

It is the end of July, or nearly so, and yesterday I received my summer issue of The Mirror, the Tri-Ess Newsletter. Quite a few articles caught my eye and I have read about a third of those so far. One that particularly grabbed my attention was the article entitled, "What has your femme persona done for you? Is she worthwhile?" and I got to thinking about that very thing. What HAS my femme persona done for me?

Stepping back in time to a point when I did not even know I had such a thing as a 'femme persona', I can see that it did a number of things for me that set me apart. My mother's fair skin and light complexion singled me out for unwanted teasing. I was more sensitive, not exactly an encouraged male trait, and in defense of myself, I had a hair trigger that got me into a lot of fights over that teasing. As I grew up this internal person helped me play at being an amateur guidance counselor at a summer camp where a young girl friend of mine had a huge crush on a counselor. My goal was to help each see and respond to each other differently. I don't recall how successful I was but I believe I helped the counselor become aware of the matter and deal with it more effectively. I hope my belief is not faulty in this regard. I am certain that it did help ME to grow however, in ways yet to be known. One obvious way was that I tended to look at people a bit differently than usual.

My problems with my appearance, and life learning issues to that point, carried into high school. It was here that several things started. I learned to control my temper, although I also tended still to internalize and suppress it. This distanced me from others, peers and adults alike, and made it very difficult to start or keep relationships. No doubt this was a factor in all three of my divorces. It was a start however, and I began to practice selective hearing which helped me avoid MOST potential fights. Sometimes the best defense is a strategic retreat. Alas that was not always true. I also started cross dressing. It started as a need or desire to wear girl clothes so I acquired some. I loved the clothes, the feelings, the fit, and yes, the often youthful erotic fantasies that came with it. I also loved returning to male mode. The two experiences were wonderful taken as a whole part of me.

My first active role as a female person/character occurred as an adult online. Of course I have been online since the BBS style days where you connected at a slow 300 baud at \$6.00 per connect hour, a far cry from the unlimited Internet access of today with high speed/high capacity computers and the networks that support them. Someone suggested I was afraid to be seen with a girl name – so I played around in several back and forth messages changing my nick and even using, for a short period, a girl name to prove I could and would.

Some years still later, it was suggested I could do a female character role in an online role-playing game. It was then that a girlfriend and I rolled up my first girl character. Her name was Darleah and she was the initial foundation for Rosaliy, the girl I am today. The role play was based on Anne McCaffrey's Dragon Riders of Pern books (of which I have the entire collection). Not a dragon rider herself, though my male character, T'Zar was, she was, nevertheless a strong woman. Her role as Headwoman of the Lower Caverns was to govern the domestic activities of the Weyr and she was a strong person in her own right. I managed a creditable presentation in this role and that gave me confidence in my ability as a female persona.

As time is wont to do, it moved on and so did I. My cross dressing, had been on hold for a number of years but it came back as I began to explore that woman in me. My first wife had no clue, although she probably would have been shocked had she ever caught me trying on her clothes. Luckily they fit and I enjoyed that although I still had the feeling that it was somehow bad or naughty.

My second wife knew and at first enjoyed it with me BUT she lost interest quickly, both in me dressed and later, in me altogether. She did, however, seduce a visiting girl friend of mine right off the computer while I was at work. Later she also had an online experience with a male in femme mode, a fact of which she was not aware at first. These events did very little for my self esteem and my

confidence as a male and as a person. My girl persona however, continued to grow but she was kept a secret. Closeted and online only, she feared loss of friends SHOULD anyone find out she was not a “real girl.”

So far there haven't been any clearly apparent positives to my femme side. Trust me, they were there. After my separation from my third (and probably last) wife, I made a decision. Darleah became Rosaliy and came out of the closet. The fantasy name was put away, slowly, to make room for the real girl.

With her emergence, Rosaliy began to visibly affect my overall persona. No I did not become totally self confident overnight. But I did begin a new phase or personal growth. Overall I have to credit Rosaliy and her growing confidence in herself as helping to take the 'edge' off my male side. As this happened, he became easier to approach, less prone to anger and frustration, though both sides still have some of that, and improved his on-the-job performance to the point where he has finally progressed into a management level with better income and some job security. Rosaliy, only 3 years old as a real person, has made it possible for me to finally be a complete and reasonably well adjusted person. HE does well at work and has been told often that his work is good and well appreciated. SHE is well respected, generally, as the person she presents. Well dressed, not too flashy, but confident. Strong in her own being. Does Rosaliy pass? Maybe she does ... sometimes. More important than passing is that she IS AND she is here to stay.

To the original questions: What has she done for me? Is she worthwhile? She has made me whole, confident, and sure. She has improved my life and my job prospects; and YES, she is VERY MUCH worthwhile!! I could not be who I am today, without her.