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THE TARTAN SKIRT



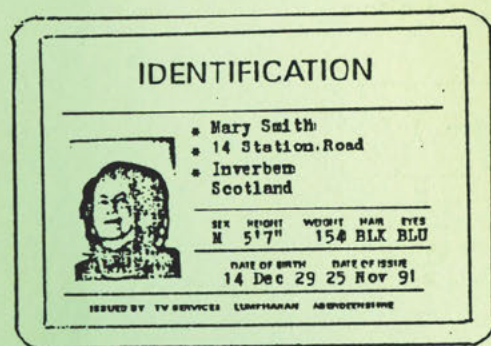
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for the
Gender Community

New Series No. 14

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THE TARTAN SKIRT

The Scottish Magazine for the
Gender Community

Editor: Anne Forrester

New Series No. 14

April 1995

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TRIPPING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

by Nicole [REDACTED]

This article first appeared in the American magazine [REDACTED]. While it is a fascinating personal approach to 'coming out', three points should be made for British readers. Firstly, you must disregard Nicole's first two suggestions about drivers' licenses - they are definitely illegal and could cause you real grief. Always use your legal driving licence, and never try to fool police officers about your true identity if you are ever stopped. Secondly, it really is asking for trouble knowingly to act in a provocative manner towards men who believe you to be a woman. Don't. And thirdly, while the American context envisages travel everywhere by air, within Britain this is probably the least likely mode of transport for most crossdressers, but almost exactly the same points apply to travel by rail, or even by bus or long-distance coach. Finally, in case you don't speak Amerlish (i.e. American English), the following translations may help:

Pants	= Trousers
Pantyhose	= Tights
Pumps	= Court-style shoes
Purse	= Handbag.
Skycap	= Airport baggage porter

Have you ever taken a trip out of town as a female ? Or have you dreamed about it ? Since my own experience is limited to a half dozen or so journeys I do not claim to be a travel expert, but I have been around enough to share some reflections with you. Only in the last couple of years have

I been able to cross dress with any frequency. When I was married my cross dressing was essentially limited to evenings when I was out of town on business, and I would become Nicole in the hotel room and occasionally venture out for a petrified stroll around town. I always fantasized, however, about actually taking a trip as a woman. The fascinating difference is that when dressing around home or going out in your own town you can always quickly scamper home if you are frightened; once you commit to an out-of-town journey, though, you cannot escape your female *persona* until you return. It is sort of like a survival course as a woman, since by necessity you must depend upon your skills as a female to get by.

This is not a discussion on appearance *per se*, but unless you are prepared for gawking and possible harassment, I think it is most important that you get your skills down so that you can pass as a woman without notice. Everyone has their own opinions on this, of course, but I urge you to look at women whom you find attractive and observe how they dress, wear their hair and deport themselves. Invest in at least one first class wig you can blend into your own hair, and learn to style and soften it. Don't be afraid to comb it back off your face; real girls don't hide under a helmet of fake hair. Wear the simple and elegant clothes that real women wear, and skip the frilly stuff and high



collars or you'll look like *Tootsie*. Minimalist makeup will, surprisingly, make you more real and attractive. Practice speaking until you find a feminine voice that you are comfortable with, and then use it. The details are essential, too: simple jewelry, a functional watch, a barett for the hair, properly located and sized breasts, and maybe a hint of cleavage at the neckline. Most of all, know and revel

in the feeling of femininity so that you walk with a sexy spring in your step, smile when people speak to you, and maybe even casually toss your hair and pretend you don't see that handsome businessman admiring you. Hold your shoulders back, your chin up, and be the woman you are.

My most extensive trip was a five day vacation to Boston last fall. The very process of making your reservations is exciting, because you realize that it is for your female side and that if your male counterpart showed up he would be out of character ! And Nicole will soon have enough frequent flyer credits to take a free trip herself.

Packing your things is a bit of a thrill in itself. When travelling as Nicole, I go strictly female and do not take any male clothing or accoutrements. I recommend buying or borrowing an appropriate set of ladies luggage, and marking the identification tags with your female name. All you really need is a hanging bag and one suitcase, and you will draw less attention when your bags are appropriate to your gender. To carry makeup and other personal care items that may be breakable, try a small padded makeup bag to protect them. You would hate to arrive and find that a loose bottle of beige foundation has ruined everything in your suitcase. Be sure to take the basics for a touch-up, such as a hairbrush, lipstick and powder in your purse because, believe me, you will need them after three hours on an airplane. Lugging along several pairs of shoes creates unnecessary bulk and weight. I like to take one pair of flats or other good walking shoes, and wear black pumps because they are so versatile. Remember to take some socks if you plan to do any sightseeing, because you don't want to walk around all day in pantyhose and pumps. I will usually wear a nice business-type dress or suit (think of how you are going to present yourself at the hotel) and carry one other outfit suitable for going out in the evening, a pair of neutral pants and a blouse in the hanging bag, and an extra shirt and sweater in the suitcase. This gives you plenty of versatility. Don't forget to throw in something to

sleep in, too; I usually just toss in an oversized t-shirt. If you are taking any sex toys I recommend putting them in your suitcase so that you don't have to face the prospect of hauling your dildo out of your tote bag at the security checkpoint !

I think it is best to take only one purse, so you want to select something that has enough room to be useful but will not make you look like a bag lady when you go to dinner. You are allowed another piece of carry-on luggage, and a canvas tote is ideal for this. You will really kick yourself if you fail to bring along *Cosmo* or a paperback for the plane ride, as in-flight magazines get pretty boring.

One other pre-flight recommendation if you can get away with it: have your nails done professionally, preferably with something versatile like a French manicure, and in a short to medium functional length. You will be so glad you don't have to fret about a press-on nail popping off as you haul your bags off the luggage carousel. And there are few things that really add the feminine touch better than a beautiful set of nails. You will really feel like the lady you are and be ready to travel. A pair of masculine paws signing the hotel register or accepting change from a store clerk is a dead giveaway.

Today the travel world runs on credit cards, so be prepared with your own. Have them issued with only your initials rather than your first name, or get them in your female name. You will not be able to charge airline tickets, check into a hotel, or rent a car without one. This last business of car rental is especially tricky, since you will be required to produce a valid driver's license. The only ways I know of to deal with this are: (1) invest in a first class fake, but be sure all the information is correct with the exception of the substitution of your female name and sex; (2) find a good female friend who looks sort of like you and will let you borrow hers; or (3) just tell the reservation clerk that you are in the process of transitioning and produce your male

counterpart's license. The third option may cause a little embarrassment but it is the safest, and hey, what do you care what they think anyway ? Personally I do not like to even have my male driver's license with me.



Be sure to make all reservations you need in advance, and that they are in your female name. If you want to see a play or concert, try to order your tickets in advance. I personally like a window seating on the airplane when I am travelling as a woman, because you do not have to constantly get up to let people in and out of their seats. Naturally, before you leave, you need to tell someone you trust where you are going and where you will be staying.

Now you are ready for your exhilarating adventure. The best thing to do, of course, is to have your bags packed and your travelling clothes laid out so that you are not rushing around at the last second. For heaven's sake, do go to the bathroom before you get on the plane so that you don't have to fight that battle. Then imagine your feelings as you slip into your dress and shoes, admire your beautifully manicured hands, fix your hair, and head to the airport for a few glorious days totally immersed in femininity. And once you get on that plane, you know you are committed to being a woman for the duration of your journey.

One of the nice things about travelling as a woman is the courtesy that is shown to you. A skycap will scoot over and ask to take your bags, a gentleman will hold the door for you, and the ticket agent will smile and say "You're at gate 18, ma'am". And a nice looking woman travelling on her own will always attract the attention of the male of the species. Of course, being the slut that I am, I enjoy being checked out and flirted with. It's so provocative to sit on the airplane, let your skirt slide up to mid-thigh and watch the guy in the next seat start adjusting himself as you

politely chat and ignore his arousal like a lady should. Needless to say, of course, you must keep your safety in mind and be careful not to put yourself in a position of true danger. Make sure that you are not being followed into remote areas, and if you think someone is about to bother you do not hesitate to simply ask the nearest gentleman or security officer for an escort. Your best defence is probably just to let your feminine confidence shine through and stay out of bad places, but you must be alert to the hazards that unfortunately go along with being a woman.

Once you reach the airport in your destination city, you should be prepared for ground transportation. I always carry a good supply of one and five dollar bills in the side compartment of my purse when travelling to handle tips, cab fares, *etc.* Don't overlook a quick visit to the ladies' room on arrival to freshen up, especially if it has been windy or if you have eaten on the airplane. Know where you are going and how to get there, because cab drivers will sometimes take advantage of what they believe to be a naive woman. In New York, for example, tell the cabbie, "The Waldorf *via* the Triborough Bridge", or in Boston, know that you can take the water ferry to the Marriott. It is most helpful to study the place you are going to visit beforehand, and talk with people who have lived or traveled there.

It has been my experience that by the time you have reached your destination, you will be so comfortable in your female role that it will be second nature to you. Perhaps it has to do with being in a distant geographical location, or the sense that you have, at least for a while, cut the ties that bind you to your maleness and left all vestiges of that behind you. As for me, at last, I truly become Nicole. I find myself as a woman in a new and challenging environment. I am ready to experience the wonder and sensations of female life, though we must not be so naive as to ignore the hassles of that life as well.

It is best if you have friends with whom you can visit for at least a while, or if you have someone with whom you can travel. If you are travelling with a friend, they must understand that your journey is an experiment in total involvement in your female side and that no remnant whatsoever of your male personality will be present. As you shop, sightsee and play, you will discover a gentle feminine undercurrent in the world. Moms with babies will smile at you when you wait in line; store clerks will chat like old friends; and yes, occasionally men will still offer you a seat on a bus or hold the door for you. On the other hand, you will find that there are unwritten restrictions as well. It is uncomfortable to go out unescorted to some restaurants and nightclubs, and considerations of personal safety are much more significant for women than for men.

Yet to get up each morning completely female, to dress yourself and interact with the world totally as a woman, to prepare yourself in the evening and slip cozily into bed as a female this total immersion of experience allows your woman's heart to swell, your female confidence and pride to grow, and your feminine consciousness to hold sway for a time. Yes, you will be aware of some of the missing male prerogatives of life. But your knowledge and comprehension of the femaleness within you will deepen and you will return home a stronger, more perceptive and understanding human being. ■

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"I'd much rather be a woman than a man. Women can cry, they can wear cute clothes, and they're first to be rescued off sinking ships"

Gilda Radnor

WORDS and DAYS

"Happiness is like potato salad - when you share it with others it's a picnic".

"Just about when you think you can make ends meet, someone moves the ends".

"Be careful how you live - you may be the only Bible some people read".

Birthdays - which is yours ?

Monday's child is fair of face
Tuesday's child is full of grace
Wednesday's child is loving and giving
Thursday's child works hard for a living
Friday's child is full of woe
Saturday's child has far to go
But the child that is born on the Sabbath day
Is brave and bonny, and good and gay

Look ahead

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it yourself"

JoAnn Roberts

SIZE IS RELATIVE

How vital are your statistics ?

If you think that the 'model' female figure to aim at is 36-24-36, think again. The average American woman's 'vital statistics' nowadays are actually 36-29-39.

And do you think you are overweight ?

Did you know that it is not your total body weight that matters, but the percentage of this that is fat ? In Colorado an inventor has now produced a device to measure this. You simply grab a handful of belly fat, put the jaws of the callipers around it and squeeze them closed. You can then compare the measurement recorded with what it *should* be for your age, sex and weight.

And what about your dress size ?

Don't worry too much if you can't get into a size 10 (American 8) dress - or even a 12 or 14. Around 47% of women in Britain are actually size 16 (American 14) or larger; so why not forget those waist-cinchers and just be happy with the way you are ?

And if you are worried about your height -

Well, you need not be. Sandy Allen, a genetic woman, is a secretary from 9 to 5 and lives an ordinary life outside her work - she plays bingo, drives a car, and entertains friends at home. And at 7ft 7½in and 33stone (462 lbs) she is the world's tallest woman and takes a size 58 dress and size 14½ shoes ! And another of Britain's tallest women will soon be a 6ft 7in male-to-female transsexual who is currently awaiting her reassignment surgery. So take heart all of you big guys who wear a dress - there are a lot of big girls around, and some of them are *a lot* bigger than you !

ANDROGYNY RULES, OK ?

by Georgette

I think that I may finally have found the secret of happiness while living a male life and at the same time supporting the woman who is inside me. Basically, my problem has been that I really do feel truly feminine inside, and regard myself as a woman; but I have a life, a job and a family in which I am known as a man. So for long enough I have had the problem of balancing the two sides of my life, and trying not to hurt my family by letting them know of 'the woman inside'. I think that I may now have found the answer.

You see, it is inside myself that I feel a woman, and cross-dressing serves only to reinforce that feeling. I really enjoy putting on a dress, or a blouse and skirt, but it does nothing for me sexually and I am as happy in low heels as in the more uncomfortable high heels that so many crossdressers prefer. But the funny thing is that because I feel like a woman inside, that feeling goes around with me all the time, regardless of how I am dressed or what I am doing.

Looking around me I see many - if not most - women dressed in trousers, denim jeans, sweatshirts, sports jackets, anoraks, heavy boots and thick socks, while the womens' magazines frequently print articles in their fashion sections advising women to go and raid their menfolks' wardrobes for their shirts, collars and ties, and even their suits. Indeed, it is not often these days that you can see a woman in the streets or shopping centres dressed in the stereotypical fashion of dress and high heels - and even when I take my family to the theatre I rarely see a pair of high heels other than on the stage.

So if I really feel like a woman inside, and women commonly dress like men on the outside, why shouldn't I be a woman all the time, no matter whether I am wearing trousers or a skirt ? Of course, I still enjoy the opportunity to cross-dress at the monthly meetings of my local gender group, or when I am alone in the house for a few hours, but I still enjoy feeling like a woman inside for the rest of the time. You see, this is possible because in today's society men and women often wear exactly the same kind of clothes. Indeed, it is funny when I am in a clothes shop to hear some people ask whether an anorak or a sweater is a man's or a woman's - and really there is no difference at all. So if I dress in informal clothes to work in the garden or to go down to the local shops - tee-shirt, jeans and trainers - those clothes may be exactly the same whether I am a man or a woman: it's called androgyny.

Being androgynous means that there is no clear external sign as to whether a person is a man or a woman, and now that men can wear their hair long, and everyday clothes are so often the same, I can easily look like a man on the outside for most of the time, while wearing clothes that are appropriate for either sex, and feeling like a woman on the inside, *all* the time. And of course, I can also look like a woman on the outside as well whenever I have the opportunity to put on some prettier and more specifically feminine clothes.

Now I don't pretend that this is an ideal solution. I would like to dress and live like a woman all the time, but I can't. At the same time I would like to have my family and friends continue to accept me as the man they have always known - but although I am still the same person inside the two things are simply not compatible. So I now know that I can be happy all the time by dressing androgynously for much of it, dressing specifically as a woman whenever I get the opportunity, and feeling like a woman inside for the *whole* of that time. Yes, I really do think that I have finally found the secret of true gender happiness ! ■

WHAT'S THAT WORD ?

- a wander through the alphabet

M is for **Macho**. The dreadful testosterone-induced lifestyle that includes aggression, violence, insensitivity, herd activity and often drunkenness, and that so many men seem to think is right and proper 'manly' behaviour; and which most women find sickening.

N is for **Normal**. Actually there's no such thing. For most people it usually means "having exactly the same appearance, behaviour and beliefs as *me*". The trouble is that this is hardly ever the case - which is why so-called 'normal' individuals are usually even more of a minority than are those who they criticise for being 'different'.

O is for **Orchidectomy**. A surgical operation to remove the testicles or their contents, so removing the body's main source of the male hormone testosterone - in effect, surgical castration. It has a substantial feminising effect, so although mostly used as part of the treatment of prostate cancer it is also much sought after by transsexuals and, if not performed previously, is part of sex reassignment surgery. ☺

Time for tea

"A woman is like a teabag: when she is in hot water she just gets stronger"

Hilary Rodham Clinton

ALL THAT KISSING

You must have noticed how, when they meet friends, women have long had a tendency to kiss one another on the cheek - and now even some men are beginning to follow the habit. It really is a charming sign of friendship, and especially of sisterly greeting. According to a recent survey published in *Harpers and Queen* magazine, however, the popularity of this European-style social kiss is increasing, and it seems that Britons generally are becoming increasingly attached to this delightful habit.

Of course, we have long been aware that Frenchmen (for example) greet other Frenchmen with a kiss on each cheek, but although in Britain it was at one time only close relatives who kissed on greeting this has now spread to a much wider group of people, with the acceptability of kissing everyone one meets on the cheek, from casual friends to new acquaintances. Even royalty and politicians are kissing in public, and (perfectly straight) men are even seen kissing one another as a greeting in restaurants.



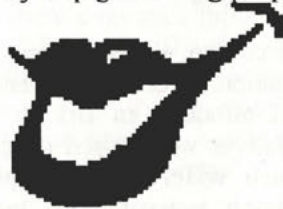
It is suggested that there is a variety of techniques for the social kiss including the wet kiss, as exemplified by the singer Liza

Minelli, politicians Kenneth Clark and Nicholas Soames, and the pop star Elton John. Then there are the kissers who leave their lipstick on your face, such as the novelist Barbara Cartland and the actress Joan Collins (and maybe many of you if you use a plentiful coating of lipstick without a sealer on top). Of course there is also the air kiss (known in America as the Park Avenue Grunt), where the kisser misses your cheek altogether - practitioners including the singer Cher (who is said to have invented it) and the former American first Lady, Nancy Reagan. Serial kissers, who peck your cheek three or more times, include the PLO

leader Yasser Arafat, the tennis star Andre Agassi, and opera singer Luciano Pavarotti. Finally, of course, there are those who will do almost anything to *avoid* kissing, including such diverse characters as Prince Philip, the Queen Mother, Michael Jackson and Arthur Scargill.

If you are a cheek kisser yourself (and it is a charming habit that is at present much more widely spread amongst our American sisters in the gender community than it is in the UK) I guess that a determined sociologist could make something out of which of the above groups you fall into yourself. Do you follow the style of royalty, politics or the stage? Or is this just another way of pigeonholing people?

Personally I prefer to see the greeting kiss as nothing more than a pleasant form of greeting between friends - and especially between females. So if you perceive yourself as a woman inside, present yourself as a woman outside, or just go about your daily business in your male role and cross dress as and when you can, you can still enjoy the pleasure of a truly feminine gesture with an unashamed public kiss on the cheek when greeting friends of either sex. Just forget the fine details of technique and be your own natural self. As one of my collection of button badges says: *Enjoy life: this is NOT a dress rehearsal.*



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Changeable

"The whole thing about women is that they change. We are the changeable sex. Men, poor old things, seem to me to just go on in the same grooves for their whole lives"

Germain Greer

THE SUFFERING BEHIND PREMARIN

by Bonnie Stoehn

Many male→female transgendered people take female hormones, mostly without knowing what they are or where they come from, or how they are produced. Current medical thinking generally prefers the use of ethanyl-oestradiol, a synthetic oestrogen often delivered in the form of patches (e.g. "ESTRADERM™"), but many genetic women as well as transgendered people are still being prescribed *PREMARIN™*, which is prepared from the urine of pregnant mares, and involves a substantial amount of perceived cruelty to the animals. This article, which spells out what is involved and which originally appeared in the Redwings Horse Sanctuary Summer Newsletter, is reproduced with permission from Redwings Horse Sanctuary. If you are interested in the work of the Sanctuary please ring [+44] 01603- [REDACTED] - Ed.



In 1993 approximately 75,000 pregnant mares were confined in stalls measuring 8x3½x7 feet. Virtually all of their foals were killed soon after birth, or sold and sent to slaughter. Some of the fillies were impregnated as soon as possible to follow in their mothers' footsteps. Actually, it should be footstep, as taking one step forward and one backward is all the mares can do in their stalls.

You're probably wondering what obscure backward country would allow such cruelty...and WHY? I'll answer those questions and spare you the horrendous detailed accounts of buildings full of pregnant mares whose only exercise is weaving back and forth, day in and day out, and of the thousands of young frightened foals crammed into cattle trucks and pens. What I would like to ask, before I

go on, is would you be willing to talk to friends, write a letter, or make a phone call to help stop this suffering and slaughter ?

This senseless cruelty is occurring right now because of a Canadian based company called Ayerst Organics, Inc. They are the world's only producer of pregnant mares' urine (PMU) from which an oestrogen substitute PREMARIN™ is extracted. Although other substitutes are available, doctors are still prescribing this drug to women needing oestrogen replacement therapy.



The equine factory farms are located in Canada, particularly in Manitoba, with some also in Dakota, USA. The mares are either catheterised or fitted with a cup and hose to collect their urine which is sold at up to £10 per gallon to Ayerst Organics, Inc.

Approximately 8 Million women are taking PREMARIN™. They have possibly been told about the various side-effects such as increased risk of breast cancer and gall bladder disease. However, there is a direct effect that has been well-hidden...cruelty ! What women may not know is that there is another choice; 100% plant-derived (synthetic) oestrogen replacement is just as effective as PREMARIN™ and the wholesale price is virtually identical. Although prices may vary, there are at least six different alternatives on the market today...ask your doctor.

Women who are sickened to learn about the suffering and the slaughter may also begin questioning the health risks from the impurities associated with putting animal waste into their bodies. In addition, the natural oestrogen from plant-derived substances contains the same ingredients produced by human females while PREMARIN™ does not.

If ever there was an example of education directly stopping equine abuse and slaughter, this is it. If women demand this synthetic plant-based oestrogen replacement instead of PREMARIN™, hundreds of thousands of mares and their foals will be spared.

There is no time to lose. With millions of women entering menopause the PMU industry is gearing up. Canadian government officials were unavailable to comment when I called about the reported £14 million they are giving to Ayerst Organics Inc., toward their £70 million planned facility expansion. As we go to press (in August) 1200, more factory farms have applied to produce PMU.

Unless there is an immediate and overwhelming response from the consumers and the general public the 150,000 plus mares and foals currently caught up in this nightmare will quickly double and triple. I've been in touch with people working behind the scenes and have offered, on behalf of Redwings and our supporters, to give a safe comfortable home at our sanctuary in the US to any mares and/or foals that can be rescued. I'll keep you updated but, in the meantime, the horses need our help.

Many thanks to PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine for supplying facts and figures for this article.



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Inform your doctor of the facts and ask him/her to consider prescribing a cruelty-free alternative to patients requiring oestrogen.
2. Write a letter to your newspaper or womens' magazine explaining how mares' urine is acquired and that there are effective alternatives available.

3. Write to the Manitoba Government - The Honourable Marianne Cerilli, Room 234, Legislative Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8, Canada.

4. Write to the company that produces PREMARIN™ - Robert Essner, President., Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories, PO Box 8299, Philadelphia, PA 19101, USA.



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WORD SEARCH

See if you can find the girls' names in the word search grid below. The names run in straight lines vertically, horizontally or diagonally, in either direction. Some letters are used more than once. However, one of the girls can not be found in the grid. Which one is she? (Answer on page 51).

D	I	A	N	A	N	A	S	U	S	J
A	J	U	D	W	A	O	A	H	A	Q
V	U	A	H	H	T	U	R	U	H	T
I	D	A	C	E	A	O	A	M	R	H
D	I	D	A	Q	N	C	H	B	E	Y
S	T	A	R	A	U	A	N	X	F	R
A	B	L	O	N	W	I	J	F	I	K
R	I	Q	L	E	H	T	E	R	N	G
H	J	G	Y	S	N	X	B	V	N	F
S	A	D	N	I	L	H	T	H	E	W
W	I	N	G	S	A	Y	E	P	J	S

You are looking for:

Carolyn	Jennifer
Diana	Linda
Dorothy	Ruth
Ethel	Sarah
Jacquie	Susan
Jane	



AND HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS !

We are so used to hearing the bad news about that great genderphobic world out there, and all about those morally self-righteous individuals who - all-too-often in the name of 'religion' - seek to stamp out anything that they perceive as 'abnormal'; in other words, anyone who does not think and act precisely like themselves. (Remember all the bigotry that surfaced recently when Parliament discussed lowering the age of consent for male gays in Britain ?). In particular, there has been a lot of worrying news coming out of the USA recently, where the so-called 'religious right' (although there is precious little that is even remotely 'religious' about their actions) are trying every trick in the book to have laws introduced that would make life impossible for the gay and lesbian community and, by implication, for the gender community also. Consequently it was good to hear recently that:

in Colorado voters have defeated an initiative to expand the definition of pornography in a way that would have harassed gay/lesbian bookstores and encouraged "witch hunts" against all gay/lesbian, feminist and other 'alternative lifestyle' materials;

and in Idaho voters defeated (albeit narrowly) an anti-gay rights amendment to their constitution;

and in Oregon a Republican politician, Bill Witt, lost his bid to be elected to office partly because of his connection with the Oregon Citizens' Alliance, which has recently sponsored anti-gay legislation;

while in Wyoming voters have defeated a measure that would have made performing an abortion (except in the case of rape and incest) a felony.

And if you don't see what all of this has to do with you, read on. OK, so WE all know that being transgendered does not mean that you are necessarily gay - but just try

explaining the difference to any of these bigots and see if you get anywhere. You must be aware that those sponsoring anti-gay and anti-feminist measures regard gender diversity as synonymous with homosexuality, and therefore something to be outlawed. To them, we are all part of the same sinful community. Indeed, currently there is even a move in the United States to shut down the Public Broadcasting Service, because from time to time it shows programmes about homosexuality and other alternative lifestyles: and if that isn't censorship in the name of bigotry I don't know what is. Such things spread, and if these people ever win, then *your* transgendered lifestyle will become impossible too.

So be wary of those who spout their own morality. As someone once said: "*Morality is the last refuge of the hypocrit*".

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GENDER: SOCIAL CONSTRUCT OR BIOLOGICAL REALITY ?

The following item (slightly edited to tidy up the 'computerese') was plucked off the Internet, and goes to show that the problem of 'labels' just will not go away - Ed.

I have developed an approach that regards "Male" and "Female" as purely biological labels which refer only to an individual's genetic code (*i.e.* xy = male, xx = female: any other combination must be addressed in terms of its physiological consequences). The terms "Masculine" and "Feminine", on the other hand, refer purely to patterns of sociological and cultural bias, and vary to a great degree from culture to culture. "Masculine" and "Feminine" are arbitrary linguistic structures, and as such have no intrinsic value. They function simply as containers for the cultural definition of behaviour in the social role, what is acceptable and unacceptable public behaviour, *etc.*

The labels "Man" and "Woman" should therefore be seen simply as linguistic tags that point to perceived gender (that is, as perceived by the other person) in a cultural context. If we can accept these definitions then we can say that a genetic male can be a woman and *vice versa*. It has always bothered me that the surgical process is referred to as a "sex change", when in reality it is simply a psychological and aesthetic process to align the outward appearance with the (self-) perceived inner gender. One can not change one's sex as this is determined genetically. One can, however, change one's perceived social role.

Good luck
Your Sister in the Goddess, Dyan

Blessed Be

PICK YOURSELF A NAME

Each New Year *The Times* publishes a list of the top ten most popular names, according to the birth announcements in their columns for the past year. If you are seeking a suitable *femme* name for yourself and want to appear up to date you could do worse than pick one from this list - or if you are of more mature years, perhaps one from the list of a century ago. For 1994 (and 1894) the most popular girls names were:

1994	1894
Sophie	<i>Florence</i>
Alice	<i>Mary</i>
Catherine	<i>Alice</i>
Lucy	<i>Annie</i>
Olivia	<i>Elsie</i>
Alexandra	<i>Edith</i>
Emily	<i>Elizabeth</i>
Isobel	<i>Doris</i>
Eleanor	<i>Dorothy</i>
Charlotte	<i>Ethel</i>

If you are going in the opposite direction, for the benefit of our F→M brothers the top ten boys names were:

Thomas	<i>William</i>
James	<i>John</i>
Alexander	<i>George</i>
William	<i>Thomas</i>
Charles	<i>Charles</i>
Oliver	<i>Frederick</i>
George	<i>Arthur</i>
Edward	<i>James</i>
Henry	<i>Albert</i>
Harry	<i>Ernest</i>

Of course these lists represent generation rather than gender preferences, and the choice of boys' names seem to show more than a hint of a 'let's copy the Royals' spirit. But it's interesting to note that despite the similarity in the two lists of boys names, a century apart, Alice is the only girls name to appear in both lists - and I don't know many Alices in the gender community - while many other girls' names that are popular amongst us don't appear in either list. I guess it all goes to show that we are all just a bunch of individualists, as we knew all along!

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THE WAY WE WERE
We take an affectionate look at the past through the pages of Woman's Weekly

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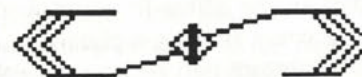
"PERVERTS" - SO THAT'S WHAT THEY REALLY THINK OF US

In an article in *best* magazine recently, discussing adverts that upset some people, one of the adverts shown was advertising Pirelli tyres and showed a muscular athlete in a starting position, but wearing a pair of red high heel shoes - you have probably all seen it. The advertiser's point was that if you are going to drive, you must do so with the right kind of contact with the road for the job.

However, in a column alongside in which the magazine's readers were asked for their comments on the adverts the top place went to a genetic woman whose comment was "Yuk! That's what I think of the Pirelli ad. I just don't like anything to do with men wearing women's clothing. That's for perverts isn't it?"

OK, so she was expressing an ignorant, narrow-minded, bigoted and outright sexist view. (I wonder if she has ever worn trousers - or is it that what's sauce for the gander is definitely *not* sauce for the goose?). However, it serves to remind us that this is precisely what very many people do think about crossdressing - "that's for perverts isn't it?".

This comment appeared in a women's magazine that is normally very informative and sympathetic about gender issues, so we need not expect to find anything more accepting in society at large. There is still an awfully long way to go.



THE END OF THE GENDER DYSPHORIA TRUST

WHAT WENT WRONG - AND WHY

by Fran Springfield

Following the publication in issue 13 of *The Tartan Skirt* of an Open Letter to all Gender Groups, the Gender Dysphoria Trust International (GDTI) was sadly forced to cease existence. This was for two main reasons, the first being finance and the second being a lack of volunteers able and willing to be involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation.

Throughout the whole history, first of SHAFT (the Self Help Association For Transsexuals) then GDT and GDTI, it was only possible to keep running because who ever was running the group very generously put their hand in their pocket and paid many of the bills themselves. During the time the organisation was run from various peoples homes no expenses were claimed for light heat, electricity *etc.* When we had offices these could only be financed because of the personal generosity of Directors. In the last six months alone of GDTI's existence two directors personally put in approximately £1000 to ensure its survival at a time when we were forced, by circumstances beyond our control, to move offices very rapidly, having been badly let down by a volunteer.

To enable GDTI to run properly and provide the service it should to subscribers and enquirers needed the equivalent of 2.5 full-time staff in the office to cover working hours and not taking into account running a phonenumber at evenings and weekends. An important part of my own role involved media and public relations, which often involved much

travelling around the UK promoting a positive and accurate image of transsexuality. This inevitably took me away from base, where I was a vital cog in the wheel, and meant that my absence left the office under-resourced.

I must also place on record that the lack of inter-group co-operation south of the Border did not help our cause. Our details had previously always been published in other Gender Groups' magazines and leaflets. When this stopped in some significant places a few years ago, without any reasonable explanation, many people were denied the opportunity of finding out about us. This, combined with what at times appeared to be almost a campaign of misinformation about us and our status, eventually eroded our membership base to the point where we were no longer viable. We had a strong Regional support structure, but not the financial capital to be involved in pro-active promotion.

All in all it was a very hard decision to take, and one which required much heart searching, but eventually there was no alternative. I had dedicated the last 5½ years of my life, as a (non-transsexual) genetic female, to running an organisation for transsexuals, and at times I received much criticism for my situation. Indeed, I asked the Board of Directors if I should resign because I was not TS, and was told very firmly no; they, and many others, supported me fully right to the end.

This whole experience has taught me two things: i) I never want to be involved as a leader in a membership-based organisation again, but ii) that I do want to continue working with the whole transgender community. Hence I have decided to set up Gender Identity Consultancy Services, which will be a professionally-run resource centre providing information, publications, counselling and referrals for all those who have issues of gender identity. If anyone wishes to contact me for more information please write to: BM Box 5434, London WC1N 3XX, or phone [+44] (0)1323 [REDACTED].



HAVE YOU READ ?

Some Books Reviewed

Just Julia by Julia Grant. London: Boxtree. 1994. ISBN 1-85283-481-1. £ 6.99.

"In 1980 George Roberts took the biggest step of his life. He became Julia Grant". Well, that piece of the cover 'blurb' for this autobiography sets the scene for a story with which a lot of people became familiar through a BBC television film made at the time, and a recent 'follow-up' film bringing the story up to date. However, don't be misled into thinking that this is simply the life story of a typical transsexual: it isn't. Indeed, any transsexual facing the problem of 'coming out' to their family and explaining just what transsexualism is all about would probably be well advised to make sure that they do *not* get their hands on this book.

Julia Grant certainly has a high profile public image as a transsexual in Britain today; but like a few other high profile transsexuals whose stories have been published, her life has not been the sort of model that any of us would wish to emulate. Basically, before her reassignment surgery Julia's life was one of sexual abuse as a child followed by a career of prostitution and crime, doing great harm to a great many people along the way, and paying for some of it with periods in prison.

Julia does not say exactly when she was born but it was around 1954 and she was brought up in Fleetwood, Lancs, the oldest of eight children all born within a 10-year period. Her father was a fisherman, often not at home and a drunken bully and sexual abuser when he was. Her mother simply couldn't cope and was herself a prostitute. The

young George soon turned to homosexual prostitution and a life of crime that is best glossed over - although this occupies almost three quarters of the book, often in quite nauseating, almost pornographic, detail. (Which is why I would not recommend it for anyone's family as a window on cross-dressing or transsexualism). Introduced to cross-dressing by a friend, George gradually found both that he felt happier when dressed as a woman, and also that he could make money as a flamboyant drag artist, given his very extrovert personality. Finally he decided that he really should have been born a woman, and despite his sordid criminal history eventually obtained reassignment surgery.

Sadly, things then went drastically wrong and due to a mistake in the treatment of a medical emergency Julia's surgery was effectively ruined. Since that time she has fought to make a new life as a woman, combining a business in ceramics with continuing her outrageous - and distinctly 'blue' - show business activities.

Personally I found the large proportion of the book that is devoted in such detail to Julia's earlier homosexual and criminal activities too much to stomach - especially in view of the very small amount of space and detail actually devoted to her transsexualism. This is most certainly *not* a book that describes what someone who believes themselves to be transsexual might expect to experience; and it is in no way even remotely typical of any one of the very many transsexuals known to me. It is without doubt a very sad story, and one can only sympathise with Julia over her very traumatic life. However, I would suggest reading this book only if you are interested in homosexual or criminal lifestyles or wish to empathise with someone who has seen the very depths of life in a so-called civilised country.

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CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

Dear Anne

Erin [REDACTED]' article in issue 13 of *The Tartan Skirt* ("The sex-change operation: to have it or not?", p40) raises some issues that really need to be addressed. There seem to be a number of concerns in her mind, both about presentation and visibility, as well as about counselling, that I feel must be answered.

Anne Forrester quite rightly pointed out in her article "Gender, Job or Generation" in the same issue (p 8) that the approach of those who wish to be 'read' (dreadful word) is indeed counter-productive. Others may still be trying to find out just how society accepts them and - perhaps because of previous bad experiences - decide to tell before being found out. So often this is totally unnecessary, but until more confidence is gained it is a useful 'prop' which eventually can be done away with. However, that can take time, and if Kim's friend (to whom Erin referred) does not have such a wide variety of opportunities as some others in the gender community to get out and mix in the big world, it may take her a longer time to adjust.

On the other hand I have been out with transsexuals who have mis-interpreted the signs, saying that they have been 'read' when in fact, because they may be dressed a little more smartly than their fellow shoppers, they have been 'noticed' - but that has been as stylish women and not as transsexuals. I don't think it is a case of Kim's friend not coming to terms with what she has done, but maybe needing

a little help getting there. Gender reassignment surgery is a de-stabilising and traumatic process for many, at a time when they are trying to prove to the 'gatekeepers' (i.e. their psychiatrists) that they are in fact stable and suitable for surgery.

Which brings me to my next point. I firmly believe that ALL those requesting gender reassignment surgery should have extensive counselling, both before and during the process. The psychiatrist's job is to 'monitor' ones progress. This does not involve counselling, nor should it, for psychiatrists are not trained counsellors. Counselling is best undertaken by those experienced and specifically qualified in gender issues; and that does not necessarily mean those who have been through the process themselves.

I have met a number of transsexuals who feel that by virtue of having had an operation they are now supremely qualified to advise others on the subject. That is NOT what counselling is all about. Counselling is about enabling a person to find the solution that is best for him or her. What is right for one person may not be right for someone else. Those who have found their own solutions often are too keen to extol them, even to the extent of blocking out all other possibilities.

I do not know of a single transsexual - and I have probably met over 500, some 200 of whom are post operative - who has gone through their transition without any problems. It is how they overcome those difficulties that counts. Anyone who says they have not had problems is not only deluding others, but themselves as well. I would venture to suggest that transsexuals are rather too close to the dilemmas of gender dysphoria to be able to assist others in the same situation. After all, you wouldn't require your doctor to have had appendicitis to be able to diagnose and treat yours, nor a surgeon to have had his own appendix removed before removing yours!

As for counselling of post-op transsexuals, many people do find it extremely helpful, not because they have made a mistake - far from it - but because they have needed some help to come to terms with the inevitable changes that are now occurring in their lives; just as it would be for those who are not transsexual.

I would agree that such counselling is virtually non-existent - certainly most gender information centres do not seem to provide any form of after-care, and to my mind that is scandalous. Yes, let's have good counselling - not to do so could be damaging to your future health and wealth - but let it be by counsellors chosen for their empathy, training and knowledge, and not just by virtue of their own personal experience.

Yours truly
Sarah [REDACTED]



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COMMUNICATION ? *

by Shannon May [REDACTED]

Years ago (early Jurassic) I was lucky and worked as a part-time secretary for several years. My co-workers accepted me as a female and I became friends with many of them. As far as I know, no one knew my secret (at least they never let on). Anyway, the reason I am telling you this is because I learned something about communication that I would like to share with you.

There are three types of information that we communicate: facts, negative feelings, and positive feelings. Both types of feelings can be communicated verbally or non-verbally, but facts are conveyed only verbally. Facts do not contribute to a relationship between individuals. Negative feelings degrade or destroy a relationship. Of the three, only shared positive feelings really tend to build a relationship between individuals. I learned that there are three very different modes of communication in our society: female-female, male-male, and between the sexes. The primary type of information that is conveyed differs between the modes.

Typically, men can communicate facts and negative feelings with other men, but they seem unable to share positive feelings. Often, the only time men share feelings is under extremely stressful situations. Men seem to build fortresses around themselves at an early age. They develop defenses and offenses that interfere with their ability to share feelings with other males. Men often perceive the expression of feelings (especially towards another male) as a sign of weakness. As a result, many men become insulated from their own feelings and may not understand them. I believe that the intolerance for gays and crossdressers expressed by many men stems from the fact that they have not explored and understood their own

feelings. Their true feelings are locked in the basement and it's scary down there. What if they find out that they are not so different from the people they look down upon? Horrors!

Females, on the other hand, usually tend to share their feelings with each other. Women rarely dominate their discussions with facts and usually do not directly express negative feelings. As a result women can form intimate, but non-sexual, bonds with other females. Men, however, rarely experience this type of bonding with each other. Because they express their feelings, women are generally able to explore and be in touch with their inner feelings. I personally found the female mode of communication to be much more stimulating and substantive than the male mode. I also feel that it is a more healthy approach.

*There are two cultures, male and female,
existing side by side with very little
overlap in communication*

The upshot of all this is that there are two cultures, male and female, existing side by side with very little overlap in communication. The primary mode of communication between these two cultures is sexual, which is entirely different from either the male-to-male or female-to-female modes. Because the two cultures communicate differently, some inherent problems between the sexes may be fuelled by misunderstandings that arise from poor communication. For example, when I worked as a woman I experienced something that occurs frequently with many women: my opinions or ideas were shunted aside and initially dismissed by a man but later resurrected as *his* ideas. In the presence of male co-workers (not to mention bosses!) I felt as if I were being forced into a subservient role. The natural male perception that anyone who communicates feelings is weak and therefore not important may cause or aggravate the

problem. When women do not directly express their negative feelings they reinforce the perception of weakness.

It seems that gender cues may play a role in the mode of communication. I have several female friends with whom I interact in my female role. Unlike my previous situation, these women know me in both roles. I have found that we communicate differently depending upon how I present myself. When I am in my female role I am again able to enjoy the female mode of communication. However, in my male role the communication is more guarded and less intimate. My friends have told me that it is easier to communicate with someone who appears and acts female. I'm also sure that a large part of the difference is because I am naturally more open in my female role.

If I am right, being gender-blurred is a blessing. I feel that many crossdressers are learning to develop all three modes of communication. I have observed and experienced a curious mix of female-female, male-male and male-female modes of conversation between crossdressers. Through the female mode of communication many of us have developed intimate non-sexual bonds with each other (something that other males rarely experience). We have the potential to enjoy all levels of communication which the separate sexes do not. If we become more adept at communication, perhaps we can help our less fortunate brethren overcome some of their difficulties. In the process we can help heal ourselves and feel pride in what we do.

* Reprinted from [REDACTED]



MARRIAGE FOR TRANSSEXUALS IS NOW LEGAL

- IN NEW ZEALAND

As in Britain, transsexuals in New Zealand can not have the 'sex' entry on their birth certificates altered (and, unlike Britain, not even that on their Passports - although the Immigration Dept. usually put a 'dash' in the 'Sex box'). However, the current Registrar of Marriages - a genetic woman - after being lobbied by local transgendered support groups applied recently to the High Court for a ruling on the question of marriage for transsexuals. The following report from the New Zealand Press Association subsequently appeared in New Zealand newspapers.

"Men and women who have had surgical or medical sex changes may marry as if they had been born men or women, after a ruling by the High Court at Wellington on Wednesday. Justice Ellis said in a judgement that there was no legal impediment to a man who had become a woman marrying a man, or to a woman who had become a man marrying a woman.

'Once a transsexual has undergone surgery, he or she is no longer able to operate in his or her original sex. There is no social advantage in the law not recognising the validity of the marriage of a transsexual in the sex of reassignment. It would merely confirm the factual reality' he said. 'If the law insisted genetic gender was the pre-determinant for a marriage, then a man who dressed as a woman could marry a woman, and a woman who dressed as a man could marry a man'.

The judgement followed an application from the Registrar of Marriages for a declaration on whether two people of the same sex may be married legally if one of them has changed their sex.

Justice Ellis said some people had a compelling desire to be recognised and to behave as people of the opposite sex. 'If society allows such people to undergo therapy and surgery to fulfill that desire, then it ought also to allow such persons to function as fully as possible in their reassigned sex, and this must include the capacity to marry. The ability to have children was not an essential part of marriage, neither was the ability to have sexual intercourse. In my view, the law of New Zealand has changed to recognise a shift away from sexual activity and more emphasis being placed on psychological and social aspects of sex, sometimes referred to as gender issues', Justice Ellis said".



As New Zealand law is modelled closely on British law we may now wonder if a case could be made in Britain for this judgement to be considered as case law, overturning the previous - outdated and nonsensical - ruling in the case of April Ashley, which has been cited ever since as the reason for the present discrimination against transsexuals who simply wish to get on with living fulfilled lives in their true gender.

Meantime, it is interesting to note that a) marriage between a transsexual and a person of the same original genetic sex (e.g. a male→female transsexual and a genetic male) is legal in Barbados, provided that the original birth certificate and a letter from the surgeon who performed the operation, certifying the change of anatomical sex, are produced: and b) valid marriages performed in Barbados are recognised as valid in Britain. More about all of this - and the situation in America - in our next issue - AF ■

WHAT DO CROSSDRESSERS WANT ?*

by Paul K.

"Ach ! Crossdressers ! Voi do dey want ?"
(with apologies to Sigmund Freud)

What do crossdressers want ? Crossdressing is such an individual thing, all of us coming from different places, all spending time alone, that it would seem impossible to define anything that all crossdressers, TV or TS, male or female, gay or straight, or anything else, want. While there are many things each of us uniquely desires, there are some desires we share.

Crossdressers want :

Acceptance. They need to do something that isn't societally acceptable, and because of that have spent many years trying to deny their needs. They need to feel that the needs they have are OK, that they will be accepted no matter what they need to do, as long as it doesn't harm anyone else.

Affirmation. Because they have this deep secret, they feel that there is something wrong with them. They know that they are a good person, but a voice inside tells them that they are somehow less than normal. Crossdressers need to feel the affirmation that they are good and lovable.

Approval. When you do something, it's nice to have others approve of it. Comments like "You look great !" or "You do that well !" are fabulous to hear. We all love positive feedback, and we, in our closeted existence, often don't get to hear the good approving comments of others.

Affection. It's great to be liked, and we need the affection of others to keep going. The affection that others give you, even when they know the deepest darkest secrets of your soul is very special. That kind of unconditional affection makes us feel whole and happy.

Fun. People have fun when their daily cares drop away, and we focus on a pleasurable activity. These activities include, but are not limited to, eating, dancing, talking, dressing, or even sex. Crossdressers want to see their dressing as a fun activity, as far away from their everyday cares, focused and enjoyable. Dressing up and partying should be fun, and things are always more fun when we can share them.

While we may all have other needs, ranging from expressing our true gender to making political statements, if we can get acceptance of our need to dress, affirmation of ourselves as a lovable person, approval of our actions, the affection of others who know that we crossdress, and get a little fun, most of us will be happy people.

* Reprinted from Cross-Talk (Woodland Hills, Ca, USA), #58



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER*

by Dina Amberle

One of the great challenges we face as crossdressers is dealing with the non-crossdressing public. And the reason dealing with the general population is so difficult is because of the misperceptions others have about us. But misperceptions are not a complaint exclusive to crossdressers.

Recently I was in a restaurant (not cross-dressed) when a half dozen men and women bikers came in and sat at a nearby table. They stood out from the ordinary crowd and I caught myself wondering why anyone would want to adopt an appearance that so many people find threatening. I had to laugh at my own prejudice. A crossdresser should be the last person to judge someone based on external appearances. The bikers were there for hamburgers and beer just like everyone else; their behavior, if not their dress, was no different than any 'normal' customer.

A recent job development allowed me to see a co-worker's Masonic Fraternal group's newsletter. Perusing the photos of the grand potentates and candid photos of the lodge activities also made me wonder what prompts men to engage in such a ritualistic and regimented form of socialization. Again, I had to remind myself to imagine what the brotherhood might have to say about a roomful of male crossdressers.

And in another recent instance, outside a fetish fashion convention one member of the general population was overheard to declare about the outlandishly dressed convention-goers, "these people are weird". Weirdness, however, did not keep her and her friends from staring for a good long while. Like many misunderstood groups, the

fetish fashion lovers are intelligent and interesting people, who incidentally enjoy bizarre clothing.

We all have some prejudices that flare up from first impressions. Those prejudices can be overcome by maintaining an open mind about others, despite stereotypes. To a crossdresser, a villainous-looking biker may seem weird; the biker may think a group of middle-aged men wearing fezzes looks weird; and almost anyone might think a man in a rubber bodysuit and gas mask is a weird-looking thing indeed.



One definition of *weird* is: "of strange or extraordinary character". So maybe people who enjoy different forms of expression are weird in the literal sense of the word. Maybe crossdressers are weird, too...not that there's anything wrong with that.

* Reprinted, with permission, from
Renaissance News & Views, January 1995.



GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES

(even when it is a wig !)

You know the old saying "Gentlemen prefer blondes" ? As the title of a film starring the (peroxide) blonde Marilyn Monroe it has become almost an article of faith with men everywhere. Well, you may not be surprised to learn that it is true - even when the blonde hair is simply a wig. So how do we know this ? Well, quite simply from an experiment.

Margaret Morrison, a (genetic woman) journalist who works for a womens' magazine is an attractive raven-haired lady who describes her hair as "dramatically dark, thick and shiny". However, she wondered why there were so many blondes working around her when she moved to London, and set out to find why so many ladies seem to take to the (peroxide) bottle or to the wig supplier. So she spent a day in the City of London, going around with her usual dark bob and red lipstick and observing the reactions of the men around her, while a photographer trailed discretely behind, also observing the mens' reactions. She then repeated her travels the next day only this time wearing a curly light blonde wig and softer makeup.

Now Margaret is, by any standards, a very attractive lady, but she reported that while going around as a brunette she was virtually unnoticed, received no help when she tried looking lost, and was ignored by business men eating picnic lunches in the sunshine outside their offices. However, when appearing as a somewhat obvious 'dizzy blonde' the next day things were very different indeed. Taxi drivers chatted her up, men could not have been more helpful when she looked lost, and she described the reactions of the lunching business men as "about as subtle as a peroxide perm", while a group of building workers even called their mates to come and look.

Now as a genetic woman Margaret's reaction was deep disappointment that what she called "a tangle of artificial fibre" should have had such an effect on mens' reactions to her. More seriously, however, the reactions to the blonde *persona* would be seen by most women as unwanted and threatening. Margaret's own comment was that "after a day as a blonde I knew one thing for certain: in some men's eyes, being blonde made me fair game. That's just not my idea of fun".

Of course, there is a moral in all of this for all of us. Anyone who cross-dresses and wears a wig, whether they cross-dress for fun or because they are living a real female life-style, has (within certain limits) a choice as to whether they will be blonde, brunette or red-head. As long as the wig chosen does not clash with your skin colour, age and general appearance you can be whatever you want to be. However, if you are contemplating going out and about while dressed *en femme*, and if being blonde really does attract the sort of attention that Margaret Morrison experienced, then you may want to think seriously if that is what you really want.

How you appear in private - whether in your own bedroom or at a support group meeting - is, of course, entirely up to you. However, if you are going out onto the street and into the shops, then stop to consider not only what looks good on you but also whether you want to attract attention and wolf whistles from the male population or simply want to sink into the woodwork of the passing crowds. Indeed, even if you are out 'on the town' at night, do consider whether you want to be 'picked up' in a bar or disco because you're blonde and therefore seen as 'fair game', and if you could then handle it if things go too far.

Of course, if you get your wigs from a reputable supplier to the gender community - and there are several (one of whom advertises regularly in *The Tarian Skirt*, see page 2) - then you will be certain to get some good advice as to the

colour and style of hairpiece that suits you best. But if blondes bring out the beast in men, then do think twice if you are not naturally blonde and want to become one. Goldie Hawn, Barbara Windsor and Jerry Hall are all blonde naturally, and it suits them; Marilyn Monroe, Paula Yates and Madonna all 'dyed' to be blonde, and although it has not hurt their professional reputations any they do have a somewhat different type of reputation.

I guess that if you are not in line with the naturally blonde ladies then only you can decide if you want to be another Madonna, or simply remain like the majority of genetic women out there, and be able to go around without attracting unwanted attention simply because of your hair.



THE TALE OF THE HOMELESS TV

"It's an outrage" shouted Ms Lindsay Dawson, formerly assistant director of a shelter for the homeless in Alexandria, Virginia. So what had fired her up so much? Well, she had just been sacked for telling the local newspaper all about a male "transvestite" who had been allowed to sleep and shower in the womens' section of the shelter, despite the protests of some of the female residents. The assistant director had been away from the shelter when the 5'7" cross-dressed genetic male had arrived, "dressed like a woman". Apparently this "gender bender" was taking hormones and had developed breasts, but still had his male genitalia, as well as "big hands and feet", and had seemingly arrived complete with a 5 o'clock shadow showing through his makeup.

Now whether the unfortunate (and homeless) cross-gendered individual was actually a pre-operative transsexual, a transgenderist or a simple crossdresser is not known, although he is said to have told the other women in the shelter that he was "going to have a sex-change operation"; but even so his presence in the womens' quarters clearly caused some alarm. He had seemingly told the director of the shelter that he saw himself as a woman (and apparently he was living as one) and so had "special needs". Despite this, on her return the assistant director "immediately complained...(and) demanded" that the "transvestite" be removed to the men's section".

Somehow the local newspaper found out about the situation and Lindsay Dawson and another worker at the shelter (a man this time) confirmed the details for them - and were then sacked for "a breach of the privacy of the person" staying in the shelter. The so-called "transvestite" was later moved to a local mental facility, although again it is not clear from the newspaper reports whether he was truly in

need of mental health care, or was simply being 'dumped' by society to remove the embarrassment of having to face up to gender dysphoria.

One may well smile (rather wryly) at the style of the report of this incident, which carried the headline "Director of homeless shelter lets transvestite move in with the women" (and the sub-heading "...then he fires 2 staffers who blew the whistle on him"). But underneath this there is a really tragic story. If the poor genderist was taking hormones he had presumably been seen by at least one health care professional, and unless he was really mentally ill he would not have been living completely as a woman unless he was genuinely suffering from gender dysphoria.

What comes out of this rather sad report is what we all privately know to be true - that there are still an awful lot of cold-hearted and unsympathetic bigots out there who, despite being in occupations where they are supposed to care for the less fortunate amongst us, show about as much sympathy and concern for anyone who is 'different' as the spider shows for the fly. It also demonstrates (yet again, as if we didn't see and hear it every day) that nobody recognises, let alone understands, the difference between sex and gender. The only (slight) consolation for those of us in Britain is that it happened three and a half thousand miles away, on the other side of the Atlantic. But don't get too blasé: it could happen (and probably has) here. And any one of us could be the next victim, if not in a shelter for the homeless then in a hospital, hotel, social club, or anywhere else that we may enter while cross-dressed and/or taking hormones, and whether or not we are truly transsexual. Be warned (or reminded) - there are still an awful lot of mindless bigots out there just waiting to make trouble for everyone who is not just like them! ♂♀



ACROSS THE POND



- A SPECIAL VISIT TO AMERICA

By Anne Forrester

No, you are not mis-reading the heading to this item. It was a *special* visit to America, and it is *Anne* writing, not Bonnie. As regular readers will know, Bonnie Lynne [REDACTED], who usually writes our 'Letter from America', has taken a break as she has been away getting her sex reassignment surgery, and is now recuperating. As I went 'across the pond' to be with my dear sister for this major landmark in her life (beautifully scheduled for St. Valentine's day) I thought that a note about the visit may fill in until Bonnie is fully recovered and about again, and able to produce her next column.

Dr Eugene Schrang is one of the world's leading reassignment surgeons, but he practices in northern Wisconsin, up by the Great Lakes - and Wisconsin in February is *COLD*. (The day we arrived, taking wind-chill factor into account the temperature was around -104°C !). So if you plan a similar trip to these parts during the winter months, take plenty of warm clothing. Forget skirts and heels and take slacks, leggings, scarves, gloves, winter coats and boots !

The Theda Clark Regional Medical Center in Neenah, where the surgery is performed, is an extremely well equipped hospital with a quite wonderful nursing staff on the surgical unit. They accept Dr Schrang's transsexual patients completely as women from start to finish, treat them with total professionalism and wonderful kindness,

and make everyone most welcome. I have worked in hospitals all my life, as well as having been a patient myself in both American and British hospitals, and I have never known patients to receive more professional, more helpful or friendlier treatment.

I will leave the technicalities of the surgery aside, as Bonnie will be telling her own story in a future 'Across the Pond' article, but after being beside her bed for the whole nine days that she was in hospital I do have a few observations that may help others going for reassignment surgery. Firstly, if at all possible **take a companion with you**. It can be very lonely and scary for anyone on their own, and I was glad that I could each day visit with another TS who was in the hospital on her own for her surgery at the same time as Bonnie. Secondly, **don't even think of being discharged and travelling home on your own**. This operation is *major* surgery, and no matter how well things go, after 10 days you will be weaker than any kitten, and quite unable to handle luggage and the hassle of travelling on your own. Third, don't go dressed as for a party or for smart shopping. **Take as little luggage as possible and wear loose and comfortable clothes throughout** - slacks, sweater or tee-shirt and slip-on flat shoes are ideal. Finally, unless you live within spitting distance of the hospital **don't aim to travel straight home the day you are discharged**. Arrange to stay in a hotel near to the hospital for another two or three days, both to give yourself the extra time to recuperate before the journey, and also in case of any unforeseen complication arising with your wound site. Remember, you will be as weak as a baby and will probably hurt like hell !

Make no mistake, SRS is *major* surgery, and the fact that your psychiatrist and your surgeon have both accepted you for it does not mean that you will sail through it without problems. Get psyched up for a tough time, and you will probably find things a lot easier. It is the apparently simple things that can make life uncomfortable - like laying flat on

your back for the better part of a week, with a catheter in place; like trying to eat hospital food when you feel like death warmed up; like having to shave any facial hair remaining after electrolysis, while in a womens ward; like wearing uncomfortable pressure stockings for a week to prevent thrombosis while you are bed-bound; like accepting the very intimate nursing care of your genital area, when you can't even see what it looks like. (Of course, if you are having surgery in a country other than Britain or the USA you will probably have language problems to cope with as well). And then there are the things after surgery like regular dilation, douching, and the irritation of pubic hair re-growing as stubble. No doubt Bonnie will have quite a bit to say about all of these - and other - related irritants.

I had to come home and leave Bonnie a week after her discharge from hospital, by when she was well on the road to recovery, and we have since talked on the phone when she has confirmed that all is going well. So when all is said and done, there is a great sense of relief when one finally becomes externally what one has always been inside. **Yes, it is well worth all the pain, discomfort and hassle.**

(Postscript: During our stay in Wisconsin another [post-op] TS came back to the hospital for a labioplasty, as day surgery. This lucky lady was accompanied and supported by both her parents, who had even paid for the labioplasty as well as for the whole of her reassignment surgery. Now *that's* what I call *real* support. If only we could all be that fortunate !).

WORD SEARCH

The name missing from the word search grid on page 21 is **DOROTHY**.

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