



FANTASIA FAIR: CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING IN NEVER-NEVER LAND

by M. P. Allen

Part II

After Ari left me sitting on the sofa at Gifford House, Malinda, young and casual in a matching blue jean skirt and vest, came over and asked me what I was doing. She mentioned that she was on her way to the volley ball game between the Fan/Fair FANTASTICS and the PIED PIPER WOMEN, a team drawn from the local lesbian community. We wandered along Commercial Street to the Pied Piper where the net was set up on the beach behind the bar. Children, dogs, assorted onlookers and players took their places, and a high-spirited game began. As a few men had joined the Pied Piper team, and some of the FANTASTICS were not in "drag", it almost looked like a game between two average American teams. Not quite. There was Malinda, using a lacy, black bra and a garter belt as pom-poms, leaping in the air, cheering, "Rah! Rah! Rah! C'mon transi-queens!" Amidst much complaining about sand in their shoes and broken nails, the FANTASTICS managed a narrow victory. After all, they did have the advantage of height.

At that point it was beyond me to understand what I was seeing. How was it possible that lesbians were seeking out the company of straight men who like to dress in styles of women's clothing in which none of them would be caught dead? They had cheerfully chosen to spend the afternoon with men who love high heels, heavy make-up, girdles, long line bras, false eyelashes, and long fingernails.... these were all things that symbolized women as sex objects. Here were feminists playing ball with men who seem to see women in most stereotypical images.

After the volleyball game, Ariadne invited me to join her at the Lobster Pot, a local restaurant where the heads of various paraculture social contact groups from all over the country would be dining. These were the organizers, the people who put in the time and energy for the 'paraculture' on the local level. We took over a long table in the middle of the restaurant. Although there were some curious glances at the salad bar, most of the regular patrons of the restaurant quietly ignored the group. Seated between Michelle and Betty Ann, I tried to gain some understanding of what I had just witnessed. "What you saw this afternoon is an alliance of minorities" Michelle explained. "We are not men who pose a threat to women. We're not putting women down, we're trying to imitate women as best we can," Betty Ann confirmed. Crossdressers really do see themselves as women at least some of the time. The stories that Michelle and Betty Ann told me at dinner further helped me to realize this.

Michelle, tall, thin, and long blonde hair, was chatting with a woman at the beauty parlor. She told her that she was a gynecologist. The woman said, "how wonderful to have another woman take care of you. You must really be able to empathize. But how does your husband feel about those 3 AM trips to the hospital?" Michelle is very happy in "her" work. "This is a marvelous job for me. I live in a totally femme environment. When a woman's in labor, afterwards my belly hurts, I push along with her." As I got to know Michelle better, I came to appreciate the way, whether in his doctor role or as Michelle, (s)he takes care of people both physically and psychically.

At first, I found Betty Ann a little harder to talk to. She is older, with an elaborate upswept hairdo, a matriarchical figure,

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OUTREACH NOTES

National AHP Meeting in Washington DC

In July the Annual National Meeting of the Association for Humanistic Psychology was held. Ed Elkin and Ariadne Kane gave a 2 hour workshop on 'Becoming Androgynous'. After giving a brief overview of Androgyny and its relationship to gender roles, they did an intensive guided fantasy exercise and also developed some gender role play situations to illustrate the concept of Androgyny.

Attended by over 65 participants it was well received and indications are that more of this type workshop will be given at future meetings. It was a breakthrough for those of us who feel the issues of crossdressing and gender role should be looked at in a social context and not solely as a psychological problem.

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AN EXPERIENCE AT THE KABUKI THEATRE

by Ariadne Kane

While in Washington this summer I was privileged to attend a performance of Kabuki National Theatre held at the Kennedy Center. This is a National Theater Group from Japan which was born out of the vibrant urban culture of 17th Century Japan. It encompasses many of the cultural values of the Japanese people and amid the visual splendor of this very stylized theater form the famous personalities of Japanese history come to life on the Kabuki stage. All of the roles including the female protagonists are played by males.

The program they prepared for their American tour represented a splendid sampling of the Kabuki's stylized eclecticism. Dance and comedy blend effectively in the colorful and erotic bravura acting piece called "Naukami" and the historic melodrama called "Kamagai Jinya" illustrated the classical acting method. The Kabuki is an actor's theater and has been viewed as such since the beginning of the 17th Century.

All of the female roles are acted by male Kabuki artists. The female impersonator Kabuki artists are known as 'onnagata'. Their grace, body movement, costume choice and color and wigs are unmatched by any other theater form. They learn the art of femme impersonation from a very early age. They are trained thoroughly and only after at least 10 - 15 years of hard practice are these actors considered ready to perform before an audience. Away from their demanding careers in the theater, many of the actors are married, have families and follow the traditional cultural way of Japanese society.

On the stage the actor's speech, his movements, and his poses, even his rhythms, are all set by "form" derived from the martial arts. It also applies to wigs, costumes, props and make-up.

It was a magnificent experience to see the art of the Kabuki theater. If they should return to a major center in America, I recommend strongly that you make it a must to see.

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and a Tallulah Bankhead voice. She told me the most unusual story on passing as a woman I have heard. "I always liked to dress up as a girl. When I was five, I went to visit my aunt for the summer. She told me that if I wanted to dress like a girl, it was OK with her so long as I was consistent so the neighbors wouldn't get confused. I dressed like a girl for the whole summer. Instead of going home in the fall, I ended up staying with my aunt. When school started, everyone assumed I was a girl. I was an extremely late developer and was able to remain a girl through high school. It was only when I went into the army that the masculine side of my body developed; my voice deepened, my beard grew.

Over dinner Ariadne pointed out to me that 'transvestite' is a pejorative word, a word that is associated with illness, fetishism and prostitution, whereas 'crossdresser' is a preferred, neutral term which can apply to a variety of people. Betty Ann demurred, "we don't mind being called transvestites, but we should actually be called bivestites!" I said, "That would made the rest of us monovestites! Sounds pretty dull. "Mono-anything sounds dull," Betty Ann agreed, "like mononucleosis!"

On Saturday afternoon sitting in a phone booth at my hotel, watching Fan/Fair participants wander by, my tolerance suddenly reached its lowest ebb. Maybe it was because this was more than an evening's outing with Vicky. This time I was immersed in it all. Until now it had been easy to be both interested and detached. I felt the situation had changed. I had to take a stand. I was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of them and thought, "so many men looking so grotesque." What I found particularly difficult was the strange colors of their faces. No matter what color foundation they applied, the facial hair showed through. It seemed that they tried to solve that by applying more foundation. There were ashen faces, liver faces, beefy faces. The features seemed far too large, like caricatures, the wigs askew, the voices thunderous, and they towered over me with their natural height enhanced by high heels. I felt shocked and pained, "how could they do this to

themselves? Whatever happened to natural beauty?....." Then I started once more on what I saw as their stereotypes of women. What they saw as femininity struck me as a vision from the dark ages of say the early 50s. They appeared as every image I would not want to be identified with from the shopping mall matron, to the Frederick of Hollywood glamour girl. What could I possibly have in common with these "women"? Fortunately the waves of revulsion began to subside. If I was going to get anywhere in understanding what crossdressers are about then I would have to shut off the clatter of feminist outrage in my head and be willing to listen and let them in.

By 5 PM on Saturday we were in the midst of a hurricane. Provincetown lost its electricity and hot water. The awards Banquet and the Fantasy Ball were scheduled for that evening. If one were ever going to do it up grand, this was the night. Most people were still in the process of getting ready. Vicky suspended a wire coat hanger from a pipe in the hotel corridor, attached her cosmetic mirror to the coat hanger, and made up by the light from the battery run emergency light that had been installed in the corridor. I was impressed by her ingenuity and hoped everyone else would fare as well.

The roads were flooding and there were rumors of inundation by the ocean if the winds kept up. But the awards banquet was scheduled, and come what may, we had to get there - Michelle, Betty Ann, Grace (an Afro-wigged, sweet-faced crossdresser from Michigan), Vicky and I piled into Linda and Lucy's car. We were almost on the highway when the engine flooded. Linda's wife Lucy, who describes herself as a 'very good mechanic' started barking out a series of directions. After about twenty minutes of listening to Linda and Lucy struggle with the engine, Grace had had enough. She borrowed Betty Ann's light encircled compact, hiked her long, white evening gown up to her waist under the evening coat, and braved the wind, rain, and flooded terrain to examine the state of the engine. I wished I could lend her my cowboy boots.

The awards banquet was held by candlelight in a large room almost entirely filled with men in varying degrees of dress from full machismo to full femme. Ariadne was the mistress of ceremonies. Thank yous and

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PROFILE OF A FAN/FAIR
PARTICIPANT

by M. P. Allen

(The following is one of several vignettes of a Fan/Fair participant. Sensitively written this vignette gives the reader some insight about who attends the Fair.)

What I loved about Fan/Fair was being with men who were consciousness raising. They were having fun and being introspective at the same time. They came from all over the country and from a great variety of backgrounds, and they were not competitive (the various 'contests' notwithstanding). They accepted each other as equals, as people with a common bond, as companions. Many claimed to feel more relaxed as a woman; they seemed to see women as relaxed and non-competitive. But what I perceived most was that they were being direct with themselves and one another, while trying to make sense of themselves they opened up to sharing.

Wendy was a good example of someone able to see it all and love it. She was a first-time participant at Fan/Fair, and, although she had little experience at cross-dressing, she planned to stay in skirts all week long to experience herself fully as Wendy. She told me what brought her from California to the Fair: "Is it possible? Mankind has been asking this question for five thousand years, maybe longer; the question is; What's the difference between you and me? Is there a difference? People are asking this, all the way from Congress wrestling with the ERA to husbands with their wives. This is the motivation for people coming here. It's OK if I use a catalyst to create the feeling of femininity. We know about masculinity - all right, next step. Now what's female like: Well, let's put on make up and wear dresses for a week and see if it makes us feel any different. Well, it's still the same person, the same eyes looking at you. The big difference is how I perceive you. Several words come up. Vulnerability. You don't feel like you want to take on some drunken incompetent when you're in a dress.

You feel a little intimidated. Sensitivity - nuance- Here's the scenerio: A guy goes into a department store with his wife. In his mind she's spending his money while she sits home and does nothing but watch soap operas and eat bonbons, which of course, is not the case. She's worked hard taking care of the kids and keeping the house together. He doesn't want to know from that because his mind is on watching the ball game and eating a lot of junk food and extending his pot belly into infinity. But his wife is saying; Oh yeah...but this color over here...he's thinking; who gives a damn. If he got behind her trip and said; Yeah! that purple is really pretty on you. As a matter of fact, I never noticed that your eyes look more beautiful next to purple..."

To me, Wendy is adorable. She is a breathless Berkeley Co-ed, an apolitical hippy always wearing a flower in her freshly permed blonde hair. She wears mini-skirts with tights. A lot of purple, flower patterns, things that are a little silly, and cute, from another time. She picked her name Wendy from Peter Pan, another youthful image. Wendy herself is in her thirties, but she plays young and flighty. She has dimples when she smiles, which is often. I tell her, "Wendy, if you were a sorority pledge at Berkeley, every sorority would rush you." She seems to think that I am adorable too. She won't tell me what she does as Walter, or even, where she grew up or what she has done in her life. But she is great in the here and now. Wendy participated in everything. She went to every workshop; sociology, medical, legal, and asked questions. She overcame her awkwardness and swayed to the drumbeat at the androgyny workshop. She played the piano skillfully at the Follies and even made up her own comedy routine as Betty White of TV/TV. To top it all off, Wendy won "Miss Cinderella" at the awards banquet! In answer to the question; "which first year participant really 'came out' and let her femme personality show during the Fair period?" we all voted for Wendy.

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awards were given to members of the Provincetown Community and the Fan/Fair participants. There were four major awards: Miss Cinderella (for a first year participant who had blossomed), Miss Femininity, Miss Best Dressed, and Miss Congeniality, plus three special awards: Miss Most Helpful, Miss Fantasia Fair, and the Outreach Institute Award. There were hugs and kisses and much applauding. Michelle told me later that she was "numb with joy". I doubt the new Miss America could have put it better.

Over the next year, I kept up my new friendships from Fan/Fair through correspondence and an occasional visitor including Ariadne. Through the correspondence, the visits with Ari, and my continued outings with Vicky/Kurt, I started to feel that my understanding of this paraculture was increasing. I finally became clear as to how biological sex, gender role and sexual preference relate to the crossdresser, transgenderist, and the transsexual. The crossdresser is satisfied with his biological sex, but has a strong desire to explore the opposite gender role by wearing feminine clothing and make-up, and behaving, possibly experiencing life in ways that have traditionally been considered feminine. In most cases, his preference remains heterosexual; he prefers living with and loving women. The transgenderist has gone further than the crossdresser in that he is questioning his role as a man; he would like to try living as a woman. He probably has begun to modify his biological sex; he is taking hormones and is having electrolysis to make his body more feminine, and is spending much more time dressed as a woman. His sexual preference probably has not changed, but his activity level may have declined. The transsexual has gone all the way. Through surgery and hormones, (s)he has technically become female. In many cases (s)he is living as a woman, although sometimes, if (s)he doesn't "pass" or can't afford to give up his male job, he continues to alternate between his masculine and feminine lifestyles. His sexual preference now, can become subject to some confusion unless he was previously bisexual.

When Ari asked me to be the official photographer for Fantasia Fair '81, I was very excited. I would be covering all the events as well as offering private portrait sessions in my hotel suite. I realized this would be my opportunity to come closer to understanding all the things that interested me in a way that would go beyond the theoretical. I also noticed that whereas last year just meeting heterosexual transvestites was exotic and mysterious enough to fascinate me, this year I wanted to know more about transgenderists and transsexuals.

I flew up to Provincetown a day before Fantasia Fair began. I was more than a little apprehensive, venturing into this world alone. But my fears were quickly put aside. There were many events and experiences, so many interesting encounters that I found that every time I sat down with someone, even if it were for breakfast, I would be given the gift of a small revelation. A new piece of the puzzle would be fitted into place. Rather than attempt a chronicle of those ten full days in Provincetown, I will present vignettes; the stories of a few favorite people and highlights of the Fair's events. Fan/Fair was and will be a surreal kaleidoscope/ I'll tempt you with a few of its colored pieces.

Provincetown off-season has a population one-third Portuguese fishermen, one-third gay and one third New England families. It's a pleasure walking along the two main streets past ethnic boutiques and hand crafted jewelry shops. The October weather this year was perfect, and I wandered happily from restaurant to beauty parlor, to Universalist Church, to the Beach and back to the hotels, taking pictures of whatever seemed interesting; Betty Ann and Michelle's nightly pajama parties, rehearsals for the Fan/Fair Follies, Malinda at the bar.

I hung sheets in my hotel suite as backdrops for portrait sessions. Grace (the heroine who got the car started in last year's deluge) a former commercial photographer, volunteered to help me. I soon found out how much I needed her; I did not know how to put men in feminine poses. It was a subject Grace had studied carefully for

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years. When we started I felt somewhat uneasy. Was I committing myself to dishonest portraiture: Shouldn't I be capturing the essence of a person the way they are? Again, as usual in Never-Never Land, I realized there are several ways to see things. The individual sitting for me wanted a protrait of himself as his femme self. There he was, applying his make-up carefully, styling his hair, picking his jewelry and special outfits to capture a fantasy of himself. What if he ruins it with a false move? When I made suggestions for positions, my sitters looked bolder, more aggressive. When Grace took over, they looked more demure and coy.

Some people came with one outfit, one look; it was as if they were coming for their yearbook picture and were frightened. Others came to play. Dorothy started out as a sweet little lady in tweeds and turned herself into Mae West for the end. Wendy, a breezy, engaging first timer, came from a make-up lesson and was bubbling with excitement; "I went through a compressed, high-powered make-up course. She had to condense ten years of information in ten minutes. It felt like a cram course, Post-Graduate Make-up, I felt like there'd be a pop quiz." When an unsophisticated TV puts on make-up it looks like a Forty-Second Street hooker. The other clients at the beauty parlor were curious too and wanted to see what works on a guy. Wendy brought at least four outfits to be photographed in.

Grace and I learned to collaborate on the lighting and on helping each subject to find herself. I would joyfully have taken a few months and photographed everyone there. When Grace posed for me, my lingering doubts about the honesty of the protraits finally disappeared. Although Grace knew how to pose and was fully aware of what she was doing, psychological insight still came through. the essence of Grace was there and in revealing that essence, Greg was revealed too. What I saw was the vulnerability, the humanity that lay behind the masks of Grace and Greg. I felt immensely grateful to Grace for sharing this with me.

The 9 day experience of Fan/Fair was intensely rich with people and events. Space precludes recounting all of the marvelous things I had seen and done with a widely diverse ~~and~~ interesting group of human beings.

I had gotten used to this Never-Never Land that was absolutely real, yet far away from my life before I had come. I had developed a new self-confidence, and a greater clarity about the issues gnawing at me all these years. I had gotten out of the realm of theory into the directness of experience.

As a photographer I was not simply an observer of the scene but a participant in it. The photography had served as my passport to the land of Fantasia Fair. Through it, and through the generosity and openness of my new friends in sharing themselves with me, I learned about myself.

(Editor's Note: *The author wishes to thank Ms. Vicky West and Lee's Mardi Gras Enterprises their invaluable contribution to her understanding of this paraculture.*

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Seminar at AHR

In September Ariadne Kane gave a 2 hour seminar to the staff of Associates for Human Resources (AHR) in Concord, MA. AHR is a network of professionals trained in contemporary and traditional approaches to psychotherapy and organizational development. It is in its 12th year of operation. A lively and in depth discussion followed Ms Kane's presentation. The outcome of this experience may lead to a cooperative affiliation between AHR and the Outreach Institute.