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# What You See is Not What You Get

I have, since I can remember, been a boy

by Phil Kirk

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One day I was surfing the net and I found F.T.M. International. Something clicked.

**W**hen I was born, I was to be Anthony Lee. No one even planned on a girl so they didn't have a girl's name available for me. I was named after my Mother in a "now what do we do moment".

***After thirty-eight years I realised that gender-identity has nothing to do with sexual preference. I was a man. I was gay.***

Did I pick up on them, or did they pick up on me? I don't know but I have, since I can remember, been a boy. I just knew it. I knew just as strongly I was not a girl. Questions of "why" puzzled me. It would have been like asking a boy the same age, why he was a boy "Cause I am".

My Mother assisted that image unwittingly when she told me that "if I ate my veggies, I would grow hair on my chest". (that was my main goal at age two and three ... to have hair on my chest like my big brother, I totally ignored my big sister). I am still mad that I got a 40DD chest for all those veggies. I was what my family considered a tomboy. It would be a passing phase. Since we lived in the country until I was nine I was left alone with these behaviours. My Mother had started her familiar chant that would haunt me for thirty-seven years of "why can't you be more lady like? You should be more feminine". Deep down inside I think she knew and she did her best to change me into what I looked like physically ... a girl. Nothing could change me because nothing made me this way. I was just a boy.

At that stage I could only define girl's clothes as uncomfortable. Today I can tell you that I feel like a straight guy in drag when I wear them. I could trash all the frilly, lacy, ruffled dresses in five minutes (quicker if there was mud). This didn't have any lasting effect on me. What did was my sexual development. I was interested in men. My logic was, if I was interested in men I had to be a straight female because I had a female body. All women must feel like I did because when you looked in the mirror I was one. Most women that I knew got married and had children if they were interested in men. So I must be a woman and I knew what my role was to be. Mom kept saying the same things about trying to be more feminine.

I hadn't realised that gender-identity had nothing to do with sexuality. I was focused on my preferred sexual partners - men and my physical body - female. I was also totally miserable. I always felt as if I were hiding something that someone might find out. For thirty-eight years I tried to live as a woman.

Drag to me is when I dress as a woman because it is not who I am. For thirty-eight years, twenty-four hours a day I was in drag. That wore me out and made me miserable. One day I was surfing the net and I found F.T.M. International. Something clicked. As I read some things at the bottom dropped out of my stomach. It fit. I found information on transfags and suddenly it really fit. After thirty-eight years I realised that gender-identity has nothing to do with sexual preference. I was a man. I was gay.

Many friends surprised me by saying they knew. Very few reacted in a negative manner. My family is another story. They don't know yet and I don't know when I will tell them, but that is from other family issues not from me being a gay F.T.M. I personally am planning on taking them out to a nice Italian dinner. The pasta should soften the blow of the head hitting the table. As my S.O. says, "Those who matter knew and those who don't matter don't know".

One more time: Gender Identity.

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Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.