

May 24, 2009
Ann Arbor Observer

Transgender Archive

The U-M's Labadie Collection of social protest literature now includes a T-shirt that reads, "Boys will be girls."

In 2000 the Labadie competed with twelve major national institutions, including the University of Chicago, the University of Minnesota, Cornell, and Indiana University's Kinsey Institute. The trophy they all wanted was the National Transgender Library & Archives (NTL&A), the largest known cataloged collection on transsexualism and transgenderism. The U-M won the collection, which was begun by trans-

Dallas Denny, who now lives in Georgia, transitioned from male to female in her late thirties. She began the collection in the 1970s with the book The Man-Maid Doll, which she described as a "sordid autobiography of a transgendered prostitute."

gender activist Dallas Denny more than twenty-five years ago.

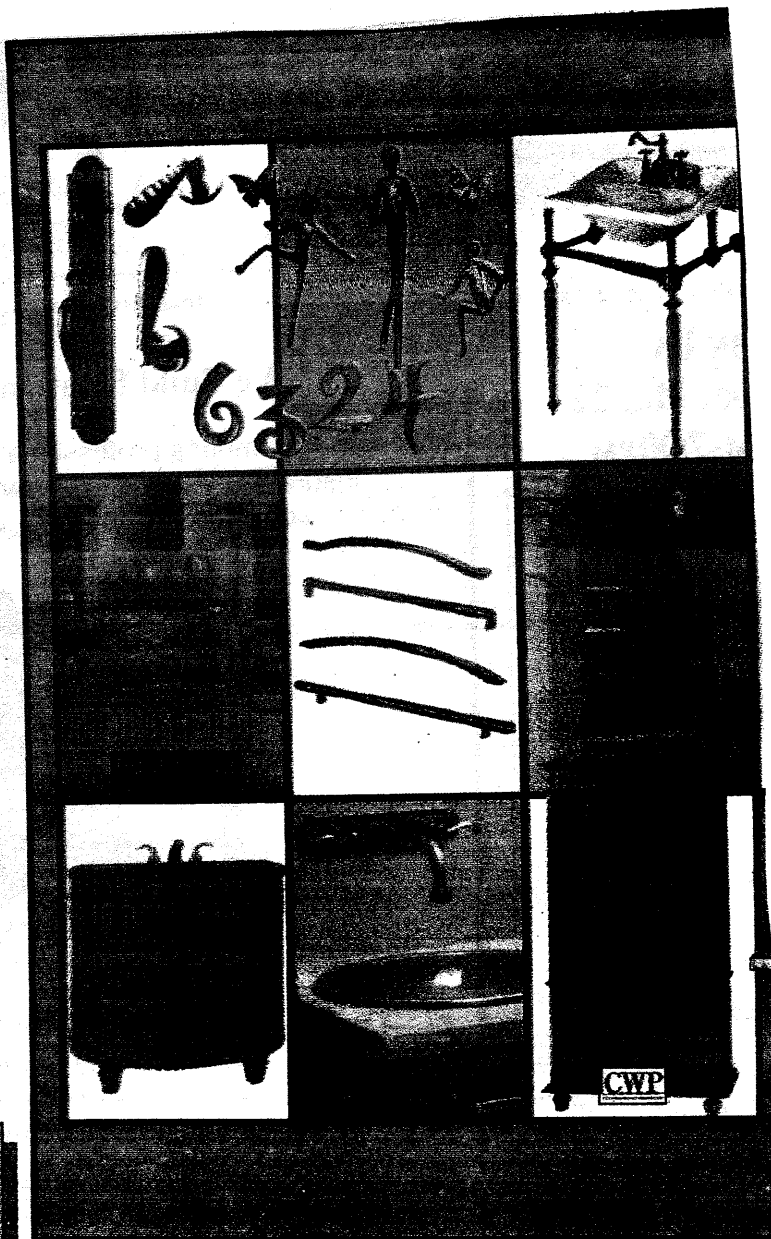
Curator Julie Herrada says the keys to the victory were the Labadie's "history, our ability to maintain the collection, our intentions to make it available, our accessibility to scholars, and our funding security." Herrada personally oversaw the transfer of the collection, which filled a fifteen-foot U-Haul truck. It includes more than 1,000 transgender-themed books from the nineteenth century to the present—plus magazines, newsletters, journals, newspaper clippings, garments, shoes, buttons, brochures, cassette tapes, videos, playbills, photographs, postcards, comic books, sheet music, greeting cards, movie posters, and bumper stickers.

In the program for the collection's

opening, Denny recalled being "scared to death" when she went to her local library in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, at age fourteen to search the subject headings "transvestite" and "transsexual." "There were only two books listed. One was in the reference section—and I wasn't about to ask the librarian for a book on *that* subject!" She never found the other book in the stacks: "It was either stolen or always checked out."

Denny, who now lives in Decatur, Georgia, transitioned from male to female in her late thirties. She began the collection in the 1970s with the book *The Man-Maid Doll*, which she described as a "sordid autobiography of a transgendered prostitute." Eventually the archive outgrew her home and became the NTL&A, under the auspices of the national group Gender Education & Advocacy, which is its official donor.

Highlights from the NTL&A will be on exhibit at the Hatcher Graduate Library through May 29. Denny's own favorite item is a 1953 nightclub program from *Madame Arthur's*, the Parisian transvestite cabaret. Herrada points out a pair of narrow, black, high-heeled sandals with peach rosettes that once were worn by Virginia Prince. Now in her nineties, Prince is known as the "godmother" of M-to-F cross-dressers.



Calls & Letters

Metes and bounds

To the Observer

As a longtime (fourteen years) member of the Superior Charter Township Planning Commission, I had to chuckle when I saw the statement in April's Ann Arbor Observer that development in Superior Township is "limited" with lots of "metes and bounds" development. (I and Rush...)

Certain sense alone should suggest that "limited" development doesn't mean no limits and certainly not "metes and bounds" development. The... (The...)



cooking & LIFE

Natural Solutions for Menopause

With Dr. Greg Peroff

Fee \$5.

Saturday, May 1,

10am-11:30am

Health and Healing Naturally, The
Chiropractic Way With Dr. Andrea
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Free.

Thursday, May 6,

7:00-7:30 pm

Seafood For Health

with Chef Brian Steinberg

Fee \$15.

Wednesday, April 14,