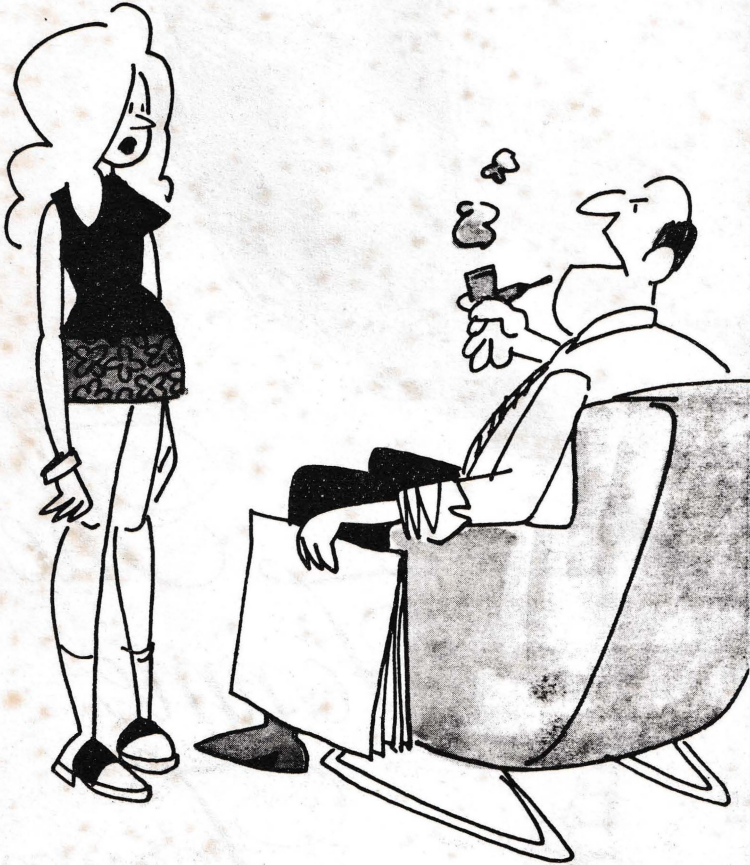




may 1972

*The
Femme
Forum*



No son of mine is going out looking like that! Put on some lashes, dammit!

HERE BE VIRGINIA WHO HATH WORDS OF WISDOM.
LET US LISTEN THEREUNTO...

In the previous issue of the Femme Forum, you will remember that I asked you all to express your views as to how FPE should be operated in view of the changes in the world since the time when I set up its operating procedures. I gave you my view that the FP world could be divided into the security conscious and what might be called the "open door" types, and I expressed my concern for the former in the presence of the latter, and particularly the effect of same on the GGs.

While nowhere near a majority response was received, there were a number of letters sent in. Practically all of them voted the same way -- the way I would have voted and the way I expected the sentiment would run, but which I didn't want to dictate. I preferred a free expression of opinion. I think it safe to assume that if any reasonable percentage of FPE's membership were unhappy about things they would have voiced their sentiments. Since I didn't get such voicings I can presume, I guess, that silence means assent. I think that what has happened is that those who were of a more care-free bent, who don't have many responsibilities and either have little to lose or are more inclined to risk taking have already voted with their feet by disaffiliating themselves from the organization. And that is all right and as it should be -- both for them and for those still within the organization.

Other groups and publications loudly proclaim that they are the largest group or that they have the largest circulation or something

and, if they have to blow those horns, I think they probably do so out of some sense of insecurity. For if they are so large or have so many readers, they shouldn't be so badly in need of more that they have to bleat about their size. As for myself and Transvestia and for all those in FPE, there are only two things to say ... TVia is the first, original and the oldest publication in the FP field and has seen others come and go, and FPE is the first, the longest lived organization. It was always designed as an organization built on quality rather than quantity, did not proselytize for members and expected the prospective members to feel ready to join, want to join, and be concerned about the kind of group they were getting into. FPE was not in the past, is not now, and with the votes of confidence expressed in letters, will not in the future be an open door organization. It will continue to try to serve the interests of a specific type of person -- a heterosexual cross dresser, and even among members of this group, will be concerned about those who are responsible individuals and who are therefore concerned about security procedures and plans. We will wish all other groups well, and may they be successful in serving the people who seek them out. There are all kinds of people in the world so there are all kinds of cross dressers. They are not by any means all the kind that I have referred to as FPs (femmePersonators, not, I might add Female IMpersonators, which is an entirely different word and concept). But, in any case, they too need the satisfactions of social activities. If other groups can provide it, then more power to them. I must say that I think it would be nice if other groups and publications would be charitable in their attitude toward TVia, FPE and toward me,

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personally. As it is, there is some sort of direct or veiled reference to me and my activities in practically every publication directed toward TVs and FPs. But maybe they are on an ego trip and their envy is showing. It is amusing too, that much of the time I am referred to as Charles Prince, or it is to Charles Prince's Group (meaning FPE) when poor old Charlie boy has been dead and buried these 4 years past. (Maybe they just don't want to insult and throw rocks at a woman -- if so, I will just thank them for their chivalry).

In regard to the nature of FPE, I think there is something else that we ought to remember about it. At least I think about it because it was the thought in my mind that lead to tis birth. All of us TV-FPs start out in a closet. It's a lonely world. Eventually you run across TVia (or some other publication) and you find there are others like yourself. Then you write letters in or submit material and its printed with your name on it and that's a kind of symbolic opening of the closet door. Then you send a picture in to be printed, and that is making a statement about yourself that all the world can see (if it cares to look) and that throws open the door much wider. But now two things become clear-- 1) that humans are gregarious, they like to be with their own kind and you can't really be a well adjusted, self accepting person of any kind all by yourself, and that 2) your long years in the closet have left their traumatic marks on your psyche. There is a solution to both of these problems -- get to know other people in the flesh, in social situations where all can be dressed as they like and have themselves accepted as good

people and learn to accept others the same way. That idea gave birth to FPE.

Of course chapter meetings are enjoyable, we have fun, we talk, we serve refreshments etc., but, while many of you have never given any thought to it and some of you may even resent it as an idea, FPE chapter meetings are a form of group therapy. There are not a few members of AA among us (they very likely became alcoholics because they were TVs first) and they will recognize the similarities of results if not of method. AA helps its members to deal with their problems. FPE does the same, except that handling alcoholism requires leaving alcohol alone, while handling cross dressing requires learning to accept it freely, comfortably and publically to the extent of group commitment. All of you are better able to accept your FPia and lose your guilt as a result of meeting with friends in a social situation, comparing notes, finding that your history is not too different from theirs and finding that neither of you is a weirdo, etc. With those developments you can better deal with your dressing, not as a "problem" or an illness, but simply as a form of behavior that is shared by many others, that fulfills a certain part of your human needs and that hurts no one (and doesn't even hurt yourself anymore once you have achieved the acceptance of yourself by yourself). This also explains one of the reasons why people drop out of FPE activity. It isn't necessarily due to disappointment with it (tho that undoubtedly occurs for a few) but in many cases it is simply because the individual has come to terms with himself, has learned to accept and understand his dress-

ing patterns, is no longer bugged with fear and guilt, no longer feels alone and is no longer under a compulsion to dress and the intense emotions that go with it. He no longer feels such a need as he once did and much of his energy turns elsewhere. This explains, too, why a lot of people, including a lot of you who read this, cease reading TVia. You don't feel that you need it any more. Of course I can understand this intellectually, but I must admit to sometimes feeling a little depressed seeing a card of someone I know TVia and FPE have done much for, going into the dead file because we haven't heard from her for a couple of years. I develop a kind of a maternal feeling for people after a while, and when they drop away it's kind of like a mother feels when the child grows up and leaves home to go out on his own, even though both the mother and I know in our heads, tho not in our hearts, that that was the ultimate purpose of all the care, help and nurturing in the first place.

Well, enough of that. Let me quote some of the comments that were sent in in response to my solicitation of opinion. In the person of their secretary, the RHO chapter in the Baltimore/D.C. area wrote -- "We unanimously agree that the present standards should not be relaxed and the requirements for FPE membership should remain intact in their present form. These requirements undoubtedly limit our membership as compared to a policy of open admission without question, however we feel that the measure of security gained by the present screening process is more important than a large membership. If the membership requirements were significantly relaxed, many of our present RHO members would be forced to drop out

because of the lack of security, and prospective members who desired security would be deterred from joining. We believe that FPE should continue to maintain these standards in order to protect the present membership and to



NO, you do NOT have to check each one!
And this is your last FPE Open House!

insure the continuing high quality of the organization".

Other members offer the following comments.

"I believe the current policies of FPE are sound and should be maintained ... to have a heterogeneous group would weaken the unity of our organization because of the diversity of interests and, consequently, we would have to attempt to be what so many organizations in our society have become -- all things to all people involved and the result is that it ends up to be nothing to anyone"

"I think you should keep running your organization pretty much as you have in the past..... If you wish to continue to help the kind of people you set out to help years ago, you will have to keep FPE as it is now and as it has been"

"My brief, frank opinion is; FPE should unquestionably stay as it is with no major changes. No persons other than TVs and their wives!! It has taken me too long to carefully and gently educate my wife into accepting my TV tendencies to have her mind messed up by 'others' of different preferences".....

"I think the policy should remain unchanged..... A liberal membership policy would bring in TVs who have hang-ups from punishment or bondage, through extreme exhibitionism to gay TVs. Too many of these types might disrupt the aims and purposes of the FPE chapters. One thing I enjoy about the local chapter is the tone of the meetings. They are free of any off-color activity, no sneaky attempts to divert the club's activities into offbeat practices"

"Your March editorial asked some most interesting questions. I, for one, am not afraid to speak my piece. In essence -- you founded FPE and TVia on principles I agreed with more than 10 years ago and I STILL AGREE WITH THEM Virginia, despite the fact that our lives have crossed, we still have not met, but I, along with many others, associate with you in the fullest in this chosen approach".....

"Please accept this wife's 4¢ worth. I personally do not think the rules for joining FPE should be changed, nor do I think that you should stop preaching on the subject of a person's name, address and phone number being private and not to be given out by anyone but the owner To say that the actions of an H.S. would offend a wife are to me, unfounded. I'm more offended by a male wearing feminine attire and then acting like a man. The wearing of too and poorly applied make-up, the spoiling of a pretty outfit with too much jewelry, and speaking in a falsetto voice are more offensive to me than the effeminate gestures attributed to an H.S. You could say that I want my men to act like gentlemen and my women to act like ladies"

"For myself, and I know I can speak for the other girls in our chapter, I say keep FPE the way it is and has been. I do not want to get into any other organizations that cater to all and sundry way-out persuasions and will not bring anyone into our chapter that is not a true FP. The wives and children I have met are too wonderful to subject them to any others outside of FPE. If those FPE members who are joining other

organizations would just put a little more talk and a lot more action into FPE, and with less griping, they would have no need of any other organizations. It is so true that those who beef the most do the least work, but they like all the benefits of the hard work of others"

"I wholeheartedly agree with your position of keeping our organization as it is. I would not have asked for membership if other types had been permitted membership. Not that I am prejudiced, but as you have set up the membership requirements I feel our sorority has a large measure of security and dignity. Let it continue to be so"

"I am definitely in favor of keeping FPE as it has been in the past. I enjoy meeting and being with others who are like myself, just an FP. I know that neither myself nor my wife are interested in meeting Homos, TSs or Fetishists, and in the event they would be granted membership, we would be compelled to resign our own membership".....

"I think we should keep our group for heterosexual persons, and the reasons you gave were on the ball. This is why many of us joined you -- or anything. Likewise the wives attitudes and response is of utmost value to anyone who has any consideration for them or for the maintainence of the home"....

I received one letter from a member of FPE who has also joined and become very active in another organization. It is long, detailed and critical. I can't reproduce it all here but some of the statements may be of interest. "I have always given you credit for the determination to start this whole TV

movement during a difficult time. My criticism is that you have kept it from growing to what it could have become. For a small organization, it is one of the most formal I have ever run into. It provides GENERAL aid through the public work you do BUT it does not aid the troubled INDIVIDUAL when said individual is 1) outside of the very narrow definition you have given transvestism, 2) a different person philosophically than you, and 3) when she wants to graduate to a new level of activity. I have three further points to make: a) I believe you have hurt more TVs than you have helped due to your overemphasis on WIVES, as most wives are only 'warm bodies' and not participating members; b) Before I am convinced I will have to see significant evidence that those of responsibility are less willing to take chances than those who 'have little to lose'. In fact, what I do see is the exact opposite!! c) My final and most serious charge that has caused me to join and totally support (another organization and work for it) other than for personal reasons, is your most unscientific tendency to categorize rather than provide a range for TV behavior"..... And much more.

My comments on the above: I don't want to enter into a polemic or a debate with the writer of this letter (only a small part of a 2-page typewritten letter is given above), but the selections from it which I have given here are illustrative and a comment on them is in order. The person who wrote this was married -- happily I was given to understand, has since been divorced and now considers herself to be a transexual. OK, those are just facts to categorize (of which I have been accused) to some degree as to the back-

ground from which she writes. She says that I have "kept FPE from growing to what it could have become". All of the other comments printed before hers, and I'm sure the feelings of many who did not respond, are an adequate answer to that. I didn't keep it from becoming, the members don't want it to become what this writer would have liked to see it become.

Something else that she doesn't realize, and perhaps many of the members of FPE don't either, is that apart from my general educational activities on radio, TV and thru published articles, I have spent a great deal of effort on general help INSIDE of the subscribership of TVia. Since issue No. 1, I have tried to explain, discuss, reassure, to clarify, counsel and generally to provide a background that would help any reader to understand and deal with her own problems in a more effective way. The writer of this letter came into awareness of TVia only 2 or 3 years ago and is apparently unaware of the approach taken over all 13 years of its publication in the line of counseling and help. Moreover, if she had any idea of the letters, phone calls from all over the country and the personal sessions that I have had over the years, she would not say that I or FPE gave no individual help.

Again she lists three ways in which individuals disqualify themselves from aid. She misses the point entirely that TVia and FPE were intentionally organized to help a certain breed of cat (to use a current term). We could not, and have never even attempted, to help everybody of all kinds, especially those who want to "graduate" to a "new level".

There is no such thing as graduating from being an FP, unless you call full time living as Mary and I do a graduation. We don't consider it such, we see it as just a logical extension of what all the rest of you are doing, made possible by personal and specific conditions in our lives. If one decides to become a homosexual or a transexual or go in for bondage or punishment, that is not, to me, any form of graduation but simply a complete change of direction. Naturally FPE is not going to provide aid and counsel to such people because those in FPE are, for the most part, unequipped to understand, feel empathy for, or feel able to provide any direct aid to such persons -- so they don't try.

Finally it is interesting that I am charged with being "unscientific" in attempting to categorize people instead of "providing a range for TV behavior". Strange that science itself is based on categorization, that is classification into types and properties, which is the only way that science could handle the multitudinous variations in nature. Having earned a PH/D in science, I really don't feel that my attitudes and activities have been unscientific. They may have been wrong (in her opinion), they may have been ill-advised, but from a scientific viewpoint, trying to segregate the various ways, reasons and satisfactions involved in cross dressing they were not improper.

FPE simply was not built on the same principles and for the same purposes as the other organizations. I call your attention to the first paragraph of the Pledge which you all signed on joining FPE -- "I understand the purpose of FPE to be the assistance

of its members in developing understanding, acceptance, psychological and spiritual growth in the realm of Personality Expression for themselves and also to use any practical means to disseminate information about Femme-Personation to the public, to increase general awareness of the subject".

So I have given you a summary of the responses. They are almost exactly what I expected, but to avoid the recurring accusation of being a dictator I wanted to go through the motions of having had an "election of principles" if I use the term. So, the membership having expressed itself as it has, the motion is considered to have been carried out, and we proceed on from here by the same routes and methods as we have in the past.

IDENTIFICATION CARDS?

Another organization for "TVs" issues a small wallet-sized card that identifies the bearer as a transvestite (whatever that may mean to the official who sees the card) and assures the reader that the bearer is not dressing for any criminal purpose, but only because of a compulsion to do so. Several of our members knowing that this card was offered by other groups have suggested that FPE do the same.

1. I can't imagine that the presentation of such a card to any policeman or to any other authority who has felt that the individual involved had done something justifying police or other intervention, would be in the least impressed with the card. The

organization behind it would be completely unknown to him, it would have no status as a medical or counselling group, and its statement of no criminal intent would be meaningless. The officer would have had some cause for accosting the TV in the first place, and if that were serious enough, a card saying that he is not dangerous but really a good little boy who just likes to wear dresses is not going to change things.

2. Its only purpose would be to give the TV out in public a sense of false confidence in feeling that having that card on him he could get through an official confrontation more successfully than he could without it. This might lead some otherwise timid souls to undertake adventures they should not attempt and would not, without this false sense of security.

3. Such a card would have to give the organization's name and might well lead to some sort of official questions being asked as to the nature of that organization. The person involved is not authorized to speak for or about the national organization under such circumstances, and producing a card identifying it, simply makes such questioning inevitable. The organization cannot do anything for a person who has been caught up in a police situation, so there is no point in bringing such an organization to their attention. We have nothing to hide, true, but neither do we have anything to gain by such publicity and the possible encouragement of some sort of investigation of FPE.

So, for these three reasons, I do not feel that such an "Identification Card" would be either useful or wise.

-Virginia

Bear FPE Member:

A woman psychologist who is well acquainted with the field of cross crossing is interested in doing a study of the wives of FPs and has asked my cooperation in making the contacts for her. Since it would be a waste of money just to send the questionnaires out broadside, I am taking this method of ascertaining which wives would be willing to help out on this project. Will you please ask her (if she is at all understanding or accepting) whether she would be willing to do so. If she will cooperate, please fill out the questions below, clip that part off and return to me.

You need have no fear about security. No names will be given to the psychologist nor will any be asked for on the questionnaire. She will send the questionnaires to me and I will address and mail them. They will be returned to her directly in a stamped, addressed envelope provided.

I hope your wife will join in the effort as I feel it could do much to delineate the type of woman who is able to deal with this behaviour pattern. Such information would tell us something about what makes for a stable FP family and it would also be useful to the as yet unmarried FPs to know what kind of a woman to look for and what type would not be able to deal with it.

I don't know just how soon she will get the questionnaires prepared but I want to be ready with a mailing list when she gets them to me, so your prompt cooperation in returning the stub below will be appreciated.

Thanks in advance.

I will ()
be willing to fill out and return a wives questionnaire.
will not ()

Please address the questionnaire you send as follows:

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ zip _____

Dear Mr. [Name]:

any be asked for on the questionnaire. You will need the questionnaire to be on and I will address
you need have no fear about security. No name will be given to the newspaper and all
the will certainly be given full out the question below. The fact that you are not named in the
any way (it is in all understanding of accidents) means that you will be all in to do so. If
method of assessing which cases would be waiting to help out on this subject. All our cases
since it would be a matter of money just as well the questionnaire and procedure. I am taking this
to being a study of the cases of the and has asked me cooperation in making the complete for the
A month before the cases are well advanced with the kind of cases covered in the questionnaire