

MY SON

1 My son is named Randy, and I love him
2 very much. We were separated back in 1976,
3 before his sixth birthday. He's now 22 years
4 old, and up until last December in 1991, he and
5 I had only seen each other one time during that
6 span of 16 years. Last month in July of 1992,
7 he and I celebrated his birthday together for
8 the first time in all those years. We blew out
9 the candles and the whole nine yards. It was
10 worth the wait.

11 Our families are very important to all
12 of us in the gender community. Yes, George
13 Bush! Yes, Pat Bucannon! Yes, Pat Robertson!
14 And yes, the boy vice president, the
15 transgender community does have families, and
16 we care about our families. There is so much
17 pain that we in the gender community experience
18 with relation to our families merely to be true
19 as to who we are.

20 Recently, a friend of mine named Jim
21 had a heart bypass. Doctors took out a large
22 vein from his leg, ripped open his chest to put
23 it in there. He's recovered, and as we were
24 chatting about it, I was doing some self-talk.
25 As you know self-talk is whenever you're
26 chatting with someone or listening to them, and
27 at the same time your talking in your own mind,
28 preparing a response, or thinking about
29 something even though your listening. As he
30 was talking, my self-talk went something like
31 this. "They tell us that if God wanted us to be
32 women, those of us who are male to female, God
33 would have done so. And yet God probably didn't
34 want this man to die because there was an
35 interference of a very special surgery.
36 Speaking of surgery, what makes the gender
37 community surgery sinful, and yet his surgery
38 was not sinful?" While he was telling me the
39 story, I kept thinking about that all the
40 while. He was surrounded by his very loving
41 spouse and his children, and since we are
42 friends and we were celebrating his life, I
43 kept my thoughts to myself.

44 Being alive and being whole, that is
45 all that we, as transgendered people seek. Yet

1 the love of our families is always placed in
2 jeopardy. Divorce, estrangement, ostracism,
3 embarrassment, you name it. It's just not
4 consistant. In addition, it's just not fair,
5 but it happens to all of us to some degree. It
6 happened to me, and it took almost 16 years to
7 work it out with my son. Even today, it's still
8 not completely worked out with my parents or
9 with my siblings.

6 What I'm going to offer to you in the
7 next few minutes is not THE solution to
8 families, it just happened to be my solution in
9 1976. My solution in 1976 would definitely be
10 different than my solution in 1992. I don't
11 want this to be construed as the solution in
12 1992, but it was what I did then, and I know
13 we're discussing different solutions today.

10 My first spouse divorced me in 1972.
11 My son was two years old. She divorced me
12 because of my cross dressing. During the next
13 several years I visited Randy, and I spent days
14 with him. Because my self-esteem was very low
15 at that time and because this was the 1970's
16 rather than today, 1992, I did, at that time,
17 not choose to fight for possessory
18 conservatorship. I do not want my remarks
19 today to be construed that you should not fight
20 to get possessory conservatorship. The judge,
21 who's going to be talking in a little bit, and
22 I talked about that extensively, and I'll let
23 him carry that ball. But while I was visiting
24 Randy, I still had hair on my face: I was
growing a beard. I was trying very hard to
make it as a man.

19 In 1975 I began to cross dress in
20 public. My hair on my head got longer,
21 obviously, I was clean shaven, my nails got
22 longer, my eyebrows got thinner. Randy, my
23 five year old, became very puzzled by my
24 appearance, and his mother became very nervous
whenever I visited. So, at that time in 1976,
I made a decision. I would give my son and his
mother all the space they needed to come to
terms at their own speed with who I was.

1 I made that decision after much
2 thought and prayer because I knew that even
3 though I had spent most of my life surrounded
4 by my mother and my father, and my sister and
5 my brother, we were growing apart over the
6 issue of my cross dressing and my transgender
7 nature. Even though we had much physical
8 nearness for all those years, it came to me
9 that physical nearness was not the guarantee.
10 Physical nearness was not the guarantee. It had
11 to be more than that. I figured if I
12 sacrificed some time now, back in 1976, Randy
13 and I might be able to put it together in the
14 future, and spend the rest of our lives as good
15 friends.

9 What bothered me, though, was how did
10 I insure that he would not grow up hating me,
11 feeling that I had abandoned him? So, I wrote
12 to him, and I wrote, and I wrote to him every
13 single month for 16 years. I wrote to him. I
14 just wrote what was happening in my life: What
15 was going on.

13 Much happened during that time. His
14 mother and I almost squared-off twice in the
15 legal arena. She remarried. At the age of 11,
16 my son decided for himself that he wanted to
17 meet this Phyllis person once to see who she
18 was and what she was all about. Also, his
19 mother asked me, and I complied with an
20 inflationary raise in child support.

17 When he turned 18, I pledged to him to
18 continue that same child support payment, even
19 though it was no longer a legal obligation, for
20 four more years until he turned 22. What I
21 wanted to do was give him a stake towards his
22 college, or any other future, and to help him
23 out, 'cause let's face it, when he was getting
24 his braces and other things, I just didn't have
25 the money to go above what I was paying at the
26 time.

23 I cried a lot during that time. Each
24 of us sitting here who have children and who
25 are facing this situation, or face this
26 situation, we cry a lot. Every month when I

1 wrote Randy, my son, the wound would reopen. I
was very honest with him about who I was.

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3 Before he met Phyllis, I would sign
the letters PH blank L. I would not sign it
4 PHIL, because that was not who I was, but I
wasn't going to force the Y of Phyllis on him.
After he met me, I signed them Phyllis.
5 Whenever he would send me a letter, which was a
couple times a year, or his school picture, or
6 whatever it was, it was addressed to Phyllis.
As you can imagine Father's Day was hell for me
7 every year because my father would not be close
to me, and my son had not yet figured out how
8 to.

9 Then came three days before Christmas
in 1991. I was sitting in my office and he
10 called. He was visiting his grandmother in San
Antonio. And he said, "Phyllis?" And I said,
11 "Yes." And he said, "This is Randy." Well, I
didn't know what his voice sounded like, and I
12 said, "Randy who?" And he said, "Randy Frye,
your son." And I said, "Oh my God." And I
13 started crying, and I came completely undone,
and I cried a lot.

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15 When we decided that I was going to go
the San Antonio the next day, I cried several
times that evening. I had to go to Court that
16 morning, and as I was driving to Court I broke
into tears. I was on an elevator going up to
17 the Court, and I'd see some of my friends, and
I'd say, "Guess where I'm going today?" Where
18 are you going? And I couldn't even get it out
I'd start crying. I was just so screwed up --
19 you know -- and it was really something. When
I got finished at the courthouse, I was going
20 to the airport -- driving to the airport -- I
was crying. When I got in the airplane I
21 started crying. A lot of tension was going
on.

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23 Anyway, that day I saw him and we
hugged, and of course, I cried, and he hugged
me back. His mother and his grandmother were
24 very gracious and loving, and we all hugged and
all that healing was taken care of. He's not

1 shy about me at all. He's very warm and
2 healing and once during that day when we were
3 chatting he said, "Phyllis, you did a very good
4 job with me. You stayed away from me long
5 enough for me to come to terms with who you
6 were, but you wrote me every single day for 16
7 years. I never ever doubted your love. I
8 always knew that you were close by, and I
9 always knew you'd come at a moment's notice. I
10 always knew that you wanted me."

11 As we parted that day in December, he
12 indicated that we would get together again, and
13 we have done so often. He's come to our home in
14 Houston. He is now in graduate school, a
15 professional school, studying to be an
16 occupational therapist. And Trish, my spouse of
17 19 years, we've seen him several times.

18 Last week while we were talking on the
19 phone, Randy and I visit on a weekly basis now,
20 we got into a philisophical discussion. I
21 again told him that his mother and his
22 grandmother and his grandfather had done a very
23 good job putting him together. I stated that I
24 was so proud of him and that I was sorry that I
25 couldn't be there, and again he stated,
26 "Phyllis, don't worry about it. I knew you
27 were there. I knew you loved me. I knew that
28 you would come at any time." And he said,
29 "Besides, I know you were catching a lot of
30 hell, and I know you were going through a lot
31 of problems, and I know people were assaulting
32 you, either mentally or emotionally, time and
33 time again." And he says, "I think considering
34 what you went through, you came out pretty good
35 yourself." That's my son, and as we parted,
36 once again, we stated our love for each other.

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