



So, we meet again Santa Claus!!!

January 2007 Update

**As I sit here having completed a special notice and invitation to each of you in regard to Lobby Days 2007, I think to myself, "This is daunting for me—trying to cover several months of ups and downs without writing a book. I guess I will begin at the beginning....."**

### **November:**

***My Birthday:*** I want to thank all of you who were able to make it to my birthday party. I loved the fact that we all got to relax and discuss some of those forbidden subjects that family and friends are loathe to discuss—religion and politics. I cannot think of a better present than being able to have those close to me honestly engage in dialogue (as long as everyone agrees with me ;- ) Robin and I are still making our way through some of the liquor, since we drink it only once in a blue moon.

***Messina Hof:*** Our Good Friend Sara was able to get together a group of us to go on a tour of Messina Hof vineyards in Bryan, Texas. Robin and I have been before, and we enjoyed our previous tour. This time it was made even nicer with friends and new acquaintances...even though we did have a slightly better tour guide the time before. Once again, I was made certain that of all the wines, port is my favorite.

***Renaissance Festival:*** Due to some unexpected free tickets from some friends, Robin and I were able to get to go to Renaissance Festival this year. Although neither of us were able to slay dragons, we did conquer a turkey leg, bought a celtic batik tapestry of a night dragon that as soon as I get some wherewithal and a step ladder, will be protecting the bedroom ceiling, and had a great time with Patrick and Sara watching men play in mud.

### ***Thanksgiving:***

This year for Thanksgiving, we went to see Robin's mom in Monroe, LA. New this year though was the challenge of two growing children in tow. Onyx is getting where she really wants to sleep in the bed at night instead of her crate. So the challenge is getting to be accomodating her size on the bed. The visit was nice. Although Robin and I both had to take vacation days for the day after Thanksgiving because our workplaces do not automatically grant it off, we were able to spend some quality time with Mom, eat a nice BBQ dinner and spend some time taking a breather from our regular workday life.

Robin's eldest brother really seemed to take a liking to the kids, letting them kiss him all over the face, and just having a good time with them. I just hope that they didn't make him sick.

So, visiting Mom was the main event. However, we didn't leave for Monroe until Friday morning. Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, we spent with some new friends and the



kindest hostess I know. Our Friend Sara opened her home to all wayward souls lost and stuck in Bryan. I absolutely love these kind of potluck, extended family of choice get togethers. For the first time I met Patrick's mom and sister. I finally met Becca's partner Denise, had some good conversation and even greater food. Sara's hospitality reminded me that perhaps next year it should be my turn to open my home to this extended family. To many times, those of us that are "left behinds" don't

remember that sometimes our greatest family is our family of choice—and it is with them that we should celebrate. So, mark your calendars—next Thanksgiving is at my duplex.



### **December:**

Ok, for those of you who have not met Patrick Paschall (that is him doing dishes above), well you are missing out on one of the greatest gentlemen I know. When and where did I meet Patrick? Well, it was through Allies...I remember that. Then, it was that we kept bumping into each other at co-facilitator training for Allies, the presentation by Kristin Schilt, PhD from UCLA about activism, more Allies activities, other programs, advocacy, activism....I think he was stalking me.



Nah, just kidding. Our paths have just been crossing and crossing within the past year or two. These kinds of serendipitous meetings seem to be the establishing points for my truly lasting, tried and true friends.

### ***Patrick's Party:***

So, Patrick, his Mom, and sister invited me out to their annual Christmas Part at the beginning of December in League City, Texas. Patrick's Uncle David and partner have a really nice two story house with a pool in the backyard, and more guests than you can count. Besides certain friends trying to get me drunk, a cutthroat game of present exchange with about 51 people, and karaoke with David till about 2am, I had a blast. I don't think I have ever seen so many people in one building — unless you count any

of the number of German, Texan, Western Country Dancing Weddings in our family I went to growing up.

Let us see, how many presents were exchanged from me that night in the fun of the white elephant/not white elephant chinese christmas present game that night? There was the safari suitcase set, then the silver tray, then the Santa Doll, then I ended up with the Red Wine Glasses. All of that, and I think I was one of the lucky ones. The “Wild Turkey” and “Lotto Tickets” ended up being dead presents because of the number of times they were traded. And then, there was some sort of competition with Patrick wanting to be the absolute last present opener so that he could dominate the present competition.



These friends of mine and their competition. Little do they know that we evil scorpions are always watching, always waiting, to finally get the last laugh.

#### *Hockey:*

I can tell you for a fact that Robin is into Baseball and Football, and threatens every year that I will be a football widow, have to serve her beer and chips, and will not get the remote back for any of those girly movies I like.

Of the sports I like, let us see.....Women’s Volleyball, Women’s Basketball, and Women’s Trampoline jumping—for obvious reasons. In honesty, Figure Skating is definitely top on the list. Recently though I have been introduced to the sport of Hockey, and I have to say....I am beginning to really take a liking to this very dramatic sport. The past few months have provided several opportunities for me to see the Aggie Men’s Hockey Team in action.



#### *Christmas*

Christmas this year was intimate and nice. I was able to visit with Patrick and his family for a brief respite in League City, before joining Robin, and her sister’s family for dinner and opening of presents. As usual, I am honored to be invited and enjoy watching Charlie and Michelle open their presents and be themselves.

#### **January:**

##### *Ice Storm*

This January provided some interesting weather in our area. An Ice Storm hit in January that ground business to a halt, and left my car encased in a block of ice (sorry, no pictures). This was surrounded by some periods of unseasonably warm weather, and all of these hot/cold, wet/more wet/brief dry conditions are wreaking havoc with my sinus conditions. I am just about ready to leave this state and go somewhere where

at least the temperature and conditions are constant. I was thinking of Alaska, but I hear that global warming is changing the landscape even there. Arggh.

#### *Ancestry*

So, I recently saw the opportunity to try Ancestry.com free for 14 days. When I was a kid, I use to have records of our maternal family tree. On my Dad's side, my step-mother Shirley has been generous in giving me leads to track Dad's branch of the tree. It is a pastime I got away from. I have to say though, once I get back into it, I find it fascinating and intriguing. Perhaps one of these days I will print up a poster size family tree going back to our roots in Germany, Scotland, and England.

#### **February:**

##### *Mardi Gras at Galveston:*

So, I finally did it. I finally was able to go to a Mardi Gras celebration in Galveston, Texas. After spending some time on the strand, guarding the alcohol, and being pelted by beads, I did let go of my inhibitions. The honor of being flashed this year went to the wonderfully fabulous Patrick Luckenbeal (sp?), only to be followed by the very cute Patrick Paschall. But, bead honors on that night go to my two other most hot female friends (whose names I will not mention), from whom I learn to relax and just let it all loose once in a while.

After beads on the Strand we went to a local gay club, caught a drag show, and really had some fun. For me, the best part of the evening was watching my friends have fun with go-go dancers, male strippers.....and most of all, getting to dance my tushie off.





## **KUDOS: Sara Bendoraitis gets a new job:**

As some of you know, I “transitioned” on April 10, 2001. In that time, and in being involved in the local GLBT community of Bryan/College Station, not only for my own support, but for the edification of others I have seen “changes in the guard” of membership of the student GLBTA organization, have witnessed the political tides of our local “progressive community”, have seen good people come and go, and have made a host of my own mistakes along the way.

Back a few years ago I met this cute young lady of cute, kinky, hair persuasion on Guess Whose Gay Panels. I began to see more of her on these panels, and as she became Graduate Assistant for Gender Issues Education Services under Beatriz Arnillas, survived through the next supervisor, and numerous interim Directors she left an impression on myself and everyone she met. Gender Issues was combined with the Women’s Center being run by another friend I had been making—Brenda Bethman, and the quest was to make sure that as Sara’s term in Graduate School was coming to an end, that she be hired on permanently with the Women’s and Gender Equity Resource Center. Sara, in the time I met her, became an excellent resource, a person I could build synergy with in terms of getting programming such as celebrations of Transgender Day of Remembrance on the TAMU campus, and other initiatives, and became someone who I am honored to call a friend.

She is one of the few people in my life who has asked for my expertise and experiential knowledge of transgender issues and has shared credit of that contribution as she shared that knowledge with others on a local and national scale. She has been the one “straight” woman who has quickly learned all of the subtleties of the world I live in, and can truly be called a trusted advocate. I cannot say that I trust anyone more than myself with presenting this information— she is the exception.

And as a friend, she has been one of the few people who offered a shoulder to cry on when my father passed. Someone who had been through similar life experience, and someone who I became perhaps closest to outside of Robin to actually take up on that offer.

Now she has moved beyond Bryan/College Station and has become the new Director of the LGBT Resource Center at American University in Washington, D.C.—no small feat, especially considering the reputation and activism of the student body at AU.

I cannot speak more highly of Sara, and am honored to consider her a friend and Ally.



As promised, in my last update, I stated that I would make the effort to try and educate you, my family and friends, on transgender issues.

I cannot say that I can make you understand, because after 35 years I have come to a few realizations.

1. I cannot make anyone do anything.
2. Understanding is a gift that comes from an individual struggling of their own accord with the weighing and compassionate inspection of another's life. At times it comes from trying to walk in their shoes for an hour or two, but more so it comes from truly listening without judgment. And, as realization 1 implies, it is not something I can magically bestow on anyone...no matter how I may wish to.

### **TRANSGENDER 101:**

**MYTH 1: Male to Female Transsexuals who love women are not lesbians, and the women they are in relationship are really in a straight relationship—not a lesbian one.**

Where do I begin to deconstruct this myth. I guess let us look at where this idea comes from. It comes from the idea that a male to female transsexual is not really the female she knows she is, but is biologically a male and should just accept it. It also deals with a misapplication and misunderstanding of what is straight and what is lesbian. Although one group of people may call an object a widget and swear to that in all of their great knowledge, the fact that it is used as a hammer, looks like a hammer, is kept in the drawer with the nails, and that 1 in 10 carpenters identify it as a hammer somehow still makes it a widget?

Let us look at the first perspective—MTF Transsexuals are really just men “pretending to be women”. Ultimately this boils down to what we are going to call male and what we are going to call female. Despite the fact that in Western society we assume that we are smarter and more advanced than the rest of the world, there are different ways of viewing something as basic as sex in history and society. In point of fact, there are some societies whose definition of “male” and “female” is intimately tied to the gender (masculine/feminine/ etc) one portrays, the activities one engages in, the clothing one wears, as well as the spiritual essence an individual has and, of course, what is between their legs. As scientists who study the interaction of gender and sex look at these societies, we understand that their viewpoint may be far more accurate and encompassing than what we medically dictate in the West.

But, let us look at what we believe in the West. In Texas with the case of Christie Lee Littleton vs John Prange the 21st District Court of Texas upheld that sex was determined by chromosomes. However, the fact of the matter is that 1 in 2000 births falls outside of the arbitrary distinctions of XX female and XY male that this precedent rules. Intersex individuals with chromosomal diversity ranging from Turner's Syndrome (one X chromosome, no second chromosome being either X nor Y), to Klinefelter's Syndrome (Two X Chromosomes, but also a Y chromosome) fall unapologetically outside this precept. And these are just two of a host of intersex conditions which prove to biologically undermine a “medical definition” of sex. Again, non XX and non XY chromosomal designations account for 1 in 1, 666 births and Klinefelters Syndrome accounts for 1 in 1000 births. That is far more common than many of us realize or are



comfortable with.. Even more shocking is the fact that the Intersex Society of North America estimates that

“Total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female  
.....one in 100 births” <http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>

Of growing understanding is the fact that sex is not just between the legs, it is an identity component formed prenatally in the brain. In this perspective, during fetal development Mother Nature in her infinite wisdom provides for ultimate variety for the sustainability of the human species. Some persons are programmed male and have male bodies, some are “programmed” female and have female bodies, some however are programmed one “sex” and born with the anatomy of the opposite sex. This is not some “mistake” or “aberration”, in point of fact it is part of this greater concept of Diversity which guarantees our survival. How can someone who is intergendered possibly prevent the degradation of the human species. Frankly, I don’t know. But, then again, I am not sure how male programmed/male bodies people mating with female programmed/female bodied people prevent the extinction of the human race other than producing offspring. And, as we have seen oh too many times in reality....production of offspring alone does not guarantee a species chance of survival, it is only one dimension thereof.

So, identity is as much of a component of sex as biological anatomy. From that perspective, there is no fantasy play or “pretending” on the part of the MTF or FTM transsexuals in regard to being the sex they know they are. Scientific evidence and thought is coming to be in line with this perspective as we learn more and more about differently gendered people and their lives. And so, from that framework sexual attraction is based on who the individual knows they are and whom that they are attracted to. In a very practical manner as well, since the Male to Female transsexual knows herself as female, behaves in accordance with that, and forms intimate relationships as a female, her relationships should be identified in that regard. Further, society tends to treat relationships formed in reference to how the individual identifies and to whom she is attracted to.

So, for instance, my relationship with Robin is viewed as a relationship between two women. Society tends to regard us that way, denying us rights the way other lesbian couples are denied rights, assuming in some instances that the intimacy that we experience with each other is not as legitimate as the intimacy between a “man” and a “woman”, and relegating us to an “other” status as a couple. On a personal level, the relationship between Robin and myself is that a woman with a woman. And, as a side-note, ladies....if you think that life with men is hard, try having a relationship with an individual as emotional, “hormonal”, and geared towards approaching the world the same as you. It may seem a boon, or idyllic. In reality, it is just as hard as trying to communicate with a sex that seems to be from a different planet. Because there is no difference of approach or perspective, there are sometimes obstacles that are all the more challenging to overcome.

Therefore, despite the fact that straight and GLBT alike may think or believe that the relationship between Robin and I is a “straight” one, the reality is different. The same privileges and rights that exist for straight couples do not apply to us. The kind of intimacy we have is not “heterosexual” in any sense. Our interpersonal emotional and private lives are those of two women in union with one another. And society overall treats us as two women.

So, if it quacks like a duck, and waddles like a duck, whether or not it has a penis....it is not a widget.

## TRANSGENDER TERMS:

**INTERSEX** – “Simply put, intersexuality is a set of medical conditions that features **"congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system."** That is, a person with an intersex condition is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered "standard" for either male or female.”<sup>1</sup>

From <http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>

“Below we provide a summary of statistics drawn from an article by Brown University researcher Anne Fausto-Sterling.<sup>2</sup> The basis for that article was an extensive review of the medical literature from 1955 to 1998 aimed at producing numeric estimates for the frequency of sex variations. Note that the frequency of some of these conditions, such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia, differs for different populations. These statistics are approximations.

Not XX and not XY	one in 1,666 births
Klinefelter (XXY)	one in 1,000 births
Androgen insensitivity syndrome	one in 13,000 births
Partial androgen insensitivity syndrome	one in 130,000 births
Classical congenital adrenal hyperplasia	one in 13,000 births
Late onset adrenal hyperplasia	one in 66 individuals
Vaginal agenesis	one in 6,000 births
Ovotestes	one in 83,000 births
Idiopathic (no discernable medical cause)	one in 110,000 births
Iatrogenic (caused by medical treatment, for instance progesterin administered to pregnant mother)	no estimate
5 alpha reductase deficiency	no estimate
Mixed gonadal dysgenesis	no estimate
Complete gonadal dysgenesis	one in 150,000 births
Hypospadias (urethral opening in perineum or along penile shaft)	one in 2,000 births
Hypospadias (urethral opening between corona and tip of glans penis)	1 in 770 births

Total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female      one in  
100 births

Total number of people receiving surgery to “normalize” genital appearance      one or  
two in 1,000 births

*2. Blackless, Melanie, Anthony Charuvastra, Amanda Derryck, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Karl Lauzanne, and Ellen Lee. 2000. How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis. American Journal of Human Biology 12:151-166.*

**CROSSDRESSER:** Usually an individual who dresses in the clothes of the opposite gender. Please do not make the mistake of saying that a transexual is a crossdresser, or that they crossdress. For the transexual the clothes of their desired sex are their true genders clothes, and the ones that they have had to wear all of their life up to this point is crossdressing. Keep in mind too, that in our society, it is perfectly appropriate for women to wear the clothes of men, but the opposite is not accepted. As such, one could ostensibly argue that women who wear t-shirts and jeans are crossdressing (most of us just consider it androgynous these days). NOT A TRANSVESTITE

**TRANSVESTITE:** - Transvestite has become a medical term typifying a condition in which an individual obtains a fetishistic thrill from wearing clothing of the opposite sex. Too many times in common usage Transvestite is used in synonymous relation to crossdressing or eonism. I strongly discourage this, as it is inaccurate and insulting. Unless you are a psychologist who studies fetishistic behaviour, you should not be using this term.

**DRAG QUEEN:** Typically, a gay man who dresses up as a woman for entertainment purposes. Such individuals may or may not be transexuals, as some men do it purely for entertainment while some transexuals do it to raise money.

**FEMALE IMPERSONATOR:** Men who dress up as celebrity women for entertainment value. This is not a measure of their degree of gender dysphoria.

**DRAG KING:** Women who dress up as men for entertainment value, see Drag Queen and switch the sex of the actors.

NOTE: Please keep in mind that these definitions are the traditional definitions found in textbooks and gender research. They do very little for describing individuals

#### TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN HISTORY

**Did you know that Joan of Arc was charged by the Inquisition for wearing men's clothes and was forced to wear a dress while in the Inquisition prisons as a humiliation?**

**Did you know that some 400 Civil War soldiers were discovered to have been born as women.**



**Did you know that throughout time men have dressed as women for political reasons to defy authorities, a notable case of which is “Rebecca and Her Daughters” Armed male peasants dressed as women in Wales from 1839 to 1844 in protest to toll roads which unduly burdened and leached money from indigent farmers trying to take produce to market. These “privately owned” roads started taking money from people already overly financially burdened just to stay alive. The Rebecca’s gained popular widespread support as they led constables and officials on “merry chases through the countryside.”**



**Did you know that the term Eonism, which is an older term for crossdressing, came from the Chevalier De Eon who was employed by King Louis XV. On a mission to Russia in order to meet Empress Elizabeth and work with the pro-French faction against the Habsburg Monarchy, the Chevalier was apparently disguised as the lady Lia de Beaumont and become the maid of honour to the Empress.**



As evidenced throughout time in a variety of cultures worldwide, gender is socially constructed. What is male, what is female or what is masculine or feminine was once decided by the community as a whole and was all-inclusive [see map below].

To quote Navajo Wesley Thomas who describes himself as *nadleeh-like*”1.

“Where I began to identify gender on a continuum – meaning place female at one end and male on the other end – I placed forty-nine different gender identifications in between. This was derived at one sitting, not from carrying out a full and comprehensive fieldwork research. This number derived from my own understanding of gender within the Navajo cosmology”

With the rise of patriarchal civilization, the need to distinguish persons on the basis of race, gender, sex, disability, etc subsumed the self-expression of many communal peoples. Nevertheless, since the dawn of history such persons of differing genders have been leaders and innovators in their times. From individuals as respected as Joan of Arc, to over 400 Civil War soldiers found to have been born female such as Franklin Thompson, and to the humble and unknown outside their own communities in which they made a world of difference in history.



*Left:* Burmese “Nat Dancer”  
- source “Transgender Warriors”

*Right:* Franklin Thompson (Sarah Emma Edmonds)  
- source “Transgender Warriors”



*Left:* Leslie Feinberg – author of “Transgender Warriors Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman”

## Third and Fourth Gender People of the World

- Third Sex/Third Gender People have been intimately linked with the Gay and Lesbian Community Across Cultures
    - Berdache - now considered derogatory, the term used now is Two-Spirit, which is also used among Native Gay and Lesbian people to self-identify.
    - People time and again throughout history have confused sex, sexual desire or orientation, and gender.
- In the West, some of the great leaders in the gay and lesbian movement have been transgender persons. In a related vein, some of the great leaders in the Women's movement have been lesbians





