

## **The Phyllabuster's War Stories (Give or Take Many Years)**

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### Prologue

The War Stories were first written approximately 1990. I do not remember the exact date. They were used as a role model to encourage and relate to other transgenders. They were published, in part in numerous local and regional transgender newsletters and magazines.

They were also related, some in part, some in total, in my dinner-time speeches and introductions at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (1992) in Houston.

I run a rather large international e-mail list called the "Phyllabuster list." Through it, I get numerous requests for ideas and encouragement from individuals and couples who are dealing with a gender transition. They ask for a formula, and I really do not have one. All I can be is an example - of being a survivor of an out and open transition in the same house and neighborhood beginning back in 1976. My word to them is that "if I could make it back in 1976, then you can do it in 1998." I have published these stories, in part or in total, numerous times via the Phyllabuster list.

To many who are on the aforementioned e-mail list, much of what is in these seven stories will be, in a sense, redundant, and I apologize. But, I think they are still worthy - especially for younger folks, latecomers and those on the outside seeking to understand - and I hope that they become part of whatever it takes to help give people courage.

These are not merely transgender stories. As many lesbian and gay and bisexual Texas lawyers who work at the Harris County Courthouse have told me, "If you could make it at the courthouse as an out and visible T, then I felt that I could begin to slowly emerge at the courthouse as an LGB and slowly become out as well."

And they have.

But now, a disclaimer: keep in mind that what you're about to read was first committed to paper over a decade ago. Back then, I had gone back into my many boxes of diaries, letters and other records to retrieve something from the past. In so doing, I met a flood of memories of episodes in my life, what some might call my "War Stories." If you are willing to read them, I am glad to have made the effort to write them down.

And I thank Katrina Rose for her assistance in editing them in 1999.

## No.1 - The White Christmas

December of 1977 was a bleak month for my spouse and me. I had been unemployed for nineteen months since being fired for being "a dress wearing freak." Her job wasn't generating what we needed because during the time that we were both employed, we had accumulated much debt. (Several years later, her profession enjoyed a substantial pay raise, but that was later.) We had used all of our savings while trying to learn how to downgrade our standard of living.

To make it all worse, I had been unable to get unemployment compensation. My last employer actually did not fight it, but I had a homophobic Texas Employment Commission referee who chose to write up my interview in such a way that I was blocked from benefits. (We eventually won and got the benefits, but that too was later.)

We felt very alone because neither of our families would have anything to do with us. (Her mom eventually came around and became a great ally, but, once again, that was later.)

At the time, Houston still had a crossdressing prohibition ordinance - and the fight to change the ordinance was not making much headway. I'd already been lobbying for its repeal for about a year. Every day, I never knew if I'd be arrested. Every day, my spouse never knew when she left for work if I'd make it home from job hunting, lobbying and such. (The ordinance was done away with in 1980, but, still once again, that was later.)

Christmas was going to be meager. We had shoes, but they were not winter shoes. We had some warm clothes, but they were a bit tattered. It was depressing as hell.

No, actually, it was all around shitty.

About the only things we did have were each other, our faith in God and our church family. Even though she and I loved each other (and still do) and were best friends (and still are), those years of hardship bonded us together. We felt that our faith was being tested, much as in the story of Job, but no matter how bad it got we always tithed (and still do) 10% of our gross. Our church family helped to keep the loneliness and the isolation at bay. We were with the Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection and we sang in the choir. (Today, when I sing the Hallelujah Chorus, I get it all mixed up. In junior high, I memorized it as a tenor and in college I learned the bass line. There, at MCCR I sang soprano and in later years I did the alto line. Now, I just kind of sing it all.)

Each year at MCCR, as in most other churches, they have a White Christmas offering where people bring canned and non-perishable goods each Sunday in December, wrapped in white paper, and place them at the altar. The poor families are given this the day before Christmas.

As I sit here keypunching this out, I am starting to cry again - because, in 1977, they brought the food to us. We were the White Christmas family that year. It was really quite

wonderful. We separated the eight boxes of food into category and took out ten percent. We then went to another transgendered person who had been living on the street because she'd also lost her job and gave it to her. We three cried a lot. With the money we saved from not having to buy food for several weeks, we each bought some warm shoes and a warmer coat.

My spouse and I did survive and now are prosperous. The other transgendered person I referred to was an engineering graphics designer. She got a job several months later washing cars. Eventually, she made it back and got rehired in her previous profession.

I shall never forget any of it.

## **No.2 - NAWBO**

"Monday, 3PM, 21 November 1977, 1708 Sunset Blvd @ 'Ouisie's Table'" was the calendar notation. I'd been Phyllis for fourteen months, a week and a day, but I'd been unemployed for about seventeen months. I was sitting at the café called Ouisie's Table enjoying a soft drink with other women I'd met during my efforts to get the Houston cross-dressing ordinance repealed.

I had found a "home" with many of the feminists in Houston and, for the most part, had been accepted. A year prior I had met Ms. Nikki Van Hightower, the Women's Advocate for the Office of the Mayor (Fred Hofheinz at the time). We'd chatted about the women's movement in general, about me, and about the ordinance specifically. Nikki has been a definite leader in women's rights in this region, and we have been allies often.

In January 1978 a new mayor came on board. He and the City Council effectively sacked her and her office. Those macho rascals had hated her for a long time as she had dared to speak the truth about unequal pay for equal work and the many restrictions placed on women seeking to advance professionally.

As a result of that sack, the feminists of Houston mobilized. We packed the City Council chambers to protest and did so for several days thereafter. Yes, I was very acceptable to these women as I was another soldier in the struggle. This was the Houston grassroots genesis of what many women take for granted today while shirking the label of feminist. Shortly thereafter, I got active working as a volunteer in the City Council race of Marilyn Whited who made a serious bid for a seat.

But, alas, she lost.

There were very few women elected to anything back then. These were the days before Kathy Whitmire's prominence. Most of you know what happened later (for those who don't, she served two terms as Controller and then five as Mayor.)

As a result of my involvement, when the mailout was issued for the organizational

meeting of the Houston Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), I received one. And there I was, hoping to use my engineering degree somehow and earn some money somehow as I was still into the struggle to receive unemployment compensation because of a homophobic state agency. (Can you imagine what my \$115 charter membership cost me in proportionate income back then?)

Several of us decided to create a nucleus and formed the Board and elected Officers. For the next several months I went to many meetings trying to help get this group established in Houston. In January, the President (I remember her first name was Jeanne) called my spouse and me because she'd just been raped and had only been in Houston for a few months. We spent much time helping her initially through the ordeal and fear. I really felt like I was contributing: that kind of feeling helps the ego during transition, especially if you're unemployed.

Just before the February Board meeting, though, I was asked to resign by a very rude and homophobic person named Martha. (Yes, I know her last name, and I still see her at other events for other groups - and she is still rude and homophobic.) The rest of the Board stood silent as Martha chased me out. She'd convinced the others that, because I was transgendered, no one would join the group. So I left. (I cried a lot in those years. I went through a lot of rejection from other local groups during that time such as the Houston Aggie Club and the American Society of Civil Engineers. It was hell. I became very bitter during those years; so bitter that I can only go back into my memory of those times for a short while at a shallow depth or else the intensity re-invades my ego.)

Things are great now, of course. I practice law successfully and out of the closet. My spouse and I are still together and all is very well for us.

In July 1991 I met a NAWBO person who asked me to join. I told her the above story. She apologized and said that should never have happened. Later I received a membership application from the local chapter. I wrote a letter to the membership chair asking her to tell the above story to the Board before I would actually apply. The day after the Board meeting, my answering machine had a message telling me when the next meeting was and that I should come.

I have since rejoined NAWBO. I am out of the closet. I am well accepted, and I enjoy the people there. They have listed me in their membership directory as being a charter member and included in my listing all of the affiliations that I have with you, my sisters and brothers of the gender community.

Transitioning now is still difficult. But, it is much easier than in 1976 and I made it through. There were some very good hearted people back then to help. There are even more very good-hearted people today who will help.

Take a risk; reach out.

**No.3 - My Son**

My son is named Randy, and I love him very much. We were separated in 1976 before his sixth birthday. He is approaching twenty-two. Up until last month, we'd only seen each other once during that span of nearly sixteen years. It was worth the wait.

Our families are very important to all of us in the gender community. We experience so much pain merely to be true to who we are. Recently, a friend of mine had a heart by-pass where the doctors took a large vein from his leg and planted it in his chest. I did some self-talk ("They tell us that if God wanted us to be women, God would have done so. Yet, did God want this man to die only to have the death interfered with by special surgery? And speaking of surgery, what makes mine sinful and his not?") while he told his story to me. All the while, he was surrounded by his loving spouse and kids. But since he and his family are friends, I kept my self-talk to myself that night because I didn't want to dampen our joy over his being alive.

Ah, yes. Being alive and being whole.

That is all that we transgendered folk seek. Yet, the love of our families is always placed in jeopardy. Divorce, estrangement, ostracism, embarrassment - you name it: it simply is not consistent. In addition, it's just not fair. But it happens to us all to some degree. It happened to me and it took almost sixteen years to work it out with my son. (It's still not completely worked out with my parents and siblings.) What I offer in this writing is not the solution, but simply a solution to the problem of how to handle the kids.

My first spouse divorced me because of my cross-dressing in 1972 when my son was two. During the next several years I visited Randy and spent those days with him. I still had a beard then and was trying to make it as a man. In 1975, I began to cross-dress in public on occasion. My hair and nails became longer, my eyebrows thinner. He became puzzled by my appearance and his mother was becoming very nervous when I visited. I MADE A DELIBERATE DECISION: I WOULD GIVE MY SON AND HIS MOTHER THE SPACE THEY NEEDED TO COME TO TERMS (AT THEIR OWN SPEED) WITH WHO I WAS.

I made that decision after much thought and prayer. You see, I knew that even though I'd spent most of my life surrounded by my parents and siblings, we were growing apart over who I was becoming. Therefore, physical nearness was not guaranteed. I had also hoped that by sacrificing some time now, we might have the rest of our lives as good friends. What bothered me also was how did I ensure that he didn't grow up hating me for feeling abandoned.

So, I wrote to him every single month for those sixteen years. Much happened. His mother and I almost squared off twice in the legal arena. She remarried. My son decided for himself that he wanted to meet Phyllis once when he was about eleven. His mother asked me and I complied with an inflationary raise in the child support (I also made a pledge to him to continue the monthly payment for four more years after he turned eighteen.) In short, I walked a fine line between being too close and staying too far away.

Yes, I cried a lot over it. Every month when I wrote my son the wound would open again.

I was always honest to him and simply reported what was going on in my life. Father's Day was an annual hell because I could be close to neither my father nor my son.

Three days before Christmas 1991, he called.

He was visiting his grandmother in San Antonio and wanted to know if I could make a special trip to visit. Well, I said YES (while I cried). I told my spouse the wonderful news (and I cried). I called my mother to tell her (and I cried). I drove to the courthouse the next morning (and I cried). I told several courthouse friends about the call (and cried at each telling). I drove to the airport (and I cried). I flew (and cried again).

When we first met and hugged, I cried.

It was a wonderful day. We spent most of it together. When I hugged him, he hugged me back. His mother and grandmother were very gracious and loving and hugged me as well. He was not at all shy about me. IT WAS VERY WARM AND VERY HEALING!! He told me this (paraphrasing what I remember) during one of our many talks:

"You did a good job. You stayed far enough away for me to come to terms with who you were. Yet, you wrote to me every single month for sixteen years. I never doubted your love. I always knew that you were close by and would come at a moment's notice. I always knew that you wanted me."

As we parted, he indicated that we would get together again. He is in college, and he works part time. It probably won't be until this summer, but it will be. I know in my heart that it will be another visit with much warmth again, and I feel sure that I will cry once more. So much healing was done: so much more to be.

POST-1991 NOTE: He has since married and finished professional school. He is a father. My spouse and I were invited to the wedding, the college graduation and we are "Ganny" and "Gam" to our two year old grandchild. We talk about twice a week on the phone. They get a 'CC' of all of my political TG e-mail.

Recently, they took a six day vacation with us. We are close. It worked for us.

#### **No.4 - Law School**

Being a licensed professional engineer (P.E.) in three states and holding two engineering degrees from Texas A&M University, one of the least likely goals in my life back in 1976 was to enter law school. But being that in 1976, the engineering community was VERY MUCH MORE closed and homophobic than it seems to be today, my transition was not tolerated even a little bit. I was blackballed. I'll discuss that in a subsequent story about my changes.

While continuing the job search, I decided to cash in on my G.I. bill and go to college for a Masters in Business Administration. This would fulfill the ends of many strategies: (1) it would generate some monthly income; (2) it would give me something meaningful to do (one of

the diseases of unemployment is loss of self-esteem due to being unable to contribute one's talents and energies); (3) an MBA would make me a more valuable job candidate; (4) it would buy me a year while people got used to the idea of me being me; and (5) it would give more people (people who would, in the future, be in management positions) the opportunity to meet me and interface with me on a regular basis in the controlled classroom setting.

During my investigation of local colleges, I came upon the fact the University of Houston offered a joint-degree program: MBA and law (with each degree's core courses fulfilling the elective requirements of the other degree). And that, my friends, is why I became interested in law school. The MBA would fulfill the five previously strategies for a longer time, and the law degree would give me the tools to defend myself against all the crap that was dished my way back then. At that time, my self-esteem had been beaten down so low that I did not even entertain the thought of actually practicing law, much less being the hell-raising trial attorney I am today.

My year in the business college was really great. The students were either nice or supportive or not glaringly-standoffish. It went great. Then came the fall of 1978, though, and my entry into three years of mostly hell in the law school.

I found out years later that there was quite a discussion at a faculty meeting as the news was released that I'd been accepted and would actually attend. I was very open about my non-operative status. Several professors demanded my right to attend, and several said that if the bathroom was a problem, they would accompany me to insure that everyone got over themselves.

The bathrooms had their own transition.

When the law school was built, it was an all male school. As women came, some one-holers were added for the women. As more women came, several of the men's rooms were redesigned as women's even though the urinals remained therein (some women law students grew ivy in the urinals), and several of the one-holers were changed to men's. When I came along, several of the one-holers were made unisex and simply assigned the status of 'restroom.'

During my interview, I was told about the changes and was told to use the one-holers that were labeled 'restroom'. That seemed reasonable (and it was) so I agreed. However, reasonable did not equate to practical as none of the "Phyllis potties" were near to either my study carrel, my classroom or the library. So, after a couple of days of long trips with a full bladder, I just started using the convenient women's restrooms. About five weeks later I was called in to meet the Dean of Students. When I asked how many complaints he'd received, he said that there had been only a few. I suggested that, since most of the women were not complaining, he merely inform the sexually insecure ones as to which few restrooms I regularly frequented so that they could take their own full bladders on long walks elsewhere.

This made sense to him - and the restroom problem was over.

To say that I was lonely at law school would be an understatement. During the first

months, there were less than ten students who treated me as anything better than an animal. I adopted two strategies to deal with this: (1) talk one-on-one to my professors to learn the seating charts for each class I attended and (2) find solace with other Christians in the Christian Legal Society.

First, I went to my profs and chatted with them at length. Those who had had a problem were disarmed by my being so up-front and unashamed. They shared their seating charts with me and I learned students' names. When I saw students in the halls, I would speak to them by name. That got quite a few to open up. But, my attending the Christian Legal Society (intentionally initialed by me without capitals as "cls") began a three year war that exposed their total lack of Christianity.

One day during my third week at law school, while in a lonely mood, I found a flyer in my study carrel that was distributed campus-wide. It invited new students to the next cls meeting. As I was strong in my faith, I thought that they would give me refuge.

WRONG!!!!

They asked about my faith and I told them how my journey through my transition had tested it, revealing many truths. At the second meeting, I was denounced. I was told to leave or else I would be shunned. During the next thirty months, they held secret meetings so that they would not have to pray with me. They laid hands on me at my invitation and then complained when I did not change.

And, they gave me that shit about "loving the sinner but hating the sin" for months - and years.

Near the end of my final semester, I wrote out a long list of everything that they'd done to me during those thirty months and gave it to the Dean of Students. The result was a faculty meeting in which the faculty sponsor of cls was verbally cut to ribbons by his peers. Eventually, an investigation was held, and cls was given a one-year university probation for discrimination. Their final meanness came with the yearbook. One of my classmates was a camera buff and wanted to do a yearbook. But, he told cls that if they did not let me in their group picture, then he would not put them into the yearbook.

You guessed it: cls is not in the yearbook.

During my second year, I decided to form a law student group for lesbian, gay and transgender law students. A few brave souls joined. Most of them were straight and we called ourselves the "Friends\* of Gays" (the asterisk inferring inclusivity.) I became very strident during that year. We went to the University Senate to ask for \$250 for our organization. Other campus groups had done the same thing for years.

The Young Americans for Freedom went nuts.



Our budget request became a university-wide hot topic. At the Senate meeting wherein the Friends\*'s budget request was discussed, the YAF had two attorneys fly in from Austin to argue against our request. That evening, YAF-ers came to my home and banged on the windows and doors screaming epithets, threats of rape, violence.

It took months for my spouse to begin to feel safe again.

The silly bastards even injected glue into the doorlock of the Friends\* office at the law school. One would wear a Scottish kilt to class to mock me.

Please remember that, while all of this was going on, I was still coping with family ostracism, neighborhood violence, the city ordinance that made cross-dressing illegal, and electrolysis.

Once or twice each week during those years I'd get one or more hours of electrolysis such that my face always felt like hamburger meat and my nerves were very much on edge. During each March of those three years, I went into a crying jag. I'd stay at home for a week to ten days and just cry. I was a mess.



(A law student friend who went on to be President of the Student Bar Association gave me this cartoon. The caption reads, "Making the Best of a Bad Situation." She gave it to me for courage. It still hangs above my desk.)

Constitutional law and some other classes became war zones. Whenever a professor or a student would make some outlandishly sexist, bigoted or homophobic statement or legal

conclusion, up my hand would go and the debate would begin. After a while, I found a set of radicals from the Black, Hispanic and Women's movements (who are friends to this day.)

My grades went from very bad to pretty good. At the end of the first year, I was a breath away from flunking out. By graduation, though, I was ranked near the very top of the bottom third. And at graduation, as I crossed the stage, there was not a single boo or heckle. Something special happened during the last two months of law school which made the entire experience worthwhile.

As I've mentioned, I had written down all of the cls garbage and given it to the Dean of Students. I also gave copies to several of my classmates.

The copies were circulated quickly. The effect was amazing - and is illustrative of the greatness of people in general. Everyone at the school had known that I took a jab here and there, or an insult here and there, or an indignity from time to time.

But, until I put it all down on paper, no one really knew just how intense and continuing it had been over such a long period of time. During that last two months, people spoke to me by name who had never before given me the time of day.

It was almost a collective apology. And Friends\* got their photo in the yearbook.

Now, as a law school alumna, I get along very well. At the ten-year class reunion I was very well treated and even loved by my class. My face is almost dead center in the middle of the front row of our class reunion group photo. And the law school has accepted, with gratitude, my endowment towards an annual \$500 award for the best student paper on the subject of transgender and sexual minority law. The law school Dean even has me call him by his first name.

So, I say to transgendered people now, if I could make it through that back then, you have no excuse not to get on with being who you are today.

### **No.5 - League of Women Voters**

This will be a very positive story because my experience with the League of Women Voters has been mostly a terrific experience with some terrific people.

I joined the League in December 1977. One of our neighbors who was very good and supportive of my change was a League member. She asked me to attend a meeting. I'll always remember how very kind she was. She knew what kind of garbage that I was going through (do recall: my transition began in September, 1976, in the same neighborhood) and she reached out to lead me to an oasis.

The League was indeed an oasis for a long time. I needed that. It was a few meetings

each month with some nice people who were not going to give me any trash.

Actually, one of the committees that I became involved with was the Natural Resources Committee (back in the days when the Houston League was doing a study on local flooding.) They were very happy that I was there as I was a professionally-licensed civil engineer. One of my suggestions was to quit trying to take the water off of the streets. Instead, use the streets to channel the water quicker into the bayous. Yes - floods are a nuisance, but the nuisance of staying off the streets for a few hours was a convenient nuisance compared to having the water build up and flood homes.

I also suggested that holding ponds be built as new development went forward. These would hold the water temporarily as the now-covered-with-concrete land used to hold the rainwater.

Don't think that there weren't some skeptics and some folks that didn't like me - because there were. But, the League people that I have met over the years are for the most part progressive, insightful and concerned people. (I keep saying people rather than women, because the League is open to men. They have retained their name as its roots go to the days when women did not have the vote.)

I remember one annual meeting when I asked that something be done to get the League involved in getting rid of Houston's cross-dressing ordinance. To this day, I firmly believe that some League members did some behind the scenes work to smooth the skids on that. I also believe that my acceptance by the League was partially responsible for my getting an audience with decision-makers which, in turn, may have been part of why I was never arrested while I "stormed the bastions of city government" trying to get that cursed ordinance repealed.

I remember my first state convention.

I was told by our local president that no one wanted to share a room with me. In tears I called many of the people that I knew in the League. I called the president back with a list of twenty who said that they would share a room with me.

At that state convention, I challenged the Texas League to lobby for repeal of the Texas homosexual conduct law. Several conventions later, I had won over a majority of the delegates and many state officers: LWV-Texas decided that it was officially for the repeal of that cursed law.

Several years later, the two women who were in charge of the host committee (Houston was the host League for the state convention that year) named me to be the Floor Manager of the Convention. This was their way of helping me to thumb my nose at some of the state folks who were still carrying a dislike of me because I am a transgendered person.

I've been elected several times to be the leader of the neighborhood League unit. I've been appointed to the Board of Directors of the Houston League several times. Recently I was

surprised by a call from the nominating committee.

I was asked if I would allow myself to be nominated to be one of the vice-presidents of the Houston League. So, I am on the slate for this next year. When the current president heard that I'd been nominated for that position, she asked me if I'd start early and she put it through at the next Board meeting.

So, now I'm the Organizational Vice-President of the League of Women Voters of Houston. I will end this as I end most of my stories - with a challenge. If I can do all of that starting back in the dark days of 1976, surely you can break out today.

Be bold and be proud of who you are.

### **No.6 - Hormones: One Person's Experience**

I've heard so many myths and uncertainties about hormones that I decided to write about my personal experiences. These are mine only and are not intended to be advice of any kind.

I began hormones in early 1978. I started on Premarin, then went to Ogen and am now on Estinyl. I quit Premarin because it lowered my blood iron count and also caused me to have an unwelcome reaction to the cold - skin hives. I quit Ogen because it simply became too expensive. I've been on Estinyl for several years now and am pleased except for the recurring leg cramps.

As a transgenderist (a non-op TS), I found that neither low dosages of Premarin nor of Ogen even got my testosterone level down to what a low dosage of Estinyl has. I have never taken a large dosage. It never was necessary. Currently I have been on 0.5mg daily.

As for the electrolysis, any suppression of testosterone will have two results: (1) hairs weakened by the needle will remain weakened and more vulnerable to the next treatment; and (2) surrounding light hairs (peach fuzz), that would otherwise be stimulated in future years or by the electrolysis needle, will remain light. Yes, electrolysis will go faster because the treatment is not having to also overcome testosterone re-stimulation of the weakened hair or new stimulation of a nearby hair.

Even so, the single biggest factor is that your operator must use enough heat for a long enough time increment or else your operator is simply tweezing your face if using either insufficient heat or insufficient time.

As for muscle tone and body fat distribution, hormones will change things given enough time. The skeletal frame will remain, but the muscle mass will reduce. The skeleton is, for the most part, fixed and rigid by the time we come to terms with who we truly are. The larger muscles over the shoulders will diminish, but that does not mean that you will become a weakling.

Indeed, many women who are proud of their bodies are also strong.

Fat distribution in the face will also change. This was very interesting for me as I had a broad face and a wide nose. For at least six years after the hormones began to alter my body, people said that I looked as though I was losing weight. All the while, though, I actually was putting on weight. My face was simply thinning out.

Yes, breasts will come (their size will be dependent on your family's genetic disposition), but even more of a pleasant surprise will be the development of a tush (or derriere.) When viewed from the rear, you will no longer look like a long-haired guy in pants.

Overall, though, the key is time. I repeat: the key is time, even with the low dosage that I take, everything did eventually happen.

As for your sex drive (or libido), it too will drop.

For me, this was also an unexpected surprise. From about age nine or ten, I was constantly horny - with a demanding libido that required release on a daily and sometimes thrice-daily basis. Sex for me was a need, an appetite: almost a distracting obsession.

Now, however, sex for me is a pleasure that I can usually access when it is convenient and desired (occasionally - rarely, in fact - it is a need.) Yes, even a "non-op" who has been on hormones as long as I have can have sex. The details are personal and will remain so. But, I will say that early during my initial transition, I was voluntarily sterilized via vasectomy. To do so made great sense as I did not want to sire another child and it would relieve my spouse from the associated risks of taking chemical birth control for many more years (additionally, it removed any potential accusation against me of being a "rooster in the henhouse" when I use the ladies room.)

Over the years, the hormones have caused an atrophy of the genitals. But, as I stated above, I can have sex and, now, sex for me is a pleasure that I can usually access when it is convenient and desired.

POST-1991 NOTE: In Dec 1995 I had an orchiectomy, a legal correction of sex and a legal amendment to my birth certificate to reflect me as being female. The court was very aware that the only genital surgery that I had was an orchiectomy. That was 1995. This is Aug 1998. I remain pleased with the orchiectomy. My female spouse and I remain a legally married, legal same-sex couple (yes - you read that correctly; Texas law addresses who can get married, not who can be married) and celebrated our Silver Anniversary two months ago. I have since found that the folic acid that I take as a treatment for the sideroblastic anemia has also reduced the leg cramps.

**No.7 - The Repeal of City of Houston Ordinance 28-442-4**

August 12, 1990 marked the tenth anniversary of the Houston City Council's repeal of Section 28-42.4 of the city's Code of Ordinances. That ordinance had made it illegal to dress in the clothing of the opposite sex. (How 'clothing of the opposite sex' was defined -- with newspaper advertising "Menswear" for women -- always puzzled me.)

This ordinance had its roots in combination with other ordinances that went all the way back to the year 1904. I remember researching it, as well as the conversations that I had with Assistant City Attorney, Ed Cazaros.

Ed is a great guy.

This ordinance was the one used to arrest, and hound severely, Anthony "Tony" Mayes who later became Ann Mayes. (Herman Short was Chief of Police in those days; do a bit of research on Houston history for more info on ol' Shootin' Short.) This ordinance was also being attacked by several "Jane Doe's" in federal court (who, prior to the total repeal, eventually were successful in getting it declared constitutionally inapplicable to transsexuals) (f.n. B). I have learned that the ordinance was used to allow homophobes in the police department to go into male bars and arrest any female impersonator who was not on stage or not in transit to the dressing room.

I have also learned that the ordinance was used to allow homophobes in the police department to go into female bars and arrest any lesbian wearing fly-front pants. (As I alluded to earlier, how 'clothing of the opposite sex' was defined always puzzled me.) Houston activist Ray Hill knows much of this history. He told me that a bunch of women hired a big name attorney (possibly Melvin Belli, but I'm not sure) to try the cases. The attorney got the cases dismissed but the ordinance remained on the books.

By now you know that, in September, 1976, I began my full-time changeover and was subject to enforcement of the ordinance (this was prior to the federal court case). Shortly afterwards, being terrified of arrest via the ordinance, I wrote to every single member of the then-Houston City Council, then-Mayor Fred Hofheinz presiding.

I got one positive response.

Within a week after I sent the letters, I was called on the phone by Councilmember Johnny Goyen.

We were friends from that day forward.

I wept openly when Johnny died.

Goyen recalled to me that he had always been puzzled by Anne Mayes, but was especially upset over the way that she'd been mistreated under the ordinance. When he read my letter and reviewed my education and short list of life experiences, he called me. We met in his office.

Within a few weeks he had me meet Councilmembers Judson Robinson, Jr., and Jim

Westmoreland. (Jim thought I was a joke and tried to persuade me not to have any ties with the lesbian/gay community.)(f.n.C)

That was late 1976.

For the next several years I went downtown several days each week. I also wrote a myriad of letters and made numerous phone calls. I lobbied the Municipal Judges, the Councilmembers and anyone who would listen. As I've mentioned I became active in the feminist movement. I joined the League of Women Voters (I still believe that the then-LWVH President, Lynne Johnson, was influential enough to convince many people to the fact that I was serious and deserved their attention.) I lectured all over Houston for Jerome Sherman and JoAnn Small at the University of Houston-Downtown, for Vicki Hammett and the late Jim McCary at UH's Central Campus, and for Chad Gordon and Bill Martin at Rice University.

I even went into the police station and had it out with Deputy Chief of Vice, Fred Bankston - at the invitation of then-Chief, B.G. "Pappy" Bond. God was watching because I left via my own steam.

I WAS NEVER ARRESTED. BUT, EACH AND EVERY DAY FOR FOUR YEARS I LEFT THE HOUSE IN THE MORNING NOT KNOWING IF I'D BE BACK THAT NIGHT OR IN JAIL. AND EACH AND EVERY DAY FOR FOUR YEARS MY SPOUSE LEFT THE HOUSE TO GO TO HER WORK NOT KNOWING WHETHER I'D BE BACK AT NIGHT OF IN JAIL.

I have always felt as though that was very cruel.

In 1979, the city held council elections for single-member districts. I invited many of the candidates to the UH Law School. That was when Ernest McGowen and I became friends. He invited me to do volunteer work in his office after he was elected. It gave me the opportunity to lobby on the ordinance repeal and he got the benefit of running ideas and projects by me with my engineering and law backgrounds.

It was very equitable.

In the spring of 1980, though, Councilmember John Goodner popped off about me in a City Council session.

It caused quite a stir.

I believe that it was Councilmember Dale Gorzinski who suggested that I confront Goodner directly. I did and, with tears in my eyes, I explained that this was neither a game nor a stunt but was a real life situation. Many other council members talked to Goodner privately. He and Ernest were not on friendly terms (because of the pop-off as well as other things.) Dale kept them at arms' length. In the afternoon, Goodner was talking to Councilmember Lance Lalor about the fact that John may have "shot himself in the foot" this time. Lalor suggested that

Goodner move to repeal the ordinance and, after doing so, Lalor would second.

John did and then Lance did.

Lance told me to leave City Hall and not to come back until the repeal went through. He told me to trust his skills now that the repeal ordinance was in motion. He called me whenever anything was relevant.

On August 12, 1980, after several "tags," the ordinance to repeal was again before Council. Then-Mayor Jim McConn was out of town (as was Jim Westmoreland). Johnny Goyen was Mayor Pro-tem. City Secretary Anna Russell waited until Councilmembers Homer Ford and Larry McKaskle were on the phone. She then gave the repeal to Johnny.

He asked for a vote.

Homer and Larry were not even aware it was up for a vote. Councilmember Christin Hartung was the sole and only no vote.

Homer and Larry went to Johnny Goyen about five minutes later. In short, Johnny played dumb. The ordinance was repealed and has remains off the books.

Epilogue (But Certainly Not an Epitaph)

The reason why I began No.7 with the ten-year celebration date is that because on the 9th of August 1990, I received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the City of Houston "for Meritorious Service to the Community." It was signed by then-Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire. It hangs in my office.

Once again, however repetitious it may seem, I say this to you, my sisters and brothers: If I could do all of that in the late 70's and early 80's, what is your excuse as the end of the century approaches for staying scared, staying closeted and not being the true person that you are?

At the time I originally wrote this, I concluded with the succinct statement "This is our decade: MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR YOU NOW!!"

I was, of course, referring to the 1990's - which are pretty much behind us now. We did make a lot of things happen in the 90's, but more needs to be done. Not only did the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act not become law, but also, by the time that it did reach the floor of the Senate for the legendary 50-49 vote, transgendered people had been back-roomed out of the bill by various East Coast elitist, exclusionist factions.

Still, we are approaching a new decade again. Actually, forget new decade - we're coming up on a new century and a new millennium.

That being the case, how about this for an ending (to this batch of war stories anyway -



not to me, yet), "This is our millennium: MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR YOU NOW!!!"

You'll never know until you try.

War may be hell, but the closet is worse.

f.n. A was deleted in subsequent edit.

f.n. B Doe v. McConn

f.n. C Westmoreland stayed on the Council throughout the rest of the 1970's and on through 1980's as well. He was defeated in 1989 by a political unknown who happened to be the only other person on the ballot when, rather late in the campaign season, Westmoreland made a racist quip about the proposed naming of a terminal at Houston's Intercontinental Airport for the late Houston Congressman, Mickey Leland, an African-American.