



Desert Drag: Transgendered soldiers serve in Saudi Arabia

by Paula Jordan Sinclair

You're not likely to hear it during a live CNN report from Saudi Arabia, but there *are* transgendered Americans fighting in the war with Iraq. From around the country, transvestites have been sent to the Gulf when their reserve units were called up. And other transgendered people on active duty in the Middle East are subscribing to a leading magazine for transvestites.

"I searched our customer database and I can positively identify a dozen customers in the Gulf," said JoAnn Roberts, publisher of *Lady-Like* and *En Femme* magazines. She said the first subscriptions came in September, about a month after U.S. troops first arrived in Saudi Arabia.

Drag entrepreneur Michael Salem recently told Philadelphia *Daily News* columnist Stu Bykofsky that he gets four or five requests a day for his catalog from troops in Saudi Arabia.

While the idea of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines wearing garter belts and panties under their

desert "camies" may revolt many people, the fact that transvestites and transsexuals serve in the armed forces comes as no surprise to those familiar with the community. In fact, according to one psychiatrist, the military's reputation for masculinity may actually *attract* transgendered people.

Dr. George R. Brown, clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, calls this phenomenon "flight into hyper-masculinity." Brown was a military psychiatrist at a large Air Force medical center in the Midwest. During a three year period he evaluated 11 males with "severe gender dysphoria" and published a paper on his conclusions. Brown is himself now serving in Saudi Arabia.

Brown based his conclusions on a small sample, so it would not be appropriate to apply his theories to all transgendered males in the military. Yet his theories are of interest now that the nation is at war.

Brown believes that most people would guess that there are fewer

transgendered or gender dysphoric males in the military than in the general population because, according to popular logic, a man "who engages in cross-gender activities ... would not voluntarily submit himself to a system known for its staunch intolerance of deviancy...." Yet, Brown claims, the military's reputation for turning boys into men was the primary attraction for many of his clients to enlist.

"I joined the Navy hoping maybe the problem would go away," one of the men told Brown. "It did for a while, but it's still here." Another said, "I joined the Air Force as a cover. In uniform, my masculinity would not be questioned — I was above reproach."

The same sentiments have been expressed by other men with less severe gender dysphoria.

Based on the gender dysphoric males who came to him for treatment, Brown speculates that they sought to reinforce their masculinity after their feelings of being different made them feel alien. They

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'La Cage Aux Folles' Comes to Valley Forge

Imagine arriving *en femme* at a noted female impersonator show and causing a murmur of excitement as the audience "recognizes" you as part of the cast.

Or, how would it feel if you are seated front row and one of the real cast members comes over and asks that you stay after the show to meet the rest of the cast, the producer, and the choreographer?

That's what happened several

years ago when a group of Renaissance members got together to see *Finocchio* at the Downingtown Inn. It was such a marvelous experience that the girls are still talking about it.

There's a chance to repeat that magic this month when *La Cage Aux Folles* comes to the Valley Forge Music Fair for a one-week stay. This production stars Gene Barry, who reprises his Broadway role as Ri-

nato, and Lee Roy Reams as Albin/Zsa Zsa. And if that isn't enough excitement, how about the show's rousing anthem "I Am What I Am"?

Several members are already planning to get a group together to see this wonderful musical on Saturday, March 30, at 8:00 p.m. The cost per ticket is \$30. Of course, they're going dressed to the "nines." Maybe the audience will mistake

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CHAPTER INFORMATION...

New Jersey

South Jersey: Kelly Harris, chapter leader. Write Renaissance SJ, c/o P. O. Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ 08330. Meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, Inc. 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee, N.J. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Call (609) 641-3782.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia area: Dina Amberle, chapter leader. Write Renaissance PHL, Box AD, Bensalem, PA 19020. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia, Pa. Winter hours: starts at 8:00 p.m. Call (215) 946-8887.

Pennsylvania

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Brenda Davidson, chapter leader. Write Renaissance LSV, Box 2122, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Meets the first Saturday of the month. Presently, the chapter lacks a permanent meeting site, so call (717) 780-1578 for latest information. The March meeting will be held in Carlisle, Pa., at 8:00 p.m.

Pennsylvania

Reading: The National Board has revoked this chapter's charter. If your membership has not expired, please contact National Secretary Susan Crane, P.O. Box 552, King of Prussia, PA 19046.

Renaissance News

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Articles must be submitted for publication one month in advance.

For current information about Renaissance, call (215) 630-1437 24 hours a day.

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

NATIONAL INFORMATION...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AND, DON'T FORGET ABOUT...

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

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

• **The Pen Pal Project.** If you are willing to write letters to pen pals, please inform MaryAnn Kirkland or write to the office, c/o Dept. PP.

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

• Call the new **Transsexual Hotline** if you need need someone to talk with. Call (609) 641-3782 between 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. EST. This service is provided by the South Jersey Chapter.

Calendar of Events

MARCH

2nd Ren. So. Jersey Chapter Psychotherapist Dr. Ralph Reynolds

2nd Ren. LSV Chapter

16th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter Merle Norman cosmetic demonstration

APRIL

6th Ren. So. Jersey Chapter Endocrinologist Dr. James M. Kauffman

6th Ren. LSV Chapter

10th-14th IFGE convention in Denver

20th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter

MAY

4th Ren. So. Jersey Chapter

4th Ren. LSV Chapter

18th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter

JoAnn Altman Stringer
SURVIVALTM

Support groups: do we need them?

Many people will answer this question with a resounding "yes" for they believe that support groups are absolutely necessary. But maybe, just maybe, all that they offer is not as necessary as we think.

In the August, 1990 issue of *The Transsexual Voice*, publisher Phoebe Smith answered a similar charge from Marlo M. The distraught writer had noted that two groups she attended had a high percentage of post-op transsexual members and seemed to have a hierarchal caste system. The members at the top of the heap presented a "know it all" attitude which turned Marlo off. Smith wrote back saying it was her opinion that participation in a support group may not be for everyone. That raises some interesting fodder for discussion.

My personal opinion is like a double-edged sword. I believe we do need support groups, but maybe they're not for everyone. Groups can be both good and bad.

Let's investigate the good things support groups offer. The initial, purpose of groups is socialization — an activity that occurs in almost every facet of our lives. We socialize with peers, family, same sex/opposite sex friends, and co-workers. We socialize from the very earliest childhood years to our golden era at the nursing home. Much of this socialization involves learning from other people. Women learn *how* to be women from other females. So it is natural that transgendered people, who have been flailing away in a vast sea of despair and uncertainty, would want to socialize and learn from other transgendered people.

The second positive aspect of support groups is education. We join groups to learn things about the world. People come to support groups to learn about the feelings they have inside themselves and perhaps to learn what they are: transsexual or transvestite. They

seek very basic information from people who share their outlook, and support groups provide this important service.

Transsexuals and transvestites also seek to improve themselves through support group membership. They attend the meetings to learn how to dress, act, talk, and all the other essential skills necessary for their chosen gender role.

Of course, groups do just what their name implies — provide support to those with gender dysphoria. Nobody can have empathy of another person's situation unless they have been through it themselves. As a post-op transsexual woman, I know very well what a pre-op sister is going through, and I can support her emotionally.

These are some of the good things support groups provide. But what of the darker side?

Gender support groups tend to have a very unique sociopolitical hierarchy that I haven't found in other support groups. I don't know whether the cause is related to gender dysphoria or to something else. But it's a *very* real aspect of gender groups.

What I'm talking about here is the "know it all" syndrome mentioned by Marlo. Apparently she attended a few meetings and saw it right off the bat. I call this the "Boy Scout Strata." A boy generally enters the Scouting program as a Cub Scout, but he can't wait until he becomes a Boy Scout. He continues to climb a ladder to the very top rung known as Eagle Scout, the "best of the best." All along this climb, he has been setting his sights on those above him, knowing that if he worked hard enough, he could be like them.

We all know that transvestites and transsexuals are entirely different. But quite often, support groups promulgate the idea that it's somehow "better" to be a transsexual, and so we see transvestites suddenly calling themselves trans-

sexuals as if this was the next rung up the transgender "ladder." And within the transsexual caste, it is seen as "better" to be in transition or (best of all) post-op. Among post-ops, you are somehow considered better than others if you have a boyfriend or are married (as I am).

At meetings quite often it's the post-op transsexuals who sit like wise college professors, looked up to by the transvestites and pre-ops. This practice is not openly espoused by the members, but it often ripples just beneath the surface.

What is the answer? Many groups have started speciality support groups for transsexuals only. Some have even added groups for transvestites' spouses and children. To a small extent, these speciality groups have worked, but not as well as initially hoped. A problem often is that the parent group fails to exercise strong leadership. The speciality groups need to be very structured, for casual groups peter out very soon. I still believe special interest groups are good because they provide individuals with direct contact with their peers so they can share their unique experiences and problems.

But in special interest or general groups, the problem of an informal caste system must be tackled openly and honestly. Everyone in the group should be made aware that this system is now or could become a problem in the future. It is then each and every person's responsibility to self-police their respective group to crush this class system. Very strong leadership is needed for this to happen.

Do we need groups? Yes, we do for all of the positive reasons stated above. But we don't need the caste systems that so often grows up among them. All good things have a cost. Erasing this caste system will be painful, but it is necessary for our beloved gender support groups to survive and to prosper.

New 'significant other' group forming

Responding to a specific request from the "significant other" of a transgendered individual, the South Jersey Renaissance chapter has undertaken to assist in the formation of a support group solely for spouses of transvestites and transsexuals in the Delaware Valley.

"A lot of people have asked me about a group of this nature," said Kelly Harris, leader of the South Jersey chapter. "It's something I also see a need for. If there's anything I can do to get it off the ground, that's what I'm here for."

Harris said she believes that the group for significant others should be "strictly for them, run by them, and attended by them so they can get the support they need." Yet, she said, status as a special Renaissance chapter or affiliate would provide assistance in getting the group off the ground. The spouses and significant others need not be members of other Renaissance chapters.

Alison Laing, co-director of outreach on the national board, praised the initiative shown by Harris.

"We do an awful lot of things for the general public and for ourselves. But its time we did something for those closest to our culture and help them as we have been helping ourselves." She added that "this group could be set up as a special chapter or join with us under our new affiliate program."

A special group for significant others has been tried in the past, but with limited success. One spouse who had attended meetings just for spouses stopped going because "it was nothing more than a bitch session with wives and girlfriends sitting around telling each other how much they disliked crossdressing" she told the *Renaissance News* on the condition that her name not be used. "They were reinforcing each other's negative attitudes instead of trying to help

themselves."

"I wished that group had adopted a more positive tone toward solving their problems," she said. She suggested that having a qualified professional facilitate discussions would move the group toward constructive results.

Presently, Harris is helping the organizers of the special group find a meeting place convenient to spouses throughout the region.

Persons interested in this group should call Laverne Zeitler at (609) 358-6671.

Monmouth County transgenderists sought for group

An open crossdresser/transgendered support group is forming in Monmouth County, N.J. Those interested should contact L.C. at Post Office Box 1326, Brick, NJ 08723.



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Affiliation option sparks interest nationwide; groups in 6 states ask about Renaissance link

Response from around the nation to the new Renaissance policy on affiliate organizations has been most encouraging, according to Alison Laing, national co-director of outreach.

She reports that within a month after the policy was announced, she had received inquiries from northern New Jersey, California, Connecticut, Maryland, western Michigan, and northern Virginia.

Some of those inquiries also offered suggestions on how affiliation could be made more meaningful for

transgendered people in those areas. She said that the policy adopted by the board is not fixed, and that suggestions from interested groups continue to be welcomed and also may receive board approval.

Affiliation with Renaissance provides several entitlements for a one-time fee of \$25 and an annual fee of \$10. These include:

- A copy of the chapter handbook and tips on organizing a local group;
- A complete set of *Background Papers* and *Community Outreach Bulletins* with permission for un-

limited unmodified reproduction so long as affiliate status is maintained;

- Participation in the National Referral Service.

An optional service will be available for affiliates to obtain the publication rights to certain *Renaissance News* columns at an additional fee of \$30 per year.

Affiliates must agree with the goals, policies and operations of Renaissance. Affiliates also must have a minimum of five national Renaissance members, including the leader of the affiliate group.

Nat'l board revokes Reading charter

At its January meeting, the national Renaissance board voted unanimously to revoke the charter of the chapter in Reading. The board also voted to ensure that members who had paid dues to the Reading chapter receive full value for their money.

The group in Reading had not met for several months. The board had made numerous unsuccessful attempts to contact Susan Marshall, the leader of the chapter, to deter-

mine the status of the group. The vote to disband the chapter came after those numerous attempts went unanswered.

"Although we are disappointed that the Reading chapter had to be disbanded, we acted so that the former members wouldn't continue in a state of limbo," said Paula Jordan Sinclair, national managing director. "The motion to disestablish the chapter also contained our pledge to continue to provide the

services those members paid for. They will continue to receive the *Renaissance News*, and the national board has officially asked the chapters in South Jersey, Lower Susquehanna Valley and Greater Philadelphia to 'adopt' the former Reading members for the unexpired portion of their paid memberships."

The South Jersey chapter has agreed to Sinclair's request; the other chapters have yet to act as of this writing.

One of the problems associated with the disestablishment is that there are no membership records that would show who had paid dues to Reading and when. This situation is not likely to occur again thanks to the new four-part membership form used by all the chapters, Sinclair said. But the lack of information about former Reading members makes it difficult to provide services to them. She asked Reading members to send whatever information they have about their dues payment to the national office. She promised that every effort will be made to treat those members fairly.

The board estimated that the Reading chapter numbered about a dozen members.

Greek transvestite shot by police; cover-up feared, protest sought

The International Lesbian and Gay Association reports that in April of last year, a transvestite named Stephanos Kyrou was shot in the back by police while driving his car in Athens.

Police say that Kyrou did not obey orders to disperse. Witnesses say that the orders were accompanied by a host of insults.

Commenting on the shooting, Police Superintendent Papalegiorgos told reporters that he did not think Police Officer John Tsiklos acted improperly.

After his release from a hospital,

Kyrou was charged with "attempted dangerous behavior" and "resisting arrest."

The Greek gay rights organization Kraximo Group, has asked concerned people around the world to write letters of complaint to:

- General Police Superintendent Papalegiorgos, Central Police Dept., Alexandres Ave., Athens, Greece;
- Mr. Vassilides, Minister of Public Order, Pireos Str. 1, Athens, Greece; and to
- The Nea Demokratia Party, Central Offices, Rigillis 17, Athens, Greece.

Watch the staples!

Dina Amberle, the director of the Greater Philadelphia chapter was selected as the "Quarterly Girl" for a new California publication, *Crossdresser's Quarterly*. Dina was profiled in a four-page layout in the second issue of this publication published recently. The layout also included several photos, including a tasteful "centerfold" picture.

In addition to talking about her favorite fashions ("short and tight for dancing") and activities while crossdressed ("clubbing"), Dina stated her wish for the transgendered community.

"How about if we all pull together instead of apart? There seems to be an awful lot of bitchiness between the various organizations. I think our case would be better made to the public if we could stand united under those threads common to all of us. We could educate the public about differences between subgroupings after we got their attention. But politics, especially TG

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tried to "fit in" by choosing obviously masculine activities. Or, as noted gender experts R.J. Stoller and G. H. Herdt say, "the first order of business of being a man is: don't be a woman."

Brown also noted that just being in uniform was not enough for some of the transgendered males he saw. Some of them volunteered for high risk assignments or for units known to be "macho" like the Green Berets.

Yes, Green Berets in *drag*.

Roberts knows that this is true in the Persian Gulf today. One of her subscribers who is there now "was a former member of a "special forces" team in Vietnam and he told me there were two other transvestites, beside himself, in his unit."

Brown said that for the males he treated, being simply masculine was

politics, is a messy business, and it seems to attract the egomaniacs rather than the conciliators."

Dina also expressed a strong opinion about negative social attitudes toward transgendered people.

Sex therapists, educators want more from Gr. Phila. Chapter

The Greater Philadelphia Renaissance chapter held the first Renaissance Professional Seminar for Transgendered Issues on January 19 in King of Prussia. The eight therapists and sex educators in attendance met a group of panelists composed of Beth Marshall, Jackie K., Evelyn and Maryann Kirkland,, and the seminar organizer, Angela Gardner.

Emily Kahn, an instructor of human sexuality at Temple University and longtime friend of Renaissance, moderated the morning program which featured an exercise on

not enough; they had to be *hyper*-masculine, a trait Brown calls "a form of gender disorder."

For decades, psychiatrists and psychologists have noted that some males adopt actions that go beyond what society labels as simply masculine. One reason for this, some experts say, is that these men are rejecting "the feminine aspects of the self." Many of these hypermasculine actions — such as overcompetitiveness and believing danger is exciting — are rewarded by the military.

"It seems that (military) duty is a natural choice for the gender dysphoric male ... who is attempting to make a 'last ditch effort' to take the path of least resistance vis-à-vis society and family ... while purging his feminine self" Brown said. This process could result, he

When she is dressed as Dina, she said, "she hasn't a care in the world... "It's the way the world was supposed to be before we mucked it up with civilization, the Industrial

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terms used in the transgendered community, panel discussion, and a question-and-answer session with the panelists.

After lunch at the restaurant at Bloomingdales, Kahn presented theories on gender roles and gender transpositions developed by James D. Wienric, author of the book *Sexual Landscapes*. The seminar was closed with a presentation by William Stayton on treatment options for transgendered clients in therapy.

The attendees indicated that they found the seminar useful but too

added, in "the prevalence of gender dysphoric males (in the military) being much higher than in the civilian population."

A less extreme theory voiced by some in the transgender community holds that many of us adopt unquestionably masculine activities as a balance for the feminine side.

Of course, Brown and others recognizes that there are many reasons why transgendered males join the military, including patriotism. Furthermore, we know that many transgendered military personnel successfully complete their tours of duty or careers even though they are almost continually at risk of being labeled homosexual and discharged.

• Miss Sinclair wishes to hear from transgendered people who were or are in the Armed Forces. Write to her at the Renaissance office.

THE **N** *Paula Jordan Sinclair* **NEWSQUEEN**™

It appears that Miss Sinclair has competition in the NewsQueen biz. It's not the competition she minds so much, its from whence it comes — a shorter gentleman who was once her escort for an evening of clubbing and dancing, Philadelphia *Daily News* columnist Stu Bykofsky. Last month, Stu scooped Miss Sinclair on the crossdressing connection with the Persian Gulf war, and printed an item about Desert "Storm troopers" requesting items from Michael Salem's mail order boutique. Part of Stu's column made it into this issue's page one story "Desert Drag." The other good parts — what few there were — follow:

Salem is quoted as claiming that his customers include "some high-ranking officers" and "a lot of pilots who wear lingerie under their flight suits." But it is unlikely that the pilots are doing so in Saudi Arabia nowadays. Before they take off on each mission, pilots leave behind family photographs and other personal items to prevent Iraqis from using that material against the flyers if they are shot down and taken prisoner. Imagine how much tougher things would be on a P.O.W. captured while wearing women's underwear?

Salem claims some sensitivity to the troops' situation when he says that he won't send a catalog to the Middle East out of fear that the men will get in trouble while stationed in conservative Saudi Arabia. Instead, He promises to send them a free catalog when they get home.

At least Salem now has an excuse for his notoriously slow service.



The war couldn't have come at a better time for the television industry. February was one of the ratings months, also a favorite time for trotting out transgendered people and other oddities. But with some exceptions, the programming was

rather tame; Phil Donahue didn't put on a dress.

It must have been a great temptation for Donahue, who seems to take considerable pride in his closeness with the transgendered community. In an interview with *Irish American Magazine*, Donahue claimed that he had been named "Man of the Year" by a group called "Transvestites for a Better America."

By the way, "Transvestites for Better Television" meets...



Transgendered people in India, otherwise known as eunuchs, have a quite different attitude toward publicity; they eschew it.

In December, more than 1,000 eunuchs meet for 20 days at the All-India Conference of the Eunuchs. The group would not disclose the purpose of the meeting other than telling the *Hindustan Times* of New Delhi that they met to discuss "internal affairs."

For reporters who got too nosy, they had a more pointed response. "If an outsider attempts to witness our ceremonies, he will become like us," one of the eunuchs said.

The gathering in Ghonsla caused quite a stir with villagers coming from miles around to catch sight of the eunuchs, who, the paper reports, "were quite beautiful, and the people often got confused and took them for women."

Extra police were called out to prevent violence, but there were no problems other than the usual nasty remarks.



An unfortunate crossdresser in Madison, Wis., would have been lucky if the person or persons who police suspect mistook him for a woman had only used hurtful words instead of violent force when his true gender was discovered.

The individual's skeleton was found jammed in the chimney of a

building undergoing renovation. When discovered by workmen, the man's remains were clad in a floral print dress, shag sweater, and medium-heeled pumps. Based on the condition of the clothing, police say the body could have been in the chimney for up to two years. The bones were totally clean of muscle and flesh.

Authorities speculate that the man was murdered and his body hidden in the chimney of the empty building to prevent discovery. They also speculate that the murder occurred after someone realized his date was not a real woman.



Not all discoveries of this nature end so tragically. Remember Charles Daugherty, the 26-year-old man who posed as a female high school cheerleader for eight days last year? Although he pleaded guilty to charges of criminal impersonation, he last month avoided a possible two year prison term.

Daugherty, who claimed to be Cheyen (pronounced Shawn) Weatherly when he enrolled at Coronado Springs High School in Colorado Springs, Colo., was diagnosed has having multiple personalities, and was sentenced to two years probation and counseling. Daugherty said he wanted to graduate high school so he could become a psychologist.

He now dresses as a woman all of the time and uses the name Shannon Ireland.



A county jail official in Los Angeles would have been ready if Daugherty had been sent to the slammer there.

Ernest Cobarrubias is responsible for deciding which prisoners get assigned to the jail's special protective unit for gay inmates and which ones are faking homosexuality. To separate the sheep from the

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THE **N** *Paula Jordan Sinclair*
NEWSQUEEN™

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goats, so to speak, Cobarrubias asks the "wanna be" gay men a series of questions such as "what size dress do you wear?" He says that the inmates who know their dress size are usually straight.



Good thing Cobarrubias doesn't work in a zoo; he'd have a heck of a time sorting out howler monkeys. Females of the species are often mistaken for the male because her clitoris is the same size as his penis.



But while Cobarrubias' method may not work in zoology, it shows promise in the study of history.

Historian Horace Littleton has claimed that President Martin Van Buren, along with James Buchanan and Chester A. Arthur, was gay. His "proof" is information that Van Buren liked to wear his wife's clothes and perfume.

We know what that *really* means, don't we?



We interrupt this column for a special legal advisory for read-

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them — and you — for part of the cast as they did at Downingtown.

Anyone interested in attending should write or call JoAnn Roberts before Friday, March 15. You also will need to send her \$30 for each ticket by the 15th, and she'll pick

ers in Kentucky...

An old law in the Bluegrass State *requires* partial male-to-female crossdressing. According to a newspaper report, it is illegal for a woman to buy a hat unless her husband tries it on first.

We now return you to our regularly scheduled column now in progress.



During the past ten months, ten transvestites have been murdered in Peru. The killings are believed to be the work of two groups of Marxist revolutionaries: the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement and the Shining Path guerrillas.

According to the Movimiento Homosexual de Lima (MHL), a lesbian and gay rights organization in the South American nation, the killings of transvestites — and even more homosexuals — are a part of a left wing "moralization" campaign aimed at ridding the country of undesirable elements. MHL says that international human rights organizations have been of little help in stopping the killings because they

them up for you at the Music Fair.

"It will be a great evening," JoAnn said. "We might even go out for cocktails afterwards."

JoAnn can be reached at P.O. Box 1263, King of Prussia, PA 19406, or by phone at 215-640-9449 most anytime of the day.

"are not considered violations of human rights."

MHL is doing what it can, but its limited funds are not keeping pace with Peru's annual 10,000 percent inflation rate. Donations are needed and can be sent to the organization at Apartado 110289, Lima 11, Peru.

Miss Sinclair received no clippings this month, and so she suspects that Stu Bykofsky is intercepting her mail. While she contacts the postal authorities, kindly continue to send her items for the column. Be sure to note the date and name of the publication.

Chapter leader is 'Centerfold' girl

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Revolution and government. I absolutely hate having to sneak out of my house like a cat burglar..."

Introducing Dina to her readers, *Crossdresser's Quarterly* publisher Danielle Alexis said Renaissance is "one of the more active groups in the country, and Dina is one of the reasons."

Alexis said a survey conducted a year ago in the transgendered community showed that support and activities are two of the most important services an organization can provide.

"Renaissance excels in these areas thanks to Dina... and of all the other girls who have worked so hard to make Renaissance the success that it is today," Alexis wrote.

Crossdresser's Quarterly is published by JMPG, P.O. Box 7217, Burbank, CA 91510-7217.

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For Ideas
FORUM

Balls . . . Who's got 'em?

by JoAnn Roberts

There's been a lot of talk in the gender press lately about activism. Sister Mary Elizabeth tried unsuccessfully, albeit through no fault of her own, to squash the Americans With Disabilities Act. Sister distributed petitions for us to sign and send to our congressional representatives. I'll bet the number of people who actually signed those petitions was very small. Why? Because generally transvestites have no balls when it comes to putting their asses on the line for this community.

Janet Christon, took support groups to task in *Gender Expressions* (Vol. II, No. 1) for fostering an underground atmosphere. Having spent the last four years nursing a support group, I disagree with her. Most TVs — still wracked by tremendous guilt — don't want to be seen in public for fear they might be recognized, laughed at, or (heaven forbid) thought to be gay. Like I said: balls, they ain't got any. It's my opinion that the "T-community" (I hate that term) is never going to have the kind of political impact that gays, lesbians, blacks, Hispanics, and women have had because no one is willing to stand up and identify him/her self as a transvestite.

"It takes balls to pretend you don't have any."

—Anonymous Drag Queen

So why do some transsexuals chose to go public even after they literally don't have any balls? You see, it's a very simple thing. A true transsexual knows he or she can't hide in the real world. Sooner or later, someone finds out. The label never goes away; not really. The transsexuals have to learn to live

with it. They must go through the real life test where almost everyone knows about them. The successful ones know the world doesn't end because people discover they are transsexuals.

Ah, but a transvestite is a horse of another color. The classic TV is a male, and his maleness is very important to him. The TV has an out, a refuge. He goes home after his support group meeting, takes a shower, puts on his three-piece suit and Presto, he has "power" again. He has regained his "respect." This is one reason why transsexuals and feminists get so pissed-off at TVs. Transvestites cheat the system. Why? 'Cause they ain't got no balls.

"Yeah, and it takes even bigger balls to have 'em cut off."

—Another Anonymous
Drag Queen

See, TVs are men and their maleness represents "power" and "respect," primarily to other men, of course. For some women — and a lot of transsexuals — power represents repression. Men play their macho political power games even in their transgender "support" groups. Just look at how these groups are organized. Heavy on the structure — a very male trait. If you don't believe me, just look at any organization chart. We can't help it. We were raised that way. No matter how feminine we may think we appear and act, our brains are wired for male thinking. Only estrogens can undo that wiring, but not completely and at no little risk. I have no desire to take estrogens, so I'm stuck with my wiring.

But that doesn't mean I have to act like an asshole. I can change my behavior toward women, gays, lesbians, blacks, and other minorities.

I can try to be a better human being. And, I can try to act like I have some balls. But to do the really courageous stuff you need big brass balls. Those I ain't got. Not yet, anyway. Maybe someday.

***"Balls," said the Queen,
"If I had two, I'd be King."***

—Anonymous Queen

Along the way from there to here I've had some very interesting experiences that have taught me some invaluable lessons.

Five years ago I was involved in a serious car accident. Many people have heard me tell this story in a very humorous way, but let me say that at the time it wasn't funny.

I was crossdressed and out with friends in Manhattan. On our way back to my friends' apartment, an asshole (read: male) ran a red light, hit us broadside, and flipped our car onto its roof, whereupon we slid through the intersection and came to rest on another occupied, parked vehicle.

One person was seriously injured and unconscious, another had a concussion, while the rest of us (five in all) had various cuts and contusions. Four of us ended up in the emergency room of St. Luke's Hospital. The fifth, the seriously injured one, was taken elsewhere.

I'll never forget the E.R. doctor because he treated us like trash, worse, like radioactive waste. No X-rays, not even for my friend with the concussion. I think he thought we were hookers or addicts or both. Oh yeah, I was the only TV in the bunch, the rest were GGs, my wife included. But the bastard didn't even clean the glass fragments from her foot.

Afterwards, my friends remarked at my coolness under the circumstances. I didn't panic and I didn't

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For Ideas
FORUM

Balls . . . Who's got 'em?

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care that I was crossdressed. I was glad we were all still alive. Being alive seemed more important than worrying about whether or not the cops and medical technicians were going to discover I was a man dressed like a woman. Hell, I even gave 'em my legal name so my insurance would pay the hospital bill. Being alive was more important. That's when I learned the world doesn't end if someone knows I'm a TV. I haven't been the same since. I think I grew some balls that night.

"And the King laughed. Not because he had to, but because he wanted two."

—Anonymous King

Another incident comes to mind. I decided to take a new sister, Michelle, out on the town. This was her first time in public, i.e. outside of our support group. On the way downtown, my car developed a very flat tire. Michelle was panic stricken, "What do we do now?!" Honey, we change the damn tire, that's what. (See, all of a sudden she had no balls.) Michelle watched for maniac drivers while I hoisted the spare and jack out of the trunk.

While loosening the lug nuts before jacking up the car, I become aware of someone standing beside me. Not one, but two guys stopped to help these damsels in distress. So, I let them change the tire for me. Besides, I'd already broken a nail. Michelle was terrified; I told her to get back in the car and shut up.

As the guys were putting the shredded tire in the trunk, I got a lecture about riding on the "space saver spare" that comes with the cars these days. What did that guy think I was, an idiot? Yep, and I looked like one too; it's called a female. Every male knows that females don't know nuthin' 'bout

cars. Right?

It took balls to let those guys change the tire and more balls to listen to the lecture without blowin' my cool or my cover. I realized that women put up with this crap every damn day of their lives. No wonder they're pissed.

Fast forward to six months ago. I need knee surgery for torn cartilage. I have to make several trips to the doctor's office, to the hospital for pre-admission testing, and finally the surgery. I usually shave my whole body as I've come to loathe body hair. (Well, maybe not loathe, but at least a strong dislike.) The doctor doesn't say anything about my legs being shaved, but one of the nurses asked if I am a swimmer or a bicyclist. I answered simply, "No." No explanation offered nor needed.

Up we go to the O.R. suites. The anesthesiologist is a woman and she remarks that my nails are longer than hers. I keep silent. Then, a nurse comes over to shave my leg (singular) and discovers that I beat her to it, on both legs. Bad enough the doc is gonna cut me, damn if I'm gonna let anyone else near me with a razor. I shaved 'em the morning before I got there. Next surprise. One of the assisting nurses is the wife of an acquaintance of mine. I need this?

I'm in the recovery room, afterwards. They won't let you go home till you void your bladder. I can't, so Ron, the aide, is going to catheterize me. Surprise Ron, I shave *there* too. He gives me a strange look. Ron is gay. (I can tell these things from hanging around gay bars in drag.) So I level with him: "I'm a transvestite." He's cool about it and very gentle. Together we drain a liter of fluid, and now I can go home.

I didn't get embarrassed or excited about being "discovered" and I have infallible, physiological data from the EKG and blood pressure

cuff to prove it. All it takes is balls.

One more story. A long time ago when I was still in my teens, something terrible happened to me. At least I thought it was terrible at the time. (Exactly "what" is unimportant.) I prayed to God not to let this thing happen, but it did anyway. I learned that life continues, despite our best efforts to stop it in its tracks.

"Q: Would you date a woman with a dick?"

A: I dunno. Depends on her personality."

—Al Pacino in *Sea of Love*

So, back to the beginning. How is the "T-community" (I *still* hate that term) going to make political strides when the majority of "T-people," a.k.a. transvestites, are so damned scared of being discovered and scared of losing their power as a male that they won't even come out to a support group meeting, let alone put their legal name on a petition? Are we ever going to see a transvestite on *Donahue* say, "My real name is John Smith and I work for IBM. I'm a transvestite and I believe I have a basic right to dress as I please?" No. Are we ever going to make connections with gay and lesbian activists when a majority of TVs are homophobes? No.

It all comes down to no balls. TVs think they have too much to lose by coming out and everything to gain by staying in the closet. Unlike being black or female, no one knows you're a transvestite unless told, much like being gay. Maybe "outing" for TVs will be the next rage. There are probably a Hell of a lot more crossdressers in Congress than there are gays.

Talking about political activism in the "T-community" (I *really* hate that term) is about as productive as

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For Ideas
FORUM

Correcting the record on Allen's 'Transformations'

To the Editor:

In the February, 1991 issue of the *Renaissance News*, JoAnn Roberts in her "Iconoclast" column brought up the incident of the rather bland review of Mariette Pathy Allen's photo essay book *Transformations* that appeared in *The Transvestian*. I would like to set the record straight on several points.

• JoAnn is wrong in her allegation that the book "has been relegated to the 'clearance pile.'" This is not the case. While there has not been a mad rush to buy the book, the

decision whether to remainder the book will be made — if at all — sometime in the future.

• The negative review in *The Transvestian* by Daniel M.T. Graham appears to be an exception. The gay press, especially in New York City, has given the book glowing reviews. Also, reviews in the publications of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex and the American Psychological Association were all quite positive, Allen said.

• But perhaps the real value of the book lies with the impact it has

had outside the transgendered and professional communities. In promoting her book on television and radio in several major cities (often accompanied by local crossdressers), she has presented us to the general public in a very positive light. On a more personal level, many have used it to educate family members and friends or as an aid in "coming out." In at least one case, the book may have been instrumental in saving a marriage.

—Alison Laing
Phoenixville, Pa.

'I feel I belong because of the fine newsletter'

To the Editor:

I have been a Renaissance member for a couple of years now. I can't get to meetings as much as I want, but I really feel that I *belong* to the organization because of the fine newsletter.

The announcement a couple of months back that JoAnn was stepping down as editor worried me because the newsletter is my main

connection to Renaissance. I have been watching Pam's work closely and I must say that I am very pleased with December and January issues. I am sure the high quality will continue.

Also, I am happy that someone new to the organization and to the local crossdressers' community volunteered and was accepted for this

important position. People like me (in the closet and somewhat isolated) sometimes believe that groups like Renaissance are for only the people who have opportunities that many of us don't have. "People who don't have big reputations have nothing to give back." Pam, you showed us this isn't the truth. I was really glad to read in your personal introduction article that you feel you have something to give. The other things you have done so far, like *Evening Magazine* and college speaking are more examples.

Good luck in your editing job. There are many who see you as an inspiration to us.

—Renee S.
Ridley Park, Pa.

Balls - Who's got 'em?

(continued from page 10)

talking about going to Mars. Technically, we have the capability, but it ain't gonna happen in this century. Ain't no one here got the balls to carry it off. I mean, sure, I got balls but not *that* big.

What we need is to do is form a

coalition of organizations to fund a political action committee, a PAC. Then hire somebody with balls *that* big to represent us in the political arena. Some lawyer-type in a three-piece, power suit that can dish the bull with the best of 'em.

All it's gonna take is balls.

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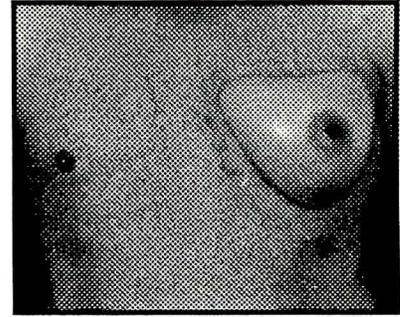
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Crossdressing deserves more dignity than this book provides

by JoAnn Roberts

Five years ago, you would have been hard pressed to find a serious book on the subject of transvestism outside of the works of Virginia Prince. Today, there are a plethora of new titles with more arriving every few months. *Crossdressing With Dignity* (PM Publishers, 1990, ISBN 0-9626762-1-7) by Peggy J. Rudd, Ed.D., who also authored *My Husband Wears My Clothes*, is one of these new books, but it contains little to make it worthwhile.

The book can best be described as a wrap-around, i.e. a collection of stories and commentary by transvestites held together with threads of text written by Rudd. The transvestites who are quoted responded to a questionnaire circulated by Rudd in January, 1990. Over 800 transvestites responded and this book is the result. By the way, Rudd is married to a transvestite.

Rudd says "the time is right to move ahead toward the crossdresser's dream of social acceptance." She believes the book has value beyond the "limited population" of transvestites and their partners. I disagree; I found many problems with the book and its arguments for crossdressing.

An appropriate example is in Chapter 7, "Moving Beyond Guilt," in which transvestism is put on trial. The prosecuting attorney represents society and the defense attorney represents the crossdressers. Both sides call transvestites as witnesses.

Among other offenses, transvestites are charged with misappropriation of funds. The prosecution calls to the stand a spouse who complains about the great amount of money her husband spends on his crossdressing. She says that she hasn't purchased anything for herself or their children in four months. The defense replies that yes,

"crossdressing is expensive, but so are golf, boating, and race cars. I might add, so are formal teas at the country club, fancy furniture, and wedding showers."

What garbage! The woman is saying her husband is acting in a selfish manner and neglecting the family's basic needs. The dolt defense responds with a list of luxuries, and the wife is supposed to accept her partner's extravagant spending because it is an "investment in personal happiness, good mental health."

This weak justification totally ignores the woman's real issues and devalues her feelings. Rudd was suckered into a typically masculine ploy. This happens frequently throughout the book.

Another flaw is the avoidance of meaningful discussion of sex and eroticism associated with crossdressing. I'm aware it is not politically correct to acknowledge that crossdressing is erotic for transvestites, but it is precisely that eroticism which separates us from transsexuals and female impersonators.

Rudd tries assiduously to ignore the issue, but it is there for the reader to find between the lines. For example, Rudd was disturbed by her partner's interest in magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, (which she characterized as "pornography") and his desire to dress like a "street walker."

The mock-trial keeps coming back to feelings of guilt, but never acknowledges that much of the guilt felt by transvestites is due to the denied link between crossdressing and eroticism. We live in the second most sexually repressed society in the world, and many of our psychological problems stem from our staunch denial that humans need to be sexual to be mentally healthy.

I also found erroneous informa-

tion on the development of physical sex: "fetus is essentially a hermaphrodite during the first six weeks after conception. It actually incorporates the genitalia of both genders." The reality is there are two clumps of cells in a fetus that have the potential to develop into the genitalia of one sex or the other. A fetus almost never develops both genitalia. As a professional and as an educator, Rudd cannot be forgiven for perpetuating wrong information.

Rudd also misses several important points. Two transvestites talk about their childhood and recount instances of abuse by their parents. Rudd fails to take the abuse into account for their feelings of worthlessness. Crossdressing is certainly a refuge for these individuals, while the abuse is their real source of guilt and pain.

She takes a simplistic psychological view of transvestism, failing once again to take into account the sexual dimorphism of the brain, i.e. men and women process information differently. Rudd discusses the stigma of transvestism, but fails to point out that crossdressers are stigmatized because society stigmatizes women.

It wasn't all bad. The chapter on self acceptance contains good advice. But one chapter doesn't make the book worthwhile.

By a wide margin, Rudd missed her goal of appealing to a larger audience. The only people who are going to benefit — if at all — are transvestites who still feel guilt about their crossdressing. Most transvestites who belong to peer support groups have already learned most of what's in the book. There is little to recommend it for spouses, friends or family. The commentary is anecdotal and self-serving. I was very disappointed.

THE **ICONOCLAST**TM

JoAnn Roberts

BROOKLYN, N.Y. - This is one play I wish I had seen...

I received the information just too late to tell you anything about it here, but there was a play in New York during December called *Hidden: A Gender* written, produced and acted by **Kate Bornstein**.

We are grateful to an anonymous editor from *Out and About* the newsletter of **Girl's Night Out** for a brief review.

"*Hidden: A Gender* sensitively explores the individual and societal issues involved with gender conflict and transformation. The androgynous Dr. Grinder serves as the narrator and commentator, challenging the audience to explore the significance and meaning of gender in our own lives.

"The play shifts between the tortuous personal journeys traveled by two individuals, a 19th century French female-to-male transsexual (apparently one of the first documented medical cases of gender corrective surgery), and a more contemporary case involving male-to-female transformation. Aside from the riveting performances, some hilarious black humor is offered in two scenes. One, a Marx

Brothers-like sketch involves a consultation with a quack surgeon where a demonstration of the sex-change surgery results in a banana being hurled out into the audience. The other offers segments from a mock game show; *What's My Sex?*"

For those members who were not around when Renaissance was formed in '87, Bornstein was one of the original seven board members.

Anyone interested in a support group in the metro NYC area should contact G.N.O., P.O. Box 369, Brooklyn, NY 11235.



SEATTLE - 'Esprit de corps' this isn't...

The rift at **Emerald City** is widening into a crevasse. Reporting in the January, 1991 newsletter, EC Prez **Micki Van der Wey** accuses EC stalwart **Janice Van Cleve** of making an end-run around the EC board in the planning of **Esprit '91**, a northwestern event to be sponsored by EC, NWGA and the **Cornbury Society**.

Van Cleve, in a letter to the event's planning committee, allegedly told committee members "our committee need not be bothered by any noise from Mikki or her

faction. ... any background noise should be ignored by us." In addition, it is alleged that Van Cleve asked for mailing lists or labels from the other two groups.

Van der Wey says Van Cleve's actions violate EC by-laws and that the recommendation to ignore the EC president is a "slap in the face of Emerald City."

As a result, Van der Wey, along with Social Director **Monica B.** has called for a vote of confidence by EC members by offering her resignation and asked that the other officers discipline Van Cleve.

If the allegations are true, then Van Cleve's actions are wrong. The end (Esprit '91, in this case) never justifies the means. It is a shame that a group with such a sterling reputation for community activism is reduced to political infighting.



ALIEF, TEX. - After the announcement of the "peace" accord between **Virginia Prince** and myself, I received a note from **Jane Ellen Fairfax**, chair of the board of **Tri-Ess**. Fairfax sent her regards and expressed her relief at the end of the animosity. She included a

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THE **ICONOCLAST**TM
JoAnn Roberts

copy of the *Femme Forum*, the newsletter of the **Tau Chi** chapter and you can imagine my surprise when I saw my Pocono weekend listed under national events.

I'm glad to see that other Tri-Ess members are responding favorably and that Renaissance will no longer be "black-listed."



DENVER - If you're still undecided about whether or not to attend the **International Foundation for Gender Education** "Coming Together" convention (April 10-14), here is a peek at the program that might change your mind.

I guess for the fifth time around they were bound to come up with new sessions and several look to be very interesting. For example:

IFGE executive director **Merissa Sherrill Lynn** hosts a panel of representatives from local government, law enforcement, gay, lesbian, black and Jewish communities. The topic is "Our Community and the Rest of the World." Then, we have **Lily Frank** on "Crossdressing in Pagan & Christian Worldviews" and **Janet Green** with "Alcoholism & The Gender Community." There will also be a panel discussion of "Crossdresser/Partner Issues" with **Georgia Green**. In addition there are all day sessions for M-to-F and F-to-M transsexuals, wives and partners, and mental health professionals.

Our own **Alison Laing** will team up with **Wendy Parker** to present "Speaking As A Woman," a special program on voice development.

There is still time to register. The full convention is \$230 plus room and meals. Contact IFGE at P.O. Box 367, Wayland, MA 01778.

The 1991 convention is hosted by the **Gender Identity Clinic** in Denver.

While we're still in the Rockies, I'd like to commend the GIC for

creating a "Founder's Trust Fund."

The terms of the fund provide that deposits will be made into the fund up to a maximum of \$10,000 or until Jan. 1, 1994. At that time, the income generated by the fund will be used for GIC operating expenses. At no time will the principle be dispersed. This should guarantee that GIC will continue to exist.



TORONTO - A rolling stone gathers no moss...

My good friends, **Veronica Brown** and **Paddy Aldridge**, aren't letting any moss grow under their feet. Spurred by the success of their transformation boutique, **Take A Walk On The Wildside**, they've formed a new, private membership organization here, the **Toronto Cross Dressers Club** or **TCDC** as they like to call it.

The club, which has its own facility, hosts parties on Tuesdays and Saturdays, plus special function events. They're also forming a wives' support group that will meet once a month. Members may also store clothing at the facility, use it as a place to dress before going out on the town, or stop in for a makeover. TCDC can also provide a complete outfit, including wig and shoes for their in-house parties.

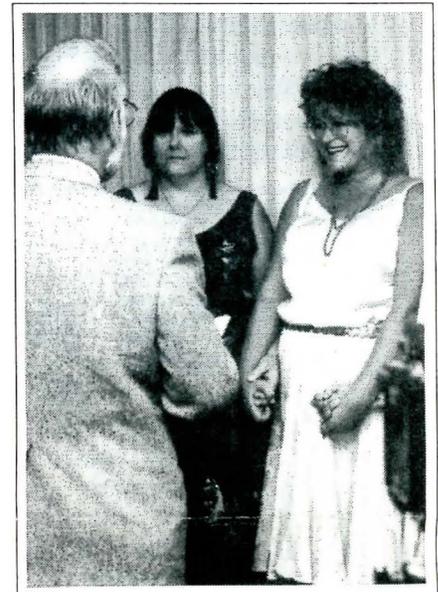
The club also publishes a monthly newsletter. I don't have specific membership cost information, but you can contact TCDC at 429C Dundas St. East, Toronto, M5A-2A9 or call (416) 864-0420.

This organization is a little different from most transgender support groups in that it is privately owned and managed as a business. This should prove to be an interesting experiment. One advantage to private ownership is that TCDC management doesn't have to worry about the internecine warfare that seems to run rampant through some groups. In addition, if they don't cater to the needs of the

community, they won't make any money for their business — supply and demand.

I've seen these two hard at work and I participated in their very first "public" event. I think I can say, without worry of looking like a fool, that anyone who visits TCDC will be very pleased indeed.

In addition, my congratulations to both Paddy and Veronica on their recent marriage. By Canadian law, Veronica, a post-op transsexual, is still recognized as a genetic male, and therefore has a legal right to marry a genetic woman, i.e. Paddy. They tied the knot in a civil ceremony.



Veronica Brown and Paddy Aldridge exchange wedding vows in Canada.



NOTA BENE — The opinions expressed here are mine and mine alone. They do not represent any "official" position of the Renaissance organization or any other person.

If you'd like to comment, positively or negatively, please write to me at P.O. Box 1263, King of Prussia, PA 19406. I'd like to hear your opinion of things.

Louise Baltimore

FUTURE PERFECT

This is Louise from Millennium. I'm from 1,000 years in the future—a future where we can change sex as easily as you might change your hair color.

As I've told you before, I've changed so many times, I've forgotten what sex I was born, but I do remember the last time I changed and why.

We were at war; the last war we fought, ever. Ironically, we were at war with our colonies on Mars. They wanted independence from Earth.

The government called for volunteers and I went. I was female at the time. I find that the most comforting for me. But to fight a war requires males, so I let them change me. It was unlike any change I had ever experienced before.

Let me say that changing sex does not alter your memories. They never mess with your memories. It is the memory of that war that keeps

me in this female body now.

They didn't just change me from female to male; they made me a soldier. No, that's not right. They made me less human than that; they made me an engine of destruction, a tool of chaos, an harbinger of entropy.

As all mechanical things, the engine that I had become had no emotion, no conscience, no morals, and almost no humanity. It performed splendidly as it's programmers had planned. It destroyed life relentlessly.

When there was no life left to destroy, the engine shut itself down.

When I next awoke, I was back on Earth in Louise's body. The engine was gone, but I remembered. All the emotions that might have delayed the engine, all the thoughts that might have swayed it from its mission, now came back in a flood.

They never mess with your

memories. I never fully recovered. I still have nightmares about the war. It is the contrast between that the engine and my mission now — saving lives — that keeps me sane. That, and Sherman, my purse-onal computer.

Sherman says you knew the horrors of war too. He says that many of your transgendered served and died in your wars. Those that survived were changed by it, as I was.

Killing is the most horrible experience I've ever had (remember, they never mess with your memories). They made sure I would remember what the engines had done so it won't happen again. You will never know the helplessness of being an merely an engine. They can't do that to you, not yet anyway.

We, both, honor our war dead, but we often forget the survivors. Don't. They need you too.



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