

Your SOFFA VOICE

Volume 2, Issue 5

December 1, 1999



Happy Holidays!!!!



From The Editor

Greetings!!

This will be the last issue of 'Your SOFFA VOICE' for this year. I decided to its time to dress this newsletter up a bit. It's missing some heart. It's too dry. It needs a little spice. I've decided to add some fun....like some jokes....or recipes...or maybe a brainteaser to ponder over. I'm also announcing the addition of new columns for a little variety. If you have any ideas, or even comments about the new format, please be sure and let me hear them.

Write to: SOFFAUSA@aol.com

Or snail mail:

Jodi Burchell, Editor

PO Box 1916

Smyrna, TN. 37167

Thanks!

~~Jodi

NEWSFLASH!!

'Your SOFFA VOICE' gets a face-lift!!!

Well....not really a face lift...It's more like an overhaul.

Your SOFFA VOICE will be bigger than ever with even more information and writings from readers. Here are some of the changes you will see in upcoming issues:

1. **A new column called Queerness and Kink dedicated to the discussion of gay/bi and kink issues brought to you by Arthur.**
2. **A new column for book reviews from a SOFFA standpoint brought to you by Lori and Joell.**
3. **A new column called "From The Brothers" for SOFFA-related writings from our transmen.**

And much much more.....

~~In keeping with this new format, Your SOFFA VOICE is now accepting submissions from FTM/transmen. All writings that have a SOFFA-related theme will be considered. Writings could include personal stories, essays, articles, poetry, announcements, etc. Submissions should be relatively clean and less than 1000 words is preferred.

Please send any submissions or questions to:

SOFFAUSA@aol.com or snail mail:

Jodi Burchell, editor

P.O. Box 1916.

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A Pronoun-Free Weekend

~By Joell Smith

My parents came to visit my partner and I in March of '99. Jon was far enough into his physical transition to have noticeable sideburns and to be very unhappy about being mistaken for a female, but not far enough in to have had surgery yet, or to be ready to be out to everyone and my mother. We talked about coming out to them, and decided that, if there was an opportunity, and if it felt right, I would tell them. In addition, I claimed absolute discretion as to the definitions of 'opportunity' and 'feels right.' Jon was very clear though-regardless of whether we told them or not, he did not want me to call him 'she' or by his old name. This, obviously, put me in a complicated situation, but then, my relationship with my parents has always been complicated.

Fortunately, Jon's old name could easily be abbreviated to a non-gender-specific nickname, which he didn't especially like, but which was infinitely more acceptable than his full name. If I said 'Joe' and my family heard 'Jo,' well at least Jon knew I intended that e.

I decided to try to think of the whole weekend as one big word game.

My parents, along with my Grandmother and her dog, arrived Friday evening in their new motorhome, and parked it in front of our garage. This was the excuse for the trip-it was the motorhome's maiden voyage, and a chance to check everything out before they took off for a week-long vacation later in the Spring. I arrived home from a work a little after their arrival, and Jon greeted me with a what-are-you-doing-leaving-me-alone-with-these-people look as he came out of the motorhome with Mom and Dad right behind him.

After the hugs and hi honey's and how-was-the-trip portion of the evening, I said to Jon, "So you already got the grand tour?"

Mom said "We were just getting started, come on in girls, you have to see the whole thing!"

Jon looked stricken, but followed cooperatively enough as the motorhome's numerous charms were pointed out. Chattering about the motorhome was easy enough. I asked lots of questions about this furnishing and that, oohed and aahed over the miniature bathroom, admired all the things that could be turned into beds, and generally tried to make the whole thing last as long as possible. This visit was a timed exercise after all. Jon eventually remembered that his responsibility as head chef was the perfect excuse, and made his escape. His departure occasioned the first pronoun event.

"Does she do all the cooking?" my mom asked.

"No, just when we have company. I do most of the cooking when it's just us, but I'm no good at multiple-dish meals. Joe is better at timing things, making it so everything gets done all at once." Well, okay, that was easy enough. What did we learn from that? Talk mostly about me and 'we.' If you mention Jon, keep it short.

Eventually my family made it into the house, where they said appreciative things about how good dinner smelled and how nice everything looked. It was a little easier to avoid third-person pronouns when Jon was actually in the room.

To Mom: "Joe's a great cook!" To Jon: "I loved that Indian dinner you made when Pam and Stephanie were here." To Mom: "There were five different kinds of chutneys!" To Jon: "You're so good." To Mom: "The food was amazing!"

By talking at Jon, instead of about him, I can keep it in the second person. Sweet!

My conversation for the whole weekend was predicated on these two rules.

"Oh yeah, Joe loves that kind of thing. Weren't you just telling me about that the other day, sweetie?"

"We play that card game you taught us last summer almost every night. It's our favorite now. We even taught it to Joe's family at Christmas. I win most of the time when it's just you and me, don't I, but when there's more than just the two of us, I play terribly!"

"Joe's already got spring fever-you've already pulled out the seed catalogs and started planning the garden, haven't you? Why don't you show Dad what you have mapped out?"

I only slipped up once. A friend called to confirm plans to get together after my parents left. Talking with her was a familiar and comfortable, nothing at all like having my parents in my house. "Oh yeah, he can't wait, "I said in response to I don't even know what, and instantly felt ice-water running down my spine. I tried not to be obvious as I checked out Mom to see if she'd caught my slip. A tiny thing, and I don't even know if, from the context of the rest of my end of the conversation, she would have any idea of who I was talking about, but I was so worked up about the whole thing by that point that I thought my head would explode. Mom gave no indication that she'd noticed anything and I started breathing again and chanced a look at Jon. His eyes were huge. He'd obviously caught it.

My family spent the night and most of the day Saturday in their motorhome. Jon and I got up Saturday morning and pattered around, finishing up breakfast preparations and waiting for the family to come knocking on the door. They didn't knock and didn't knock, and when I looked out the

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-by D.M. Parker

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We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

-Lee Smith, Midsouth Coordinator, is a SOFFA and also the Online Outreach Coordinator:
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-Arlene Sandoval-Guerra is the Southeast Region Spanish-speaking Liason(ally): Latino/a Issues: (Se Habla Español)
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21 april 99

1:46 PM

It's begun. He's gone from me for now. We arrived around noon and we waited for them to turn over the operating room to make ready for his surgery. Jayne, the head nurse finally came and fetched us up around half-past or so after he'd fidgeted and smoked two cigarettes. He changed out of his clothes and into the surgical gown. She came back and she proceeded to take digital images of his bare chest from all angles. It was a bit of a shock for him to see it on the 21-inch monitor larger than life. Jayne went on to speak at length of how strange it was to not have a relationship with the patient prior to surgery and how extraordinary it was for the consult to take place the selfsame day of the surgery, but that it was okay. The one comment I recall specifically was that she said something like, "Well it was odd because she (gesturing towards me) wouldn't let us at you..." I blinked. Ummm, okay. She brought in a binder of before and after FtM chest surgeries that the good doctor had done and we saw some amazing work. I think I'd have felt better if she'd had images of not only the success, but the failures as well if there are any. There were also some final images of a C cup that she had done hesitantly through the nipple versus the incisions and was quite happy with the results. It was a bit graphic and Jayne had flipped over it quickly, but he and I being the morbid freaks that we are had a later and closer look at it of course. She exited and the anesthesiologist entered for the preliminary quiz. She left and Dr. Fischer came in followed by Jayne shortly thereafter. She was immediately entranced by his tattoos and the dilemma of not only saving the dragon's toes, but perhaps incorporating his nipple placement into the claws of the image itself. I chuckled to myself. I knew that if she was at all worth the paper her credentials were printed upon that she would react that way. I knew that if she was the artist that her profession demands, she would rise to the challenge. I felt better because I knew that we had something in common at that point which was a great love and joy for creation and bringing other people to that joy that we felt. Jayne kept up the patter as Dr. B began to mark the spots where she wanted to incise his skin and her concentration was laser sharp and steady as the three-way conversation flowed around her. They're assuming that he is at the beginning of the full transition...who can say at this point after the idea of invisibility and the passing of the lesbian birthright dropped onto his head last night?

Nonetheless, the preliminaries were finally over and it was time to excise me from the process. I gave him a quick kiss and told him that I loved him and sent him on his way. Once she knew that we were poor as the proverbial church mice and wouldn't really be able to afford anymore meds, she came out afterwards and brought me a plastic Ziploc bag of samples of extra

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kitchen window to the driveway, I could see Dad in the driver's seat of the motorhome, reading the newspaper. I went out and knocked on their door. They were all up, in their pajamas still, drinking coffee, watching TV, like it was Saturday morning at home. Mom offered me a plastic lunch pack of applesauce.

When I didn't come back from the motorhome, Jon put breakfast on a tray and brought it out to us. We ate homemade coffeecake and fresh fruit salad crowded around the little table while Mom made us watch a gospel music video. Since Jon is a musician, and I met some people from the gospel music industry while I was at college, Mom thinks it's a good 'in.' She's always putting on these videos, so I can see Suzanne's new baby or so Jon can hear this wonderful pianist. When the video was over we made our escape with the breakfast dishes. Mom and Grandma didn't look like they were even thinking about getting dressed yet. They still had a half pot of coffee and were starting the video over again.

Dad came out though, and wandered around the yard. I joined him in the yard, and asked him if he would take a look at my chainsaw since I couldn't get it started. He got it fired up and started cutting things up. He cut a slab off of a downed tree and noticed that it looked like a fat bear, sitting on it's behind. He told me to take it up to show Mom. She thought it looked like a bear too, and asked me to have Dad cut another one, so they could take them home and put them in the yard facing each other. Dad cut several more, and I brought them up and leaned them against the garage so Mom could pick out the ones that looked the most like bears. She was dressed by then, and standing in the yard watching Grandma's dog wander around the yard.

I went into the house, and Jon said, "I think they don't like our house. Why are they staying out there?" I tried to convince him that it was just because they were so excited about the new motorhome, and not that they didn't like him or our house. And eventually Mom and Dad did come in for a while. Grandma wasn't feeling too well I guess, and stayed in the motorhome all day. We ate lunch and sat around and chatted for a while, mostly about my sister and her kids, who live very far away and who are a safe topic as long as we just stick to how brilliant my nieces are and how fast they are growing, and avoid the fact that my sister and her husband are missionaries. Mom and Dad think that's a good thing, except that they don't like the grandkids being so far away. Jon and I think it's a terrible thing. So we don't talk about that whole part of it.

The whole time we talked I was evaluating the level of opportunity, and trying to work up the nerve to just say it. "Mom and Dad, Joe is having a sex change." I couldn't do it. I gave myself a rousing go-for-it kind of speech, then

strength Tylenol and a Darvon-like drug that he's to take one every six hours for pain. He can take two if he needs to, but he's to start with one. She also said that if he needed more, she was certain that she could scrape up others. Bless her.

The wait has begun. This is the hardest part for me. I had a moment when we were sitting and waiting before the consultation began. I sat there close to him, looking at his face and calling it beloved in my mind. The tears began to well in my eyes and I know that he saw them before I could stop them. They did not fall, but I know that he saw anyway. I think that he's come close himself a few times in the last couple of days. I know that the discussion of community of last night may have brought tears of shock and loss. My last journal entry this afternoon seemed to grab him a bit. I know that it choked me to write it. His eyes were extra twinkly as I successfully stopped them from spilling...this is hard. It's like letting him go so that he can be whole even as he is less. He has waited his entire life for this. There have been many before him in this office that have experienced the same fear, trepidation, hope, disbelief, nerves and unadulterated joy and relief that he has in the past 24 years up to today. They may be accustomed to seeing these transmen come in and out, but I only concern myself with this one.

I've just been given my prescription errand by Jayne. Boy, is it rattling to see her going in and out of the front office from the surgery itself without asking her what the hell is she doing running around instead of keeping her happy ass back there in surgery?? But then I realize that since I have no earthly idea of exactly what it is that's transpiring back there, how would I know if she truly needs to remain glued to the table throughout? So this is me, traipsing my happy ass out to the drugstore to fetch his tetracycline. Christ, this is killing me.

3:35 PM

He is doing what he came here to do. I am assuming that he is deeply and completely under, wandering about in the land of anesthesia while Dr. B does her thing. I am waiting. It's not the sort of thing that one can do successfully or unsuccessfully, you simply do it until it's over. And it's not over yet and won't be for quite some time, methinks. Since they didn't actually start at one, I will most likely be here until after five, if not until six or so. They said three to four hours and they began at roughly half-past one or so. I always over estimate on these things so I won't be ready for it to be over before it will be. I can always hope, can't I? Hoping is all that I'm doing currently, so there ya go. I jaunted over to the drug store, hoping that the tetracycline wouldn't break the bank. Jayne also gave me a script for Demerol as well, so he's all set for the pain drugs if he needs to be. I didn't have it filled, we'll simply wait to see if he ends up actually needing it or not. Thankfully, either because of the insurance from his BC/BS, or due to his presence in the drug store chain system, or because the pharmacist used a generic, it only ran a few bucks for the entire supply. I browsed for birthday cards for family and friends while I

I WANT TO WRITE ABOUT HIS CHEST

~~by Jessica Fraser

I want to write about his chest. As I sit here to write this, I close my eyes and remember the feel of it under my hands, and mouth, last night. His is tightly muscled from years of manual labor, and deeply tanned from a summer shirtless, in the sun. The hair that grows there is thicker in density all the time, as the hormones he has been taking for two and a half years now continue their effects. The hair is blonde, blonde and fine and so soft under my touch. His chest is flat and hard, with no scarring from the surgery. I met D this way; his chest belies the history that he has shared with me. I splay my hands out across his chest. I love the contrast of my feminine, small hands against this broad expanse of masculinity. I push, to feel the heat and strength, and he pushes back. I close my eyes and sigh, and lose myself in the experience.

D's chest is my favorite attribute of his. It represents for me his masculinity, his essential maleness. Although the rest of his body is male, in some areas male in a way that is uniquely transgendered, it is his chest that is ultimately male, that announces who he is to both myself and the world. Why? Well, for one thing it is visible. Whether he is wearing a shirt or is topless in the summer sun, its flat planes mark him, in this gendered world, as male. Not only is there no longer anything to hide under his shirt, fearing discovery, but he has the freedom to express himself however he feels most comfortable.

Whenever I am with D, I seek out his chest – to feel it under my hands, and to feel surrounded by it, by him, when he holds me. Passion, warmth, strength, comfort. I experience a myriad of feelings about this part of him, which overlap, compete, and collide together in ways that sometimes overwhelm me. Some of them are sexual – I find his hard, hairy chest extremely erotic. Some of them are also emotional. Emotions for myself; when I turn to him, I seek comfort, safety, a haven from the world. I also become emotional for him; I feel the length of his journey to this place. I feel grief and compassion for the hurt boy who knew at a young age that something was terribly, viscerally wrong. I also feel hope and pride for the man he is now and is becoming.

I picture him now, coming over to me at the campsite, one time this summer. He has just chopped some firewood for the evening, and his upper torso is glistening with a fine sheen of sweat. I admire his lean, muscled form, naked above a pair of tight denims. I don't even remember what I am doing while he is cutting the wood; I only recall pausing with stilled breath. D walks over to me with a little grin on his face. "What?" he giggles softly, seeing my stillness, noting the wide look on my face, feeling shy. I stare at him without speaking. Then, I move to touch him, again. ♥

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF TRANNY

~~by Teresa McPherson

Transgenderism is a serious topic, so it's not surprising we as partners take ourselves and our situations quite seriously. But I'm a person who must find the lighter side of any situation in order to survive. So I want to share some of the moments when my partner and I have found that a spoonful of humor helps the medicine go down.

Being the femme partner of an FTM in the throes of transition is quite an adventure. In some ways, it's a lot like being paired with a biological male except this time I'm not chaffing at the bonds of holy matrimony. Instead, I'm slowly coming to understand this funny, warm, very special guy who is outwardly becoming the man he's always been inside.

Danny is my partner, lover, fiancé, best friend, mentor, and much, much more. He fulfills my need to nurture, mother, fuss over, etc. He also meets my needs when I want to be taken care of, when I need to be held and loved. But perhaps most importantly, he understands my need to smile and laugh, because this wonderful trannyman is forever giving me something to laugh about as we struggle through this complex process known as transition.

D and I have been together for about a year and a half. During that time, I've learned new definitions for words such as pack, bind and pass. But our biggest hurdle, as a new couple was more about tidiness than transgenderism. You see, I'm pretty tidy and well, Danny's not. So we compromise--I ask him to do something and we negotiate the when part.

I'll give you an example. One weekend I was cleaning house when Danny had the misfortune to be home. I asked him to pick up his music stuff in the living room. In addition to his day job, D's a musician in a local rock and blues band. Most living rooms include a sofa, lamp, chair or two, a little art on the walls, etc. Ours has all that, but also features a Fender guitar and amp with cords all over the place, foot pedals to create that Groovy Funky Sound a folk music lover like myself just adores, and a coffee table littered with tuner, sheet music, and guitar picks for the cats to bat around so later D can say, "Honey, have you seen my picks?"

So on this day I asked Danny to tidy up his

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waited, but my mind was truly not on it whatsoever.

So I'm back here, doing that waiting thing again as I have always done. I couldn't even begin to think of being anywhere else. He has visions of being able to eat more than simply the soup we bought last night. He has visions of a double Whopper with cheese and extra mayo, a large order of fries and a massive Mt. Dew. I think not. But then again, because of the mettle of his constitution, who can tell for sure? All I wish for is for him not to be sick and heaving his guts out. Not only is that not any fun for anyone involved, but I can't do anything for him when he's like that. ::sigh: All I can do is stand by helplessly and hope that it will stop soon. So, this is me, praying for his settled stomach.

I sit her and await instruction. Jayne mentioned to us that she wasn't going to tell him diddly-squat about the post-care because a) he wouldn't remember a damned thing that she told him and b) I was going to be taking care of it anyway. I'm not really nervous about it at all to be quite honest about it. He is the person that I love most in this world, so why would taking care of him in any way that he needs me to make me at all squeamish?

It keeps dawning on me in small waves that he is going to come out of that surgery room a very, very different person. This is not like a haircut where we'll just pop in the car afterwards and he'll take a shower and be done with it. This is madness. He will not be himself for quite awhile, if ever again. Well, if anything he'll be more himself than he ever was. That's why he's here, right? Right? ::sigh:: Five o'clock. If I can just hold out until five o'clock. Damn. His soul will not slip.

I'm really hoping that she gets it right the first time and that he won't have to return for revisions if there are those unsightly little bulges. One of the before and after shots that looked so very good was similar to him in the degree of droop (I can't recollect what the medical term for it was), but the one that was closest to him in size suffered from the need for revisions.

::sigh:: I want him to look good. And now we have to concern ourselves about finding someone to remove the drains because apparently according to Jayne, we won't be here long enough to have Dr. B do it, dammit. Maybe we can stay with a friend an extra night perhaps?

4:47 PM

Oh...my...god. Dr. B wanted a picture of what she'd done so far, so Jayne went in and took another digital image and brought it up on the monitor. Sweet Jesus, the woman does amazing work it looked perfect already and she hadn't even done the nipple grafts yet. All I could do was stare at the image and go, "Oh my god...that's amazing." Because it was. Hell it is. His chest is totally flat, no bulges or paunches to be seen although who can tell what effect gravity will have upon it. There are the necessary incision points, which will be his scars in an even straight line at the bottom of each pectoral muscle and the drains exit at the end of those points at his sides. Wow, just wow. He will be livid that I was able to see it before he was. It was strange to see him lying

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The following special contacts are also SOFFAs:

- Legal Issues: Phyllis Randolph Frye, Esq: PRFrye@aol.com (lawyer and transwoman)
- Medical Issues: Dr Kathryn Thomas, Phd, RN: 410-625-1095; Email: katesx@juno.com (gender therapist)
- Family Issues: Mary Boenke; Email: MaryBoenke@aol.com (parent of tg)
- Official Jewish Mother: Leslie Ann Alpert: Email: fluffy@access.digex.net (ally)

If you think you'd like to be an AmBoyz local, regional, or SOFFA contact, see the American Boyz website, <http://www.amboyz.org> for a "job description" and then contact national SOFFA coordinator, Loree Cook-Daniels, at:

LoreeCD@aol.com
or American Boyz's Coordinator-in-Chief,
Gary Bowen, at: transman@netgsi.com.

Help Wanted!!

'Your SOFFA VOICE' is looking to add a new parents/family issues column in the very near future. We will need someone who is familiar with issues concerning the parenting/family of FTM/transmen to write and handle this new column. No experience is needed. This is a volunteer position, but you will receive a copy of the newsletter each time it is published.

If you are interested, please send email to: SOFFAUSA@aol.com.

Reminder

This newsletter is available on a one-time basis as a sample copy via postal mail. To receive a print version of the latest issue, send SASE to Jodi Burchell, Editor at: PO Box 1916, Smyrna, TN 37167. Or Email: SOFFAUSA@aol.com or visit Websight: www.angelfire.com/tn/yoursoffavoiced/index.html

All donations are greatly appreciated to help provide materials and postage.

To receive future issues, complete the subscription form on the last page.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

~~New Webzine

Stonefemme.Com is pleased to announce the release of the Premier Issue of FEMME: the Magazine a magazine for Femmes, about Femmes, BY Femmes <http://www.stonefemme.com/femme>

The magazine highlights the words and experiences of Femmes. Our first issue focuses on the issues of Femmes "Coming Out of the Queer Closet". In addition to our cover story and features we also have columns on Health, Wealth, Sex and much, much more!

Please take a moment to check out this new and exciting magazine!

FEMME: the Magazine is a quarterly e-zine distributed on the World Wide Web.

~~Conference

EQUAL! is the GLBT organization of Lucent Technologies employees. Their yearly conference tends to have about 300 people.

This year's conference is near Phoenix, AZ. They need bi speakers. I'm trying to dig up suggestions for speakers and

workshop trainers. Local people are preferred ("local" means AZ and "commuter flight or closer") to save costs, but don't hold back from contacting me if you aren't local.

They are co-locating with the conference of differently-abled Lucent employees conference, and will be sharing some keynote and other sessions. So, if the candidate trainer can talk on ability_and_bi issues, that's excellent.

If you haven't done a corporate conference before, I should warn you that they are a bit different that some activist conferences I've been too. People wear business suits. Attendees of workshops are often straight executives/managers that are there for training. They expect workshops to be run by experienced trainers, rather than facilitators of "group discussions" or "panels". (I'm not explaining myself very well here, but I think the flavor of what I'm saying is getting through)

(They are also looking for transgender trainers. Lucent is the first Fortune 500 to include tg in their anti-discrimination policy.)

If you would be interested in being contacted by the conference committee, please send me email.
--Tom Limoncelli
tal@plts.org or tal@bell-labs.com

The American Boyz present True Spirit Conference 2000

"Creating a Vision for the Next Century"

Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, Alexandria, Virginia, February 18-20, 2000
5000 Seminary Road
Alexandria, Virginia 22311
Tel: 1 (800) HILTONS (for reservations only) (703) 845-1010

CONTACT: The American Boyz phone: (410) 620-2161 or e-mail address: TrueSpirit@office.iximd.com

The American Boyz is pleased to announce the Fourth Annual True Spirit Conference to be held at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, Alexandria, Virginia, on February 18-20, 2000. This three-day conference focuses on the social, physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational health of all gender variant people on the FTM spectrum and their significant others, friends, families, and allies.

Workshops and panel presentations to be held during this fourth annual event address such topics as: health and wellness issues, relationships, special needs populations (including youth, elders, people of color, and individuals who have physical challenges), legal, political, and employment issues, and spirituality.

Other events scheduled for True Spirit 2000 are: authors readings and chat sessions, exhibit hall with information and merchandise, art show, and the American Boyz Award Ceremony.

Conference fees range from \$40-\$80. Those registering before January 1, 2000 will enjoy a discounted registration fee of \$60. Children ages 14 years and younger accompanied by an adult will be admitted free. Some work scholarship and housing assistance is available on a first come, first serve basis. There are two options for registration: download and complete the registration form from the internet at <http://www.amboyz.org/TSC/TSC2000reg.html> Or, request a conference flyer from The American Boyz/True Spirit 2000, 212A South Bridge Street, # 131, Elkton, MD, 21921.

American Boyz

American Boyz is a support and social group for people who were born female but who feel that is not a complete or accurate assessment of who they are and our significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs). Our membership includes Butches, FTMs, Transmen, FTV's, Gender Outlaws, Transexals, Drag Kings, Boychicks, She-Bears, Shapeshifters, Tomboys, Passing Women, Amazons, Intersexuals, Female Guys, Boss Girls, Transgenderists, Sirs, and our SOFFAs. We provide education, support, social events, newsletters, online forums, local meetings, political action, and a national conference.

To learn more about The American Boyz, send email to amboyz@iximd.com or

check out the websight at <http://office.iximd.com/mailman>

Or send SASE to: The American Boyz, 212A S. Bridge St., Suite 131, Elkton, MD, 21922 FAX: 410-620-2024

FROM THE BROTHERS

The Gift

~~By Jesse Lee

As you are all aware, Christmas time is fast approaching. The stockings are hung, the tree is dressed, & the malls are full of people with cheer.

I, on the other hand, not being rich can only sit and dream of greater wealth, if only I could...

I would buy my love a garden, full of songbirds and golden honey.

I would buy my love a mansion atop a flowered hill, a guard at every corner, four Angels from the heavens. I would fill the pool with silver & gold, mere trinkets of my love.

I would paint the skies upon the rooms, the sun and the moon would light the halls, and the stars would be her candles.

I would place a fluffy cloud beneath her, as she sipped the sweetest of wines from a golden goblet.

Upon the wind she would travel to magical places, before seen only in dreams, her baths would be drawn from the milk of roses, her hair adorned with the dust of diamonds.

I would give her music, played on harps made of pearl, and dress her in threads of the finest silk.

For my sweet Love there is no gift too grand, if only I could...I would give her the world.

I Love You Baby,

~Jesse~

Christmas 1999

~~editor's note: Jesse Lee is my partner. I thought his words were wonderful, so I shared them with you as the first submission to this column. 'From the Brothers' is a new ongoing column specifically for SOFFA-related writings sent in by FTMs/Transmen. Please send any submissions for consideration to SOFFA USA@aol.com. Thanks!! ~Jodi

From page 4

gave myself a stern talking to, then roughed myself up a little-it didn't help. I felt cowardly and miserable, but couldn't say the words. I was pretty certain that Mom at least had noticed Jon's sideburns. She notices everything. I almost wished she would say something, because then I'd have to explain and that would put an end to the agony of trying to get up the nerve to do it. But she didn't say anything and neither did I.

Eventually, Mom decided to go back out to the motorhome for a nap. Dad and Jon and I looked at garden supply catalogs. I don't spend even half the time in the gardens that Jon does, but that afternoon I was all "our garden this" or "we're going to plant that" or "that's your favorite, isn't it Joe?" Then Jon decided he needed to get his exercise and took off on his usual four mile circuit. Dad and I looked at catalogs for another hour and talked about decks and lawn furniture.

I went back to work on myself. 'It oughta be easy, it's just

Dad. Mom might yell and be confrontational, but Dad never yells.'

'Dad cries.'

'Never mind.'

Shortly after Jon got back, Mom and Grandma came out of the motorhome and started saying their good-byes. They left pretty early Saturday afternoon, apparently oblivious to my verbal feats of daring-do, but very pleased with their new home on wheels. I was exhausted.

We went out with friends later that evening, and I almost shouted every time I got to use a third-person pronoun. Of course, I was still completely self-conscious about it, and didn't speak an unthinking pronoun for several weeks. I still sometimes stop to double-check a pronoun before it comes out of my mouth, even when I am referring to someone who has never to my knowledge ever questioned their apparent gender. Oh well, maybe that's a good thing. ♥

True Spirit will, for the fourth year, provide a major opportunity for people of transgender experience, their friends, families, allies, and service providers to gather together for education, networking, and support.

Representatives of the press are invited to True Spirit 2000 but MUST pre-register as a press person, and sign and comply with all True Spirit press and camera regulations. All registered press will receive a True Spirit 2000 press packet upon their arrival at the conference.

Opportunities for corporate and organizational sponsorship are still available.

~New Support Group

Nashville TMen is a new support forming in the Nashville, Tennessee area for Transmen and their SOs. The group is in its infancy, so meeting logistics have yet to be decided. Email: Nashville_TMen@webtv.net for more information.

If you have any announcements that you would like posted, please email

SOFFAUSA@aol.com

or snail mail:

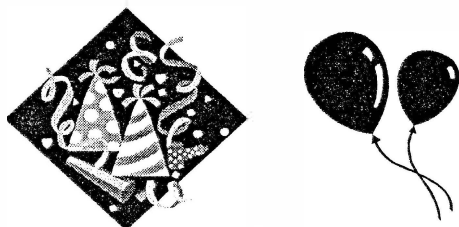
Jodi Burchell, editor

PO Box 1916

Smyrna, TN 37167



*Happy Holidays
and
Happy New Year!!!!*



things, otherwise known in my house as Living Room Decor. He said OK and began tidying up. A few minutes later I heard the guitar. Being played. Not being put away. Being played. Somehow in the midst of his cleaning, he was overcome with the urge to crank out a tune and succumbed to the impulse. Which doesn't exactly thrill one's partner who is elbow deep in a toilet with Playtex gloves and Clorox.

What this taught me is that when he says he will do something, like most males, what he means is that he will do it before he dies. I then proceed to negotiate exactly when he might perform the requested task, since Prior To Death is somewhat vague.

Of course, household challenges like these aren't unique to transcouples. But others are. Recently, an odd little gadget, complete with denim carrying pouch, arrived in our mailbox. Danny explained this was a stand-to-pee device and promptly shut himself up in the bathroom. I've never seen a human consume as much water as he did that weekend--apparently he wanted to keep his renal system active so he could practice.

A few nights later he had to use the restroom while we were at a mall. My partner is currently in that impossible place known as Gender Purgatory. He's scheduled for top surgery in April, but for now he passes about 50 percent of the time. Which means he's going to get weird looks in ANY public restroom, and women are often more tolerant of genderbending than men.

So on this day he was in the women's bathroom. The thing he forgot was that women using a public restroom don't expect to see another "woman" standing to urinate (darn those gaping little one-inch slits around the stall doors). Also, there's the little problem of feet pointing the wrong way. Meanwhile, I'm waiting outside when I see a woman leave with a very puzzled expression on her face. I'm not sure what she saw or heard, but I'm sure it was on her mind at 3 a.m.

When we became partners, Danny promised me our life would never be dull or uneventful. And he's keeping that promise. Whatever challenges our unusual partnership brings in the future, it will never be unremarkable. For we've learned to capitalize on the lighthearted moments in this exciting journey called transition. And a smile or a chuckle can go along way in helping to ease the bumps, bruises and scrapes change brings to lives which are anything but ordinary. ♥

there on the table like that. It's like I knew it was him, the tattoos make it obvious, but to see him like that...without them and with the flesh showing through the small holes where his nipples will be grafted on...it was completely surreal. It's kind of funny; I've seen more of his insides than he ever will, probably. ::chuckle:: I'm elated. Now all he has to do is make it through. I wonder if he's dreaming under the anesthesia? Is he able to think at all as he goes through this amazing thing? I desperately wanted to see his sleeping face that was covered by the blue and bloody surgical sheets. I guess that I wanted some sort of assurance that it truly was him under that sheet and that he was okay. I have held my tongue every time Jayne comes out from asking her how things are going in there, and it was awfully kind of her to let me see the current progress. Unfortunately, it looks as if Dr. B will not be able to see the photo because the printer's on the fritz now.

He will be elated. I know that he will. What he's always longed for has happened and is nearly complete. The hated projectiles are gone; I saw Jayne place the container of his flesh in the bio waste receptacle in front of the clinic on the sidewalk. What a dubious end for unwanted fat, don't you think? In a little white box of metal on a cold and lonely sidewalk. ::listening to Jayne fighting with the printer:: I wonder if we'll get to take home those photos? Probably not, as I'm certain that they are the property of

Dr. B's office now. But it would be way cool if we could have them for a scrapbook or something. The before and after shots will definitely make it onto her web page as this seems to be one of the most extreme surgeries that she's done and had evidence of, plus her work around the tattoos will be a source of added pride for her. That's a pretty damn cool thing, too. His right nipple now sits in the center of the dragon's forelegs betwixt the claws; it's way cool and he'll be most pleased, I'm sure. It turns out that the tribal tattoo was not placed at the true center of his chest, so that made the placement of his left nipple a little off center of his pec, but it gives the illusion of symmetry. If she would have tried to keep the symmetry true, it actually would have looked a bit skewed, so I'm certain that he'll be pleased with that, knowing his love for illusion of perfect symmetry to the eye.

Amazing. He should be out fairly soon, I guess. I don't know how long it takes for one to graft nipples, but I guess that it couldn't take as long as it did to remove the actual flesh, could it? I want to see him and I want to see him now. This is where my part comes in, I guess. This is where I have to be strong and be his rock to lean against as he comes out from...oh god. He's out. As soon as he wakes up, they'll take me to him. I love him. So very much. ♥



NASHVILLE TMEN NEWSLETTER

Nashville TMen, a newly formed support group for FTMs and SOs in the Nashville, Tennessee area, announces the upcoming publication of its new newsletter.

The Nashville TMen Newsletter will be published bi-monthly with the first issue available in January. Included will be national and regional announcements, resources, articles, and other items of interest to the FTM community. Submissions are welcome.

For more information or a sample copy, email Nashville_TMen@webtv.net.