



THE EON ACCORD

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A PUBLICATION OF EXPRESSING OUR NATURE, INC.

ISSUE 6

NAME THAT STEREOTYPE

by Charliss Dolge

In this issue of the **ACCORD** we conclude Rev. Kim Harvey's contribution to our EXCERPTS section. Part II of this section is a selection from Marjorie Garber's recent book, *VESTED INTERESTS: CROSSDRESSING AND CULTURAL ANXIETY*.

Both selections have something to say about the subject of stereotypes. Rev. Harvey challenges us to throw away the caricatured aspects of the stereotype of a woman's appearance and role, and to seek out our own individual expression of our feminine persona. This has a lot to do with becoming more contemporary in terms of political correctness, fashion, and feminist, or liberationist, thinking. It also has a lot to do with courage and self esteem. I think it would be wonderful if more of us in the crossdressing community would be willing to open ourselves up to this challenge.

The selection from Marjorie Garber's book deals with the thoughts that writers like Joan Riviere, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault have about womanliness, gender identification, and cultural identity. This selection poses the idea that there is nothing "real," or of essence, about the stereotype of woman or feminine—that this is all made up by cultural forces (especially the patriarchal, or male dominated, culture) This deconstructionist type of thinking poses questions and challenges that point to all kinds of human and spiritual potential, the expression of which would run right across the grain of all the belief systems regarding these subjects, beliefs we uncritically assume to be true or "real" simply because we were brought up with them and have held on to them for so long (the alternatives being socially, economically, and psychologically too risky to accept and express—no matter that they just might be healthier)

The above challenges to popular or culturally inspired thinking get right to the heart of the matter regarding much of what we experience in this world as intolerance, discrimination, and all kinds of oppression, hurt, and frustration.

Really, in our heart of hearts, I think we see all this; however, it does pose an interesting, and perhaps painful, dilemma for most of us who crossdress, whether we be transvestites, transgenderists, or transsexuals: regardless of our gender identity or how we strive to position ourselves in the scheme of things, we depend on this culture's stereotype of what constitutes woman or feminine for reasons of emotional gratification, spiritual fulfillment, sexual gratification, social acceptance from peers and those who make up the larger society in which we desire to "blend in" without notice or question, and for reasons of "safety" or anonymity, as well as pride in skill and artistry.

What the dilemma comes down to, I think, may be this: that we want to "pass", —whether the encounter with our feminine self be the image in the mirror or in the public eye— not only in terms of culture's expectations today, but also in terms of what was womanly or feminine at the point in our childhood past, that turning point, when we first experienced the reward or truth of our crossdressing activity and/or gender identity. It's an interesting kind of romance with, loyalty to, or repetitive attraction to the "long ago."

The power of the stereotype is evident when we pass in public while we are made up with transforming cosmetics, the "crowning glory" hair style or realistic wig, our skirts or dresses, high heels and accessories, and functioning through our knowledge of feminine body language, voice, and behaviour. **Especially** if all this has become easy and natural for us.

However, to **really** appreciate the power of the stereotype to elicit the desired response to your presence, see how it is possible to pass with a sales clerk or with anyone with reason to approach you and speak to you as "Miss" or "Ma'am" when you are exhibiting just a scant few of the elements of the stereotype— say a shoulder bag, woman-tailored jeans, flats, very little or no makeup, and barrette-secured hair along with what we might call a somewhat feminine demeanor or posture. This happens, especially if being "feminine" tends to be natural for us. No matter that the sales clerk may soon realize her "mistake", the
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FALL/WINTER SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

EON has created a calendar for support group activities that includes every saturday of the month from September the 12th through December the 31st. Please consult the two part blue and pink events calendar that has been sent to you under separate cover. Many of these events require pre-registration.

Also, please note:

1ST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH...Board of Directors meeting, Expressing Our Nature, Inc. **7:00 PM**. Contact a board member if you have ideas or topics you would like to have the board consider.

EVERY THURSDAY...Beginning at **7:00 PM**...Makeover Classes conducted by Angela Sheedy (see your calendar).

3RD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH...Newsletter Night... Beginning at **7:00 PM**.

National & Regional Events

1. **18th Annual Fantasia Fair**...Live, learn and explore the diverse aspects of alternative gender styles. Extensive program. **October 16-25, 1992 Provincetown, Mass**
2. **18TH Annual Fantasia Fair**...Grande Dame of events. **October 16-25, 1992, Provincetown, MA.**
3. **1992 Holiday En Femme Convention**...Sponsored by TRI-ESS Chapter Sigma Epsilon. **November 11-15, 1992 Atlanta, GA.**
4. **PARTYTIME CAFE...TIFFANY CLUB OF NEW ENGLAND**...An outside social event that includes the public. Hotel rooms reserved for out-of-town guests. **7:00 PM, November 7 1992, Newton, MA.**
5. **FIRST EVENT...TIFFANY CLUB OF NEW ENGLAND**...**January 27, 1993-February 1st. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Natick, MA.**
6. **FIFTH ANNUAL TEXAS "T" PARTY, "TEA FOR TWO"**...**February 26-28, 1993, San Antonio, Texas.**
7. **THIRD ANNUAL FALL HARVEST WEEKEND**...St. Louis Gender Foundation. **November 19-22, St. Louis, MO.**
8. **Seventh Annual "Coming Together-Working Together" Convention**...Sponsored by IFGE. Meet, learn from, and share insights with leaders and members of our community from around the world. Learn, grow, and be yourself in an atmosphere of pride, dignity, and joy... **March 14-21, (1993) Philadelphia, PA**

EXCERPTS: I

The following is taken from the keynote address given by the Rev. Kim K. Harvey at the 1990 "Coming Together-Working Together" convention. She is the senior minister of the Arlington Street Church in Boston.

Her first experience of the crossdressing community was in 1985, during the Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, at which time she was Senior Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Provincetown.

As a loving "outsider," she shared a vision and a hope that she had for us. After sharing some about her own self-realization as a lesbian, she spoke to us.

This concludes our excerpts from her talk, which we began in last month's issue of the ACCORD.

"Providing a haven for your newcomers, and a meaningful supportive community for you all, coming out, and taking risks— these are three challenges to your potential as a people today. Moreover, to live honorably out on the margin asks very hard things of each of us. Briefly, here are three thoughts I have about the crossdressing community's special challenges.

First, you are challenged not to be stereotypical in your presentation. If you dress to look like a caricature of a woman, rather than as a true woman, you are only hurting yourself. One friend who dresses told me that she bought enormous falsies and ridiculously long eyelashes and killing stiletto heels so that people would think she was only fooling around. At some level, she didn't believe she deserved to be taken seriously, so she didn't take herself seriously. If you want to dress like a woman, you will be so much more warmly received if you don't insult women while doing it.

Second, and most important, if you dress like a woman, it is important to act like a woman. I don't mean that you need to cross your legs at the ankles when seated—most females I know don't do this. But it is important to truly, deeply, committedly try on the best of what women have become over the centuries— nurturing, compassionate, patient teachers and healers as well as gutsy, powerful movers and shakers. It is women who have defined the spiritual life of most church communities; women who have tenderly cared for the very young,

the very old, and the unwell; women who have brought aesthetics into every corner of our lives; women who have marched for peace and done men's and women's work while the men were off to war; and women who are today at the forefront of every movement to heal all manner of brokenness in our society. I encourage you to read the history of women, to read women's literature, to see women's art, and to hear women's music. The only reason that the gender roles have begun to slide a little is because courageous people from the margins— lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and crossdressers— have dared to challenge them, dared as women, to enter traditional men's spheres and dared, as men, to enter into traditional women's spheres.

Finally, third, it would be so unfair to enjoy dressing as a woman, trying on a woman's persona, and never going further, never giving any of your time or energy or money to causes that deeply affect women, like birth control and childcare and equal pay for equal work. It is more than appropriate to give your hard-earned male dollars to further the cause of women. Many of you have begun to do this; I owe a personal thank you to Jenny Stevens, who has been a wonderful spokesperson for women and has consistently and generously put her money where her mouth is. It begins at home, making sure that your girlfriend or wife has as big a clothing allowance as you do, and, most importantly, enjoys the power and respect and freedom that you enjoy. But it is much, much bigger than that. Women are the poorest people in the world. Women and children are the most at risk for being on our planet right now. Think about what you can do for women, and know that it will be doing something for yourself. Think globally and act locally and globally.

And please talk to your men friends about this. You don't have to introduce the issue by saying, "I dress as a woman, so I have a special stake in this issue," although that would be wonderful, if you dare. Try to imagine being dressed as you are coupled with not being physically strong enough to fight back, and speak up about domestic violence and violence in our streets. Let yourself feel how incredibly vulnerable a woman feels every time she leaves home— and sometimes, how vulnerable we feel right within our own homes. Seek to deeply experience that vulnerability, and then tell your men friends how you feel about the government or the church legislating the fate of a pregnancy that is the result of a rape.

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EXCERPTS: I

(CON'T FROM PAGE 3)

My friends, there is healing work to be done, healing work that is uniquely yours to do. I invite you today to accept **the challenge to live deeply into the expression of every corner of who you are. Celebrate your potential and the potential of your people by nurturing the haven of this community, by coming out as much as you possibly can- and then some- and by daring to take risks.** Please throw out the stereotypes, act like women- and learn all you can of womanly ways- and seek to give your time, energy, and money to the causes that affect all of our lives.

I close with words from singer Margie Adam, who says, "Bringing together all we know for others who are struggling alone, bringing together all we are, offering those who want to find us a way to find us, a way to see, we shall go forth from this place, willing to open wide, sharing the light inside. We shall not fail."

EXCERPTS: II

WOMAN: Created Or Made Up?

The following was excerpted from VESTED INTERESTS: CROSSDRESSING AND CULTURAL ANXIETY, by Marjorie Garber. Published by Rutledge, 1992.

"...if 'woman' is culturally constructed, and if female impersonators are **conscious** constructors of artificial and artifactual femininity, how does a 'female impersonator' differ from a 'woman'? The question seems both ludicrous and offensive, but its theoretical and social implications are large and important. Female impersonators are often accused of misogyny (and regularly deny the charge), but in the female impersonator, the feminist debate about essentialism versus constructedness finds an unexpected, parodic, and unwelcome test.

Here is one drag queen's answer, describing the heyday of the London drag balls of the sixties: 'there was a definite distinction then as there is now between the

drag queens who enjoyed masquerading as women, and the sex changes (that is, transsexuals), who regarded themselves, and were regarded, as real women.'

'Masquerading' versus 'real' women. It makes sense that transsexuals, who have invested so much in anatomical alteration, should insist that the ground of reality is the feminized body: the body undergoing hormone treatment to develop breasts and hips, undergoing surgery to translate the penis into a vagina. But this binarism between 'masquerading' and 'real women' has been at the center of disputes and discussions among psychoanalytic critics, feminist film theorists, and, most recently, lesbian or self-described 'queer theorists.' Drawing on Joan Riviere's classic essay, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade,' and on Lacan's revision and extension of that essay in 'The Signification of the Phallus,' theorists have sought to define 'woman' as a construct that depends, for reasons social and political as well as erotic, upon masks and masquerade.

Riviere has argued not only that 'women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men,' but also that it was impossible to separate womanliness **from** masquerade:

'The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade.' My suggestion is not, however, that there is any difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.'

The woman constructed by culture is, then, according to Riviere, already an impersonation. Womanliness **is** mimicry, **is** masquerade."

I HEAR MUSIC. DO YOU?

By Angela Sheedy

The other night I was sitting on my sofa at home watching an old Spencer Tracy movie called "Something About Joe". I like Spencer Tracy movies, they seem to appeal to both sides of my nature, always having those soft undertones of what life is really all about.

I won't elaborate on the movie except to say that there was one scene, where Tracy was having his new role as guardian angel for a young WW II fighter pilot explained to him by his heavenly commander. He said to Tracy, "Have you ever flown your plane at night over the ocean at twenty thousand feet? All alone, with the clouds below you and the stars and moon above you, and heard beautiful music?" After some shuffling around for an adequate answer, Tracy finally admitted that he had heard music, but could never find the words to explain it adequately to others. His commander looked him in the eye and said, "The music is the song of your heart singing to your soul. It is the feeling in every man when he knows that he is in the process of experiencing the true freedom of his spirit."

I know that it is hard to explain the reasons why we do some things that others do not understand, such as crossdressing. There never seem to be words that can adequately express the feelings we have when we are dressed. But don't we hear the music? Of course we do.

The soft music that feeds our souls is the click of heels across a floor, the smell of perfume in our rooms, the feel of taffetta rushing against silk stockings, that woman in the mirror that we love to be.

It is not so difficult for others to understand our feeling if you first preface your explanation with the very honest statement that crossdressing to us is the music of the heart that feeds our souls. Besides being quite profound, it may be the best explanation that I have ever heard.

What do you feel when you hear this music? I feel the freedom in my spirit to express what my soul must have, to be truly satisfied with life. One of the experiences in my life that makes me overjoyed and utterly intoxicated with freedom. A part of a cosmic happening that is far bigger than myself, yet I feel no less small for it's realization. As a matter of fact, when I hear the music, I feel exceptionally fortunate to be just me.

For flyers it may take being alone at twenty thousand feet, for football players it may be the winning catch, for mothers it may be the first look at their new baby. For all of us there are those special times in our lives that let us know that each of our souls is special and is capable of rising above the petty arguments of life to experience not the bondage of our earthbound being, but a spirit in our soul that loves to be free to express ourselves.

I know that Spencer Tracy did not have crossdressing in mind when he was making this movie. But once again, this movie, like many of his others, touched my soul and made it easier for me to understand who I am and finally find the right words to explain it to others. Crossdressing is the music I hear from my heart, being played so lovingly to my soul. I can't wait to see the look on the next person's face when they ask me, "why do you do this Angela?"

TALES FROM THE TV DARKSIDE

by

Victoria Lynn

Rather than review a single book, I've taken it upon myself to review an entire class of them to see just how the crossdresser or transsexual is treated within the confines of what we commonly call fiction. Since this could easily turn into something much larger than I want to write (or you want to read), I'll keep the examples to a minimum. Oddly enough, this limitation does no damage; as we shall see, the crossdresser is presented in literature in a surprisingly small number of roles.

Before proceeding, take a moment to understand my terminology. You will see the term TV (transvestite) or crossdresser. What you will not see are all the twelve syllable words which can be used to describe the variety of lifestyles we in the gender community have come to accept as our own. You won't see TS (pre-op or post-op), or transgenderist, & etc. Why? Because the average reader of fiction does not understand the difference. Indeed, they may not be aware that there is a difference, and to fully appreciate what we are up against, it is important that you not see any difference either (at least for the time being).

The TV has been found in literature for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. While there are exceptions, we are most often cast in two roles, comic and villain. The first is typified by the 'Milton Berle' type of crossdressing as farce. As long as it's funny, it's not really a big problem. Society excuses almost anything in the name of comedy. It's important to know that some see us as caricatures, but for the most part, as long as society is laughing almost any behavior can be excused. While all this might be a bit annoying, it is essentially harmless. On the other hand, we have the TV presented in fiction as the villain, and this is where things get out of hand.

Though examples abound, we'll take a look at two of the most famous. Both of these characters are famous and both are fiction, or, are they...?

In 1962 Alfred Hitchcock terrified the world with a neat little movie called "Psycho". At the end of the film, Martin Balsam explained that Norman Bates was a "Transvestite". This little bit of misinformation has probably caused more trouble than all of Milton Berle's drag farce scenes put together. Why? Because Berle's characters were funny. Norman Bates, on the other hand, was anything but. Norman was, among other things, a murderer. Dressed in his mother's clothes, Young Mr. Bates

dispatches at least two people to the great beyond, and it is darkly hinted at that he's dispatched a few more in the past. In "Psycho", Bates' transvestism is probably a symptom of the fact that he is completely schizophrenic, yet the impression one is left with is that his crossdressing is a cause of this murderous behavior, rather than a very minor part of a very serious disturbance.

In a nutshell, Hitchcock has left us with the impression that **Norman is a killer because he is a TV**. (He's not a TV, but the movie viewing public doesn't know that.) If that's the case, then logic demands anyone who is a TV must also have these darker, more frightening urges. That this is not true is immaterial. It's what the public is told, and it's what they will unconsciously accept. It's human nature to remember what has the biggest impact on you, and everyone on the planet over the age of 20 has probably seen at least a few scenes from this movie. (If you think it didn't have any effect, consider that shower sales dropped 40% in the six months that followed the movie's release!)

Our second example is even more current, and if possible even better known. Is there anyone in the country who doesn't recognize the book/movie title "Silence Of The Lambs", wherein we are faced with not one villain, but two? In a curious twist, the author (Thomas Harris) has made the secondary villain (Hannibal Lecter) by far the more interesting of the two. The first villain is a twisted monster named Jame (pronounced like "name") Gumm. This fellow has it in his head that he wants to be a woman, so to assist in this endeavor, he's taken to skinning young ladies and wearing them! (-Nice guy, right?-) Now, remember that several hundred million people have read the book (published in 1988) or seen the movie. Will they understand the obvious differences between a rational individual and someone like Gumm or Bates?— Of course not. To the average viewer (or reader), both are "Transvestites", and having no other information to fall back on, they will continue to equate the behavior of these fictional aberrations with the cross gender society in general.

To be sure, in the last few years this is changing. Shows such as Donahue, Geraldo Rivera, and so forth have tried, at times, to represent members of our community with honesty and fairness, but still the image that Hitchcock and Thomas Harris have left us with will continue to haunt the community, just as for centuries the image of the "wicked witch" has haunted those who follow pagan religions. When you hear the word "witch", what do you think of? Someone who worships nature, and tries to live in harmony with it or the character played by Margaret Hamilton in the "Wizard of Oz"?

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QUESTIONS

by Anne Harper

Angela and I had a unique experience near the end of September. In the past, members of EON have been able to speak to a Sociology class at Hamilton College, and this year we took advantage of the opportunity. The course title, "Sexual Diversity", is taught by Paula Rust, Ph.D. About 35 students attended the seminar to question two men dressed as women. For Angela and I, the fact that we looked terrific in our feminine attire was not unusual; we often dress that way. What made the experience special was the questions we were asked, and the genuine interest in our responses:

- 1- 'Do you feel that you made a choice to be a crossdresser or were you born that way?'
- 2- 'How does your family react to your crossdressing?'
- 3- 'Do you feel that you are an example of someone breaking down or defying gender roles, or by dressing in that manner are you simply trying to take on the other gender role, thereby accepting that men and women are two separate, distinct categories?'
- 4- 'Do you find shopping for clothes difficult? - Please share some of your experiences.'
- 5- 'Do you only crossdress around those who accept you?'
- 6- 'Don't you think it's the slightest bit weird?'
- 7- 'How do you decide when to dress as a man or woman?'
- 8- 'Do you consider what you do to be deceiving to the outside world? -Does this deception upset you in any way?'
- 9- 'Are you homosexual? How many are or are not?'
- 10- 'If we lived in an equal society where men and women had no gender roles and gender identities were mixed, do you think you would still be a crossdresser, or want to be one?'

These represent only a small sample of the questions that were prepared in advance by the class. Some of the questions were light-hearted which kept the mood of the session pleasant. Other questions were very complex,

requiring Angela and I to think and use all of our perceptive powers. They asked about our sexuality, our relationships, and our motivations. They wanted to know of society's reaction to our activity, and of our feelings toward that reaction. Some wondered about the connection between crossdressing and the women's movement. Some students got very involved, while others seemed to enjoy being spectators. I left the school that night thinking we helped the class toward a better understanding of crossdressing. Angela and I did not always agree in our answers to some of their questions, but it seems that our differences assisted in showing them that crossdressers are regular people. I went home that night thinking that we had furthered our "cause" by being available to that class. It wasn't until much later that I realized the benefit I had derived and what made this experience so rewarding.

As I thought about my reaction to that evening at Hamilton College, I was reminded of an article written by Charliss in the May 1992 newsletter. She wrote about "A Larger Sense of Self"; she had described what I experienced:

"Self Expression is growth, and growth, paradoxically, is not adding to something. It is a releasing of something, an unfolding of what is already there or within. This is the true nature of what we call change: it is a going-back-to; it is a giving up of the false or convenient, a letting-go of what is easy for others to accept but ultimately destructive to you."

Every time I have an opportunity to interact with anyone as a crossdressed individual, I grow. I learn more about myself, and have come to realize that my crossgender activity is much more than a hobby. Having to consider the student's questions and answering them while sitting there in a dress made me peel back some of my protective layers. I then saw what is really inside, a more authentic self. The students may have experienced their first exposure to crossdressing that evening, but I received additional affirmation to continue my growth.

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, BABE!

Let's see, last month I promised to discuss eyebrows and foundation. I know we can cover eyebrows, but the big question is, can any crossdresser who has not had electrolysis cover the subject of foundation adequately? We'll see.

Eyebrows are a problem for crossdressers because the general feeling is that you cannot have them look feminine without everyone in your world noticing that they have been cut, tweezed, plucked, shaped, waxed and colored. Not so, neanderthal eyes.

In fact, careful trimming and plucking over a period of time will go virtually unnoticed by even your closest friends and relatives. They may even think you look better, but in truth most will never notice if you are patient and careful.

Start by tweezing (refer to lesson #1, tools) only the outside areas of the brow and only the heaviest or coarsest hairs first. Keep up with this for at least a week to see if there is any reaction from those around you. When you find out that no one is going to arrest you for abusing your brows, move in for the next step, shorten the long hairs. This is done best by using a small brow brush or even a toothbrush and combing the hair straight up toward your hairline. With a sharp pair of scissors (again see "tools") clip off the longer hairs that protrude above your desired browline. Repeat the process but this time comb the hairs down to the direction of the eye. This is a brow trim that when the long hairs are cut, the brows will look as dark or light as before because you are not removing any of the hairs, you are only shortening them. Keep up both these procedures for about a month and still, no one will really notice. If you do have an observant friend that says something, have an excuse on hand to explain the sparcer brows. I like the one where, gee, I had trouble lighting the gas range so I blew on the pilot light and poof, I burned half of the right brow, so I had to trim the left one to match the one that was burned.

In any event, interest and curiosity is usually short lived and the topic moves on to more earth shattering subjects such as, how high the grass is growing this year.

Now we have gotten to this point, it's time to really move in for the final touches. With the tweezers in hand, trim the remaining hairs along the brow line you desire. A trick here is to go up and under the bottom of the brow and tweeze small hairs along the brow line so the longer hairs overshadow the area, then when you use a brow cream or gel they will be brushed together, giving you an even thinner brow and allowing you to give more room for eye shadow above the eye lid area. This technique will help to open up the eye area and with a little patience and time, your brows will become very feminine without the associated fears of everyone else noticing.

Remember, there are three types of brow applications; pencil, liquid or powder. Pencil is the easiest to use, providing the maximum control and when applying it, it is always better to go lightly, looking for little color, and adding more or deeper color to taste. It is more difficult to try and remove the color once it is applied, so when it comes to eyebrows, there is a common rule, patience and time produce the best results.

Well, I guess that we will have to start talking about beard cover and foundation next month because I am out of my allotted space.

Love Ya, Angela

OUR GANG

by Charliss

Community is **spirit**. The result is always greater than the sum of its parts. Most important, community means **all** of us.

With this in mind, several EON group members have made contributions that have enhanced our meeting space, our programs, our times together in work and recreation- contributions that have advanced our social purpose and group identity, and that have caused increased financial stability and forward movement with our vision. They have been able to contribute their time or money, energy or ideas because they are willing to identify with something that is greater than themselves, which is: the vision of community.

They did it for you, and for others they are yet to meet or for others they may never personally know.

They are:

Ann Harper, who represented us by speaking at the Gay Pride rally this past June. Her's was an experience of bridge building as well as one of personal empowerment. She was accompanied by **Velvet** who played an important and supportive role en femme with Ann.

Angela Sheedy was with Ann on an occasion recently in September when they both made a presentation to Paula Rust's sociology class at Hamilton College. This was a first time experience for Ann, and one in a string of many for Angela. In addition to their outreach commitments, both have made financial contributions to our fundraising programs, as well as donations of meeting space furnishings and fixtures. They have also served as role models for others in our group- Ann with her understated, yet elegant, feminine presentation, and Angela with her (deleted) presentation.

Brittany, fairly new to the group, learned of our desire to purchase a VCR and television and made the first financial commitment towards the purchase. Brittany's example, followed by help from Angela and Ann, along with the profits from our "Coming Home" and "Merissa" dinners enabled us to purchase excellent equipment for our video night programs.

Rita set up the equipment for us, and **Velvet** has completed the painstaking task of creating a log of our video library complete with program descriptions, segments, and tape indexing. Rita and

Velvet are always at work for all of us in other ways too. On several occasions, Rita has done carpentry work at our offices, and the installation of locks and hardware that she has donated. She has also been a financial contributor to our fundraising programs. Most recently, Rita installed the new sink and vanity in the second floor restroom. Velvet has spent many long hours at our computer updating our database and our separate mailing lists, in the process becoming more and more expert and creative, and able to instruct others (we had to veto her proposal, though, to relocate the PC and printer to the makeup & dressing room). Velvet also got the renovation of the second floor restroom started. She is also very often busy at other smaller tasks that when completed make a big difference in our total environment.

Krista wields a mean steel tape measure when dressed in skirt and heels, but she delivers the carpeting and performs the installation in jeans and sneakers (pink and aqua Rebocks!) Krista provided and installed the new carpeting for the redecorated second floor restroom and second floor reception area. Earlier this year, she also provided the carpeting for the business office, our makeup & dressing room, and the meeting room and conference room. There have also been times when her pitching-in with others has helped us meet a due bill during times when we have been flying by the seat of our skirt (She is a true flyer, literally- a pilot, that is. The trouble, though, that many of us have with this fact is that Krista uses Amelia Earhart luggage-not carpetbag valises- and we all know what happened to her...)

Marsha Simson headed up our successful yard sale this past June. She was assisted by Wilma, Jerri, Velvet, and Rita. In addition to often being that welcome and compassionate voice on the telephone when newcomers make their first contact with EON, Marsha participates in the initial interviews, is often at the office to greet group members and friends, and handles many of the outside errands so necessary to our business and meeting-time life: banking at our credit union; meeting with our printer; dealing with the post office; purchasing at the grocery store; and other errands (including the operation of Simson Limo Service for post-meeting home delivery of EON group members) She also is a partner in Marvel Services (along with Velvet) which performs a maid/house mother function for EON. Marsha is always there with Velvet on newsletter night, labeling, stamping, and envelope-stuffing, so that you may have this newsletter which we hope you enjoy. (CONT PAGE 11)

TALES FROM THE TV DARKSIDE

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While Harris' book is only a few years old, the story of Norman Bates goes back to the early 1960's. What ties these two stories together is that they are based in fact. Hitchcock's movie was taken from a book written by Robert Bloch, written in 1959-60. Bloch freely admitted the source of his inspiration, and while Thomas Harris may not be aware of it, his character Jame Gumm also owes a debt of gratitude to a 'quiet, friendly' Wisconsin farmer named Edward Gein.

He was well liked by his neighbors, and seemed content to live out his years running the family farm with his brother Henry and their mother. "Mother" Gein had made absolutely sure that her sons would remain single by constantly reminding them that most women were filthy whores and that they should never marry. (Sound familiar, Norman...?) In any event, a series of strokes in the mid 1940's sent Mrs. Gein to her grave. A short while later Henry Gein died as he tried to help fight a Wisconsin forest fire, and Edward Gein was alone for the first time in his life.

Soon Ed began to exhibit some very strange behavior. He'd left his mother's room exactly the way she had left it, and boarded it up. He lived in two rooms of the rambling old farm house, and used another for his 'experiments'. He devoured books on anatomy, and took meticulous notes. A dim witted friend named "Gus" was enlisted to help Ed locate subjects for his 'research'. Lonely rural cemeteries were looted, and the pair brought their grisly trophies back to the Gein farmhouse.

A few years later, Gus was taken to an old folk's home and Gein was left to fend for himself. Gus had never seen what Gein had done with the bodies the two had brought back; the bodies had been skinned and Gein had taken to wearing the skins around his home. He had an idea that with surgery he could be transformed from a man to a woman, and in his own warped world, the wearing of his victim's skins was a step in that direction.

(He was eventually apprehended and judged to be insane. Confined at the state hospital, he died there in 1990.)

The popular stories of Bates and Gumm present crossdressers in a less than positive light. The strange story of Ed Gein provides us with a real basis for the plots woven by Hitchcock and Harris. Was Gein the typical crossdresser? Of course not. No

more than Gumm and Bates are typical villains. The important point is that, fair or not, Norman Bates and Jame Gumm are characters that will forever be identified with the crossgender community. In both cases the "Transvestite" has been associated with the worst society has to offer, and this can't help but affect how we are seen by those around us.

By looking at how society perceives us in fiction, it is easier to understand why we are treated the way we are. Any minority which society does not understand, it fears. If the minority has no frightening aspects, society will provide some. Thus, the pagan becomes the evil witch of legend; the homosexual becomes the deviate; religious beliefs not in tune with the majority become heretical; and the TV becomes identified with psychotic killers. What this tells us is not that we are wrong because we are different, but that society needs to justify attitudes by demonstrating that we are different **because** we are wrong. That this argument is not supported by experience proves not only that fact is indeed stranger than fiction, but that when given a choice, society will gladly accept fiction as fact. -V.L.

OUR GANG (CON'T FROM PAGE 9)

Patricia, Kathy, Julia, Michelle, our newest members in the group. We appreciate your meeting and special event attendance, your enthusiasm and interest in us all.

Jacqueline, who preceeded Velvet with her own computer before the business office had its own PC, and who ran off untold numbers of mailing labels from the EON database that she initially created for us. Jacqueline- who graces our meetings with her own special joy in her feminine expression.

Cheryl, whose most visible contribution of the many she has made from the very beginning of this group is our stained glass logo which is the skylight window in our central hallway. This, which she commissioned for EON, and the sterling silver logos which many of us wear from time to time as pendants or earrings.

All Those Who Attend Meetings with the intention of doing something good for themselves and discover in the process that they are helping others. This is what it's all about. This is the beginning of true community. It is spirit, and it is the whole exceeding the the sum of its parts.

If you are a member of the EON group and have been absent from its meetings and events; if you drop by now and then out of some occasional boredom or just to see who might be around and willing to do some bar hopping with you; or if you think that "your nature" might be more exceptional than "our nature;" or if you're just shy and uneasy around other transgendered people and crossdressers because you have not come to peaceful terms yet with yourself, within; if any of this, or something else, applies to, or comes close to, your "reasons" for not participating more fully and completely in the EON support group, please be willing to take a moment to quietly and honestly reconsider your position.

If we are going to be true to our nature, if we are to truly "**express** our nature," and still be able to deal with or possibly transcend the disadvantages and barriers that others in society have put in our way, then we will need, for a long time to come, to put ourselves in the position to receive and give care and support.

We will need to grow in our "nature" as can only be done as a family and not as the isolated loners we were before we made that first and courageous phone call to EON. Remember, we are a broad and spacious group, with room for all who are sincere and willing.

NAME THAT STEREOTYPE

(CON'T FROM PAGE 1)

point has been made regarding expectation and judgement. In this instance, only a few pieces of the familiar total image were needed to create the context in which we were related to.

And so, challenge the crossdresser to abandon the stereotype through which the born-male body and feminine heart must function in order to make the critical declaration of **gender** identity? Hardly! Removing the dress and everything else is like removing the music from the opera. What we have are just words- an intellect without the body, mind and soul without that critical means of self expression and joy. Imagine the health and joy, the liberation, the opportunity to participate with others in life in a manner of integrity if, instead of employing the physical, decorative, and clothing elements of the feminine stereotype, we chose to carry printed signs that declared the hidden reality of the person in the man's three piece suit...

No, never. Rather than accepting **any** extreme, we learn that clothes, any kind or style of clothes, do not make the woman any more than they make the man. They can only do what we want them to do in terms of others relating to us, and that is lead others from the outside of us to the inside of us, and then hopefully they will respect us for **that** truth which they see there.

Once we are out of the closet, we must accept the need to experiment as teenage females were able to openly experiment and emulate adult females at a time when we were dressing behind locked doors and drawn blinds. Like them, our attempts will often be naive or clumsy, unskilled or self-conscious. Hopefully, our association with others in a support group will help us to mature in our presentation; hopefully, individuation occurs and our thinking and feeling aspects soften, become more flexible, and new possibilities become apparent and attractive.

Hopefully, at some point we gain the power of choice in terms of style and presentation, which replaces the need for conformity- any kind of conformity- as **the** avenue for self expression and **the** way to achieve acceptance and peace of mind.

At one point of experience, makeup and high heels may be a necessity, and at another level they can be a choice. At which point or level do we wish to experience ourselves, have others see us- at necessity or choice?

Expressing Our Nature, Inc.
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Board of Directors: Charliss Dolge, President; Ann Harper, Vice President; Angela Sheedy, Sec./Treas.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

WE BELIEVE IN:

THE RIGHT OF THE TRANSGENDERED PERSON TO FULL PARTICIPATION IN AND ACCEPTANCE AND AFFIRMATION BY SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. THIS IS THE RIGHT TO DIGNITY.

THE RIGHT OF ALL PEOPLE SUBJECT TO OPPRESSION TO COME TOGETHER IN UNITY AND TO CREATE MECHANISMS OF SUPPORT FOR OTHERS OF LIKE KIND. THIS IS THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL COMMUNITY.

THE RIGHT OF EACH INDIVIDUAL TO DEFINE THEMSELVES AS THEY WISH TO BE AND TO SEEK OUT THEIR PERSONAL INTEGRITY WITHOUT HINDRANCE. THIS IS THE RIGHT TO SELF LOVE.

WE FURTHERMORE BELIEVE:

THAT PERSONS WHO ARE TRANSGENDERED AND/OR OF SAME-GENDER SEXUAL ORIENTATION ARE ENDOWED, BY VIRTUE OF THEIR DIFFERENTNESS, WITH A SPECIAL CHARISMA AND UNIQUE VOCATION TO TRANSFORM THE PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS AND THE WORLD ITSELF BY BEING EXEMPLARS OF TOLERANCE AND LOVE.

THAT OUR HAPPINESS, PERSONAL GROWTH, AND SENSE OF FULFILLMENT AS INDIVIDUALS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED WHEN WE PERSEVERE IN HONESTLY OPENING THE REALITY OF OUR SELVES TO OTHERS. EON EXISTS TO HELP CREATE AND TO PROMOTE THAT COURAGE.

Expressing Our Nature, Inc. is a non profit community service organization for crossdressers, transgenderists, and transsexuals.

Services include: peer support group membership; regularly scheduled program and discussion meetings each month; weekly class nights; special social events for members, family, and friends.

EON also maintains offices, meeting rooms, and a library which are open to peer support group members at various times throughout the week.

The peer support group is an open group, that is, all are welcome regardless of gender identification or sexual orientation. EON stresses a holistic and non discriminatory approach to personal development within the peer support group.

EON also engages in educational outreach activity aimed at: colleges and universities; groups within the gay/lesbian and womens' movement; the social justice community; other public organizations.

The Newsletter is a monthly publication. Cost of The Newsletter is included in the current annual peer support group dues. articles, news items, reprints and original artwork are welcome. All submissions will be subject to editorial policy.