

THE TRANSSEXUAL VOICE

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TRANSSEXUALS ON-LINE Sandy Mesics

Shannon has just moved to San Jose, and wants to know about the local TS community, where the doctors are, where to shop, and where to get electrolysis. Rita is traveling to Philadelphia soon on business, and is arranging a date with Chris. "Sweetie" in Washing D.C. has a torrid romance going on with Roger in Milwaukee. Nora is a New York City TS, looking for a roommate to share her apartment. They are all doing this on high-tech '90s fashion--using their home computers and modems.

This whole new dimension in interpersonal communication came as a pleasant surprise to me recently, when I added a modem to my home computer. My employer gave it to me in the hopes, no doubt, that I would work at home as well as the office, and commute to work via modem. After I hooked it up and got acquainted with the software to run it, I began exploring local BBSs (Buletin Board Systems). There are at least 450 BBSs nationwide, and most cities have one or more of these local BBSs, many of which are free of charge, or carry low yearly fees. They are run by amateurs, however, and because of this there is always a chance that a given BBS will be here today and gone tomorrow.

Many of the BBSs serve specific interest groups: genealogy, Apple Users, IBM users, programmers, ecology, astronomy, science, coin collecting, sports, games, etc. But of interest to the TS are the BBS services that serve sexual minorities, like gays, lesbians, and transvestites and transsexuals. On the BBSs, individuals can chat with one another, or leave private messages or messages to all persons on the BBS. In some ways its like a telephone party line; a great networking tool.

In order to take part in a bulletin board, you need a computer, modem, and software. The type of computer isn't really important. Modems come in a variety of transmission speeds: 300, 1200, 2400, and 9600 baud. Without getting technical, the Baud rate determines the speed at which your computer communicates with the host computer. Nowadays, most people are communicating at either 1200 or 2400 baud. For all but the heavy-duty computer nerd, this is more than adequate.

Then you will need software to handle the modem and the communications: two of the more common programs are Procomm and Crosstalk. These programs operate the modem, and can be programmed to place calls automatically.

Once you are set up, the next step is to find a local BBS. This can take some research, and some phone calls to local computer dealers. Talk with them, and sooner or later you will connect. Then it's just a matter of finding a BBS with an adult sexually-oriented board. When you join such a BBS, you may be required to fill out an application for full access to the board and membership is usually a nominal \$10 or \$30 a year. Once on the BBS, you can read messages and reply to the ones you are interested in. Or, you can leave a "Hello, I am new to the board" message. Checking back in a few days, you just might find a reply.

So, if you want to connect with other TSs around the country, swap information or just have a philosophical conversation, try out the computer BBSs. It is true that you can do the same through publications, personal ads, and telephones, but if you have access to computer equipment, either through work or an unlimited home computer budget, going on-line can be a fun way to share the TS experience. Next time you're on-line, look for me!

SANDY MESICS IS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER. FROM 1974 TO 1980 SHE WAS EDITOR AT NEPTUNE PRODUCTIONS, AND PUBLISHER OF IMAGE MAGAZINE. SHE LIVES IN FLORIDA WITH HER LIFE PARTNER, AND IN HER SPARE TIME IS RESTORING A 1957 CHEVY.

Dear Phoebe:

I have read the TS Voice for several years. I have some suggestions and some things I'd like to see featured or covered in articles. One thing is this voice operation by the doctor in Beverly Hills. Living in California, I've heard of him before and I remember when the price was a reasonable \$1500 for the operation. I've also heard rumors that some of his operations have back-fired. I heard a story about one person who had the operation and actually ended up with a deeper voice. Do you think we could get a list or survey of his patients? Would any of his patients give a testimonial? What is the success rate? Does he have before and after tapes available?

Something I'd really like to see is a list with names and addresses of all the places where we could go for a sex-change operation. Maybe even some sort of rating about them. It's one thing to pick out a name and it's another thing to know that there are a group of others like us who have had a good experience with a particular clinic and doctor. It's my life and attainment of sexual sensitivity is important to me and I'm sure many others like me. I've heard of various places throughout the northern hemisphere but I don't have any specific addresses to contact. I have been living as a woman 3 years now and I'm well prepared to become fully who I am. But where do I go? Jacqui