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Buffalo Belles

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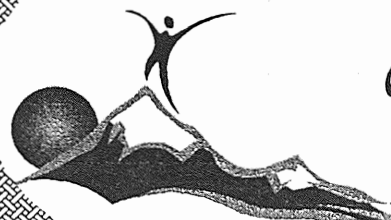
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THE JOURNEY

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUFFALO BELLES

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THIS IS OUR BACK-TO-SCHOOL, BACK-TO-WORK, BACK-TO-NORMAL (?) WEATHER ISSUE. HOPE YOUR SUMMER WAS FUN AND FILLED WITH PLEASANT MEMORIES. WE ANTICIPATE A FALL FILLED WITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE TG INDIVIDUAL. ARE YOU READY? THEN CHECK YOUR STOCKINGS FOR RUNS AND LET'S GO...

Thoughtful Advice

By Tina Marie

A few weekends ago I had planned to meet a couple of girlfriends downtown at Secrets and enjoy the evening. I got there about 9:30pm, grabbed a drink and headed for the patio to watch the pouring rain and lightning.

The other girls weren't supposed to arrive for an hour, so I took a seat at the bar. The only other people there were 5 guys at a table just chatting. They asked me to join them, which I did. We talked for a while and one of them asked me and the others if we could use a drink. My glass was empty so I said sure. He went off to the bar to get our drinks and I started to think about some advice that my friend, Kali, and a few others had given me...

"Never let your drink out of you sight."

I excused myself from the table and headed to the bar to watch my drink being made and to have it given directly to me. I told the guy that I wished to have my drink in my sight.

He was a little put off and asked, "Don't you trust me?" I said, "I don't know you, so I can't at this point."

I took my drink and went back to the table. When he came back, I explained

to him that I have heard of a few stories about things being put into drinks and I didn't want to take any chances. He was still a little upset with the insinuation, but I felt much better knowing that my drink was safe.

I told this story to Kali and she had some more good advice and female insight, which I always take to heart:

First: A Lady never accepts a drink from someone that she doesn't know!
 Second: Never accept a drink when you haven't seen the drink made. (Editor Note: Unless you're at the bar itself, this may be impractical.)
 Third: Never let your drink out of your sight.
 Fourth: Never go out without having firm plans to meet someone.



I never knew about the first rule, but I was told that if you accept a drink from a stranger, you are more or less saying that he can expect something in return. So, better off just saying no thanks! Or, if you desire to, get into a conversation first and get to know them. Otherwise, you might find yourself in the company of someone who you might not even like. Is the drink worth it?

You can never be too careful and if you are alone there is no one that can watch out for you but you!



CAMILLE'S CORNER

As The World Turns

At times the world seems like a soap opera: Bill and Monica; young Elian in Miami; television's "Survivor". It never ceases to amaze me. But in the Trans world meaningful conditions are occurring. Society is showing a growing interest in learning about who we are. But they need to get their knowledge of us from people other than the Jerry Springers of the world. That's one of the goals of the Belles. We need to reach out to other Transgendered individuals in need of friends and support; to make alliances with the Gay, Lesbian and Bi communities in order to bring about laws that offer protection from discrimination; and to educate the general public about understanding and tolerance.

Some efforts that a few Belles have been involved with include: working with The Buffalo Pride Committee, who plan the annual Pride parade, rally and associate activities. They have named me to their Board of Directors. We will now have input to an increasingly visible activity in the Buffalo area. PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) has asked us to advise them about helping Trans youth and their families. I, along with Colleen, have been attending their monthly meetings to assist this wonderful, caring group. And starting next week, the two of us will be speaking to Trans youth at monthly meetings at GLYS (Gay & Lesbian Youth Services), in downtown Buffalo, as well as attending their monthly "Trans Movie Night". (Don't you wish you could have discussed your gender "gift" with someone when you were a teen or young adult? I know I would have practically crawled to get to a place like this when I was a youth.)

In October, I'll be addressing a class of Nurse Practitioners at the University of Buffalo's Medical School about alternative

lifestyles. Also occurring at the University of Buffalo in mid-October, is the annual "Coming Out Days" where the Lesbian, Gay & Bi Alliance (LGBA) puts on a two day education fair to inform the student body about what it is to be 'different'. They have never included anything about the transgendered community before. Yet you know there are youth at the university who are looking for answers and support. The Belles will be there this year. And there are more classes and other schools we'll be contacting this and next semester as well.

I just need more time to do many of these things (or devise a 36-hour day). Many of you know that I have been writing for the Buffalo Belles newsletter for over three years. And for the last two years, I have had the job as editor. I truly enjoy it. But it eats up a chunk of time that I would rather be spending on the above efforts. It's time to pass the editor's pencil to someone else.

The December 2000, edition of *The Journey* will be the last issue I edit.

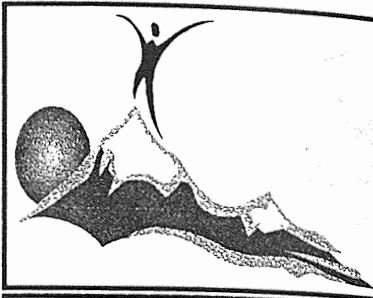
I will provide assistance to whoever takes over as editor. I'll also continue to write a monthly column as before.

The Journey is the one key element that links our group no matter where we are on the transgender spectrum. It is important to me. I hope it is as meaningful to you.

Anyone who has any questions or is interested in participating in any of the above, please contact me.

Take care.

PS: Don't forget about attending "Curtain Up" on Friday, September 22. It's the annual downtown event celebrating the opening of the theater season. The activities and entertainment are FREE on Main Street (between Tupper and Huron) after the shows are over, about 9:00pm to midnight. (You don't have to go to a show in order to attend the festivities.) I and a few Belles have attended this event the last two years, and everyone we met was friendly. I hope to see you there.



The Journey is the monthly publication of the Buffalo Belles. All articles and information contained in this publication may be reprinted in full by any non-profit gender community organization without permission, provided credit is given to this newsletter and the author. The material contained herein does not necessarily express the views or opinions of the Buffalo Belles, its officers or editorial staff. Contributions of articles are welcomed. The Buffalo Belles reserve the right to edit submissions for publication for suitability, spelling, grammar and/or length. Submissions or comments should be addressed to:

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Nancy's Perspective

Hi ladies,

Good news, Bad news? Bad news, Good news? I can never decide in which order they go! Oh well, I'll just relate the news in my own order, and let you decide for me.

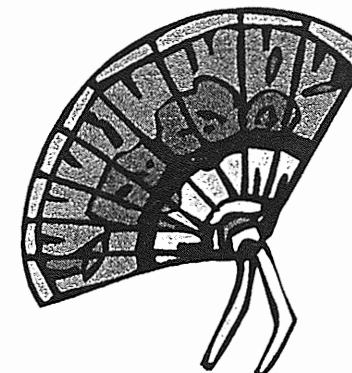
Bad news is that I couldn't get to the picnic on August 12th. Good news is that I didn't have any heartburn on the 13th. I don't mind being a working woman, but working on Saturdays limits me at times. I think my boss was getting on to me because my calling in sick on the 2nd Saturday of every month was starting to become obvious. I'm not sure she was buying my excuse that I had PNS, cramps, or even morning sickness either! Hope everyone had a great time.

Bad news is I'm not going to the Fantasia Fair this October. Just couldn't seem to tie all the ends together. Good news is I'm going to the "Fall Harvest 2000" in St. Louis instead. I'll also get to spend a couple of days with a girlfriend I've only known via the mail and telephone. Look for my post-convention report in November.

Good news is I conducted my 1st interview with a prospective new member back on August 6th. We sat over coffee for two hours while exchanging questions and answers. I had talked to Camille a couple of months ago about stepping up to the plate a bit more, and that I would be glad to interview anyone from the Rochester area as the need arose. This first time was fun, and I look forward to doing it again. No bad news here!

One last Bad news item is that summer is winding down! Good news is that it'll start feeling more comfortable wearing hose again as the temperature and humidity start to drop. But you already knew that! Take care.

Your sister,
Nancy

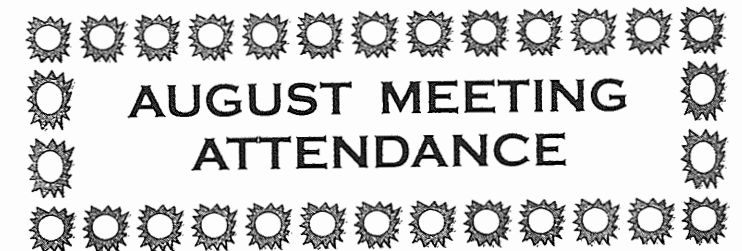


WANTED INDIVIDUAL TO ASSUME EDITOR DUTIES OF THE JOURNEY

Camille will be leaving her position as Editor of the newsletter after the December, 2000, issue due to her outreach/education activities.

This position must be filled. Assistance will be provided.

Please contact the helpline or speak to an officer if you are interested.



AUGUST MEETING ATTENDANCE

Ann Z.
Brenda C.
Colleen R.
Crystal F.
Dana D.
Holly I.
Jo S.
Joan L. & Jill
Kathy L.

Kelly H.
Michelle L.
Rebecca
Susan R.
Tina Marie

Guests: Tammy from Newbury St, and Pam G. from Rochester

Reflections

By
Andy Miller, Belles Member

It isn't often that in contemporary American society that we have the opportunities to educate ourselves about the diversity around us. Unusual isn't it? That, in the "land of opportunity" America promises itself to be, its inhabitants are actively encouraged not to explore the cultural and political diversity and all its joys and challenges it can bring us? Doesn't that which we would choose to see all the more limit us? Many of these questions bother me, some more than others, from the mild to the insane. Why is it that people, not just Americans, engage in wholesale discrimination? Is it selfishness, greed? Or is it something much more central and symptomatic of the culture that one finds itself reared in?

For just as much as I would like to divorce myself from the culture I was reared in, I must acknowledge its influence (and perhaps even more so, to understand its basis—so as to be so thoroughly informed on it that I can stand intelligently against it) and its effects it has had on my life. For if I do not do this, I stand to loose a lot in the process of becoming who I am called to be, and ultimately, by extension of this argument, society as a whole loses out on what could have been tremendous achievements?

For example, if Dr. George Washington Carver, the noted black scientist who developed hundreds of uses for the peanut, had accepted the adopted racist viewpoint against people of African descent, would he have even tried to gain an education and pursue his dreams? I don't think that it would be likely. Or how about the poet Langston Hughes or Maya Angelou? Or how about Helen Keller? These people who decided that they had important contributions and dreams to pursue persisted in spite of what their contemporary culture dictated to them as to their proper place/role. Many people who find themselves in the "non" dominant culture are either casually or downright blatantly told that they are less than human is. Until this thinking is challenged and seen for what it is we may not ever have the hope of reversing the end results it brings upon everyone. For no one can deny the existence of its results: the depression, the giving up of hope, and the anger it fosters (and rightly so!).

The reason I bring this up is that I believe that in our society, if you find yourself in any one of these diverse communities you already have your hands full of challenges and obstacles to overcome; but, however, if you find yourself in more than one, then you not only have challenges which are unique unto themselves, you will have found yourself battling obstacles that may well be insurmountable.

It is a common enough understanding in our society that access to fair legal representation in our present day judicial system may well be regulated by what kind of connections you have or how large a bank account you possess; but, has any one of us seriously entertained the reality that a person of color has to struggle against? Now imagine that you're not only black, but

you're also TG/TS/CD? Or physically or mentally challenged? The list could go on and on...and it does!

Even in our "community" there is a diversity of opinion over the existence of the phenomena of the transgendered/transsexual/cross-dress population. It seems that everyone has a theory or ready explanation about what has caused this. At times it can be informative but at other times, you just know its being used against you to further support an uninformed biased viewpoint and to provide a platform for them to objectify and discriminate against you. From healthcare and employment, housing to parental rights. Even from involvement in your family to being outcast from it. Discrimination hits home. Hard. Many transpeople (include all of us in this, for as many different variations there are of how one can dress to how many ways we have to express our gender we are *all* gender variant) struggle with these issues on a daily basis.

This doesn't even touch upon lifestyle issues; these are issues that are central to a person's concept of who they are and how they see themselves in the world. Our society has so restricted our becoming whole that is it any wonder that it is this crippled? You would think that with all the disadvantages these attitudes bring that we'd all be weeping and grieving over our collective loss.

But I know this is not the case. Bigotry serves a different purpose altogether. Besides insulating those who perpetrate it from seeing others as human beings deserving of respect, it also prevents them from sharing in any of the joy of the myriad of diversity our world has been presented. An analogy would be to think of the surface of the ocean and think that the surface we see is all there is. Such a view would obviously be limiting. But, if one were encouraged to dive below the surface and see the complexity of life and its many forms, wouldn't that perspective only add to our appreciation of life instead of our penchant for destroying it?

Yet, in all of these questions I have raised, I feel anemically unfit to adequately answer them. All I can suggest is that we try our best to inform others, in the best way we can, about the truth of our lives: its joys, struggles, and achievements. I know that this is no small task. It is asking a lot of our community to put that much on the line. People still need to have employment, and a means of putting food on the table and putting a blanket over themselves when they lay down to sleep. In many ways all of us have basic needs and Trans people are no less human because of them.

But what does it say about a society's treatment of its members when it would punish and exclude, even *murder* them for trying to fulfill them? Not much, I would venture to say. I, for one, am constantly amazed at the breadth and depth of the diversity within our community. The fact that we still try, to me, is even more of a miracle than we would be tempted to call it. Since I have come to Buffalo, I can tell you firsthand that the love and support that I have found here have truly helped me reclaim the idea that people are capable of tremendous kind-

(Continued on page 9)

TRANS COMMUNITY NEWS

DRAG QUEENS WON'T HAVE TO COME OUT

OLYMPIC OFFICIALS REFUSE TO BACK OFF FROM PLANS AMID MANY PROTESTS

SYDNEY, August 23 - Sydney Olympics organizers on Thursday refused to back down from using drag queens in the Games closing ceremony, winning praise from most commentators and gay groups.

The decision to use between 40 and 200 drag queens, hailed as a breakthrough for gay rights, had set off a storm of protests from church groups and conservative politicians who saw it as an endorsement of a homosexual lifestyle.

Some callers to talk-back radio stations even said they planned to demand refunds for ticket they had bought for the Oct. 1 closing ceremony.

But Games chiefs stuck to their guns, seeing the criticism as only a backlash from right-wing reactionaries.

Asked if the drag queens would be taken out of the ceremony, Games spokesman Milton Cockburn told Reuters: "Absolutely not."

Olympics chief Michael Knight said the drag queens would be part of a segment extolling Australian films and their inclusion should not be seen as a celebration of gay culture.

The drag queens will appear on a float in a celebration of "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," a film which won the 1995 Oscar for best costume design and featured three cross-dressers traveling through the Australian outback by bus.

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★ PRIMARY ★
★ DAY ★
★ TUESDAY ★
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COUPLE FIGHTS FOR SON, 6, THEY SAY IS GIRL AT HEART

By E. Pyle and M. Crane, Columbus Dispatch Staff Reporters

OHIO, August 26 - A Westerville couple is fighting to regain custody of their 6-year-old boy, whom they said was taken by social workers because they let the child dress and act like he's a girl.

The couple lost temporary custody of the child Wednesday, less than two weeks after trying to enroll him in first grade at McVay Elementary School as a girl. The child attended the school last year as a boy.

They said Franklin County Children Services is violating their civil rights by not allowing them to do what's best for their child. A gender-identity disorder was diagnosed in the child.

The disorder is recognized by the medical community. It can show up in the toddler stage when children begin to identify themselves as either male or female.

Children Services officials declined to comment on whether they think the child should be raised as a boy or girl. They said they just want to make sure the child is getting proper care and protection from his parents.

The couple said their child was born with male genitalia but has been adamant about being a girl since turning 2.

"She's your typical little girl who likes dressing up in frilly gowns, earrings and pretty shoes and playing with Barbie dolls," her mother said yesterday. "She's always gravitated to all things girls and, until recently, we had no idea why."

The child was diagnosed with gender-identity disorder in November after being hospitalized at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center for trying to hurt himself and others during an emotional outburst, said the couple's attorney, Randi Barnabee.

Barnabee said the child has been in and out of various Ohio hospitals and treatment centers since age 3 for uncontrollable behavior, which she said is linked to the child's gender-identity disorder. The child also suffers from attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and Asperger syndrome, which is related to autism, as well as violent, obsessive behavior.

"The more pressure brought onto the child to conform to acceptable social gender standards, the more she acted out," said Barnabee, a transsexual who has a law office in the Cleveland area.

While it took the couple a little time to adjust to the diagnosis, gender-identity disorder provided them with answers... and much-needed relief, Barnabee said.

(continued on next page)

GIRL AT HEART (Continued from page 5)

"It all became so clear," the attorney said. "It wasn't a matter of this child, who is so young, innocent and barely able to choose what she wants for dinner, choosing to be a girl. She's just manifesting her personality."

Most people have a very clear-cut sense of gender from an early age, said Dr. Herman Tolbert, director of child and adolescent psychiatry at the Ohio State University School of Medicine. As toddlers, individuals identify a gender and then spend the remaining years being socialized to fit societal expectations that go along with it, Tolbert said.

The disorder can be strictly psychological or have a mixture of psychological and physiological causes, such as ambiguous genitalia. Regardless of how the disorder shows up in a child, Tolbert said it is important to seek help and get a psychiatric evaluation.

"There's no single answer that applies to everybody," he said.

Children Services received a call Aug. 11 from someone concerned about the child and social workers decided to seek an emergency order for custody from a Franklin County judge not long after, said John Saros, the agency's executive director.

Although he refused to list the caller's concerns, court documents reveal that school employees and Children Services officials questioned the gender-identity diagnosis, as well as the parents' influence on the child's behavior.

In their complaint, Children Services officials noted that they first became aware of the couple in February when they turned to the agency because of "severe mental-health issues."

"Parents were currently separated and had a history of mental-health issues. Mother was diagnosed as bipolar and father may also have mental-health issues. Child was alleged to be exhibiting out-of-control violent behavior," according to notes contained in the complaint.

"Parents did not appear to be able to recognize that some of the child's behavior may be attributed to the home environment."

Barnabee said her clients have reconciled and that their marital problems stemmed from not knowing how to help their child.

"They've been at their wits' end for years, moving from one crisis to another... all the while just trying to do what's best for their child," she said.

The mother indicated in a kindergarten survey that her child liked to draw and design clothing, as well as play with cars, Legos and toys, which is not atypical of boys and girls, Children Services officials noted.

Now, they said, she told them the child wants to wear jewelry and girl's clothing.

Barnabee contends that the child was placed in the temporary custody of a foster family not to protect the child, but society.

"No one wants this child to be who she is... a girl. It's too much of a political hot potato," she said.

The parents said they plan to file a federal sex-discrimination lawsuit against the Westerville school district and Children Service.

The couple, who is Jewish, said Children Services has refused to allow their child to wear dresses and jewelry while in foster care or to maintain a kosher diet. They also alleged that the agency would not let the child observe the Sabbath with the family at home and has not refilled the child's lithium prescription for bipolar disorder.

"We have no idea what they are doing to her. She's not getting her medication. She's very, very fragile," the mother said. "She's never even had an outside baby sitter... not even family. She can't be fine. She's petrified. I know it."

Her father is worried that the foster family is trying to make his child conform to "being a boy."

"It will depress her, and who knows what will happen," he said.

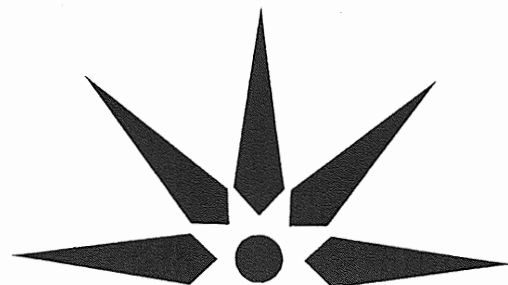
Saros said the child is doing well and has been appointed an independent guardian who will act on the child's best interests.

"As in any investigation, interviews with the parents and child are required; and relevant, available documentation of the child's medical, physical, psychological and social condition must be obtained and reviewed," he said. "To date the parents in the case have not yet participated in an interview, and have refused to sign a release so that Children Services can review materials."

A court hearing on Children Services' complaint has been set for Sept. 12.

Barnabee predicted a "protracted and bitter" fight.

"It's a tremendously tragic case over a socially unpopular disorder," she said. "Years ago, in private schools kids were slapped for using their left or 'wrong' hand. This is no different, just worse."

**BOYS DEVELOPED BREASTS FROM MOMS' ESTROGEN CREAMS**

BOSTON, April 4 — Women may want to stop using estrogen creams for menopausal symptoms if they have young boys in the house, according to a study published in this month's Pediatrics.

The report presents three separate cases of young boys developing breasts as a result of exposure to estrogen creams.

Estrogen Found in Bloodstream

The three boys, ages 24 months, 33 months, and 8 years, were referred to the Endocrinology Center at the Children's Medical Center in Dallas after their mothers expressed concern over developing breasts in the boys. Doctors found high estrogen levels in their bloodstream.

"There should be no estrogen at these boys' age," explains pediatrician Dr. Eric Felner, co-author of the Pediatrics study. Normally, estrogen levels are not found in boys until shortly before they hit puberty.

Doctors first were concerned high estrogen levels were being caused by cancerous tumors possibly in the testes or adrenal glands. The boys did not experience any other symptoms of premature exposure to estrogen, such as body odor, pubic or underarm hair, or penile enlargement.

Breast development occurs in 50 percent to 60 percent of boys who reach puberty, but it is very uncommon in the boys the age these pediatricians saw, says Dr. Robert Schwartz, chief of pediatric oncology at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"It was wise for them to follow up," Schwartz says, commenting on the paper.

Creams Were Culprit

Doctors obtained further histories and it was revealed each of the boys' mothers used estrogen cream, which had been custom-compounded by a pharmacist, to help with premenopausal symptoms. The mothers were between 30 and 50 years of age, and spread the cream either on their legs or their abdomen, Felner says.

The physicians suspect that traces of the cream left on the mother's hands or body was spread to the children through the children's skin or through food preparation.

The high estrogen levels not only caused an increase in breast size, but also accelerated growth and prematurely aged the boys' bones. The boys' breasts reduced in size, once the women starting using an estrogen patch rather than the cream, but their height and bone age remained.

Bone Aging a Problem

Felner called the bone aging "the most worrisome sign" of exposure to the cream. Bone age is a measure of how the bones thicken, mature and grow, a process that can be independent of chronological age, Felner explains. Someone can be 13 years old and have a bone age that is younger or older and as a result would be shorter or taller, respectively.

But Felner is concerned that the boys who were exposed to estrogen experienced an extreme premature bone age, which probably will set off puberty too early. "Early puberty might result in further aging of the bones and the boys might not be able to reach the height they should have," he says.

Usually boys continue to grow once their bone age gets to about 17 years. Felner said the 33-month-old patient, when he reached 39 months of age, already had a bone age of about 8 years.

Patches, Pills Better

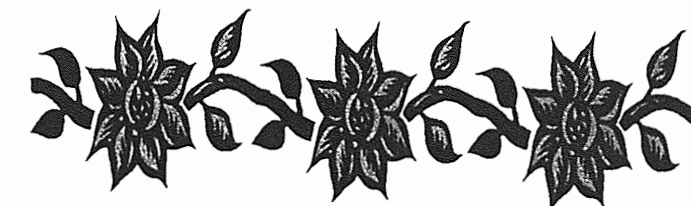
Although not routinely recommended by gynecologists, estrogen cream is a popular way for women to maintain estrogen levels in menopausal women.

Unlike an estrogen pill or patch, estrogen creams can contain more than 100 times the normal dosage of estrogen. On average, a patch will contain 0.1 milligram of the hormone, while a cream will contain 25 mg to 50 mg. The FDA does not regulate custom-compounded creams.

"These creams are highly loaded, and people tend to have a 'more is better' mentality," Felner offers as an explanation for the popularity of the creams. Because of the high estrogen concentration, it takes only a small amount of cream in the child's system to produce symptoms such as the three boys experienced.

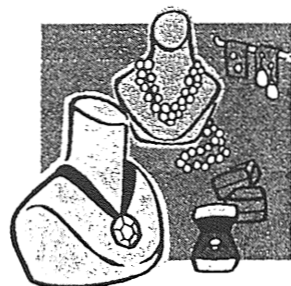
Schwartz called the report important for doctors and for older mothers of young children. "If a woman is using estrogen, she probably should use a patch or pill rather than a cream," Schwartz says.

The last reports of estrogen exposure in boys in the medical literature date from the late 1970s and early 1980s, according to Felner. Skin and hair preparations, ingestion of milk with estrogen and exposure via fathers who worked in a chemical factory were the means of transmission. Felner believes this is the first report of an exposure through an estrogen cream.





FASHION, STYLE ... AND YOU



Fishing for a new look ?

Fishnets have returned to fashion in recent years but now there is a whole new way to wear them. Layered over brightly colored tights. "The boldest women will team up printed legwear and fishnets," reports the Hosiery Association. Nothing like drawing a little attention to the legs.

Washing Without Water

The latest way to remove makeup or freshen up the skin is with disposable towlettes. Think baby wipes for the face. But pricier. A package of Chanel's soon-to-debut Precision Refreshing Swipes will sell for \$23.

Editor's Note: Try Tops or Wegman's baby wipe washcloths at less than \$3.00. I use them all the time.



The following is from *Happy Woman* magazine (www.happywomanmagazine.com), a parody of *Cosmopolitan*.



What Your Eyebrows Say About You

If the eyes are the window to the soul, then the eyebrows must be the window treatment. Find out what they say about you!

The Curve

Loveable, cute, dimwitted with no sense of humor. You secretly hate your best friend and love true crime novels. Your favorite color is eggplant and you chose a Pekinese because it set off your skin tone. You think wrestling is real and the ozone layer is not. You will marry twice and become a barfly when you are 52.

The Arch

Wise, witty and a tad arrogant. Your favorite color is teal blue and you keep your diary under a cashmere sweater in the third drawer to the right in your dresser. You are fond of animals but un-

able to keep one because of your irresponsibility. You only read book-liners and you are frightened of whisk brooms. You will have three children with three different lovers and become famous as a result of a cosmetic surgery screw-up. One of your children will write a tell-all after which you will move to Florida and make a living cheating at canasta.

The Straight Arrow

Everyone comes to you for advice but they never take it because they think you are stupid. You steal post it notes from work and have a crush on your mailman. You love reading and fancy yourself a poet. People rarely remember your name and you are generally referred to as that "sneaky" girl. Your favorite color is mustard and your dry-cleaning ticket is in your windbreaker. You will inherit money when you are forty-two and blow it all as a result of a ballroom dance scam.

The Untamed

Your brows say "Look at me. I gave up a long time ago". Your favorite color is sage green and you talk behind everyone's back. You have a secret talent for decoupage and have a ham and cheese sandwich rotting in your filing cabinet. You will never marry and you will be referred to in later years as "that spooky woman with all the cats".

TRANSSEXUALS WANT TO BE SEEN AS PEOPLE, NOT AS 'MISTAKES'

DEAR ABBY: I have recently "come out" to my family for who I really am -- a transsexual. I have felt this way as long as I can remember. At 26, I could no longer hide myself and, after seeing a therapist, I have begun the process of changing my gender. Some members of my family support me. However, my father and grandparents are staunchly against this. They say they will not accept it because to do so would be to admit that God makes mistakes.

Abby, I am not a "mistake," and neither are others like me. I have had tests, and they confirm that this is genetic. In no way do I think that God makes mistakes. God made me this way, and I must deal with it in the way that makes me happiest. Since I have come out, I have been happier than I have ever been, and I plan to finish my transition over the next few years.

Every move I have made on this journey has been considerate of those around me, changing gradually rather than shocking them by completely altering my appearance overnight.

Could you please help me educate my family and others who know so little about what the transgendered community goes through? We struggle to lead normal lives and try to be productive in society. We are teachers, lawyers, doctors and office workers. As few as we are, we are not mistakes as my father claims. Still, we face prejudice on a daily basis. We need our families to stand behind us as we make our way through this challenging journey. Please, Abby, help educate people to see that we are just like them.

TRANSGENDERED IN CHICAGO

DEAR TRANSGENDERED: You are not a mistake. Followed to its logical conclusion, your father's attitude would make the entire medical profession unnecessary. Transsexualism is inborn. Children as young as 3 have insisted that their true gender is not their birth gender. I congratulate you for being honest about who you are, knowing it might be difficult for some people to understand. I also applaud those family members who support you.

The usual gender transition involves a period of psychotherapy to consider all of the ramifications, followed by hormonal therapy, and then living full-time in the new gender for at least a year before seeking sexual reassignment surgery.

This is not an easy process for the transsexual person, nor for the family. Parents often experience many of the same emotions that occur in the grief process -- shock, anger, denial, guilt, sadness, and finally acceptance. Learning to use the new name is difficult; new pronouns are even harder. All of this takes time and commitment, but is a necessary part of the process.

Loving parents who want their child to be happy must learn to be accepting. Many transsexuals live very successfully in their new gender, and claim they are truly happy for the first time in their lives. Many families are proud of their "new" sons and daughters and report their relationships have vastly improved since their child's transition.

I would urge any family in this situation to contact PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). They have many resources available for transgendered people and their families.

Reflections (Continued from page 4)

ness and compassion. Many have been supportive in ways that they will never know; their words of encouragement and their willingness to let me into their lives have helped me to feel a sense of connectedness in an otherwise difficult and challenging time. I only wonder what would become of our world if we all treated each other in this way. Wouldn't it be more compassionate and loving? Understanding and caring? Wouldn't it at least feel a little more like home?

In my prayers I dream of the day when we can all feel such a passion for life that to entertain the idea of denying anyone the right to freely express their nature in society is as abhorrent to them as their own right to self realization & expression begin denied to them.

LIKE TO HAVE
YOUR PHOTO
AND/ OR SOME
INFORMATION
ABOUT YOUR
FEMME SELF ON
THE WEB?

OR A LINK TO
YOUR PERSONAL
HOMEPAGE?

ROOM IS STILL
AVAILABLE ON
THE BUFFALO
BELLES WEBSITE
(WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/BUFFALOBELLES)

CONTACT: CAMILLE OR
HELPLINE (879-0973)



COMING EVENTS



DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF LAST MINUTE CHANGES, CALL TO VERIFY THE TIME AND PLACE OF EVENTS

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| SEPTEMBER 9 | BUFFALO BELLES MEETING - 6:00pm |
| SEPTEMBER 16 | ABACUCK PRICKERT DINNER PARTY 7:00 to 11:00pm
Albany, NY (info: 518-436-4513 or www.nytg.org/dinner.html) |
| SEPTEMBER 22 | CURTAIN UP-Free from 9:00pm to midnight, Downtown Buffalo |
| SEPT. 26-OCT. 1 | SOUTHERN COMFORT
Atlanta, Georgia (info: 404-630-6470; www.sccatl.org) |
| OCTOBER 5 - 8 | 4th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CROSSDRESSING, SEX & GENDER, Philadelphia, PA (info: 610 -975-9119) |
| OCTOBER 7 | ROCHESTER CD NETWORK - 6:30pm |
| OCTOBER 12-15 | FALL HARVEST 2000
St. Louis, Missouri (info: www.transgender.org/stlgf/FH2000.html) |
| OCTOBER 14 | BUFFALO BELLES MEETING - 6:00pm |
| OCTOBER 18 - 25 | FANTASIA FAIR
Provincetown, Massachusetts |
| NOVEMBER 4 | ROCHESTER CD NETWORK - 6:30pm |
| NOVEMBER 11 | BUFFALO BELLES MEETING - 6:00pm |
| NOVEMBER 9 - 12 | WESTERN BELLES ROUNDUP 2000
Milford (The Poconos), Pennsylvania
(info: 810-286-6214; www.bobbiswan.com/dude) |
| NOVEMBER 16 -19 | LAKE ERIE GALA 2000
Erie, Pennsylvania (info: www.geocities.com/wellesley/1614) |
| DECEMBER 2 | ROCHESTER CD NETWORK - 6:30pm |
| DECEMBER 16 | BUFFALO BELLES ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY 6:00pm |

"All human beings carry within themselves an ever-unfolding idea of who they are and what they are capable of achieving."

'97 International Bill of Gender Rights The Right to Define Gender Identity, first sentence