

THE INGERSOLL MESSAGE

April 1998

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My First Time

Like many transsexuals, I knew from a very early age that something just didn't make sense. Why wasn't I happy being thought of as a girl? Why did I have these feelings of being a boy? Didn't every girl actually want to be a boy, but just hide those feelings really well? Or, was it just me? Why couldn't I just grow a penis? When these questions couldn't or wouldn't be answered, I withdrew and acted like the girl that I thought everyone around me wanted me to be. But I always held to the belief, even as a child, that there was a way to stop the facade. When I got old enough, I'd stop pretending.

I remember the first time I sought help. I had broken up with my girlfriend and had nothing stopping me. I believed that I was putting my life at stake. I had a great job, my own apartment, and folks I called friends. Was I willing to gamble away all this should my transition not be accepted? Did I really have a choice? I called Ingersoll Gender Center and left a message asking for information on how to go about changing my sex. The person who answered the message suggested I come in on a Thursday night and talk to a facilitator. Was I ready to face something I'd only dreamt about for most of my life? Yes, now was the time.

It was a cold and rainy night in Seattle (not unlike a majority of the nights in this great city of ours). I was terrified. So much so, that I brought my

sister with me. It was at Ingersoll that I met, for the first time, someone else just like me. I was relieved. Finally, someone could help me get what I needed.

I got some referral information and began therapy. My therapist worked with me to get people around me educated on my impending transition. Within three months of starting therapy, I began my hormone therapy. My voice began to change immediately. Those folks who were unaware of the upcoming event questioned my change in attitude and drop in voice, but never guessed what I was going through. Within six months of walking through the doors of Ingersoll, I was announcing at work that I was going in for chest

They knew exactly what I was talking about when I discussed issues related to my transitioning.

reconstruction surgery and that I would be returning to work as male. In record time, my life dream had been realized.

Shortly after transitioning, I began volunteering for Ingersoll Gender Center. I wanted to give something back for what Ingersoll had given to me. I began co-facilitating the FTM Support Group. At the time I had shown up, we had less than a handful of attendees. Within a year, dozens of guys were coming out of the closet. It was strange, having been a minority for so long, to sit in a room with a group of other FTMs and

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We Are Mutating

The Ingersoll Message is evolving into a different format. This is an experiment at this point to find out just what we can do to provide a readable professional-looking product that you will enjoy and find informational at the same time. We may move this to basically an on line publication, which we can hardcopy as necessary.

For the time being, as they say, "Stay tuned to this station."

—Denise [REDACTED] Acting Editor

The Ingersoll Message

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to be one of many. They knew exactly what I was talking about when I discussed issues related to my transitioning. Most of them had gone through what I was experiencing, and some even had hints of how to handle future events. I didn't have to pretend anymore.

The FTM community has experienced an incredible growth over the past half dozen years. With the boom in Internet access, FTMs from around the world are communicating, exchanging information and learning from one another. FTMs who transitioned decades ago are now coming back out of the closet to re-enter the ever growing TS/TG community. FTM organizations are sprouting up all over the place. In August 1995, FTM International held our first-ever FTM Conference of the Americas in San Francisco, CA. It was a resounding success, with FTMs coming in from all over the world. Friends were made, contacts were established, and ideas were exchanged. There have been two more prosperous FTM Conferences of the Americas (1996 in Seattle and 1997 in Boston, Massachusetts) following this initial success.

Additionally, the True Spirit Conference in Maryland just held its second annual conference and other FTM programs have been included in traditionally MTF-held conferences.

Ingersoll's FTM activities have grown over the past few years as well. FTMs are taking an active part in Ingersoll's growth. I've joined the Board as Director of FTM Resources and was able to get eight FTMs to volunteer to facilitate our FTM Support Groups. Our support groups now run twice a month:

**2nd Tuesday of every month,
7:30-9:30 p.m. and 4th Saturday**

of every month, 11a.m.-1p.m.

In addition, Jude Patton offers a Group Therapy session for FTMs the last Saturday of every month, 7-8:30 p.m. in Suite 102 of the same building Ingersoll is in. His wife, Carolyn, offers an SO/partner support group at the same time as Jude's Group Therapy session down the hall in Suite 106.

We began showing documentaries. The most recent, "You Don't Know Dick: Courageous Hearts of Transsexual Men" is a documentary about six FTMs from around the country. This film was shown during the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival here in Seattle and received numerous awards. This was initially shown in January during our first Sunday Social, and we presented it again March 8th. For information about future showings, call Ingersoll at (206)329-6651.

And, of course, this year, FTMs are taking an active part in Esprit '98. This will be the first year that the program will include activities by FTMs, for FTMs and about FTMs. The program promises to be educational for FTMs just coming out, long-timers, MTFs, and those just plain interested in FTM issues.

These are exciting times. Much has happened in the past six years. I'm really looking forward to the next six!

—David

LOOKING FOR FTM GROUPS

AND INFORMATION?, call

Ingersoll at (206)329-6651 or

David at [REDACTED]

THE T-PEOPLE

by Maxi i Villafan

THE T-PEOPLE are a year-and-a-half-old Seattle group "dedicated to the pursuit of maximum fun -- and political freedom -- for people who bend, blend, or transcend gender in any way, shape or form."

THE T-PEOPLE meet at least twice a month at Ingersoll Gender Center and other locations around Seattle. T-PEOPLE have been known to haunt Bill's Off Broadway, pool halls, parks, and various cozy homes around town.

Whether you are butch, femme, female, male, androgynous, intersexed, other, or other-worldly -- THE T-PEOPLE would love for you to join us as we party, mingle, kaffeeklatsch, and plot the consolidation of trans political power!

A typical at-home meeting involved a quick catch-up on T-PEOPLE beeswax, followed by generous helpings of exotic pizza and homebrewed beer and cider.

We rented a van recently, taking a road trip to Bellingham, where we visited The Cinderella Circle, a terrific trans rap group to the north! Afterwards, we shared pleasant conversation and great food at a picturesque (but reasonably-priced) Greek-Italian restaurant. Everyone was quite friendly. We had no shortage of casual blab and humor to make the drive up and back seem short.

THE T-PEOPLE support any person who moves across gender lines. Or redefines them. Or defies them outright.

Instead of slicing society into ever more thin slivers of group identity, THE T-PEOPLE proclaim, "We (too)

are EVERYWHERE!" Meaning that trans people are already part of any conceivable group, including heterosexual men and women; lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals; all minority and majority groups; and all political stripes. This fact would be obvious, except that trans people have lagged behind LGB folks in creating visibility, understanding, and acceptance. THE T-PEOPLE are working to change that.

One member of our group addressed the twin issues of diversity and inclusion well by saying, "Too frequently I have seen personal disputes and misunderstanding rip through the community. We all carry baggage and scars that get in the way of working with people who are different. But we are all on the same side. THE T-PEOPLE is a group for ALL trans people, partners, and supporters. Part of our mission is building community. This is a learning process for all of us. Not everyone understands everyone else's concerns and difficulties. That's OK, because as we continue to evolve we will become more aware and more sensitive. No one else is going to support and defend us -- we have to do it for each other. I am absolutely convinced that we will."

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From the Founder

Ingersoll is for all. These simple words tell the complex story of our work here at the center. Hundreds of people over 21 years have given their time and their love to keep us on track towards this dream of service.

Have you seen how great ideas sometimes fall to division? Have you seen how simple human hopes have been lost because of argument and separation? We have often thought of these problems and have returned again and again to the simplest answers: Ingersoll is for all.

We have joined the others in our community who are dreaming and building a world without discrimination; a world open to the full exploration of self and identity. We are part of a fine unity among all the questioning and exploring people of our communities. By listening we learn of the needs that are here around and among us. By listening and learning we become partners with our clients and friends. And by keeping in mind the simplest of guides we held to the work we pledged years ago:

Ingersoll is for all!

—Marsha Botzer



Poem

by Michele Overrein

Violets are red and Roses are blue,
in this mixed up genderland of me and you.

Yes, Violets are read as they walk down the street,
and sometimes they pass if they act quite discrete.

And Roses are blue, actually passive/aggressive,
watch out there, old Rosie, you're becoming obsessive.

And they'll ship us all off to the home for old flowers,
and the years will roll by in a matter of hours.

Snap out of it, girls, you'll make yourselves batty,
your makeup will run, your wig will look ratty.

We must find some help, don't fail us, Harry,
We'll OD on Premarin and won't that be scary.

Maybe Harry could help me interpret my dream,
Sausages? Butcher knives? What could it all mean?

Violet is not a transsexual menace,
lives with an FTM now known as Dennis.

And Rose, she scrimped and she saved all her cash,
now post-op she's gorgeous and no gender trash.

And if on some Friday you're looking for thrills,
Just stop by and say hi, they're always at Bill's.

So pray to St. Benjamin in the middle of the night,
and you'll find a gender that fits you just right.



WANTED ALIVE AND KICKING!

Writers, editors and assorted
other folks to (voluntarily—
bless you) help with **THE
INGERSOLL MESSAGE.**

Growth of Ingersoll Gender Center

by Denise [REDACTED]

Over the past year the Ingersoll Board of Directors has taken on transforming the organization into an increasingly more effective and efficient body committed to service to anyone who has concerns and questions about gender.

Through a series of "forwards" (rather than "retreats"), the Board has tackled such things as increasing the size of the group meeting room, adding a new facilitator's office, computerizing the financial system, re-establishing Sunday social activities, doing greater outreach, finding enough money to pay minimum stipends to office staff, revitalizing the corps of information and referral phone volunteers, and recruiting effective board members.

Having handled a number of the nitty-gritty items on our to-do list, the Board will—at its May forward—return to the task of envisioning the future. It is committed to creating the mountain it will then begin to climb. In the June issue of *The Message* we will describe that mountain. At that time we will undoubtedly also begin looking for people to climb the mountain with us—by providing expertise, funding, and other resources.

MUCH THANKS THIS PAST MONTH TO:

Our newest board member—Sara Phillips
PRIDE FOUNDATION
PANGAIA FOUNDATION

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On the political front, THE T-PEOPLE have issued a statement against I-200, the ballot measure Washingtonians will vote on in November, calling it "an attack on affirmative action," and offering "support to other students, educators, and members of the workforce who understand that we work together or we fall apart as a society and as an economy."

T-PEOPLE do not have to agree on every issue or participate in every political action, and that keeps things exciting! THE T-PEOPLE provide a social glue for a motley crew of views. It's cool just to fight for your right to party!

Future T-PEOPLE projects include networking with the greater queer community and interacting with the City of Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities.

For more information, contact:

THE T-PEOPLE
P.O. Box 2514
Seattle, WA 98111
(206) 325-0085/(206) 244-5629
email: t-people@geocities.com

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(206)322-2012

Howard E. Leonard

Ph.D. Lic. #989

(206)329-5255

Jude Patton

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(425)787-5094

Bryant Vehrs, M.A.

(206)623-5244

K. K. (Robby) Robbins

(509)880-8111

THE INGERSOLL CALENDAR

SUNDAY, APRIL 19th — DANCE!
with lessons, so come one, come all.
From 2:00 p.m. to finish at the Com-
munity Room at SCSSM, 1820 E.
Pine (across Madison from Inger-
soll).

SUNDAY, MAY 17th—TOPIC SO-
CIAL at Ingersoll, 2-5 p.m. Put it on
your calendar; details next time.

REGULARLY SCHEDULED:

Wednesday Evening Group—7:30 to
9:30 p.m. for pre- and post-op TS
folks. Referral needed.

Thursday Evening Group—7:00 to
9:00 p.m. Open drop-in group. This
is a good place to contact the Inger-

soll Center for the first time. All are
welcome in this facilitator-guided sup-
port group. Individual consultation is
available and publications are available
for purchase.

Friday Evening Group—8:00 to 10:00
p.m. Open support group for anyone
with gender questions. The longest-
lived group of its kind in the U.S.
Structured discussion, facilitator-led.

All Ingersoll groups have a suggested
group fee of \$10 and \$5 minimum.

AFFILIATED GROUPS:

FtM Specialty and Therapy Groups
one Tuesday and one Saturday a
month. Contact David for more infor-
mation: (253)859-1053.

Amazing Changes: Closed AA group
for the T-communities. 12-Step Tradi-
tion. Mondays 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the
Ingersoll Center.

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