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Buffalo Belles

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MARCH 2000



THE JOURNEY

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUFFALO BELLES

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• THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST ISSUE IF YOU DO NOT RE-NEW YOUR BUFFALO BELLES MEMBERSHIP.



KATHY'S NOTES



Dear Sisters,

We had quite a turnout for our February meeting. In fact it was one of our largest meetings ever. Funny thing, as February has often been our least attended meeting of the year. Whether it was the decent weather or just that we have been growing, but attendance has definitely been on the upswing in recent months.

The meeting kind of ended up being a "meet your vendors" night. Now if we had tried to organize such a get together, probably never would have happened. But some how various parties all picked this night to come and tell of their services.

First up was Karen of Newbury St. Hair, Wig & Wellness Center. Karen did a presentation with us in the past and wanted to reacquaint us with her services. She is located 2884 Niagara Falls Blvd., Wheatfield and can be reached at 694-4528. A special night for us was held February 19th at her studio, as mentioned in last months *The Journey*.

Next up was Bobbi Swan, who came in from Michigan to tell us about the Western Belles Roundup to be held at a Dude Ranch in November 9-12, in Milford, PA. Bobbi is an ex-Buffalonian and joined our group to keep in touch with what's going on in the old hometown. Bobbi can be reached at BobbiSwan@aol.com and maintains a web site at <http://www.bobbiswan.com>, to receive more information on her

events and activities. We have more of the brochures available for this event, if you missed the meeting and desire one. Holly attended last years, if I'm not mistaken. But if I am, that's nothing new, as I've had lots of practice making mistakes in the past.

Our third speaker this evening was the lovely Tina Mack. Tina is a skilled seamstress and wished to make her services known to the girls. Have a new dress that needs alterations? Or something really special to be created from scratch? Tina is the gal to see. Tina has been doing the exotic outfits of many of the drag queens since 1973. I can only say that she must have started as a child laborer in one of Kathy Lee's Honduran sweat shops to have started then! She can be reached at 896-3571 to set up an appointment.

Batting cleanup in our presenters' lineup this night was Miss Suzi. Many of you may already be familiar with her or have seen her ads in Artvoice. She has owned the first complete transformation saloon (OK, the word is salon, one would think Camille is writing this, not Kathy, who is a regular June Cleaver) in the area. She offers quite an array of services, such as complete head to toe dressing, makeovers, shopping, modeling and photography services. You know, we have members in this group who have never attended a meeting. If you are one of them, and you hesitate because you don't have your act together (at least in your mind), perhaps Miss Suzi is just who you need to see to get your image together. Suzi can be reached at 884-7991. Her business location is at 430 Delaware Ave. (near Edward St.) in Buffalo. Her web site is http://www.geocities.com/suzis_studio/. Suzi has also joined our group and we may be holding a meeting at her studio in the near future.

Continued on page 4



CAMILLE'S CORNER

LET'S BE CAREFUL OUT THERE

If you were a fan of the cop show "Hill Street Blues" back in the 1980's, that phrase will be very familiar. Those words were Sergeant Phil Esterhaus' fatherly advice at the end of his roll call to the cops about to hit the beat. It was meant to remind them, that although they were prepared to deal with what they were trained for, the elements of surprise and the unknown were lurking around the next corner.

It's good advice for us members of the transgender community. Especially those of us who are out in public, either living and working or just having a drink at a downtown club or bar. Recently a few disturbing incidents occurred that act as a reminder that we need "to be careful out there." Let me tell you about them.

One of our members was attending an event in Rochester. She was enjoying the evening and the company of some friends when she began to feel 'strange'. She had been drinking her usual favorite and knew her limits and how it effected her. But this time there was a different feeling - she felt lightheaded and not in her usual control of herself. Her friends noticed her uncharacteristic behavior and inquired what was wrong. She wasn't able to say and as a result they stayed with her the rest of the evening.

What happened? Our Belle believes someone spiked her drink when she wasn't looking. This occurs more often than most people are aware. There are people, mostly men, who will slip a drug into an unsuspecting woman's drink, wait till it starts effecting her and then "come to her rescue". Only the rescue often involves leading the drugged individual to a car or location and having his way with her. The drug is powerful enough to keep one from resisting but still be conscious. The next day there is usually no memory of what happened the night before. And the perpetrator is seldom caught. Sounds a lot like alcohol, but it is different. Deadly different. Too much alcohol will eventually make you pass out. Too much of this 'date rape' drug can kill you. This happened to a young woman from the Southtowns area. Her drink was spiked with too much of the drug and she went into a coma and later died.

How can you be careful? Never leave your drink unattended. It only takes a few seconds to spike a drink. If you notice that your drink tastes different, dump it and order another. Another way to prevent this kind of problem is to always go out with a friend or two who can keep an eye on each other.

The second incident occurred at a downtown Buffalo bar a few weeks ago. Tina, a Buffalo Belle, had been approached by a man who would not take 'no' for an answer. As the bar was closing, she asked me if I would walk with her to her car, as this guy was hanging around the exit and she was apprehensive of his persistence. Well, he did follow us out of the bar. We got to Tina's car safely and I waved goodbye as she drove off. But this night wasn't quite over.

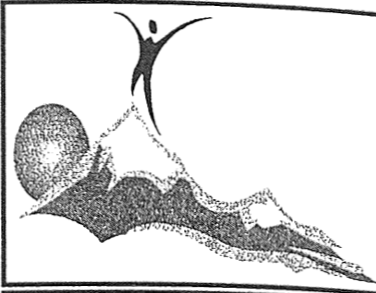
The next day she told me about what occurred after she drove off. The guy had followed her in his car block after block. Tina was quite worried and feared for her safety. At a stoplight he pulled along side her car. She couldn't take it any more and rolled down her window to ask what he wanted. He told her he just wanted to "spend some time with her." It wasn't her idea of a nice way to end an evening. She told him to get lost and quickly drove off with him in pursuit. She made it through the next stoplight and for some reason the guy stopped when it turned red. That allowed her to make a few quick turns and lose him. She was soon home safe. It was an end to a night that could have been lot worse. What could Tina and myself have done to avoid this problem or at least respond differently? What is the best response to a situation like this?

First, make sure an undesired guy understands the word "no". Don't be coy or playful. If you don't want his attention you must make sure he knows you are not playing hard to get. Most guys won't waste their time after a firm refusal. But for the others who continue their 'hunt', you must be careful. In a case like this, driving to a busy place or location will hinder this kind of pursuit. Driving to the local police station will certainly deter this behavior. (In downtown Buffalo, Station B is located at 672 Main St, near Shea's Theater.) In a situation such as this, it's a better risk being in the station with a few bemused police officers than outside with a potentially dangerous individual.

And what was my error that night? My mistake was not having Tina drive me to my car after walking to hers. The creep might have followed and accosted me before I reached my car. I'll know better next time.

A woman friend of mine once said that "Women are always on guard." We need to keep that in mind constantly.

Take care.



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NANCY'S PERSPECTIVE

Hi girls,

I've always considered myself an observer. I spend a lot of time taking note of what goes on around me, and often I share that information with you in his column. It's sometimes hard putting feelings into words, so when a topic I'm familiar with drops into my lap, it's easy to start forming sentences.

In last month's edition of this very newsletter, on pages 8 & 9, there was an article entitled, "Crossdressers and the Men Who Love Them" by Yvonne Sullivan. That offering struck a cord with me personally. Ms. Sullivan talks of those crossdressers who want validation and acceptance by dating men. She speaks of a fantasy a lot of us have about playing the female role in a relationship, and points out a lot of information I'm sure we have all thought about.

I have a TG friend named Brenda who lives near Chicago. We have been corresponding via the mail and on the phone for well over a year. Last fall I was going on vacation in her area, so we decided to meet in person. Brenda asked me if I would consider taking her on a date. I had no problem, and what a wild three days we had! I stayed dressed as a guy while escorting her to dinner, shopping, breakfast, more shopping, and endless hours of just talking about our situation as transgendered individuals. I confess that I did get dressed up on Saturday night, and the two of us crashed a Tri-Ess meeting, which was fun.

Both Brenda and I had a wonderful time. A date was something she had thought about for a long time, and I was happy to help her fulfill that dream. She enjoyed having someone open doors, help her be seated at dinner, carry her bags while shopping, etc. All those things men do for women.

Recently, Brenda wrote a summary of our date that was published in the magazine *Ladylike*. She got a lot of coverage from the editors, complete with a photo or two. She described the sensation of the experience, and told everyone what a gentleman I was. She tells me she has received a ton of mail from sisters who have similar feelings, and they are asking a lot of questions. Brenda thinks I should open a TG escort service. I could charge a small fee and have some fun on the weekends. You need a woman for a date? How about a man? I don't think so, but it's an interesting idea.

Keeping an open mind is the key this month. Good things happen if you're willing to explore the possibilities that are out there.

Your sister,
Nancy

Joshua Marete Mutuma, 32, was arrested in Modesto, Calif., in November on suspicion of impersonating his wife. Mutuma's wife had a restraining order against him, and Mutumas arrived at the courthouse dressed as a woman with long black hair and 5 o'clock shadow, attempting to have the order dismissed, and responding to the clerk's questions in falsetto.

-From 'News of the Weird'

TRANSSEXUAL NEWS TELEGRAPH ANNOUNCES NEW WEBSITE

(SAN FRANCISCO) Feb 20, 2000. Transsexual News Telegraph (TNT) is the magazine for transsexuals who live 24/7 opposite their birth sex full time, all the time (surgeries optional). TNT is also for transgendered people -- those whose gender expression falls outside the bipolar gender system; and for our significant others, friends, families and allies.

Being transsexual/transgendered gives you a perspective that is quite different from other people's. TNT has been putting that perspective into words and pictures since 1993.

Currently on the website (www.transsexnews.com) is the entire contents of



TNT #8 (Winter 1999). This includes an examination of the state of SRS for FTMs; a photo-spread of Kim Harlow, a beautiful French TS, with her own words of reflection; insights on "Chix With Dix" by Christine Beatty; plus fiction, poetry, book and film reviews, and much more.

In the near future, we will be adding the complete contents from all our back issues, plus articles and photo features special to the website. We will also be offering the "best of" TG-oriented material, including audio and video, selected from other sources.

TNT is about the lived experience of trans men and women. TNT addresses us, and our lives, from our perspective, not the perspective of those who observe us. TNT is not written from the clinical or medical point of view. These are our words -- and yours.

TNT's list of writers include Gary Bowen, Jason Cromwell, Dallas Denny, Diane Green, Jacob Hale, Julian Leonard, Nancy Nangeroni, Rachel Pollack, Gwen Smith, Susan Stryker, Max Valerio Wolf, Riki Ann Wilchins, Jessica Xavier and many others.

KATHY'S NOTES

Continued from page 1

Also in attendance, but not in the batting order this night, was Mistress Kali of PEP fame. She was coaching at third base, and could be seen giving those discrete instructions to the players-bunt, fetch me a drink, swing away, hang in there, fluff my pillow, etc. For those who's tastes run a little more to wild side, her web site is at <http://www.kalipep.mybds.com/>

Now I'm not sure how this baseball analogy got started. Looking at the weather today from my corner office suite at the top of the Lorraine office building in downtown Snyder, it hardly seems appropriate but if it helps the weather Gods take a hint and bring on some weather that is more conducive for the great American boor, I'm all for it.

Following our presenters, we had the usual pizza and snacks to enjoy. Also, a chance to do a little mingling with each other, and especially a chance to say hello to some new sisters who made their debuts at the meeting. We've already mentioned Kali, Bobbi, Suzi, and Tina, also making their first appearances with us was Joella, Ann, and Allyson. Now we do have a slight problem, mainly which Alison were you? We have two who've remained shy till now, but still not sure which one you were! So were you Hamburg Ali, or Livonia Ali? Please let me know which one of you graced us with your presence.

This was really something, seven new members at one meeting, almost doubled our previous best, which coincidentally was last February, when four new girls made their debuts. There was no quantity discount given on the warmth of the welcome given to you lovely ladies!

Somehow with all this going on this evening, Camille and Patti thought that the night might go slow, so arranged for a little gaming for the evening. So they came up with a variation of pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey. Instead of a tail, it was a heart. Instead of a pin, it was tape, and substituting for the donkey, was a poster of Shania Twain. Chocolate hearts were the prizes given out for the best three efforts on this tepidity-received event.

YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

So far we have only 34 out of our membership total of 64 have signed up for another year of membership. If you have hesitated until now, your day of reckoning is near. If you have not paid by the end of March, this is your last newsletter. How much you owe is simply found on your envelope: next to your name is the amount that is owed by you slackers. The good and righteous girls will find a PD there instead and may bask in the enlightenment and prestige that membership entails. Come to the meeting and pay or send your check/cash to the PO box ASAP.

This seems to be about our usual rate of renewal by the way. Each year we end up losing around a third of the previous years roster, but with gains made during the year, end up with more than when we started. What happens to those who don't renew is often unknown. Some feel that they outgrow the group and can do their thing without us. Others try once more to do the purge thingie and try to put this second-

self away for good. Whatever the reason, if this is the last issue that you intend to receive, the very best to you and may you find peace and fulfillment in your lives.

ROCHESTER CD NETWORK

Last night I had the pleasure to attend a meeting of our sister group down the I-90. It was a real pleasure seeing some old friends that I hadn't seen in quite some time. I wasn't the only one who made the trip, as Kendra and Jo (from the Belles), joined the girls we have from there like Kelly, Nancy, & Terri Lynn. It was a real nice gathering, with more than 20 in attendance.

They had Freddie in attendance, working his magic on wigs. Wow, is he good! I talked with him about making a trip to visit us to do his work and hopefully we'll be able to arrange for this sometimes in the future, but with family health problems, he won't be doing this too soon. If you get a chance to avail yourself of his talents, take advantage of it. Wait till this month's meeting to see what he did with one I bought several months ago, and thought would be impossible to ever make right.

Next month they will be having a professional makeup person coming in from Philadelphia to do makeovers. The cost will be \$25 for a session with this person, but from what I've been told, he'll even be able to make me look good. Now wouldn't that be something to see. If so, I'll probably dunk my head in a couple of gallons of acrylic to preserve the look forever!

Their site is very easy to get to. Took only an hour to get there from the Williamsville toll barrier. They hold their meetings on the first Saturday of the month and hopefully more of us will join them for an extra girl-night-out in the future. Any questions, ask Kelly or Nancy at our meeting.

We may be running a couple of pages of Rochester news in the future, as they don't have a newsletter and we'll send ours to their members who can't get their updates etc. via E-mail.

In the years past, there had been somewhat of an adversarial relationship between our two groups. But that is long past behind us, and lets work together to make both groups prosper for the good of us all.

BELLES WEB PAGE:

Victoria has started to work on redoing our page. We've had a pretty sorry one in the past and hopefully this time around it will be something to be proud of. One of the things that she would like to add to the page is a links area to the members. As she said in a recent E-mail "Hello sisters. I am e-mailing all of you whom gave permission to Camille for me to e-mail you. As I and Camille announced at the last Belles meeting, we are soliciting personal profiles for our new web site. This will enable visitors to our site to learn more about us and our group. If you would like to participate, please send a photo, if you wish, and a "squibble" about yourself with anything you wish to share. Please e-mail them to me at this e-mail address: cassanit@lightlink.com), and I will assemble them and put them on our new pages."

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TRANS COMMUNITY NEWS

HORMONES AND SEXUAL DESTINY

by Professor Melissa Hines, Psychologist - City University
February 21, 2000

Even before birth, males and females differ hormonally. Male fetuses produce more testosterone androgens from about week 8 to week 24 of gestation, and these hormones direct development of the external genitalia. Prenatal exposure to androgens produces a male body type: without androgens, a female body type develops. So, it is sometimes said that Eve not Adam was the first human being. The basic plan is female and a male is produced by adding androgens.

Prenatal abnormalities

Children with prenatal hormonal abnormalities can have genitalia that do not match their genetic sex. This sometimes happens because of genetic disorders or because a woman was prescribed hormone-altering medication during pregnancy. Genetic females (XX individuals) exposed to high levels of androgens prenatally are born with genitalia that resemble those of a boy, and genetic males (XY individuals) whose cells are unable to respond to androgens look like girls at birth. The masculinised girls are surgically feminised and treated with hormones to normalize their hormone levels postnatally. The genetic males who cannot respond to androgens appear to be female at birth and are typically raised as girls without awareness of their XY chromosome make-up.

Brain development

Hormones also influence brain development. Most parts of the mammalian brain are similar in males and females, but some regions differ by sex. These are located primarily in older parts of the brain, such as the hypothalamus and amygdala, regions that control functions related to sexuality. The brain regions that differ in males and females also have receptors or receiving units that allow the cells to respond to androgens. In many mammals, hormones determine which cells live and die in these regions, what other parts of the brain they interconnect with anatomically and what chemicals they use for communicating. The early hormone environment also permanently influences behavior. For instance, female rhesus monkeys exposed to high levels of androgens prenatally behave more like males postnatally. Their sexual behavior is changed as are other behaviors that differ in males and females, including the rough-and-tumbleplay that is characteristic of young males.

Human behavior

Hormones not only influence development of the human brain but also affect human behavior. Girls exposed prenatally to high levels of androgens show more interest in toys like cars and trucks and less interest in dolls. They also are more likely than most girls to prefer boys as playmates and to engage in male-typical rough-and-tumble play. As adults, most are heterosexual, but they are more likely than women

in general to be bisexual or lesbian. Hormones may partly explain not only why males and females differ behaviorally, but also why some people within each sex show more sex-typical behavior than others.

Culture and society

Cultural and social factors also influence gender development. Parents, peers and teachers encourage girls and boys to play with sex-typical toys and children imitate the behavior of others of the same sex. However, individuals also enter the world with stronger or weaker tendencies to conform to sex-stereotyped behavior and this appears to relate to the prenatal hormone environment.

AMBIGUOUS GENITALIA LEADS TO INFANT'S DEATH

by Gwendolyn Ann Smith

(DALLAS, February 15) In an evolving case in Dallas, Texas, investigators believe they have a motive for the murder of a newborn whose mother has been charged with killing her own child on December 8, 1999, simply because the child was born with ambiguous genitalia.

The Collin County medical examiner says the three-day-old baby born to Aruna and Ganga Kavili was born with ambiguous genitalia. It was not clear whether the newborn was a boy or a girl. The infant's mother, is now charged with capital murder.

Police say she told them she was in the bathroom in her far north Dallas apartment, and her husband was away when someone broke into their home and killed the baby. But investigators say the newborn was dead three hours after his parents brought him home from the hospital.

Investigators with Child Protective Services conducted their own investigation after they took custody of the couple's 2-year-old daughter. One CPS report reads: the child appears to have knowledge of her siblings death and becomes distraught when talking about the incident. Another CPS report says the mother, Aruna Kavili puts the wants, needs and desires of spouse ahead of herself and her own children.

A north Texas expert on Indian culture says children born with sexual deformities are called eunuchs, and are usually given away. Men sometimes shun their wives for giving birth to eunuchs.

Detectives won't speculate whether Aruna Kavili allegedly killed her child because she was ashamed, or because she was pressured into doing so. The coroner says the baby had no chance at survival -- he died of blunt force trauma to the head, and strangulation.

TRANS COMMUNITY NEWS

THE RISKY BUSINESS OF CROSS-DRESSING IN SMALL-TOWN AMERICA

by Serena Donadoni

When Kimberly Peirce began working on her debut film, *Boys Don't Cry*, she didn't envision an exploitative true crime story. In Brandon Teena, the young woman posing as a man who was murdered in a small Nebraska town six years ago, Peirce recognized a kindred spirit to the gender rebels she had been researching; women such as the Civil War spy posing as a man who was the center of Peirce's thesis script at Columbia University.

"There was a whole history of Hollywood films," said Peirce at the 1999 Toronto International Film Festival, "that talked about people who had cross-dressed to get what they couldn't get in the gender that they were born into."

In a film such as Billy Wilder's gender-bending screwball comedy, *Some Like It Hot* (1959), she continued, "you never think for a minute that (Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon) want to be women – they're just doing it to meet their ends."

But historically, women dressing up as men had more profound implications. It served as one of the few ways women could break out of their prescribed destinies and access, on their own, things that were traditionally only granted to men: education, independence and power.

These desires have been expressed in recent historical films such as Barbra Streisand's *Yentl* (1983), where a Jewish girl pretends to be a boy in order to receive male-only religious instruction – or Maggie Greenwald's *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993), where Suzy Amis discovers the only way she can be a single woman in America's frontier West is as a single man.

Then there's Sally Potter's imaginative and immensely witty *Orlando* (1993), whose central character lives from Elizabethan times to the present, changing from a man to a woman along the way. Potter hypothesizes that even though Orlando loses his fortune and property, becoming a woman brings its own valuable experiences, and ultimately it's someone who can see both sides of the gender divide who has the most valuable perspective of all.

So it comes as no surprise that female cross-dressing has become a particularly fertile subject for women filmmakers, who are functioning in what is still a male-dominated industry.

"What happens to any girl in America," Peirce explained, "is that there comes a time when somebody says, 'Stop wearing pants, stop hanging from trees, stop go-kart racing and put on a dress and act like a girl.' When I realized that the things that I wanted to do were not necessarily called 'girl' things, I started looking for role models and I started

appropriating guys."

This extended to her cinematic icons, independents and neo-realists such as John Cassavetes, Martin Scorsese, Roberto Rossellini and Pier Paolo Pasolini.

"I looked up and all my heroes were men," continued Peirce, "but then when I started to read about girls who dressed as guys throughout history – these sailors, these pirates, these adventurers – that was something thrilling. They got by just being who they were, and yet they were following 'male' behavior. So when I discovered Teena, it was like she just plugged into that need for somebody to identify with, and I found what she did was absolutely extraordinary."

In her late teens, Teena Marie Brandon reinvented herself as Brandon Teena, taking the leap of faith that others would perceive her as a man because, as Peirce said, "that's who she believed she was."

Even though this was the early 1990s, long after the women's and gay rights movements had begun to alter American society's rigid gender conventions, those changes hadn't filtered down to Brandon Teena. Kimberly Peirce explained that a major factor in this story was something that's rarely discussed honestly in America: class distinctions.

"Class affects everything that you ever do," she asserted. "It affects if you get educated; it affects what jobs you have; it affects your aspirations, your sense of yourself."

"The transformation that Brandon went through," she continued, "was even that much more miraculous because Teena was from a trailer park, because she didn't have education, because she didn't have any models."

Leaving Lincoln, Neb., for the even smaller Falls City, Brandon fell in with an aimless group of young people, becoming particularly close to a charismatic troublemaker named John Lotter and his friend from his numerous prison stays, Tom Nissen. But when Brandon fell in love with John's would-be girlfriend, Lana Tisdell (whom Peirce interviewed extensively), the dynamic became more complex.

Eventually, it was Brandon Teena's friends, Lotter and Nissen, who raped and killed her after learning that Teena was really a woman.

"Murder is a relationship between two or more people," said Peirce, "and the only way to really understand Brandon's death was to make sense of the guys."

The key to *Boys Don't Cry*, Kimberly Peirce believed, meant trying to piece together all the rage, insecurity, desire, jealousy, betrayal and numbing boredom that defined the lives of these particular people and see how that led to this most personal of crimes.

"Brandon aspired to be," she explained, "a shit-kicking, hard-ass, drinking, girl-chasing straight guy. I mean, of all things to be, that's what he aspired to. And who did he pick for his role model? John Lotter. It was a recipe for disaster."

FOR A BETTER YOU...



Fashion Tips

FROM "INSTANT STYLE"

By Emily Cho and Neila Fisher

- If you are tall, tiny prints, delicate jewelry and sheer fabric will exaggerate your height.
- One of the most important reasons to get your body in shape is not for the pounds but for graceful movements and better poise.
- An Easy Formula; If the color of your jacket or over layer matches the color of your skirt or pants, your inside blouse or sweater can then be a contrasting color, and it's hard to make a mistake.
- To have a smooth line, tuck your tops into your pantyhose – you can still pull out your top evenly all around for that bloused, relaxed look – and it will stay.
- A cuffless pants always makes the leg look longer.



KATHY'S NOTES

Continued from page 4

She followed up with: "Hi everyone. A few people asked me for a "template" of things to include in the profile. Below are some suggestions, of course all information is optional etc.

- * Femme name
- * Occupation
- * Age
- * How long you've been with the Belles
- * Height, hair color, etc.
- * TG status
- * Marital status
- * Organizations you belong to other than the Belles
- * How out you are to others
- * If you go out dressed, where etc.

That's all I could think of. If you have any others please feel free to add to it."

So far Victoria has her profile up, and Camille and myself have sent ours in as well. Speaking of e-mails, Jana and Susan, I've gotten mail returned from you two recently. Have you changed addresses and forgotten to let us know? Please, you two, and anyone else who now wishes to have their E-mail address known, send them to me at: KathyLorraine@aol.com

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Transgenderists: When Self-Identification Challenges Transgender Stereotypes

By Gianna E. Israel

There has been an interesting development in the transgender community in recent years, specifically of persons who do not identify with the social and clinical definitions which apply to individuals with gender identity issues. Traditionally, those who comprise what is frequently referred to as the "transgender community" include transsexuals and crossdressers. In part, the definitions on who is a transsexual and who is a crossdresser are defined by social stereotypes and clinical literature; however they are also defined by those unique persons who have transgender experiences.

A transsexual is a person who transitions and permanently lives as a member of the opposite gender. These persons seek out sex hormones and cosmetic surgery. This includes breast augmentation or mastectomy depending on the direction of change. In addition, transsexuals are interested in Genital Reassignment Surgery or what is also known as Sex Reassignment Surgery. It is common knowledge that there is a larger proportion of individuals who self-identify as transsexual, than the actual number of people who have genital reassignment. This in part is due to the high financial, emotional and social costs associated with living as a member of the opposite gender as well as the surgical procedure itself. There also exists a number of individuals who are unable to undergo Genital Reassignment. More information about those persons will be briefly addressed later in this article.

Crossdressers are persons who temporarily wear clothing of the opposite gender to fulfill an inner sense of need or reduce gender related anxiety. Typically crossdressing is done privately, although some persons do so publicly when circumstances appear safe. Some also crossdress for sexual fulfillment, such as in "transvestic fetishism." While crossdressers do not experience the many difficulties transsexuals face during the pursuit of transition or Genital Reassignment, they do experience emotional turbulence, social isolation, or concerns regarding privacy and whether to tell others about their secret. Like transsexuals, these factors are particularly evident when a crossdresser is unaware of transgender resources or is unable to resolve stereotype induced feelings of guilt, shame or fear. Both transsexuals and crossdressers are at risk of victimization by persons who cannot tolerate differences in others. Although, transsexuals face slightly higher risks because they are more visible than crossdressers who tend to be more hidden.

Transgenderists are persons who consistently live as members of the opposite gender either on a part or full-time basis. Some maintain their original identity in the work place or during formal occasions. Others appear in their new identity during all aspects of daily life. Transgenderists are unique because maintaining both masculine and feminine characteristics is integral to having a sense of balance. However, the outward presentation of these characteristics varies subtly depending on the individual's needs and sense of connection to each gender. Like transsexuals, many are interested in obtaining electrolysis, hormones and even cosmetic surgery to bring their outward presentation in line with

their inner sense of self. However, like crossdressers, transgenderists are *not interested* in Genital Reassignment Surgery.

To elaborate on this distinction, even if a transgenderist lives "in role" as a member of the opposite gender on a full-time basis, what separates them from transsexuals, is that they derive pleasure from and value their genitals as originally developed. However, in most circumstances, it is unlikely that a transgenderist who lives in role full-time will disclose such private information without good reason. Because transgenderists are not interested in genital reassignment, they should not be confused with "non-operative" transsexuals or persons who are unable to have surgery due to financial or medical hardship. Although the majority of non-operative transsexuals live "in role" permanently, most need to adjust to a period of internalized incongruity during the time they are unable to have genital reassignment, if at all. Transgenderists do not go through this period of adjustment, because they are not interested in altering their genitals.

Like transsexuals who are at the very beginning of transition, transgenderists frequently experience incongruent feelings regarding their gender identity. Unlike crossdressers these feelings persist "after the clothes come off" and the person dresses in their original gender. These incongruent feelings typically can be continuous, lasting for days and even weeks, until the individual recognizes a pattern in his or her needs. Transgenderists stop feeling incongruent when their needs are consistently met by maintaining characteristics from both genders.

Understanding a transgenderist identity becomes particularly interesting when the subject of differentiating these from other transgender persons is looked at in further detail. Upon hearing about transgenderists, many people are inclined to believe that transgenderists are actually undecided about or simply unaware of genital reassignment. Others believe transgenderists are crossdressers, who somehow have managed to arrange unique living situations, so as to live out their fantasy. While the potential for such circumstances exists, a person usually self identifies as a transgenderist because their internal needs do not meet the narrow definitions associated with transsexuals or crossdressers.

As we try understanding the process of differentiating one type of transgender person from another, it is important to recognize where transgender persons get their definitions and role models. In coming to terms with crossdressing or gender identity issues, most people consult clinical as well as community resources, so as to compare their experiences with others. Access to resources can vary immensely depending upon the individual's location, cultural background, social status, educational and investigative skills.

For example, the standards which validates a person having a transgender identity vary greatly depending on location. In India, many transgender people have a choice between conforming to traditional gender stereotypes or becoming part of the Hijra caste. This is particularly so if they intend to live out their lives as members of the opposite gender. Within the caste, ritual castration without anesthesia is performed on new members by the caste. Also, hand plucking of facial and body hair is widely encouraged over shaving. Subsequently, while crossdressers and transgenderists may participate in Hijra activities to some extent, none are really considered a full member until they have suffered the pain of beautification and ritual castration.

These practices can seem quite removed from the experiences of transgender persons living in the North America or Europe. These individuals find out about electrolysis, coping with crossdressing, or making a gender transition through relatively similar gender clinics or organizations. For the transgenderist, information addressing their needs has come forth slowly as clinicians began documenting gender identity issues only 20 years ago. In fact, the process of disseminating clinical information about gender issues is so slow, most people are not aware that transgender persons may have specialized medical needs. They may also not be aware that *having a transgender identity is not in and of itself mentally disordered, medically diseased or pathological.*

Because the majority of clinical resources make no reference to transgenderists, it is important to recognize that differentiating this specialized sub-population is not much different than other transgender persons. Whereas most clinical resources use "consistency" in determining who is a crossdresser as well as who is a transsexual (and therefore an appropriate candidate for hormone administration and genital reassignment), this criterion is equally valuable in identifying transgenderists and their needs. Consistency is defined as person having consistent thoughts, actions, requests or demands for a set period of time. Professionals who utilize consistency as a factor for assessing crossdresser and transsexual treatment plans, may also do so for transgenderists. For example, within the *Recommended Guidelines for Transgender Care*, Dr. Donald Tarver and I recommend (in part) that "transgender individuals appropriate for hormone administration include those who have in the preceding three months consistently expressed interest in the permanent physical changes brought forward by hormones, in order to bring the body in line with an intended masculine, feminine or androgynous appearance."

On the surface the preceding recommendation may appear vague because it does not distinguish between transgender sub-populations. This lack of distinction, however, reflects an increasing trend among care providers to encourage transgender persons to adopt a gender-identification based on their needs and experiences, rather than force clients to conform to a provider or clinic's stereotypes. Encouraging self-determination has encouraged a relaxation of gender boundaries, which meets the needs of all transgender persons.

Because there is not an overabundance of clinical literature portraying the specialized needs and issues transgenderists face, frequently these people cannot locate or are turned away from medical, surgical and psychological services. Those given incorrect information suffer needlessly and are often at risk. For example, those believing they are crossdressers and ineligible for professional services frequently end up self-prescribing, or seeking black market hormones and substandard cosmetic surgeries. Others, believing they are transsexuals, mistakenly proceed with a full-time transition or undergo Genital Reassignment Surgery. As a result these persons end up making huge sacrifices in order to validate themselves, and those who go through with genital reassignment may find themselves regretting having done so for the remainder of their lives. Recognition by professionals and the transgender community of transgenderist needs can help reduce these types of incidents.

Frequently I receive requests for information from physicians who are uncertain about how to address hormone administration in transgenderists. Because hormone administration is a routine medical procedure, providing it to transgenderists is for the most part identical to that of pre-operative transsexuals. I always advise physicians to take into account the patient's general health, blood laboratory testing, prescription side effects and cosmetic predisposition. The only significant differences include the possibility that the transgenderist may ask that the prescription strength does not interfere with sexual performance, or that cosmetic growth be focused on moderate development or androgenization.

One of the most exciting developments in understanding transgenderist issues, is the recognition that these their experiences can sharply differ in regard to pre-existing relationships such as marriages. Unlike transsexuals who are more likely to face divorce as a consequence of transition, and unlike closeted crossdressers who are the least likely to share "their secret" with a spouse, transgender issues become a significant dynamic within relationships. This is particularly true for those who live in role. In most circumstances the person's spouse or significant other is clearly supportive of the transgenderist's needs. Frequently many couples find that the relaxation of gender roles allows both persons to get their internal needs met, whereas they might not get through traditional role play.

It may be assumed that the majority of transgenderist persons deny a desire to have Genital Reassignment Surgery in order to save a pre-existing marital relationship. In some circumstances that maybe the case. However, within my counseling practice only 1 out of every 4 transgenderists state that he or she would "possibly be interested" in genital reassignment if not involved in a pre-existing relationship. Frequently, this ambiguity diminishes the more accepted the person is by others, particularly when acceptance comes from their spouse.

Other issues where transgenderists find difficulties include disclosure and isolation. Disclosing one's transgender status to others is a challenging prospect fraught with risks. However for the transgenderist, in addition to potential rejection from family and friends, they face the possibility of being turned away by professionals and rejected by the transgender community at large. This is particularly so when transgenderists encounter crossdressers who prefer keeping their behavior hidden, and subsequently feel uncomfortable being around someone who is so visible. Likewise, transsexuals may not be interested in socializing with a transgenderist for fear of having a desire or lack of desire in seeking Genital Reassignment Surgery invalidated.

Like other transgender persons who are hidden or who have not found resources, transgenderists tend to live very isolated, painful lives. This can be overcome by organizations and professionals encouraging differences in others, even when a person's gender identification challenges transgender stereotypes.

Gianna E. Israel is a gender-specializing counselor. In private practice she provides nationwide telephone consultation, individual and relationship counseling; evaluations, referrals and. She is also principal author of the *Recommended Guidelines for Transgender Care*, a founding AEGIS board member and an HBIGDA member.



COMING EVENTS



DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF LAST MINUTE
CHANGES, CALL TO VERIFY THE TIME AND
PLACE OF EVENTS

MARCH 11	BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm
APRIL 1	ROCHESTER CD NETWORK MEETING 6:30pm
APRIL 8	BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm
APRIL 30	MILLENNIUM MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR EQUALITY
MAY 6	ROCHESTER CD NETWORK MEETING 6:30pm
MAY 13	BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm

A Warm And Grateful Thank You To The Buffalo Belles!!!

On Saturday, February 19, 2000, Newbury Street Hair, Wig & Wellness Center sponsored a wig party for the Buffalo Belles. I am happy to say that the event was a great success! Many ideas were shared, friends made, and laughter shared by all.

Due to the great success of our first wig party held exclusively for the Buffalo Belles, Newbury St. would like to announce another "Night At Newbury" on **March 25 th, 2000 from 6 to 8 p.m.** The party will be held, again, at Newbury Street Hair, Wig & Wellness Center located at 2884 Niagara Falls Blvd., North Tonawanda. A five dollar cover charge will be charged per person to cover refreshments. The evening will include one skin care/mini-facial demonstration, free cuts and styles for all wigs purchased and a 15% discount on all sales including gift certificates for full and half day beauty plans.

Also, I am urging The Buffalo Belles to bring their sister CD's as guests, one guest per Belles member. I will look forward to seeing you all once again for another lovely evening with the Buffalo Belles at Newbury Street!!!

Please feel free to direct any questions, comments and/or ideas to Karen at our E-mail address: HairyCD@aol.com. Our newsletter, including coupons and specials, is also available to any interested members. Just leave an address or fax number at our E-mail address.

Once again, thank you to all the Buffalo Belles for making our first exclusive wig party a great success!!!

Sincerely,
Karen Ann Mariglio -Boyd