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for the
Gender Community

New Series No. 13

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THE TARTAN SKIRT

The Scottish Magazine for the Gender Community

Editor: Anne Forrester

New Series No. 13

January 1995

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TO DO NO HARM...

A SERIOUS POINT FOR DISCUSSION

by a worried transsexual

I have long agreed with the view previously expressed in this magazine that "there is really only one moral imperative in life - do nothing to hurt others". Almost everything else that we are taught about life in a civilised society is worthless without this one thing. Now for those of us in the gender community, quite apart from the usual matters of civil law - and often, for those with religious beliefs in the Judaic/Christian/Islamic traditions their own religious and moral requirements - there are actually two additional aspects of life we must take into consideration.

One way in which we can hurt other members of our sisterhood has already been discussed in an earlier issue of *The Tartan Skirt* (New Issue No.3, July 1992, pp 3-5). Briefly, if we go out and about without caring about our appearance, putting ourselves around as very obvious men in dresses, then we are certainly harming those of our community who either wish - or often need - to pass and to live in society without notice. All transsexuals and transgenderists, as well as the more seriously-minded crossdresser who wishes quietly to go about their affairs *en femme* without attracting attention, simply 'sinking into the woodwork', are harmed if the general public has its already homophobic and genderphobic perceptions of those who cross-dress confirmed by a bunch of guys in dresses who look as though they have escaped from the *Rocky Horror Show*. And even worse is the occasion (which I have experienced myself, so I know) when one of these exhibitionist types comes up to a sister who is succeeding in going about her business unnoticed and greets her in a loud and public manner, attracting the attention of all around and

causing severe embarrassment. At best this is an example of plain bad manners, and is a way of hurting others that really is not defensible: at worst it is positively offensive. Be considerate of others and you will find that others are much more likely to be considerate of you.

However, that is not what I set out to talk about. The other way in which we can harm others is much nearer home, and is in respect of the way that knowledge of our gender diversity affects our loved ones when they learn of it - whether they be wives or partners, brothers or sisters, parents or children. Will they be horrified or accepting? Indeed, can we reasonably expect them to accept it at all? And it is here that we may find ourselves in deep conflict with our own innermost selves.

One fellow transsexual said to me recently that she had to admit that being transsexual, and going right down the line to reassignment surgery as she was about to do, was pure selfishness, for basically it was all about looking after her own interests, putting these first regardless of the effect that this may have on others. Of course, this is basically true - but only if we let it be so.

If we believe in the principle of not hurting others, then surely we must give serious consideration to the effect that learning of our gender diversity may have on others - and especially those who we love. And here's the rub! We must walk a tight-rope between being true to ourselves and possibly going all the way along that yellow-brick road to surgical reassignment in the wonderful land of Oz, and at the same time of doing everything in our power not to hurt those who we love - which, if we really mean not to hurt them may mean that perhaps we should consider not going further down that road after all. So what are we to do? Should we be true to ourselves and go ahead regardless of the effect on others, or should we be considerate of our loved ones and continue to sublimate our own deepest inner feelings? This is a 'no-win' situation, for whichever we choose will hurt someone - our loved ones or ourselves.

Now for crossdressers the situation is difficult but not impossible, for if it is possible to dress from time to time, either when on ones own for a few hours or by going to meetings of a local gender group, then it is often possible to both have ones cake and eat it - that is, to experience the joy of dressing and being oneself, even if only for a few hours now and then, while at the same time not hurting ones loved ones. For the transsexual or transgenderist, where it is a matter of full-time living and working and of even more permanent changes in appearance and lifestyle - such as electrolysis and chemical and/or surgical reassignment - the situation is much more difficult.

One way in which these difficult situations may be resolved if ones own gender situation is appropriate - and what I mean by that is that ones gender dysphoria is such that the presence of outside plumbing in the genital department is no worse than an unpleasant and serious inconvenience that does not in itself seriously threaten ones own mental health, then it may be possible at least to forgo that final step of reassignment surgery if this would reduce the hurt that such a move may otherwise cause. Of course, it is partners and parents who are most hurt by this final step, because in the one case it is a threat of a partner finding herself with a female (? lesbian) partner rather than the heterosexual male partner or husband she thought that she had. In the other case it is the apparent loss of a boy (or girl) to whom the mother had given birth and who had been brought up by the parents as a much-loved son or daughter for many years - only to turn round and become a daughter (or son) of the opposite sex. In these cases the final step of surgical reassignment may well be the last straw that not only causes the partnership or the family to break up, but certainly to cause very serious hurt to the partner, parent or sibling concerned.

(In passing, I do sometimes wonder exactly what is the difference between a transgenderist and a pre-operative transsexual whose gender dysphoria does not extend to

serious revulsion concerning their genital plumbing. Both live full-time lives in a gender role opposite to that of their genetic sex, without the benefit of surgery and often both with the benefit of hormones. Or is this just another example of people putting labels on one another? No doubt Anne Forrester, who has strong views on the matter of labels, will pick me up on this one). [Yes, I will. See page 21 of this issue - Anne].

In the final resort, putting the well-being of others above ones own needs may well be the only way out of a difficult situation, even though it leaves the transsexual incompletely fulfilled herself - but this would certainly be an act of supreme self sacrifice in her endeavour not to hurt others.

Of course, if ones gender dysphoria leaves the unfortunate sufferer physically sick with the presence of external genitalia - and in many cases this really is a matter of life-threatening seriousness - then there may be no alternative but to go ahead with reassignment surgery, and probably minimise the trauma for ones loved ones by moving far away and removing oneself from the scene, in the hope that by not putting the situation right under their noses her loved ones may come eventually to accept the situation, or at least not to be quite so deeply hurt by it.

So how do we resolve this problem - to avoid hurting others but at the same time to be true to ourselves? Frankly, I don't know - and I really wish that I did, for I find myself in exactly this position. How can I be true to myself without risking real hurt to a family of loved ones who have been wonderfully supportive during recent periods of ill health? For the transsexual or transgenderist who is really concerned for others as well as for him or herself (and although I have been referring throughout this article to the male-to-female, exactly the same applies to the female-to-male gender-gifted individual) this is a pretty awful dilemma. I personally know one dear friend who has been fortunate enough to receive complete acceptance from

her family - and I know others who have experienced total rejection due to the hurt felt by the family. If you *can* escape this dilemma, satisfying your own deeply felt needs and at the same time avoiding hurt to your loved ones, do consider yourself exceptionally fortunate. ■

A HUG

A Hug

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Is democratic - anyone is eligible for a hug
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Overcomes fears
Builds self-esteem (Wow ! they actually want to hug me !)
Slows down aging - huggers stay younger longer
Eases tension
Fights insomnia
Keeps arms and shoulder muscles in condition
Affirms physical well-being
Makes impossible days possible
Makes happy days happier

A hug makes you feel good all day !



GENDER, JOB OR GENERATION ?

SOME THOUGHTS ON STYLES OF DRESSING

by Anne Forrester

A few days ago I was talking to another TS on the phone and the conversation strayed onto the subject of whether I had been right to say in an article in another magazine that "All transsexuals cross-dress, although not all crossdressers are transsexual". Of course, we were not in disagreement about the second half of this statement, but it was suggested to me that not all transsexuals do in fact cross-dress, because whatever their anatomy and genetic sex suggest, in the case of male-to-female transsexuals (for example) they were truly women all the time, and it was only the wearing of traditional *male* clothes before they came to understand and come to terms with their gender dysphoria that might be seen as cross-dressing. It is an argument that I have heard before. I must admit that it makes sense and I do fully accept it. From there, however, we strayed on to other aspects of dress and it was interesting to compare our respective attitudes to this.

Of course, everyone who cross-dresses - for whatever reason, whether they see themselves as transsexuals, transgenderists, serious crossdressers, fetishistic transvestites, bisexuals seeking a male partner, or even as drag queens - has their own personal reason for doing so, and consequently dresses in whatever style they feel comfortable or which 'turns them on'. However, leaving aside for the purposes of this discussion those who cross-dress solely for sexual kicks or for purposes of stage entertainment, and considering only those who cross-dress with the intention of being able to go out and about in

public and 'pass' without attracting attention, there do seem to be two different approaches.

First, then, let us assume that one does not wish to attract attention as being obviously 'a man in a dress'. (Of course, there is a school of thought which says that to attract such attention in this manner is actually a good and desirable thing, as this is the only way that the gender community will ever make the rest of society aware of its presence, and so come to tolerate us. Personally I think this approach is counter-productive, as the reaction is more often shock-horror than amused tolerance; and in 'Bible belt country' - such as parts of Scotland and north America - the likely reaction is a complaint to the police if you are lucky or a beating-up if you are not).

So if you *DON'T* wish to attract attention what do you do - or don't do ? Well, generally speaking you 'dress down' and seek to follow the appearance of the average 'woman in the street'. You *don't* go swanning down the High Street in a micro-mini skirt, cleavage down to your navel, fishnet stockings and six-inch heels, or go to the supermarket in a cocktail dress. You try to dress in an unobtrusive manner that will not cause others to stare at you. But what does that mean ? Well, this is where the telephone conversation I referred to at the start of this discussion took off.

My TS friend said that she tended not to dress in a specifically feminine manner but usually went about in jeans, slacks or leggings and a sweater or tee-shirt. For my part, while I may wear this sort of outfit when working about the house, and even adopt slacks and blouse for some outings, when I go out I usually wear a dress, or a skirt, blouse and jacket, or even a business suit. Now this doesn't just represent two individuals' attitudes to fashion (even though, purely as a fashion statement, I personally dislike leggings), but I think it has a lot more to do with the fact that I am several years - maybe a generation - older than my friend.

When I was young[er] (I always reckon that you are as old as you feel - which puts me around 60 going on 30) the convention was that women dressed a lot more formally than they do today. Even during and just after the war (yes, I do mean that one from 1939 to 1945 !) the sight of women in trousers, while accepted for practical reasons of the times, was not considered 'quite the done thing' except for work purposes. During my teens and early twenties women wore very feminine full flowing skirts or pretty dresses, and for work - and later business, as they began to be admitted to professional activities - it was the smart business suit with a straight skirt and fitted jacket that came to be called 'power dressing'.

Of course, in society circles ladies of leisure still wore the tweed skirts and twin sets of the 1930s during the day, and often put on cocktail dresses or full-length gowns for the evening. (For you younger people, a twin set is matching knitted jumper and cardigan, usually worn with a string of pearls. Still worn by some more casually elegant of the more mature ladies).



OK, so times change and fashions change with them, but we do tend to find impressed in our own minds the things that were around us during our youth, and then carry them with us in a more-or-less undiluted form for most of our lives. (Just ask your sons or daughters - or even grandsons

and granddaughters - about tastes in music and then compare them with your own, and you'll see what I mean). Nevertheless, even allowing for adoption of new fashions and trends I guess that most of us have as our image of what we consider typical female dress the styles and fashions which were popular in our younger years. Hence, compared with the more formal 'power dressing' skirt, blouse and jacket approach of myself a generation older, an explanation for the relaxed attitude of the 'leggings and tee-shirt' style of my friend (sometimes referred to by cynics within our community as 'the TS uniform').

There may sometimes be another factor in our choice of dress style - and one that is not always within our control. My friend and I are both single and work from home, so we are each free for most of the time to 'do our own thing' when it comes to dress style. Not everyone has this freedom, however, and if you are a transsexual or transgenderist who goes out to work each day you may well find that there is a dress code in your place of work that determines the style of your appearance during working hours. It may be a uniform if you are a waitress, a nurse or a receptionist for example, or simply an accepted minimum level of formality if you are a lawyer or work in one of the professions. One American TS friend of mine works in a professional capacity with clients of her firm, and so is expected to dress in a more formal manner at work than she does at home. In these situations it is all a matter of time and place, but when 'off duty' we are back to personal predilection again.

You see, eventually it is not a question of which of us feels more feminine than the other, nor the extent of our gender dysphoria or whether we have or have not undergone certain stages of chemical or surgical gender reassignment - and not always even necessarily the surroundings in which we find ourselves - that determines whether we hit the streets in laid-back leisure wear or aiming for smart stereotypical femininity. I think it has much more to do

with that old problem 'the generation gap'. For the most part we are today what we were made by the youthful experiences of our respective generations; and when it comes to our ideas of dress convention most of us tend to stick in much that same mould for most of our lives.

Thankfully, despite society's dislike of the concept of 'a man in a dress' - and even its intolerance of diversity in dress styles amongst men - women are generally allowed to wear almost any style of dress that they please without attracting adverse comment. That catch-all explanation of 'fashion' allows women to wear a skirt or trousers, flowery prints or denim, skirts way above the knee or down to the ankle, and just about anything else that is not frankly indecent. Consequently, when *en femme* you have the freedom to dress in whatever female style your own background and inclinations prefer - as long as it is a style suitable for the streets and supermarkets and not one found only in the ballroom, on the stage, or under the lamplight on back-street corners. You don't have to worry about wearing only (or even avoiding) feminine frills. Just be yourself - but be your age and remember the old simile of older women dressing in younger fashions as looking like "mutton dressed as lamb". That also attracts attention. ■

Whoops...!

OK, so we all goof at times, and I should have included with the cartoon reproduced on page 48 of the last issue credits to the artist, Brenda Marten (who holds the copyright), and to Transsexex, publishers of the magazine *Reflections* in which it first appeared (Issue 5, page 53). I really am sorry, ladies.

---oooOOOooo---

WHAT'S THAT WORD ?

- a wander through the alphabet

J is for **Jockstrap**. A piece of elasticated material worn between the legs by men - especially athletes - to support the genitals. However, they can also be used by cross-dressers and pre-operative transsexuals to hold up and conceal the outside plumbing - especially when wearing very short or very tight skirts.

K is for **Kissing**. Although for lovers this means "to join lips with another person in an act of love or desire" - technically known as oral osculation - women greeting one another frequently kiss each other on the cheek. This is a very feminine action and one that a number of genderists also practise when greeting one another, as part of their feminine comportment: and in this context it is very definitely **NOT** a sexual act.

L is for **Labels**. Which is what everyone seems so very keen to put on themselves, not to mention one another, so that they can then be mentally compartmentalised into little black boxes which define the type of behaviour expected of the individual, according to the perceptions of the person doing the labelling. However, I am *not* a label - I am a person. ☺

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"It's never too late to be what you might have been"

George Elliot

PASSING IS PASSÉ: BEING IS IN *

by Virginia Prince PhD

"Passing" used to be the name of the game. In my younger days (the '60s and '70s) I had a motto to live up to. It was: "*Strive for Perfection to Avoid Detection*". It seemed pretty cute to me at the time and I tried to live up to it. As many of you will remember, I did a lot of travelling in those days and on several of those trips I shared rooms, cabins and even yurts (those quaint circular structures used by nomadic tribes in Mongolia, Iran and parts of far western China) with one or several unknowing females. One had to conform to the accepted standards of feminine dress and deportment. I guess I did, since I never had any trouble with my roommates ... except with one named Florence who got bent out of shape because I wanted to leave the window open one hot night in Ulan Bator in Outer Mongolia. She got so mad she jumped me from behind and tried to tear off my pajama top. But that was just good clean bitch fighting. Fortunately I stopped my reaction before Charles really got into it: I got a wrist lock on her and persuaded her that the window was to stay open, which it did. But passing was the thing that I strove for and so do most of the rest of you. That is, you did ... up until the last couple of years.

**Women are no longer interested
in playing to the male ego
by appearing "pretty", attractive
or alluring**

What happened ? Well, as women's liberation began to take hold women didn't care so much about their appearance as they used to. The clothes you see on women in the streets

and in the malls these days are a long way from the epitome of femininity, grace and loveliness. In effect, even the young girls and women have given up trying to "pass". They just dress anyway they darn please. All they seem to care about is keeping warm on cold days and modest enough not to encourage boys and men. With rapes and attacks against women on the increase it seems that self-protection has led them to look as unfeminine and attractive as they comfortably can.

The psychological result of this is that, except for special dates or special events women are no longer interested in playing to the male ego by appearing pretty, attractive or alluring. All they are interested in is just "being": "Hey, this is me, I'm happy with myself and if you aren't it's just tough !".



So where does this leave the crossdresser ? We have kind of had the rug pulled out from beneath us. Of course this sloppier, more masculine and uncaring appearance of so many women today gives us less to look up to and admire, and therefore less to imitate and want to be part of. And this, in turn, means less likelihood of being read if we dress in equally sloppy ways. But then, why go to the trouble ? The girls aren't wearing heels, skirts or nicer blouses very frequently. Many of them wear little jewelry or lipstick. If a CD really dresses as he would prefer he would stick out like a sore thumb. Thinking of yourself as being Jane or Betty and having to dress more or less like you would as John or Bill is likely to have a pretty chilling effect on your TV desires, so why dress ?

Of course it can (and will) be argued that having to dress in a less attractive way won't necessarily stop you from expressing your softer, caring, sensitive side. True, it won't ... except that you won't be comfortable doing it because acting in more feminine ways when dressed more or less the way John or Bill might dress is going to make you feel out of place and even effeminate. After all, the

main reason we crossdress is that it provides a real escape hatch out of our socially expected behavior, at the same time providing a visible doorway into a world where such behaviors, appearances and attitudes are not only permissible but expected. After all, the old "duck" argument works: *i.e.* if you walk, talk and quack like a woman you **are** a woman. But when many or most of the females in sight dress, walk and behave like boys or men what are **they**; and if you do the same what are **you** ?

So while women do not have to "pass" they used to take more interest in their appearance than they do these days. So what **are** they doing these days ... in their own minds, I mean ? Answer: they are simply **being** ! They are clothed, they are modest, they are warm and except for special parties they are not trying to impress anybody or have any special effect on anyone else. They are just **being** themselves.

Now don't rush to point out exceptions to the above, like dressing up pretty for parties, weddings, church or whatever. It is as clear to me as it is to you that women still do this and I hope they will continue. But it doesn't change my generalisation that **on the average** women no longer make the attempts they used to to show themselves off in a good light except on special occasions. They are just satisfied to **be**. And CDs in turn are having to choose between dressing as our mental image of what we are trying to imitate says, or just putting on most any old thing that is handy and going out to the mall with the rest of the "liberated" and "I can't be bothered with all that dressing to look nice" women. I guess most of the young CDs (there must be a few out there) will make some sort of adjustment to the current situation, but I must say I feel a little sorry for them. They, in most cases, will be unable to enjoy the delicious feeling of being a really attractive girl or woman in heels, flowing skirts, a pretty blouse, makeup, hairdo, jewelry and all that "stuff" that made girls and not boys in my day, and maybe in yours too.

So I suggest that maybe the younger ones among us consider learning to just **be** women and not try so hard to conform (passing) to an image that is rapidly becoming passé itself. Think how a six foot CD in three-inch heels, wearing a mid-thigh miniskirt and C or D boobs, will stand out in a crowd of younger women in cut-off jeans, an old shirt with the tails out, wearing ankle high thick soled army boots, with long but more or less uncombed hair and with little or no makeup or jewelry. "She" won't be "passing" with them, but current fashion and custom are surely passing her by. What's a girl to do ?

Maybe the day is coming when there will "be no joy in Mudville, mighty 'Cassie' has struck out" !

* Reprinted from Cross-Talk
(Woodland Hills, Ca, USA), #59

IF ONLY WE ALL COULD...

You may love or loath the Princess of Wales (and few people seem to fall anywhere between these extremes), but all women must certainly envy her ability to spend on her appearance. It is reported that Princess Diana spends some £1750 a week on clothes - far more than the average British woman spends on clothes in a whole year; she also spends more on hair care each week than the average woman spends in a year, and when it comes to cosmetics her weekly spending of nearly £150 is around three times what most women spend in a year. Talk about "Shop 'till you drop" ! No wonder Diana always appears immaculately groomed in public: if *we* could all spend money on our appearance at that rate wouldn't we all ?

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TRANSGENDERISM: THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE *

by Lauren Hotchkiss

We've all been brought up to believe that there are only two gender presentations allowed to us in this life, and that they are inextricably tied to the genetic sex into which we are born. We come into this world as either 'little boys' or 'little girls' and are expected to live the rest of our lives in strict accordance to the narrowly defined gender roles that society has 'assigned' to each sex. This is all very fine, in theory anyway, were it not for the reality that it just is not that simple.

All of us, men and women, have both the feminine and the masculine within us to varying degrees, and so it follows that there must be a vast blending ground between the diametrically opposed stereotypical concepts of man and woman; and yet the myth persists that there is not. No wonder that the two 'sexes' often have such difficulty understanding each other when society has cast them in the role of 'opposites'. Our language, too, is full of terminology that tends to divide the concepts of male and female, and us along with them. Even in this 'enlightened' age where sexual-reassignment has become a fairly commonplace occurrence there is still the expectation that one is supposed to trade on one set of behavioral and dress standards for another.

Within our own community as well, I have noticed that there is a tendency to divide the male from the female; and whether it is the transvestite path of bouncing back and forth between genders (a sort of conscious schizophrenia) or the transsexual path of surgical transformation, still it is an either/or equation, rather than a true integration of masculine and feminine qualities.

There is, however, a third alternative, which until comparatively recently has seldom been considered: the transgendered lifestyle.

Such a lifestyle is admittedly not the right agenda for everyone in the gender community; many crossdressers have no desire to further expand their curious 'hobby', and for members of the transsexual community there is a different path to be followed. For the individual who is drawn to this lifestyle, however, there is afforded a rare opportunity to integrate the hitherto separate halves into a cohesive oneness, and so reach a wholeness of being.

Perhaps, for some of us who are moving toward a transgendered or androgynous existence there is a reason why we were born into male bodies. Possibly it is to explore the integration of female energy on both an outer and inner manifestational level; to experience in the body of a 'man' what have, up until now, been considered feminine feelings.

Femininity always seemed more natural to me; it was masculinity that I had to 'learn', and it always seemed forced

In my own life, though I was born male I never did feel like a 'man'. I've always felt more comfortable around women than I have around men. Somehow femininity always seemed more natural to me; it was masculinity that I had to 'learn', and it always seemed forced. I realize now that I've always had a deep need for feminine expression, and now that I've opened myself up to expressing it I feel I have become a more complete and open person; more at peace with myself and more able to be of service to others.

I feel a deep commitment to my lifestyle of choice, as well as to the gender community as a whole; a sense of life

purpose and spiritual path beyond anything I've ever experienced.

I have noticed a difficulty, however, now that I have swung so far in the female direction, in accepting the male component of my psyche. My goal is to be able to accept both; the male as well as the female.

Transgenderism is not always an easy path to follow. It is often fraught with challenges of self-acceptance and the perceived judgments of others, as well as difficulties in finding and maintaining relationships, but though some may regard it as a choice of loneliness I feel that for those of us who feel guided to this lifestyle it is a choice for freedom.

** Reprinted from Cross-Talk (Woodland Hills, Ca, USA), #37 and #60*

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TS OR TG ?

- OR IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE ?

by Anne Forrester

Elsewhere in this issue (p 3) one of our contributors, in a passing comment, wonders if there is any real difference between a transgenderist and a pre-operative transsexual, or whether this is just another example of confusing labels. She suggested that as I hate the idea of putting labels on people I would probably pick up this point, so here goes.

First, what do we understand by 'transgenderist' and 'transsexual' ? I suppose the commonly understood meanings are that a transsexual is a person who feels that he or she was born into the wrong body, and consequently seeks chemical and surgical treatment to bring their body into line with their own perception of their gender. Transgenderist, on the other hand, is understood to mean someone who cross-dresses and lives full-time in the gender role opposite to that of their genetic sex, and who may or may not seek to alter their body by the use of hormones, but who has no wish to seek surgery to alter their anatomy.

Of course, once you start talking about labels then almost every word you use needs defining separately. So first let us be clear what we mean by 'sex' and by 'gender'. While we commonly say that sex is what is between the legs and gender is what is between the ears, it is actually not quite as simple as that. Sex can have (at least) two quite different meanings. Basically the word refers to the genetic sex of an individual - that is, whether they inherited both an X and a Y chromosome from their parents, so that being XY they are genetically male, or alternatively they inherited an X from each parent, so being XX they are genetically female.

The second meaning of sex describes the anatomy of the genitals. If a person has a penis and testicles, together with more or less flat breasts and small nipples, they are said to be male, while if they have a vagina leading to a uterus, and more or less prominent breasts with large nipples, they are said to be female.

Finally, if in their appearance a person looks like, dresses like, and behaves like a stereotypical male then he is said to be a man, while if a person looks like, dresses like, and behaves like a stereotypical female then she is said to be a woman.

Now you may have noticed that I used two separate sets of terms in these definitions. In two cases I referred to 'male' and 'female', while in the third I referred to 'man' and 'woman' - and these pairs of terms are *not* the same. Male and female refer to measurable factors like genetic or anatomical sex, while man and woman refer to what is in the mind - gender - so we are left with three ways of differentiating ourselves.

Male and female refer to measurable factors like genetic or anatomical sex, while man and woman refer to what is in the mind - gender

Now if a person who is genetically and anatomically male feels inside himself that he is really a woman and not a man - that is, his perception of gender differs from his genetic and anatomical sex - what are we to call him/her ? Well, firstly, if we think for the moment of those people who we call 'transsexual', we must again divide them into two categories. (And please note that while, for the purposes of argument I refer to male→female individuals, the same arguments apply to the female→male situation).

The person who has known more or less from day one that their body was not congruent with their brain, and who then spends all of their early years struggling with this incongruity, eventually seeking reassignment surgery (or committing suicide) because they can't face being constantly torn apart by the situation, is referred to as a primary transsexual. On the other hand many transsexual don't understand and identify what it is that is bothering them until much later in life. They struggle to conform to society's expectations of their anatomical sex, frequently trying (and often failing in) marriage, until later in life they realise the nature of their problem. These people are usually called secondary transsexuals.

Generally speaking the so-called primary transsexual has a real positive loathing for the external genitalia (or breasts in the case of the female→male individual) and can not wait to get rid of them, whereas the secondary transsexual, having had to live with society's expectations that he (or she) will have and use them, has adopted a feeling somewhere between dislike and indifference to the external signs of their genetic sex. And in view of their (usually) greater age at the time of awareness and diagnosis the secondary transsexual may also have a number of factors militating against reassignment surgery. (For example, it may be financially impossible in view of the family commitments to which he/she has become tied as a result of a lifetime of trying to conform to society's expectations rather than their own real needs, or it may be the many other medical complications that come with advancing years and that may make them poor candidates for major surgery of any kind).

Finally, there is one other difference we must consider, and this is something that will be familiar to anyone who works on a gender helpline. Many people present themselves saying "I feel like a woman and I want a sex change" - not even beginning to realise just what it is they are asking. In fact, most of these people are not transsexual at all but are actually crossdressers (and often enough, fetishistic

transvestites) who would actually be mortified if it ever came to losing their 'manhood'. (Which is why many psychiatrists treating potential transsexuals will first put them on a course of anti-androgen hormones. The consequent total - but if necessary, reversible - loss of the male sex drive soon sorts out the real transsexual who welcomes it, from the 'wannabees' who quickly decide they want it back).

*...what is the difference
between them ?*

Now then, having sorted out all that terminology let us see where we stand. If a transgenderist is someone who wants to live full-time in the gender role opposite to that of his/her genetic sex, and a transsexual is also someone who wants to live full-time in the gender role opposite to that of his/her genetic sex, and each of them may be taking hormones to assist in their aim, what is the difference between them ? Well, as far as I can see, in the case of the primary transsexual it is mainly a loathing for their outside plumbing that drives them to whatever means are necessary to seek surgical intervention to bring their anatomical sex into line with their gender, regardless of the obstacles that may lay in their path, and/or a compulsive need to live (and eventually die) with the body of the woman that they know themselves to be. In the case of the secondary transsexual the obstacles in their path - including a lifetime's accumulation of responsibilities to others - may be more than can be overcome, and in any case the distaste for the external plumbing may not be sufficient to drive them to extreme measures to get rid of it.

So we are left with a situation in which the so-called transgenderist and the so-called secondary transsexual may well differ in their individual attitudes to their gender

identity disorder (in other words, their motivation), but at the same time differ not at all in the lifestyles and other measures that they adopt to meet their personal needs. Each lives full-time in the opposite gender role to their genetic sex and wants only to 'sink into the woodwork' as a perfectly ordinary woman (or man in the case of the F→M individual). In either case it seems to me that, reverting to the difference in meaning between male/female (which refer to sex) and man/woman (which refer to gender), what we have is a single category of people who might quite properly be labelled 'male women' (or in the case of genetic females, 'female men'). In other words, people whose genetic and anatomical sex are not congruent with their lifestyle as determined by their gender feelings and self-perceptions.

So perhaps this highlights the futility of trying to put clear-cut labels on people and fitting them into neat little black boxes, just as though everyone was exactly the same as everyone else who bears the same label. (Indeed, this is precisely the mistake made by all those unthinking and uncaring people who use the word 'normal' to mean 'exactly like me'). If we must use labels at all, for goodness sake let us think through the meaning of those labels more carefully before we stick them on ourselves - let alone on other people. As Jed Bland said (and as I am never tired of quoting), "I am not a label: I am a person". ■

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Being a woman is of special interest only to aspiring male transsexuals. To actual women, it is simply a good excuse not to play football"

Fran Lebowitz



CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

This month we have received three letters for publication, two *from* other British gender organisations (and one of which is addressed *to* all British gender groups) and one from a well-known and respected member of the gender community in America. All three, however, refer to matters addressed in our last issue - the question of security at meetings of gender support groups and the apparent lack of cooperation between the main gender organisations - so perhaps these are matters that we should all be taking a great deal more seriously :

From the Chairperson of Crosslynx (Glasgow):

Dear Anne

I have just read the latest Tartan Skirt (No.12), in which I found some excellent articles. However, I would refer to your article "Never mind the why and wherefore" (of which I have no criticism) on page 46, and I quote: "More recently a young woman has been present at meetings of one of the Scottish groups, sitting at a table all afternoon with a tape recorder running, picking up the general conversation around her".

Speaking as Chairperson of the Crosslynx (Glasgow & West of Scotland) TV/TS group I wish to make it perfectly clear that Crosslynx was not that group, should any of your readers have the mistaken impression that it was. At no time in the near-3-year existence of Crosslynx has any

audio tape recorder or video camera ever been present at any of our meetings, for which permission of the group's committee would have had to be obtained.

The Crosslynx committee - at present consisting of myself, Susan Hunter (Secretary) and Carol Taylor (Treasurer) - has to date never been asked about this subject of a tape recorder, so I can not say what would be our answer, or that of any future committee.

Finally I would like to say that we at Crosslynx do not at present have our own magazine or newsletter, and it is low in our order of priorities. Any book, magazine or newsletter of a TV/TS group which wishes to make it available will be welcome at any of our meetings.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Stewart

Chairperson, Crosslynx

From the Chairperson of the Gender Dysphoria Trust International

An open letter to all UK Gender Groups

From time to time within the Gender Community rumours abound. Normally it is best to ignore these, however there has recently been rumour, speculation, and in at least one instance deliberate public mis-representation of the status of Gender Dysphoria Trust International (GDTI). There have also been statements that the GDTI has ceased to function: this is not true. While we are aware that this has not come from officers within your organisation we wish nevertheless publically to put the record straight, so that none of your members are under any misapprehension about GDTI.

Our origins began in the late 1970s when we were founded by Judy Cousins as the Self Help Association for Transsexuals (SHAFT). In 1989 our name was changed to Gender Dysphoria Trust, and at the beginning of 1991 the suffix International was added to reflect our growing world-wide links. In December 1991 we became a non-profit organisation - i.e. a Company Limited by Guarantee (No 2668977) with the express purpose of obtaining charitable status, which was granted in January 1993 and our Registered Charity Number is 1016107.

The combination of a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity is a common one amongst helping organisations (e.g. the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the former TV/TS group at French Place), and indicates the growing sense of professionalism and responsibility within the voluntary sector.

The GDTI exists solely to support and help those who are transsexual and their families, as well as acting as a resource centre for professionals caring for transsexuals. This is not in any way an élitist stance, but reflects the fact that transsexuality is a medical condition that one is born with, and we believe that transsexuals have needs that are different and separate from those of transvestites and transgenderists. We are aware that for some people these needs and definitions can overlap, but nevertheless feel that the specific services we offer are of great value to those we set out to assist.

We are run by a group of Trustees and a Board of Directors. Our President, Antonia Allen, was one of the original founders of SHAFT and our Vice Presidents include specialists in gender dysphoria from all over the world including Professor John Money (USA), Professor Louis Gooren (Holland) and Professor Richard Green (Charing Cross Hospital, London) as well as other UK professionals including Ms Jean Sambrooks (Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Liverpool) and Dr Russell Reid (Consultant

Psychiatrist, Hillingdon and London). If anyone wishes further information about Transsexuality, the GDTI or its services, an information pack is available at a cost of £4 (cheques or postal orders made payable to GDTI, BM Box 7624, London, WC1N 3XX).

Given the sometimes hostile world faced by those suffering from gender dysphoria, it is the policy of the Gender Dysphoria Trust International to seek the strongest links with other gender organisations without compromising the autonomy of those groups, and members of the Board of Directors are more than willing to attend any meeting within the gender community that will seek to foster a greater understanding between groups.

*For and on behalf of the Trustees and Board of Directors
Paula McDowell
Chairperson and Trustee, GDTI*

From JoAnn Roberts

To The Editor,

I am writing in regard to several statements made in your editorial "Why, Oh Why..." (The Tartan Skirt, NS 12, October 1994). It is my hope to correct some mis-perceptions and to give you some additional information concerning cooperation among the US organizations.

My first comment relates to your statement "And despite whatever protestations these latter organizations may make to the effect that most of them cater for transsexuals as well as crossdressers, the truth is that any such catering may be



Nov 21, 1994

either very minimal indeed, or sometimes may even result, in practise, in active dissuasion of transsexuals." I can't speak for the other organizations listed, but as a co-founder and active board member of the Renaissance Education Assoc., Inc., I can say that your characterization is totally inaccurate with regard to Renaissance.

Renaissance has always been sensitive to the needs of all transgendered individuals, especially transsexuals. The first board of directors in 1988 included Kate Bornstein, noted transsexual playwright and author of Gender Outlaw. Subsequent boards have always included transsexuals to make sure the organization would stay sensitive to their needs. The retiring national Managing Director for 1994 is transsexual. Several of the Renaissance chapters are led by transsexuals, too. Our attention to transsexual issues is neither minimal nor dissuasive.

My second comment relates to your statement, "...organizations which cater exclusively for transsexuals, like... AEGIS in the USA." That statement is incorrect. As chair of the board of AEGIS, I can assure you the AEGIS tries to serve all segments of the transgender community. Yes, AEGIS has a heavy focus on issues affecting transsexuals and transgenderists, but we do not exclude crossdressers. There is only one organization in the US that focuses exclusively on M-t-F transsexuals (The XX Club, Hartford, Connecticut) and about three that serve F-t-M transsexuals exclusively.

My third comment refers to your statement, "...the five major gender organizations in the USA who (with the exception of AEGIS) more usually seem to be more or less at one another's throats..." Again, I must say that characterization is inaccurate. Never, at any time, has Renaissance, Tri-Ess, Outreach Institute and/or IFGE been "at each other's throat." Yes, individuals within these organizations have had personal differences. Yes, these personal differences have appeared in print, but that is the

nature of having a Bill of Rights and First Amendment protection of Free Speech. However, one should not presume these personal opinions are the official positions of any organizations; they are not. In particular, Renaissance, AEGIS, Tri-Ess and Outreach have worked together on many projects over the past few years. The effort you applauded was another step in our long history of cooperation. What was significant, was the participation of IFGE.

Now for the **really good news**. Emboldened by the success of their cooperation at the National Social Workers Conference, the groups involved have decided to form a Transgender Alliance for Community, or simply The Alliance. The purpose of The Alliance is to encourage the interactive participation of all transgender organizations in projects like the one just concluded. In other words, they want to keep working together toward common goals. To that end, a pledge has been written for the various boards to endorse. The wording is as follows:

Any organization that wishes to participate in The Alliance should make the following pledge:
"We, (name of organization), in the spirit of cooperation, caring, and community, pledge to participate in the sharing and exchange of services, information and resources, where possible, with other transgender organizations in order to develop a greater sense of true community among all transgendered people of the world."

Signed: The Board of Directors.

As of this writing, the Renaissance board has taken the Pledge. In about two weeks the AEGIS board will consider the Pledge at its meeting. I expect we'll take it. Later in December, Outreach Institute will hold a board meeting where they will consider the Pledge. I expect they'll take it. After all, Dallas Denny (AEGIS & Outreach) and Alison

Laing (Renaissance & Outreach) were the co-authors of the Pledge. Jane Ellen Fairfax (Tri-Ess chair, who initiated the NASW cooperative) has assured me she will take this to the Tri-Ess board in 1995, as will Phyllis Frye of the International Conference on Transgender Law & Employment Policy (ICTLEP). I am certain there will be other organizations joining over the next year.

I am overjoyed at the prospect of creating a real community out of the various segments and factions here in the US. All it took was for a few key individuals to say, "We ought to work together, not separately." At the same time, I am saddened that the British groups cannot find common ground. There is nothing to be gained by non-cooperation and much to be lost.

Anne, while I may have seemed harsh in correcting your mis-statements, I applaud your courage and honesty in pointing out the folly of letting personal egos override the needs of the community. Indeed, there can be no real community as long as personal interest is served over the interest of the organization itself. For whatever criticism you may receive, know that there are many here who support your position.

I'll close this letter with some words of advice to the TG leaders there from various TG leaders here. Phyllis Frye would say, "Get over yourself!" Alison Laing would say, "There is no 'I' in the word TEAM." And I'll tell you my favorite quote: "You are what you do when it counts."

Yours truly, with respect, love and admiration,

*JoAnn Roberts
Box 61263
King of Prussia
PA 19406-1263, USA*

(The following is abstracted from a letter I then sent to JoAnn Roberts in reply to her letter reprinted above - Editor)

Dear JoAnn

Thank you for your very welcome letter...I really do appreciate feedback of this sort, and am glad to have an 'inside view' of the position 'over there'.

However, I would like to comment on some of your points. Hanging over my desk is a wall-plaque which states:

**FACTS ARE NOT UNIMPORTANT
BUT IT IS BY PERCEPTIONS
THAT WE ARE JUDGED**

- and most of what I said regarding the position in the USA is indeed the "perception" of those of us from other countries. For example, you (correctly) point out that "individuals within these organizations have had personal differences". Well, despite what you then (again, correctly) say about "protection of free speech", the frequency - and often the bitterness - of these "differences"...do give the perception to others that they represent a lot more than mere "personal differences".

I must also note that some of my comments were based not upon perceptions but upon specific reported incidents and things that have actually been said to me by individuals involved - whose confidentiality I must, of course, respect. I have certainly come across published reports of individual members of TriEss who, coming to realise that they are actually TS, have been asked to resign, as TriEss is an organisation solely for heterosexual crossdressers.

I must also say that during my own attendance at both IFGE 'Coming Together' meetings and at Fantasia Fairs over the last few years I have all-too-often heard discussions (mostly informal, over coffee and in the bars

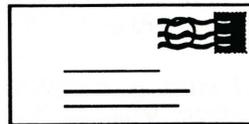
and lounges) at which antagonisms between IFGE and Outreach were not merely hinted at, but were openly spoken of and accepted as being the actual state of affairs.

Now all of this is very sad, and is certainly paralleled (and often exceeded) by similar antagonisms and misunderstandings between the gender organisations in this country - as I sought to indicate in my editorial. Indeed, the point that I was trying to make was that while American gender organisations, despite their differences, can and do work together for the greater good, this is sadly not happening very much over here. I do agree with the theme that runs through your letter, however, that while most of the differences we see and hear are basically down to personal disagreements and dislikes, the organisations themselves are mostly pledged to work for the general good of the gender community as a whole. (Although I have also recently seen it questioned elsewhere whether such a diverse group of people can properly be called 'a community' !). However, as I said at the beginning, "it is by perceptions that we are judged" - so maybe we should all (myself included) be doing more to improve our public relations and the perceptions that others (including our own sisters) have of us.

Anne Forrester

NB. In a subsequent letter received as we were going to press JoAnn agreed with my 'perception' of the generally antagonistic attitude of Tri-Ess towards transsexuals, and also with my analysis of the differences often stemming more from antagonisms between individual 'leaders' of the community than between organisations.

So, has anyone else anything to say about the way we work together, pull in the same direction and help one another - or sometimes (too often ?) fail to do so ? If so, let's be hearing from you - please !



HAVE YOU READ ?

Some Books Reviewed

Gender Outlaw: on Men, Women and the Rest of Us by Kate Bornstein. London & New York :Routledge. 1984. ISBN 0-415-90897-3. £ 19.99

Without any doubt this is one of the most unusual - and most important - books on a gender topic to appear in recent years. Kate Bornstein is a transsexual to female whose very idiosyncratic and well-argued views on gender will undoubtedly stimulate discussion within the gender community for years to come. Basically, Kate's thesis is that the common concept of there being two genders, male and female, is ridiculously constricting and outmoded and is the very cause of the injustices that women so often experience: to her, people are just people, and crossing gender boundaries is only necessary because society has (unnecessarily) imposed those boundaries upon a human race that is essentially bigenderal.

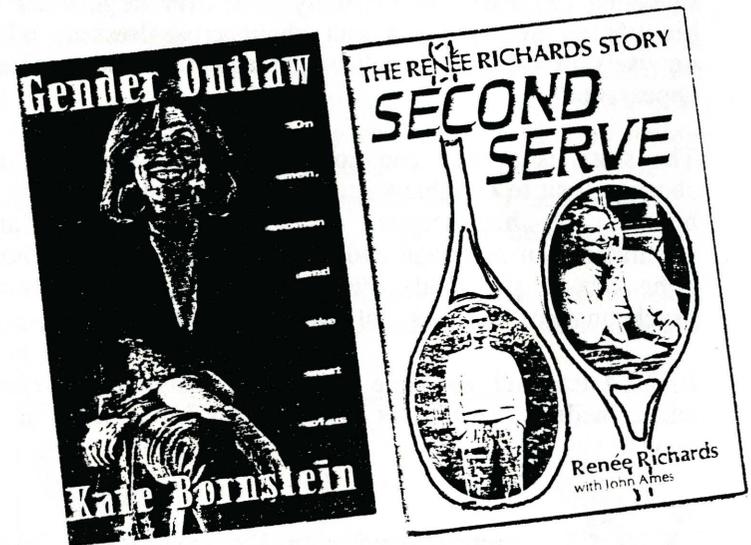
Kate Bornstein herself has had what by any standards is a varied and colourful career. From heterosexual male, one-time scientologist, first mate on a sea-going ship, and IBM salesperson to successful transsexual lesbian playwright, actress and author and active feminist, is a journey that few could even contemplate. And despite (or possibly because of) this motley background she is also a very witty and funny writer. Indeed, one critical view quoted on the jacket of her book sums it all up: "Kate Bornstein is a fierce and funny voice in the front lines of gender and sexual identity. Her wise heart and wild imagination challenge us to really own our own bodies, our desires, our dreams".

The book itself is produced in an unusual format with three sets of texts, each set in a different typeface and placed in different columns: the main text of the book is in the centre with a series of apposite quotations offset to the left and another series of comments on her own thoughts offset to the right. The effect is that you can never get bored with any single topic. Also included in the book is the text of Kate's play *Hidden: a gender*, (the title itself a 'play' on the words "hidden agenda").

It simply is not possible in a short space to review the content of the book in detail, but suffice it to say that Kate is quite clear that unlike Male or Female the division **Men or Women** is entirely artificial, and a basic cause of the injustices that men heap upon women in our society. While genital plumbing may place one clearly in one or another category of sex, how one thinks and acts - in other words, ones gender - is another matter entirely, and should certainly not be determined solely by a quick glance between the legs at the time of birth. Regardless of whether one is genetically male or female, whether one is mentally man or woman, sexually heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, is all for the individual to decide for him or herself.

Photographs of Kate in both her original male role and as she is now reveal a typical male who has become a most attractive woman, with the actor's ability in each case to present a wide variety of appearances - and the book itself reveals the same transition in its author's approach to life. It is also extremely quotable, and I will just offer one example, which sums up Kate's approach to life, and then leave you to go out and buy it and read it for yourself. You will certainly be the richer for the experience. Kate says "Well, it's a patriarchal culture, and gender seems to be basic to the patriarchy. After all, men couldn't have male privilege if there were no males. And women couldn't be oppressed if there were no such thing as 'women'. Doing away with gender is key to the doing away with the

patriarchy, as well as ending the many injustices perpetrated in the name of gender inequity. There is no gender inequity that doesn't first assume there is gender - and only two genders at that. Gender inequities include sexism, homophobia, and misogyny. The struggle for womens' rights (and to a lesser extent men's rights) is a vital stopgap measure until we do away with the system whose very nature maintains the imbalance and prohibits any harmony".



Second Serve: the Renée Richards Story by Renée Richards, with John Ames. New York:Stein & Day. 1983. ISBN 0-8128-2897-6. US\$ 16.95.

As you can see, this book has been around for some time - as has its subject, now aged 60 - although it has hardly been seen in Britain. Dr Renée Richards, formerly Dr Richard Raskind, a successful ophthalmological surgeon, is one of the more prominent American transsexuals who has had more than her fair share of media attention, first attracted by her prominence as a top class tennis player.

As a young man Richard Raskind was somewhat smothered by an overbearing mother and a manipulating sister, and it was not until he followed in the family tradition and graduated as a doctor that he could start to live his own life - and it was something of a hell-raising life at that, with many outlandish sexual adventures and punctuated by a spell in the US Navy, where he rose to the rank of Surgeon Lieutenant Commander. During all of this, however, his feminine *alter ego* - who he appropriately named Renée (meaning re-born) - increasingly took over large areas of his life as he went out and about cross-dressed, often unwisely in view of his tall height and (then) poor female appearance.

The story is a long and complicated one, including an abortive visit to Casablanca to seek reassignment surgery, a number of heterosexual affairs with women, and culminating in marriage and the birth of a son (of whom [s]he was deeply fond). Finally, however, after years of psychoanalysis and personal struggle with his feelings,

Richard Raskind was able to obtain reassignment surgery and a medical position as a woman far from his home in New York.



Interspersed with his medical and naval careers, however, Richard Raskind was also a tennis player of exceptional calibre, and it was after Renée's reassignment surgery and move to California as a woman that her successes on the tennis court, and later as a coach of international tennis celebrities, led to a very public unmasking by a sensation-hungry media. However, it was the refusal of the tennis authorities to recognise Renée as a woman player - despite full legal as well as medical recognition of her status - that led her to start a lengthy and very public battle for acceptance on behalf of all persecuted minorities.

The 'happy ending' to this story is that a court finally upheld Renée's claim for recognition by the tennis authorities, and she now practices as an ophthalmological surgeon in her home state of New York.



In many ways this story is typical of many other transsexuals' life stories that have been published, but as it is so little known outside the USA (despite the successful film and video with the same title, starring Vanessa Redgrave - who turns in an incredibly realistic performance in both genders - and following the true life story with remarkable accuracy) I really can recommend it to anyone trapped in the same transsexual hell of coming to terms with oneself, and the subsequent lack of acceptance by society. Renée is a fighter and, as such, an inspiration.

The book can be ordered through any major bookseller if you quote the ISBN number, and it is well worth the acquisition and the reading.



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THE 'SEX-CHANGE' OPERATION

TO HAVE IT OR NOT ?

- THAT IS THE QUESTION

by Erin Carruthers

In the last issue of *The Tartan Skirt* (No.12, October 1994) Bonnie Lynne Betz, in her 'Letter from America' illustrated her views on gender dysphoria and its accompanying treatment by analogy with a one-way train journey. And very apt her remarks were, too !

I was reminded of this by comments in a letter I received recently from my friend Kim regarding a post-operative transsexual acquaintance of hers who had called on her recently. Apparently, although this friend is very successful with both her appearance and her voice, she still complains about being 'read' and, oddly, if she *does* pass on two or three occasions she then deliberately gives the game away. Kim says that her friend evidently can't come to terms with her new self.

And yet, before we are recommended for surgery we have to undergo a considerable period of psychiatric assessment, and live full-time as a woman for two years. So, what is her problem ? Has she been wrongly assessed ? She has 'bought her train ticket' right to the end of the line, and it's too late now to reverse the anatomical changes even if she reverts to living again as a man.

By all accounts this is not an isolated case, and I would advise every transsexual to look inward and get to grips with how they *really* see themselves. Before being accepted for surgery we have to undergo a 'second opinion' assessment. (At the time of writing mine is due in

December, at Charing Cross hospital in London. Yes, London - all the way from the Hebrides ! So by the time you read this I should know whether I am to have 'the op' or not. This will be a nerve-wracking experience - not because I have any doubts that I will pass, but the sheer magnitude of the travel, overnight accommodation, *etc*, is mind-boggling as I have no transport of my own).

I feel that I have already come to terms with myself and do not envisage any mental problems following the operation. Of course, it must be acknowledged that transsexuals have to stop taking hormones for two months before surgery and for one month afterwards. The withdrawal symptoms may indeed cause problems, and transsexuals should certainly be counselled about - or at least warned of - this possibility. Which brings me to my next point.

I have heard complaints that post-operative counselling for transsexuals is virtually non-existent. Personally I hope that I will not need such counselling, but if I do I would see it as a failure on my part, and that I would have made a mistake.

Since I have always maintained that only a transsexual can properly understand another transsexual. Perhaps we should have post-operative transsexuals (who have made the transition without problems themselves) acting as counsellors at all stages of the original assessment ? Obviously they would have to work closely with, and under the direction of, the psychiatrist - but it is a thought worthy of consideration. ■

"The hardest thing in life is to learn which bridge to cross and which to burn"

David Russell

A TRANSSEXUAL IN TRANSITION

MORE ABOUT MY LIFE SO FAR

by Susan Hunter

Regular readers will remember Susan Hunter's previous contributions in which she talked about her gender transition to female and put her feelings into verse. Coming to terms with her gender identity comparatively late in life Susan had to explain matters to a wife and grown up children while trying to keep her job during her transition. Here she carries on with the story.

Hello again. It's been quite a while since you've heard from me, so let me assure you that I am still alive and kicking. So much has happened since I last wrote that it has taken a while to clear it all in my mind. I had poured out so much of my hopes and fears in my poetry that I felt then that I had nothing new to say.

As you know, the biggest decision that anyone can make is what they should be doing with their life - so where was I going, would I still be doing the same things next year? Although the thought really frightened me I made the decision that would change my life forever, because once the decision to make a gender transition is made you must stick to it come hell or high water, and face life's problems in the new role.

After discussing the matter with my wife we decided that I would stay in the family home. While this is not always recommended it has not worked out too badly for me, although it can create problems with some other people's attitudes towards you. Some will not even look your way, others will take you as a person but never discuss the gender issue, while yet others will be curious and ask

questions. I try to answer these as honestly as I can, but do try to judge what is genuine curiosity and what is nosiness.

One thing I should have done earlier was to see my family doctor. I had actually by-passed him and gone straight to a doctor who specialised in gender identity disorders, so I made an appointment and explained the whole story. After one visit he suggested that my medical records be changed as there was correspondence coming in concerning Susan, and it was confusing for the medical staff.

I suppose that when you are out dressed the one fear you have is that you will be stopped by the police and can only produce male I.D, which could lead to some embarrassing moments. So now that I was living as Susan full time I had to change my documents. The first thing I did was to apply for a new driver's licence, making sure that it had a female designation. I also made a list of things that had to be done, and remembered something that was said by a girl who had done it all before: "Don't try to change everything all at the same time".

Believe me, when you start to think about all the things you have to do you begin to ask yourself "What have I done?". So I worked out a planned timetable. The first person I spoke to outside the family and my doctor was the personnel manager at my place of work. I had already tested the water there and found them very supportive, for which I will be eternally grateful, but there was still a long way to go before I could be totally accepted as Susan. Let us not kid ourselves - going to work in the opposite gender role is no easy task. You can not at any time let your standards slip, because no matter how attractive you may think you look your work mates will always see your male side, so you must be prepared to be talked about!

One of my biggest fears was of being unemployed. I have worked for 9 years in my present job and have never been out of work since I left school, so when the company

announced redundancies I thought "that's it, you're out"; but I survived and am still here. But that made me think, what if I *had* been made redundant ? My name had been changed but I was still paying tax under my male name, so that was the last thing to be changed. If you think getting mail in your female name is something, just wait till you get a letter from the tax office addressed to "Miss (whoever)": you feel that you have entered a whole new world. There is a certain amount of recognition from officialdom, and if I am ever made redundant then I can apply for another job as Susan. But I'm not foolish enough to think that I will get a job any more easily !

So that's it. I am living the life that makes me happy, but there's always something more that I could do, something that I want, so I strive towards it. There are questions that I ask myself. What will life be like in five years time ? Will I be on my own or will I still be in the family home ? I suppose that's the hard part - where do we stop making changes and start living life again ? Or are we doomed to go through life always wanting more and always looking for something that's just out of reach ? ■

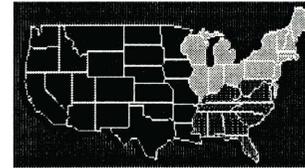
QUOTES OF THE MONTH

The differences between men and women

"A businessman is aggressive; a businesswoman is pushy. He's good on details; she's fussy. He loses his temper because he's so involved in his job; she's bitchy. He follows through; she doesn't know when to give up. His judgements are her prejudices. He is a man of the world; she slept her way to the top. He's a stern taskmaster; she's hard to work for"
Today's Woman



FROM ACROSS THE POND



- A LETTER FROM AMERICA

By *Bonnie Lynne Betz*

Hello again from the good old US of A, where at the time of writing thoughts are turning toward the holiday season. Everywhere you go you see the Christmas season coming up: capitalism has now taken over the holidays in full force. Here in the United States we celebrate Thanksgiving Day on the last Thursday of November, and it is a time for people to get together and give thanks for all the things they have. Now, however, this wonderful holiday is being treated as secondary and being overlooked: Christmas is seen as *much* more important because of the monetary aspect.



I find this very depressing, as Thanksgiving Day was very important for me as it was a day when all my family were together and could enjoy one another's company. Alas, those days are gone, like so many other traditions. My family has become very small over the past few years as the older members have died and the younger ones have gone their separate ways. All I have left of my immediate family is my brother, who is much older than me and in poor health. When I told him all about myself earlier this year he supported me, but now I feel a definite distance between us that never existed before. He still keeps in contact, but from a distance. Well, I can accept that and work with it, and I keep the relationship going as best I can. I do have several cousins, however, who have been very supportive, accept me for who I am and love to be with Bonnie.

When I started my transgender 'journey' toward my real life I realized that I may have to go it alone, and I decided that no matter what happened I *would* travel that road - alone if necessary. So I did start that trek alone, but along the way a wonderful thing happened which I will tell you all about.

I started my lonely quest prepared to be alone, but happy knowing that I am now the person I so rudely suppressed for so many years. Once I had shed the burdens of denial and became happy with myself I noticed that I also became more friendly with others, and looked at others not for their faults but for their good points. I seemed to make friends much more easily and was able to meet people that I enjoyed being with - and I enjoyed immensely being with them. I found out, though, that some of these people had their own agenda, part of which was to use others for their own gains - what I call 'fair weather friends' - and I saw that I needed to temper my new happiness with a wary eye toward those who I met and treated as friends. I started to become disenchanted with people, because here was this bright new person who was so alive and wanted to make others happy as well, but now she had to deal with others who were not so happy and alive, and who had these hidden agendas. I started to wonder about this world, but a change occurred in my life that brought out the best in Bonnie.

I found two people who only look at Bonnie, and want to be with her, because of who she is. I met each of these people by chance: one through an introduction at an event we both attended, and the other through a mutual friend who knew I was in need of a hairdresser. I knew from the minute I met them that these people were different from the others. They have each become part of my life, and will remain in my life until I die. I can truly state that I love them both as if they were my own blood, and I regard and treat them as sisters, which they are to me. One I hold very dear but geographical distance keeps us from being together

as much as we would wish, so we try to keep our conversations going no matter what. The other, who lives much closer, I see every weekend - and next year we will be buying a home together. These two people have not yet met one another, but they are undoubtedly bound together because they both mean the world to me, and I hope to have them meet when I have my reassignment surgery this coming February. They are my sisters and my best friends, and always will be. Even though I have met many other wonderful people and made many good friends, these two will always be in my heart and will always be my best friends.



Now I wanted to tell you about this side of me to make you aware that life does not have much meaning without friends and loved ones. Once you learn to love yourself and enjoy yourself, you can then love others and enjoy others. When I was young I had my family and they meant the world to me, but as I grew older I met many people who were less than honest and caused me to become wary of friendships. As I went through my denials I became even more wary and made some wrong friendships, but when I finally became the 'real me' I started to meet new people and enjoyed these meetings much more. I quickly discovered that I can not have everyone as my friend, so I have tempered my enjoyment of people with a cautious attitude gained from years of experience, and have now found true friendships that will last forever.

Friendships make life enjoyable, and close friendships make it wonderful: and I have both an enjoyable and a wonderful life because I have found good and close friends. So the message that I want to get across to everyone is this:

don't be alone, *make* friends and *be* friends with people. Making friendships can lead to other more wonderful aspects of life. Who knows, you may even gain a new family out of your friendships as I did. Now I have more of a family than ever, and I can enjoy Thanksgiving Day again because I have something to be thankful for. I am not alone and, more importantly, two other people are not alone in this world either, for they have me!

I must close now, and want to wish everyone a Happy Holiday season. I will then be taking a 'writing hiatus' for a short while as I will be having my surgery in February and have many things to do before then. I need to devote time to myself, so that I can totally prepare for the last door that I must pass through before I see the bright sunlight of a new day and my new life. Then I will be back, totally refreshed and renewed, and totally Bonnie.

God Bless you all... Talk to you again soon from "Across The Pond".

Bonnie

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS

Of all the words in the English language

The six most important are: **I admit I made a mistake**

The five most important are: **You did a good job**

The four most important are: **What is your opinion ?**

The three most important are: **If you please**

The two most important are: **Thank you**

The one most important is: **We**

The one *least* important is: **I**

NEWS FROM THE SCOTTISH GROUPS

Crosslynx (Glasgow). If it's true that through adversity comes strength then Crosslynx should be the strongest group in the country as we have not had to seek trouble - it came looking for us. Our troubles started when a new manager took over the Centre where we held our meetings. We had been ticking over quite nicely when we submitted our dates for the second half of the year, which is where it all started to go wrong. Our committee was called to a meeting with the manager and in a matter of 15 minutes we were out on our ear and all our plans were up in the air. We had worked so hard to build up the group and our numbers had started to rise - we were having 20 to 25 attending regularly at our meetings - and now we had nowhere to go.

The committee decided that we would not go quietly, but it seemed it was not only the manager's neck that was brass, for not even his bosses could make him change his mind. (We later learned that we were not the only group to feel this clean sweep for the Gay switchboard, who had been in the building for 21 years, were given six months to get out. But they say that God works in mysterious ways, and we fell out of the fire and landed right on our feet. The Group is now meeting in the Charlie Reid Centre at 15 Elmerbank Street, Glasgow, with two meetings a month on the second and fourth Wednesdays. We have use of the Café area which the Centre staff open up so we can buy tea, coffee, *etc*, and our programme didn't suffer as we had continuity. At our first meeting in the new Centre, in October, we had a talk by the Strathclyde Police area officer, who was very informative and helped put a few minds at rest. November saw the *Miss Crosslynx* competition - purely a fun night - and in December we had our Christmas party.

The programme for the first six months of the year includes social nights with games *etc* on the fourth Wednesdays and on the second Wednesdays a makeup 'swap shop' in January, a talk by Janice Pevoy of the Gender Dysphoria Trust in February, a *Colour Works* special in March, talks on marriage guidance in April and by Jim Black of Ruchill Hospital in May, and a Quiz Night in June. We hope that if you are in Glasgow on any of these dates you will please drop in.

Grampian Gender Group - 3G (Aberdeen). Yes, 3G is still alive and well and happy living in the new premises we moved into in September 1993. We have sole use of, and complete freedom of movement in, a large building easily accessible from the city centre, with a discrete entrance and car parking, excellent changing facilities, and non-stop tea, coffee and refreshments. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, and crossdressers and transsexuals mix happily together along with a few partners who are also regular attenders. Our regular meetings continue on the third Saturday of each month (from one-ish for two-ish until five-ish - although nobody throws us out if we are still talking) and are now extended for a trial period for the benefit of those who can attend more easily during the week, with evening meetings on the first Wednesday of each month (except January), from 7.00 until 9.00pm.

Although we enjoy these social 'get-togethers' we continue to act mainly as a support group, and our helpline receives an average of three or four new calls for help each week, ranging from possible transsexuals through serious crossdressers and those still firmly in their closets to occasional fetishistic transvestites. These calls often come from other parts of Scotland (and sometimes further afield) and an increasing number of them are referrals from the Samaritans. As we maintain a comprehensive file of information and can offer comprehensive advice (ranging from where to buy clothes and how, to where to find the

best reassignment surgeons and what they charge), and have a trained counsellor to help those with serious personal problems, we can answer most questions: and if not, we always "know a man (or a woman !) who can" !

Following our happy Christmas party in December (complete with Anne's cross-dressed dog - he was wearing a pink tinsel collar) our Saturday programme for the beginning of 1995 includes talks by a solicitor and a police officer in January and a speech therapist in March. Thereafter we shall see what we can arrange, although as our barbecue last summer was such a success we shall probably repeat it this year (weather permitting). We are very conscious of the need for security and screen new members before their first attendance, but members of other gender groups are always welcome as guests, so if you are likely to be in the most beautiful part of Britain (yes, that's us), get in touch - try phoning 013398 83695 most evenings and asking for Anne - and we will give you directions.

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Dr. Sheila Kirk is both a board certified Obstetrician-Gynecologist and a Transgendered person. She has read the medical literature, attended numerous conferences conducted by researchers and world authorities on



Transgendered Medical Care and lectures herself to the transsexual community about hormonal therapy and reassignment surgery. She has summarized a great amount of up-to-date medical literature to aid you, the medical physician, in the care of the transgendered person.

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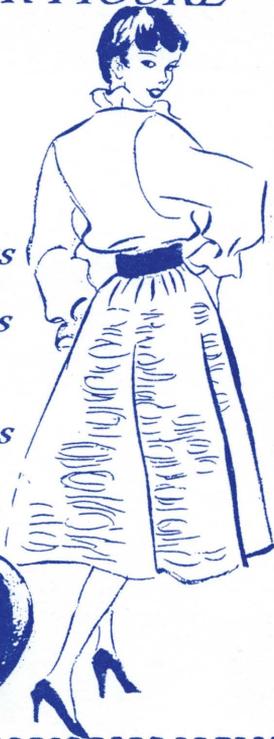
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