

(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.)

# My Drive to be a Woman

## Confined to Dreams, Daydreams and Closet Cross-Dressing

by Helen

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



What ever drives me to want to be a woman has been with me since my earliest memories.

**W**hat ever drives me to want to be a woman has been with me since my earliest memories. In my early primary school days this was expressed by wanting to play with girls and an attachment to feminine things. However, I quickly learnt that expressing these desires would only lead to social ostracism. Perhaps, fortunately for me, I could play the male gender role well, being good at sport and among the top students at my school. My wish to be a woman was confined to dreams and daydreams whose frequency is impossible to estimate in retrospect and to closet dressing in either my mother's or eldest sisters clothes whenever a suitable opportunity arose. Not surprisingly, I was sprung by my parents on a few occasions and my sister realised that it was my slightly larger feet that had stretched her first pair of heels. Little did she realise that I'd been eyeing them off in envy for about three months and had nearly succumbed on a number of occasions.

*Perhaps my greatest satisfaction is that my former wife and two daughters still wish to know me as do those close friends that I've broken the news to*

In my late teens my parents, who were starting to suspect that my flirtations with womanhood might be more than a passing phase, had organised for me to contact a psychiatrist. Unfortunately, I followed his advice and tried to "straighten" myself out and

make a man of myself. If some of the more realistic advice that is available today had been given, I could have spared my family and myself a lot of needless agony. This is not to say that I regret my life for the following thirty years. With the same knowledge I'd probably do the same thing again. I enjoy life and the pressures of gender dysphoria only require expression other than my inner thoughts from time to time. When this happened, I either cross-dressed or indulged in other pursuits of which I'm not proud but recognise have been employed by many others besides myself. These latter generally resulted in self-loathing which enabled me to sublimate my desires from three to six months.

If it was all in my head as I had been led to believe, I should not have needed this help, however, I recognised at a pragmatic level that I did. After eight years my wife came home unexpectedly to find me cross-dressed, and this situation was compounded by my closet efforts being very amateuristic. I looked at what I was - a man doing a very poor impersonation of a woman. After a lot of arguing and anger over a period of months, which did not go unnoticed by our two teenage girls, we agreed that if we could get our relationship back on a more reasonable level, then we would stick together until our youngest (thirteen years) had completed high school. At this time, if I still felt the same, then I should take steps to establish what I really wanted. It was at this time that I made contact with Professor Steinbeck. From that time I've been taking Androcur, initially on the assumption that my desires were sexual in nature (while I was sure they weren't, I couldn't convince anyone else). The Androcur certainly diminished my sexual drive but not noticeably my capacity for sex or my gender dysphoria.

By now you should guess that I'm about fifty (we won't discuss too closely how "about") and I was only fully transitioned on the 27th June this year. It was meant to have been on the 1st April, but I'm getting used to not being able to have everything that I want. However, since May 1995, my private life has been conducted as a woman while pants, shirt and tie were only donned for work. My reasons for this were threefold.

1. **Financial** - for myself, the cost of transition would be \$32,000 - \$41,000 (which included electrolysis, reassignment surgery, cosmetic surgery, H.R.T., Dental work and a cost of change of documentation). I also felt obliged to leave a spouse who had supported me for twenty-six years, and continues to support me, in a reasonable financial position.
2. **Presentation** - To me, living as a woman means being employed, preferably in my chosen profession. To achieve this I had to be able to present myself in an acceptable and professional manner, as a woman. A deep voice and a five-o'clock shadow would severely diminish the image I wished to present so electrolysis, speech therapy and a reasonable level of H.R.T. as a minimum were needed first. I also thought that some cosmetic surgery would be helpful but in retrospect this was not necessary as I secured a contract (computer programming) on my first day of full transition before the cosmetic surgery

was done. The many professionals, both medical, health and public servants, who helped me achieve my transition all responded in a supportive, constructive and often sympathetic way. If I fail in my endeavours, it will be because of my own shortcomings and not because of a lack of an appropriate level of support.

3. **Personal** - It is impossible to pursue the course I am on when you have been married for twenty-six years and have two grown children without having problems on the personal front. Perhaps my greatest satisfaction is that my former wife and two daughters still wish to know me as do those close friends that I've broken the news to. This is not to say that there hasn't been a lot of heartache, soul searching, guilt, anger, and loneliness along the way.

That things have gone smoothly is largely due to the fact I've managed to resist a strong temptation to charge into gender reassignment like a bull at a gate and have taken the time to assess where I wanted to go and to deal with problems as they have cropped up along the way. Over the past eighteen months I've met and discussed mutual problems with some fifteen other G.D.s. This peer support is invaluable, it's a shame that my wife didn't have access to the same level of support. In particular, I owe Kate Cummings, first for her book *Katherine's Diary* which for me is the most relevant that I've read, and then, for being willing to meet my wife and for providing me (and a long list of others) with rational advice and accommodation (the latter at her cost).

I have also been fortunate in forming a friendship (bordering on alliance) with another who is some twenty years younger and who approaches transition with a zest and sense of humour that has to be seen to be believed. Her presentation is flawless and what she sees in this middle aged "old boiler" is beyond me. However, I'm very grateful that she finds something. It's too easy, given the problems that we do face, to become self-absorbed and humourless, so having someone to laugh at yourself with is invaluable.

---

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

---

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.