

# Polare Edition 63

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## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

**W**hat interesting times we live in! Papal funerals, royal weddings, Papal weddings, royal funerals. Such pompous circumstance! Makes you glad to be alive (as opposed to being dead or married). I have been told I mustn't use the headline "Ding! Dong! the Pope is Dead", so of course I won't. The last thing I would want is to offend anyone or be seen as a stirrer. But I have reprinted, with permission, an article by the most Reverend Bruce J. Simpson, an archbishop in the Benedictine order of St John the Beloved in the United States, on the topic of the legacy of Pope John Paul the Second. It should be remembered that the Benedictines have maintained a level of detachment and independence from the Vatican virtually from their inception, and one of the reactionary policies of the recently departed Pontiff was to try and impose his authority on them from outside their order. I think the Archbishop provides a reasoned assessment of the achievements and failures of the deceased Pope. Sadly, from the L.G.B.T.I. point of view there is much to regret.

Talking of L.G.B.T.I., I note that there are now American action groups labelling themselves G.L.B.T.A, for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and Allies. It seems a pity to have lost sight of the I for intersex but it is a very welcome development to have people with no direct involvement in L.G.B. or T offering themselves as allies. And maybe there are also G.L.B.T.I.A. groups I just haven't come across.

This issue features one of our interstate transgender activists, Julie Peters, who appears on the cover and has a piece on self-esteem starting on page 19. Julie is Victorian (although currently working in Tasmania) and has been appearing in public forums for quite a few years. Like a number of us, she has stood for Parliament for the Australian Democrats, but unlike us she has now stood five times and is currently the Vice President of the Victorian Branch of the Democrats. She has also appeared at many conferences, symposiums and workshops and has her own web page where she has placed a number of her thoughtful (and very amusing) talks and papers.

And she sings. As a person who was gay before transition and lesbian after transition she claims she is the only member of the Gay and Lesbian Choir with the right to belong, since she is, in fact, gay and lesbian. If the other choir members want to continue to sing with her, says Julie, they should rename it the Gay or Lesbian Choir. Add to her activism, wit and brilliant writing style the fact that she is drop-dead gor-jus and you will see why she gets to be on the cover of this issue.

By strange coincidence, when I was looking up Julie Peters for added information for the cover story, I came across Julie Ann Peters, an American award-winning author of children's books. Her latest book, *Luna*, which has been nominated for

## Feature Articles



Interestingly enough, most cross-dressers when asked if they would take a cure for being a cross-dresser, will say no.

### A Cross-Dressing Perspective

The types of issues that cross-dressers often encounter usually fall within two broad reaching categories: relationship issues and personal well-being writes Lynne from Sydney's cross-dressing self-help support organisation, the Seahorse Society.

### Self-Esteem: The Catch 22 of Transgender

Transgender has its own built in Catch 22. You need very high self-esteem to successfully deal with being transgendered, but simply being transgendered is one of the great forces sapping your self-esteem. But don't despair! Julie has discovered a loophole.

### Blind Folly

Willow Arune reviews *Blind Folly*, a new Print On Demand (P.O.D.) book by Willette Pratts who gives an honest voice to what evangelical christians, those that make up 40 percent of Americans, think concerning transsexualism. It really is a real and present danger.

### Luna

This is the story of a transgender teenager in crisis, as seen through the eyes of her younger sister. At the outset we meet Luna, a woman by night, naming herself for the moon, but forced to be the academically brilliant but hopelessly unmasculine Liam by day.

### The Sex/Law Tango Tangle

Social progress is so often a matter of three steps forward, two steps back as norrie mentions in this article about retrograde decisions, like the granting of exemptions to allow Mission Australia and Edward Eager Lodge to discriminate against transgendered people.

### The Legacy of John Paul II

The sheer length of John Paul II's iron-fisted rule over the Roman Catholic Church and the impact of his continuing babble of anti-gay rhetoric and pastoral pronouncements affecting

the National Book Award, tells the story of a transgendered teenager just prior to transition. Julie Ann Peters is an out lesbian and her published books include *Far from Xanadu*, *Keeping You a Secret* (Stonewall honour Book) and *Define Normal*. I have reviewed *Luna* on page 9.

In the last issue of *Polare* we paid tribute to Stephen Whittle and Christine Burns who were awarded the O.B.E. and M.B.E. respectively in Britain's New Year Honours for their services to the transgender community. We were recently honoured by Stephen's presence in Australia at the Macquarie University Body Modification Conference II. Few people have been as active and accomplished as much as Stephen, who is a Law Professor at Manchester University. We hope he will continue to work for the transgender community for years to come and look forward to seeing him when next he visits. Susan Stryker, the noted American activist, also spoke at the conference.

There is a piece by Lynne Johnson, President of the Seahorse Society, on the topic of cross-dressing. It appeared in the March issue of *Seahorse Magazine* and I asked Lynne for permission to reprint it. It starts on page 15.

I would like to foreshadow possible changes in *Polare*, in the hope of hearing your opinion. The letter pages are there for your input and we don't get enough of it. Because of increasing costs and a decreasing budget, it may not be possible to continue *Polare* in its present format. We may have to reduce the number of issues a year from six to four, reduce the number of pages from 40 to 36 or 32 or restrict circulation in some way yet to be determined. Not only is production of *Polare* a considerable expense but postage costs also rise as the mailing list continues to grow. The one measure we do not wish to take is that of imposing a subscription for *Polare*. This would penalise those most in need of the magazine and reduce its effectiveness. Please, let us know what you think of these possible changes.

## Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

Hi everyone. There are a number of exciting projects underway at the Centre and I would like to take the opportunity to inform you of these in my report.

### New Website

Over recent months we have been working closely with our web designer to create a new website that will be visually more interesting and much easier to navigate. The design will allow for easy access to all the ranges of information previously available through readily accessible menu options that will be available on all pages. There will also be a number of new features including a site map, a search engine and the capacity to download a range of resources in either P.D.F. or Word format. In addition it will be possible for individuals to submit articles to *Polare* online.

By the time this edition of the magazine arrives the new website will be in place and I would encourage those of you with Internet access to visit the site and have a look around. Feedback on the site will be most welcome so if you have any ideas on areas where we might further improve the site we would love to hear from you.

### Quality Management Services (Q.M.S)

Over the coming twelve months the Centre will be engaged in a formal accreditation process. We are contracted with Q.M.S., an independent accreditation provider to the health and community sectors, to complete the accreditation process. While accreditation is a relatively lengthy and involved process it basically looks at the broad range of systems employed by an agency in the delivery of services and comprehensively measures these against standards developed by the Quality Improvement Council.

The Centre will be measured against a set of Core Standards and an additional set of Primary Health Care Standards. The Core Standards are divided into three sections each of which contains a number of specific standards. The Core Sections are Building Quality Organisations, Providing Quality Services and Programs and Sustaining Quality External Relationships. The Primary Health Care module contains additional standards relevant to the provision of service that complement the core module Providing Quality Services and Programs above.

In order to gain accreditation an agency must demonstrate that it meets the requirements of all standards, so the process affords us a

millions of people worldwide, means that a critical eye must be used to examine his legacy.

### The Transgender Documentary Drinking Game

Gwendolyn would like to see a documentary where transgender people are not stereotyped. She wants to see that transgender people are not all Caucasian. She wants to see transmen, gender-queers, and others who are just living their lives without a concern for genitals.

### Transgendered Veterans "March" on Washington

A retired Navy Commander who was a nuclear-submarine engineer. Another refuelled B-52 bombers. Others fought in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. All of these people, and perhaps many more, are members of what is surely the least-known U.S. military minority - transgendered troops.

### Queer Sex, Straight Talk

Transphobia from within and without the queer community has been shown to dramatically increase H.I.V. risks. It serves to alienate, isolate, and stigmatize, and may lead to an increase in other social pressures, including poverty, substance abuse, and unemployment.

valuable opportunity to ensure that the Centre is compliant with best practice in all our systems of service delivery. I will keep you posted on our progress.

## Working Beyond the Frontiers

This project is independent of the accreditation process but it comes in a timely manner and will certainly be complementary. The project is an initiative of the S.A.A.P. Inner West Interagency which comprises 35 homelessness agencies in the inner-west area, including the Gender Centre, funded by S.A.A.P.

The primary aim of the project will be to maximise the capacity of these agencies to work more closely together through consultation and the sharing of resources and expertise. As the project is established it will provide the opportunity for agencies to interact, provide managerial support, share resources such as policy documents or systems of work and provide access for each agency to areas of expertise which may be available in other agencies.

This capacity for sharing will reduce the isolation in which agencies often find themselves working and will go a long way towards developing successful partnerships. This, in turn, will promote an understanding of the diversity within client groups and the barriers that often confront members of those groups, an issue pertinent to the transgender community.

The Gender Centre welcomes this initiative and we look forward to playing our part in ensuring its successful outcome.

## Social & Support Worker (SSW)

Since the Social & Support position became vacant a few people have approached me enquiring about the position. I initially advised people that the position would be advertised in this edition of *Polare*. However, in light of the accreditation process and along with a proposed review of how our services are being delivered there is a strong likelihood that a number of changes will occur in the job descriptions of positions at the Centre and these will affect the role of the Social & Support Worker. With this in mind, and with the intention that any changes made will be aimed at improving the way in which services are provided to clients, it would be premature to advertise the position before determining its structure.

In the meantime Rick Winters is filling the role in a relief capacity until we formally advertise and all the usual social and support activities are continuing. I thank Rick for making himself available and I welcome him to the Centre for the time being. It is likely that the Social & Support Worker position will be formally advertised in the next edition of *Polare*.

## Polare

Over the past three years we have benefited from some additional funding for *Polare* and this has enabled us to make significant improvements to the quality and content of the magazine. Unfortunately the additional funding was only available for three years and it seems unlikely that additional funds will be available. The reduction in funding coupled with escalating postage and printing costs means that we will have to make some changes in *Polare's* distribution. While a number of options have been canvassed it seems that the only viable one, if we are to maintain the quality of the magazine, is to reduce its frequency from bi-monthly to quarterly. While this is not ideal it is more palatable than the other suggested options. Katherine has addressed this issue in her editorial and has asked for input from the community.

If no alternative presents itself this edition is likely to be the last of the bi-monthly issues. If, however, we do have to go to quarterly production it may be possible to expand the content and we will certainly do our best to make sure that every issue is a joy to receive.

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# A Cross-Dressing Perspective

## Former Seahorse Society President Shares Her Collected Thoughts and Experiences

by Lynne, [Seahorse Society of N.S.W.](#) 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

**C**ross-dressers in the community face many difficult situations in their lifetime. Self-help organisations such as the Seahorse Society aim to help members to deal with these situations as much as possible and encourage cross-dressers to celebrate their diversity. The types of problems usually faced by our members are varied but usually fall into two broad categories:

1. Relationship Problems - difficulties encountered when partners and family become aware of the cross-dresser's activities; and
2. Personal wellbeing - Confusion about one's own identity and place in society

***While we often face difficult problems, it is important to understand that many people are quite happy to be cross-dressers and wouldn't want to be any other way.***

I have collected below some of the issues, problems and experiences that the Seahorse Society has witnessed over the years. It is largely based on my experience as President of the Society for nearly five years in which time I have dealt with hundreds of people in the transgendered community including Seahorse members and prospective members, sister organisations and other community groups, and also with the partners, family and friends of transgendered people. Dealings have been in person, by correspondence or by telephone.

While we often face difficult problems, it is important to understand that many people are quite happy to be cross-dressers and wouldn't want to be any other way. Cross-dressing is not a problem in itself; the problem is generally related to the ability of a cross-dresser or someone close to them to deal with it. And their problems usually stem from their perception, real or otherwise, that their activities are unacceptable to those around them. Most people who come to terms with it can live very fulfilled lives and participate in the community like anyone else if they choose to.

### What is a Cross-Dresser?

Cross-dressers are one group in the larger transgendered community. Defining a cross-dresser is difficult, because we do not fit into neat categories. There is a broad spectrum of people with characteristics that qualify them to be called cross-dressers. In general it is true to say that a cross-dresser is a man who has an overwhelming urge to dress and act like a woman on occasions. There is no proven reason to explain why a man would want to do this but many theories exist. That is not something that will be explored for now. Instead, we choose just to accept that reality and move on.

### Is a Cross-Dresser the Same as a Transvestite?

The answer is yes. Transvestite is a term coined from Latin: trans = across, vestite = to dress.

### Why Just Men?

All our current members were born male. It appears the service we offer is more valuable to men because if a woman wants to cross-dress, and many do, then, generally, they don't need support. It is quite acceptable among most of our community for a woman to wear male clothes and act in a masculine manner. There is very little stigma associated to that these days. For a man to put on a frock, high-heeled shoes and make-up, however, is much less usual and to do this in public often draws unwanted reactions ranging from ridicule to aggression.

### How do Cross-Dressers Differ from Other Transgendered People?

This is a question that is subject to many opinions. In my opinion, the difference is not great, but more a matter of the state of mind of the individual at a point in time and how that person identifies him, or herself. It is not uncommon for members of the Seahorse Society to decide at some point in their life to take their desire to dress and act like a woman further. They may choose to live as a woman fulltime. Some go on to take female hormones and alter their physical appearance with cosmetic procedures such as permanent hair removal and surgery. Once someone has made the decision to live fulltime in the opposite gender role, one might then categorise this person as a transsexual. (Transsexual is a medical term coined from Latin roots, literally meaning 'across sex'.)

Some people see transsexuals as very different from cross-dressers, that there is some fundamental wiring in the brain that is different and this may be true. Our experience, however, is that there is a broad spectrum of existence. This ranges from men who gain sexual gratification from touching or wearing female items of clothing such as shoes or underwear to exhibitionist drag queens, to shy and closeted cross-dressers to full time gender reassigned individuals and to any and every position in between and some more that I can't

think of at the moment. And this does not imply a progression, a legitimacy or superiority of any position over another - people are different and they can change. Long live diversity.

## The Experiences of a Cross-Dresser

So, assuming a diverse community exists, cross-dressers have diverse backgrounds and indeed the membership of our club includes people from all walks in life. But some themes keep reappearing. Lack of acceptance by family and friends can result in many problems. Loneliness and isolation is a common theme for young people and especially if they feel different from everyone else. A young boy wishing to dress up like a girl, sneaking away with clothes from his mother or his sister and then trying them on privately will often feel a great burden from having to keep his activity such a huge secret. He will live with a fear of discovery and probably suffer from guilt because he is doing something so wrong. Some members also report that they were forced to dress up in girls' clothes by sisters or mothers and felt some shame associated with this. He will also feel great shame if he is discovered and derided, or worse - cast out.

The isolation of a cross-dresser will probably stay with him through his teenage years when his sexual feelings awaken. This can be a confusing period but for most the love of femininity will draw them into close relationships with the opposite sex. Most of the cross-dressers I have spoken to are heterosexual. It appears that the need to cross-dress is totally unrelated to sexual preference. There are gay cross-dressers, but they are usually happy to express themselves in more open ways such as dressing-up in drag for parties. The majority of cross-dressers do, however, grow up in heterosexual roles and may marry and go on to have children.

While I have heard instances of cross-dressers who have had drug, alcohol or crime problems, the incidence does not seem any higher than the norm. In fact it may be the opposite. Among our members we have many high achievers. Many seem to be driven to achieve and prove themselves. Some over-react to their feminine desires by choosing to engage in excessively macho pursuits such as car racing or male dominated jobs such as construction. It is almost as if they are trying to deny to the world what they truly are inside. This just makes things worse as if they are surrounded by people who are even less likely to accept them, their overt manliness can make it harder to dress up and pass as a woman. Some resign themselves to never being able to express their true desires and others reach a point where they want to forget about the opinions of others and 'come-out'.

## Relationships

A wife may be unaware of her husband's desires if he chooses to keep his secret from her. But many men do confess to their wives or partners and maybe also to their family and friends because they no longer want to be burdened by the secrecy. So a man may keep his cross-dressing secret, but if he is in a close relationship with a woman it may not always be as secretive as he thinks. Women are generally very observant and they will notice a hint of perfume or leftover signs of make-up and especially extra items of female clothing secreted around the house. Initially they may suspect that their husband is having an affair, but sometimes they guess closer to the truth. An interesting experience I have had on several occasions is a wife phoning the Seahorse Society having discovered her husband's secret. Rather than confronting the husband, they seek support. In one case the woman had done significant research into the subject while the husband remained oblivious to the fact that his wife suspected anything. There was a stalemate situation where both parties were too scared to raise the matter in case of an adverse reaction by either party. Although I normally hesitate to give any advice to people regarding their relationships, I believe in these cases it is better to suggest that communication commences.

However when a man asks me if he should tell his wife that he is a cross-dresser, I will not make a recommendation because it can go different ways depending on the partner's own predisposition and also the manner in which the subject is raised.

One partner I spoke to said that when her boyfriend confessed to her, she was so happy, she danced around the room. Another said "I always suspected it" and went on to have a fulfilling and understanding relationship. However for every story of acceptance, there are just as many of rejection. And there does appear to be a high rate of marriage breakdowns amongst cross-dressers.

In cases where the partner does not offer total acceptance, a compromise is often reached where rules are set to govern the cross-dresser's behaviour. For example, he may dress in front of his wife, but not in front of the children, or he may be allowed out only once per week. Rules may vary from highly restrictive to quite liberal depending on the wife's acceptance of the situation.

## And What About the Children?

Many hours of sleep have been lost worrying about the effect a cross-dressing Dad may have on his children, especially to a son who would see his Dad as a role model. In some cases this has turned out to be of little consequence and the children once told, have accepted the situation well and often very positively. In one case, a daughter having been warned that her father was about to make a major announcement was expecting something horrible like that he was about to go to gaol for murder. She sensed the guilt and gravity of the situation from the air around the parents as they prepared to come out with it. She turned out to be relieved; "Is that all?" she said.

Some of our members are open with their children and some have brought their children along to social events without any problems. Quite the opposite, they often enjoy being at the occasion although daughters often feel the need to smarten up and modernize their Dad's appearance.

Unfortunately, in other cases, children have reacted very negatively and in some cases have totally divorced their fathers from their life after the disclosure. Naturally, this can be devastating to the father and it may heighten any sense of guilt he has for being who he is regardless of the fact that it was not his choice to be that way.

## Coming-Out - A Turning Point

It is evident that the majority of cross-dressers spend their life closeted. For example, while the Seahorse Society has around a hundred

current members across New South Wales, only about half of these are active members. Moreover the Internet groups indicate that there are perhaps ten times as many cross-dressers who are only prepared to come-out in the relative anonymity of the web. There are doubtless many more who don't come-out at all.

The repressiveness of remaining closeted can last for many years. Some don't emerge from this ever and others leave it until later in life, often not until their forties or fifties to come-out. The 'coming-out' is an important turning point because it represents a newfound freedom.

## Who Do You Come-Out To?

Most cross-dressers come-out first to their partners. Others will confide in family, friends or work colleagues. Women tend to be more understanding than men although a common reaction from women is "Why on earth would you want this life?" Not everyone will tolerate the fact, but most people do. However there is a difference between tolerance and acceptance. While someone may tolerate it and indeed defend your right to be who you are, it doesn't mean they will like the idea and they may not be willing to explore the notion any further than just knowing about it. The gay community tends to be quite tolerant of cross-dressers, perhaps because of the fact that we are minority groups who have had to deal with discrimination. However, while the level of tolerance is higher, it is by no means universal. It's ironic that straight cross-dressers may be gay-bashed because they appear to be gay in the eyes of many people.

Ultimately a cross-dresser may choose to come-out to the world and be totally open about it, in reality there is still enough reluctance by the community to accept cross-dressing that most choose to come-out only to a select audience avoiding conflicts with work, family, community or friends.

But to come-out is normally a very positive experience. It is common to hear a new member say "Why didn't I do this years ago?" It can be like a heavy burden being taken from your mind or a light suddenly turning on. "I'm not the only one in world like this." "It's not wrong and there is nothing to be ashamed about" Going out cross-dressed in public for the first time can be 'dream-like' How often do one's dreams come true, especially to an individual who has lived with such a repressive secret?

Yet for all the cross-dressers who reach this turning point in their life, there are many more who never do and the act of not coming-out can be damaging to health and relationships. It is hard to imagine how much ill-health, despair, relationship breakdown or substance abuse may be attributed to repressed dreams.

And yet relationships are also at risk by coming-out as mentioned earlier, not all partners will tolerate the disclosure that their loved one is not the man they married or, worse, that they are some kind of pervert. (What will the neighbours think?) But that's not the only problem. A partner may initially accept the disclosure and this is often a relief to the cross-dresser. There is, however, a real risk that they may push the limits too far. Like the proverbial kid in a candy store, they want it all and want it now. The act of coming-out too fast can be a danger in itself and some partners will turn from an initial positive position to a negative one if it is not handled well.

Another problem from coming-out too fast is the temptation to rush along the path to gender transition too quickly. While it may seem a natural thing to do at the time, a more considered decision may result in less collateral damage to family and friends and hopefully avoiding an irreversible mistake.

But for most cross-dressers, the turning point of coming-out is a very important event in their lives as they move towards a more contented and relaxed existence. Support groups like the Seahorse Society aim to turn dreams into reality for our sister souls out there. I love to see cross-dressers on their first outing; they are so high on the experience. But while it may be a high point in one's life, it can also be a bit of an anti-climax. The thought often going through your mind that everyone in the world will be waiting for you to walk out the door and you will create a big scene wherever you go. In reality, unless your appearance is attention grabbing, most people just ignore you.

## Passing

Passing is important to most cross-dressers. This is the ability to 'get away with it'. To pass in public means to be accepted as a woman and many cross-dressers will go to a lot of trouble with their appearance to make themselves more believable - to pass. Cross-dressers' ability to pass depends on how much effort they put into their appearance and also on physical attributes which are hard to disguise such as size, shape, body hair, skin condition, voice etc. Many experienced cross-dressers will say that passing is more about self-confidence than anything else. Individually many members of the Seahorse Society do go out and pass in public with relative ease. Or if they are read, most people will be too polite to make any fuss about it. Some are luckier or more determined and they will pass easier than others. However in the end it's more about how comfortable you feel about yourself than what other people think.

Going out in a group with other cross-dressers is a different story and the likelihood of being read very much increases proportionately to the number of members in the group. The gender illusion becomes harder to pull off in numbers. Many of our public functions are held with the realisation that we are a social group of cross-dressers who are out to enjoy themselves rather than trying to pretend we are a group of larger than life women with deeper voices.

## Summary

With all these problems, who would want to be a cross-dresser? Experience indicates that there is no cure but interestingly enough, most cross-dressers when asked if they would take a cure for being a cross-dresser, will say no. Most feel that they have something special, despite the problems. Treating transgendered people with aversion therapy has failed, efforts by women to correct the miscreant behaviour of their cross-dressing partners have also consistently failed, although many men will agree to curb their behaviour for the sake of the relationship. Ultimately though, the desire never dies.

The most effective treatment is understanding and communication. As a group we accept that we are what we are and we prefer to

celebrate this rather than mourn it. Hopefully the rest of the world will one day be more accepting of us and the negative feelings instilled by years of hiding and misunderstanding will gradually evaporate.

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## Self-Esteem

### The Catch 22 of Transgender

by Julie Peters

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**Julie Peters: I built my self-esteem in any way I could and that gave me the impetus to become my-self.**

**T**ransgender has its own built in Catch 22. You need very high self-esteem to successfully deal with being transgendered, but simply being transgendered is one of the great forces sapping your self-esteem.

**Self-esteem - the Transgender Catch 22. But don't despair! I've discovered a loophole. Self-esteem isn't compartmentalised. Self-esteem is self-esteem. Achieving in any area of life improves your self-esteem which helps you deal with being transgendered. I discovered this loophole by accident but before I go into more detail I'd like to show you why being transgendered dragged my self-esteem so low that I was suicidal.**

I was an only child for three years, the eldest grandchild on my father's side and seen as the eldest male on my mothers side. I was special and I knew it. At this age I didn't know I lived in a transphobic, homophobic, racist, classist and religiously intolerant world.

At seven I learnt I wasn't going to grow up to be a lady. And I learnt my disappointment wasn't something that I could tell anyone without fear of ostracism. But I discovered that I could have secret "soon-it-will-be-realised-I'm-a-girl" dreams and none of the adults around me knew I was having these dreams.

Initially these secret dreams gave me a feeling of being in control. But I did live in a transphobic society and as I grew older I started to measure myself by the social norms of the Catholic environment I lived in. And I could only conclude that because all I wanted to be was a girl then I was a sinner and sick in the head.

I went stealth, hiding any hints of femininity. Refusing to even play dressing up games because I knew that I would look too happy playing at being a girl and people would figure me out. Oh, how I lived for my secret "everyone-now-realises-their-mistake-and-now--realises-I'm-really-a-girl" dreams.

But as I became more Catholically indoctrinated, I found it harder to enjoy the dreams. I started to feel guilty. I knew I could hide my dreams from the world. But I started to realise I couldn't hide my dreams from God. It probably took until I was twelve or thirteen before this guilt and discomfort had become self-loathing. I imagined there had been some huge mistake and God had really created me a girl and at puberty I'd grow breasts and everyone would realise their mistake and I'd be happy.

But no. I was hit heavy by testosterone poisoning. My voice broke, my legs grew hairy, my face and crotch became hairy. I didn't want my voice broken. I wanted it fixed. But what could a girl do. Easy! The elixir of happiness! Chocolate. And so I became pimply and hairy. I was just coping. I dropped some basics, I stopped brushing my teeth. Who cared. If I couldn't be a girl I could see no point to life. Pimply, hairy, green teeth. Kids laughed at my green teeth. I started to brush again.

I think I had done my homework about twice during primary school but at eleven I found myself at the very working class, Christian Brothers College, Our Lady of Mount Carmel - which is now a Hari Krishna Temple.

It was a bit of a culture shock - these Christian Brothers. If you didn't do your homework you could easily end up with thirty cuts a day across the hand, with a thick leather strap. The formula was even-handedly applied. We were given ten spelling words to learn a night. You got a cut across the hand for each mistake. Even as I write these words my hands have become sore. And a similar formula applied for every other subject. That's how you could get so many a day.

You'll never guess. I started to do my homework. And the biggest surprise of all was that I actually found Science, Latin, Maths, Geography, Religion and English interesting. At seventeen I was at University, with a scholarship, studying engineering.

In retrospect the Faculty of Engineering wasn't the culturally best choice for a tranny in self-denial. Alcohol helped drown the pain. I dropped out of University. We had full employment in the early 1970s. I got a job in television. I discovered a gay scene. I felt comfortable with them.

***Achieving in any area of life improves your self-esteem which helps your deal with being transgendered.***

I passed my driving licence. I drove fast and dangerously. The worst that could happen is that I could die and I'd have no more pain. I discovered rum and coke, vodka and orange. Getting pissed was an acceptable man's way to deal with your problems. I drank. I fitted in. I couldn't shave. I couldn't even look in the mirror.

My demise was just around the corner. Soon I'd have no pain. Pissed-off-my-face I blacked out while driving home. I ran off the road. I caught myself. I stopped the car, I fell asleep.

I woke up many hours later. Scared. Petrified. I was crying. I could still just remember having high self-esteem when I was five. I wanted it back. But I didn't know how.

I could see that faintest of a glimmer of possibility simply because I could remember it. At twenty-one the terrier in me kicked in. I shaved. I sold my car. I went out and bought a dress. I determined to fight the guilt. I didn't drink a single drop of alcohol for ten years and it took me another eight years to gain enough self-esteem to be able to embrace my gender. It took until I was thirty-nine before I had enough self-esteem to live as a woman. But how did I turn myself around? I'm only now starting to see how I did it. I was looking for ways to feel good about myself without alcohol or chocolate. I found little ways to cheer myself up. But no alcohol. Okay, chocolate's allowed. I'm sure I'm alcoholic. I just don't drink. This Catholic guilt is crap. I bought more clothes. I put them on. I was overcome by an incredible rush of joy. Yes I remember this. This is self-esteem. I could remember in early high school feeling good about getting good marks at school. Achieve things. I didn't win the fight that day.

My head said I was a man and I knew I would be laughed at, ridiculed. I must keep this secret. Joy. Fear. Joy. Fear. Guilt. Fear. Guilt. Joy. A step forward. A step back. I felt a failure because I wasn't a real woman. I will fight this guilt. I didn't have any friends I felt comfortable enough with to invite home right through high school or university. I started to have friends through work. Having friends gave me a few hits of self-esteem. I discovered the Seahorse Club in 1974, a club for transvestites. It was at Seahorse that I first met transsexuals. I thought I just couldn't do what they did. But Seahorse was certainly a safe environment. New friends who understood my transgender. I could talk openly and honestly for the first time in my life. I had discovered the freedom to be myself. Or at least permission to start looking for myself.

I certainly had some disasters. But as they say "repetition is the mother of learning", "practice makes perfect". And I got better and better. At first I started to treat it like a science experiment.

I'd take careful notes as to what I did and measure it's success. If I had a bad day I'd only pass at ten metres. Or if I had a good day I could pass as close as one metre. My big problem was body and facial hair.

I soon discovered waxing and electrolysis. Looking better gave me some hits of self-esteem. I looked for and found so many ways to get a hit of self-esteem.

I did so many classes, dance, cooking and doing things around the house like carpentry, plumbing. Lots and lots of little successes. The other thing that really helped was intensive self-analysis. I read and read and wrote and wrote analysing myself. At first I wrote in code. I was so scared of it ever being read. I guess I have come a long way. Here I am writing my deepest secrets for hundreds of people I will never meet. At first I read anything that even mentioned my "condition".

Novels, biographies, psychology texts, and, surprise, surprise, a huge wealth of learning - papers on transgender in the journal racks of the Melbourne University Medical Library. I existed. I wasn't a freak. Well! I wasn't such a freak. I started to take hormones at twenty-five. I felt so good about my body until I freaked. People at work noticed I was growing breasts. I couldn't cope with the ridicule. I stopped.

In my mid to late twenties I discovered Jung and his concept of androgyny. A male can only become whole if he embraces his feminine side and a woman can only become whole if she embraces her masculine side. I did the test in the back of the book. I was perfectly androgynous. That gave me a hit of self-esteem. I had reached Jung's ideal. But I still had this nagging doubt. I knew I wanted to be an androgynous woman not an androgynous man. I was starting to get better at my work. This helped my esteem.

I was in a good relationship. This helped - more self-esteem hits. I went back and finished my degree. Four years part-time. More self-esteem hits. I started to take low dosages of hormones - to help me look androgynous as well as be it. I set myself exercises in passing as a woman. Going to a restaurant. Going to a movie. I felt really depressed when I had to change back. My house was falling apart. I fixed it up. That's three more years of self-esteem hits. I was becoming a better photographer.

I now had some great shots of me as a woman. Most not so good. Improve! I analyse every trip. Obsessed about improving my technique. I put so much energy into this that I'm sure I would have gained a PhD in "passing-as-a-woman" if only some university offered such a course of study.

I take a trip to Sydney, by myself, without any boy's clothes. Great. I've made a huge step. I've achieved one minor utopian dream. And as soon as I've climbed this new hill I can see higher more exciting hills that need to be climbed. I'm alone in my transgender. I'm only a woman if people see me as a woman. In Sydney I'm seen as a woman by strangers. I buy a bus ticket or a cup of coffee. I like strangers taking me as a woman. I need more interaction with people. I need more than a ten second conversation. I need people important to me to see me as a woman. It strikes me that my head and heart are in conflict.

I don't think I'm having emotions. Surely acting is one thing that requires both thinking and feeling. Maybe acting will help get thinking and feeling to work. I take acting and singing lessons. I develop some good friends. It takes a while but eventually I start to have emotions again. And what a shock. I realise that I desperately want to be a woman. My head tells me I'm a man and my heart tells me I'm a woman. I've allowed my head to dominate for so many years and denying my heart has got me into this mess. I realise my head and heart are running in totally different directions. My life will only work if my head and heart agree. This self-knowledge allows me to jump to the next step. I find a very lateral position that both my head and heart can tolerate.

My head gives my heart permission to culturally live as a woman and my heart gives my head permission to go around telling everyone I'm transgendered because that is logically accurate. My head and heart are friends for the first time since childhood. Now that's a step in self-esteem. I now have sufficient self-esteem to deal with my negative self-talk. I do it. It certainly hasn't been in a hurry. I've been in the wading pool of indecision for eighteen years before I jumped into the deep end of living again. I change gender. I deal with the shit. In fact dealing with the shit makes me feel even stronger. More self-esteem hits. I'm strong enough to wear down those negative people around me. The people who are positive and praise my courage give me just a few more hits of self-esteem. Shock Horror! I've done it. After all these years of indecision and self-loathing. My one aim in life is fulfilled.

Oh? What do I do now? My one aim in life is fulfilled? I have achieved my biggest goal in life. For a short time I have a little, what can I call it? It's like post-natal-depression.

Well I suppose I've just been born-again. Maybe I should call it post re-natal depression. This one doesn't stump me. I have the technique that builds self-esteem. It's simple. Do stuff that increases self-esteem. So since I've found true myself I've just kept doing things. I started to sing in public, more acting, promotions at work, I ran for Parliament five times, great relationship, public speaking, go freelance, start growing things, study multimedia, engineering. I've become a self-esteem addict. I still have days I'm down. I guess that makes me like everyone else.

But I've come a very long way in tiny, tiny steps. I survived high school by being totally logical and turning off my emotions. I kept a very tight lid on all my feelings from 1963 to 1990. That's twenty-seven years in the pressure cooker. I - oh, so slowly - built up my self-esteem to the point where it was safe to turn my emotions back on. I know most people can't wait that long. Each must find her/his way in his/her own time. But I can now cope with my weirdness. I like myself.

What was the process? Including friends, giving myself the freedom to be myself and acquiring self-knowledge.

And so I slip through the loophole in the transgender self-esteem Catch 22. Self-esteem isn't compartmentalised. I built my self-esteem in any way I could and that gave me the impetus to become my-self.

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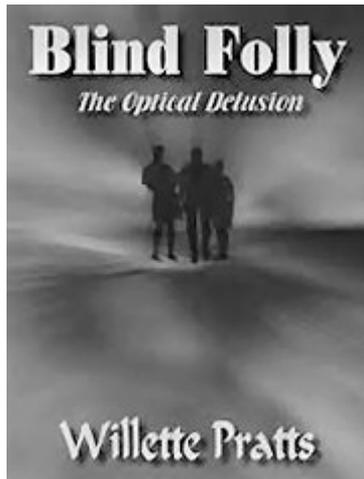
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## Book Review: Blind Folly

### The Optical Delusion

Reviewed by Willow Arune

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**Blind Folly: The Optical Delusion, by Willette Pratts.**

#### Blind Folly: The Optical Delusion

by Willette Pratts  
Published by Authorhouse,  
Bloomington, Indiana U.S.A. (2004)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1420813234

*... why read this book? To understand, without the political niceties of Evangelical Alliance, that this is the real face of prejudice, the honest representation of bias.*

**W**e know, of course, that there are many who hate transsexuals, who believe we act against 'God's will'. They encourage those who find faith to 'de-trans'. In England, the Evangelical Alliance took a strong stand against new legislation as well as advising congregations to lie - to lure us back before springing the trap. The trap? Form an emotional bond and then demand de-trans as a condition for remaining.

This attitude rarely sees print. We have Perry, the bio of an early transitioner, one who joined the 'Jewel Box Review' and then found salvation by returning to a male form. Later, a direct descendant, Ron Rigsbee followed Perry's footsteps and wrote his book with the assistance of Jim Bakker's sister. Both of these were some time ago, although I note that Perry has recently been re-printed. With the exception of the Evangelical Alliance tome on why we are wrong, little else has found its way off websites and pamphlets to give form to

the hatred (yes, it is) of what might be called the 'Baptist mentality'.

A new P.O.D book (Print On Demand) by Willette Pratts enters the lists. Blind Folly is singular for giving an honest voice to what this large segment of Americans think concerning transsexualism. Remember, Bush got elected with their support, and self-identified 'evangelical Christians' represent forty percent of the American population. It is, in the words of old, a 'real and present danger'.

Now, I have talked to the writer, as well as to Dorothy Bakker. They are what we used to call 'nice old ladies'. Kind, pleasant to speak to, and chatty. But like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, doggedly determined to save us even if we do not wish to be saved, or damn us with a shrill voice if they must. They were pleasant enough to talk to, but I seem to have forgotten to identify myself as a transsexual woman, and they never asked.

And therein lies the biggest danger. Can such a nice, grandmotherly type harbour such hatred? She is such a dear!

Pratts speaks for God - no doubt about it, not for her. She knows exactly what God thinks of transsexuals.

Of course, she knows transsexuals too, admitting that none would speak to her concerning the book. But years ago she did see one coming out of an office in San Francisco, and has never forgotten the experience. Right in the Triple A Building on Van Ness Boulevard, bold as brass, and walking right by her. Even with a Bachelor of Science (San Jose Christian College) she could hardly believe her eyes.

Her first 'abomination'.

We (both homosexual and transsexual - they are one and the same to her) lurk after school to lure youth into our lifestyle. That is due to our addiction for abominations. One primary motivation we have, in her view, is to turn Peeping-Tom, to invade women's washrooms to satisfy our desire to see a woman disrobed. Yet we are gay, and suffer the abomination of liking men! Why we, as gay, want to see a woman disrobed is easily explained. Put simply, all men want that. That we are legally sanctioned to change our gender and peek legally is horrid (don't women's rooms in the U.S. have cubicles as we do in Canada?) Women should never enter a washroom knowing one of us was there, and leave if one comes in! Of course, it has never happened, but she is prepared to do what she must to protect herself.

It is the mindset that is interesting. No amount of science law discussion or sanction would change her mind. All males want to see women disrobed, even if they are attracted to other men, it seems. With Wikipedia as a major source of information, she knows this. Unknown to me, a major reason for transition is our burning desire to look at women in washrooms.

As to learning to be gay, she knows this too. She once watched Boy George being interviewed on television.

Now, all this and more could be rather fun. But Pratts is giving voice to what these nice grandmotherly types are thinking, and it is the first such representation to come along in book format.

The ugliest portion comes when she writes about a woman who had the gall, and lack of 'common-sense', to walk alone on a beach one night in California. The woman was raped. Pratts seems to blame the woman and segues into "Homosexuals and transsexuals who ignore the rules of safety when it comes to impersonating a woman should stop crying about it and expect to suffer the consequences of simulation. See 'The Beating' (another chapter)".

This is summed up in the statement "He/she got what she deserved." Not one comment condemning those who did the beating or rape. Apply this mindset to the Mathew Sheppard case. Over 40 percent of the American population? And her pastor assisted her in reviewing her book! Of course, he is not gay like these other pastors.

She talks of a Senator, a good man she thinks, who came out with a comment approving of same-sex marriage. A politician unable to distinguish good and evil it seems, but as she respected him, he must have been "under stress" and "not clear about what he was thinking". He should have kept quiet and taken a vacation. Simply dismissed in this manner, there is no need to think about what he has said.

There is more, of course.

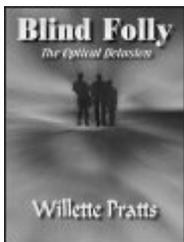
Now ... why read this book? To understand, without the political niceties of Evangelical Alliance, that this is the real face of prejudice, the honest representation of bias.

In a phrase ... "Know your enemy"!

## Willette Pratts

**From Smashwords Books:**  Willette Pratts' online biography records that she enjoys creative writing, and has promised to include God's Word in every work that she produces. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Theology, is a missionary at her church, and prays that her sunset will take a long time setting.

**She seems to have written two books on the subject she refers to as homosexuality/transsexuality, and asserts that transsexuality is "a drastic form of homosexuality" and, "an agenda aimed at destroying marriage and everything connected to it."**



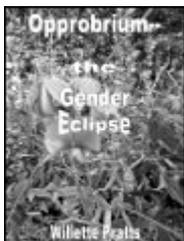
**Blind Folly: The Optical Illusion**

Author: Willette Pratts

Publisher: Authorhouse, Bloomington, Indiana U.S.A. 2004

I.S.B.N.-13 978 1420813234

**From Google Books:**  *Blind Folly* makes the connection between wrong doing spirits, homosexuality, transsexuality, and anatomical blindness. In forty-three topics combined, it gives an extensive analysis, many with true-life examples, of how one can make a wrong turn in life when a righteous influence is absent. *Blind Folly* delves deeply into how common sense and understanding are undermined when a homosexual man or woman makes a decision to become a transsexual by having sexual reassignment surgery to become the opposite sex. This literary work uncovers the biological and spiritual reasons why a man can never be a woman; and a woman can never be a man."



**Opprobrium - the Gender Eclipse**

Author: Willette Pratts

Publisher: Willette Pratts at Smashwords 2012

I.S.B.N.-13 978 1452415789

**From Smashwords Books:**  *Opprobrium - the Gender Eclipse* is a collection of various topics about the homosexual and transsexual way of life and how their agenda has adversely impacted not only their lives, but the lives of family, children, and the workplace. The information contained in this book proves that this lifestyle is a vehicle travelling down a dead-end road.

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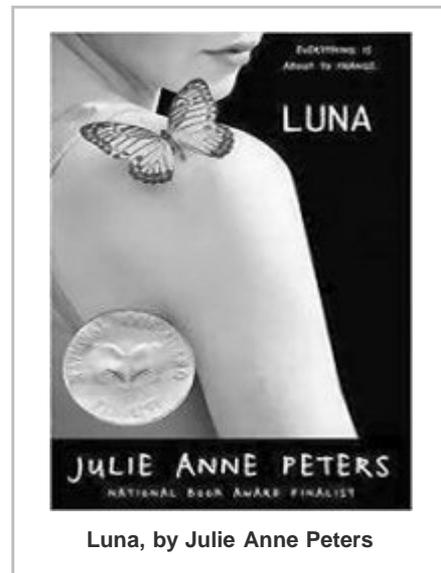
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## Book Review: Luna

### Everything is About to Change

Reviewed by Katherine Cummings

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Luna, by Julie Anne Peters

#### Luna: Everything is About to Change

by Julie Anne Peters  
Published by Little Brown, New York  
U.S.A. (2004)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0316713695

*Luna [sounds] like an obsessed monster ... and she is ... as all of us have been when driven to the brink of suicide by our need to fulfil our impossible dream.*

**T**his is the story of a transgender teenager in crisis, as seen through the eyes of her younger sister. At the outset we meet Luna, a woman by night, naming herself for the moon, but forced to be the academically brilliant but hopelessly unmasculine Liam by day. Some might think Liam a nerd, except for his popularity with his female high school contemporaries, popularity he shrugs off, since he knows through every waking moment that Liam is Luna, Luna is a woman and Luna is not a lesbian.

Liam's sister, Regan, younger than Liam/Luna, is the only confidante for Luna and the only sounding board for Luna's anguished need to be a full-time female. With their mother totally absorbed in her career and their father forever pushing Liam to be a jock, the responsibility for keeping Luna sane falls on Regan. When Luna needs to cross-dress in the still watches of the night and when her needs escalate into a compulsion to spread her wings and be Luna in the light of day, Regan is there for her.

Regan is just as much a victim of the situation as Luna. Regan hates her family life and sublimates her need for a supportive and loving family into her relationship with Elise and David, a young couple for whom she babysits ... a relationship which goes disastrously wrong when Regan, for once, depends on Luna for support.

Regan is turned in on herself by the terrible need to keep Luna's secret and she avoids involvement with boys who try to create a relationship, because she lacks self-confidence, thinks herself a klutz and is constantly at Luna's beck and call.

This makes Luna sound like an obsessed monster ... and she is ... as all of us have been when driven to the brink of suicide by our need to fulfil our impossible dream.

Regan's life is further complicated when she encounters Chris, who will not take "no" for an answer and pursues her, much to her confusion, discomfort and delight. Chris adds one more item to the array of elements Regan is juggling as she tries to be all things to Luna, keep her relationship with Chris afloat and cope with a demanding school schedule and a dopey teacher who wants her to live up to Liam/Luna's academic standards.

When crisis strikes and every part of Regan's life seems to be fragmenting and sinking without trace, Luna takes on her biggest challenge, to be herself among her contemporaries at school and in her family. Her determination to live her own life, as she must one day live it, is admirable on one level, but socially suicidal on another and Regan suffers some of the transition backlash.

Luna is remarkable in being able to make her decisions without seeking professional advice from doctors, school counsellors or even close friends. She is lucky to find an experienced and helpful transgender on the Internet by whom she can be inspired and from whom she can learn.

Julie Anne Peters is an award-winning author and Luna was a National Book Award finalist. She is an "out" lesbian and when it was suggested that she write a book about a teen transgender she interviewed many transgenders and put in the hard yards to achieve authenticity. The book is a brilliant exposition of the conflict, exaltation and terror involved in "coming-out" and I recommend it unreservedly.

#### Julie Anne Peters

**From Julie's website:**  Julie Anne Peters is the critically-acclaimed, award-winning author of more than a dozen books for young adults and children. Her book, *Luna*, was a National Book Award Finalist; *Keeping You a Secret* was named a Stonewall Honour Book; *Between Mom and Jo* won a Lambda Literary



Award; and *Define "Normal"* was voted by young readers as their favourite book of the year in California and Maryland. Julie's books have been published in numerous countries, including Korea, China, Croatia, Germany, France, Italy, Indonesia, Turkey, and Brazil. She is a member of The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, PEN America, Colorado Authors League, and The Author's Guild. Julie loves writing because she gets to be her own boss and doesn't have to work in an office cubicle. It's hard to think outside the box when you work in a cube. She lives in Lakewood, Colorado, U.S.A. with her partner, Sherri, and far too many cats. The cats are under the impression that they're creative geniuses, since they spend a majority of their day walking back and forth across her computer keyboard. They probably generate more words per day than she does, but who can read cat gibberish?

[Read more about Julie and her other books at her website](#)



Luna

Author: Julie Anne Peters

Publisher: Little Brown, (2004)

I.S.B.N.-13 978 0316733695

**From Amazon Books:** Regan's brother Liam can't stand the person he is during the day. Like the moon from whom Liam has chosen his female namesake, his true self, Luna, only reveals herself at night. In the secrecy of his basement bedroom Liam transforms himself into the beautiful girl he longs to be, with help from his sister's clothes and makeup. Now, everything is about to change - Luna is preparing to emerge from her cocoon. But are Liam's family and friends ready to welcome

Luna into their lives? Compelling and provocative, this is an unforgettable novel about a transgender teen's struggle for self-identity and acceptance.

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# The Sex/Law Tango Tangle

## Discrimination Against Transgender People

by norrie mAy-welby

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... there have been retrograde decisions too, such as the granting of exemptions to allow Mission Australia and Edward Eager Lodge to discriminate against transgendered people.

**S**ocial progress is so often a matter of three steps forward and two steps back.

In 1996, we (transsexuals) were included in the Anti-Discrimination Act of

N.S.W., but only "recognised transgender persons" were guaranteed equal treatment with others of their gender. To be a "recognised transgender person", you must change your birth certificate, which requires (A) being born in a State (or country) that allows for such a change, and (B) satisfying the prerequisites for such a change, which means having had irreversible surgical procedures for the purpose of living in the "new" gender. This may mean a full vaginoplasty or penoplasty, or be as "simple" as a hysterectomy or hormone implants.

In 2004, it was established that in Australian Federal law, the legal sex of a person is not determined solely by the sex assigned at birth, but by the sex they are now, which is influenced by how they are seen by their social environment,

and by supporting surgery. This was a judgement by the full bench of the Family Court, re: Kevin, in which it was held that a transgendered man (who had not had full penoplasty, but had undergone some other transsexual medical processes) was a man for the purpose of the Marriage Act.

This would seem to shift the drawing of lines for when transgendered people must be considered legally to be of the sex in which they present.

Yet there have been retrograde decisions too, such as the granting of exemptions to allow Mission Australia and Edward Eager Lodge to discriminate against transgendered people.

Mission Australia's exemption states that they may run women-only services, but transgendered women are a kind of women, and I cannot see how they are allowed to use the old criteria of "recognised transgendered persons" for the only transwomen allowed in, when Re: Kevin supersedes this State law. Re: Kevin says that what you are now is what you are now, not necessarily what was assigned at birth, so a transwoman is a woman even if her birth certificate is male.

Edward Eager Lodge accepts trans women and treats them as men, and vice versa for transmen.

This is contrary to the principles of good welfare provision, where the humiliation of needy people is no longer an accepted practice.

To add insult to injury, I have just been informed that Supported Accommodation Assistance program (S.A.A.P.), which funds many agencies including Edward Eager Lodge, Mission Australia, and the Gender Centre, is asking all agencies to report the sex of clients, with sex defined "as a biological distinction between male and female, whereas gender is a self-identifying term. An example may be in the case of a client who was born with male anatomy but identifies as female. Under the new guidelines, that client should be recorded as male". Of course this is contrary to the N.S.W. law applying to "recognised transgender persons" and flies in the face of the federal legal ruling of re: Kevin.

As S.W.O.P.s Transgender Project Officer, I am working with the Gender Centre and Sex and Gender Education (S.A.G.E.) Australia to change the exclusionary practices of Mission Australia, and against an extension of Edward Eager Lodge's exemption, and to try and have the bureaucrats of S.A.A.P. adopt a more respectful and legally appropriate practice.

On a brighter note, those transsexuals who were born in the U.K. can now have their birth certificates changed to reflect the appropriate gender.

But Lord only knows what complications will follow the Federal Government's amendments to the Marriage Act made last August, which prohibit people of the same sex marrying in Australia, and render invalid in Australia any marriage made by same sex couples overseas, but do not address the question of marriages made heterosexually that become same-sex by virtue of one partner changing

sex, or of marriages made heterosexually overseas by partners who are classified as the same sex in Australia (due to the different determinations of legal sex in different jurisdictions).

In Iran, transsexuals are now recognised as their self-identified sex after sex-change surgery. But homosexuality (or any sex a pre-op. tranny girl has with a man) still gets a wall pushed on top of you.

Not surprisingly, there is a reduction in the number of "in-betweenies" (my frivolous term for people like me who are of ambiguous or androgynous gender) or effeminate queens, and an increase in "women trapped in men's bodies" seeking surgery and gender "normalisation".

Ah, wouldn't it be nice to just be accepted as a human being, without having to have a "normal" Type A or B identity, or without having to get universal agreement about what your sex or gender is?

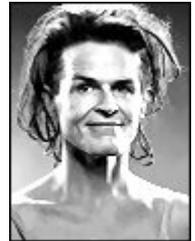
On the plus side, glamorous transwoman Miriam charmed *Big Brother* in Australia, while another transwoman won the U.K. series last year. More and more transgender people are becoming visible in many varied fields, from the glamour of television to the grind of politics. I met Georgina Beyer a few months ago, the transsexual woman who retired from showbiz to the country, became interested in Council politics, and after being elected Mayor a couple of times stood for election as the local Member of Parliament and was elected. Despite the many legal and other challenges we face, there is room for us to achieve in whatever fields we choose, without our trans identity limiting us.

The world is a changing place, but by and large most people are more accepting of diversity than they may have been ten or twenty years ago. There are still bigots, but they are fewer in number, and far less influential than in bygone days. And enough of us have survived to build support for each other, to grow strong and assert our right to exist on equal terms with anyone. We know there's nothing wrong with who we are, even if who we are doesn't fit nicely into other people's expectations or the standard sex categories. And, as transgendered people, our liminal nature may even be a gift to the world. The law, of course, remains an ass, but such is life.

## **norrie mAy-welby**

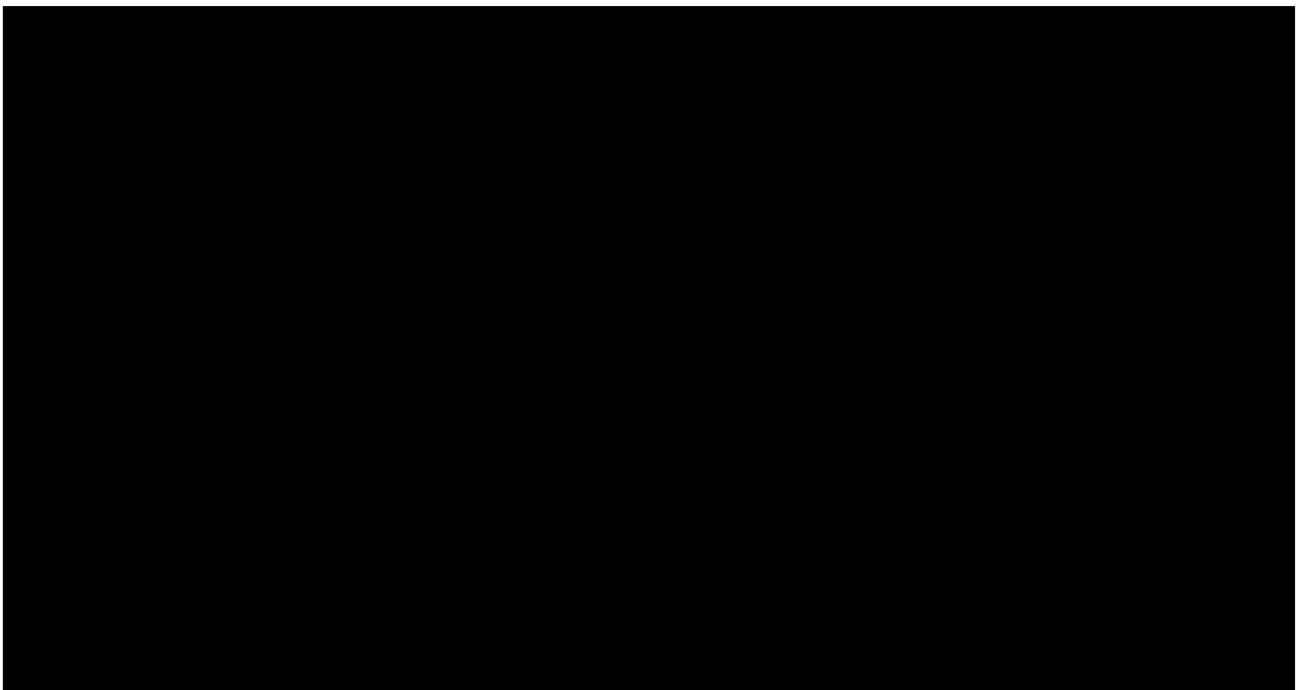
From [Wikipedia](#)  norrie mAy-welby became the first person in the world to be officially declared to be neither a man nor a woman, making Australia the first country in the world to recognise a "non-specified" gender.

Born in Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland, as a male and moving to Perth, Western Australia at the age of seven, norrie underwent male-to-female reassignment surgery in 1989, but later found that being a woman was not what zie felt like either. Zie moved to Sydney in the early 1990s. Doctors stated, in January 2010, that norrie was a neuter, neither male nor female, as hir psychological self-image was as a neuter, hir hormones were not the same as a male's or female's, and zie had no sex organs.



One of hir worries about being labelled male or female is that zie now looks like neither and is physically neither as well. Because of this, if hir passport states gender as being one or the other, it is possible that zie might be detained for not fitting what the gender field says zie should look like. This was one of norrie's reasons for seeking recognition as gender neutral. Of hir own sexuality, norrie has stated: "I'd be the perfect androgyne if I was completely omniseual, but I'm only monoseual. Just think of me as a big queen girl."

norrie has been an integral part of the Gender Centre in many ways since moving from Western Australia many years ago. [Visit hir website for more about norrie](#)  Meanwhile, this excellent video has appeared on You Tube, an interview with norrie in which zie explains her views on many topics



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# The Legacy of John Paul II

## His Ironfisted Rule Over the Catholic Church

by the Most Reverend Bruce J. Simpson, O.S.J.B.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Pope John Paul II

**A**s a billion Roman Catholics worldwide begin to get used to the idea that John Paul II will no longer be the leader of their church - for the first time in more than twenty-six years, sympathetic messages flow from all parts of the world to the Vatican, and cable television channels are filled with reverent tributes. But due to the sheer length of John Paul II's iron fisted rule over the Roman Catholic Church and the impact he's had on the lives of millions of people, both good and bad, a critical eye must be used to examine his legacy.

***The pope clearly abdicated his responsibility to protect the children of God from paedophile priests and was more concerned about the primacy of the church and protecting church assets.***

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Poland, a known ultra-conservative, was elected the 264th supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church on 16th October 1978. This election, followed the death of Pope John Paul I, who survived the papacy for only thirty-three days; his brief rule followed the death of Pope Paul VI. (The deaths of both Paul VI and John Paul I have left many mysteries and hints that indicate that neither death was the result of natural causes.) The suddenness of Karol Wojtyla's election combined with the fact that he followed three of the most liberal Italian popes of the last century made his rise to the papal throne most unexpected.

After his election, John Paul II became the most widely travelled of any pope in the history of the church, making 103 pastoral trips outside of Italy, and 143 within Italy. As a result of these many trips, John Paul II cultivated influence with many of the world's powerful in an attempt to increase Vatican influence and help in its causes. He also essentially capsized the Vatican ship with an overload of red ink, operating with a deficit of well over \$200 million. At the same time, John Paul II successfully swept the Vatican Bank scandal of the 1970s under the rug by making huge payments to key officials in business and government. This is the same scandal that John Paul I wanted to expose and investigate to the light of day - before he suddenly died, alone in the papal apartment.

Even more important to the future of the church is the fact that John Paul II created, at last count, 201 cardinals - who will meet to select the next pope ensuring the conservative tone of his rule well after his death. No bishop with progressive views has been elevated to the rank of cardinal in more than quarter of a century, let alone any priest to the rank of bishop.

In previous papal elections there were normally three factions within the College of Cardinals that elected the pope: the conservative, the liberal, and the neutrals. This mixture of theological perspective enabled all candidates a chance at election. As the church teaches, the election of a pope is guided by the Holy Spirit.

In the conclave to elect a new pope to follow John Paul II, there will be only one mindset from which to fill the shoes of the fisherman: the conservative.

So what is this pope's legacy?

Pope John Paul II can be given much deserved credit for playing a major role in the defeat of Communism in various parts of the world, including the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev has publicly stated that the pope played an important role in the collapse and break-up of the Soviet Union. There is no question that he was largely responsible for the fall of General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the last Communist leader of Poland. Between the Polish labor and political group Solidarity and the pope, Communism was doomed in Poland.

John Paul II also played a major role in the return to the church of many young people, who took to him with their cries of "J.P.2, we love you." Wherever he travelled he encountered throngs of youth trying to get a glimpse of the man who was pope. His influence in bringing many of them back to the fold of the church cannot be overstated.

But there was also a darker side to this occupant of the chair of Saint Peter. John Paul II must be held accountable for a complete failure of leadership on the sexual abuse crises that arose during his watch. The pope clearly abdicated his responsibility to protect the children of God from paedophile priests and was more concerned about the primacy of the church and protecting church assets. His most glaring failure in this regard was in not removing bishops and cardinals who knowingly protected paedophile priests from discovery and prosecution - thereby increasing the amount of damage these men did to innocent children and the faith of the people.

Further, over the course of his papacy, John Paul II refused to consider any non-dogmatic positions on key social topics such as birth control, divorce, female clergy, celibacy, and homosexuality. The non-progressive and often discriminatory policies already in place when he became pope were maintained and strengthened. His position on these topics has led to vast divisions within the church around the world and has escalated the phenomenon of "Cafeteria Catholicism," especially in the United States, where many Roman Catholics adhere to the history and symbolism of the church but reject many of its specific policies. Many American Roman Catholics simply choose which dogmatic positions of the church they will follow and which to ignore. "Cafeteria Catholicism" is not surprising within a church that condemns homosexuality while being full of homosexual men at all levels of power.

All of the ultraconservative positions of John Paul II and the Vatican are in direct opposition to those that were espoused by John Paul I. Had the first John Paul lived anywhere near the length of time of his successor, the Catholic Church would be a completely different institution than it is today.

In the past two years of his rule, John Paul II became obsessed with the advances made by gays and lesbians seeking equality throughout the world. He was greatly troubled that European countries began legally recognizing same-sex marriages and domestic partnerships and granting adoption rights to these couples. Even as he remained largely silent on the epidemic of child abuse among his U.S. clergy, Pope John Paul II spoke out frequently in response to advances in gay equality in America.

John Paul II attempted to exert tremendous influence over public policy regarding gays and lesbians, especially in U.S. society, where he seemed to see the most danger and threat to the role of the church in daily life. He issued various directives to American clergy and American Catholic politicians in an attempt to prevent the L.G.B.T. community from gaining any recognition within society, culminating in his statement on same-sex unions issued in July 2003, in which he not only condemned gay marriage but used some of the most hostile, corrosive, outrageous, and un-Christian terms to describe this group of God's children.

During the American presidential campaign of 2004, we saw George W. Bush travel to the Vatican and, with hat in hand ask the pope to have his bishops help him win election. True to form, the "red hats" of the American church chimed in shortly thereafter with a continuing babble of anti-gay rhetoric and pastoral pronouncements in an attempt to retain the anti-gay president, a clear violation of American laws that grant churches billions of dollars in tax-free privileges on the condition that they stay out of electoral politics. Obviously the pope considered the L.G.B.T. movement and its continuing push for full equality in the world more evil even than the war on Iraq. The pope admonished Bush for the war, but his displeasure ended there, at the audience. To this day, homophobia-driven theology continues to inundate the American and world church.

In his 2005 speech to set the agenda for the year, same-sex marriage was at the top of the "hit list" for this pope and the church. John Paul II felt that the greatest threat to families was the equal protection of families that did not fit his idea of the biblical profile of marriage. Somehow that strict biblical definition managed to ignore all the polygamists, concubines, incestuous unions, arranged weddings for children, and other variations of biblical marriage that appear in the Christian Bible, many with God's own sanction.

The pope did mention in his 2005 agenda that the wealthy nations should help more in feeding the poor. Not much of an agenda for the vicar of Christ.

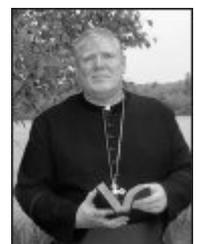
For twenty-six years, the unyielding dogma of John Paul II presented an inhospitable atmosphere within the church and drove many of the faithful out onto the streets to find another spiritual home, while the church completely forgot that the original sin of Sodom was inhospitality.

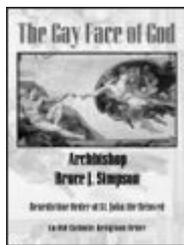
The immense healing and bringing together in unity of the world's churches and communities was a missed opportunity that could have made this pope one of the greatest men to have ever sat in the chair of Saint Peter.

We can only hope and pray that the next pope will be more enlightened by the Holy Spirit and will choose to steer a course away from such divisive ultra-conservatism. We also pray that in the afterlife John Paul II will be enlightened with the truth of how wrong he was about the gay community and God.

## The Most Reverend Bruce J. Simpson

**Edited from Writers Net:** 📧 Born and raised in New Jersey, U.S.A. at the age eighteen Bruce Simpson enlisted in the United States Air Force during Vietnam and was assigned to nuclear security. Upon an Honourable discharge, Bruce entered police work. Archbishop Simpson received his undergraduate degree (B.A.) in the legal field from the University of Central Florida in 1981. While in college, Simpson ran for and was elected to a county wide political position, unseating the incumbent. Simpson also served as Deputy Campaign manager for Lawson Lamar, Chief Assistant States Attorney in his successful run for Sheriff of Orange County, Florida. Upon graduation, Simpson was sworn in as a Commissioner of the District Court of Maryland, and Acting United States Magistrate, Pro Tem, where he served for two years prior to returning to police work as a sworn Police Officer in Prince Georges County Maryland. In his role as Court Commissioner which is known in other jurisdictions as judges, justice of the peace, or magistrates, Simpson heard high numbers of criminal cases brought before the court by Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies where initial appearances before the court were conducted, rights given, and determination of probable cause was made, as well as conditions of detention or release. Simpson also reviewed probable cause and made decisions on the issuance of arrest warrants and criminal summons. Civilly, Simpson became involved in emergency petitions of various kinds and interacted with higher-level judges on a daily basis. At one point, Simpson was rated in the top 1 percentile of all of the Commissioners in the State of Maryland by his Chief Administrative law Judge.





Author: Bruce J. Simpson  
Publisher: BookSurge Publishing (2004)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1932657098.

**From The Gay Face of God Website:**  This is the story of a man born of an act of violence who grew up as a gay man to become an Archbishop in the Old Catholic Church in America. Archbishop Bruce J. Simpson's theology and beliefs on the subject of the L.G.B.T. community, its place in the world and in particular in the Church, fly in the face of most traditions and governmental positions.

These positions and beliefs have been formed out of his unique experiences growing up in the military, police departments, a brief connection with the Saudi Royal family, the federal government, and the Roman Catholic Church. His story is one of sadness and joy, but mostly it is the triumphant journey of one man to find true happiness, love and God.

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# Transgender Documentary Drinking Game

## I'll Drink to That!

by Gwendolyn Ann Smith

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



A few weeks back I had the pleasure of attending the viewing party of a new transgender documentary, a viewing made all the more fun by the fact that a few of my friends — and yours truly — were part of the cast of this piece. Of course, if you would have blinked, you would have likely missed me.

*I would rather like to see a documentary where transgender people are not stereotypes, where people can see just how diverse we really are.*

As I watched this documentary, I noticed many of the same clichés and stereotypes that I've seen time and time again in transgender documentaries. I thought about who I could write to, and how I could address these issues.

Then I decided to go for a more novel approach, and turn it all into a drinking game.

For those three of you out there who have never heard of this type of drinking game, let me elaborate. The concept started in earnest during the 1970s, when someone noticed that the phrase, "Hi, Bob" was uttered several times in the average episode of *The Bob Newhart Show*. Hence, this particular drinking game requires everyone watching to take a drink when they hear any character say, "Hi, Bob."

With the rise of the World Wide Web, it seems that every show has gained its own drinking game. Fans of *I Love Lucy* can imbibe when Lucy cries or when Ricky laughs, while viewers of *American Idol* may sip their beverage of choice every time a contestant sings a Whitney Houston song — you get the idea.

Even the Weather Channel has a drinking game, based on meteorological terms that might pop up on the screen. Indeed, it would seem that only one genre does not have such a pastime — but I intend to rectify this!

Before I lay out the various conditions, I want to make one thing clear. I'm not condoning the drinking of hard liquors, nor am I suggesting that one should drink to excess simply because I've set up some rules. Likewise, I am certainly not endorsing any underage drinking in any way. I simply am providing this in a light-hearted vein, and hope that you will take this in the way I've intended.

Hi, Bob! The set up is usual. A number of friends, a beverage of choice, and a transgender documentary. The last ingredient should not be that difficult to acquire, given that you can likely find one on the various Discovery channels every few days.

Take one drink if ...

- » A transwoman is shown putting on make-up or fixing her hair, or if a transman is shown shaving or slicking back his hair. If they show two transfolk in one shot, take two drinks.
- » The narrator uses the words "unusual," "shocking," or "disturbing" to describe a transgender person and/or the process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- » "She" and "her" is used to describe a transman, or "he" and "him" is used to describe a transwoman.
- » The birth name of a transgender person is used to describe the person after they begins transition or when they is shown in a preferred gender. Take an extra drink if the narrator has already stressed that the person in question has changed their name.
- » If anyone makes the assumption that genitals equal gender.
- » A transwoman is shown doing a stereotypically feminine action, like shopping in the mall, or a transman is shown doing something stereotypically masculine, such as playing a sport.
- » If a transman is shown putting on and/or straightening a tie.
- » If old photographs are used to try and show that a transperson used to visually fit into their birth gender.
- » If anyone uses the phrase "a man trapped in a woman's body," or vice versa.
- » If undergarments are shown. Make it two if they happen to be a gaff or a binder.

Take two drinks if ...

- » No transmen are shown.
- » The transgender people presented are predominately Caucasian, and predominately middle or upper class.
- » An "expert" is brought on to talk about how "wrong" being transgender is. You may as well add a third if they happen to be using a religious argument against being transgender.
- » The family of a transgender person is shown, particularly if they are negative towards their loved one's transgender status.
- » If anyone says "You will always be (blank) to me, where the blank represents a transperson's birth gender."

#### Finish the bottle if ...

- » You discover you accidentally put on Ed Wood's *Glen or Glenda*, or if the only thing you can find on that has to do with being transgendered happens to be *The Jerry Springer Show*. Just don't waste anything expensive in the process.

Now yes, I am being a bit flippant — even dismissive — of transgender documentaries. It isn't that I feel they serve no purpose: I am sure that many have been educated thanks to the various transgender documentaries out there, and education is never a bad thing. That said, education can always be better.

As I said, much of what is shown are stereotypes and clichés, and frankly, it is time that these clichés become a part of history.

I would rather like to see a documentary where transgender people are not stereotypes, where people can see just how diverse we really are. I want to see that transgender people are not all Caucasian. I want to see transmen, I want to see gender-queers, and I want to see others who are just living their lives without a concern for genitals.

I want to see transwomen and transmen defined by who they are, not by dated notions of gender. I want to see people called what they want to be called. In short, I want to see reality, not clichés.

I'll drink to that.

### Gwendolyn Ann Smith

From Gwendolyn's website: Gwendolyn Ann Smith is a graphic designer, desktop publisher, web designer, writer, and transgender activist.

She writes transmissions for four major L.G.B.T. newspapers in the United States, *Baltimore Gay Life*, the *Bay Area Reporter*, *Between The Lines*, and the *Philadelphia Gay News*. Individual Transmission pieces are also often printed in *Express Gay News*, the *Houston Voice*, the *New York Blade*, the *Southern Voice*, and the *Washington Blade*. In addition to these, she has contributed to several other publications and online forums over the years. Her website contains a vast number of her writings that are of interest to transgender people and our allies.

Gwen has spoken publicly since High School, and has presented on transgender-related topics since 1994. She has spoken in a number of different clubs and forms.

Gwendolyn Ann Smith also founded the Transgender Day of Remembrance in 1998, a day which occurs annually on 20th November. It is a day to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia, or the hatred or fear of transgender and gender non-conforming people, and acts to bring attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community. The Transgender Day of Remembrance was originally organised to memorialize the murder of Rita Hester in Allston, Massachusetts, however since its inception, it has slowly evolved from the web-based project started by Smith into an international day of action. In 2010, Transgender Day of Remembrance was observed in over 185 cities in more than twenty countries.



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# Transgendered Veterans to March on Washington

## To Give Tribute to their Fellow Troops Who Have Silently Served Their Nation

by Lisa Hoffman

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



seek surgery to change their gender.

On 20th May, a contingent of the Transgender American Veterans Association will come to Washington to openly pay their respects at memorials to fallen U.S. soldiers and give tribute to their fellow troops who have silently served their nation.

As they did last year at Arlington Cemetery, about fifty transgendered vets. took part in their first but little-noticed "march" on Washington, this year's participants also hope to shine a light on the contributions of those in uniform, present and past, who suffer from a "gender-identity disorder" and all the emotional pain that can accompany it.

They also hope to call on the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide them "fair and equal treatment" for what is recognised by the medical profession as a treatable medical condition.

Last year, the participants "for the first time in their lives ... mourned their fallen compatriots while standing proudly and openly as themselves," association secretary Karen Rice said on the group's website. "We know, as some may not, that there are those who serve in silence now."

How many there are is unknown. While other controversial populations in uniform - such as gays and lesbians - are implicitly acknowledged by the brass to exist, those with aberrant genders remain deep in the darkest corner of the proverbial closet.

Even those who study the sociology and demographics of the military say they have virtually no idea how many transgendered G.I.s and veterans there are in America.

"Very, very little is known about transgendered service members," said Aaron Belkin, a professor and director of the Centre for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California, Santa Barbara, which has just commissioned its first study on the subject.

Robyn Walters, a transsexual Navy veteran who runs an online discussion group said about 500 vets. are members of the group - almost double what it was when the non-profit began in 2003. She said she personally knows of about 1,000 transgendered vets. Beyond that, Walters said, "there are no statistics."

Walters' own story is akin to those of others in the group, most of whom waited until they retired to "transition" to the opposite sex.

A U.S. Naval Academy graduate with a doctorate in engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Walters rose to the rank of commander during a twenty-year career, when her name was Robert Walters and she was a nuclear submarine designer.

Married with four daughters for twenty years, Walters, 67, sublimated her feminine impulses until her last child was in college. Through the Internet and a spiritual journey, Walters came to terms with the fact that "I always knew I never felt right as a man."

Walters said the sex transformation four years ago was liberating, allowing her to finally be what she was inside. Divorced from her wife, Walters now is married to a twenty-year Navy vet who used to be a female before a sex-change.

**O**ne is a retired Navy Commander who served as a nuclear-submarine engineer. Another refuelled B-52 bombers. Others fought in Korea and Vietnam and one infantry sergeant is now in combat in Iraq.

All these people, and perhaps hundreds more, are members of what is probably the least-known U.S. military minority - transgendered troops.

These G.I.s - past and present - fall somewhere on a general gender spectrum that stretches from cross-dressers, who wear clothes of the opposite sex, to those whose genitalia were ambiguous at birth, to transsexuals, most of whom

*Even those who study the sociology and demographics of the military say they have virtually no idea how many transgendered G.I.s and veterans there are in America.*

Walters and experts on transsexuals say it is common for transgendered men to choose "macho" occupations, hoping to end their internal confusion and prove they are "real" men. "What's more macho than being a (Navy) Seal?" said Tarynn Witten, a Virginia Commonwealth University professor who is conducting the study on transgendered vets. commissioned by the sexual-minorities centre.

In uniform, Walters said, transgendered vets. have been elite commandos, explosive ordnance experts and front-line infantry troops. After their service, many go on to be police officers, fire-fighters and air-traffic controllers.

And unlike Corporal Klinger - the character in the "M\*A\*S\*H" television series who dressed as a woman in a ploy to be sent home from the Korean War - these veterans were as dedicated and patriotic as any other soldiers, proud to serve and defend their country, Walters and others said.

After the transgendered-vet. events in Washington last year, some who attended posted accounts on the group's website about the extraordinary emotion that surrounded their visit and their open participation as transsexuals. They marvelled that other "normal" tourists neither snickered nor stared as they paid homage at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the new World War II memorial and laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

It was the wreath-laying that most moved the vets. to tears. They could not believe that the full name of their organisation was actually uttered by the tomb's honour guard.

"It is always a struggle to get people to give us the simple human dignity of using our name. I was expecting him to short us by saying T.A.V.A.," retired Army 1st Lt. Phyllis Randolph Frye, a transsexual, wrote on the website. "But as he stood in his dress blues, at that sacred site and proclaimed the words, "This wreath is being placed by the Transgender American Veterans Association, I began to cry."

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(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.)

## Queer Sex, Straight Talk

### We All Deserve Access to Appropriate Healthcare and H.I.V. Prevention

by Peter Jacobsen, Prevention Director [Vermont CARES](#) and Vermont Diversity Health Project Volunteer. © Copyright Mountain Pride Media

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**A**t age thirteen, I told my dad I was gay - to some tears and anxiety. At eighteen, I let him know my mohawk-wearin' boyfriend would be my prom date, provoking nary a reaction. At age twenty, I mentioned that for the long-term I might not be looking for a monogamous relationship, that maybe one partner wasn't quite enough, to which my dad replied he had pretty well picked up on that already.

*... and people more comfortable with their gender-identity are more likely to have long-term relationships and better sex.*

Two years later, realizing I wasn't really the butchiest boy on the block, I figured that the way I wore my gender seemed a little arbitrary, and that I was exploring how to express myself honestly and comfortably. This line of discussion - hardly

a shocker, really - caught him off guard. I'm still figuring myself out, and he's still talking circuitously around the day I came-out as not-strictly-guy.

To this day I grapple with why gender would be so domineering a concept as to cause anxiety in those we turn to for love and respect. How come our society's broader conversations about gender seem to progress so slowly?

As Vermont considers adding gender-identity to its non-discrimination law, I've been focusing on how Vermont provides, or doesn't provide, comprehensive H.I.V. prevention to transpeople. These opportunities and barriers, systemic or otherwise, to effecting real change might be summarized briefly as follows:

- » Many decision-makers lack the information, or even the language, needed to wholeheartedly incorporate transpeople into larger health promotion programs.
- » Transphobia has been demonstrated to dramatically increase H.I.V. risks, including transphobia from within and without the queer community. Transphobia, which for many serves to alienate, isolate, and stigmatize, may lead to an increase in other social pressures, including poverty, substance abuse, or unemployment.
- » Word of mouth about which medical providers and social service organisations provide trans-friendly service spreads slowly, and it's challenging (though not impossible) to provide helpful resources when we're not sure where there might be service gaps, or where providers might be unknowledgeable or even hostile.
- » Safer sex materials aren't always designed with transpeople's bodies in mind. Condom manufacturers, for instance, don't seem to design barriers for a variety of bodies having all sorts of fun sex: they're pretty well focused on penises.
- » For transpeople anxious about partners' perceptions of genitalia or bodies generally, urging safer sex can be challenging, especially if appropriate barriers aren't readily available.
- » Needle exchanges need to be sure they will readily accept syringes from people who may use them for hormones or silicone.
- » Lastly, rates of H.I.V. infection among transpeople nationwide are higher than average. According to the Surgeon General, rates may be between fourteen and 69 percent in certain groups, though it's worth noting that many of the studies referred to are surveys of sex workers who are at increased risk regardless of gender-identity. In some American cities, H.I.V. infection rates may be as high as one in four among transpeople, ninety times higher than the national infection rate of 0.3 percent.

I've attended a handful of conferences and workshops discussing positive health for transpeople, all of which have offered great solutions to the challenges listed above. From new solutions for barrier use and production to designing comprehensive research and needs assessments within trans communities, the messages are consistent. One recurring theme: communication is key. Our medical providers, legislators, bus drivers, social service organisations, and police officers will learn how to work with all of us given time,

diligence, and thoughtful education. If you're uncomfortable having those conversations, ask a friend or neighbour to advocate on your behalf.

Furthermore, for all the "bad news" published by the health authorities, you should know there's great news out there too. For instance, formal and informal studies show that sex drive increases as people begin taking hormones (oestrogens and testosterone), sexual fluidity lends itself more easily to satisfying sex, and people more comfortable with their gender-identity are more likely to have long-term relationships and better sex.

Whenever you begin analysing your gender, and whatever identity or expression feels most like you, please know that one of the many things we all deserve is access to appropriate healthcare and H.I.V. prevention. Know also that there are people who are ready and able to support you.

All you need to do is ask.

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