

CROSS-TALK

The Transgender Community News & Information Monthly

#78

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The Transgender Community News & Information Monthly

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KYMBERLEIGH'S CLIPBOARD

WHY THIS COMMUNITY DRIVES ME CRAZY

by Kimberleigh Richards
Publisher & Managing Editor

Like anyone else who writes for a living, I have an ego ... but, unlike some, mine is capable of accepting constructive criticism without being badly bruised. Thus I did not fear Dina Amberle's response in *Renaissance News & Views* to my editorial in the January issue.

To be honest, for the past few weeks I have been kicking

"What has been bothering me about this community is the attitude of many who give the impression that they are the standard."

around the idea of writing a sequel of sorts to that editorial, in an attempt to put my finger more precisely on the reasons that the transgender community frequently irritates me to the point of annoyance. So Dina's observations came at a very good time to get my attention. She correctly identified my focus -- even if I didn't realize it at the time of writing -- as a call for conformity within our ranks ... a type of uniformity that is so "normal" in appearance that it would increase the odds of acceptance (or at least tolerance) by the mainstream. Dina used the phrase "vanilla-flavored transgenderism" to describe it, which caused me to realize that not only had I proposed an unrealistic, non-achievable goal, I had advocated a presentation by our community that I myself cannot conform to.

By way of explaining that last remark, I have to mention a long-running, circular discussion that has been taking place on the Internet for about as long as my original editorial has been in print. The discussion has focused on the definitions of crossdressers and transsexuals; the question of whether or not "transgender" is a synonym for "crossdresser" or a description of a shared condition between all in our community; whether a non-operative but full-time crossliving person should be regarded as their sex or as their presented gender; and whether or not transsexuals are part of the "transgender community". While I cannot argue with the need to talk about these topics -- indeed, these are the roots of our own sense of self-identity -- I use the phrase "circular discussion" because there is a small faction, self-identified as

transsexual, apparently post-operative, who reject any argument that does not conform to *their* position that "penis=male=man" and that crossdressers are really "men in dresses". (Never mind that I've run across a few CDs who fit that description.) They further argue that someone who lives full-time in a woman's gender role, but without surgery, is still a man; and have even called me "Mr. Richards" in their postings (apparently they consider insult to be a weapon that wins arguments).

I have found that, considering the vitriol in the online transgender arena, I have been finding more support and enjoyment lately in some of the lesbian areas on the Net ... and upon reflection, I can easily understand why. My appearance is much more dykeish than anything else (for the record, the photo at the top of this page shows me with more hair than my present "standard Midwest dyke haircut") and I've never had much of an argument -- either online or in person -- with the women I communicate with via the Net over the question of what I am or how I fit in. I simply am who I am, in lesbian space, and that seems to be good enough for those I meet.

(For that matter, I was wearing my "Out, Proud, and On The Net" t-shirt at the Post Office the other day and a woman -- obviously lesbian -- came up to me and congratulated me on the shirt. *She* didn't have any trouble identifying me ...)

But in being so "lesbian-identified", I seem to have lost some of what has made me "transgender-identified" and consequently I don't even fit the "vanilla flavor" definition anymore. Also as a result, I find myself unable to tolerate endless arguments about who is included and who is excluded or about who is qualified to decide. And I believe that is what has been bothering me about this community; it's not those who represent diversity (or even extremes) in transgendered behavior, it's the attitude of many who give the impression that they are the standard by which all others should be compared.

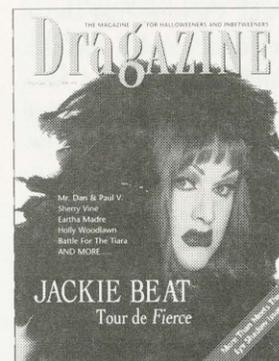
This is why the "crossdresser from hell" in my original editorial aggravates me; why the person who calls transgenderists "non-op transsexuals" gets into arguments with me; why our activist leaders annoy me on occasion;

why the publisher of "that" magazine irritates me; and why those who invent new terms to fit "their" definition of the existing terms quite simply make me nuts. Each of those behaviors sends the message: "Your opinion is irrelevant; I (and *only* I) am qualified to define transgenderism."

I suppose that at times I am no better. I have certainly been one of the more opinionated people in this community (and I happen to have a soapbox that no one can take away from me), but I have never consciously excluded someone from this community, no matter how much I might disagree with his or her opinion.

Dina, in her critique of my original editorial, said something I agree with wholeheartedly: "It would be better ... to present ourselves as a diverse group of individuals who share some common traits and goals but who express ourselves in many different colors." Unfortunately, the problem lies in those who believe they have nothing in common with the others and that their color is the only one on the palette.

And that's why, sometimes, this community drives me crazy.



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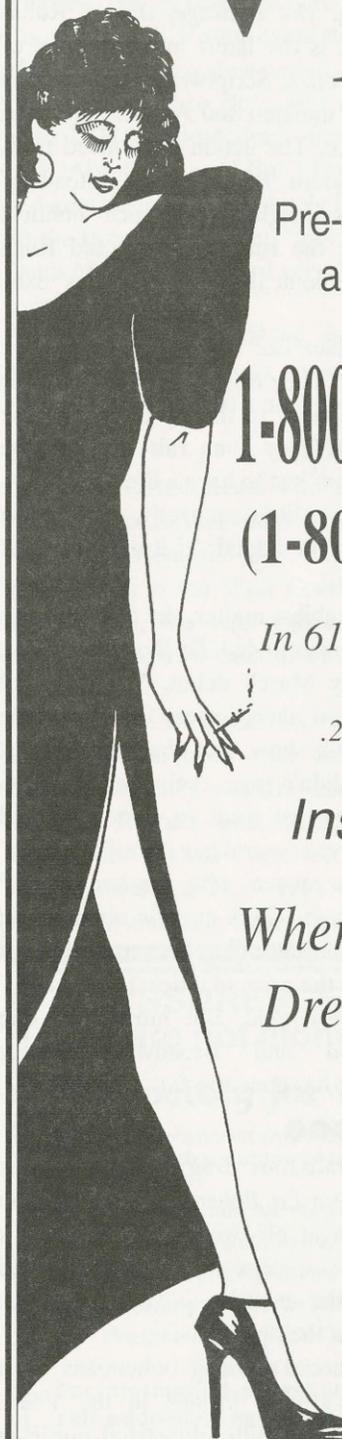
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The NewsQueen

by Paula Jordan Sinclair

The big news last month was the opening of yet another feature film featuring drag. *The Birdcage*, starring Robin Williams and Nathan Lane, is the latest in a long line of remakes of *La Cage aux Folles*. Scriptwriter Elaine May left the plot unchanged, but updated and Americanized the classic the 1978 French farce. The action has moved from the Riviera to Miami's South Beach. And instead of zapping hypocritical and self-righteous French political right-wingers, May skewers the religious right and Rush Limbaugh while making the point that "family values" exist in all types of families.

"The fact is, there are families like this," Williams said in an interview about the film. "They exist. They exist all over America despite what folks want to think. And they raise their kids like anybody else. They don't raise them to be gay or straight, they raise them just to have a life."

"If it gets the religious right a little squirrely, that's not a bad thing in a year like this," he added. "If it works to that purpose, that's OK."

But despite the *au courant* subject matter, the film failed to garner the media hype the surrounded *To Wong Foo*. Yes, just before the film's early March debut, Williams and co-star Nathan Lane were on almost every early morning news show or late night talk show. But the movie didn't earn headlines because it didn't raise eyebrows. Williams doesn't have the drag role; that went to Lane, a noted Broadway actor who has played several gay roles before.

However, a San Francisco queen who crashed a VIP screening -- in drag, of course -- was ecstatic about Gene Hackman in drag bumping and grinding his way through a disco number. "That's worth the price of a ticket," she said. Reviews have generally been good. But more than one reviewer said Hollywood and Broadway's recent infatuation with drag queens has gone too far.



Perhaps an example of gratuitous drag is *Rent*, a rock musical "sequel" to the opera *La Boheme* that opened in February to critical acclaim at off-Broadway's New York Theater Workshop. Opera queens will note that the opening coincided -- to the month -- with the 100th anniversary of the premier of the opera.

The musical transplants Puccini's young bohemians from 1830s Paris to New York's East Village in the 1990s. Rodolfo, now called Roger, is a Billy Idol-styled musician grappling with depression and writer's block. Mimi is still

named Mimi, only now she is suffering not from consumption, but from HIV. So is Roger. To make the musical better fit the artistic New York scene, the characters also include an HIV-infected drag queen named Angel and her boyfriend.



But if critics think drag has been overused now, wait until they see the spinoff series that Roseanne is contemplating. The show would feature Leon and Fred, the gay couple who wed on her show in December.

"Colin Powell could have a part in my gay sitcom if Don Rickles or Pat Robertson aren't available to play the drag queen," she said.



Powell would certainly have the dignity of a drag diva in late middle age, like RuPaul in, say, 30 years.

But meanwhile, Miss Paul isn't wasting any time doing a wide range of product endorsements. First, she flacked MAC cosmetics. Now she is appearing in print ads for, of all things, *Men's Health* magazine, whose motto is "Tons of useful stuff for regular guys." Miss Paul, showing that she is not a regular guy, is wearing fishnet tights and a leotard. Tiny print at the bottom of the third of a page ad in a recent *New York Times* noted that Miss Paul was wearing "makeup by MAC."



Speaking of aging, before his death, drag diva Divine noted that "all my life I wanted to look like Elizabeth Taylor. Now I find Elizabeth Taylor is beginning to look like me."



Rampant drag has not escaped television. In a recent episode of *The X-Files*, an angry mob beat on the door of the town doctor after bones are found in his medical bag. The doctor came to the door wearing lipstick and a nightgown, panicked when he saw the mob, and scampered upstairs.

In the next scene, the doctor (wearing conventional attire) was being questioned by police and the FBI. Agent Mulder said to Agent Scully and another woman in the room that one of them was wearing his favorite perfume. The doctor become noticeably uncomfortable.

The doctor's apparent transvestism was not mentioned again, nor was it used as a means of portraying him as a "psycho killer." The bones, as it turned out, were those of an animal.

Drag conspiracy fans will note that Agent Mulder is played by David Duchovny, who rose to fame as the transvestite in the series *Twin Peaks*.



Of course, not all references to transgendered behavior on television are harmless.

On a recent *Saturday Night Live* sketch, the murder conviction of John Lotter for killing Brandon Teena, a 20-year-old female-to-male transsexual, made the show's "Weekend Update." Lotter had been sentenced to three consecutive life sentences. *SNL* cast member Norm MacDonald ended his "report" by suggesting "that everyone involved in the story should die."

It was not clear whether Mac Donald was referring just to Lotter and his accomplices, or if he was passing *post mortem* judgment on Teena as well ... But the meaning was clear to transgendered activist Riki Anne Wilchins, who has called on NBC to apologize.

An apology isn't likely, said Daniel Ferguson, senior press manager for NBC late-night entertainment on the East Coast. "*SNL* is intended to be a comedy show," he said. "Unfortunately, every week, someone is offended by a joke."

Wilchins has promised to mobilize Transsexual Menace for a protest.



Ms. Wilchins provides an update on the case of Candy Walker, the California transsexual who was arrested and held on \$250,000 bail following a visit to her parents' home, a visit her father ended by shooting and wounding her. Although her mother and father refused to press charges, District Attorney John Vanarelli would not release Candy or to even agree to reduce her bail. The DA was heard to say, "At least that will keep him off the streets in a dress for awhile."

Local transgender activists presented the court with information on transsexualism and eventually, bail was reduced to \$20,000; Walker was released on her own recognizance. The 38-year-old pre-op transsexual has undergone psychiatric evaluation and the next court hearing will take place after the court and both sides receive the reports of the evaluation.



Ms. Sinclair supposes that drag on cult shows like *Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files* isn't that strange. But she believes things have clearly gotten out of hand when drag queens start showing up on *This Old House* on PBS.

The home renovation show is currently doing a project in Savannah, Ga. The fourth episode of the series includes a tour of the city's historic district by John Berendt, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, the non-fiction best seller that helped revitalize this sleepy Southern port city. One of the characters in the book is Lady Chablis, a local drag queen. The Lady herself makes an appearance during the televised tour.

A movie version of the book will soon start filming in Savannah, directed by Clint Eastwood.

Eastwood won't star in *Midnight*, though. The scuttlebutt around Hollywood, according to one studio president, is that Robert Redford and Jack Nicholson have been

mentioned as the film's stars. Singer Diana Ross has expressed interest in playing Lady Chablis, the executive said.

So what's wrong with RuPaul? Or Colin Powell?

And wouldn't you know it, Lady Chablis has penned her autobiography.



And it seems that one can't even have a quiet meal without being confronted with drag queens. The "waitresses" at Los Angeles' Trilogy restaurant are guys in high drag.

Co-owner Hali Rosen came up with the idea -- in jest -- after a particularly slow period.

"We were about to close, so I said to my partner, we need a hook. How about drag queens? She looked at me and said: 'Absolutely not.' But I kept insisting until she gave in, and now business is absolutely fabulous ..."

So the two self-described "middle-aged housewives" cruised Santa Monica Boulevard recruiting guys who wanted to be waitresses.

Besides waiting on tables and flirting with diners, the girls lip synch to show tunes and disco hits, earning a reported \$200 to \$400 a night in tips.



California restaurateurs who may want to copy this idea need go no further than San Francisco to recruit their staffs. On Memorial Day, the city will be crawling with drag queens as the West Coast finally gets its own version of Wigstock, the wigs-and-high-heels gathering that has made New York's Central Park the place to be on Labor Day.

Wigstock West organizers aren't ready to reveal the names of celebrities who will make guest appearances. Neither will they confirm nor deny a rumored reunion between RuPaul and Milton Berle. But they have announced that the event will be hosted by Lady Bunny, who founded the New York original 11 years ago; Joan Jett Blakk; and male impersonator Elvis Herselvis ...

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A gentle reader has brought to Ms. Sinclair's attention that she may owe Mr. Herselvis an apology.

Bob Davis of San Francisco wrote to Ms. Sinclair about the column appearing in the 71st issue of *Cross-Talk*. The item concerned an ungentlemanly remark Mr. Herselvis reportedly said to a patron at a lesbian bar when the patron complained that Mr. Herselvis was violating womyn's space. Mr. Davis says he has known Mr. Herselvis "for some time and 'Fuck you, baby' just doesn't sound like her."

As her readers know, Ms. Sinclair relies on published news reports for her column. When something sounds suspect, she reports it as such. Unfortunately, Ms. Sinclair is not acquainted with Mr. Herselvis, and so this item seemed to have the ring of truth.

Ms. Sinclair sincerely apologizes to Mr. Herselvis for implying that when in character, Leigh Crowe would not always behave as a gentleman. She also apologizes for misspelling Ms. Crowe's name in the original column.

Furthermore, she deeply appreciates that Mr. Davis brought this to her attention.



Miss Sinclair -- and her publisher, Ms. Richards -- are both glad that Miss Sinclair didn't write *anything* about Eleanor Schuler of Rio Rancho, N.M. She is suing the last magazine that wrote about her.

Last year, *Business Week* wrote that Schuler, who spied on the Soviet Union for the U.S., had a sex change in 1976. Her suit against the magazine and its parent company, McGraw-Hill, Inc., charges that the magazine defamed her and violated her privacy. She said she had been out of the public eye since 1980 and "this article vortexed me back in."

But Ms. Schuler does not always eschew publicity. She gave a lengthy interview about her suit to the *Albuquerque Journal* and her sex change was reported in *People* magazine in the 1970s.



Ms. Sinclair is no lawyer, but she thinks Ms. Schuler's chance of winning the suit are about as good as Lawrence

Thompson's were of winning his suit.

Thompson, an inmate at Texas prison at Huntsville, had sued the state because he is forced to wear pants that have neither pockets nor a fly. The unisex pants, he claimed, violate his constitutional right to freedom of religion because, as a Moslem, he is forbidden to wear clothes that women wear. Furthermore, the new pants "denied him the right to express his manhood and exposed him to taunting, ridicule, embarrassment, and emasculation, and dehumanization."

A lower court threw out the suit, and so did the Texas Third Court of Appeals, noting that the style of pants previously issued prisoners -- with pockets and a button fly -- are regularly worn by women. "He would still be wearing pants that women wear," the appeals court noted in throwing out Thompson's suit.



Thompson, who probably acted as his own attorney, could represent the Bay Counties District Council of Carpenters in San Francisco. It seems that they could use sound legal advice.

The union's troubles started when Roxanne Bourbonaiss filed charges of discrimination before the San Francisco Human Rights Commission (HRC). Bourbonaiss, a male-to-female transsexual, was seeking protection under the city's landmark ordinance forbidding discrimination against transsexuals.

Before her transition, Bourbonaiss had been a union organizer named Tom. But after she began to presented a more feminine appearance at work -- with professionally manicured nails and pierced ears -- union officials began to make disparaging remarks in memos. One claimed that her appearance was "inappropriate for San Francisco." Another said that "multiple earring in each ear and long polished fingernails" failed to "project the professional image that allows the union to be most effective in downtown San Francisco." Eventually, the union eliminated her position.

After mediation proposed by the HRC failed to produce satisfactory results, the commission announced that it will seek to file suit against the union. But union attorneys aren't afraid. They say the suit is pointless because there is

no record that *Roxanne Bourbonaiss* ever worked for the union.



The fact that Roxanne Bourbonaiss is a woman was ignored by her employer ... A Texas transsexual's troubles began when her employers began treating her too much like a woman, and she has fled a federal lawsuit claiming sexual harassment.

Just before Greg Compeau began to transition to Jackie Ann, she was assured by her bosses at Miles, Inc. that there would be no problems. But no sooner than she began working as a woman did trouble begin. In her suit, Compeau charged that a supervisor repeatedly pinched her on the buttocks in front of co-workers, made disparaging remarks, and sent her on errands to other parts of the plant for the purpose of putting her on display.

After she was denied a transfer to a different shift, Compeau resigned because of the intolerable working conditions.



Carla Pridgen is also having trouble with her bosses. But in this case, the bosses are officials of the Presbyterian Church. Carla, a male-to-female transsexual, is an ordained Presbyterian minister.

Officials of the Cherokee Presbytery of Northwest Georgia in February asked Pridgen to cease "the practice of ministry of word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church, USA." In other words, she has been asked to resign, although no charges have been brought against her.

Officials said that for some time they had been aware that "Carlton had begun a transition to a transgender expression, and wished to be known as Carla." Noting that "the situation is exceedingly complex" and is "of such a highly sensitive nature that special care and attention is needed," the officials prayed and concluded that resignation was the only alternative.

If Pridgen does not resign, she will be placed on inactive status. Following three years on inactive status, she would be stripped of her ordination. And if she practices her ministry in any form, her ordination will be immediately

terminated.

Pridgen, whose father is also a Presbyterian minister, has not made any comment until she has the advice of an attorney.



Attorneys for two British transsexuals didn't get much of a hearing recently when they tried to change the law that forbids transsexuals to have their birth certificates and other documents changed to reflect their new status. The High Court refused the request without comment even though the attorneys presented information that such changes were permitted before the celebrated April Ashley case in 1970.

But all is not lost. One of the plaintiffs has a similar case pending before the European Court of Justice. Meanwhile, a member of Parliament has introduced a bill that would allow Britain's estimated 8,000 post-op transsexuals to obtain substitute birth certificates.



A clue to the basis for the official British point of view comes from a *London Times* column by Nigella Lawson examining gender reassignment surgery. Here is part of what she had to say:

"What I'm not saying is that such operations should be outlawed. Those who want undiseased breasts and wombs and penises removed are right, of course, to say that it is their body, their choice. The question is, what is the nature of the problem and what therefore is the appropriate treatment?"

"Treatment there should definitely be -- these people are suffering horrendously -- but I cannot see that this should inevitably be in the form of surgery. All transsexuals are utterly convinced that they are, as they say, trapped in the wrong body. But does this make them right? I know psychiatric care is already provided, but there must be some kind of approach that might help people to really work out what is at the root of this incredible distress."



Mental distress seemed to be the problem with the British

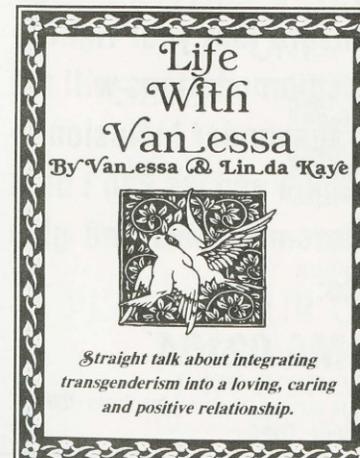


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"Life With Vanessa" is a new book just released. Written by Vanessa and Linda Kaye (formerly Linda Peacock), a couple in a transgendered relationship, it deals with many of the issues facing couples in similar relationships. Some of these issues are: The Woman Within; Developing the Woman Within; Sensuality and Sexual Issues; Religious Issues; Friends and Family; Support Groups; Shopping and Money Issues; The Other Woman; and, Celebrating the Similar. The book includes a chapter by Dallas Denny, M.A., founder and director of AEGIS, "Why Is Your Partner This Way," and an introduction by Jo Ann Roberts, Ph.D., co-founder of Renaissance, author and publisher.

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transsexual found prowling a dormitory at fabled Eton College only two days after Prince William began high school there last fall.

A matron at the school confronted the woman and asked her a few questions. When the matron received "unsatisfactory answers," she set off a security alarm. The woman fled, but was captured by police.

The 31-year-old post-op transsexual, who had a moustache and wore a long raincoat and baggy trousers, had a history of mental problems.



While Ms. Lawson may support the *official* point of view, the British are known for their love of eccentrics, and some crossdressing certainly fits into that category. For example, where else but Britain would you find a nudist camp for transvestites. At least that was the claim of a notice on the Internet search site Yahoo! This, of course, begs the question how can you be undressed and crossdressed at the same time? Just high heels and wigs with maybe a touch of makeup to heighten the natural look?

As it turns out, the camp is for nudists only in the spring and summer. During the colder months, the isolated spot is ideal for weekend crossdressing retreats.



Many nations have split personalities. The U.S. is certainly

no exception. But Singapore? Now there's a country that sticks to business, where littering and chewing gum are prohibited and where men must have short haircuts. Even the lively nightclub scene is strictly proscribed.

For example, on stage for the nightly show at the Boom Boom Room, young men in Lycra bodysuits strike sexual poses with toy pistols while wailing the refrain to a song-and-dance number: "It's a sin!"

At the bar in the back of the room, co-owner Alan Koh recites the rules he obeys to keep open this burlesque club that also features drag queens. No vulgar language. No jabs at the government. No overexposure of flesh. The restrictions do not trouble Koh. In fact, he defends the limits on personal rights -- from free expression to access to a jury trial to spitting on sidewalks -- that make wealthy, orderly Singapore seem to some Americans a repressive and alien nation.

"Sometimes, certain individual rights have to be forfeited if you want things to work for the good of all people," he said. So it came as a surprise when the Singapore government lifted the ban on transsexuals marrying in their new gender. Community Development Minister Abdullah Tarmugi explained that the step was only a practical solution to recognize a person's newly acquired gender.



Old rules have been changed in Egypt as well. Al Azhar,

the highest Sunni Islam authority in the country has issued a *fatwa*, or religious decision allowing sex change operations.

"A man can undergo an operation to become a woman and a woman can do the reverse if a doctor deems the intervention necessary to bring out signs of femininity or masculinity which are present but hidden," the decision said.

The nation's first recorded sex change took place in 1988, and only 20 have been recorded since then. Although the medical procedure is legal, they are done quietly because due to the sarcasm they raise from the public," a medical official said. Sarcasm was the least of the trouble faced by Egyptian transsexuals. The first transsexual was expelled from Al Azhar University because she was a "disgusting imitation of a woman forbidden by Islam."

It should be noted that not all Egyptians found Sali Abdullah disgusting. After leaving the university, she became a belly dancer in a Cairo cabaret and attracted numerous fans and considerable press attention. For awhile, her photo was everywhere.

A government official speculated that with the end of religious objections to transsexualism, more Egyptian men and woman will seek to have their sex changed. The motive? Men wanting to escape compulsory military service and women seeking more than their traditional half-share of inheritances.



In the Philippines, athletic prowess could be considered a reason for having a sex change. But Nancy Navalta doesn't think she needs the operation.

Navalta, a Filipino runner hailed as the next sprint queen of Asia, has been barred from competing in the national games this month because a gender test has revealed she is a man.

"Nancy Navalta is genetically male," said Monico Puentevella, a member of the Philippine National Games' technical committee. "We would like to spare her the ridicule when she competes. I think we should all move on and solve our bigger problems." Puentevella said. Navalta ran as a man and as a woman in different races in February. Her time in the 100 meters could have qualified her for the Olympics.

So why doesn't Navalta want a sex change? "I am a full woman. I fervently believe that," she said.



Crossdressing, too, has its strange motivations. Consider the case of Reynaldo Munoz, the Venezuelan customs inspector who, Ms. Sinclair's favorite supermarket tabloid claims, masqueraded as a woman on the job for six years just so he could conduct intimate body searches of attractive female tourists crossing the border from Colombia.

You *can* make a difference!

Help us fight for your right to be transgendered.

In June of 1995, several of the national transgender organizations created the community's first political action committee — GenderPAC. It's purpose is to fund the increasing number of political activities of the transgender community such as the Transgender Lobby Days last October. In just a few short months, GenderPAC, through the evangelism of a few dedicated people, managed to raise and disburse over \$10,000. It is not enough.

It's time for the entire community to pitch in. GenderPAC wants to ensure that your right to work, your right to fair housing, and your right to reasonable public accommodations will not be denied. GenderPAC will continue to lobby Congress in 1996 for transgender inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). But, we can't do it alone and we can't do it for free. Your tax-deductible contribution will make the crucial difference. Give and give generously. You'll feel really good about it. Send your contributions to:

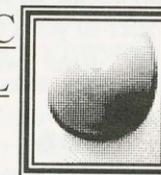
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Munoz would claim to be looking for smuggled drugs and would take the "suspects" into a private examination room where he would order them to strip and then he would do a body cavity search.

The scheme was finally uncovered when a Swiss tourist objected to the search and contacted her embassy in Caracas.



Like the Swiss tourist, the tellers at an Ogden, Utah, credit union knew something was funny when the person wearing a blonde wig, plastic scarf, turquoise blouse, black stretch pants, and shocking pink lipstick approached the counter. Their suspicions were confirmed when the man handed them a note demanding money.

The robber fled. But witnesses gave police a license number, and the robber was arrested at his place of work. Later, he was charged with stealing a car from an Ogden car dealer. For that crime he was also dressed in drag and called himself "Rhonda".



Then there is the story of the Montana man who used a woman's full-length pink silk nightgown to make a lasting impression on the folks in Hamilton before he left town.

Police say that Jason Taylor, 24, entered Anthony's clothing store during the early afternoon and loitered in the women's section for nearly 90 minutes. Every time a clerk would approach him or passed near him, he would pull more of the nightgown out from his pants. Eventually, the entire nightgown was outside his pants. In addition, he grasped his crotch in a suggestive manner.

"Kind of odd," police officer George Borgen said. "You don't see that kind of stuff in a small town like this."

Taylor was convicted of disorderly conduct, fined \$120, and given a 10-day suspended jail sentence. He told the judge that he was leaving town that day to get a job -- in Utah!



It took postal officials a little while to catch on to John Pitney's strange behavior. When Pitney showed up for work at the mail processing facility in downtown Denver wearing a dress, authorities simply escorted him off the premises. He came back a second time wearing the dress as well as a gorilla mask and a strap-on sexual device.

Again, he was escorted from the facility. Only after his third visit were police called. After they arrested Pitney they found several guns in his car.

He was given a psychiatric examination and was sent to Utah.

Ms. Sinclair is kidding about Utah. He actually was given a job with the Bay Counties District Council of Carpenters.



Sometimes people dress up for the most innocent of reasons -- like they're six years old and don't have a lot of hang-ups.

That evidently explains why Gerald Holmes was wearing a dress and playing house when his father, Henry, arrived at his Baltimore day-care facility ...

"There he was with this long dress on that a little girl wears. One of those long white silk dresses with sequins in it," said Holmes, who removed the boy from the day-care center.

Holmes believes the Social Secur-A-Kiddie Child Care Center was, possibly unwittingly, encouraging his son to be homosexual.

Such type of play is harmless, said Lindi Budd, the center's executive director. "I'm sure that there have been any number of little boys that have put on earrings, or put on shiny jewelry, or put on dresses, that are not gay," she said.

Holmes also complained to state child care officials, but J.C. Shay, a spokesman for the state Department of Human Resources, said the state considers Gerald's choice of a costume to be "perfectly acceptable."

"It would be the same as if a 6-year-old girl dressed in a shirt and a tie and daddy's coat," he said.

But wait until Gerald gets 10 years older. Ms. Sinclair bets that then wearing a dress wouldn't be "perfectly acceptable."



Ms. Sinclair is always pleased to thank those kind readers who send her clippings (noting, of course, the name and date of publication). Alas, this month one contributor must be omitted because her penmanship rendered her name illegible. But if you are from Pasadena, Calif., you know who you are. Those who were both generous and legible include Leni Scaletta, Jill Ambrose, Kris Bessette, Jaye Jane Albright, and Jacqueline E. Alkula ...



HotBuzz

by JoAnn Roberts

"Don't dig your own grave with your own knife and fork."

-- English Proverb



I started last month with a caution for IFGE regarding *Transgender Tapestry* (or whatever they call it this month). I've heard from several people regarding the magazine and the split is running 50-50, like-dislike. Personally, I think attempts at "mainstreaming" *Transgender Tapestry*, or any other transgender magazine (yes, even *LadyLike*) will meet with only very limited success. Look, here comes Mr. Closet-TV into Barnes & Noble. He sees *Transgender Tapestry* or *Cross-Talk* on the rack. He picks it up, flips through the pages, maybe even memorizes an address of an advertiser or a support group and then puts it back on the rack. Why? Mr. Closet-TV isn't going to walk up to the cashier and buy a "transvestite" magazine out in plain view of everyone. Those who are clued-in to the community are likely to have subscriptions already. *Cross-Talk* has thrown in the towel on trying to make it on the newsstand and *Transformation* can't get on regular newsstands. I spoke to a distributor about mainstreaming transgender publications and his response was: "... the transgender magazines just don't sell well enough to take on more." This is what *Cross-Talk* experienced. However, one place our publications do seem to sell well is in gay and lesbian bookstores. Another distributor has been snapping up transgender books left and right for sales to g/l/b bookstores. As the owner put it, "Drag is hot."



Drag is hot in the media, too. Julie Andrews has revived *Victor/Victoria* as a Broadway musical to rave reviews if the *New York Times* is any measure. (I wonder if *Transgender Tapestry* will cover that next?) Robin Williams and Broadway actor Nathan Lane are reprising *La Cage*

Aux Folles on the silver screen as *The Birdcage*. (By the way, we had it all wrong in these pages a while back -- Williams is playing the macho Renato and Lane is playing Albin/Albert). Finally, the week of Valentine's Day saw RuPaul as the hostess for the Sci-Fi Channel's "Strange Love" film festival. At the other end of the spectrum is the ad for Bijan with Bo Derek. To the far left is the shapely Ms. Derek in bra and panties donning a silky shirt. At far right is Ms. Derek fully clothed in a menswear suit complete with shirt and tie.



From the net comes this message by a friend, Jami Ward: "On another note, I want to broach a subject with you. I don't know how you feel personally about the whole O.J. Simpson deal, but I'm more than a little irked by it all. And now there's his video! Well, I do volunteer work at a local shelter for abused women, and one of the staff members there said that as a form of positive protest against that tape, rather than just boycotting it, folks have started taking the \$29.95 cost of the tape and donating the money to a local women's shelter instead. Since you have a greater public presence than I do, I wanted to ask if you could disseminate this idea in a future column or anywhere else you see fit. I will also be asking Cindy Martin (TGForum), and anyone else I can think of, to do the same because I believe it's an idea that deserves exposure. I would like to think that with enough grassroots activism, the shelters would make more money than O.J. from this." Well put Jami and a great idea, too. Readers, it's up to you to act.



It is also with a sad spirit and a very heavy heart that I have to let you all know of the recent deaths of two of our community's brightest stars.

Jennifer Richards, a long-time transgender community activist died December 22 at age 44, of AIDS related complications. I met Jennifer in 1992 at the IFGE convention in Houston. I was asked if I would present her with a Trinity Award. I had not known Jennifer before that. When I read her biography and saw how much she had done for the community, long before the Phyllis Fries and Riki Wilchins, I was truly impressed. I could not wait to meet her. So, let me tell you a little about Ms. Richards.



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She was originally from the Philadelphia area, but left to find her fortune on the West Coast. Settling in Portland, Oregon, she soon became heavily involved in both the gay and transgender communities there. In 1983, Jennifer co-produced one of the major West Coast transgender events -- DREAM '83. She also did a cable-television talk show in Portland as Fairy Tyler Moore, her drag-persona. After moving to St. Louis, Jennifer got involved with what was then the St. Louis Gateway Femmes, a rather conservative organization. She helped get them opened to new ideas and the group changed its name to the St. Louis Gender Foundation. Jennifer served StLGF as its President, Vice President, and its Fashion & Talent Show director for their Fall Harvest event. Jennifer was the main force behind the first regional coalition of transgender support groups, the Mid-America Gender Group Information Exchange (MAGGIE). She also served the national community as vice-chair of the Congress of Transgender Organizations from 1993 to 1994, and served as the M.C. for the IFGE Trinity Awards for 1993 and 1994.

Jennifer was such a delight to be around. She was bubbly and vivacious. Everywhere she went, she made people feel good about themselves. As a result, she was often honored herself with awards of all kinds: Miss DREAM, 1980; the "Maggie" 1992, the Jennifer Richards Humanitarian Outreach Award, 1992; IFGE Trinity Award, 1992; Princess of the Poconos, 1994.

We became close friends back in 1992. We just hit it off instantly. I can say that knowing Jennifer was a great joy for me. We shared a few really great times together. The last time I saw Jennifer was October 1995 at the Fall Harvest in St. Louis. She was thin, haggard and cranky, but her spirit was indomitable. I am diminished greatly by her death. She has been buried in Philadelphia.



Gloria Fredericks, the driving force behind River City Gender Alliance, died in an accident at her work on March 6.

The transgender community at large does not know what it lost with Gloria's untimely death; I only knew her briefly, but it was obvious to myself and others that she was a person dedicated to the betterment of the transgender community.

Gloria was the only transgender person to actually see and speak with a U.S. Senator during the National Transgender Lobby Days last October. During that meeting, she impressed the Senator so much that he left a Russian delegation waiting ten minutes in his outer office while he discussed transgender issues with Gloria.

After that experience, Gloria became a one-woman transgender political action committee. She developed the idea of selling "shark's teeth" buttons to raise money for ICTLEP, which she did during the 1995 Fall Harvest weekend in St. Louis. She also collected e-mail addresses from the Fall Harvest participants so we could all stay in touch with one another.

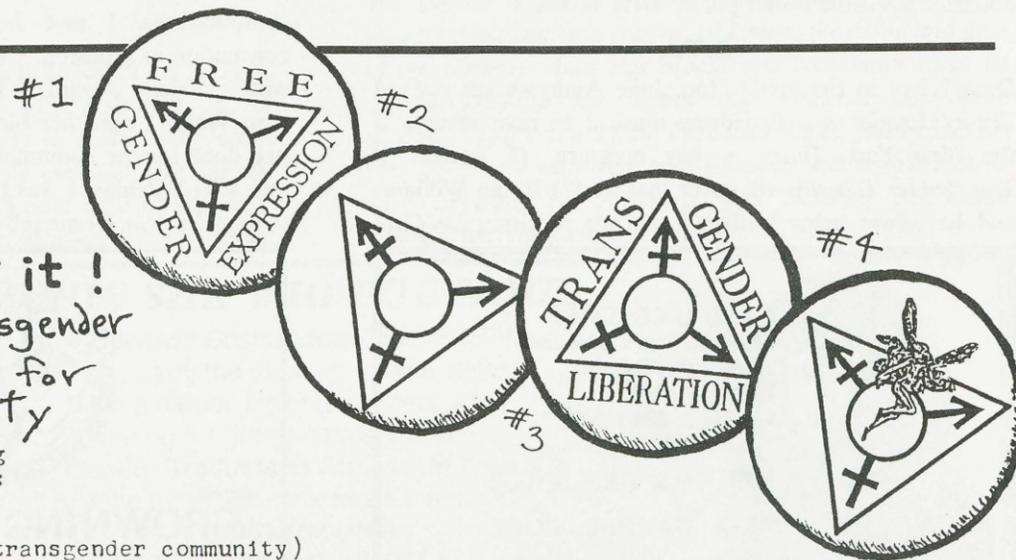
Many of the transgender leaders involved in creating the GenderPAC were very impressed with Gloria's energy and dedication to transgender activism. So much so that Gloria was considered for an "evangelist" role with GenderPAC to help educate the middle American transgender community about the need to become politically active.

The Gloria Fredericks I knew so briefly was a wonderful person with a terrific outlook on life. Her star was rising on the national transgender scene and it saddens me deeply to see it extinguished so suddenly.

The groups that make up MAGGIE (Mid-America Gender Group Information Exchange) have lost two bright lights in Jennifer and Gloria. My sympathies and my condolences go out to all the MAGGIE members. Your loss is our loss.

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I spent a weekend in February in Toronto with Virginia Prince as guests of Paddy Aldridge at Wildside. Paddy set up a gig for Virginia and me so we could talk with members of the Ontario transgender community. I had a great time and met lots of new folks as well as renewing some old friendships. The Canadian transgender community is slowly coming into its own and its likely we'll see some important community leadership emerge from our Northern sisters. I met briefly with leaders of Gender Mosaic, Xpressions, and the Monarch Social Club. Xpressions expressed some interest in affiliating with Renaissance. That would make Ren a truly international organization. Way kew!



Well, I'm into page three and that means it's time to get down to fashion notes and news ... Science and Technology triumph again. This time it's pantyhose without seams. Yes, truly an amazing feat. And Calvin Klein, that little devil, is the first to offer it. Sorry, no price quoted, but first-adopters of new technology never worry about what it costs.



Thank Goddess most of us (and most other women for that matter) don't pay attention to the runway crowd. I mean, really. Gobs of blue eyeshadow and unruly hair. Yecch! Most drag queens look better than the runway models.

Earth to fashion world ... wake up!



So what is up with the fashion world? Here's six hot looks for Spring ... citrus juice colors ... The trench look in both coats and dresses ... Split-personality skirt lengths, either macro-ankle length or micro-thigh length ... Definitely-Not-June-Cleaver shirtdresses ... Slack suits ... pop-art prints on everything. The one color I really dislike this Spring is the light, lime green. It reminds me of the color of some 1968 Plymouth Dusters.



They say Practice Makes Perfect ... *marie claire* magazine had a makeup artist estimate how long it took certain fashionable women to put on their face. Leading the pack with the shortest time was Linda Evangelista at 1 minute: no foundation, no eye makeup, just blush and lipstick ... Next was Courtney Cox (*Friends*) at 30 minutes ... Famke Janssen (The latest James Bond arch villain) at 1 hour ... and trailing the pack at 2 hours was Loni Anderson. Anderson's makeup was characterized as "very high maintenance, superglam Hollywood" including no less than 12 steps. Gee, I don't feel so bad at 45 minutes.



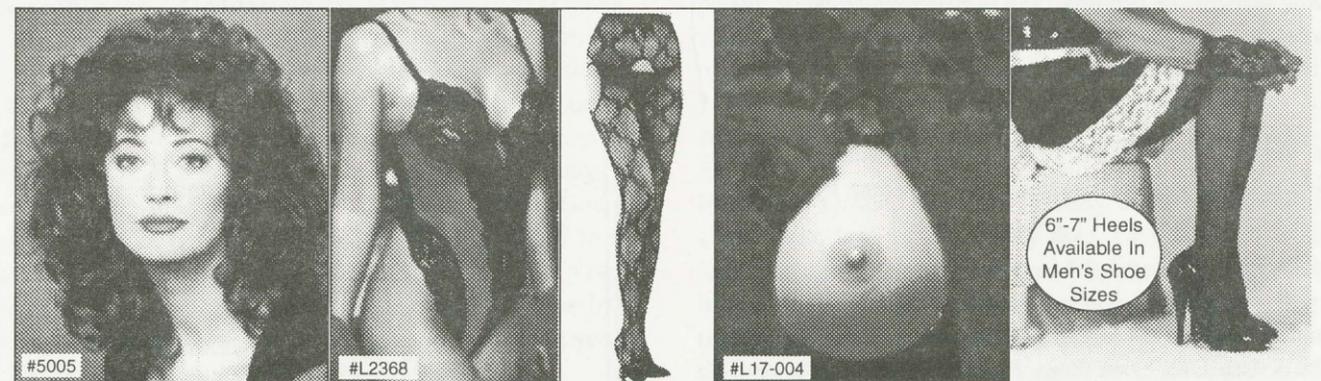
Down the aisle, past the torque wrenches ... Sears has gotten into cosmetics in a big way with their Circle of Beauty section in stores nationwide. What's so cool about

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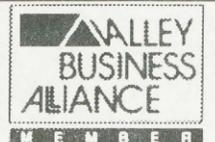
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Biological Bust Boosting? Researchers at the Carolinas Medical Center and the University of Michigan have experimented with growing breast-like tissue for implantation. Fatty cells similar to breast tissue were cultivated *in vitro* and then attached onto soft sponge-like forms. These forms were implanted in lab rats where the tissue continued to develop and even vascularize. Someday, it might be possible to create an implantable breast form from the patient's own body tissue. No rejection.



Computers and computer modeling are becoming more commonplace daily. The latest trend is to use computers and 3-D modeling to preview the results of plastic surgery. Making the rounds of medical conventions is a software package that lets plastic surgeons "see" the results of surgery without touching a scalpel. The patient's face is captured onto the computer screen via a video camera and the surgeon can then manipulate the image.



Speaking of images, women seem less satisfied with their bodies today than 10 years ago. According to a recent study of 800 women between the ages of 18 and 70, more than 45 percent were displeased with their weight, waist, hips, buttocks and legs. Only 16 percent said they were content with their body. The same survey done 10 years ago, turned up only 30 percent who were dissatisfied. Interestingly, in both studies African-American women were much more satisfied with their appearance than other groups, probably because of African-American culture's greater acceptance of differing body shapes. We have become so accustomed to seeing images of runway and advertising models, who represent a statistical extreme in terms of body shape, that we begin to believe all women should look like them.



One designer who seems to really know women's bodies and how to design good looking clothes is Dana Buchman.



You know you're mainstream when they start making fun of you ... Donna Karan sued a New York T-shirt manufacturer for trademark infringement. He was selling T-shirts with DKFU on them. But Ms. Karan has missed a few knock-offs, like the cartoon in the New Yorker with a couple in leisure suits reading DKNJ, and the D(Y)K(E)NY T-shirts.



Quotable: "A fashion is merely a form of ugliness so unbearable that we are compelled to alter it every six months." -- Oscar Wilde.



I'd swear a TV asked this question. Someone wrote in to *Glamour* magazine and asked if a sequined cocktail dress was appropriate for a daytime wedding.



This is a test. Punctuate the following: Woman without her man is a savage.



Chanel has a mission: introduce unorthodox nail colors that will double sales like Vamp did last year. First they tried Pink Alert which is the color of bubble gum. Their newest is Metallic, a silvery polish that gives a slight pearlescent shine.



I'm sick of seeing white (as in snow), but that's the latest word for spring -- white eyeshadow, nail polish and lipstick. Everybody's gotten into the act, too, like Bobbi Brown, Chanel, Lancome, and M.A.C. Prices range from \$17 (Bobbi Brown shadow) to \$50 (Chanel shadow). Try using chalk dust and white-out. It's cheaper.



So, those are my opinions, but, hey, what do I know? I think if you turn your back on this community, eventually it will turn its back on you. Comments? E-mail them to <cyberqueen@cdspub.com>. Copyright 1996 by Creative Design Services.

Jim Bridges
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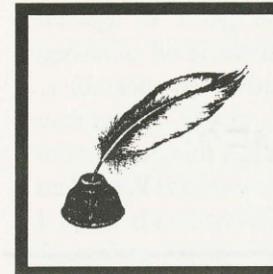
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GUEST COMMENTARY

YOU KNOW YOU ARE GOING TO HELL WHEN ...

by Jay Holavarri

You, like me, have probably been an uneager witness to the polarized tennis match between the Homosexual Community and the Conservative Christian Coalition played out recently in the media. The debate will never be settled by the primary combatants since the outspoken Christians (a misnomer if ever there was one) won't

tolerate the homosexuals who, they shout, are sickly bent on plunging indecently into the Lake of Fire while dragging America with them; and the gay community who, with understandable irony, can't tolerate all of this intolerance. So the position at either end stands as immutable as granite, leaving free-thinking heterosexuals in the middle to be buffeted back and forth in the struggle between the Word of Almighty God and Gay Pride Day.

In light of this, I thought it would be useful if a heterosexual, non-atheist, ex-born-again-Christian (or, I suppose, a dead-again-Heathen), Bible reader offered a few points for general readers to consider the next time they are confronted with a gay-bashing Christian editorial.

Where does it say in the Bible that homosexuality is a sin? Actually, there are several verses and one is powerful enough to make a God-fearing gay man quiver: "If a man has intercourse with a man as with a woman, both commit an abomination. They must be put to death" (*Leviticus 20:33*). Another verse, targeted seemingly at transvestites and cowgirls: "No woman may wear an article of man's clothing, nor may a man put on women's dress; for those who do are abominable to the Lord your God" (*Deuteronomy 22:4*). Both of these verses, and all of the related ones in later Biblical books (including the New Testament) are taken from the laws handed to Moses by God. So according to the Word of God, if you are gay, you are an abomination and should be killed. Sorry.

But don't breathe a sigh of relief yet, heterosexuals; God handed down a whole bunch of other less-popular laws that must be followed as well. I doubt the Lord wanted his followers to simply pick and choose those laws which were most convenient. Here is a list of seven not-so-deadly lesser known sins you are committing, and probably didn't know it.

1. Sorry Girls: "When a woman has her discharge of blood, her impurity will last for seven days; anyone who touches

her will be unclean till evening." (*Leviticus 15:19*)

2. It Might Fall Off: "When anyone has a discharge from his private parts, the discharge is ritually unclean ... All bedding on which anyone with such a discharge lies will be ritually unclean, and everything on which he sits will be unclean. Every earthenware bowl touched by the person

Christians are selective about what Biblical passages they use against those whose lifestyles they disagree with.

must be broken." (*Leviticus 15:12*)

3. Marines are Doomed, I: "You are not to cut off your hair from your temples." (*Leviticus 20:27*)

4. Marines are Doomed, II: "You must not ... tattoo yourselves. I am the Lord." (*Leviticus 20:27*)

5. Insult to Injury: "No man whose testicles have been crushed or whose organ has been cut off may become a member of the assembly of the Lord." (*Deuteronomy 23:1*)

6. Potty Training: "You must have a sign outside the camp showing where you can withdraw to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment, you are to have a trowel, and when you squat outside, you are to scrape a hole with it and then turn and cover your excrement." (*Deuteronomy 23:12*)

7. Tell This to Visa: "You are not to exact interest on anything you lend to a fellow-countryman." (*Deuteronomy 23:19*)

For some reason, there isn't nearly as much squawking about these laws of God. Why not? They are part of the same teaching that right-wing Christians use to blast homosexuals. Well, Christians would (and should) tell you that Jesus Christ changed all of that when he died for our sins on the cross. We no longer have to sacrifice two turtledoves to the Lord and practice special bathing rites every time you have the misfortune of touching your girlfriend when she is on her period. Thank God. Yet because it suits their own ignorance, some Christians will pick that anti-homosexual law out of pages and pages of other laws that they have long stopped abiding and apply it to others. It is ridiculous. It is also a sad and horrible irony that the one Biblical figure that gets the least airplay by

(continued on page 20)



VIRGIN VIEWS BY VIRGINIA

NARCISSISM? GUILT? SHAME?

by Virginia Prince, Ph.D.

I concluded my column last month with the statement that if you are moderately successful in seeing the mirror reflection of your "girl within" that it stands to reason that the image would have a physical reaction on your boyself. While I am about it, let me point out that this is not narcissism. The male person after which the behavior was

reflection -- and, moreover, that the object being reflected was a man in women's clothes and that it was, in actuality, the owner of the eyes -- isn't even known.

But when the message gets to the association cortex it is broken up and transmitted to various locations where all aspects of the image are compared with previous experience and judgements made. The one association we are considering would be the gender association location. At that point everything falls together and the center relays the message that the image is of a young, attractive ("sexy") girl/female that warrants consideration for sexual activity and this

conclusion is sent on to the centers controlling the flow of blood to the penis which results in an erection. But before any overt reaction could take place, other association points send back the message that it is not a real girl but a reflection, that even the reflection is not of a real female but of a dressed up man, and that in truth that man is himself. These messages combine to send an inhibitory message to the action centers so that nothing actually happens. But the erection was already under way, so it continues in spite of the inhibitory messages. About this point the awareness center realizes that it has a full grown erection sticking out in front and no female around to copulate with ... so, "let's get rid of the erection!" The quickest, least complicated and most pleasurable way of doing this will be to manipulate and stimulate the penis by hand. This is done, orgasm occurs, the veins in the penis open up and drain the blood from it and it returns to its normal size.

But now the awareness of the pleasure of the orgasm hits the association centers and they again send that signal to all centers that store any information on hand about penises, stimulation and such but also to the religio-morality center. This center replies that the moral code under which the individual lives has recorded a message that such activity is a no-no. But unfortunately the act has already been carried out so the no-no message is sent off to what might be thought of as the self-punishment center. The penalty assessed by that center is known to psychologists as guilt and an emotion of shame and guilt is sent to the self awareness area and the individual is sentenced to a period of lowered self-respect and of

feelings of being not quite as good and admirable a person as he previously thought. He then punishes himself ... for isn't he a "bad" person for allowing his penis to undergo a climax in a condition other than during intercourse with a female? The punishment he thus inflicts on himself is known as shame.

I made the observation last month that two good things (chocolate syrup on chocolate ice cream) enjoyed simultaneously can be additive and make the whole experience more enjoyable than either alone. So too, two "bad" things suffered simultaneously make a much bigger "bad" thing than either alone. In the present case, our theological moral culture teaches that penile erection should only occur during intercourse with a female intervaginally. For the Church, sex is only for the purpose of procreation, so for it to occur at other times and be used in other ways is a "bad" thing. Moreover, to intentionally stimulate it to orgasm in any other way than by vaginal friction is also a "bad" thing. To violate both of these strictures at the same time and to do it in the context of crossdressing which in itself is a "bad" thing makes the total behavior a *very bad thing*. So "shame" on you ... and that is exactly what develops.

The moral (?) of this whole story is that the erotic effects of seeing oneself dressed in the mirror is a perfectly normal response and one would have grounds for concern if it *did not* happen. If the erection is a natural response to a common stimulus (the sight of a pretty girl or woman) then the use of the hands to reverse the process is equally natural. So the total experience of reflection/stimulation/masturbation is nothing to feel guilty or shamed about. If somebody is unalterably opposed to masturbation he should make a great effort to avoid any visual contact with attractive women or girls because there is a high probability that he might get caught up in the natural chain of events.

I hope that most of you realize that few animals do anything that could be called masturbation by human standards, but for those that have learned that it felt good enough the first time to be worthy of repetition, they do so without any sense of guilt or shame about it. Even baby boys can get erections and can be masturbated by nurses and later by themselves. They haven't been afflicted by moral prohibitions so they do what comes naturally and don't feel the least bit guilty or shamed by it. In view of the fact that religion is responsible for all the "thou shalt nots" that we live under, I can't help but point out the biblical injunction to "be like little children". Little children can do it without any self directed retribution so why can't we adults?

Of course, as one grows older and the experience of crossdressing continues over the years, the femmeself becomes less of a fascinating novelty and more of a reality. So it is gradually accepted as simply one aspect of the individual's life. As this occurs, the erotic aspects of

dressing decline. The second self becomes more real and any eroticism that occurs becomes more "her" eroticism and less of "his". Age, of course, lessens the erotic drive all by itself although this is highly variable. In some males the drive starts to slack off early and in others it persists much longer. I am now 83 but the fabled "first thing to go" hasn't gone and I rather expect it to stick around till the whole body quits.

If you still have any sense of shame or guilt about dressing or getting aroused when doing so, *get over it!* Life is too short, so enjoy it every way you can. Only in a male dominated, macho, patriarchal society could the imitation of the other gender be considered as bad and unacceptable. If females ruled society any male attempting to imitate them could only be considered as a social climber trying to "better" himself and that would probably only provoke a laugh of sympathy, not an accusation and condemnation for being less than a *man*.

Heaven forbid!



Virginia Prince is a co-founder of The Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess) and the former publisher of Transvestia magazine. She may be contacted at P.O. Box 36091, Los Angeles CA 90036.

"If you still have any sense of shame or guilt about dressing or getting aroused when doing so, get over it!"

named looked into a pool of water and saw *himself* and became enamored of the vision. The reason for emphasizing the "him" was that this was a case of a male admiring another male -- even though it was himself. This is only a special case of homosexual admiration. Hetero CDs are interested in girls, not boys, so we enjoy our femme image and generally do not take as much of an interest in our masculine image.

But when an image hits the retina it sets up a nerve impulse in the optic nerve which carries it back to the optic chiasma, a place where the information from the two eyes is integrated. Then the impulse travels back to the visual cortex at the back of the brain where the information contained in the original visual image is sent to what is called the "association" areas and to the emotional centers where it is compared with past experience and the significance of what was seen is evaluated. All information already in the brain that bears on the object or scene viewed is compared in order to decide what (if anything) to do about it. In the case of the nicely done up CD we were considering, the image seen in the mirror shows an attractive young lady who posses, twirls around, may lift her skirts or whatever. Now the retina has seen similar visions before. Maybe they were of real girls ... maybe showgirls on stage ... maybe pictures of such young females in *Playboy* or *Hustler*. The retina and the optic nerve only receive and transmit impulses; they do not evaluate or react to the contents of the image being seen and transmitted. That assignment of significance, meaning and values takes place in the association cortex. So up to this point the fact that the object seen was only a mirror

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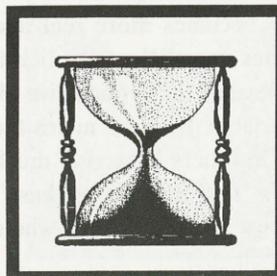
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HIS/HERSTORY

TRANSGENDER MYSTICS OUT IN THE COLD

by Roberta Perkins

When Russians began expanding onto the Steppes, the Taiga and the Tundra of eastern Siberia in the 18th Century they came across strange tribes of horsemen, herders and hunters. The strangest of their strange habits to these hairy men from the west was the custom of crossdressing amongst the tribal *shamans* (medicine men or witch doctors).

The Art of Shamanism Across Siberia: The word Shaman comes from the Tungu term *Samman*, meaning practitioner of occult magic and magical healing. Shamans, or medicine men, are found in many parts of the world, such as in North American Indian tribes, in native Brazilian communities, across sub-Saharan Africa, amongst tribal societies in Southeast Asia and India, throughout Oceania, and in aboriginal Australia. But, in these areas shamans were always men. In Siberia many shamans were also women. In Tungu society young girls could enter the profession of magical healing, and amongst the Kamchadal almost all shamans were women. As the Russian anthropologist Marie Antoinette Czaplicka noted early this century: "The woman is by nature a shaman ... is not restricted to tabus specifically female, for her social position is much higher than that of the ordinary woman. Whilst purely male tabus are not applied to the man shaman, who has, together with certain male tabus, some privileges of a woman." So it was that male shamans achieved their best results when adopting the mannerisms and dress of female shamans.

Amongst the Koryak the secrets of shamanism were passed onto women by their mothers, whilst men could only acquire these secrets through a dream, in which particular spirits appeared and advised the dreamer to thereafter to live as a woman. According to the anthropologist Jochelson who visited the tribe in the 1890s, a Koryak myth which tells of a powerful male shaman who became impotent discouraged men from becoming shamans out of fear of ending up impotent. So, most shamans were women, and men who were supernaturally ordered to take up the profession dressed as women to avoid impotency.

The Kamchadal referred to their male shamans as *Koekchuch*, which means "woman-man", because once they entered the profession from that moment they must live as women, taking up female occupations, like making hide

clothing, entering a house through its smoke hole as women did, and act shyly in the company of men just like women. Some Koekchuch married men with many wives to become one of their concubines. With the Yakut, an equestrian tribe of the great Steppes, shamans were divided into "white magicians" and "black magicians". The

Siberia and the Arctic region have been home to shamans and other transgendered people among native tribes.

former were healers and always men, who inherited their profession from older male shamans, and who were not required to dress as women. "Black magicians" were sorcerers and always women or men who lived as women. These latter donned the iron hoops worn by women over their breasts, women's jackets, and shaped their hair in a female fashion. They also slept on the left side, or the woman's side, in the *yurta*, a tent erected on the backs of horses, when the tribe was on the move.

The Ambivalent Sex of Chukchee Shamans: The religious practices of the Chukchee, a reindeer herding tribe of the Siberian Tundra, were thoroughly investigated by the Russian ethnographer Bogoras at the turn of the century. Like other Siberian tribes male shamans in Chukchee society were required to live as women. The Chukchees had two words to describe them: *ne uchica*, which meant "similar to a woman", and *yirka-laul*, or "soft man". These might imply that the male shamans were pretending to be women, but many Chukchees believed that they actually did have their sex changed by supernatural beings. Yet, as Bogoras discovered, some *ne uchica* also lived as men. One of his informants in fact was an old bearded man who, like all *ne uchica*, dressed as a woman, but was happily married with four children and numerous grandchildren. Other *ne uchica* he had heard about had secret mistresses who bore many children fathered by the shamans. It would seem that at least some Chukchees were aware that a change of sex had not occurred.

However, most Chukchee *ne uchica* conformed to the inevitable by adopting the full lifestyle of women. They changed their names to female ones and if the opportunity arose married men. As wives they took up needle work and skin dressing and made the clothes for both their husbands and themselves. Some of these *ne uchica* wives also had supernatural husbands, to whom they had been married long before the marriage to their mortal husband. The supernatural husband, or *kele*, passed onto his wife orders for her mortal husband, and he refused to disobey for fear of offending the spiritual force. Obviously, it is easy to see how a *ne uchica* wife could take advantage of such a situation in a Chukchee version of the wife wearing "the pants" in the family.

There were also cases of Chukchee women, known as *qa cikicheca*, meaning "similar to a man", who cropped their hair short like men, learned to shoot arrows and hurl spears, and married young girls. They were not, though, shamans.

The Women-Men of the American Arctic: Shamans were found in native societies across both American continents, but whilst male shamans often crossdressed, female shamans were rare, and usually only occurred with post-menopausal women, if it occurred at all. The opposite opinion to the Siberians existed amongst American Indians, who often viewed women as polluting to spiritual power, especially during menses. Gender crossing females in native America were also rare, although they have been

reported amongst the Mohave of the Southwest, and in some tribes of the Amazon rain-forest. Indeed, the very word "Amazon" comes from the Spaniard Orellana who was confronted by female warriors on the river which now bears that name. Amongst the Mapuches and other Araucanian tribes in Chile there were shamans very similar to the Siberian phenomenon. Mapuche shamans were often young women, whilst their male shamans wore female clothing and lived as women.

There was one people in aboriginal America who carried the arts of shamanism and the female arts among men to extreme. These were the Aleut tribes of the Aleutian Islands off the southwest coast of Alaska. The name for their male shamans was *chupan*, which referred to their custom of dressing and adopting the lifestyle of women. But the Aleuts considered them special beings who were semi-supernatural themselves, and, the Aleuts believed that it was certainly not beyond the powers of a *chupan* to actually change their sex. What was different about these women-men shamans was the very early age of their gender crossing. Elsewhere in the world a promising shaman might be discovered in boyhood, but they usually did not adopt a female role until in their teens or as adults. But amongst the Aleuts a shaman might be chosen while the candidate was still an infant, and in preparation for this profession the parents would raise their baby boy as a girl from that moment on. Some reports suggest that the child's testicles were removed. As these transformed

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girls grew into womanhood so they became full-fledged medicine-women. On the chupans, the armchair anthropologist Ernest Crawley said "that a stranger would naturally take them for what they are not." Aleuts considered it lucky to have a chupan living in their house. Chupans were the most powerful beings in their tribe because of their close association with supernatural spirits. So, mothers hoped some of their magic might rub off on their daughters, and sent girls to be trained in the feminine arts by chupans, who were considered to be idyllic women. Writing about "primitive" peoples early this century, Edward Carpenter drew upon the 19th century reports of Russian visitors to Aleut communities: "As soon as the chupan has moulded into (a shaman) the tribe confide to him the girls most suitable in bodily grace and disposition. He has to complete their education; he will perfect them in dancing and other accomplishments, and finally will initiate them into the pleasures of love. If they display intelligence, they will become seers and medicine-women, priestesses and prophetesses."

Across the Arctic the Eskimos depended heavily upon their *angagoks*, or shamans, to detect taboo-breakers, but gender-crossing, or even simply crossdressing, was virtually unknown in Eskimo society. Perhaps this was due to a shortage of men, who frequently disappeared in the sudden and fierce blizzards of the Tundra. There was, however, one Eskimo tribe, the Kaniagmiut of Kodiak

Island off the south coast of Alaska, who did have male *angagoks* who adopted the lifestyle of women. Perhaps this might be due to their close proximity to Indian tribes to the south who practiced the custom of gender crossing and certainly might be due to their much less severe environment than other Eskimos. The Kaniagmiuts called their gender crossing shamans *achnutschik*, which meant they had special powers, but in having these powers it was natural for them to live as women. They tattooed their chins like women and practiced the womanly arts. They usually had husbands, who were considered fortunate to have married a *achnutschik*. Like the Aleuts, the Kaniagmiuts raised a boy as a girl if he showed some feminine characteristics. Some parents who desired a daughter were even known to raise a boy as a girl from the moment of his birth. In this regard the Kaniagmiuts contrasted with other Eskimos, who highly valued males above females and wouldn't dream of raising a boy as a girl, even placing baby girls out on the freezing tundra to die.



Roberta Perkins is affiliated with the School of Sociology at the University of New South Wales, Australia. This is the sixth in a series of ten articles adapted from her thesis in anthropology; installments are presented every other month. The next, in Cross-Talk #80, will discuss famous transgendered people of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries.

GOING TO HELL ... continued from page 15

conservative Christians is Christ himself, after whom they are named. That is because much of Christ's teaching revolves around themes like love, charity, and forgiveness; qualities which don't exactly embody loud Christians like Pat Buchanan.

So, because you will probably never hear this from a Christian on talk-radio or in the newspaper, here is one of the teachings of Christ that all Christians and those they persecute should know. It is taken from the Gospel of John, chapter 8, verses 1-11, with Jesus teaching in the temple:

"Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. In the law Moses has laid down that such women are to be stoned. What do you say about it?"

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they continued to press their question he sat up straight and said, "Let whichever of you is free from sin throw the first stone at her".

Alas, conservative Christians are far too busy hurling rocks to reflect on the teachings of Christ.



Jay Holavarri is a student at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo CA. This commentary originally appeared in the Cal Poly newspaper Mustang Daily. Reprinted by permission of the author.

The Bearded Lady

by Ricky Hunt
Illustration by Rita

As I write this it's approaching Christmastime, unless, like me, you aren't a Christian; in which case it's approaching the Holidays. I can tell because the traditional indicators of Christmas are on every hand. Some are of a cultural nature: snow on the ground, lights on the houses, blaring commercials urging you to give your loved ones diamonds or Caribbean Cruises for the Holidays. Others are more personal: I'm unemployed again, the furnace broke, the car blew its engine, and I can no longer dress all day because we took in a homeless mother and her 11-month-old daughter. I can always count on things going downhill faster for the Holidays; maybe it's the snow that lets them slip faster. Somehow I don't feel depressed this year as things fall apart around me. Since I've gone back to college I've taken the attitude that if I can't work it means I can study more, and the unemployment people actually agree with me. But it's impossible to be depressed when a little girl smiles up at you and keeps doing such awfully cute things. Who cares if I have time to study? I'm playing with the baby!

There are parts of this thing that make me a little nervous, however. I am very aware of the gender pressures operating on this innocent little child. Mom is the product of an abusive home, leaving an abusive marriage, and seems to define herself by how feminine she looks. This means hours in the bathroom to look just right, and if she's late for work or the baby is cranky she has her priorities, and they are not mine. The baby has loads of clothes, a veritable fountain of pinkness pouring from every drawer. I'm not curmudgeon enough to say "Bah! Humbug!" to the frills and lace and such on a little girl, but I can see the start of another stereotypical female with no chance to express her whole nature.

I was disgusted the other night when I got hooked on a TV show she was watching, and had to watch the commercials. There was one for the Fisher Price Makeup Table that about set me frothing and writhing on the floor. When my kids were babies Fisher Price used to make great



educational toys, and for all I know they still do. But the message of this commercial came through loud and clear. "In order to be a good little girl you *have* to dress in frills, *have* to use makeup and perfume and all that stuff, and you *need* this foolish plastic table to keep all your junk on so you can do it *right!*" I don't want my little girl to grow up that way. (Notice how she's been promoted to *my* little girl?) I want her to grow up strong and confident and not buying into this crap. I know this ranting about frills is downright contradictory coming from a man in a skirt, but I want her to be able to choose, not mindlessly follow the gender path to some approved end.

In small ways she's showing she's ready for new experiences. Before she came to live with us she was fed exclusively by bottle, long past the time when she needed solid food. We tried the standard oatmeal and pabulum, but she forcefully rejected them. (You want to pass me the washcloth? The fire hose, too? Thanks.) In desperation I gave her a forkful of Spanish rice from my plate and she gorfed down half my dinner. The kid's a gourmet; she loves potato pancakes, applesauce, bagels & cream cheese, lasagna, homemade french fries and turkey Parmesan. She doesn't know babies aren't supposed to like spicy foods, she just eats. That's the way I want her to grow up, and maybe it will rub off on her mother (who hasn't gotten the nerve to try the offbeat food we serve) and they can grow up together. She may not be with us long, but I'm going to try. If it works it will be the best Christmas gift I have ever gotten.



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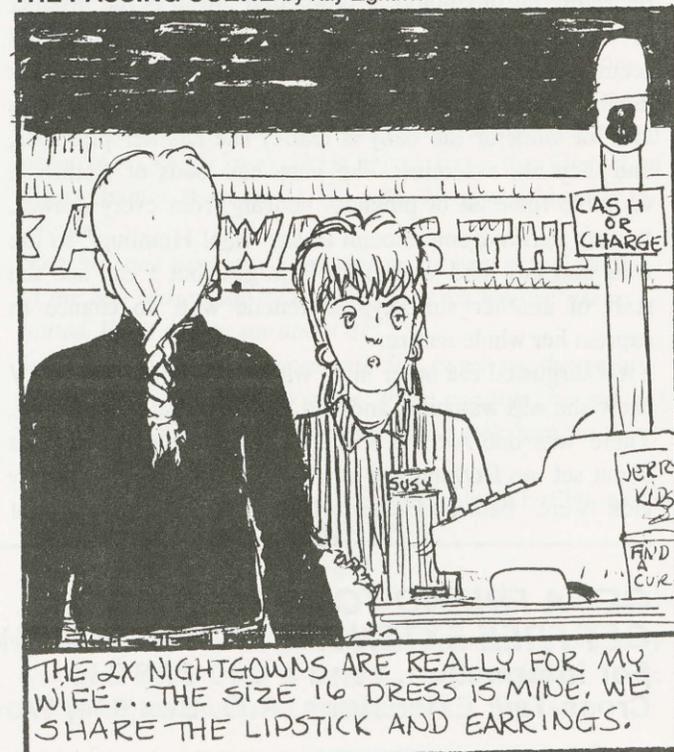
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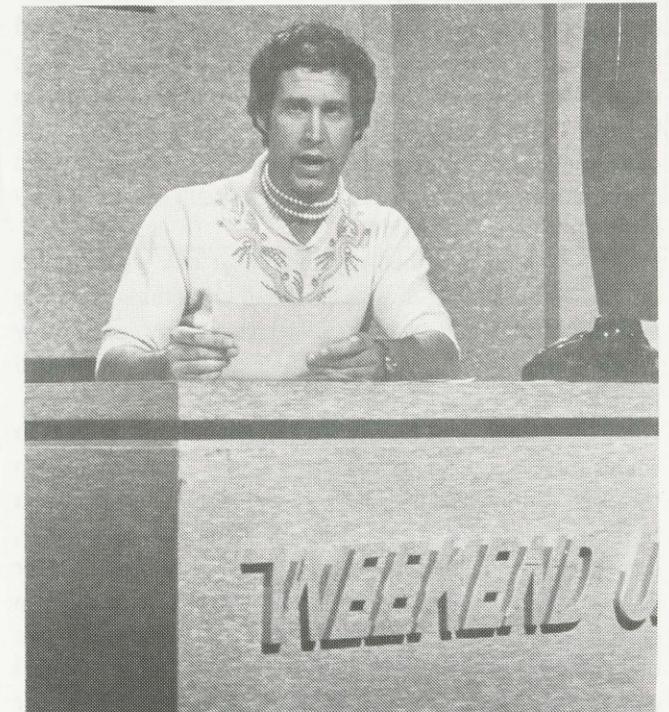


GREAT MOMENTS IN TV HISTORY

from the archives of Ralph Judd



Airdate unknown, 1970s: Mimic Stanley Baxter impersonates Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra (left) and Liza Minnelli (right) on *The Stanley Baxter Big Picture Show*, PBS.



3/20/61: Garry Moore and Durward Kirby in a sketch on *The Garry Moore Show*, CBS.

Airdate unknown, 1975-76: Chevy Chase dons a dress for "Weekend Update" on *Saturday Night Live*, NBC.



TRANSGENDER TIPS

DEVELOPING A FEMALE VOICE

PART ONE: AN OVERVIEW

by Melanie Anne Phillips

Nothing gets you read faster than a voice that doesn't match your appearance. Many gender folk dress up to the nines and look like goddesses ... until they open their mouths. Suddenly, in spite of the grace and curves they turn into truck drivers or lumberjacks right before your eyes.

Clothes may make the man, but it is voice that makes the woman.

Whether you are a crossdresser or transsexual, developing a truly *female* voice -- not just a feminine one -- is of paramount concern. When I began my transition, there was electrolysis to worry about, mannerisms ... but it was voice that seemed to me the greatest obstacle. Like most, I tried simply feminizing my voice, softening the voice I had. I tried raising my pitch artificially, arriving at that bad falsetto that forms the stereotype of the transgendered marking them as parodies rather than the real thing. Eventually I even considered vocal chord surgery as a last resort.

Voice surgery made me nervous though. I had a fairly decent singing voice, I like to do character voices, I liked to sound dramatic when I spoke. But the thought of being read every time I uttered a word was enough to tip the balance to consider voice surgery, even though all end-results I had heard were not very convincing *and* I had heard horror stories of those who as a result of the surgery lost their voices completely!

I had just about resigned myself to that risk when, a few months into fulltime, I stumbled into something quite by accident that has made the difference in my career, my relationships, in my life as a whole: I learned to sound female.

Notice I did not say "to talk like a woman", but rather "to sound female". This is because the secret I found is not in the way one speaks but the way one sounds. I had been trying out different voices that day (as I did most days), sometimes trying to sound like a squeaky teenager, other times like a mature matron. For weeks I had been struggling with no progress to speak of. And then, this one day, suddenly something happened. My voice "slipped gears" and came down in a different place than it had ever been.

All at once, in one broad stroke, the *timber* of my voice had turned female. I couldn't believe it! I actually *sounded*

female! I tried saying this and that and *everything* sounded female. This was incredible! After all my fears and yearnings ... well, it was almost like magically being transformed into a woman!

It was just about quitting time when this happened. At the time, I was working as Melanie, but still going home to my wife as Dave. The kids did not know about my transition yet. So each night, I would leave work, take off the nail polish and makeup, change my clothes and go home. So, I decided it was time to go back to my "drab" voice and do Dave again for the night. But when I tried to revert, I couldn't find my old voice. I tried again -- nothing! Suddenly I felt that I really *had* been transformed! That somehow my whole voicebox had been changed to a female form! But this was terrible! My wife was going to kill me!

After half an hour of unsuccessful attempts to get out of voice, there was nothing left to do but face the music. I drove home, stepped inside. Mary said, "How was your day?" I replied, "Fine", but it wasn't Dave's voice, it was Melanie's voice, and Mary threw a fit!

"What's wrong with your voice?" she demanded. I explained what had happened and how I got stuck. She told me I had darn well better figure out how to get my old voice back before the kids woke up in the morning. Try as I might, I met with no success. But then, over the course of an hour or so, my voice relaxed and the old voice came back. I was saved; but then, I worried that I couldn't get the new voice back again. After all, it happened by accident, and I really didn't know what I had done. At first, I *did* lose the new voice.

But then, I found it again, and practiced and practiced going in and out all the rest of the night.

The next morning, the first thing I did when I woke up was try to find the new voice again, and there it was, mine to command! Over the following months, I worked on the fine points of my voice, adding all the incidental elements that affected not only my sound, but the manner in which I spoke. And now, over four years later and two years after SRS, I can report that my new voice is fine. If I choose I can still slip in and out of it at will. This voice has been crucial in my career advancement, relationships and, best of all, my female voice has helped developed my sense of self as Melanie.

In this article, I will share with you how I did it and provide all the steps you need to find your own female voice.

To begin, as I looked back over the path I had taken, I discovered seven important tools for developing a feminine voice. Six of them work on the femininity but the seventh is the "secret" that actually makes one *sound* female. I'll describe each briefly, then cover them all in greater detail in future installments of this article. By name, the seven tools are Pitch, Resonance, Dynamic Range, Annunciation, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Body English.

PITCH: Most people assume that the primary difference between men's and women's voices is pitch. But we shall see that the actual difference in pitch between the sexes is minimal. In fact, the overlap of range between the sexes allows for almost *any* individual to fall well within accepted norms of pitch.

RESONANCE: Resonance is the real secret of this method. Resonance is the modulation of whatever pitch you have. It puts the envelope on the voice that takes the pitch and assigns it timbre. In the course of this article I will describe a simple exercise anyone can do to find that special place in their voice and develop a truly *female* resonance.

DYNAMIC RANGE: Dynamic Range describes the difference between the highest highs and the lowest lows that a person uses while speaking. Men use a very narrow dynamic range, even though they are quite capable of extending that range. It is simply a matter of training, not physiology. In contrast, women use a much *wider* dynamic range, which is what gives their voices more of a "sing/song" effect.

ANNUNCIATION: Annunciation is the way you pronounce your words. Just as one might do a dialect, there is a female dialect that transcends languages and cultures. I will describe a means for developing a fully feminine annunciation.

VOCABULARY: Yes, there are masculine and feminine words. In our culture, certain words are almost exclusively reserved for males and others for females. I will cover some of these and show you how to be on the lookout for more.

GRAMMAR: Being masculine or feminine has a lot to do with brokering power. When one forms words into sentences, the *order* of words as well as modifiers and parantheticals change the position of power of the speaker. We'll look into ways to adopt the "power level" appropriate to the many roles played by either sex.

BODY ENGLISH: Body English is the way you move while you talk. In fact, it has an actual impact of how the voice itself will sound. By using the proper body english while you speak, you can improve the femininity of your voice -- even on the phone!

So as not to give any of these areas less in depth treatment than they deserve, I've allowed Kymberleigh the flexibility to present this article in segments (the entire article is nearly as long as an issue of this magazine!). Next month, we'll look at pitch and resonance in greater detail, including some exercises you can try yourself.

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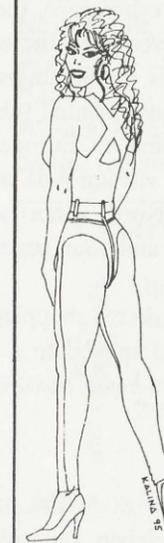
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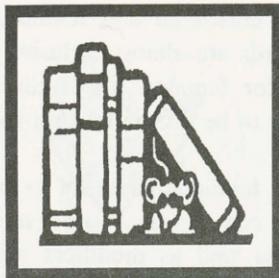
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Alternative Presses

by Kimberleigh Richards

About a year ago, I published a scathing review of J.M.P.G.'s *Crossdressers' International Shopping Guide* in which I berated editor Danielle Alexis for not checking the accuracy of her information from edition to edition. Apparently Danielle doesn't care for constructive criticism; I recently had the opportunity to look through the 1996 edition of the *Guide* and -- no surprise -- every error I pointed out last year was in there, uncorrected.

Fortunately, the U.K. publication *The Tranny Guide 96* has expanded its coverage of sources in the U.S., after venturing into this unfamiliar territory last year. Although the listings combine support groups, TG-friendly businesses, and restaurant/nightclubs with only a set of symbols (and the descriptions) to differentiate between them, at least they had the good sense to group their listings geographically, making this an easy-to-use resource.



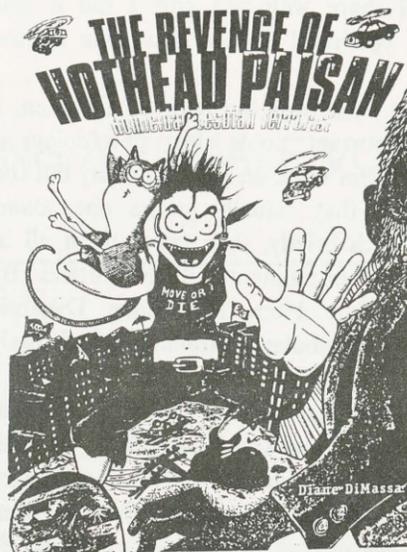
Although, unlike the J.M.P.G. guide, *Tranny Guide* does not include mainstream mail order fashion catalogs, the space that might have been taken by those additional listings is taken up with a variety of informative and helpful articles. (Besides, there are plenty of publications that catalog the catalogs; the quarterly *Hot Mail* newsletter reviewed in *Cross-Talk* #74 comes to mind.)

This year, there are articles on drag kings, cyberspace, the media, and legal aspects, among others; even with these, over three-quarters of *Tranny Guide 96* is about shops, services, and places to go. Last year, I recommended this close to pocket-size book to anyone travelling in Europe; now, it's also a valuable resource for those visiting Asia or just crossing into an unfamiliar region of North America. (There's even a page of listings in Africa and four pages devoted to Australia and New Zealand!)

This is my idea of a transgender international shopping guide. And it's even reasonably accurate and up-to-date ...
[\$20.00 (U.S.) from WayOut Publishing Co., P.O. Box 70, Enfield Middlesex EN1 2AE, U.K.]



At first glance, one might wonder why a reprint of underground lesbian comix -- especially when the title



character is, by her own admission, a "homicidal lesbian terrorist" -- would be of interest to the transgender community. But as you read *The Revenge of Hothead Paisan* (Cleis Press, 1995, 0-57344-016-7) it becomes very apparent that HH (shown below with her girlfriend Daphne, reacting to taunts from a pair of clueless macho males) deals with society's reaction to her lifestyle in much the same way transgendered people would like to; she beats the crap out of her tormentors.

Okay, so HH is a comic book character and her reactions are the ones we only think about acting on; but creator Diane DiMassa has struck a responsive chord in the lesbian community for several years now and I think the time has come for the transgender community to realize that the same chord has some related harmonics here.

Besides, there's something about Daphne ...



Hothead Paisan (right) and Daphne.



It's been well over a year since I reviewed Steve Stewart's *Gay Hollywood Film & Video Guide* in this column, and I had expected that Steve would be at work on the third edition of same. Much to my surprise, he has instead come out with a small volume of "901 Bitchy Barbs, Wicked Wisecracks & Lusty Lampoons" called *Campy Vampy Trampy Movie Quotes*.

Given that the majority of quotes come not from gay-themed movies but from classic Hollywood, this book is scarily close to mainstream in appeal. Not only does it have some of my all-time favorite movie lines (including

Gene Wilder's reaction in *Blazing Saddles* to Cleavon Little's "underground success" as sheriff of Rock Ridge) but it has many lines I had totally forgotten from movies I thought I remembered vividly. Steve has organized these memorable quotes into 45 categories ranging from bisexuality, masturbation and promiscuity to bad luck, lawyers, and religion. (Five pages just on crossdressing!)

If I have any complaint with this clever little volume, it is the annoying number of entries where the actor being quoted is listed as "unidentified". I suspect that in these cases, Steve may not have had time to identify a minor character in order to look up the actor's name in the credits, but I still find it somewhat annoying. Perhaps some good readers will forward him the missing information for future revisions.

[\$11.45, postage included, from Companion Press, P.O. Box 2575, Laguna Hills CA 92654. California residents, add 7.75% sales tax.]



I have been trying, for several months now, to review the novel *Shaman* by Hugh Fox, which was recommended to me by my friend Bert Herrman. I'm still trying to find time to finish it, but I thought I'd make a quick mention of the magazine published by the same house (Permeable Press), *Puck*.

Billed as the Unofficial Journal of the Irrepressible, the issue editor Brian Clark sent me was the "special sex issue", which means not that this is a borderline pornographic magazine but rather a frequently irreverent and totally insider look at what we would call "alternate lifestyles" and which the mainstream would call "those weirdos".

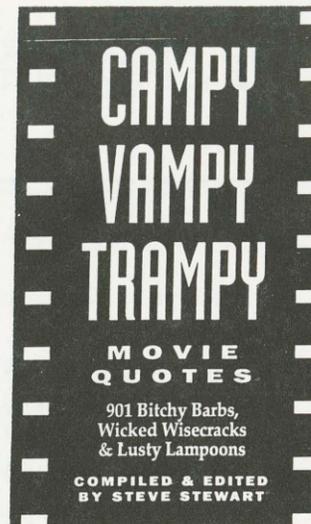
Of particular interest in this issue (#11) are LindaAnn Loschiavo's short fiction work *Cocktail*, which tells of a transsexual's experience in bizarre circumstances; and a review of the book *Nightmare of Ecstasy*, which chronicles the life and art of Ed Wood.

Puck is a very interesting journal on all of its levels, though, and while you might want to read it just for the content pertaining to your own interests, you'll undoubtedly find many other fascinating articles as well.

[\$5.95 for a single issue, \$15.00 for a three issue subscription to Permeable Press, 47 Noe St. #4, San Francisco CA 94114-1014. Also available at slightly higher rates outside the U.S.]



A sad note: I am advised by Mirha-Soleil Ross at genderpress in Toronto that, due to the declining health of editor/publisher Xantra Phillippa, their erratically-published journal *Gendertrash* has ceased publication.



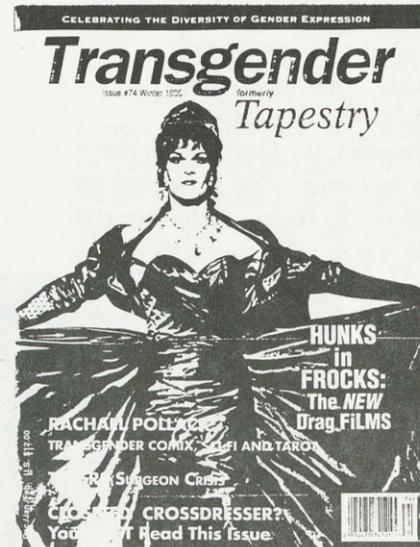
Although Xantra was stable at the time of Mirha-Soleil's letter to me, this is the second time they have encountered problems outside of their control affecting their publication schedule and "it will not be realistically possible to start over again in the future."

Although I found *Gendertrash* somewhat bizarre on the two occasions that I reviewed it here, it still saddens me when an alternative press voice is silenced. I can only hope that Xantra will survive whatever health difficulties have silenced her.



In closing this month, I'd like to say a couple of things about the premiere issue of *Transgender Tapestry*, since there are a few people who have waiting to see how I "blast" them.

Those people will be a bit disappointed to learn that I don't think the magazine was all that bad, although I am not certain I like the new pull-out section (especially since



it omitted the listings for the many transgender community businesses, publications, and online services who have supported IFGE over the years). The content in the magazine proper seems to be moving away from the community's areas of interest, though, presumably to make the magazine more palatable in the mainstream market. Rather than paraphrase JoAnn Roberts' thoughts on that -- we happen to be

in agreement -- I'll suggest that IFGE read her "HotBuzz" column this month and take her remarks to heart.

'Nuff said.

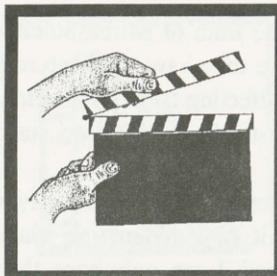
Next month, a look at the pre-production proofs of Leslie Feinberg's new *Transgender Warriors*, Stephanie Castle's "faction" novel *The Dual Alliance*, and Kalina Isato's *Walking With the Best of Them*. (Provided I find time to do all this reading.)

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MOVIE REVIEW

THE BIRDCAGE

by Diane Chaplin

The Birdcage is the type of film that insists on having its way with just about everything. As a result of Elaine May's keen script and a crack cast, it pretty much gets away with it.

The movie, Hollywood's high profile remake of the French gender-bending comedy *La Cage aux Folles*, along with its many stage incarnations, benefits greatly from the faultless casting of Robin Williams and Nathan Lane (of Broadway's *Guys and Dolls*) as the middle-aged gay couple. The sure directorial hand of the sly social satirist Mike Nichols (*The Graduate*) adds impeccable timing and a certain deco decadence to the proceedings as well.

As with many of Nichols' comedies, the film does, at times, have a tendency to sidestep its humor. This is particularly true with Lane's role as Albert, the flashy, effeminate star of the drag revue that packs 'em in at his partner's Miami Beach nightclub. In a pleasant change of pace for Williams, his Armand Goldman character is the comparatively self-controlled half of the couple.

The film opens with a chorus of flashy drag queens lip-syncing *We Are Family* on the nightclub stage. Are we in for the musical version of the piece, which this reviewer delighted in catching many moons ago at the Pantages Theater in Hollywood? Not at all, but it rather effectively sets up the spirit of things.

The basics of the plot involve Val (Dan Futterman), Armand's son from a single heterosexual liaison, returning from college to announce his engagement. His fiancée, Barbara Keeley (Calista Flockhart), will shortly be visiting, with her uptight parents along, and Val wonders if Armand and, more



Albert (Nathan Lane) as "Starina", headliner at the Birdcage nightclub.

importantly, Albert, can tone things down for this first encounter.

What's new here is the fact that Val's prospective father-in-law Senator Keeley (Gene Hackman), is the vice-president of the Coalition for Moral Order, a social conservative group whose co-founder recently died in bed with an underage prostitute.

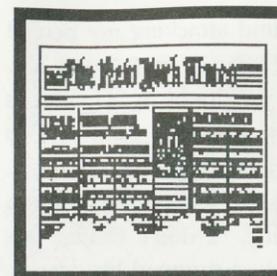
As a token form of damage control, Keeley and his wife Louise (Dianne Wiest), hope to organize an ultra-traditional media showpiece wedding for their daughter. This makes it even more imperative that Val's parents act like "real men" -- a hopeless, uproarious task in Albert's case, who's to pretend he's an uncle.

The upshot of all of this is an awkward dinner party seasoned with deception and mistaken identity. The icing and the desert, of course, turn out to be Albert's astonishing approximation of Barbara Bush.

Though relatively tame, the political satire and media-bashing that bounces throughout *The Birdcage* provides a great deal of extra fun. Although the film ranges from cartoonish to sophisticated, it is consistently hilarious.

Mike Nichols and Elaine May were one of the top stand-up comedy teams of the late '50s, and their first film collaboration exhibits all of the imaginative wit that initially made them famous. One wishes at times, however, that Nichols and May might have taken a few aspects of the film a bit more seriously. Though he displays marvelous slapstick invention as the Goldmans' fey Guatemalan servant Agador, Hank Azaria also manages to insult both

(continued on page 31)



NewsQueen Extra

BOSTON TRANSSEXUALS ATTACKED BY "STRAIGHT" DATES

by Paula Jordan Sinclair

It appears to be open season on transsexuals in Boston with at least two serious attacks in recent months. One of the attacks was fatal; in the other, the victim fought back and threw her attacker down a flight of stairs before calling police. In both cases, the assailants had picked up the transsexuals in bars and turned on them in a panic after having sex.

The fatal attack occurred in November of last year, and while prosecutors hope for a first degree murder indictment, the perpetrator is free on bail. Prosecutors allege that William Palmer, 34, a computer programmer, was at the Playland Cafe in Boston's notorious Combat Zone when he met Ramon Pickett, 23, and Pickett's twin brother Gabriel, both pre-op transsexuals. Ramon went by the name Chanelle and Gabriel uses the name Gabrielle. Palmer drove both women back to their home in Chelsea, where the group snorted cocaine. Palmer then took Chanelle, back to his apartment in Watertown, according to Adrienne Lynch, an assistant Middlesex district attorney. There he claims he discovered Pickett was a man and strangled him during a scuffle, Lynch said.

Lynch recounted the version of events provided by the two men with whom Palmer shares his apartment. At about 5 a.m., after Palmer and Chanelle left the bar, the men were awakened by sounds of crashing and screaming, she said. Police discovered Pickett's body in Palmer's bedroom Monday afternoon by breaking into the apartment. Palmer and his roommates had visited attorney Walter Prince, who called police.

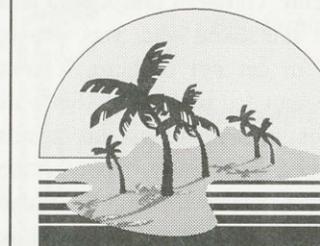
But Gabrielle, who has appeared with Chanelle on television shows such as *Jenny Jones* and *Gerardo*, said Palmer had been seen several times in the Playland Cafe, which patrons described as a bar frequented by gay men and transvestites. "He didn't kill her because he didn't know," Gabrielle said, "He's saying that to cover up. He's been in Playland several times. He knew exactly what she was." Others at the bar backed-up Gabrielle's assertion. A bartender who gave his name only as Michael said that many regular customers knew both Palmer and Chanelle and knew that the two were acquainted. "There are only 150 seats in here so everybody knows one another," he said. Another bartender, Jimmy, said the motive for the

murder was more likely related to drugs than to sex. He, too, agreed that Palmer knew Chanelle's biological gender. "You see somebody with five pounds of foundation and a stubble and you don't know he's a man? Come on," he said. Playland patrons agreed that Palmer could not have been unaware of Pickett's gender. "He knew what he was doing," said Toyaer Shearion, 30, another pre-op transsexual, who said she dated Palmer four times. "He loves us."

Palmer's attorney branded the allegations as "absurd." "We have it on pretty solid ground that any accusations are certainly false and out of character for a gentleman who has lived the normal upstanding life he has," Prince said. Boston newspapers picked up that theme. The Boston *Herald* headlined its story "'Preppy' allegedly kills date in drag." The newspaper described Palmer as a "polite and clean cut man" who wore "khaki pants and sports coats to his job at Unisys."

"The newspaper played it up as every straight guy's worst nightmare," said Robb Johnson of victim assistance program serving sexual minorities in Boston. Gabrielle said Chanelle worked as a prostitute at the bar to help finance his planned sex-change, but Palmer was not a customer. Chanelle thought Palmer might be someone with whom she could have a relationship, Gabrielle said. The night of the killing, she said, Chanelle and Palmer had shared drinks and kisses at the bar before Chanelle

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packed an overnight bag for their date in Watertown. Shortly after his arrest, Palmer was released on \$50,000 cash bail. A week later, 250 gays, lesbians, and transgendered people gathered in a Boston church for a memorial service for Chanelle. This was followed by a candlelight march to the State House where marchers laid a wreath and heard transgender activist Nancy Nangeroni say that Chanelle's death could be a turning point in bringing the two communities together. Speakers at the memorial service included former Boston City Councilman David Scondras, who is openly gay. He compared Chanelle's murder to cultural opposition to anything feminine in men. "I say to my straight male friends, 'What do you do to women that makes you so afraid of becoming one?'" The last speaker at the service was Gabrielle. "I never expected this number of people," she said, obviously touched by the turnout. "Let's stay together like we are tonight."

A mere week after the service and march in memory of Chanelle, another Boston transsexual found herself being attacked by a man who picked her up outside the Tar Bar. Daniel Gerstein, 26, allegedly choked Albert "Sandy" Piscopiello, 37, after the two had sex in her apartment. But Piscopiello, who stands "six feet one inch without my shoes," was able to fend off the attack and threw Gerstein down a flight of stairs before calling police. The man fled before police arrived. "He wanted to be with somebody," Piscopiello said of Gerstein's invitation to her outside the bar. "But then he couldn't handle it after the fact. He had a straight attack."

She said that after the two had sex in her apartment, they shared a bottle of wine. Suddenly, Gerstein jumped up and ran from the bedroom. When she asked what was wrong, Gerstein replied "I just have to get out of here. I can't handle this." She said they began to argue and that was when Gerstein lunged at her and tightened his hands around her throat. She pushed him away, opened the apartment door, and threw him down the stairs. "I can handle myself, thank God," she said. "But I don't think

THE BIRDCAGE ... continued from page 28

gays and Latinos on a recurrent basis. Though his demands that Albert and Armand act like people they are not seems rooted in every kid's embarrassments about their parents, it's so much crueler for him, in this circumstance, to bring society's prejudices into such a loving home.

All that considered, *The Birdcage* still has a lot more to say, and says it a lot funnier than the majority of comedies released these days. Its ultimate message of tolerance, though hardly new, has rarely been served up with this much manic fun.

If the success of last fall's commercially productive *To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything! Julie Newmar* and the

these people should be going around attacking my people and blaming it on homophobia."

The transsexual said there was no doubt in Gerstein's mind that he was not picking up a genetic female. "He knew exactly what I was before I got into the car," she said. "I'm pretty passable, but you'd have to be pretty damn stupid in order not to tell," adding, "I don't change my voice for anybody." Although Gerstein dropped his driver's license in Piscopiello's apartment, Gerstein has not been arrested because the offense is listed as a simple assault and Piscopiello has to file a complaint. But Piscopiello refuses to make the necessary statements. "I don't feel I have to," she said. "I have enough problems in my life right now. I gave the police a photo ID with his address on it and they can't do anything? I don't think that's right. It's because I'm a she-male. If I was just an average Irish woman here in South Boston, something would have been done right then."

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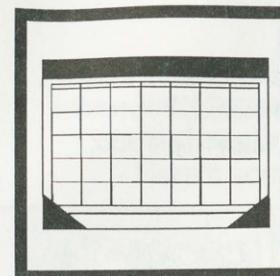


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track record for *La Cage aux Folles'* stage versions and movie sequels is any indication, *The Birdcage* should be a success too.

Rated R (language and adult situations). Starring Robin Williams, Gene Hackman, Nathan Lane, Dianne Wiest, Dan Futterman, Calista Flockhart, Hank Azaria, and Christine Baranski. Directed and produced by Mike Nichols. Written by Elaine May, based on the stage play *La Cage aux Folles* by Jean Poiret, and the script by Francis Veber, Edouard Molinaro, Marcello Danon and Jean Poiret. Released by United Artists Pictures. Photo credit: Lorey Sebastian.



EVENTS CALENDAR

April 25-29, 1996: "California Dreamin '96", San Francisco CA, sponsored by Powder Puffs Of California and co-hosted by ETVC, Diablo Valley Girls, Rainbow Gender Association and Sacramento Gender Alliance. Details from PPOC/California Dreamin, P.O. Box 1088, Yorba Linda CA 92686, by Internet at <dreamin96@aol.com> or by telephone at (714) 779-9013.

May 4, 1996: "Prom Night in New Jersey", Edison NJ, sponsored by the Chi Delta Mu and Sigma Nu Rho chapters of Tri-Ess and Monmouth Ocean TransGender. Details from (201) 439-9618.

May 9-12, 1996: "A Kindred Spirits Circle", Glade Mountain NC. Details from Kindred Spirits, P.O. Box 18332, Asheville NC 28814, or by calling (704) 253-9882.

May 15-19, 1996: "Esprit '96", Port Angeles WA, sponsored by NWGA, Emerald City, and Cornbury Society. Information from <nwga@teleport.com> or by writing P.O. Box 1101, Renton WA 98057-1101.

May 16-19, 1996: "Paradise in the Poconos", Canadensis PA, produced by Creative Design Services, P.O. Box 19206, King of Prussia PA 19406. Information via Internet: <poco@cdspub.com> or by phone: (610) 640-9449.

June 5-9, 1996: 14th Annual "Be All You Want To Be", Detroit MI. This year's host organization is Crossroads, with co-sponsors Chi Chapter Tri-Ess, TransPitt, Paradise Club, and CrossPort. Details from Crossroads Be-All, P.O. Box 430126, Pontiac MI 48343 or by calling (313) 537-3267.

July 3-7, 1996: "Transgen '96: Transgender Independence Weekend", Houston TX, sponsored by the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy. Details from ICTLEP, P.O. Drawer 35477, Houston 77235-5477, by calling (713) 777-8452, by Internet to <ictlep@aol.com> or by fax at (713) 777-0909.

July 24-28, 1996: 4th Annual "Spouses'/Partners' International Conference for Education", Wilmington DE (Philadelphia PA). Details from Dr. Peggy Rudd, P.O. Box 5304, Katy TX 77491, fax (713) 347-8747; from Betsy at (909) 875-2687; or from Evelyn at (215) 860-9271.

September 1-8, 1996: "Dignity Cruise VII" to Bermuda from New York, sponsored by Dr. Peggy Rudd. Details from Brenda at Cruises Inc., 1-800-247-7021.

September 19-26, 1996: "Paradise in the Poconos", Canadensis PA. See May listing for details.

September 26-29, 1996: 6th Annual "Southern Comfort Conference", Atlanta GA. Information from P.O. Box 77591, Atlanta 30357-1591, by telephoning (404) 633-6470, or to <phillida@atl.mindspring.com> by Internet e-mail.

October 18-21, 1996: "A Kindred Spirits Vision Quest", Dixon Mountain NC. See May listing for details.

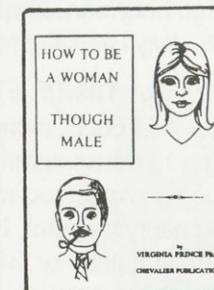
November 6-9, 1996: 7th Annual "Fall Harvest", St. Louis MO, sponsored by Mid America Gender Group Information Exchange (MAGGIE) and hosted by Iowa Artistry. Information from P.O. Box 75, Cedar Rapids IA 52406-0075, telephone (309) 755-2310.

November 6-10, 1996: Tri-Ess "Holiday En Femme", Chicago IL. Details from Chi Chapter at P.O. Box 40, Wood Dale IL 60191-0040 or by telephoning (708) 262-8707.

November 8-10, 1996: "Queer Spirit Conference", for LGBT and Native healers and teachers, Highlands NC. Information from Kindred Spirits, P.O. Box 18332, Asheville NC 28814, or by calling (704) 253-9882.

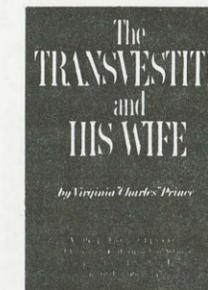
(Please send information on national transgender community events to Cross-Talk, P.O. Box 944, Woodland Hills CA 91365. Listings must be accompanied by a written authorization by an officer of the sponsoring organization or be listed in their group newsletter. Information will not be accepted via e-mail.)

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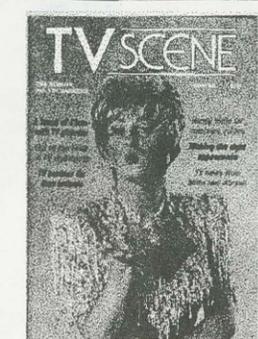
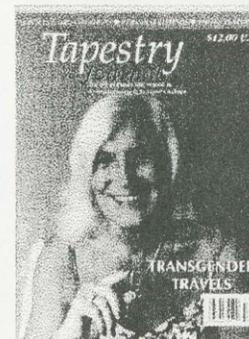
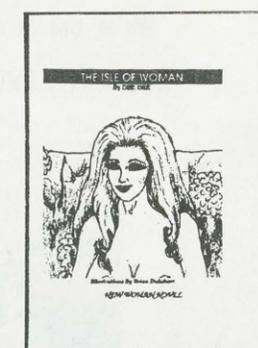
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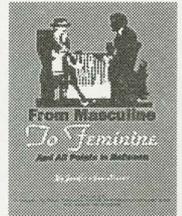
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