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Buffalo Belles

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June, 1998

Hello, Dear Sisters:

It's been a month filled with delightful ups and dreadful downs. You're about to learn about some of them today. So shall we begin...

Our May monthly meeting. I would have to classify that as a "down" as only seven members bothered to attend a rare Friday meeting. Did the summer attendance doldrums hit earlier than usual or was it difficult to throw something together on the evening of a work day? Whatever the reasons were, the seven of us enjoyed a pleasant evening discussing future Belle activities such as a day trip to Niagara-On-The-Lake, a trip down the NY Thruway to visit our Erie Sisters for one of their meetings and a late summer or early fall overnighter to Toronto. Other things we're working on include a visit by a laser electrologist and an alternate meeting at a shop that often caters to cross-dressers. An additional "up" for the meeting: plenty of pizza to go around. Down side: those extra calories heading to your waist!

After the meeting ended, most of us traveled to downtown Buffalo's Stage Door to

enjoy a pleasant summer-like evening. A rather serene one at that. Perhaps it was due to a state-wide Librarian convention in town. (Shhh... be quiet. Don't you realize there are people trying to concentrate downtown?) After we were asked to leave the outdoor patio at the Stage Door, we stopped by the new club "Fuel" just around the corner. No librarians there, except for the two we found at the Stage Door and towed them along to use as shields. "Up" report: the dance floor belonged to us the rest of the night.

(An Insert from Jean:) The Catus Kickers have moved from the Stage Door to the new "FUEL" location. As always, the group leader informed me that we are always welcome to visit or to dance. We meet on Wed. and Sun. evenings.

And now the promised news of the Imperial Court of Buffalo's Coronation Week events.

That schedule started on Wednesday and finishes on Sunday. This writer only attended

Friday's "Out-of-Town" show and Saturday's Coronation event.

The "Out-of-Town" show, at Club Marcella, featured over 30 performances by members of the other Imperial Courts that were visiting Buffalo that week. The large crowd enjoyed the excellent entertainment provided by the hard working performers.

Saturday's Coronation event was the high point of the week. Gowns, glitter and enough rhinestones and tiaras to fill a small kingdom's treasury were evident as one gazed across the large room at the Hamlin House. Again the entertainment was first rate. And even though Donna and I were the only Belles there, by the end of the night hairstyles were being re-worked, outrageous stories were swapped, and a sense that a few friendships were being forged that made me look forward to attending next year's event. A limousine ride to the post party at Marcella's topped off a most delightful evening.

The following week luck was still working for me as I found myself driving to New York City to visit a wonderful friend in Staten Island. Besides seeing a Tony nominated Broadway show ("Freak"), I was able to stop by and check out that tranny superstore, "Lee's Madi Gras Boutique" on 14th Street in Manhattan. With great selections and prices, I was able to purchase a waist cincher that makes it look like I've been dieting for a year.

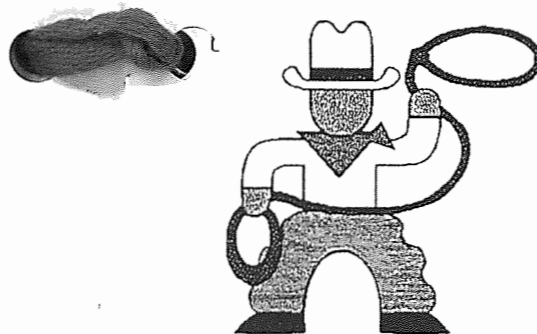


In the mood for some Chinese food, we visited Lucky Cheng's (mentioned in the previous month's newsletter) in the East Village. This is the place whose waitresses have that "something extra". The food was so-so, but the drag show was hilarious.

Another "up" was a shopping trip to the Staten Island Mall as Camille. Macy's had a few sales, but the thing I enjoyed most was the special attention that the sales staff is known for. A dinner on Monday night at "Bistro" was a lovely closing "up", as Margarita and I had the place practically to ourselves. The food was wonderful and the staff was first rate (very attentive to us two women). Hours later we reluctantly said good-bye as the hour was late as the long drive back (a "down") to Buffalo the following day awaited me. But thoughts of a return trip to New York in July kept me smiling most of the way home.

Well, I hope things have been going well for all of you. Please write or tell me about them at the next meeting on Saturday, June 6.

Till then, hugs. Camille.



[Received from Australia, by way of Tim Kingston at San Francisco Frontiers.]

An old cowboy

dressed to kill with cowboy shirt, hat, jeans, spurs, and

chaps went to a bar and ordered a drink. As he sat there sipping his

whiskey, a young lady sat down next to him. After she ordered her drink

she turned to the cowboy and asked him, "Are you a real cowboy?" To

which he replied, "Well, I have spent my whole life on the ranch,

herding cows, breaking horses, mending fences, I guess I am." After a

short while he asked her what she was. She replied, "I've never been on

a ranch, so I'm not a cowboy, but I am a lesbian. I spend my whole day

thinking about women. As soon as I get up in the morning I think of

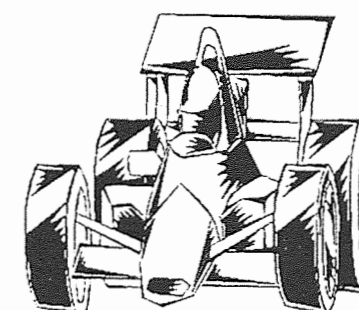
women, when I eat, shower, watch TV, everything seems to make me think

of women." A short while later she left and the cowboy ordered another

drink. A couple sat down next to him and asked, "Are you a real

cowboy?" To which he replied, "I always thought I was, but I just

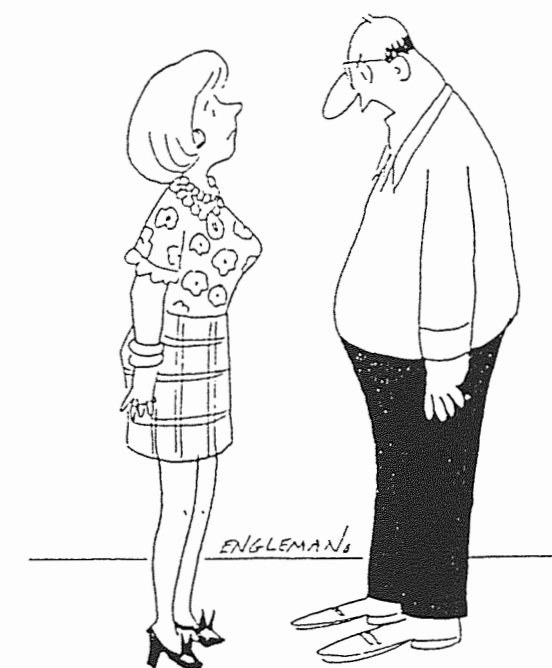
found out that I'm a lesbian."



(From Newsweek, June 1, 1998)

PIT STOP

In the 1980s he was J.T. Hayes, up-and-coming NASCAR driver. Then he dropped out of sight. Now we know why. Hayes decided to switch gears in 1992, and now he's back and going by the name Terri O'Connell, racing's first transsexual driver, as far as we know. "It was like, 'I really am a chick, and it's groovy'," O'Connell says, "but I want to get back into racing." This weekend's Cannonball Run launches her bid for next year's Indy 500. Oh, and here's a little secret O'Connell wants the boys in the pit to know: when she raced as Hayes she liked to wear panties and pink toenail polish.



"Damn it, son, if you're going to dress up, do it right! That blouse doesn't go with that skirt! Your jewelry's too gaudy..."

A CROSSDRESSER'S GUIDE TO STEPPING OUT

I am going to start with an assumption. I will assume that you are a crossdresser who has come to the realization that hiding in your own personal closet is stifling your personal growth as a whole human being. You need to get out into the world! But you don't go out because you are afraid of what the world will say. You are sure that you will be rejected by everyone with whom you have the most fleeting contact; that they will make fun of you. Further, you don't think you will ever look good enough to go unnoticed in the outside world.

Well, there is hope. I have just described the early feelings of almost every crossdresser with whom I have discussed this subject. On the other hand, there are a large number of ETVC members who are perfectly willing to brave the outside world, and do it without incident. The purpose of this article is to help you notice some of the things you must address to make a successful transition.

SELF IMAGE

Let's start with the single most important step of your exodus from that little closet - self-image. Quiz time! When you look in the mirror when crossdressed, what do you see?

- A guy in a dress,
- A truly ugly woman who could derail a train with a passing glance,
- An average looking woman, or
- A real knockout.

Answer: a. A guy in a dress. At least this is the answer unless your self image is firm. Regardless of your physical appearance, be it anywhere from "b." to "d.", the people with whom you interact are going to notice something not quite right, and will soon, if not instantly, see a guy in a dress. What do they usually notice? Well, it could be a flaw in appearance, or a display of masculine gestures (knees together, dear), but more likely than not, it will be a manifestation of abject fear. If you are truly afraid, you might as well wear a large sign, because your fear will show. When it shows, people are going to wonder what you have to be afraid of, or nervous about, and then they will pay close attention to you and figure it out. So, how does one get over that abject fear? After all, we do something society scorns. Well, you could do it the hard way, like I did. I just started going out, late at night and never inside any place for a lot of years. Then I went where people were. got read, got laughed at, and ran. After a while I got used to it and I was not as afraid. I also did not get noticed as much. I'm no whiz at math, but I can add two and two, and usually end up with four as an answer. Fortunately, that is not the only option. I had not heard of such a thing as ETVC, and I did not know any other crossdressers. If you are reading this, you are probably a member of ETVC. There is an easier way. Go to a meeting. Go in male clothes if you must. Just go! At the meetings, particularly the educational sessions, you will learn details of improving your appearance and deportment, and you will meet people who share your needs and will help you develop your self image. Also, it is non-threatening since you will be surrounded by other cross-dressers. All right, now you know that you have a safe place to go, and that you don't have to work on this alone. It is time to develop that self image.

A healthy self image starts with the heartfelt knowledge that you are not sick, perverted, or strange. You are an individual with a need to experience, as much as possible, the full gamut of the human experience. That's right, human. All you want to do, really, is to bring out the feminine side of your personality, and you choose to do it by assuming an externally female role. Society, as a whole, frowns on this because a man should not be feminine - that is weakness, and that is wrong. That attitude, however, ignores one very crucial and inescapable fact - women are human too. So, in actuality, all you are trying to do is to be fully yourself, and fully human. There is nothing wrong with that. Those who feel femininity is somehow inferior to masculinity are anachronisms. They should be fossilized bones, existing to be unearthed by archaeologists, instead of walking the streets, but they do still walk - male and female alike. And, unfortunately, crossdressers who brave outside world must deal with them. The first step, therefore, is to be at peace with yourself. If you can accept yourself, then fear will not give you away. Most people are not terribly observant, if you don't give them anything to observe, and will accept what they see at face value. If you look like you have always been female, you will be accepted at face value. Even when you are read by someone, you will likely be accepted at face value because your self image is strong. People seldom confront others who are truly self-confident and comfortable with themselves. Work on self image, but don't expect it to bloom into full fruition overnight. Come to ETVC, Tri-Ess, or such other meetings as there may be in your area and let others help you. This is a difficult task, and there is no reason to go it alone.

APPEARANCE

Make-up:

No, this is not a make-up class. There are hundreds of sources for that information. I only have a couple of things to say on that subject. Make sure your beard does not show through your make-up. A beard is a uniquely male characteristic and a five-o'clock shadow will completely ruin an otherwise perfect presentation. The other is to make sure your make-up fits your age and the occasion. No amount of make-up which is acceptable for street wear will make a forty year old face look twenty. It only attracts attention, as does formal make-up in the mall. I would also recommend a stage make-up class at your local junior college. There you will learn about the variety of marvelous things you can do with make-up, and about the effects of highlight and shadow. Since you learn the theory, and not simply a mechanical application of one person's method for applying make-up, you can effectively design a make-up plan to soften and compliment your individual face.

Body Hair:

Shave it, pluck it, bleach it, get electrolysis, or cover it. Those are the options. Ignoring it is not an option. Don't let hairy arms or legs ruin your appearance. No matter what method you use, however, hair on the back of your hands, and particularly your fingers, is not acceptable. The lack of hair on a man's hand is not really noticeable, but a pair of hairy hands is very noticeable on a woman. Ditto on feet and ankles unless you wear opaque tights or boots.

Body and Clothes:

That's right -body. You need to pass from the neck down as well as up. Your proportions need to be female as much as possible. A lot of women do have broad shoulders, thick waists, and narrow hips. Most of us, unfortunately, have broader shoulders, thicker waists, and narrower hips than these women. If you have an trace of a spare tire or "beer belly" it is time to invest in a corset or waist cincher. Unless you are blessed with very wide hips, then pad them. If you refuse to pad them, then wear clothes that make them look bigger. Broad shoulders can only be camouflaged with clothing. There are a number of good books to be found on dealing with various body types and clothing tricks to hide figure flaws. Clothes should be appropriate to your size, weight, and age, and should fit. Blouses are not to be worn to show off your muscles. They should drape, not stretch, over your torso. And don't forget that you will have breasts to contend with also. Unless you are young and willowy, you have no business in a tight, black, leather mini-skirt. If you are forty, dress for forty and forget those bygone years of youth and lost opportunity. You are trying to go unnoticed now. Finally, dress for the occasion. Look around you. How many women your age wear evening dresses and high heels in the mall? For that matter, how many wear a dress at all? Most of them will be in pants or a comfortable skirt, and comfortable shoes. You are sure to be noticed if you dress like a peacock while visiting the hen house. As far as breasts are concerned, they should look natural. That means, unless you have managed to grow your own, that you will need artificial breasts. First, make sure they are large enough for your torso, without effecting the Dolly Parton look.

They should be the right shape, meaning that several pairs of socks will probably be too lumpy. They must also have the proper weight to look natural. The weight gives them the proper movement and helps them attain a realistic contour. Foam rubber will not do unless you only need a little padding to add one cup size to your natural assets. Silicone is expensive, but probably the best. You can make do with well-sealed plastic bags filled with water. (Balloons won't do, the shape is wrong.) Whatever your choice, be sure not to cinch up your bra straps too far. Breasts should go slightly below your armpits, not your collar bone.

DEPORTMENT

Gestures/Body Language:

As I sure everyone has noticed, men and women have different ways of moving, standing, and gesturing. Your complete image requires that you learn move your body like a woman. The best way is to be coached by an expert. Failing that, watch the way women walk, sit, rise from a seated position, eat, stand, and gesture. You may be surprised, for example, to find that walking like a woman is not just a matter of moving your hips back and forth. Women have a lower center of gravity and walking is a matter of moving from the hips and letting the rest of the body come along. It is balanced. Men walk by starting to fall over and moving their feet underneath to give support before they finish falling. Sitting should be accomplished with good posture, knees together, and arms close in - not taking up much room. If you sit with legs apart, shoulders hunched forward, and elbows on knees, you need some work. Learn, and practice, the differences between the way men and women move. A video camera can be a valuable tool. If you need some outside help, enlist a friend or bug the ETVC Education Co-Chairpersons about some sessions in movement.

Voice:

If you get everything else right and never have to speak, you will be fine. That is a little unrealistic, however, so let us cover a few key issues on voice. Contrary to what you may have heard, a high-pitched voice is not absolutely necessary. If done wrong, raising your pitch too much can damage your vocal cords. If you try a falsetto, you will only sound like Mickey Mouse. What to do? Well there are advocates of a number of methods for developing a passable voice. The following is simple and will get you off to a good start. First, you should get your voice warmed up. This is easily accomplished by humming. Go up and down in a range that is comfortable. As you warm up you will be able to go a little higher. When you switch to speaking, stay in the higher part of your natural range. If you have to strain at all, you are too high and may hurt yourself. Drop down a little until you are comfortable. Now, forget what you have heard about having to make your voice breathy. If you listen to women who have passed their teen years, you will find that very few of them have breathy voices. What you will find is that their voices are not loud and booming. Men shout at each other (listen at work - it's true) in comparison to women, who speak with quieter, not breathier, voices. Support your voice from the diaphragm and let your voice resonate in your head, not your chest. These two things will not only eliminate breathiness, but will also make it easier to maintain a higher pitch. It will also eliminate that bass rumble that makes a voice undeniably male. In this one area I will go into detail as I learned this years ago while taking voice lessons (for

singing) and don't know of any particular outside reference. Start by standing. Maintain good posture and stay relaxed. Place one hand on your chest and one on your abdomen. Take a deep breath. Did your chest move or your abdomen? You should feel your abdomen move first if you are breathing from the diaphragm. Your rib cage will follow. Practice this because you will need air to support your voice and your diaphragm provides it. It is also hard work, so you will need to get your breathing muscles into shape. Now place the fingertips of one hand on either side of your nose, and the other on your chest. Start humming, going up and down the scale? You should feel strong vibrations in the sinuses on each side of your nose, and none in your chest (or very little). If your chest is vibrating, work some more on breathing out with your diaphragm rather than your chest muscles. What you feel in your sinuses is resonance. The sound is vibrating in the sinuses, an effect forced by humming. You want to include more than your sinuses in this, however, or your voice will be intolerable nasal. You can easily hear the difference between full resonance and nasal resonance. Tighten your jaw, mash your lips together, and push your tongue up into your mouth, like you were trying to avoid taking foul tasting medicine. Now hum and listen. You should be making a very pinched, whining sound. Now, still humming, slowly relax your lips, jaw, and tongue. Go ahead and let your jaw drop (keeping your lips closed). You should feel the vibration spread to your tongue, lips, and even your teeth. Do you hear the difference? This tone should be full and pleasant, even though you are humming through your nose. By using your diaphragm to breathe, you will be able to relax your throat and mouth when speaking. You will find that it not only allows you to maintain a higher pitch without hurting your vocal cords, but produces a clear tone which is pleasant to hear.

You can also be more convincing by changing your speech habits. Don't lecture (a tough one for me), but discuss. Make statements as questions rather than demands. For example, when calling the Lane Bryant catalog department, don't say, "I would like to place an order." Instead try, "Could I place an order, please." That precise difference in phrasing was once given to me as an example, and it works, so I pass it to you. Finally, avoid speaking in a monotone. Speak with energy and enthusiasm and your voice will have a tendency to fluctuate in pitch, another common characteristic of the female voice.

CONCLUSION

Even though I have only touched upon some highlights, clearly, there are a lot of things to consider when deciding to venture into the outside world. This should not, however, frighten anyone away from their goal. Simply remember that you will be learning different habits and give yourself adequate time to learn. If you are impatient, then attend meetings of the gender community organizations, because there you will be appreciated and accepted even if you have not yet learned to do everything, or anything, right. And no matter what, just remember the most important element of all - believe in yourself.

Reprinted from the Gender Web site at <http://www.genderweb.org>. Originally from FEMINET. Reprinted April issue of the Pink Slip, by Celia Bennett, Kappa Beta Chapter



Is Your Computer Male or Female?

From the CDSO

Is your computer male or female? As you are aware, ships have long been characterized as being female (e.g., "Steady as she goes," or "She's listing to starboard, Captain!")

Recently, a group of computer scientists (all males) announced that computers should also be referred to as being female. Their reasons for drawing this conclusion follow:

Five reasons to believe computers are female

- ⊗ No one but the Creator understands their internal logic
- ⊗ The native language they use to communicate with



other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else

- ⊗ The message "Bad command or file name" is about as informative as "If you don't know why I'm mad at you, then I'm certainly not going to tell you."
- ⊗ Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval
- ⊗ As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

However, another group of computer scientists (all female) think that computers should be referred to as if they were male. Their reasons follow:

Five reasons to believe computers are male

- ⊗ They have a lot of data, but are still clueless
- ⊗ They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they are the problem
- ⊗ As soon as you commit to one you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have obtained a better model
- ⊗ In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on
- ⊗ Big power surges knock them out for the rest of the night



Passing Or Pleasure

by Dina Amberle

To pass or not to pass. That is the question. For some of us, nature has given us the answer. Some of us are passable while for others it is completely out of the question and no expertise with makeup wand or fashion selection will overcome some men's natural masculine features. Genetic factors such as height, breadth or a striking resemblance to Ernest Borgnine can make passing an unattainable dream.

What of the rest of us in the vast middle ground where the proper application here or the correct choice there may give us some hope of passable femininity? Let's take a look at the concept of passing and see if it's the objective we should all be striving for - or perhaps merely an idea to be scrapped in favor of a more rewarding alternative.

Let's agree on one basic fact from the beginning: passing is a relative term. Let's also define passability as a measure along a continuum rather than a specific measurable point of feminine believability. For example, many crossdressers can "pass" providing the observer is far enough away to miss some telltale signals. Likewise, many of us can pass in close quarters if the lighting is subdued or if there are other distractions to the observer's attention in the near vicinity. Very few crossdressers can pass in daylight or close quarters in an easily observed area. Along the spectrum of passability, we all fall somewhere. The difficulty for each of us is in discovering at what point we pass and beyond which we do not.

The widespread advice for passing in public is to dress down in an attempt to blend in with the surroundings and not stand out like a... well, a man in women's clothing, hence increasing one's chances of passing. But this is a difficult thong for us to do because even if we choose sedate fashions to wear in public, we need quite a bit of makeup to conceal some masculine features while enhancing others to create a feminine visage. And makeup in the quantities that we often need to apply is quite a bit more than most women wear even if they're going to a fancy dress affair. Of course, subtlety in makeup

application is something that can be learned but for the most part we are still heavily made up compared to most women in almost any setting.

So, let's consider a best case scenario for passing at, say, the local shopping center, restaurant, or stroll along the street. We are wearing our most conservative wig and our makeup is understated in quantity and coloration. We are wearing a simple blouse and conservative length skirt, slacks, or perhaps a very simple dress, and accessorization is at a minimum, not at all showy, and we are wearing flat-soled or very low heeled shoes. Are we having fun yet?

And, even if we look like our own Aunt Jane in our dress-down duds, we must still wonder if we aren't being read for other reasons like height, gait, or simply un-passable masculine features such as a protruding Adam's Apple or large hands. I won't even bring up the subject of voice.

How many of you are saying, "But that's not me; I pass all the time." Well, maybe you do, but it's probably a matter of staying within your space on the passing continuum and, more pointedly, simply not being observed very closely. The question I want to raise is whether passing under the constraints mentioned above is a rewarding experience. It has to do with personal tastes and motivations for crossdressing. Some strive for the totally believable look that will enable us to pass in any situation. Others favor varying degrees of more noticeable fashions from party chic to drag queen extravagance. If you enjoy wearing party dresses and high heels, then the realities of passing would impose severe crimps in your personal style.

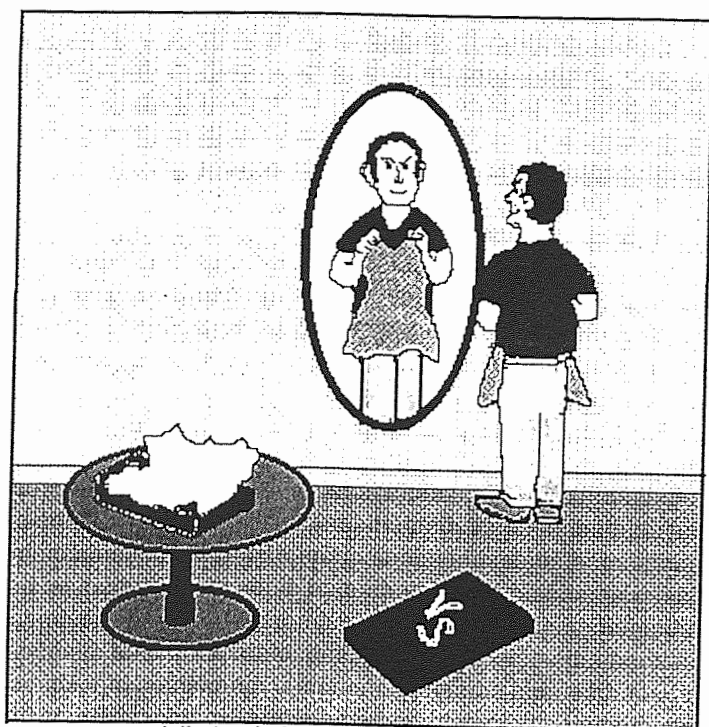
Yet each of us, no matter what our tastes or motivations might be, would like to be accepted as a woman in whatever guise we might create for ourselves. The concept of passing has therefore acquired the cachet of being the loftiest form of crossdressing. The problems with that widespread notion is that for many of us passing is out of the question be it for physical or aesthetic limitations. An Ernest Borgnine look-alike can't pass because of physical limitations; but a would-be Marilyn Monroe isn't going to enjoy dressing like Miss Hathaway because of the aesthetic crimp.

If you are determined to get out of the house, there are places to go that do not require you to pass perfectly. Crossdressers' support groups, some gay/drag nightclubs, some avant-garde or more cosmopolitan watering holes, and some boutiques and shops are to be found where you could be accepted without regard to your passability. Finding these places may be easier in some locations than others, but they can be found.

No matter how highfalutin' your crossdressing motivations may be, it is still very much a visual and tactile experience. If your aesthetic sense-of-self cannot get interested in wearing dowdy clothes and flats in order to pass publicly, don't despair. A butterfly won't enjoy becoming a caterpillar again. Passing may not be the height of self-actualization for your femme-self. If, however, you are interested in blending yourself into the environment to pass as a woman in order to express yourself, consider the notion of the passing continuum. Think about some mix of your own appearance factors and a venue in which you might be able to move about freely at minimum risk of detection.

You may come - or have already come - to the conclusion that passing is not for you, but that doesn't make you any less of a woman.

PASSING THOUGHTS By Linda D



Victoria's OTHER Secret

A Call For Help With International Conference On Transgender Law And Employment Policy, Inc. (ICTLEP) "Proceedings".

(ICTLP is a non-profit organization which presents an annual conference on how the law affects transgendered persons)

I am no longer the Executive Director of ICTLEP. Most folks already know that and are enjoying the leadership of the new Ex. Director, Sharon Stuart. I know that I am enjoying her leadership.

Even so, I still have an outstanding job from my earlier reign. "Proceedings VI" has not been published. As you may know, for the first five ICTLEP Conferences, we published transcribed volumes, in the range of 300 pages each, that are indexed (the index can be downloaded from our web page at www.abmall.com/ictlep) and are available in more and more university and law libraries across the world. If there is no set in your library, put the squeeze on the librarian to order a set. Or if you have \$400 that you want to use to help the community, buy a full set and donate it to your local library. What a great project for a local TG group to get TG information into the local university library for the students to use in research papers.

"Proceedings VI" did not get done. The student court reporters finked out. All that I have is tapes of all of the sessions. I have one volunteer who is diligently transcribing and I love her for it.

Would you like to transcribe a tape? Now before you say yes, let me explain. It is a pain in the ass job. There is NO pay. Each tape is 90 minutes. You will need to listen to each tape several times just to get the gist. Then you will need to start the tape, listen, stop the tape and type. It is very slow and it is not fun. After you finish, you need to go through to proof read and edit several times until it is correct. And you need to be able to send it all to me a 3-1/2" disk in an IBM format.

If you are willing to do that, send me your mailing address and I will send you a tape. By the way, we have about 18 remaining. Thanks, Phyllis R. Frye