



Southern Belle

Newsletter of Sigma Epsilon Chapter of the Society for the Second Self, Inc. (Tri-Ess Sorority)

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Sig Ep Adopts New Hotel Beginning in January 1994

The rumored shift in meeting sites for Sigma Epsilon was confirmed at the October meeting.

President Lauren Hester announced that the board has settled on The Marque of Atlanta as our new meeting headquarters for 1994.

The Marque (*pronounced Mark, as opposed to Mar-key, according to Lauren*) is located at 111 Perimeter Center West. More to the point, it is adjacent to Perimeter Mall on the north side by JCPenney. A tall, smoke-gray glass building, its illuminated name shines brightly atop the building at night. The Marque's phone number is (404) 396-6800 and Lauren recommends you make reservations for all 12 meetings at one time. "You can always cancel," Jacque Nowling reminded the group during

last month's announcement. Large, beautifully furnished rooms

will be available at a group rate of \$54 per night, which is less than would have been the new rate offered to us for 1994 back at the Ramada. Two-room suites, which include a pull-out coach in the outer room as well a full kitchen, will go for \$69 and include free breakfast. These should be a popular choice for couples and sisters who share rooms but also was some privacy. On the

1994 MEETING DATES

Jan 14 - 15

Feb 4 - 5

Mar 11 - 12

Apr 8 - 9

May 13 - 14

Jun 10 - 11

Jul 8 - 9

Aug 12 - 13

Sep 9 - 12

Oct 14 - 15

Nov 11 - 12

Dec 9 - 10

con side, the bar is not as large or free-standing as the Polo Lounge. It is an open-air affair off the main lobby, but there's no lounge singers. The restaurant serves an oriental dinner menu. Breakfast buffet is typical American. Fitness buffs can use an exercise room and pool.

Annual Due\$ Are Now Due

Your subscription will soon end if you do not renew!

My measure of a good hotel is whether or not room service can deliver a pair of off-black, queen-size, control-top hose in under 30 minutes.

Next Meeting Dec. 10 - 11 Don't forget your grab bag prize for the Xmas party!



Gender Couples Face Delicate Bedroom Issues

by Linda Peacock

One of the most painful aspects for some women who are involved with a gender-gifted man is the sexual side of the relationship, and how, if at all, the crossdressing fits into it. I think that this is such a personal thing, that there cannot be a generalized right or wrong; rather, each couple must individually confront and deal with it.

One of my dear friends, Janie Hutton, is an extraordinarily open-minded woman. Her capacity for loving is amazing, and it surrounds the lucky recipient. Janie married hetcrossdressing husband last January, and as she had been married previously to a crossdresser and widowed, I would have to say she has had some experience in dealing with the sexual issues in such a marriage. Janie presented a Bedrooms Issues program at SPICE last July, and during it, she shared her own personal experiences and thoughts.

One of the most thought-provoking comments she made was that the most powerful, electrifying sexual experience of her life was when she willingly allowed her husband to act out his number-one crossdressing fantasy — it turned out to be just as fantastic for her as it was for him. As I said, Janie is an extraordinary woman, and her openness about her husband's sexual needs is extraordinary. However, what is right for Janie does not necessarily mean it is right for me, or for you. We all want to have

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What's That Transsexual Doing Here, Anyhow?

by Dallas Denny

I'm not a heterosexual crossdresser, nor am I the partner of one of the members, but I rarely miss a Sigma Epsilon meeting; in fact, I come early and stay late. Who am I, and why do I come?

Let me start with why I come. I come because Sigma Epsilon and Tri-Ess have been very important in my life. I come because I love and respect the officers and members, both individually and collectively. I come because I am in turn respected and loved. I come because I am a magnet for those with feelings of gender dysphoria, who seek me out in private to talk. I come because I have such a good time. But most of all, I come because Sig Ep is so important to me.

From age 12 to 40, I dwelt and dealt in solitude with my feelings of gender dysphoria. I knew there were others out there like me, but they were certainly not in the gay community or in the ads in magazines I found in adult bookstores. They were completely invisible to me.

Then, in the late 1970s, I heard about Tri-Ess, the Society for the Second Self. Well, I certainly had a second self! I wrote Box 194 in Tulare and got the membership booklet, and even corresponded briefly with Virginia Prince. But I did not join because I felt I was something other than a crossdresser. I almost mailed my membership fee anyway, but instead I went back underground for 10 years.

In 1988 I said "What the hell!" and sent the membership fee to Tulare. I promptly received my registration packet and contacted the then-fledgling Sigma Epsilon. In fact, it was our very own Joan Ann who replied to my enquiry about coming to a meeting. In November, I drove crossdressed from my home in the upper East corner of Tennessee to Chattanooga to attend my first Sigma Epsilon meeting.

At that meeting I found companionship, warmth, and understanding. For the first time in my life, I was with others who understood and accepted how I felt. I can't begin to express how important it was to have that sense of belongingness. After years of feeling like a stranger in a strange land, I was finally home.

Joining Tri-Ess was a turning point in my life, for through Sigma Epsilon I was able to make contacts which helped me to pursue my personal journey. That journey, as most of you know, is commonly called transsexualism. But I did not think I was transsexual, for I did not fit the stereotype. I had not played with dolls as a child, and was not so gender-conflicted that I could not function as a male. I did not hate my genitals. When I read the biographies of transsexuals, I did not see my own life. But even if I did not fit the transsexual stereotype, I deeply and truly desired, and had persistently desired since my early teen years, to be a woman. In fact, I had come a long way towards being one, for I had been consistently taking female hormones since January, 1980—nearly ten years. My body, my interests, my emotions, practically everything about me had been profoundly altered during the decade I had spent underground. I was physically and emotionally ready for the next step, whatever that would turn out to be, and if I had not found Sigma Epsilon, I would have lacked the support I needed to make that step.

With my future course becoming clear to me, I wrote a letter to Robin Kieffer in late 1989. In it, I expressed my support of and love for Tri-Ess and Sigma Epsilon, but said that I felt I did not fit the membership criterion and would be looking elsewhere for the help I needed to complete my journey.

Continued on page 6

First Person

Singular:

Sig Ep Girl Lives Strip Club Dream

by Melanie Shaline

The weekend of October 30, 1993 was one of the most incredible weekends Melanie has ever known. It was a Sigma Epsilon (SE) weekend and Friday was nice enough. I treated myself to dinner *en femme* at a Chinese restaurant and caught up with the gang in the Polo Lounge before hitting Crazy Rays for a nightcap on the way home.

It was Saturday that packed the real punch. The weather being cool, I decided to shop for that coat I've been needing. So off I went to the JCPenny outlet store. My conservative ruffled blouse, above-the-knee black skirt, and very business-like fall yellow blazer brought the occasional scrutiny and a few startled, "Oh my God's." I found a lovely coat I had remembered from a previous trip (on sale no less) and collected a nice, "Ya'll come back now," from the clerk before slowly and proudly parading out in front of 30 or more shoppers who were waiting for loved ones.

Evening saw me in a simple, elegant white and gold beaded gown, nude stockings and Cinderella glass high heels so you could see my red painted toenails. I checked with my Sig Ep sisters at the hotel in preparation for living a lifelong fantasy: to visit a strip club *en femme*. I decided I would need a male escort as

these clubs generally don't let ladies in unattended. I'd asked a friend of mine, Jim, with whom I had worked for a number of years. He and his wife have been very supportive of my crossdressing since I nervously came out to them.

I had invited both of them along, but Mary had a previous engagement, so there was Jim at the hotel at 7:30 pm to meet Melanie for the first time. His initial comment was "You sure are tall." We enjoyed dinner and then retired to the bar to chat with the sisters. Soon it was time to head out. Jim helped me with the car door and we were off.

Once again at the club Jim got out and opened the door for me and we walked to the front door of the club. When we entered the doorman informed us that the cover charge was \$5, but women get in free, so Jim only had to pay for himself. The doorman also indicated that there was going to be a Halloween costume contest tonight and would I like to enter, and I said "Sure, Why not?". I had to lean over to sign the contest list and Jim said that when I did a lot of necks strained to see as much as they could.

We went to one of the small stages and Jim helped me off with my coat. A waitress brought us diet cokes, complimented my dress and left us to

settle back and enjoy one of man's main pleasures: looking at women. The dancers followed the standard procedure of coming on stage with a top and bottom on, put a dollar under their garter, they take the top off, another dollar under the garter, and they take their bottom off. The only thing they end up wearing is their shoes.

We were getting a lot of attention from the girls and I got many comments on how pretty my dress was. One girl was very impressed with how well my beaded bag matched the dress. One performer approached us after her set to talk and was surprised at the deepness of my voice, saying she had thought I was a bi-woman. (I had put some dollars under her garter.) I felt a real positive response from all the girls except one who seemed really confused and somewhat freaked out about the whole thing.

Jim told me that he sensed by some looks and feelings he was getting that a number of people there probably assumed he was my gay lover. I am proud to know a man who is sure enough of himself that he does not care what others think.

The first costume contest they had was for the employees. There were eleven participants and the girls among them had really cute costumes. They finally did the customer contest a *Continued on page 8*

Who's the TS Anyway?

Continued from page 5 Robin read that letter at the next meeting, and something unusual and wonderful happened. It was decided by vote that if I or any other transsexual person felt that Sigma Epsilon had anything to offer, we would be welcomed. That was a courageous move, for at the time it was against the rules of Tri-Ess National. I received that message with tears in my eyes and love in my heart, and with it I became a Sigma Ep girl for life.

I have pursued my personal journey, which has taken me not only into full-time living and sex reassignment surgery, but into advocacy work on behalf of other transgendered persons. Robin, Linda, Rachel, Kathy, Joan Ann, and other old-timers, and many newer members have shared in my joy and offered encouragement along a way that has often been difficult.

I like to think that not only are Sigma Epsilon and Tri-Ess special to me, but that I am special to Sigma Epsilon and Tri-Ess. I was shown concrete evidence of this last year, when I was not only invited to attend the Holiday en Femme, but received a Friends of Tri-Ess award. The plaque hangs proudly on the wall, directly in my line of sight as I work at my computer to write this. I will get other awards in this life, but none will be more important to me. And I will receive love in my life, but none will mean more than the love I have received from Tri-Ess National and from Sigma Epsilon.

And that's why you'll see this transsexual at Sigma Epsilon meetings!

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Ye Olde Male Bag

Sigma Epsilon Board of Directors

Dear Board:

While we applaud the new look of Southern Belle, we are concerned about the outline of the minutes of the Board of Directors indicating the decision to adopt a dress code.

Such a code is, in our view, counterproductive. It introduces a divisiveness among our ranks, and is an admission of failure for Sigma Epsilon in that the decision shows intolerance and an inability to support and counsel our members.

To be sure, we are also concerned about inappropriateness of dress by certain members and their insensitivity to the reactions of "civilians" as well as to other members who expect a certain degree of decorum in dress and behavior. Legislation and expulsion is not the answer. All of us, to some extent, have gone through a hooker stage. We have caricatured women as we found a way to express our inner feelings and discover a feminine essence. Many face this problem alone, without the benefit of gentle support and suggestion.

We submit that a major reason for the existence of Sig Ep is to support and nurture each other. By insisting that some

of us hold a morally higher ground, we may exclude those individuals who need us the most.

We can point out that a dress that is inappropriate in a hotel lobby may be acceptable in certain bars. We can show individuals that they may achieve a more elegant, feminine and pleasing appearance. We can, as a group, show our displeasure at certain activities and dress and set a standard by our own behavior and appearance.

While we assemble as a group of heterosexual crossdressers and try to evidence a female persona with taste and discretion, we diminish ourselves by establishing exclusionary policies. We re-emphasize the pigeon-holed, diagnostic and clinical dismissal of all of us by society in general. The transvestic fetishists (of whom we speak), the transgendered, transsexual, gay and straight among us all have separate concerns, but a common bond. We should rather be inclusive, emphasize the spectrum of gender behavior, and indicate appropriate ways for all of us to relate to society as a whole, so that none of us is treated as a freak or pervert, but with the respect and dignity that we crave.

Delia Van Maris, M.D.
Burta Van Maris

Meeting Report.....

Continued from page 3 of this sort.

A few stores on our shopping list asked to be dropped. Too many CDs were showing up just to browse and endlessly chat, without buying anything. It is our trade that helps maintain our welcome at ladieswear shops, much more than our charming personalities. Remember, every business is in business to do business. Along those lines, Wanda advised the group that Catherine's at Lenox Square Mall is especially welcoming. Gretyl is particularly helpful, she says.

The group planning to attend *La Cage en femme* at the Fox Theater next February now numbers about three dozen. Contact Lauren ASAP on our hot line if you hope to be included in the block of seats she's arranging.

Six Sig Ep ladies made an *en femme* appearance at this Fall's Show & Tell/Question & Answer session with Emory University Sociology classes. Susan is preparing a letter to go to other area educational institutions and organizations volunteering us in similar ventures. Members will be solicited to join in.

Terry proposed that a third special interest group, in addition to wives and newcomers, begin meeting on Saturdays. It would offer group therapy peer support for any interested CD members who wish to discuss life issues or problems. No professional moderator is available, but one might be invited if there is enough interest. Professional HCDA (Heterosexual CrossDressers Anonymous) discussion materials may be used, if found desirable.

A wealth of suggestions for projects and entertainments came from old and new members alike. Our VP for Activities, Michelle McAllen, and Wanda will be working together to put many into action. In response to an oft-repeated suggestion, the meeting ended with each member introducing herself with a few words. The number of newcomers at meetings over recent months and years makes this desirable for all.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Listings are as accurate as possible at presstime.
Please report any inaccuracies ASAP.

1994

Feb. 25-27

TEXAS T PARTY, San Antonio, TX
PO Box 700042, San Antonio, TX 78270

April 21-24

MOONLIGHT IN MANHATTAN, New York City
Greater New York Gender Alliance, c/o Lynda Frank, 330 W 45th St., Apt 3-E, New York, NY 10036 (212) 765-3561

April 27 - May 1

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN', Burbank, Calif.
PPOC, PO Box 1088, Yorba Linda, CA 92686

May 7-14

EURO FANTASIA, Ebeltoft, Denmark
EuroFantasia, Box 442, N-4301 Sandnes, Norway

May 31 - June 1

14TH TIFFANY CLUB SPRING OUTING,
Provincetown, Mass.
TCNE, PO Box 2283, Woburn, MA 01888-0483.
Call Tuesdays, 7-10 pm EST (508) 358-2305

June 8 - 12

12TH BE ALL YOU WANT TO BE, Pittsburgh, PA
TransPitt, PO Box 3214, Pittsburgh, PA 15230