

Searching for Bras

By Pamela Slea

Shopping for bras has never gotten easier.

Ever since the fourth grade when I came home to see my mother and her best friend, Stephanie, eying me as I set down my book bag at the front door and tried to walk away quietly.

“Pammie?”

There was a rustle of plastic bags from K-Mart and before I could escape I was bombarded with both of them talking very fast about how winter was coming soon and I needed “layers” under my tee shirts, as they shared nervous glances between them, awaiting my reaction.

“That's really the secret of keeping warm, Pammie, is that you need to wear layers. Every day. It's not a *bra*, really, it's like a little tank top.” Mother pulls out three pastel colored cotton sports bras attached to little bra-hangers and swings them around like toys. I looked around to make sure my brothers and their cute friends weren't around and looked at my mother very seriously. “Layers?” I said.

So from then on all the other girls at school were being introduced to bras as little lacy white things that had various numbers followed by a sequence of As that the girls acquired on outings to the department stores with their mothers. Thanks to the layers talk, I didn't have to get a bra with a size until I was a B. And by then I had an

allowance and could sneak to the mall with my even more well endowed friend, Heather Joeright, who cleared up all the ambiguities of the number/letter system, as well as the hook and eye problem. (If they were ever tricky to get off us, they're much more difficult to get on without instructions.)

Then came junior high. They started growing and they just wouldn't stop. While other girls were stuffing, I was tightening. I mushed and stuffed those poor breasts into the C cup bra as long as I possibly could, but the end was near: I would have to move into D territory.

Before Victoria's Secret came to Mentor, Ohio, entering the more well-endowed racks of the lingerie section of any department store was like relinquishing all hope of creative breast support. While the A, B and C cup bras were a rainbow of colors, patterns and textures, all designed to make you feel sexy and create a feeling for the inner personality of your breasts, the D cups are sadly dull. The colors spectrum is limited to only three: black, white, or beige (roughly the color of the bandages in the nurse's office). The straps are twice as wide as the C cups, but the worst, the kicker, is that in order to support all the weight of a pair of D sized breasts that just can't live another day in the pretty red and black polka dotted one you've been wearing since a year ago, is the row of six fasteners at the back. To go from two to six is to jump into a whole new world – to assume a new personality. The six fastened me is the one that will take two hands for even a talented boyfriend to unfasten, will never be asked for i.d. at a rated R movie, will always face the wall when changing into a swimsuit at the gym.

So from then on, the very idea of shopping for a bra became only a last

resort. Even though I know that here in San Francisco I can find beautiful full-figured bras in colors and styles that J.C. Penny's would have gawked at, the very act of looking past the tiny, colorful A rack is a little unnerving. And the monster that looms behind it, the drooping empty cups of the full figured section, beckons me to it. I know I'll be here for an hour trying them on, I think. Oh the horror, the horror...