



After our most recent update which you most likely just received, I have been eager to come up with a new edition in between work, class, and trying to keep up with the havoc that two daughters of canine persuasion raise. The month has had its ups and downs—its frustrations and rewards. In fact, I write this as Ginger demands to be held, kissed, and cuddled....and now that she has been put down and is quiet, I wonder what “gifts” she is leaving me in the other room.

In our family life is not always outings and fun—in fact, most of it is work, more work, traveling to work, and occasionally taking a breather to catch some television with each other and our little ones.

Add this to a lesbian relationship trying to live honestly and frankly in the world, and tension no doubt creeps into our lives. In fact, it is this very tension that sometimes causes friction between Robin and myself. Tension which does not always find the most constructive outlets. But recently we were reminded by our pastor of a tool which we could put to our use. Pastor Dan reminded us that we need to take out time to be with each other—we need to have a “date

September—October 2006

night” as it were. Luckily for us, we had already planned a dinner with two people that mean the world to each of us in keeping our sanity and heart in Bryan/College Station. The four of us had the opportunity to have fine Italian food, wine, dessert, and port (my most favorite wine) as well as company that it was our deepest pleasure to connect with. We are indebted to our friends, their understanding, compassion, and great company.

This month we had the opportunity to see an exhibit that I had meant to take Robin to this past summer for her birthday—Bodyworlds 3. You can find out more information on Bodyworlds at:

1. http://www.hmns.org/exhibits/special_exhibits/bodyworlds.asp
2. <http://www.bcm.edu/news/item.cfm?newsID=554>
3. and also at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_Worlds

This exhibit is highly unique in that it is an exhibit of post mortem bodies posed and displayed in unique settings that allow the viewer to learn so much more about the human body, how it works, and what it really looks like.

The problem for medical students and others for centuries was the rapid decay of the human body after death. Guther Von Hagens derived a polymerization technique called plastination which preserved these bodies in ways previously not possible.

The result are lasting sculptural pieces which educate.

When Robin first told me of the exhibit, I was skeptical and thought that this was more morbid curiosity than legitimate art or science. I am the first to admit that I was totally wrong. Not only did we both get to see actual preserved lungs from smokers, and the damage that does to the body. We were able to see so much much more of each of the body systems from circulation, to respiration, digestion, etc—and what cancerous tissues in the brain and elsewhere look like. I can not do it justice by explaining the exhibit—only that it is an event truly worth visiting. The things we learned about the human body.....well worth the money. (continued on back cover)



Onyx's Update:

This family is weird. My older sister is smaller than me and does not like to share any of her toys with me. She is most particular about her rawhide chewies. She is spoiled and has to be held by mommy all the time. She also always gets to sleep in bed, with Mommy and Momma and I don't. It's ok though, I thought having 6 brothers and sisters was crowded—that bed is way too busy.

All I really want to do is to chew on a rawhide, throw the water bowl around, lay at Mommy's feet, lick Momma's toes, and torment my older sister.

This past week Mommy had to "unstop the toilet". She used this rubber plunger thing and made a lot of noise, and said some things that I was told I cannot say in the presence of guests. When Mommy was done, she left the plunger thing on a towel in the bathroom. Wasn't she surprised when I took it as a trophy and decided to prance around the Living Room with it.

My one wish? That Mommy would stop closing the lid on the toilet thingy. I love getting drinks out of it.

Just recently I began to feel very very sick. Mommy and Momma argued about taking me to the doctor, but Mommy finally agreed with Momma's wisdom and took me in. It turns out I had something called Parvo. She left me for a day with the strange doctors who put tubes in my legs and a conical thing around me head so that I couldn't pull the tubes out.

The next day Mommy picked me up. I was feeling better, screaming and yelling. Mommy made me eat this strange soft food and take medicine. I didn't like it though. So much in fact that I got sick again. Mommy took me to another doctor, cried a lot, and eventually brought me home. Before I knew it, Mommy spend most of her time with me. Every hour or so she was sticking something in my mouth and squirting some stuff I really didn't care for down my throat. When Mommy got tired, momma took over.

After all this, Mommy also got a little sick and missed two days of something called PreCalculus class. She was not happy. I don't know why though, because I am running around the house again, chewing on anything she leaves on the floor and knocking things over by chasing my sister.

Ginger's Update:

My sister is a brat and gets us both in so much trouble. If she would just stop running around all the time and stealing MY toys. I was a little scared for her lately because Mommy and Momma were crying and yelling, and then Sis was gone. When she came back, she had to stay in the bathroom, and I had to stay in my crate. Mommy kept getting up all the time to make her drink this yucky looking stuff. Mommy even tried to give her cheese, or hotdogs, just to get her to eat something. I don't know what was wrong with her or with Mommy, everyone knows I LOVE CHEESE. I do not demand all of Mommy;s attention, I just get to see her so little of

the time, and she is always busy. Sometimes I just want her to hold me and kiss me—like when I was a puppy.



What do we do for a living:

Even among family I think we forget sometimes what other members of the family do for a living and the energy they put into it. So, I would like to spend a little space this time going over our career paths so far.

Robin:

Robin is a sales associate for Office Depot in Spring, Tx. This means that she commutes about 1.5 to 2 hours every day to Houston and back to College Station. Having been with the company for 10 years, Robin is finally earning a decent wage and good health benefits. Her college years were spent studying Biology, and this is something she says she would be interested in returning to again one of these days. At Office Depot she has been Copy/Print manager, Customer Service Manager, and always has a joke or three and good sense of humor—which keeps the workplace a tolerable place to be. Nowadays she sells computers, furniture, and other needed items to customers. Her winning personality and desire to help the customer find what he/she needs has Robin accomplishing goal after goal on company contests in regard to sales.

In the past she has worked for Jack in the Box, and was an assistant manager at a bookstore. There are days when I listen to her, and am confident that her finest moments were working in Books a Million. This could be because Robin just adores books and is quite an avid reader. The pay was what the pay tends to be for manager's at book stores (it was pitiful), but her job worth was very high.

There are times we have talked about, why don't we just open up a Gay/Lesbian bookstore in Bryan/College Station? Katy knows exactly what books to buy, and Robin could run the store.

Bryan/College Station though? Let us really think about that? Is there a need for it? You bet—there is also a need for a GLBT Community Center. Is this something Bryan/College Station will see anytime soon? ?Doubtful...

Which is a shame, with the rate that B/CS is developing, the needs for these outlets are just going to exponentially develop. But, who is going to fund building either in this town at this time?

So, in the meantime...if you need a cool tech gadget or new computer, look Robin up at the Office Depot. She will hook you up.

Katy:

Katy's formal title is "Production Assistant", her other titles are "Master Control Operator" "Encoding Guru" and "Katrina" (usually said with a "will you please help me with this" tone).

Since 1990 Katy has been in radio and television. Starting as a beat reporter for an Arts Radio magazine to help fund her college expenses, she became a DJ at the Public Radio station that produced the radio magazine, co-hosted and produced/ co-produced some other shows, was a DJ for an adult contemporary station, a rock DJ, a hard rock DJ, volunteered in running camera for KAMU, running sound for KAMU's broadcast for Bonfire, lent her vocal talent to a project or two, and got a job after graduation at a Cable Ad Insertion company—CableTime.

CableTime, became CableRep, which became Cox Media, which then has become Suddenlink Media. Katy's department is responsible for digitally encoding the local commercials seen on stations such as Sci-Fi channel, Food Network, ESPN, etc. The team she works with each week does this for most of Texas, some properties in Louisiana—including Monroe, Alexandria, and Lake Charles, two properties in California, North Carolina properties, and Oklahoma properties. At one time, there were over 500 cities that this department took commercials from and made them into MPEG files like you can download on your computer through YouTube, etc to play on servers in these cities during ESPN broadcasts, etc.

Here is how the process works:

A client decides that they need market penetration for their product and that television advertising is a good option. Cable Advertising typically can reach much more people than Broadcast Television alone.

So they decide they want to run a commercial and what commercials to run. If need be, they get a commercial created for them.

That commercial is scheduled to run on ESPN, MTV, LIFETIME, and other networks, during a particular daypart, during premium time slots, etc as the client agrees on in their contract.

The commercial comes to Katy's department. They take the commercial and literally record it onto the computer. That recorded file (just like any mp3 file, word document file, quicktime movie, etc) is sent to a Quality Assurance Station.

Katy checks the commercial that the video playback looks suitable for air, that

there is no offensive material , that the client paying for the ad is indeed who is being advertised, and for Political spots makes sure that there is a legal disclaimer in the spot, etc etc as per Federal Regulations.

If she approves the spot, it is sent to a server in the building that is called the MVL—or Master Video Library.

Remember those instructions in regard to when and on what networks this commercial should air? Well, those instructions placed into a massive database instruct where these commercials should go.

So, they are sent via T1 line to North Carolina.

From North Carolina, they are sent to a satellite circling the Earth

Each city has a satellite dish at their cable station listing to this satellite dish.

When this dish “hears” a unique identifier for itself, it starts downloading content consisting of schedules of when commercials are supposed to air and the spots (commercials Katy’s team “encoded”). Once there, it can broadcast as needed.

Katy’s CableTime/CableRep/CoxMedia/Suddenlink career

8 months after hire— was promoted to evening supervisor . At peak staff, had 20 Subordinates reporting to her (both full-time and part-time) at that time we “encoded” about 2000 spots per week. Katy also started developing the training manual for the proprietary software used in her job and was responsible for an organized approach to training for all of her workers.

2001 she transitioned from male-to-female on the job.

2002 left partner of 8 years for another woman. New relationship was abusive and a “train wreck”.

2003/2004 Restructuring of company: Katy’s department had become downsized over the years and was now absorbed into the Production Department. The position of Production Department head was not a position open to competition for hire, and was retained by one of her prior subordinates

2005-2006 Special Projects given to Katy on a case-by-case basis. Responsible for the Encoding aspect of the integration of the Oklahoma and North Carolina territories after being bought by Suddenlink. Responsible for scheduling of 30 minute programming on Cable Access in Bakersfield, CA.

Understanding Katy's Life Decision, her "Lifestyle":

Many of my relatives in my family, whom I love dearly, and miss greatly have been known to say, "I don't understand" when it comes to the time in my life where I stood upon the principles I was raised with and owned myself by becoming the sex I always knew I am—Female. Along the way, people have been estranged, hurt, and are still wounded. Perhaps this series of basic lessons in this phenomenon will help.

When I was about 16, my mother handed me a clipping from the newspaper...this is the poem that was written on it.

THE MAN IN THE GLASS

by Dale Wimbrow, (c) 1934
1895-1954

**When you get what you want in your struggle for self,
And the world makes you King for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what that man has to say.
For it isn't your Father, or Mother, or Wife,
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the man staring back from the glass.
You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,**

**For he's with you clear up to the end,
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.
You may get what you want down the pathway of years,
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the guy in the glass.**

This simple poem came to be the best gift my mother ever gave me. It taught me for the first time to be true to myself. It has been a lesson I have had to learn over and over again. But, it is one of those lessons that is touchstone to all of our lives.

In this journey and becoming of myself I have been called ill, crazy, sick, sexually perverse, and have lost good friends and cherished family. My heart has been broken many times. But, always there my spirituality held my relationship with God and this poem continues to tell me that I must live truthfully as my own woman. That this is God's will.

Lifestyle:

Being a lesbian, and being a male-to-female transsexual is not a life style. If it were, then I should be making tons of money at it, partying every night in clubs, ripping out awakening rock songs, and having a ton of fun. It is also not a set of behaviors, or a "style" of living. I think I have established already in this publication that I follow the drum that the Goddess handed to me, and no one else's. There is not some lesbian or transsexual code that I follow. I follow the truth I know and the morality that is my heart. This is something that I know for a fact is not a sin. It is something that I have spent much spiritual time with God in discussion of. There are days when it is not easy, there are days when I relax and can breathe....these are the days just like you have in your life and are no different. We each live the best way we know how.

Paradigms:

As I educate on gay and transgender topics, there is one overriding paradigm I use that I believe is truth and gives perspective to all of "this" That paradigm is Diversity.

From my earliest walks at home I noticed the wildflowers growing in the vacant fields near our home. Fields of daisies were breathtaking to behold and enjoy. Even more glorious to behold were fields of Indian Paintbrush, with Bluebonnet, and Mexican Hats (a flower). The contrasting bands of color in these multicolored fields, and even the variety in the fields of pure daisies were a lesson in life. The Goddess created diversity for a reason—for the very survival of us.

The same lesson applies to humans. If we were all the same, we would be boring indeed. Differences in the color of our skins, differences in the people we are sexually attracted, differences in who we know we are inside are part of the spectrum of the human population. All variations were built into the human population to ensure our survival as a people. It is the most simple, most natural, way of being. The only constant is inconsistency, change, and innovation.

Transgender issues are a misunderstood field by many. I feel that to effect change, people must get together and talk. Education is the tool of understanding - and isn't that why we are here on earth- to learn from each other?"

Let us look at a few terms:

TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY: A loose association of people who transgress gender norms in a wide variety of ways. Celebrating a recently born self-awareness, this community is growing fast across all lines, including social, economic, political, and philosophical divisions. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.¹

TRANSSEXUAL: Individuals whose sexual identity does not match their assigned birth sex. Such individuals experience gender dysphoria, or a “disconnect” between who they know they are emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually and their biological makeup. Such persons may or may not pursue hormonal and surgical options to correct this “mismatch” of mind and body.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: The sex/seses one finds romantically/erotically desirous or attractive. Orientation can range from attraction to the opposite sex (hetero), same sex (homo), both sexes (bi), persons of all gender identities (pan) and any variation thereof.¹

GENDER - A sociological construct of what is “male” and what is “female”. Different societies throughout time have had slightly different ideas about what was “masculine”, “feminine”, or “androgynous”. Unfortunately, in our society biological sex and these concepts of character or intermingled and confused.

GENDER IDENTITY: How one sees themselves socially: man, woman, or a combination of both. One may have a penis but prefer to relate socially as a woman, or one may have a vagina but prefer to relate as a man. One might prefer to be fluid, relating sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman,. Or one might not identify as either one, relating androgynously. ¹

SEXUAL IDENTITY: How one sees themselves physically: male, female, or in between. If someone is born female, but wishes to see their body as male in all respects, their sexual identity is male. It is generally rude to speak of such a person as female, since it denies their right to inhabit the social and physical role as is right for them as individuals. Such individuals are called transsexuals whether or not they have had any surgery.¹

Next time, we will look at a few more terms and look at who transgender people are.

While at Bodyworlds at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, there were some other exhibits we took in—most important of which to me was the Cockrell Butterfly Center and Live Insect Zoo. I absolutely love butterflies, both philosophically and they just make me happy as can be.



Butterflies speak to me of my own transformative life and of the possibilities we have while living.

This place was amazing. There was an indoor waterfall and butterflies all over the place. They would land on guests, eat nectar from fruit placed strategically for them in the indoor rainforest, and just display their color for all to see. This little fellow here is a surprising catch. Unsuspecting, while his

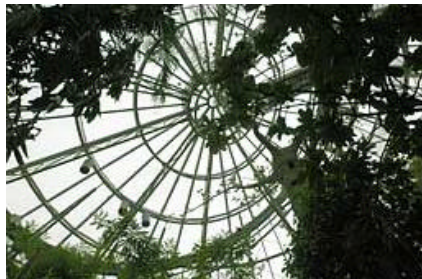
wings are closed he looks plain and brown, when he opens though—the most beautiful iridescent blue is shown to the world—and this professional picture does not do it justice.



Just as astonishing was the Live Insect Zoo. We saw cockroaches (hissing), huge katydids at least the length of my hand, locusts, walking sticks much much much bigger than I have seen in Texas, tarantulas, and more.

But, we also saw the hatching facility for the butterflies. We actually got to watch a butterfly hatch out of its cocoon before our very eyes. It was spectacular. Simply spectacular.

There is so much to do at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. In October there will be a Benjamin Franklin Exhibit



that Robin wants to go back and see. I myself, want to see more features at the planetarium, take another tour of the rock, gem, and mineral collection, and spend more time luxuriating in the Butterfly Center—especially as winter approaches and I don't get to see as much green around me. If at all possible, I encourage each of you to go. In fact, Robin and I are looking to see if next we can get Tammy and Tom (Robin's twin sister

and her husband) to bring Charlie and Michelle (nephew and niece) to see the sights with us. The term WOW does not do this place justice.....

Pictures of Puppies

