



### **Family Tradition: It Wasn't Unusual to Dress Him Up Like a Girl**

My grandma and grandpa on my father's side lived over 200 miles from us, so we rarely visited them. When I was thirteen, I dreaded the upcoming trip to visit them because they were getting older and had moved into a small apartment from their large home that I had always loved because it had a spacious backyard with plenty of room for exploring and playing. Dad told me his parents no longer needed a big house to rattle

around in since all their children had married and moved away. This was destined to be the last time I visited them under the strange circumstances I'm about to relate.

The year was 1940, and Gram and Gramp moved from into their small cookie cutter Cape Cod style home. Each year my parents visited Dad's folks in March after our typically harsh winter weather, and in August or September, they usually visited them again, but for this visit, I also went along. I was six years old and deposited there for a weekend visit. We would leave home at about 5 AM, hoping to arrive in time for lunch. (Super highways didn't exist.)

After we arrived, we all had a light lunch, and then visited for the afternoon before having a big feast of a dinner prepared by two of my aunts, who lived not far away. They made most everything at their houses, then brought the food over to Gram's house and made a spread on picnic tables set up in the backyard of the apartment building since they had only a small kitchen-dining area. When the festivities ended for the day, I went home with my aunt and uncle and my cousin Jean Louise because Gram's small apartment didn't have a guest room. Jean was a few months older than I was.

I didn't stay with my parents at Gram's apartment because there was only one modest spare bedroom in their small home. While staying with my grandparents, I usually slept in just my underwear, but upon retiring at my aunt's house, she insisted I would wear proper nightclothes, and without my parents to plead my case, I had to put on one of Jean's best long nighties made of a slinky smooth fabric in peach and trimmed with yards of cream-colored lace. In the morning, we would be joining the rest of the family for church services with all us kids going to the church's Sunday school. Then we were to rejoin my grandparents, parents and other kin for lunch and a short visit before going home.

Aunt Fran decided I couldn't wear my shorts and polo shirt to Sunday school and Church services. I had to be properly attired. The only option available to her, since I didn't travel with a suit, was that I wear something of Jean's. Without discussion, I was stripped of my nightie and put into sleek, white lace-edged pink panties, bloomer panties that went a little way down my legs, and a matching vest and full slip followed by a summer weight white linen dress trimmed with pink and white lace. The dress buttoned up the back and was decorated with a pink fabric sash that went about my waist and tied in a big butterfly bow below the buttons. The dress was trimmed with a pink satin ribbons and white lace about the short puffy sleeves, the squire neckline and the skirt a few inches above the hem. Along with anklets and patent leather shoes, I was put into a white soft brimmed hat with pink satin streamers and taken to Sunday services.

At six years old, I knew I was a boy and not supposed to wear girls' clothes, but I had been trained not to question my elders. I simply did what they told me to do; however, I discovered how bad it was for a boy to wear his girl cousin's clothes upon entering the Sunday school.

Everyone gathered around me, the new kid, and wondered why I had such short hair for a girl, so my cousin Jean simply told them I was a boy. The roomful of kids made fun of me for wearing a dress. The giggling began, and I was quizzed; they wanted to know if I was a mama's boy or a sissy or if I had been a bad boy and was being punished! Of course, they wanted to see what I was wearing underneath, and they had a great time lifting up my dress and fancy slip to see the lacy pink bloomer panties I was wearing.

I was spared further humiliation when teacher arrived and she began giving us the weekly religious instruction. However, when the lesson ended the kids' questions began flying again. I was glad Jean told them I wasn't a sissy and I wasn't being punished. She just explained that I was visiting and didn't have any boys' clothes nice enough to wear to church, and so it was decided I had to wear an outfit of hers instead. That seemed to satisfy most of them, but a few of them continued to giggle and tease until we met up with my grandparents and aunt and uncle after their church services. Happily, my uncle shooed away the teasers, and the other children left me alone while my aunt and uncle visited to other worshipers. None of the adults paid much attention to me. They didn't seem to give a hoot why I had such short hair if I was a girl or why I was dressed like a girl if I was a boy.

One lady went out of her way to compliment me on my 'pretty country girl style dress' as she termed it and asked me all about how I liked wearing it. She even asked if I was lucky enough to be wearing undies as fancy as the dress. I had no idea if she knew I was a boy or a girl, and I wasn't about to inform her. With my aunt's blessing, the woman picked up the hem of my dress and swished it around in her hands; I know she was looking carefully at my panties. She gazed intently and frowned a bit but then gave me a kiss on the cheek and said I was brave to wear such pretty clothes when most other kids wore very plain outfits. While she was playing around and flipping up my skirt and slip, she surely saw the bulge in my loose-fitting pink bloomer panties, I don't know for sure if she then realized I was a boy, but I sensed she did because she just kept saying, "Oh, how sweet! Oh, how pretty to see a child who so loves wearing such dainty undies." Then she waved goodbye. I was glad she went away.

When we arrived back at Gram's, a luncheon buffet was set up on tables out in the yard. Other relatives that I didn't know stopped to see my father before it was announced we had to leave to go back home. I was surprised that my parents and other relatives said little about how I was dressed, other than generically complimenting me by saying things like, "Oh, John, you look so sweet, today."

Jean asked me if I enjoyed wearing 'nice clothes' as she put it. "Aren't soft panties, vests and slips comfortable? All the added lace and satin trim make them very special. You didn't seem to be overly upset dressed this way, so I think you enjoy wearing my silky slips and panties and one of my best dresses." I nodded and mumbled that the clothes felt nice to wear, but I was happy when she changed the subject.

Goodbye hugs and kisses were shared. When Dad told me to get into the car because we were leaving, I asked, "Can I change back into my own clothes?" Instead of verbally

answering, he simply pointed to the car. I knew enough to get into it at once or he would give my pantied butt a wallop and make me dance in pain. At six, he never used a strap on me, but I just his big, calloused palm could impart harder stinging blows than my tush could stand.

All during the long trip home, dad said nothing about how I was dressed. I did fall asleep on the way, and my dress and slips became rucked up around my hips. I woke up with the lacy pale pink panties on full display and my hands idling stroking the white lace around the panty legs. Still, nothing was said during the trip. While dad was at work the day, mom put me back into Jean's clothes and took me to see her mother, who lived just five blocks away. Grandma said to me, "You are too precious for words. Your aunts, uncles and cousins must see my new granddaughter."

So the following Sunday, I was dressed again and most of my aunts, uncles, and cousins on my mother's side of the family began dropping in to see the cute boy in a dress. I was crushed both mentally by the exposure and physically by the hugs and kisses of an endless parade of my relatives.

Around Halloween each year, my father's parents came to visit us. Gram and grandpa came by bus and usually stayed for a week or more. Then Aunt Fran, Uncle Bill and my cousin Jean would come to spend one night before taking Gram and Gramp back home the next day. On this visit, Mother had washed and pressed Jean's dress and lingerie and returned them to Aunt Fran. She accepted the dress but returned the lingerie to mom and said Jean had outgrown them, and I should keep them and wear them because they had been expensive when new and still had plenty of wear left in them.

When they departed, I owned the panties, vest, slip and a many-tiered petticoat. Mother placed them in my dresser with my boys' underwear. She told they were too nice not to use and that I would wear them on Sundays and other special occasions under my "dress-up" clothes.

I was unhappy with the prospect of someone finding out I was wearing satin and lace trimmed undies, but I wasn't given any choice. I wore dainties for Thanksgiving, Christmas and every week at Sunday school. I even had to wear the full slip tucked into my trousers when the weather got colder. Grandma had split the bottom of the slip front and back and fashioned them into homemade pettipants. After WWI, some exclusive women's shops did alter slips for women to wear under trousers, especially for the women who were then working in factories since dresses were not practical to wear on the job.

In 1941 the same scenario was played out again by Aunt Fran. I was taken to Church completely attired in a girls' dress outfit. When we sat at a table to wait for the teacher to arrive and the lesson to begin, a girl, whom I remembered as a teaser a year earlier, said to me, "Our little sissy has returned. Do you again have pretty panties on under your dress? I can see you have a nice camisole and slip."

I remembered her. I said back, “Hi, Peggy, I can see your dainties too. Do you have pretty silky panties on too?”

“But, I’m a girl and I’m supposed to wear lacy silken dainties.”

“Well, Peggy, I’m a boy and I don’t like to wear girls’ dainties, but my aunt makes me wear them just to make you look dowdy since my clothes are so much prettier than yours!”

As she was ready to respond, the teacher arrived and began the lesson.

When we were alone my cousin Jean said, “I’m glad you put Peggy down. She’s a real pain in the butt.” Then she whispered in my ear, “You love wearing pretty dresses and silken slips and panties, don’t you? I’m going to tell Aunt Bertha that she should make you wear dresses all the time.”

I responded, “Oh, no! Don’t tell her that. I don’t want to be a girl or even look like a girl in any way!”

“Oh, you can’t fool me. I think deep down you love my pretty clothes, and you really do want me to talk to Auntie (my mom) about it, so I’m going to whether you like it or not.”

Mom said to me when we headed home, “Your cousin Jean says I should get you some dresses and more lingerie, especially since the lingerie she passed onto you last year is now getting quite worn. She says you really love your soft, cuddly satin, rayon and lace panties. Should I, honey?”

I immediately answered, “No, Mom, it’s not necessary.” I quickly realized that I hadn’t come out very strongly against it. I didn’t know why I hadn’t been more adamant. I felt an unpleasant tickle in my stomach as I had to admit to myself that it was fun to feel her ticklish slips and soft dresses floating around me, and I blushed thinking about how her silken panties tickled my hips and thighs and ... even if I abhorred the teasing that these sissy girls’ clothes invariably brought on. However, I surely wasn’t going to admit this to anybody, even my mom even if she was convinced that I did enjoy them.

World War II interrupted our visits to Gran and Gramps. Then in 1946, after the war, our visits resumed. I was then twelve, and when I arrived at Aunt Fran’s, I was directed to change into a fancy dress outfit of Jean’s. When I asked why I was to be humiliated in girls’ clothes again, Aunt Fran said, “Isn’t it obvious?”

“No, Aunt Fran, I don’t understand?”

“You’re not being humiliated. It’s simply that Jean’s clothes are so much prettier than anything of you brought. We simply want you to look as nice as possible for Church, so you will wear a pretty skirt and undies.”

Once again, I went to Church where I was greeted as a long lost friend. Peggy said she wasn't surprised to see me in skirts again. I asked her why she wasn't teasing me as much as before. She said, "Well, I'm older now and with the clothes shortages during the war, I saw many boys who had to wear secondhand clothes from their sisters and relatives. It doesn't look so unusual anymore for me to see a boy in a skirt, even if he wears fancy girls' panties under his dress as you did before. I bet you have really fancy panties on under your skirt again today. I remember the finely decorated panties you had on years ago when you were here last; they were some of the fanciest panties I had ever seen. Can I take a peek?"

I was spared by the bell as they say as the teacher called us to attention and started the weekly lesson. After class, Peggy tried to pursue me, but my uncle was there right on time to pick me up, so I was spared the indignity because if Peggy could have seen the fancy my undies I had on under my blouse, skirt and coat, she would have teased me regardless of her then updated views. It was after the war and fancy lingerie was beginning to become available again, and my cousin had a drawerful of the laciest, fanciest and prettiest panties imaginable, even much more elaborate than those she had before the war. If they were discovered on me, I know I would have been not only teased but also held in disdain. Peggy was a developing into a sophisticated young woman, but I'm sure a peek at my ridiculously frilled and ruffled lingerie would have broken her facade and had her screaming and crying out with glee like a menacing and hysterical little preschooler.

That day, I was wearing a panty-girdle with two pairs of lacy panties — because my cousin and aunt said they knew how much I loved MY panties! I had one pair of panties under the girdle 'to help the tight girdle slide on easily' and another pair of panties on over the girdle 'for appearance sake' in case anyone would 'like to peek under my skirt'! In addition, I had long nylon stockings attached to the garter straps of the girdle. Those were quite unnerving to wear too! The constant pull of the garters couldn't be ignored! I also wore a soft training brassiere under my blouse that held me with a freaky, mind-upsetting snug grip that was kept reminding me of its presence. If I were to take off my suit jacket, the straps of my brassiere would clearly be visible through my thin blouse and slip. At least my aunt did not insist upon stuffing the little 'cheaters' into the bra that made it look like I had mini breasts, which she did make me wear at the house upon our return from church.

In 1947, I made my last trip to my Gram's, soon after they both died. Afterwards, when we were going through a box full of snapshots from Gram's house, I stopped when I saw four very similar photographs of Aunt Fran as a little girl. However, they were marked Easter 1907, 1908, 1910 and 1912. I said, "Mom, did Gram make a mistake when she labeled these pictures because they go over five years, but Aunt Fran looks shorted and younger in the last two pictures taken years later."

Mom said it was strange and would ask dad about it. Then, two days later, mom told me the first two pictures were Aunt Fran on consecutive years, but the next one was of my father two years after that when he was able to fit into that same dress. The last picture

was on my Uncle Ted who was two years younger than my dad and then wearing the same dress he had worn and passed onto him. Then I realized that my aunt had been dressing up her brothers and other boys in our family her whole life! Any wonder, my father, aunts, uncles and other relatives weren't surprised or upset about seeing me in panties and dresses whenever I stayed with my aunt and grandparents! I was simply carrying on a "Family Tradition."

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