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June 2000

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Recommended Citation

Buffalo Belles, "June 2000" (2000). *Buffalo Belles Newsletters*. 84.
<https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/buffalobelles/84>

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JUNE 2000



THE JOURNEY

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUFFALO BELLES

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- BELLES IN THE MOVIES? READ TINA'S ACCOUNT OF A NIGHT AMONG THE STARS AT THE FILMING OF A MOVIE AT SHEA'S THEATER (PAGE 4)
- COME TO THE BUFFALO PRIDE PARADE & CELEBRATION RALLY ON SATURDAY, JUNE 17 (1:00PM TO 4:00PM) & SAY HELLO TO CAMILLE - AT THE BELLES INFORMATION TABLE. (EN FEMME OPTIONAL)

KATHY'S NOTES



Dear Sisters,

The May meeting was held in our alternative meeting room-the one upstairs by the fire escape. With the switch in dates from our usual second Saturday to the first, we did miss our Rochester friends and hope to see them back here for our June meeting.

The highlight of the meeting was the presence of

two ladies from PFLAG (Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) which has also added transgendered to their mission statement. This is a worthwhile group that you can refer your family/friends to that are having problems with coming to accept your transgendered nature. I wish I had more to report about what they had to tell, but arrived late to the meeting, after they had finished their presentation. Camille attended the next PFLAG meeting after ours and hopefully has more to report later on.

The other theme for the night was "white elephant" or "yard sale". Several of the girls brought items they no longer liked, or fit or were the wrong color etc. Several girls were able to pick up some real bargains a little or no cost.

Our lovely and esteemed leader, Camille, took the floor as usual and covered many activities and events that will be occurring in the near future. One was the call for extras for the filming of "Manna from Heaven" being filmed in town at the time. My understanding is that Camille, Janice and Tina did show up for the open casting

call and probably will be seen in several of the scenes that were shot that night. We certainly will be looking forward to the release of this film and spotting our girls in it!

Another topic broached was the upcoming Gay Pride March. We are going to be setting up an information table at the "after march" gathering place at Bidwell Park. Hopefully some of you might be willing to volunteer to 'man' it for a couple of hours on June 17th. More, I'm sure, from Camille later.

Another topic of discussion was the ballot in last month's The Journey for new officers and elections. Unless Camille received some at the meeting, I certainly know that none showed up in our Post Office box, meaning that once more our call for help has gone totally unheeded. You know, this isn't that awfully hard. If you indeed really have a feminine side, why can't it be shown in something else than by the clothes you like wear?

Some of the jobs we need fulfilled don't take a lot of time or skill or 'outing' yourself. Is it really too much to ask that we have someone volunteer to keep track of the library? To check our Hotline and return a few calls each month? Or write a column for the newsletter. Or make sure that we have enough snacks and pop for the meeting? Or someone to plan the August picnic? Apparently so.

I've gotten so sick and tired of this constant need to cajole you into helping out, I've come up with my own solution. Resign. So this is it for me. After seven years of doing all or part of the newsletter, checking the PO Box a couple of times a week, interviews and everything else; I quit. So Camille gets a couple more straws to add to her load. Whether that will be the final ones to break her we'll soon see.

(continued on page 4)



CAMILLE'S CORNER

Evolution – it is an essential part of life. And it is an important part of social and support groups as well. In the Buffalo Belles eight years of existence we have evolved from a Tri-Ess sorority of heterosexual male crossdressers to an organization that recognizes the needs of the entire Transgendered community – CD's, transsexuals, MtoF's, FtoM's, straight, gay or bi.

The question arises: are we ready to face the changes and challenges of our evolving culture. Some recent markers of these changes have been: the civil recognition of 'gay unions'; the growing acceptance of the younger generation; the information and connections that the Internet has fostered; the increasing importance of linking with the communities of gay, lesbian, bi and trans individuals to educate the public in order to gain acceptance and promote laws that can protect life and limb.

Is it possible for us to expand our vision? Or do we want to remain a small social group that exists in our larger closet?

I think we can meet this challenge. Many of you know that I am working with other organizations to help establish dialogue and understanding with the general public. An example that could benefit you personally is the upcoming healthcare conference called "Recognizing the Barriers: Providing Health Care to the Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Transgendered Communities". The conference's goal is to sensitize and educate members of the healthcare community, such as doctors, nurses, emergency medical technicians. An example of how you could be affected: You are dressed en femme and you are involved in a car accident. The emergency medical technicians arrive and discover you are not the woman they thought they were about to help. Some think it's amusing. Others are somewhat confused as how to proceed. Meanwhile your life is ebbing away as they stand there. You die as a result of the hesitation. Seem improbable? Ask Tyra Hunter's mother. She had to bury her 24 year-old Trans child because the Washington, D.C. ambulance personnel at the accident scene,

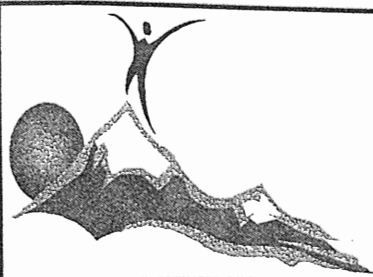
upon discovering Tyra's male genitals, used derogatory epithets, backed away, and ceased rendering emergency treatment to her.

Other non-emergency stories of purposeful neglect abound. Hopefully, this conference can make a small difference. Or one that could save your life.

Another group making a difference today is PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays). The Belles are beginning a partnership with them as PFLAG has been receiving requests from parents as to what to do about their children who are gender confused. Last month Colleen R. and I attended their monthly meeting and met some wonderful and dedicated individuals. They have asked the both of us to join their board in order to assist and guide them concerning Trans issues. Requests for help and support regarding Trans children (both young and old) have become more frequent. I wish there had been a group like them when my bewildered parents discovered me dressed en femme. Life would have been a little kinder and sympathetic for a confused twelve year old and his parents.

For the first time since our founding, the Belles will have a presence at the Buffalo Pride Celebration rally on June 17. We will be setting up an information table at the rally site at Elmwood Ave. and Bidwell Parkway. It's about ¾ mile south of Buffalo State College and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Stop by and say hello to me and the Belles. Dressing en femme is optional, so you don't have an excuse not to come. We'll be there from noon to 4:00pm. A 90 minute entertainment program will start about 2:30pm.

If you aren't aware of it yet, Kathy is stepping down from many of the duties that she has performed for the last seven years. I will sorely miss her caring and dedication. Her leaving decreases the number of people running this organization. This will affect you. I'm already overburdened and no one returned any ballots last month or offered to help in any way. In addition, I will not be attending the July and August meetings. If some people do not step forward soon, the meetings and picnic may not happen. Perhaps we should suspend the summer meetings? Please come to the meeting on the 10th and let's discuss it and take a vote on it. See you then.



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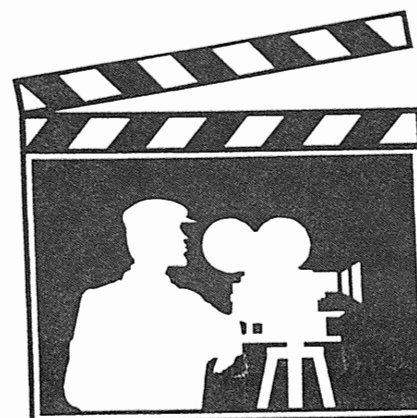
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Tina Tries Out for the Movies

By: Tina Marie



I had been thinking about this day for weeks. There was a movie to be filmed in Buffalo titled "Manna from Heaven" and they were looking for people to be extras in it. They were going to film a dance contest and wanted to fill Shea's theater to resemble a full audience. This would take nearly 3,000

people and they wanted everyone to dress elegantly. I thought what a great chance for me to try something new and stretch my boundaries.

I was expecting a large turn out from our Buffalo Belles, but only Camille, Janice, and I showed up. I arrived at Shea's at 5:00 PM and waited for Camille and Janice at the bottom of the theater's big staircase. It was much like the grand staircase in the movie "Titanic." I had never been to Shea's before and it is a beautiful playhouse! So there I was in my long silver dress in a public building with hundreds of people. I was a bit nervous but not as much as I once had been. There was no line to enter so I did not see a lot of people until we went inside. We got some looks and a few nice comments, nothing bad at all. The looks will always be there.

We took our seats towards the back since they were already filming. We sat among a group of 50 others. Another group of 200 was in the front rows. When the filming paused they moved us up front and took some more shots to try to get the image of a full audience. This failed since there were just not enough people to make it work. Then it was decided to bring us up on stage to serve as background for the dance scene. Now we were up on stage with all the stars!

There were about 8 big stars. We were just feet away from Shirley Jones (who won an Academy Award for her role in "Elmer Gantry"), Cloris Leachman (who won an Academy Award for her role in "The Last Picture Show"), Louise Fletcher (who won an Academy Award for her role as "Nurse Ratched" in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"), Wendy Mallick (the tall brunette girl on NBC's "Just Shoot Me"), and Frank Gorshin (who played the "Riddler" in the original Batman).

I really wanted to get a picture of some of the stars but the opportunity never arose. A gentleman was looking for a partner to dance with and Janice obliged him. I was surprised that she had the courage to do that. After a few minutes of dancing they managed to work their way right to the middle of the group.

You GO Girl! And I thought we were just going to be background.

Then a girl was looking for a partner to dance with and asked Camille or me to be her partner. Camille passed and I thought about it for a few seconds and said, "OK." I figured I'm there, what the heck! I didn't know how to waltz, so she showed me the basic steps and away we went! Dancing on stage with all the stars right next to us! I thought that I would just be in a seat way in the back. I never dreamed that I was going to be dancing on stage!

After that they sent us back to our seats for more shots. They moved the three of us to seats right in the very front and side of the auditorium. In this scene, Cloris Leachman had to run across the front of the seats right past us! We should show up close in this shot! I made sure my legs were in full view!

They moved us around again and I figured that that was about it for me, so I took a seat towards the back for the rest of the shooting. They had the stars mixed in with us for more shots. Wendy Mallick was in an aisle seat for a close up and there was an empty seat right behind her. A woman who was setting up the shot was looking for someone to fill that seat and to my surprise she pointed at me! So now I was sitting right behind Wendy for a close up shot! After a few minutes of checking out the shot the director said that it wouldn't work. My dress was too sparkly and was upstaging Wendy! So they moved me two rows back but still right behind her. I still should be in this shot.

What a great experience! All night, there we were mingling with hundreds of people. It made me feel so good that no one had any reservations about having us in the shots!

Later we went to Friday's for something to eat. We had a few looks from patrons, but 'Oh, Well!' When we left Friday's to go to Camille's car, we walked down the sidewalk and we must have had at least four cars either honk or holler comments at us. They were all good ones as I'm sure they all thought we were real girls out for an evening. We were not in an area that CD's usually frequent so we were not read and I felt the comments were genuine. It was kind of neat and it made me smile and feel good!

I'm not sure how far it was from Studio Arena where I parked. I went there first by mistake but it must have been a whole city block. That was a long way for me to walk in five-inch heels and it felt great! I never in a million years thought I would be walking down Main Street in Buffalo, "dressed" and in heels and a corset! What a night!

We proceeded on to Secret's for a few more hours and then moved to the Underground until 3:30 AM. A very long day! I had been up since 5:30 AM and dressed from 3:30 PM until 4:30 AM the next day.

One last thing I must tell you. I had another experience on the way home. I was pulled over by 'Mister Cop' and checked for

(Continued on page 4)



NANCY'S PERSPECTIVE

Hi ladies,

Thank goodness the snow has stopped falling. I was thinking of hooking up a lawn mower to my snow blower. Saves time when the weather is ever changing.

Have you been following the developments in Vermont regarding giving equal rights to people most consider outside the mainstream of society? A law was passed that provides gays and lesbians the opportunity to form a legal union. Go to the county clerk, pay a fee, fill out the paperwork, and it's a done deal. These people will then have the same rights as married heterosexual couples. The words married, or marriage, is left off the forms, which will help calm the religious right that has been very vocal in its opposition for years.

I think this is a real triumph, not only for gays and lesbians, but for the transgendered community as well. If a state government can recognize a person's sexual orientation and realize that people can fall in love regardless of that orientation, then I see those of us dealing with gender expression on the doorstep of being accepted a lot more. Be sure to leave your forwarding address in Vermont so we can pass along the newsletter when you have settled.

The Rochester CD Network has been having some fun meetings of late. Hopefully you will consider going to Rochester soon. Hey, it gives you a chance to get out twice a month, and since we are all in the same boat, I say go for it!

Missed going to the *Be All* in Cincinnati this year, but I will be going to the *Fantasia Fair* in October. Those of you who saw my video debut know that it's a great place to have some TG/CD fun for a few days. Start thinking about it now because when the girls start making their reservations, they will go fast.

Careful when ordering from the catalogs. Don't forget that the state dropped the 4% sales tax on clothes and shoes. I'm not sure all the catalog sales folks are aware of this, and there is no need to spend more than is required. You can bet you won't see any refund if you overpay on the sales tax.

Reach out to a sister whenever you can. I'll leave you with that thought for now. Until next month - enjoy the better weather (if it stays around!).

Your sister,
Nancy

(Continued from page 3)

Tina Tries Out for the Movies

DWI! I passed his test OK but it was still scary! I was tired and I did drift over the lane marker and of course he was behind me at the time. A few seconds later the lights came on and I said to myself, "Oh Shit"!! He asked me if I had been drinking and I told him I had had a glass of wine and a screwdriver. (I actually had had three screwdrivers.) He asked me for my license and I gave it to him along with my new Tina ID. He went to his car and then came back and asked me to do the ABC's. I did this fine, but slowed down when I got to L, M, N, O, P - because that is where people usually screw up. He then asked me to step out of the car and come to the back and do the 'follow the pen thing' with my eyes.

So there I was in my five-inch heels and long silver dress on the side of the thruway all decked out with 'Mister Cop'! I must have satisfied him because he did let me go; but I was scared! I'm very glad I had switched to Coke at the Underground. I'm glad it worked out all right because that would have ruined a great evening!

So... that was my Saturday night. One for the memory book! I wish more girls could have joined us for the evening. Maybe next time?

**NOW AVAILABLE IN THE
BELLES VIDEO
LIBRARY:**

Academy Award winner
"BOYS DON'T CRY"

KATHY'S NOTES

(Continued from page 1)

I know she was already feeling over burdened, so don't be to surprised if she goes too. Perhaps then, someone or two will finally feel compelled to take some action and get off their duffs and do something. I hope so.

My final action will be to stop by the church and pay our dues for the next six months, through December. Hopefully, we'll have the second Saturday reserved for your use of the facilities.

Take care,
Kathy

PS On a personal note, my bad attitude is probably caused by the failure of my new career. The new job I started didn't work out as expected and my plans for transitioning have been dealt a severe blow, which has sent me into deep throes of depression.

TRANS COMMUNITY NEWS

CROSS-DRESSING TEEN ACCUSES SCHOOL OF BIAS

May 3, 2000, *The Oregonian*, By Wendy Y. Lawton

GRESHAM -- After being suspended for wearing women's clothes and a bra stuffed with socks, a Sam Barlow High School student is steering clear of campus and plans to be tutored for the rest of the school year.

Brian Peters, a quiet junior with glasses, describes himself as a "gay boy cross-dresser." The 17-year-old occasionally wears pink lipstick and carries a flowered purse. For about a week, Brian has gone by the name of Violet.

But it was slipping into a pink striped shirt, a black lace blouse, a long skirt, low-heeled pumps and a filled-out bra that ran him afoul of school officials April 21. Peters walked into his third-period American literature class. According to a memo written by the teacher, his attire had "crossed the line" and was a "focal point for distraction and curiosity."

The teacher sent Peters to the principal's office. He was asked to change his clothes. He refused. He was suspended for insubordination.

Peters thinks the suspension, which lasted until last Wednesday, amounts to discrimination and violates his free-expression rights. Peters has not returned to Barlow since he was kicked out. In fact, he doesn't want to return to the 1,800-student school on Gresham's east side.

"The school says they want to be supportive of queer students, but they're not," Peters said. "The message they're sending to students is that I am not normal. That I am disruptive. That I am wrong. Whether they think so or not, that's what they're saying."

Linda Jessell, director of secondary education for the Gresham-Barlow School District, said the high school staff was simply enforcing the dress code, which bans "disruptive" or "distracting" clothing.

Citing student privacy over discipline matters, Jessell would not say exactly how Peters' appearance caused a classroom ruckus. But cross-dressing, she said, is not allowed since a March revision was made to the Barlow dress code.

"We can restrict student expression and dress when it disrupts the learning environment for other kids," Jessell said. "Our goal is to preserve that work environment. Learning is our mission."

This is not the first time Peters has tangled with the Barlow staff.

Throughout the school year, Peters' attire -- from a knee-length velvet dress to a "Sorry Girls, I'm Gay" T-shirt -- has gotten him into trouble. For a while, his clothing was monitored daily. And most students haven't been kind.

**BUFFALO PRIDE PARADE &
CELEBRATION RALLY
SATURDAY, JUNE 17
1:00pm to 4:00pm
BIDWELL PARKWAY AT
ELMWOOD AVE (1/2 MILE SOUTH
OF BUFFALO STATE CAMPUS)**

Peters said he has been harassed every day. Most kids call him names. Some boys, he said, hug each other to mock him. Once when he was spotted in the boys' bathroom, someone shouted out, "Wrong room!"

Some teen-agers have been sent home or verbally reprimanded for their taunts to Peters. Barlow also has a new respect policy, which includes punishment for harassment of gay students. And Jessell said the district would do all it could to provide Peters with the kind of education he got at Barlow -- whether it's at-home tutoring, Internet courses or after-school sessions with teachers at the school.

"We're very serious about that," she said. "All along, our goal is to replicate the academic experience he had. We're trying to save him as many credits as we can."

So who is right in this tussle over skirts at school? Is Peters' right to free expression being crushed? Or is the school within its legal bounds?

The law is fuzzy on the topic, according to David Hudson, an attorney with the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, who is writing a book on students' First Amendment rights.

Hudson said a 1969 U.S. Supreme Court ruling offered the best guidance. Known in legal circles as the Tinker case, justices weighed in on whether Iowa students could wear black arm bands to protest the Vietnam War.

In their opinion, the court stated that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gates." But the court also gave public schools the power to restrict expression that causes a "substantial disruption."

Since that landmark decision, Hudson said, state and federal courts haven't sent a clear message about student dress. An Indianapolis boy was allowed to wear a dress to prom under a 1999 federal court ruling.

"It's a mixed bag out there," said Jann Carson, associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon. "This big legal door is wide open."



FASHION, STYLE ... AND YOU



FROM THE EAST, A HAIR REMOVAL ALTERNATIVE

By TAMARA IKENBERG, *The Baltimore Sun*

Women go to great lengths to combat facial hair. They pluck, wax, and tweeze. Now they can even thread.

This trendy Eastern alternative -- which uses a looped thread to yank out hairs at the root -- is an alternative to other near-medieval methods.

"I'm a convert," says Linda West, 41, who has come to Usha Beauty Salon in Parkville, Md., to get her eyebrows threaded. "I'll never have them waxed again."

It might just be a matter of time until threading becomes even hotter than waxing.

"Waxing is about cutting out your pattern," says Jane Larkworthy, beauty director for Jane, a fashion and entertainment magazine. "Threading is each hair by each hair. It's more artistic."

The threader, holding one end of the thread taut in her mouth, plays the part of cosmetic cowboy, lassoing out each hair with the looped ends of the thread.

Narine Nikogosian, of the Ole Henriksen Face and Beauty salon in Los Angeles, says threading has its perks. It doesn't pull the skin and is good for the circulation of the face, she says.

Threading is also chemical-free, is more precise, and can remove hairs too short to be waxed away.

The growing praise about threading coincides with the current obsession with eyebrows. Big-screen brows -- sexy, arched, defined -- are all the rage.

The exact origins of threading are difficult to trace. Some people, including Nikogosian, say it began in the Middle East. Others, among them Gupta, suggest it was brought to India by the Chinese more than 2,000 years ago. Most agree that it's been practiced here for at least 10 years.

Any practice that involves ripping hair off your body is bound to smart a little.

"Waxing is a quick pain," says Terrelle Gray, a Usha devotee who lives in Northwest Baltimore. Threading is a staccato pain more akin to tweezing, as the hairs are removed almost individually.

Some beauty consumers might be concerned about hygiene,

Hose Bares The Toes

A hosiery company in Brazil has a leg up on the rest of the world with a new offering: toeless pantyhose.

Not sandal-foot, mind you. Toeless.

They are designed for women who enjoy wearing open-toe shoes and sandals but don't like to walk around with their legs bare.

The pantyhose, called TriFil Toeless Hosiery, are manufactured in Brazil by Scalina. Dupont -- which makes Lycra fibers found in these and other brands of pantyhose -- recently made them available to women in the United States. Initially the toeless hose are available only on the Internet at www.lycrashop.com, but they may eventually be found in stores.

Priced at \$6 a pair, the pantyhose stop above the ball of the foot, exposing the toes. They are held in place by a narrow, elastic cuff and a loop that hooks over the big toe. Four shades are available -- natural, soft natural, tobacco and coffees brown.

The idea is to pick the shade closest to your natural skin tone and to wear open-toe shoes with enough coverage to hide the elastic cuff.

as one end of the thread is held in the aesthetician's mouth.

"If (the thread) is long enough and the fiber is not a cotton, it should be OK as long as that area is kept away from the skin," says Dr. Lisa Donofrio, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Yale University School of Medicine. And reusing a thread is a no-no, she adds.

Gupta says she uses a new thread for every customer, and her threads are 100-percent polyester.

But what about more, um, sensitive places? Gupta says threading is done only on the legs, arm, and (shudder) the bikini line, to capture pesky hairs that refuse to be removed by waxing or other methods.

As threading gets bigger in cities such as Los Angeles, it's only a matter of time before starlets start singing its praises.

Gupta thinks Hollywood is definitely ready for threading. But she'd like to start at the White House with Hillary Rodham Clinton, whom Gupta considers an eyebrow nightmare.

"Please," she says, "just let me go and do her eyebrows."

Single Crossdresser Issues

by Melanie Yarborough

Crossdressers not yet in a committed relationship or married have a special set of challenges. While many desperately want to meet a woman, they despair of meeting one who'll be sympathetic and understanding of their situation. Given this, these are some of the more important issues single crossdressers should consider:



1. WHEN do you tell a woman you're a crossdresser?

All reasonable people agree "Before you get serious, definitely before marriage." Any crossdresser who would withhold this information is setting the stage for disaster. Now, many crossdressers fear rejection and losing their woman if they do this. To this I respond: if you tell her the right way (more on this later) and back it up with actions, the edge can be blunted.

Also, it's better to know right away if she can't accept it. Think about which is worse: losing a woman now and dealing with a few months of heartbreak and finding someone else, or being trapped in a marriage where you have to be closeted all the time.

Also, not telling her creates serious long-term damage when she feels betrayed by your not having told her. Once you get intimate, a boundary has been crossed, and anything after that will be seen as betrayal. Women fear betrayal perhaps more than men do. And this can poison a relationship for years afterwards: she'll definitely think, "What else has he been withholding?"

Some take the opposite tack of "Tell her immediately". The logic is, "If she can handle it, fine. If not, it was never meant to be." But when a woman is just suing to know you, crossdressing will become one negative thing to examine against an otherwise blank canvas. But if she knows other things about you, your personality, your history, your likes and dislikes, she can get a more balanced picture. She can weigh this against the positive things she already knows about you.

Now, there are some women who simply will not accept this. If you meet firm and unyielding resistance, you may have to consider cutting your losses and ending the relationship. It's better to lose \$100 today than \$1000 tomorrow. And you know the cliché: "There's many fish in the sea?" It's true.

2 HOW do you tell a woman you're a crossdresser?

Dropping hints to test the water is useful. You can make references to current movies, or say you knew someone who was transsexual. You'd be surprised at how this can be creatively juxtaposed into a conversation. Her reaction gives you an idea of where she stands. Be advised that women with

strongly religious backgrounds are often the least tolerant of diversity. Also, a woman with some college education may also mean a more open mind

Where you tell her is just as important as how. Obviously, choose a private indoor place, not a busy public one. Or, a tranquil open air park or beach without too many people is nice.

When you break the news, be positive. Don't preface it with negative vocabulary of shame like, "We've got a problem to talk about." She'll immediately tense up and brace for the worst. It's better to be more casual, indicating that you've got something meaningful to talk about. Negative words send out signals of shame. Positive words mean unique and special. Also, use of disarming body language helps: maintaining eye contact, holding your hand to your chest, using sincere tone of voice, etc.

Don't give her too much information at first! This is a lot to handle in one sitting. If you start throwing out biological and sociological theories, or your transgender life story, it's going to confuse her. Keep your words simple and to the point, and don't use our community's slang and acronyms. Reiterate that you respect her enough to feel you have to be honest with her, and that you're not gay and not transsexual.

3. Be prepared to make compromises.

Single crossdressers have, up to a point, the freedom to indulge. But once in a relationship, this changes. There are suddenly limitations on the frequency and extent one can self-gratify. But don't consider it as having freedom taken away. Consider it as now thinking in terms of two people, not just one. Two is a more complicated number than one, but not a worse one.

Also, what might seem insignificant to you, may be significant to her. Take body shaving, for example. Most crossdressers cannot understand how anyone would have a problem with it. But to many women this can indeed be a serious issue. They like hair, they want a man. What might seem right and fair and logical to men may seem wrong and unfair and illogical to women.

Relationships always call for compromise on issues: finances, religion, tastes in food, attitude towards raising children, likes and dislikes in entertainment, feelings towards relatives, division of chores, etc. Maybe sexual issues are a little stronger, but they're still just another issue up for negotiation. The secret is: R-E-C-I-P-R-O-C-I-T-Y.

4. Issues of Security.

Having a woman over to your place presents challenges. If you live by yourself, you're used to having a wardrobe and femme things around. But you can be betrayed by a single makeup sponge, a forgotten pair of panties, or a stray copy of a newsletter. Start thinking NOW of places to hide things if need be. These can be in zippered roll bags covered up by men's clothes, the trunk of your car, or even a friend's place if just for a day or two.

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Keep pictures of yourself en femme under lock and key. Time and time again I've heard of dozens of crossdressers who've been outed when they left compromising photos lying around the house. Make the last-minute "Transgender Sweep"- a quick glance over the room for any stray femme items.

Also, be prepared for excuses for being absent when you go to support group meetings or events. You may even have to skip a meeting sometimes. Don't give the impression: "I have to be at this place, but I can't tell you where." When you put an air of mystery around something, it encourages her to imagine the worst.

5. Communication Problems.

If you start off with the assumption, "I can't change; this is something you need to accept," there's a problem. The point of a relationship is to grow together, not to take a stand, and have the other person yield to it. True, you may not be able to stop crossdressing. But you do have control of when and for what interval you do it, and to what degree she has to see it. From having talked with several genetic women, I've learned that many women fear that crossdressing may be a THRESHOLD. Just as marijuana was feared to be a threshold to heroin and cocaine, crossdressing may be feared to be a threshold to becoming gay or transsexual. You need to reassure her on both counts that you aren't. And you can't do this with just words, the suspicion may linger on. You have to do it with deeds: by being willing to be the masculine man she wants and needs.

Lies are bad for relationships. If you tell one lie, you have to tell ten more to cover it up. You'll also have to keep lies straight as contradictions get noticed. For example, if you say it's your bowling night, be prepared for questions on where the alley is, how your game went, who you were with, etc. That's a lot of things to have to keep track of, isn't it?

Crossdressers pride themselves on how they understand women better by having walked in their shoes. Now's the time to put it to the test by really understanding a woman's point of view in the relationship and what she wants.

6. Start developing new interests.

One of the first things a person wants to know is "What are your interests?" Obviously, you can't hit her with the truth yet! Evasive answers arouse suspicion: are you involved in something illegal? Before you start looking to meet someone, you should have one or two interests to be able to talk about. Yes, it may mean taking time away from dressing around the house, shopping, or support group meetings. But it will make you a more well-rounded person, and better able to have a relationship.

7. Use your advantages.

Single crossdressers have several advantages over married ones. No, it's not the obvious freedom to dress. It's that those single and in the community have already gone through the difficult process of coming out to themselves BEFORE getting married. By the time they meet someone, a lot of the traumatic initial self-confrontation is past. By contrast, having to do this while married or in a relationship is a lot harder.

Single crossdressers also have the benefit of learning from married ones. By asking the right questions, listening and learning, a single crossdresser can avoid miscalculations and errors many married crossdressers unknowingly make. And if a married crossdresser can share this knowledge with a single sister, they'll have done what our groups are supposed to do: provide peer support.

(This article originally appeared in the Neutral Corner newsletter and was reprinted in the Femme Mirror by permission of the author.)



A HELPFUL BUFFALO BELLE ASSISTING AN 'EXTRA QUEEN SIZE' MEMBER WITH A STOCKING ADJUSTMENT.

PASSING THOUGHTS

By Yvonne M. Sullivan

Two years ago I did a seemingly small thing. I made an appointment with a hair stylist who also sold wigs to be fitted with a new wig. Up until that point, I had been buying wigs through various mail order sources, and over time I had gone from long and curly to short and curly to long and straight. I always stuck with colors that were close to my natural hair color, but I never felt 100% comfortable out in public, in large part because I always felt it was obvious I was wearing a wig. My wig looked "wiggy".

The wig that Fran fitted me with was straight and rather short, and it was a relatively nondescript brown color. I would never have chosen it myself from a catalog. Several days later I wore it to a Lambda Chi Lambda support group meeting. One of the other ladies asked if it was my own hair.

The wig thing seemed to be important to me, because since then, my confidence level out in public has skyrocketed. The number and kinds of places I will go as Yvonne has grown and I am always on the lookout for new places. I have learned to relax and enjoy myself when I am out *en femme*. As a result, I think people who come in contact with me are also more relaxed around me, because they accept the fact that I appear to know what I am doing. They're OK with me because I seem to be OK with me.

Most crossdressers don't go out in public because they feel they don't "pass". Yet that is not as simple a statement as it sounds, because it begs the question "what does it mean to pass?" Does it mean to have people think you are a woman? Does it mean to have people accept you as a woman, which is not quite the same thing. Does it mean to have people accept you as a crossdresser?

Whether or not you "pass" will depend on how you define "passing". If I go out in public as Yvonne I consider it a good time if I can do the things I want to do and the people I interact with treat me no differently than they would anyone else doing the same thing. Since I can't read their minds, I don't know if they think I am a woman or not. I can only observe how they treat me.

If they treat me in accordance with the circumstances around us, I feel I have "passed". Using this definition of "passing", and for me, it is the only definition that makes sense, then I would have to say that I pass quite a bit.

Other transgendered people often tell me that I can pass, but I'm never sure why they think that. Maybe it's just a way of paying me a compliment, or maybe they are trying to help me build confidence. Do I look like a woman? I don't know. It depends on a lot of things. There are lots of little visual clues that I give off that may result in people guessing that I am male, if they look long and hard enough. After all, I have 40-odd years of practice being male, but only a few years experience being female.

There is one factor in my favor: I am not a large person. I am not quite five and half feet tall, and I weigh 135 pounds. That

is the average size of a woman in our culture. With carefully applied makeup and the right clothes, I can "erase" a lot of my male-ness.

How would I feel if I were the size of the average male? Or taller? Would I be as comfortable? My gut feeling is no. Yet, at the same time, I remember how much more nervous I was in public two or three years ago, and I was the same size then that I am now. What changed?

I think I got into the habit of noticing how unnoticed I am. I don't get laughed at, I don't get harassed and I am not treated rudely. Well, that's something to be thankful for.

I also broadened my horizons little by little. For example, I use to never go out before nightfall, and in the summer time, when the days were long, I wouldn't leave the house at all. But about two years ago, Lori began renting an art studio in an office building near our house. I was able to use the studio as a place to do my makeup and change, and I found I could come and go much more easily that way. The time I was spending outside got longer, I was doing more things and going more places. And I was going out on a very regular basis. Often, it would be only once a week, but it was every week, and I think that by committing myself to going out, I was forced to deal with my nervousness and fear.

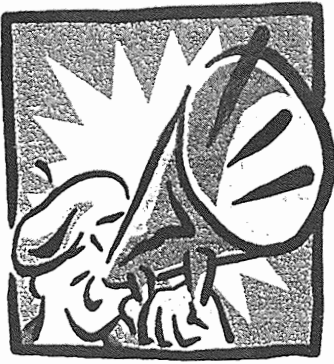
This past Autumn I decided to take on the challenge of shopping *en femme*. I was, in part, inspired by a friend who would tell me of her experiences and I have to admit I was a little envious. Shopping is hard because you have to actually interact with people. I've made it a little easier by getting some credit cards with Yvonne's name on them. Some of these were even store-specific cards. Now the hardest part about shopping is not buying everything I try on.

I actually enjoy shopping for women's clothes. I had become pretty good at judging how well a size or style might work on me, and over time I had cut way down on the number of times I had to return something. Still, there were certain things I couldn't buy because I had no idea. Pants, for example. And I am actually much more comfortable buying cosmetics as Yvonne than as a man.

When I am out, I never get asked questions, and sometimes I wish I would. Sometimes, I wish someone would be frank with me and ask me about what I am doing. It would be a very interesting conversation. But they don't, maybe because they are being polite and respecting my privacy. Which again, is not an altogether bad thing.

At any rate, that's what being out in public has been like for me for the past year or so, and I have been enjoying it. You may too, if you try it, or you may not. Or you may opt to not try. It's a decision only you can make for yourself. But from time to time, I may write here about a typical outing as Yvonne, just to give visitors to this site a sense of what it feels like and what I experience. Maybe it will help someone make up their mind. One way or the other.

Yvonne Sullivan lives in the Albany, NY area. Her writings are featured in *The Journey* from time to time.



COMING EVENTS



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

JUNE 7-11	BE ALL 2000 – Cincinnati, Ohio
JUNE 10	BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm
JUNE 17	BUFFALO PRIDE PARADE & CELEBRATION Parade: 1:00pm (route up Elmwood Ave to Bidwell Pkwy) Celebration: 3:00pm at Elmwood Ave. & Bidwell Parkway Free entertainment, (stop by at the Belles Information table & say Hi to Camille. Dressing en femme is optional)
JUNE 25	TORONTO PRIDE & CELEBRATION The Pride Parade is on Sunday, at 3:00 p.m. It starts at Bloor & Church Streets, moves west on Bloor, south on Yonge & east on Gould to Church Street.
JULY 1	ROCHESTER CD NETWORK MEETING 6:30pm
JULY 8	BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm
AUGUST 12	BUFFALO BELLES ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC 6:00pm
SEPT. 26-OCT. 1	SOUTHERN COMFORT Atlanta, Georgia
OCTOBER 5 – 8	4th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CROSSDRESSING, SEX & GENDER, Philadelphia, PA (for info call 610 -975-9119)
OCTOBER 18 – 25	FANTASIA FAIR Provincetown, Massachusetts
NOVEMBER 9 – 12	WESTERN BELLES ROUNDUP 2000 Milford (The Poconos), Pennsylvania
NOVEMBER 16 -19	LAKE ERIE GALA 2000 - Erie, Pennsylvania

WON'T YOU HELP?

**POSITIONS AVAILABLE
IMMEDIATELY:**

- ♦ **MEETING SETUP HELPERS**
- ♦ **SUMMER PICNIC HELPERS**

CONTACT CAMILLE OR CALL HELPLINE (879-0973) AND LEAVE MESSAGE.