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Buffalo Belles

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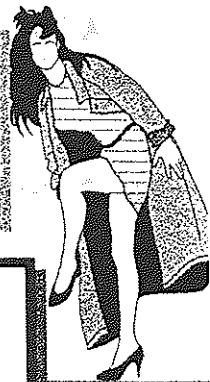


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SEPTEMBER 1998

NEWSFLASH: "The September meeting will be held on the 12th, same time, same place."

Hello, ladies!

Now that you know about the new meeting date, let me fill you in on some past and future happenings.

Again this year, the weather goddesses blessed us with a marvelous evening for our Annual Picnic held on August 1st. Twelve members attended the event and enjoyed the various culinary delights brought by many of the attendees. (I was so pleased as there wasn't a potato salad in sight!) Pattie, as in years past, dazzled us again with her magic blender drinks while Janice mystified us with her BBQ skills. There was more than enough food and we had to send the tasty leftovers home (you girls were good at watching what you ate and at keeping an eye on that waistline).

At the picnic, the Buffalo Belles also got a chance to greet a new member to our group. Welcome, Marcia! We're looking forward to seeing you at all our future meetings.

Since this was more of a social gathering than a regular meeting, we only touched on a few business items. Due to the fact that our meeting place hosts are raising the costs of holding our gatherings there, we will need to raise our monthly meeting dues to \$6.00 (up from \$5.00). It still is a reasonable amount and this is the first time we have ever

increased the monthly fee since the group was formed.

Also discussed was the upcoming Toronto trip - September 19 & 20. For those considering making the trip, plan on spending \$200 for the weekend. If you are interested, please call the hotline and leave a message as soon as possible. A twenty dollar deposit will be necessary to hold a reservation and will have to be paid no later than our next meeting (September 12).

After the picnic, a small but adventurous group headed to downtown Buffalo for mirth and merriment. Stops included Secrets (formerly the Stage Door), Buddies and Club Marcella.

The following week, a few Belles attended the live play "Psycho Beach Party". I loved it! Even with the temperature flirting with 90 degrees both inside and out of the Alleyway Theater, it was most enjoyable. For all you live stage fans, I'll keep you posted on future plays and possible trips to the theater district. Of course if you get the urge to see something and would like a theater companion, let me know.

Well, until the next issue, be well and enjoy yourselves.

Hugs, Camille

A Tradition Worth Pursuing?

For several Arizona Diamondbacks, the charter flight home was even uglier than their 12-6 loss to the Florida Marlins. After losing leads of 3-0 and 4-2, 10 of the younger players lost their civvies and wore women's clothing, a time-honored baseball initiation ritual. "It's tradition. It's part of the game. It's something we've all done, some of us more than once," veteran co-conspirator Matt Williams said.

The annointed players found dresses hanging in their locker stalls when they walked into the clubhouse after the game. Most players changed willingly, even though it was evident some expense had been spared in selecting the outfits.

"It's not hazing. Win or lose, it's been part of a tradition of a lot of players who have been here before us. It's all about doing it and being part of it. It's an experience we all will never forget," said Williams, made to do it twice by San Francisco veterans when he came up in the late 1980's.

Provided by Dallas Denny

August Picnic Attendees:

Allyson
Camille
Colleen
Crystal
Donna
Janice
Jean
Marcia
Michelle
Pattie
Susan
Vaughn

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Sex-Change Operation In Your Face

MIAMI (Reuters) - First it was childbirth, then a scandal involving faux virgins -- now a Florida company says it plans to broadcast a sex-change operation live on the Internet.

"This is not a hoax," Jonathan Ogden, chief technology officer of privately-held Calypso Productions Int. Inc., told Reuters in an interview Thursday.

Ogden said the company's Calypso Health division planned to broadcast live over the Internet a six-hour surgical procedure in November in which a Florida resident would be transformed from a man into a woman.

He said Calypso Productions had "been developing pay per call and Internet brands since 1990, including adult website brands, and this site is our foray into the health and medicine arena .. this is the launch of Calypso Health."

The patient had already been planning to undergo the operation before reaching an agreement with the company to broadcast it, he added by telephone from the company's base in Tequesta, Florida.

He declined to reveal more about the patient, who he said would be available for interviews next week. The operation will take place in London, England, and Calypso was not paying for it though it would provide the people and equipment for the broadcast, he added

"She is very interested in doing this because she will probably become the spokesperson at least for the time being for transgender individuals, and it is an opportunity for her to educate the public and other transgender individuals," Ogden said.

Written by Martin Langfield
Reuters

Trans Across America

By JOHN CLOUD

from TIME MAGAZINE / July 20, 1998

Watch out, Pat Buchanan. Ridiculed for years, "transgenders" are emerging as the newest group to demand equality.

When James Madison was urging his young nation to refrain "from oppressing the minority," he was talking about "other sects," not other sexes. Shannon Ware, an engineer from St. Louis, Mo., who began life as Craig Ware but now lives as a woman, would grant that much. But since a high school civics teacher inspired her, she has clung to the belief that social change is possible, that America is elastic enough to accommodate all minority groups--even when the minority is as caricatured and misunderstood as hers.

Ware is "transgendered," which means her mental gender--her deepest awareness of her identity--doesn't correspond to the parts she was born with. Though she has become an activist in the past year or so, Ware struggled with these feelings for years. Now, at 45, she is happy with her inner and outward selves, the latter feminized with hormones and women's clothes. Ware isn't yet "transsexual," but she does plan to undergo what doctors call "sex-reassignment surgery" when she and her beau David can afford it; it will cost about as much as their new Nissan.

Since transsexuals burst on the scene in the 1950s, when a G.I. went from George to Christine Jorgensen, journalists have periodically revisited the subject in tones varying from the dryly medical to the hotly sensational. But today many forms of gender nonconformity have actually become mainstream. In the past five years, several movies, plays, tabloid shows and famous cross-dressers like RuPaul have moved drag from the fringes of gay culture to prime time. Even Teletubbies, a show for toddlers, features Tinky Winky, a boy who carries a red patent-leather purse.

Less noticed, however, is that gender nonconformists have been working together, with some remarkable

successes, to build a political movement. Their first step was to reclaim the power to name themselves: transgender is now the term most widely used, and it encompasses everyone from cross-dressers (those who dress in clothes of the opposite sex) to transsexuals (those who surgically "correct" their genitals to match their "real" gender).

No one knows how many transgendered people exist, but at least 25,000 Americans have undergone sex-reassignment surgery, and the dozen or so North American doctors who perform it have long waiting lists. Psychologists say "gender-identity disorder" occurs in at least 2% of children; they experience discomfort with their assigned gender and may experiment with gender roles. Some of these people turn out to be gay; most don't. The overlapping permutations of gender and sexuality can get baffling, which is why transgender activist Riki Anne Wilchins simply declared "the end of gender" in her recent book, *Read My Lips*. Wilchins believes that male-female divisions force constructed social roles on all of us and create a class of the "gender oppressed"--not only transgenders but also feminine men, butch women, lesbians and gays, "intersexed" people (hermaphrodites) and even people with "alternative sexual practices." (Marv Albert, meet your leader.)

In the early '90s, transgenders started forming political groups, mostly street-level organizations, which picketed the American Psychiatric Association, for instance, for using the gender-identity-disorder diagnosis. Previously, transgenders appeared as figures in the early gay-liberation movement: it was cross-dressing men--their "hair in curls," as they chanted--who threw the first rocks in the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City's Greenwich Village. But as the gay movement went mainstream, it jettisoned transgenders as too off-putting.

Transgenders faced practical obstacles to organizing themselves separately. Most couldn't simply dress as a member of the opposite sex without getting beaten or fired. Many felt pressured to undergo expensive genital and cosmetic operations, which doctors wouldn't perform unless the patients also underwent years of psychiatric treatment. After the surgery, some had to move to find a new job and start a new life. Political organizing was a luxury.

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Today medical rules are getting more relaxed. Some transgenders still elect to have full operations, but others (especially the young) express gender their own way, perhaps just with clothing or hormone treatments or with partial surgery. Increasingly, they simply refuse to discuss their private parts. "What's important is hate crimes and job discrimination," says Shannon Minter, a female-to-male transgender and civil rights lawyer. "Why does everyone want to talk about my genitals?"

Governments and employers are starting to listen. Although just one state, Minnesota, has a law protecting transgenders from job and housing discrimination, cities all over the country (including San Francisco, of course, but also Seattle and, as of last year, Evanston, Ill.) have passed similar legislation. Recently the California assembly approved a bill to increase penalties for those who commit crimes against transgenders; the bill awaits senate approval.

Lawyers with the Transgender Law Conference have helped pass statutes in at least 17 states allowing transsexuals to change the sex designation on their birth certificate, which means their driver's license and passport can reflect reality. (One unintended consequence: legal marriages between people who have become the same sex.) In Missouri, the house judiciary committee met in March to discuss the state's first civil rights bill to include "sexual orientation"--defined to include gender "self-image or identity." Illinois and Pennsylvania considered similar bills. None passed, but "we were happy to get the issue out there," says activist Ware.

Many transgenders are furious that the biggest gay lobbying group in the U.S., the Human Rights Campaign, opposes adding transgenders to the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, a gay job-protection bill that has been pending in Congress since 1994. But the Campaign is coming around. Last year it helped arrange a meeting between transgender activists and Justice Department officials to discuss anti-trans violence (a 1997 survey of transgenders found that 60% had been assaulted). The Campaign is also lobbying for a bill that would give U.S. district attorneys the authority to handle state crimes involving bias against "real or perceived ... gender." Transgenders have their own D.C. presence, Gender pac. It sponsored its third Lobby Day on Capitol Hill

in April, when more than 100 transgenders met members of Congress. A state-focused group called It's Time America! has chapters in half the states. And of course, transgenders are talking about staging a march on Washington--de rigueur for any minority going mainstream.

Businesses are paying attention. Computer firm Lucent Technologies has added "gender-identity characteristics or expression" to its equal-opportunity policy. The University of Iowa has similar language, and in February, Rutgers adopted more limited protections for "people who have changed or are in the process of changing" their sex. Last year Harvard allowed an incoming female-to-male freshman to live on a male dorm floor. Campus groups have asked the college to formally protect transgenders, but Harvard being Harvard, the university is studying the issue. Transgenders are pushing ahead in the courts as well. In a little-noticed but groundbreaking case last year, a Minnesota male-to-female transsexual won Social Security "widow's benefits" following her husband's death in 1995. The Social Security Administration declined to grant them at first but reversed itself after the woman appealed, with the A.C.L.U.'s help.

The most important victories are often won outside the public arena. A little over a year ago, Shannon Ware was the host of a constituent meet-and-greet for her state representative. Over coffee and snacks, Ware introduced Representative Patrick Dougherty, a moderate Democrat and devout Roman Catholic, to several transgenders. He was set to consider legislation that would make it difficult for transsexuals to gain even partial custody of their children after a divorce. For Ware, it wasn't an academic issue. She was once married and has a daughter, Elizabeth. Though the 13-year-old and her mom have been "totally cool" about her transition from Craig to Shannon, Ware knew others weren't as lucky as she was. Another Missourian, Sharon (ne Daniel), has fought her ex-wife for six years for the right simply to visit her two boys.

The low-key meeting at Ware's house worked. Dougherty listened as she and several others told their stories. Some had lost jobs, some had been rejected by family, all felt battered by a society that insists that biology is destiny. Dougherty left seeing no reason to attack these folks with a new law. A few days later, he quietly let the legislation die in his committee.

ARE YOU A PARENT? DOES YOUR "GENDER" DEVIATE FROM SOMEONE'S "NORM"?

If you are gender variant (and, really, how many of us aren't?) and a parent, please take a few minutes and respond to this request. I am gathering stories from parents. This is a totally confidential project that I have undertaken to document how gender variant parents deal with (or are dealt with, in some cases!) being parents and all the attendant things that surround it. As you share your story please consider some of the following questions, but please don't limit your response and/or discussion to these points, I am interested in hearing about YOUR experiences, as you wish to share them:

- 1) How do you self identify? (for example, Transgendered, Feminine Man, Masculine Woman, Transsexual, Cross Dresser, Drag Queen, Drag King, FtM, MtF, etc.)
- 2) How many children do you have?
- 3) What are their ages? Do you identify their sex? (Do they?) How?
- 4) How old were they when they became aware of your gender variance?
- 5) How did they become aware?
- 6) Are they your biological children?
- 7) If yes to #6, are you their biological father or mother?
- 8) If no to #6, what is your relationship (adopted, AI, etc.)?
- 9) What is your relationship to the children's other biological parent(s) (married, divorced, divorce-in-process, no relationship (donors unknown, for example), domestic partnership, etc.)?
- 10) How is your relationship with the other parent (friendly, hostile, non-communicative, etc.)?
- 11) How have your children adapted to your gender variance?
- 12) How have the other "influencers" in your child(ren)'s lives handled your gender variance (other parent, peers, teachers, etc.)?
- 13) Is there another "significant other" in your life or other new family members to whom your children are exposed? What is the character of those relationships?
- 14) Have you been involved with the legal system vis-à-vis your children and your gender variance? For example, have you been involved in a custody dispute because of your gender variance, or was it an issue in your divorce?

15) If yes to #12, please share as much of the details of the process and the outcome as you wish. For example, what was the "complaint" if any, what was the outcome of the proceeding, how did you locate your attorney, what were the arguments against you, what were your arguments, did you settle out-of-court, what sort of "custody" or "visitation" was awarded, etc.?

16) Please characterize your relationship now with your children.

17) Are your children now, or have they been, involved in therapy for issues surrounding your gender variance? If so, has the process been helpful to them, in your opinion? In theirs? Would they be interested in participating in a survey oriented to professionals? If so, would you share their contact information, please?

18) Please share any other information that you wish!

What I intend to do with these stories and this information:

This is the first step in developing an information database and support network for gender-variant parents. At this point, I simply wish to understand the issues that parents have faced vis-à-vis their children and their gender variance. From this information, I, working with appropriate professionals, intend to develop a formal questionnaire and survey. I then intend to present the results of that more formal survey at major gender conferences. The first would likely be next year, probably the IFGE Coming Together Conference. I anticipate recruiting child psychologists, marriage counselors, attorneys, a panel of gender variant parents, kids with "out" parents, etc. to put on presentations and workshops that address the growing and complex needs of gender variant folk and their offspring. Some of these folk are already well known leaders of our community, are in my database, and have agreed to both the concept and their participation! I will also share the results with all survey participants and anyone else who requests it.

From that effort, I hope to establish an awareness of the issues and challenges facing those of us gender variant folk that are also struggling with raising children.

Eventually, I intend that this work form the foundation for a longer-term study of gender variant parents, optimally a "sanctioned" study (undertaken, for example, by a university) that will provide usable evidence as to the "fitness" of gender variant parents. I anticipate that this work will be similar to that which was conducted in the gay and lesbian communities in the late '70s and '80s and I believe it will provide usable evidence that gender variant parents are not less fit and their children not less "well-adapted" than any other parent or child.

If you know of a gender variant parent that has not responded to this, please pass this along to them in whatever format is appropriate.

Please share, if you wish, your contact information so that you may be included in the more formal survey to follow. My contact information is:

Name: Denise Brogan
Address: 118 So. Westshore Blvd. #255
Tampa, FL 33609
Phone: (727) 785-3186
E-Mail: DEBrogan@AOL.com

Potatoes and Crossdressing

by Stacy Clement & Judi Clement

My wife and I have been dealing with my crossdressing and how it fits into our relationship since before we were married ten or so years ago. We bounce among acceptance, repression, denial, pain, and hatred (sometimes for my crossdressing, sometimes because of it). Ours is a deeply loving relationship and the crossdressing, which in some marriages acts as a catalyst and the glue that binds, is for us the final, major burr under each our saddles. When discord hits our life, it almost always ends up being blamed on the crossdressing. Blame is key in our duels and because I am the one with the transvestic paraphilia, I accept the blame.

I struggled long and mightily to find a way to express to her that this crossdressing thing was not going to go away and that it would have to be incorporated into our life together if we were to stay together. Telling her that it was a part of me and needed expression was accurate but rather ethereal. Saying that I "had to be me" was a bit too theatrical. And speaking of it as a hobby did not fit accurately for me. It is and was a part of my personality; an essential fragment of the whole that wakes daily, loves passionately, and drives too fast; it was one of the facets that made her fall in love with me, and me her. But none of these characterizations was deep enough, accurate enough, or understandable enough.

I am an educator by passion and rely heavily on storytelling and mental imagery to convey ideas. My favorite tool is the metaphor and the analogy (I consider them to be one, unified tool). It is no accident then that I have long searched for a metaphor for my crossdressing and I can now tell you, gentle readers, that I have come up with one that, though it is a bit long and drawn out, works explicitly well for me, and for, I think, my wife in describing how I perceive one aspect of my crossdressing as it directly relates to her. Of course, there are many aspects of crossdressing and each one may be best suited for a different metaphor. This analogy is associated with the need to crossdress, how it works in a relationship and what can happen if it is suppressed, not allowed to be expressed — I told you it was a long analogy.

I used to be in the kitchen a lot, always a valued help to my mother. Okay, so I was always a presence and sometimes a help. Point is, I spent a lot of time in the kitchen when there was cooking going on; still

do in fact. One of the things that I got to do as a child was to monitor the potatoes. When company was coming and mashed potatoes, or boiled potatoes, was on the menu, I would climb up on my kitchen stool and I would get to make sure that the potatoes cooked, properly and thoroughly. In fact, I would forgo the television or playing outside to watch the potatoes boil. Now this is not an easy task, to be sure. The monitor is responsible for making certain that the boiling continues at an even roll, never boiling over, boiling dry, or stopping altogether. A heady responsibility for any six year old and I announced my successes as potato monitor when dinner was at last served.

"I made the mashed potatoes," was what I said, and in fact, had it not been for me and my diligent monitoring, so far as I knew, the potatoes now mounded white in front of me would have been so missed from the table as to be equally noteworthy as there delectable presence now was.

So what, you may ask, does boiling potatoes have to do with crossdressing, anyway?

For a long time I tried to associate the sublimation of crossdressing with placing a lid on a boiling pot; the lid securely in place would surely blow if steam were not allowed an escape of some sort. That association, while not altogether incorrect, did not fit closely enough and did not allow for necessary alternatives, save the lid being on or the lid being off. So I formulated the following analogy of crossdressing and boiling potatoes as a means of understanding the pressures, the tumult, and the potential for crossdressing as it comes into a relationship.

The crossdresser is the pot in which the potatoes are boiling. The crossdressing is the boiling itself, combining the potatoes and the water and spices therein that are the other facets of the person and the relationship. The lid is the sublimation, either by design or by guilt. The goal, for both the crossdresser and his partner, the cook, is to keep the pot boiling without allowing the water to boil out and the potatoes to burn, or to keep the lid on too tightly so as to allow the pot to boil over and either soil the stove or to put out the flame beneath the relationship. The pot boils along nicely, sometimes with the lid nestled over the pot and the pressure building, sometimes with the lid askew so as to allow more steam to escape, and sometimes with the lid completely off and the water rolling feverishly. Each position of the lid; nested on, askew, and off, creates a different set of opportunities for the potatoes and

for the crossdresser in their relationship, and simultaneously permits unique circumstances to occur.

The lid nested tightly on the pot and the potatoes boiling wildly creates pressure. The crossdresser is not allowed his need for emotional expression and the pressure on the pot grows. The effect of not removing the lid comes in explosion, either in the form of the pot itself (the crossdresser in this analogy) damaging itself, or in the form of the water boiling over. The water boiling over results in a mess to clean, and if you have ever cleaned a stove where potato water has overflowed you know how difficult it is, or with repeated overflows or a really severe one, the flame goes out (the flame in this case is the passion and love between the crossdresser and the mate) and the cooking stops. The alternative to allowing the boiling over is to remove the lid, either occasionally or permanently, to allow the pressure to equalize or diminish. Now what happens if the lid is removed occasionally? The steam dissipates and the potatoes boil along to a delicious completion. The same is potentially true if the lid is removed completely. However, both methods require diligence by the cook (in this analogy, the significant other) so as to prevent boiling dry or boiling over, but both methods allow similar results.

With both methods of success just outlined, precautions and alarms must be minded. If the lid is to be removed when the potatoes are at the brink of overflowing, the cook must be cognizant of the warning signs of immanent overflow. The experienced cook watches for little spurts of steam from around the lid, listens for a change in the sound of that steam escaping and watches for watery discharge around the top of the pot. These signs noted, the lid can be removed before the water boils onto the stove. Likewise the crossdresser will show signs of the need to have the opportunity to release the steam; the legs get shaved, the eye lingers on the fashion pages of the newspaper and the plans to be 'alone for a while' emerge. The spouse who is experienced in reading the signs can act on them and encourage a weekend shopping spree or tryst for her girlfriend, lesbian lover, or passionate queen, or she can get the sponge ready to clean up the next, inevitable boil-over.

Cooking potatoes without a cover, not surprisingly my favorite culinary method, also requires specific methodology for success. Care must be taken to not allow the water to run dry. This may come in the form of the cook adding water to keep the boiling action alive or by reducing the flame slightly. This

method allows for the nearly direct interaction between potatoes and cook. Spices can be added, stirring may be done and water level can be monitored without removing the lid or chancing overflow. This method also does not preclude the cook from doing other things in her kitchen and allows for the fragrant aroma of the potatoes to permeate and add to the smells of the kitchen. Likewise, this allows the crossdresser the opportunity for expression of self, by means of adding his aroma to the others in the kitchen, prevents him from making a mess on the stove by boiling over, and keeps the flame of the relationship burning brightly. Now before you jump to the understandable conclusion that it is the spouses' or the cook's responsibility to monitor the boiling of the potatoes and all its many idiosyncrasies let me anthropomorphize the pot just a moment and tell you that that is just not so. It is the pot's responsibility to communicate throughout the cooking process 'how it is doing.' This is done subtly by allowing steam to escape from beneath the lid, emitting those gentle kitchen sounds that tell the seasoned cook that more water, less fire or removal of the lid altogether would help the process. This, as any great cook will tell you, is a process that is slightly different for each pot, with each relationship with a cook and indeed may, and probably will, change as the pot, and the cook, mature. Make no mistake, without finely tuned communication between the pot and the cook, the process may well go awry. Also be mindful that when a pot and a cook come together for the first time, or come together in a new situation for the first time, the subtleties of communication might need refining, specific to the situation. The crossdresser and spouse must form a unique communications system unlike any anywhere else used. It is the hallmark of successful partnerships that above all else they communicate very, very well.

Of course we all wish that dealing with a crossdressing relationship was as easy or painless as cooking a pot of potatoes. Those couples who are successful may tell you that it is never easy, but that the flavors that fill their lives are worth the effort. Some crossdressing relationships may well benefit from an evening in the kitchen boiling a pot of potatoes. The results may not only be a more healthy relationship but also a dish of tasty mashed potatoes. For a real treat add a bit of spice, parsley or sage, to the relationship and to the potatoes. And, as Julia Child would say right now, Bon Appetit!

Stacy and Judy Clement can be reached by e-mail at:
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(Editor's Note: The following piece has been making its way around the Internet in one form or another for the last couple of months. It was at first credited to the novelist, Kurt Vonnegut, from a speech he gave at the 1997 MIT commencement. Well, it turns out Vonnegut never made the speech. It came from a Chicago Tribune column written by Mary Schmich, whom I have never heard of before this. Nonetheless, I like the piece and I think you will too. Here it is in its original form.)

ADVICE, LIKE YOUTH, PROBABLY JUST WASTED ON THE YOUNG

Inside every adult lurks a graduation speaker dying to get out, some world-weary pundit eager to pontificate on life to young people who'd rather be Rollerblading. Most of us, alas, will never be invited to sow our words of wisdom among an audience of caps and gowns, but there's no reason we can't entertain ourselves by composing a Guide to Life for Graduates.

I encourage anyone over 26 to try this and thank you for indulging my attempt.

Ladies and gentlemen of the class of '97:

"Wear sunscreen! If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it. The long-term benefits of sunscreen have been proven by scientists, whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable than my own meandering experience.

I will dispense this advice now: Enjoy the power and beauty of youth. Oh, never mind. You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth until they've faded. But trust me, in 20 years, you'll look back at photos of yourself and recall in a way you can't grasp now how much possibility lay before you and how fabulous you really looked. You are not as fat as you imagine.

Don't worry about the future. Or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing gum. The real troubles in your life are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind, the kind that blindsides you at 4pm on some idle Tuesday.

Do one thing every day that scares you. Sing. Don't be reckless with other people's hearts. Don't put up with people who are reckless with yours.

Floss. Don't waste time on jealousy. Sometimes you're ahead, sometimes you're behind. The race is long and in the end it's only with yourself.

Remember the compliments you receive. Forget the insults. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how. Keep your old love letters. Throw away your old bank statements.

Stretch. Don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life. The most interesting people I know didn't know at 22 what they wanted to do with their lives. Some of the most interesting 40-year-olds I know still don't.

Get plenty of calcium. Be kind to your knees. You'll miss them when they're gone.

Maybe you'll marry, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll have children, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll divorce when you are 40; maybe you'll dance the funky chicken on your 75th wedding anniversary. Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much, or berate yourself either. Your choices are half chance. So are everybody else's.

Enjoy your body. Use it every way you can. Don't be afraid of it or of what other people think of it. It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own. Dance, even if you have nowhere to do it but in your living room.

Read the directions, even if you don't follow them. Do not read beauty magazines; they will only make you feel ugly. Get to know your parents. You never know when they will be gone for good. Be nice to your siblings. They're your best link to your past and the people most likely to stick with you in the future.

Understand that friends come and go, but with a precious few, you should hold on.

Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyles, because the older you get, the more you need the people who knew you when you were young.

Live in New York City once, but leave before it makes you hard.

Live in Northern California once, but leave before it makes you soft.

Travel. Accept certain inalienable truths: prices will rise, politicians will philander. You, too, will get old. And when you do, you'll fantasize that when you were young, prices were reasonable, politicians were noble, and children respected their elders. Respect your elders.

Don't expect anyone else to support you. Maybe you have a trust fund. Maybe you'll have a wealthy

spouse. But you never know when either might run out.

Don't mess too much with your hair or by the time you are 40 it will look 85. Be careful whose advice you buy, but be patient with those who supply it.

Advice is a form of nostalgia, dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it is worth. But trust me on the sunscreen."

