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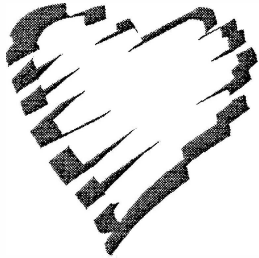
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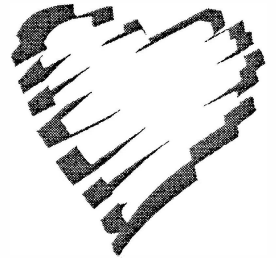
Your SOFFA VOICE

Volume 3, Issue 1

February 1, 2000



Happy Valentine's Day!!!!



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MEN LOVING FTM MEN

~~by Arthur Freeheart

Welcome to the column! I'd like this to be a space where a variety of gay/bi/queer FTMs and their SOs can compare their experiences and perspectives. Our perceptions of who we desire and how we desire them are often overshadowed by sexual orientation labels. Many FTMs who are attracted to women assume themselves to be lesbian before accepting their own maleness. Others repress their attraction to women for fear that they'll be thought to be lesbian. Many FTMs who are attracted to men assume themselves to be heterosexual before accepting their own maleness. Others repress their attraction to men for fear that they'll be thought to be heterosexual. Most bi/gay FTMs are very familiar with the attitude, "If you're sexually attracted to men why not remain a woman?" FTMs...Focusing on expressing your maleness in intimate situations brings it out.

Exploring what bi-ness, gayness, and/or queerness is for you is an adventure in self-discovery. SOs and friends of gay, bi, or queer FTMs...Acknowledging an FTM's maleness reassures him that he can express it with you. Appreciating the ways he expresses his bi-ness, queerness, and/or gayness shows genuine acceptance.

I look forward to columns and dialogs to come!

Will someone write about bi/gay/queer stuff at TSC for next issue?♥

FEATURE STORY

The Vial

~~by Teresa McPherson

I hold the small vial up to the light. The solution is slightly amber, translucent, innocuous looking. THIS is the medication that will change our lives? Spur the facial hair that will deny us access to some events in the lesbian community? Further deepen my lover's voice until the "Sirs" become less tentative? Hurl us into a heterosexual existence? Render me an invisible lesbian? Maybe, I decide, we're assigning a little too much power to this 10 ml vial of testosterone.

When my partner Danny first mentioned hormone therapy last year, I cringed. Probably even made a small joke. No, thanks, none for me. At the time, he said he wanted to "get rid of the boobs" and then see how he felt before making a decision about the big T. But over the months, as the other steps of his relatively smooth transition began to fall into place, he kept coming back to the topic. And I kept steering us away. Yes, we'll talk about it one day when we're ready. Naturally I meant when I'M ready.

Several months ago we went to lunch with two new friends, a delightful couple whose 36-year marriage had survived what must surely be the ultimate test of any relationship. These lovely women, one a biological female and the other an elegant self-made woman, gave us wonderful advice and even a chuckle or two. When Danny explained he was thinking about testosterone therapy, one of the women looked at this handsome individual who already exuded masculinity, and said quite simply, "How much do you NEED?!"

A couple months later, Danny finally met someone like himself, a quiet man who several years before had taken the same journey he was on now. We live in an isolated state without an active transgendered community, although we're finally getting to know a few others. So after a two-hour lunch, he arrived home with a twinkle in his eye and a huge smile. I asked how it went and his first words were, "I gotta have the voice." I knew then it was just a matter of time.

Recently Danny told me about coming out as a transsexual to his family doctor. To her credit, she

believed him and seemed supportive of his efforts to transition. But when D mentioned the possibility of hormones, she said they could talk about that another time. My partner is 40 years old. What's a good time? At age 50? Age 60? And shouldn't a person decide for himself when it's time? I began to see that I had stonewalled this topic just as she was doing.

So after the lunch with his new friend, Danny came home with the name of one of the few local physicians willing to manage hormone therapy for transsexuals. He made an appointment, took copies of his coveted letters from two gender counselors and documentation that he's scheduled for chest surgery in April, and had the necessary lab work done.

Then the day arrived. After a second consultation to review lab results, the doctor gave Danny a small slip of paper on which he wrote the words "testosterone cypionate" and "21-gauge needle w/syringe." Then a kind nurse named Colleen gave him his first injection there in the office while I watched. I'm not exactly comfortable with needles, especially when they're entering my own body or the body of someone I love. But I watched, I didn't blink or turn away, I wanted to fully commit this moment and this image to memory.

Afterward, we went home and held each other. It had been an emotional experience and we each needed to process the events of this day, both individually and as a couple. Few of our friends would understand the significance of this step and all the work that Danny did to receive this first injection. The agony and joy of coming out to himself and to others. Going to counselors who lay bare the soul, poke and prod and look around for any anomalies, when nothing is more anomalous than a body and brain that do not match. Finding a physician willing to assist transsexuals with treatment options such as hormones. Walking up to a pharmacy window with breasts (albeit bound) and a prescription for testosterone. And all the while, convincing his partner that testosterone therapy will not turn this mild, sweet Dr. Jekyll into a raging, maniacal Mr. Hyde.

The next morning was Saturday. I let Danny sleep in while I puttered about the house. I opened the medicine cabinet and stared for a few minutes at the tiny, almost helpless looking vial. One dose down, nine more to go, then another vial. And another. For the rest of his life, I presume. I smiled.

I sat down at my computer to write to some of our friends to let them know how our weekend began. I titled the message, "Danny has a sore butt." ♥

FROM THE WEB

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIFE

1. Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
2. When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
3. Follow the three Rs:
 - ◆ Respect for self
 - ◆ Respect for others and
 - ◆ Responsibility for all your actions.
4. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
5. Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.
6. Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
7. When you realise you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
8. Spend some time alone every day.
9. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
10. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
11. Live a good, honourable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll be able to enjoy it a second time.
12. A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.
13. In disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.
14. Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve immortality.
15. Be gentle with the earth.
16. Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.
17. Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.
18. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.
19. Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.♥

AMBOYZ SOFFA CONTACTS

National SOFFA Coordinator:

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Local SOFFA Coordinators:

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-Toronto: Kaia Kruus, 416-466-0235; FAX: 416-466-8812 ; Email: kaia@ca.ibm.com
-San Antonio, TX: Debra: 210-434-6044; (leave msg on answering machine); Email: debra@mac.hwr.arizona.edu
-Richard Brown in Delaware, (gay man, tg ally): Delaware: Richard Brown: 302-366-1805; Email: horned@sprintmail.com

We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

-Lee Smith, Midsouth Coordinator, is a SOFFA and also the Online Outreach Coordinator:
PO Box 118, New Haven, KY, 40051
Email: STHRNBOZZ@aol.com or Alphavamp@aol.com
Phone: 502-549-3846

-Arlene Sandoval-Guerra is the Southeast Region Spanish-speaking Liason (ally): Latino/a Issues: (Se Habla Español)
Email: asandoval@aol.com

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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: katesz@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.netgsi.com/~listwrangler> 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.



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*

New WEBSIGHT!!

There is a new websight out there dedicated to answering all those questions about being a SOFFA of a transman. Check it out at: [Http://members.xoom.com/ftmssofaq/](http://members.xoom.com/ftmssofaq/)

~New Email Support List

I'd like to invite all the straight-IDed wives/lovers/girlfriends of FTMs out there to join us on a new list called NyteCafe. The purpose of the list is to provide a relaxed, informal space in which ladies whose roots are in the heterosexual community can chat about the issues and concerns that are specific to them. To subscribe, email me personally at Nyteflyer1@aol.com or Access ONElist site at <http://www.onelist.com>. Enter the name of the list, "NyteCafe" and then click on "join"

View from the SOFFA: Not Exactly a Review of Boys Don't Cry

~~by Joell Smith
virago18@hotmail.com

Welcome to the first ever View from the SOFFA. In this column, Ruby and I will be taking turns reviewing and discussing movies, books, web sites, articles, and anything else we see that might be interesting to the SOFFAs of trannie boyz. This first column was intended to be a review of *Boys Don't Cry*, the film about the murder of Brandon Teena, but I haven't had a chance to see it yet, since it apparently only made a secret one-night sneak preview appearance in Indianapolis and hasn't been back for a real run. But I have been reading reviews and following the news about the film, and talking to people who have seen the movie, and we thought you might find some of this background stuff interesting too.

First, a few must-visit sites on the web for anyone interested in learning more about Brandon and both the movies about his life:

- ◆ brandon.guggenheim.org – “a one-year narrative in installments.” A fascinating multimedia exhibit by the Guggenheim.
- ◆ www.zeitgeistfilm.com/current/brandonteena/brandon.html – The homepage for Zeitgeist Film's *The Brandon Teena Story*, the documentary by Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir.
- ◆ www.ftm-intl.org/Hist/Bran/index.html – FTM International's "Our History – Brandon Teena" site.
- ◆ www.foxsearchlight.com/boysdontcry – The homepage for the Fox Searchlight movie *Boys Don't Cry*.

There were several legal issues surrounding the film when it first came out. Apparently Aphrodite Jones sold her book *All She Wanted* to Fox Searchlight, where Diane Keaton and Bill Robertson were going to make it into a movie starring Drew Barrymore. That production languished, however, while Kimberly Peirce made her movie, which was originally tentatively titled *Take it Like a Man*. Fox Searchlight then bought and distributed Peirce's movie under the title *Boys Don't Cry*. Aphrodite Jones sued Fox Searchlight last October, but I haven't been able to find out the fate of that suit. Diane Keaton and Bill Robertson filed and settled a lawsuit with the studio around the same time.

Lana Tisdale, who apparently worked with Kimberly Peirce while *Boys Don't Cry* was being made, sued in October of '99 to prevent the film from being released with her name in it. According to USA Today, 12/17/99: Lana Tisdale, who was Brandon's high school girlfriend and knew her as Brandon Teena, says that "not a single scene of the film

From The Brothers

In this month's column, I'm including a very interesting article about marriage from Shannon Minter, an FTM attorney. ~~editor

TRANSGENDERED ELDERS AND MARRIAGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL PLANNING

~~by Shannon Minter

Transgendered elders face unique legal issues with regard to marriage. Although marriage is not yet a legal option for lesbian, gay or bisexual people in any state, it is already an option -- and a reality for many transgendered people. This article summarizes the legal issues surrounding marriage for transgendered people and suggests some ways that transgendered elders can protect their marital relationships.

Many people are aware that transgendered individuals may enter into a heterosexual marriage after undergoing sex-reassignment. What may be less well known, however, is that a transgendered person may also be married to a person of the same sex. That situation arises, for example, when one of the spouses in a heterosexual marriage comes out as transsexual and transitions within the marriage. If the couple chooses to stay together, as many do, the result is a legal marriage in which both spouses are male or female. Alternatively, in states that do not allow a transgendered person to change his or her legal sex, some transgendered people have been able to marry a person of the same sex. To all outward appearances and to the couple themselves, the marriage is a same-sex union. In the eyes of the law, however, it is a different-sex marriage because, technically speaking, the law continues to view the transgendered spouse as a legal member of his or her birth sex even after sex-reassignment. In short, marriage is a very real option for a variety of transgendered people in a variety of circumstances.

In practice, however, the legal validity of

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marriages involving a transgendered spouse is not yet firmly established in the great majority of states. Very recently, for example, an appellate court in Texas invalidated a seven-year marriage between Christine Littleton, a transgendered woman, and her deceased husband. The case arose when Ms. Littleton brought a wrongful death suit seeking damages for her husband's death as a result of alleged medical malpractice. Rather than ruling on the merits of Ms. Littleton's suit, the court held that a person's legal sex is genetically fixed at birth and that Ms. Littleton should be deemed to be legally male (despite her female anatomy and appearance, and despite the fact that she had lived as a woman for most of her adult life). As a result of that decision, Ms. Littleton was denied all of the rights afforded to a legal spouse – not only the right to bring a wrongful death suit, but the right to intestate inheritance, to obtain her deceased husband's Social Security and retirement benefits, and many others as well. In contrast, a trial court in Orange County, California recently affirmed the validity of a marriage involving a transgendered man. The case arose when the wife sought to invalidate the marriage in order to deprive her husband of his parental rights vis-a-vis the couple's child, who was born through alternative insemination. Fortunately, the trial court rejected the wife's argument that the transgendered husband should be considered legally female and refused to nullify the marriage. The court held that California law recognizes the post-operative sex of a transsexual person for all legal purposes, including marriage. Notably, however, if the court had ruled differently, or if the transgendered spouse had not undergone extensive and expensive sex reassignment surgeries prior to the marriage, it is likely that he would have lost any right to maintain a relationship with his child.

As these and other similar cases make clear, it is critical that transgendered people who are married become aware of their potential legal vulnerability and take steps to protect themselves as much as possible. As an initial matter, transgendered persons who are married should certainly act accordingly and should not hesitate to exercise their rights as legal spouses, whether that be the right to file married tax returns, the right to apply for spousal benefits, or the right to have or adopt children as a married couple. At the same time, however, it is also important to create a safety

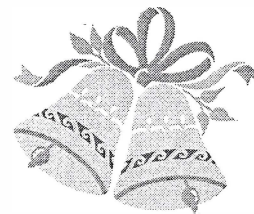
net in the event that the validity of the marriage is challenged.

Although there are some protections that arise exclusively through marriage and cannot be duplicated through any other means, there are also some basic protections that can be safeguarded and secured through privately executed documents and agreements. At a minimum, a transgendered elder who is married should have:

- (1) a last will and testament for both spouses;
- (2) financial and medical powers of attorney in which each spouse designates either the other spouse or another trusted person to be his or her legal agent in the event of incapacitation; and
- (3) a written personal relationship agreement including a detailed account of each spouse's rights and responsibilities with regard to finances, property, support, children, and any other issues that are important to the couple. The agreement should also include an acknowledgment that the non-transgendered partner is aware that the other spouse is transgendered, to avoid later claims of deception or fraud. Ideally, the couple should draft those documents with assistance from an attorney and supplement them with any other legal planning documents that are appropriate for their specific circumstances.

With those basic documents in place, transgendered elders who are in a marital relationship can at least ensure that the spouses can inherit each other's estates and retain control over their own financial and medical decisions, even if the validity of the marriage is challenged. In many cases, the safety net created by extra legal planning will never have to be used. In others, the presence of that extra protection will shelter transgendered elders and their partners from devastating emotional trauma and financial loss. ♥

~~Shannon Minter is the Senior Staff Attorney for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and coordinates its new elder law project.



A LIFETIME TOGETHER

~By Jodi Burchell

What does it take to maintain and nurture a relationship? What are the building blocks needed for two people to build a lifetime together?

I've asked myself these questions many times in the past. Like most people, I've had a few relationships. One lasted for 8 years and died of lesbian bed death. Well, it died and neither of us knew it until she met someone else. Then all of the obligatory sneaking around and lies followed until I had finally had enough and called it off. The other relationships were short lived. One was a shaky, on and off, year and a half relationship, the other lasted only 5 months.

Isn't it ironic how many relationships end with one person lying to another? I started to begin that sentence with "Isn't it funny....", but then I decided that there isn't a damned thing funny about sleeping around, sneaking around, and lying about it. Especially when you're on the receiving end of the deceit.

I realize that I have few tools to build a long-term relationship. My mom and dad are divorced. My grandparents were together for 50+ years, but they were unhappy. I think I'd rather be alone than to spend years and years with someone I'm not happy with.

I decided some time ago to seek out the answer in other people. I sat in on a panel at TrueSpirit last year where the topic was building relationships for the long haul. Most of the people in that room hadn't been together for more than 2 years. How depressing. Luckily, the ones who were in long-term relationships did share. They mostly talked about the importance of communication and listening to each other. That was about all the advice that they gave.

I moderate an email support list for SOs of transmen with 80 members strong. What better group to ask? So I put my dilemma out there. I asked:

"The most important factor in building long-term relationships is....."

Here are the responses that I got:

..... finding a balance of space where all the folks involved can both grow together and individually in equal parts.

.....Tolerance

.....realizing that there is more needed than love, that you need to accompany love by important spiritual

words like respect, honesty, and communication.

.....compromise!

.....communication

.....choosing a partner whose values and interests you share, just like you share with your close platonic friends.

.....trust and respect

.....Trust and honesty.

.....communication! If you can talk about things, then you can resolve things and avoid misunderstands.

..... keeping the lines of communications open no matter what is going on with the two of you, and learning what subjects to leave alone completely!

..... Commitment, Communication, Compassion & Caring.

..... patience and empathy. Communication is critical too, but without the first two, real communication is nearly impossible.

.....A sense of humor and appreciation for the absurd.

.....emotional honesty, compassion, willingness to listen & an earnestly open mind... then when you've got all these ingredients, a commitment to communication plus a generous dose of humor!

Hmmm. These are pretty good answers. I think that if you summarized all of this, you need lots of honest communication with a willingness and effort to compromise, empathize, care, trust and offer mutual respect. Add to that a healthy dose of humor so you don't go crazy, a little spice (my personal favorite) so things don't get too dull, as well as lots of patience and 'that' sounds like a recipe for success!

I wish us all love and happy, healthy relationships on this day and always.

Happy Valentines Day!!! ♥

~~Note: For more information about the support list for SOs of transmen, go to www.onelist.com then enter the name of the list, FTMSOS, and then click to join. Be sure and send a short bio to FTMSOS@yahoo.com if you'd like to be subbed to this closed support group.

reflects reality" and calls it "the second murder of Brandon Teena."

Tisdal, who tried to stop the film's release, is suing Fox Searchlight and the filmmakers, citing invasion of privacy and defamation. Tisdal says Brandon never proposed marriage to her, took drugs with her or fled from the police with her, all of which happen in the film. Tisdal also says that she ended the relationship when she realized Brandon was a girl (the movie depicts it as continuing) and that she was not at the murder scene (the movie places her there).

Obviously, she was unable to stop the film from being distributed, and as of December 30th, there was no date set for a trial. Another interesting facet to that story is that Chloë Sevigny, the actress who played Lana, has said in several interviews that she is uncomfortable with her part in the film. In an article on the Hollywood.com web site, she is reported to have said "It was very difficult separating the true story from the movie, I wanted to draw a lot from the true story, the real Brandon and the mannerisms of the real Lana. But, at the same time, it felt like we were doing something wrong - I'm still not sure about it."

For more information about both Aphrodite Jones' and Lana Tisdal's suits, visit www.apbnews.com/media/celebnews/1999/11/01/boys1101_01.html?s=email. This article contains links to copies of the actual complaints filed by Jones and Tisdal.

Another legal side story, this one not related to the film: Brandon's mother, JoAnn Brandon, sued Richardson County, Nebraska, for negligence in Brandon's death. The judge awarded JoAnn Brandon \$80,000, but split it up based on responsibility for the death. The judge found John Lotter and Tom Nissen, the convicted murderers, to be 85% responsible for the murder, and therefore responsible for paying 85% of the judgement. Richardson County must pay 14%, or \$11,200, plus funeral expenses. The judge also found Brandon himself to be 1% responsible for his own death, and subtracted \$62 from the funeral expenses. The amount JoAnn Brandon is likely to see, then, is around \$17,000. According to the Lincoln Journal Star, 12/8/99,

JoAnn Brandon's attorney, Herbert Friedman of Lincoln, called the ruling a legal and moral victory for his client. But he had argued for an award of several hundred thousand dollars.

"She's disappointed," Friedman said. "We're leaning toward appeal." Friedman criticized the judge for requiring Lotter and Nissen to pay 85 percent of the

award when they weren't named in the lawsuit. He also questioned the judge's decision to essentially let Laux off the hook.

...Reached at his home Tuesday, Laux said he had not yet read the ruling. It was not discussed at Tuesday's county board meeting, he added.

"Until I read it or talk to my attorney, I haven't got no {sic} comment," Laux said.

On a happier note, *Boys Don't Cry* has been doing well at the box office and receiving critical acclaim. Several critics, including Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun Times*, have named it one of the ten best films of 1999. The National Board of Review named it the #7 movie of the year, and awarded director Kimberly Peirce Best Debut, and Hilary Swank Best Breakthrough. Chloë Sevigny (in case you were wondering, it's pronounced se-VE-nyay) won Best Supporting Actress at the 1999 Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards, the Boston Society of Film Critics Awards, and the National Society of Film Critics Awards, and was nominated for a Golden Globe. The Boston Society of Film Critics also gave Kimberly Peirce Best New Filmmaker. Hilary Swank has won Best Actress awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, the New York Film Critics Circle, and the Boston Society of Film Critics. She also won Best Actress in a Drama at the 2000 Golden Globes. In her thank you speech, Swank dedicated her victory to Brandon, who taught her, she said, how important it is to be true to yourself.

Now, before you run right off and buy your ticket, here is one more thought. My partner H saw *Boys Don't Cry* up in Chicago last November, and came home pretty much devastated. Fortunately he saw it with a good friend, but the story is about an FTM transgendered person getting raped and then murdered just for being transgendered. The violence is graphic and deeply disturbing—even the most jaded movie reviewers mention that. H didn't feel safe again for weeks, and kept saying things like "Two other people were killed just because they happened to be in the same house with him! Just for being friends with him!" The whole thing brought my fears for his safety back to the front of my mind as well. While this movie is incredibly important for what it shows the world about our lives, and about how some social structures create the fear and hatred that breeds obscene violence, remember that for a big part of the audience, Brandon Teena is a fascinating, sympathetic character—a very good metaphor for everyone who defines themselves as different from the rest of society. But for us, he's our lover, our son, our best friend. It will be very hard to watch. ♥

True Spirit (A first timer's perspective)

~by Lisa Miller

The True Spirit Conference.....whoever came up with this name was certainly right on the money. I have never seen such a spirit of camaraderie as I did at this conference. As a first time attendee, and a straight identified SO, I had many misgivings about whether or not I would fit in with the other participants and if there would be any presentations that would hold my interest. It took me all of 30 minutes to figure out that my fears were completely unfounded. Everyone I met was friendly and talkative and many went out of their way to make me feel at home when I admitted to being a "first timer". Those in charge of the conference were helpful and well informed as to what was going on, despite the initial problems they were experiencing on Friday morning.

The Straight Women's Caucus was the first group that I attended and the only one that I attended apart from my SO. For a few minutes, I thought I would be "caucusing" all by myself, but eventually 2 other women wandered in. The 3 of us found common ground pretty quickly, although we were all in different stages of our relationships. We laughed quite a bit, shared a lot of our feelings on how we fit into the lives of our men and even talked about some of surgery issues that I had been wondering about. Our 75 minutes together passed quickly and I think we were all sorry to relinquish our room to the next group. In many ways, I think the fact that we were such a small group helped us to get the most out of our conversations. Over the course of the weekend, the three of us ran into one another several times and always found a minute to talk. My SO, who is seriously considering chest surgery, even managed to chat with one of their SOs and get his opinion on the surgeon who worked on him.

Chest Surgery with Dr. Brownstein was of great interest to both my SO and myself. I was pleased with his presentation and his relaxed attitude with everyone. He is quite obviously a knowledgeable surgeon and I admired the way he handled questions and comments from the group. I left his seminar feeling that I had a

better understanding of the procedure itself and what I could expect once my SO has the surgery. Dr. Brownstein was also the presenter at the Metaoidioplasty Seminar. As a newcomer to the whole F-to-M scene, I had no idea what this particular surgery entailed and thus was extremely interested in attending this presentation. As were many other people, if the standing room only attendance was any indication. I cannot say that I came out of this seminar knowing much more than I did when I went in. After his dynamic presentation earlier in the day, I was disappointed by his lack of luster speaking and very technical explanation of the entire procedure.

By far, my favorite seminar was F-to-M 101: Things Your Parents Never Told You. Max Anderson is the kind of dynamic speaker that holds the attention of any group. I had visited his website several times prior to TSC and was genuinely looking forward to his presentation. His humor and honesty lent much to the subject matter. I never would have dreamed there were so many products available as "packies" or that the sound of urination was actually of concern to people. My SO and I were especially grateful for his information on the "packie" that was being sold in the vendor's area. Because of the nature of the product, it wasn't prominently displayed and, had Max not told us about it, we would have missed out on one of the best buys we've ever had.

The overall atmosphere of True Spirit was one of friendship and openness. When we asked one of the volunteers for help finding people that Dr. Fischer had performed chest surgery on, he sent immediately sent a couple of "Bev's Boys" our way. These guys, who didn't know us from Adam's housecat, talked to us at length about their surgeries and, in one case, even allowed my SO to view the results so he could make an informed choice on surgeons. My SO often talks about there being a need for more unity in the community. True Spirit gives me hope that it is possibility. ♥