

# A man for all seasons, but clothes for the best of reasons

by Dick Bigos

**T**he search for "androgyny" continued this past week as 100 or so cross-dressers gathered in this Cape-tip fishing village for the fifth Annual Fantasia Fair.

Beginning October 12th and ending ten days later, the Fantasia Fair is an activity sponsored by The Human Outreach and Achievement Institute of Boston.

Ariadne (pronounced 'arry-od-knee) Kane, founder and director of the Outreach Institute—a person who described him/herself as "a woman 40 percent of the time" has brought cross-dressers from around this country and Canada, Mexico and England together to "come out of the closet," making one of their wildest fantasies become reality for ten full days.

An androgynous person, according to Kane, is one "who no longer has to deal with gender roles. It is an ideal...right now, if one HAS to categorize people, my behavior represents the concept of bi-genderism."

Kane, who has a female spouse, lives in Boston. He makes a living as a consultant. As a woman, Ariadne provides supportive counselling to other cross-dressers and professionals (doctors, sex counsellors, social workers, etc.) who want to understand more about cross-dressers. As a man, Kane uses a different name and consults on a variety of educational projects.

Cross-dressers, better known as transvestites, though they are uncomfortable with the latter term because of the carnal sexual implications. According to Kane, most cross-dressers are heterosexual in sexual preference, many leaving their spouses and children at home to attend functions like Fantasia Fair.

"For the people at Fantasia Fair, ours is a gender trip," says Kane, "not a sexual one. We're not drag queens who cavort around in lascivious clothes always on the make, though I'm not sure this is true of the paraculture as a whole. Aside from this trait, we're pretty representative of society as a whole."

He explains, "People here run the gamut of economic, political, religious and sexual preference...just like the 'straights'. You'd be surprised at how many 'pillars of society' are a part of our paraculture."

The cross-dressers at Fantasia Fair kept a busy schedule. From registration and "change-over" to the closing Auld Lang Syne brunch, fair participants filled their days with receptions, dinners, seminars, swim parties, bathing suit competitions, variety and talent shows, fashion-beauty courses and awards banquets.

To "straights," including the residents of Provincetown which comprise about as diverse a group as one might ever encounter, Ariadne admits it can be pretty weird.

"But I don't expect you to accept me," says Kane, "just to tolerate me...be civil...that's all I can expect. I don't think it (cross-dressing) will ever really be acceptable because of the way our society is structured: if you don't conform, people feel insecure and threatened and they take it out on you."

**F**or cross-dressers, Fantasia Fair is a dream come true. For ten days they can wear feminine attire, use whatever make-up and wigs they desire,



OUTREACH INSTITUTE director "Ariadne" Kane.

Wednesday, October 24, 1979 - Cape Cod News - 7



socialize with others who share similar feelings and impulses, discuss the serious and legal aspects of their behavior...and do so in public. Granted, Provincetown isn't exactly the heartland of middle America, but it does constitute "a public."

According to Kane, "One of the problems the straight world has is who you go to bed with...anyone who doesn't conform to their view of a heterosexual is a pervert. But anyone who is a cross-dresser is basically a heterosexual."

In an attempt to delineate between those who live a lifestyle generally unacceptable to society as a whole, Fantasia Fair sponsored a public seminar last Wednesday at the Universalist Church on Commercial Street. About 100 people attended, half of which were not cross-dressers.

**Panelist included Al Bouchard, a male gay person and founder of Clearspace, a Boston community center for lesbians and gay men; Linda Carfoot, a lesbian who is a member of the Massachusetts Gay Political Caucus**

**and operator of Beacon Tours, a gay Boston travel agency; Erica Gallagher, a transsexual male to female post-op and Ariadne Kane, a cross-dresser. The seminar was moderated by Fantasia Fair cross-dresser Jarah Chandler.**

Bouchard spoke of the need "to come out of the closet" and related a personal history of job firings, military discharge and social ostracism which he attributes to his gayness.

Gallagher, a now-divorced single woman, now considers herself heterosexual, dresses in feminine attire, but says she has "never cross-dressed" and attributes her condition to a hormone imbalance at birth. All of her formerly male personal life documents, including birth certificate, driver's license and school records now reflect her life as a woman.

Carfoot, the lesbian, told the group "I don't think we (gay people) have much in common with you. I don't know if we can support it (transvestites), but we can at least try not to negate it."

After Kane's presentation on cross-dressers, the crowd asked questions. And while all of the groups represented on the panel share a "lack of acceptance from the straights," they really didn't know much about each other...in some cases "tolerating" each other. Some were not ready to go so far as to be "comfortable" with the varying lifestyles represented, perhaps feeling, in many ways about each other, as the "straights" generally feel about them collectively.

**A**side from Fantasia Fair, the Outreach Institute offers a counselling service, publishes a newsletter and sponsors a Spring Gala Weekend each year in Boston "to give people a flavor of cross-dressing." It has a post office box (Kenmore Station, Box 368, Boston, MA 02215), but does not have a phone or walk-in service.

Cross-dressing is a barely understood phenomena, even by cross-dressers. According to Kane, libraries can't keep books on the subject stocked "because they're ripped-off," usually by people who might not want to purchase these books, even if available, at a neighborhood bookstore.

Married, unmarried; parent, non-parent; young, old; rich, poor; blue-collar worker, corporation

executive...such are the people who cross-dress and, for a moment, they let the Cape Cod News observe their life close-up.

**For this writer, exploring the world of cross-dressers was an experience we're not likely to forget. Unusual even for the streets of Provincetown after five years of Fantasia Fairs, so we stood out as unusual in a private reception just preceding their awards banquet in the Gifford House.**

Interestingly enough, where they ask for "toleration," they gave acceptance...not an easy thing to do for straights who could go back and ridicule them in a local paper.

There's no denying it's a weird trip. Very weird when an elderly transvestite talks of "always wanting to wear fine nylon and light lace, standing on high heels just like I'm on top of the world."

"Normal," as most of us define it, surely does not apply here. It is a paraculture of people who express behavior modes which include cross-dressers, androgynes, transgenderists and transsexuals... complicated terms for a society whose understanding of the sexes is mostly gleaned during five or ten minutes with Walter Cronkite each evening. ■