

Special:

Making
Love
Last
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The Sweetheart Connection

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Tri-Ess

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Nov. 10-14

Houston TX

Dignity Cruise #11

Nov. 14-21

S.P.I.C.E.

VIII

July 12-16,

2000

Houston, Texas

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MOVING FROM THE WILDERNESS TOWARD THE 2000 SPICE ODYSSEY

by Dr. Peggy Rudd

Everywhere I looked at SPICE VII there were people learning to: *hold tenaciously to hope, take advice, be unselfish, keep on trying, practice consideration for others, think before acting, profit by mistakes, forgive and forget, accept the responsibility for self-improvement, and commit to lasting relationships.*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND THE REAL FOOD

Hope filled the air! I saw smiles and happy people. Hugs became the expected norm. But the satisfaction went beyond personal growth and into the banquets room where the comments were, "This food is WAYtoo good! There has been no rubber chicken at this conference." It's easy to smile when you have good food for the spirit and the body. My fondest memory is of Kim and Doug, who assisted Beta Gamma volunteers

for the conference. The fudge they brought for the hospitality room was the best ever, and their homemade bread seemed reminiscent of a by-gone era when people did special favors for their friends. Move over Martha Stewart. Kim and Doug are moving in.

There was a serious side, too. As we progressed through the programs I heard, "Wow! What a conference! I'm learning to be a better person and a better life partner. I'm going home with a new appreciation of my spouse." Another participant said, "As in the case of each SPICE, I'm returning home with new skills. It's a wonderful feeling to know that I am not alone. It's so rewarding to interact with other people who face the same joys as well as the same challenges."

NOW ...

ON TO HOUSTON!

While we have the momentum high and our focus

Rudd(Continued on page 4)

Thoughts on S.P.I.C.E. VII

by Karen F.

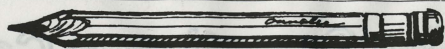
You could not help going home from SPICE VII in Minneapolis without H.O.P.E. in your heart, with Peggy Rudd as the coach and Lee as our cheerleader at the Saturday night banquet. Every SPICE I have attended, (and I've only been to two so far), seems to have its own overall theme and mood. I believe this year's conference was attended by open and honest people who were so down to earth and a lot of fun mixed in with hard work and lots of skills to improve our relationships. I believe each individual can get something special from each SPICE they attend.

My individual Chapter in Orlando offered a scholarship to cover expenses for some of those that wanted to attend this year. We had 5 wives and 1 husband attending. Our Chapter has a very active, supportive, and well attended Wives and Partners Support Group and we also work together with the husbands.

Last year at SPICE VI we learned to build those bridges and we brought that home and started asking the men if they wanted to join us from time to time in the support group. It

Thots(Continued on page 4)

Editor's Blue Pencil



The idea first drifted across my mind like smoke from another room as I was driving home from S.P.I.C.E. II in Chicago ... *how neat it would be to hold S.P.I.C.E. in Minneapolis.*

That was born mostly of a degree of lazy selfishness; I gave no weight or credence to such a greedy thought, as our chapter was brand new and composed mostly of men who had no wives or SO's, or those women in their lives knew nothing of their "interest". We had nothing to offer such a conference.

Shortly thereafter I was appointed to the S.P.I.C.E. Planning Board ... "who, ME? Awesome!" At #3, in Memphis, I presented the design for a



S.P.I.C.E. logo; then talked the board of Beta Gamma into fronting up the funds to cause the manufacture of lapel pins to sell to those who supported and/or attended the conference. (*Profits to be donated to S.P.I.C.E.*)

Not until Walter Bocking and I flew out to Ontario together for SPICE 5, did I seriously think it would really happen. But — The Board approved it and the fat was in the fire!

I was dubious about its success; there were still few wives and partners in the chapter from which to draw aid. The reluctance to even discuss the logistics of such an undertaking was discouraging to disheartening.

The *Not in My Own Back Yard* syndrome was at work.

This, in turn, raises the spectre of minds all ready made up that did not want to be confused OR seduced by real facts.

God knows I could empathize with that ... I was fairly certain the first SPICE agenda would be to get me to "get in line"; "shape up or ship out" of my CD marriage.

That anxious attitude is still seen at S.P.I.C.E., usually women who are attending for the first time. For that matter, still at work in Beta Gamma. Reminds me of a fellow who planned to join our family and work with us at our recently acquired [79] resort and 131 acres of sugar maples. We had studied on how to best tap those trees and make the valuable syrup that would provide us an income. Talking with enthusiasm over beers, he allowed as how "I don't know how you are doing it, but I wouldn't do it that way ... I'd do it differently." He had even less experience than we.

Some of you listen regularly to Garrison Kiellor and his Prairie Home Companion shows on NPR. He tells stories of these kind of characters who pontificate non-existent expertise and greet each innovation with "That's different," or "I dunno — but I don't think I'll like it."

That which we fear works greater horrors in our imagination than the thing we fear is even remotely capable of creating.

I also recall —decades ago — finding a book on "how to Swim". Went on for pages and pages about how to float. Kept talking about *Relaxing*...more pages and pages with stiff little drawings about the intricacies of excuting the "crawl" swim stroke.

I was impressed: there are books about any and everything. Reading tells you *about* the thing; only *experience* can create learning and *knowledge*.

Water *is*; it is neither good nor bad. It can sustain life, and it can wash it away or drown it. It is how it is used that counts, the response to its use that enfeebles or ennobles the user.

CDing just *is*. By itself it is benign; neither good nor bad. It is how it is done and what the responses are that destroys or strengthens relationships. In other words, you are in control of what you think and how you feel. Nobody else. **No one** can make you unhappy - or happy, unless you choose to be that way.

S.P.I.C.E., Tri-Ess, the various chapters of Tri-Ess, and some other gender groups, recognize that verity and will work with anyone who wants help in achieving personal happiness. We happen to focus on those hetero-sexual beings who find that Crossdressing plays an important role in that happiness.

Most intelligent beings also recognize that we do not live and work in vacuums ... we have families. Enlightened selfishness indicates that the inclusion of that family in the CD scene requires careful consideration of boundaries, feelings, anxieties and aspirations. Communication means telling of and *listening* to truths.

Don't just read about it all; participate. You only get out of this life what you put into it. If you don't think you are getting enough of life's treats ... ask for them. Or create your own.

But do it!

Onnalee
MN-947-G

from the Cat box:

by Cat D. IL-9556-D

I am glad to be home but it is also a bummer!! I am glad to have met new friends at SPICE as well as see the ones I have not been able to see for a YEAR!! I had a wonderful time at SPICE and did some more personal growth. I learned that I have to be comfortable in my own feelings and in sharing them with others. I have taken an extra step in making the decision to stand up for what I want to change.

I guess the thing I have trouble with is this...it is much harder to get across the message and what you learned when your cder does not attend with you... it seems to be all one sided and I want to take the big step and talk to my sweetheart about the issues I said I would... Time is precious when you have little ones in the house and it is hard to find that couple time. I sure hope that I get to it soon because I am kind of losing my nerve! That happens when you can't address the situation right away!

I DID speak into my micro-cassette recorder and it helps to look at the notes I took as well as listen to that to get my thoughts straight... ya know?? (*HAD to add that Onnalee!! LOL! Onnalee is trying to get me to stop saying... "ya know" when I am talking... it is a bad habit I DO need to break! Ya know??*)

But seriously, I feel as though this SPICE was so much more beneficial to me, having gone to the one in Atlanta last year. I was so apprehensive going to last year's SPICE; I did not know what anyone looked like or what

to expect. It was helpful: hearing a woman named Sallie Hunt speak got me to go again for counseling, which I desperately needed. This year, I went a bit deeper and stepped out on a limb. I actually let all the people in the room at SPICE in on a part of my past because I HAD to ask a question.

The question was how to let the man you love know that a thing which was previously ok is, in fact, NOT ok... My history of sexual abuse and closing myself off to what I was feeling in order to survive was not serving me well that day. I was not honest with MYSELF, let alone with my husband and it is a bit hard to take. I asked, "HOW do you approach saying that you are not

comfortable with something (I did not say EXACTLY what it was but it is if he decides to get rough with my breasts and it sends a reflex through me that turns my mind to the past and I am not present with him... where I would RATHER be) without giving in?

Walter Bocking, PhD, was so nice and put me at ease in helping to answer this question. He said that I need to start saying no and my husband needs to respect that. When I say no and mean it and it is respected as what I need to keep my sanity and work through issues, I will feel more free to say YES...

(I have to add this, it is something I blurted out in counseling one day... "I have to respect myself enough not to force me to do anything I am uncomfortable with." I am working on that and will probably be leaning on the CDSO list for the courage to make that happen.)

Right now, my husband is busy with work and we have precious little time for the two of us. I do not think it would even register if I were that busy and he tried to discuss things with me! Thanks for listening and to all women who were at SPICE (and those who were not able to attend!) who gave me the much-needed hugs and encouragement! You are a rare breed and I am grateful to call you ALL my friends!

===

Peace!!

CAT ~>^..^<~ IL-9556-D

It's been said that hypocrites are people who complain about all the sex, offensive language and violence ... *on their VCRs.*

The Sweetheart Connection is published four times yearly. No boundary trashing. No bashing of any kind.

Our guideline for every issue will be that which shapes productive resolution to many problems:

1. What is going on?
2. Who's in charge?
3. What do you want?
4. Where do we go from here?

Each quarterly issue will deal with all four questions but will focus on one question in turn.

Subscription costs are \$15/yr for four issues; a wife/partner may join Tri-Ess separately from her partner for a cost of \$12. She will receive membership and the Sweetheart Connection. If she chooses to receive The Femme Mirror, her annual cost will be \$25. Letters, comments and articles are encouraged and may be sent to the editor.

Onnalee Graham
The Sweetheart Connection
P.O. Box 8591
Minneapolis, MN 55408.

E-mail: spice@tri-ess.com
Deadline ; Fall Issue: OCT. 20th

(Continued from page 1) *Thots...*

has been very informative and enlightening, just like at SPICE when we have the "Group Meetings". This year we will have much more news and skills to share and we will try to spread H.O.P.E. throughout.

I believe another goal of SPICE will be to encourage Chapters to try and organize their own Wives & Partners Support Group and perhaps set up a scholarship to send at least one wife from each chapter. Three years ago, the Orlando Chapter started with 3 wives and has grown to a regular attendance of 10 plus visitors (our record being 16 I believe). It has to start somewhere, why not with you? All it takes is a concerned caring, sharing, compassionate person wanting to help others lost in the Wildemess of emotions to find HOPE once again. The simple support and sharing and gaining of education are some of the first steps. Why not you?

I have been down that dark, lonely, confusing road to nowhere 13 years ago - not knowing who or where to go for help, and not wanting to at first. But if I had had been given the opportunity to be introduced to a group of women that had been there, done that, and were healing, I think I would have given it a try by attending. Help others, and you help yourself. It seems that every year SPICE tries to make the conference an individual experience for you by offering personal help through additional break out-groups if you have a special need. Next year the focus will be on first timers and a wall of smiles will greet everyone, especially those with special needs, as we blast off at SPICE VIII, a Space Odyssey Millennium in Houston, Texas.

See Ya all there.

Love and Respect,
Karen F.-Orlando
FL-9555-F

SPICE—means many things to many people. Spice of life. Spice in your tea. The smell of Spice when you're cooking. All of these and more I am sure. But in this little article I want to tell you about one of the people that brought the SPICE VII alive for all of us. May I introduce you to—

Walter Bocking, Ph.D.

Walter is a Licensed Psychologist on the faculty of the Program in Human Sexuality and the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota. He coordinated the University's Transgender Services, promoting the health of transgendered persons, their families, and communities. Dr. Bocking is President of the Midcontinent Region of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, Membership Chair of the Hany Benjamin International Center Dysphoria Association and serves on the Professional Advisory Board of SPICE. All of this and many more credits to his name than space allows naming.

Walter always has a ever ready engaging smile and bright eyes that are always looking for an avenue to follow, question to answer, or see someone that needs a helping hand. When he was giving a presentation or if he was sitting in the back of the room, the smile and the intelligent eyes were there; looking, watching, and listening to all of our trials and accomplishments, our fears and our loves. I don't think he missed a thing. If it was possible, he addressed and covered all items that he saw. Of course neither Walter nor his co-presenters at SPICE could answer all the questions nor can we solve all the problems. What we try to do is give each and everyone of you the tools with which you can work to make the problems look smaller and therefore the road of life a little easier.

The presentations that Dr. Bocking and his staff, Meg Striepe, Ph.D., Bean Robinson, Ph.D., Sara Mize, Ph.D. and Diane Stellrecht, Ph.D. were informative and fun. There was not a minute that was not used to the best of our ability.

Thank you Dr. Walter Bocking and all the staff for helping to make S.P.I.C.E. VII the success that it was.

Desiree' Liegh>
TX-9315-H

(Continued from page 1) *Rudd*

directed toward SPICE, why not go ahead and mark your calendars now for July 12- 16, 2000. In fact, if you know your credit card number or if the check book is handy it's not too soon to register for the next conference. Ask for vacation time, and start putting nickels into the Piggie Bank. Texas has a lot planned for you starting with a Texas Bar B Que at our home on Wednesday evening. You will be able to move freely from the inside to the outside depending on your comfort level. Yep! We really do have air conditioning in Texas!

Thursday we will begin our sessions with knowledgeable presenters including Denise O Daughtery and Eddie Miller. David Hymel will pair with me to share thoughts about effective communication.

Friday we will have excursions to points of interest. You may choose between the historic coastal city of Galveston, The Space Center, The Battleship Texas, or the upscale Galleria. You may opt for an afternoon relaxing by the pool, or sharing thoughts and ideas in small discussion groups. Throughout the conference we will have a small conference room reserved inside the lobby area, so that special focus groups can form at any time.

We promise you fun, inspirational presentations, wonderful interaction with your friends, both old and new, a great hotel room on the club level, and some tasty Texas food. Yes! Kim and Doug will be back as our host and hostess, and Linda and John have promised a dance demonstration at one of our banquets. Who knows? We might all learn to do the Texas Two Step.

Y'all come, now! Ya-*heeee*-hah!
TX-9014-T

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE,
except from a
vending machine

Hi Emily,

How was the SPICE conference? Do you think that it provides good support for wives? If you have the time I'd like to hear a little about it.

Monica

Dear Monica,

SPICE was excellent and I would recommend it to anyone that would like to improve the relationship with his or her spouse. While some of the program was certainly tailored to couples involved in a relationship that involved crossdressing, the program was such that any married couple will profit from attending. In fact, Laurie and I feel that my daughter and son-in-law should attend SPICE next year in Houston, and my son-in-law is not a cross-dresser.

Besides a very worthwhile program, SPICE offered an opportunity to meet a lot of new people, really nice people. We also had plenty of opportunity for socializing, bonding, and simply having fun. The program was balanced.

SPICE is not designed as a function to convert wives to "Stepford Wives for CDs", rather it is a conference where we learn to deal with issues of marriage, cross-dressing, children, negotiation, communication, compromise, and other skills necessary to develop a strong and healthy marriage relationship. A lot of the husbands learned quite a bit, and I feel that

STRANGE BUT TRUE

*Fat chance and slim chance
mean the same thing*

**From Our Electronic
MAIL BOX**

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SPICE will be credited for saving at least a couple of marriages headed for divorce.

You might want to talk with Laurie about SPICE. We plan on attending again next year, only this time we want to take Heather & Steve along.

My best,
Emily Clark

Dear CDSOers ...

How do I get over my anger at MY need to cover for him? He doesn't need me to, but I automatically cover for him.

All he really wants is for me to be me. Guess I was married too many years to an alcoholic that made me responsible for everything with no control over anything. I revert to that behavior, and it's not necessary. How the hell do I get past it? Any bright ideas?

Every time I'm aware of my acting responsible, my shoulder hurts, so its important to get beyond this. I guess it's an inborn need to be dishonest about what is really going on. To cover up the truth because the reaction of strangers is an unknown. Can any of you relate to this? How have you dealt with it?

B
[A variety of responses followed ... then]

**Love doesn't make the
world go 'round ...
it makes the ride worth-
while.**

Thanks for all the responses. My husband doesn't want my protection or cover, and the mom in me really does take over. "M" is like my second daughter. We've told a lot of people and no one has been all bent out of shape about it; they don't care. My initial reaction when we are shopping is to be cautious/sneaky, then realize I don't have to be cautious/sneaky. Goes back and forth like that for about 10 minutes till I can calm down, but it feels like ricochet.

We have a cd book on the coffee table we are trying to wade through, but it's so darned outdated that we both feel it's a total waste of time. What if the neighbors see it? Who's responsibility is it to put it away? What if neighbors do see it? What's the worst they'd do? Realistically, what is the worst thing these people would do? Not speak to us? Big deal.

I'm beginning to see that I'm just having to cut the apron strings and it's kind of exhausting. With your child you can see that it's time because of age and maturity. Where are our guidelines? THEN crossdressers get beat up or killed because they are dressed. Teenage girls also get beat up and killed because of they way they are dressed. My inability to keep this in perspective is driving me nuts. My daughter survived, so will "M".

Dear Readers,

This is a 'happy' issue ... despite physical difficulties (da 'knee'+ other stuff), arguing with the Medical Mafia, lotsa SPICE duties, job demands and a couple of important art shows, I had much enthusiastic help.

I am grateful for the timely contributions of every person whose name is found on their articles. I invite YOU to join them for the Fall issue. I am seeking stories of "revelation": first learning of CDing. Send to: The ConXn, Box 8591, Mpls MN 55408 -OR -e-mail to:

*spice@tri-ess.com
by October 20th, 1999.*

Your Editor

SPICE VII - A Great Wilderness Adventure

by Gil and Mary Frances Fairfax

We have just returned from a most glorious five days at the Spouses' and Partners' International Conference for Education (SPICE)! It was a mixture of fun times, serious discussions, relationship building and camaraderie, and we were sorry to see it end.

SPICE always opens with a really classy fun event, and this was no exception. This year's theme was "A Wilderness Adventure," and that's just what it was. On Wednesday we enjoyed a picnic and cookout on the lake at Ft. Snelling State Park, near the Minneapolis [airport]. Onnalee, an expert canoeist, gave lessons in the mysterious "J stroke." It was 90 degrees out there, and the only ones who managed to stay cool were the couple who fell into the drink! Under a shady tent, we enjoyed [Robert's] catfish fried crisp in beer batter and a panoply of picnic goodies. It was a time to catch up with old friends and meet new ones.

The teaching seminars were outstanding. Virginia Prince, founder of Tri-Ess, was there as her "brother," Charles, to deliver the Keynote Address. The University of Minnesota's Program in Human Sexuality (PHS) gave some really helpful seminars on communication, negotiation, boundaries, sexuality, and telling the children. Coordinated by the ever popular Dr. Walter Bocking, the PHS staff were a wonderful team. In sep-

arate sections for husbands and wives, they divided us into small groups to consider such questions as, "Why is it best to tell the children?", "Why is it best not to tell them?", "When do you tell them?", and, "What approaches make telling them easier?" Then the husbands and wives got together to compare notes.

The evenings were fabulous, with really top rate food followed by fun. One of the men brought a karaoke machine and sang for us. Another, who had experience in barber-shop, got a quartet together. Called "The Sweet Spices," they introduced themselves [at the Saturday night final banquet] as Cinnamon, Sweet Basil, and Oregano. Then the fourth member ran in, hollering, "I'm Cumin!" Then they launched into "Sweet Adeline," "Let Me Call You 'Sweetheart,'" and "Down by the Old Mill Stream."

On Friday evening the hosting couple, Sofronia's "brother", Robert, and Onnalee, presented in a comical dialogue a summary of their 40 years of marriage. We laughed till our sides split! This couple conceived the "Wilderness Adventure" theme and did a humongous amount of planning and work to make this conference the success it was. Beta Gamma Chapter really got involved. Many came and enjoyed the event. Special praise goes to Karen's "brother," [Richard] who ran the Registration Desk as smoothly as could be, and to Kim and Doug, who provided wonderful goodies at the Hospitality Room and bailed us out when we needed help with the Bookstore.

As the last dinner drew to a close, the men gathered outside and brought in long stemmed red roses for each of the ladies. Peggy Rudd, Director of the Tri-Ess Department of Spouses' and Partners' Support, was presented with a bouquet of red roses. Graciously, she invited each of the seven wives on the SPICE Planning Board to come up and take a rose from her bouquet.

After dinner Saturday night, Peggy summed up this SPICE in one word, "HOPE," explaining that the "H" was for Honesty and Help, the "O" for Optimism, the "P" for Patience, and the "E" for Education.

Every year, at least one marriage is saved at SPICE. One couple came, wracked by conflict over crossdressing, and on the verge of separation. They left with hope in their hearts. Many left with their marriages visibly enhanced. Those happy tears will always be with us as we recall this Wilderness Adventure.

Next year's *SPICE*, July 12-16 in Houston, Texas, the theme is: "2000: A SPICE Odyssey." Mark your calendars! This conference is a must for spouses and couples. *SPICE CAN enhance life and relationships!* TX-9001-M



Put (cast antiqued pewter)
S.P.I.C.E. on your lapel!

Please make check for:
\$10.00 + 1.75 s/h
payable to Beta Gamma

S.P.I.C.E. Pin
PO Box 8591

Minneapolis, MN 55408

Historical S.P.I.C.E. Keynote speaker

a response
by Miriam C.

It is a relatively rare thing to meet someone famous whose pioneering breakthroughs deeply affected your life. Dr. Charles Prince is such a person. He was the first one to bring cross-dressing into the light of day, and begin the process of getting the world to recognize and - one day - accept the gender-gifted. His book, 'The Transvestite and His Wife' was the only resource on the subject for a very long time.

In the opening address at the S.P.I.C.E. meeting this year, Dr. Prince spoke about being lost in the wilderness of emotions and social conditioning as we try to disconnect gender from sex. He discussed the history of gender roles, their relation to agriculture and roles in primitive communities. He also made several comments on the perception of women as second class citizens, and the perception that the cross-dresser is "lowering himself" in the quest to be more feminine. He made two excellent points, that "Logic has nothing to do with emotional reactions" and "Women just are, men are always trying to become".

It was unfortunate, [in this writer's opinion,] that in the latter part of his speech, he antagonized most of the participants. Dr. Prince spoke well, in an off-the cuff presentation, but seemed to have the proverbial chip on his shoulder. He restated the theory that cross-dressing is a product of society's pressure, while most professional working in gender studies now believe it is a biological process. His [apparent] attitude of 'get used to it' and 'why can't you accept it?' are the typical reactions of the self-centered cross-dresser. He

completely neglected to deal with the fears of discovery, and the resulting ostracism and financial insecurity.

It is true that progress is rarely made by shy, quiet people. Dr. Prince has the aggressive personality that is required to move opinions and policies out of stagnation. But the S.P.I.C.E. meeting is for the spouses and partners struggling with their emotions and fears. Aggression is out of place there.

FL-9174-C

TIP-A-CANOE and Cheryl, too!



It was a hot, humid day in the middle of July. In spite of the heat, Matt and I valiantly set forth to traverse the uncharted waters of the lake in our canoe. One of us, experienced in the art of canoeing only singly, sat in the stern. The other, a newbie who shall remain nameless, sat in the bow. Challenged by our fearless leader to practice the "J" stroke, we felt confident enough in our skills to cast off fully clothed, life jackets within reach.

Off we went. Paddling with our usual aplomb, we soon found ourselves traveling the breadth and width of this tiny lake. Encountering huge masses of seaweed and other delicacies, we quickly turned into what became the first of many uncoordinated circles. Back-paddling furiously we managed to break from the green seagarden and again went on our merry way. Alas to our everlasting humiliation, one of us zigged when the other zagged. The brave canoeist struggled valiantly before setting us free - in the lake.

As the two of us tread the chilly blue water, those on shore laughed with glee at the first and only casualties of SPICE VII. As our rescuers approached, we rescued the floating lifejackets and threw them into the traitorous canoe. With little dignity and a lot of water, we trudged ashore to

face the music. The laughter peeled from all as they espied our wet, bedraggled attire. While they laughed, we looked at each other and realized that at least we were cool and they weren't. (GRIN)

It is all too true. Matt and I did manage to tip over the canoe and take a dip into the lake fully clothed. It presented all of us at SPICE many opportunities to laugh and joke about it. At the same time there is at least one lesson to be learned. I've canoed alone many times - never with a partner. This time was different. He and I had to coordinate not only our strokes but also which side of the canoe we were paddling from. This involved communication. Although we talked a lot, obviously we weren't saying the right things or we wouldn't have landed in the drink. We got our signals mixed and paid the price - wet shoes for two days. There is a time to be independent and a time to depend on others especially your partner, a time to work alone and a time for two to work as one, a time to say "I'm sorry" and a time to say "I forgive". (Honey, I'm sorry about those soggy cigarettes.)

Now if we can just take the "J" stroke lessons into our marriage...hmmmmmm. I'm sure Onnalee will refresh our memories at every opportunity. In the meantime, I'm already looking forward to SPICE VIII. Hopefully there are no canoes in Houston especially since the theme is "2000: A SPICE Odyssey." (Honey, have you ever been in a space ship?) OH-9087-D

NOVEMBER 1999 10-14: *HOLIDAY EN FEMME*, Houston, TX. Brenda Thomas, 14601 Bellaire #334, Houston TX 77083, Phone 281-495-8009 (after 7PM), E-Mail: brenda@firstmethou.com

14-21: *HOLIDAY AT SEA/DIGNITY CRUISE #11*, Houston, Calico-Cancun-Cozumel-Roatan, Honduras-Houston, CRUISEONE, INC., Anne McLaughlin, 1-800-699-6631, International 281-679-1399

Making Love Last The Busy Couple's Guide to a Very GOOD Marriage

Ellen Wachtel, PhD

Marriages start out tender and loving ... but demanding careers and the daily job of running a home and raising children turns too many relationships into cold, methodical business arrangements.

As a marital therapist for more than 20 years, I've found that most couples have little time or energy for the complicated "relationship exercises" that are frequently suggested by some therapists.

So I've developed very simple strategies built on basic truths about what makes love last. These strategies can be integrated easily into everyday life to reverse negative relationship patterns and build on positive ones. They are effective even just one spouse starts practicing them.

***Make your spouse feel good about himself/herself** — and then your spouse will feel good about you. In strong, loving relationships, couples make ego-boosting comments to each other every day. Helpful ...

***Look for admirable qualities in your partner.** It becomes too easy to focus on behavior or habits that you don't like in your spouse. But with practice, you can teach yourself to find and praise those characteristics that make you feel good.

***Be specific when you compliment.** Details add meaning to your words. "I liked the way you handled the kids' crankiness by joking about it" resonates more than just remarking on your spouse's sense of humor.

***Be emotionally generous.** Encourage your spouse to take part in a favorite activity — even if it means he will spend time away from you — will make him feel loved instead of guilty.

***Warm your partner's heart.** In many busy marriages, expressions of caring stop. We get busy or think these expressions won't have much significance. But loving gestures don't have to be extravagant. Small but steady displays are more realistic — and often more meaningful. Helpful ...

***Treat vulnerabilities as opportu- nities to be loving.** You and your spouse have weak points. Use them as opportunities to be kind and understanding.

Example: Your spouse assumes too much responsibility at work, which cuts into family time. Instead of becoming angry and voicing resentment, recognize all that your spouse accomplishes. Then sympatheti-

cally encourage your spouse to look for ways to reduce the workload or delegate more to coworkers.

***Accommodate your spouse's sensitivities.** Adapting to emotional sore spots need not be complicated.

Example: one couple — an outgoing husband and a quieter wife who felt ignored in social situations — used secret signals. When talking to others, the man would touch his wife's arm to show that he hadn't forgotten her. If she was feeling left out, she would squeeze his hand so he would bring her into the conversation.

***Share tender caring gestures.** These would include a quick "Hi, how are you doing?" through e-mail or a call at work ... preparing a favorite dish ... or helping to search for a missing item. All are nurturing and supportive.

And what was once considered exclusively gentlemanly behavior — helping with packages or a coat — can be done for men and will be appreciated.

***Offer praise rather than criticism.** Criticism not only erodes love but rarely results in the kind of change that you are hoping to achieve. By contrast, praise always encourages cooperation. Helpful ...

***Notice small steps in the right direction.** when you want your spouse to behave in a specific way or to remember to take care of a chore, express your appreciation when he tries.

While it's tempting to say "I wish you would do more around the house," tagging on a criticism overshadows your praise. If your spouse doesn't try at all, ask yourself whether it is worth fighting over or it's just easier for you to do it.

If that's unacceptable or impossible, wait until a time when you can express without becoming angry or condescending.

***Think before you carp.** When you feel the urge to criticize, ask yourself, "Is what I'm about to say really going to have a positive impact?" Then speak carefully, not hurtfully.

A spouse's hurtful intent can cut every bit as deeply as harsh words. Try not to revisit old mistakes. Digging up the past is often the basis for even bigger and more painful arguments.

***Being attractive counts.** "Attractiveness" is more than sexy underwear or strong muscles. Attractiveness is remaining thoughtful, engaging and interested in your spouse. Helpful ...

***Be considerate.** Feeling comfortable with your spouse is great. But that comfort level can also cause couples to intrude on each other's space or to take each other for granted.

Show your spouse the same courtesy you would extend to a friend. Give warm greetings after an absence ... refrain from routinely unloading anger or frustration ... pay attention when your spouse talks or explain why you're unable to give your spouse your full attention at that time.

***Continue to surprise.** Romantic gestures, love notes or gifts remind your spouse you're still a couple.

***Recognize and support change.** Holding on to an outdated view of your spouse can be alienating. It's far more loving for couples to acknowledge each other's new strengths, such as dealing with difficult relatives or controlling anger.

***Don't give up being lovers.** The idea is to balance the needs of the relationship with other obligations. Helpful ...

***Set aside "two-of-you" moments.** Block out 15 to 20 minutes each day to connect as a couple. If you have children, plan you togetherness for when the children are doing homework before dinner... or while they watch TV afterward. Stick to the routine so your kids learn to respect "grown-up time."

***Have couple conversations.** Put kids and chores off-limits during your moments together. If you sometimes feel at a loss for topics to discuss, keep a running list during the day as things occur to you, from a joke to a pleasant reminiscence.

Writing everything down also strengthens your own connection with personal thoughts and feelings.

***Keep on dating.** Time together outside the house relieves family and job pressures and gets you to connect like yourselves before the marriage.

Also, arrange romantic dates at home, shifting the atmosphere away from the ordinary with a special late-evening meal. And a s with your daily 20-minutes together, maintain "couple conversation."

***Play hooky.** Ask the sitter to stay into the evening so you can meet after work for an early dinner. Or arrange child care for a few daytime hours on the week-end for a walk together! These small breaks in routine will seem like adventures.

***Steal a sexy moment.** Even a few minutes of touching and hugging reminds couples that they are more than parenting partners.

***Important:** Remembering the experiences that brought you together.

From the August 15, 1999 issue of *Bottom Line/Personal*: Interview with Ellen Wachtel, PhD, psychologist and marital therapist in private practice in New York.

She is author of *We Love Each Other, But...* (Golden books)



S.P.I.C.E. Keynote Talk

by Charles
"Virginia" Prince

Virginia Prince was the keynote speaker at S.P.I.C.E. VII, July, 1999, in Minneapolis. Since cross-dressing is prohibited at S.P.I.C.E., he appeared as 'Charles.' Following is a transcription of his speech: [thanks to sjo/Beta Gamma] Ed.

I am appearing as Charles Prince, in deference to your rules about cross-dressing. As a matter of fact, I am crossdressed right now! I was listed on your program as "The Prince formerly known as Virginia." "Formerly" means yesterday afternoon, and Sunday morning Virginia will be back.

The border between girl and woman is generally accepted as being age eighteen. I have been a woman for thirty-two years; eighteen and thirty-two makes fifty. How many of you women are under fifty years of age? Quite a few. That means that I have been a woman longer than many of you. Note I said woman not female. I have lived full time as a woman for those thirty-two years. This leads to the distinction between woman and man, female and male. That is the distinction between sex and gender.

This leads right into the matter of the Wilderness that

is the theme of this conference. So what is a wilderness? A place where nothing is familiar and everything looks the same in all directions. No guidelines, no organization, you don't know which way to turn. Four kinds of natural wildernesses exist: the rain forest, the desert, frozen sea or snow field, and the mountains. But sometimes there is a wilderness between your ears when you can't find any familiar signs to lead you out. But natural and psychological wildernesses have something in common; namely that you can't see any way out and there are no signs directing you out. You are lost and feel helpless.

In the city, there are places to go for directions or help. In your mind there aren't any, so you stumble around blindly trying to find a solution. Well, you found one called S.P.I.C.E. and there are people to give you some guidance. But back to wildernesses. If you are lost in a natural wilderness, what do you need most? Answer: Information about the situation such as compass points, which way is back, etc. Well, that's what you need in your mental wilderness too. Before you were married, you lived in a city with streets, directions, and familiar people and places. You knew that boys and men were different from

girls and women, but you kind of assumed that was all a matter of anatomy and parenthood. You thought you knew how each kind *should* behave and expected that they would behave that way. You knew your place and what was expected of you and you thought you knew what men were like and how you could expect them to act.

Then you woke up one morning and found by accident or on purpose that your man liked to wear some feminine garments. Crash, bang, your world more or less collapsed and you found yourself in a wilderness with no expectation of such a situation; no satisfactory explanation of it; no preparation for dealing with the phenomenon of a man wanting to do what women do. And no apparent escape or solution to the problem. That is what a wilderness is! Wives are caught by a conflict between expectation and reality and she struggles with it and that is why you are here.

She asks herself, "Why would he want to do that? Is he mentally disturbed, a homosexual, a transsexual, a lunatic, or what?"

Let me relieve your mind by saying that he is probably not any of these things. He is just a victim of the kind of culture we live in and have lived in for the last several thousand years. It has been a culture that divides humans into two types based on the two sexes.

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But the information I promised to provide starts with understanding what gender is and how it came to be. Animals do not have gender, they just have two sexes doing two different tasks in life and are naturally built anatomically and physiologically to perform them effectively. Humans also come in two sexes and have the necessary anatomy and physiology to reproduce the same way as other mammals. But beyond these abilities, we also have psychology and sociology to assist us.

Gender started with the invention of agriculture, growing crops and living near them. This occurred ten to twelve thousand years ago. Differing jobs and expectations developed between males and females leading to different identifications in clothes, decorations, activities, etc. Thus gender came into being and in modern times it is really just a visual presentation of one's self which, when genitals are not visible, seem to indicate the sex of an individual.

The population increased, villages became towns, then cities, and finally states and nations. Laws were written, wars fought, discoveries made and cultures started, flourished, and died out. Through it all, behavior became stylized and stereo typed. That is, clothing, activities, jobs, talents, and expectations became divided between those befitting men

and those fitting for women. This process went on for thousands of years.

Men, being bigger and stronger and not burdened with child birth and child care, took over the operation of society, protecting, conquering, governing, controlling, building, and inventing. Females did, however, make four of the most significant of human inventions: Agriculture, Cooking, Weaving, and Ceramics. But, in the process, men became persuaded that they were the most capable and important gender, and demoted women to second class citizens primarily responsible for children, home, and keeping their husbands happy. This has gone on regardless of other changes right up to the latter half of the 19th century.

All of this does have something to do with crossdressing, I promise.

People who live under stereotypic conditions sooner or later get tired of the limitations of such societies. They want to escape and explore other ways of life. Women figured out under such limitations for hundreds of years but were helpless to do much about it because men dominated all the important aspects of life and there was no escape. Until Democracy Was Invented. Because the very word 'Demos' means "the people" in Greek, which means that the people have something to say about their lives. And by the early 1800's they began to say it. As the most restricted

and limited members of society, women were the ones saying it. They wanted the vote so that they would have some say in lawmaking and governing.

The early suffragettes included Eliza Bloomer who broke the rule that circular garments (skirts) were proper for women and that bifurcate (two legged) garments, trousers or pants, were for men only. Bloomers became the underwear of the day for the well-dressed suffragettes. It took them nearly a century to get the vote and begin to break down the barriers to progress in politics, occupations, business, education, and the professions.

World War II gave rise to Rosie the Riveter and all other women taking men's places in the war effort. This required appropriate clothing and shorter hair, and women have never looked back. They didn't all want to return to the kitchen and nursery. They looked for careers in about every field you can imagine. Today, there is no garment of masculine clothing that is not worn by women except possibly the jock strap. Even that is pretty well copied by the popular thong panties made famous by Monica.

Now, isn't there and old saying about "What is sauce for the Goose should be Sauce for the Gander?"



The following is reprinted with permission, from the August Beta Gamma newsletter 'En Femme'. The author is the President of that Tri-Ess Chapter, whom we were pleased to have as our guest at the Friday night S.P.I.C.E. dinner. We thought the ideas expressed would bring encouragement and inspiration to our readers, wherever they are on the crossdressing road. Ed.

Purging; Just One More Time

by Steve/Sharon
MN- 4041-O

Purging is a really over-worked topic in publications like this, but I think I've come up with a new slant on the subject.

To make things a little more interesting, I'm going to add a New Character to this series of articles. I'm sure most of you who are past perusers of this publication are familiar with The Engineer. (S)he's on vacation this month, giving someone else a chance to be heard from. Enter the **Star Trek Fan** (STF.) I don't think (s)he really needs much in the way of introduction. (STF stands around for a couple of minutes, gets bored because (s)he doesn't have anything to do here yet, and wanders off to watch *The Wrath of Khan* for the umpteenth time...)

We were talking about Purging. Most of us have done it at least once, some often enough to have earned the title 'Serial Purger,' but I don't think I want to pursue that idea.

Purges can be partial or complete. Both times I tried it, I kept a few things, stuff that was Too Good to Throw Away, especially since there was a chance it might even fit again someday if I just started using

that exercise machine. This sort of behavior is symbolic of what is really going on. A CD will dispose of nearly all of his wardrobe in a Purge, but often holds something back. In a Complete Purge, nothing *physical* is retained. However, the desire to crossdress *cannot* be Purged, ever, so no Purge is Complete.

When I was about eighteen years old, I attempted to Purge a portion of my *self* by creating a new, masculine persona that essentially overlaid my real self. Even though I knew it was an act, I also knew that I had to be able to behave as a Man in society if I was ever going to get anywhere, to succeed. This worked as well as most Purges, and led to extreme mental discomfort that I could relieve only by occasionally crossdressing in secret.

About twelve years ago, when I started to go out in public crossdressed on a regular basis, Sharon started a process of slowly tearing down the masculine façade that I had created. It was a long, slow process.

About a year ago, I began living as Sharon full-time. Steve was now fully repressed, and I became entirely Sharon. I even sent Steve's stuff to Goodwill. How about that? A Purge in reverse. As you may or may not have guessed, Purging doesn't work no matter which direction it goes. I lost a lot of self-confidence, my business suffered, and somewhere, deep down, I wasn't happy. I had lost something, and didn't know what it was.

Think of the Gender Self as one of those long tubular balloons people twist into dogs,

cats, or banjo stands. One end is male, the other female. In the past, I put a weight on the female half, suppressing it. When I became Sharon, I simply moved the weight to the other side.

(Shuffling sounds come from the other room as the Star Trek Fan gets up mumbling something about "Not wanting to see that bug crawl out of Chekov's ear again.") (S)he rejoins us.)

"So," I ask, "What's your favorite episode from the Original Series?" (Yes, this *is* a shameless setup...)

"Well," says the STF, "I've always liked Episode Six, 'The Enemy Within.'" That's the one where Captain Kirk is involved in a transporter accident, and is split into two people, one passive and feminine, the other aggressive and masculine."

"Oh, really? A transporter accident? Did they have those very often? I thought they had an Engineer on board."

"Anyway, neither part of Kirk's personality can survive alone. The aggressive side has no control over his behavior, and the passive side nearly dies of apathy."

"Interesting. Was that the episode with the horse?"

OK. Maybe the STF isn't going to be a regular character here, but (s)he did bring up some interesting ideas.

The title (The Enemy Within) is interesting in itself. Who is the Enemy? The aggressor? The passivist? Or is it the person worrying about which one of them is wrong?

Continued on next page. —>

Returning to real life for a moment, I can personally identify with both halves of Kirk. When I repressed my male self so completely earlier this year, I lost track of who I really was. I wasn't sure where I belonged. For the first time in my life, it was almost impossible to make decisions.

So what happened? I got some advice from a person I know and respect who has had great experience dealing with gender issues. We talked around the subject for about half an hour, at which point he said something to me that was at once quite simple and very profound. Funny I didn't figure it out for myself.

What he said was (paraphrasing slightly), "I give you permission to be whomever you wish, Steve or Sharon or anyone else, whenever you want."

"Oh." Stop to think for a minute... "No, *you* can't give me that permission, but *I* can."

And I did. Right then, right there, and Steve came back. Well, not all of him, but the good parts did. Interestingly enough, Sharon didn't go away. Her clothes aren't going to go away either.

Now it gets interesting. Up until now, I've been speaking of Steve and Sharon as separate entities. Maybe they were. If so, it was a lot of work to keep them that way. If not, it was even more work to make myself believe that they really *were* two people.

My biggest mistake was in making the assumption that Men are Men and Women are Women and deep down, I was either one or the other. I saw myself as either Steve or Sharon, but not both. One or the

other was in the majority at any given time, but I treated them as separate and distinct. I've stopped doing that.

Who am I now? A Man in a dress? A Woman with errors in her anatomical structure? Something else? What?

There is a simple answer to that question, but it's taken me fifty plus years to figure it out and then actually *believe* it.

I'm Moi. Me. That's it.

Figuratively, I removed the weight from the masculine side of my personality balloon and threw it away. Forever. To make things even more interesting, the balloon seems to have turned into a sphere. Spheres don't have left and right sides, or ends. The whole became greater than the sum of its parts.

A most interesting experience occurred last Friday night at S.P.I.C.E., where I attended the evening meal, late presentations, and just generally sat around and talked with people. As Steve. No crossdressing at S.P.I.C.E., you know. I had a little(!) trouble with mannerisms until I just decided to forget about them. That was the first time in nearly two years that I've worn a coat and tie. (Yes, ties are as bad as I recalled. Probably equivalent to the comment my second wife made to me once wondering why anyone would wear a bra for fun...)

Most interesting was in the bar before dinner. I was sitting next to Onnalee, who was trying to get the bartender's attention and order another round. She waved, even raised her voice a bit. Nothing. I

raised my hand, snapped my fingers once, said "Hey!" and Voila! Drinks. It's just like riding a bicycle. You don't forget how.

Do you suppose wives resent the fact that crossdressers can revert to men and reclaim a social power that most of them never had? Worth thinking about.

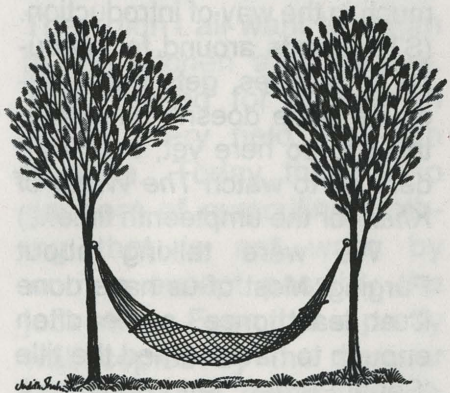
A couple of years back I came up with the term Fem-Man (for Feminine Man.) Maybe that's what I am. A Fem-Man in a dress.

I no longer think of myself in terms of labels. Internally, I have a concept of myself that is quite complex and difficult to describe. No single word or phrase encompasses it. That change from self-deception to self-perception was a huge step for me.

So what happens now? I don't really know yet, but I'll keep you posted.

One thing I know for sure:

I'll never Purge a part of *myself* again, ever.



"I have said before that metaphors are dangerous. Love begins with a metaphor. Which is to say, love begins at that point when a woman enters her first word into [a man's] poetic memory."

Milan Kundera
Author

— *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*