



A Publication of Transgenderist's Independence Club, Albany, NY

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN - Winnie [REDACTED]

If you follow the scientific news, it seems that researchers are continually discovering curious facts about biological sex and gender, compiling evidence which should eventually lead to confirmation that our transgendered behavior is perfectly natural and not in any way perverted. As reported in articles reprinted here, there is a small area of the brain that is larger in men than in women, *including the TS variety of women.*

Then, there are some amazing transsexual fish - they can undergo a complete genital and brain transformation in **just 4 days!** Think of it - ejaculating sperm on Sunday, laying eggs on Thursday! No two-year real-life test, no hormone pills, no electrolysis, no psychiatrists, no surgery. And if they don't like it, they can change back next week! H'mm, now, how about that Little Mermaid?

Our heartfelt wishes for a complete and speedy recovery go to Jennifer [REDACTED], who suffered a stroke earlier in November. This was not her first, but we hope it was her last. Jennifer came to our meeting on November 16, much better but with some remaining speech problems. We miss her column this month.

CANDIDATES WANTED FOR TGIC ELECTIONS

So far, few have volunteered to run for office in TGIC. We need a full slate to put on the ballot in January, and I will be twisting arms this month. Please re-read the list of jobs in last month's newsletter, and Callan's *Adventure* article in this. If you want the Club to continue and grow, come forward **now!**

XMAS PARTY AT CLUB ROOM DECEMBER 7

The TGIC Xmas Party is set for **December 7**, in the Club Room at 7 pm. That's **this** Thursday, if you read our newsletter when you receive it and the Post Office delivers on time. We will have the room decorated and bring in a couple of party platters of food, and drink to go with it. Come earlier if you can help to set up. Bring a grab-bag gift if you wish to exchange surprises - suggested price \$10-\$15. And dress in your festive finery. Hope to see you all!

DINNER PARTIES

Our November party was held at Oceans Eleven on Rt. 20. The six who came agreed that the food was great and we had a good time, despite slow service - it was a busy night. The next dinner party is scheduled for **December 16** at 8 pm, at a location still to be determined. Please sign up at the club room or call 436-4513 and leave a message for Joan by Thursday, December 14, or call Joan at 377-4546. Leave your number so we can confirm the location, etc.

Contents

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN - Winnie [REDACTED]	1
Drag Goes Straight in London	2
ADVENTURE IS WHERE YOU FIND IT - Callan [REDACTED]	3
Male Transsexuals' Brains Resemble Female Brains	4
FEELING PRETTY - Callan [REDACTED]	5
The Short and Tragic Life of a Neighborhood "Sissy"	6
"Bisexual" Fish Found in Japan	6
Ravena Bans Male Crossdressing	7
GenderQueer Charged with Rape for Consensual Sex	7
Hejiras: Castration & Condoms	7
CALLAN'S HALLOWEEN 95 - Callan [REDACTED]	8
QUOTE UNQUOTE - Rex [REDACTED]	8
WORLD AIDS DAY - DECEMBER 1	9
ANNOUNCEMENTS	10
CALENDAR	10

Drag Goes Straight in London

LONDON, Oct 31 (Reuter) - Cross-dressing is the latest craze to hit the entertainment world and with Hollywood actors leading the way, London's underground drag scene has burst out of the closet with blazing colours.

Ebon-Knee, Ruby Venezuela and Regina Fong are just some of the cabaret performers entertaining straight and gay audiences at clubs such as Madame JoJo's and the Way Out Bar. They say drag has lost its seedy image and now draws a wider public, helped by the success of films like "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," and "To Wong Foo, thanks for everything, Julie Newmar."

"I would say that 80% of our customers are straight," says Steve Bell, manager of Madame JoJo's. "A lot of straight people want to find out about the drag scene, not because they want to get involved in it, but they want to be able to see it," he says. "It's like looking into a goldfish bowl."

"Drag has been going on for ages, but it's only now that it's getting such a high profile," says Alex, assistant manager and waitress at the club where he is known as "Barbie." Alex is slim, with never-ending legs and impossibly narrow hips - only a hint of stubble betrays his androgynous beauty as male. In full make-up, he is so glamorous that many customers refuse to believe they are watching a man.

At the other end of the spectrum, Regina Fong, aka Reginald Bundy, attracts a rowdy crowd of mostly gay men to his ultra-camp variety shows at the "Black Cap" pub in north London. Bundy has performed in drag for nearly 20 years and says audiences are more mixed now because drag acts are becoming politically correct.

"It was really very unpleasant for women to watch drag," says Bundy. "You used to have drag acts and they'd always do a pregnant scene, and they'd bring out cucumbers, and it was really putting down women. I think that's stopped," he adds. "Now people bring their girlfriends and they don't feel as threatened by it anymore."

But if drag is all the rage, transvestism still has a sordid image and many men hide the habit from family and friends. At "Adam as Eve," a small salon with tinted windows, men pay to receive make-overs and wear themed outfits ranging from demure brides to black lace and garters.

Josie Cahill, a blue-eyed Irish woman with a gentle, comforting voice, says she has received 800 phone calls since she opened the salon in September and 18 people have already used the facilities.

"This seems to be a fantasy for the men who come in but it's not a sexual fantasy," Cahill says. "They're happy enough to get dressed and walk around, read magazines, watch TV and have a drink and they don't pester you for anything else. I would say about 70 to 75 percent of them are what we call closet dressers," she says. "I see a lot of personalities change as well as clothes," Cahill says. "They're trying to keep up this macho image all the time and the clothes just let them escape from that. It's becoming more acceptable, but I don't think it's happening fast enough."

Some drag artists are angry that the makers of "Priscilla" and "To Wong Foo" are putting straight actors like Patrick Swayze in the principal roles. "Having three heterosexuals playing the characters annoyed me immensely," says Bundy. "Drag is part of gay culture, and then you get heterosexuals in a way being voyeuristic and making films, but not with gays, because that's not acceptable," Bundy says. "Why can't they get a gay person to do it? Because it's our story."

TGIC

PO Box 13604, Albany, NY 12212-3604
(518) 436-4513 (live Thurs. 8-10 pm)

Transgenderist's Independence Club (TGIC) is a nonprofit, educational, non-sexual social support group for persons wishing to explore beyond the conventional boundaries of gender, including crossdressers, transsexuals and their friends.

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Newsletter Editor Winnie [REDACTED]

The Transgenderist is the newsletter of TGIC, published monthly and mailed First Class to members, prospective members, friends, professionals, and exchange publications.

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Adventure Is Where You Find It

Callan [REDACTED] Copyright © 1995

Halloween. The Sacred High Holy For Crossdressers, at least according to JoAnn Roberts. It is the one time left in our year when you can go out dressed in anything you want, in masks that conceal your history and reveal your inner nature.

What did you do this Halloween? Did you take a risk, like walking into the Marriott in nothing but a negligee and a mink stole? Or did you stay at home and think about what your life could be like?

Life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving!

RuPaul, stealing a great line from Auntie Mame.

We learn when we are challenged, when we lift our heads to see a greater horizon, when we overcome challenges we thought were impossible.

Linda [REDACTED] has noted "When I leave home I don't set out to change a flat tire in a dress, but if it happens, well, heck!" Linda, Chair of the IFGE Board of Directors, is the kind of girl who dives into life with two high heel clad feet, walking into situations that would scare the heck out of most of us. And you know what? She survives and she even has fun.

Living life with gusto is a scary thought for many of us. To step up and accept the challenge, to take the responsibility of being out there, in your own way, working to help others and to new vistas, new breakthroughs for yourself is very tough. But it is the most rewarding thing we can do, gives us the focus and the energy that makes life worth living.

*Life engenders life. Energy creates energy.
It is by spending oneself that one becomes rich.*

Sarah Bernhardt

What kind of challenges can you face? Winnie has put some up to you: Help make TGIC the kind of place that better supports transgendered people in upstate New York. Give more opportunities for the married crossdresser to find some escape, more effort into working for support of diversity, more room for the transgendered to find a life that satisfies them and lets them give back to the world.

There are no great acts, only small acts done with great love

Mother Theresa

Every goal ever achieved by humans was achieved one small step at a time by people who didn't start out being great, merely started acting from their own love and caring, love and caring we all have.

If you are bored with your life, if you feel you need something more, remember that giving is receiving. Remember that all the people you admire are just

humans like you who took a risk, put themselves out there and did their best.

What kind of adventures do you dream of? Are they as simple as sitting in church in a pretty dress, or as complex as spending Carnival in Rio? You are capable of anything, as long as you do it one step at a time, start out on a journey that means something to you.

The primary purpose of transgender support groups is to support people in opening up the possibilities incarnate in them that have not yet become real, that have been suppressed by the expectations of this world. Is our goal to fit as well as possible into what people expect of us or to become all we are capable of being? This is the challenge we each face.

A few people will step up to a challenge next month when they choose to give of themselves to TGIC, to learn about themselves by facing new challenges. They will be concerned about how much time they have to give, about how well they can do what is needed, about what being out even enough to help TGIC will mean to their lives.

And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.

The Beatles

Are you ready to have more love, more adventure, more life in your life? Are you ready to take another step on the path of becoming more comfortable in your own skin?

The only antidote to self loathing and shame is pride -- and the pride of doing something that will help others, to stand up and take control of something that will help make the world a little better place for those who are suffering the stigma of being transgendered, including those teenagers struggling with transgender everyday.

There is work to be done. Simple work, tasks that anyone can do -- and with some learning and openness, tasks anyone can learn to do better and better. One little bit of work that helps your community -- and helps you in the process.

Don't spend too much time thinking about all the possible problems -- if you do that, your life will be stopped in its tracks. There are lots of reasons that you might fail -- but with a little energy, lots of ways that you can succeed, that every step towards control is a step towards your own success -- and your own freedom.

You know what you need to do to help make this world a bit better -- all you need to do is to do it. Some teach, some write, some politic, and some help make a little TG group in Albany keep moving forward, helping people like it has for almost 30 years. Transgender Hostesses passing on the caring and hospitality that they received -- and keeping the gift of pride by passing it on. Maybe that's you.

Male Transsexuals' Brains Resemble Female Brains

Washington Post, Thursday, November 02, 1995

Scientists in Holland have found preliminary evidence that male transsexuals —men who identify sexually with women — have a strikingly different brain structure from "ordinary" men, at least in one key area about one-eighth of an inch wide.

In today's issue of the journal *Nature*, a team of researchers from Amsterdam reports that it conducted post-mortem exams on the brains of six male-to-female transsexuals. Specifically, the researchers studied one particular part of the hypothalamus, called the central division of the bed nucleus of the striaterminalis (BSTc).

This area, which is thought to influence sexual behavior, is on average 44 percent larger in men than in women. Yet all six subjects had BSTc regions that were the size of women's, Dick Swaab of the Netherlands Institute for Brain Research and colleagues found.

BSTc volume is not related to homosexuality, the researchers concluded from post-mortem analyses of 36 other brains, including those of gay men and heterosexuals of both sexes: "The BSTc was 62 percent larger in homosexual men than in heterosexual women." Nor does it appear to be a factor in sexual orientation in general. Of the six transsexuals, three had been attracted to women, two were attracted to men and one was bisexual.

Psychiatrist Sandra Witelson of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, said the work adds "to the body of knowledge that has been accumulating in the past five or six years, all of which shows that there are biological correlates to variation in human sexual behavior."

The authors of today's paper argue that the transsexuals' "feminine" BSTc volume arose from biochemical conditions early in life — perhaps during fetal development. The findings, they conclude, "support the hypothesis that gender identity develops as a result of an interaction between the developing brain and sex hormones."

Under the supervision of brain-specialist Prof. D. Swaab, researchers have studied the brains of 6 deceased transsexuals. According to Swaab, this research proves that transsexualism not caused by psychological disorders.

In the late 80's, Swaab caused a fair amount of commotion by stating that research of the brains of homosexual men showed that their sexual inclination was biologically determined."

A few hours later, Prof. Swaab and the endocrinologist/transsexuologist Prof. L. Gooren were interviewed on Dutch television. Gooren stressed that these researchers only examined the brains of M->F transsexuals: "Only one herd of all the people that are treated in our clinic is F->M. Until now, only very few transsexuals have died - that's why we only had 6 brains to examine. And all of those used to belong to M->F transsexuals."

The proof was found in the hypothalamus, Swaab explained. "On the top of this part in the brain is a small group of cells. In biological males, it's twice as big as in biological females. But in M->F transsexuals, it's got the same size as in biological women." Because the human brain-patterns develop in the four years after birth, it is very probable that the sexual differentiation also takes place in this period. According to Swaab, the first signs of transsexualism appear at an early age: "Professor Cohen, of the Utrecht University, has been observing possibly transsexual children for quite a number of years now. Her findings seem to prove that the first signs become evident between the age of 5 and 8."

Gooren added that the research project was primarily meant to understand the phenomenon, *not* to find a cure. He is convinced that especially non-Dutch transsexuals can benefit from the research findings. "In the Netherlands, transsexualism is legally recognized. People can change their name and gender, and all treatment is paid by the national Health Care. But in other countries, transsexuals have to tear down a lot of walls to be accepted as the man or woman they really are, deep inside. I sincerely hope that their troubles will be diminished in the future. After all, you can't change Nature, now can you?"

A group of British transsexuals have already asked permission to use the research findings in court. "They claim the right to change their name and gender in official records. And in my opinion, they have a very strong case now", Gooren concluded.

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Feeling Pretty

You write:

> A friend's current hobby is scolding me about my bad attitude about passability; she says I have no problem, I say they're polite at the dojo because there's a culture of politeness there, and basically they're all just "going along with the joke" when I intro'ed myself as a woman.

This is not about passability -- it's about believing in your woman-self. You look fine, that's not the issue. No amount of makeup or padding will help. Linda & Cyn say "attitude is important but that doesn't mean you can look like an unmade. un-laundered bed"-- and if you have a good attitude you will want to look good anyway.

What will help is a sense of self confidence and comfort with yourself. You come from your woman space and you are a woman, no matter if you still have a dick or some male secondary sexual characteristics show. It's the 10 minute rule -- anyone can pick you apart on your appearance alone, just like we can pick most people at the mall apart. What we have to come to is being strong and together enough to spend 10 minutes with someone and have them find a bit about who we are, and then it all goes away. We just deal with another human after that.

At the Dojo you feel safe, like you won't be humiliated, don't have to hide. But when you have just changed over, are rushing from the day, feel like "Evil Twin" is still around, you feel ugly, goofy, wierd, and those feelings read. Feel strong and safe. . .

Whenever I feel afraid
I hold my head up high
and whistle a happy tune
so no one will suspect
I'm afraid.

Sue is strong and pretty in her own special way. She feels comfortable she can show off her best features and minimize her worst. She's grown up and is comfortable in her body. Sure, she ain't perfect, but she's good -- and parts of her are excellent.

She does the best she can with what she got -- and anyone who wants to quibble, fuck'em. She tries to get better everyday, in some way or other, and that's great.

Is there really any other choice?

Callan

Subj: RE: Feeling Pretty
To: [REDACTED]

Callan,

Thanks for the e-mail reply; if I hadn't talked with you last night before seeing it, it might have been more helpful, but as is, the best perspective on this problem-situation is the one you proposed last night: "So meet your friendly neighborhood transgendered person, let's be friends". That one works for me, changing passing-failure (I guess I have a thing about failure, I'd suspect) to acceptably presenting as a third possibility, only in that (or similar) contexts. That works okay for me where failure to pass completely (or as close as I can manage) as a garden variety vanilla woman doesn't. I'm far from

willing to present everywhere/everywhen as a tg person; woman is where I want to be most of the time, most places (with the exception of necessity-driven exceptions like work), but that different category for that or a few environments like it will do.

Thanks, doll! (sane again)

Subj: Re: Feeling Pretty

Look hon -- you ****ARE**** a woman. That's your gender role, one you feel, one you live, one you identify with, one you are developing.

You happen to be a woman who was born with a penis, and because of that were assigned to the boy category until you chose to leave it. This makes you transgendered -- you are living in a gender category that you were not socialized for.

Most people will see you as a woman. Be one. But at some time under some condition, the issue of your transgender will come up. You have to decide if you want to switch everything to "when I was a little girl," lying about your past, or you want to remain obscure ("as a child...") or you want to say it out loud.

This may come up because someone is rude enough to confront you ("May I help you ****SIR****?") or because someone is fishing around about your past ("So Sue, tell us about when you got your first period. . ."), or because you just decide to clear the air, break the ice.

None of this means you are not passing, unless you define passing as "deceiving people into believing that I was born female and was socialized as a woman." You are a woman, and if they give you shit, tough noogies. But they will get cranky if they think you deceived them, you broke an implicit honesty & intimacy.

I don't even use the word passing anymore. I may want to blend in, to assimilate, to not be noticed, and that's OK. But there are lots of women who want to blend in and have trouble, get called out -- fat women, handicapped women, scarred women, women of colour, dwarf women -- anyone who doesn't fit a whitebread model of what a woman is. They get harrassed, put down, and hooted at by insensitive boors -- and respected by others who admire their courage to be out and proud in the face of challenges.

Honey, you are a woman. A woman with a unique history and an atypical body. A woman by choice, not because it was the default. In fact, you have the courage and inner strength to face stigma, and that makes you very special -- and very precious.

Will some see your scars as deformities? Yes, the people who have not yet healed their own wounds, who loath themselves will. But for others, the strength of your character & personality is the real test., and those shine.

Sure, you'll suffer a few slings. But you have suffered much worse and survived. You can hold your head up proud and smile, take your time and live your own life.

You are a woman. That simple. You don't have to pass as anything. There is no failure, only pain. And you have faced that and blossomed as the Phoenix.

Callan

THE SHORT AND TRAGIC LIFE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD 'SISSY'

Column by Victoria Brownworth

Tuesday, October 31, 1995 PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

Tonight, kids will be going door to door in Halloween costumes. There will be the usual high-pitched shrieks of laughter and shouts of "Boo" as children run through the streets, bags of candy swinging.

In Middletown, Del., neighbors caught up in the excitement of the holiday may actually stop thinking about 9-year-old Steven Wilson for a while. For Karen Wilson, the boy's mother, the pain of hearing the happy voices of other children may be almost unbearable. Her son won't be among the revelers. Her son is gone for good. The shrieks she hears in the streets outside may make her wonder again what the last moments of her son's life were like, may make her want to scream out her own anguish.

It's been two weeks since little Steven disappeared; two weeks since he was murdered not far from the apartment complex where he lived. Fifteen-year-old Lamont Harden has been charged with the murder. Police say Harden has confessed.

But that is only part of the story of the short and terribly sad life of Steven Wilson. The rest of the tale is just as grim.

Steven wasn't like other boys. He had a learning disability, he was shy - a loner, his mother told reporters when he was still missing. And he liked to play with dolls, with girl's toys.

"They teased him a lot," said one neighbor who admitted her child was among his persecutors. "He would hide in my house," said one of his baby sitters.

Steven was afraid of the children in his neighborhood. Afraid of the taunts, afraid of being "picked on," afraid of how being different had made him a target.

Steven was right to be afraid. There was shock in Middletown when Steven's little, battered body was found in a nearby creek. There was horror a few days later when police announced Harden's arrest at a town meeting and told a packed hall how brutal Steven's murder was.

But while Steven was missing, and in the days afterward, as Harden and other children were questioned about his murder, the mothers of Middletown worried: Had their children been involved in the boy's death? Because apparently they had all been involved in the daily torture he endured in life. Several mothers admitted their fear; others found it difficult to believe Harden committed the killing alone. "Steven didn't go with people," said one mother, adamantly.

Whether or not Harden had accomplices who helped him fracture Steven's skull in several places, break his jaw, crack his teeth, viciously rape him and drown him in the creek, we may never know.

But if Steven hadn't been a "sissy" who liked to play with dolls, if he hadn't been the target of nearly every child in the neighborhood, perhaps he would not have become the victim of murder.

Homophobia has many guises. A boy who likes girl's toys or clothes gets taunted, hit, assaulted or raped. The perpetrators often say they were trying to teach the victim a lesson, teach him the difference between masculine and feminine.

Perhaps that's what Harden wanted to do to Steven. Perhaps the kind of "games" the neighborhood children played with Steven - taunts, bullying, violence - just got out of hand and he was killed.

Harden will be tried and likely convicted. But while what Harden stands accused of doing to Steven is certainly the most awful of the many crimes committed against this child, there were many others.

There was a climate in Middletown that made Steven afraid every day of his short life. And that climate may have contributed to his death; made Harden believe no one cared what happened to Steven, that his death was no one's loss.

The climate in Middletown has changed since Steven's murder; mothers say they are afraid, but don't say of what. Something happened in this small town, but it could have happened anywhere.

This Halloween night, a ghost hovers over Middletown. His name is Steven Wilson, and he's seeking the justice and peace he never found in life.

Victoria A. Brownworth's column on gay issues appears every other Tuesday in the Philadelphia Daily News, alternating with Mubarak Dahir's

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"Bisexual" Fish Found In Japan

Source: Associated Press, Tuesday, November 14, 1995

SAN DIEGO - A species of fish that can change sex, altering genitalia and behavior to suit social circumstances, has been discovered off the coast of Okinawa, Japanese and American researchers report.

The tropical fish normally lives in groups of one dominant male and several females. If a larger male comes along, the dominant male changes into a subservient female; if something happens to the new dominant male, the largest female becomes a male, even if it was a male once before.

It has generally been believed that such changes are irreversible.

Biologist Matthew Grober of the University of Idaho told a meeting of the Society for Neuroscience Sunday that at least three species of fish, a variant of the gobi called *Trimma okinawae*, had been identified that could change sex repeatedly when required. Restructuring of genitalia and their brain takes place in about four days.

Grober said he and his colleagues had been able for the first time to induce the 2-inch fish to undergo such sexchanges in the laboratory, enabling study of accompanying changes in brain structure.

The discovery is significant because the brain region involved in the sex change is the same region recently suggested to cause transsexuality in humans, Grober said.

The fish, was discovered by marine biologist Tokomi Sunobe of the Natural History Museum and Institute in Chiba, Japan.

Grober and Sunobe found changes in the ventral forebrain, specifically in cells that produce the hormone *arginine vasotocin*, which directly controls sex-specific reproductive and parenting behaviors in a wide variety of vertebrates.

"Humans and fish have the same pieces of the engine that drives sexual differences," Grober said. It is difficult to study the brain in humans, he noted, but "we can play with the engine in fish and find really interesting insights about human behavior."

Grober said he had no idea how many times a male-female-male cycle could be repeated. He has just started an experiment in which "we'll run a single fish through the cycle over and over again until it dies or stops cycling."

JOSEFINA A. SPECKERT M.ED
PSYCHOTHERAPIST

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Ravena Bans Male Crossdressing: Calls It "Offensive To Women"

(Ravena, NY, AP) -- Cross-dressing is a no-no at one Albany-area high school. Even on Halloween.

Two boys dressed as women at Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk High School were sent home to change their clothes yesterday.

Principal Andrew [REDACTED] says the costumes Jed [REDACTED] and Sean [REDACTED] were wearing might offend women.

And [REDACTED] says school officials made the policy against cross-dressing clear after a recent school government meeting.

But some students are yelling double standard since girls who dressed as men in ties and beards weren't sent home.

[REDACTED] said he thought it would be funny to dress as a six-foot-eight grandma. He plays center for the school basketball team. He wore his grandmother's purple dresscoat, a scarf and makeup.

[REDACTED]'s sister, Sarah, wore men's pants, a jacket, tie and a painted beard and sideburns with no repercussions.

GenderQueer Charged with Rape for Consensual Sex Making Gender-Privacy Criminal?

Colorado Springs, CO - October Sean O'Neill, a 20 year-old transgender person, has been charged with the sexual assault of 4 girls who claim they engaged in consensual sex on numerous occasions but were unaware that O'Neill, born Sharon Clark, was actually "a lesbian." O'Neill, who does not use the words "transsexual" or "transgendered," reportedly has a fluid approach to gender and lives primarily as a man, preferring male pronouns. Although the events in question occurred years ago when both O'Neill and the women were teenagers,

O'Neill is being charged with 11 felony counts, including sexual assault, criminal impersonation and sexual assault on a child. Total penalty is 32 years imprisonment, and O'Neill would be 52 upon release.

Charges were originally brought by two policewomen in the ultra-conservation Colorado Springs area, when O'Neill was picked up on a minor charge and admitted to having vaginal sex organs. His previous girlfriends refused cooperate in the prosecution until intensely pressured by the PD, parents, and the DA's office. If successful, the case would effectively equate failure to disclose one's genitals/genital status as a "criminal deception" and any resulting sex, consensual or not, as "sexual assault" or rape. This poses grave consequences for transpeople who are pre-operative or non-operative, and for trans-men who lack the \$60,000 (or the desire) for a complete phallo-plasti. Under Colorado's interpretation, the murder of transpeople (like the bloody May 16 slaying of Deborah Forte following her date's discovery of her penis) could be defended on grounds of "justifiable homicide" since they would be engaged in the de facto "rape" of their assailants. This is strongly reminiscent of the odious "homosexual panic" defense, long used in conservative jurisdictions to justify the murders of gay men by offended straights. O'Neill's case is covered in detail in the October issue of *OUT* Magazine by Donna Minkowitz.

The Menace is planing a series of educational demonstrations in concert with local activists, the M-t-M community, and any interested Lesbian Avengers. Contact Riki@Pipeline.Com for further details.

Hejiras: Castration & Condoms

"In April, an AIDS activist organization in Madras, India, made a public plea that eunuchs convening for their annual festival near the city later in the month use condoms during their wild celebration. Many, but fewer than half, of the country's 400,000 eunuchs retain their penises, and Community Action Network estimated that 10,000 sex acts would take place at the close of the 15 day gathering. An AIDS activist said that because most eunuchs were recruited by force, they are 'angry' and show little sexual restraint."

A bizarre story made even more bizarre by a mistranslation the festival in question is not a gathering of eunuchs, strictly speaking, but of hijras, as they are called in India. Hijras are men who live as women, or to put it another way, transsexuals with religion, being devotees of the mother goddess Bahuchara Mata. Many but not all have been castrated, voluntarily for the most part, although there have been reports over the years of hijras who were forcibly emasculated. A few are hermaphrodites that is, born with both male and female plumbing, typically underdeveloped. Some hijras, or perhaps we should say parahijras, are normally endowed homosexual men who just like the hijra lifestyle.

The lifestyle is the thing, see. "What makes hijras hijras is not biology or anatomy but culture," says Arvind Kumar, editor of San Jose, California based *India Currents* magazine, which has run stories on hijras. "Most hijras cross dress, i.e., wear women's clothing, makeup, etc. Their public behavior and mannerisms are high camp, highly exaggerated feminine gestures, but they make no effort to mask their male voices. Most hijras are good singers and dancers and entertainers. Their presence at weddings is thought to bring good luck.

"There is not a birth in the country that goes unmonitored by the local hijra community they visit the house and demand to examine the newborn. In the old days it is said that if the baby's genitals were malformed, parents would not want to raise the child and the hijras would immediately take it away and raise it as their own.

"The coming of the British to India saw the downfall of the hijra community. During Muslim rule of India hijras were harem guards and court entertainers and many enjoyed privileged status. The British viewed them as freaks to be shunned, an attitude that prevails among westernized urban Indians. Today hijras are made fun of and avoided, but there is much greater tolerance of them in rural areas."

But there's more to being a hijra than flaming for the yokels. While they support themselves to an extent by begging, their major source of income apparently is prostitution, for which purpose they are in much demand. Hijras are invariably the passive partner, taking their customers anally or between the thighs.

Although not all who call themselves hijras are eunuchs, many hijras say you cannot be a true hijra until you have been castrated. (I rely here on the research of anthropologist Serena Nanda.) The highly ritualized operation is done without anesthetic. Two quick cuts are made, severing both testicles and penis. A stick is inserted to keep the urethra open for purposes of urination. No attempt is made to stanch the bleeding or stitch the wound, which is repeatedly treated with hot sesame oil to prevent infection. Despite all this, one veteran castrator claims that out of 1,000 patients he lost only one.

The number of hijras is uncertain. One researcher puts it at 50,000; a recent press account of the annual hijra festival says 200,000. Fifty thousand people showed up at the festival, of whom 10,000 were hijras. It was the 40,000 non hijras (and the non emasculated faux hijras) who needed the condoms the AIDS activists were urging upon them. Sex among the hijras isn't completely inexplicable, but it's still pretty weird.

As reported by "The Straight Dope's" Cecil Adams, via Chuck Shepherd's "News of the Weird" feature

Callan's Halloween 95

Halloween, the one day where we can assume the mask that both conceals our everyday identity and reveals our inner one, is very powerful for me and for all transgendered people. Halloween (and other rituals) are about revealing our "shadow selves" as Jung called them – and we have been taught to deny them in this world. We must have courage to reveal parts of we have been told to keep hidden.

At the Black Velvet Art Party Friday night in Lake George, I won the Tres Tacky Award in the Women's Division. Turns out a black panne velvet unitard (worn with boots and a cranberry peignoir) can come in handy! Melodie, who was also there asked if they "knew." Yes, they knew I was born male, but some artists get it. It was funny – the M.C kept calling me a guy, but I eventually won a woman's award – and was cheered on by a group of women I was dancing with. One asked me my birth name, and when I told her, said "Callan suits you better."

I gave a great interview to the *Post Star*, but my comments about Elvis living as a waitress in a truck stop ("... it's a lonely life except for a few truckdrivers she takes back to her room...") were bowdlerized, and the comments about shamans about transgender – and that I won the woman's award just passed him by.

At the Priscilla Party on Sunday at the Blythewood, the place was packed with great looks and Sal, who was doing the classic horny drag queen number. They even built a rock to stand on. I had a nice chat with Aaron, an Anthro Prof. from SUNYA about Gynemimetic Shamans. He noted that one indicator of "crossdressing" behavior was a reasonably high status of women, which looks to be a good excuse for the rise in the visibility of CDs, but was stunned when I talked about the growth of the F2M community.

Jason Cromwell has done work on TG and creation myths and has shown that where there are feminine, animal or polytheistic myths, TG behavior is much more prevalent than in male myth places. The first group tolerates and encourages transformation. The shift in the creation myth of our culture, from a religious one to a technological myth of continuous change is crucial to the opening of TG.

Tuesday I drove down to the old Rhinecliff Hotel for the Clam Club's *Night In Hell* tonight. From the Tampon cookies to the medical dissection photos, it was queer & fun. – I had good conversations, either serious, playful and flirting, and those are hard to find.

As for me, I wore my little shiny black vinyl mini with the zippers and matching cycle vest, with the deep cut black leotard (one gal came up and said "Aren't WonderBras great?") and my little black sneaker boots. It takes guts it takes to wrap a eighth of a ton of flesh and bone in lace & plastic.

My favorite part was climbing the rock face just behind the hotel, lit for the night with an eerie green glow with the gorgeous Maura. I tore my tights to shreds – but damn, I looked great – and very scary. Power femmes unite!

I always learn something on Halloween. From the days, 15 years ago, when I had to have a few drinks before I pulled off my jeans to reveal the Danskins of my superhero costume, on to today, when my essential transgendered nature shines out.

I walk in the spaces between worlds, a lesbian woman, a drag queen, a straight man, all at the same time. I am beginning to feel strong in those spaces, but sometimes I also feel lost. I touch the rage, the terror, the longing, the free floating fear all the time. Halloween is when worlds touch and it reminds me that my current reality limits me still and that there is much more to be.

I refuse to call it gender dysphoria – it's having visions of a world beyond the current limits that I just cant begin to talk about because "they" just don't get it. Harlan Ellison wrote "I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream" – for many of us it is "I have no words and I must scream."

I hope you had a safe and happy Halloween time, to discover, to challenge – and to know that what the future holds will be astonishing and beautiful.

Callan, 11/9/95

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QUOTE UNQUOTE #50 - Oct. 18, 1995

by Rex [REDACTED]

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"My life has changed 100 percent since coming out. The stuff I'm wanting to do right now is with the gay and lesbian community. I'm really at an action point where there's so much I want to see change and that's my real focus."

--Chastity Bono, daughter of Sonny & Cher, to Chicago's *Outlines*.

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"It's eliminated a lot of unspoken tension. It's really a fantastic feeling; I highly recommend it to anybody in any situation, to live in truth."

--Singer k.d. lang to The New York Times on coming out.

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"In a listing in the Sept. 15 *On The Air* column, we incorrectly identified actor Rosie O'Donnell as being openly Lesbian."

--A correction in The Washington Blade.

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"I'm openly gay because I'm a Catholic. A very core moral that I was taught growing up as a Roman Catholic is the idea of truth and honesty. In my book I quote the Holy Father: 'Be not afraid. Of what should we not be afraid? We should not fear the truth about ourselves.' To me, Catholicism is about truth, and honesty before one's fellow man and before God. My feeling about the equality of gay people springs out of my Catholicism. Homosexuality is not something that I chose. And if it is not something that I chose, it's something that God made me, and if God made me this way, I can't see that he would want me to be ashamed of it."

--Andrew Sullivan, editor of the influential journal *The New Republic*.

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"We will live to see the day that St. Patrick's Cathedral is a child-care center and the Pope is no longer a disgrace to the skirt that he has on."

--Ms. Magazine Editor Gloria Steinem at a rally following a protest march against Pope John Paul II's visit to New York.

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"I've never had much sympathy with gay Christians. I always thought it's ... essentially a failure to recognize that the biggest single source of oppression to gays has always been the Christian church. All you need to do is go to an atheist country like France, or Sweden, where religion is virtually dead, to feel the tremendous release. Or a culture like Southeast Asia where the religion is Buddhist."

--Famed gay author Edmund White to Atlanta's *Etcetera* magazine.

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"In the world according to televangelist Pat Robertson, all women are meant to marry, bear children, obey their husbands and stay home. And lesbians are the devil's handmaidens, luring innocent women away from God's chosen path."

--Deb Price, whose gay-issues column runs in mainstream newspapers.

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"If the lesbians, who don't have babies, if they can get their [heterosexual] sisters to be less than the fulfilled women they could be ... then of course they've brought them down to their level. ... There's such an incredible militancy on the part of lesbian women to get heterosexual women to abort their babies."

--Pat Robertson.

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On this, December 1, 1995, World AIDS Day,
the 15th year after AIDS has arrived,

We remember all of the wonderful people who have left us painfully,
who are sadly lost to this world,

We remember all who are suffering with AIDS all over the world,
all of them our sisters and brothers,

We think of all that will get AIDS before a cure is found,

And we think of those who are left behind,
left feeling a loss of love, caused by AIDS.

Together, we make a vow that their lives were full of meaning,
both for them, and for a world that needs to be reminded that life is precious
and must be valued in each of us,
that the creativity and energy of each one of us is sacred and must be
honored.

On this day of remembrance, we remember loss and know that while we are
in this world we must burn bright, shine in our diversity.

Death will always be a part of this world. But today, we vow to celebrate
this life in all its glory while we have it. We must live in love, not in fear.

And with this celebration of life, we understand that our sisters and brothers
with AIDS have given us the message:

L'Chaim, live life fully, care for each other.

Today, we remember this legacy of respect, caring and love.

And wherever they are, we wish peace to all who were touched by AIDS,
and we send them our love.

Amen.

Callan [REDACTED], 1994

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TRI-ESS MEETINGS IN SCHENECTADY

The Lambda Chi Lambda Chapter of Tri-Ess holds monthly Saturday meetings at a motel in Schenectady. The planned schedule is: Dec. 9, Jan. 20, Feb. 17, Mar. 16, Apr. 20, May 18, June 15.

BECOME AN IFGE MEMBER

The International Foundation for Gender Education is now a membership 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Basic membership is \$25. Subscriptions to *Tapestry* are \$40. Brochures and forms are available in the Club Room. Please contact TGIC, or write to: **IFGE, PO Box 229, Waltham, MA 02154-0229, (617) 899-2212**

ANONYMOUS HIV ANTIBODY TESTING

Your regional HIV Counseling and Testing Program provides free HIV counseling and antibody testing, support and referral. No names will be asked. (NYS Health Department) **Albany Area:** (518) 486-1595 or 1-800-962-5065.

CALENDAR

Regular Meetings are held every Thursday at the TGIC Club Room on Central Avenue in Albany, 7:30 - 10 pm. Some come earlier and stay later, but it is wise to call if you are not a Keyholder or if it is your first visit. Come dressed either way, meet and talk with friends. Many continue to socialize at one of the Central Ave. night spots after the meetings.

DECEMBER 1995

- Dec 7 **XMAS PARTY, 7pm Club Room**
- Dec 14 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Dec 16 **Dinner Party, 8:00 pm**
Location to be announced
- Dec 21 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Dec 28 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm

JANUARY 1996

- Jan 4 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Jan 11 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Jan 13 **Dinner Party, 8:00 pm**
Location to be announced
- Jan 18 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Jan 25 Thursday Meeting, 7:30 pm

MAJOR COMING EVENTS

- Contact TGIC for more information.

- Jan 24-28 **TCNE First Event**, Woburn, MA
- 2/27-3/3 **Texas T-Party**, Dallas, TX
- Mar 24-31 **IFGE Convention**, Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN
- Apr 20-23 **California Dreamin'**, Burbank
- May 16-19 **Paradise in the Poconos**, Canadensis, PA
- July 3-7 **TRANSGEN'96**, Houston, TX

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