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Provincetown Magazine

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**HALLOWEEN
UNMASKED**

**EVIL IN
CHATHAM**

**FANTASIA
SCHEDULE**

**DALLAS TALKS
TRANSGENDER**



*John Flanagan
10/10/13*

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YOUR GUIDE TO: ARTS ENTERTAINMENT DINING SHOPPING

in the **Spotlight**: DALLAS DENNY

Interview by Brenner Thomas

(TRANS)FORMATIONS:

AN INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY'S MOST OUTSPOKEN MEMBERS.

The transgender community has in the last ten years experienced unprecedented progress. From local nondiscrimination ordinances to inclusion in federal hate crime bills, cross-dressers and transsexuals have come far on the road to freedom. But much like the gay community of the 60's and 70's, prejudice and ignorance cloud much of the country's understanding of transgender issues. Few people know this more than Dallas Denny, a Southern-born transsexual and longtime supporter of Fantasia Barré, who has witnessed firsthand the mobilization of the TG community, and in fact helped initiate it. In 1990 she founded AEGIS, the American Educational Gender Information Service, a national clearinghouse on transsexual and transgender issues. Today, as the editor of Transgender Tapestry magazine and author of three books and numerous articles, Dallas continues to shape and contribute to the discourse on transgender issues. We caught up with her in Pine Lake, Georgia, the world's smallest municipality with a transgender nondiscrimination ordinance, to talk about her transformation from man to woman and her thoughts on her community's past, present and future.



PM: Let's start with the story of your coming out as a transgendered person? How did that awareness come about?

DD: When I was about 13, and suddenly out of the blue. I guess I hadn't thought a lot about gender until the prospect of being an adult loomed up. I found myself at 14 totally dressed, with full face. I didn't see a cross-dressed boy. I saw a girl and an attractive one. I knew that that was the person I wanted to be and yet it was a person I had created out of cosmetics and cloth. I didn't know how to make that person manifest. I also knew that it would not be healthy to be out about it. So I didn't tell my parents although my stash of women's clothing got found. We had one of those emotional moments.

PM: How old were you then?

DD: Probably 15.

PM: And what was their reaction?

DD: My father threatened to make me walk to town, which was about five miles away, in front of the car dressed while he followed—which would have been humiliating but at least I would have been out. When I was just out of high school, I found myself working as a dishwasher and busboy at Shoney's making very little money but I found myself living in downtown Nashville in the Ross hotel. And it was located centrally, just near the Grand Ole Opry. I would sneak out the back door dressed and be right in the middle of the city. And I wanted to go full time, I wanted to live full time as a young woman but I had no resources and I could never quite figure out how to do it. I also knew it would be disastrous to be discovered. So I was frightened at the time too, but once I was out the door of the hotel, a lot of things happened that let me be a woman for an hour or a day.

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Fantasia 2003 Fair

Oct 23 -26

SCHEDULE OF WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES

THURSDAY OCT 23

9:30-11.30 am
Speaker: Sandra Cole
Alone in Paradise
(for all transgals here alone)
Fairbanks Carriage House

10-11.30 am
Speaker: Dr. Trankila
Growing Your Self
Napi's

10-11.30 am
Speaker: Victoria M.
The Healthy TG
C&A Cabaret

12-1 pm
Lunch
Bayside Betsy's, Crown & Anchor or
Napi's
Get tickets in advance

1-2.30 pm
Speaker: Dallas Denny
Where We've Been



C&A Cabaret

2.30-5.30 pm
Follies Folks
Follies Rehearsal
C&A Paramount

3.00-4.30 pm
Speaker: Helen Boyd
My Husband Betty:
A Reading and discussion

Napi's
3.00-4.30 pm
Speaker: Sandra Cole with Miqqi Alicia
Gilbert
Secrets of Savvy Sisterhood
C&A Cabaret

3.00-4.30 pm
Speaker: Jamie Daley
Hair Removal: A Peer-to-Peer Look
Fairbanks Carriage House

5.30-7.30 pm
Gabriel's Party
Cocktail Party
Gabriel's

6 pm+
You & Your Friends
Girls' Night Out
Provincetown!

FRIDAY OCT 24

9:30-11.30 am
Speaker: Sandra Cole
Which Way to Nirvana? (couples)
Fairbanks Carriage House

10-11.30 am
Speaker: Art Brantz
Hormones 101
Fairbanks Dining Room

10-11.30 am
Speaker: Dr. Trankila
Growing Your Self
C&A Cabaret

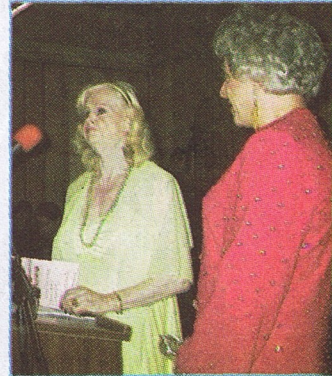
10-11.30 am
Speaker: Brenda Viola
Transgender Behavior: A
Continuum Napi's

12-1 pm
Lunch
Bayside Betsy's,
Crown & Anchor or Napi's
Get tickets in advance

1-2.30 pm
Speaker: Dr. Marci Bowers

The First Trans
Surgeon: GRS
for the 21st
Century
C&A Cabaret

3.00-4.30 pm
Speaker:
Mariette
Pathy Allen



Photographing Yourself And Others
C&A Cabaret

3.00-4.30 pm
Speaker: Dr. Marci Bowers Talking
Seriously About GRS
Fairbanks Carriage House

3.00-4.30 pm
Speaker: Diane Ellborn
In or Out? Telling or Hiding
Napi's



2-5 pm
Follies Folks.
Follies Full Rehearsal
C&A: Paramount

8:00-11:00
Follies Folks.

Fantasia 2003 Fair

SCHEDULE OF WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES



FanFair Follies
C&A: Paramount

SATURDAY OCT 25

9:30-11:30 am
Sandra Cole
"T" for Two
(just for Transgals who are here with their partners)
Fairbanks Carriage House

10-11:30 am
Holly Boswell
Transgender Spirit Circle
The Beach

10-11:30 am
FF Committee
Fantasia Fair 2004
C&A Cabaret

12-1 pm
Lunch
Bayside Betsy's,
Crown & Anchor or Napi's
Get tickets in advance
Keynote

1-2:30 pm
Speaker: Mariette Pathy Allen
Book Launch
C&A Cabaret

2:30-4:30 pm
Sandra Cole
Alone in Paradise
(for all transgals here alone)
Fairbanks Carriage House

3:00-4:30 pm
Speaker: Diane Ellaborn
Children: Telling or Hiding? Workshop
Napi's
3:00-4:30 pm
Speakers: Dallas Denny & Miqqi Alicia
Lost in the The Pink Fog
C&A Cabaret

6.30-11pm

Reception
6.30 pm

Banquet Dinner
7.30 pm
Michael Shay's

SUNDAY OCT 26

9-12 am
Fantasia Fair
Farewell Brunch
Michael Shay's



11 am
Sunday Service
Unitarian Service
Unitarian Meeting House

LOCATIONS FOR WORKSHOPS AND LUNCHES

NOTE: Commercial Street is the main street in Provincetown with many shops and restaurants, and the last street before the ocean.

Bradford Street is one block further from the water.

Fair Headquarters
Crown and Anchor
247 commercial street
(Registration: :[508] 487-1430 X 201
Cabaret: small theater off the bar
Paramount:: large theater in the rear



Other Locations

Bayside Betsy's
177 Commercial Street

Crowne Pointe
82 Bradford Street,

Fairbanks Carriage House
(FB Carriage House)
90 Bradford St
Carriage House is just behind the main building

Napi's
7 Freeman Street
lunch and meeting room is upstairs

Pied Bar
193A Commercial St
Across from Spiritu Pizza

UU Meeting House
Universalist Unitarian Meeting House
236 Commercial St.

Whaler's Wharf
241 Commercial Street

PM: and what's the time period here?

DD: 1968 or so.

PM: When were you finally able to dress full time and live as a woman?

DD: When I was about 20 my beard really started coming in, I went to college and got married and was married for six years and I wore a beard during most of that time. It grew to be about 1976 and my marriage had dissolved.

PM: Had you resigned yourself to living life as a man?

DD: I was trying really hard throughout the marriage, although it didn't work out. Though she knew about what was going on with me. We talked about it. But it really wasn't that much of an issue because I wasn't dressing. After she left, I was living alone during graduate school so I started dressing again. I have a picture from that period. I was probably 26, 27 and I ducked into one of those little photo booths. I still have it. I had gone to the beauty shop and had my hair done and they had no idea. Eventually I came back to Nashville, and I had determined that this was not going to go away. So I came out to my friends as a cross-dresser. I was dressing but at that point my beard was hard to disguise so for the first time I was passing well, but under close inspection people might notice something. So I wanted to go full time then but I didn't feel that my body was up for it. I had applied for hormones to the Gender Clinic at Vanderbilt and paid them a fair amount of money to be diagnosed and they told me that they were not going to offer me any services because I was not dysfunctional enough to be transsexual because I had a job and I because I had gotten a higher education and had been married. So they offered me counseling to help me get through life in the male realm which of course was not what I wanted.

So at that time I spent six months of my spare time at the Vanderbilt library reading everything I could on transsexualism which was all psycho-medical at the time. It was all the pathology based stuff that transsexuals had character disorders and transsexuals had not identified with their fathers. But I went out and wrote a prescription and but myself on hormones, the best dose I could figure out from the literature in 1980. I was thirty. Within six months my hair had returned and my body started feminizing.

I then found the community. I joined Triess, which is an organization for heterosexual cross-dressers. They do not allow gay people. They do not allow transsexuals. I had had some relationships with men at this point. I didn't feel that this homophobic organization for cross-dressers was a right place for me but it was all there was. When I went to their meetings, I was able to plug into the community. And I started an organization in Atlanta that was like a support group for transsexuals. By that time I was quite feminized and had electrolysis and started to prepare to go full time, which I thought would require moving. Most people didn't really transition at the work place. I was offered the option of doing it but I thought it would be too weird. In December of '89 I transitioned and I had had electrolysis that year in preparation. It was like falling of a log. I just loaded a U-Haul with all

my possessions and I changed clothes and I threw the grimy moving boy clothes I had away and that was the last time I ever presented as a man. I became an activist because the people in the support group were impressed with my credentials and they sort of drafted me into a leadership role so I realized A: there was so little information out there and B: there were so many people like me who just didn't have the information to make the decisions. If I had any support at all when I was 17, I would have transitioned much earlier. It was sort of uphill all the way.

PM: Are we talking about AEGIS here? [editors note: AEGIS stands for the American Educational Gender Information Service]

DD: Yes, I founded AEGIS in 1990 and published a journal called Chrysalis.

My father threatened to make me walk to town in front of the car dressed while he followed—which would have been humiliating but at least I would have been out.

PM: And the concept of that organization was what?

DD: Just to provide information so that transgendered people could make sane decisions. If you don't know, and you can't get information and anybody that you might ordinarily go to for help is sort of crazy on the subject...

PM: What kind of information?

DD: Information about transsexualism. Information what you can do about it. For instance that these feelings do not go away. You can manage them if you work hard at it. Basically people know a lot more about transgender issues now. Transgendered people themselves can go to the internet and type it in and get more information than I found in thirty years. All those truisms have been exposed and by the mid-90's it was sort of like people were beginning to look at the pathology not as based within the individual but in the intolerant society. Like if you want to step outside this narrowly defined gender roles, what's wrong with it? So one of the things that became manifest in the 90's was that transgendered people realized that they didn't have to "change sex," they didn't have to have surgery, that whatever was their best fit was okay. There were people who felt that you weren't a proper transsexual unless they had genital surgery. And there are transsexuals who absolutely need that to feel whole or at one with their bodies, including me.

PM: So you had the operation?

DD: In 1991, in Brussels.

PM: Do you think most transgendered people today are still closeted?

DD: I think most transgendered people, like most gay people, go through a period of self-exploration and trying on roles and figuring out what their issues are. And I think there's less of a recognized process for doing that than for gay and lesbian people. Gay and lesbian people know more about how to come out, or at least when they start venturing out they can find other gay and lesbian people, they can find organizations. It's improved dramatically for TG people but some of them can't go to their school counselor or their minister and get good information.

I just loaded a U-Haul with all my possessions and I changed clothes and I grew the grimy moving boy clothes I had away and that was the last time ever presented as a man.

PM: What do you think the largest misconception is about the TG community?

DD: Boy. One is that you're gay and that you can't deal with it. So if we weren't in denial about your homosexuality you wouldn't need to do this. I think that's a misconception. I think there's a misconception that cross-dressers cross for erotic reasons and certainly some do but you know, you see a lot of people at the Fair who are not walking around with erections all week. They are exploring socially appearing as a woman for a whole week, which is a non-sexual thing. The other big one is sexuality. Cross-dressers are people who have lived their whole lives in the straight community and the idea that there dressing might have something to do with their sexuality is frightening for them. That was more common 15 years ago in the Trans community and it's rare now except for this one organization which seems kind of like an atavism, Triess. Transgendered people are by and large much less homophobic than they used to be. The TG community has people who identify as straight, bi and gay or lesbian.

PM: And how do you identify?

DD: Bi.

PM: How far do you think the TG community is behind gay rights in terms of progress?

DD: It's interesting. The HRC did a survey about a year ago and their data showed that the level of tolerance in the general American public for transgendered and transsexual people is very close to that of gay and lesbian but in terms of our political organizations I would say we're closing the gap but we're...I don't know if the analogy is that good. I don't think that we will ever have the money for the large organizations. Many cross-dressers have money and they can contribute but 350 days a year they are Republicans and 15 days a year they are at conferences and transsexuals don't have money because they spend a lot on their process or their employment is adversely affected by coming out. Often transsexuals after the process go off

on their own and they become less involved. Who knows what the numbers are but in terms of us having the mass of people able to give money, that's probably never going to happen.

PM: HRC now includes transgender in its mission statement and some people aren't happy about it as they see it as a dissolution of purpose and identity arguing that the two, homosexuality and transgenderism, don't have to do anything with each other. How do you respond to that?

DD: I would point out that being gay or lesbian is violating gender norms just as is cross-dressing. There's an expectation of your gendered behavior and if you're with someone of the same sex you're violating a gender norm. That's what makes people upset. Many gay and lesbian people when they get bashed it's not because of their sexual orientation, but because their gendered presentation somehow sets off their attackers. If gender presentation and orientation is not included, then there's a loop hole in the anti-bashing laws and the anti-discrimination laws that you can drive a car through. There are instances of being attacked and even killed because they are perceived to be gay based upon their gender presentation. Besides it's just the right thing to do—everyone deserves civil rights.

PM: Right. I'm not questioning that. I'm asking about the alliance if

Transgendered people are by and large much less homophobic than they used to be.

you will.

DD: The drag community has been closely affiliated with the gay community forever, from Stonewall. Transgendered people were involved in the Stonewall riots. I have copy of Drag Magazine from '69 in which there's an article complaining about being excluded from the wakening movement—complaining that we were getting arrested and we were fighting six months ago and now all of a sudden we are politically incorrect. There's been a lot of political involvement by gender variant people all along.

PM: A lot has been happening with gay rights lately, what would you like to see happen next for the TG community?

DD: That's an interesting question. It would be great to get something like a Trans-inclusive ENDA [editor's note; Employment Non Discrimination Act is being spearheaded by the HRC and currently does not include TG in its language.] One area in which transsexuals suffer is employment. If you are a non-passing transsexual, it's really hard to get a job. More and more people are being able to keep their jobs when they transition, but if you don't pass very well, it's nearly impossible to get a job. At least a serious job. Obviously I think that employment protections are critical for the Trans community. If you can't work in this country you are in trouble.