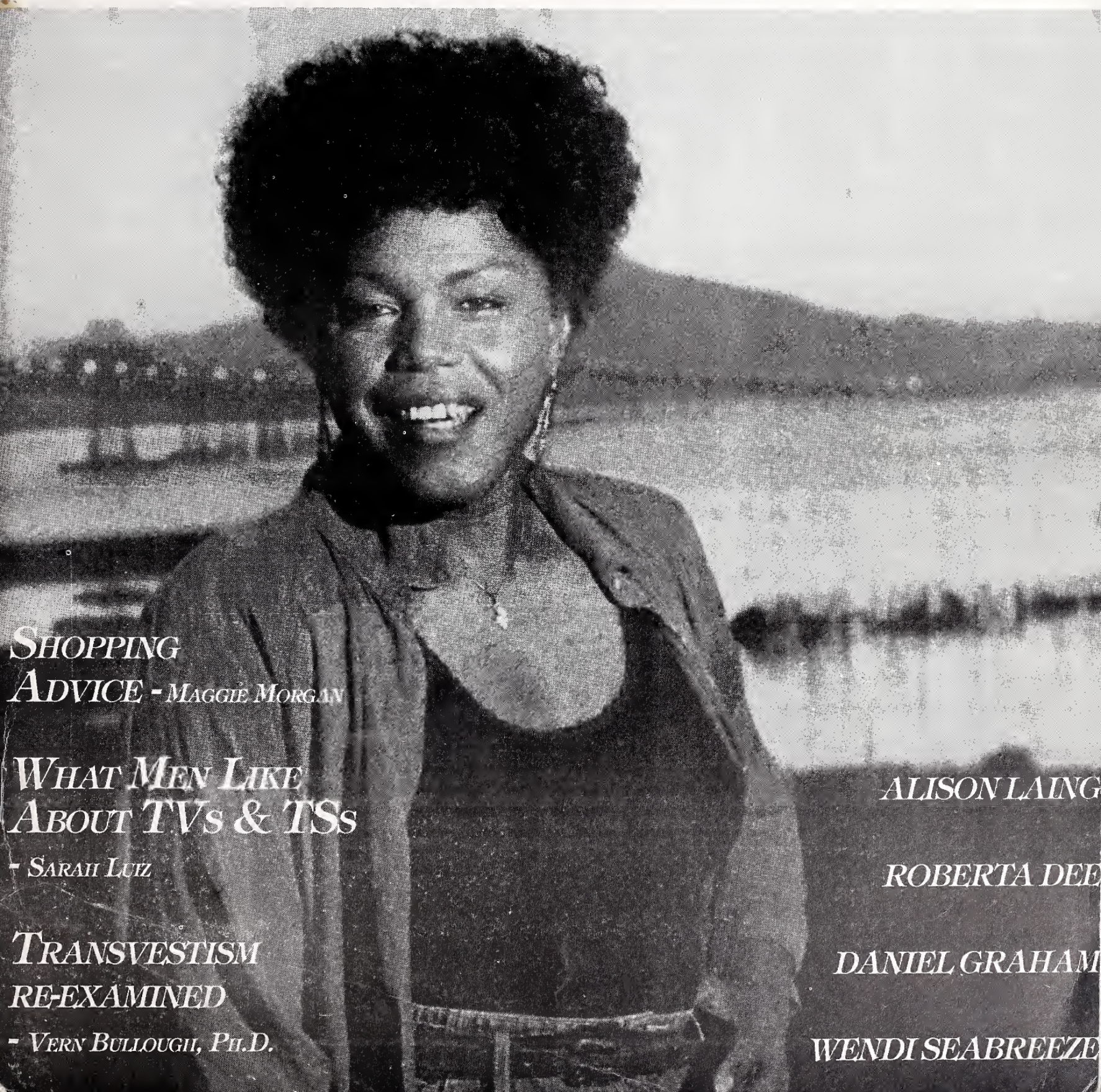


The All New
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Magazine

#23



SHOPPING
ADVICE - MAGGIE MORGAN

WHAT MEN LIKE
ABOUT TVs & TSs
- SARAH LUIZ

TRANSVESTISM
RE-EXAMINED
- VERN BULLOUGH, PH.D.

ALISON LAING

ROBERTA DEE

DANIEL GRAHAM

WENDI SEABREEZE

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MY FIRST JOB As A WOMAN

Roberta Angela Dee

My first job as a woman was for a golf cart company on Long Island, which has since gone out of business. I was about 28 years old at the time and had no employment history as a woman. So the job with this company was a very important step. It became the basis for all my future employment.

My resume reflected a high school diploma. It showed that I had held a clerical position at a small retail store. It also showed I held the position of Administrative Assistant for a small out of state company. When I interviewed I explained that I needed a job right away. I had just moved to town and was staying with a friend.

I was interviewed for the position of machine operator at a salary of a little more than minimum wage. Neither the position, nor the salary was of much importance to me. My main concern was to set up credentials as a woman. I also wanted to get and maintain a credit history and to live as a woman on a full time basis.

THE DECISION TO CROSS LIVE

What prompted this drastic decision? My decision to live as a woman grew out of several factors. The first was simply the depression that occurred with my attempts to live as a man. I had done everything I could to avoid looking or acting like a man. Yet, because I continued dressing in male or androgynous clothing, most people assumed me to be gay. That, too, was depressing because I never considered myself to be gay.

A second factor was that I had reached a career position as a male that created the need for me to socialize with my male co-workers. It was also expected that I would marry soon. Marriage was not the direction I wanted to pursue.

The third factor involved the ending of my relationship two years earlier. My first lover had



left me very hurt emotionally. I had reached a point where I was comfortable enough to consider dating again. This time however, I wanted recognition as a woman in my own right, before anything started. Whatever my motivation my strategy worked. The interviewer hired me and gave me a starting date.

I had only been on hormones about three months and was less than a AA cup in development. I had been out on enough dates to know I could 'pass' in public. But, passing in public was a whole lot different from passing for a full 8½ hours while intimately working with people, day after day, week after week.

I had no idea what kinds of questions my co-workers would ask, nor whether anyone would actually 'read' me. And if they did read me, would they be discreet about it? I was in new territory.

THE FIRST DAY

Naturally any 6-foot tall woman is going to attract attention. And as nervous as I was that first day, I had to somehow discriminate between those who were looking at me because of my height and those who might have suspected that I was cross-dressed.

Since there was no way to do this with absolute certainty, I decided to assume that anyone who stared at me for too long did so because of my height. This was no time for any lack of confidence. I needed to prepare myself for anyone who would challenge my gender. I needed to defend myself as any woman would defend herself. Then just hope for the best.

The foreman was an English gentleman in his late fifties. After a remark or two about my height he was both polite and flirtatious. Although his compliments flattered me I concentrated on

learning my responsibilities on this humongous machine designed to cut and stamp holes in 3-inch diameter steel pipes.

As I leaned over to push the pipe through the little hole for stamping and cutting, I noticed the foreman was trying to sneak a peek down my blouse. It did much to increase my level of confidence, but it would have been nice if I had a bit more for him to see.

A male quality control inspector came by every half hour to check on my work. His name was Ron and he was always very nice. He told me that the guys had commented on my height. I wanted to ask whether they had commented on anything else. I didn't because I couldn't afford to do or say anything that might cause anyone to be the least bit curious or suspicious.

That afternoon I took my first half-hour lunch with the other ladies. Most of them were housewives and mothers. They talked about their husbands and their children. They talked about the job and how short-sighted they thought the foreman had been in several areas.

I said as little as possible. They accepted my shyness as I was the new girl on the block. Later however they started to ask questions about my personal life. Did I have a boyfriend? Did I have a problem getting dates because of my height? How old was I? Just how tall? How much did I weigh? Did I have any children? Could I have children?

I answered the question about my fertility by telling them that although I had never been pregnant, I hoped to have children someday. That answer seemed to satisfy them. I was afraid they would start asking me questions about female anatomy or on having a period. And I didn't want to get into areas that might cause them to ask too many more questions.

I did however pay very careful attention to their responses. One of the ladies paid a lot of attention to my hands. Although I had neatly manicured nails and slender fingers, my hands were larger and still more masculine than those of the average woman. Alone it wasn't enough to give me away. But it could easily lead her to examine other aspects of my anatomy. If she put it all together it might be enough to generate doubt.

It was a relief when lunch ended. These women might not have been well-read or well-educated but they could distinguish a woman from a man. If I could successfully pass their inspection, I could feel a great deal more confident.

After lunch several of the women exchanged information. They excluded me from this exchange of gossip and it made me uneasy, but I continued to work as if nothing was wrong.

Then I felt a need to use the bathroom. Sensitive to their suspicions I held back from using the facility as long as I could. Nature called me to my moment of truth and I asked the foreman for permission to leave.

As I left the department one of the ladies followed me. She watched as I entered the ladies room but would not enter after me. Her unwillingness to follow me made me even more nervous. I was afraid that when I exited from the lady's room there would be a police officer to arrest me. Fortunately that did not happen and I returned to the department without incidence.

I asked the lady who worked next to me for details as to what was going on. She told me that some of the women were wondering about my height and if I had a hormonal problem. Sometimes when a woman looks suspiciously masculine, other women present their suspicions by using the phrase "hormonal problems."

"That happens all the time," I replied. "It's because of my height and the size of my hands and feet. I do have a slight hormonal problem, but I'm certainly not a freak. And I'm not a man if that's what really worries them." I then went over to ask the foreman to take a look at my machine. I did this intentionally to give my co-worker time to convey my explanation to the other women.

The gossiping quickly came to a halt. My strategy was once again successful. They accepted my explanation. Still I refrained from using the bathroom for the rest of the day.

WOMEN'S RULES & REGULATIONS

It was important for the women to come to a conclusion about my gender because women live under a different social structure than men. Women have rules that exist for no other reason than women compete with other.

This competitive game does not take an aggressive form, as it does with men. It is more cunning, which is why women are often called 'catty.' The players are women. They can only be women. Even if a man understood the rules well enough his successes or losses would not be measured the same way they are measured for a genetic female.

Feminine behavior is the accumulation of having lived for many years as a female—of actually being female. All of the subtleties cannot

be mastered overnight.

Women are well-tuned to body language. This is why they can tell if a woman is gay or straight or sooner and faster than any man.

My confrontation with real women on my first day at work could have been a disaster had I underestimated their abilities. I won because I knew I had to prove myself slowly and patiently—a little at a time.

CONCLUSION

It is possible (even probable) that some of these women believed I was cross-dressed during my six months of employment with the golf cart company. It doesn't really matter now. I accomplished everything I set out to accomplish: a valid reference on my resume, a credit history and a learning experience few people ever undergo.

I literally learned to be a woman through observation, through trial and error, and through an open mind, a willingness to listen, to respect and to understand that this was their domain. I

was only an apprentice, a rookie.

I've tried in the course of writing this short story to share something of value with everyone who cross-dresses, especially cross-dressers who venture beyond the 'closet' and into the public.

Patience is a virtue. Never expect to become too much too soon. The result can only be that you make a fool out of yourself. Remember that every woman looks at every other woman as a competitor in the struggle to find or keep a man (or even another woman). Anyone who enters that arena is going to be checked out thoroughly. My advice is simply not to underestimate the competition.

Stay sweet. And good luck.

EF

If you have some relevant thoughts you'd like to share, Roberta can be contacted through this magazine or directly by writing to:

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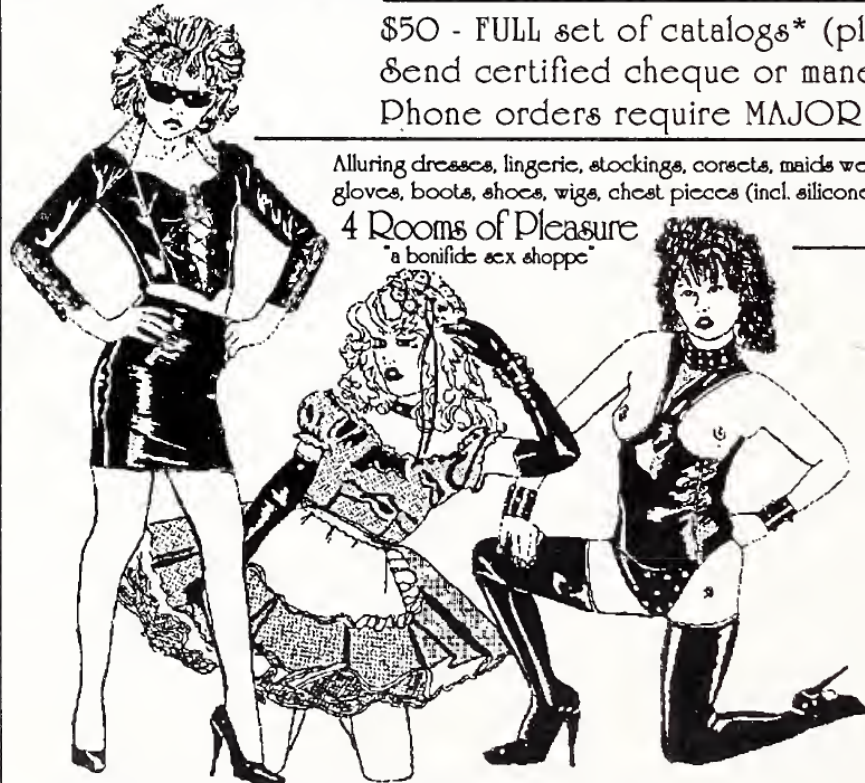
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