

LET'S TALK : National Underwear Day urges flashing with pride

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I'm one of many who grew up with the admonishment to be sure to wear decent underwear — actually, we referred to underwear as "draws" — in case I was ever in an accident.

Draws, also the object of many old folks' jokes I heard growing up, were something with which I'd always had a love-hate relationship. They were necessary and they knew it, so they always took full advantage by being too big; too small (more often than not); too hard to find; too obvious underneath the outerwear; or by just going where no undergarment should go.

And, ahem, come to think of it, those problems haven't exactly gone away.

So it is with mixed feelings that — and this is straight from the Boy, They Come Up With a Day for Everything Department — I find a National Underwear Day in the making.

An unofficial holiday has been declared by the online underwear retailer Freshpair.com. "We feel that for the amount of money people in the US spend annually on underwear (over \$12 billion), it should get more respect and recognition," writes Sean Evans, the company's public relations director, in an e-release.

National Draws Day — oops, National Underwear Day — is Aug. 13. I had actually meant to run this column Aug. 10. But not only did I have nothing more scintillating to discuss (Yeah, it's hot; what a shame about Kobe; thanks for the memories, Bob H.; blah blah blah), I also wanted to afford my readers time to plan an underwear-buying spree in order to, according to the release, "showcase a small part of their underwear for a day."

(Oh, you mean people haven't already been walking around showing part or all of their underwear? What about the Rocky Horror Picture Show dude? Vanity 6? Madonna's early sartorial choices? Baggy and low-rider pants that show off boxer labels? "The Thong Song"? Bustiers-as-outerwear and that whole bra-lace-showingabove-the-low-neckline thing? I also wanted to give readers time to plan an impromptu trip to New York. On the Big Day, 20 models (men and women) will be canvassing the city to gather petitions to make National Underwear Day official. Oh, and they'll be wearing only their underwear. Well, we are talking New York.

ALONG CAME LINEN The e-release included some interesting facts about draws history: Originally, underwear was worn purely to ward off infections. But only the rich bluebloods could afford them — the underwear, not the infections. When linen came along in the 18th century, bingo! The peasants were able to afford skivvies, too, which meant they stayed healthy and lived longer. Nowadays, wearers can stay

healthy, live longer and make various fashion statements, such as " Man, I hate wedgies!" The term "drawers" — from which sprang the term "draws" — referred to the drawstring that was sewn into underpants beginning in 1791. And all this time I'd thought the term came from the fact that the garments are kept in dresser drawers. Learn something new every day. In 1913, Mary Phelps Jacob, a New York socialite, invented the first modern bra with the help of two handkerchiefs, ribbon and some cord. Women have been wearing the ill-fitting torture devices ever since. While men spend about \$3.4 billion annually on underwear, women fork over about \$8.6 billion annually. Won't touch that one.

It would take nearly 7.5 trillion pairs of size large men's briefs to cover the state of Texas. But it would take far fewer pairs if they used dupes of the world's largest pair of underpants, made in the United Kingdom in 1999 and measuring 14 feet by 29 feet. Ten percent of men and 7 percent of women prefer to go sans undies. So if anyone you know keeps getting infections....

PRIDE? WELL, WHY NOT? "People should take pride in their underwear because after all, underwear is only clothing worn on the inside," according to the e-release. If you can't make it to New York on Aug. 13, you are encouraged to walk around in your draws here to celebrate the day ... I just can't guarantee you won't get picked up for that in these here parts. Seriously, FreshPair.com suggests displaying only a bit of "seeable" underwear — "people can show their support by simply leaving a shirt button undone." You can also log on to www.freshpair.com that day to sign the petition. I know you good folks are pumped by this momentous announcement. Don't worry. Aug. 13 will be here in a flash. Just keep ya draws on. Victoria's real secret? An e-mail to: [helaine _ freeman@adg.ardemgaz.com](mailto:helaine_freeman@adg.ardemgaz.com)