

# Reparative Description at the Johnson Publishing Company Archive

International Terminology Working Group

October 24, 2024

Getty Research Institute

Los Angeles, CA

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# THE WOMAN WHO LIVED AS A MAN FOR 15 YEARS

Courtroom striptease bares true sex of Mississippi male

INTO THE SMALL, bare office of the mayor of Kosciusko, Mississippi, a policeman walked with a husky prisoner. The mayor, who also acts as city judge in the town of 10,000, asked in a matter-of-fact routine inquiry what the charges were. He was informed the Negro had been driving with improper lights and a pint of whiskey had been found in the car. Then the policeman told Mayor T. V. Rone something that made him sit up suddenly in his straight-back chair:

"When I tried to search him, he protested and told me: 'Take it easy, I'm a woman.'"

The mayor promptly took up the interrogation of the prisoner, who claimed he was not James McHarris as listed on his license but really a woman named Annie Lee Grant.

The mayor slowly closed his words and told the prisoner: "Annie Lee, if you want to prove to me you're a woman you can do it. But you don't have to unless you want to."

While bug-eyed police and the mayor waited in tense silence, the prisoner walked to a closet, discarded shirt, pants and male underwear. The police crowded in closer, strained their necks and jockeyed for position. When Jim walked out almost completely nude, what they saw made their mouths pop open: the man Jim McHarris long known in town as a hard-working laborer as well as a "mighty tough man with the ladies" was no man at all, but a fully-developed, big-breasted woman.

One of the strangest courtroom scenes in American legal history was quickly culminated when Mayor Rone hurriedly fined the defendant \$100 or 30 days in jail. The word of the sensational unmasking of Jim McHarris quickly got around Kosciusko and jarred the quiet small town.

Especially upset were several women who had been girl friends of Jim McHarris, now revealed to be Annie Lee Grant. One woman admitted regularly receiving money from Jim, when "she" was working as a man on a Memphis barge line. Jim called the woman "his wife." Before "his" exposure, Jim had been engaged to marry a high school girl.

To get the incredible story of the girl that was Annie Lee Grant and the woman called Jim, EBONY went to Kosciusko, Miss., interviewed scores of persons and heard Jim's defiant declaration that she intends to remain a "man" in what she believes is a man's world.



Annie Lee Grant, alias Jim McHarris, lights cigarette in typical masculine posture on front porch of home where she lived as a man in Kosciusko. Says she: "I've posed as a man, off and on, most of my life."

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Displaying bralet compression, a homemade band of white cloth, Annie Lee reveals ginnack which helped her to fool thousands. When fully dressed, her tied-down bust looks like fat, protruding stomach. A bushy dresser who leans toward starched white slits, casual slacks and separated-toe black shoes, Annie Lee owns two men's suits.

## ANNIE LEE WORKED AS PREACHER, COOK WHILE POSING AS A MAN

THE UNMASKING of Annie Lee Grant laid bare the raw tragedy of her double-sexed life and spotlighted for public view an almost unprecedented story of a sex change without surgery.

A baby-faced woman of 30 with small, delicate hands and tiny curving holes in her ears, Annie Lee Grant has been fooling people since her early teens when she rejected her sex and cast her lot with the men of the world. Her full-time masquerade, perhaps the cleverest in the long history of male impersonations, began at least fifteen years ago. Her male act was so successful that she had been scheduled for elevation to the deacon's board of her church in Kosciusko.

Shorn of her long hair, her bust fattened by a homemade band of cloth, long-haired, soft-voiced Annie Lee became swaggering, gruff-voiced Jim.

A yearning for all things masculine threads back through Annie Lee's entire life. Her parents died when she was small and she was reared by two sets of foster parents. A lifelong friend and confidant, Bishop Smiley Jones of Kosciusko's True Tabernacle Church of the First Born, recalled that Annie Lee often slipped away from her home town of Meridian, Miss., and made her way to Jackson. Even then, Bishop Jones recalls, she had "funny habits."

There were, for instance, revealing incidents which happened on periodic church missions to small Mississippi towns. "I used to carry her around with me," Bishop Jones said, "and she would sleep in a

room with two or three other girls. But the girls said she was acting 'funny' so I had to change them up. We put her in a bed with an old lady, and there wasn't no more trouble."

But Annie Lee was still restive. Though an attractive youngster with long, pretty hair, she was happier wearing overalls. "There can't have come a change some way," Bishop Jones says, adding: "I know she's been out with men and women. But something had happened to her long before she started wearing men's clothing only. After this, she didn't like anything but ladies."

Gradually, Annie Lee became Jim. She moved about often, working for a spell in Memphis, then moving on to Chicago and other mid-western cities. She discarded girls' clothes entirely, took to striking matches on the bottom of her shoe and dangling cigarettes from her mouth. She threw herself wholeheartedly into the male masquerade, seeking the hardest jobs, talking the roughest talk and recounting her triumphs over women in the loudest tones. She became a short-order cook, a cab driver, a filling station attendant—and a preacher.

Ever on the move, restless and rootless, Annie Lee moved to Kosciusko last November. "The first time I saw her after the change," Bishop Jones says, "she was calling herself Evangelist Grant. She was wearing a dark coat, odd pants and looked very nice. If a person didn't know it, he wouldn't have guessed it. She walked up to me and said: 'Don't you be telling people I'm a woman. I'm a preacher now.'"



Praying with pastor, Bishop Smiley Jones, Annie Lee kneels in True Tabernacle Church of the First Born. An ex-preacher, Annie Lee was active in church affairs, sang male parts in church choir. Her voice, though high-strung, is not feminine.

## ANNIE LEE INTENDS TO FIGHT FOR RIGHT TO LIVE AS MAN

THE ROLE fate fashioned for Annie Lee Grant slapped her in the face even before her release from prison. Bidding her goodbye, Superintendent Eakin advised: "G'd, you got you a dress now and do the things a woman oughta do."

Annie Lee shot back: "I don't see it like that." Wearing an old pair of pants, a white shirt and a truck driver's cap, Jim set out from the farm to face critics. She got a cool reception in Kosciusko. Strangers gawked and grinned sheepishly, old friends avoided her eyes, white people pointed and guffawed. Embittered, Annie Lee gathered her belongings in a brown paper sack and left town. She allowed as how she would knock around Jackson for a while, but as a man.

At 50, after a lifetime of heartbreaks and deception, Annie Lee made an incredible decision: she decided to remain a "man," though exposed and publicized as a woman. She is determined to hold onto the strands of a way of life which makes her happy. The tragedy of this way of life, however, is that her masquerade has led her to a sexual point-of-no-return: she now loathes women's clothes and is happy only if treated like "one of the boys."



Chatting with landlady, Mrs. Kate Lee Edwards and her daughter, Annie Lee bids them farewell before leaving Kosciusko. They called Annie Lee "Little Brother." Annie Lee said she never registered for draft, quipped: "Man, I ain't crazy."

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# Cataloging consists of...

- providing access to materials by creating formal descriptions to represent the materials and then organizing those descriptions through headings that will connect user queries with relevant materials.
- Standards + rules that guide archival cataloging:
  - Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)
  - Intl Standard for Archival Authority Records (IS AAR)

Aaron, Hank

## Black-and-white prints

Folder 1 of 4, 1956

Clamshell  
OVI-001A

folder 002

Creator - pht: Jackson, David, 1922-1966

Physical Description: Black-and-white prints

Controlled Access Headings:

- Ebony
- Aaron, Hank, 1934-2021

Folder 2 of 4, 1956

Clamshell  
OVI-001A

folder 003

Creator - pht: Sleet, Moneta, Jr., 1926-1996

Creator - pht: Jackson, David, 1922-1966

Physical Description: Black-and-white prints

Controlled Access Headings:

- Ebony
- Aaron, Hank, 1934-2021

Folder 3 of 4, 1956

Clamshell  
OVI-001A

folder 004

Creator - pht: Jackson, David, 1922-1966

Creator - pht: Sleet, Moneta, Jr., 1926-1996

Physical Description: Black-and-white prints

Controlled Access Headings:

- Ebony
- Aaron, Hank, 1934-2021

Folder 4 of 4, 1956-1974

Clamshell  
OVI-001A

folder 005

Creator - pht: Jackson, David, 1922-1966

Physical Description: Black-and-white prints

### Scope and Contents

Folder includes photos by Ken Regan and Charles G. Kirman.

Controlled Access Headings:

- Ebony
- Aaron, Hank, 1934-2021

# Critical cataloging + Reparative description

- CritCat and reparative description are more recent and on-going practices to edit/create catalog records and finding aids with radical empathy for users, other archivists, and the people/places represented in collections.
- JPCA's approach includes:
  - Including a content warning and instructions for RD in the JPCA Processing Manual
  - Editing folder titles that include inaccurate or harmful language.
  - Reviewing folders flagged by Processing Archivists for sensitive and/or harmful material (Content Review Working Group)
  - Considering sensitive images for restriction + adding specific content warnings at the folder-level within the finding aid
  - Writing a general content warning to include in the front matter of the finding aid
  - Considerations for displaying content warnings on RCV before image appears



Enable Reorder Mode Add Child Add Sibling Load via Spreadsheet ⓘ Transfer ▾ Rapid Data Entry Close Record

▼ African Safari Hunting	File
▼ Color slides	File
Folder 1 of 1, 1969	File Graphic Materials Slide Box: MS-046, Folder: 005

- Basic Information >
- Languages >
- Dates 1 >
- Extents >
- Agent Links 1 >
- Subjects 1 >
- Notes 2 >
- External Documents >
- Rights Statements >
- Instances 1 >
- Potentially Offensive/Sensitive Content >

Save Archival Object

Save Add Event ▾ Publish All Unpublish All More ▾ Suppress Delete

## Folder 1 of 1, 1969 Archival Object ?

Archival Object Folder 1 of 1, 1969 updated ✕

### Basic Information ?

Title *	<input type="text" value="Folder 1 of 1"/>
Ref ID	ff051243e8e97a1ec3ce5965e8ee4af0
Component Unique Identifier	<input type="text"/>



Eddie McClennon, Bobbie Laney, and Toni Evans posing for a photo at the 1954 Funmakers Ball. The annual event was held at the Rockland Palace in New York. Photo by G. Marshall Wilson. Johnson Publishing Company Archive.



Funmakers Ball. The ball would attract large crowds of over 2,000 and was held in major cities such as New York and Chicago in the 1950's and 1960's. Photo by Isaac Sutton. Johnson Publishing Company Archive.

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