



Mail Tribune

The truth is out there, and they're wearing it *right* now!

"Hey, thong boy."

By BILL VARBLE

Mail Tribune

An editor meant me. And it was her idea to do the thong story. It was a stretch, but I leaped into the breach.

National Underwear Day started it. That's Wednesday (it's penciled in on your calendar, right?). It's also Herbert Hoover Day, Spoil Your Dog Day and National Duran Duran Appreciation Day. But we've had too many dog stories, and nobody wanted to write about dead presidents or '80s rock bands, although Herbert Hoover easily edged Duran Duran.

Every day is something-or-other day — today is Particularly Preposterous Packaging Day — so that cuts no ice with us. What caught our eye was that 28 percent of women surveyed for National Underwear Day said their choice in underwear was the thong.

Can this be? And if it's that high overall, it must be even higher among young and middle-aged women, since little kids and the elderly don't figure to be major thongsters (they don't, do they? tell me they don't).

About half the women surveyed preferred panties. Something called "boy shorts" claimed 13 percent of the market. Six percent said their choice was "nothing at all." Then it got curiouser and curiouser. Four percent said "other styles."

What other styles? You got your briefs, your thong, your boy shorts, your nothing. What else is there? Union suits? Loincloths? Stuffing gerbils under your clothes?

Nevermind. The National Underwear Day people are best taken with a grain of salt. They tend to wax hyperbolic, as you can see at www.freshpair.com.

Founded in August 2003, National Underwear Day is an event that evokes the care-free attitude of Sixties "happenings," when free spirits took control of public spaces as venues for their art, their message. ...

And so on, a breathless narrative about National Underwear Day.

... our underwear ambassadors wandered through heavily trafficked locales such as Times Square ... modeling some of today's hottest brands ...



Dear underwear people, I don't know where you got your '60s history, but the spirit of the happening was so not the spirit of marketing. Happenings stood in the same relation to your marketing campaign as a Grateful Dead show to a concert by The Monkees.

Although it may be hard for you to grasp, undergarments were among the bare facts of life long before the Takeover of Absolutely Everything by corporate marketers and people of hottest-brands ilk.

But let's talk about guys. I wore briefs as a boy, boxers in my youth, went back to briefs in middle age. A neat symmetry, perhaps. Then, at Costco, I encountered "boxer briefs" made of soft fabric but reaching half-way down your thighs. Said to be comfy. But you have to buy three pairs. Forget it. Too big a leap.

Guys used to have few choices. The remains of leather loincloths found in archaeological digs are pretty basic. No word on how often cave guys changed them, but it's not a pretty picture.

Ancient Greek guys came down squarely in the "nothing at all" category, which simplified matters at the Olympics. Medieval guys invented baggy drawers called "braies," which made it a lot easier to don your armor on a cold morning.

The codpiece came in as a utilitarian accessory for Renaissance guys before the invention of the flap, but King Henry VIII padded his, and when the king does it, everybody does it, and the codpiece jumped the shark.

Victorian times brought guys the union suit. The 1930s brought briefs, boxers and the elastic waistband. Now there's the boxer brief, which is basically half a union suit. More symmetry, perhaps.

Oh yeah. About that survey. Four percent of guys said "other" — *the same percent as women*. This raises the specter of a cult, a conspiracy of men and women cladding their intimate selves in unspeakable weirdness, mixing and moving among us.

But what exactly is "other"? Never mind. It's more than I need to know.

Oh, all right. If you're among the 4 percent, you can e-mail details here. Just don't call me thong boy.

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