

Polare Edition 11

Published: February 1996 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

Editorial

by Craig Skinner, Polare Editor

Welcome to the first edition of *Polare* for 1996. We at the Gender Centre wish a "Happy Mardi Gras" to all of you participating in the festivities. To those of you on the Tranny Pride float this year; have a ball!

There are a lot of letters in "Postscript" this edition, showing that discussion as usual is alive and well in the transgender community. There is once again a variety of articles for you to enjoy. Everyone is very excited about the upcoming legislative changes in N.S.W. for anti-discrimination etc. Transgender Liberation Coalition give us a picture of how they managed to win this legislative success. Napewastewin, who presented a paper at the Harry Benjamin conference in Ulm, Germany last September kindly gave us permission to re-print the paper in *Polare*. Poetry has been very popular over the last few months, which is great to see, so we included a full double page spread in this edition. Caroline has written a follow up to "You're a Tranny and You're Beautiful", an article that appeared in *Polare* last year. Laura shares with us some realisations from a day spent at the beach and Roberta succeeds yet again in broadening our horizons and awareness when we go to Asia for a spot of gender changing.

As usual there's also a lot of contacts, groups and activities to get involved with and lots to read. So sit back, relax and enjoy the first edition of *Polare* for 1996.

Manager's Report

by Bill Robertson, Gender Centre Manager

"Cultural identity ... is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture." - (Hall, 1990:225)

In reality the transgender community is a network of communities, primarily split between political community which pursues ideals of political power and representation, and the other communities, which encompass the genuine diversity which political activists seek to represent.

While diversification is the spice of life, those of the community who compound political issues together with unresolved personal issues and who purport to represent the collective community can do the community as a whole great disfavour. The motive, while ostensibly caring is viewed by onlookers as self-serving and self-centred.

The tenacity and the richness of the emerging variety of gender subcultures within the transgender community cannot be sufficiently emphasised. What needs to be acknowledged, accepted and valued within the community itself and the contributions that everyone makes from the various communities all working towards a real sense of community development.

Snippets

from the pages of Polare Number Ten

Feature Articles



We are not asking for this recognition in spite of our transsexuality ... but because of our transsexuality! Because of what and who we are!

The Growing Rent

Paper presented to the H.B.I.G.D.A. Symposium by Marjorie Anne Napewastewin Schuster, explaining that transsexuals are demanding rights as equal members of our society and of the human race and that these demands are for recognition, not approval.

The Middle Way

Geselle Galadriel writes of her gender dysphoria and how it claimed years of her desperately lonely life. Ever since she's been asking why? The knowledge to understand was hard won over 28 years, for she had never masculinised, not at the age of four or even 14.

You're a Tranny and You're Beautiful Two

Caroline Layt and her feelings that the best gift you can give yourself is to be true and loyal to yourself, writing in response to Val's article in the previous *Polare* edition titled You're a Tranny and You're Beautiful.

On the Beach

"For the next three years I attended church services come rain or shine, sang hymns and listened to what they had to say. I didn't believe a word of it" says Laura, who recounts her experiences at church and on the beach.

The eleventh edition of *Polare* featured a lengthy article in relation to the proposed transgender anti-discrimination legislation and issues that arose among the transgender community at the time. The article was written by Aidy Griffen of the group known as Transgender Liberation and Care (T.L.C.). This was indeed a turbulent time in the Gender Centre's history and it is our intention to compile an article that addresses this divisive time in our community at a later date.

Internal Gender Centre advertisements in edition nine of *Polare* magazine included those for the Needle Exchange and Outreach services. The Needle Exchange service offered syringes, needles, spoons, water, swabs, fit packs, sharps containers, pill filters, dams, condoms, gloves and lube and advertised as a confidential free service for people with gender issues. The H.I.V. Outreach Service visited clients in convenient locations and offered supplies - condoms, lube, gloves, dams, fit packs etc. - or just someone to chat with, those interested were encouraged to contact the outreach worker at the Gender Centre. The outreach workers are also at Forbes and William Streets every Thursday night from 9:30pm - 12:00am.

The Easter barbecue was advertised for 4th April 1996 and a series of art classes were advertised spanning a two month period from March through April. Included in the classes were etching, box making and book binding. Clients were also invited to come and relax at the Gender Centre. Each Monday evening at 6:00pm there was an opportunity to participate in relaxation classes that used a variety of methods to help with relaxation including soothing and inspirational music, essential oils, guided meditations and relaxation exercises.

Externally, the search for transgender people to take part in the Andrology Unit at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital's "Prostate Disease and the Transgender Person" study continued with an advertisement that asked; "did you know that biological males have an 80% chance of having prostate disease and a 25% chance of needing surgery? We don't know whether this is the same for transgenders. The prostate is known to be a hormone sensitive organ, but it remains unclear what the long-term effects of oestrogen are on the prostate and whether this changes the incidence of prostate disease. Did you know that the prostate is not removed in genital realignment surgery and it is unclear as to what happens to the prostate long-term post-surgery. The Andrology Unit at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is trying to answer these questions with a current research project and are looking for volunteers."

The Pride Centre was also calling for a community meeting for all health/welfare service providers, transgender persons and their friends to form a sub-committee to oversee and set up an inter-disciplinary conference to collate ideas and proposals that work towards the establishment of a transgender community health model. The meeting was to be held on Wednesday 28th February 1996 at the Pride Centre, 26 Hutchinson Street, Surry Hills

News in Brief

from the pages of *Polare* Number Eleven

A mentally disturbed transsexual has been questioned by police after being found prowling in a dormitory at Eton College, only two days after Prince William started school there.

A matron at the exclusive \$25,000 a year college confronted the woman and hit the security panic button after she obtained "unsatisfactory answers" about what the intruder was doing there.

The 31-year-old woman who had a moustache and wore a long raincoat and baggy trousers fled but was later arrested by police in nearby Windsor.

According to Britain's *Sun* newspaper, the woman was a man before undergoing a sex-change operation.

The Gender Centre advise that this edition of *Polare* is not current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.

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.

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

The Growing Rent

Our Demands are for Recognition, Not Approval

Paper presented to the XIV Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Symposium, 1996, Kloster Irsee, Bavaria, Germany, by Marjorie Anne Napewastewin Schüster, MA. psy.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1996 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Marjorie Anne Napewastewin Schüster

I am very pleased to address you today in a collective sense. Collectively that is, from my part as I stand with my "foot on both sides of the counter", both as a professional in our field and as a consumer of our "product". Collectively from your part, as you have gathered here from all over the world from wildly diversified societies, cultures, backgrounds and understandings both personally and professionally. It is my hope and my goal here, that the unique insights, both from my culture and from your Euro-American culture, which I will present to you - will aid you in your understanding of the work in which we are engaged. I would further hope that my comments would stimulate new patterns of thinking and open doors for discussions which can, and perhaps will, ultimately benefit and enrich our life on this planet.

Our demands are for recognition, not approval. We are not asking for this recognition in spite of our transsexuality ... but because of our transsexuality! Because of what and who we are!

The remote in time or distance is always strange. The familiar present, is always natural and a matter of course. Beyond the narrow range of our horizon, imagination creates a new world, but as we advance in any direction, or as we go back over forgotten paths, we find

ever a continuity and succession. The human race is one in thought and action. In Lakota we say *mitayuke oyasin*, "we are all related". The systems of our highest modern civilization have their counterparts among all the nations, and their chain of parallels stretches backward link by link until we find their origin and interpretation in the customs and rites of our own barbarian ancestors, or of our still existing aboriginal tribes. There is nothing new under the sun.

More and more transsexuals around the world are appearing on court room dockets. We are demanding our rights as equal members of our society and of the human race. Our demands are for recognition, not approval. We are not asking for this recognition in spite of our transsexuality ... but because of our transsexuality! Because of what and who we are!

However, the discussions which we are met with in court, especially in cases of sexual and gender discrimination in the workplace, are both extremely dangerous while at the same time exciting, refreshing and promising. But the process is also difficult and emotionally demanding for those who are principal. In the first, the danger lies directly in the path of the individual living within Euro-American society. The world which western man has created, where ever he has invaded, has been and still is, coloured with a foundation of fear. Fear born out of discrimination towards things different, things unknown. Or at any rate things that are different from that which Euro-American society has to offer the world!

The dismissal case which was recently before the European Court in Luxembourg concerns a person who, while working for a public teaching institution in Cornwall, England, began her period of transition, her "real-life-test". Her case is similar in detail to my dismissal case which is currently running against the city of Copenhagen, Denmark. The legal discussion in both cases, has focused on the issue that existing equal rights laws refer to "men and women" and not to transsexuals. It is the legal community who demands this distinction and by taking this path the "legal eagles" have stated through implication, that "equal rights laws" do not apply to this group of people. "Equal Rights" laws are based on and born out of, Human Rights ideals. The danger we are witness to here lies in the possible legal conclusion which can be construed ... "transsexuals, because of the psychological phenomenon which is enjoyed by them, have ceased to be legally human". With this argument, we demonstrate how we have become inflated with the conceit of our own technology. We demonstrate to that extent that we must depend entirely on our own technology in relating to the natural world. We prove that the dependence into which we have grown has made us not merely servants of our own technology but we have become, one of its products! (I myself, am a product of that technology, in a limited way and on a physical plane, at any rate!) Motivation and use are the keys to our inner balance. My people recognise balance as the centre of the "red road" to peace and universal personal power. Can we as a race and at this level of our sociological development, afford the creation of a class of non-human "humanoids"?

While in the second instance and viewing the lawyers dialogue from another location on the "medicine wheel", their demanding that equal rights laws to stipulate ... "men, women and transsexuals", the conclusion could lead to the legal recognition of transsexualism as the "third gender"! This discussion is refreshing, promising and exciting. Re-innovative, if you will! Especially to my thinking as a Native

American. I am Sihasapa, Lakota, or rather, that is to say, I am of the Blackfoot tribe of the Sioux Nation. As a gender-crosser, as a transsexual person in Lakota society, we are known as *Winkte*. My people call me "two-souls-person". As *Winkte* I have always been an important personage in my society. Culturally, socially and religiously we function as a social adhesive, offering continuity and the promise of our continued existence as a people. We were never a threat to a rigid, polarized and discriminating sexual structure. That is to say, not before the coming of the white man's priests and their confused and narrow view of the manner of things. The "third gender" solution snakes into the past and connects with Native American societal structure from thousands of years ago. Our societies and our cultures existed, functioned quite well, yes even flourished, long before the Europeans ever thought of challenging the "monsters" which lived in their tears and which swam in the middle of the Atlantic!

Last June I had the privilege to attend the "United Nations Workshop on the Establishment of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous People", which was held in Copenhagen. I was present as a delegate for my people as were fifty others from native societies from all over the world.

During my research for that meeting I uncovered something quite unrelated to the reason we are all here this week just outside of Ulm. I wish in passing however, to share my findings with those of us who are interested in historical sidelights. To me it is thought provoking and intriguing that in March of 1857 an event occurred just northwest of where the Big Cotton River runs into the Minnesota River in the mid-west of the U.S.A. This event later came to be known by the whites as the "Spirit Lake Massacre". It was in fact, the opening battle of the tragic human event which American history has called the "Sioux Wars". I will not tell you what we refer to it as. It seems that a group of German immigrants, quite contrary to the treaty of 1851, had built their farms and a town in the middle of the hunting grounds of the Santee, the Eastern Sioux, the *Midiwakanton*. Forty whites were killed during this first "outbreak", as it was referred to by contemporary accounts, in the town of "New Ulm". My people came back and finished the job later that year, when on 23rd August the entire town was put under siege. New Ulm, by the 31st August, was abandoned by the fast-learning Germans and the town was subsequently burnt to the ground.

With the study of history, as in this seemingly unrelated event, especially when taken in a social and cultural context, patterns begin to appear. Patterns which can point to a process. That same process of "thinking that we can rule nature", whether it be natural or human nature, continues today! By working ourselves into these corners, western society is in danger of beginning to pick itself apart in a destructive manner. By attacking this minority, our transsexuals, instead of protecting them, we destroy ourselves. While on the other hand, through an awareness of what the collective unconscious contains for us, these discussions have the possibility of being the fertilization which affords western society and mankind continued growth. The immediate danger is faced by those whom we, the international medical community are treating. As we view the "real-life-test" becoming a "real-life-war" for all of them ... everyday ... all of the time, we stand helpless as we see our clients Civil and Human Rights being trampled upon!

As a direct consequence of the enormous social and technological changes of the last century, the world is not working well. We do not live in traditional and static societies. But our governments, in resisting change, act as if we did. Unless we come to destroy ourselves utterly, the future belongs to societies that, while not ignoring the reptilian and mammalian parts of our being, enable the characteristically human components of our nature to flourish; to those societies that encourage diversity rather than conformity; to those societies willing to invest resources in a variety of social, political, economic and cultural experiments, and who are prepared to sacrifice short-term advantages for long-term benefit; to those societies that treat new ideas, even if they follow ancient patterns, as delicate fragile and immensely valuable pathways to the future.

The ever growing international transsexual community is a threat to the very structure of western society, as well as a personal threat to the rigidly accepted sexual and gender norms now prevalent in the social and legal community in which we live. Sexual roles and gender roles must be recognised in national and international law as the continuum which they are. In life we do not all of us go directly from birth to death in an instant. Rather there is a great deal which we experience from the beginning point to our terminating moment. Society and the law allow for and even encourage this! The law recognises changes due to our age as more privileges are given and more responsibility demanded. Society recognises our growth with "rites of passage", whether formal or informal. The continuum represented in ageing is approved and celebrated in different ways around the world as a natural part of life. Why do we continue to follow such a polarized and puritanically "white" line of thought when we consider sex and gender?


Peter Bastian, the Danish experimental musician has said, "Borders are only borders, if you will not cross them". If nothing else we, as transsexuals are "border-crossers"! It may be that it is for some of you a kind of security to live within such a polarized structure ... but without the patterns of diversity, such that transsexualism represents, it leads to death of the possibility of a meaningful future for us as a race. Our professional cry to the establishment shall be ... "Stop pissing in the corners. Stop marking your borders. Stop limiting your possibilities".

Four hundred years ago, William Shakespeare suggested that we should "take all of the lawyers out and shoot them first". No matter what we feel personally about these 'rule makers' and 'rule players' ... perhaps that step is just a bit drastic. I propose another course. It is time that we of the international medical community developed a greater solidarity. A solid and impermeable network to deal with the issue of the legal position of our clients. After all the work which we do with the individual, this is the final step in total "rehabilitation" ... the completion of the task at hand. It is not enough that we help our clients to function in a society which at best, only tolerates them as freaks of nature or that accepts them within its own rigid and polarized structure, within its own limited understanding. Causing them either to hide an entire section of their past, or deny and reject a portion of their existence, or on the other hand leading them to become outspoken crusaders for the cause of equal rights of transsexuals. Again, limited possibilities are set before them. Our task is in fact, much greater than any of us perhaps have ever imagined ... we are forming the very building blocks for the restructuring of society itself ... that is ... if we are doing our jobs and not just going through the motions, not just putting in the time and collecting the pay checks! What must exist in our relationships with our clients is referred to in Lakota as, *ohokicilapi* or rather ... "mutual respect". It is necessary, if we are to be true to our commitment to those who come to us, that we take a stronger line in the work in which the legal community seems to be publicly floundering in. It is up to us to become not only our clients "gatekeepers", but the "guide-posts" for society's future as well. Dare we avoid our fulfilling this responsibility any longer?

It is my primary intention to alter the general thinking about transsexuals within the society in which I am now living. And then secondarily, to effect the necessary legislation which comes out of that new thinking. The legislation which can afford this fascinating group of "Gender Adventurers" the protection against discrimination which they deserve and which is merely the same as that which everyone else enjoys (or thinks that they do).

I would like to invite those of you who are interested in the formation of such a network to contact me before the end of the conference. I invite the discussion which could follow and in that way, perhaps we can explore what possibilities are open to us to effect these long overdue and necessary changes.

Marjorie Anne Napewastewiñ Schützer

Edited from the Western Illinois University website:  **Transwoman Marjorie Anne Napewastewiñ Schützer describes herself as a Native American two-souls person, clinical therapist, museum lecturer, artist, writer, musician, singer, weaver, photographer, horse breeder and trainer, boat builder, the parent of two and a grandparent.**



"When I was about eight years old I made a deal with myself; I had had these thoughts in my spirit since I was around three years old. The deal was that I would live the first half of my life as a male and then the rest as the person that I thought I was always meant to be - the woman that I am today", Napewastewiñ says.

After her successful sex reassignment surgery was performed in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Napewastewiñ wrote her initial paper "Winyanktehca: Two-souls Person", from her hospital bed while recovering, which led to a few years of talking at conferences and symposiums around Europe.

Following twenty-two years in Europe, Napewastewiñ returned to the U.S. She has remained a staunch advocate and popular presenter for transgendered and transsexual rights and issues. She now lives in Louisiana, U.S.A. after having spearheaded the rescue of more than 400 horses after Hurricane Katrina.

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.

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

The Middle Way

Geselle's Gender Dysphoria Claimed Years of Her Life

by Giselle Galadriel

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1996 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Hormones have helped feminize my body, but my low self-esteem regarding my body is only marginally helped.

Thank you for accepting my article for I believe it is important for others who may be experiencing immense psychological pain to know there are others who cannot accept the unfulfilling femininity that male-to-female transsexuality offers. ***The knowledge to understand my condition was hard won over twenty-eight years, for I never masculinised. Not at the age of four or even fourteen.*** My gender dysphoria has claimed years and years of a desperately lonely life, at every turn I face it.

I have had few sexual experiences or partners, and have no children. And now the loss of my fertility, although expected, leaves an enormous gap. Could there be anything less feminine than hurting our bodies rather than nurturing them?

The knowledge to understand my condition was hard won over twenty-eight years, for I never masculinised. Not at the age of four or even fourteen. Ever

since I have been asking - why?

My Father was in pain due to his amputated leg. He was usually absent as he worked eighty miles away. He came home on the weekends drunk and abusive. I found this an intrusion into my life. It was so stressful I contracted rheumatic fever at the age of four.

My Mother, a nurse, nursed me at home against doctors orders. For six months I couldn't move a muscle or even blink hard. I lost my sense of self and never found a deep autonomy from her. Instead I moulded myself on her to the point that I am also female to my core. At thirteen I was already dressing in her clothes without anyone knowing. Life became lonely and difficult. I have tortured myself endlessly. I am now forty.

The contradictions have wounded me. Every time I talk, every time I look at my body or try to assert my identity. I have believed that in order to have a self, I must have a gender. I have been on hormones for ten years in total.

How can I find the peace of mind we all desire? The only model that has led to any peace is to believe, after years of denial, that we have both female and male energies.

My male energies waged war on God, yet to no avail. He will defend Geselle like a medieval knight. He does not know how to stop the war. Yet he is in love with all things female so his male libido is focused inward as envy, never as lust. He does not know how to relate to women as male.

Hormones have helped feminize my body, but my low self-esteem regarding my body is only marginally helped. In fact it is even hindered by the side-effects of the hormones giving me even more psychological pain.

To start your puberty and know you can never complete it is close to a nightmare to me. To be taken almost to womanhood only to be dumped out of reach is frustrating beyond my endurance. I do not accept the blood on the surgeons knife as my menstrual blood.

So I must change! Or I will go insane or commit suicide without choice.

I now realise that only by listening to my internal female can I ever hope to resolve my gender dysphoria. She must also learn not to feel insulted if I am acknowledged as male. For I honour my internal male energies so as to stop the battle. So he can be of use to me. So that I may balance myself.

As far as sexuality is concerned, I feel that I must surrender and enjoy the lack of male sexual energy and be satisfied to be a celibate asexual androgyne. For my genitals no longer have libidonized meaning for me.

My female need can never be met. But I have a mother inside aching to nurture a child. I must nurture a very frightened four year-old and lead them so they have a chance to grow into a whole person.

And I must find some peace before the sexless dirt shall wrap us all.

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.

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

You're a Tranny and You're Beautiful Two

Hold Your Head High and Be Proud

by Caroline Layt

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1996 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Caroline Layt

I am writing in regard to an article published in *Polare* in May 1995, written by Val titled "You're a Tranny & You're Beautiful".

The best gift you can give yourself is to be true and loyal to yourself.

I have been on hormone treatment for four months now and I have never felt better. I have seen my physical and psychological state change very quickly and it feels great. I am a nice person and socially interact well with people. I have worked for eight years as an aerobics instructor which helped build my confidence greatly. I was once a painfully shy person, but not anymore. And yes, I do love myself, but not in an egotistical way, I just feel really comfortable with myself.

I feel that I am a beautiful tranny. I have men chasing and complimenting me, and I am not complaining for one moment as I love the attention.

Remember girls, you are a tranny and you are beautiful. Be proud of it and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Beauty is something that comes from within. If you feel beautiful you will be. Whenever I feel this way, people tell me that I am glowing. When I am not feeling this way I can still feel attractive but something seems to be missing. I think we are all like this. People tell me I have a gorgeous smile, and you know why this is? It is because I am happy and content inside.

I am surprised at how well I have progressed as a woman. My Father tells me that I bear a resemblance to my mother twenty years ago. This makes me feel so good that sometimes I have to pinch myself to believe that this gorgeous woman is really me. I have also noticed how beautiful a lot of other transgender women are. They are so gorgeous and carry themselves so well that I am sure they feel like me; that it is meant to be.

Like Val (I like this girl) mentioned, our time is coming when we will have our respected place in society. It is definitely something worth fighting for.

I find that because we have had to live unhappily for a long time, as the sex we didn't want to be, and because we had to hide our true feelings, when we did decide to come-out our true feelings surfaced and we are not living a lie anymore. This makes us better people. We are content and spiritual as people. We have definitely connected with our souls and true inner self.

The most wonderful feeling I have ever experienced was being able to tell my family and friends about my desire to change my gender to female. I was free, no more lies, no more hiding my true feelings. I was at last, after thirty years, free to explore my true feelings, desires and wishes. The best gift you can give yourself is to be true and loyal to yourself. If that means disappointing or hurting those that are close to you in the process, then sometimes this just has to be. If they love you and you allow them some time to come to terms with it, they will eventually come back to you. They will recover.

I'm not saying that gender is a bed of roses, we all have our ups and downs. But it sure beats the anguish that I felt when I was male. To be transgender takes a lot of courage, but it is also a very exciting feeling and I have nothing but admiration for my transgender sisters and brothers for having the strength to be who you want to be. I really do feel for those people who feel the same way that we do but for some reason or another cannot accept their feelings. There must be millions of poor souls who have or will die unhappily because they cannot accept their true desires and feelings - probably because they feel they have to conform to society's expectations.

So remember tranny girls and tranny boys; hold your head high and be proud when you walk down the street because each and every one of you is precious and gorgeous.

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.

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

On the Beach

An Uplifting Experience to Say the Least

by Laura Seabrook

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1996 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Life is like a beach.

When I was just a kid, my mother took me to Judo lessons at the Police and Citizens Youth Club. I had a tough time at school and she thought it was important that I learn to defend

myself, and this judo was a good way of doing this. Most of judo is learning how to throw people who attack you. Because you practise in partners you get thrown quite often. One night I fell the wrong way on my foot. I was in agony and I had to be taken home. Shortly after I came down with suspected glandular fever (turned out to be mumps), followed by appendicitis. I never "got back in the saddle" - I lost the confidence to continue the course, and never went back.

For the next three years I attended church services come rain or shine, sang hymns and listened to what they had to say. I didn't believe a word of it.

Now it's almost thirty years later and I'm in my second year of transition. I determined at the start of this that it would have to be an emotional and spiritual transition as well as a physical and social one. I've been dealing with a lot of buried hurt and pain, sorting it out and letting go. I feel that I had a lost childhood, one where I never really could express who I was or be genuinely happy in being me. I'm currently finishing a co-dependency course. The two major relationships that I've had in my life may not have started out as disasters, but they surely ended up as such. I'm keen not to repeat this a third time, and seek to be a more loving, intimate and fulfilled person. It's hard work requiring effort and persistence. But what else is new? Life goes on.

A weekend back in November was one of the most enjoyable and enlightening for me since the start of transition. On Friday night I enjoyed a body massage, a film, and dancing at a nightclub. The latter was a first for me, and I found it great fun. On the Saturday, one of my ex-girlfriends shouted me to a "Healthy Living" seminar run by the local vegetarian society. As it happened the seminar made numerous references to natural oestrogen production. One of the speakers gave a quote from Jan Morris, and another was promoting substances (such as Soya beans) that reduce the risk of breast and prostate cancer - both of which I hope to avoid. Then on Sunday I went to church followed by a trip to the beach.

I'm not even a Christian, let alone a church goer. Technically I was raised as a Methodist, but my parents never went to church or discussed their beliefs at all. When I was in my early teens they were convinced by a lay preacher that it would do me a power of good to go to church every Sunday. I remember the first time that I was taken to church by this preacher. We walked through Toohey Park and I followed close behind him and watched while he dropped pamphlets on the grass. I thought that he was being careless, and carefully picket up each one, handing them back to him with a smile when we got to church. He was less than happy with me.

For the next three years I attended church services come rain or shine, sang hymns and listened to what they had to say. I didn't believe a word of it. I wouldn't have minded that much, but I never understood why they sent me to a Church of Christ church, and not a Methodist one! What I heard described a jealous god who demanded love and obedience from his followers, and would not tolerate variation and difference in his people. Why, I thought, would I ever want to worship such a being? After the three years I left, never to return until a Sunday last November.

My friends Bird and Douglas in Queensland had suggested that I try going to the Unity Church. Not because of any divine reason, but because they promoted positive outlooks, personal development and prosperity. These seemed selfless enough reasons to go, and at the worst I would have wasted a morning. I was pleasantly surprised. The service had the same format that I remembered, alternating between song, sermon and prayer; with a voluntary collection and tea and a chat afterwards. No surprises there.

What did surprise me was the content. What was preached was not conformity but an arbitrary set of rules. Instead, there was a message of love, acceptance, positive change and practical steps for fulfilling one's potential. Here were folks willing to accept me without conditions, and ready to practise what they preached. I won't bore you with further details, but several times during the service I wept, overcome with emotion. I'm a cynical bitch - I study fringe science and religions as one of my hobbies - but this service did something that none of the others had. It reached me.

It was an uplifting experience to say the least. Don't take my word for it, check it out yourself. Afterwards I rode my bicycle down to

Swanbourne Beach. I had originally planned to change in the dunes and go for a swim but I changed my plans. I walked down to the nudist part of the beach, stripped off to my panties, and jumped in the surf. The panties and my bumble bee ear studs were the only things I wore while I played in the sea. I hadn't been down to the nudist beach to swim for over two years, well before I started my transition. I loved the sheer fun of frolicking on the beach. Ever since starting hormone replacement therapy though, I'd felt self-conscious about presenting my body. How do you reconcile having female breasts and male genitalia on a nudist beach?

But I was here now and having fun. I took off my spectacles and so couldn't see if anyone noticed or made comments. And I didn't care either - I was enjoying myself. I felt creative, carefree and happy. I got to thinking while I was playing how what I was doing was like a metaphor for life. Nothing original here, people have suggested this before, but this was my inspiration and revelation. Probably the influence of going to church. And this is what I thought - Life is like a beach.

These thoughts came back to me in late December. My friend Cheryl was here on holidays before going to London, and we're on a beach at Mandurah. I'm frolicking in three foot of surf while she stands up on her knees, afraid to get her wig wet (she's only just come-out). This is the eye of the storm for me, I'm off work on stress leave because the job I loved is being wound up and I'm being retrained to do work I hate. I'm moving out of where I live in a few weeks time and everything goes into storage while I visit Sydney. I might not be back. And once again I think life is a beach.

There are many different ways of going to the beach. Some people drive down and eat fish and chips, safe in their cars. Others venture out and just sunbake on the sand or walk along the shore. Others play just at the sea's edge, risking a foot or two at the water. Still others jump in, swimming and playing and having fun. Everyone has a different style of swimming, and moves at their own pace. The ocean is a treacherous environment. There are rip tides and under currents that will drag you down to the shore or out to sea. How you cope with these is up to you.

As the waves come breaking in, you can march out defiantly, bracing yourself for when it hits. But do this, and you will probably get hit in the stomach and get dumped on the shore. Or, you can float, go with the current, applying energy and effort when needed and relaxing when you can. The waves are more fun then as you ride their crests and troughs. And this is like learning to fall in judo. It's not just a matter of being tough and enduring, but of being flexible and going with the flow.

You might be a good swimmer, but things are made easier if you can increase your buoyancy. And what is this buoyancy, to extend the metaphor further? To me it's faith and soul. Keep it positive in a practical way, and you'll get much further in realising who you are. Why practical? Because if it's not practical it doesn't work. And if it doesn't work, if you lose faith in yourself, you sink to the bottom.

So I'm going with the flow, going to Sydney rather than going mad with stress. Whether or not it's an ebb or riptide, I don't know. Only time will tell. But I'm going where I have to, letting the current take me with it.

At this point you're probably thinking that I've mixed my metaphors horribly and flogged them to death. Maybe so. Perhaps life is like a Monty Python sketch and you're sentenced to "be hung until you cheer up". Laugh it off and you're okay; but take it too seriously, and you'll wind up much worse, never realising what you can become. And realising who you are, being happy, fulfilling your potential, is the name of the game.

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.

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.