

# **NOTES FROM THE** *Underground*

Ottawa, Canada

Vol. 4 No. 2

March/April 1992



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## Disclosure and Secrecy

In the July 1991 issue of the Journal of the History of Sexuality, there is an interesting article by Roy Cain on the evolution of attitudes in the gay community toward disclosure and secrecy. It documents how being secretive about one's sexuality was once viewed as normal and desirable and how that changed to the prevailing opinion that it is psychologically advantageous to the individual and politically advantageous to the gay community to be open. It is interesting to note some of the parallels in this evolution to that of our own community.

Gay's in the 50's and 60's adopted a position that stressed the similarities between homosexuals and heterosexuals and the importance of education in reducing discrimination and injustice. Those in the homophile movement, as it was then called, were characteristically cautious in their social and political activities. Disclosure of homosexuality was not encouraged. Their cautious position reflected concern for the safety of the individual, as well as their own viability, since it was believed that flaunting one's sexuality would alienate people and adversely affect the way gay people were perceived.

It is interesting to note also the attitudes of mental health professionals towards gays at this time. They were of the opinion that the distress or guilt that kept their patients from divulging their homosexuality to others was evidence of a promising degree of normality, and, therefore, was a good indicator that heterosexuality might be achieved through psychotherapy. In other words, guilt was good! Gays who did not feel bad about their sexuality were viewed as suffering from a more profound psychological disturbance. This diagnosis was a result of the prevailing notion that homosexuality was a mental disorder.

Not so very long ago, crossdressers were advised not to jeopardize their standing in male society by revealing their true nature. In many ways, this is how Tri-Ess flourished and continues to survive. It affords people the opportunity to relieve some of the pressure of being a closeted TV, while maintaining an otherwise respectable position in society. The membership isn't encouraged to go public, although even if it were the majority of crossdressers wouldn't do it anyway.

Heterosexual crossdressers have also expended considerable energy emphasizing that they are just like other people. This was a hopeless tactic for gays and is still an equally hopeless tactic for crossdressers. A crossdresser will always be regarded as "different", no matter what he says. Why not explore those things that make us different and celebrate them? We all have our own vision. Submerging it into the general blob of mankind is not only boring, its counterproductive to the Self.

As gays acquired more self respect, they were urged not to concern themselves with "respectability", but to be non-apologetic and assertive. The personal became political, and disclosure became a strategy of the gay movement. Secrecy was not regarded as a rational choice, but rather an indicator of self-oppression and as one of the main reasons for the ongoing repression of gays.

This is starting to happen in our community, although it's clear that the number of people being assertive and unapologetic is few. Crossdressers, in fact, are in the unusual position where some of them are public in their female persona, but completely secretive about their male life. That's hardly living in the open.

For the most part, crossdressers still rely on education rather than public disclosure to help reduce injustice against them. Currently, there is a strong push in the States to have crossdressing removed from the DSM, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. While this would be a worthwhile achievement, the process itself is fraught with inherent dangers which I don't think our community considers. There has never been a skepticism of mental health professionals among our community like there was in the gay community. Gay activists were once sensitive to the professionalization and medicalization of gay concerns, and they realized that mental health professionals had a completely different agenda from their own. It was only after gays achieved some political clout and had wrestled their agenda away from the psychiatrists that homosexuality was removed from the DSM. Obviously there had been considerable lobbying to achieve this, but by that time gays were lobbying from a position of power. We are nowhere near that position, and getting crossdressing removed from the DSM will not change your life or mine. There is still too much "personal" work to do.

### Notes from the Underground

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### **Out With the Old...**

As many of you know, I've been performing various functions within Gender Mosaic since its inception almost four years ago. Having recently relinquished a good many of these duties, and most importantly, my position as president, I feel now is the right time to thank a good portion of the membership - notably the "hard core" - for the support over the years.

Sometime in the past year, I became aware that I wasn't the best person to be in the position of president. Perhaps every crossdresser feels at one time or another that he is "different" from other crossdressers and that his personal goals no longer line up with the goals of others. If I've appeared less than sympathetic in the last few months, it is not because I don't care about the well being of the group or its individual members. It is only that I've felt my enthusiasm diminish, while the sense that it was time I turned my attention to other matters increased.

Of course, I'll still be editing the newsletter, so its not like I'm going anywhere far away.

I'm also delighted that Joanne is the new prez. Her evident enthusiasm makes me think I'm the sputtering relay runner passing the baton to the runner with the full head of steam. Special thanks, too, Joanne for being such a supportive VP.

Thanks too to Lary for listening stoically while I babbled out my frustrations over Tobys at the New Edinburgh Pub.

**Ted**

### **In With the New...**

I want to thank you for electing me president of our group. I will, as past presidents Judy and Alison have done, try to keep our organization together as we venture into the future and to go where no crossdresser has gone before.

We have a strong alliance with each other at Gender Mosaic and new members will find us a friendly bunch of crossdressers. With the

different interests in the group and the Crossdressers Resource Survival Guide, we can help new members get rid of the shame and guilt associated with crossdressing.

LeeAnne in Kingston has come up with the idea of producing a directory of crossdressers from the groups in Canada. I was speaking with her a few weeks ago and she is ready to accept listings for the first issue. I am enclosing a form for you to fill out if you want to be entered in the directory.

Basically, she wants to know if we can entertain guest members from other clubs or if you would just like to correspond with other crossdressing people in our community.

Thanks.

**Joanne**

### **Welcome**

I want to welcome our new members into Gender Mosaic: Vanna and his wife Marilyn, Connie, Sandy and his girlfriend Sue and also Kelly. Hop on board girls, the ride only gets better.

**Joanne**

### **Thank You Again**

We would be remiss in not reporting to those who missed the extravaganza, that January's "Girls Night Out" was a great success. Despite my misgivings about planning an event so soon after the new year, we're happy to report that we made money and had a lot of fun. So we're doing it again March 4th!

Thanks to all who arrived early to set up and in particular to the Duchess.

## **FACTT NOTES**

*A Selection of abstracts reported in FACTT Ottawa's newsletter.*

### **Families of seven M-to-F transsexuals after 5-7 years**

Archives of Sexual Behavior. March 1975

A study was done involving four black and three white families having a male to female transsexual member surgically reassigned more than 5 years ago. The black families were more open than the white in declaring the reassignment within the family and community, thereby they relieved themselves and the transsexual member of a need for deception, defiance, or defensiveness, and they were less scheming and manipulative. Without the anxiety of concealment, they could feel more positive about sex reassignment as a form of rehabilitation. A formal public declaration of sex reassignment, analogous to a declared change of citizenship, would be advantageous in transsexual rehabilitation.

### **Training in Feminine Skills in a Male Transsexual**

British Journal of Medical Psychology. December 1976

This case study describes an attempt to modify the sex-role behavior of a male transsexual in accordance with the subject's preferred sexual identity. The patient was treated before sex-change surgery. Treatment consisted of a modified form of social skills training and comprised such techniques as modelling, behavior rehearsal and videotape feedback and focused on female elements of behavior.

The results indicated that: (a) behavioral intervention facilitated adoption of a new sex role; (b) the techniques used were particularly useful in modifying sex role behavior; (c) the adoption of a new sex role in line with preferred identity was successful in terms of patient satisfaction.

### **TS Hassled In Windsor**

Sarah Carrol, a 37 year old transsexual, is fleeing Windsor, Ontario after receiving death threats and cross country attention for her election as a director of the Reform Party's Windsor West riding association.

"I can't believe all the attention this has been getting," she said. "I don't think it's safe for me to walk down the streets. If this story ran in Vancouver, no one would think twice about it. People out East are a lot more close minded about things like this."

Carrol underwent a sex change operation 14 years ago, and went public with her sexuality in order to promote transsexuality education in the Reform Party. She said she's been ostracized by everyone, including her family. She once lived in B.C. and plans to return to escape the attention and have her operation completed.

### **TV Trouble**

Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales offered a "red-faced apology" after readers took him to task for comments regarding soldiers in the cable TV version of "This Is The Army". Shales said the men in drag "appeared to be enjoying themselves just a little bit too much." A San Franciscan wrote, "For an intelligent, aware and so-called knowledgeable commentator to demean by innuendo is incomprehensible. Just how much 'enjoyment' on the part of the actors would have been enough for you?"

### **Pay Equity With A Vengeance**

A London disc jockey who spent two years undergoing sex reassignment and was fired when she reported for work was finally offered her old job back with a reduction in salary.

### **Man-Woman's Track Record In Jeopardy**

Roxanne Atkins Andersen sees it as a clear cut issue. Stella Walsh, dominant women's sprinter through the 1930's and 1940's was a man and therefore should be stripped of titles won half a century ago.

Andersen's request to change the results of those races is on the agenda of the women's track and field committee of the Athletics Congress, which is holding its annual convention in New Orleans.

"Stella had replaced a number of women, including one of my proteges and a friend of mine, Hilde Strike, in numerous championship meets," Andersen said.

"I felt that nobody wanted to touch this thing. I'm in my 80th year and counting my sins of omission, and I thought: 'I should be fighting for my girl.' She lost to her by an eyelash."

Strike of Montreal ran second to Walsh in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. Walsh won the gold in

the 100 metres and took the silver in the 1936 Games in Berlin.

"Let's face it, she was an idol," Andersen said. "Stella was an idol. I'm not sure about the she part."

After Walsh was shot to death in an attempted armed robbery in December 1980, the controversy over her gender arose. A coroner's report said she had ambiguous genitalia - both male and female characteristics. A chromosome analysis showed a majority of typically male YY chromosomes in her cells.

"If that coroner was correct, and I have no reason to doubt it, then our history reads that a man won all of these women's championships," Andersen said.

She said the competitive advantage that a man gains by competing as a woman is no less real than the advantage gained through the use of performance enhancing drugs. And it's becoming more of a problem with the advancement of surgical techniques in sex change operations. Several cases are on record of a woman found to have a majority of male chromosomes who later bore children, further complicating the gender testing procedure, Andersen said.

"They're going to go back to the original method of testing, which the ladies don't like," Andersen said. "Nevertheless, off-with-their panties is the final proof."

### **Catholics On Guard**

San Francisco Catholics announced the formation of "Catholics for Truth & Justice" to combat "increasing evidence of hate crimes and attacks on the Roman Catholic Church". The group cited as clear examples of vicious bigotry the PBS documentary of ACT-UP disrupting a mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in NY and the appearance at a Stanford-Notre Dame game of a Stanford band member dressed as a nun who used a crucifix to conduct the music.

### **Business Booming**

A cab service run exclusively by women and with female drivers is swamped with business after attacks on women travelling alone in London taxis.

Ladycabs said the number of calls for its service surged by a quarter last week after a London cab driver was charged with raping a 22 year old student in the back of his vehicle.

It was the latest in a series of rapes and violent attacks on women by cab drivers.

A survey last year found one in seven taxi passengers in Britain had been sexually or physically abused by a driver.



## Support? What Support?

Just a few quick notes. Why is emotional sharing such a dirty concept to certain group members? I've noticed how, when real sharing of emotions and feelings begin, some persons either try to refocus the conversation or try and disrupt things and/or leave the room. I thought we were a support group, which to me means that certain things must be accepted and even encouraged.

As much as I enjoy "events", why are we so reticent to focus on our emotions and feelings? (Emotions are how we feel physically and feelings encompass the inner questions.) Again I'm forced to notice and question the two functions within our group. There is one group that feels they're okay with themselves and refuse to discuss anything deeper than make up and why can't society accept us and the other group who seem to want to share their experiences and problems.

In my own experience, a support group is open to frank discussion of subjects that may cause some to be squemish, be boring to others and in outright bad taste to quite a few. Yet most support groups share and learn from everyone's openness and willingness to admit to being less than perfect in every way. Some members are getting tired of monologues from the head rather than experiences from the heart, but we are all guilty of that. Yet if that's what we prefer, then let's admit it and call ourselves a social group and not a support group.

I realize that for some listening to a new member's joy at finding the group constitutes support, but some of us would strenuously beg to differ. Although attaching support group to our name may add a certain cachet, I believe that it is misleading and I am not alone in that assessment.

It may seem overly picky, but as one who has gained immensely from support groups, I tend to bristle at our cavalier attitude towards real support and our appropriation of a term we have no intention of honouring. Again, it's the division between those who crossdress to feel like womyn and those who crossdress as an extension of how they feel constantly, and I'm not discussing TVs versus TSs.

The latter group tend to overdo and separate their personnaes and to overcompensate in either genders, whereas the former tend to understate and under? on a daily basis. Their lifestyle encompasses feminism, freedom of expression, nurturing and caring and support as a lifestyle. The first group discusses polyester versus chiffon, but that is my own belief.

The point is that we should discuss openly whether or not we are a real support group or rather a social group and call ourselves accordingly. We all need to be warriors for the truth in a non-violent, caring way.

love,

Niki Ross Avon

## More on the 20th Century

I was interested to see so much reaction to Niki-Ross's article "Into the 20th Century", although in some respects I don't think Belinda and Niki disagree much at all.

Belinda states that before any significant change in society has occurred, it was preceded by some "landmark change in philosophy" and that we must "change the philosophy with which society looks at life" and not just the way it looks at crossdressers. I couldn't agree more. In fact, that change of philosophy is emerging now and it involves feminism and the environmental movement.

I believe that all the original ideas on sex and gender come not from the psychiatric profession, which, despite being solidly entrenched in conventional male thinking, is still the place most crossdressers go for help, but from feminist thinkers who have consistently questioned the way our society is structured. Feminism is not just achieving equal pay for women, although that obviously is a starting point. As Karen states in her review of *The Crone*, feminists want "something other than equality: elevated consciousness." Now I know that sounds idealistic, particularly to men who always fancy themselves practical people. What it is, however, is a profound belief that the human race cannot continue the way it has.

Unfortunately, men aren't changing; in fact, they've shown themselves resistant to change. I don't necessarily agree with everything that feminists propose, but that doesn't deny the essential truth of their thinking. Women must play a larger role in the way the world is run. They would bring to it those human characteristics that all of us have to certain degree, but which are commonly perceived to be feminine. I am not ascribing, as it may seem, a superior morality to women. Society's problem exists because we value certain human qualities, those regarded as masculine, as superior to other human qualities, those regarded feminine. They are all human qualities, however, and all of them are necessary in equal proportion for a human civilization.

It is not enough that women have shown that they can perform as well as men in masculine hierarchies. Many women have found the experience de-humanizing, which explains why so many are starting their own businesses. They know there is another way of doing things.

I'm always shocked when I realize again and again that men in general have so little awareness of what women are trying to accomplish. It disturbs me because I can't help thinking that their refusal to examine these issues stems from the fact that these ideas are being advanced by women, and hence are less worthy of consideration. Or do men really believe that the status of women on Earth is as it should be?

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## Dating a Crossdresser

Exciting, wonderful and sharing are all adjectives that first come to mind. I have been dating Sandy for a year and a half. He told me about his crossdressing within the first month. It doesn't bother me at all. I don't think of it as a problem. It's just there and it's part of him. I don't judge him because he's doing something that most people don't consider normal. I know who he is, the packaging or wrapping is not important.

Society has built images on the biological sex and called them masculinity and femininity. Clothes are differentiated to fit the image associated with sex. The image of masculinity is so rigid that a man cannot step outside it without some sort of social sanction, such as disgust or shame. It's acceptable for women to wear slacks, leather jackets, short hair and even cowboy boots, but let a man wear a skirt, well that's just disgusting. Not to me. Clothes do not make the person. I couldn't care less what people wear. I look at what is inside.

It's exciting to step outside the so-called norms of society and venture into something different. By not making any judgements, I free myself to explore life more fully. I feel very comfortable with Sandy when he is all dressed up. It makes him happy and that is fine with me.

We have a good time together and can share so much more when he understands what I go through in putting on my makeup and clothes because he does it too. It is great to go shopping with him because he has great taste in clothes. He can buy beautiful outfits right off the rack for both him and me. The best thing is we can wear the same size. However, we are built differently and the style chosen for each of us is different depending on the outfit. He loves shopping, which makes me happy because I have a hard time buying clothes; but with him, it is fun.

Sandy is not any less a man because he enjoys wearing a dress. He has no desire to be a woman, just to wear what society deems to be female clothes. We have an ordinary life in every other aspect. If you are wondering, sex is not a problem either. We have a wonderful sex life. Actually the crossdressing enhances it. I won't go into detail, you'll have to take my word on it.

In my opinion, crossdressing is nothing to get upset or worried about. Sandy and I talk a lot about it, discussing exactly how we feel. That is important. Get all your feelings out in the open. Explore these feelings and identify what they are; for example, anger or fear. If you are fearful, what makes you feel that way. If you are angry, what really makes you feel angry. I ask all the wives and girlfriends of crossdressers, if you feel fear or

disgust over crossdressing, how do you think he felt when he realized how much he really enjoyed doing it? Explore with him what feelings he experienced when he realized he was a crossdresser, then explore with him exactly how you feel. Society has placed the biological male so rigidly inside the image of masculinity that the crossdresser experiences a tremendous amount of guilt and shame himself. You probably worry too much about what other people think. It is what you think that matters. For me, I love Sandy and I accept that he is a crossdresser. That is all that matters to me. Don't restrict what you do in life based on the opinion of others.

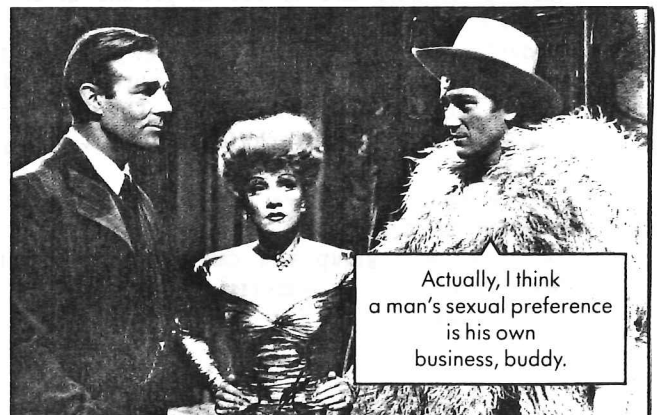
I would like to point out here that everything I have written is my opinion and my experience. Take what you like and leave the rest. You can think I'm crazy or think I'm wonderful based on what I have written, I don't care. I know who I am and how I feel. I feel just fine about everything in my life, especially Sandy.

Sue

**Continued from previous page.**

In her article "Dispelling Myths", Sharon suggests it's not logical to expect all crossdressers to be feminists. I agree. I'm disappointed, however, that with such a liberating philosophy available to us, so few of us embrace it. In this respect, most crossdressers are no different from other men. It's ironic, of course, that we should be spending so much energy emulating women while not having the slightest idea of what concerns them. It may not exactly be sexism, but it doesn't take genius to realize how some women who are committed to change would find us insulting.

Ted



## What A Day!

Halloween bestows a license on all crossdressers to be what they want for at least one day. Oh yes, I've heard the reasoning, "But you can't do too good a job, otherwise people would be suspicious", but I'm not talking about getting dressed for a party with your friends. I'm talking about getting dressed to be a woman for a day; shopping for a new dress, trying on heels, buying lunch, trying a new fragrance and so on. The reason Halloween works is that as an absolute last resort you can fall back on "But I'm going to a Halloween party." Although you may not agree with me, it does give me the added insurance necessary to get Karen out the door. I will now relate how Karen spent October 31st of 1991.

The night before, I drove to Kingston and rented a room for the night. Why Kingston? It felt less likely that I would run into someone that I knew and that is also where Professional Nails & Lashes happens to be. I used the TV guide to call and book an appointment for 10 A.M. that morning. I was thrilled with the matter of fact way that the girl said "You are booked for 10 A.M., male to female." It was almost as though this was an everyday occurrence for her. Upon booking into my room, I chose my wardrobe for the next day, although I changed my mind several times during the night. Having had a perfumed bubble bath to put me in the right frame of mind, I slipped on my negligee and eventually drifted off to sleep.

"Your wake up call, sir." How I hated those words, not only the part about waking up, but the sir part too. Couldn't I be called ma'am just once? I had my shower quickly and then proceeded to shave my face in three different directions. This was to be my last male task of the day. As I began to get dressed, Karen began to emerge. I had chosen to wear a red blouse with a black skirt that was just above my knees. I couldn't put my skirt on til after my appointment, but I was determined to walk into the beauty salon without a stitch of male clothing on. As I stood before the mirror ready to leave the hotel, I was frightened yet excited. I was indeed wearing only woman's clothing. I had on my red blouse with grey slacks and brown trench coat that was snugged in tightly at the waist. There was little doubt that my shape was not that of a man. As I opened the hotel door, I realized I was wearing high heels. As much as I loved them, I had to change into my flats. It was obvious that I was wearing dark nylons as they were showing between the bottom of my slacks and the tops of my shoes. At that point, I didn't care.

"Hi, I'm Rick", I said to the receptionist. She smiled and told me to hang my coat in the closet. Wait a minute, I thought, I'm wearing a red, very

feminine, sheer blouse that would show my lingerie. I was also wearing my breast inserts and woman's slacks. At least with my coat on I felt protected. With it off, there was no doubt I was dressed as a woman. I decided that if it wasn't going to bother them, it wasn't going to bother me either. Off came the coat and I was shown to a seat where Kathy was to do my nails. I almost died. It was in among the other clients, all very much women in varying degrees of getting themselves beautified. My friend began doing my nails by first soaking them, applying hand lotion, pushing my cuticles back, applying a coat of base, two coats of red lacquer and then a clear finishing coat. Although they were not as long as some artificial ones I had worn, I loved them because they were mine. All of this took around 45 minutes and I was still sitting in amongst all the other woman customers. The most amazing thing about it was none of them seemed to notice or care.

"Megan will now do your makeup." Finally I was able to move from my obvious spot to what I had hoped was something a little more private. Boy, was I wrong. I was led directly to the main reception area. There was a chair surrounded by makeup and brushes. It was right in the middle of where everybody comes in and out, plus it was directly in front of large windows that were opposite an office complex! I could not have been put more on a pedestal. Megan proceeded to apply my makeup all the while chatting with friends and customers, and treating me as I imagine she would any of her female clients, in a warm, professional way.

"Debbie will now do your hair." I was led to a more private chair where I saw my wig that had been professionally styled. As she slipped it on my head, I suddenly felt a great relief. It was as if the wig was the final piece of the puzzle. If anyone was to look at me now, they would see a woman. Debbie finished and sent me back so Megan could give me the final touches. "As we girls say, you'll feel better once you have your lipstick on." Finally I was able to smile.

As I slipped on the same coat, what a different feeling came over me. I felt feminine, like a woman, not a man wearing a dress. My first stop on the way out was the washroom. Yes, the woman's, but it was a private washroom with a locked door. My visit was twofold. The first was for natural reasons. The second was to enable me to remove my slacks (my last connection to maleness) and pull on my skirt. Off came my flats and on went my black high heels. As I slipped my purse over my shoulder, I opened the door and out stepped Karen. This was it. There was no turning

Continued next page.

back now. I would either be accepted or rejected.

It seems a bit odd, but my driving changes when I'm dressed. I suppose the fear of confronting the public, not to mention the police, is enough of a reason to drive with extreme care, but it seems that my aggressive male driving techniques are replaced by a careful woman-like approach to driving.

As I approached the mall, my heart once again began to race. As much as I wanted to continue to wear my three inch heels, I decided that my newly purchased one inch heels would be more appropriate. As I entered the Sears store, I expected a reaction from people. It didn't happen! I was virtually ignored. Feeling braver, I went to the ladies' shoe section. How different it felt. As a male, shopping for ladies shoes sometimes brings the odd "What are you doing here?" stare, but as a woman it looked and felt perfectly natural. There was one pair of beautiful pink high heels I just had to try on. As I slipped on the heels and checked my reflection in the mirror, I had a feeling of absolute joy. I tried on several other pairs before wandering away to the woman's clothing section. I looked at bras, slips, pantyhose and dresses and was left alone as any woman would be. I held a few dresses in front of me and looked in the mirror trying to imagine how I would look wearing one of them. Oh, how I would love to have tried one on, but I would leave that for another day.

Walking through the mall was also a thrill. I occasionally saw my reflection in the mirror or in windows, or felt the snugness of my corset, the sound of my heels on the floor or the feel of earrings dangling and swinging as I walked. There were so many things to remind me I was a woman, that nothing could let me slip back into maleness or give me away, or so I thought. More on that later. The one feeling I did get that was the same,



whether I was dressed as a man or a woman was a full bladder. Now what to do? I saw the signs for a public washroom, but this was a large shared washroom not a private one with a locked door. I had no choice so I headed for the ladies room. Upon entering, I was faced with an empty room. What a relief. Picking a stall nearest the door for quick escape, I relieved myself, but several women had now entered and busied themselves doing whatever women do in a washroom. As soon as it quieted down, I left my stall and quickly exited, half expecting to be arrested for doing such a terrible thing. Again I was delighted to be ignored.

The rest of the day was uneventful, although I was extremely pleased with the young girl at the McDonalds drive-thru who said, "Thank you ma'am". If only she realized how good it felt.

"Would you like it filled?" "Yes please", I answered, but in my male voice. What a blunder! The gas station attendant backed away from my car and proceeded to tell his buddies about the girl in the Toyota. Boy, did I have clean windows, as all three attendants took their turn cleaning my front windshield. As I drove off, all three waved goodbye in an exaggerated feminine wave. Although not particularly enjoyable, it was a learning experience for me.

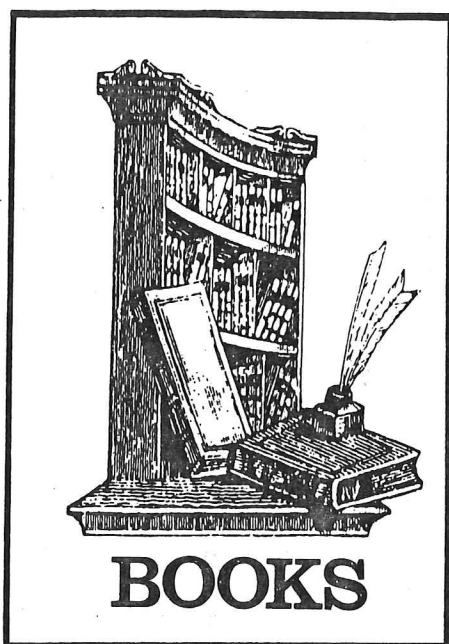
This story has already gone on too long, but I would like to say just a few words before I close. I made some very valuable discoveries today.

- 1) The experience in the beauty salon showed me that most women are understanding.
- 2) That unless you do something to prove otherwise, people generally accept what they see. When they see long hair, makeup, a dress and high heels, they automatically think "woman" not "man in a dress".
- 3) Even when read, as I was at the gas station, the results are not that horrific.
- 4) That I enjoyed the day as a woman. There are so many things we don't realize happen to women. Someone holding the door open for you, a smile from a man, the courtesy extended to you as you walk across a parking lot.

I promise you this. This was only my first day as Karen. I have scheduled an appointment at a beauty salon for sometime in the new year. It looks like I won't be able to fall back on the Halloween excuse.

Karen Gaston





**Fantastic Women : Sex Gender and Transvestism.** by Annie Woodhouse.

This is a book which many crossdressers would find irritating. *Fantastic Women* is essentially a look at transvestism from a feminist perspective, and although it is not entirely critical - indeed, many chapters analyze and denounce the irrational basis for the taboos against crossdressing - it comes out not being entirely sympathetic either.

The word fantastic of the title is not used in its colloquial sense of wonderful, but rather in its original meaning of fantasy. This is essential to know because, although Woodhouse spends entire chapters defining transvestism and acknowledging its diversity, her views and analysis are based primarily on what I call the orthodox transvestite, that is the biological male who dresses periodically in feminine clothes with the intention of looking like a woman.

One of the problems with non-crossdressers analyzing crossdressers is that they place undue emphasis on the most innocuous of events. Woodhouse is occasionally guilty of this. Even a joke is analyzed to discover its hidden meaning. Any crossdresser who has read the psychiatry texts and who doesn't

pray at the altar of psychiatry will find this familiar. Her feminist perspective, however, enables Woodhouse to identify the male bias in much of the material, and she does an excellent job of demolishing some of the completely asinine observations psychiatrists have had of crossdressers over the years. Woodhouse concludes "the research models outlined here contain...direct reflections of oppressive constructions of gender."

This does not mean that she is entirely supportive either. There are two aspects in particular that Woodhouse does not find to her liking. The first is the unrealistic view that many crossdressers have of women and femininity, while simultaneously believing that because they've learned to fool some of the people some of the time, they now understand completely what it is to be a woman. She challenges the inherent assumption many crossdressers make that by simply dressing in feminine clothes, we are contributing to a greater equality between the sexes by changing the gender roles and stereotypes. Are we not, in fact, reaffirming the stereotypes of the two existing gender roles by playing each of them separately? She finds the concept of a crossdresser speaking of himself in the third person as bizarre as I do.

I had expected crossdressers' view of femininity to be the major thrust of the book, but this issue finds greater relevance in the way it affects the crossdresser's wife, which is the second point which disturbs Woodhouse. There are many truths in her observations in this section of the book, but many problems with her conclusions also.

Woodhouse found that there is a huge gulf between the perception transvestites have of their wives' attitudes toward their crossdressing and their wives' actual attitudes. I can't help thinking how true this is when I hear crossdressers telling me they have a "supportive" wife. When I hear later about the difficulties they are having over the issue, I wonder at how they have

fooled themselves so completely. Wishful thinking perhaps.

All but one of the wives Woodhouse interviewed did not know about their husbands' dressing before they were married. All of the husbands weren't into gender bending, but were typically male when male and excessively feminine when dressed, to the point where their personalities changed. Many wives were afraid their husbands would take hormones, change their sex or become completely different from the husbands they married. These are all legitimate concerns, and Woodhouse criticizes Virginia Prince's dismissal of them in *The Transvestite and His Wife*. She ridicules Prince's opinion that if the wife does not accept, she is causing her "own pain by taking an antagonistic rather than a sharing attitude...your discomfort is self-inflicted." Needless to say, she doesn't think much of grading your wife as an A, B or C as if she were a child at school.

The problems I have with this section is that Woodhouse fails to differentiate transvestism from the social taboos against it. A great deal of the wives' anxiety is centred around the "What if the neighbours found out" question. Although she acknowledges that if transvestism were more openly expressed it would undermine some of society's sexist myths, she concludes that in a "society where gender divisions run deep it is unrealistic to expect women to sacrifice what they see as their happiness for the sake of an anti-sexist future." In other words, even though it is intrinsically not a bad thing, women shouldn't have to put up with it if they don't want to. Frankly, I don't think this is any more helpful than Virginia Prince lecturing wives about the necessity of changing.

There are other problems in this section. After clearly destroying much of the thinking behind society's objections to crossdressing, Woodhouse suddenly adopts a very conservative attitude when the crossdressing concerns the wives.

Continued next page.

Why do they stay with their husbands? she asks, and then compares them with women who stay in abusive relationships. It never occurs to her, or perhaps the very narrow sample of wives she interviewed never gave her the idea, that the husbands might be very fine people. As I said, there is some truth in this section that crossdressers would do well to consider, but her sympathy for women completely obliterates her ability to understand the sorts of pressure the husbands are under.

Part of the problem is that crossdressers generally are attracted to women with traditional concepts of marriage and gender. A clash of values in such a marriage is inevitable, and all the more severe when the wife knows nothing about the husband's crossdressing prior to marriage.

It would be interesting to engage Ms. Woodhouse in a debate about crossdressing. I think the book is flawed because, despite trying to embrace transvestism's diversity, Woodhouse eventually hangs her theories and analysis on a narrow, repressed interpretation of it. There is truth in it though, because that's exactly the kind of life many crossdressers lead.

Ted

**Women's Reality : An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society.** by Anne Wilson Schaeff.

"It is not necessary to deny another's reality in order to affirm my own." With this sentiment, Anne Wilson Schaeff starts her book *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society*. She brings the perspective of an experienced psychotherapist who found the traditional methods not addressing the needs of women. By meeting with groups of women in various functions she initially developed generalizations, then concepts, and finally theories which she describes in her book.

*Women's Reality* is the first of a series of books by Anne Schaeff dealing with the causes of alienation and isolation, with later books dealing with the resulting addiction and codependence.

Anne Schaeff describes the White Male System as the system in which we live, and in it, the power and influence which is held by white males. This system is maintained by four myths.

First, the White Male System (WMS) defines itself as the only reality. This results in denying the validity of any differences or dissension, since anything other than the White Male System would be threatening to the System. Other realities are not recognized.

Second, there is a paradoxical myth that the WMS is innately superior. If it were the only reality, how could there be a hierarchy? But from this notion stems the concept of duality: members of the White Male System are superior, and non-members are inferior.

Third, the WMS purports to know and understand everything. It claims omniscience and omnipotence because of its innate superiority.

Finally, the WMS claims that it is possible to be totally logical, rational and objective and that any other thinking process or source of knowledge does not exist. It claims to be able to define truth as an absolute entity beyond a person's selfhood.

It is therefore consistent that God is defined as a white male with super-human abilities and that if we cannot emulate Him, it is because we are not loyal to the White Male System. Such dualistic thinking then attributes the opposite qualities to the opposite of God: the inferior, defeated, temperamental, emotional, unpredictable, chaotic, undisciplined, and eternally un-manly woman or devil.

The WMS expresses its oppression in all the facets of our lives. In parenting, the WMS extolls the vir-

tues of teaching the child rules in order to "make" the child, instead of facilitating or participating in the child's development. The WMS sees commitment as incarceration, instead of a covenantal relationship. The WMS sexualizes excessively, instead of realizing that sexuality is not a major criterion. The WMS approaches the concept of power from a zero-sum perspective due to dualistic thinking and preoccupation with control. But power is limitless.

The WMS is inherently evil and non-human. When we concretize our perceptions, we are participating in theological idolatry. The emphasis on the rigid and static is idolatrous. The "Father" as a controlling force, who can be controlled by manipulation, is not God. Sin is alienation: when we are out of tune, we distort ourselves and are often destructive. Instead, we should look to the process which is never constant or static. In the WMS, living in tune with God means getting in tune with something outside the Self: to be what one is not. In the Female System, living in tune with God means being in tune with what one is. Our true selves are never in conflict with God.

In *Women's Reality* Anne Schaeff lays the groundwork for her subsequent works, including *When Society Becomes an Addict*. In that work, she describes a "cosmic puzzle": each of us is a unique and vital piece of the puzzle. We must live up to the full size of that piece by being fully ourselves. That is a revolutionary concept in this world, but it can lead us to emancipation while giving us a true feeling of freedom along the way. Audre Lorde summed it up in an essay "The Erotic as Power": "When we live outside ourselves, and by that I mean on external directives only, rather than from our internal knowledge and needs, when we live away from those erotic guides from within ourselves, then our lives are limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to the needs of a structure that is not based on human need...But when we begin to live from within outward, in touch

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## Gender Mosaic Info

### New Executive

**President:** Joanne L.  
**Vice President:** Belinda Doree  
**Secretary:** Natalie B.  
**Treasurer:** Leigh T.

Membership: \$35 per year, includes newsletter, admittance to social events, survival guide and reduced rates on special events.

Associate Membership: \$15 per year, includes subscription to newsletter.

### Montreal Trip

Please note that some members will be partaking of Genvieve's hospitality in Montreal the weekend of March 21st. Hotels and transportation are yet to resolved. Interested individuals are asked to call the office. Promptly.

### Survival Guide

Belinda is accepting submissions for Survival and Resource Guide 92. If you know of any shops, nightclubs or crossdressing groups that were left out of the 1991 edition, or would like to update current listings, please get in touch.

### Books

with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense. For as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society. Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within."

The only truth we can experience is our Self. If I do not accept myself, then all is in vain. According to Mother Theresa, "Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty". The answers and the joy of living are within.

Karen Hope

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at

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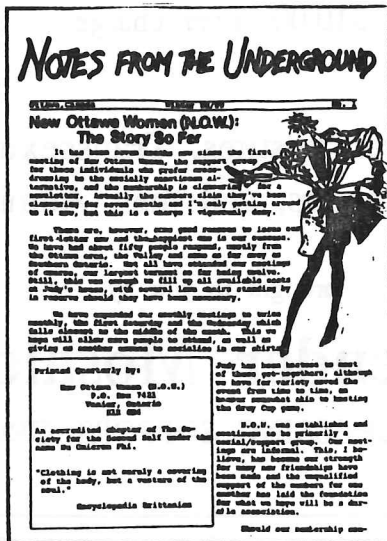


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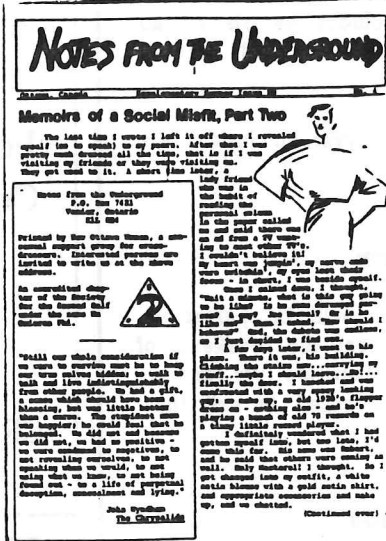
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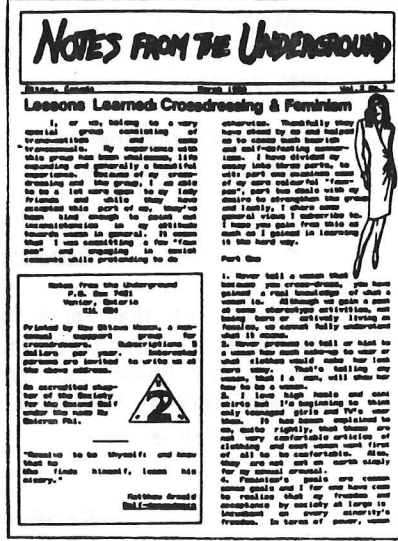
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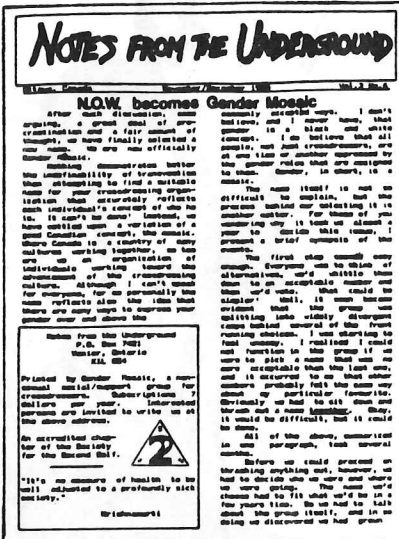
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New format! Same old Niki-Ross! Also, Natalie's adventures with her perceptive and persistent daughter. \$2.00



**Volume 3, No. 6 10 Pages**

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