes out for football and starts doing some dating.

When a wife tells hubby "do this again and I'll divorce you and take you for all you're worth" she will get his undivided attention. I take the position that this type cure is nothing more than holding a gun to someone's head and demanding "Your money or your life." They give in to you but certainly not because they want to. Pragmatically, we have a tremendous force at work when something so basic is forcibly suppressed. Suppression, due to guilt or fear, can lead to real mental illness. But, for some this type "treatment" works.

No studies that I know of explore this kind of shock treatment. I'm certain that some guys do indeed simply conclude that it's more trouble than its worth and dress only in the dreams -- (both day and night). Some come roaring out of the closet heading straight for the operating table later in life while some content themselves to an occasional buying of clothing and a fling when away from home. The clothing, of necessity, goes to the Great Crossdresser in the Sky before they head back home. A small, unfortunately, minority of the crossdressing population will join organizations, like GGA.

The "carrot cure" is similar to the gun-to-the-head in that the wife might say, instead, "give this up and I'll buy the sexiest nightie I can find and give you the best time in bed you've ever had." For some it works -- if only for a while.

The "down on your knees and be saved" cure is another of the shock variety which, again, works for some in that for a little while the crossdresser stops doing "it". I will point out though that studies show that religious conversion experiences generally cause significant changes in lifestyle for up to a year on the average.

The "shrink cure", recently discussed in a recent Dr. Michelle column, often involves a hundred to two hundred hours of couch time. The dollars represented for this amount of couch time is on the order of a down payment on a house or the dollar equivalent of a new car -- even at today's inflated prices.

Michelle did, however, make a very good and basic point: If a person really

wants to give up crossdressing, indeed has a burning desire to do so, the person can give it up. On the other hand if a person does not want to give it up nothing is really going to work in the long run.

At this point we can ask the very basic question "Why would a person want to give it up?" It certainly doesn't hurt anyone else, or at least it doesn't need to. It's not like a crime of violence. As for being a sin, I will note that in the aforementioned biblical chapter it is suggested that if a young girl is found not to be a virgin at the time of her marriage she is to be stoned to death by the town elders. So, beware all you sexually happy, unwed women 'cause the Bible Thumpers are coming with their truck loads of stones. Is promiscuity any worse than crossdressing? While I'm not into stoning young women (except possibly with a little grass) nor into guilt trips over crossdressing I will make one more brief comment on the Bible and then get on to other things. My comment is: nowhere, I repeat, nowhere in the Bible is there a condemnation of masturbation. If you care to challenge that, simply point out to me where, using any commonly accepted translation, it's mentioned.

I will readily admit that we have to live with the rest of Society and, like it or not, we must obey its laws and mores, at least up to a point. While walking down San Francisco's Market Street at high noon wearing a dress and a beard may elicit absolutely no reaction at all, if you plan to walk down Main Street in Sticksville you had better pass perfectly or you'll be in big trouble.

If your wife has given you the ultimatum that it's her or the slip, you'll have decision to make. In any case it probably isn't cool to dress in front of her unless you are prepared for a divorce. Nevertheless, I firmly maintain it is possible to live a full healthy, happy productive life, indeed to be happily married and be a practicing crossdresser. To me, the ultimate cure is to be at peace with oneself and still do things in life that are pleasant.

If I have one observation to make concerning crossdressers it is, that as a group they are more guilt ridden than any other group I know of. Guilt is the one place a cure can begin. A good, qualified, enlightened counselor can, in this case, help a lot. A central qualification

for such a counselor is that she/he really have looked into the area of crossdressing and know what the hell they are talking about. Most members of the Harry Benjamin Association whom I have met are competent to help the so-called gender dysphoric. (I detest that term, but we are, for now at least, stuck with it.) Merely having a wall full of decorative diplomas and certificates or being well recognized by their peers in no way qualifies a therapist to help you deal with your challenges of crossdressing. Check their qualifications. How many crossdressers have they "treated"? How many are currently in therapy with them? How many, if any, have they "cured"? Are the "cured" happier now? Are they as productive or more productive than before the "cure"? How does the "cured" crossdresser rate the quality of his/her post-curative life?

The paraculture itself can help to erase the quilt associated with crossdressing. If you are going to spend thousands of dollars to deal with your crossdressing you might seriously consider going to crossdresser's affairs such as Fantasy Fair or the Success Week-end or Dream. It really does help to know you're not the only one "doing this". But, in the final analysis you must look into yourself and your mirror and convince yourself that crossdressing is indeed okay. It may not be prudent to go into public crossdressed unless you really know what you're doing and can really pass (few men can pass as women without a lot of work and practice). It may require a bit longer to find the right woman who will accept and even enjoy your crossdressing. But, it is okay! It's okay for you to be you. Self-acceptance is the ultimate and most wonderful cure of all!

---- CALIFORNIA ----

ATTRACTIVE, young MTF crossdresser wishes to share living arrangements with mature female or TS. I am completing a 12 month public relations/secretarial assignment out-of-state and will be returning to California for permanent residence in October. I am discreet, friendly, honest, a good housekeeper, enjoy cooking with natural foods and enjoy good music and conversation. Write GGA, attn: CA-52, PO Box 62283, Sunnyvale, CA 94088.

HOLLYWOOD STRIKES AGAIN!

Remember the publicity hyping the TS movie "The Woman Within"? As you may have suspected, since no one has seen the movie or even a teaser of it, it is apparently languishing "in the can", to use a Hollywood expression.

Well, now we see publicity for a new Dustin Hoffman movie "Tootsie". The premise of which is fairly simple:



Dustin, as a male, is a struggling young actor unable to make ends meet as a male so he dons ladies apparel, applies and is accepted for a female role on a TV (pun intended?) soap opera. Things go swimmingly for Dorothy (nee Dustin) until love rears its head and "Dorothy" falls for one of the show's "other" actresses. It will be interesting to see how the writers handle this situation. Obviously the movie is intended as "broad comedy" (another pun?) but hopefully there will be some significant social message (possibly subliminal) such as "the average crossdressers isn't a Drag Queen and that many do have affairs of the heart -- and the genitals -- with the opposite sex." Mayhaps people will see that wearing a dress won't keep Dustin out of Mrs. Robinson's bed after all. (Remember The Graduate?) We hope the writer(s) didn't pad his role as well as his figure.

Since Dustin was reportedly paid 5 mill for this effort we suspect it will hit the silver screen in December 1982 as scheduled rather than languish in a can somewhere. We hope the December release isn't intended to and won't equate Dorothy's apparel with the Christmas carol words, on which Miss Orange Juice choked, "and now we don our gay apparel".

As a sidebar, Muriel Olive, owner and operator of Fem-Fashion Expressions and Prez of the NYC Chapter, supplied Dustin's "padding" for the movie. Will we see "Padding by Muriel Olive" or perhaps "Special Effects by Muriel" among the movie's credits rolling across the screen?

MEDICAL REPORT

Bill, our trusty, hard-working(?) printer and friend to many is in the local meat-cutter's shop having his back overhauled -- apparently something to do with discs although "reliable sources" (as we say in the news business) indicate he's really in to have a mattress removed from it because he seems to have difficulty getting his back off of one in the morning.

But seriously folks, he really is having a medical challenge, regardless of cause, and it would be a thoughtful, and appreciated, gesture for you drop a get well card in the mail to him. His address is Bill, c/o T. R. Graphics, 685 Dotey Court, San Jose, CA 95111.

BIRTHDAY ANYONE?

We quote, in part, from a letter received recently from Marlaus (CN-13).

"May I make a suggestion? I think it would be a good idea to ask the Associates what their birthdate is and publish, in every issue of the Phoenix, a list of those birthdays coming up -- enough in advance so that others can send them a nice birthday card to show that we care for our sister or brother TVs and/or TSS and are their friends. I like to think we're all one big happy family."

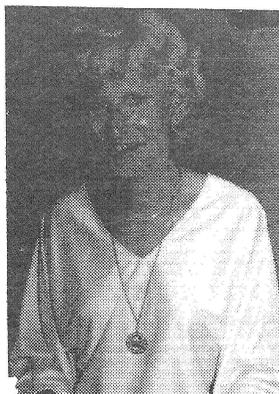
Sounds like a good idea to us. In fact it sounded so good that we have included a pre-addressed card, which you may complete, stamp and drop in a mail box. As the cards are received the dates will be posted on the computer record file so the dates may be selected, en masse, and included in the Phoenix each month. We'll simply list the name and ID Number as they appear in the Correspondent's Directory.

TALL GIRLS

Some of you "tall girls", who may have difficulty finding "just the thing" to wear will be interested to know the Shelly's Tall Girl chain is now publishing a mail order catalog. The address to which to write to obtain a copy of the catalog is: Shelly's Tall, 747 Towne Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90021. By the way, don't be surprised if prices seem a little on the high side.

DEAR DOCTOR MICHELLE
by
Michelle
Williams, M.D.

The advice provided in this column is given with the understanding that the inquirer and readers MUST consult their own physicians for medical attention.



(If you have any medical questions which may be related to your crossdressing or transsexual lifestyle address them to Dear Doctor, c/o GGA, PO Box 62283, Sunnyvale, CA 94088.)

Dear Doctor Michelle,

I am considering having my ear pierced. How should I go about this? Is it dangerous?

Leigh Ann
Florida

Dear Leigh Ann,

Ear piercing is relatively easy to accomplish. It can be done in the stores of many reputable jewelers, many physicians are capable of doing this, many beauty shop also do it. The risk of infection is low initially because all the parts of the piercing apparatus are disposable and sterile. The procedure may be uncomfortable psychologically, but in actuality is almost painless. It is more difficult to have blood drawn than to have your ears pierced.

It is usually suggested you keep the studs in a month, but it can be done in ten days continuously, if the hole is not to be recovered with skin. If you, as most us, have to work I would suggest doing the following:

Very early during the course of a vacation (1 or 2 weeks) have the piercing done. Keep the studs in during the vacation, turning them and applying the alcohol; then intermittently, at night, put the studs in and sleep with them.

To camouflage the holes during the day while working, either cover the holes with a dab of make-up -- which may show -- or some of the dead skin from around the ear area (behind or inside the ear -- on most of us it can be flaked off with a finger) can be placed in the hole to make

it almost invisible. Only a very close look will reveal the perforation.

Once the holes are healed they can be plugged this way and should not be visible to your co-workers -- unless you have just removed the earrings or you do as I once did and wear them to work. However, most people will not pay any attention to holes. You should avoid heavy loops to prevent enlargement of the holes.

Piercing is reversible. If you leave the earrings out for three to six months the holes will close by themselves.

MOVING?

To make a short story long, within the last two months a veritable plethora of address changes by Phoenix recipients has occurred. While the resulting record updating is minor for announced address changes unannounced changes of address cost the treasury money.

When a Phoenix is returned as undeliverable it costs 54 cents since it's returned via First Class handling.

When a Phoenix is returned with what the Post Office refers to as "Forwarding Information" there is a charge of 25 cents in addition to the 54 cent postage charge.

When the Post Office uses PS Form 3547 there is also a 25 cent charge. Can you feature the Post Office sending mail Postage Due?

Of course when the Post Office returns your Phoenix it adds more pipeline time to your receipt of it since it's held until the next monthly mailing and simply included, if we have a new address for you, with all the others going out at the end of the month -- that's why you sometimes receive two at once, last month's and the current issue.

The long and short of this is quite simple. If you can't bear to cut out the Change of Address coupon from the back page of the Phoenix then at least take the time to obtain a postcard Change of Address Form from the Post Office, fill it out, put a stamp on it and mail in. Be sure, when filling out the change of address form for the Post Office to check the block pertaining to forwarding of Third Class Mail. That way we'll get your new address and the Post Office will forward the Phoenix directly to you.

CHAPTER CHATTER

SAN JOSE. Both July meetings were great. Discussions were spirited and attendance was up. During a previous meeting Clare (CA-189) suggested a "night out" so she was elected to investigate the possibilities of a Dining Out at the Interlude. Well, Clare has completed her investigations (we now call her Sandra Spade) and made her report at the July 16th meeting. Management of the Interlude stated that we could have the space needed in the dining room any night EXCEPT Friday, Saturday or Tuesday. The members attending the July 16th meeting selected Sunday, September 26th as The Night. However, Marilyn (CA-151), mentioned that restaurants usually close one night a week and we should find out if Sunday really is available. The upshot is that Clare will again contact the Interlude manager to see if Sunday the 26th really is available. If it isn't available on the 26th we'll hold the Dining Out on Thursday, September 23rd.

So, while the date has yet to be finalized we did thrash out most of the details which are:

The Main Office will send a letter of specifics to each person on our Mailing List in the 93XXX, 94XXX and 95XXX ZIP Codes with full details and the specific date. (So mark both the 23rd and 26th on your calendar NOW and reserve them for the Dining Out).

A \$10.00 deposit per person attending will be required when you respond in the affirmative to your invitation. A ticket will be furnished as proof of deposit payment and deposits will be refunded when you present your ticket at the Dining Out. If you fail to claim your deposit it will go into the Treasury.

All replies must be returned to the Main Office by Saturday, September 10th so we can let the people at the Interlude know how many of us to expect. If you wish to make your reservation early you may send your check any time between now and the 10th.

Each attendee will pay their own check -- both food and bar bill.

In addition to the meal selections on the menu Management will also have Vegetarian Plates/Meals available for those wishing not to eat meat.

Wives, lovers, etc. are welcome, naturally. But, please, bring only one (either your wife/husband/lover not

both).

When the exact date has been determined we'll furnish all the specifics and look forward to seeing you at the Interlude. Oh, by the way the Interlude is on Stevens Creek, just off the Lawrence Expressway and the letter will contain directions of "how to get there from here".

Now is the time to dust off your best bib and tucker and start getting ready for a fun night out. Naturally, plan to attend crossdressed - so we'll know you and we want you to look good for pictures we'll take and publish in the Phoenix (of those not being camera shy).

SAN FRANCISCO The July 14th meeting was well attended and more laughter rang through the hall than we've heard in a long time. In addition to the San Franciscans attending Betty (CA-79), whom we haven't seen in I don't know how long, again made it through the Caldecott Tunnel, across the Bay Bridge and into The City. Chriss, Bunny, Beth and a guest made it down from Sacramento and Dora Mae made it in from Oakley as they so often do.

We almost had a catastrophe though, the Sexton of the church, apparently not knowing we were having our usual scheduled meeting, was locking the front door at 8:30 when Chriss arrived to stop her. Lack of communication anyone?

Oh, last month we announced a presentation by the Society of Janus (not to be confused with Paul Walker's Janus Information Facility) planned for the August meeting. Inadvertently (really because the calendar was open to September rather than August) the date was announced as August 8th. Actually the meeting and presentation are scheduled for our usual second Wednesday - the 11th - so make that change. Just to be safe Georgia has mailed out postcards with the correction to everyone in the 93 through 95 ZIPs. If the room is too small to accommodate the crowd that night we'll move to one of the larger rooms. David, who will moderate the presentation that night, indicates about half of the time allotted will be a question and answer period, so dust off your questions concerning S&M.

See you on the 11th.

CHICAGO. The Oldie but Goodie Night meeting of July was a smash hit. Even

though the Chicago Area was deluged by an absolute monsoon that night forty hardy ladies made it out. We do even better than the Post Office when it comes to delivering the goods. This is really just a teaser report since I'm working up a much more detailed one complete with pictures, not only of the Chicago meetings, but my attendance at the Mini-Fantasia Fair last month on Cape Cod for the Phoenix. So look forward to a report on "Sharon's Travels" next month. I may have some details, at that time, of the August Hawaiian Luau meeting we're having at the Lite Factory and possibly some details about the beauty pageant held at the Baton recently. I may even break down and send Georgia a picture she can use on my report as she did in the August Phoenix for the Portland and Hampton Roads Chapters. -- Sharon (IL-1)

NEPA Chapter. Here in the East it's a bit warmish for public outings for our ladies, so like so many other "back East" chapters we generally close down for the summer months. But, we'll be kicking off the new season with our first 1982/83 meeting scheduled to be held September 18th. Those interested in attending our meetings need only contact me for times, dates and planned events. You'll find my address under "Pennsylvania" on the "Coming Attractions" page. Kathy (PA-22)

WHERE WE ARE

We thought you might like to know where your sister and brother Associates are located so here's a run down (as of July 1 '82) of where they are.

Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California*, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia*, Delaware, Florida*, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Indiana, Illinois*, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland*, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, New Jersey*, New Mexico, New York*, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon*, Pennsylvania*, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas*, Utah, Virginia*, Vermont, Washington, Canada*, Mexico, Australia.

*Indicates 1 or more chapters.

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MAIL BAG

Dear GGA,

It doesn't seem possible that a year has already flown by since I became a subscriber to your publication. As a pre-op MTF I have an absorbing interest in anything relating to my condition in life. I have come to look forward to receiving the Phoenix every month and it's always read from cover-to-cover within an hour of its arrival. Please keep up the good work.

I want to "upgrade" my membership from Subscriber to Associate this year.

Pamela (NV-20)

Reno

Dear Pam,

Thanks for the kind words concerning the Phoenix. We've mentioned your city of residence because we thought the other Associates in the Reno area should know there are others like themselves in the area and you and they might wish to make contact. Your listing appears in Supplement 7, enclosed in this the mailing with this month's Phoenix, but there's nothing like a little added publicity to bring out the pens and paper.

Dear GGA,

Received my Renewal Notice and am, of course, enclosing my fee to renew. But, I'm curious, can you tell me what my status is? Am I a US Associate, a Subscriber or what?

Toni (NY-11)

Dear Toni,

We thought the notice was quite clear. Since you are a U.S. resident and receive your mail in the U.S. obviously the U.S. Rates on the notice apply to you. Now, since the second line of your address label has a State abbreviation followed by a number you are an Associate. If you were another category the second line of the label would contain the word "subscriber", "professional associate" or "advertiser". You are a U.S. Associate and those rates apply to you.

The Renewal Notice has U.S., Canadian and overseas rates on it because we use bulk rate to mail to U.S. recipients and 1st Class or Airmail, which costs five times as much as Bulk Rate to Canadian and overseas (non-Armed Forces) recipients we charge them for the additional postage -- just as other magazines do.

COVER GIRL AND GUY FOR THE PHOENIX?

So as to give our non-writing readers a real chance to participate in the Phoenix and give our in-house artist, Dianne (CA-3), a respite from our work so she can make a few bucks from the "Civilian World" we thought it would a novel and useful idea to ask our readers to help us come up with Ms. and Mr. Phoenix.

What we would like to do is run a line drawing of a female on the back cover each month (as we have this month). We'd like to also have a similar illustration of a male for the MTF readers. So, we're throwing a hat into the ring and asking those of you with artistic skills to come up with the figures to appear on the back cover. The drawings should be:

of a single individual (they can be married for all we care but we only want one of each),

nine inches in height,

no background "clutter",

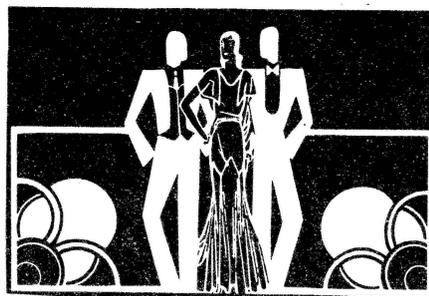
no more than three inches wide.

sexy, but in good taste (remember the Petty Girls?).

The drawing for each month would bear some relevance to the month - toasting with a champagne glass for January for example, something Valentiney for February, Irish motif for March, maybe a clear raincoat and broly for April, with flowers for May, Flag Dayish for June, Fourth of July is an obvious choice for that month. August and September seem to come up blank, but October, with Halloween should be a snap as are November and December with Thanksgiving and Christmas.

We also want to use her/him as a little trademark, ala the little figure appearing on the Playboy "Joke Page" and we'll use them on inside pages as well.

Once we select Ms. and Mr. Phoenix we'll need a different pose for each month, so when doing your drawing please bear that in mind.



LIFE IN TWO GENDERS

by

Patsy Marie Pichon

A personal and professional look at the phenomenon of cross-gender behavior by one whose closet door is swinging open to reveal gowns as well as suits.

It has been a long and tortuous road from the moment, many decades ago, when first I experienced an orgasmic thrill surrounded by the silken folds of my mother's evening dress. Having accumulated along the way a Ph.D. degree, nearly twenty years of a bitter-sweet marriage, one daughter, many years of practice as a professional counselor, much personal psychotherapy, numerous joyful and terrifying moments, a lifesaving sense of humor, and hopefully not a little wisdom, I have arrived at the present, scarred but intact.

"The present" for me consists, among other features, of rebuilding a recently shattered career, making the transition from marriage to singlehood, presiding over a large and active support group for transvestites and transsexuals, feeling better about myself than I ever have previously, and attempting to unify the parts of my life that have always been kept in separate compartments. While the details of my specific joys and sorrows are peculiar to me. I have met enough TVs and TSs over the years to know that our similarities far outweigh our differences. It is some of my observations, from the point of view both as a crossdresser and a helping professional, that I would like to share with you.

Before proceeding any further, a definition of terms is in order. Much of this article will be devoted to a discussion of the MTF transvestite, or crossdresser, who obtains personal and sexual pleasure from dressing partially or completely in women's clothing some or all of the time. Most transvestites do not wish to change their biological sex, in contrast to the transsexual. The TS, whether male or female, feels psychologically opposite to his or her genetic sex, and frequently seeks surgical and medical correction of what is perceived as a mistake of nature. Neither the TV nor the TS should be confused with the drag queen, a homosexual male who dresses as a woman usually for the purpose of attracting other gay males. Frequently, but not exclusively, professional female impersonators and male prostitutes are drag queens.

As in any group of people, wide differences exist between the lifestyles of individual TVs. There are enough similarities, however, to permit a slightly fuzzy profile of the "typical" TV. More than likely, he first started dressing in his mother's or an older sister's clothing around the age of puberty, although some started considerably earlier or later in life. At any rate, the experience produced strong sexual and sensual pleasure as well as guilt feelings that his behavior was "sick." The latter feelings may have been reinforced by parents or other relatives who scolded or punished the TV upon discovering his activity. A somewhat smaller number were encouraged in their dressing by relatives who thought it was "cute," pretended not to notice, or gained indirect satisfaction from seeing a male in feminine clothing.

Whatever his family's reaction to his crossdressing, and in spite of promises to stop made to himself or others, the powerful pleasure experienced by the TV when dressed in women's clothing pulled him ineluctably toward further episodes of crossdressing accompanied by guilt, fear of discovery, and in some cases, self-loathing. For many, the secretive and "underground" nature of the activity may add further to its enjoyment, part of the thrill resulting from the realization that at any moment he might be caught in the forbidden garments. For many years, periods of excitement produced by crossdressing may alternate with the "purges" familiar to many TVs, where clothing is discarded or destroyed with a solemn pledge (soon broken) "never to do it again."

Far from wanting to change his sex--in spite of his womanly feelings when crossdressed--the TV usually experiences a heterosexual attraction toward women during adolescence and adulthood, and in most cases functions as a sexually normal male with women. Sooner or later, he falls in love and makes the decision to marry, a true crisis point for the crossdresser. Many, if not most, make the mistake, out of fear of rejection as a unsuitable spouse, of concealing their crossdressing from their prospective wives. Usually this is rationalized by such thoughts as "I love her so much, I'll be able to stop," or "She satisfies me sexually, so I won't need to dress any more," or "Even if I do it once in a while, she won't find out." Of course, none of the above proves true. When the wife inevitably discovers her husband's habit, she is at best hurt by the fact that he has concealed it from her, and at worst confirms his darkest fears by branding his a pervert and filing for divorce. In between these alternatives lies a period that often spans years and consists of desperate attempts by the wife to accept and understand behavior which is

mysterious and frightening to her, and equally desperate attempts by the TV husband to control and accommodate his dressing to the tolerance of his wife.

It is a rare and intelligent TV who shares this facet of his life with another before the relationship becomes too intense. If the other person can't tolerate the crossdressing, the relationship ends with less pain for both than in the post-marital discovery. Given the sex-role expectations and brainwashing of our culture, it is an equally rare woman who can love and accept a crossdressing male without reservations. Insecurities about her own sexual identity or fears of discovery of her mate's proclivities by others often get in the way of total acceptance. Frequently, both husband and wife harbor deep-seated questions concerning the mental health of both ("What kind of man would like to dress in women's clothing?" "What kind of woman would marry such a man?") that interfere with all aspects of their relationship.

Although the majority of TVs are primarily heterosexual, some degree of bisexuality is characteristic in perhaps a quarter to a third of crossdressers. While most of these individuals are not attracted to males when dressed as a male, they do experience some sexual arousal when dressed as a woman in the presence of men or other TVs. Despite occasional forays in bisexuality, most married TVs would not wish to leave their wives for a life "in drag." Many crossdressers enjoy feeling "sexy" or being complimented on their appearance, by a man, woman, or another TV without wanting to have a sexual relationship with that person. My experience indicates that most crossdressers with reasonably understanding wives make unusually devoted husbands.

The titles of much TV or "drag" literature, such as "Forced to Dress by Dominating Sister" or "Sissy in Skirts" would lead one to believe that all crossdressers indulge in sadomasochistic sexual behavior. In actuality, a rather small percentage of TVs seem to have a preference for the "heavier" aspects of S & M such as bondage, whipping, or scatology. Many, however, do enjoy, either in fantasy or reality, the idea of a woman encouraging them to dress, then initiating and taking the lead in sexual activity or going out together as "two women." The idea of being "forced" or at least encouraged in one's dressing by a female partner appears to me more of a guilt-reducing device than a desire to be dominated. This scenario, as well as one in which the TV is teased or punished by a woman when dressed, is well known to most professional prostitutes as one frequently requested by clients who have no other outlet for their desire to dress.

Few, if any, substantial studies have been

conducted on the character or development of transvestites. Most TVs appear to have a rather generous streak of narcissism in their personalities, this being evidenced by the hours frequently spent dressing and making up in front of the mirror, the pleasure experienced in "looking beautiful" and being complimented as such, and the above mentioned fantasies in which a woman devotes all her emotional and sexual attention to the TV. When with each other, crossdressers will frequently discuss the latest additions to their wardrobes or new makeup techniques at great length. One suspects that the family structure of many TVs consisted of a powerful mother-son bond with a lesser influence from the father. In this bond, the TV child played the role of "mother's darling," receiving the bulk of mother's time, attention, admiration, or punishment, as reflected in fantasy later in life. This narcissism, if not controlled to some degree, may seriously interfere with satisfactory marital and other relationships.

A large number of crossdressers claim that putting on women's clothing, in addition to being sexually stimulating, is relaxing for them or gives them a sense of relief or escape, much as would a hobby like golf or bowling. What they appear to be escaping from is the pressure of the masculine role as they perceive it-- the feeling of constantly needing to be "on top" in the world as successful businessman, husband, income provider, father, and any of the other roles a male is expected to play in our culture. When dressed as a woman, they can temporarily forget their masculine strictures. Some TVs report that they actually become more emotionally expressive, tender, silly, or allow themselves to behave in other ways normally forbidden a man. It is tempting to speculate whether, if our culture continues to acquire a greater degree of androgyny in the behaviors permitted men and women, transvestism will eventually become obsolete.

Although one might expect that a man who spent a good part of his time dressed as a woman would be a rather androgynous creature, dwelling somewhere in the mists between femininity and masculinity, such is rarely the case. Far from conforming to the limp-wristed stereotype of the drag queen, most TVs are almost impeccably masculine in their everyday lives as workers, family members, and citizens. Some, perhaps, even attempt to camouflage their preference for feminine attire by proclaiming "macho" sexual attitudes in their male role.

While the careers of crossdressers span virtually every occupation, they are as likely to be construction workers or truck drivers as

doctors, lawyers, teachers or ministers. Nearly all crossdressers, however, share a dread of having their pastime revealed. Unfortunately, given the prevailing lack of sympathy and understanding in our society for a genetic male who would even momentarily or in fantasy give up the glorious privilege of his masculinity, these fears are more than justified.

As a member of the mental health profession, my career was severely compromised recently when some photographs of myself, crossdressed, fell into the wrong hands and I was forced to resign from a rather prominent position. While the fact that my superior led a secretive alternative lifestyle himself did not help my cause, I suspect the results would have been similar in any event. The assumption if that if one crossdresses, one is "crazy" or "sick", and certainly such an individual cannot possibly help others toward health. Although I had the option of fighting my dismissal legally, I chose not to do so as I knew the resultant glare of publicity would only hurt me, my family and my career further. While there are those who have successfully "uncloseted" themselves to their families, their friends, and their co-workers, such "coming out" must be approached with extreme caution and discretion until such time as society develops a more liberal attitude toward variant sexual phenomena. Meanwhile, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of TVs are responsible, competent individuals at work and at home, indistinguishable from the rest of the population.

What are the options available to the crossdresser who feels locked in his dark closet, unable or unwilling to stop the behavior which is so pleasurable, yet not daring to share his secret with anyone for fear of losing his family, his career, his friends, and his reputation? One, of course, is simply to remain safely behind his locked door, feeling sick, perverted and ashamed under the illogical assumption that "if I'm in the closet, I must be doing something wrong." Unfortunately, many TVs spend their entire lives under just such a shadow, irreparably damaging their self esteem as persons.

While remaining more or less in the closet, the TV who wishes to wear more than lingerie in the privacy of his boudoir may sneak out occasionally to gay bars or other establishments that permit if not encourage crossdressers. He may also patronize understanding prostitutes who will share an hour of pleasure with him. These joys have their drawbacks, including expense, the possibility of getting involved with somewhat unsavory or irresponsible individuals, and little more than momentary relief from the sense of loneliness that pervades the life of the crossdresser. There is also, of course, the risk

that his secret life may somehow come to the attention of those he would least wish to know. Finally, there is the problem of "passing" as a woman in public, a herculean task for most TVs unless they are 5'5" tall, carry 130 pounds distributed in the right places, have feminine facial features, no facial or body hair, a soft voice, and the proper posture and gait. Added to thus are the challenges of buying women's fashions as a male (or daring to do so dressed) and mastering the art of makeup, all of which make "going public" quite an ambitious project.

Still another possibility is for the closet TV to risk sharing his secret with someone he trusts enough to believe the other person will react non-judgmentally. If a close friend or one's spouse is not a candidate for this revelation, a more expensive but safe bet is a professional psychotherapist. No competent therapist will condemn or ridicule a crossdresser, nor insist that he "must stop such sick behavior." Rather, he or she will help the individual understand himself and his situation more clearly, and make those decisions that are in the best interests of himself and others. If the TV insists upon trying to stop dressing of his own free will, certain therapists employ behavioral techniques designed to extinguish unwanted behavior. Because there are so few TVs who genuinely want to stop dressing, however, the efficiency of these procedures is somewhat uncertain. More likely, the therapist's role will be that of supporting the individual in living his difficult lifestyle as enjoyably and freely as he can, reducing the crippling guilt and self-hatred that are so often present.

From a therapeutic point of view, the healthy TV is one who fully accepts his desire to dress and pursues it with the knowledge that although many around him find such behavior unacceptable, he is "O.K." as a person. This does not mean flouting the feelings of others by parading in front of them with a "public be damned" attitude. Such behavior is masochistic if not suicidal.

A therapist can also help the TV decide whether and how much of his lifestyle to share with his wife, non-marital partner, parents, children, friends, or co-workers. Where the TV is married, the therapist can often monitor the process of disclosure and help both parties work through the feelings and difficulties that may result. Although some couples may find no recourse but to separate, many others can work out a compromise wherein the husband can dress with the permission, if not the participation, of his wife. The process of working out this modus vivendi can be a lengthy one, particularly if the TV's wife feels strongly that such behavior is not acceptable for a

man. Her fears may include suspicions that she is a latent homosexual for marrying a TV, particularly if she participates in his dressing or enjoys it sexually; anxieties over children or other family members discovering clothing or other evidence of the behavior; anticipation that the family's reputation would be ruined in the face of public disclosure; or that there is "another woman" living with them in the person of her husband, a potential competitor for time and attention just as a lover would be. If the crossdresser reveals bisexual or domination fantasies, the marital picture becomes even more complex. Family therapy is strongly indicated when parents discover crossdressing behavior in a child. Unless the child is very young, the behavior is unlikely to stop. However, if the crossdressing is symptomatic of other family conflicts, amelioration of these conditions may produce change in the child's behavior pattern.

A most important option available to the crossdresser is membership in one of the support organizations for TVs and TSs. Gateway Gender Alliance offers publications helpful to the TV in understanding himself and managing himself and managing his lifestyle, and provides confidential mailing lists to those who wish to correspond with each other. An even more effective way to reduce the loneliness and isolation experienced by most TVs is to join one of the social and support clubs located in most large metropolitan areas. For those courageous enough to come out of the closet, these clubs provide an opportunity for single and married TVs to meet with others who share and struggle with their lifestyle. In the safe and supportive environment provided there, much of the guilt and shame associated with crossdressing can be transformed into social relaxation, the knowledge that one is not alone, and that most important ingredient of any life, self-respect. Many of these organizations also provide support and understanding for the TV's spouse or partner.

It is clear that to gain self-esteem, the crossdresser must open the door of his closet far enough to reach for others, at the same time exercising good judgment about when, where and with whom he shares information about his preferences. What can the other 98% of society do that might help the transvestite gain more positive feelings about himself? As a tiny minority of perhaps a few million individuals in this country, TVs are hardly about to start a rights movement in their own behalf, and need all the acceptance they can gain from others.

The most powerful influence that the public can have is to realize what TVs are and what they are not. Others need to know that they

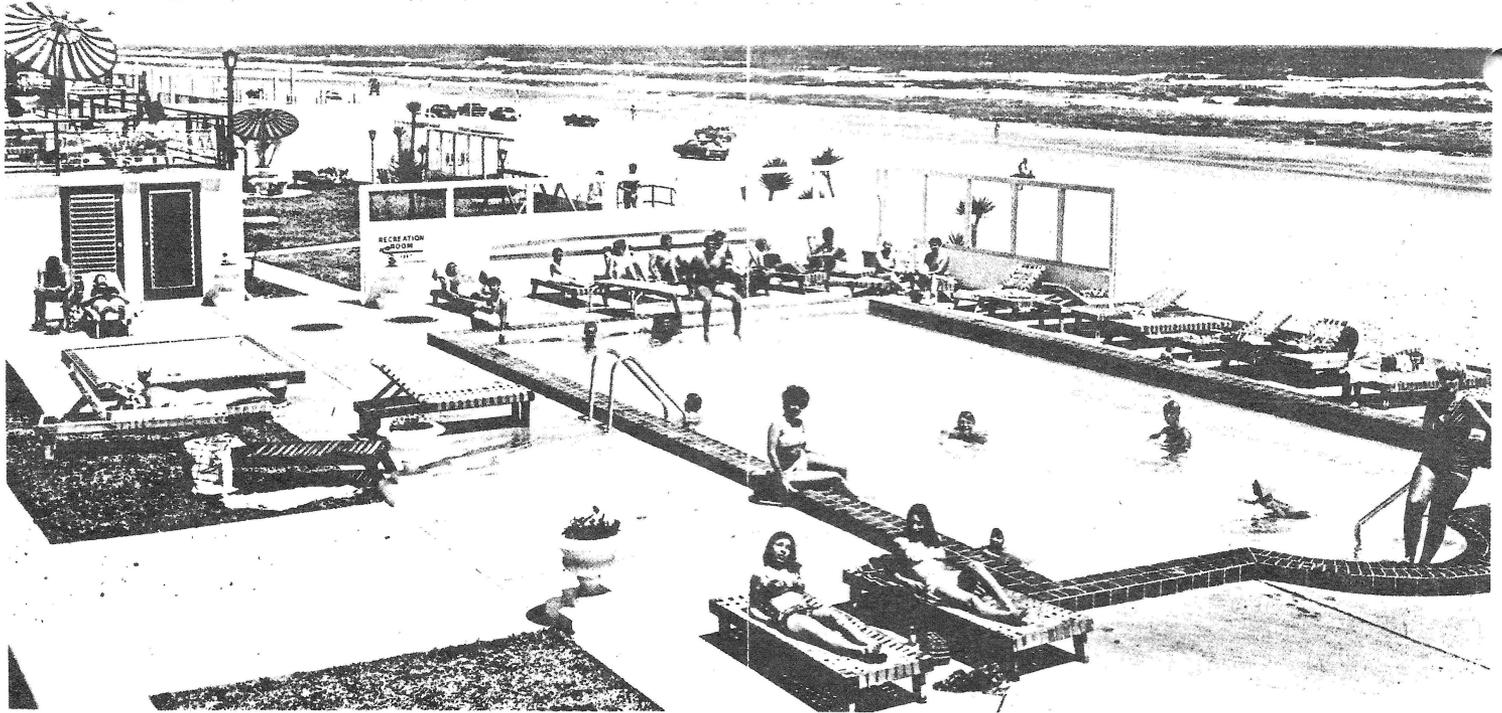
are human beings with the needs, hopes and aspirations of us all; responsible employees and loving family members, and in many cases, leading prominent citizens of society; that they are not child molesters, prostitutes, mentally ill, interested in converting others to their pastime or in the exploitation of anyone for any reason. When crossdressing behavior is discovered, whether in a child or an adult, it is essential, despite the feelings of shock or surprise that may arise, not to scold, disparage, belittle, or otherwise react punitively toward the individual. While it may not be possible to understand the individual's behavior at first, this is what is needed. Therapy can be extremely helpful, not in stopping crossdressing, but in helping parent and child, husband and wife understand, accept and live with it more peaceably.

In the final analysis, transvestism carries a powerful message regarding the sex roles of our society. That a man dressed as a woman should be scorned, ridiculed, and looked down upon by others is a clear statement of the relative stature of men and women in this culture. That a man should not be permitted to wear a dress is as outrageously arbitrary, if not as culturally significant, as a woman being prohibited from doing "a man's job" at a man's rate of pay. That any individual, provided he or she does not exploit or harm self or others, should be harassed for pursuing a lifestyle varying from the majority's is inconsistent with the principles of a society that claims to value individual freedom so highly. Ultimately, it is society's pernicious and illogical attitudes toward the roles of men and women and toward those with alternative sexual lifestyles which must be corrected before a phenomenon such as cross-gender behavior will cease to be a problem for those who practice it.

(Editor's comment: Since knowlegde of crossdressing is rather limited the number of therapists able to "treat" the crossdresser competantly are few and far between. One must remember that the therapist is, after all, human and therefore prey to the many fears, guilt feelings and prejudices as others in our society. Competent therapists able to effectively deal with the crossdresser are hard to find and certainly, like anything else must be shopped for. The wrong therapist can do irreperable damage to the already guilt and fear-ridden crossdresser. Certainly there are qualified therapists, but remember, their knowledge is "book knowledge" and any expertise was gained from dealing with other individuals, seldom from involvement in crossdressing on a personal level.)

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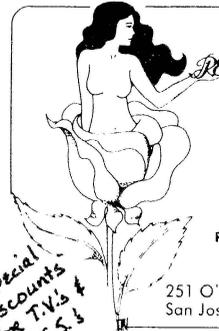
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Letters from postoperative gender reassignment individuals concerning their adjustment in their new life are also welcomed.

Address all correspondence to:

Paul A. Walker, Ph.D.
1952 Union Street
San Francisco, CA 94123

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