British eccentric Marion Joe Carstairs (1900-1993) was a world-class speedboat racer, heiress to the Standard Oil fortune, ruler of her own Caribbean Island ... and a cross-dressing lesbian. This biography places Carstairs's adventurous life in the context of 20th-century attitudes toward sexual deviance. During the permissive 1920s, Carstairs was able to flaunt her taste for women in the bohemian circles of London and Paris. She had affairs with numerous gals, including Natalie Barney and Dolly Wilde, Oscars niece. When writing about Carstairs boat races, the press of that roaring decade regarded her as a loveable tomboy. But as social norms shifted in the 30s, Carstairs lifestyle was frowned upon. So she acquired Whale Cay, an island off the coast of Florida, turned it into her own version of paradise, became a gentleman farmer, and had an affair with Marlene Dietrich. Carstairs most important and long-term relationship, though, was with Lord Tod Wadley, a stuffed leather doll. -- Rebecca Brown

My Personal Review:
I saw this slim volume in the store and was fascinated by the picture on the cover - a woman dressed as a man with a little battered doll on her shoulder - what in the world is this? So, I started to read. What a surprise. This is the story of Marion Joe Carstairs, a Standard Oil heiress, a champion speed boat driver, friend to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, an unrepentant lesbian, owner of the Caribbean island Whale Cay, and the constant companion of Lord Todd Wadley (yes, a funny little doll). This is one of the most immediately engaging books Ive ever read. What a character she was, and what a life she led. The Queen of Whale Cay is an absolute charmer from start to finish. Looking for a little slice of forgotten history to while away some time? This is the book for you.

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