

# Polare Edition 45

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## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

**H**aving used images which could be taken as male-to-female and female-to-male on recent *Polare* covers, I have been looking for a cover image which might pay tribute to the intersexed segment of our community. I decided to use an image taken from one of many Hellenistic statues of Hermaphroditus (the Hellenistic period ran from 323 B.C.E. to 31 B.C.E.). Hermaphroditus, or Aphroditus, was the son of Hermes, messenger of the Greek Gods, and Aphrodite, goddess of love, beauty and fertility.

The story goes that Hermaphroditus bathed in the spring where the nymph Salmacis lived, and she fell in love with him. She prayed to the gods to combine her body with his and they granted her wish. A cult of Aphroditus is recorded from the early fourth century B.C.E. and fourth century statues of Hermaphroditus show him as a beautiful youth with breasts. Later statues show a woman with a penis. There is a fine statue of a sleeping hermaphrodite housed in the Louvre, but while searching for its image I found another statue I found even more appropriate. It shows a hermaphrodite in combat with a satyr. Satyrs for those who do not know, conformed closely to the description provided for "men" by Jack Lemmon in *Some Like it Hot*, namely, "rough hairy beasts with eight hands who only want one thing from a girl ...". Satyrs had a permanent erection and lived for sex. I like this statue because the hermaphrodite is obviously teaching the satyr a painful lesson in unarmed close combat.

Talking of which (oh, the subtle segue!), taking lessons in self-defence is an eminently sensible undertaking for members of our community. I agree with much of what Elizabeth says about transition but I also think we should be prepared for occasions when people do not respond sensibly to logic and/or compassion. If you are going to walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and fear no evil, sometimes you have to be the Meanest Son of a Bitch (or the Meanest Bitch) in the Valley.

## Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

In the last edition of *Polare* I ventured into a discussion on the process of transition with the intention of looking at why some people manage their post transition more comfortably than others. I ran out of room in that edition and only managed to touch on the transition period itself. I did make the comment that "passing" was not significant in achieving a successful outcome and I would like to resume by attempting to identify some of the characteristics that do seem to play a vital role.

To begin with it is probably necessary to try to define what a "successful outcome" might mean. For most of us I think it

## Feature Articles



That the Mardi Gras has become more of a party than a protest has been a matter of much debate over recent months.

### Party or Protest?

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has become more of a party than a protest with opinion divided fairly evenly as to which way it should evolve. Party or protest, the Mardi Gras has become an event which has captured the attention of many countries the world over.

### A Rose by Any Other Name

Some transpeople adopt a more appropriate name in childhood. For others it only becomes necessary when they realised Ralph isn't all that suitable for a person wearing a sequined little black dress and four-inch stilettos. Catherine S talks to a few name droppers.

### From Victim to Villain in a Single Bound

Carolyn decided to write this article after taking retaliatory action against a local teenager that was abusing her in a shopping centre. She reports that the incident was treated very negatively by police and then arrested for assault, finger printed and then locked up.

### The Day the Sky Fell on Me

The idea hit Elaine as if the sky had fallen on her. Most of her life she had struggled to be a man. Her life of struggle, pain and apparent failure could be explained in this single truth: she was a woman born in a man's body, a revelation, both shocking and freeing.

### Black Market Testosterone

Buying testosterone from the black market, especially from body builders is incredibly risky. Counterfeit androgens are a hugely profitable business, there is absolutely no telling what you will get, if it will contain what it says, or even if it is sanitary or sterile.

### Safety Guidelines for Injecting Hormones

This article provides important information that people injecting hormones need to know including where to inject, what to use and how to avoid infections however if you are contemplating

probably means that in the main we are accepted in the wider community as the sex with which we identify and that we are treated with respect and dignity regardless of whether our transsexual history is known or not. So why does this apply to some members of the community and not others?

No doubt there are a multitude of reasons and all of them are complex. Nonetheless it may be a useful exercise to try and unravel them. Lets begin with attitude because this is probably the umbrella characteristic under which all other characteristics can be grouped. The Oxford Dictionary defines "attitude" as 1a, a settled opinion or way of thinking. b, behaviour reflects this. In other words how we see ourselves, how we see others, how we view the world, what our values and beliefs are and the opinions we form determine our attitude and our attitude plays a role in determining how others see us.

How then does attitude translate into the real life experience of transgender people? For those achieving a successful outcome what we might generally see reflected in their attitude is:

- » a positive approach to life, which may include employment, active participation in social and community activities, setting goals and working towards their achievement, establishing stable and reciprocal relationships with other people and generally getting on with life:
- » values and opinions that are perceived to be fair and just, which may include views on politics, religion, spirituality, the environment, social justice, human rights and so on:
- » a strong sense of self that is respectful and accepting. This is a two way street involving respect and acceptance for others. It is a fundamental truth that if you treat people the way you would like to be treated you are more likely to be treated the way you would like.
- » responsibility, taking responsibility for your own actions.
- » self-confidence, this is partly about never apologising for who you are and indeed about having a sense of pride in who you are. We often fall into the trap of assuming that our life experience as a transsexual separates us from the rest of the population. That we are enduring this enormously challenging, life changing event and everyone else is okay, Not so! Being alive is enormously challenging. Very few people are totally okay. Everyone has baggage. The baggage may be different but baggage is baggage. Yours is every bit as good, or bad, as theirs. If they don't apologise to you for theirs, why should you apologise to them for yours? Be proud of your journey. You have done the hard work and you have earned the right.
- » I recently read a magazine interview with a drag queen and she quipped about a book she is writing which is titled, "I'm okay, but you need to pull yourself together". I don't suppose it will ever get into print but it is worth reflecting on the title.

Having expounded on some of the characteristics that lead to a successful outcome, and I concede there are many, many more, is it fair to suggest that it is the absence of some of these characteristics that leave others in the community struggling to come to terms with life after transition? In part perhaps. But there is no formula that can be simply applied to guarantee success. Certainly there are lots of people in the world whom we would describe as successful that do not possess all these kinds of qualities though most would probably possess plenty of self-confidence. Certainly there are people who may be liked but not respected, or respected but not liked and so on. Nothing is simple in the complex world of being human.

But this much is certain. We have a substantial degree of control over our own destiny. If we are not enjoying the same acceptance in society as some other transgender people we can find out why and try to do something to improve things for ourselves. If we suffer from low self-esteem we can work to overcome that, if we are lacking in confidence we can do something about it, if we don't know much about what is going on in the world we can become informed, if we don't have views or opinions we can develop these, if we don't have a job there may be other ways we can harness our talents to generate an income. It may not be easy but it can be achieved. We have choices in our lives. We can choose to make excuses or we can change what isn't working for us. If we choose excuses then it is a sad reality that in twelve months time we will still be in the same place as we are today. If we choose change, who knows what exciting possibilities that may lead us to?

And if you do seem to constantly meet with negativity or discrimination it may be important to ask yourself why. Now I am not suggesting that anybody does this but by way of illustration it is worth recognising that; if you fart loudly in public, if you are cruel to animals, if your life is a litany of complaints, if your favourite topic of conversation is yourself and if everything that ever happened to you is someone else's fault then the chances are people will not think too highly of you. If you fall into the latter category don't assume that you are not well liked because you are transgender. You are probably not well liked because of all the other things you are doing. Being transgender is incidental.

I am not saying that being transgender is not a factor in the negative treatment that we may receive from some in the wider community but it is important to look at all the factors. It is my firm conviction that the vast majority of people don't really care whether you are transgender or not. They have enough to occupy them in their own lives without dedicating energy to being nasty to us. We may draw their curiosity, but any difference is going to generate curiosity and gender difference is no exception. Nobody notices a Falcon driving by, but a Ferrari gets everyone's attention. Greet curiosity with a smile and think of yourself as a Ferrari.

self-administering please consult your physician first to ensure your safety.

### Interview with Kate Davis

Kate Davis' film *Southern Comfort* follows the last four seasons of F.T.M. Robert Eads' life, a man who was many things to many people: a cowboy, a grandfather, a good ol' boy from the South who wanted to die on the land he owned, a man who died too young of ovarian cancer.

As for that small and usually incredibly insecure minority that are out to give us a hard time, we provide a nice scapegoat for them to project all their own inadequacies and failings onto. They seek to affirm their own value in the world at our expense. They are tragic cases and we might well treat them with some compassion. However, we are under no obligation to notice them. They are best ignored. A useful personal affirmation for deflecting these people's reactions to you is to simply say to yourself "what other people think of me is none of my business".

Above all, be yourself and maintain your dignity.

If community members would like to express views on this or any other topic please send your contributions in to Katherine. We would love to hear from you.

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## Party or Protest

### We Are Here to Stay

by Ken Coleman

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



We are getting stronger and more visible than ever.

**T**he twenty-fourth Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

Parade got off to it's usual noisy start with the "Dykes on Bikes" being welcomed by cheering

crowds of enthusiastic supporters. Unlike previous years, where the girls did a few laps of the parade route to warm up the crowd, this year they led the parade in a more subdued fashion. The mood became a little more sombre with the Remembrance Group marching from the end to the beginning of the parade route, with sections of the crowd maintaining a reverential silence as they passed.

The lead float, "St Muscle Mary's Cathedral" was greeted with wild applause, with an archbishop Pell look-alike acknowledging the cheers of the crowd as he waved from his throne - the small of incense wafting over those close to the

*Party of protest, the Mardi Gras has become an event which has captured the attention of many countries of the world.*

roadway.

The pre-parade entertainment was well attended, with celebrities - among them Boy George - keeping those in the reserved seating area entertained until the parade began. Television personalities including Steve Bisley and Indira Naidoo compared the Bobby Goldsmith section, ably assisted by well-known entertainer Atlanta Georgia.

That the Mardi Gras has become more of a party than a protest has been a matter of much debate over recent months, with opinion divided fairly evenly as to which way to go. Those who have been involved in the parade since it's humble beginning in 1978 continue to espouse the view that it should remain essentially a protest, whereas there are those who weren't even born then, who see it simply as a huge occasion to party. Party of protest, the Mardi Gras has become an event which has captured the attention of many countries of the world.

Journalists from as far a field as Denmark were very interested in the event, and there was also a huge contingent from Japan seated in the press section who seemed a little bewildered as to what was going on.

With discrimination against gays, lesbians and transgender people still very much alive, the Mardi Gras provides a platform for all of us to get out there and show those who would choose to class us as second class citizens that we are here to stay, and that far from fading into the sunset, we are getting stronger and more visible than ever.

Next year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the movement. We need to prepare for the biggest festival ever. If you've never become involved before, let's show the knockers just how many of us there are by putting on the party of the century.

Have a wonderful year, and we'll see you again in 2003.

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# A Rose by Any Other Name

## A look at the Process of Choosing a Name

by Catherine S.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**S**ome transpeople adopt a female name in childhood. For others it only became necessary when they realised Ralph isn't all that suitable for a person wearing a sequined little black dress and four-inch stilettos. Catherine (make sure you don't call her Cathy or Cate) talks to a few name droppers.

***Names come and go in cycles and reflect their era. Whatever happened to the Roys, Alfs, Corals, Pearls and Aileens of this world?***

I was there when Rob became Laura, in name at least. It happened when a group of us were sitting around talking at the now defunct Centennial Hotel. (Newcomers must be sick to death of us old-timers dribbling in our bras and reminiscing about the good old days at 'The Cent'. Tough! And be careful who you call an old-timer, junior.)

"It was a little bit difficult because you don't normally choose your own name, somebody gives you one," she recalls. "I got out a couple of books that had lists of names. I went through these and wrote down the possibilities because there were ones that are obviously unsuitable."

As a fan of Lauren Bacall, she was attracted to that name at first "but it wasn't quite suitable, it didn't hit the spot". After exhausting the name books and rejecting names directly

linked to her family or friends she finally announced her choice at the Centennial.

Laura also took the unusual step of legally adopting a new surname to replace her distinctive former name. Partly this was because she returned to live in the regional city of her childhood. However Laura denies she buried her past. "I just want to live my life now as I am, to pass, to mingle in society, without anybody taking any particular notice of me, just as an ordinary person."

Names come and go in cycles and reflect their era. Whatever happened to the Roys, Alfs, Corals, Pearls and Aileens of this world? Rest assured that one day their places in the nursing home will be taken by Kylies, Jasons, Trents and, yes, even Madonnas. Scary, isn't it!

Of course the drag queens have it all over us when it comes to names. Their handles are as unrestrained as their appearance. Consider Barbara Quicksand, Amanda Diefore, Kitten Kaboodle and my favourite, Maude Boate. Oh, to be that imaginative.

In some ways, names are a bit like that Holy Grail of cross-dressing, passing. If you want to pass, wear something that doesn't attract attention. Similarly choose a name that reflects your era, ethnicity and personality.

The simple and most obvious way is to choose the feminine version of your male name: Michael to Michelle, Andrew to Andrea, etc. Some recommend retaining your initial, for example John can become Jacinta, Joanne, Jasmine or even Jamilla. I suppose it saves on initialled hankies. It may even be possible to rearrange your male name, for example Katherine Cummings in her biography *Katherine's Diary* mentions a friend Ernie who became Irene.

Don't care for that? Then go for it, call yourself Candee-Soo and wear that sequined little black dress and four-inch stilettos to the shops. It's a free country but don't be too surprised if you attract some attention. (Note to editor: please check the Seahorse membership register to ensure I haven't libelled any Candee-Soos.)

Sarah adopted her name in her mid-teens. "I just thought it was a nice name for a girl," she recalls. "It seemed distinctly feminine and sophisticated."

She believes the inspiration may have been a song, *Me and Sarah Jane* by Genesis. "When I was dressing up and didn't feel like my male self any more I would sing it to myself. I liked the name and so if I had a spare moment to myself (as you do) I would always think "Oh, I might do a Sarah Jane".

Twenty years later she is still happy with the choice. "I love it," Sarah contends, "having this extra dimension to my life." She has toyed with variations including (wait for it) "Sarah Gun-in-your-pocket".

Thirty years ago Lyn T (of The Sex Changers cartoon series fame) lived in a small town and needed a name to allow her to receive correspondence without arousing local comment. She adopted her sister-in-law's name (with permission). "She got married about two weeks later, moved interstate, changed her name and I've kept it ever since." Lyn, a graphic artist, has since adopted a second given name, Sue. "And the reason for that was graphical. 'L', 'S' and 'T' fit together in a graphic symbol. The 'S' is the ideal link."

Lyn believes that her given names are appropriate to her age. "When I was born, Lyn and Sue were the most common female names." She has adopted the name progressively over the past fifteen years but hasn't bothered with the legal processes.

Some people go through a number of names before finding the right one. Katherine, a recent visitor to Seahorse from Adelaide, called herself Natasha Katherine when she first started dressing in late '95. "I thought Natasha Katherine sounded fine. But then I went into denial and in '98 when I started coming out of that Natasha seemed to be not all that serious as a name."

She chose to rearrange her male name. "I thought why not have a name that's close to my male name, Neville. And so I mixed up the letters and come up with Evellin." She used that name, sometimes shortened to Evie, for a little while and then rejected it "because Neville's the guy and I'm not the guy. My masculinity is skin deep. I mean you cut me and a woman bleeds."

Finally she reverted to Katherine which she calls a "very versatile name: Katherine, Kate, Kay, Katie, Kat. I use it in different ways and almost in different moods." She has adopted a second given name, Yvonne. "It just has a lovely ring to it: 'Katherine Yvonne'. It almost sings," she says lyrically.

My own selection, Catherine, came about through a mixture of laziness, default and science. Back in the old days (there I go again) before ultrasound tests became routine, expectant parents didn't know what they were getting until they got it. So most selected a boy's name and a girl's. According to family history my alternative name was Catherine (or maybe Katherine). Simple, really.

I preferred the softer look of the 'C' to the 'K' and I'm one of these pedants who insist on the full name: not Cathy, Cath, Cate or even Catie. And make sure you don't swallow the vowels and call me 'Cath-rn'. It's nothing like my male name but that's okay, my female appearance is nothing like my male self either, at least I hope not!

I toyed with the idea of becoming Emma, a play on my given name initials, M.A., but frankly I can't be bothered. I haven't chosen a second name but it would probably be Mary, my mother's second name. Catherine Mary ... hmmm, it has a nice Catholic schoolgirl ring about it. I can see myself in my school dress, 10AA cup training bra, straw hat, black patent Mary Janes ... down girl! Control yourself!

What to choose? Well, it's your call. At least you have a choice, which is more than you had all those years ago when some fascist yanked you out of that nice, warm place, whacked your backside and made you cry.

"What's in a name?" as Will Shakespeare wrote in Romeo and Juliet. "That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." That's all very well but I prefer W.C. Fields response when Mae West introduced herself in the film My Little Chickadee: 'Flowerbelle-Lee', he says, barely able to contain his lust. "What a euphonious appellation." Hmmm ... Flowerbelle ... I wonder if I could

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# From Victim to Villain in a Single Bound

## Taking Matters Into Her Own Hands

by Caroline Layt

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**Caroline Layt: I told the Police my side of the story and that I felt I had been victimised. I thought I would be listened to but I was told I was being charged and arrested for assault.**

**I** decided to write this article after being harassed by a local teenager in the town near where I live and having the incident treated negatively by police when I defended myself.

***In my solicitor's opinion the police could have taken my statement and let me off with a warning that my action had been at the lower end of the assault scale.***

I am twenty-six-years-old a post-operative woman. I transitioned in 1995. Before I transitioned I played competitive sport in my local area and was often written up in the local paper. I also mixed socially with the locals on social occasions.

Unfortunately there was that one percent (there always is), who over the last six years thought it was okay to victimise, abuse and vilify me. These have either been teenagers or young adult males. Lately it has been the former and unfortunately the aggressive one percent is always the most vocal.

The first two years were the hardest. Teenagers and young adults congregate around shops in the shopping malls in my area and if I passed they would mutter things under their breath. If there were enough of them they would scream insults at me from a safe distance. Because of my sporting background and the fact that I am a strong person physically I would sometimes ask them what their problem was and then tell them what I thought of them and their comments. On other occasions I would ignore them but if I had already had a bad day then sometimes I would react and give them back some of their abuse.

As the months went by the harassment grew less and less, partly due to the fact that I had a new partner (also M.T.F.). It was harder for them to pick on me when there were two of us. Also, as time went on, we became less of a novelty and the young louts moved on to victimise someone else. Still, the abuse flared up from time to time and occasionally my partner and I would have to put up with their bigoted attacks.

My partner moved to the U.S.A. two years ago on a working visa and met and married a wonderful American man but she and I remain best friends. She mentioned that she had moved forward in her life and I hadn't as she had moved away and started a new life for herself. She is never harassed or victimised and nobody is aware of her past. I agree with her totally.

Since my partner moved to the United States I have been verbally abused every three months or so, usually during school holidays. Eighteen months ago I went to the local policeman and told him I was being harassed by the local teenagers. I told him the circumstances leading to my victimisation and he told me there was nothing he could do. I asked him what would happen if I were to take the law into my own hands. He told me that if I hit them I would be charged with assault. He told me the same teenage louts were harassing his teenage daughter. I am sure he took action on her behalf and warned the teenagers off but I realised that I would have to fend for myself as the local police were not going to do anything to protect me, thanks to their own bigotry.

I was abused again about three months ago and again defended myself. I told the teenagers I was going to the Anti-Discrimination Board over their harassment and they 'dropped off' when I told them this.

On 3rd January 2002 I was very tired from lack of sleep and physical exhaustion having been fighting bushfires. We had lost a house and two sheds on our property and I didn't really have a Christmas-New Year holiday in 2001-2002. As a result my patience was stretched thin and when some teenage boys started to harass me, one of them screaming out "Oh yuck, there goes that f\*\*\*ing drag queen", I told him he was an idiot and to pull his head in, but then I thought "he is a dickhead ... who cares what he thinks" and went back to my shopping.

A little later I walked past the teenagers again and they glared at me. I returned the favour. As I walked towards my car the one who had yelled out had a smart ass look on his face and held his cigarette a few inches from my face. I was very tense with the cigarette burning so close to me and several of his friends only three metres away (I had been assaulted by five teenagers in Roselands under similar circumstances). I punched him three or four times to the head and body and when I realised his friends were not joining in, I stopped hitting him but held him up against a wire fence. He told me his father was a bikie and he would get him on to me. I let him go

and walked back to my car and he started to abuse me again. I told him to be careful what he said and that I hoped the incident would teach him a lesson.

When people heard what had happened, many told me the teenager was a troublemaker and had got what he deserved. They told me he had been expelled from school and had bullied other kids. Unfortunately I am not allowed to use this information in court.

The Camden Police were contacted by the teenager and his family on Thursday 3rd January and the police waited until Saturday to contact me at 8:30pm to come to Camden Police Station at 9:00pm. My Solicitor and I believe they did this as I would have less chance of finding legal representation on a Saturday night than during the week.

I told the police my side of the story and that I felt I had been victimised. I thought I would be listened to but I was told I was being charged and arrested for assault. I couldn't believe it. I was fingerprinted, photographed and locked up for an hour and a half. When I was fingerprinted the Senior Constable filled in the forms as 'male' gender, I corrected him and said "I am not male". He changed the forms to 'female' without apologising. He was as professional as he had to be, yet I felt I was being punished, not for the act I was supposed to have committed, but for being transgender. In my solicitor's opinion the police could have taken my statement and let me off with a warning that my action had been at the lower end of the assault scale.

The days of 'Bumper' Farrell bashing gays and transgender people may be over but I feel the police force have a long way to go before gay, lesbian and transgender people are treated equally by the police. Homophobia and problems with transgender have not yet been treated adequately within the police and these issues need to be addressed, especially in country and regional areas.

What is the solution? I could move, as my partner did, but I have four dogs and I can't afford to rent a large house at the moment. I would love to move to the Wollongong area as I teach aerobics at two fitness centres there. I love the people and as they know me only as a woman I have no problems. I teach school children aerobics in Wollongong and I have never had any problems there. They refer to me as 'Miss' as they see me as a woman. I socialise in Wollongong with friends from the gym. I would never socialise in my home area as I know there is no point and I would be victimised by some bigoted idiot. It is like living in two worlds.

I will be \$2,750 out of pocket (solicitor's fees) due to the victim having become the villain.

The system is flawed and needs revision.

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# The Day the Sky Fell on Me

## Elaine's Revelation, both Shocking and Freeing

by Elaine

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... she asked me if I knew of my strong feminine energy.

**T**he idea hit me like a truck, as if the sky had fallen on me. Most of my life I have struggled to be a man in a man's world and I could never get it, why I never quite made the big time. That my life of struggle and pain and apparent failure could be explained in this single truth: that I am a woman who was born with a man's body, was a revelation, at once both shocking and freeing.

*... while my mates were all out testing their testosterone, I was at home wearing a pair of oranges or tennis balls down the front of my jumper.*

It answered in one go, everything I have never understood about my turbulent past. When I left school I had foolishly believed the advertising world would give me a career in which to express my early signs of creative ability. How wrong I was! This was undeniably the world of big business, the corporate world where men were men and woe betide anyone who was not a member of the club.

Believing I was a man, I would subconsciously summon any maleness I could muster in order to be one of them and I tried to play their game. But I was playing by different rules. The more macho the client or colleague the more serious and destructive were the games they played with me. They must have sensed I was not one of them but couldn't understand

what was going on. Or maybe I was threatening to their maleness ... I don't know? Whatever the reason - an unconscious thing certainly - I would invariably find myself in the uncomfortable position of victim.

At one advertising agency, for example, the staff was invited to social drinks after work every Friday in the boss's office. Here the blokes were blokes and would gather in one corner of the room while the women would huddle in the other. This was social? One night I became tired of the males-only conversation and dared to cross the floor to join the women. The men never forgave me. Life was made so difficult for me that, as "Creative Director", I was unable to function and I had no choice but to leave. I have always been drawn to the company of women, not men, but I've never understood until now why it's landed me in so much hot water when my motives were never those usually attributed to men. At some agencies, to be in the club was to attend the late night male drinking sessions at which important decisions were made. I learnt that to be absent from even one of them was detrimental to my career. But hey, all the grog was free, so what was my problem? I'd often console myself by seeing those around me in the corporate world as warriors defending their kingdom (the company), aspiring to their roles of the "Boys Own" comic book heroes, bravely setting out from their castles (homes) every morning on their trusty steeds (cars) to go into battle in their suits of armour (business suits).

Their ties were their swords and those who wore the loudest ties, especially if splattered with red, tended to be the killers. I'd beware the blue tie wearer who would often be the deceiver, the colours of his sword not always matching the colour of his intentions (it's the politicians favourite tie). I've read that a man's tie is a symbol of his erect penis but then, symbolically, what is the difference between a penis and a sword?

There was the time when I landed my first big client soon after going out on my own. They were a well known party plan company where the saleswoman sold their product in the home. When I was invited to their week-long annual conference in Fiji to present my campaign I thought I had it made. I had written and designed a series of black and white double page spread magazine ads and a radio commercial using two of their sales women doing their thing in a real home environment. So of course I'd become friendly with these two women before the conference.

We arrived at the resort at 4 o'clock in the morning so, since our time was free on the first day, I decided to take an afternoon nap in my room. On emerging, still groggy, I was confronted by a number of hostile senior women and the male Managing Director, accusing me of spending the afternoon in bed with Mrs. X (who was one of the women in the ads). What? They were so sure of their assumption that they hadn't even bothered to knock on my door or try my phone. My denials and my "what are you talking about?" seemed to cut no ice.

What I was being accused of was their expectation of me, as a man. Of course they were not to know about the ad campaign and how I came to know the photogenic Mrs. X beforehand. My presentation on the final night of the conference, a formal affair, was a great success. I'd engaged a top songwriter, Mike Brady, to compose a jingle which was so good I had him record a full three minute version

of it hoping it might make the charts. The song went down so well that the fifty or so delegates danced and sang to it all night as I kept playing the tape for them. I was on a real high. This was surely the launch of my successful freelance career.

I had a new family of two beautiful blonde blue eyed little girls aged four and two, and we just bought a modest timber house in a trendy inner Melbourne suburb. Everything was going well. Soon afterwards the clock struck midnight and everything turned to pumpkins. The client cancelled the campaign and asked that I place no more advertising.

There were perfectly good internal reasons why, but I have no doubt the first nail in the coffin (and perhaps the last) was the imagined episode between me and one of their staff on that first steamy afternoon in Fiji. It was a year before I got paid for the campaign in spite of much persistence on my part (I had equally persistent creditors to pay).

Can you see how easy it has been for me to get myself into trouble - even when I'm asleep? It's not as if I were incompetent or lacking in talent. I ran my own freelance business for over ten years, against the odds, and once wrote and directed a campaign of award-winning television commercials for a famous brand of pies and donuts.

My Mother wanted a girl. She was convinced her first child, me, was a girl. So sure was she that she had lovingly made a pile of beautiful embroidered and smocked dresses for her newborn daughter to wear. To her great disappointment I arrived in a little boys body but I got to wear the dresses anyhow.

I wonder, did my mother know I was a girl resting in her womb or did she will it with her thoughts? I'm sure you've read books which say, like the title of the first chapter in Napoleon Hill's famous book *Think and Grow Rich*, that "Thoughts are Things". Or was it through wearing all those beautiful dresses my Mother had made with such love and anticipation? There were a number of telling episodes as I was growing up.

Like the time my Mother took an axe to my writing desk in which were stored all my pet projects after I refused to go outside and play footy with my brothers. That little drama surely sent the female in me ducking for cover for years. Or when I became deeply impressed by a classmate (at an all-boys school) who played the female lead in the annual school play and was transformed into a beautiful woman.

This made such a deep and lasting impact on the teenage schoolboy who had just reached puberty. But while my mates were all out testing their testosterone, I was at home wearing a pair of oranges or tennis balls down the front of my jumper. I'd reached puberty, so where were my breasts then? When they failed to appear I had innocently (and instinctively?) created them as best I could.

In later years, without having any understanding, I was filled with shame and guilt over that incident. Yet all my life I've been ashamed of my man's body (especially my short, unmanly legs with my thin ankles and calves) and have usually worn boring unsexy grey clothes.

Always I've sought to be invisible in the crowd. Like a car only running on two cylinders my car eventually blew up and I was declared bankrupt. I was a real mess. I retreated, broke and broken, to live in a friend's leaky old caravan parked outside their home on the edge of a small country town in the hills. Everything I owned was inside that caravan. There was no new Porsche parked outside, not even a beaten up Mini-Minor. I'd lost my home, my business, my savings, my car and even my credit cards which I'd surrendered to the Official Receiver. I had failed at everything.

My life was over (or so I thought). In spite of being homeless (unless you call a leaky old caravan parked by the roadside a home), unemployable and a stressed out basket case, miraculous and mysterious things began to happen.

When everything stopped, when all the activity and the chatter and the struggle stopped, a new me peered out from behind the facade. the mask, the ugly body that was the male me. A little at a time I could see, or recall, the signs which had been there all my life. Without yet having understanding.

It was as if I had begun a whole new life. Even my identity was non-existent but a new one had begun swirling around in my mind and my actions and my sense of who I was.

A few years later I'm on a plane to New York - with no money or credit cards, it was insane! - and I lived for six months in a luxury apartment block on the Hudson River overlooking Manhattan with a pen-friend who paid for everything including my air fare.

One day we're walking through Provincetown at Cape Cod and she announces there is a group of gay guys showing an interest in me. Yeah, right! We met a psychic woman from New Jersey who told me I was 60 percent female and only 40 percent male. I was stunned but I was listening at last. My friend was a feminist and I became absorbed in her library of feminist, gender and goddess literature.

By the time I left, I too was a feminist and a student of the goddess. Back home, I continued to think about and study these issues. I was changed by Riane Eisler's brilliant book *The Chalice and the Blade*, (chalice = feminine, blade = masculine) and the sequel *Sacred Pleasure*. The soul (which is also not our physical body), I decided, is the sum total of every lifetime we have lived which includes both male and female genders, regardless of whether we happen to be living right now in a male or female body. All of us, I believe, are on different points on a scale between the extremes of all-female and all-male.

Like our false personas we all have false bodies which mask who we really are, so our beliefs about who we are, and who others think we are, becomes a deception. I could never see what was so glaringly obvious to others.

A good looking young woman in a mini skirt approached me in a bargain shop in the city. I wondered why she was engaging me in conversation beyond the usual polite few words then she asked me if I knew of my strong feminine energy. She could feel it from the other side of the store, she said. She explained she was a lesbian, then took out a pencil and wrote an address on a scrap of paper,

inviting me to meet her gay and lesbian friends.

I never did. I was living in a caravan in the country so I let it pass. I have never forgotten that meeting. It took two great explosions to wake me up. The first was bankruptcy which demolished my old persona. The second was an article headed "A Woman Trapped in a Man's Body". Instantly I knew it was about me.

That was when the sky fell on me and I awakened to the truth which had been there, had I bothered to notice, since the day I was born (or before). Now I can love and be proud of my "woman's body" without the guilt or the shame. For the first time in my life I can love myself. What a confession!

Recently I was walking the one kilometre to the shops from the rented furnished flat by the sea where I'm now living. Along an unmade road around the side of a hill, enjoying the expansive ocean views, when I heard someone say the name Elaine. I looked around but no-one was in sight. I heard the name again and knew it was coming from inside my head. By the time I'd reached the shops I knew that if I broke it down into three sounds it was the reverse of my given male name. El-ai-ne reversed is Ne-ai-el (Neil). The one dollar rack at the local op-shop became a gold mine for a new colourful wardrobe. I took some photos of myself in a full length mirror and couldn't believe what I saw when I got the prints back. There were my horrible man's legs transformed into LEGS! I decided to take a huge risk and discuss my secret with my doctor, a woman who is both a G.P. and an Alternative Therapies Practitioner. Two years ago she had rescued me when other doctors had failed to diagnose a number of stress related illnesses from my past.

My new revelation, I believed, could explain a great deal about my health and could become part of my healing. She looked through a selection of my photos, as I sat there trembling, then looked up and said in a matter-of-fact voice: "I knew about this a year ago but didn't know whether I should raise it with you"! Even my doctor knew? This has not been a choice, a whim, an impulsive flight into fantasy. It's an honest recognition of what is and what always has been in spite of a lifetime of denial which has cost me dearly in every aspect of my life. We are all different, in so many ways. We should be encouraged to cultivate and celebrate our differences, our uniqueness, instead of trying to become a world of clones. I'm proud to be a woman trapped in a man's body. It's who I am. I'm not homosexual and I'm not attracted to men. Where that leaves me I'm not sure. But that's okay. I'm on an exciting new adventure as a new person with a new gender - I prefer the word "androgynous". I'm free to be and enjoy who I really am. I'm well into my second full-length book manuscript where my feminine voice can at last be heard.

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Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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# Black Market Testosterone

## There's No Telling What You'll Get!

by RaverDyke, [Trans-Health.com](http://Trans-Health.com) 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... there's absolutely no telling ... if it will contain what it says, or even if it is sanitary or sterile.

**D**o not buy testosterone from the black market, especially from body builders. They will probably rip you off, and there's absolutely no telling what you will get, if it will contain what it says, or even if it is sanitary or sterile. Counterfeit androgens are a huge and profitable business for many unscrupulous people. What they give you might be dangerous, I'm not kidding.

Below I describe four androgens and a few other drugs that might be of interest to F.T.M. guys. Remember that 250mg of one testosterone ester is not the same as 250mg of another testosterone ester, nor is it the same as 250mg of another androgen. I won't make specific dosage recommendations: that's up to your physician.

### Testosterone

Testosterone is the F.T.M.s androgen of choice for a variety of reasons. It has excellent androgenic and anabolic properties, and is the substance that is produced naturally within your body. It does have a 5 $\alpha$ R metabolite and an aromatase metabolite, so one should consider adding an anti-oestrogenic agent if one is supplementing with supraphysiological doses of the drug. If you are prone to hair loss and/or male pattern baldness, you should also consider a 5 $\alpha$ R inhibitor. Physicians specializing in hair loss can usually help you find an appropriate one. There are several different testosterone drugs, including testosterone cypionate (Depo-testosterone), testosterone enanthate (Testoviron ® /Delatestryl), testosterone propionate and testosterone decanoate. Testosterone cypionate and testosterone enanthate are the most common testosterone esters used by F.T.M.s. One possibility that F.T.M.s should consider is a drug called Sustanon ® 250, which is an injectable drug containing 250mg of four different testosterone esters. It might not be available in your country. Organon is a reputable manufacturer of Sustanon ® 250, but there's a whole bunch of fake Sustanon ® out there. Buy it from a reputable pharmacy. Omnadren ® 250 is a drug similar to Sustanon ® 250, but with one different ester that reduces the overall half life by a few days. Omnadren ® is also faked quite frequently.

### Nandrolone

At first glance nandrolone might seem to be a weird substance. It resembles both an androgen and an oestrogen, but it has reasonably high anabolic effects. It is known to be a progestin, which might cause some undesirable effects in an F.T.M. guy. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable choice, especially for guys who are concerned about hair loss or specifically about gaining muscle size. By far the most common nandrolone drug is the injectable Deca Durabolin, or nandrolone decanoate. This is without a doubt the most commonly counterfeited androgen, so definitely don't buy it off of the street.

### Trenbolone

I think this androgen rocks. It seems to cause the fewest negative side-effects and the maximum positive effects. Pound for pound it seems to be almost three times as effective as testosterone. It has no metabolic pathway to oestrogens, and seems to have reasonably little negative effect on hair loss. Unfortunately it is very hard to get in most countries. One possibility is the drug Parabolan (trenbolone cyclohexylmethylcarbonate), an oil-based injectable. There are some agricultural drugs containing trenbolone, but ... well, they're not made for human use. Same drug, possibly fewer quality controls during the manufacturing process. And if you buy this on the black market (assuming that what you buy even contains trenbolone, and that's quite an assumption to make) you're probably buying something that someone whipped up in his basement after extracting trenbolone acetate from cattle implants. Most of these people know and care very little about making the drug safe. But Good Gravy, if you can find trenbolone then you should definitely ask your doctor for a prescription.

### Methenolone

This is a weaker androgen, but a reasonable choice for F.T.M. guys because it does not metabolise to an oestrogen. It might increase the rate of hair loss, but seems to be less aggressive in this regard than testosterone. Primobolan ® Depot (methenolone enanthate) is

the most common injectable preparation of methenolone. Primobolan ® is expensive.

## Other Androgens

There are quite a few oral androgens that I'm just not going to mention. Suffice to say that you should stay away from them if you can find injectables. If you are seeing a physician, just have him prescribe an injectable and show you how to inject it (or have him inject it for you).

## Clomiphene

Clomiphene seems to be a very effective anti-oestrogenic compound. It is not an androgen. It is most commonly used in the treatment of breast cancer. It is an oral drug, but as it is not an oral androgen it does not have hepatotoxic effects. The most common drug preparation of clomiphene is called Clomid (clomiphene citrate). It is widely available around the world.

## Aminoglutethimide

This is a drug that inhibits the action of aromatase, the enzyme that converts androgens to oestrogens. At higher dosages, through another mechanism, it can inhibit the production of cortisol. This might sound good (cortisol is catabolic) but you need normal cortisol levels to be healthy. If you're going to take aminoglutethimide, don't take a lot of it, and have your cortisol levels checked regularly. The brand name for it is Cytadren. There are better anti-oestrogenic choices such as tamoxifen and clomiphene, so really, don't bother with it.

## Anastrozole

This compound works like aminoglutethimide in that it blocks the aromatization of androgens to oestrogens, but it does not seem to have the same effects on cortisol. Its brand name is Arimidex ®. It is expensive but effective. I still think tamoxifen and clomiphene are better choices for anti-oestrogens.

## Tamoxifen

Tamoxifen is quite similar to clomiphene. Most readily available under the brand name Nolvadex, and like clomiphene it blocks oestrogen receptors in some tissues and activates them in others. (However, this activation in reality blocks the oestrogenic effects anyway, so no worries.)

To summarize, keep all of this in mind the next time you talk to your physician:

- » They can probably double, triple or even quadruple your dosage of testosterone with great results and few negative effects, especially for periods of a few weeks or months.
- » There are drugs available that reduce oestrogenic effects. You should consider them, especially if you are using testosterone.
- » There are other androgens available besides testosterone.
- » You should have your lipid, testosterone, oestrogen and liver levels, as well as your blood pressure, checked regularly.

## Glossary

**Anabolic:** An effect that increases growth. For F.T.M. purposes this usually refers to muscle growth, and should more specifically be described as "muscle anabolism."

**Androgenic:** A 'masculinising' effect such as increased body hair growth.

**17-alpha alkylated:** A steroid that has an alkyl group attached at the 17alpha position.

**Acute:** A state or condition that comes on rapidly and disappears within a short amount of time.

**Ester:** In chemistry, an organic compound in which an oxygen atom is bonded to carbon atom(s). In practical terms relevant to our discussion of androgens, esters of drugs are more soluble in oil (important for many injectable drugs) and longer acting because it appears that the body must remove the ester chain before the compound can act at androgen receptors.


**Half-life:** - For our purposes, the amount of time it takes for a substance to be metabolically reduced to one half of its original concentration.

**Metabolic:** An action that takes place inside the body.

**Oral:** A delivery mechanism that involves taking a drug by mouth.

**Supraphysiological:** Dosages that are greater than what the 'normal', 'healthy' body will produce

## Raverdyke

**From Trans-Health website:**  Raverdyke is a serious nerd-chick. Her interests that matter to Trans-Health include physiology, steroid biochemistry, pharmacology, nutrient biochemistry, and the Powerpuff Girls ... not necessarily in that order. She has, uh, what you might call "extensive personal experience

with supplementation for performance enhancement". Her more fun interests include reading, writing, cycling, weight lifting, smart girls, rock climbing, and long walks in the park with you ... and two little dogs.



[Other Trans-Health articles by Raverdyke](#) 

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# Safety Guidelines for Injecting Hormones

## Important Information to Avoid Infection

from Trans-Health.com

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

**The following article is provided for information purposes only. The Gender Centre strongly recommends that hormones administered by injections are best done under medical supervision. If you are contemplating self-administering please consult your physician first to ensure your safety.**

Hormones are to be injected only into the thigh or buttock muscle. When injecting, be careful of nerves, veins and bones. The buttock is the most common place people inject. You can switch buttock cheeks to avoid bruises and sores. After you inject into these muscles, you might be sore for a day or two.

Do not inject more than the prescribed amount: it will not speed up your treatment process. You can cause serious liver damage and increase the risk of blood clots. Blood clots can appear in the veins of the legs and can travel to the lungs. This is called pulmonary embolism, which can be fatal. People who smoke cigarettes and inject hormones are more likely to develop pulmonary embolism.

Most doctors recommend 1cc to be injected once a month and in some selected cases, twice a month. This will depend on the type of hormones and concentration. If you do not have a doctor, see one before you start hormone therapy treatments. Referrals can be made to doctors who specialize in providing health care to the transgender community.

Needles and syringes are to be used one time only. Never share your needles with anyone. If a new sterile syringe is not available the next time you inject, always clean it first. To clean your syringe, do the following:

- » Rinse the syringe with water three times;
- » bleach three times (keep bleach in syringe for at least thirty seconds and shake each time); and then rinse with water three times.

When injecting hormones follow these helpful steps to avoid H.I.V. and other serious infections:

- » Clean the top of the bottle with an alcohol prep pad.
- » Fill the syringe with the amount of air equal to the amount of hormones you will be injecting. If you inject 1cc of hormones put in 1cc of air. This makes it easier to get hormones out of the bottle.
- » Insert needle into the bottle, turn the bottle upside down, and push air into the bottle. To fill the syringe with hormones, pull the plunger down so the top of the plunger lines up with the 1cc mark on the side of the syringe.
- » Pull needle out of bottle, tap syringe with your finger to make any air bubbles in the syringe rise to the top. Push out all the excess air with a little dribble of hormones to make sure there is not air in the needle.
- » Now your syringe is filled with hormones. Put the cap back on the needle while you choose and prepare the injection site.
- » If you do inject into muscles below the waist you can reduce the risk by picking a site about fifteen centimetres below your hips and fifteen centimetres above your knee (that is about halfway between your hip and knee) on the outer side of the leg.
- » Keep the limb straight and as relaxed as possible.
- » Clean the injection site with a single wipe with a new swab.
- » Holding the barrel of the syringe, push the needle in with one swift jab. Not quite up to the hilt.
- » Draw back. If you get blood in the syringe, you have hit a vein or an artery. Pull the needle back a centimetre and try again.
- » Provided the syringe remains free of blood inject slowly and continue to keep the limb relaxed. Intra muscular injecting requires longer needles at least 2.5 centimetres long; 23 gauge and 21 gauge are both suitable.
- » Bring back all used syringes to the Gender Centre for exchange for new ones.

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## Interview with Kate Davis

### Producer of Sundance Film Festival Award Winning Movie *Southern Comfort*

by Erin Torneo, [Indiewire](#) 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... Kate Davis' touching documentary *Southern Comfort*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance a few weeks ago and recently played in Berlin.

**R**obert Eads was many things to many people: a cowboy, a grandfather, a good ol' boy from the South who wanted to die on the land he owned and would pass on to his children. He was also a transsexual who died too young of ovarian cancer, a man born female, a mother and a daughter, a victim of discrimination - and the subject of Kate Davis' touching documentary *Southern Comfort*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance a few weeks ago and recently played in Berlin. The film follows the last four seasons of Eads' extraordinary life, as he falls in love with Lola Cola, a lively male-to-female transsexual, and in the process, explores issues of family, identity and the complicated relationship between biology and choice that serves as the crux of the transgender debate.

*It really takes a lot of courage to have your life exposed in any documentary ... given the sort of deep-seated hatred that still exists for transgendered people*

At the party for *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* at Sundance 2001, "Inch" director and star John Cameron Mitchell, in drag, dedicated the band's final number to Lola Cola. The moment reaffirmed the sense that this once invisible community had finally emerged, in both stunning dramatic and documentary forms.

Filmmaker Kate Davis, softly spoken and modest in person, tackles the documentary side with profound sensitivity and emotional weight. Despite the complexities of the characters' struggles - from discrimination in the medical community to rejection in their own families to fears of violent intolerance, Davis stands back and lets the story tell itself. *indieWIRE* spoke

with Davis both before and after Sundance about her relationship with Eade, dramatic structure, intimacy, and the political struggles of the transgendered community.

The film, acquired by H.B.O. for broadcast later this year, opened to a sold-out screening at the Film Forum in New York on 21st February.

**indieWIRE:** How did you first meet Robert and learn of this incredible story?

**Kate Davis:** I was fortunate enough to be able to do a more directly political piece for A & E Television Networks on the transgendered community, and their struggle for civil rights. During that time I went to a lot of conferences held across the country every year. One of them was a F.T.M. in Maryland, where I met a lot of guys. Hung out for a few days and heard a lot of stories. But when I met Robert, he really grabbed me - I mean, on many different levels. He was dying at the time, having already been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. And over two dozen doctors turned him down for treatment, because he's transgendered. So here was this cowboy, smoking his tobacco pipe, telling me all about not only the heartbreaking injustice that he had faced, like being a man from the South, and having to go into an Ob/Gyn office. But also, he opened up on many other levels, like telling me about being a parent - to be a man and be pregnant - how that felt, and how his sons felt. And he emanated such warmth and charisma.

**indieWIRE:** When did you decide to make a film about him?

**Kate Davis:** All the way back on the plane I was thinking: I've gotta make a film. And when I called him, he said: "Yeah, I thought you'd call". He sort of had a sixth sense about our talking to each other. Then I didn't hear from him for months during the summer. I think he was going through a period of sickness again - his health was like a roller coaster. One day he'd be running around and, you know, cleaning his gun, or taking Jacuzzis and just traipsing through the woods, and the next day, he'd be completely laid out on his back, in pain. I assumed then, at a certain point during that summer, after the Easter test shoot, that maybe the film just wouldn't happen.

**indieWIRE:** The fragility of his health aside, did Robert express any hesitation about having such private struggles filmed?

**Kate Davis:** He's always been a very private person. And so he was a little bit - I wouldn't say hesitant, but he was taking a real leap of faith when he made this film. I mean, it was the first time he would ever be completely "out" in public. He knew that he would also be

dead after the film came out - and that provided him with a certain amount of safety, so he made the commitment. But I think it was not an entirely easy thing to do. And that's true for everybody else in the film, too. It really takes a lot of courage to have your life exposed in any documentary, but particularly if your mere existence is a life and death threatening issue, given the sort of deep-seated hatred that still exists for transgendered people. I think he felt either his life was just going to get swept under the rug, and somebody else would get sick and die, or not get treatment. And he didn't just want it to be about the prejudice, either, or his own death. He wanted it to be about his spirit of life.

**indieWIRE:** How did the other characters become involved? It seemed like several of them were not entirely "out", so it was surprising that they agreed to be filmed.

**Kate Davis:** When I met the cast of characters, I realised: This really is more than Robert. I wanted to include a whole community. Because part of all of their lives is that they often lose their biological families and create their own sense of family. And Robert speaks eloquently about his chosen family. So Cass and Max then became the other main characters, and he was just falling in love with Lola. Fortunately, I interviewed her that first meeting. At that point, she was star struck and thought that he would recover from his cancer. Max, Robert's best friend, encouraged me to continue pursuing Robert to make the film.

**indieWIRE:** Did you come to the project with a narrative structure in mind?

**Kate Davis:** Another facet of his life unfolded in front of the camera, each time I went down to Georgia - his romantic relationship developed, he prepared to go into the hospice, and so forth. And then I had a structure for the film, basically. But, originally, in fact, I didn't. I only filmed about six times during the course of one year. In the editing room, though, I approached the whole thing as just a love story, with the gender issues all a subtext.

**indieWIRE:** Even though several of the characters express their fear of being "out", they are strikingly frank, on-camera, with questions about their bodies, and operations. Why do you think this is?

**Kate Davis:** There's a million other factors, but I attribute their frankness to two things. One is that my approach to people when I'm making films, tend to be based on trust. I made a film called "Girl Talk", about three runaway girls. It's extremely close-up and sort of in their world. It's a tone that sometimes is set when I work with people.

**indieWIRE:** Is it a conscious process?

**Kate Davis:** It is, almost. It just seems to be my style. Not with every subject, by any means - but when I'm really doing my own work. Doing the camera work myself, with either me or my partner, Elizabeth, doing sound, we kept it a very intimate environment, which was partly conscious. But also I'd have to say we just really love these people. We were very, very close, very quickly, with all of them. The second factor is that many transgendered people I've met - to get where they are today, to still be alive, despite all the hardships - requires a certain deep level of self-awareness. And a lot of them have been through pain, and sort of come out the other side, through introspection. So they're often much more open, and immediately intimate, than many people. It's like there's no room in life for trivial bullshit, because their lives are so lived on the line. It's just who they are.

**indieWIRE:** The argument for obstetrics D.V. is largely a economic one, but I'm wondering in your case if D.V. was also a deliberate choice. The small D.V. cameras are less obtrusive, of course, and more intimate.

**Kate Davis:** Yes, the D.V. camera proved to be very important in many respects. It was portable, light and easy to shoot with for hours at a time, unlike 16mm cameras. And because it was small, it was less intimidating and so did contribute to the sense of intimacy. So many people comment that the camera in *Southern Comfort* seems to be 'transparent.' Additionally, the hour loads mean that the scenes could play out more naturally and fully.

**indieWIRE:** The intimacy in the film suggests your own complicity - that you, as the filmmaker, are just another one of the people who loved Robert. How did you preserve enough detachment, to do work as a filmmaker when that work involved documenting someone you cared about dying?

**Kate Davis:** Everybody has their hard parts when they make independent films. Often it's the fundraising, or it's some technical nightmare that happens. In my case, it was losing Robert, because I had grown attached to him. So yes, I had to have a sort of split consciousness, where sometimes I was just going after the shot. For example, when he's sitting there at the barber shop, you look at that face, and it's like a portrait of death, itself. And then, at other times, I just put down the camera and gave him a back rub, or gave him medicine, and just cried with him. There were dramatic moments that I couldn't, ethically, pick up the camera to capture. It would feel too cold-blooded. It wasn't easy.

**indieWIRE:** How did Robert handle being the subject of the film when his health was failing? Did it complicate the relationship you two developed?

**Kate Davis:** We were on the same team. Robert knew the film had to be made. He felt it was really important that his story got out there, and that people learn these kinds of social and systemic atrocities happen. Transgendered people can still be bludgeoned as a moral statement on the part of bigoted people. Robert lived in the land of the K.K.K., and he used to have dreams of crosses burning on his lawn all the time. So he and I had a mutual understanding. It wasn't just that I came in as an outsider, to capture images and run off with them. But he was working with me to make a larger statement, through his own personal story.

**indieWIRE:** Were you able to get early financing for the film?

**Kate Davis:** I didn't have much financing. It was a difficult story for people to get their minds around. People had such little experience

even imagining what a transgendered man is. It's been like an invisible community, until now, and the recent success of *Boys Don't Cry*. But that wasn't really about the community at large, but more a very isolated incident, Brandon Teena. I mean, you tell somebody there's this cowboy, and he's transgendered. He falls in love with a male-to-female. And then it's just like: "Huh? What?" It just flips reality, as we know it, upside down.

**indieWIRE:** Why are there so many films dealing with sexual identity right now?

**Kate Davis:** It's very hard to say. Sexuality is all over the place. Major novels and non-fiction books have come out that have stretched the envelope of what can be discussed publicly. We've broken through a lot of taboos. After heterosexuality, the next border to cross seemed to be homosexuality, and now gays are much more prevalent in the media. But a yet untapped realm, after that, is people who really transcend the norms of what we consider "male" and "female". This is new territory. And even then most of the stories have focused on women - transgendered women. For some of the reasons I mentioned. I think the men are really hidden. I think a lot of people don't even know they exist.

**indieWIRE:** How did Lola and the cast receive the film?

**Kate Davis:** It's a funny thing I never would have expected. I, of course, was hoping they would all say, "Yay!", and rally around it, because it's about all the issues that are near and dear to their heart, and they all adored Robert. They all watched it, and, although they liked the film, they had picky problems with their own appearance - whether it was their hair, their weight, their accent or whatever.

**indieWIRE:** Appearance because it is so central to their chosen identities, perhaps? There is almost a feeling that your own body betrays you.

**Kate Davis:** Of course. When you're a transgendered person, you have to spend double, if not triple, the time that most of us do, being conscious of how you present yourself: how you look, how you talk, how you walk, how you hold your cigarette. So seeing themselves blown up on a screen is a pretty intense experience. How most of us, or, let's say, non-transgendered people express our gender identity is a constant, unthinking process.

**indieWIRE:** Do you ever feel limited by truth, by the responsibility as a documentarian trying to express reality?

**Kate Davis:** I must confess that the infinite richness of reality has always challenged and fascinated me. I find a lot of fictional stuff falls flat, or is too uni-dimensional. So I can't say that when I make documentary films I feel frustrated by limitations. No. I think the limitations of the filmmaking process in documentary - which are real, and they're often a pain in the neck - they are well outweighed by sort of the complex landscape of real living beings in front of the camera.

**indieWIRE:** Does the privilege of seeing things, encountering marginalized communities what attracts you to work?

**Kate Davis:** It's a combination of things. I think that there are political underpinnings to why I do what I do, and why I choose these subjects. But, on the other hand, I could never be a politician - that's not me, you know. I love working with film. On a purely artistic level, I love the narrative, the music, the sound, the rhythm of editing - all this stuff that isn't directly related to the film's message, but to filmmaking, itself. So I really think it's a mix. I'm unable to do films that have no social relevance. On the other hand, I'm probably equally unable to do propaganda.

**indieWIRE:** When we first spoke, you had just gotten accepted into Sundance. Now you've won the Grand Jury Prize. What's that like?

**Kate Davis:** Winning Sundance was more than anyone could count on in life. I was thrilled, but mostly for Robert. I really felt like his dreams were being realised. That by being willing to open up on film, his story could reach many well outside the transgendered community, and perhaps change hearts and minds. Standing at the podium, I missed him, but had a sense that if he's up there watching, he's grinning his cowboy grin in between puffs from his pipe.


## Southern Comfort

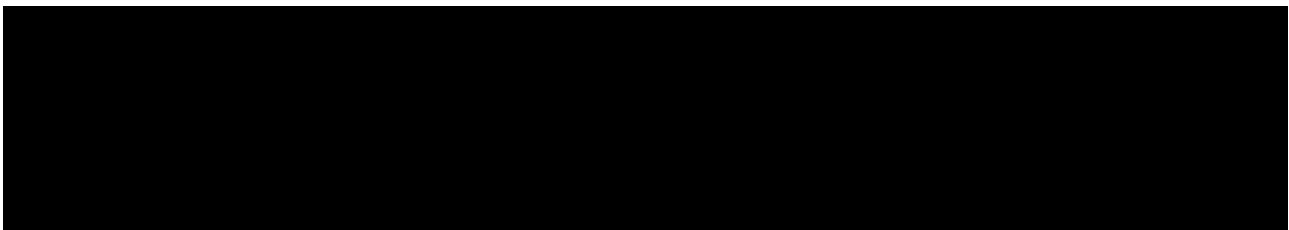
Directed by: Kate Davis

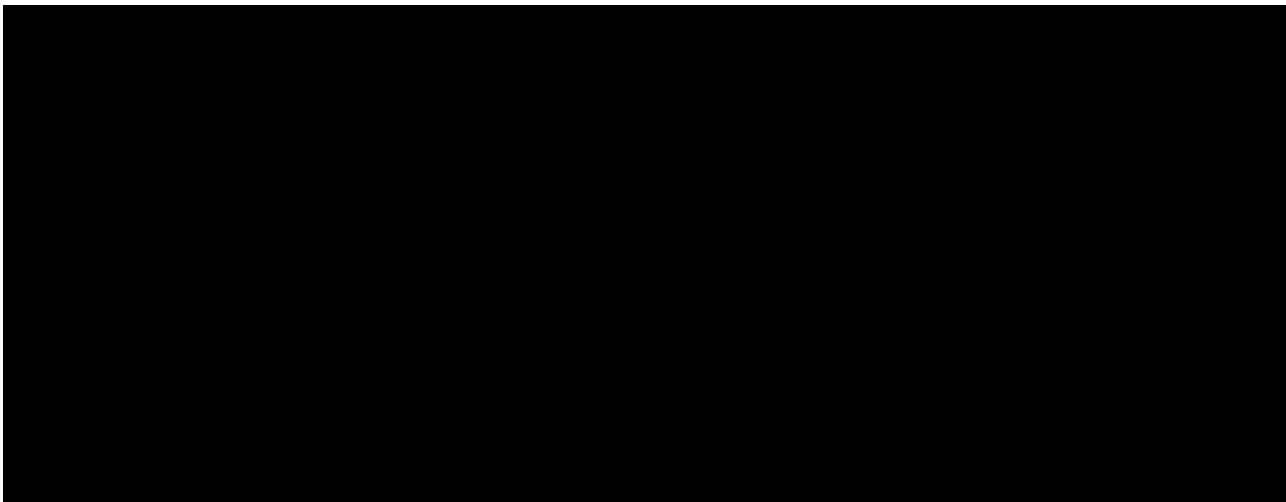
Starring: Robert Eads, Lola Cola, Maxwell Scott Anderson, Cas Piotrowski, Corissa Anderson

Producer(s): Kate Davis, Elizabeth Adams, Nancy Abraham, Sheila Nevins

Released: 2001

[From Amazon Movies](#)  Stunningly poignant documentary tells the remarkable story of Robert Eads, a female-to-male transsexual coping with cervical and ovarian cancer. Unable to find a doctor who feels comfortable treating him, Eads faces his illness with the help of a local support group for transgender individuals and the love of his girlfriend Lola, a woman who was born a man.





## From Kate Davis ...

**From Amazon Movies** 📺 This June (2009) marks the 40th Anniversary of the Stonewall riots. In June of 1969, for the first time, transgendered and gay youth fought back against the police because they were fed up with oppression, and many felt they had nothing to lose by risking their lives and throwing bricks at the establishment. To the amazement of many during those violent nights, they found they had a collective voice. This grew into the annual Gay Pride parades which continue across the world, all testaments to the power of speaking out.

These themes of courage and stepping out of the closet were also the backbone of *Southern Comfort*. When I met Robert Eads at a conference for transgendered men, I found myself living with a very hidden minority, hidden because they pass so well as men, and hidden to protect themselves against the daily perils of living as a transperson in a world which still persecutes them and makes every day a dangerous prospect.

The men in *Southern Comfort* were fine living their regular lives, and hardly jumped at the chance to be part of a documentary. In fact, Robert himself resisted for months, and one day called to tell me that he was up for it. That he would be dead by the time the film would be finished. And so we all started to help tell Robert's extraordinary tale of being a transman, a parent, a shotgun-toting guy who can pass for a classic redneck from rural Georgia, and as someone who was falling in love during the final year of his life. During the filming, I began to hear one recurring idea: the importance of accepting oneself. From that comes the strength to live a more honest life, and from that comes the chance to open up the hearts and minds of others.

And so the six main people in *Southern Comfort*, most of whom had survived rejection from their families, friends, employers, and the medical world, decided it was time to speak out and let others know how that feels. That they are human too. Many times at the end of a shoot, I would fly back from Atlanta feeling inspired by their strength - wouldn't it be great if we all could simply accept ourselves? - but also I felt outraged that such prejudice still exists and continues to kill.

*Southern Comfort* has, since then, reached millions of people around the world. There was even a town in rural Japan which celebrated "Robert Eads Day". Those in the film now know they did a lot to help break down stereotypes about those society condemns for being different. In a quieter way, the film reflects the spirit which was needed to ignite the Stonewall riots. Enough hiding. Time to be on an equal footing with everyone else. In the end, this isn't a story of L.G.B.T. rights or transgendered rights, but of human rights.

- Kate Davis, Director, *Southern Comfort*

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.