

F. O. R. G. E.

For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression

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July's BBQ — July 15, 2000

July's event is another (almost) purely social opportunity to meet other FORGE members (as well as our allies and supports who wish to join us for this mostly-non-discussion event). We'll meet—again—in the bright solarium of Michael's condo (1633 N. Prospect Ave, Milwaukee, WI), where people can chat and mingle both inside the cool air conditioning, or in the fresh air on the rooftop.

We will have a short meeting from 2:30—3:30 to discuss Passing, since the June Meeting was canceled. Plan on arriving at 2:00 for snacks, then to meet, followed by BBQ and swimming. Families, spouses, parents, children, and non-trans friends are especially welcome.

FORGE will supply all food (non-vegetarian, so if you have special dietary needs, please contact Michael or Bear at the numbers below).

Show up early and plan on enjoying good food and company. The pool/whirlpool/sauna will be available for use throughout the afternoon—so bring your suit and towel! To ensure enough food for everyone, please RSVP no later than July 10th.

What's provided: Meat, chips, dip, side dishes, plates, cups, silverware.

What you need to do:

1. RSVP (by phone or email) by July 10th (remember to let us know if you have any special dietary considerations)
2. Bring your own beverage
3. Bring your suit and towel if you wish to swim
4. A contribution of \$5 is appreciated to cover some of the food costs

RSVP to Michael at 414.278.6031 or tgwarrior@execpc.com or
Bear devitt2@execpc.com

"Passing" Discussion

July 15, 2000 (short) Meeting

This month's short (1 hour) meeting will focus on exploring, expanding, and deepening discussion and dialogue on the intersection of FTM+/trans+/SOFFA experience on "Passing" In The Summer's Heat. How is passing different in the summer months vs. other times of the year? How important is passing? Does the heat and physical comfort outweigh passing? Is passing overrated? Do non-transitioning FTM+/trans/butches/fill-in-your-gender-identity people care about passing as male? Is passing only about passing as male or is it something more than having a perceived male appearance? How do partners feel about their FTM+/butch partner passing in the summer months (or at any point in the year)? How do passing issues affect summer entertainment like swimming or other outside events that may encourage fewer clothes? How do we cope with the heat when trying to bind or wear layers in the summer months? How does passing or not affect internal comfort with one's own (or with one's partners') gender identity? Many of these concepts and more will be addressed at the July FORGE meeting. Join us!

July 15, 2000 BBQ & Passing Meeting

What: BBQ!
When: Saturday July 15, 2000
RSVP: by July 10th, 2000
Time: 2:00 – 6:30++ pm
[2:30—3:30 = meeting on Passing]
Where: Michael's Condo — Solarium
1633 N. Prospect Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53202
Donation: \$5.00

FORGE Calendar

(All schedules are tentative and subject to change.)

July 15, 2000

Topic: BBQ/Party & Passing
Location: Milwaukee, WI

August 19, 2000

Topic: Hormones
Location: Chicago, IL

September 16, 2000

Topic: SOFFAs
Location: Milwaukee, WI

October 14, 2000

Topic: Race & Privilege
Location: Ann Sathers on Belmont
Chicago, IL

November 11, 2000

Topic: TG Aging
Location: Ann Sathers on Belmont
Chicago, IL

December 9, 2000

Topic: Holiday Party!
Location: Chicago, IL

Submit your ideas for future meeting topics!
Newsletter submissions always welcomed!

FORGE Newsletter

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A Man without A Country

By michael munson

I have become a man without a country. Well not really a "man" by my choice of definition, but that's another story.

The other day I took a very good friend to the Milwaukee Mitchell Field Airport. My friend is butch. She's strong, assertive, large, often dresses in jeans and button-down shirts and boots, has shortly trimmer hair, and walks with confidence and pride. She knows who she is and isn't afraid of letting others see her core identity. She proudly wears rainbow-colored rings off the right epaulet of her black leather jacket. She's a dyke and doesn't conceal this fact from the world.

We've been friends for a long time and I take great pride in knowing her. She has known me through my transition, through some difficult time, and through many good times as well.

As we were walking through Mitchell Field Airport, we noticed two butch women sitting in a row of seats. They were most obviously a couple. My friend was walking in slightly in front of me. As we neared them, I watched the two women's faces light up, smile, and nod at my friend. The brightness in their faces quickly vanished as I walked by them. I felt a bitter sadness, but didn't quite understand why.

Only moments later, we reached the gate and approached the airline counter to be greeted by a wonderfully sweet, very effeminate male flight attendant. My friend commented, after we stepped away from the window, how nice it was to have a "family" member on her flight.

Then it hit me. It all made sense. That sense of sadness, that great inexplicable sense of loss that I never even realized was a loss.

Who is my family? And why don't they recognize me any more?!

When I'm in public, I recognize my gay and lesbian family. I recognize so many of my MTF sisters. I continue, like I always have, smiling when I see someone also belonging to my queer and/or transgendered family. But they don't see me. They don't know that I am one of them any more.

I am alone in my queerness. I am seemingly alone in my trans-ness. I've become a nameless, faceless guy. While many FTMs may enjoy their "success" in being able to pass so well that no one knows of their past, I am saddened by my loss of casual, social recognition of my queerness and of my trans-ness.

As I walked back through the airport alone, towards my car, I saw the same to dykes sitting together. I wanted to scream "I'M ONE TOO!!!!". Can't you see?! I'm just as queer (if not moreso) that my friend you so nicely smiled at! Why won't you smile at me any more? Why won't any of my family recognize me any more!!!!???

But, of course, I just kept walking, thinking, realizing I don't know what to do with these overpowering feelings of isolation. It all made so much sense to me. I had lost part of my tribe or rather my tribe had lost me, or at least wasn't able to find me through my scruffy beard, flat chest, pierced right ear, baggy jeans, and loggers. Lesbians just see me as just another guy, presumably a straight man. Gay men often see me as too "butch" to be one of them, so also see me as just another straight guy, also. MTFs are typically the same deal - no recognition, since they only see me as just another guy.

I feel I've moved into an invisible never-never-land.

Those of us who came out as queer prior to coming out as trans, know both the joys and heartaches of the les/bi/gay community.

I am no longer recognized as a dyke of course.

I have all too slowly come to the realization that I am alone.

F.O.R.G.E.

Mission

We're a social support group for female-to-male transsexuals and transgenderists; butches; drag kings; gender queers and radicals; gender outlaws; people assigned female at birth, raised girl → woman, with fairly unambiguous female bodies at some point in their lives with masculine self-identification (at least some of the time); and our SOFFAs (significant others, families, friends and allies). We meet monthly in order to form friendships, share information, compare experiences and strengthen ourselves and each other.

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Not Passing at the Pool

By Jay Allen Sennett

"Not in a million years," I said to myself. My girlfriend urged me to discard my T-shirt for a bare chest underneath. Swimming last summer at Ypsilanti's public pool on Congress Street, I froze myself in a new version of my ancient gender conundrum - Yes, take it off, no leave it on. Yes, I'm a man, no, I'm something else entirely. Yes, I want surgery, no, I don't want surgery. Yes, gender is real, no, it isn't real.

Uncut, a natural man, I told myself she could know nothing of what would/might happen to me after I dropped my T to the blistering hot concrete. I knew the Truth. People would gawk, stare and glare at my tits/chest/breasts. A public spectacle ensues: The lifeguard asks me to leave after calling the police who arrive on the scene with blaring sirens to arrest a hairy woman for indecent exposure!

The crisp, deep, lush pool seduced me away from my paranoias. The pool said whispered the same words my girlfriend did. "Nothing will happen. Some guys have bigger breasts/tits than you. Noone can tell." I agreed with her and removed my T-shirt, driven mad by a life longing and yearning to feel the water touching my bare skin. Up, out of the water I went, off came the T-shirt, and into the water I returned.

Nothing happened. No one could tell. The Supreme Committee for Gender Review, Preview and Acceptance residing in my heart responded variously:

-They can't tell?!? What a bunch of dolts. Don't they know a trannie guy when they see one?!?

-They can't tell! Once again my paranoias proved extreme.

-What can't they tell?!?

I live on both sides of the passing knife. Passing smothers me, folding me into a premixed masculine batter that bakes out my life as stone butch lesbian, my cunt/clit/T-enhanced cock, my queer body. But passing also protects my fragile body from the inquisition and imposition of people in my life. I remember days turning into weeks turning into months turning into years of:

- "You know. If you didn't dress that way you probably wouldn't get mistaken for a man."

- "Sir. Ma'am? Oh sorry."

- "This is the women's room."

- "[Brandishing my driver's license] Is this you? This isn't you. It is you? Manager to line 6 for check approval. Manager to line 6 for check approval."

I love the safety my goatee, deep voice, leathery skin and broad shoulders create for me. I like hiding behind people's assumptions of what these physical features mean to them. Eventually though, the feeling of protectedness slips into smotheredness. Then I want out.

A day without and beyond the conundrum may always elude me. I do know that with the infiltration of True Spirit by deranged zealots Americans for the Truth About Homosexuality [*] my need to live with my T-shirt off as metaphor and fact outweighs the protection passing affords me.

What I really want is to fail at this gender passing and release myself: from the anguish of failing my own expectations of how my gender presentation should look, from looking over my shoulder to see where the next boogeyman lurks to call me out, read me or hate me; from gauging my gender presentation in the eyes and body gestures of others; from raging against the machine grinds up bones and blood and sinew as I decide which moniker I should choose today, M or F.

Like my cat lazing in the spring sunlit window's heat, I want to live within my flesh and muscles and breath as the human expression I choose - an unrepentant, unapologetic, uncut, wild transman.

[Jay Allen Sennett lives as a transman in Ypsilanti, Michigan, home to Rosie the Riveter. He writes and seeks funders for film "Live From the Rust Belt," a 60-minute documentary about the trans communities in the Midwest. You can reach him at jay_sennett@yahoo.com]

[* Ed. Note: Americans for Truth is a religious right, anti LGBT group who recently publicly targeted GLAAD (The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and True Spirit Conference. To see the type of hate promulgated by the AFT, view their website filled with lies and inaccuracies at: <http://www.americansfortruth.org/truespirit.html>

To support GLAAD, who was directly attacked by AFT, visit their website at: <http://www.glaad.org/org/index.html> GLAAD is committed to transgender awareness and protection, as can be noted in their mission statement:

"The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate, and inclusive representation of individuals and events in all media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. "

In pursuit of its mission, GLAAD focuses on five main strategies:

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No-Op/Pre-Op FTM Passing Tips In Hot Weather

By Lor Jackson

I'm a no-op FTM guy with a stocky build, who has been able to pass as male for over 20 years. One of the tricks to this is picking the right size, medium weight and medium weave of the fabric, of shirts I buy, for maximum curve concealment, with or without a binder.

To put it simply, guys: Dickey's brand, 100% cotton casual wear shirts. I've looked and looked, and Dickey's works the best in the heat.

Size: Example, if your chest/breast size is a large men's 42"-44", try an XL men's shirt. A smaller built guy might not have to go one size over.

The shirts are cut so larger sizes look good, not sloppy.

SIZES CHEST/BREAST SIZE MEASURED AROUND IN INCHES

Small 34-36

Medium 38-40

Large 42-44

XL 46-48

2XL 50-52

For best results: steam ironed shirts will look better and hold the shape.

Wearing a slightly tight, 100% cotton sleeveless tank top under your shirt will help hold you in. Fruit of the Loom is a good brand.

Due to health problems, I currently weigh a little more than in past years, so my wife and I are working on a 100% cotton hand-made binder to help me. If this works, I'll let all you guys know. I've tried Saran Wrap, wound around several times and taped together. Danger! Do not use Saran Wrap as a binder in hot weather! You can dehydrate and easily overheat. Saran Wrap works much better in cold weather, but care must be taken not to bind too tight, because of restriction while breathing. It also can irritate the skin.

Swimwear: When buying men's trunks, if you are unfamiliar with pants sizes, use hip size as a men's waist size. If your waist size is a lot smaller than your hip size, try to find men's trunks with a drawstring in with the elastic waistband. A darker color is more concealing if you aren't wearing a "willie." (Smile.)

Swimwear top is a problem. I've worn a jeans jacket, or an army jacket with the sleeves cut off when canoeing. Tank top underneath will not work, if you get completely wet. Perhaps Alex Fox's suggestion of a women's Title 9 "Frog" bra might work. I personally don't know.

Looking as male as possible gives me a feeling of self-confidence when going out in public. It also cuts down on harassment. I hope this helps, guys. Have a great summer!

Hormone Newsletter Submissions

August's meeting topic is focused on exploring, expanding, and deepening discussion and dialogue on the intersection of FTM+/trans+/SOFFA experience and thinking on Hormones. What role do hormones play in our lives? What are the desired effects of testosterone use, adverse effects? How do we find competent, medical professionals who understand FTM+s' needs and can address our questions, monitor our medical care, and treat us with respect? Do the HBIQDA Standards of Care play a role in gaining access to hormones? What happens to our bodies and minds when we use testosterone? What are the options for testosterone delivery (injection, patch, pills, pellets)? How do SOFFAs feel about hormones and the bodily changes?

All Trans+/FTM+/SOFFAs are invited to submit articles, resources, calendar events, poetry, erotica, fiction, non-fiction, interviews, cartoons, anecdotes, news briefs, personal stories, etc. on this topic for the newsletter. There is no length requirement or restrictions (longer pieces may be published in installments and/or shortened in conjunction with the author), and you need not be a published or polished writer to submit. The newsletter is an open, uncensored forum for all Trans+/FTM+/SOFFAs (significant others, friends, family and allies).

**The DEADLINE for this hormone edition is:
July 10, 2000**

Submissions can be emailed to Michael Munson at tgwarrior@execpc.com or mailed to FORGE @ PO Box 1272, Milwaukee, WI 53201 Past FORGE newsletters can be viewed on the web at www.execpc.com/~dmmunson/forge.htm

Submissions for future issues are welcome at any time. Among the future topics we plan to discuss are:

- SOFFAs (Significant Others, Friends, Families and Allies)
(*Submission deadline: August 15*)
- Race & Privilege
(*Submission deadline: September 15*)
- TG Aging
(*Submission deadline: October 15*)

Two Women

By Loree Cook-Daniels
LoreeCD@aol.com

Let's have a talk about two women.

One we'll call Susie Suburb. Raised in a middle-class, segregated neighborhood in a medium-sized Northern California town, her blond, blue-eyed little-girl good looks and personality began paying off early. She was exactly six years old when she became her elementary school's Queen of the May.

She reigned from then on, serving as teacher's pet in each class, becoming a favorite of her Brownie leader, then her Junior Girl Scouts leader, then the church choir director, then the church youth group leader. They created a special award for her in her Job's Daughters chapter. She was such a beloved member of the local retirement home's Junior Auxiliary that the head of the dining room snapped her up for her first after-school job practically the minute she turned 16.

By 17, she was valedictorian of her high school class, by 22 the top departmental honoree at her state university graduation. She won a nationwide competition for a prestigious public policy fellowship at age 24 and moved to D.C. There she got married, earned her Master's Degree, bought a house in the suburbs, and became a mother -- in that order. She's now active in her child's day care center's Parent Advisory Board, works part-time for a national professional association, and spends the rest of her time on her family and her favorite pastimes of reading and writing.

Can you picture her? I thought so. That's Susie.

The woman we'll call Rosie Radical also showed her colors early. An organizer from the get-go, by the age of 13 she was heading an activist girls group that eventually managed to change the school's dress code so girls could wear pants. By 17 she was the only out Lesbian active in the town's Women's Center. She co-founded a Gay People's Association at 18, and moved to San Francisco at 20 to enroll in the country's most radical women's studies program. At 21, she was co-chair of the San Francisco Committee for the very first March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

In order to finally cut the ties to an ambivalent relationship she'd been unable to end, Rosie eventually moved across country and became one of the first open Lesbians ever to work for Congress. She and her new lover, a Black butch, revelled in pushing the envelope, holding a public commitment ceremony long before such

events were commonplace, becoming the first Lesbians they'd ever heard of who legally hyphenated their names, buying a house together (and then talking about the experience in a nationally- prominent straight newspaper), and finally becoming parents together. Rosie now juggles three part-time jobs (none of which offers health benefits), is seeing approximately her fifteenth therapist, is active in an Interracial Lesbian Couples Group, and writes a monthly column for the local Lesbian and Gay newspaper.

So much for Rosie.

Susie Suburb and Rosie Radical. Chances are you know one of them, or at least a woman just like her. She is your next door neighbor, maybe even your best friend. As for the other woman, well, if you've never met her, at least you've seen one like her on T.V.

Even if you don't know either Susie or Rosie, you probably know which one you'd invite to coffee, and which one you wouldn't give the time of day. You already know, sight unseen, what each is likely to think, how each is likely to behave. You already know, sight unseen, how you'd react to each of them, right?

Or do you? How would you react if I told you that Susie and Rosie are actually exactly the same woman? If I said that Susie became a mother when her lesbian partner gave birth, that Rosie became a wife after her lesbian lover became a man, what would you say? How would you think about the heterosexual wife and mother who was the only lesbian "father" in her spouse's childbirth class? How would your mind wrap around the Lesbian columnist who is on her husband's health insurance? What would you say when the straight publication's Work & Family expert began talking about her first- hand experiences with Lesbian bed death? What would you think if you knew that the trainer leading the Gay couples' communication workshop married her lesbian-lover-turned-husband that very morning?

Do you know how to make sense of such a woman?

More importantly, does she?

[Loree Cook-Daniels is a mono-personalities, polyamorous SOFFA, exploring new identities and constructs of family.]

Passing? What's that?

*cubby j. sherwood
cjsherwood@england.com*

I exist in that nameless realm that is not male, not female.

Am I passing if I get sent to the men's room by the helpful waiter?

Am I passing when I get called Sir or Ma'am?

Am I passing when a woman won't enter the bathroom because she sees me in there?

What makes someone decide I'm "Monsieur" even in a tight t-shirt?

What makes another decide I'm "Miss" even in shirt and tie?

Am I passing if I get "read" as male by one person, female by someone else all on the same day in the same clothes?

Why do I prefer to be addressed as Young Man instead of Lady?

Why is "he" gender neutral?

Why is gender based on what others do? What others see?

When will it no longer matter how people address me?

When will I find myself?



American's For Truth & GLAAD, continued

(Continued from page 4)

1. To organize the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to respond to negative and positive portrayals of our community in media through the Monitoring and Mobilization program
2. To work directly with media professionals to improve their understanding of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community by providing accurate information and offering seminars as part of the Outreach to Media Professionals program
3. To work with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organizations and individuals to refine and expand their understanding of the media and skills needed to work with them by offering training interventions and technical assistance through the Community Skills Building and Outreach program

FORGE Code of Conduct

Trans people and SOFFAs (significant others, friends, families and allies) are all too frequently subject to others' judgements, projections, assumptions, and worse.

FORGE therefore seeks to provide a safe haven where people's identities, needs, and beliefs are not questioned, devalued, or disrespected.

Participants in FORGE events are therefore expected to:

- Be true to themselves and their own convictions.
- Stay open-minded and flexible to allow for and honor individual difference and diversity.
- Respect and support others' identities and choices, including their decisions to express their gender in whatever ways are comfortable.
- Remember that individuals' identities and external appearances may not "match," and that at FORGE, identities are more important than appearances.
- Recognize that SOFFAs face the same sorts of prejudices, dilemmas, and challenges that their trans loved ones do, and deserve an equal measure of respect and support.
- Listen carefully to others. Questions or alternative viewpoints should be phrased carefully to acknowledge that what works for one may not work for others.
- Avoid stereotyping.
- Agree to disagree when necessary.
- Be considerate of others' privacy. Think before speaking so you don't accidentally out someone or cause an embarrassing situation.

4. To promote lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Visibility by designing and implementing public education campaigns with positive lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender images.
5. To study and articulate cultural and media-specific trends, issues, and controversies to inform the work of GLAAD and other organizations through its Research and Analysis program.

GLAAD's effort to pursue #5, one of their Cultural Interest: Media Projects, is a focus on Transgender Visibility. To learn more about GLAAD's TG visibility studies and commitment, visit http://www.glaad.org/org/projects/cultural/trans_visibility/index.html Their commitment to TG issues can be noted in their list of actions/reports at <http://www.glaad.org/org/topics/index.html?topic=11>

The Art of Cruising

[Ed. Note: I asked Michael if he would be interested in writing an article on how passing and cruising intersect. This article may not apply to everyone, since it's written from a gay man's perspective. Does anyone want to write about cruising or courting women or transfolk?]

By Michael M. Hernandez

I'd like to tell you that there is a simple formula that you can learn to be able to successfully cruise men, but there isn't. It requires work on your part. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Socialize

It never ceases to amaze me that the people who complain the most about the shallowness of the dating pool are those who spend most of their time at home alone. Your chances of finding someone increase greatly by leaving the house.

These days one has a variety of options such as cyberspace, dating services, social clubs, gatherings and events that present an opportunity to meet other people. Even when you meet someone online, barring a strictly cybersex relationship, at some point in time you will want to meet your e-pal in person or they may wish to meet you. [Keep in mind that what may work on the computer screen may not work in person, but don't let that stop you.]

There are gay clubs and organizations for any number of hobbies, crafts, games, or sports. That is the easiest way to meet someone with common interests. If spirituality or religion is an important part of your life, events such as a fairie gathering, a church, or temple, etc., may be the perfect place to meet.

Someone whose trans identity is not dependent on an outward appearance created by testosterone or supplements will have a different experience than someone who has been on hormones for years and has had some form of surgery. The former will inevitably be circumnavigating the stresses and strains of being seen for whom they really are despite the outward packaging while the latter may be attempting to compensate for loss of sensation or a bodily configuration which is somewhat different from the traditional male. This, however, should not be a deterrent. I waited seven years before having chest surgery and was able to cruise and have sex with men despite having "hairy tits".

Socializing helps you hone your skills because after all at some point in time you will need to speak to the object of your affections. The goal is learning how to be comfortable speaking with other people.

Develop Your Sense of Humor

Humor is one of the best forms of education. The less

vested you are in your disclosure of being trans the greater the likelihood that you will find the sex which you are seeking. Some discussions are more serious than most. You really have nothing to lose by talking to someone. Without at least a preliminary approach there is no chance of any relationship whatsoever. By trying there is at least the possibility of a yes.

This advice must be tempered by your particular situation at the time. If you are not in an emotional space to be vulnerable or will take a "no thanks" as a rejection, taking a chance at harming your self esteem may not be wise. However, even in that situation you have nothing whatsoever to lose by talking to someone. It may be that you both have something in common and can enjoy each other's company. Friendships can and do evolve into other forms of relationships. Only you can weigh and balance whether to risk the friendship by having a relationship. What I mean to say is that a friendship which develops into a relationship already has a basis of trust and familiarity, but if the relationship ends, you not only lose a lover, but a friend.

Figure Out Your Desires

The only way to get your needs and/or desires met is to communicate them. So, what exactly is it that you want? Some of you may have already spent hours fantasizing about what it is that you want. If you aren't sure of your desires, your best bet may be to make a list of what you are looking for in the ideal partner/spouse/lover/fuckbuddy. Keep in mind that one person may not be able to meet all of your needs or desires. Just take a piece of paper and start writing a list. Desires could be characteristics, sexual activities that you'd like to engage in, physical features, or any variety of other things. You don't have to be organized. What is important is that you not censor yourself while making the list. If you are absolutely resistive to the idea of making a list, come up with a list of historical figures or movie stars who you are attracted to then and write down the reasons for your attraction to that particular person. Once you have run out of steam go back and read the list. What items are absolutely necessary? Which ones are preferences?

Identify the Kind of Relationship That You Are Looking For

The type of relationship that you are looking for becomes important in evaluating the amount of energy that you are willing to expend educating someone about you and/or your desires. Wouldn't it be grand to be able to say to someone "I'm trans" and have it immediately understood without further explanation? The only way that that will happen is by each of us spending the time and

(Continued on page 10)

Resources

The FTM Passing Tips, originally created by "Andy", is one of the most complete set of passing hints and tips available anywhere. The web page is frequently updated with new information on packies, chest binders and other information useful to FTMs and people who wish to have a more visibly male appearance.

The FTM Passing Tips Home Page can be found at:
<http://www.geocities.com/FTMPass/>

Links from the Passing Tips Page

- **Tricks of the Trade** - A more detailed guide to wardrobe (including suits, formal wear, and choosing the right type of collar), posture, mannerisms, binding, shaving, acne control, and sex toys (among other things) is available at:
<http://www.koan.com/~lbear/tricks.html>
- **Passing Tips for FTMs** - A site which includes very useful advice on finding reasonably-priced clothing and on dealing with social situations:
<http://pages.hotbot.com/diaries/alexander59/ftmpassing.html>
- **Adventures in Boyland** has useful tips on "Binding, Packing, Grooming, Health, and Fashion." Very cool-looking graphics, too:
<http://www.adventuresinboyland.com/ftm/tips.html>
- **Bear's FTM Resources** - on the "Writings from Others" page under "Binding Suggestions," Sam explains how to best modify and use neoprene back braces for binding:
<http://members.aol.com/bearfromtn/TransScripts.html>
- **Adventures of an American Transfag** includes useful tips on wardrobe, binding, stuffers, and eyewear:
http://www.geocities.com/daniel_cq

Hair and Shaving

- **The Buzztown Barber Shop:** a great illustrated reference to traditional barber shops and short haircuts for men. Find out the difference between an "ivy league" and a "high and tight" and what a "number two clipper blade" is. Here's how to tell the barber what you want:
<http://www.geocities.com/RodeoDrive/3696>
- **Tips on Shaving:**
<http://www.thegrid.net/ftminfnet/shaving.html>

Chest

- **Binding**
 - **Title 9 Fr.O.G. Binder:**
<http://www.title9sports.com/DCupCatalog.html>
 - **Underworks Body Shirt and Support Tank:**
<http://www.underworks.com/products.html#991>

- **Morris Designs Gynecomastia Vests:**
<http://www.morrisdesigns.com/frame.html>
- **Mr. S Leathers Latex Undershirts:**
<http://www.mr-s-leather-fetters.com>
- **Surgery:**
 - **Dr. Michael Brownstein** is a surgeon with extensive experience in FTM chest reconstruction:
<http://www.BrownsteinMD.com>

Clothing

- **How to Tie a Tie:**
<http://www.fashionmall.com/guide/tie/doc/index.html>
- **How to Buy a Suit:**
<http://www.fashionmall.com/guide/misc/suits.shtml>
- **Lebow Brothers:** <http://www.tiac.net/users/lebow/>
- **Short Sizes, Inc:** <http://www.shortsizesinc.com>
- **Resources for Short Men:** Site with extensive lists of clothing and shoe sources as well as mail order and specialty shops:
<http://www.best.com/~piner/short.html>

Stuffers

- **The Glue Slug:** <http://www.naturalwonders.com>
- **The Softie:** <http://grandopening.altsex.com/catalog/ov-dildos.html?sl=5&slop=A&cid=211848.10950>
- **The Ultimate Packer:**
<http://www.gaywired.com/products/packer>
- **The FTM Prosthesis:**
<http://www.chariot.net.au/~darienzo/>
- **The De Nijs Prosthesis:**
<http://www.phallusprosthesis.com>
- **The Sock (to pack stuffers in):** <http://www.intmale.com/product.asp?pf%5Fid=A275zz&dept%5Fid=10650&subdept%5Fid=>

Shoes

- **Bass:** <http://www.ghbass.com/ghbass/default.asp>
- **Richlee elevator shoes:**
<http://www.elevatorshoes.com>

Bathrooms

- **The Freshette:**
 - **Freshette Home Page:**
<http://www.freshette.com/>
 - **Recreational Equipment, Inc.:**
<http://www.rei.com>
 - **Campmor:** <http://www.campmor.com>
- **The TravelMate:**
<http://www.restrooms.org/device-assist.html>
- **Le Funelle:** <http://www.magellans.com>
- **Restrooms.org:**
<http://www.restrooms.org/standing.html>

The Art of Cruising (Continued)

(Continued from page 8)

effort of conducting preliminary education for our potential partners. The more men who know we exist, the more likely that we will be desired for who we are.

What you are looking for may also affect your level of interaction and whether or not disclosure is in the cards. You'd probably approach a trick far different than someone who you'd like to be married to. Then again, maybe not. Are you seeking a spouse, a lover, a date, simply sex, all of the above, some of the above, none of the above?

Your chances of sexual satisfaction will increase if you know what makes you feel good. Make friends with your body. If you aren't comfortable with your body, your partner won't be either. Sex is not totally focused in the genitals. Spend time exploring other areas of your body. Touch your chest, your head, your face, your groin. Smell yourself. Taste yourself. What arouses you? What interferes with your level of arousal? Masturbate. Keep in mind that not all masturbation needs to necessarily end in orgasm. While it may be your preference, it is not an absolute necessity for everyone. The more comfortable you are with yourself the more likely that you will attract who you want.

Cruising

Cruising men is completely different than courting women. There tends to be a two-second window of opportunity which is wholly dependent on making and maintaining eye contact. In order to be approached you have to be approachable. This means smiling.

The easiest way to learn what will work for you is to go out and watch other men cruise each other. You aren't limited to the bars. As I previously mentioned there are gay clubs and organizations for any number of hobbies, crafts, games, or sports. Go, watch, learn. Observation will teach you that men have different ways of calling attention to themselves and interacting with each other. What particular hurdles you face will depend on a variety of factors such as your stage in transition (if any), identity, sexual orientation, experience, and desire. If you are concerned about passing or uncomfortable about your body or yourself, these things will come across. The guy you are cruising may not know why, but your discomfort may be clearly felt.

Once you have attracted someone's attention, your socialization skills come into play and the decision to disclose or not disclose comes to the forefront. Some people view this discussion as rather stressful. It can be a period fraught with the possibility of great rejection. Check your negative thinking at the door. The fact that you are having the conversation in the first place, means that the person to whom you are speaking with is already attracted to you (particularly if he approached you). You are negotiating from a position of strength not weakness. The surer you are of yourself, the more honest you are about your desires, the greater the likelihood that you will have an interaction of a sexual nature with the other person(s). You may not have sex on the spot. It may be a matter of hours, days, weeks, or even years. Even if

the answer was "thanks, but no thanks," the mind is an interesting thing. Once curious, it's impossible to turn off. You might be pleasantly surprised down the road.

"No" is not necessarily about you. It's about your potential partner. It's about his fear, performance anxiety, gender issues, identity issues, or a whole plethora of other things. The guy may be having an identity crisis. You just happened to be the catalyst. Men reject one another for any variety of reasons. No can mean any number of things from "I'm attached and my boyfriend will nut me if he finds out that I've even looked at anyone else" to "I'm not feeling particularly sexual tonight" to "You are incredibly hot, but I have erectile dysfunction." Some reasons are more simple such as sexual incomparability such as you may both want to be the person giving the blow job. Of course, the real reasons are rarely spoken aloud. In some instances, the stud who you found hot is into a particular type. If he's into tall beefy blonds and you are a short thin red-head, transgendered or not, you just don't fit the bill. As Billy Lane says "no is an opportunity for someone else to say yes." There are places where you can go where disclosure may not be an issue, such as sex clubs. But that is a topic for another article.

If you are afraid to go alone, take a friend. You may want to limit the number of people that you take with you. Transmen tend to run in packs in sexual spaces. While it may provide good support, it can deter from the experience in that there is a tendency to remain with each other and not interact with other people.

So get off that pity pot. Go forth into the world young men. If you are interested in someone, speak up. Without taking a chance the "no" is guaranteed. You might be pleasantly surprised to receive a yes. If you do wind up getting told no, it's his loss not yours. There are men who find us attractive and not only that, they prefer us as partners. Happy Hunting.

[Michael Hernandez wrote a sex column for the FTM Newsletter entitled Trans Sexuality . Published non-fiction work includes contribution to FTMS & Transmen by Jason Cromwell (1999, Indiana University Press) , "I Am Neither Man Nor Woman" Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue, ed. Leslie Feinberg (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), "Holding My Breath Under Water" Looking Queer , ed. Dawn Atkins (Hayworth Press, 1998), "Boundaries: Gender and Transgenderism," The Second Coming , eds. Pat Califia and Robin Sweeney (San Francisco: Alyson Publications, 1996), "Packing, Passing & Pissing," Dagger , eds. Lily Burana, Roxxie, and Linnea Due (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1994). Mike loves e-mail and can be contacted at Lbear@koan.com.]

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Letter to the Editor

I fully understand how frustrating it can be in a F2M situation. I live in a remote area of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I am offering a SAFE, fun, red-neck vacation to any F2M who may be interested. This is NOT an offer for any type of sex thing... I have 2 Polaris 4 wheelers, I go fishing, doing the 4x4 truck thing, go deer/bear/bird hunting, etc.

Offering someone a vacation to be treated totally as a male, separate sleeping areas... The cost to them is only their own share of the beer, gas, and chip in for the chow. Why would I do this? I spend part of my life in femme mode. I am non-passable there, so I know how it must be for someone who wants to just be treated as a male by a genetic male. I will stay in full male mode the entire time, and not try to collect make up tips, etc, as that would ruin any illusion. I am single, have my own house on a lake at the end of a dead end road. I live 167 miles North of Green Bay, Wisc. This is a serious offer, and like I said, pitch in for the cost of chow, gas, and beer... just like any 2 guys would do when they get together. Discretion assured, and all decisions of public appearance will be up to the visitor...Come on up and pee off my porch, like I do every morning... Hey, what the Hell... anybody interested, or if some guy wants to discuss anything with someone who understands what the H you're going through.. I'll help..... John <jaemod@webtv.net>

Horizons Trans Focus Group

KJ Jackson writes:

"We have set the date for our transgender focus group. It is from 1:00 -3:00 pm at Horizons (Chicago, IL) on Saturday 29 July. Anyone who wants to participate needs to call me at 773.472.6469 extension 450 to register to ensure the group is appropriate. Again, this is a one time focus group to gather thoughts on what needs/issues are out there that Horizons could provide resources and direct services for. Any assistance you and your group could offer me in spreading the word and ensuring a diverse focus group would be very helpful!"

[Ed. Note: Horizons very much wishes to serve the trans community. Their last attempt at a focus group yielded only MTFs and MTF-oriented Crossdressers. It's vital that we let our mental health professionals know that we exist, as well as what our specific needs are.]

At the intersection of Gender and Leather *

cubby j. sherwood
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The boy stood at the intersection of Gender and Leather and looked out at the well-traveled paths before him. So many people, known and unknown, had walked each of these paths before him. Some had even walked both. he wasn't sure he was even entitled to join their ranks despite being the only boy who looked like he did in the club he'd joined, despite being the only boy who looked like he did at those events at which he was the bootblack. he felt like there were so many others who were better qualified to speak about why a person who looked like him wasn't female (but wasn't really male, either), why he wanted to be a club brother and not a club sister, why he wanted to be part of an organization that had always been referred to as "The Men of...", why he wanted to play with the boys and not the girls.

he wasn't sure he was entitled to talk about Gender to these people of Leather. There were so many others who were better read, better speakers, better leaders, people who had taken so many steps forward on the Gender path that they couldn't turn around and go backwards nearly as easily as he could.

But then he paused. Realized that the direction he had taken as he walked on the Gender path, while different from the direction others before him had gone, wasn't as easy to turn and go backwards on as he had first thought. Because he had already taken those steps on the Gender path, had already started talking to others about how he saw himself, had already started explaining his presence at all these events. And turning back wouldn't be true to himself, wouldn't honor his choices or those whose steps on the Gender path he saw as he walked.

He took a deep breath. another one. and another one. And he set forth onto the well-worn pathways that lay before him, determined to walk both the paths of Gender and Leather as well as he could, for himself and for no one else, honoring and respecting those who both came before and who would come after.

[cubby j. sherwood is a gender neutral individual who cherishes being able to submit and to serve, seeks out new opportunities for growth, learning and understanding, and wishes to express hir gratitude to hir Top for being a constant loving and guiding presence in hir life. cubby lives on the East Coast and may be contacted at cjsherwood@england.com.]

[* Ed. Note: This article was inadvertently omitted from the last newsletter focusing on Leather and SM.]

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