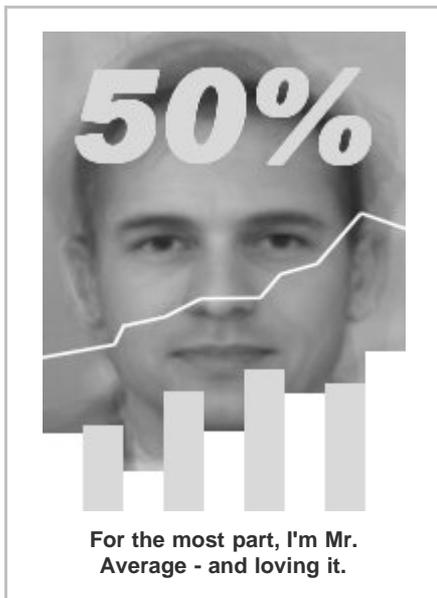


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## Call Me Average

### Living Life More as a Man, and Less as a Transsexual

by Jasper Laybutt (Founder of the now defunct support group 'Boys Will Be Boys')  
Article appeared in Polare magazine: August 1995 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Recently, I was asked to attend a workshop concerning trans issues, particularly F.T.M.. It had been a couple of years since I had been in such a public position, and although a little out of practice, all of the issues and history came flooding back. I had realised that I had finally reached a point where I was living a life more as a man, and less as a transsexual. I realised, how little thought I now gave to my transgenderism.

*It is necessary to share one's experiences if only to break the cycle of isolation and silence that can surround newcomers.*

When I began my gender process, I couldn't imagine not being 100 percent aware that I was a trans. I openly pushed for a trans sensibility and awareness, and became actively involved in support groups, both on a local and international level. My identity had shifted from a 'Wicked Woman' to an F.T.M. I was always living under a self-imposed label. The initial stages of physical and emotional gender change resulted in self-obsession and self-consciousness. Each day I awoke as an F.T.M.; the breast binding had to be put on, the fake bulge go in my pants, the male walk practiced and so on.

Now, after breast reduction and the cumulative effects of over four years of testosterone, I can leap out of bed relatively secure in my masculinity (excepting the fake bulge!). Parallel

to this, is a certain psychological and emotional freedom from no longer being constantly aware that I have a 'medical' condition. Having now moved through puberty and finding the man within, I can just get on with the ordinary act of living something many take for granted. It was such a surprise to discover how far I had evolved in relatively a few short years. When I spoke about being an F.T.M. at the aforementioned workshop, I felt like I was talking about someone else entirely!

Before taking steps toward a physical change, it was important for me to meet with other, experienced F.T.M.s. Once, I judged those trans who disappeared into the mainstream, harshly. How could they not remain accessible for fledgling trans to gain counsel? Now, with one foot in the 'queer' community, and another in the 'straight' world, I have ached for anonymity and the sense of normality it can bring.

The thought of being involved in a so-called trans community can make me groan with responsibility. Yet it is important to give to those who come after you. It is necessary to share one's experiences if only to break the cycle of isolation and silence that can surround newcomers. In reaching back to those behind us we can flush out the denial which has imprisoned both ourselves and our community. But it is hard, and I no longer judge those who 'disappear', as I now so long to do.

It would be nice to think that the mantle of being an elder could be passed on from one boy to another, so that those who have learned to integrate, can do so without a sense of obligation or regret. It's wonderful then, to see new F.T.M.s come forward, who will in time replace old farts like me.

At times I want to cry out "when can I stop being a trans and become a person?" No doubt, every trans has this thought. The answer is individual. For me, I ceased to be wholly trans focused around eighteen months ago. Though the physicality of my situation reminds me every day that I'm different, the reality of day-to-day living as a man can help smooth over those insecurities. I have never wanted to become so ordinary in my whole life! It also helps having friends and a lover who love me as the man they know. I no longer feel the need to champion trans issues or to go on public display. In order to gain the peace of mind I seek, I have had to shed my earlier skin.

For the most part, I'm Mr. Average and loving it.

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

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