

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Ottawa, Canada

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Observing the People's Reactions

Although my grand ambition in life is to go where I please while wearing my skirts, I have ambivalent feelings toward the 80% or so of the population who is so indifferent to my taste in clothing that they don't even notice me. Crossdressing has at times made my life quite difficult, so you'd think these people would at least have the decency to be outraged. It seems like I went through all that crap for nothing! But then, our imaginations are often our most effective jailers.

Still, the moment you run into unpleasantness, oh how you wish for indifference! I once went to a play with a friend (a good experience - few rednecks in the chea-tuh) and after the performance we were standing on the street corner waiting for the traffic light to change when I became aware of a middle aged woman to my left staring at me so intensely I thought she was trying to burn holes into me. The traffic light was taking an eternity to change -

- like they always do on these occasions - and I was starting to get a little uncomfortable, so I turned to her and said, "Hello". Well you'd think I'd applied smelling salts to her nose, because she broke out of her stupor so suddenly that she almost reeled off the sidewalk. I guess she realized she was being rude, although I noticed she couldn't resist a few more furtive glances when the light finally turned.

People who stare always remind me of an old Bob Hope movie I once saw. He's dressed up and getting out of his car and there's a crowd of people standing around staring at him and he says: "What's the matter, never seen a Buick before?"

The closest I came to physical violence was at an outdoor restaurant on a summer evening. Two fellows didn't appreciate our skirts much and were threatening a round of fisticuffs to prove it. Lary and I were being equally insolent to them. It occurred to us that if they did try something, their chances of victory were no better than 50/50 and those odds just weren't good enough to face the ignominy of being beaten up by two guys in skirts.

Positive reactions are what we live for though, and the best ones of all come from the women who break into large sunny smiles when they see you. Hard not to fall in love on the spot. And there are many people who, though they don't understand the motivation, still admire your guts for doing what you're doing.

Obviously you must be in a certain state of mind to appreciate people's reactions, but when you feel confident and positive, you can take even more strength from the experience.



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"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

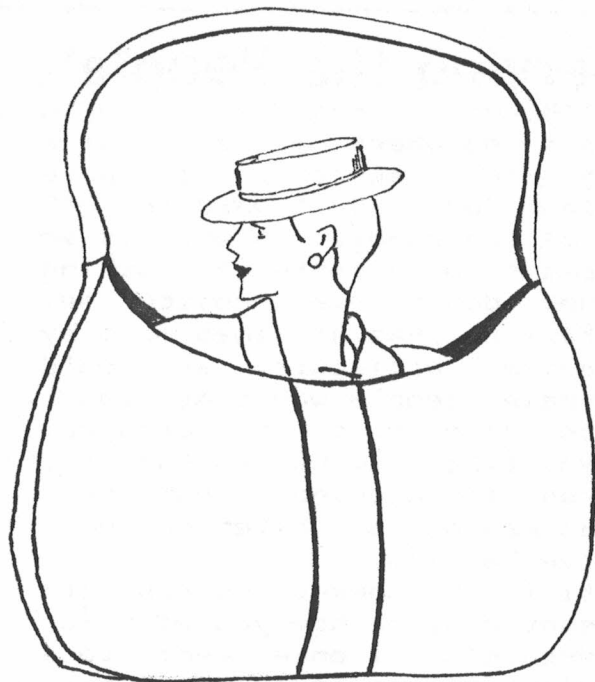
Eleanor Roosevelt

My Kingdom for a Purse

Quite often we hear men commenting on how impractical women are when it comes to their style of fashion. They're criticized for wearing high heels and other uncomfortable clothes just to be fashionable. Ironically few men would admit that it was they that originally forced these styles on women.

Of course, who could be more practical than men? All a man needs is the ever present suit, an item of clothing so boring that it was never given a name. A suit is just called a suit - boring, predictable, nameless. The biggest decision most men have to make when it comes time to dress for the day is whether to wear the blue or the grey one. Since the suit is so standardized, it protects men because they never have to worry about showing any of their personal sense of style. This way they need never risk having their egos hurt if someone were to comment negatively about their clothing.

But I'm rambling, so let me get to one of my greatest pet peeves. What I'm really frustrated about is that for some reason the super practical male is not allowed to carry a purse! Originally purses were invented for use by both sexes back when clothing had no pockets. Nothing bothers me more than having every pocket full of the necessary items I require to have with me daily. Keys, a hairbrush, money, my cheque book, cigarettes, a lighter, kleenex, business cards, change for the bus, my wallet,



somedays my bank book, and those folded up pieces of paper I need to remind me of something. Nothing annoys me more than to hear a constant cacophony of rattling change every time I walk somewhere, and I find I'm constantly squeezing my hands into my pockets in an often feeble attempt to quiet down this irritating noise.

I probably spend at least an hour a day filling and emptying my pockets. When I leave to go somewhere, I've got to make sure I've got all of those items placed strategically in various pockets and then I have to make a mental note of where each item is. Often after this I'll end up spending another hour verifying that yes, I did actually put my keys or whatever in my pocket already. Then there's the problem of which pocket that thing is in. Not to mention the necessity of shifting

things around in order to prevent a fatal stabbing from a comb or the messy explosion of a pen. Coming home means another major ritual as I reach into the forty six pockets I have and empty them. Maybe the only reason that men don't wear makeup is that if they did, they then they'd have to find even more room in their pockets to carry their mascara, eyeliner and eyeshadow.

What if you go to a store to pick up some little item or what if you're like me and you like to read a book while you're on the bus? Then you're really stuck. Either you force it into one of your pockets, or you end up using one of your hands to carry it. Suppose you have a sheet of paper to carry, what do you do? Well, real men carry all sheets of paper and important documents all folded up into a two inch square in their pockets. After all the only purse a real man thinks about is the forty million dollar purse some guy is going to win for beating some guy's head in a boxing ring. Excuse me while I purse my lips into a big sigh.

What do you do if you're wearing tight jeans that have absolutely no room for anything, or shorts that have those tiny pockets. T-shirts don't usually have pockets that are very big either, so often I end up having to wear extra clothes just so I'll have pockets. And what about all those clothes that have open pockets that you have to

keep checking to make sure that you haven't lost anything important? It sure is great being a practical male, isn't it?

I do own a purse that could pass for a man's, but I don't carry it much. After hearing a few derogatory remarks from passers by, I gave up using it. I can take being called names, but I may as well be fully dressed if I have to put up with it. And if I walked into work carrying my male purse, I'm sure the rumors would fly that I must be gay. No truly practical, "normal" man would burden himself with such a silly article as a purse.

Okay, I'll admit that I'm a real purse abuser when I'm being "allowed" to use my purse. I'm one of those ladies who sometimes has got everything she could possibly need short of an overnight stay in her purse, and often it takes me awhile to find my lipstick or my keys. But so what? I know it's there! And it's still much more convenient to carry a purse.

Sharon



"I have heard with admiring submission the experience of the lady who declared that the sense of being well-dressed gives a feeling of inward tranquillity which religion is powerless to bestow."

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Social Aims

Travels to Gaspé

This is the third and concluding episode of Joanne's trip to the east coast of Canada.

We left Halifax and headed to Gaspé and Perce Rock on the east shore of Quebec on the Atlantic Ocean. We got a motel near Perce Rock after driving almost 450 miles. We were tired and wanted something to eat, so we headed to the closest restaurant. After we ate, I got my camera to take some pictures of the rock from the pier. The sun was at the right angle to light up the rock a golden color and it was beautiful to look at. We then headed back to the motel to rest. At the motel I changed into another outfit. I put on my blue dress with a full skirt and a pageboy wig, then touched up my makeup, put on my three inch heels and went for a walk in the town. Then back to the motel where I talked to the people who rented the room beside us. I talked in my most feminine voice possible, the same soft, medium pitch I used when ordering a meal. Anyway, we talked for about a half hour about the rock formations and the other parts of Canada we had enjoyed. The wind was blowing up the bluffs at the edge of the ocean, lifting my dress again and showing my slip. Either the couple did not notice or did not care who they were talking to, but it was enjoyable being accepted as a woman.

I got used to eating in places like McDonalds and Swiss Chalet, sitting next to real people and not have them look at you with strange looks. I practised being inconspicuous by learning to

take smaller bites and sipping my drink.

I guess the real test at being Joanne was in the Gaspé on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. A Quebec Provincial Police speed trap in a small village caught me exceeding the speed limit. The officer pulled me over and asked for my drivers licence and insurance. I grabbed my purse and gave him the papers; he walked back to his patrol car and proceeded to write up my ticket. He then returned and handed back the papers and the speeding ticket saying in French that my insurance had expired. I told him in a soft voice that I was on holiday and would look into it as soon as possible. Perhaps because the officer was French and my name was English, he didn't realize the name was masculine. Anyway, if my name had been Bob or Peter who knows what would have happened.

I just wanted to tell you about my unforgettable three week vacation, living and being accepted as a female and dressing in the clothes I have always wanted to wear. Passing as a woman in public has allowed me to enjoy the beautiful things in life, and being a member of Tri-Ess has let me indulge in my feminine fantasy forever.

Joanne



Where Do We Go From Here?

As we begin our third year, I've been thinking a little of our group and the crossroads I believe we're at. I realize we're a spontaneous sort of organization which doesn't do much long term planning and I genuinely hate to bog us down in anything as dry as policies and procedures, but I think this is a good time to ask the dreaded question, Where do we go from here?

Obviously our base must continue to be our social/support role, but as the needs and horizons of the members grow, there's a danger that the organization may lose its relevance if it doesn't grow also.

There is a portion of the group, for example, that is out of the closet far enough that they wish to go out in public more, and who consequently find that going to the meetings is no longer sufficiently challenging.

Actor Gary Merrill, known for his supporting roles in *Twelve O'Clock High* and *All About Eve* and for his stormy marriage with Bette Davis, died March 5th of cancer. He was 74. The colorful, spirited actor, whose penchant for wearing skirts on hot days was known in the Portland area, appeared in 42 films during a career that spanned more than 40 years. Asked one summer day why he was wearing a skirt, he said: "I believe in wearing no clothes at all, and this is the closest you can get to it in public. (It always annoys me that men have to justify wearing a skirt. I have yet to hear anyone ask a punker why he's wearing

What keeps them going is the friendships they've made, but they'll come less and less often if they feel their opportunity for personal growth is no longer expanding.

Similarly, there are others who feel we don't do nearly enough in terms of public education. I must admit it sometimes seems to me we operate in isolation. We get confidential referrals and are surprisingly well known amongst the crossdressing underground, but I doubt if many in the "real" world know about us. This contributes to the feeling that while it seems our horizons have expanded, perhaps its only a case where the prison is a little larger.

Anyone who has spent time in the closet (and we all have) knows that it's not a healthy experience. I think the same is true of a crossdressing group.

What do you think?

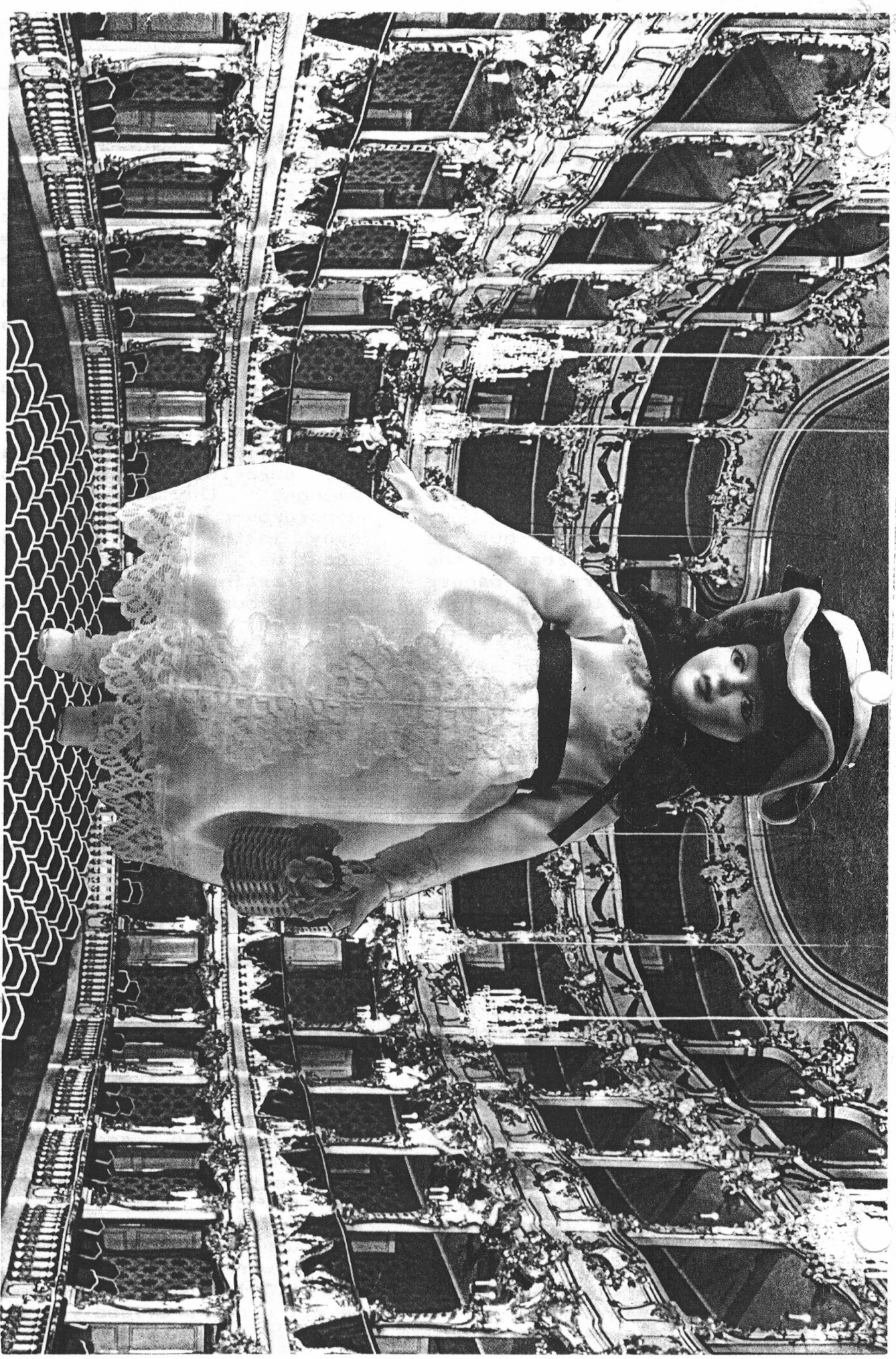
World Watch



a safety pin through his nose.)

The Uruguayan senate has banned women wearing trousers from entering its chamber. The new dress code also makes a tie obligatory for men, although apparently men in skirts were never specifically banned. I wonder if it would be all right provided you wore a tie.

Ted



A MAGNIFICENT ENTRANCE

BY JIM

THE BACK PAGE