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My Dad's a Woman

Gareth's Experiences as a Child with a Trans Parent

by Gareth

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I was really scared about what people would say.

When I was six years old, I realised that my Dad wore women's clothing. Looking back, it's a wonder I hadn't twigged before. I remember that Dad would come home from work

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dressed as a man and suddenly mum would announce "Auntie Diane's coming for tea". As if by magic, Dad would go upstairs and a few minutes later, this nice lady called Auntie Diane would appear. Then, one day, I turned to Mum and said, "Dad's Auntie Diane isn't he?" I was too young to find it strange. Mum just scooped me up in her arms, gave me a big hug and said "yes he is."

She explained that it had to be a family secret and that I wasn't allowed to tell a soul. She said that some people wouldn't understand why Dad felt the need to dress as a woman. From that point on I stopped saying "Dad" and called him Diane. At first it was strange referring to him as Dad at school and Diane at home, but I soon got used to it. I guess I just accepted it because I didn't realise it was so unusual. When I was about ten, Dad explained to me that he'd always known he wanted to be a woman. He met Mum when he was twenty and she was seventeen and he told her soon after that he thought he was a transvestite - a man who likes to wear women's clothes. Amazingly, Mum took it really well. Because she was in love with Dad, she wasn't going to let what felt natural to him get in the way of their relationship. My parents were married soon after, with Dad in a suit and Mum in a wedding dress. But by the time I was born, Dad was dressing as Diane most evenings and at weekends. He and Mum felt that it was the only way I was going to find his cross-dressing natural and they decided not to hide anything from me. Dad also vowed to answer any questions I had as I grew older, honestly and truthfully.

Life didn't really change much after I found out about Dad. My Gran - Dad's Mum - didn't understand at first, but even she came around slowly. Dad even felt at ease dressing as a woman around some of his friends and occasionally he dressed up when we went out. Anyone who saw us assumed I was out with my Mum and Aunt. I knew that I had two very proud parents who loved me so it didn't matter what people thought.

Then, in 1994, Mum and Dad decided to move to Ireland. Unfortunately Dad was tied to a job in Wales, so Mum and I had to move without him for six months. Being apart put a real strain on us, especially Dad. I really missed him and we talked on the phone every night. I could tell from his voice that he wasn't happy and we'd often cry down the phone together. "It won't be long," he promised, but I was terrified he'd abandon us.

"I still love you," I'd say, hoping that it would make him come home to us quicker. When Dad finally joined us in our new home six months later, he'd changed. He was feeling very low and went to see a doctor, who told him he wasn't a transvestite but a transsexual. This meant that he had the body of a man but the mind of a woman. One day he sat me down and explained that he didn't feel comfortable pretending to be something he wasn't, so he'd decided to have a sex change. I was happy for him, but I was worried about other people's reactions too. A lot of people knew about Dad's cross-dressing, including my school friends. The doctor then referred Dad to a Psychiatrist to make sure he was making the right decision. We knew life would be hard, but we were devastated when the Health Authority refused to pay for the operation. Even so, Mum and Dad were determined to go ahead and forked out about £5,000 of their own money for the treatment.

Dad had to take hormone tablets every day, which meant he slowly lost his stubble and his breasts grew bigger. It felt quite strange seeing him turning into a woman. But when I saw how happy he was about his body changing, I knew he was doing the right thing.

Not long after this, Mum and Dad accepted an offer to go on the radio to talk about Dad's desire to be a woman. When I first heard, I was really scared about what people would say. Up until then, Dad had only told a few close friends that he was Diane and when my friends came round to the house he always dressed as a man. But after the radio show, everyone knew the truth.

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After that first interview, "Diane" received a lot of media attention and he and Mum did more television and radio interviews. I even went on television with them myself last year. Before we went on, Mum was worried about me getting so much attention but I decided that if she and Dad were strong enough then I could be, too. Some people in the audience thought Dad was weird, but to me, they were weird for not being clever enough to understand. Last September, Dad took his final step in his transformation into Diane. He had his penis removed in a sex change operation. Afterwards, he was in a lot of pain, but now that he's recovered, it's obvious that he's not as stressed as he was and he's happy to be who he's meant to be at last. As far as Mum and I are concerned, the operation means that Dad is now officially a woman. We always call her Diane and refer to her as "she". Sometimes, I look at old photos and wonder what life would have been like if Diane had tried to hide her true self. I don't think we'd still be a family if she hadn't been so open. She was always meant to be a woman and our family would have broken up years ago if she'd tried to live as a man. I've got two loving parents who are still together. That can't be bad, can it?

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