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BOOK OF PROGRAM TRANSCRIPTS

from the International Foundation for Gender Education's

1st Annual

"Coming Together—Working Together" Convention
Chicago 1987

This book of transcripts is dedicated to:

DR. VIRGINIA PRINCE

Recipient of I.F.G.E.'s first 'Outstanding Lifetime Contribution' Award'
to express our appreciation and heartfelt thanks
for her years of devoted service to our Community.

(*** The Steering/Planning Committee for our first I.F.G.E. convention, held recently in Chicago, selected Dr. Virginia Prince as the person who has made the greatest life-time contribution to our community. An 'Outstanding Contribution' award was named in her honor, and will be presented annually by the Convention Steering/Planning Committee to an outstanding member of our Community. Dr. Prince's speech 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow' is a landmark speech for unity, for progress, and for direction.)

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW
or
WHERE WE WERE, WHERE WE ARE,
WHERE WE MIGHT GO IN THE FUTURE

Keynote speech delivered by DR. VIRGINIA PRINCE at the 1st annual I.F.G.E. 'Coming Together Convention' in Chicago, March 7, 1987

HELLO MY SISTERS! ... (- receiving an enthusiastic 'Hello Virginia' from the audience -)

Let me start out by welcoming you, not just to a gathering of cross-dressers in Chicago in March of 1987, but to what we may all hope becomes a historical occasion. It is rather fitting that I should have been asked to give the Keynote address at this convention because I opened one era for people like us when I started to publish 'Transvestia' in 1960. Today I am participating in the closure of that era and the opening of a new one. But, following my title, let us start with where we were 27 years ago.

Cross-dressing has occurred all down the ages and in all cultures. Those individuals who practiced it and who have come to our attention through historical records were usually isolated individuals. The situation was still that way in 1960. I had come to know about 8 or 10 other cross-dressers because we used to visit one of our number who was on welfare and had a rather beaten up house in Long Beach, Calif.. So, when in 1960 I decided that there ought to be a publication for people like myself, I approached these people and asked them to mention the ideas to their contacts. I asked for \$4 for a year's subscription and over the next 2 months the number increased to 25 and I felt that it was time to proceed. So issue No. 1 of Transvestia Magazine came off the press. 25 subscribers at \$4 each meant that the venture started on \$100 of capital. Issue #1 was 61 pages which my secretary typed and which was then photocopied.

By asking all subscribers to recommend it to their friends, by some small advertising effort and mostly by hope, it gradually grew. By No. 5 we started with our first Cover Girl which was Annette and some of you knew her. We also had internal pictures and it went on from there. At the time Transvestia was begun you couldn't find 10 TVs in one room at one time anywhere in the world. That was 27 years ago, and now look at us here. Progress has indeed been made.

A preview of our gathering here today occurred in 1962 when an early-on friend of mine named Susanna opened her resort in the Catskills for a famous weekend where some 62 TVs gathered. My clearest memory of that event was waking in the

morning and going to the bathroom only to find it crowded with about 10 of the 'girls' in nighties, slips, panties, bras, and the like, all trying to see themselves in the mirror while trying to shave... It was so crowded that they missed their own cheeks and cut the girl beside them.

Dr. Wendell Pomeroy, one of the original Kinsey researchers, was there too and was heard to remark afterward that it had been the "most asexual weekend he had ever spent". I mention this because it illustrated the general conception amongst professionals at the time that cross-dressing was done primarily for sexual reasons and therefore it was expected that some kind of erotic activity would be going on behind every bush. Of course everybody was having too much fun just being girls to worry about sexuality, and I think the experience was not lost on the good doctor and other non-TVs who were there.

The following year, Susanna repeated the performance and I took the occasion to announce the formation of the Foundation for Personality Expression abbreviated FPE or Phi Pi Epsilon to put it in greek letters. This was the first organization for cross-dressers in this or, as far as I know, in any other country. Chapters were formed in many cities and then over the years there were other groups which formed on their own or sometimes broke away from FPE. As most of you know in 1980 we renamed the group 'The Society for the Second Self', or Tri-Ess for short. But FPE still survives in Scandinavia where I helped establish the group called FPE of North Europe. They too have an annual gathering at some resort in either Sweden or Denmark with 60 to 80 attendees. The Beaumont Society in England, formed by British members of FPE has also survived for nearly 20 years and has chapters all over England. It got its first rush of members as a result of an interview I gave to the Manchester Guardian in which I mentioned the group and they had 30 or 40 applications. Another group of former FPE members set up the Australian TV organization naming it the Seahorse Society because I had selected the Seahorse as our symbol since it is the male seahorse that guards and brings up the young. More recently another former member set up the Femme Travestie Society in Switzerland. So we are not alone being organized in the United States. As a result of these organizational activities and the publications that resulted from them, cross-dressers in all the western countries now at least know that there are organizations, that they are not alone and that if they wish to do so, they can meet and associate with others of the same persuasion.

I mention these things not to brag of my part in them but simply to review the situation as it was, the 'yesterday' in the title of this talk. It all started with 25 members scattered across the country and it has grown to many hundreds of members of several dozens of groups some of which are chapters of Tri Ess and others which are independent organizations. Those early efforts have paid off far beyond my imaginings of 1960.

So much for yesterday... what of today? Today we have several focal points in what Ariadne likes to call our 'para-culture'. Beginning at about the same time a dozen years ago, Ariadne and other members of the groups in Boston put together Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, and Marilyn in Seattle put together the 'DREAM' gathering on the Oregon coast. These two gatherings were on opposite sides of the continent and were quite different in other ways too. DREAM took place in a fancy leased group of condominiums where the participants lived in some pretty fancy apartments but did not mingle with the outside world. Fantasia Fair, on the other hand, was in a resort city which is very tolerant of gays and other minorities and where the participants are free to wander around town on their own visiting shops, restaurants, etc. just like any other tourist. The interesting thing about that experience is that no TV 'passes' in Provincetown for the simple reason that the

only 'ladies' in town who wear dresses, heels, and makeup are the TVs. All the local women and most of the tourists who come to visit the town are in slacks and flat shoes and not particularly 'feminine' as we would define it.

I will put in a plug for the Fair at this point because it is an experience that all of you who have not been able to get out 'on the town' elsewhere should have.

These two pioneering groups were followed by the formation of the Tiffany Club in Boston which also had its special events in Provincetown and, in due course, there were weekend affairs organized in various places such as in the Poconos in Pennsylvania, Shangri-La and Tri Ess gatherings in New Orleans and San Francisco. Groups in the Bay area, in upstate New York in Orange county in California, and others that I have probably forgotten have gatherings from time to time. The mid-continent, not to be outdone by the East or West coast, has its 'Be All You Want To Be' weekend. The 'Be All' is sponsored by four separate groups, the Chi Chapter of Tri Ess, Crossroads in Michigan, Paradise Club in Ohio, and TransPitt in Pennsylvania. The gathering last year had 191 attendees of which something like 41 were couples, and was, I am sure, the largest gathering of cross-dressers that has ever occurred anywhere at any time. It was also outstanding in the large number of wives and girlfriends that attended.

On the publishing side there is still Transvestia now published by my friend Carol Beecroft, and the Tapestry published by the person who has been the instigator and driving force behind this convention, Merissa Sherrill Lynn. The Tapestry has become a very respectable sized magazine and one which serves all shades of opinion in our culture. And of course there are a number of newsletters put out by the various chapters and groups around the country. So the amount of printed material available today is considerable and no cross-dresser anywhere need be without at least correspondent contacts even if she lives in the middle of the badlands of the Dakotas.

Unfortunately there are a lot of other publications which directly relate sex and cross-dressing which do not improve our image. Not that CDs are not as sexual as anyone else, but unfortunately there are many shrinks, as well as the lay public that think that the only reason we cross-dress is to get our sexual kicks and when so many magazines of this type appear it tends to vindicate their position and thus blinds them and the rest of the public to any understanding of the real nature and purpose of cross-dressing.

The other aspect of our contact with the main stream lies in appearances and lectures. As most of you know I initiated such appearances on radio and TV back in the early sixties. In fact, probably a fair number of you here today first learned that there were others like yourself and there were publications and groups for people like yourself either from catching one of my appearances or hearing about it from a friend. Out of curiosity, will those of you who did make your first contact through one of my appearances please raise your hands? (- Nearly 1/2 the audience raised their hands. -)

I exposed myself like that so that others could find me because I had no means of finding them. I guess I must have made about 100 appearances around the country between 1963 and 1970. I didn't mind doing it in those days but once I started living full time as Virginia and traveling around the world with tour groups I had to stop it. When I could retire back into the personality of 'Charles' I felt fairly safe that I would not be recognized as also being Virginia. But once I started living full time as Virginia and traveling around the world with tour groups

I had to stop it because I could not take the chance that some member of the tour group might have seen me on a show and would recognize me. Since I often had to share rooms with other women you can picture the consternation that recognition would have caused.

Fortunately there are many other individuals now in all parts of the country who have followed me and appeared on various TV and radio shows to spread the word. Since two of the most effective and experienced performers this way are in our audience today and because they have done such a good job of carrying the word to the public on many occasions and many shows I think they should be acknowledged. I refer, of course, to Naomi and Eve whom most of you know. This is not to overlook the many others who have appeared, but with the exception of Ariadne of the Outreach Institute and Carol Beecroft of Tri Ess, and Betty Ann of 'Our Sorority', I don't know the names of most of them. But we all owe a debt to any of our sisters who will do this since appearances where they can be seen, be questioned and have a chance to present themselves as intelligent, friendly, and non-threatening individuals are one of the few ways open to us to make our position known to the general public. I salute all those who have been brave enough to do this and I hope many more of you will in the future.

I think I can take a little credit for educating a number of professional people through lectures given to various medical school classes, regular university classes and private organizations as well as through presenting papers to professional societies and publishing in professional journals. Of recent years I have been joined in this endeavor by several others, two which come to mind are Ariadne and Dr. Roger Peo. There are probably others that I don't know about and thus can't acknowledge but whose efforts we should all appreciate.

I can't leave this review of where we are at the moment without a word about my research surveys to which many of you have contributed. The first was a survey of 504 cases of transvestism and I presented it to the American Psychiatric Convention in Honolulu in 1965 and it was subsequently published in the Psychological Reports in 1972 in conjunction with Dr. Bentler of UCLA. The current project has by now been responded to by over 700 of our sisters and is in the process of being computerized by my collaborator, a PhD Candidate at the U. of New York. This is a terribly long job when you consider that there were 52 questions and on average about 5 parts to each so $5 \times 52 \times 700 =$ about 180,000 entries. So that accounts for the fact that the results will not be available for perhaps another year. But when they are they will be submitted to both Transvestia and Tapestry for publication as well as some professional journal. The large number of responses should make a real contribution to professional knowledge of the subject. Well so much for the past and present. There are probably areas and contributors that I have overlooked and no offense is intended by such oversights. There are lots of things I don't know and others that I don't remember.

But the main thrust of this convention is the future. Where do we go from here? Do we just keep struggling along as we have for the last 27 years with a few public activities, a few publications and a bunch of widely scattered social groups none of which have any real goals individually or collectively? Or, alternatively, do you come to see the activity of cross-dressing and those who practice it as something more than just a kind of weird behavior on the part of some isolated and in some way abnormal individuals? This has been the situation throughout history. But history is a process of building up some aspect of human life or social behavior little by little until a situation comes to pass in which the slow quantitative change relatively suddenly develops a qualitative change. This change of quantity into quality is a philosophical proposition which occurs over and over again in both

nature and human relations. My reason for bringing it up in the present connection is that I think our 'movement' if you will permit the term, is ready to undergo such a change. But the movement made is up to you, the individuals, so that for the movement to change, you the individuals have to change. Individual drops of water do not move but when many come together in one place the pool starts to move. That is what we are doing at this convention. The pool is made up of many drops--each of you--so that for the pool to start to flow, to become a 'movement' your individual drops have to move.

Now I am not suggesting that you change your way of living. I neither want you to suddenly go down to the office in heels and a chiffon formal or to tell all the neighbors, relatives, etc. No, I don't want you to change what you do, I just want you change what you THINK! After all, there is an old saying--"As a man thinketh, so is he." so If I can change your thinking, I will change you. "So what do I have to do?" you ask. It's easy! All you have to do is to stop thinking of yourself and other cross-dressers as kind of kookie, as something of an oddball because you do something most other men neither do nor understand, or as a sort of psychological and medical curiosity. All of us have entertained these and similar ideas in the past, and many still do. "But the times they are a-changin'" so the song says, and it is time that we cease looking upon the act of cross-dressing in these negative ways. "Well what other ways are there?" you ask.

Every one of you is well acquainted with the idea of women's liberation and I expect that most of you support and some of you are members of the National Organization of Women. But few men or women have stopped to consider that men need liberation even more than women, but they don't know it because being the ruling class it never occurs to them that there is any better place to be than where they are--the nobles of society. With women having been the peasants of society and having served the nobles for thousands of years the possibility of their wanting to change their status is both reasonable and clear. But if you are born a noble how can you improve on that? What is better is to be a free noble and not one bound to a centuries-old set of behaviors, expectations, requirements and life styles that prevent men from ever realizing a lot of their own potentials. Yes, men need liberation but not in the same way as women. Women have needed liberation TO, that is, the freedom to do the kind of work that interests them, of becoming a professional person like a doctor, a lawyer, or a scientist, or to go into politics and government at local, state and federal levels. They needed to learn how to stand on their own feet, make something of themselves and to be independent persons, not appendages to some male, father, brother, husband, etc. And those possibilities have largely been achieved.

But men already have these things. Men need liberation FROM, not TO. They need escape from the conceptions of manliness as one who is supposed to know about all manner of things, who is able to handle most any situation, who is there to comfort others not as strong as he is, to provide a shoulder to cry on and an encouraging pat on the back and words of cheer. He is expected to always be strong, be capable of handling whatever may arise and to be a leader. If he falls too far behind his peers in these ways he is regarded as a wimp or a panty waist by other men and his own self esteem drops proportionately. So it's liberation FROM these expectations that men need. If such liberation should be achieved some day men would be able to be and do what they felt like being and doing and not what society or other men tried to get them to be. This would be reflected in their work, their attitudes toward other, the kind of degree of expectations that would show up in independence of behavior, interests and dress. A society composed of both liberated women AND liberated men would indeed be a remarkable place to live.

Well that's all very nice, you say, but what has it got to do with us? Answer--Everything, because as cross-dressers you are already well on the way toward that goal. Any man who is held captive by others or by ideas and customs has enemies, namely his captors, masters and concepts. Thus in the drive to live up to society's expectations of masculinity there is one big enemy, one's own femininity. This is any man's greatest enemy because it is diametrically opposed to the masculinity that he is expected to feel and manifest to others. Thus ever since a boy was called a sissy himself or watched what happened to some other boy who was so labeled he has made a great effort never to let that happen again. This leads either to isolation out of fear, going through life in frustration and anger with accompanying physiological symptoms of ulcers, heart attacks, and other conditions, or at the extreme the development of the over-compensating attitude we call machoism where by making enough noise, attracting enough attention, doing enough daring and possibly destructive or criminal things a man 'proves' that he is a 'real' man.

The result is that for most men their biggest enemy is their own inner femininity because its discovery would destroy them in the eyes of other men. It is well known that men do not develop physically close relationships with other men as women do with other women. Men do not show emotions such as hurt, grief, fear, or tenderness lest such manifestations shall be taken as a sign of weakness--read femininity. Thus men always keep other men at a physical and psychological distance just as a moat around a castle keeps the enemy out. This is done because should the invader get inside the moat he might destroy the castle's owner. Should another man manage to penetrate a man's psychological defenses he might, just might discover something about that man which could be interpreted as not sufficiently masculine, which is to say, somewhat feminine. That information in the hands of another man would about destroy the victim's self esteem. You all understand what I'm talking about because you have gone to great lengths to keep your cross-dressing secret from brother, father, coach, boss, and friends lest they decide that you were indeed too feminine and not a REAL MAN. Have you ever reflected on the fact that you can hold hands, hug or give a hello or goodbye kiss to another CD if you were both dressed, whereas you would not think of doing the same thing if you were both dressed in men's clothes? That is because you have escaped FROM those masculine expectations and requirements when you are dressed as a woman. But unknowingly you behave that way when dressed because you CAN behave that way. It's a touch of freedom.

Well where does this leave us as far as the future of cross-dressers is concerned? It leaves me with the feeling that I want to get all of you to see yourselves in a different light; not on the defensive and apologetic side concerning your feminine interests, but on the aggressive, proud and self-confident side. And why not? Cross-dressers of whatever persuasion, gay or straight, TVs, TGs, or TSs are in point of fact the very vanguard of Mens' Liberation. Why? Because we have faced up to that enemy, our own inner femininity that frightens so many men. My personal comment about myself is, "I have met the enemy and SHE is ME." All of us have met this erstwhile enemy that so concerns other men and we have made a degree of peace with her. We have given her real time existence and 3-dimensional reality and we enjoy her when she is present. In this process we have to a degree and for the time being literally been liberated FROM all that masculinity that so encumbers the lives of other men and our lives when our femme-self is not present.

So if we can begin to see our activity in the positive light of being a liberation movement that all men will someday enjoy and that we are simply first in the field we can see ourselves as pointing the way to others. Now let me hastily make a statement before you misinterpret the above. I am definitely NOT saying that what we do, namely wearing dresses, heels and makeup should be done by all other men. That is not it at all. It is merely the technique that we have developed to

contend with the repression that society puts on us to conform. However, we sometimes place more importance on the clothing than is warranted. Clothing, besides keeping the wearer both warm and modest is only a kind of admission ticket to a certain way of life. Women's clothing is a means to an end, not an end in itself. To most cross-dressers, whether they know it or not, the feminine clothing simply gets them out of jail so that they can, for a limited time, be the kind of person they cannot be the rest of the time. Ideal liberation for both men and women is not to become women or men respectively, but to achieve the right to express and enjoy any of the various ways people can react to life without having to deal with the label of 'masculine' or 'feminine'.

Merissa has suggested that we need to become a real community and I agree. A community is a group of people with common interests, common goals and some consensus on how to achieve them. In the past we have been just a disorganized group of people with common interests all right, but not common goals because we have not taken the trouble to think beyond ourselves. We have enjoyed our pleasures and suffered our guilts on a personal level, never really asking why there are so many others with the same interests and the same fears and guilts. We are a community without really knowing it. What we really need to do to become a true community is to realize that: A) each of us is one of a large number, B) that both the pleasures and the pains are shared with others, and C) that we all have a common opponent--the social idea that men should not try to become whole human beings by developing their YINS as well as their YANGS, to use the Chinese terms, but rather should be satisfied to remain only half humans--nobles who live in their castles on the cold but stimulating mountain tops--never to enjoy the flowers and the warmth of the meadows below.

I see this convention as a kind of collimating lens--one that receives light coming in from many directions and putting it out all going in one direction. That is, it makes all beams parallel. We come to this convention not only from all geographic directions but from many different psychological directions too. We are of various persuasions regarding our dressing, some among us are gay, most are just straight TVs, a few of us are transgenderists and some are post operative transsexuals. Naturally the views of these various groups are very diverse and each of us is primarily concerned about the meaning and importance of cross-dressing to our own selves and our own group. This means that each group resents a different picture to society and society is therefore confused. A society that is confused and doesn't quite understand something will react negatively to it in order to protect its own values which it does understand.

The various types of people that make up our sub-culture should, therefore, recognize that we have a common opponent and that we would all be better off if we could present a common front to society in the hope that it could learn to understand us, hopefully to accept us, but as a minimum, to just let us do our thing. But to bring this about we have to stop confusing society with multiple presentations and differing explanations which induce society's negative reactions. To do this we have to find the common denominator between gay and straight CDs, and between full-time TGs and pre- and post-op TSs. In short, we have to markedly reduce the internal strife and polarization between the various types of CDs and like to the collimated beam of laser light, all of us face in the same direction and realize that the real antagonist is not each other but social ignorance, misunderstanding and opposition. We have to find what we all have in common and present this to society in such a way as to educate its ignorance, provide a rationale for its understanding of our cross-dressing and thereby undermine its opposition.

From where I sit it no longer seems of vital importance whether you are gay or straight, that is a personal decision basically unrelated to dressing. It isn't really important whether you dress intermittently according to desire and opportunity, as most of you do, or whether you live full time as I and some others do, nor is it important whether you plan on or have achieved sex reassignment surgery. The common thread running through all these life styles is the need and desire to express and experience one's own self-concept and total potential. In doing so we can become both better and more complete human beings.

Once we have a common understanding of what we are accomplishing when we dress we can accept a common goal which is to make society understand that there is a need in our society for people to be free and to be complete. This does not mean just political freedom or racial freedom but social freedom--the freedom to express whatever is part of oneself as long as other people's rights and freedoms are not trod upon in the process. Gender as an outgrowth of sex and the division of labor in life's tasks, served a useful purpose for past generations. But under modern economic and social conditions with modern knowledge and modern understanding of ourselves and the world we live in, gender is pretty much an anachronism. Sexual differences of anatomy, physiology and psychology will remain, of course, but distinctions of social expectation, requirements and limitations as to life styles, interests, talents, dress and occupations will slowly disappear. This is already visible in the younger set. If you were an 18 year old TV today how would you dress to satisfy your desire to be like a girl? About all you could do would be to wear two earrings instead of one like the boys do. Young women of today wear little makeup or jewelry and many of them have boyish haircuts. They dress, act, drink, smoke, swear and give you the finger if they get angry at you just like the boys do. About the only differences left are those based on anatomy, boys wear jockstraps and girls wear bras.

So, to conclude these remarks, I'd like to see each of you leave this convention and start your own personal tomorrow with a new outlook on your cross-dressing. Namely that it is not a kinky behavior, that it is not sick, that in itself it is not an indicator of sexual partner preference, but rather, that cross-dressing is merely a means of your achieving a condition of more complete 'human-ness'. Be proud of the fact that you are in fact one cut ABOVE other men, not BELOW them, by virtue of having discovered the other side of yourself. You ARE one of the leaders of Mens' Liberation because you too have met the enemy, made a degree of peace with her, given her real life and brought her to this gathering. And as I look out over this crowd of "enemies" I hope I am looking at the future commanders of the real war--the war to achieve full human status for both men and women. Remember! If you can imagine something, it is human, if something is possible, it is human, if it is desirable and satisfying, it is human, if it is enjoyable and fulfilling, it is human, and if it indeed IS human it ought to be available to all humans regardless of their sex.

Having made that peace with your own 'enemy' you have more freedom to interact with other people and problems because you now have a handle on both extremes of human nature. You understand the active and the passive, the assertive and the receptive, you have the outer strength to act if the situation warrants it and the inner strength to let the situation pass you by, if that is a more appropriate response. You know from personal experience what it is like to be a man and what the benefits and privileges of being a woman are, and you are able to select whichever pattern you wish at a given time. Moreover, you are beginning to understand that your clothing at the time really has little to do with it. A liberated human whether in pants or skirts has a choice between an assertive, attacking reaction to a situation or a passive, accepting and a let-it-go-by

reaction. And it makes no difference what the sex of the human being is.

So go forth from this convention to your own personal futures, love your 'enemy' as yourself (which she really is) and do your part in our common effort to liberate not only ourselves but all other men.

- END -