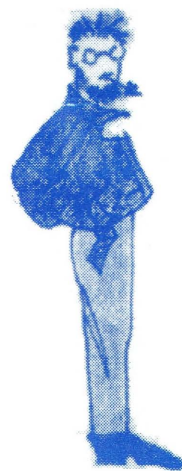
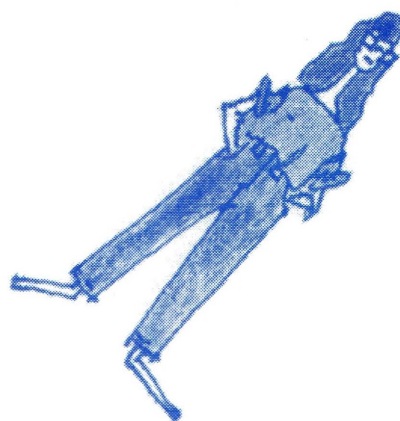
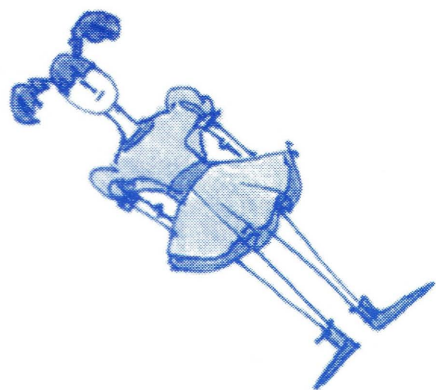


# Chrysalis

THE JOURNAL OF TRANSGRESSIVE GENDER IDENTITIES

Vol. 2, No. 2

\$9.00



*This issue.....*

*Transsexual Men  
An Issue For & By FTMs*

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About this Issue

The theme of this issue is *FTM: Men's Issues*. It is an issue by and for female-to-male transsexual people, transgenderists, and cross-dressers. They are collectively known as "FTMs," but there is no doubt that they are men, pure and simple. And not only men, but men who embody the best of what is masculine. Many FTMs hold onto the nurturing, caring aspects of feminine socialization, even as they cast aside the physical shell. Unfortunately, many in the transgender community have yet to realize that the men are half of the community, and ignore, insult, and patronize them. Kudos to those who reach out to FTMs, and to the men for their patience.

Jason Cromwell is guest editor of this issue. Jason is a doctoral student in anthropology whose dissertation concerns FTMs. He is on the Boards of Directors of the International Foundation for Gender Education and AEGIS, and is past President of Seattle's Ingersoll Center.

The cover drawings are by Tone Cimino, from a card for Jason's 38th birthday.

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## Upcoming in *Chrysalis*:

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### *Transgender Gothic:*

*A Look at the Way Things  
Are, Were, and Will Be*

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## *Chrysalis: The Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities*

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**Mission:** *Chrysalis* is dedicated to the in-depth exploration of gender issues. Our focus will be on topics which have been ignored or only lightly touched upon in other forums. Our treatments will be intelligent and unbiased.

**Submissions:** We welcome your stories, articles, letters, editorials, news clippings, position statements, research reports, press releases, poems, and artwork.

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By providing these voices, it is my hope that those who are FTM will find some comfort with the daily struggles of being transgendered men by reading about others like themselves, and that those who are not FTM will gain a broader understanding of what it is to be who we are.

I t has taken much longer than either Dallas or myself thought it would to pull this issue of *Chrysalis* together. On one hand, it is my fault. As a graduate student who is nearing completion of my dissertation, my time is limited. Add to that the fact that I teach (to pay tuition) and that I'm a husband and father. . . Well, you get the idea. On the other hand, a problem I encountered was the lack of submitted material. After an unsuccessful call for submissions (which garnered very few items) I resorted to asking, cajoling, encouraging, even admonishing individuals I knew to write something, anything, from their perspective. Finally, there were enough FTM authors for this issue.

Which brings me to a matter I'd like to mention here. I find it extremely frustrating to hear FTMs say that there is so little material about us, then to provide an opportunity for more material to come into existence, only to have such a poor response from the community. But I am not alone in this frustration. *FTM Newsletter* editor James Green as well as the editors of *Tapestry* and *Chrysalis*, have repeatedly asked for submissions from FTMs—to no avail. Why continue to complain that what is available is inaccurate, erroneous, and narrow, and not do anything about it? There are many venues for our voices to be heard. We must take advantage of these. To this end, I am grateful to the individuals who provided materials for this issue. I

applaud all of them for having the courage to speak out.

The voices contained within these pages are those of frustration, anxiety, pain, and anger, as well as triumph, happiness, peacefulness, and joy. All of these emotions are expressed via the following topics: what it is to be FTM; how to deal with friends, families and our children; coping with being transgendered and living within the in-between state of maleness and femaleness; the media's skewing of our lives by telling only part of the story; the addition of a condition such as multiple personality disorder and how it complicates being FTM; living with our bodies; changing intimate relationships; dealing with "male privilege;" differences between us and others in the gender community; being "out" or not; and last, but not least, the realities of surgery. These voices come through poetry, short prose, journals, and essays. With the exception of one poem and the lyrics to a song, all of the theme-related material in this issue is by FTMs. The poem and song lyrics are included because they express an outsider's point of view that is both insightful and humorous. By providing these voices, it is my hope that those who are FTM will find some comfort with the daily struggles of being transgendered men by reading about others like themselves, and that those who are not FTM will gain a broader understanding of what it is to be who we are.

Over the past few years, I have talked with and listened to hundreds of FTMs express what it means to them to be transgendered. The common denominator among us is this: We have always known that we were men, even when others did not recognize us as such and even when we were not living as men or doing anything about our feelings that we were men in women's bodies.

I would like to end with an excerpt from a speech I gave at the Southern Comfort Convention in October 1992.

*As children, what we dreamed about and knew deep inside ourselves was that we were boys (despite all the evidence to the contrary) who would grow up to be men. But when puberty hit, we were told and we learned that the only way we could become what we knew we were would take some pretty drastic measures.*

*Many of us at some point in our lives took (or are taking) all or some of those measures. At this point in our lives, we can choose to spend the rest of our lives mourning that we weren't born as males. But if we do, we will never discover the wonderful life that lies within and beyond us.*

*Some of you may be thinking, 'THIS is wonderful. No, I didn't choose to be transsexual.' And in a sense, I agree. We didn't choose. But in another sense, we did choose to do something about our self-knowledge that in spite of our bodies, we are men. We choose in varying degrees to be men. But the question remains: What is wonderful about being transsexual or transgendered men?*

*I believe it is a gift. A wonderful opportunity to be unique men. How many men truly know what it is to be treated like a woman in this society? We know, and because we know, we have a special knowledge that it is more than a penis that makes a man a man. We know that it takes more than genitals to make the man.*

I think these sentiments are clearly expressed throughout this issue by all the authors who took the opportunity to share with the readers of *Chrysalis* their thoughts and feelings about being FTM.

—Jason Cromwell  
Guest Editor

We're pleased to be, so far as we know, the first national transgender publication (besides the newsletter of *FTM International*, of course) to have FTM issues as the theme of an issue. It won't be the last time for us, provided that we receive materials from FTMs.

We've been publishing materials by men all along—Stephen Whittle, Erich Trapp, James Green. We understand that FTMs are half of the transgender community. We understand that men are not impressed by talk about makeup and womens' clothes. We understand that there is a paucity of literature for men; that surgical techniques are, to make an understatement, primitive; that prosthetics leave a lot to be desired. We know that men are marginalized and treated insensitively by some factions of the transgender community. We know that Standards of Care developed for MTF people don't adequately address FTM issues.

We don't like it either.

We named our new publishing division after Lou Sullivan, a transsexual man who fought the medical establishment for his right to love other men as a man. Sullivan Press' first publication will be *Recommended Guidelines for Transgender Care*, by Gianna Israel and Dr. Donald Tarver. The authors have taken pains to get the input of men, and to adequately address FTM issues in the book.

In 1994, AEGIS announced that we would award \$500 to any group which would match that amount for purpose of putting on a national conference for transsexual and transgendered men. FTM International took the challenge, and we awarded the money in February, 1995. The conference, the first for men on the North American continent, will be held in San Francisco. Appropriately, it kicks off on my birthday, 18 August, 1995.

We're very proud that our challenge provided the stimulus which has resulted in the FTM Conference. It wasn't much money in an absolute sense, but it was in a relative sense, as it represented a major portion of our budget. It is money well spent.

1995 is a watershed year for the transgender community. It has seen the acknowledgement of transgendered academics, a growing recognition that it is a society which cannot accept diversity which is sick, rather than transsexual and transgendered persons, and maybe, just maybe, it will be the year the guys got organized.

—Dallas Denny  
Editor-in-Chief

Editor:

I'm in the middle of my monthly perusal of TV-TS newsletters preparatory to writing my "Alison's Femail Box" in the *Emerald City News*.

I had to stop and tell you how very disturbing it is to be skimming through "Wilma's Trip to the Mall," "Valentine Party a Success," and "Spring Is On Us and It's Time to Consider Changing Wardrobes"—and suddenly be stopped dead by 52 pages of intensely interesting reading in the Winter *Chrysalis*.

Alison Marsh  
Emerald City, Seattle, WA

Dear Ms. Denny:

Thank you for the bibliographic material on voice and laryngeal cosmetic surgery that you provided in response to my help line call. It was also most gracious of you to call me to say that the information had been sent.

Your rapid and thorough reply could serve as a model for the medical departments of other educational organizations dealing with gender issues. As a physician, and as a transgendered person, I understand the importance of timely answers to professional queries; and I'm glad you do, too.

Anne L., M.D.  
Seattle, WA

Dear Dallas:

I have wanted to write you for some time now. I had not felt that I'd really had anything worth saying. After reading the latest issue of *Chrysalis*, I could not remain silent any longer. I have to tell you of the enormous positive impact you and your magazine have had on my life.

The first thing that really struck me was the cover. Here was a visual representation of how I feel about all the photos I've ever been in. I can look at them and not even see myself present because the image recorded is not the image I hold of myself mentally. By the time I reached your article, I was sitting on the floor, rocking in place and bawling my eyes out, which by the way made it very hard to read... something I didn't want to stop doing.

Without getting into a lot of needless details, I would like to share with you how your magazine, along with a letter from a very sweet friend named Robin Pringle helped keep me out of possible enrollment in the Charter-by-the-Sea hospital. Things had been going badly for me emotionally and I was getting deeper into depression and starting to get completely overwhelmed by feelings from my past that were just now deciding to come up. My therapist asked me to admit myself, and I told her NO. Then my psychiatrist called and asked the same question. Again I said no, but agreed to see him in a week to re-evaluate the situation. Things were looking really down to me until the day before the appointment. A letter from Robin came, as well as *Chrysalis*. The next day when we met, my psychiatrist asked what it was that had caused such a major change in my mood. I told him about the previous day, and for the first time I told him "I am a transsexual!" Not that he didn't already know it, but I had never come out and told him. The earth didn't move or anything, but my spirit sure did. Thank you again.

Michelle Link  
St. Mary's, GA

P.O. BOX

*Wrong Body (for Jason)*

by Dallas Denny

*I am not in the wrong body*

*Wrong body*

*Wrong body*

*I am not in the wrong body*

*I'm not "trapped"*

*I was never trapped*

*It's just that this body developed in ways*

*I would rather it had not*

*And it was necessary to do a little*

*Shall we say*

*Social and physical re-engineering*

*to make things more to my liking*

*It wasn't a question of wrong body*

*It was a question of right body,*

*wrong characteristics*

*And a tune-up was required*

*And so I have resculpted it*

*Made it more to my liking*

*Gained this, lost that*

*Paid technicians to make some modifications*

*Took pills which made me*

*grow in important places*

*And shrink in important places*

*And I have gone under the knife for things*

*That the pills could not give me*

*I may not have liked everything about it*

*But it was not the wrong body*

*It was never the wrong body*

*It's the right body*

*It has already been the right body*

*It's my body*

*And now it's just as I have always wanted it*

*What could be simpler?*

*Perfectly Modular Male*

A song by Dallas Denny

*<allegro>*

*I'm a Perfectly Modular Male*

*I bought the one I'm wearing at a rummage sale*

*I have one for every occasion*

*I have one for every need*

*I have one of every size*

*And I have one to stand and pee*

*They come in designer colors*

*And they serve me without fail*

*I'm a Perfectly Modular Male*

*I have one that's made of fabric*

*(Well, it's really just a sock)*

*But it comes in very handy*

*When I need to have a cock*

*I've an assortment for the bedroom*

*And they never kiss and tell*

*I'm a Perfectly Modular Male*

*I have one called Widowmaker*

*I have one that gives off sparks*

*I have one that's fluorescent*

*And it glows red in the dark*

*I have one I can inflate*

*Until it's hard as any nail*

*I'm a Perfectly Modular Male*

*So if yours ever disappoints you*

*If yours ever doesn't spurt*

*You can always just go shopping*

*At the mall right after work*

*And if you see one that you fancy*

*You should buy it without fail*

*And be a Perfectly Modular*

*Perfectly Modular*

*Perfectly Modular Male*

*I wrote the above the day after Jason showed me an assortment of prosthetic devices. I was singularly unimpressed by the lack of quality of some of the commercial devices (I was dating an FTM at the time). It occurred to me that the perfect prosthetic is not one all-purpose device which does a number of things poorly, but an assortment, one of which fits every need perfectly, like the various detachable arms of the protagonist of Robert A. Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*—Dallas*



*Kirk Read is a 21-year-old Echols Scholar at the University of Virginia. His fiction and poetry have appeared in Genre, Christopher Street, Empathy, White Crane, and Out in Virginia. He recently published Word Party, a collection of poetry and monologues. Kirk is also an award-winning playwright.*

## The Poetry of Kirk Read

### White Hot

*I think I'm ready to fall in love again—  
the nights of wild impulse are over.  
I've done my oat sowing and now  
I feel barren  
Like South Dakota  
You know you're ready to fall in love  
When you feel like a Plains state.  
I can see him in movies and books and strangers—  
the lonely cowboy who smokes and cries only occasionally  
and wipes his feet twice before he steps into your house—  
waiting for me  
to kill the lonely part  
to feed it to him with cinnamon  
at dawn, before he steps into the sunrise—  
he's waiting for me  
to nuzzle his back while he shaves  
to spoon him to sleep and adjust my breathing to his  
to ride shotgun closer than normal  
to allow him to smoke less and cry more  
to go to his Mama's church and sit in the third pew  
to help him paint fences  
and irrigate the fields so they don't burn up  
and he wouldn't ignore me in the morning for  
some newspaper  
and as he watched the evening news he'd hold me and  
stroke my hair  
as the weatherman predicted no rain no rain  
and my mind wouldn't wander to other cowboys as I lay  
beneath him.  
And I know I would be happy  
with this cowboy.  
We would shuck corn  
and skin bucks  
and shoe stallions*

*and hold hands  
and laugh gently  
gather kindling  
split wood, stack the pieces, strike a match,  
set fire  
to our hearth—  
a fire that will consume everything around us  
until all that we've built  
is swallowed up by white hot flames  
so blinding I can't imagine boredom  
anymore.*

### Danny, age 16

*Maybe maybe maybe  
if I got it if I got, you know, IT  
I could cut it out of me with a knife or suck it out  
and spit out the poison part  
and get my blood cleaned—drained like a rock & roll junkie  
Keith Richards or somebody  
maybe I could cut off the parts that have it  
my dick my butt my mouth my throat my stomach.  
My brain can't have it yet  
my heart my arms my legs  
They didn't do anything wrong  
My eyes saw plenty but they didn't do it.  
Maybe my fingers  
maybe my chest.  
not my hair or knees or elbows  
Most of me is innocent, I swear.  
Maybe I could cut the rest out,  
the wicked parts,  
siphon them out and leave them in a roadside dumpster  
Maybe I could cut deep enough to find it  
and make it go away.  
I swear I'll never do it again.  
I swear I won't ever do anything wrong.  
I'll hide in my room.  
Maybe if I don't tell anyone it'll go away.  
Maybe if I cut myself deep enough it'll go away.  
Maybe if I pray hard enough it'll go away  
Maybe.  
Maybe.  
Maybe?*

# Gender Happenings

## *International Congress a Success!*

### *Nontransgendered, Transgendered Scholars Attend*

In February, 1995, more than 300 transgendered and nontransgendered scholars met in Van Nuys, California for the First International Congress on Gender, Crossdressing, and Sex Issues. The conference was Hosted by the Center for Sex Research at California State University at Northridge, and chaired by Vern Bullough and James Elias. The congress was co-sponsored by AEGIS, FTM International, IFGE, Renaissance, The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, and Tri-Ess.

The Congress was of special importance because for the first time, transgendered and transsexual, as well as academic credentials, were honored.

Scholars presenting papers included Ray Blanchard, Walter Bockting, Anne Bolin, Holly Boswell, Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Sandra Cole, Jason Cromwell, Dallas Denny, Holly Devor, Milton Diamond, Richard Docter, Gretchen Fincke, James Green, Richard Green, Bill Henkin, Ari Kane, Bo Laurent, Roger Millen, Niela Miller, Roger Northway, Friedemann Pfafflin, Virginia Prince, David Prok, Joann Roberts, Martine Rothblatt, Joy Schaefer, Kim Stuart, Jayne Thomas, Marilyn Volker, Janis Walworth, Frederick Whitham, Stephen Whittle, Walter Williams, and Ken Zucker (and we're leaving many out because of lack of space; sorry about that, folks). Roger Gorski spoke on the significance of recent breakthroughs in the biology of gender behavior, Stanley Biber talked about male-to-female sex reassignment surgery, and Xia Zhao Ji, formerly of the People's Republic of China, spoke about his innovative work with cross-transplantation of testes and ovaries. Dr. Ji's work was largely ignored in this country because of a faulty translation in a

Reuter's report, which said the neovaginas of his MTF patients were lined with leather (the proper translation was *skin*). Loren Cameron and Mariette Pathy Allen exhibited their photographs, and Veronica Vera of Miss Vera's Finishing School for Boys Who Want to be Girls gave a makeover demonstration on one of the nontransgendered professionals.

Some of the presentations were deeply steeped in a pathology-based model of transgender and transsexual identity, but a surprising number reflected the emerging sensibility that it is a society which cannot accept transgendered persons, rather than transgendered and transsexual persons themselves, which is sick. William Dragoin, for instance, presented his speculations that transgender and gay identity and behavior is actively selected for in the Darwinian sense. Walter Williams pointed out that he considered the transsexual and transgendered individuals at the conference the true experts, which offended some of those who were nontransgendered.

There was hot discussion-around the issue of access to hormonal and surgical treatments, and tempers wore thin on several occasions, but for the most part, the more than three hundred attendees shared their data and theories in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

The sponsors of the Texas "T" Party, which ran concurrently in San Antonio, took offense at the timing of the Congress. The two conferences were very different in nature, and many Congress attendees felt their criticism was unreasonable.

The Second International Congress will be sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania; it will be held in Philadelphia in 1997. ☞

*I know Mike well, and respect him immensely. He was an integral part of our support group until his move to the Southwest. In fact, he once saved the group from the forces of evil (a long story) by speaking his mind when the rest of us were too intimidated to.*

## *Privilege, or Payment Extracted?*

*by Michael H. Brannon*

**M**y morning classes were over and I had a break before having to be back for my afternoon class. That would be just enough time to leave the campus, do some errands, and be back on time — if I hurried. I headed for the parking lot, cranked up the engine and started down the rows of parked cars. Momentarily, I came upon a woman who was waving somewhat frantically and calling out to me with a worried expression on her face.

“Uh, oh,” I thought to myself. “What’s wrong? Do I have a flat tire? Has someone bashed in the side of my car? Did I run over something of hers? What’s going on?” Even as I asked myself these questions I was taking a quick mental inventory. The tires felt all right; I didn’t hear any strange noises.

As I slowed, I heard her asking through the closed window, “Do you have any jumper cables?”

So that was it. She needed help — a damsel in distress. Damn! If I stopped to deal with her I wouldn’t have time to complete my agenda. Either I’d be late getting back or I would have to abort the mission and do it another day. I considered driving on, pretending I hadn’t heard. But, alas! Chivalry is not dead. How often do I get a chance to come to the rescue on my white charger? My male ego loves the challenge. Then again, I had been on hormones only a few months. Did she see me as male? Would we get half-way through the encounter and she would realize she was dealing with another female?

I lowered the window and bought myself a little time to complete my mental gesticulations by saying (a little bit truthfully), “I’m not sure if I do have jumper cables. We move them back and forth between cars and I’m not sure if I had them last.”

There was a look of expectation on her face. I realized many things about the reality of life and gender in that moment. I realized that this woman believed I owed her a “fix” to her dilemma, that I owed her a rescue. I realized that the simple-sounding question, “Do you have jumper cables?” wasn’t a straightforward request for information at all. It was a loaded request that really meant: “I expect you to have jumper cables and it is your duty to put aside your agenda, get out of your car, and stay here for as long as it takes

doing whatever it takes to get my mechanical problem solved and get me on the road again so I can go on with my agenda. Never mind that such an occurrence may happen in sub-zero weather and you don't have any gloves with you. Never mind that you may be wearing a \$500.00 suit and will risk getting grease on it beyond salvage. Never mind that you may scrape

thing as male privilege, but it has been bought at an extremely high cost. For centuries men have been expected to fix and rescue — to do the “heavy lifting.” It was men who rode off to war at the risk of being maimed or killed. It was men who were assigned the risky jobs of society like policing the streets or entering burning buildings to rescue the inhabitants. It has been men

## No Stranger to Myself

by Alan

*I work in a fishbowl. I swim cautiously, reading the motions of the fins, see the slow turning of other species, caught, as am I, in the necessity of breathing. They read my lines. The Southern smile, the easy greeting, stuck in my throat, lay a shadow through my chest. There is no ease of anything where Northern shark eyes peer.*

*My mouth barks a new laugh, deep and rough, a sudden cello sound, staccato and rich. I sing bass, full-mouthed, rib-rumpling. This voice which I hear as mine delights me like nothing else in life. The sound of me rings in celebration.*

*I am standing in the sanctuary of a Unitarian Church singing with twenty other mouths. Some who think they have seen me before cast nets between my legs. The tightness of my fear, the heat of my anger — fill my voice with emotional intensity. I become the song. My throat opens in full release, my mouth a cavern resonating with the need to have my beauty heard.*

*Dry shaving leaves sandpaper on my cheeks, and the sound of the razor's rasp roots me to the core of the earth. I shave the way a Midwestern farmer harvests corn, knowing his work by the rows of stubble which the night deer come to glean. My fingers stroke my cheeks to hear the music of my soul.*

*There is the acceptance of those who do not understand and the understanding of those who cannot accept and the curiosity of minds all sizes. There is one who touches me without questions, and yet questions me without touching.*

*As I become no stranger to myself, the world I knew is filled with strangers.*

*Those who say gender doesn't matter have a way of meaning that it does, or those who say it does mean it doesn't, and all they are really saying is “Why is it a big deal to me?”*

*To get it, I guess you had to be there.*

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*I'm glad that woman hailed me down in the parking lot that day. The event, inconsequential as it was in the course of human history, certainly has given me occasion for reflecting on that history and my place in it as an emerging male.*

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your knuckles, or slip and break a limb, or get a concussion attempting to do my bidding. You OWE it to me, a woman, simply by being a man (or a butch lesbian — I never did figure out who or what she thought I was, but it was clear that I was there to fulfill a male gender expectation), to rescue me from this situation at any cost to yourself.”

I got out of the car, opened the trunk, and did her bidding. It was a classic case. “I don't know where the hood opens. I think there's a latch thingy somewhere in the front.” “What do I do now? Should I try and start it up?” “Can you close the hood for me? I just had a hysterectomy and I'm not supposed to lift anything heavy.” “I just don't know what I would have done....”

Part of me was relishing the role. After years of having society deny me my male role, here was one of society's best trained representatives acknowledging it! I was being asked — nay, expected — to fulfill a traditional male function and I was successfully doing it. YES! On the other hand I was having a quick study course in the price men pay for being men.

Much is said about male privilege. Some suggest that a prime reason female-to-male transsexuals want to transition is to acquire that position of male privilege. What a naive point of view. Yes, there is such a

who have traditionally fought the stresses of business and trauma and injury in the interest of protecting or cleaning up women, children and the elderly — often from the harm or messes of their own making.

I do not quarrel with the fact that injustices have been done to women throughout time, and that many have been precluded from participating in the rugged duties when or if they wanted to. I applaud, support, and participate in the feminist ideals and goals of bringing equality to all. But I have a new sense of the emerging men's movement point of view that women aren't the only ones who have been abused and taken advantage of by our society and others like it. Men have paid and continue to pay dearly for the much ballyhooed position of male privilege. Granted, the presence of testosterone may, and probably does, adapt the male personage to war and risk and stress and lifting more easily than the female personage. But it is not grounds for abuse or menial servitude.

I'm glad that woman hailed me down in the parking lot that day. The event, inconsequential as it was in the course of human history, certainly has given me occasion for reflecting on that history and my place in it as an emerging male. Fortunately for me, it wasn't a sub-zero day, nor was I wearing a \$500.00 suit! ♀♀

## *Excerpts from a Journey*

*(With My Body)*

*by Jason Cromwell*

**D**ecember 28, 1972: Masculinity is a very sensitive thing. Being transsexual is hell; you belong to neither sex, yet you belong to both, wanting only the one. Unconsciously, my brothers and my stepfather pose a threat to my masculinity.... The hardness of their features, the deepness of their voices, the jokes they make about sex that I can't make because being virile doesn't belong to me. I haven't the necessary equipment to perform. I tell myself this doesn't matter, yet I know this does not cover up the facts. All my life I've fought femininity. So many men take their masculinity for granted. How does someone like myself explain to society that being transsexual is not homosexuality — that the difference lies in not just attraction, but in a need to change the body? I don't know. I only know that at times I find it unbearable.

**May 15, 1977:** Three days ago, on my 25th birthday, I had a mastectomy. Even with bandages on, I feel better, more whole, more complete. I don't have breasts anymore. I don't have to bind anymore. Hurray!

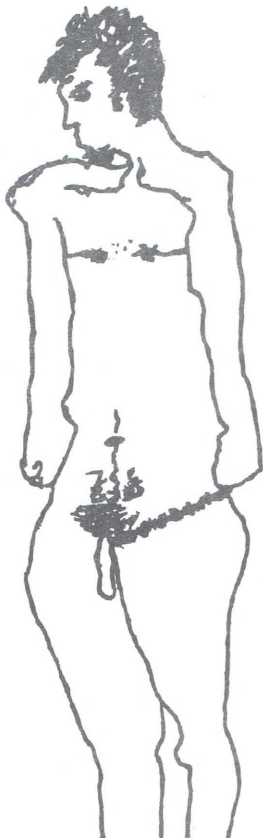
**May 29, 1977:** The doctor took the stitches out today. Except for my nipples and the scars, my chest looks great. He gave me an article to read on penis construction. It looks like a real penis! It even uses a prosthesis so I could get an erection by pumping one of the testicles. The last pictures I saw were at least ten years ago. They made the penis look like a fleshy baseball bat without a scrotum. It was gross! There was no way I was going to have that surgery. I'd pretty much made up my mind that I'd never have a penis. But the surgery in this article looks really good. I don't know if I should go for this or not. I feel very confused.

**May 12, 1978:** It's a year since I had breast removal. Except for the scars, which are fading, I'm no longer aware of my chest. I'm still thinking about the penis surgery. Dr. O assures me he can do it, but he lied to me about what he would do on my chest. I still don't know what to do.

March 15, 1979: I've not written anything about surgery. I started the phalloplasty at the beginning of the year. I have been too angry, too frustrated, too drained of energy to write about what has been happening to me. Slowly over the course of the months the base has eroded and died. What remains, fought to hold on. I resorted to natural medicines and finally have cleared up the infection. But the base is nearly gone and it hangs by a small piece of tissue. Slowly it has become that baseball bat, but only smaller. There is no scrotum, and no more surgery.

April 30, 1980: Recently, I have thought about having surgery to remove it. But in a strange way I have become attached to this deformed, lifeless penis. It is all I've got. I still don't call it my penis. Sometimes I can't look at myself in the mirror. All man but that one part. I feel more like a man, yet I still don't have a penis and might never.

February 18, 1981: I find myself watching myself. Always watching. C asked me today what I think. How I am feel-



ing. I do not know. I do not know if I feel anything, sometimes. These things seem so trivial. It is not much different being me now than it was 10 years ago. I just pretend and play the games in different clothes.

Yes, I am comfortable as a man in this world. With my clothes on, I do not hate my body, but I feel its limits. I wish I could take off my clothes and celebrate me in my nakedness. I haven't felt safe naked since before I knew what the word meant. I find no comfort in my physical being. Fortunately, we are not made of bodies alone. I find comfort, sometimes, in my mind.

April 22, 1981: (*The following was written during a time when I had to be off of testosterone for medical reasons.*) I can't take much more of this feminization. Daily it builds up. My chest swells and is tender to any touch. Fat is being redistributed: my hips broaden and my waist narrows. My body becomes uglier and more disgusting daily. My nerves are on edge and I anticipate every sign of menses. I don't see how women can cope with the cycle every month for years and years. Surgery (hysterectomy) becomes imperative. July. No later.

May 8, 1981: Even though I have been married eight years now, I find I do not know how to receive love from Bonnie. I do not know how to deal with my body being turned on by someone else. And too, I find since I'm not taking testosterone that my sex drive is very low and it takes more to turn me on. "Turn-on" makes me think of a light switch, and perhaps I am expecting too much of my body. For many years I have controlled all of its reactions — as a means of survival and out of habit — but always I have turned it off or on. Unfortunately, it has been off more than on.

It seems whenever I tell someone about me, they think Bonnie is wonderful; which, I think, bothers her a bit. At least, she has asked why people say so. It is because of the unusual circumstances surrounding my life, which she overlooks. Often I think she forgets that I am not a "normal" man.

However, I think she believes that many men, even though they are physically normal, are not really men. Without Bonnie, I would probably be asexual, as very few women or men are accepting of me sexually. It seems I threaten their definitions of male and female, women less so than men.

July 6, 1981: Sometimes I would give just about anything to be normal. For a day. A month. A year. But I think it would be harder to have it for awhile than to never have had it at all. This way, I can only imagine what it would be like to be wholly a man. I hate this paradox — half man, half woman. Unable to have a woman as a man would. None of the surgeon's magic can ever complete this emptiness inside, this hollow aching between my legs.

Yesterday I looked at my wife's imperfect, beautiful little body, with breasts she has never detested, with shapely, feminine legs. . . a sure, confident woman's body, one which has never doubted its womanliness, never questioned which was right. . . the mixed-up mind, or the obvious woman's body.

A body which was ugly and detested before has become mutilated and scarred by the surgeon's knife. Breasts that look like they are caught between a woman's body and a man's, uncertain of their masculinity. A scar, 10-12 inches long, leading to a useless and worthless tube, not even a joking facsimile of a penis . . . but I hang onto the hope that someday it will be capable of erection and penetration . . . and knowing it will never be real, will never know the warmth and comfort of a woman's vagina, never feel itself against my leg or even between them, knowing it will never be.

July 14, 1981: Man. Woman. Gay. Straight. Transsexual. Somehow the labels aren't working and don't feel right. I don't feel like a woman, yet I'm not a man. And lately I've been wondering if I'm just playing a game with myself. I still don't know what a woman is supposed to be, but I've always been told I don't act like one. I

can't see me dressing or acting any different that I do now, yet I don't ever really feel like a man and a lot of that, I'm sure, is not having a penis. I know I'd feel different with a penis, but I don't know if I'd feel any better or somehow right. I guess I'd just feel different.

**January 1, 1983:** I've lived the past 13 years as a man. Anatomically, I'm still female. It's a fact I live with every day. I accept it as best I can. When possible, I've had surgery to correct it. Most of my life I've referred to my body as IT. At times I've hated it. I'm now learning about my body. As I learn, I am confused as my visual image meets my physical body. Each new scar asserts the truth.

M says to be proud. I think she is right. Yet, I don't know how. Over half of my life, I've been ashamed and prayed no one finds out. My paranoia dissipates very cautiously as I've come out to a selected group of folks. It seems so many things have happened. So many changes in my life.

**August 5, 1983:** Three days ago, Dr. M removed my uterus and ovaries. Like he said, I never needed those parts. I am relieved, although I don't feel any different, because I know I will never menstruate again. Today he gave me the first testosterone shot I've had in three years. Again I feel no different, but from experience I know I will.

**August 27, 1984:** My self-esteem is up. Exercising almost daily — run 5 to 7 times per week, work-out at the Y three times a week. I don't know why these things help my self-esteem, but they do. Perhaps because I am doing something nice for myself both in the long and short runs. When I run, I like the way I feel, the way my body moves, the way my posture improves, the way the wind feels on my face, the sweat, the tightness in my muscles, the feeling of strength.

**November 9, 1984:** When I was thirteen, I had my first period. I realized then that it was finally true and I had to face the facts. I tried to commit sui-

cide that night. As I got more feminine, as my breasts grew, as my hips widened, I became more and more detached from my body. I wish I had pictures from that time. I don't know if I would recognize that girl. I remember wanting so desperately to fit in, to be one of the girls. To have a boy want me. From about age 14 to 18 I was very promiscuous. I wanted to prove I was female. There were a couple of men who I loved; they were a part of the man inside me. Each was different, but yet so much of what I wanted to be.

When I look in the mirror, sometimes I like the man who looks back at me. I accept that which is considered feminine. As I become more comfortable with myself, I become less ashamed. As I've gotten older, I realize that I am both woman and man, that I have lived as both woman and man, and this is okay.

**September 12, 1985:** Bonnie's therapist said that she is "making love to a man with a woman's body." This is something we both have thought of but not put into words.

**August 1, 1986:** I learned at an early age to detach myself from my body. To turn off feelings of pain encountered by my stepfather's strap. Without knowing it, I turned off pleasure also. It is still difficult to let in pleasure. To enjoy the sensations of my own body. Even harder to admit that it is, indeed, my body. It is something I must work at, to let in feelings of physical pleasure, to allow my lover to touch me, to caress, to bring me pleasure as she is wont to do. I work at it. Sometimes it works, but never does my body allow itself to feel the orgasm that she and I want it to feel. Nearly always my body rushes toward it, as though it were a swift runner approaching the crest of a hill, then the runner stumbles and falls with a headlong rush to the bottom, left feeling cheated of his accomplishment, as though in falling he'd forgotten to celebrate. Then I lay there, cold, empty, as devoid of feeling as a body can be and still be alive. I watch over this man's shoulder con-

stantly— anticipating every move, cautioning him to beware.

Why am I so hard on myself? Why can't I celebrate the victories? All of us, the collective me, wants us to celebrate, to say "I am what I am." I want and need to quit battering my body. To leave it alone and to quit yelling at it, telling me, "Your body is ugly. Look at it. Like a woman's but with a dollop of skin hanging in front of your 'vagina.'" Yes, that word I hate. "Vagina," "clitoris," not a "penis." Like a child yelling insults in spite. Always standing outside, looking in as though watching a performance. At every opportunity we deny life. We need to affirm it and ourselves in it. To celebrate ourselves. To say, "I am beautiful, one of the world's creatures."

**September 17, 1986:** When I drew this picture (p. 12), I'd felt turbulent for days— roaring and pulsating inside my chest. Feeling ugly and avoiding even looking at my face. I'd had an urge to draw for several days. When I told Bonnie, she said, "Why don't you do it?" This picture came out. Every now and then I look at this picture. I see me. I recognize that hollow, sunken chest.



Afraid and not wanting to look at my body. A heavy sigh accompanying “my body.”

Sometimes around my hip scar, my leg feels numb and tingly, sore and tender in places, shooting needles toward my bones. I wish my body wouldn't hurt. My right side, sometimes heavy, cold. My chest, heavy with a weight forcing down over my liver. Sometimes I'm afraid my body is going to die. I want to love my body. With my clothes on, sometimes I do.

**September 18, 1986:** I feel detached from my body. Like my genitals have been cut off and absent for a long time. As though all I have is scars. I feel so scarred. Inside and out.

Growing up female. Living male. How many times have I said that I know what it is like to be treated female but I don't know what it is to be female? Nor do I know what it is to be male. Yet I feel male. A dichotomy that isn't supposed to exist. The world doesn't treat me female anymore. I feel more male, but detached, as though I don't belong. More than anything, I need to accept my body. The older I get, the more crucial this becomes.

**October 3, 1986:** For the first time, this body of mine is feeling. Still learning, but feeling. Still scary at times.

**August 11, 1987:** Drew this self-portrait (p. 13) a few days ago. S, my therapist, and I compared it to the other one from a year ago. My self-esteem has certainly changed. I'm facing the viewer, my body less restrained, chest expanded rather than pulled in, arms looser but still not free. As I drew this one I tried to free the arms from the sides, but they looked unnatural.

Losing so much weight has definitely improved my feelings about myself. The scars are not so prominent in this drawing. S said she would have noticed the hip scar, but not the chest scars. It's interesting that the drawing from a year ago is a mirror-image and this one is just the opposite.

**August 2, 1988:** It is four years ago today that I had a hysterectomy.

Ironically, driving home from dinner with T, M, and our children, the topic came up. It was quite funny. Bonnie was talking about the money she'd inherited from her Dad's death. M asked her what we did with it. Bonnie, without hesitating, said, “Jason had a hysterectomy.” We all had a good laugh. Then T said, “Do you know how incongruent it is for me to think of you as a woman?” “Try it in my shoes,” I replied. We all laughed again.

I love being able to be free with who I am and where I started from. I remember that D (my first therapist) had told me that I was a “very congruent man.” I protested and mentioned the “so-called” feminine traits I had. She said that she knew many men like me. And then, of course, we had to talk about those traits. Not too surprisingly, I have many of the same traits as my Grandpa. He was a quiet, gentle, caring man. He loved Grandma more than life. Like I love Bonnie. But he was strong of will and character. And I am about the same size as him. Grandpa was and is my hero. He knew

*Having experienced being both a man and, although many years ago, a woman, I'm often asked how it feels to be a man, how it feel to be a woman. My response, always, is I don't know — what I do know is what it is like to be treated like both.*

.....  
the meaning of “Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing is so gentle as strength.”

**May 7, 1989:** Spencer came into my office today and gesturing at the wall, he said, “Dad, I don't get that.” I looked up and he was pointing at St. Frances de Sales', “Nothing is so strong....” Well, I was surprised to hear his voice. I was so busy working I'd not heard him. Sometimes it is still very strange to feel so safe. It feels so unnatural to not have a part of me lis-

tening, wary, anticipating, to not be closed down, to let my body be “off guard.” Yet, it is so comfortable. Anyway, I stopped and looked up and said, “Am I gentle?” He said, “Yes.” “Am I strong?” Midway through the last question he said, “Oh, I get it.” God, he's incredible. I am constantly amazed at his mind. He has taught me to see again. And he has helped me to let myself love me.

**January 15, 1992:** Having experienced being both a man and, although many years ago, a woman, I'm often asked how it feels to be a man, how it feel to be a woman. My response, always, is I don't know — what I do know is what it is like to be treated like both. What I feel like is a person who mostly identifies as a man, but occasionally-to-frequently recognizes the femaleness of myself— but then I must explain what I mean. Specifically, I can't divorce myself from the femaleness of certain parts of my body. More generally, I can't deny that some of my behaviors, manners, and even some of my thinking have been criticized as being female. I don't care anymore. I am satisfied with who and what I am.

**December 30, 1992:** Had dinner with S, M, D, and B tonight. We talked about various and sundry things. Among them: hormones, mastectomies, how far we are willing to let surgeons cut on us, how we identify ourselves, how these identities change over time, etc.

S said, “We have no culture, no role models, so we can be whatever we decide. We are the next generations' role models.” For this reason, it is important that we articulate our lives. We are constructing the meaning of our lives in multiple ways. None of us, at this point, wants genital surgery. We all agreed that having an anatomically “correct” penis was not what made us men. D said that for him, “It's spiritual. It comes from within me, not from outside.” I thought, but did not say, that what he calls “spirit” I call “energy.”

**March 26, 1993:** Part of the reason I came out of the closet and became



active in the gender community after being in the closet for 10 years was, in part, out of fear that someone was going to discover I'd once been female. Another reason had to do with the fact that the only person I could talk with was my wife. And although she is very understanding and extremely supportive, she admits

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*In spite of what every surgeon has ever told me, I have yet to see any surgery that can give me what the surgeon himself has, and until he can, I'm not interested. They can keep their neo-phallus, their penile implants and all their other so-called "phallic constructions." They may think that being a man means having a penis, but I have found that it doesn't.*

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that she can never really know how I feel. Especially during the times when I really wish that I had anatomical genitalia. Other FTMs can understand my feelings. I don't get obsessed with not having a penis. In fact, I think it is the least important thing about being a man. I just occasionally wish that I'd been born with male equipment. Usually, those feelings don't last long and I realize what a wonderful life I've had and what wonderful people I've met that I wouldn't have met if I'd been born male.

**May 24, 1993:** Part of the reason I came back into the TS community is because of an unsuccessful phalloplasty. I really felt the need of support at the time. I didn't really start becoming proud of who and what I am until I came out of the closet. Since then I have taken pride in being different. I wouldn't be the man I am had I not been born with a female body.

**July 7, 1994:** Looking over my journals and scraps of paper, I wish I had written more about the times I felt good about my body. But not less about the difficult times. It has been an interesting journey, "living in" this body. Unfortunately, I find it difficult to write when I feel good, happy, satisfied with life. It is always easier to express the anger and sadness, less easy to describe confusion. I always feels trite

and riddled with cliches when I write about the good times, the love, the tenderness, the comfort I have found in life.

In retrospect, I know that Bonnie and Spencer are inextricably a part of the process that has led to my comfort with life, with myself, and with my body. Both of them have helped me to

love me as I am, because they have always loved me for who and what I am. Somehow, in a way in which I cannot understand, Bonnie has always seen past my body's imperfections and seen me as a normal man. Bonnie and I consciously choose not to hide my body from Spencer. He knows that my body is not like his and that it never will be. In March at I.F.G.E. he was asked, "What's it like to have a transsexual as a Dad?" He replied, "It doesn't matter. He's just my Dad." For him, I am also normal. Their seeing me as such has helped me to see beyond my body.

Another turning point I can see or recall is when I came out and went to a support group. Meeting J, who was so like me, was an affirmation of who I was and what I had accomplished in my life. Everything I had read had made me feel as though I should be crazy. I wanted to go to the group for at least three years before I went. But the first group I'd gone to was anything but a support group. The facilitators were very indoctrinated into the mental illness model and most of the people in the group were on the verge of illness. In spite of my misgivings, I finally went. It was a comfort to be with others who had feelings similar to mine. I could relax and let the bad feelings go. Grousing with others about how non-others make you feel is like a deep breath slowly released. Doing so made me realize

that I wasn't crazy or confused, that the world was, and that I was right, they were wrong.

I'd read as much as I could get my hands on when I was young. I was appalled then, I was appalled 10 years ago, and I am appalled now. What surgical improvements there have been are insignificant and leave much to be desired. In spite of what every surgeon has ever told me, I have yet to see any surgery that can give me what the surgeon himself has, and until he can, I'm not interested. They can keep their neo-phallus, their penile implants and all their other so-called "phallic constructions." They may think that being a man means having a penis, but I have found that it doesn't. Penises are superficial. And until males learn that what they are is no more than a small part of their bodies which, comparatively, they rarely use, they will never be men.

I've always known who and what I am, ever since I was very young. I am not buying into stereotypes or living a fantasy. I do not need a penis or scrotum to prove I'm a man. I know at the core of my beingness that I am a man. What do they mean by telling me (and everyone else) that I have the "wrong body?" Excuse me, it's MY body. It's the one I was born with, only slightly altered. No more so than Michael Jackson or Phyllis Diller. But the difference is, my body doesn't have its surgeries out in public; no one needs know that breasts, uterus and related parts were removed. I can pass. It could be my secret (but look what it did to Billy Tipton). Many people in society are frightened by potential secrets—some so much so that they would rather you didn't exist and, if you do, pretend you're not what you are, or have yourself cured. I can't pretend. I tried when I tried to be a woman. And I AM cured. Finally, in my life, I feel whole. And, thinking so or writing it down does not elicit an immediate response of "except my body." At last it is my body, with scars, muscles, hair, and skin that tells a story about who and what I am: A man who began life with a female body. ♀♀

## Some FTM Resources

Note: For more complete information, contact FTM International or AEGIS, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033 (404) 939-0244.

### First (Inter)national FTM Conference

18-20 August, 1995  
c/o FTM International  
5337 College Avenue, #142  
San Francisco, CA 94618  
(510) 287-2646

### Support Groups

FTM International  
5337 College Avenue, #142  
San Francisco, CA 94618  
(510) 287-2646

East Coast Female-to-Male Group  
P.O. Box 60585  
Florence Station  
Northampton, MA 01060  
(413) 584-7616 (Bet Power)  
(617) 926-7691 (Lonnie)

Eden Society  
P.O. Box 1692  
Pompano Beach, FL 33061-9316  
(305) 784-9316

F to M Network  
Stephen Whittle  
BM Network  
London  
WGIN 3XX England  
s.t.whittle@mmu.ac.uk

### Prosthetics

Sensuous Skins  
P.O. Box 3547  
Conroe, TX 77031-3547  
(409) 539-3432

Creative Growth Enterprises  
Rhonnie Reed  
4480 Treat Blvd., Ste. 227  
Concord, CA 94521  
(510) 798-0922

Armand Hotimsky  
B.P. 37  
93320 Pavillons s/Bois  
France  
tel. 33-1-68.310.311

### Internet

AEGIS Electronic Mailing List  
majordomo@mindspring.com  
in 1st line of message, include the message  
subscribe aegis-list <your e-mail address>

soc.support.transgendered (USENET group)  
alt.transgendered (USENET group)

World Wide Web  
<http://www.ftm-intl.org>

### America On-Line

FTMnews@aol.com

### Surgeons

Michael Brownstein, MD  
Opera Plaza  
601 Van Ness, Ste. 2058  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 441-2777  
(Mastectomy, metadoioplasty)  
Dr. Brownstein also has an office in Montana

Stanley Laub, MD  
Gender Dysphoria Program, Inc.  
1515 El Camino Real  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
(Mastectomy, metadoioplasty, phalloplasty)

David A. Gilbert, MD., FRS(C), FACS  
Plastic Surgery Associates  
400 W. Brambleton Avenue, Ste. 300  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
(804) 622-7500  
(Mastectomy, metadoioplasty, phalloplasty)

Yvon Menard, MD, FRCS  
1003 Boulevard St. -Joseph, est.  
Montreal, Quebec  
H2J 1L2 Canada  
(514) 288-2097  
(Mastectomy)

Morton Slutsky, MD, PC  
993 Johnson Ferry Road  
Bldg. C, Ste. 215  
Atlanta, GA 303242  
(404) 256-4760  
(Mastectomy)

For information about British & other European surgeons, contact Stephen Whittle at Boy's Own.

## *Media Tells Only Part of a Story*

### *A Parent's Dilemma*

by Jerry Sousa

“FROM GAL TO GUY . . . TO GAL . . . TO GUY, 3 SEX CHANGES!” Thus reads the headline of my story in the August 21, 1990, *National Enquirer*. That was four years ago. Since then, I have questioned why I went public with such an intense personal struggle. After weighing the matter as carefully as I know how, my biggest regret is that the media, because of their constraints of time and space, can give only limited focus to what they feel is important. The *National Enquirer* and all the national “talk shows” I chose to appear on, were, I believe, fair in their presentations of the parts of my life they chose to focus on. They were, perhaps, a bit eager to play up the sensational . . . that, after all, increases their ratings! They also allowed me to share some real personal human tragedies, such as the death of my 18 year old son in 1988.

The estrangement of my two remaining children was the focus in 1992 of the “Geraldo” shows’ “Top Ten All Time Favorites.” Unbeknownst to me in advance, the “Geraldo” show brought my oldest daughter, Lori, from the Midwest to be reunited with me on the air in New York. I had not seen her for nearly two years, and she later told me she would never have seen me again had it not been for Geraldo. Lori had met Geraldo in 1989 when we appeared together on his show. At that time, I was presenting as a woman, clutching my Bible, and tearfully looking forward to the second coming of Christ and the resurrection morning when I would be reunited once more with my precious son. This belief was all that was keeping me alive then. I had returned to this belief in 1982 following the death of my lover of eight years, and the on-going life and death crises of my son as his kidneys gradually failed.

I grew up with a very fundamentalist Christian doctrine. My dad, well before my birth and until he retired at the age of 70, was a “hellfire and brimstone” evangelist minister with the Seventh Day Adventist church. Dad, because of his own unresolved family-of-origin issues combined with his basic temperament, was a fire-breathing rager at home, inflicting emotional and physical pain with his verbal and “corporal punishment” abuse. The wounds he inflicted were driven even deeper by his righteous justification of

his abuse, in which he claimed he was only doing what God wanted him to do as a father. After all, he rationalized, the Bible instructs parents to train their children in the way they should go and children are to obey their parents. Furthermore, the Ten Commandments exhort children to “honor” the father and mother. Since my perfectionistic father could never be pleased, only seemingly appeased through my pain and suffering, and since dad claimed to represent God on this earth, I came to believe this was God’s way. Given my religious upbringing and abusive childhood, in 1979, when my son Andy’s kidneys began to fail and my girlfriend, Jan, was diagnosed with breast cancer, I felt, therefore, these things were God’s punishment for my “sin” of becoming a man in 1969. Using this same line of “logic,” three years later when Jan died, I firmly believed Andy was next on God’s “hit list” unless I somehow appeased Him. The most punitive thing I could think of doing to myself was to return to presenting myself as a woman. One month after Jan died, this is exactly what I did. I fervently hoped this self-punishment of returning to my false selfhood I had created over the years prior to 1969 would quiet God’s wrath and spare the life of my son.

In a desperate attempt to reinforce my position I became a fervent born-again Christian. It was easy for me to become a religious addict; my dad had been a wonderful role model for this way of stuffing and denying internal pain. But in spite of my religious fervor, my hopes, and my adoption of a false self, my son died an incredibly horrifying death from complications of a doctor-supplied Demerol addiction. While, sadly, Andy’s death was from chemicals, I also was dying by denying my true self. Maybe one day when I’m emotionally ready to examine those agonizing years more closely, I will use writing as a final catharsis to heal my inner woundedness. Since I began dealing with the truth of my transsexualism in 1990, appearing on “talk shows” and talking to selected reporters has been therapeutic on a small scale.

To say that I didn’t begin to understand my transsexualism until the last four years would be a serious understatement! Both in early adulthood and again after I “found the Lord” in the mid-1980s, I went through periods of time believing that I was really a “lesbian.” In my ignorance, I believed that transsexualism was only  
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*Following Jan’s death in 1982, I was so frozen emotionally with unexpressed grief and coupled with the fear of losing Andy, I had lost all sexual feelings. In this situationally-induced asexual state, I could think and believe that God had delivered me from the “bondage” of homosexuality. So much did I believe this that I wrote a book, *Bailing out of Homosexuality*.*  
.....

an extreme acting out of “ego dystonic” homosexuality. Using the fundamentalist Christian’s interpretation of the Bible, this was not only unnatural, but a huge sin as well. Following Jan’s death in 1982, I was so frozen emotionally with unexpressed grief and fear of losing Andy, I had lost all sexual feelings. In this situationally induced asexual state, I could think and believe that God had delivered me from the “bondage” of homosexuality. So much did I believe this that I wrote a book, *Bailing out of Homosexuality*. My son designed the cover and the doctor-friend, who was supplying Andy with Demerol, paid for the publication of that sincere but sincerely misguided piece of literature. It actually came off the press a few weeks after Andy’s death, and I, still caught, as it were, in the loop of denial, “promoted” this book and all it stood for on “Geraldo” in 1989 with my daughter Lori. Several hundred copies of the this book were sold for a nominal amount or given away during that year.

In 1990, after returning to intensive psychotherapy, I read Dr. John Money’s book, *Gay, Straight and In-Between* (1988). My psychiatrist had given me the book, believing its contents might help me in my search for sexual identity. Although I found the book to be quite esoteric and academic in its approach, I nonetheless was brought face-to-face with issues of my denied, repressed, and disowned transsexualism. In reference to transsexualism or “gender cross-coding,” as Money terms it, he states that when “nature” (biology) and “nurture” (environment) “interact at a critical period, whether in prenatal or postnatal life” the results of this interaction “may be irreversible or immutable” (p. 87).

The emphasis on the words “irreversible” and “immutable” are mine, because they jumped out and hit me between the eyes. By then, mid-1990, I had found myself facing, once again, my “cross-coded” gender identity. After over nine years of total absorption in my son’s life and his on-going medical care (from 1979 to his death in 1988), my own issues had begun to resurface. I was panic-stricken! After the lengths to which I had gone to convince myself and others that “total healing” was possible, I was forcefully confronted with strong evidence to the contrary.

In time, with the unwavering support of a totally accepting, non-critical, and non-judgmental therapist, I began to slowly face the truth about myself in the area of my transsexualism—namely, that it had existed since earliest childhood and, indeed, still is part and parcel of who I am. In deference to my own inner truth, I had to ultimately begin moving away from my past faulty belief systems toward developing my authentic gendered self. It has been hard for me to understand and accept the truth—that regardless of my XX chromosomes and my female anatomy (prior to surgeries and the effects of male hormones), my psyche, my inner self is immutably male.

Finding myself chronologically in my early 50s with the emotional development of an adolescent, I decided to

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## *My Life as a Man*

*by Kitt Alexander*

*Resolve to be thyself;  
and know that he  
Who finds himself,  
loses his misery!*

*—Matthew Arnold  
Self-Dependence*

I've spent the better part of my life searching for who I am. This has been a long and often rocky path, but I am finally comforted in the knowledge that I am no longer walking this path alone. Perhaps, if I share this journey, others may have a bit of a map to assist them in their search.

All my life I felt like a stranger. Though I was well-liked and had friends, there was a deep well of emptiness inside me. Waking each morning and having to look in a mirror that reflected an image that was not mine led me to the edge of insanity. I did not understand what I was feeling, only that I was never comfortable with myself. Bouts of depression, drugs and alcohol, promiscuity, and a whole host of other self-destructive behaviors marked my life when I was young.

I tried to be as masculine as I could, forging new paths in the world around me. I was the first girl in my high school to take auto mechanics and the first to get kicked out of school for disobeying the dress code by wearing slacks. These things were done under the guise of "women's liberation," for I had no other outlet for expressing my masculinity. They were an assertion on my part (privately) that I was a guy. Just one of the guys. . . doing the "regular" stuff. Likewise my interest in sports: playing hockey and hours of practice in gymnastics.

I hung out with the guys and saw each of my early sexual experiences as conquests, just as the guys felt about each of the girls they made-out with. But, of course, I was labeled "easy," while they were proving their masculinity. We were really doing the same thing.

I was never happy in dresses or skirts. I tried to make myself as genderless as I could. I knew I couldn't pass for a boy, but I made furtive attempts at it. I remember when my hair was cut very short, around the age of 11, I would look in the mirror and try to figure out how to pass. Though I made some minor attempts at trying on womanhood, such as makeup and curlers, I was always left feeling non-committal. It wasn't really me.

I hated my name (Rose Charlotte)— it was too obviously feminine. At various times I tried out different names. Ricky and Chuck are two that come to mind.

After high school, I went into the Army. Part of the reason I wanted so desperately to go into the military was I saw it as a "masculine" thing to do. What better way to prove my machismo? Even though the Army did its best to make sure that the young WACs remained as feminine as possible, I was able to get around much of it by my choice of military specialty. In the end, though, the military turned out to be a great disappointment, for once again, I did not prove my strength and ability, but faced whispers of "dyke" and "slut." Funny how the very qualities in men are despised and belittled in women.

It goes on and on. The only time when things changed was when I hit age 27 or 28 and developed an overwhelming urge to become a parent. The nurturing side of me, which was very strong, really took over. My marriage 11 years ago was one of convenience: I wanted to have a child. My part-time lover (male) wanted to get married. He was 17 years older than me, had been married before, and had had a vasectomy. He convinced me to marry him by making all the arrangements for me to be inseminated at a local fertility clinic. My daughter was actually conceived the day that Ronald Reagan was shot. I had a dickens of a time leaving the clinic with all the Secret Service people and commotion going on. What a way to start!

Little did I know what a hassle things would be after I married him. I do not regret having had my daughter. She is truly the love of my life! This beautiful child is growing into a fabulous person, who I am proud to know. However, when my daughter was 18 months old, I left my ex-husband because of his abusive behavior. The divorce took eight years and I went through a lot of crap. He was just jerking my chain: He never wanted custody, but was pissed that I left. So I was fighting charges of "living in an open and notorious lesbian lifestyle that is detrimental to the health of the minor child." I won, but at a lot of expense. Thank goodness he didn't know yet about my dreams of gender change!

Reading everything I could get

my hands on, I really thought that if I could change my sex everything would be fine. But sex changes were only for the rich and famous, Christine Jorgensen and Renée Richards. And typically, there were no models of female-to-male transsexuals that I could find. So I lived as a bisexual woman.

It took finally meeting a woman in the gender community to open my eyes to the reality that real people can and do change their sex. Meeting Jessica was the answer to my many years of questioning. When we became comfortable talking with each other, I inundated her with questions. I poured out my soul to her, and she in turn gave me the sources of information that she had.

Here I am now, seven months into my transition, living my life as a man. Being *myself* for the first time in my life. Waking each morning, looking into the mirror and smiling. Admiring the guy who looks back at me. Reveling in the growth of hair on my face. Singing along with the music on the radio, but now as a tenor and not an alto. Touching the hardening muscles and joyously working out so that my body will continue to metamorphose into the man who was always there, waiting.

And I keep smiling, mentally recording the "firsts" in my new life. The first time I walked into a public rest room. The first time I was called "sir" by a store clerk. The first time someone didn't recognize my voice on the phone. And my first kiss as a man.

This can't be bad . . . it feels too good. But with the good comes the ugly—a few friends who no longer call, and worse, a family who made a small attempt to try to understand, but now seem to be working hard to ruin everything I've accomplished.

But they forget: I am a man now. And I won't be intimidated. My newfound sense of strength and inner peace will not be dimmed or extinguished. I will stand tall, square my shoulders and remind them, "This is the person you have raised me to be." And if they can't accept me as their son, at least *I* will know that I have resolved to be myself and I am letting go of my misery. ♀♂

## *Transgenderism: What is It?*

*By Alan*

*It is not about being trapped in the wrong body.*

*It is about being expected to live a lie.*

*It is not about sexuality but about gender identity.*

*It is not about being a feminine man or a masculine woman.*

*It is about one's gender identity being what it is.*

*It is not about preferences but basic truths.*

*It is not a decision but a discovery.*

*It is not a goal but a path.*

*It is not about trying to be different but about trying to be yourself.*

*Neither is it about trying to conform or to hide but about honoring one's difference.*

*It is not a modern phenomenon created by medical technology.*

*It is a persistent pattern within nature and human cultures that, in a technological society, has evolved to fit the times.*

*It is not a pathology but a cultural reality. Healthy cultures have never had a problem with it; sick societies obsess on labeling the unusual as sick without ever understanding the real pathology is the aversion to difference.*

*It is about the subtle and myriad aspects of human diversity. It is about biological realities which science has only begun to discover and try to name.*

*It is about getting one's insides, the core identity, and one's outsides, the biological and social package, to match.*

*It is not about splitting one's self but about finding integrity and wholeness.*

*It is not about being cursed but being blessed. ♀♂*

*Max is a founder of The Eden Society and editor of Eden News. He is also chair of the Transsexual program for the 1995 Southern Comfort.*

## *Roll With the Changes*

*by Maxwell Anderson*

**S**exual identity and gender identity are, I feel, as similar as apples and oranges. While the former defines who and what we prefer, the latter is a blueprint of who and what we are. When the Standards of Care were written, they were designed with the assumption that all transsexuals are heterosexual in nature. It is now known this isn't always the case. Some transsexuals identify as gay or lesbian, and many identify as bisexual. And for many, as in my case, our sexual identities have shifted throughout our transitions.

Eight years ago I walked into a gay bar in Chicago. Like so many others before me, I fell into the gay scene early on. When you have a female body and you're attracted to women, you are generally seen as gay. It doesn't matter that you identify as male gendered; as long as your body is female, most in society will see you as a homosexual woman. Thusly, I rounded my corners just enough to fit into a faction which would accept me most readily.

I met my significant other in that bar on that night. There was an immediate mutual attraction, and we have been together ever since. We've had our share of ups and downs, and we fight, as all couples do. But no matter what happens, we've always been there for each other.

I've always been the man in our family, so after I finally mustered the courage to admit my transsexualism, it didn't seem to come as much of a surprise to my partner. She took it so well. Actually, she accepted this knowledge better than I did; the first step, admission, is always the hardest.

From day one, when I told her, I was Max. She always referred to me as "him." From the very beginning she had no problems with pronouns or with my transition. I count myself extremely lucky.

I had been living full-time as a man for almost three years when Karen and I decided to marry. We had moved from Chicago to Fort Lauderdale, and shortly after arriving in Florida, I'd had all my identification updated to "male." So, in Florida, we could legally obtain a marriage license. We were legally married in a small but beautiful ceremony (with an outrageous reception afterwards) in September, 1991.

Throughout our eight years together, I've acted as the typical man and I admit that I have been somewhat selfish. My transition has eaten up much of our money, and a lot of time has been spent on my feelings and my emotions. I'm not necessarily self-absorbed, but I'm not very observant either. I never saw how all of this affected Karen. I never noticed how unhappy she was at times or how depressed she could get. Most of all, I didn't understand

how my transition could bother her so much, when in the beginning, she had handled everything so well.

It never dawned on me that Karen was experiencing a gender conflict of her own. I had thought to myself, "She couldn't possibly be jealous of the emotional and physical transformations I've been going through." I was wrong. Not that she was jealous, but instead, envious. How was I to know that every physiological change I experienced was one that she wished for herself?

Just as it took courage for me to admit my condition, it took even more for Karen (now Jake). I have not been as good about accepting Jake's transition as he was with mine. I screw up pronouns constantly. I have to make a conscious effort to think before speaking. It hasn't come as naturally as it did to Jake.

Our relationship has definitely taken some interesting twists. We have lived as lesbians, as husband and wife, and now as two gay (I prefer "bisexual") men. Jake and I are going to stay together. My transition has brought forth new realizations about me and my sexual identity. We are still growing and learning about ourselves and each other. After eight years, we still have a lot of growing to do, and I thank God that Jake and I are doing it together.

If you find that in your own transition, your desires or sexual preferences have shifted or altered, don't feel that this is unusual, because it isn't. Although my story may be unique in its own way, there are others with very similar tales to tell.

We are offered a wide spectrum of choices in our lives, and in the transgender community this is no different. We each lead our own lives, drawing daily from a palette of variety and alternatives. Our sexual identity is just one aspect of our lives. As we grow and change, this too may warrant alteration. I've learned to stop worrying about it. As for Jake, he likes to quote from one of his favorite REO Speedwagon songs: "I'll be here when you are ready to roll with the changes." ♣

## *Surgery Doesn't Always Make the Man*

*by Maxwell Anderson*

A few years back, a friend made the following comment: "Because I am willing to take short cuts, because I will use and abuse and manipulate anyone to get what I want, that shows that I want it more than you do." He was talking, of course, about surgery.

I was outraged at first, then insulted. Who did he think he was to make such a ludicrous statement? Surgery was his answer, his solution for all the problems of his life. Once his body parts were altered, he thought, he would be perfect.

That same day, however, he told me about an experience he had had only the night before: he'd gone to a nightclub, and after seeing a pretty woman and trying to "pick her up," he was read. She actually laughed at the sock in his pants. He also confided to me that a barber had refused to cut his hair because he did "not do women."

What I was hearing from him was, "When I have surgery I'll be a man, and no one will laugh at me. In order to have my surgery, I'll do whatever it takes."

As transsexuals, we all make sacrifices to afford the costs of our transitions. BUT: "Whatever it takes" should not include deception of any kind. We should not lie to obtain

hormones and falsify documents for physicians or surgeons. We shouldn't go to doctors who will do anything for the Almighty Buck. Most importantly, we must never believe that sex reassignment surgery will cure our every ill.

Too many of us fall into the line of thinking that we cannot pass in everyday society without hormones and surgery. Unfortunately, many also believe that without having basic surgery quickly, we will always be read. I personally believe this to be ridiculous. I have lived as a man for more than four years and I have not been read despite the fact that I have had no surgery.

I did not "become" a man when I started hormone therapy, or when I legally changed my name. My friends did not "become" men when they had their breasts removed, or when they had hysterectomies, or genitoplasty, or even phalloplasty. They were already men. I was already a man.

I have been on hormones for four years. I have not had any surgery yet because of finances, but I am proud to say I am not questioned in my everyday world. I am confident in my gender, and this is what people see. I recently attended a gender conference and received a great compliment: A nontransgendered man asked me why I was there. He thought I was nontransgendered, too. And while I may not be a genetic man, I most certainly am a man. ♣

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## *Presentation for Law Conference*

*by Michael M. Hernandez*

I have been asked to discuss the FTM perspective. As we run the gamut of human existence, coming from all walks of life, races, sexual orientations and spiritualities, you can see what a difficult and broad topic this is. Some of us prefer to be called FTM, while others prefer the term transgendered. Some of us are homosexual, some bisexual, some heterosexual. In some cases, we are asexual. Some of us require strict adherence to the “proper” gender pronouns. Some could care less. Some believe that we are strictly male and there is no room for anything else in us. Some believe that we are all of both and neither of either. A walking contradiction.\* A third gender, so to speak, pioneers in our own fashion, navigating the waters of a turbulent bipolar society, where you are forced to choose the gender box that you will reside in.

In a sense, women have an advantage over men. There is broader latitude when it comes to the expression of emotions and the choice of clothing. For the most part, no one thinks twice about a woman buying a man’s shirt, but a man in the lingerie department is outrageous, whether or not he is there to shop for his girlfriend, wife, or mistress. Ask any MTF about her first experience purchasing clothing or accessories during her initial transition. The muted comments, stares, and murmurs of disapproval rudely loud enough to hear, but not brazen enough to be clearly asserted. Whereas for the majority of us, the experience was, “What can I do for you, young man? Will you be using your mother’s credit card or your own?”

What we tend to forget is that for every freedom there is a cost. To a greater degree there are disadvantages for women such as lower wages, discrimination, clothing and accessories that are more expensive and less durable. There is also the added fear for personal safety. However, women are able to express affection without stigma. They touch each other from time to time. They are able to hug when they meet and preserve their semblance of sexual identity. There are no hushed whispers of “lesbos.” No one will look twice at the two elderly matrons dancing at a wedding together. That feeling of “oh, how cute” would implode immediately if they were two men.

I practiced law as a woman for four years. In that time, I was required to wear pantyhose and heels, a business suit or skirt, and a blouse to work every day, just in case I needed to go to court in an emergency. I noticed that I

*\*When I came across this phrase while editing Michael’s article, I was immediately transported back to the ’70s—a scary thought, to be sure. Those of you who were fans of Kris Kristofferson may remember these lines:*

*He’s a walking contradiction  
Partly truth and partly fiction  
Takin’ every wrong direction  
on his lonely way back home.*

*Kris said that when he wrote those words, he was thinking of a number of folks, including Jerry Jeff Walker, Chris Gantry (who I always wondered about), and Ramblin’ Jack Elliott. But maybe they describe a lot of us, MTF and FTM alike—Dallas*

was replacing three to four pairs of shoes every six months. It was more expensive to launder my blouses. (Digressing from the point, has anybody been able to figure out why women's blouses cost more than men's shirts to launder? They use the same soap, same washing machine, and same press. For the most part, starch is not requested. It's the same material, and often of smaller dimensions. It seems to me that women's blouses should be cheaper to launder.) Generally "ladies" suits lasted a couple of years before they started falling apart. Pantyhose purchases had a life unto themselves. Inevitably, I ruined a pair every three days. That is, if I was lucky.

As a man, my suits are more expensive, but have lasted far longer. My shirts cost less to launder. My shoes have not yet needed to be resoled. In short, I am spending less money for more durable goods. I don't buy the argument that women are more fashion conscious and that their clothes are made with that in mind. I have known men who are far greater clothes horses and could care less that fashion changes. They just go out and buy the current threads. However, the price paid by men for their relative freedoms is a rigid code of behavior. Real men don't cry, don't eat quiche, and certainly don't discuss anything which could be perceived as a sign of weakness by their so-called brothers. Male bonding consists of slapping each other on the back and making off-color jokes to hide the fact that they even touched. God help you if that hello hug is not accompanied by a couple of hearty slaps. By this little ritual, they are able to avoid the specter of homosexuality. What is absolutely bizarre about all of this is that a sexually aroused male can, within reason, be convinced to try something that smacks of homoeroticism. Women are more circumspect when it comes to crossing this line, yet they are freer with their affections.

I believe that little by little the stereotypical role model of what is appropriate behavior is changing. With the advent of the men's move-

ment, there is some progress being made in this regard. More opportunities are becoming available for men to have the opportunity to discuss what ails them without being pounded into the sand for being weak or a "sissy." For women, the struggle is still being fought slowly and painstakingly. There is no forward motion to terminate the wage or other disparities which exist.

As transgendered individuals, we have had the opportunity to experience both sides of the fence. Whether FTMs choose to acknowledge it or not, we did walk on this earth being perceived as women in some way, shape, or form. As such, we have experienced discrimination, whether obvious or overt. We can and should help change this world and this society by not falling into the macho-man, back-slapping, tobacco-spitting, beer-guzzling syndrome. We can and should speak out when women are being demeaned or marginalized. We can and should refuse to out-spit, out-piss, or out-screw our biological male counterparts. We have the ability to disagree with the opinions of other men without being less manly or "discovered."

We must keep in mind that our way is not always right for someone else, that for every opinion we have, there is someone with a contrary one. Each one is based on a different set of experiences and has its own validity. Instead of getting angry, invalidating the opinions or beliefs of others, and inflaming passions on both sides, we need to take a deep breath and hear each other out, and in the worst-case scenario, agree to disagree. We must each walk the path of our own choice, whether it be straight, narrow, curvy, or uphill at a 90-degree angle.

We can cry, and laugh, and talk about our fears with at least one person, whether it be a friend, lover, or a member of our community, or, for those of us who are less fortunate, with a therapist, or in the modern age, by plugging into cyberspace.

In a sense, we are sexual outlaws forging a new frontier. The absence of clearly defined transgender role mod-

els permits us to define who we are, who we sleep with, and whom we love. We get to decide what behaviors are acceptable for us, so long as we spew the appropriate catch phrases to the medical providers who have the power to stop us in our tracks.

By the same token, the lack of role models results in the lack of a frame of reference within which to work. We have more options than we did in the '40s and '50s. We should avail ourselves of these freedoms and benefits. How, you ask? By coming out.

I can see the sweat beading on many faces when I used that phrase. What does coming out mean?

The first closet that I subsisted in was as a lesbian. I had my doubts about my sexuality and called a high school friend who had "come out" during our senior year. I asked her if she thought that I was a dyke. She laughed and basically told me that only by sleeping with women would I be able to answer that question for myself. While at the time that advice was the most aggravating and frustrating thing that I had ever heard, I later realized she was teaching me one of the most important lessons I could ever learn. It was what I thought and felt that was important. To live my life by anyone else's standard would doom any happiness that I could ever hope to achieve.

In short order, I followed her advice. I proceeded to jump out of the closet, boldly asserted to the world who I was in my best Ethel Merman voice, and proceeded to slam the door shut so hard and fast that it shattered into splinters behind me. What can I say? Youth is wasted on the young.

I was working at a prestigious law firm in Beverly Hills at the time, and wouldn't you know it, not only did they fail to offer me a job after passing the bar exam, they tried to fire me 30 days before it. The fact that I was working 60 hours a week on a salary with no overtime pay or comp time and going to school at night conveniently slipped their minds. Fortunately, I convinced them to let me stay until my results came in. It was at this time that I realized that the splinters from the

shattered closet door were lodged in the back of my head. Needless to say, I had them painstakingly removed.

I knew in my heart that I had been and was being discriminated against, but could never prove it. That experience taught me caution, if nothing else. So why am I here, even suggesting that you come out?

Because you can make the difference for all of us. No one is suggesting that you wear a sign stating that you are transgendered. You don't have to leap out of the closet or even come out for very long. You don't even have to turn on the light if you don't want to. Just start by opening the door.

If and when you feel comfortable, stick your head out and look around a bit. If you need to go back in and close the door, then fine, do that. For the most part, people tend to view coming out as an extreme process. The image of a deer frozen and thereby trapped in the lights of an oncoming car comes to mind. If you want it to be this way it can, but it does not have to be.

By starting the road to transition, you have, in essence, come out to yourselves, which is the first step. If you have started taking hormones you have come out to your medical providers. If you have had to go to the Department of Motor Vehicles to change the gender on your driver's license you have come out to them too. The point that I am trying to make is that every day that we live and breathe we come out to some degree. Paul Monet, a gay writer, said "When you finally come out, there is a pain that stops, and you know that it will never hurt like that again, no matter how bad you lose or how bad you die."

Coming out is not the end-all and be-all to happiness. No one is suggesting that you will be teleported to a Disneyesque setting where birds chirp all the live-long day and the "bad guys" never win. Quite the contrary, there is vulnerability and associated risks. But what are the options if you stay in the closet?

Closets are musty and reek of fear: the fear of discovery, of humiliation, of

fear for our personal safety in the world. Whether or not we choose to see it, the closet communicates to others that we are ashamed of who we are or who we once were. So, you see, closets portray an illusion of safety, but in actuality they are not. There is no lock on the door. People who want to hurt us either physically or emotionally can smell that fear and sense that shame. By being out, the impression that we have no fear is conveyed, whether it is true or not. I can illustrate this perfectly.

I would conclude that at least a majority of you think or have at some point since I started this speech concluded that I have no fear of public speaking. This impression is totally false. See, you too can fool the world to a certain degree.

In this day and age, with the religious right closing in around us, we cannot wait for the world to change so we are accepted. I have permission from the author, S. Gardner, to read the following passage to you which, by the way, is stated better than I could have ever written it:

*I was waiting patiently for 39 years then I got tired of waiting. Ten years ago, I would never have dreamed of sharing my thoughts on this subject with even my closest family members, let alone total strangers. I would never have dreamed of being so bold as to openly buy my own skirts and blouses in stores. Now I know I can't wait for society. I have to take some small action myself. We all do. We all have to do what we can to help ourselves and to help others to have the courage to change society's perceptions of men and women. When I began to question my own situation with respect to my gender and my role, the thing that really haunted me was not my own pain (which was nevertheless real), but instead my complicity with the infliction of pain on others. If I didn't start to make some minor moves to help move the rock off our chests, how could I look in the mirror? Then I read Signorile's *Queer in America*, and realized how far ahead the non-transgendered gay movement is and how much happier life is for*

*gays now than it was in the fifties when I was born. I realized how much life has changed for gays, and I saw how much it could change for us if we only began the small steps now that will lead to major change in a few years. I vowed to never answer any questions about my transgendered status with a lie — ever. I wouldn't rub anyone's nose (yet) in my gender, but won't lie now either. It was a very liberating experience, and the joy continues. Every day, I get a little bolder about letting others know who I am and why, and that makes me feel so relieved. Closets kill and closets make other closets. I realize now that I am not the only one in my closet — my closet also helps imprison others in their closets, and every crack I back from my own closet door lets light into a million other closets.*

We cannot sit back and rely on the talk shows to portray us in an appropriate or favorable light. While it is good that we are garnering greater visibility through the media, the media cannot be trusted. Their goal is different than ours. We are not concerned about how many papers are sold or what the ratings are. What does concern us is that we do not have the same basic inalienable rights and freedoms others enjoy. We are not free from discrimination in housing, employment, or any facet of life. This is slowly changing. We want to be treated with the same level of decency and respect as anyone else. Not as a bunch of sideshow freaks. If we sit back and wait for it to happen, our persecution will continue and more than likely increase.

There is a famous quote by Martin Niemöller: "In Germany, they came first for the communists and I did not speak up because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I did not speak up because I was Protestant. When they came for me, there was no one left to speak up." What that sentiment illustrates to me is

that not only do we have a duty to get involved, but that we cannot rely on others to speak out for us or to protect us.

We cannot rely solely on the gay, lesbian and/or bisexual communities to do our work for us when they are busy ostracizing their own because of a purported "negative image." This includes drag queens, crossdressers, transgendered individuals, and anyone not in line with the Izod shirt, Banana Republic chino pant, penny loafer, Wonder Bread image.

While a faction of the gay community is willing to embrace us with open arms, an even more vocal faction would like us to bury our heads in the sand. We are told to wait by the sidelines while they garner support and gain acceptance. Then and only then should we step in. I don't trust this any more than someone who starts their sentence with "honestly," and then expects me to believe the remainder of whatever they are telling me.

It has taken the gay and lesbian community 25 years to even get close to legal protection. If we agree to wait by the sidelines it will take longer than 25 years to get where they are today.

By coming out, whether globally or on an individual basis, we touch people's lives. By being honest and open about ourselves, we educate others that we are no different from them, irrespective of our unique qualities. It is easier to disparage and destroy that which is not close to you. In other words, distance and dehumanization make us easier to obliterate, and therefore constitutes the greater threat to our existence.

### *Political Activism*

I used to believe that being political meant going out on a limb, that politics involved long meetings with lots of arguments, and nothing being accomplished. Of promises made and broken only to be resolved with a lot of last-minute scrambling by the same few people to get the conference or newsletter or event together at the last minute. That politics involved a

lot of pain and sacrifice. I deluded myself into believing that because I no longer do any of those things, I am not political.

Fortunately, someone with a very large needle burst this bubble. Talking to people is political in nature. Telling someone your story or aspects of your journey in transitioning is political. Every time we stand up in front of one person or many and say "Hey, this is what life is about for me," we are being political. This work, in addition to all of the other work, must be done. We must find our own niches and ways to help and be supportive of our fight for civil rights.

You can get involved without coming out. You don't have to be transgendered to write your congressman or senator. You can write an article anonymously and present it for publication to *Tapestry*, *Chrysalis*, *FTM Newsletter* or any other publication. You can write anonymous letters to the editor. You can stuff mailing envelopes, donate money or time to one of our organizations. You can post your thoughts, opinions, or advice to others on the Internet, and in that fashion make it easier for someone else to come out or to start thinking about us in a different light.

### *Rift in the Community*

There presently exists a rift between MTF and FTM communities. This is not due to transgressions or bad blood. The rift is gradually becoming smaller, but exists nonetheless. I believe that this stems in part from the bi-polar nature of the society in which we live. The world forces you to choose what box you will live in — male or female. There are only two spaces available on motor vehicle forms, credit applications, insurance forms, medical histories and the like. There is no box marked "other," "both," or "neither." Even in our own community, gender ambiguity is a no-no. It's no wonder that we are persecuted. We make people uncomfortable. This is another reason why talking to other people is imperative.

In essence, transition involves rejection of the prior self both overtly and subliminally. This is further compounded by that ever familiar pre-op body image discomfort. I have known FTMs who have said, "Why would anyone want to be female? The pantyhose, the makeup, the dreaded heels, the pressure to be feminine!" Don't laugh. There are MTF's who have expressed that testosterone is poison.

While I have no desire whatsoever to be feminine, I cannot deny that the look of a feminine woman is — well — more than just appealing. Without invoking my 5th amendment rights, I freely and voluntarily admit that a shapely pair of legs in black stockings can render me speechless on the spot. My desire to be masculine does not preclude my appreciation of femininity.

Also, I have noticed a trend among FTMs to leave the community after they have completed transition. I myself, although still in transition, have not been around at all this past year. Please do not take my prior statement as a slight. If it weren't for the few FTMs who have stayed and heard the same questions and dilemmas a million times, I would not be here before you tonight.

MTFs, on the other hand, tend to stick around, continuing to get and give support. I have not quite figured out why this is. Part of it may be that MTFs have more information to absorb than we do. Let's face it, learning how to apply makeup properly is much more difficult than learning to knot a tie. I have tried to walk in heels before and can tell you it's an art form I never was able to master.

The fact that there are fewer FTMs around to interact with each other also means that there are less of us around to interact with MTFs. I have no clear solution as to how to narrow the rift. Conferences such as this one and IFGE's "Coming Together, Working Together" provide a place and opportunity for us to interact and work toward a common goal.

Life is too bloody short. If it feels good, and in your heart is right, do it. Don't live to work. Work that you may live. ♀

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## Getting Real About FTM Surgery

by James Green

*Because of limitations in our equipment, and because quality reproductions were not available, we were unable to reproduce all of the figures James submitted with this article. We urge those who are considering surgery to consult some of the journals James has referenced, in order to see some very illustrative photographs and drawings of female-to-male surgeries (good and bad). They can be found in most medical libraries.*

**S**o, you're thinking of having a "sex change" operation. You've thought about it for years. You know that it's possible and that people do it every day. You've been to doctors and a therapist or two, and they've "OK'd" you for hormones; your body's been changing, you've been cross-living, and it seems like everything in your life has been leading up to the moment when you can get your surgery and be done with all this transitional stuff, get on with living your life as a man.

First of all, let's get this straight: there's no such thing as a sex change operation, at least not for FTMs. There's hormone treatment, and that goes on for the rest of your life. Then there's "top" surgery: a bilateral mastectomy and contouring of the chest. Then there's "bottom" surgery: genital reconstruction. It takes years to go through this transition, to master the changes each step of the way. And that's without taking money into consideration: each step costs money that can take years to accumulate.

Among candidates for FTM transition, there is considerable confusion about the physical benefits and limitations of each type of FTM surgery available today. This article is intended to clarify the advantages and disadvantages associated with these procedures so people who identify as FTMs can make educated decisions about how to alter their bodies.

Make no mistake, once you undergo one of these surgical procedures you have altered your body. The skin will experience a wound. At that site, your body will never be the same as it was before. Sure, I know that's what you want: you want a flat, muscular chest, and you want a penis. You also probably want the perfect male body, scarless and well-hung. I hope you can achieve it, but don't say I didn't warn you.

Before you go in for surgery you have some homework to do. First you must understand your own body. You must know what you want it to be when the surgeon's finished, and you must be realistic about what your body is before you enter the surgical suite. Your body may never live up to your self-image, no matter who your surgeon is or how much money you have. The surgeon works with flesh, and we have to acknowledge that the flesh we bring in is our own, and it may not present the ideal working conditions for the

surgeon. Second, you must understand the surgeon's techniques so you can discuss with him or her your desired outcome and have some idea of what to expect to see and feel when you wake up from the anesthesia. You must select your surgeon based on his or her reputation (i.e., results: talk to as many other FTMs as you can) and on your instincts: if you don't feel comfortable with a surgeon when you're awake, are you going to trust him or her when you're unconscious? You should also find out directly from each surgeon how he or she approaches the various difficulties that may be encountered in each procedure. And last, but not least, get yourself into the best possible physical shape before surgery to assist your surgeon in shaping your body and to aid in your own healing. All the surgeries described in this article are invasive procedures performed under general anesthesia. Ask your doctor about the risks associated with surgery in general as well as with specific procedures. And remember that nothing in this article is intended as medical advice, just as information to equip you to discuss issues with physicians.

Let's start at the top to review surgical techniques. After years of contact with scores of FTMs and asking questions, I've observed that there appear to be four primary techniques used in removal of the breast: keyhole, drawstring, pie wedge, and double incision. Your surgeon may employ one or more of these techniques. He or she will evaluate your body and recommend the surgical technique that will best remove the breast tissue and allow for proper contouring of the chest wall to maximize masculine appearance.

If you have very small breasts, that is, *VERY* small ('A' cup or smaller), your surgeon may recommend the keyhole or drawstring techniques. These methods leave little or no noticeable scarring, but will not yield the desired results if breasts are larger than A size or if the breast tissue extends close to the armpit. When performing a keyhole procedure, the surgeon makes an inci-

sion around the areolar ring, inserts a liposuction device, and vacuums out the fatty tissue comprising the breast. With this technique, the mammary glands are usually left intact. Drawbacks are that small deposits of fatty tissue may remain in the chest (this can be reduced by a technique called feathering), or the finished areola (after sealing the incision site) may be too large in comparison with the typical male chest. Advantages are little or no apparent scarring and retention of nipple sensation (*see fig. 1*). Likewise with the drawstring technique, in which the areolar ring is lifted away without disconnecting the nerves, the breast and fatty tissue is scooped or suctioned out, the excess skin is trimmed and then pulled taut toward the center of the opening like a drawstring bag, and the nipple is reattached covering the opening. Disadvantages are the same as for keyhole above, plus the nipple placement may be unnaturally low on the chest. With either of these two procedures, if the breast is too large the result will be unsatisfactory due to puckering, poor nipple placement, or overly large nipple size. If your surgeon says these procedures won't work for you, it is not a conspiracy; he or she really means it!

The pie wedge technique creates a scar from the outer edge of each nipple toward the underarm, or sometimes straight down from the nipple. Usually this procedure is done with small to medium breasts. Many FTMs are dissatisfied with the appearance of the scars because they are so symmetrical and obviously breast-related.

The most common technique for FTM breast removal is the double incision. In this procedure, each breast is opened horizontally across the chest below the nipple. The top panel of skin is peeled back to expose the chest muscle wall, and the breast and fatty tissue is cut and scraped away. The top skin panel is then brought down smooth and the skin is trimmed and sutured to the lower panel at the incision. One nipple is reserved for later use, and the other is discarded along with the extraneous skin; or,

both nipples may be retained. The nipple in reserve is used to form both new nipples (or the two original nipples are trimmed), and are then grafted into place. Surgeons have varying techniques for shaping and placing nipples; be sure to look at photos of former patients (or see them in person, if possible) and discuss his or her technique with your surgeon before surgery. This procedure leaves a long horizontal scar (*see fig. 2*), and depending on the shape of the original breasts and the surgeon's technique, the scar may also form a 'W' shape, which displeases some FTMs. Proper muscle development after healing may hide the scars beneath the pectoral fold. Disadvantages are loss of nipple sensation and scarring, though some nipple sensation may return over a period of months or years, and some FTMs are not disturbed by the scars, which may be covered by hair, or may appear as if caused by an accident or some other medical condition such as a collapsed lung. Another disadvantage may be dissatisfaction with nipple size, shape, appearance or placement. However, this method offers the most thorough removal of breast and fatty tissue because the chest wall is well-exposed.

For FTMs, bilateral mastectomy is usually performed as an outpatient procedure. This reduces costs, and also acknowledges the fact that we are usually quite happy to have this surgery, and our optimistic attitude aids in our rapid healing. The costs for "top" surgery range from \$1800 to \$6500, depending on your surgeon's fees and operating room expenses associated with the technique he or she will use. The procedure usually requires two to three weeks rest, and limited pectoral and shoulder activity for a period of up to three months. Time off from work varies from two to six weeks.

The bottom line when it comes to "top" surgery is that no surgeon can give you the chest you should have been born with. Everyone's skin and tissue type and composition is different; even using the same surgeon,

no two FTMs will have identical results. Regardless of which technique is used, you may require follow-up or touch-up procedures to clean up any residual fatty tissue, puckering, or excessive scarring. And while you may have that great looking chest when you're dressed, you may always have a sensation in your skin that there was a wound, especially if the incision was a large one. For more information on "top" surgery, see the article "Creation of a Male Chest in Female Transsexuals" by W.R. Lindsay, *Annals of Plastic Surgery*, 1979, 3(1), 39-46.

The bottom line with "bottom" surgery is no surgeon can give you the penis you should have been born with. So what's the reason for having genital reconstruction at all? Well, some FTMs think there is no acceptable reason to have "bottom" surgery. And some FTMs want desperately to have their bodies altered so they can have "male" sex, or get their new birth certificate, get married, or be legally male. And some are just afraid of being caught with female genitalia, with nothing in their crotch, or caught sitting in a toilet stall, unable to urinate while standing. Some are afraid of being perceived as female, or discovered to be a woman "after all" (because everybody "knows" genitals are the final arbiter of identity). There are a lot of reasons to have lower surgery, not the least of which is the desire to have one's entire body match one's identity. But genital reconstruction is a lot more expensive and riskier than a bilateral mastectomy. There are far fewer surgeons who are willing to perform genital reconstruction, and fewer still who are truly good at it.

Genital reconstruction falls into two basic types: phalloplasty and metoidioplasty, (*also written as meta-doioplasty; see end note, p. 32*). The term "genitoplasty" is also, erroneously, used to refer to this type of surgery: technically, genitoplasty is any genital surgery, not necessarily limited to the creation of male genitals out of female genitals, which is, technically, metoidioplasty.

The first type of phalloplasty, developed in the first half of this cen-

tury, was the Gillies abdominal tube, in which a flap of abdominal skin is rolled into a tube and left hanging like a flaccid organ. Early phalloplasty techniques were originally pioneered to treat men whose penises were lost by traumatic amputation in war or industrial accidents, and were first applied to FTMs (as far as we know) in 1948. Some FTMs have postulated that there is a conspiracy against us by the surgeons, that they aren't trying hard enough to give us a good penis because they don't care about us, but the truth is that the same problems in creating a penis apply to us as to any other penisless man.

Dr. Gillies worked later with Dr. Maltz to develop the "tube-within-a-tube" phalloplasty to provide for a urinary canal, which has proven not terribly effective due to the frequent complications of fistulae (leaks) or strictures (blockages) in the urinary passage. Maltz also developed the "suitcase handle" technique, in which the rolled tube of skin is left attached top and bottom on the abdomen for six weeks to ensure adequate blood supply to the neo-phallus, then the upper attachment is severed and the "handle" swung down over the clitoral base. This improvement resulted in better retention of the neophallus, which otherwise was prone to wither and fall off!

These early-style phalloplasties (which many surgeons still perform) require the use of a stent (silicone rod stiffener) inserted in the shaft to achieve erection. The neophallus has no feeling and usually does not have a very natural appearance. Some surgeons leave the female genitalia completely intact, and some will attempt the formation of the scrotum using a pouch of abdominal tissue beneath the neophallus, still leaving the male genitalia perched on the lower belly above the female genitalia. Still, other surgeons may be more adept using these techniques than the examples I have seen in real life.

The more contemporary phalloplasty technique is called the free tissue flap transfer (FIFT). This technique has been made possible by the

advent of microsurgery, and the development of the fine art of connecting dissimilar nerves. Using a flap of skin and muscle tissue from the forearm, groin, or thigh, this flap is transferred with its existing nerves and blood vessels to the groin area, and the nerves and blood vessels are connected microscurgically to the nerves and blood vessels of the groin, e.g., the brachial nerve of the forearm is connected to the pudendal nerve (*see fig. 3*). Note that the head of the clitoris is removed to provide access to the pudendal nerve (the nerve providing erotic sensation). This results in a penis that may have feeling, but is not capable of achieving or sustaining an erection. Although implants are available to achieve erection, they have so far proven to be problematic due to infections, rejection by the body, and extrusion and intrusion. Without an implant, a stent is required to erect the shaft of the neophallus. This penis still may not have a natural appearance; in fact, with all phalloplasties, the sculpting of the glans leaves much to be desired, and it is usually this feature that exposes the organ as one that has been artificially constructed (*see fig. 4*).

The advantages of FIFT are that new microsurgical techniques can provide a phallus with erotic sensation, and one that is closer in size to that of the average genetic male penis, as well as providing for urinary extension. The risks, though, are many: damage to the remaining nerves of the donor site, damage to the pudendal nerve of the groin resulting in a numb organ, death of the graft, loss of function in the donor site, and the frequent development of fistulae or strictures in the urinary passage. And there are disadvantages, too: the inability to achieve or sustain an erection without a stent or an implant; excessive donor site scarring; the fact that these procedures usually require multiple revisions, and may be aesthetically inferior; and there is severe pain and discomfort associated with the donor sites as well as the groin area. Also, for most FTMs, FIFT is cost prohibitive, ranging from \$50,000 to

\$150,000, plus months—or even years—spent in recovery and/or revisions.

An FTM's natural advantage over a penisless man is the clitoris. Dr. Bouman in The Netherlands and Dr. Laub in the U.S. recognized this in the 1970s and independently (and virtually simultaneously) developed the metoidioplasty technique, which is the only type of genital reconstruction that actually transforms the female genitalia into male-appearing organs (*see fig. 5*). Providing there has been sufficient clitoral growth induced by testosterone, the closest approximation to a typically-sized adult male penis is achieved with a clitoral release (the severing of the suspensory ligaments that hold the clitoris in a position where it is tucked under the pubic bone). The clitoral release effectively gives the FTM a micropenis, a naturally occurring condition among roughly 5% of male-bodied individuals. More length can be obtained once the suspensory ligaments are cut by the surgeon proceeding beneath the pubic bone and advancing the crura (or "legs" of the clitoris—or penis) out). These "legs" can be repositioned forward with respect to the pubic bone and a flap of abdominal skin can be used to cover the newly exposed tissue on the clitpenoid shaft. This procedure is being practiced more and more often in cases of male-bodied persons born with micropenis. For FTMs, the scrotum is formed by joining the labia majora and using silicone testicular implants, sometimes preceded by tissue expanders. The primary risk with metoidioplasty is that when the surgeon advances the crura out, it is possible that the pudendal nerve may be damaged and the organ rendered numb. The advantages are that the penis, though small, is otherwise normal in appearance, with a natural glans and foreskin, and the scrotum can be sized appropriately for the patient's body. Another advantage is that sexual function is not lost; the FTM can have natural erections and orgasm (unless the pudendal nerve is damaged). Note that intravaginal

penetration is possible for some individuals with this type of penis, but this ability cannot be expected in all cases.

Urethral extension in metoidioplasty poses the same problems it always has with phalloplasties: some surgeons are more willing to attempt it than others, and 100% success is still rare. But several surgeons are working on new techniques to eliminate strictures and fistulae.

Metoidioplasty can be performed on an outpatient basis and also costs less than phalloplasty, usually running \$4,000 to \$10,000. If tissue expanders are used for the scrotum, expect a second procedure to remove them and replace them with the actual implants; this procedure costs approximately \$2000. Each procedure requires about 10 days of absolute rest, and the initial reconstruction requires some further healing period of one to three weeks when it may be necessary to limit activity.

What else can be done for FTMs to increase penis size? Generally speaking, the extent of the possible enlargement of the adult clitoris is limited; that is, it will grow only to a certain degree because of the limited number of cells in its specific composition. Enlargement of the clitoris is a matter of the enlargement of the internal structures, also known as the spongy bodies, the corpora cavernosa and the corpora spongiosum (the tissue responsible for erections). Most of this growth is obtained during the first year of testosterone therapy. Other possibilities for clitoral enlargement are the use of testosterone propionate ointment 0.2% applied directly to the clitoris (this is still an experimental treatment), or the use of a vacuum pump to stimulate the repeated rush of blood into the area that enlarges the tissue, much as a bodybuilder increases muscle size through repeated blood engorgement. The penis is not a muscle, however, and too much pumping can actually tear the fibrous tissue of the organ.

When you are searching the medical literature for ideas about how

to improve phalloplasty, don't be misled by descriptions of penis reconstruction techniques used for loss of erectile function caused by other diseases. These methods presume the presence of an organ which is not easily mimicked by tissue from other parts of the body. Instead, look for Kallmann's Syndrome (one of many conditions that results in micropenis) or hypospadias repair; these conditions are far more analogous to our physical situation. Also, watch out for promises made out of fat transfers: packing your penis with your own fat can make it difficult to erect and less sensate. The fat can also clump or even die!

There is one further type of surgery of which FTMs will usually avail themselves: hysterectomy, oophorectomy, and sometimes vaginectomy. These procedures may be performed through an abdominal incision, through a vaginal entry, or using laparoscopy. Some U.S. states require that oophorectomy be performed to render the FTM sterile before he may be granted legal recognition as a male. Some FTMs feel they need to be rid of these "female" organs for psychological reasons, and some need to have them removed because the testosterone therapy may aggravate existing precancerous conditions in that tissue. And some FTMs feel this is unnecessary surgery and will avoid it.

When deciding whether or not to have the uterus and ovaries removed, there are a few things to be aware of. First, because the FTM population is not well studied, we don't know the long term impact of testosterone therapy on internal female organs. If one is in a high risk group for cancers of female organs, is prone to ovarian cysts, or has a history of problems in these organs, these are good indicators for considering removal. Also, people who live in small towns may run into problems obtaining medical treatment for "female" problems while presenting a male appearance. Sometimes big cities aren't any easier on the physically incongruent, either.



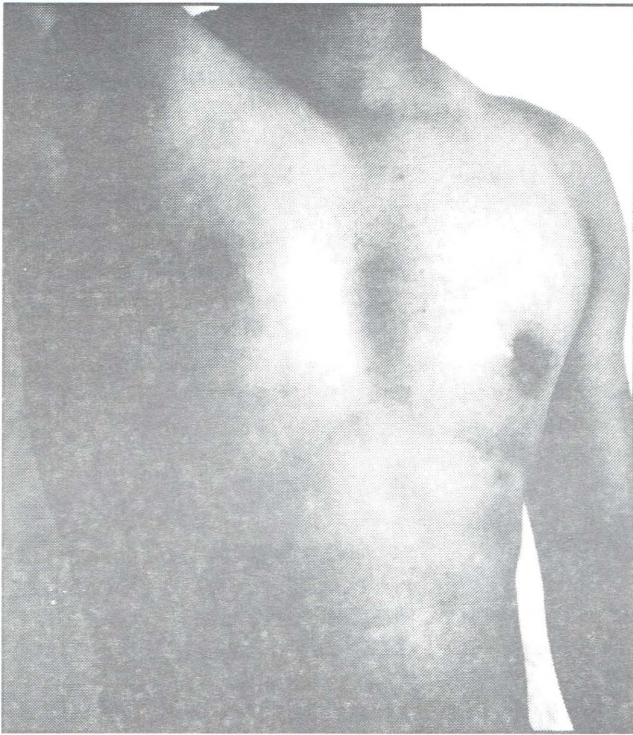


Figure 1. A successful keyhole procedure by unknown surgeon 1993. Photo ©1993 by Loren Cameron, from his project "Our Vision, Our Voices: Transsexual Portraits and Nudes" exhibited San Francisco, May 1994.

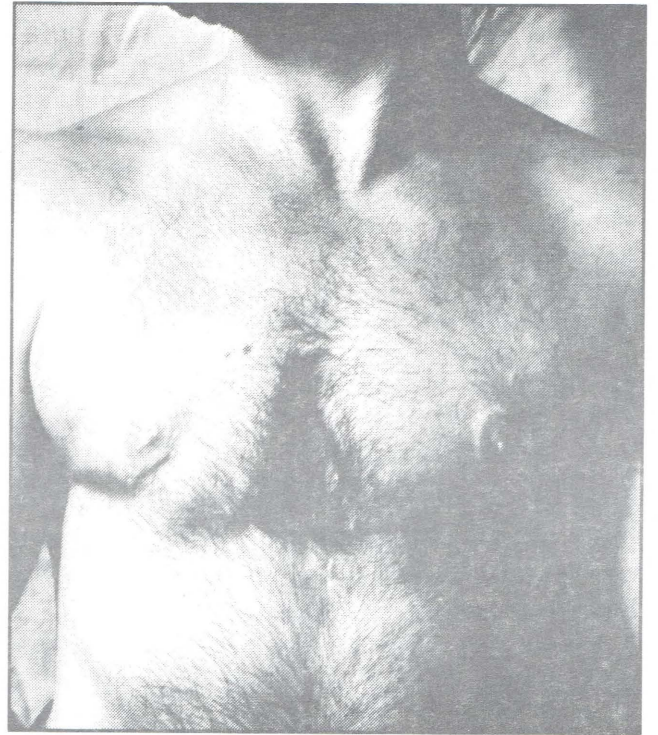


Figure 2. Scars left by a successful double incision method of breast reduction performed in 1989 by D.R. Laub. Photo ©1993 by Loren Cameron, from his project "Our Vision, Our Voices: Transsexual Portraits and Nudes."

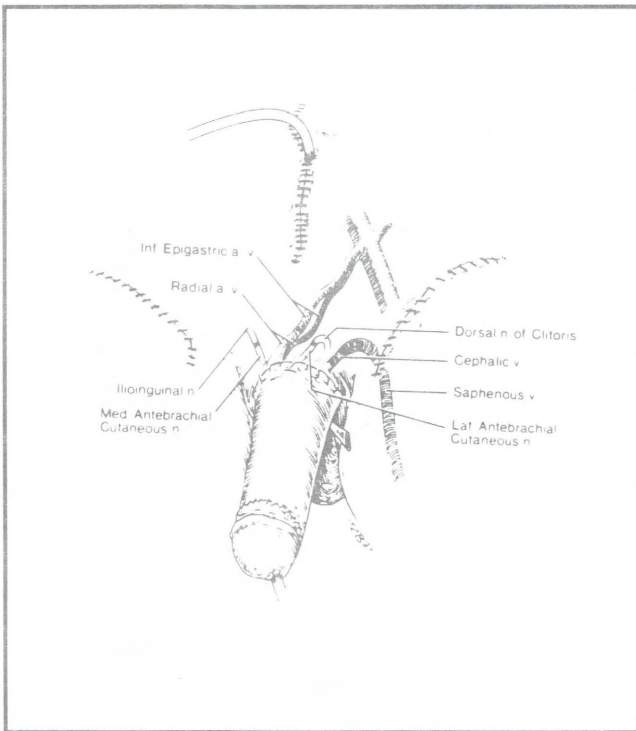


Figure 3. Diagram showing nerve and vascular connections in FIFT phalloplasty (from "Transsexual Surgery in the Genetic Female," D.A. Gilbert, et al., *Clinics in Plastic Surgery*, 15(3), July 1985, figure 4J, page 481).

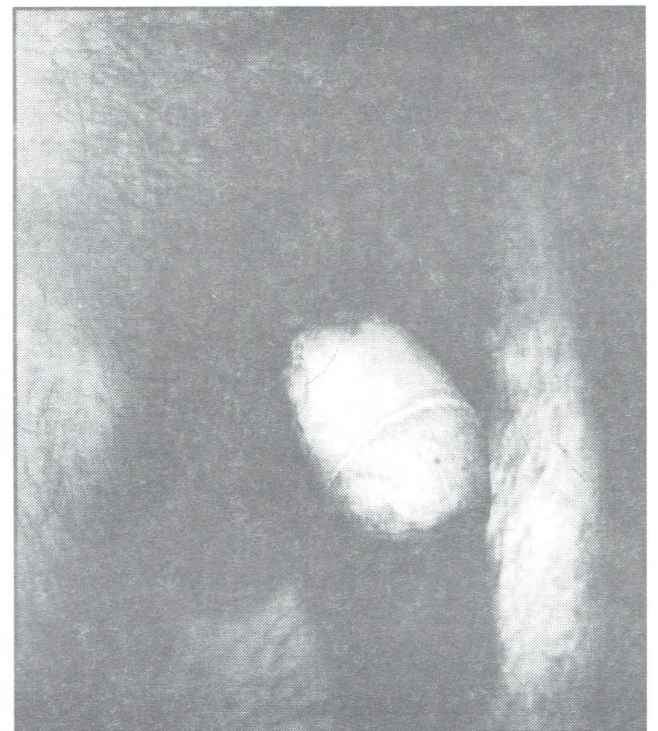


Figure 4. A phalloplasty. Photo ©1995 by Loren Cameron. The little lump on the top near the base is the clitoris, placed there to enable erotic sensation. Note the scar demarking the glans. Surgeon and date procedure was performed unknown at time of this publication.

Considering the three different approaches, the advantages and disadvantages are these: The abdominal approach is the least desirable because it induces more trauma, leaves a noticeable scar, and may interfere with a later phalloplasty via abdominal tube; however, in cases where the organs are difficult to remove or there are large fibroids or other growths, this method may be necessary. The laparoscopic approach can only remove the ovaries and fallopian tubes; it is more expensive than the abdominal method, and not all gynecologists are skilled in the technique; it leaves some scarring. The vaginal approach leaves no external scar, causes less trauma, allows for more rapid healing, and is convenient if the surgeon is also performing a vaginectomy and/or anterior vaginal flap urethroplasty (the most effective technique to date for urethral extensions): one prerequisite is that the vaginal opening must be large enough to accommodate the surgical instruments.

Some doctors recommend removing the vagina (like the other unnecessary female organs) to avoid infections and cancer. But FTMs might

consider retaining the vagina when no urethroplasty is being done because it reserves this important tissue in the event a urethroplasty is elected in the future. And some people who are accustomed to vaginal response during orgasm may want to retain the tissue to avoid loss of that sexual response.

Getting real about FTM surgery means accepting the fact that we are altering our bodies; we will never have the bodies we should have been born with. Getting real means accepting the limitations that our bodies have before we get on the operating table, and accepting that we will not come out of this scarless, without wounds, without compromises. That's not to say that we can't keep working and hoping for improvements; we can and we do. But we have to live in our bodies one way or another: where do we get the ideas of perfection that we try to live up to? How much imperfection can you handle? Identifying as transsexual means you have signed up to consider these questions. Not to do so is to invite disaster—which may occur anyway under the knife. I've had a bilateral mastectomy via double incision, hysterectomy and oophorec-

tomy via abdominal incision, and metoidioplasty without urethral extension. My last procedure was in 1991, and I've been really pleased with the results. I've made some compromises in order to live legally as a man, and I feel I've been fortunate in both my decisions and in their consequences. Things could have easily turned out otherwise. For me, getting real means taking responsibility for my decisions about my body and living with myself every day.

### End Note

1. The original term was metaoidioplasty, as coined by Dr. Donald Laub. The word combines Greek expressions which mean "changing form." In its application to an exclusively FTM procedure, the term may be construed to mean "a surgical change toward the male form." Recently, Dr. Laub has contracted the spelling to metoidioplasty (this is etymologically analogous to the contraction of encyclopaedia to the more familiar encyclopedia.) Since it is Dr. Laub's term, I have conformed to his spelling for the sake of respectful consistency. ♀♂

Figure 5. A successful metoidioplasty performed by D.R. Laub in 1990 (photo © 1993 by Loren Cameron, from his project "Our Vision, Our Voices: Transsexual Portraits and Nudes," exhibited San Francisco, May, 1994.



*Mikhail Pokrovsky is a FTM with MPD who's trying to end the shameless invisibility that surrounds people such as himself. Questions or comments? Mikhail can be reached via the Internet. Send E-mail to WOLF1958@VM.TEMPLE.EDU.*

## *Wish You Could See My Real Body*

### *Revelations of an FTM With MPD*

*by Mikhail Pokrovsky*

One cool afternoon in September 1987, a complication developed in our system (when you have Multiple Personality Disorder, better known as MPD, you share your mind with dozens of other people—in my case, 35 other people. I am one of them, and I am a male, down to my testicles). The male individual who had been assigned the “job” of caring for the body had made a serious error of judgement. He had denied vehemently our existence, and that, in my internal father’s rules, wasn’t acceptable. And so it was that I was summoned out of my afternoon nap to attend an emergency meeting concerning the future of the body. (Our world has been set up for all of us to live a very comfortable life, and if you lived with them as I had, you’d never wish to leave). I hurried towards the dining-room table that usually seats all 35 of us and sat next to my internal brothers, Xavier, who’s 14, and Isaac, who’s 21. (Note: When you’re inside you don’t grow older unless you choose to do so. Consensus here is against aging, but once you’re outside, aging takes place without your control. At least, that’s how it works for us).

Mind you, I was 24 at the time. I had been 24 years old since 1974, when my internal father created me. My job was to act neutral whenever the external father would yell at any of us. Anger was delegated to Mark, my internal uncle. At any rate, I sat quietly listening to my father tell us that we had reached a dead end. There wasn’t anyone young enough willing to take over the body. The only choices were, Xavier, whose ability to piss people off made him a very poor candidate, and Isaac, who was handicapped ever since he overdosed on drugs in 1979. He had lived in a coma till 1986, when we were diagnosed, but it left his speech and motor skills useless. He’s able to walk with a cane now, but his speech is still impaired. It was then that Mark had a brilliant idea. “Why don’t we let Gabriel (that’s what the elders call me, my middle name. My father named me after the two archangels: Michael and Gabriel, but my brother Xavier calls me Mickey, and so do the young ones as well) here take over,” he suggested. “He’s personable, intelligent, charming. Heck, he’ll be great at this.” Surprisingly enough, my father slammed his fist on the large table and simply said: “I approve.” Just like that, I had gained not only a job, but also a mission, without having been asked if I minded leaving my home for some obviously hostile territory. There wasn’t any time to prepare me for this venture because I was to go to work in the real world in a few hours.

What followed is rather brief to describe. I was trained by Xavier as I lived out here. He taught me how to drive and how to do the job because he'd seen my predecessor, Abraham, do it hundreds of times. He briefed me on who was who in the outside world. Looking back on it, his introductions weren't all too flattering. He'd say, if someone was coming towards me, something like: "Oh! That's so and so who likes to feed her dog Mr. Softie ice cream. Say hi and pretend ye jest saw 'er yesterday 'cause Abe-baby did." It was difficult to adjust to all of this information, plus the minute detail that was left out was the acquisition of new emotions, such as falling in love, being dumped, grief, anger, and all other goodies that I think makes an alter an individual.

But the most crucial thing I had to adjust to was to be related to as a female in the outside world. I had heard from the others, especially from

Xavier, how the outside world was blatantly hostile towards females. Before my full-time job, I had been sodomized and beaten severely.

Both incidents were attributed to homophobia. They were isolated incidents I experienced in 1980. The rude awakening was to have sexism shoved down my throat on a daily basis. Our pack doesn't encourage or believe in male privilege; in fact, since all the males were raised as females, save for myself, they haven't a notion about male privilege. So inside, I lived a very calm and uneventful life after I pushed those two incidents aside to achieve peace of mind.

To be treated as a female was, at first, the worst of fates. Xavier simply said about it when I complained to him: "We all went through it and lived to blab 'bout it. It's yer turn to git wiser now." Then he paused and added: "And when yer fed up with it, ye'll never be the same again. It'll

change the way ye see things ... Ah! What a disservice we done ye, pup," he lamented. He was right, I have never been able to look at life in the same cheerful manner I once did. But it gave me the insight into something so insidious, one cannot help but marvel at it: how women participate in sexism without batting an eyelash. I often watched and asked Xavier why they weren't aware of it: "'Cause they're in it ... Yer outside of it, always been. That's why they ain't listenin' to ye, pup." And he was right. How different everything looks when you aren't playing a specific game.

At times, when I was mostly anguished due to harassment by outside males, I used to go inside at night and feel my body just to comfort myself— until my father caught me once and said: "Quit that idiotic habit, please. You know who you are, we know who you are, why the self-check?" I replied: "Because I'm not

*The following article was originally published in BiFocus, Winter 1993/94. —Ed.*

## *Gender Wars or Transgenderism Doesn't Mean Having the Best of Both Worlds*

*by Mikhail Pokrouscky*

I vividly remember the moment when I heard a friend of my lover say to me that my lover had, indeed, the best of both worlds. That statement has festered in my system for the past year and a half, until now, when I have found the courage and the audacity to bring this very disturbing issue to light. I have finally had enough with the assumptions made about transgendered individuals and I have decided to nip them in the bud before they escalate to unknown heights. As a transgendered individual, I have no desire to live up to any of the following misconceptions:

*Myth #1: Bisexuals and transgendered individuals are the perfect sexual playmates.*

*Myth #2: Transgendered individuals start taking hormones for the sole purpose of expanding their range of sexual partners.*

*Myth #3: FTMs alter their gender in order to gain male privilege, and thereby betray women.*

Many feminist women have told me that I have joined the enemy. However, I know more about men than I ever would have if I had remained a female, because men relate to me as if I'm one of them. Additionally, the experiences I have had as a female never left me, mainly because of my refusal to become a stereotypical FTM. Thus, at times, living in two worlds at once becomes a concept worth cherishing. At other times, it is greatly irritating to try to share my experiences with biologically-correct people because some can't grasp the concept of having a dual-gendered life.

*Myth #4: Most importantly, that some bio-correct being has the God-given right to think that they can put a notch in his/her belt by having a sexu-*

*al encounter with a transgendered individual.*

With these cruel facts of life played out in the lives of the transgendered, it is very little wonder why most of them don't wish to "out" themselves to anyone except out of necessity to their lovers. And some do not even do THAT, keeping it a secret for as long as possible.

My experiences as an out FTM non-op (as opposed to pre-op or post-op) TS in the bisexual community has ranged from the sublime to the utterly insulting. One married bi woman wanted to have a relationship with me solely on the basis of convenience, because her straight friends would think she was dating a bio-correct man, thus avoiding the hassle of being labeled bisexual. I told her outright that if she wanted to eat pussy, she'd better pay for it in the same way every other bi woman or lesbian does, complete with the harassment and secrecy that comes with the lifestyle — just like I had, when I lived as a lesbian. On the other side of the objectification scale, I had one bi male give me this song and dance about how

sure sometimes.” He replied: “Your problem is that you have not come to terms with the rules of the game. You don’t have to play if you do not wish to do so. Playing the game shall ruin your life and all you’ve done thus far. It would be insane to give in to them. I suggest that next time you have this compulsion that you check to be sure you have enough courage within you to say to yourself: ‘My name is Mikhail and I am the son of Daniel and nothing shall ever change that.’ Or take a deep breath and laugh at their blindness.” It took me a while to get past that stage of terror and confusion, but I eventually understood what he was getting at— that being that it matters very little what anyone believes you are. What matters in life is that you know who you are.

Then, in the beginning of 1988, my father summoned me in the middle of the night to ask me what would make me happy. Sort of an odd ques-

tion, I thought. I told him I wasn’t too thrilled with the fact that I had to pretend I was a lesbian just to be with women, when I knew damn well who and what I was. “Then, pup, do what you see fit to suit yourself. You have earned your medal of conduct in your job; therefore, it’s your call. You have my blessings.” He gave me permission to alter this body to suit me.

In our system, my father is the Alpha male of our pack. All decisions that will affect them directly have to be cleared by all who live inside, but the final decision is his. Needless to say, I do have freedom to do what I wish so long as it doesn’t interfere with their lives. Living with a known abuser is an example of my freedom restriction.

So here I was, knowing in my heart that I had to lie. One note: When you’re MPD, your life is built on secrets and lies. I thought about this scenario and how it contributed to perpetuating the insidiousness of the

condition. But this time I was choosing to lie for myself, not anyone else. Thus, I pretended some more (I come from a line of con artists, Xavier could sell you the moon and you’d buy it. I have.) I went to a shrink and told her that I knew I was a male ( I never told her how well I knew), and that I had an awful feeling that I had been born in the wrong body. Xavier, at that instant, quipped merrily: “And that’s the truth and the whole truth so help me Rhonda.” I laughed at his comment but I lied to her, telling her that I was very nervous. She asked me personal questions, such as what type of underwear I was wearing. Xavier quipped again: “BVD’s ‘cause he’s too macho to wear the designer kind.” I said BVDs and bit my lip. Then she asked me if I smoked, I told her that I did, and she asked me to light a cigarette for her. Xavier whispered:

*\Concluded on page 46*

well he would treat me, but when the moment of truth came, he sexually assaulted me as he would a woman.

At this point, I’m ready to believe that some bio-correct people miss the mark when it comes to individuals who gender-fuck on a full-time basis rather than as a pastime. I don’t know what it is, but sometimes something strange happens the instant certain people know that I’m TS. It feels to me as if that’s all that matters to them. The fact that I’m a human being, deserving of the same rights and considerations as bio-correct individuals, seems to escape them altogether. After all, when was the last time any of them had to explain (justify) themselves prior to getting either naked or romantically involved?

Some don’t know what to do with the information, assuming things that are erroneous, such as that I can’t have a decent sexual life because I don’t have a penis (that’s the heterosexist belief *(as well as a phallocentric belief—Ed.)*). Others tend to demand that I tell them what gender I am. My point is that it doesn’t seem to matter to them who I am or that I choose to live my life as

decently as I can, under the duress. To them, I am no longer a human being, but rather an object to either be had or taunted into conforming.

What I have found is that not being bio-correct is almost asking for membership in polarity hell— that being the eternal belief that everything can be divided into two categories: homosexual/heterosexual, black/white, female/male; just to name a few polarities. I have also discovered, much to my chagrin, that bio-correct people, whatever their sexual orientation might be, have no notion of what it is like to be treated as if you had no right to exist — in other words, like a freak of nature. Bisexuals are most guilty on this count whenever they question my sexual orientation with the underlying tone that if I’m not bisexual then I have no right to walk among them. I have nothing but contempt for those who have tried to viciously box me in such a tight spot. I didn’t realize there was a bi patrol, giving passports only to those who meet their requirements for bisexuality (by having sex with the interrogator, word of mouth doesn’t count here).

To complete my array of griefs, my current monogamous status has also been a target of their inquiries. Hey! If I’m bi, non-monogamous, the more chances you’ll have to sweet-talk me into having sex, right? Sorry, but it isn’t that simple. Due to the misconceptions certain people have about TSs, I’m not about to give up my right to choose my future partners rather carefully. It’s very saddening to realize that even bisexual activists believe the same myths as the rest of the bio-correct population. Here I was under the delusion that since TSs and bisexuals challenge the polarity dichotomies, we had a common ground. I was obviously mistaken.

Somehow I expected more considerate and respectful treatment from bisexuals, since they’ve also been pressured to conform. Not all bisexuals have committed this inexcusable act of treason, but those who have need to re-evaluate their concept of the pecking order. I firmly believe that bisexuals need a wake up call. Bisexuals and TSs need to work together to end the stigma of invisibility. ♀♀

## *If You Will Follow, I Will Lead*

by Taylor Priest

To my struggling friend:

You say you do not understand this thing, and I say, “yes, I know.” You will never understand it the way I do. But this is alright, because I don’t need you to understand, I need you to be understanding— understanding of differences, my differences. I ask only that, when all other doors are closed, your heart will remain open to me.

But perhaps you feel that to be understanding, you must first understand. I will try to help you. Maybe using your own personal experience as a point of reference will bring you a little closer. Consider the number or times you thought about your gender in the last week. Picture yourself in front of the mirror. If someone standing behind you asks you, “Do you see a male or a female?”, what is your reply? Do you have to hesitate? Do you have to look for cues before you can answer? Pretty basic stuff, right? But consider this next question carefully: Was your answer based only on anatomy? Did you answer “female” because you remember that you have breasts? If not, what else is there? If you can begin to answer this last question, you’re on the right track.

I want you to know that I understand how automatic this process is for you because there are some things in my life that I, too, am able to take for granted—breathing, for example. It is so natural, so ingrained, that not only do I not give it a second thought, I never give it a first thought. My father, however, who has emphysema, thinks about breathing all the time. His life is limited by his breathing restriction, which I can see causes him more than physical pain. His

definition of himself as strong, independent, and broad-shouldered has been altered. The difference between the way he feels he should be and the way he know he is causes that pain, makes him incomplete.

Keeping this in mind, consider that when I look in the mirror, I see a person. Period. I do not see a male or a female, but I need to. How is it possible to live in this society with no gender? Come with me into a public rest room and watch the faces of women. There is your answer. It is not possible.

I know you will have to stretch your imagination to the limit, and probably beyond, to really grasp this. Just as I, without having children, will never “know” exactly what a mother feels like when her baby falls down and scrapes his knee, you will never “know” exactly what gender confusion feels like. My explanation can never make this a part of your experience. But if you see someone stumbling down the street in twelve inch heels, do you really have to walk in their shoes to know they are uncomfortable?

As a transgendered person, I need to become just as gender unconscious as you; just like you, I need my gender to become a part of me, instead of an obstacle to overcome. You see, for me, gender is a wall that separates me (a bunch of disjointed traits) from that one link that would unite all of these traits into a complete human being. If I can just put a hole in that wall, I can break through to the link. Then I can put all of the energy I used to expend chipping away at that wall, along with the confidence I gained from breaking through, into other problems and challenges.

I’d like to ask you to stretch your imagination a little further. Suppose, for a moment, that you have a memory problem, and you find that you keep forgetting your gender. What is the first piece of information you would feel compelled to obtain? Do you see what this automatically implies? If you don’t know your gender, you must not know who you are. Even if you have a gender neutral name, knowing yourself is precluded by not knowing your gender. Like the amnesiac who keeps forgetting their entire identity, the transgendered person has to keep checking their gender. Of course, I always know I am an anatomical female. But humans are much more than physical beings. Socially and psychologically things become confused and signals get mixed. There are levels beyond the chromosomes that are part of the self-definition, an overall identity. Imagine what happens when the answers don’t mesh. The result is that, despite your most tenacious efforts, you cannot figure out who you are because this very basic piece of information (that is, your gender identity) eludes you.

I feel like I’ve spent my whole life in search of that one final piece of the puzzle to complete the picture. Now I have that piece in my hand and I just have to fit it into place. I only hope that before you decide to walk away, you take a good look at that picture, at its new symmetry, the way being a whole unit allows the individual parts to feel secure and in balance.

I will not shut the door here; it is up to you to hold it open, or close it, if you must. Before you make that decision, however, I just ask that you know what your decision will mean to our friendship. Consider the investment, the costs, and the payoff, and weigh the options with care.

Regardless of your choice, I will always respect and love you. ♡

*This article was originally published in the Quaker journal, Friendly Woman, Vol. 6 No. 2, Spring 1983. The note about the authors stated: "John and Mary Taylor have chosen pseudonyms for obvious reasons. They have been together for thirteen years. They have attended a Quaker Meeting for several years. One of them is a student and the other works in the business field."*

*We were asked to write the article for a special issue on "Alternative Families." Only a couple of people within our religious community knew about our situation (like the person who asked us to write). The pseudonyms were to protect our identities. While we found Quakers to be accepting of diversity, to our knowledge we were the only couple who dealt with transgenderism in any form within our Meeting. At the time the article was published we were not "out" (except on an individual basis) about Jason being FTM. However, the times have changed and we are proudly and boldly "out" not only to our now 12-year-old son, but to just about everyone else. We have been open about Jason being FTM since our son's birth. As those who have met him can attest, he has no problem with having a dad who is FTM.*

*Much of what we wrote then still holds true. Jason is still a student (although he has a completion date of December, 1995) and Bonnie still works in the business world. We continue to share a deep abiding love for each other after 22 years together.*

— Jason & Bonnie Cromwell

*In thinking about using this article for this special issue of Chrysalis, I felt it was important to ask my son how he felt about it. I explained that we would reveal who we were by claiming the pseudonyms and I wanted his opinion. When I finished reading it, he clapped and said, "Dad, that's beautiful. Go for it. You know I could have read it myself a couple of years ago." So a special thanks to Spencer for letting us share our love with him and for him sharing his with us — Jason*

## Dear Child

by John & Mary Taylor

**D**ear Child:

By the time you are able to read this, you will have found out the truth of our lives. We write to shape our thoughts and to express many things we have talked about, but most importantly to explain the choices we have made which will now begin affecting your life.

*John:* I chose my life. Yet it seems the choice was made for me. When I was very young I did not think of my body and my mind as belonging to two very different people. My name, if shortened (which I preferred) could be androgynous. It was easy to believe that I was as I saw myself. But when I reached puberty the girl-turning-woman caught up with my image of the boy-turning-man. I remember that day clearly; it was my thirteenth birthday. It was also the first time I tried to commit suicide. Three years later, quite by accident, I discovered a label for the incongruities I felt and the world saw. For two years I struggled with the need to change my name and to live in my chosen gender. In spite of the ostracism I received, I know I made the right decision. For the first time in years I felt a deepening peace. Yet, I knew I would not be a complete human being until I could love someone else. I knew your mother during this time; therefore, she knew me before I chose my new life, and because of her knowing, I did not think she could or would love me. But I was wrong. She told me a few years later that she had loved me all along.

*Mary:* The first time I saw your father, I did not question that he was a man. When I was informed later that he was anatomically female, I did not know how I could be wrong, nor how I could quell the feelings which were stirring within. Shortly thereafter, he changed his name. We began to develop a friendship. Without knowing it we were falling in love. A few years later we told each other how we were feeling, and we started living together. To many who knew us, we were completely unacceptable and outcast. For a time, I questioned whether I was a lesbian. But the lesbians I knew, as diverse as they were, all had one thing in common: they were women loving women. I loved a man, for the very essence of your father is male. No one questions that. The one mistake we made, however, was to ignore the physical truth, and it was only when we learned to accept it that we truly made a choice to love each other.

At first we tried very hard to fit into the stereotypical male and female roles which our society has defined, but that didn't really work; our sense of fairness and justice rebelled. Any man who has emotions, shows them, and chooses to form a partnership rather than a dominance/subjugation relationship, was and still is considered by many to be weak and not very masculine. How much scarier it was for us to say, "We don't believe this is masculinity." We were left without a definition. But your father is a man, and we made a choice not to wallow in what we didn't have, but to make the very best of what we do have. What we found works best for us is a relationship in which neither of us is dominant and we share equally in all decisions and responsibilities. Rather than a division of labor based on stereotypes, we have a sharing of labor based on our time, talents, and interests. One of the benefits we've received from the development of our partnership is a positive reinforcing support of each other.

Out of these choices and the deep abiding love we gained from them, we decided to have a child. For us, you express another part of our love for each other — the uniqueness of our relationship. Our fear is that one day you will accuse us of not giving you a chance to choose to share the risks. Our hope and our faith is that you will share enough in the happiness and strength and joy of our love to feel, as we do, that our choices have been worth it. ♀

## *Like a Clown:*

### *An Analogy for Explaining to Children*

by LAMB

When I needed to explain transsexuality to my children, I searched for a way that they would be able to understand. They were not yet teenagers, so I felt I could not explain it to them as I would an adult. This is the way I did it:

Let's say you are going to a costume party at a friend's house. You're dressed as a clown completely, with big feet, red nose, white face, and garish clown make-up. You go to the party and you have a great time. Everybody at the party treats you like a clown, but they know it's you underneath. You have a great time!

You finally get home early in the morning. You go into your bedroom, and when you look at your bed you realize how tired you feel. You lie down on your bed, intending just to rest, but you fall asleep immediately. You still have on your costume.

When you wake up, you go to the bathroom to take a shower and wash the make-up off. But your clothes, shoes and make-up won't come off. You try as hard as you can to take some part of the costume off, but it doesn't work. The buttons aren't really buttons, they're just for show. The same with your shoelaces. The make-up and the red nose cannot be smudged or taken off.

Just then, the doorbell rings. You answer it, and it is your best friend. Your friend asks for you. You tell him that this is you, but he doesn't believe you. No matter what you say, he insists you're just a clown. Later you go to the store and get the same reaction. The kids in the neighborhood you're used to playing with do the same thing. They follow you and expect balloons and funny antics from you.

You go to see your girlfriend. She doesn't recognize you and thinks you are just someone you've paid to play a joke on her. She gives you a message to say, "Hi," and closes the door on you. It is the same everywhere you go! You cannot get people to take you seriously. All they see is the clown exterior.

You feel trapped and start looking around for a way out of your trap. Eventually, you hear about other people in the same situation and go to a meeting you've heard about. You find others like you, and you don't feel so alone any more! You learn there are ways to take away the costume. You know you cannot pass as yourself with big feet (breasts), make-up and red nose (other female features). You find out there is medication and a surgeon who can take care of this. But first you have to see a therapist to be sure you really want as well as need to not be perceived as a clown.

After some time in therapy, the therapist refers you to a doctor who prescribes the medication and you get a shot once a week (or less). But you're told you have to take the medication the rest of your life. You are so concerned about being seen as yourself that you decide to go for it. The medication works slowly and as it does the red nose begins to disappear and the clown make-up gradually turns flesh colored.

After even more therapy, you're referred to a surgeon to have your big feet (breasts) removed. The surgeon does his job, and now you are no longer recognized as a clown because the big feet (breasts), make-up and red nose (other female features) are gone.

As you've gotten closer to what you perceive yourself to be, you get happier and happier. You can finally go out in public and be seen as the person you are and be with your friends again!

In the simplest of terms this is what it is like to be a transsexual person. The therapy, shots, surgery and all the rest of the things that make up the transition are a gradual unfolding of the person you are inside. You can finally go out into the world as the person you have always been (or wanted to be) and be taken as a real person, not the shell you've been stuck with. It is a great day when you can be yourself! ♀



The following is an excerpt from Ralph Judd's doctoral dissertation.

## *A Transgender History of the Opera* by Ralph Judd

### **C**astrati and Other Imitations

Saint Paul the apostle wrote in a letter to the Corinthians, "*Mulieres in ecclesiis taceant.*" In the authorized King James Version of the Bible this command is found translated in I Corinthians 14:34. "Let your women keep silence in the churches."

Who, then, would sing the female register in Church choirs? Boy sopranos were tried. They tended to fidget. And just after learning a limited repertoire, they experienced a permanent voice change which ended their usefulness.

Next, falsettists took center stage. They were grown men who sang in an artificially high-pitched voice. Their quality of sound was substandard. Their forced tones quickly wore out their vocal cords.

It is not known exactly when castrati entered the musical world. Men had been mutilated since the beginning of time— especially by victorious warriors. By 1600 castrati were found in several prominent choirs, including that of the Vatican chapel at Rome.

It is believed that castrati were employed by many singing groups before 1600 but were erroneously labeled falsettists. The castrato was a grown male who had been surgically altered just prior to puberty so that in adulthood he retained a soprano voice with immense power over a wide musical range.

The castrati were sometimes referred to as *soprani naturali* when compared to the competing males— the falsettists. However, the castrati was not "natural," but rather "manmade." The vocal result was astounding. The castrati were greatly admired and universally employed to provide Church music.

Opera began about 1600, just as the popularity of the castrati was ascending. It is no surprise that many operatic scores were composed featuring castrati in leading roles. The male lead frequently was able to sing higher than the female lead. In fact, in the Papal states, where women were still forbidden on stage, the castrati also performed in the roles of the female singers.

Of course, there were some unauthorized impersonations. A woman would pretend to be a castrato playing a female. A priest would have the task of verifying that the female impersonator was not a woman. However, if the lass hid a sausage strategically in her clothing, she would pass the cursory examination.

Castrati continued to dominate operata until 1800. Their success was unequalled in Spain, England, Germany, Austria, and Italy. Only France rejected them. After 1800, the castrati disappeared. Older singers retired. Young singers by choice and by law kept their manhood.

Increasingly, women took the male soprano leads. A few of the high-pitched parts have been transposed for tenors. But divas are still impersonating men and singing the former castrato roles in many operas today.

Back in the early days of opera there were also other instances of crossdressing. In Italy, there arose *opera buffa*, which was comedic in tone and contrasted with *opera seria*, which was tragic.

A popular scenario in opera buffa called for a young male page played by a woman to be pursued and wooed by an old woman played by a man. In one episode they fall to discussing physical attributes:

*Young Page: You don't have very many teeth in your mouth.*

*Old Woman: You'll sail in a sea without reefs!*

That scene gives you an idea of where opera-goers' minds were dabbling some four centuries ago. Fortunately, none of the opera buffa is performed today.

In fact, there is precious little female impersonation in today's opera. The witch's role in "Hansel and Gretel" is sometimes played en travesti. And when the opera "Khosrov" was filmed in Russia in 1960, director Vera Stoyeva added a female impersonator to the flock of Persian slave girls. Also, in the 1935 Marx Brothers classic movie, "A Night at the Opera," Harpo and Chico find cause to don women's outfits as female Gypsies for a scene in Verdi's "Il Trovatore."

On the other hand, male impersonation by divas is widespread and expected to remain that way. A tradition has been established that women will do the singing in a great number of "trouser roles."

### *Trouser Roles for Divas*

Women playing men is a tradition in opera. When the castrati disappeared from the musical scene, most of their abandoned roles were picked up by mezzo-sopranos.

Also, the artists themselves mine the works of composers searching for parts suitable to their voices. Rossini's operas are ripe with travesti roles.

Supreme diva Marilyn Horne comments in *Marilyn Horne: My life*:

*Tancredi was not a castrato role. It was a male character actually written for a female to sing, thus carrying on the tradition of the treble voice for the leading male role. Such parts were usually young men, often aristocratic and just on or over the brink of manhood, but already commanders of armies— hence the gallery nickname for me, "General Horne."*

So some of the male roles were written for castrati and some were written later for females. Today the divas sing them all. Who are the female singers en travesti? Marilyn Horne, Fredrica von Stade, and Tatiana Troyanos stand tall in the field.

And what are the roles? On page 41, you will find a listing of male characters which you will find are most frequently played by women:

### *"Der Rosenkavalier": Trousers Role with Female Impersonation*

As operas go, "Der Rosenkavalier" is a youngster. Premiering in Dresden, Germany, in 1911, it has been a busy child, with performances in Berlin, Vienna, Milan, London, New York, Amsterdam, and many other places (with frequent revivals). It has enjoyed worldwide popularity.

"Der Rosenkavalier" ("The Cavalier of the Rose") is a comedy with music. The libretto is by H. von Hofmannsthal and the music is by Richard Strauss. The plot is convoluted with female impersonation. The mature Princess von Weidenberg is involved with a 17-year-old lad, Octavian (played by a woman). They are in an intimate *tete-a-tete* when the approach of Baron Ochs prompts Octavian to disguise himself as a maid to avoid discovery. Although the aging Baron seeks the assistance of the Princess in his coming marriage to the youthful Sophie, he nonetheless invites the maid (Octavian) to sup with him. Following a tradition of courtship, the Baron gives the Princess a silver rose to deliver in his behalf to Sophie and then he takes his leave. Octavian next departs. The Princess, reminded suddenly of the rose, sends it by courier to Octavian so that he may deliver it.

When Octavian later hands Sophie the rose, he is smitten by her beauty and she by his. Alone for a moment, they admit their love for one another. A duel ensues when the Baron discovers them in an embrace. Octavian's sword punctures the Baron's hand. Sophie declares she will not marry the Baron, and Octavian sends the Baron a friendly note from the maid (himself).

At an inn, Octavian, disguised again as the maid, meets the Baron for supper. Tricks akin to hallucinations are played on the Baron. The police arrive. The Princess arrives. The police withdraw. Octavian assumes his male clothes. The Baron realizes he has been duped. The Princess reunites the young lovers and departs. Octavian and Sophie declare their undying love and live happily ever after.

The story of "Der Rosenkavalier" brings to mind the earlier opera buffa. In both cases, age chases youth and is eventually thwarted.

The role of Octavian is always played by a female. Strauss composed Octavian's arias for a female soprano, and that has been the casting.

Opera companies around the world have mounted productions of "Der Rosenkavalier." Through the magic of film and television, a number of these presentations have been seen in the United States. Two movies have been made. One movie was filmed in London in 1926. A second movie was made in Salzburg, Austria in 1962.

When the second film played Carnegie Hall, Alan Rich commented in The New York Times about the intimacy in the Princess's bedroom:

*Even when seen in close range, there is nothing embarrassing about the spectacle of Octavian's wooing of Marschallin (the Princess); one forgets quite soon that two sopranos are involved.*

By contrast, the *Opera News* was not ready in 1962 for the sexual revolution:

*One squirms at being so close for so long to the amorous replay in Act I.*

Legitimate state productions do not shock with close-ups; so live performances of "Der Rosenkavalier" continue unabated, with a great many soprano Octavians delivering a great many silver roses.

### *La Gran Scena Opera Co. di New York*

La Gran Scena Opera Co. di New York is their name; operatic parody is their game. The group was created in 1980 by Ira Siff and Mario Villanuevo, with Richard Burke as musical director. The all-male ensemble performs arias, duets, and scenes from the world's greatest operas. Three of the lads sing and dress as divas.

## Trousers Role Composer Opera

Arsace	Rossini	Semiramide
Ascagne	Berlioz	Les Troyens
Caesar	Handel	Giulio Cesare
Cherubino	Mozart	La Nozze di Figaro
Composer	Strauss	Ariadne Auf Naxos
Hansel	Humperdinck	Hansel Und Gretel
Idamante	Mozart	Idomeneo
Malcolm	Rossini	La Donna Del Lago
Neocle	Rossini	L'assedio di Corinto
Nicklausse	Offenbach	Les Contes D'Hoffman
Octavian	Strauss	Der Rosenkavalier
Orfeo	Gluck	Orfeo Ed Euridice
Orlando	Vivaldi	Orlando Furioso
Orlofsky	Strauss	Die Fledermaus
Orsini	Donizetti	Lucrezia Borgia
Oscar	Verdi	Un Ballo In Maschera
Rinaldo	Handel	Rinaldo
Ruggiero	Handel	Alcina
Sextus	Mozart	La Clemanza Di Tito
Siebel	Gounod	Faust
Stephano	Gounod	Romeo Et Juliette
Tancredi	Rossini	Tancredi
Urbain	Meyerbeer	Les Huguenots

*These prima donnas (?) really know their scores. Every opera scene is sung in its original (and I mean original) key, and they take no more liberties with the printed notes or text than any other artists in a typical off night at the Met.*

—Bill Zakariasen, *Daily News*

*The travesty-ing and en travesti prima donnas of the Gran Scena Opera Co. di New York do to opera what the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo does to dance— run it through the wringer of knowledgeable spoofing.*

—William Albright, *The Houston Post*

Closing the daffy show with the whole last act of Verdi's *La Traviata*, G-B (Siff) also makes a hilariously unforgettable (and decidedly kinky) Violetta by caressing a riding crop, handcuffs and a pair of Alfredo's Jockey shorts during "Addio del passato" and being tem-

porarily revitalized in the final pages by a sniff of Dr. Grenvil's amyl nitrate (poppers to you).

Why do they do it? Ira Siff told Michael Shepherd of *Christopher Street*:

*We wanted to show that men could perform these roles as parody while being musically correct. We hoped that the laughs would occur on several levels, one for the totally informed, one for the somewhat familiar, and, of course, for the opera queens— those people who really know music. We also learned that the more vocally credible you made the performance, the funnier it became. I guess what we were finally after was creating an art form that was musically tenable and yet which could bring to the uninitiated and uninformed an appreciation of the art of opera while creating some health laughter.*

Meanwhile the praises ring ding ding ding:

*The costumes are first rate, the props are abundant, and even though the quality of the staging swings from tasteless to highly inventive, the "look" of La Gran Scena Opera Company... is marvelous and highly adaptable.*

—John Abbott, *New York Native*

*The opening program, subtitled "Sex, Love, Violence, and Death," showed Borszkb (Siff) and company to fine advantage. A resounding "Entrance of the Divas," a musical take-off on Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," introduced us to the hallowed company of operatic artistes. In addition to the titian-haired Mme. Borszkb, there was the lithe but vocally voluptuous Philene Wannelle (Philip Koch), reigning queen of American mezzos. As a matter of fact, as our mistress of ceremonies, Miss Sylvia Bills (Bruce Hopkins), America's most beloved retired soprano, told us the entire evening was a benefit for "unwed mezzos." And what, I might add, could be a better cause?*

—Martin Schaeffer, *Michael's Thing*

*Here was Puccini's mysterious princess in all her frigidness, waving a finger at the uppity Calaf and proclaiming, in what struck me as a peculiarly tongue-in-cheek voice, "Mai nessun M'avra!" ("No man shall ever possess me!).*

—Tim Smith

*Ft. Lauderdale News & Sun-Sentinel*

Michael Shepherd summed up audience sentiment in *New York Native*:

*The trill is back. When the history of opera in our time is finally written, there will have to be a special chapter set aside for Mme. Borszkb (Siff) and La Gran Scena Opera Company di New York. At a time when opera is losing much of its former excitement, Mme. Borszkb and cohorts provide true opera lovers with a needed cultural life. Bravil! ♣*

## *Vienna Boys' Choir*

In 1496, Emperor Maximilian I transported young boys across state lines from the Netherlands to Vienna to be members of his court choir, the Hofmusikkapelle. This practice continued until 1550, when Austria began to furnish her own boys as singers.

The youngsters were provided with lodging and class A treatment until their voices changed. Then they were mercilessly turned into the street. Emperor Franz II changed that in 1830. He determined to school the boys in preparation for careers. The brightest lads were also granted scholarships for college study.

Today there is a community of post-choir boys living and studying together until they are ready for adult pursuits. Graduates of the choir have included Joseph Haydn, Franz Schubert, Felix Mottl, Clemens Krauss, Georg Hellmesberger, Carl Zeller, and Hans Richter.

After World War I, the House of Hapsburg fell and the choir and school were without means of support. The group was disestablished—but not for long. Rescue came in the form of Father Joseph Schnitt, who in 1924 poured his own savings into a reorganization.

In 1926, the Choir began touring in order to support itself. These tours saw secular music join the religious repertoire. Music from musical plays, Viennese waltzes and folk music were added to the concert programs. Another significant change has been the stopping of the totally Catholic aspect of the school. Today Jews, Protestants and atheists are welcome. But the student body and choir are composed of 90% Catholic boys.

The Choir first toured the United States in 1932. They have been coming back regularly ever since, except during World War II. At that time, Father Schnitt was jailed by the Nazis for not cooperating in using the choir for German purposes. The boys disbanded until the choir was reformed following the war.

Added to their typical program then were short comic operettas per-

formed in costume. These have proved popular and continue today.

Joanne Sheevey Hoover reported in the *Washington Post* in 1979:

*In the case of the operetta or short opera such as yesterday's "Abu Hassan" by Weber, the appeal centers more on the good-natured professionalism with which the boys, some of whom assume female roles, take on the task.*

There are now four choirs composed of 10-to-14-year-olds. Each group contains 24 boys. One choir remains in Vienna at all times to sing Mass. When President Kennedy journeyed to Austria for a summit meeting with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, he encountered the Vienna Boys' Choir. On Sunday, June 4, 1961, JFK, a devout Catholic, attended nine o'clock Mass at Saint Stephan's Cathedral. There he heard the choir-in-residence. After returning to the United States, Kennedy was only too happy to welcome a touring choir to the White House on January 9, 1962.

Their next Presidential appearance was on June 17, 1979. President Jimmy Carter was in Vienna for another summit meeting. That Sunday, Southern Baptist Carter went to church and heard the choir. His verdict: "Beautiful!"

The Vienna Boys' Choir has also made movie appearances. They sang in a garden in "This is Cinema" in 1952. Ten years later they were starred in the Walt Disney production "Almost Angels." Howard Thompson's assessment in *The New York Times*: "A wholesome little family film ... ideal fare for pre-adolescent youngsters."

The history of the Vienna Boys' Choir extends back almost 500 years and it is safe to predict they will be around 500 years from now. For as Janet Graham noted in *The Reader's Digest*:

*These talented youngsters of the Vienna Boys' Choir charm music lovers the world over. They have sung to kings and commoners, capitalists and comrades. ♣*

## *The Truth Testimony*

*by Jeremiah Gold-Hopton*

**A**n important Quaker principle for more than 300 years has been the Truth Testimony. It calls for one standard of complete, absolute honesty at all times and in all situations. As a Quaker, this testimony has been my personal guide since childhood. I have followed the Truth Testimony as closely as I would follow a guide through wilderness terrain to keep myself from getting lost. When I have strayed from the Truth Testimony, it usually has been because I have failed to be truthful with myself.

My internal denial of the truth about my gender identity kept me from being truthful to other people as well as myself. Conversely, overcoming my denial has led me to a new truthfulness with others as well as myself. This has been awkward because I have had to admit that, however unintentionally, I had been dishonest. Also, being truthful about my gender identity has meant risking transphobic prejudice, discrimination, and physical harm. Difficult as this has been, I have preferred to admit my past dishonesty rather than continue it.

Last weekend I found myself in this type of difficult situation. I volunteered to serve as an adult leader for a Young Friends' (YFs) conference in North Carolina. (YFs are Quakers from 12 to 18 years old.) I drove 350 miles from Atlanta to the conference site. During this six-hour drive, I reflected on my situation.

I knew that I had to take the risk of being truthful about my past dishonesty with the YFs about my gender identity. I could not predict how the YFs would react. I could not even begin to imagine the grief I would feel if I could not continue in my role with YFs.

When I was a teenager, the YFs community was my spiritual home. I formed my deepest, most abiding spiritual beliefs and values, including my commitment to the Truth Testimony, in that community of YFs and adult leaders.

As an adult, a spiritual calling has led me to help provide this spiritual home for the next generation of Quakers. I have been leading YFs conferences for many years. I have very much enjoyed my role as an adult leader. I did not want to risk losing that role, but I knew that intentionally not following the Truth Testimony would risk desecrating that role.

I arrived at the conference site at midnight. There were 23 North Carolina YFs and 3 adult leaders whom I had not met before, besides the 9 YFs whom Curt, Steve, and I had brought with us from Atlanta. They had known me for years as a woman named Joy. Curt already knew that I had started changing my name from Joy to Jeremiah and already saw me as a man. Steve and the 9 Atlanta YFs had not yet heard anything about my name change or the reason for it. I was wearing a chest binder and men's clothes, but I looked about the same as I always had before.

Without any explanation, I simply introduced myself to the North Carolina YFs and adults as Jeremiah. Hannah, the adult coordinator, started directing us towards cabins. She pointed to a cabin and suggested that Curt and I take the empty bunks there. As I walked into the cabin, an Atlanta YF blocked my way. He said, "Guess what? This is a guys' cabin!" I replied, "Guess what? I am a guy." He didn't say anything else then. He looked at Curt. Since Curt obviously agreed with me, no one challenged my presence in that cabin again.

The next morning, Steve asked me why the North Carolina YFs and adults were calling me Jeremiah. I explained to him that I recently accepted a truth about myself that I had known but denied for years. I am a transsexual man. I am changing my name from Joy to Jeremiah to reflect my identity as a man. Steve then told me about a Quaker workshop on the meaning of masculinity that he had attended last summer. He told me that transsexual man in this workshop had much more clarity about his own masculinity and its meaning than the other men in the workshop had.

Steve then remarked that I was giving up a great name. I explained to him that I don't think of it that way. I chose Jeremiah as my male name because the book of Jeremiah contains the biblical verses about "Joy to the world." I see Jeremiah as the male form of the name Joy, not as a different name. Also, the prophet Jeremiah's message speaks to my condition. He warns that ignoring difficult truths leads to suffering. He promises that heeding the truth, however difficult, leads to joyous celebration. Steve complained, with a smile, that I had gotten him curious

enough to make him read an Old Testament prophet.

At a meeting of the adult leaders later that morning, Hannah explained that she had planned a workshop on homophobia and other gay and lesbian concerns. This workshop was a response to the homophobic remarks she had heard carelessly thrown around by YFs at previous conferences. I asked her about including transphobia and other transgender concerns in that workshop. She said that she didn't have any background or resources in that area, but if I did then she would welcome my contribution.

I took about five minutes of the workshop time to tell my story. For as long as I have been able to remember I have known I was a boy (and now am a man) even though I was born with a female body. When I was seventeen years old, I fell in love with a girl. At that point I decided to identify myself as a lesbian. I told myself that explained my childhood identification as a boy. However, being male-identified was anathema in the part of the lesbian community that I had belonged to at that time, so I buried my male-identification in deep denial.

Last year my denial started to weaken, and my male-identification threatened to surface again after being buried for fourteen years. My reaction made me suicidal until I finally decided to accept my gender identity.

I am currently in the process of legally changing my name from Joy to Jeremiah to fit my identity as a man. I am planning to begin hormone injections within a few weeks to begin the process of making my external self congruent with my internal self-identity. I am sure that I am on the right path because I feel happier, more comfortable, more peaceful, and more relaxed than I can remember ever feeling before.

I also told the YFs that I could understand if they were thinking I was weird, wrong, or sexist to identify myself as a man. Whatever they were thinking, I had probably thought the same thing about myself at some point in my life. I encouraged them to ask me questions without hesitation or fear of offending me. "Please offend me!" I joked. I told them I would rather have them openly talking with me instead of keeping quiet.

Most of them seemed to prefer the safer and more familiar topic of

homophobia. Although they asked the gay and lesbian adults many questions, not many YFs asked me questions during the workshop.

However, during free time later that day, about a dozen YFs approached me and started a discussion about transphobia, gender identity, and transsexualism. Their questions showed an interest in understanding all of this. They told me that they wanted to overcome their prejudice about transgendered people only existing "out there on talk shows." Talking to me let them learn that transgendered people exist in "real life."

I told them they might have met transsexual people before but not known it. To illustrate how ordinary-looking some transsexual people can be, I showed them a photograph of two transsexual men who have been on hormones long enough to look unambiguously male. The YFs agreed that they would not have known that these men were transsexual if I hadn't told them. Several YFs jokingly remarked that they might need to read my nametag to recognize me at the next conference.

In their reaction to my name change, the Atlanta YFs showed the instant black-and-white thinking typical of adolescents. Despite years of calling me Joy, they immediately switched to calling me Jeremiah. Whenever Curt or Steve accidentally called me Joy, the YFs immediately corrected them. Not understanding that adults sometimes have a hard time changing old habits, the YFs indignantly reminded Curt and Steve, "His name is Jeremiah!" The YFs were much more upset by my being called Joy than I was.

Best of all, the YFs who had known me for a long time said they felt more comfortable with me at this conference than at previous conferences. They sensed my greater comfort with myself, and that made them more comfortable with me.

Much to my relief and joy, being truthful about my gender identity has not ended or disturbed my relationships with YFs. Instead, my truthfulness has improved my relationships with them by making them more comfortable with me. Heeding the truth, however difficult, has led to joyous celebration. Jeremiah was right. ♣

return to college in the hope of giving myself a safer place to prepare for and adjust to the real world. I also decided, in fairness to the transgendered community, to once again go public with my new information and awareness concerning transsexuality as it related to me. I felt I may have done a real disservice to my soul brothers and sisters with my national (and international) television, radio and newspaper presentations in the mid to late 1980s. As I said earlier in this article, during that time, I was sincere, but sincerely mistaken about transsexualism. It is never easy to admit making large mistakes, even to oneself! But to open myself up to the media and to say I was wrong for so long was one of the most difficult things I have ever done.

In an anatomical sense, I am still trapped between the sexes. In 1969, my size 36C breasts were surgically removed, and in 1975 I had a total and complete hysterectomy with removal and closure of the vagina. Despite my kidding around with Geraldo and Donahue to the contrary, I never had any surgical reconstruction of breasts or vagina during the eight years from 1982 to 1990 when I returned to presenting myself as a woman. I did have extensive electrolysis during that time which removed about 80% of my extremely thick and heavy beard. Yet even with close shaving and heavy make-up, the shadow was always there and in many pictures taken during that time I looked like what I was— a man in drag!

In late 1992, a surgeon offered to begin male genital construction for me at a price I could not turn down. I was so desperate for some semblance of anatomical correctness as a man that my better judgement was overruled. The surgeon lacked experience in the area of genital construction, and the results were horrendous! Immediately following surgery I developed an expanding hematoma (a blood filled area) in the newly created scrotum, to the point of nearly bursting before I was taken back into surgery to stop the internal bleeding and remove the

accumulated blood. From there, an infection developed and a few days later the left testicular implant was removed. I then went home —2,000 miles away. Once home, an abscess developed on the right side, which eroded through the skin, draining a very purulent pus. Three weeks later, on heavy antibiotics, I returned to Chicago to have the right testicular implant removed and the area treated to clear up the roaring (by that time) infection. The pain during that month was continuous and the worst I have ever endured.

The only up side was, armed with a letter from the surgeon, on my way home from Chicago (following the original surgery) I stopped off in the city of my birth. I had my birth certificate changed to read “male” and my name (which I had had changed legally in 1970) was also corrected. At that point, I felt “reborn!” So, while I am anatomically nearly back to “square one” (but with the addition of a goodly amount of scar tissue in the genital area), legally I am finally what I have always been mentally: a male.

In spite of the surgical fiasco, in December of 1992, I earned my B.S.W. (Bachelor in Social Work)— graduating *cum laude*, I might add. January of 1993 found me in graduate school pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in psychology. By the time this article is in print, I will have finished my master’s program, graduating in June 1994 (also *cum laude*). My daughter Lori plans to attend my commencement. Gradually the rift between us narrows. When I returned to living my internal reality in late 1990, she lost her mother, whom she considered her best friend. I’m not sure she will ever totally trust me again, but she is at least willing to slowly and very gradually attempt to build a relationship with me. For this, I am grateful!

My dad, who I now know was in my adult life my best friend and most loyal supporter, died very suddenly on April 8, 1994. He was so looking forward to my graduation! Losses are inevitable in life, and I have unquestionably suffered my share. But one thing dad taught me was to pick up

the pieces and move on. I am trying to do that. Several years ago, dad apologized to me with tears streaming down his face for being so abusive to me when I was a child. I forgave him, but I could not forget, and so I struggled daily to let go of the fire-breathing monster persona he had been too often when I was a confused, frightened, and terribly vulnerable child. Sometimes it’s very difficult to let go of the pain and injustices committed against us in the past. I know, intellectually at least, that the more emotional baggage I carry with me from the past, the less room I have to develop a more peaceful and prosperous now.

However, my romantic relationship of three years duration has forced me to face myself in ways I never could have by myself. I guess I’ve only grown internally when forced into it by external circumstances. Like most people, I find change scary and threatening and I’d much prefer to avoid it whenever and however possible. Yet, for me, growth and change seem an intricate part of the tapestry I have woven of my life. Life is a journey and it has been a difficult one for me a lot of the time. But there have also been moments of fun, joy, and sometimes even ecstasy along the way. At times I still feel like a young boy who never had the opportunity to gradually evolve and develop into the man my chronological age seems to dictate I should be. Furthermore, not being anatomically correct and complete as a male bothers me most when I’m naked (as in getting dressed, taking a shower, or making love) or when I’m going to the bathroom. Maybe some day I’ll be able to afford a competent, experienced surgeon to create what nature did not. In the meantime, life goes on! ☞

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*(My Real ...) Continued from page 35*

"Light it like I done taught ye, pup. Ye'll pass with flyin' colors. Trust me, she'll be rushin' ye to the apothecary herself to give ye yer shot of manhood." I lit the cigarette macho-style by striking the match toward my body, cupping my hand to keep the wind from blowing it out. Xavier was silent and watching her reaction. "Yer hormone bound, pup. I can feel it in mah bones." She then asked me if I would ever regret not being able to have children, to which I replied no, and that was basically all there was to it. She said: "Well, I see no reason why I shouldn't approve hormone treatment for you."

I must digress. Prior to this, I had done the MPD specialist shrink tour to help me. I was told that I wasn't going to see a needle, as we weren't integrated, which is the standard treatment for people with MPD. Integration is nothing more than the fusing of all personalities into one, but all have to agree to this, of course, for it to "work." Such a solution meant the death of all of us, and we weren't going to go along with that, for obvious reasons. Since our system wasn't in a state of chaos and hasn't been

since 1986, and we lived as a family, it made no sense to us to oblige the wishes of those who didn't even care to ask what we wanted as a unit.

I was also told that hormone treatment for people with MPD isn't ethical. They kept saying that my particular case (a male personality living in a female body) was unheard of, thus not believable. It is true that some male personalities do come out for a visit, but none live full-time because it's not congruent with their biological sex.

It was even suggested that we use our 16 year-old female personality (who's never lived a millisecond of her life in the harsh, sexist, outside world) to come out and live full-time. Xavier immediately jumped over me to cut the "expert" off and said: "Yeah! Let's throw that female child into your arena. Why don't we? We sure as hell don't give a flying hoot whether she'll make it or not. We gotta satisfy them experts, don't we?" He leaned back to catch his breath and said to a stunned male shrink: "We ain't gonna abide by yer wishes 'cause it ain't fair to 'er.' 'Sides, we males have more endurance and experience in yer piece of shit world. She don't. Go fuck off or somethin', will ye?" When I came back, I stood up and

said: "For the record, I second that motion to deny your wish on the grounds that it is the most preposterous suggestion we've ever heard so far." I walked out of his office feeling very empowered by knowing what I have always known—that my pack is a solid unit that can never be dissolved by external forces. So I pretty much had to lie to get what I wanted, which was a life of my own, and to live by my own rules and those of my pack.

To me, SRS is definitely out of the question for the following reason: I already have my own equipment. To acquire a "man-made" replica would not only be redundant, but useless as well. I have gotten comfortable with this body to the point where I can derive pleasure from it, which is something I wasn't able to do until a couple of years ago, when I met my current SO, who taught me that not being bio-correct doesn't mean that I'm a freak. She also knows about my "condition."

And what was it that I really wanted? I'll tell you: Body hair, a beard, and muscle tone. The rest I can do without. I've got those now outside as well as inside. I'm quite satisfied. I'm very lucky to have a pack like mine. My love and admiration goes to them. ♀♀

## *Garrett Oppenheim*

### *A Remembrance*

*by Ari Kane*

*Garrett Oppenheim will be remembered as a valued friend of the gender community. He was a medical journalist, and edited a number of medical publications, professionally. In the 1960's, he renewed his interest in the transsexual phenomenon and started Confide Counseling Service, providing counseling and therapy services for people with severe conflicts about their gender. He continued with this service until the late 1980's. He then turned his energies to the study of past life regression and its possible relationship to transsexualism. He was active in this area of clinical study until his death on February, 1, 1995.*

*Garrett was a good friend, as well as a colleague. We enjoyed many professional and social exchanges together. He is survived by his wife, Gwen.*

*Our community has lost a dear and devoted friend.*



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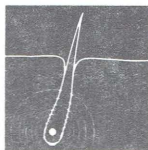
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# Bits n Pieces

## Ten Questions

by Taylor Priest

Because gender confusion is a very personal issue and one that does not usually come up in conversation at the dinner table, I have devised this list of questions to help you deal with those who have trouble grasping the concept (that is, everyone except other TS', and hopefully, your therapist. Coming to the discussion with a prepared list of questions for the uninformed serves a couple of purposes. First, if they are answering your stupid questions, they won't be asking any of their own (for example, what kind of underwear will you wear). Second, explanations do little, if anything, to increase understanding. Insight comes much more frequently and roots itself more deeply when it is derived from one's own analysis and interpretation. Analyzing something you read requires a higher level of skill than merely comprehending the words.

**Question #1:** Can you define gender? Give examples of how it is a part of your life.

**Question #2:** Can you define sex? Give examples of how it is a part of your life. (Don't hesitate to ask for specifics. After all, you're embarking on a discussion of an issue that is up close and personal for you. It's no fun to be the only one on the diving board. Grab a friend and make a bigger splash).

**Question #3:** Is your child a male or a female? How do you know? When did you know? Do you know? (Careful with this one. Parents can get very territorial and they may start to monitor Johnnie's [or Joanie's —Ed.] choice of toys more closely).

**Question #4:** Describe the history of gender in our society. Remember to include significant names and important dates. (This question will accomplish several things. First, it will distract them from looking for signs of a sprouting beard and listening for a voice to crack. Second, they will need to research the question which means

they may discover the answers to some of their own questions along the way. Finally, asking this question will give you the air of authority. It is purposely phrased in the manner of an essay question on an history exam which should evoke symptoms of test anxiety).

**Question #5:** Describe for me an emotional issue that was difficult for you to deal with, in a way that I will be able to feel exactly what you felt at the time. (Again, this distracts them from the physical alterations while forcing them to experience your frustration in trying to explain the issue. That is, it keeps their eyes off your chest and their mind on emotions).

**Question #6:** Let's play a game: It's called "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall." In this game you become the reflection of your friend. In other words, you play the part of the mirror, which is, of course, the best part. (Remember Snow White's mirror? It was omniscient, sort of like God and the judge of the Miss America Pageant rolled into one). Your friend starts the game by saying, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, what sex am I?" You then proceed to give your friend clues, but not a direct answer. The purpose of the game is for your friend to figure out their gender (which you have pre-determined) by asking you a list of questions and analyzing the clues received. At the end of the game your friend should have a much better appreciation for your dilemma.

**Question #7:** List the five most important qualities you look for in a friend. Upon receiving the list, you respond, "Then why is my gender so important?" (Since it is a rare individual who will include gender on this list, your response will almost always work. However, it is a good practice to read the list, in case you have someone whose priorities are a bit scrambled. With these people, it may be best to suggest they seek some counseling of their own).

**Question #8:** What percentage of your life do you spend in bed? What percentage of this time are you engaged in sex? How much of your day is spent in a public rest room?

(Although some of the questions you will be asked about the “technical” aspects of a gender change are understandable — even if they are asked as if you had never considered them and shedding light on them might somehow make you see the difficulty of your pursuit in a new light — their significance is much inflated. These questions will help to put them in the proper perspective).

*Question #9:* Why is the sky blue? (Again, this is a multi-faceted question. First, after the last questions, they may be sweating bullets — talking about sex often has that effect. Second, the seeming irrelevance of the question will make their search for the answer more voracious). The secret to this question is to answer it with Question #10. If they should figure it out on their own, give them extra credit.

*Question #10:* How is gender identity determined— that is, is it biological, psychological, environmental, or something else? Answer: Who cares. It’s there whether we like it or not, so we live with it. The sky is blue. You may ignore this fact by wearing tinted glasses, but sooner or later you get tired of wearing them and take them off. What color is the sky now?

Although the nature of the above questions may seem whimsical or even sarcastic, I have taken this approach for a specific reason. When you encounter a resistant friend, your reaction is naturally one of defense. My athletic experience has taught me that the best defense often breeds a more aggressive offense. When an issue is turned into a debate, the discussion becomes a competition. In order to diffuse this situation, the defense has to first lay down their gloves, and then, having gotten the attention of the offense, redesign the rules of the game. The new rules make cooperation the goal, so both players win, or they lose together. *By asking the questions, you channel your friend’s energy in a new direction and give them a new purpose, your purpose. Instead of trying to discredit your proposal, they are now trying to answer your questions— questions designed to help them understand you.* ♣

## Forward

by Taylor Priest

*Standing at the edge of the road whose ditch is littered with warning signs:*

*“Keep Out”*

*“Beware: Danger Ahead”*

*“No Trespassing”*

*“Enter at Your Own Risk”*

*I hesitate, consider the risk*

*I look for the dangers*

*There is nothing in sight*

*The road curves to the right and is gone*

*Keeping its treasures and perils to itself*

*Seeing no reason to continue, I begin to turn back*

*But wait*

*Was that a light I saw, just below the curve*

*It appeared and was gone*

*Or did I imagine it?*

*Another glimpse tells me it is real*

*I take a step, then another*

*It is not too late to turn back*

*Perhaps I did imagine the light*

*But there it is again*

*This time I close my eyes and hold onto it for a moment*

*As I forge ahead, fear and doubt fight to turn me around*

*Closing my eyes, I shut them out*

*Seeing the light, I know I must continue*

*Though I cannot see around the curve*

*The promise of the light will carry me forward*

## Metamorphosis

by Taylor Priest

*The caterpillar, sitting alone on a tree, bracing himself against the breeze, feels frightened, frustrated. He sees the expanse of the world surrounding him in all of its splendor, yet he cannot touch or experience but the most minute piece of it. He counts long distances in feet, not miles.*

*Then one day the caterpillar awakes to a new dawn. He can now see the grass, not from a tree branch, but from between the wisps of a cloud. His world has grown, his boundaries have expanded out of sight. The breeze no longer deters his movement; it has now become the force that carries him to incredible heights. Realizing he is a butterfly, he now understands that he, too, is part of the beauty and wonder of the universe.*

*Brandon Teena was murdered in Nebraska in early 1994 by two men who resented the fact that he had a female body.*

## *Why was Brandon Teena murdered?*

*by Denise Noe*

Brandon Teena was quite a ladies' man. Slim and handsome, his many former girlfriends say his main attraction was not his boyish good looks but his charisma and sexual acumen.

Brandon took his time when romancing a woman. He never rushed through to "the act," rather, he would arouse a lady and stop where she wanted him to. He was interested in the woman's pleasure for its own sake rather than as a way to make a "score." Brandon was given to surprise gifts and thoughtful reminders of his love. He sometimes handed over an entire paycheck to his ladylove or had a limousine pick her up from work.

Once he moved in with his girlfriend, Brandon insisted on doing all the cooking, cleaning, and laundry. And the pampered women enjoyed not only many orgasms, but the slow overall sensuality which Brandon understood better than most Don Juans.

Hardly a saint, Brandon Teena was also a petty criminal who deceived, manipulated, and sometimes even stole from other people—including the women who loved him. Indeed, some of his acts of "generosity" were unwittingly purchased by the girlfriend herself via a stolen credit card.

But despite his many and serious faults, virtually all his girlfriends have praised him as the "best lover" they have ever had.

Some may think Brandon's winning ways with females came from the fact that unlike most guys, he had been raised as one of them. For, as the world would discover upon his

arrest for check forgery, Brandon was genetically female, with a birth name of Teena Brandon. Having been brought up as a girl, the transgendered man may have heard more than other guys about what women like—and dislike—in men and adapted his behavior accordingly.

There is another possibility. I believe his primary advantage was, paradoxically, his lack of a natural penis. (He did pack a strap-on dildo which he used in sex as well as to help him "pass" as a male). Many studies have shown that penile intercourse—what most people think of as "the sex act"—is an inefficient way for women to reach orgasm. In addition, many reports say that overall body stimulation is more important to women than to men and that women require more energy to achieve orgasms.

Most heterosexual men are aware of this and try to compensate. But the dilemma remains that to almost all men, "I can satisfy a woman" is a brag synonymous with "I can get it up."

Brandon Teena could make the first boast in spades—but not the latter. The absence of the male organ—devastating to Brandon as it is to many other transgendered men—forced him to find other ways to please his partners. Deprived of the "goal" of penile intercourse and, like many transgendered people, unwilling to allow his partner to touch his own "defective" sex organs, he gave undivided attention to the woman's feelings.

At the time of his death, Brandon had not had surgery to either his upper or lower body and was said to be very self-conscious about his masculine identity. He tried to compensate, showing he was "one of the guys" by performing feats of physical strength. Another attempt to compensate may have been his own vocal lesbophobia (though he had no prejudice against gay men), calling physical love between women "gross" and "disgusting." He always insisted that he loved women "as a man."

In view of this anxiety, Brandon's insistence on doing the "women's work" seems puzzling. But it makes sense from the viewpoint of an astute ladies' man who knows that a well-rested woman is more likely to enjoy sex. Ironically, taking over the woman's chores may make a man more of a Don Juan than "getting it up."

After his arrest and consequent exposure as a genetic woman, two men allegedly assaulted the "gentle offender." According to a police report, John Lotter (an ex-boyfriend of Brandon's fiancée) and Lotter's buddy Tom Nissen pulled Brandon's pants down at a party and beat him until his fiancée finally looked at his crotch—where the female organs were. Later that same evening, it was asserted, the guys beat Brandon and raped him—in the vagina.

One week later, Lotter and Nissen (who were not arrested, even though Brandon filed a police report immediately after the attack) murdered Brandon and two non-transgendered friends. All three victims were shot, but only Brandon was also stabbed.

I claim no special knowledge as to the motivations of Brandon Teena's killers or the guilt of those accused. I can only speculate on a troubling question raised by this tragedy. What was there about Brandon Teena that could have aroused such fury? Why would someone want to kill him—especially if they had already beaten him and publicly humiliated him?

Perhaps the source of their rage was that the transgendered Casanova had, however inadvertently, shown that the stiff dick is not key to pleasuring the female. While his attackers could "prove" that Brandon was not the "man" people took him for, they could not destroy the knowledge that heterosexual woman had fallen in love with him—and that he had given them sexual gratification.

Brandon Teena may have been murdered by men who realized that the "maleness" between their legs was no match for the "maleness" between his ears. ☞

## *Between Worlds* by Taylor Priest

Just as we do not choose the geographic area into which we will be born, we do not choose the gender into which we will be born. So what happens if you grow up in an igloo, the whole time feeling like you belong on a surfboard? When you are old enough, you move.

Then what happens if you are born into a girl's body, your entire childhood spent wondering why boys' toys, boys' games, boys' haircuts, boys' clothes, boys' speech patterns, boys' postures and everything else that makes a boy not a girl appeals more to you than the things everyone around you pushes you toward? The answer here is not quite so simple.

You see, you are actually living in a third category, in a world whose understanding of gender is dichotomous. Being a child, you do not know this; you only know that you feel different. Unlike the Eskimo child who sees pictures of warm beaches and learns of Hawaii while studying geography, you do not hear of others like yourself.

As is the case in any social situation, the possibilities for reaction are as endless as the human imagination. I can only tell you of how I experienced living between two worlds. For as long as I can remember, I have felt "different." Being socialized in a gender dichotomous society, I assumed there were boys and girls, period. So I did not consider gender to be the cause for this feeling of separateness.

Instead, I stumbled, feeling in the dark for my own explanation. Sometimes I felt like I was "special," like God had sent me to earth for a particular purpose. (I never had a specific notion of what that purpose was, but it never really seemed important. God would let me know when the time was right).

You may be saying to yourself, "So what's wrong with that? It sounds like you had high self-esteem." Wait. There is more. More often, I wondered what was wrong with me. I began to think other kids might be making fun of me behind my back. If I walked by two kids who were whispering to each other, I assumed it was about me. To a child who feels different, that difference on the inside soon penetrates to the surface, until it seems that everyone can see it.

You can probably see where this leads. A child who does not feel secure will not venture out into the world, will not try new things, will be afraid to fail. To cope with the world the child learns to avoid things and people: "They can't laugh if they can't see me." This child learns not to invest too much effort: "If I never try, I never fail."

I must once again caution you that there is more. I was not, as you might guess based on the last paragraphs, an isolated, seemingly maladjusted child. In fact, my childhood was relatively normal. I was surrounded by a fairly supportive family, exposed to a quality education, and I had friends. Just like the child in Alaska who, despite his need for waves and sand, still occasionally enjoys a good snowball fight; I lived in my gender environment, sometimes coping better than others. The point I am trying to make here is that the coping came at a cost. The simple inability to identify the "difference" had a price tag that is still being paid off.

Think for a moment about walking along the edge of the curb, or along a thin crack in the sidewalk as a child. This balancing act took a good deal of concentration and energy. Growing up as a girl, I balanced my life everyday, trying to reach an agreeable compromise between the way a "young lady" was supposed to act and the way I felt like I needed to act. As I pointed out earlier, this went beyond behavior; it covered every psychological and sociological part of my life. Only in the past month have I finally come to realize why clothes have always been such a crucial item for me. I never before understood why, when someone suggested I dress in a different manner, I felt personally threatened, as though they were trying to change something about my identity. Now I know why. They were.

But I resisted. Now I know that I must change myself or walk on a balancing beam for the rest of my life, never touching the floor. And yes, the thought of dismounting is frightening. Flying through the air, uncertain of what will hit the floor first and how hard it will hit, is terrifying. But living complacently on a balance beam is exhausting, frustrating, disappointing, and disheartening. In comparison, the terror will be relatively short-lived. For those who cannot accept the way I walk, I am sorry. But there is no other way. ☽☽

## *Storm*

by Taylor Priest

*Storms create the beauty of rainbows. They leave the earth refreshed, life ready to reach once again for the sun. Shoulders once heavy with burdens feel light and relaxed in the wake of a storm. Children leave the folds of mother's apron to run and splash in the puddles now glistening with the beams of the sun. Before the storm, life continues; after the storm, life begins anew.*

## *Life*

by Taylor Priest

*Having found a place in the Universe, I can now commune with life around me. Being who I am allows me to become who I shall be. Loving who I am allows me to love others for who they are. Being proud of who I am allows me to take pride in where I came from, and where I am going. Knowing who I am allows me to live.*

# Medtalk

*As a transgendered physician, Sheila Kirk is in a unique position to help transgendered persons improve their overall physical and emotional well-being while providing insight and instruction to medical professionals. She is a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist with 27 years of medical experience in private practice. She is a member of the Board of Directors of IFGE, Director of IFGE's Division of Medical Liaison and Research, and a member of AEGIS' Board of Advisors. She is author of *Hormones*, and co-author, with Martine Rothblatt, of the recently released *Medical, Legal, and Workplace Issues for the Transsexual*.*

*by Sheila Kirk, M.D.*

*1. Is there a testosterone patch available to FTMs, and if so, does it work?*

Testosterone, usually given by injection, can be given to the female-to-male transsexual by the topical route. Testosterone is incorporated into a patch applied to the skin in the genital area of the body. This method was developed for hypogonadal males. These are genetic males whose testes are underactive for a variety of reasons, and whose blood testosterone levels are lower than necessary to achieve and/or maintain masculinization. The fact that the patch must be placed in the genital region for maximum effectiveness—in fact on the scrotum of the male—is an important one. This is not possible for the female-to-male individual prior to surgery. After surgery, this device and mode of therapy is available, but at this time, the effectiveness is unknown. There is need for research to determine if this treatment is as effective as injectable hormonal therapy.

This transdermal approach is in marked contrast to the estrogen patch developed for the genetic/biologic female, which is very effective when used by male-to-female transsexuals. The Estraderm patch can be applied to the trunk, buttocks, or thighs, and will produce good tissue response.

*2. I have mild blood pressure elevation. Should I have any concerns about the use of testosterone?*

If your blood pressure is elevated before the start of testosterone, there may be some aggravation once testosterone is begun. If blood pressure is only mildly elevated before treatment and controllable by regulating weight and diet (especially cholesterol) without medication, your blood pressure should remain the same as long as you follow your plan. You should have had pretreatment baseline evaluation of your cardiovascular function inclusive of EKG, possible stress test, and other measures to insure your cardiac health. If your blood pressure increases, additional testing may be necessary. Blood pressure medication may be needed.

Even if your blood pressure is high, it is very possible that by dieting, controlling your weight, and taking medication, you can remain on testosterone. However, frequent medical exams will be needed—physical exams, blood studies, and cardiac testing.

One last thought: if you smoked before the start of testosterone treatment, you should have stopped completely once you started your medication. And as hard as it is, you must never start again.

*3. Lately, I've heard of an operation that will "free the clitoris." What can you tell me about it?*

The surgical procedure you refer to consists of freeing the hood which surrounds the upper portion of the clitoris, thereby allowing much more exposure as the clitoris grows with stimulation by testosterone. It can be performed in the hospital or at an out-patient facility, provided anesthesia is adequate, and surgical technique allows for the technique to be done as an out-patient service.

An increasing number of female-to-male transsexuals are opting for this operation.

*4. Will I experience different emotions or mood swings when I begin to take my testosterone treatment?*

Many individuals taking testosterone report notable changes in mood and affect. You may be much more forceful and dominant in the workplace, in athletics, and in sexual activity. Your libido will increase. You may be quicker to anger, and your anger may be more extreme. You may have difficulty controlling your anger at times. Much of this will moderate with time, but it could create tension and problems in relationships with family members, co-workers, and lovers. It may be necessary for you to practice self-control, and for those around you to make allowances for what you are experiencing.

*5. How necessary is it to have my uterus and ovaries removed?*

Very probably, the only surgery you will really need to consider in order to live full time as a man is breast reduction/chest reconstruction. Some female-to-male individuals will want the removal of the uterus and ovaries once they have begun hormone treatment; however, there are sometimes medical reasons for this surgery. Many surgeons can remove the uterus and ovaries through the vagina; however, a portion of the vaginal wall is used by some surgeons in phalloplasty.

Removal of the uterus and ovaries ends the need for yearly pelvic exams and pap smears, which should otherwise be done yearly by all female-to-males. ☪



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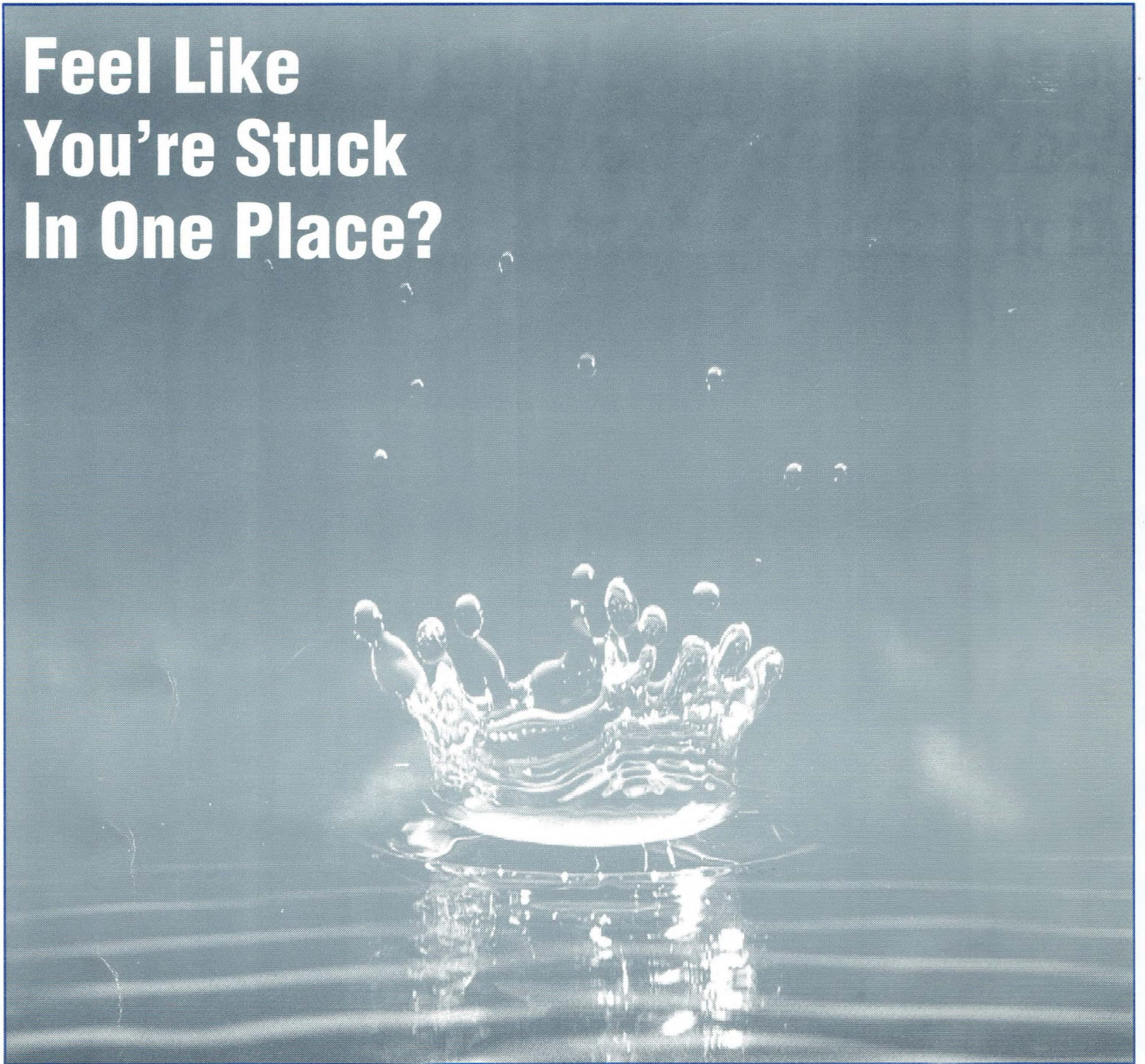
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