

# Fiesta

New Mexico Chapter of Tri-Ess 8200 Montgomery NE, #241 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109



## February Meeting

The February meeting has been scheduled for the 20th. You can arrive in feminine attire or

transform after arrival. The doors will be opened at 6 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 1999.

**February Meeting: Feb. 20**

## Our Transgender Heritage

By Dallas Denny  
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The Need for a Transgender Archive  
It's six o'clock on New Year's Eve. Bob is purging, frantically stuffing women's underwear, shoes, dresses, cosmetics, photographs, correspondence, and magazines into a Hefty bag destined for the dumpster behind the convenience store down the street. He's made his resolutions for the New Year, and at the top of the list is going cold turkey on this crossdressing thing. He's ridding himself of the clothing and literature he's accumulated so he won't have the opportunity to dress. If the stuff isn't around, he reasons he won't be tempted, he thinks, as he lovingly caresses a pair of panties before stuffing them into the bag.

Marty is going back to her butch lesbian roots, for her transgender feelings are scaring her. She's been fantasizing about taking male hormones, and her feminist friends are telling her she's a traitor for even talking about having a male self-identification. What has she been thinking about?

"Transgender was just a phase," she says, desperation in her voice. "I was just carried away after hearing Les Feinberg." She carefully packs her copies of the FTM International newsletter into a cardboard box, then seals and stamps the box and mails it to a nonexistent address.

Varna is a real woman now, she tells herself, no longer transsexual. For the first time in her life, she likes herself, and she is happy with her life. She has a job and a lover, money in the bank, and rosy prospects. So why is she clinging to all this stuff she accumulated during her transition? She decides it has to go. It's a merry bonfire, she muses, as she tosses first editions of Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* and Christine Jorgensen's autobiography in the flames.

As a people, we transsexual and transgender people are famous for getting rid of our meticulously accumulated wardrobes and libraries. Some of us are very good at purging; we've done it dozens of times, each time swearing that we will never do it again. But of course we sooner or later return to old activities. We begin to grieve the first pair of shoes we tossed away or that long-lost outfit we picked up at Macy's, remember with fondness the copies of *Transvestia* and the letter from René Richards we treasured but nonetheless burned. And once again we work hard, spending money we could use for other purposes to restock our closets and bookshelves with clothing, cosmetics, and books — all of which we may one-day toss in the garbage.

This disregard of our individual histories is reflected in our community's lack of attention to its past. We have done little to preserve and honor our pioneers, our heroes and heroines, those men and women who gave their freedom or their lives because they dared to be themselves, those men who sweated blood to build the community. There is no Transgender Hall of Fame, and there are no transgender archives.

Well, maybe it's time there was one.

I can think of nothing I would like more than to see our community get behind some sort of historical project, establish a hall of fame, a library, and an archive, take steps to ensure that our history is protected and preserved for all time.

We must do it. If we rely on museums or universities or on gay and lesbian archives, we are at risk of having our history redefined out of existence, reinterpreted to fit new intellectual fashions, or discarded because we are no longer considered interesting. We must preserve our history, for no one else will do it with enough love and dedication.

#### The Bad Old Days

It's grim when one is unable to find information. I remember well my own early experiences...

It was the summer of 1964, several months before I was scheduled to start the 9th grade. My father had retired from the U.S. Army and we had moved to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, a town with a population (then) of about 30,000. I rode my bicycle to the city library and looked up the only word I knew, transvestite. There were but two books listed in the card catalog. One was in the general stacks, but did not seem to be there. The other was in the reserved section.

I didn't have nerve enough to ask the librarian for the reserved book, so I haunted the library the rest of the summer, waiting for the other book to be returned. It never showed up. I gradually came to understand that it had been stolen, probably by someone much like me, someone who had been afraid to check it out.

It was more than 10 years later and summer again when I saw my first book on gender identity issues. It was Robert Stoller's *Sex and Gender*, a perfectly horrid psychoanalytic treatment of transsexualism. I was researching the topic because the gender program at Vanderbilt University had just turned me down on the grounds that if I were really transsexual I would have been less functional in the male role. Stoller's book and the journal articles I found suggested Vanderbilt had been right: transsexuals were tragically flawed, character-disordered, egregiously unhappy individuals, failures in the game of life. According to what I read in Stoller's book, I could not possibly be transsexual; my misery quotient was just not high enough.

Of course I was transsexual. I subsequently changed my sex and I've been enormously happy with my decision to do so. But that's what happens when someone else controls the literature that defines you — you are categorized by his or her conceits and prejudices, and you have no say-so in the matter.

#### The Start of Something

Sometime in late 1993 or early 1994 I realized I had accumulated a considerable amount of trans-related material — enough to fill a couple of bookcases and a filing cabinet. Never being one to procrastinate, I announced that I was donating my private collection to AEGIS and starting the National Transgender Library and Archive. I began to aggressively accumulate trans material, and catalogued what came in. The collection grew rapidly, so much so that the holdings list AEGIS, published in early 1998, was distributed on floppy disk, as it was an unwieldy 425 pages long in print.

The NTL&A grew to consist of about 10 bookcases and six filing cabinets, all filled to bursting with books and papers. Two rooms of my house were dedicated to the collection, which was available to and occasionally used by visiting scholars and journalists.

The collection includes many valuable and interesting and rare things, including books autographed by Harry Benjamin and Christine Jorgensen, postcards, and sheet music dating from the turn of the century, copies of early drag and female impersonator magazines, a complete set of *Transvestia*, newspaper clippings, and thousands of transgender community newsletters. It's a comprehensive collection, which contains practically everything ever written on transgender issues.

#### The Status of the NTL&A

Throughout the nineties I have had a full-time job; I work in a sheltered workshop for adults with disabilities. As the Executive Director of the American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS) I have had another full time job, and more. It's been a wild ride and an exhausting one and it has not been without effect. In 1996 I was diagnosed with sleep apnea and I broke my foot, both about the same time. I reluctantly came to the realization that I had no choice but to begin to take better care of myself. I had been burning the candle on both ends for nearly a decade, and it was time

to get some balance in my life. I talked things over with AEGIS' board and at the end of 1996 gave a one-year notice; I would work through 1997 and then would no longer be AEGIS' Executive Director. I wound up working at the request of the board for an extra three months, with my resignation becoming effective the end of March 1998. AEGIS began negotiations with the board of It's Time America to effect a merger to start a new organization, Gender Education and Advocacy. At this time, GEA is beginning to look like a reality. GEA is to inherit AEGIS' assets, including the NTL&A.

In November 1998, quite by happenstance, I found a little house with my name on it. It's a cottage on a beautiful 14-acre lake, not far from downtown Atlanta and quite reasonably priced. I bought it. Unfortunately, there is not room enough to house the NTL&A. I was not about to give up the house, so in mid-November, I, Jessica Xavier, Andrea Bennett, her son and his friend, and a transgender woman I had never met before loaded the collection into a U-Haul truck and transported it to a place for safe storage (thanks, by the way, to everyone who participated in and helped fund this move).

The NTL&A is currently in storage and will remain so for the foreseeable future. If GEA gets off the ground and takes the initiative to care for the collection, then GEA will become the custodian of the NTL&A. If GEA does not fly the AEGIS board will begin in mid-1999 to solicit proposals from historical preservationists and universities interesting in acquiring the collection.

I'm writing this to make the community aware of this great resource, the National Transgender Library & Archive. When the New Year starts and you begin to hear about the new organization Gender Education and Advocacy, please support it with your dollars. You will be helping to preserve our history and keep it in our hands.

Want to help? Write to Dallas Denny at: [aegis@gender.org](mailto:aegis@gender.org)

### Up Coming National Events:

#### *IGFE 1999 Convention*

March 18-21, 1999

Louisville, KY

[www.igfe.org](http://www.igfe.org)

### California Dreaming

April 22-25, 1999

AirTel Plaza Hotel & Conference Center

Van Nuys, CA

[www.flash.net/~dhome/cadreamin](http://www.flash.net/~dhome/cadreamin)

### Trans America Conference

May 13-15, 1999

Charlotte, NC

[www.q-notes.com/transamerica.htm](http://www.q-notes.com/transamerica.htm)

(704) 531-9988

### ESPIRT 1999

May 19-23, 1999

Port Angeles, WA

[www.nwartt.com/Espirt/](http://www.nwartt.com/Espirt/)

### SPICE 1999

Minneapolis MN, July 14-18, 1999

Sheraton Inn, Minneapolis Airport

[www.firstnethou.com/brenda/holiday.htm](http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/holiday.htm)

### 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Be-All

June 2-6, 1999

Cleveland, Ohio

[www.beall.com](http://www.beall.com)

### Holiday en Femme

Nov. 10-14, 1999

Houston, TX

[www.firstnethou.com/brenda/holiday.htm](http://www.firstnethou.com/brenda/holiday.htm)

### Press Release: Columbia Pictures

"Columbia Pictures will delve into cross-dressing with a film called Hot, based on the true-life story of Hilton LaShawn Williams, who toured the country