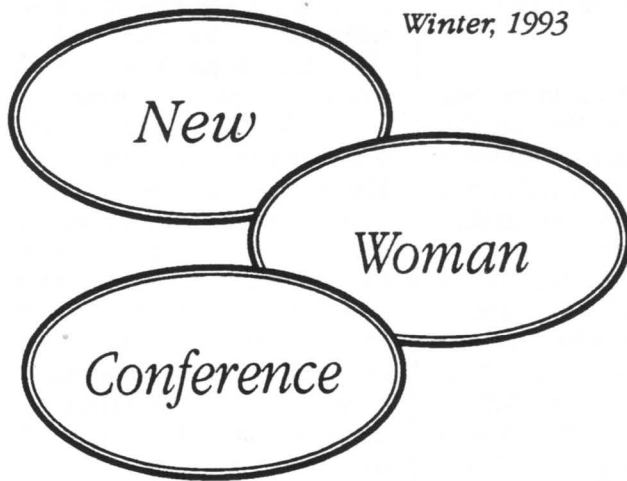


Volume 2, No. 1
Winter, 1993



Rites of Passage

The Newsletter of the
New Woman Conference

New Woman Conference
P.O. Box 67
S. Berwick, ME 03908
TEL (207) 676-5870

Dallas Denny, Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *Rites of Passage*, the official newsletter of the *New Woman Conference*. To those of you who may not know who we are, the NWC is an annual retreat limited to postoperative transsexual women and their female partners. The Conference is woman-only space in which new women can heal their wounds and look to their futures. The climax of the Conference is a literal Rite of Passage in which those who have recently had surgery are welcomed by their sisters in a ritual which celebrates their blood ties.

Those interested in attending NWC 1993, which will be held near San Francisco, California, should write or call for information.

We need submissions for Volume 2, No. 2 of the new *Rites of Passage*. Our content is limited to post-transition issues, but within that framework, we welcome your letters, articles, fiction, poetry, and cartoons. Please send submissions to Ms. Dallas Denny, Editor, *Rites of Passage*, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033. TEL (404) 939-0244.

NWC 1993

23-26 September

On the Russian River

near San Francisco, California

For information, write NWC

Wendi Kaiser, Christina Young, Angela Wensley, & Anne Ogborn, Coordinators

P.O. Box 67
S. Berwick, ME 03908
TEL (207) 676-5870

Some of you may have seen Anne Ogborn's excellent *Rites of Passage* magazine, which until now has been NWC's official organ. Anne's magazine will be continuing with the name Transsexual News Telegraph (TNT for short). Details of the Second Annual *New Woman Conference*, which was held in Essex, Massachusetts, 10-13 September, 1992, will be covered in the last issue of Anne's *Rites of Passage* Magazine, which will soon go to press. NWC 1993, which will be held near San Francisco, California, will be covered in this newsletter.

Rites of Passage

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The NWC is a nonprofit organization which promotes the welfare of postoperative transsexual women. NWC sponsors an annual conference, which is held in the fall of each year, and publishes this newsletter.

NWC will be happy to place you on our exchange list, if you will place us on yours. We will happily exchange ad space with newsletters and magazines. Others can check below for ad rates.

We encourage submissions. Material should be of interest to the new woman, between 500 and 1500 words. Submit to the editor at the Georgia Address.

1992-1993 NWC Facilitators

Wendi Kaiser
Anne Ogborn
Angela Wensley
Christina Young

Ad Rates

Business Card	\$ 5/issue
1/4 page	15/issue
1/2 page	25/issue
Full page	40/issue

Subscriptions: \$12 for 4 issues

A Word From the Editor

Hello, and welcome to the first issue of the new *Rites of Passage*, the official publication of the New Woman's Conference. We will be publishing twice per year, before and after the conference, which is held in September.

I'm aware of some happenings from some of the 1992 NWC participants. Anne Ogborn, who was last year's editor, has been very active lately in the founding of Transgender Nation, and as the publisher of her still (so far as I know) unnamed magazine. She's planning a trip to India. (*Anne: I've learned to play the Rude Girls' Rufus & Beverly on the guitar, but the chords to Phillips & Romanovsky's Our Mothers' Clothes escape me*). Rachel Pollack has just returned from Denmark, where she conducted a seaside memorial to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Christine Jorgensen's return from Scandinavia after her change. Rachel's article, "Transsexual Rights and Others" recently appeared in the *San Francisco Bay Times*; it was a breath of fresh air in the midst of the Bay Times' ongoing controversy about transsexual people at womyn-only events. Angela Wensley quit her job of long standing and started a consulting business, which is thriving and has taken her, among other places, to New Zealand. I saw Wendi Kaiser and Janis at Womens' Week in Provincetown, Mass. Christina Young has moved from Massachusetts to Atlanta. And I was given an award by, of all people, Tri-Ess, an organization of heterosexual crossdressers which has more than a few of us in its ranks. Unfortunately, the Tri-Ess ranks also contain a great many crossdressers who aspire to transsexualism. I got the award for knowing the difference.

I am your friendly editor. I'm 43 years old. My surgery was done by Dr. Michel Seghers in Brussels in July, 1991. For me, SRS was the logical conclusion to 28 years of gender dysphoria. For me, the NWC was a recognition of the journey I had made, a recognition that I had passed through a portal. Also, the NWC was a vacation from the generalized hyperactivity of my life. If I don't make NWC 1993, you'll know something about the state of my finances.

Please consider this a call for material for the newsletter. With the exception of Christina's analysis of the 1992 data, I'm producing this one from a vacuum, thinking as I write.

So what I think I will talk about is the ongoing controversy in the *Bay Times*. What happened is this, as well as I can reconstruct it, not having seen the entire exchange: several months ago, the paper printed a very angry letter from a lesbian separatist feminist called Bev Jo. In her letter, Ms. Jo accused a now post-operative transsexual woman of having sexually harassed her when she was a man. With the assistance of our own Anne Ogborn, Christine Tayleur, and perhaps others, who protected her anonymity, the accused person responded. There were letters and counter letters. Then, in the 3 December issue, the playwright Kate Bornstein published an article in the *Bay Times* in which she wrote, "It's (the) male sense of entitlement carried into their new lives as transsexual women... that ends up with the transgression of lesbian space, identity, and power. If violence is defined as a non-consensual act upon someone's space or person, then transsexuals are nothing short of violent if they demand admission into the ranks of 'women born women' lesbian separatists who don't want transsexuals there." Her article has re-galvanized the controversy, resulting in a barrage of letters from transsexual people who felt betrayed by Kate.

The issue of transsexual inclusion in womyn-only events is a thorny one, dating from at least 1979, when Janice Raymond, that bastion of twisted sensibilities, mentioned it in her book, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*. The exchange of letters in the *Bay Times* and the expulsion of NWC's Nancy Burkholder from the 1991 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is proof that the issue is very much alive.

I can think of no better jumping-off point for *Rites of Passage* than the issue of transsexual inclusion at women-only events. The next issue will recap the debate in full, and then I think we will be off and running. In the meanwhile, I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter. Send them to me (Dallas) at Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033— or call me any evening at (404) 939-0244 —ROP

1992 New Woman Conference Assessment & Comparison of Data Analyzed by Christina Young

An analysis of the 1992 Essex NWC shows an n of 20, again too small to provide scientific "evidence." Nor can the 1992 date be "added to" the 1991 NWC ($n = 16$), since some of the participants in 1992 were also participants in 1991. As a result, comparative data, while impossible to use in a strict protocol, can be "mirrored" to see if there are any significant trends emerging. As we shall see, at least a half-dozen of these trends begin to emerge—which can be highlighted when assembling the 1993 San Francisco NWC.

The demographics (age, ethnicity, job category, income, etc.) reveal a somewhat different profile for the 1992 group than for the 1991 participants. For example, the age mean of this group fell in the 41-50 range (with a median age of 38 years). Forty-five percent reported earning less than \$35,000 annually and some 65% noted that they were not as financially secure as before surgery (up from 50% last year). While 90% noted their satisfaction with surgery, some 63% this year reported sex reassignment surgery (SRS) out of the country ($n = 19$, since one person claimed not to have had surgery). An interesting note, when comparing this group to the USA SRS group, was that while 70% circled the segment on psychological testing and evaluation, one in four of those having surgery out of the country indicated that they had not had psychological testing and evaluation. This may have been an oversight response, and should be followed up next year with either more precise questions or better relational questions. If this figure is true, it needs further discussion concerning the decision-making process used to determine who is a candidate for SRS.

In 1991, 33% noted they had attended a gender clinic, whereas 50% of this year's group reported some use of a clinic. Fifty percent of last year's group indicated that they had to change jobs as part of transition. Again, this response—while we know it to be true subjectively—should be highlighted for those seeking SRS. All too often, the "new woman" must face the distinct possibility of altering profession or career, with subsequent loss of earning power. This year's group was only marginally lower in its post-high school educational level, with 80% having earned a college degree.

Concerning sexuality issues—even though some of the questions were changed this year to provoke less emotional response, some respondents felt compelled to argue with questions, challenge questions, demand privacy, or make sundry other responses; this clearly shows the reluctance many new women have in allowing this area to be invaded. But those who did respond revealed a

making such an assessment. Concerning the question about how others viewed the responding participant, a 4.11 rating (on a 5-point scale) concerning femininity emerged. Most would not venture a response, claiming this was "subjective." It seems to point out—as we noted last year—that there are certain issues we seem not to want to face in any way. And it may well be that this area should

We once again have someone who is in her late thirties or early forties who is single or divorced, making less than before financially, often having had to change job or living site, who does not participate in organized religion, who is satisfied with her surgical experience and new life, who is lesbian-oriented, who works in some professional capacity (administrator, supervisor, owner, engineer, computers, human services), who has gone to college, who owns an auto (90%), has health insurance (85%) and life insurance (75%), and who may or may not own a house (60% do, 40% do not). Only half have a retirement plan, and only 45% have IRAs.

55% lesbian preference, a 25% heterosexual preference, and a 20% bisexual or ambivalent attitude (last year's responses were evenly divided between the three categories). Most of the participants at the meeting were single (i.e., divorced or never married), whereas prior to SRS, fully 80% were married, and of those, 50% (10) had fathered children. Since SRS, 30% had dated females, 15% (3) had remained celibate, and 25% had dated both men and women. Most participants (65%) reported that significant others in their lives had "approved" (i.e., accepted them). Twenty percent reported a 0-25% approval rating, and 5% reported that less than half approved of their choices. Concerning post-SRS sexual activity (having sorted out a few verbal onslaughts reported on the survey sheets!), those who reported lesbian orientation also reported high satisfaction with both lovemaking and intercourse. The same was true of those who claimed heterosexual preference. In addition, a few—wishing to make sure that their orientation was clearly understood—took great pains to note their total dissatisfaction with foreplay/intercourse when performing such actions with someone out of their preference category.

Two areas of concern again emerged: viewing oneself as feminine or masculine (along with how others viewed the person in those two areas), and the questions about religion. On the viewing-oneself scale, most participants saw themselves as very feminine ($n = 19$, 3.68 aggregate mean), while only 13 responded to the question asked about how they viewed themselves from a masculine perspective. Most did not feel comfortable in

be left out of the questionnaire, since it seems to provide so much angst.

Finally, the issue of religion brought out once again much anger, vehemence (with heavy use of exclamation marks), and frustration. By and large, it can be reported that 55% of the 1992 participants claimed no organizational affiliation (i.e., no participation in organized religion). Much the same can be said of the participants' view on the Bible and God. This may be another area to consider leaving out of next year's questionnaire. Many participants felt it was intrusive, and yet it may be an area that becomes a convenient scapegoat for one's earlier frustrations in a gender role which was so dysphoric.

Once again, the legal profession and the medical profession fared poorly in the ranking of the participants. While a few had poor experiences with such things as name changes and drivers' licenses, most seemed to feel that they had fared nicely in these and other areas (e.g., a good doctor, acceptance by women, etc.) Over 50% rated acceptance by men as unsatisfactory.

Our summary profile and conclusions for 1992

We once again have someone who is in her late thirties or early forties (although some were over this age), who is single or divorced, making less than before financially, often having had to change job or living site, who does not participate in organized religion, who is satisfied with her surgical experience and new life, who is lesbian-oriented, who works in some professional capacity (administrator, supervisor, owner, engineer,

computers, human services), who has gone to college, who owns an auto (90%), has health insurance (85%) and life insurance (75%), and who may or may not own a house (60% do, 40% do not). Only half have a retirement plan, and only 45% have IRAs.

What does all this tell us? As we said last year, we cannot "prove" anything. However, there seems to again be certain beacon lights for new women to think about:

1. *how important is some "third person" evaluation of one's psychological state prior to SRS;*

2. *how honest are we in telling pre-SRS women that jobs, income, relationships, and acceptance are in jeopardy;*

3. *since a belief structure and/or religion factor seems unnecessary or unacceptable to most respondents, is there something that needs to be addressed in this area (NOTE: we are not saying it is necessary, but for those who feel it is, this seems to be an area of concern);*

4. *once again, a few participants either did not understand that "subjective" impressions are equally valid with so-called "objective" data and/or there is a reluctance to face issues related to femininity scaling and how others view the new woman. I believe there is a real need to address this conceptual and emotional misunderstanding. It is imperative that both honesty and factuality be present in assessing how well one really views herself in the chosen gender role and how others (in her impression) view her. For the second year, this issue created some negative feelings that need to be assuaged;*

5. *there is a need to address the reality of masculinity-femininity. Reading through some of the questionnaires raised serious doubt about a few of the respondents' reality-scope in this area. Perhaps it is semantics, but the very way in which scathing comments are made reveals a need, in this analyzer's estimation, for the issue to be addressed realistically;*

6. *the process of gender transition seems to clearly reveal that no matter what the cost or emotional and relational prices, the new woman feels better and wishes to live more fully in the gender role of preference. The post-conference comments seem to indicate that the NWC rite of passage event helps in that confirmation. - ROP*

Reprinted from Narcissus

Gender Dysphoria in Pakistan:

The Kushra

by Prof. Dr. L.J.G. Gooren

From April 24 to May 2, 1992, I visited Pakistan, invited by Organon Pharmaceutical Company to lecture on one of their products, an oral testosterone preparation.

I visited Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi/Islamabad (twin cities) and Peshawar. Pakistan is a Moslim country, with Islam being the state religion. Islam permeates many aspects in society. Pakistan got its independence from Britain in 1947, almost simultaneously with India.

With the latter country it disputes the territory of the Kashmir, a water-rich, Moslim area. My local host was Mr. Najam A. Khan, who is the director of Organon Pakistan. He studied in the USA— funny enough, in Philadelphia, where I myself spent nine months in 1965. The two of us were living in International House, a home for foreign student, but International House was so big that we did not meet in those days.

Mr. Khan is a pious Moslim, observing prayer. His foreign education has given him a broader perspective on the world, accepting that lives can be lived very differently and that tolerance and respect are needed in this world. This information is provided, since I asked his opinion and comment on an interview I had with Mr. Mohammed Aslam, a Kushra, the Pakistani term for gender dysphoric person.

On April 29, 1991, I had a short interview with Mr. Mohammed Aslam Kushra, seventy years old, from Abbottabad/Pakistan. Remarkably enough, Mr. Aslam, has added the suffix Kushra to his name. Kushra is the Pakistani (Urdu) term for transvestite, or rather a person of the third sex— not man, not woman, but a person with no sex. The Kushra lack the desire to perform sexually as men; they have no identity; they eat and drink and are alive, but lack an essential category, that of manhood— a pitiful situation, in the eyes of Pakistani. The biggest communities of Kushras live in the two major cities of Pakistan, Karachi and Lahore, but they can be found all over the country. They live in networks and some live together. In its most extreme form, Kushras will live as women, dressing as females and having female adornment.

Their income comes mainly from performing at wedding parties. If Kushras are lucky, they can make 5,000- 10,000 Pakistani rupees (\$175-350 US), a fortune by local standards. The term for the financial compensa-

tion they receive at these wedding parties is *veir*, generally paid by the father of the bridegroom. Though earned by the young Kushras, their money often goes to senior Kushras, who may eventually become very wealthy, while the juniors receive only pocket money.

Most Kushras join between the ages of 15 and 25 years. Specifically, this young segment uses a lot of body adornment, and will use bras and wigs to mimic females as much as they can. Parents regret to see their sons become Kushras.

Newborns with an unclear sex (with birth defects of their genitals) are sometimes entrusted to the care of the "sexless," the Kushras. The motivation is the shame and embarrassment that parents have about an unclear sexual differentiation of their child. The parents will tell others that a stillbirth has taken place or that the baby died soon after delivery.

So far, hormone treatment or surgery to adapt to the female role cannot be obtained in Pakistan. The crude surgery that Indian hijras perform on their novices is not carried out in Pakistan. Kushras would welcome hormonal and surgical treatment, however.

Kushras try to be smoothly shaven or pluck out their beard and body hairs. Kushras very seldom have sex with men, and almost never with women. Neither are their sexual acts between themselves.

My queries about their sexual activities were regarded as redundant: they are "sexless" and therefore are most unlikely to have sex, to want sex.

In February of each year, all Kushras of Pakistan meet in the city of Kasur, close to India. During a three-day festival, they discuss, dance, and party, and elect their king (not their queen!), who will rule 'till the next annual meeting. These meetings are closed to non-Kushras. One reporter, however, managed to slip in as a pseudokushra, but was identified and severely corrected for his misdemeanor.

Religiously, the Kushras are sincere followers of Islam. If they can afford it, they will perform their haj (the pilgrimage to Mecca). On that occasion, men are not supposed to shave, and the Kushras comply with that proscription.

Since they are neither men nor women, Kushras cannot be buried on the holy burial grounds of Moslims. Their bodies are buried in Kasur, the city in which they convene annually.

Legally speaking, there are no severe hindrances to the status of Kushras. There are no laws forbidding public appearance as a female for the male sex. The police generally react mildly, but are likely to make mockery of the Kushras.

The public at large is not hostile either, but is embarrassed with these persons. This

We Are The Transgendered
by Dallas Denny

embarrassment might sometimes end in violence, but this seldom happens. The status of Kushras in society seems to be improving, but they are still far from being respectable citizens.

The number of Kushras is estimated to be 10,000, this being a conservative estimate. The population of Pakistan is 100,000,000.

My spokesman, Mr. Aslam Kushra, ran for the National Assembly in 1990. With regard to this, there were three newspaper reports that spoke nicely of him. He received considerable support for his election campaign from his social group, and also from doctors, lawyers, and shopkeepers. The impression I got from reading the newspaper reports was that he attracted protest voters, who were fed up with politicians accused of looking after themselves in the first place. He won as many as 10,000 votes in his district, 2,000 less than his winning rival.

Mr. Khan's comments on my interview with Mohammad Aslam Kushra

The marriage parties Kushras are invited to to amuse and entertain guests are definitely not those of the upper middle class. As he

...the way gender dysphoric persons can live their lives in Pakistanis is by playing this fun game, to put themselves at ridicule.

described it, lower classes will like the fun that Kushras make because of the sexual overtones. Their liberty to do so comes from the fact that they are viewed as neither men nor women.

Since they are not women, but just act like or impersonate women, they can joke sexually with men. A true woman would lose her honor by being so explicitly sexual with a man, and no decent man would accept such provocative behavior from a woman. Since they are not men, they can socialize with women in a way a normal man cannot, because of the segregation of the sexes. Conversely, women do not view Kushras as men, and therefore feel free to joke at them, make fun of them, not having to observe the boundaries of the sexes and what is decent behavior in their relation.

In terms of cultural anthropology, the way gender dysphoric persons can live their lives in Pakistanis is by playing this fun game, to put themselves at ridicule. The latter fact made it difficult for my upper-middle-class spokesman to take Kushras seriously. In his view, they are persons without much self-respect, much honor. As a consequence, it is difficult to attribute a respectable position to them in society, to see them as serious fellow citizens, which was a dear wish of Mr. Mohammed Aslam Kushra. --ROP

We are the transgendered.

We are your sons and daughters, your fathers and mothers, your cousins, your aunts and uncles, your grandparents, your grandchildren. We are your stepfathers and stepsons, your stepmothers, your stepdaughters. We are your adopted children and your adoptive parents, and we are the parents who have given you up for adoption.

We are your neighbors and friends. We were your dorm-mate in college, your fraternity brother, your sorority sister. We were in Cub Scouts with you, in Brownies, in the Air Force, the Marines.

We are your bosses, your employees. We work next to you in the assembly line. We drive your cabs, your buses, your taxis. We fly your planes, we sail your ships, we drive your locomotives. We deliver your paper, stock the shelves in your groceries, ring up your purchases. We style your hair. We press your suits. We design your suits. We cook your food in restaurants, and we bring it to your table. We build your cars in Detroit.

We have stood on the moon.

We were at Shiloh, and at Gettysburg. In the Great War, we fought in the trenches, and we flew against the Red Baron; now we live in our old age in Veterans Hospitals. We were at Iwo Jima, and were in Korea and Viet Nam and Kuwait. We remember riding with Genghis Khan. We saw Jesus Christ.

We fill your schools. We are your principles, your teachers, your students, your librarians, the ones who sweep the halls. We write your textbooks.

We are your politicians, your farmers, your physicians, your priests, your nuns, your generals. And we are the privates in your armies, your prostitutes. We languish in your prisons. And we are guards and wardens of your prisons, too.

We are the little boy with the red hair, who mows your lawn every summer. We are the cop who gave you a ticket last year. We are the little old lady in the next pew at church.

We stand on your left side, and on your right, before you, behind you. We came before you, and we will come after you.

We are black, we are white. We are young, we are old. We are fat, we are thin. We are poor, and we are rich. We are healthy; we are ill. We are straight. We are gay. We are male. We are female.

We are the transgendered. We have always been with you.

We will always be with you. --ROP

The NWC: It's For You

Those of you who are post-op—consider what you've been through. Consider the losses. Consider the gains. Consider the process of self-improvement and change. Consider the operating table.

For the past two Septembers, something marvelous has happened. About twenty post-operative women from all over the United States have come together to share and learn in a secure, wooded, woman-only setting. These were the New Woman Conference 1991 and the New Woman Conference 1992. You should consider coming to New Woman Conference 1993.

The NWC is a chance to celebrate your womanhood with other new women, to talk about your process with others who will understand, to share experiences, to sing, to bask naked in a hot tub, to take quiet walks through the woods, to blow out a candle for friends who you have lost, to light a candle for those just starting out.

The highlight of the NWC is a ceremony in which the passage from male to female, the emergence into womanhood, the spilling of blood on the operating room table is celebrated. This ceremony provides an actual rite of passage, a social validation of identity that we would not otherwise have.

You owe it to yourself to attend NWC at least once in your life.

Call us.

AEGIS is pleased to announce...

Dr. Eugene A. Schrang, M.D., S.C.

speaking on Male-to-Female sex reassignment surgery

Saturday, 20 February, 1993

4-6 p.m.

Admission \$10 advance, \$15 at the door

Dr. Schrang will have a special closed-door session for post-operative persons only, at no additional charge (male-to-female & female-to-male)

7-9 p.m.

(others are invited to attend the regularly scheduled meeting of Atlanta Gender Explorations Support Group, 6-10 p.m. There will be an additional \$5 meeting fee)

Atlanta, Georgia

Ramada-Dunwoody Hotel

1850 Cotillion Drive, Dunwoody

Dr. Schrang is a noted plastic surgeon who practices in Neenah, Wisconsin. He offers a wide variety of surgical procedures to transsexual persons. He studied under Dr. Stanley Biber, & offers a reasonably-priced alternative to SRS out of the country.

Just off I-285 (take Exit 22, Chamblee-Dunwoody Road if Southbound or take North Peachtree Road exit if Northbound.

Travelers: Inexpensive rooms are available at the Ramada Dunwoody & other nearby hotels. Call (404) 394-5000 or (800) 628-3328 for reservations at the Ramada Dunwoody. Shuttle or taxi available from the Chamblee MARTA Station.

Atlanta is a major center for shopping, culture, & tourism