

ETVC

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME FIFTEEN, NUMBER 4,

JANUARY – FEBRUARY, 1997

Cotillion '97...

By Leslie Bailey

A ROMAN HOLIDAY

...promises to be a gala event that you won't want to miss. Against the back drop of timeless Rome, our lovely contestants will vie for the honor of being crowned Miss ETVC and the privilege of representing all of you during the coming year.

Reserve Saturday, January 25th, 1997 and join us at the California Club on Clay Street between Polk and Van Ness. Doors will open at 6:30 PM and the show will start at 8:00 PM sharp. A light dinner of pasta and chicken will be served up to 8:00 PM only. The bar will be open throughout the evening.

Is your best gown or suit back from the cleaners? Or are you shopping for that new outfit that will make you look and feel gorgeous? Well this is the night of nights to outdo yourself and look your fabulous best. Our show this year is under the direction of Trauma Flintstone of "Jungle Red" fame, and our own Lulu Blau. Expect to be entertained by a fast paced and stylish show.

Individual Tickets and Table Reservations

You may still be able to reserve a table for groups

numbering up to eight people. Because the California Club is a smaller venue than last year's show it is possible they have all been taken by this time. Individual tickets purchased in advance are \$23 each, or \$28 each if purchased at the door. A limited number of Premium Tables located front and center in the hall were available at \$224 for an eight-seat table, but again may be sold out. Call Ginny at (415) 664-1499 for table and individual seating reservations ... first come, first served.

Tickets will also be on sale at the following locations:

- Marlena's, 488 Hayes Street, SF
- Foxy Lady, 2644 Mission Street, SF
- Kimo's, 1750 Polk St. (at Pine), SF
- JR's, 2520 Camino Diablo, Walnut Creek
- Continental Wigs, 1121 Fourth St., San Rafael
- Crossers Boutique, 1490 Camden Ave., San Jose
- All ETVC, RGA, DVG and TGIF events.

Tickets may also be purchased through the mail by sending your check to ETVC at P.O. Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486. Please be sure to include your return mail address with your order. Your check must be received no later than January 6, 1997 to reserve a table. All ticket reservations received after that date will be for individual seating only.

For additional information or if you would like to help at the Cotillion, please call Leslie Bailey at (510) 527-5398.

"IT IS NOT BECAUSE THINGS ARE DIFFICULT THAT WE DO NOT DARE; IT IS BECAUSE WE DO NOT DARE THAT THEY ARE DIFFICULT." SENECA

ETVC Returns to Haunt the Dunfey

by Erin Souza

What do you do when you have a knockout costume ready five nights before Halloween? You do not let it sit in the closet; not when your local transgendered support organization has rented out a hotel meeting room and booked a live band for a party.

Sensing an opportunity to test my new velvet wings before the 31st, I took flight with Jane Kamper Bentley and flight attendant Ginny Knuth to the Dunfey, on Saturday October 26th. We had no sooner arrived when a chorus of cheers erupted in the lobby, no doubt to welcome us. As it turned out, the cheers were for the New York Yankees who had just won their fourth and decisive game of the World Series over the devil's spawn Atlanta Braves. The evening was off to a good start. Making our way past the brawling wedding celebrants (once that bouquet is tossed, it's every woman for herself) we found the room that Laura Van Nuys, Everett Roque, Joanne Handa and company had converted into the orange and black splendor of the ETVC Halloween Ball.



Exotic & Erotic - l to r: Tammy Kingsley, Roxanna Rochette, Heather Lambourn, and Tammy's S.O. (Photo By Telzey Adams)

At first I thought that I had mistakenly walked into a convention of Feline Fanatics International, because everywhere I turned I encountered someone dressed as a cat. There were domestic cats, leopards, even a tiger cub named Missy who won the door prize. I was concerned that one of the

Continued on Page 13

THE CHANCE

THE CHANNEL

ETVC Inc., a non-profit corporation, is a non-sexual membership based organization serving the educational, social, and recreational needs of gender-challenged people, their spouses, significant others, family members, friends, and professionals in the helping services. For details about ETVC programs, membership, article submission guidelines and classified ads, please write to: ETVC Secretary, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486. Minutes of all ETVC committee meetings are available to members on request.

OFFICERS

President Erin Souza
Vice-President Leslie Bailey
Secretary Veronica Smith
Treasurer Jano Bogg
Education Nancy Cupps, Juana Smith
Outreach Telzey Adams, Sandra Brewer
Social Darcy Leopard, Evette RoqueLaurie

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Membership (as of 11/30/96)	321
Total 1995 Membership	430
New Memberships this year	41

TREASURER'S REPORT

MONTH	INCOME	EXPENSES	DIFFERENCES
September	\$1,965.00	(\$1,296.37)	\$ 668.63
October	\$4,223.48	(\$2,506.08)	\$1,717.40

The "Home For ETVC" Fund is now \$1,338.50
ETVC is a non-profit corporation.

Donations to ETVC are TAX DEDUCTIBLE
on both federal and California income tax returns.
Talk to your tax advisor for details

Channel, the ETVC Newsletter, is published the last week of February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions should arrive at ETVC by the 20th day of the previous month. Contents reflect the opinions of the contributors and the editor, and are not necessarily those of ETVC. Other organizations may reprint or reproduce uncopyrighted portions of the newsletter for their members, provided ETVC is acknowledged. Copyrighted materials may be reproduced only with written permission of ETVC.

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor Elizabeth Walters
Associate Editors S. Brewer, D. Leopard,
Ginny K., E. Souza
J. & V. Smith
Advertising Please Volunteer
Photographer Jamie Faye Fenton
Layout & Design Kevin Anderson
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AD RATES

	Per issue	Per year
Business Card	\$25	\$125
4" X 5"	\$60	\$300

Personal ads from ETVC members: \$3 for up to 40 words. We will *not* accept ads with a sexual objective. Ad deadlines are the 20th of May, July, September, November, January and March. Send ad copy and check or money order to: ETVC, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486

HOTLINE &

VOICE MAIL 415-564-3246

B.B.S. 415-564-4903

Letter from Elizabeth

By Elizabeth Walters

As these winter nights grow longer and offer more hours for contemplation, I seem to find my mind wandering down some pretty darn strange corridors. As an example, let me offer you two recent media items that caught my attention within the space of a few days.

The first was a brief radio report on KCBS discussing some European research on fish populations. According to the report, fish in European waterways have been undergoing sex changes as a result of pollution! It seems some of the chemical contaminants that have found their way into European fisheries mimic the effect of estrogen, thus giving the scaly little devils a hormone therapy that is literally industrial strength!

Only a couple of days later, I spotted an item in Leah Garchik's Chronicle "Personals" column passing along the results of a cosmetic company survey that showed San Francisco residents purchase more eyeliner and lipstick per capita than those in any other community in the United States. The item said somebody in the company suggested this odd phenomenon might be due to "The Castro Factor."

Perhaps I have had too much time on my hands, but I have been giving these two items quite a bit of thought. Has anybody checked to see how much European bottled water residents of San Francisco drink, and how per capita consumption here compares with other communities in the U.S.? Has anybody recently checked San Francisco drinking water for unusual types of chemical pollution?

I know some of my girlfriends drink like fish, but now I am beginning to wonder if the fish they mimic come from Europe!

Just wondering. Best wishes for a Happy New Year — and if you drink while driving on New Year's Eve, make sure it's European water!

Letters to the Editor...

Dear Editor:

I wasn't sure how to do this, but I wanted to thank every one who was involved in any way with putting on the Halloween Party on October 26th. I had such a good time there - good food, good band, safe, free parking — The Dunfey was a good place to have it.

It happens that this is the first ETVC event I've been to and the first time I've been out in a public place, so it was twice the fun for me. Everyone there

was having such a good time and friendly — I felt like I fit right in. I felt sort of conservatively dressed compared to some, but just being able to be in a nice, short dress and heels in a very public place was enough for me.

My companion really enjoyed herself, too. She marveled at how great every one's legs looked, and wondered where all those nice, large dresses came from. Later, we had a talk about cross dressing. All in all, I can't wait to do it again. Thanks again, everybody.

Yours,
Michelle Nelson

Hot Off The Press!

DVG has just announced a change of location for their monthly rap group which has been meeting at the Pacific Center in Walnut Creek. Effective in January, 1997 the rap group will be meeting twice a month on the

first and third Thursday of each month at the following location:

Rainbow Community Center
2637 Pleasant Hill Road (at Taylor Blvd.)
Pleasant Hill, California

Call the DVG hotline at (510) 937-8432 for more information.



Da' Prez' Box
ETVC President Erin Souza

Can We Have Fun Again?

Maybe I've become jaded from being behind the scenes, in the planning stages before events and the review sessions after, that the events themselves no longer seem as fun as they used to be. Bruised egos, hurt feelings, expressed disappointment that things aren't like the "good old days at the Chez" can all contribute to a sense that ETVC's best days are behind us. No, this is not going to be my version of Bill Clinton's "bridge to the future" campaign. The point I want to make is that even though the issues many of us face are serious, we do not have to take ourselves so seriously at every event.

Our events are not life and death rescue operations in foreign lands. They are an opportunity for people to express themselves, meet friends, share information and have fun. A volunteer operation running on an annual budget of thirty four thousand dollars is not going to have things running as smoothly as Bill Graham Productions or Disneyland. We try to, but as anyone who has ever waited more than an hour for the Indiana Jones ride will tell you, glitches and delays are part of the deal. We still manage to enjoy our vacations; would you have rather been back at work during that hour? We can still enjoy our events; or would we prefer to be back in our respective closets for the evening? No one is dying nor is

anyone's corporation going belly up as the result of an overlooked detail at an event. This is not brain surgery nor the stock market; it's socializing in pretty clothes and makeup. Like so many other parties we attend, we are able to get up the next day and resume our lives. These events are a welcome respite in life; let's not go about them as if they are life itself.

And yes, there was some fun to be had recently. Thirteen participants gathered November 10th at Malibu Castle in Redwood City for the Second Annual ETVC Miniature Golf Tournament. Former ETVC president Jane Kamper Bentley emerged victorious ahead of last year's champ Valerie Genalo. Third and fourth place honors went to Trina Bloom and Nancy Ann Martine respectively. Trina also retained the organizational glory for RGA by thoroughly trouncing yours truly in the presidents' challenge. Winning back her entry fee was consummate good sport Juana Smith whose high score of eighty-three nearly equaled her bowling average. (Pray for my sake that there is never an ETVC boxing tournament.) Special thanks to prize donors Bobbie Bentley, Romantasy and Piedmont Boutique for the gift certificates and to San Francisco Empress XXVI Caresse for donating the top prize of a portable CD player. And thank you to Ginny for sitting in the sun and wind all day as statistician.

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• • • • • Special Events • • • • •

Mid Month Social

Wednesday, January 8th

A low key meeting in a good Mexican restaurant to socialize and share a big meal, an appetizer, a margarita or beverage of your choice with friends. Drop in for a relaxing few hours in your busy day.

The Line Up Restaurant/Bar, 7th & Harrison, SF, 8PM, No party fees.

Education Seminar:

Body Shaping

Wednesday, January 15th

Don't have the body you wish you had? Come find out how you can develop your figure or create the illusion of having one. A personal trainer who has helped TV and TS clients develop their bodies using specific exercises will demonstrate and discuss techniques you can use to enhance your shape. For those of you looking for instant transformations, a panel of speakers will present a variety of practical tips you can use to create the illusion of having breasts, cleavage, and hips. We'll also discuss how to select the right bra size and breast forms for your needs, and supply information on where to buy forms of various types, including how much you should expect to pay. Are you one of the many gals who make the common mistake of wearing breast forms far smaller than your bra was designed to hold? Which forms can give you the natural contour and bounce you desire? Come find out at this fun and fact-filled seminar!

8PM, Upstairs at Kimo's, Polk & Pine Sts. SF \$3

Post Cotillion Polaroid Party

Thursday, January 30th

Don't return that Cotillion dress to Macy's just yet because we're planning a Polaroid Party at Kimo's! Come meet and congratulate your favorite Cotillion contestants and the new Miss ETVC. Get a snapshot of yourself with the new her or one of your friends for only 2 dollars, or three snapshots for 5 dollars. So, get in the picture — we'll also have an open mike and deejay, so bring your favorite tapes to sing to or just listen to — put your name on the tapes and give them to the deejay and you can enjoy your favorite music while you smile for the birdie.

Upstairs at Kimo's, Polk and Pine Sts., SF, 8 PM, Members \$5, Guests \$7

Mid Month Social

Wednesday, February 12th

We are taking the Mid Month Social on the road for a few months, trying new venues with a different hostess in charge each month. If you'd like to hostess one of these socials, please call Erin at (415) 731-7032 so we can get you on the schedule. This month Juana Smith is our hostess and she has chosen to meet at The Cinch, a fun and friendly bar at 1723 Polk St. (at Clay) in SF. Starts 8 PM - no party fees.

Transsexual Seminar:

Hormone Therapy

Sunday, February 16th

In our continuing effort to provide speakers on key topics of interest to the TS community, we'll have a specialist in endocrinology present information about hormone therapy. Learn about hormones, how they work, what you can expect for results, what effects they have, how they are administered, how the effects can be maximized and the dangers minimized, and how you can obtain them safely.

A flyer containing further details about the speaker for this seminar will be available at the December 15th Christmas Potluck Party and other educational seminars.

2PM, Upstairs at Kimo's, Polk & Pine Sts. SF FREE

Education Seminar:

Self-Portraiture

Wednesday, February 19th

Explore the range of photographic techniques available to get the portrait you've always wanted. A San Francisco-based portraiture and freelance photographer will present practical advice on posing, complementary lighting, as well as basic lighting setup. The presentation will also include an explanation of types of film to use, color, and the psychology of portraiture. Sample portrait photos will be available for you to see. Feel free to bring your own cameras. Portable lighting on tripods will be provided. Additionally, Jamie Faye will present an overview of digital photography. A demonstration of how to capture shots on a personal computer using a video camera or a digital camera will be done.

8PM, Upstairs at Kimo's, Polk & Pine Sts. SF \$3

Thursday Night Fever - 70's Party at Kimo's

Thursday, February 27th

Gather your retro-wear from the back of the closet and "boogie down" to Kimo's for ETVC's Dance-a-thon. You can "dance your hip pads off" as our deejay puts that sound system to the test with our "funky" disco party. Can you "Y—Y M C A"? I know you can. It's guaranteed to be the most fun you've had in polyester since Jimmy Carter was in office. Don't like disco music? Okay... bring your dance music tapes — we'll mix 'em up as the evening goes on. C'mon down and help us keep the beat! Upstairs at Kimo's, Polk and Pine Sts., SF, 8 PM, Members \$5, Guests \$7

San Francisco Imperial Court Coronation

Week: See back page for schedules and information

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TV/TS/TG GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

OTHER GROUPS

January

2	DVG	RCC Rap Group	Meets at 7 PM	Pleasant Hill	(510) 937-8432
3	RG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	San Jose	(408) 984-4044
3	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
5	ETVC	Outreach Committee	Meets at Noon	San Francisco	(510) 443-9938
5	ETVC	Newsletter Committee	Meets at 1 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
6	DVG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	Walnut Creek	(510) 937-8432
8	ETVC	Mid-Month Social	Starts at 8 PM	The LineUp, SF	(415) 731-7032
9	ETVC	Significant Others	Meets 7:30-10 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
10	ETVC	Poker Social	Starts at 8 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
10	S.Bay	Gender Discussion Group	Meets 8-10 PM	San Jose	(408) 984-5619
10	ETVC	Lending Library Open	Hours 7-11 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
10	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
11	Imperial	Gala	Starts at 6 PM	Holiday Inn, SF	(415) 664-1499
11	TGIF	Social	Starts at 4 PM	Santa Rosa	(707) 544-1540
11	SGA	Social	Starts at 7:30 PM	Sacramento	(916) 482-7742
12	ETVC	Executive Committee	Meets at 5 PM	San Francisco	(415) 731-7032
12	FTM	Informational Meeting	Meets at 2 PM	San Francisco	(510) 287-2646
13	ETVC	TS Committee	Meets at 7 PM	Kimo's Mtg.Room	(415) 664-1499
13	ETVC	Education Committee	Meets at 8 PM	Kimo's Mtg.Room	(415) 664-1499
15	ETVC	Body Shaping	Starts at 8 PM	Kimo's, Upstairs	(415) 731-7032
16	DVG	RCC Rap Group	Meets at 7 PM	Pleasant Hill	(510) 937-8432
17	RG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	San Jose	(408) 984-4044
17	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
20	DVG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	Walnut Creek	(510) 937-8432
21	ETVC	Social Committee	Meets at 8 PM	The LineUp, SF	(415) 731-7032
22	ETVC	Library Committee	Meets at 1 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
24	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
25	ETVC	Cotillion '97!	Starts at 6:30 PM	California Club, SF	(510) 527-5398
25	SGA	Social	Starts at 7:30 PM	Sacramento	(916) 482-7742
30	ETVC	Polaroid Social	Starts at 8 PM	Kimo's, Upstairs	(415) 731-7032
31	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224

February

3	DVG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	Walnut Creek	(510) 937-8432
6	DVG	RCC Rap Group	Meets at 7 PM	Pleasant Hill	(510) 937-8432
7	RG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	San Jose	(408) 984-4044
7	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
8	SGA	Social	Starts at 7:30 PM	Sacramento	(916) 482-7742
9	ETVC	Executive Committee	Meets at 2 PM	Albany	(415) 731-7032
9	FTM	Informational Meeting	Meets at 2 PM	San Francisco	(510) 287-2646
10	ETVC	TS Committee	Meets at 7 PM	Kimo's Mtg.Room	(415) 664-1499
10	ETVC	Education Committee	Meets at 8 PM	Kimo's Mtg.Room	(415) 664-1499
12	ETVC	Mid-Month Social	Starts at 8 PM	The Cinch, SF	(415) 731-7032
13	ETVC	Significant Others	Meets 7:30-10 PM	Palo Alto	(415) 664-1499
14	ETVC	Poker Social	Starts at 8 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
14	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
14	ETVC	Lending Library Open	Hours 7-11 PM	San Francisco	(415) 664-1499
14	S.Bay	Gender Discussion Group	Meets 8-10 PM	San Jose	(408) 984-5619
16	ETVC	Outreach Committee	Meets at 1 PM	San Francisco	(510) 443-9938
16	ETVC	Hormones Seminar	Starts at 2 PM	Kimo's, Upstairs	(415) 664-1499
17	DVG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	Walnut Creek	(510) 937-8432
18	ETVC	Social Committee	Meets at 8 PM	The LineUp, SF	(415) 731-7032
19	ETVC	Self Portraiture Seminar	Starts at 8 PM	Kimo's, Upstairs	(415) 664-1499
20	DVG	RCC Rap Group	Meets at 7 PM	Pleasant Hill	(510) 937-8432
21	RG	Social	Starts at 8 PM	San Jose	(408) 984-4044
21	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224
22	Imperial	SF Coronation	Starts at 6 PM	Gift Center, SF	(415) 664-1499
22	SGA	Social	Starts at 7:30 PM	Sacramento	(916) 482-7742
27	ETVC	Thursday Night Fever	Starts at 8 PM	Kimo's, Upstairs	(415) 731-7032
28	Pac Ctr	TV/TS Rap	Meets 8-10 PM	Berkeley	(510) 841-6224

Pacific Center for Human Growth, a counseling oriented growth center. sponsors all-inclusive gender support groups on every Friday at 8:00 PM. 2712 Telegraph Avenue. Berkeley. Call: (510) 841-6224.

Rainbow Gender Association (RGA) meets 1st and 3rd Friday of the month 8:00 PM at the New Community of Faith Church. 6350 Rainbow Drive. San Jose. Write: RGA. PO Box 700730. San Jose. CA 95170. Call: (408) 984-4044

Sacramento Gender Association (SGA) Blue Rose Chapter meets 8 PM the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month in Sacramento. Write: PO Box 215456, Sacramento, CA 95821-1456. Call: (916) 482-7SGA for meeting locations.

Diablo Valley Girls (DVG) meets first and third Monday of every month. 8 PM at Just Rewards Nightclub, 2520 Camino Diablo in Walnut Creek. Write: DVG. PO Box 272885. Concord. CA 94527-2885. Call: (510) 937-8432.

FTM, a support group for Female-to-Male crossdressers & transsexuals, holds both open. Informational Meetings, and closed. Support Meetings. Write: FTM.5337 College Avenue #142. Oakland, CA 94618. Call Voice Mail: (510) 287-2646.

TGIF (TransGenderism Is Fun), a social group for transgenders, meets one Saturday each month at a private home in Santa Rosa for a potluck social from 4 PM until early evening. For dates, location and reservations, call Diane or Anne at (707) 544-1540.

San Joaquin Gender Association, meets at the First Wave Bar & Grill, 321 W. Weber Street in Stockton. For dates and times, write to 1141 Catalina Drive, Box 163, Livermore, CA 94550 or call their hot line (209) 466-9198

Silicon Valley Gender Association (SVGA), a new transgender support group, meets at the Billy DeFrank Community Center in San Jose on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month from 7PM to 9PM. For more info, call (408) 293-2429.

ETVC Membership Application

Please Print

Mailing Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Preferred Name: _____ Family Member's Name: _____

Birth Date: Month _____ Day _____ New Member: _____ Renewal: _____

How did you learn about ETVC? _____

Part year membership from January 1 - May 31 is \$13.00 (Family - \$18.00) (New members only).

Full year membership June 1 - May 31 is \$25.00 (Family - \$35.00).

Please remit by check or money order to:

ETVC, P.O. Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486

Families With Two Moms

By Sandra Brewer

On November 20th, twenty of us came to Kimo's Upstairs to listen as transgendered parents Susan Stryker and Sage Foster described their families where love for the children is shared by two moms. Their children, like many of ours, have lived with the knowledge of one of their parent's transgendered status from an early age. This brings about a unique set of circumstances and problems; in the ensuing discussion we gained valuable insights in dealing with some of these problems.

Susan Stryker is well known as a PhD author, teacher, and lecturer. She has shared her MTF transgendered status with her teenage son since he was eight years old. She has an amicable joint custody arrangement with the boy's genetic mother that allows the boy to enjoy the love of both his 'moms.' Both parents identify as lesbians; though considered 'culturally queer' the boy is basically straight as of age thirteen. He returns the love of both parents and is protective when they are confronted with elements of homophobia.

Sage Foster helped start the gay and lesbian communities in San Francisco where he has lived since 1968. Born female, he lived a lesbian lifestyle until learning of the FTM support group three years ago. He has been taking testosterone at varying intervals for over two years. Sage is the co-parent of the fifteen year old child of his female partner. With the boy's genetic father long out of the picture, Sage has filled the role of a second parent for several years, and is

now providing elements of a father image for the boy. The boy shares the love of both his parents, and he appears satisfied with the gender of his birth.

After the speakers related their stories, several from the audience shared their own situations and concerns. There is no set age to tell children of their parents transgendered status; it should be done when they display the maturity needed to deal with the situation. Telling them too early may cause confusion requiring therapy; waiting too long may risk the development of deep-rooted prejudices. How to tell them didn't get much discussion, but one parent explained that his father's penis was 'left-over' from before he decided to become a girl.

When love is freely communicated, knowledge of transgendered parents doesn't usually cause difficulty on a personal level. For their own social safety when they relate to the outside world, it is usually best for children to refrain from sharing this knowledge with their peers. Though perception of gay and lesbian parents has become more socially acceptable in recent years, transgendered parents are still not as well understood. Unfortunately, caring and responsible parents often find their transgendered status used as a potent weapon against them in child custody cases.

Further support and discussion of transgendered parents is available through the Alternative Family Project in San Francisco: Sage Foster and ETVC member Mina Schwartz are active in this effort. Support is available from the PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians And Gays) and COLAGE (Children Of Lesbians And Gays Everywhere) groups in other areas.

Take Me to the Fair

By Veronica Smith

The reviews are generally mixed on the Second Annual Gender Fair that took place at Jelly's on October 19. On the minus side, we had a disappointing turnout: there were fewer paying attendees this year compared to last, while there were more snafus. The expected stage didn't show up and we were supplied with eight-foot long tables instead of the requested six-foot ones. The change of tables confused vendors, crowded floor space, made it difficult for customers and impossible for Jelly's poor waitresses. Even the weather didn't cooperate—it was windy and cold, so fashion shows were poorly attended and several of the outside vendors were dissatisfied.

On the plus side, there were more vendors this year than last and most were glad they came. Some even did pretty well. Merely gathering together the folks who cater to our community was a kind of success. The raffle (after deducting costs like printing and mailing tickets) netted around \$1,100 toward ETVC's future home; and there were thirty-eight prize winners.

Though the statistics say there were fewer paid attendees, I met a lot of new



Rosalie's New-Look's Wig Fashion Show on our stage at the Gender Fair... l. to r. Rosalie, guitarist Andreas Rieloss, Veronica, Darcy, Dottie, & Tasha. (Photo by Veronica Smith)

folks, and the interest they expressed in our club indicated to me that the Gender Fair was achieving some outreach as well. Personally, I had a great time. It was fun to have some place to be dressed during the day. I got to try on a corset, model a wig and buy a dress. After the Fair, about a dozen of us went to dinner and a show. It was an enjoyable, long day en femme.

But events like the Gender Fair should

do more than merely afford me another opportunity to saunter about in a dress (although it's nice that they do), because they require a lot of effort, stretch our resources and tire our precious volunteers. It is hoped that such events are sort of seed projects in the long process of unifying and nurturing our community's various elements so that from them, a stronger and more expansive community can grow.

Intercourse on Sadomasochism

By Sandra Brewer

On October 16th, two dozen of us made it to Kimo's Upstairs to hear Sex Therapist William Henkin and Safe Sex Educator Sybil Holiday give an overview of the techniques used in the activities of Sadomasochism, also known as S&M. Both presenters are certified by the state in their respective disciplines. Their treatment of the subject emphasizes communication and consent between partners, and the adherence to certain rules to insure the safety of the players at all times during an S&M encounter.

Sadomasochism is the giving and receiving of intense erotic sensation by a formula agreed to in advance between consenting adults. Some variations were described. Bondage and discipline combines

the restraint of movement with punishment and control. Dominance and submission is an exchange of erotic power that depends more on psychological dominance than on physical pain. In every case, the script needs to be determined before play begins, and both the physical and psychological limits of endurance need to be kept in mind for each participant.

The body is sometimes stimulated to release endorphins when it is under the stress of sadomasochistic behavior. This can cause a natural high thus alleviating any inclination to resort to stronger intoxicants. Sadomasochism is a role-playing experience; a person playing a dominant role is referred to as the top, while a submissive role is played by the bottom. A male top is sometimes called a master; a female top is a mistress; and the bottom is a slave. Feminists have expressed some concern when hearing of male bottoms who want to be crossdressed as females; i.e. why does the bottom always have to be a woman!

Party etiquette forbids the wearing of mundane attire to S & M gatherings; provocative clothing is more appropriate, and black is always a popular color. The Society of Janus is probably the best organized Sadomasochism group in San Francisco; it began in 1974. The Outcasts began in 1984 as the first group to accept known TS members in their new gender role. Private S&M parties should generally be attended by couples; and as with any new acquaintances, beware of potential partners you meet through the mail or over the net until you know them better.

William and Sybil have recently published the book 'Consensual Sadomasochism'. This covers all aspects of the subject with an emphasis on communication, consent, and safety. They have donated an autographed copy to ETVC. This is now available in our lending library but considering the popularity of their presentation, you can expect the book to have a waiting list for awhile.

SRS Is The Final Cut

By Sandra Brewer

More than 50 people — twice the number of the largest crowd to attend any ETVC educational seminar in recent memory — crowded into Kimo's Upstairs October 20 to hear Dr. Toby Meltzer describe his experiences performing sexual reassignment surgery, usually just called SRS.

Dr. Meltzer — who last talked to us only six months earlier at California Dreamin' — also described various other surgical techniques during the trip to San Francisco he made from Oregon at his own expense.

Dr. Meltzer trained at Wayne State University in Michigan with Dr. Neal Wilson, another well known SRS surgeon. Microsurgical reconstruction of the head and neck was Dr. Meltzer's specialty. Today 60% of his practice is related to gender and 40% is cosmetic.

The technique used by Dr. Meltzer to perform SRS surgery for male-to-female patients is the penile inversion method. He takes a skin graft from above the hips to supplement the penile tissue in the 10% of cases that he feels have inadequate depth. He likes this method because it avoids donor site scars and it is less invasive than the more costly procedure that uses a section of the sigmoid colon. The nerves from the glans (head of the) penis are left intact for the construction of a clitoris; this makes orgasm possible postoperatively in most cases. Lubrication from the seminal vessels may even be possible. Dr. Meltzer recommends staying home for a month after the surgery if possible. A labia and a clitoral hood can be constructed as a secondary outpatient procedure in about three months. Dilation is needed indefinitely; how often depends on the level of sexual activity.

Other surgical procedures performed by Dr. Meltzer include breast augmentation. He has been using saline-filled implants, but silicone is expected to be an option again soon since no evidence has been found that it is harmful. He likes to insert the implant through

the areola (nipple) since it is difficult to get it low enough to seat properly through the armpit, and the crease under the breast is sometimes difficult to find.

A delicate procedure Dr. Meltzer performs with an otolaryngologist (nose and throat specialist) is a technique to raise the pitch of the voice; this is done by pulling the vocal chords tighter. The operation is performed under a local anesthesia and it is reversible, but he does not recommend this except in the most severe cases. Dr. Meltzer also performs tracheal shaves, rhinoplasties, and other cosmetic procedures for more feminine features.

Dr. Meltzer is in the process of moving from the hospital he's been working in for the last eight years to a smaller one that is still in Portland. The fees will remain the same, but he feels patients will get better service than before.

Before accepting patients for SRS, Dr. Meltzer requires two letters of recommendation from therapists according to the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care. He usually has about a two- or three-month waiting list; you can get on his list when you feel you're ready as long as you have the letters and the fees before the date of the surgery. I won't quote any fees here, but I think you'll find Dr. Meltzer's comparable to those of others performing the same services in this country.

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A Conversation with Diane: A Veteran Educator Offers a New Curriculum for Transgenderism

By Elizabeth Walters

Those who pay close attention to the media may have recently come across one of the myriad interviews that have been published with ETVC's own Diane Giles, a college math instructor, loving spouse and parent, and founder of Sonoma County's Transgenderism is Fun (TGIF) who has become a major spokesperson for our community since she decided to live full-time as a woman last year. Since Diane, 58, went public, her story has appeared in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat and has been covered by the Associated Press. That means that a wide variety of other media have picked up the story, and Diane has appeared in newspapers and radio spots all over the U.S. She has also been written up in the National Enquirer, and has been sought as a possible guest on the Jenny Jones, Oprah Winfrey and Inside Edition TV shows.

We recently caught up with Diane and were able to interview her briefly in late November about her experiences since "coming out." Until 1996, Diane was known as "Dick," and was a long-time faculty member at Santa Rosa Junior College. Actually, long-time is an understatement: Armed with a Master of Arts in mathematics from the University of Illinois, she has been teaching college-level mathematics at the college for 32 years!

Diane is also a strong family member who has been married to the same spouse, Anne, for 33 years. In addition, with Anne, Diane has been co-parent to ten children — all of them adopted kids with special needs. Diane, who describes Anne as a "saint," counts her SO as her strongest supporter, and says Anne was instrumental in helping "Dick" make the decision to go public as transgendered. "For the first 57 years of my life, I was not OK with this," Diane says simply. "I had to incorporate in my world all the negative things that our society puts on it. Last year, I was at a low ebb. It was Anne who suggested that I go forward with it. . . . For the first time in my life, I went out the front door."

Diane said she came out on Halloween 1995, and went to a party as her female persona. She had photos made of the occasion and

showed them around to those who were close to her. The reaction she received gave her grounds for cautious optimism. "Everybody without exception was very blasé about it," she said. "After about a month of this, I decided to take the next step."

She said that that her decision to go public was accepted with good grace by most of her colleagues at Santa Rosa Junior College. "With one or two exceptions, most of them were pretty supportive," she said. Diane noted that one woman had transferred to another campus to avoid her ("she just went nuts," she says sadly), but, by and large, "Everybody's in a good place about it, except for one or two of my kids."

For a strongly family-oriented person, those kids are very important. Diane said she has hopes that one of the children may eventually come around, but she said she feels the other — a daughter — is unlikely to ever accept her former father's new gender role.

"I feel she is pretty much gone," Diane said sadly. On the other hand, Diane said she is gratified that her students at Santa Rosa Junior College have been overwhelmingly accepting.

"The very first day of class, I went in and got a lot of big round eyes," she said. "I told them, that I knew they signed up for a class with Dick Giles, but they were getting his identical twin sister, Diane." Although she offered them the opportunity to transfer out, almost all stayed, she said.

Diane's new life as a full-time woman has brought her new challenges — and some unexpected pleasures. She has been besieged by offers from television producers who long to get her on their shows, including the aforementioned Jenny Jones ("Which I would never do"), as well as Oprah ("Which I am considering.")

She said the reaction to the write-up in the National Enquirer — although the article appeared without her knowledge or cooperation — has been basically positive: "My son called me and said, 'Hey, Dad! It didn't even have anything about space aliens in it!'"

Diane said last year she attended her first-ever High School reunion, and that the response was generally good. Although she is chary of offering advice to other transgendered people ("After all, I lost a daughter over this"), she says that she feels her overall experience has been positive. So far, she said, her greatest triumph since coming out lies in "just realizing that I can do it."

"With all this publicity, I have had not one single crank call in the months this has been happening," she told The Channel.



Diane and Anne Giles

Anne's Thoughts

by Anne Giles

There is a serious side to Diane's and my story, one you will read in another issue, but this is the holiday season and a time to be lighthearted.

"Lighthearted." That is a fine term to describe how we both feel these days. I have heard Diane say almost daily for the five months since she has been full time, "I feel so good", "I am just so happy", "Life is such a joy!" And her pleasure is contagious, especially to me. Of course, it helps that we have great support from family, friends and community, that I am now comfortable with a feminine spouse, and that Diane is a delightful person to live with.

I thought that I was accepting Diane because I cared about Dick/Diane's welfare, but in doing so I found an unexpected bonus: I am much happier, too. We are having such fun as a transgendered couple. We have met so many wonderful people through DVG, ETVC, and now our own TGIF get together at our home. The public has been surprisingly accepting and never hassled us after we were written up in newspapers and the Enquirer.

Of course, I am sure we provide a source of conversation. ("Maude, you'll never guess what I saw at Safeway today!") I wonder what people thought as our grown, African-American adopted daughter ran down the sidewalk yelling "Dad, wait for me," at a six foot one white woman in high heels. No, our life is never mundane.

The Lengths To Which We Go

By Veronica Smith

Channel National Correspondent

As we sat in the darkened room watching slide after slide of women's breasts (the soft, smooth symbols of femininity), I found myself being lulled into a trance-like state by the mechanical hum of the vacuum pump and the melodious drawl of the half-naked man with the huge suction cups on his chest.

And I thought, "Where else could I be but at a cross-dressing convention?"

From September 25-29, I attended my third "Southern Comfort" in Atlanta. A long way to go just to dress, you might say. But at home, I don't seem to have the time to play with make-up or hair style as much as I'd like, while at a convention, I can be one among hundreds of men playacting at being girls for an extended period of time. It is for this I go rather than to listen to any of the many offered lectures.

One lecture that did spark my interest, however, was on how to improve one's bust without hormones, pads or surgery. That's how I found myself listening to a man wearing a bra Devo might have designed for Madonna. The lecturer had developed these suction cups himself after a series of flawed prototypes (of which he showed slides). The now perfected goblets were hooked up to a portable compressor ("which you can also use to bleed your brakes") and a regulator (which the speaker continually monitored). After a half-hour, the cups were replaced with an elaborate frame supporting a customized snake-bite kit, a jack-like screw device and a manual pump.

It vaguely looked like something Grand Inquisitor Torquemada might have used.

By placing the snake bite cups to the nipples, manning the hand-pump and twisting the screw device, the breasts were stretched even further. I was reminded of the movie, "A Man Called Horse."

Finally, when the imagined limits of tearing flesh were far exceeded, he removed the tiny cups. There was a loud pop and some spilled fluid ("I sometimes draw blood"). Before us stood a man with impressively pointed breasts without hormones, pads or surgery. He said they would remain swollen like that for several hours, and would gradually shrink, but his breasts (over the past couple of years) had become permanently enlarged.

The presenter seemed perfectly comfortable and the audience expressed a lot of interest, but I guess I wasn't in the right frame of mind. I found it either funny or disturbing, sort of like "Home Improvement" meets Mae West. And to me the breasts looked blotchy and painful.

There were lots of other fun events that took place in those four days, like dining at Planet Hollywood, listening to Atlanta's Gay Men's Chorus (really great), watching a fashion show with clothes specifically designed for cross dressers, confronting a Jeff Fox worthy look-a-like who insisted that I was a woman even after I showed him the tape and foam rubber that creates my cleavage, dancing at "The Chamber" (which features S/M demonstrations), almost being shot by another cross dresser, and lots of other things.

But for me the most enjoyable aspect of these event-filled days was the simple fact that I was experiencing them as Veronica.

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OTHER VOICES

Other Voices is a newsletter within the ETVC newsletter by and for Significant Others. Send letters and articles to: Other Voices, c/o ETVC, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486.

The Wife and Times of a Crossdresser

By Juana Smith

Anniversary Gifts

Last time I had reported on that near-disastrous March Social of 1992: how it had been threatened, saved and yet was about to be threatened again. And I do want to finish that story — maybe next time. But for this issue, I'd like to discuss anniversaries, because January marks the fifth year since Hubby came out to me about his desire to cross dress, and February 14 will be the eleventh of our wedding .

Hubby has always done a good job making 2/14 a special day, whereas I sometimes have a hard time knowing what to get the big lug. But the month after he said he had always wanted to experience some of the things girls do, I thought of the perfect gift: Why not have a "sleep-over" with my new girlfriend, Veronica, just like teenagers! Having grown up in a household of boys, my husband had never considered this popular teenaged girl pass-time for Veronica. (Of course, I also envisioned adding a slight adult twist to the sleep-over.)

We spent the week arranging time off, cleaning the apartment, buying delicacies (including Snickers — what teenager would be caught without some sort of chocolate?), and getting the appropriate beauty supplies. With everything in place by the 13th, we only had to determine the scenario. I thought I gave Hubby a pretty good idea of what to expect.

Valentine's Day arrived with a typical February fog and chill, but the forecast looked promising and our excitement warmed us up. While Hubby busied himself becoming Veronica, I went downtown to shop for some special

nightgowns (not like when I was a kid) and have lunch at a quaint, little place I really like. As I swirled the last McNugget in its special sauce, I reminisced about sleep-overs and what my sister and I sometimes did on Saturday nights when we didn't have dates. I called to confirm the evening's invitation (just like I did when I was a teenager). To make it more realistic, I had my toothbrush in my backpack. Veronica answered in a sing-song falsetto and told me to come right over, or maybe pick up a video along the way. She'd provide dinner. I picked up the perfect movie and headed home, or rather, to my girlfriend's house.

When I arrived, I was surprised (and amused) to be greeted by a heavily made up, tall woman in a flamboyant red evening dress and four inch heels. "Just like a teenage girl," I thought and I said, "My, my, Vita, don't you look grand tonight!" By Veronica's puzzled look I could tell she had never seen "Mildred Pierce," the movie I'd picked. I suggested that she might want to change into something more casual, like jeans and a sweater, for the first part of the evening. She spritely agreed (she loves trying on different outfits) and as I shut the door behind me, I knew we were in for a silly but fun night.

I thought I'd take a short nap while Veronica redressed and began preparing dinner. She gently awakened me a half-hour later with a glass of champagne and raspberries. What a way to begin! Then we snacked on lemon-basted chicken, steamed artichokes and a fresh baguette, and we gabbed about school projects (we were both taking grad classes). I popped the movie in the VCR, and we gave each other masques and manicures. Our talk changed from theoretical styles to hair styles.

As we painted our toes "Jungle Red," we heard the world's most ungrateful daughter snap at her hard-working mom, "I'm sick and tired of your chickens and pies." And by the time Mr. and Mrs. Pierce confessed to the police, our polish might have been dry, but our eyes were wet. But Veronica soon lifted me out of my melancholy mood by giving me a heart shaped box of chocolates (I had the Snickers later). And when the movie was completely over, I told Veronica we had better get to bed.

Over a relaxing, intimate evening, Veronica had the opportunity to explore an event most girls experience, while I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that this make-believe sleep-over evoked long-forgotten and fond memories of when I was a kid. But we were adults as we turned off the lights and felt smooth skin touch smooth skin.

Significant Other Support Group invites all Significant Others to attend our meetings. Group members define Significant Others as wives, lovers, friends, children and others close to TV/TS persons who are themselves not TV/TS. We encourage you to ask the SO in your own life to attend, particularly if she or he needs support from peers in dealing with feelings about the TV/TS in her or his life. All meetings are kept STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL to help

insure that a safe, supportive environment is created in which all attendees feel secure enough to freely share and talk about their feelings. We are frequently assisted by a helping professional with a specialty in our area of concern. Our next meetings will be Thursday, January 9, and Thursday, February 13. You are welcome with open arms. Call (415) 664-1499 for more information.

GINNY'S

It was really special to see so many of you at the Halloween Party, with your husbands and significant others cross dressed in their various costumes. I know Halloween is the one time of the year we don't feel like we have to "explain what's going on" to our neighbors or family when our partners are cross dressed, so it is the one opportunity for most wives and partners to be supportive and feel comfortable in public sharing the fun part of this lifestyle. It was a good time and you all looked fabulous.



Another very pleasant event was held on a Friday night in November at Bobby McGee's Restaurant in the Embassy Suites Hotel in Burlingame. Instigated by the RGA group, members of both RGA and ETVC shared a good dinner in a very lovely setting. There were six couples plus six others who enjoyed the camaraderie of the evening. We hope this will happen again in the future with even more attendees ... it is good outreach, good inreach to our wives and partners, good for Bay Area sisterhood, and good fun. Our thanks to our gracious Hostesses, Trina and Gelzey, for planning this get-together.

You know now we are basically pretty nice people, most of our cross dressers are truly very rare and special human beings who share their joy and friendship happily with those who accept them. Try it again — come to the Cotillion on the 25th of January. You will see some glamorous evening wear and we think the Show will be a good one this year. We are going back to the California Club where we always felt comfortable and elegant. It is an exciting evening with everyone looking their very best. Your partner would really like to have you join him, I'm sure. Give it some thought ... maybe we'll see you there?

Here's the Baby!

Here's a snapshot taken by me (obviously no relation to Ansel (Chop off his head!) Adams) of our new addition to the "family", charming little Marisa Barbara, along with her mommy and daddy, Rosa and Perry. As we keep telling Perry, this little girl was most fortunate to take after her pretty momma!



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Out on the Town with Darcy

By Darcy Leopard



Cocktails in Elegant Surroundings

I have a TG friend named Bree who is a tour guide by trade. Her talents evidently extend into her off hours, too, as she has been doing an excellent job of finding night spots for us to sip cocktails and show off our legs.

Lately we have been focusing on upscale places: great for us TV's who love to dress up in an era when most people are dressing down.

Our first outing was Harry Denton's Starlight Room, located on top of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel at 450 Powell Street. We were a bit nervous as we parked the car and prepared to take on the brightly lit lobby en route to the lounge. Our experience up to this point was primarily in gay bars and avant-garde SOMA nightclubs. Now we were venturing straight into a classy joint of straight society.

The lobby was actually rather quiet as we strode across its elegant atmosphere towards the elevator. A mirror was located along the way, and of course we had to check ourselves out in it. Our wigs hadn't managed to turn themselves sideways yet, so we risked the elevator ride and arrived in the lounge.

The Starlight Room is essentially split into two areas. One is

a small bar and the other a dancing area. We chose the former, sitting at a round table with tall stools centered in a rotunda-style view area. The perimeter of the rotunda is lined with stools facing outwards, taking advantage of the stunning panorama. The bar's interior is ornately decorated in dark wood and creatively designed chandeliers and wall sconces.

Our well-mannered bartender arrived shortly. We requested a couple of martinis, and sipped them slowly while continuing to soak up the ambience. It was actually rather quiet that evening. We received only a few casual glances from the scattered patrons at the bar, and a nice smile from the young lady greeting people entering the dancing area.

On another evening we visited The Redwood Room, located in the Clift Hotel at Geary & Taylor. Arriving just in time to claim the last seat in the house, we placed ourselves at a small, round cocktail table in the middle of the room. No hiding in dimly lit corners for these two town-hopping transvestites!

We munched on a bowl of fresh pine nuts as we surveyed the drink menu and our surroundings. The presence of the room was awesome, with ceilings about 30 feet high and the walls and majestic pillars covered in rich redwood. A jazz trio played softly just a short distance from us. Our waitress arrived and we ordered a couple of specialty Martinis; mine had Cointreau added to it. At \$8 per drink, we decided to nurse them slowly.

As we settled into our drinks and looked around, we noted that the clientele was an interesting mix of tourists and locals, both casually and well-dressed. In one corner a group of middle-aged, cigar-chomping men were reclining happily, one of them gazing at us with an admiring predatory look. A couple of wild young Virginia Slims Poster Women in off-the-shoulder black dresses were seated at the end of the bar puffing on huge cigars, throwing their hair back and laughing. The Redwood Room has a reputation of being a haven for cigar smokers, by the way.

After both nights of visiting these two establishments, Bree and I went to an event called GirlSpot, a primarily lesbian event held every Saturday at Club VSF at 11th and Folsom streets. It is a high energy affair, with the atmosphere oozing enthusiasm and fun. The set-up is excellent, with a huge central dance floor, four bar stations, an open-air deck upstairs, and even a pool-playing area sporting a psychedelic carpet. There is usually a beautiful young lady sporting a scanty outfit and a big smile dancing solo on stage, working hard and giving quick kisses and snuggles for tips.

Bree and I always have a blast here, dancing to our hearts' content and meeting lots of ladies. They are very friendly here, and seem quite happy to see us. We occasionally see other TV's, but very few. Perhaps some more should show up, hmmm?

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ETVC Haunts Dunfey

(continued from pg. 1)

beehive bedecked bingo ladies from the Smith Trailer Park would have an attack of her allergies. Not to worry, both were too busy dancing to sneeze. Returning for the second year in a row to supply the music for the night, and great music at that, was Bole Bantu, featuring ETVC's own Deann Parkinson on drums.

There amongst the chorus girls, vampires, devils, clown, Klingon, flapper, baby and blood splattered chain saw murderess, I sidled up to the bar and pondered the universal question, "Just how does that three-breasted space alien get her lighted nipples to twinkle in succession?" And if Trina, who accessorized her lovely ruffled peach gown with a magic wand, is fairy godmother, who is Cinderella? The answer is Christina Salvetti, in her stunning white embroidered gown that would make any princess, real or story book, drool with envy the way several of us in the room did.

And while being stylishly cross dressed may win you a prize at someone else's Halloween party, at ours, looking like an

attractive woman merely qualifies you to judge others' costumes. Thus were Jane Bentley, Leslie Bailey and Andrea Drane pressed into service for being so tastefully conservative on a night that called for the outrageous. Their choice for scariest was the ever scandalous Didi Mau, for being scary in a way that is uniquely Didi's. Most glamorous went to the mystery couple in leather and lace, who left before we could record their names or award their prize. The most creative and best overall entry went to Lulu Blau in her maternal glory as Madonna, complete with new baby Lourdes.

As the band played its final set, only one question remained that evening. "What will I wear next Halloween?"



For the second year, the band "Bole Bantu" cooked at ETVC's Halloween Gala.

Photo By Telzey Adams.



Photo By Telzey Adams.

Christina Salvetti and Darcy Leopard take a photo break



Photo By Telzey Adams.

Bingo Ladies: Juana and Veronica at ETVC's Halloween Gala

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BOOK REVIEW

CONFESSIONS OF A GENDER DEFENDER

By Randi Ettner, Ph.D.

ISBN 1-886094-51-9

160 pp-\$14.95-Trade Paperback

Chicago Spectrum Press

151 Sherman Avenue,

Evanston, IL 60201

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1996

Review by Kim Elizabeth Stuart, November, 1996

Randi Ettner is a clinical psychologist who practices in Chicago, Illinois, where she and her physician husband, Fred Ettner, work with transsexuals; so I was a little confused when I leafed through *Confessions of a Gender Defender*. Wait a minute, I thought, this doesn't look as if it was written by a clinician. This is a book with a literary flare. As it turned out, I was wrong in the first instance, and correct in my latter impression.

Confessions of a Gender Defender is a literary book that is written by a clinician. It's almost like reading two private journals at the same time. Dr. Ettner skillfully weaves a number of the stories of transsexuals she has worked with into tales that involve her personal interaction with those same people. While recounting these stories, she somehow manages to comment on almost all facets of the steps that transsexuals go through in order to achieve a sense of oneness between their bodies and their internal gender identifications that most people take for granted.

The common thread that Dr. Ettner weaves in and out of these people's lives is a sense of poignancy and humanness. We learn how a therapist who really cares about the people she works with goes about her job, but it's hard not to be swept up in the emotion of these very real people and their problems. The foremost problem, of course, is that they have never been comfortable with the gender roles that have been thrust upon them based upon their genitals. In most cases, it's just a cursory glance at the infant as it emerges from the womb to see whether it has a penis or not. If it does, one course in life is virtually predetermined. If there is no penis, a very different role in life is in the offing. Most infants don't have any quarrel with these proscribed roles as they pass into childhood, adolescence and then adulthood. For the rare person who is a transsexual, however, nothing seems to fit quite right, and the war between the inner self and the body image seems never-ending.

Randi Ettner has drawn a number of separate but interrelated portraits of men and women who struggle with a seemingly hopeless dichotomy. She tells the story of Carla, an intellectually deficient male to female transsexual who has very religious parents who totally reject her in the chapter entitled, "Better Dead Than Read." There's Thomas who illustrates so beautifully the feelings transsexuals have by telling a simple anecdote about the reaction he and a friend have to a woman they pass in the street. There's the touching story of the ever so bright and positive eighty four year old transsexual who pursues a transition for the bit of contentment she can capture. My heart was heavy as I read about the male to female transsexual who was mutilated in Mexico and essentially left without genitals. She was given psychotherapy and told she couldn't be a woman because of her interest in motorcycles, then bombarded by another psychiatrist with massive doses of testosterone. The result, a medical condition that shuts down the adrenal glands and

BOOK READING:

You will have the opportunity to meet Dr. Randi Ettner, the author of "Confessions of a Gender Defender" at A Different Light Bookstore, 489 Castro Street (between 18th Street and Market) in San Francisco on Sunday, January 12, 1997 at 7:30 PM. Dr. Ettner will do a book reading and answer any of your questions at that time. Copies of her book will be available for purchase that night at \$14.95 each

produces a body that takes on the appearance of a zombie.

There are many more stories, and they all will touch you at some emotional level. You don't have to be transgendered to become engrossed in this book. That's because it relies on one of the most effective and traditional forms of teaching throughout the history of our existence-storytelling. Dr. Ettner turns out to be quite a bit more than a therapist. Randi Ettner is a story teller. She closes by reminiscing about watching her children fall asleep while remembering many of the people she works with who dream that they will wake up as little boys rather than the little girls they are being raised as, or emerge from sleep as little girls if they are being brought up as little boys.

I was particularly struck by the attitude Dr. Ettner has encountered in other professionals with respect to transsexuals. I had to laugh out loud at the hypocrisy of the plastic surgeon who told her that he performed all sorts of operations on people to help them feel better about themselves, but told her that sex reassignment surgery to make people feel better about themselves was not legitimate. Then there was her offer to all interested therapists in Kentucky to learn about gender dysphoria and how to approach it. The score: Interested therapists—0; transsexuals—0.

This is a rare glimpse into the lives of some very troubled people written by someone with the skill to involve us in their lives and the manner in which those troubles are coped with. Whether you are a therapist who wants to learn more about working with transsexuals, or you just like to read good stories, you can't go wrong with *Confessions of a Gender Defender*. If you like good books, head for your favorite bookstore.

Dr. Ettner can be reached by e-mail at: R ETTNER@aol.com

Kim Elizabeth Stuart is a widely recognized authority on the subject of transsexualism, and is the author of The Uninvited Dilemma, A Question of Gender, and the Research Supplement To The Uninvited Dilemma., both published by Metamorphous Press. She also is the author of a booklet entitled A Guide For Male To Female Transsexuals Considering Shifting Gender Identity published by ETVC. Kim Stuart can be reached at her internet address which is: kimstrophe@aol.com

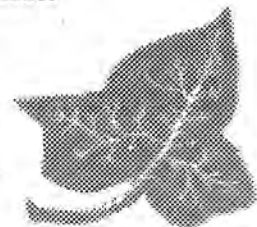
The Uninvited Dilemma

A Question of Gender

by

Kim Elizabeth Stuart

Research Supplement available separately.



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Telling The Children

By Luanna L. Rodgers, MFCC

You and your spouse agree that it is time to tell the children about your transgendered expression. It is a significant part of your life, or, in the case of the transsexual parent, going to become the way you live your life. You and your spouse have prepared yourselves by working through the shame and anxiety you may have felt about your transgender status, so that you do not convey embarrassment and mixed messages to your children. You have both developed a support network of people in whom you can confide, who are supportive of your situation. If not, develop this support network, otherwise your isolation will be a burden that will weigh on the whole family.

Remember that as parents it is your job to support your children and focus on their growth, not the other way around. This is not about getting more support for you. It is to help your children know you better and adjust to a fact of your life that impacts them. Your disclosure and handling of the matter should be as calming and non-disruptive as possible. You must be prepared to reassure and support your children in having whatever feelings they have about this news. With your children, your role as parent comes first. As an adult and a parent you must have strong inner resources and outside support. You cannot afford to feel wounded or become angry with your child if he or she has a difficult time with your transgender status. You must be able to support and help them.

Children will experience a range of feelings and may be unable to identify or articulate their feelings. They may not feel comfortable discussing all their feelings with you. Make sure that, just as you have built support for yourself, you provide outside support for your child. Let them know who they can talk with. Find someone trustworthy that your child knows and likes — a favorite aunt, family friend or other resource person. Children will eventually want to discuss this with someone outside of the immediate family. It is not fair to unload your lifelong secret onto your children and expect them to carry the burden of silence.

Additionally, bear in mind that very young children are developmentally unable to exercise discretion and may end up saying some very amusing or worrisome things to day care or elementary school teachers or other children. Before talking with the children, you and your spouse need to consider and be prepared for the impact of others knowing about your transgender status. Your need to decide together how and when to tell the children. When you do talk with the children, do so together, both parents involved as part of a family discussion. Be prepared for follow up and periods of adjustment, including changes in children's concerns as they get older and go through different stages of their own development. This is the beginning of a process, not a completed act.

How will your child respond? Each child is an individual, but in general the best predictor of a successful outcome is the quality of your relationship with your child. Are you close, supportive and communicative? Has your family been able to weather changes and stresses successfully in the past? If so, you probably have a good foundation upon which to begin discussing your transgender feelings.

The child's primary concern, whether they voice it directly or not, will always be "Will you still love me?" It is your responsibility to assure your child that though your appearance, behavior and gender role may change from time to time or permanently, that you



are their parent and will continue to love and care for them, that this part of yourself has not and will not change. You will reassure them directly by stating in words your response to the question they may not be able to ask, telling them that you will be there for them as their parent and that your love for them is unchanged. You will demonstrate your love for them by continuing to spend time with them, support and parent them as you always have. You will show them that they are secure in your care even if they have a difficult time with your transgender expression.

Remember when your child was two years old, fell on the floor, kicked and cried "No!?" You did not take that personally. Most children will at some point experience some anxiety and sense of loss when faced with significant change in a parent or in the image they have of what a mom or dad is. Make sure you are in a strong enough place internally to let your child have their own feelings. In your role as a parent your child's sense of security is paramount. You are there to help them make this transition with you, communicating with them, protecting them and reassuring them.

In my next and concluding article in this three part series on transgender parenting issues I will address concerns children will have at different ages and developmental stages and offer recommendations for parents.

Luanna L. Rodgers, MFCC is a licensed Bay Area psychotherapist specializing in work with the gender community.



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