

# **Trapped In Blue**

## **The Manuscript Papers**

**Part 2: Tumult, Transition, and Life Goes On....**

**A memoir by Donna Rose**

**10/4/99 =====**  
***My first day at work***

Hi Michelle:

Another big day!!!! How long have we talked about this day? I can't believe it's here. I can't believe this is me. It's as if I were just a spectator watching this person do these things, and to realize that it's me is really amazing to me. I have no idea where I have gotten the strength/courage to actually show up here today. It has built itself up over time, because I know it wasn't here too too long ago. It's one thing to want it and talk about it, and another to do it. And still another to feel comfortable about it. How many people actually follow it through? Pretty amazing.

I actually slept pretty well last night (in bed a little after 10), but was up early. Like, at 3 something. I found a lot to do to keep myself occupied. Like iron. And put away clothes. And straighten up my ever-increasing wardrobe in my big closet. I was tired last night, and decided to put off most of this stuff until I had a little time. And I had the time.

I also had to decide what to wear. I ended up choosing a pair of Anne Taylor slacks (kinda grey green....Julie calls it "Sea Foam") and one of my Anne Taylor silk blouses (ivory). I thought about wearing a jacket, but felt I would be more comfortable without, so I passed it up. I originally had on a pair of black Naturalizer shoes with a pretty low heel, but my feet were sore by lunch so I went home to change into a more comfortable flatter pair....They're doing better now....

I also looked at the 2-bedroom that I can rent. It's very nice. I think I'm gonna do it. As I said, I get a free month out of the deal, so it only costs \$11 more over the next 6 months than the one-bedroom that I have now. Gina (from the office) and I and one of the other girls from the office spent some time chatting. They're good people....

Maria's sister had asked if I want to go over to the restaurant to watch the Bills/Dolphins game tonight, but I think I'm just going to go home and take it easy. I have a bunch of cleaning still to do, and just want to make myself a nice dinner, have a couple of glasses of wine, and slow life down a little.

I didn't expect to see much of a reaction, and that's what I got. They had a big production implementation this weekend, and people have been running around fighting fires. We had three new people start today, so I got introduced to them. I was originally supposed to go over and get my new id badge photo at 8 this morning, but I wanted to be here in my cube for most of the morning, so I rescheduled it for tomorrow. I went down to drop something off at the secretary (we call them "administrative aides") and we had a very nice chat.

Brian is in DFW. He called just to say "congratulations" and see how my day was going. I thought that was nice of him, and sent him an email thanking him for thinking of me.

I guess that's it for now. I may write more tonight. I can't remember everything right now....it's all like a blur. I made a promise to myself to keep my head up, and look people in the eye, and display on the outside the happiness and satisfaction I feel on the inside. So far, I have done that. And when this day is over, those are the things I will remember. Not necessarily what I wore, or what I did at lunch....but how I felt. I will never forget this day.

Luv,

Donna

**10/5/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

>> *I was surprised that you went with pants on the first day, but I guess you decided to go conservative on the first day.*

I wore a pant suit today. It still had the tag on it when I took it off the hanger this morning. It's from Macy's. There are very few people who work here who wear dresses or skirts. I need to improve my shoe assortment before I get too far into the dress/skirt arena. This suit really does look good on me, though, and is very very comfortable.

I'll fill you in on details. It would probably be better to do that over the phone. Otherwise, I could be typing for hours. I'll try to give you a holler when you get home. I have electrolysis from 7-9 tonight to begin the battle of the regrowth. I've cut out the early morning weekday appointments, as it's not good to put makeup over freshly plucked skin.

I saw a beautiful pendant advertised in our Sunday paper. It is gold and silver, and has a diamond on it. On the back it has the serenity prayer, which is one of my favorites. It arrived the other day, and is just beautiful. I had trouble putting it on this morning, as the clasp is teeny and although I am doing very well with my nails, it just wouldn't work. One of the gals here at work put it on for me, and it looks nice....

I'm having lunch today with another TG who found my website somehow. We've emailed a few times, and spoken by phone, so today is lunch. She's married with kids, and it sounds like her situation is similar to mine of 18 months ago. Her wife has threatened to take the kids and leave the state if they ever find out. Sound familiar?

On top of the success I felt at work yesterday, my Bills went out and pounded the Dolphins. What a wonderful way to end the day!!!

Well, I have to go over to the main building. Wish me luck. I'll talk to you later....

Donna

**10/6/99 =====**

Today was another day filled with interesting new experiences. I'm finding that as each day passes, I get more and more confident. In everything. I decided to wear a dress today. My heels are sore from my shoes rubbing on them yesterday, so I wanted to wear something where I could wear a fairly casual shoe. I have just the perfect dress....

I had a couple of appointments today. One was with the dentist. I know the dentist pretty well, and have had a bit of a toothache lately. I don't know if it's something going on with the tooth, or something that is a by-product of the jaw surgery. It has been tender for quite a while. Elisabeth has made it clear that she does not want me traveling in the same circles that she does, and that includes our dentist. But I like our dentist, it's very convenient, and I don't want to have to start out brand new with a new one. So I called the dentist on Monday. I explained that I was dealing with a very delicate situation, and that rather than discuss it over the phone, I'd rather do it in person. I expressed concern that this would somehow affect Elisabeth or Matt, and she assured me that whatever it was, it would remain confidential. So I set up an appointment for today. I called this morning to confirm my appointment. I talked with the receptionist, who I always have fun joking around with. I asked if the dentist had explained that this was a delicate situation, and she said yes, but that she didn't know any of the details. I told her it would all become clear with I got there....

So 10:00 rolls around, and I go to the dentist. I go into the office, and the receptionist greets me and asks if she can help me. I say that I have an appointment. She looks puzzled, and starts looking over her schedule. She asks who the appointment is with, and I tell her. She asks what the last name is, and I told her. At this point, she still has no clue. She says that she needed to go and check with the dentist. So she went back, and the dentist must have clued her in, because she came back around the corner with a big grin on her face and told me to go back....

They were all wonderful. I have had lots of compliments over these last couple of days. On the makeup. On the style of dress. I don't know how much of it is just fluff, but people are VERY surprised. One friend in the other building saw me yesterday and said that he would never have believed I could have turned out so well. It has been pretty wild. One lady at work called me "stunning". I'm sure that not everyone shares these sentiments, but at least they're not stoning me yet....

At lunch I went to the apartments and told them that I'll take the larger one. I don't really need it, but decided that I can't have a roommate or a visitor with the one I have, even if I wanted to, and if I could choose any apartment in the entire complex (as for location and view), this one would be it. So I gave them \$100 to hold it. I move in on November 1. I get the month of December for free.

I had electrolysis yesterday from 7-9pm. I have it again tonight from 6-9. I'm planning to schedule 6 hrs a week or so for a while to keep up with the regrowth. So far, not a problem....I had to head over there directly from work yesterday. I didn't want to lie there on the table in my work clothes, so I stopped by the Thrift Store and bought a pair of shorts and a shirt for \$2.50. It was wonderful. The parking lot was full of Latino looking studs, and in the old days I would have been far too intimidated to even get out of my car. Not anymore.

**10/6/99 =====**

I just got back from electrolysis, and am watching a little of the Diamondbacks game before calling it a night. I'm kinda tired. I have an appointment with my psych tomorrow. I haven't seen her in at least 6 weeks. Needless to say, alot has happened in that time. I doubt I'll run out of things to talk about.

**10/7/99 =====**

This is Day 4. So far, so good. I don't think I could have asked for much better. It's not like a marching band greets me at the door or anything, but I have no problem being me and no problem with who I am at work. If others have a problem....I haven't heard about it. But it wouldn't surprise me.

I had electrolysis last night from 6-9. Attacking the regrowth is MUCH easier than the "scorched-skin" strategy that we needed to use when we cleared large areas the first time around. When I go in the evenings, I have a girl named Angie work on me. We get along very well. I sometimes bring movies to watch. A couple of days ago I brought her some dinner (Steak Supreme Chilupa's from Taco Bell...we're addicted to them). Everyone who works there makes it a point not to talk about any of the other clients. Ange mentioned last night, however, that there are at least a couple of clients who are "infatuated" with me. Fat chance of anything ever happening there. I didn't want to know who they were....

Fashions for the day: Charcoal grey high-waist pants, white top, black Liz Claiborn blazer, black shoes with maybe an inch heel. Very chic....

**10/8/00 =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>I can't believe that your first week on the job as Donna went so smoothly.*

True. I don't know what I thought might happen, though. I think that perhaps I thought I would be more nervous. Or uncomfortable. But that hasn't happened.

*>Have you felt distracted by any of this?*

No, I don't think so. If anything, I feel more focused. I have less opportunity for "socializing", so I sit in my cube and do my work and forget all about what I look like on the outside...,

*>Things seem to have become very quiet with your wife in the last couple of weeks.*

Speak of the devil. She called tonight and left a message. It was a "guilt" message. How could you do this....Matt is a mess...He's not doing well in school.... It's hard to hear but that doesn't change my conviction that a big part of the problem isn't so much what I'm doing as the hard line she has drawn in the sand and the fallout from that.

**10/8/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's almost quitting time. I could use a trip over to Applebee's for a couple of happy hour drinks and some snappytizers, but don't have anyone to go with and I'm not going alone. Kevin called, and we set up a "date" to do that next Thursday, and it got me thirsty for a couple of long island ice teas....

During lunch I went down to Tempe. I had a couple of things I wanted to do. First, I wanted to see Sandra. You may remember her. She runs the modeling studio and helped me at the beginning. She kinda dissed me when things started to get serious about a year ago...Anyways, I got the urge to go down and see her and show her how far I had come. She seemed genuinely happy to see me, and had lots of questions, and looked very different herself. It was good to see her.

Afterwards, I went to a photography studio a couple of miles from Sandra's studio. One of the gals that I have met went there for some "glamour" photography, and was just thrilled with the people and the results. Although I do not want any "glamour" in my photographs, I'd like some professional pics to document the beginning of this part of the journey. The girls there were very nice, and they're having a "special" sitting price of only \$14.95 (they do the makeup and wardrobe and whole 9 yards...). That sounds like a good investment for a couple of hours of fun. I was worried that they'll do the makeup to make me look like a tart (which I am not!), but after talking to them, I feel pretty comfortable. I may set something up for the weekend.

I'm still concerned for my job here. But I'm feeling more confident in my ability go get another one as Donna if I need to.

=====  
NEWS FLASH...  
=====

In the middle of writing this, Brian and Bill came into my cube and asked if they could talk to me. We went into the big conference room and shut the door. Usually, that's bad news....

Brian has been in DFW all week. The first time we saw each other was today.

Anyways, they sent one of the junior people down to deal with some contractors that we hired, who are now playing hardball with XYZ. I guess it got to a point where they won't work with the junior guy anymore. So Bill and Brian want to send me down to talk with these guys. This is right down my alley....

So, I'll be arriving in DFW on Monday. For the week. I have had other companies in positions like these guys have XYZ. They coded a project for us, and were paid for the time it took them to code the project, but now they say they OWN the code that they developed and all the DATA. XYZ was negligent in making sure the proper paperwork and waivers had been signed. They need someone to play hardball with these guys, and figured I had more "balls" than anyone on this team, so I'm the one.

After our chat, Bill left the room so Brian and I could talk. He asked how things were going. I told him that from my perspective, they were going well. But I knew that others here were having trouble with it, but I'm sure that he has already had to deal with that. He says he had already had a few "conversations" on the topic, and wanted to talk to me as a "friend" about some of the observations. First, he said that one of the interesting things is that some of the people who felt they could deal with it are having a tougher time now that they have to "see" it. I told him I expected that, as there is a big difference between knowing, and seeing.

He also said that a few people had mentioned that my makeup was kinda "heavy". It has been heavier than most women in this group (who frankly don't look like they wear ANY), but I don't think it has been overly-so. I told him that people weren't used to seeing Dave wear ANY makeup, so in my mind ANYTHING was probably too heavy for a lot of people. I asked him if he felt that what I am wearing today is too much, and he said no, but he just wanted to mention that it had been discussed, and to bring it to my attention and I could handle it any way I felt was appropriate.

He also mentioned that someone said I wore an "evening gown" the other day. I laughed. I did wear a black dress the other day, but it was certainly not an "evening gown". I told him that pretty much no matter what I do, there will be people who have a problem with it, and I'm ready to compromise where I can for the sake of team harmony. To a point.....

I told him that he could make up his own mind, and what I had hoped they would have done at their meeting about me was to explain that I'm new at all of this, and am still very much learning. When I look into the mirror, I still see "Dave", and makeup is probably a way for me to compensate for that. I don't apologize for it, but in the letter I wrote to them I asked for their patience while I learn, and find out what works for me and I in turn am sensitive to their problems with it.

I strongly urged him to have another meeting with my group about me and my situation. I don't think they got across what this is really about in the first one. Now that we have spent a week together, and they have actually seen me, I felt that communication was important, as long as it was "constructive" and not "destructive". He is going to try to arrange that for next week sometime, while I am in DFW.

He also mentioned my current situation with Jason, one of the other managers. Jason is the one I came down to Dallas with last time, and who has been pushing me and I have been pushing back. He is not happy with me, and I am not happy with him.....

Anyways, it has been a long day. I'm gonna head home. I just called you to tell you some of this stuff, but you're out and about. Oh well. If you want me to call sometime tomorrow, let me know when you'll be around. Or call me tonight if you wanna chat....

There's still more to tell, but I'm ready to leave. My wife called here today. Our chat did not go well. No big surprise there.

Donna

10/9/99 9:27 am =====

**From: Michelle**

**Re: My previous email to her, titled "Makeup and Wardrobe Issues"**

Hi Donna,

As far as I am concerned, all of those unnamed people who are cowardly enough not to say anything to your face about what you where ON your face are full of S%\*\$! And your wardrobe has been conservative as far as I can tell from your descriptions. You want to know what I think it is? I think that it's the same thing I see whenever I hear some women comment on some TG or TV that they saw on the television or someplace and they complain "Hell!, They looked better as a woman than I do on my best day!" Sound familiar? That's what I think is going on with some of them. Not all of them, but a few. That and seeing another person make the decision to live their life in a chosen gender rather than the one they were born under makes some people uncomfortable with their own sexuality and this is their way of trying to distance themselves from their own discomfort about themselves!!! So I say screw them. They wouldn't go to some of the other women around there and say that they were wearing more makeup than the other woman or that they were TOO DRESSED up for work. Give me a break! You come to work looking nice and it's a issue. Any other woman gets dressed up a little or wears a little nore makeup than usual and they get compliments. Why should you be singled out because you're not a gentic female. If it becomes a major issue I would make a quick call to HR and mention the word "harassment" and I guarantee you that this BS goes away in a hurry. They don't want a law suit on thier hands and they know that they are in no position to challenge you on this because they know they would lose big time!!! OK, I'm done getting on my soap box. It just pissed me off a littleabout how petty some people are.

Michelle

***My response:***

Hi Michelle:

Your reply made me smile....

The fact that they made it an issue doesn't really bother me. I talked with Maria this morning, as I went over to her office on Tuesday to have her take a couple of photos. I asked her if she thought I was wearing too much makeup when she saw me, and she said "Absolutely NOT! You looked FANTASTIC!" I told her what had happened and she said they were screwed in the head. I know that she likes to stroke some of the gals on how they look (TS/TG/TV folks eat that stuff up big-time), but I told her before I started full-time that any suggestions/comments/criticisms would be more helpful than harmful for me, and I want her to be HONEST with me. I don't need fluff. When it comes to clothes, makeup....whatever. So in my mind, it comes down to the fact that they don't really mind if I come to work as a woman, as long as I don't look like one....

My work clothes are good, expensive clothes. Ann Taylor. Liz Claiborn. Ralph Lauren. Unfortunately, I have a "thing" for quality. Whether it's in a car, or a stereo, or clothes. They are very appropriate. And I know that.

It's almost noon, and I'm at work. I've been here for a couple or three hours. Since I won't be here next week, I need to do a few things before I leave.

I'm meeting Maria at 1 to do a little shopping. I better get back at it.

I'll talk to you later....

Donna

***Her response:***

Hi Hon,

My final thoughts on your coworkers attitude about your makeup and wardrobe...F#%\* 'em!!!

Michelle

**10/13/99 =====**

***From: my sister-in-law, Stacey  
(her response after finding out about my situation)***

Hi Donna:

It was great to get your message. You sound happy, even though things have been difficult for so long. It seems that you are finally heading down the right path to make your life what you want. Please keep me up to date on some events in your life and know that I am here to listen if you ever need someone.

I agree with you that, "I think each of us has an obligation to ourselves to live our lives, as opposed to having others live our lives for us". Remain strong and know that those who are accepting of us and the changes we make in life are the ones we need to depend on. Have a great day and I'll "chat" with you soon.

Stacey

**10/14/99 =====**

***From: Becky Allison  
Re: A previous note, titled "One Week Full-Time"***

Hi Donna,

Doesn't it seem so natural to be living the right life - finally? Soon you won't be able to imagine yourself any other way. You are probably much more an attractive woman than your co-workers anticipated. They were looking for a guy in a dress. In fact, they would feel less threatened if you had shown up looking unpassable. As it is, some of them feel their masculinity at risk to know that someone they considered a "normal guy" could suddenly emerge as a "normal girl." (Who knows, perhaps it's a fantasy for some of them, and to see someone actually DO it blows them away.)

> *The home front continues to look bleak. I have not spoken with my son for  
> anything since Labor Day. My wife and I have had some very hard,  
> heart-wrenching chats, but things continue to go round and round, and always  
> end up in the same place. Her brother feels that I have been consumed by  
> Satan, and have succumbed to temptation. I wrote back that I felt that  
> feelings of hate and fear and bigotry were far better examples of that than  
> I. But he is certainly entitled to his opinion...*

You know how I feel about fundamentalist bigotry. It's no sin to be the person you were made to be, have always been. True, breaking up a marriage and alienating one's family is not a good thing. I wish it hadn't been necessary for you or for me. But when the alternative is to drop out of productive life



completely, transition becomes an easier choice. The longer you go, the more contentment and peace you realize.

You must stay strong in view of the possibility that your family (other than your mom) may not have any further relationship with you. That is so hard to accept, but it must be prepared for.

Congratulations on the early success; I'm very confident it will continue for you. Hope to see you soon.

Love,  
Becky

**10/9/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's almost 1 am. I just got back from my evening out a little while ago. It was very "interesting". And it was good to see friends, as well...

I have another comment on the wardrobe thing. I was in to work for a few hours this morning. I had a skirt and sandals on. Brian showed up just as I was leaving. He didn't say anything about my wardrobe, but he took one look at my toenails, which are painted, and he made a comment something like "You even painted your toenails?". I'm sure that every single thing I do for Donna will piss off/offend/startle someone. And as long as I do my job and keep things professional, they can kiss my a\$\$\$. They have no idea as to the magnitude of the things I do. And the day I stop doing something for fear of how it will be accepted by THEM will be a cold day in He##!

Speaking of He##, Elisabeth called me tonight and left a message to read me an email from her brother. In it, he basically said that I had succumbed to Satan, and my soul was lost. It implored her to turn to God, and away from me. I wrote back briefly, and said that if they wanted to see me as Satan, that was their right. I guess we won't know who is right until we meet again in a far better place.

The meeting tonight is for a new group – TGHarmony - and represented a broad, broad cross section of the TG community. Members of many different groups were there. There was a contingent from the local BDM group. There were a couple of psychologists. There were FTM, MTF, CD, and even a couple of "interested others". There must have been 50 people there. We went out to Maria's restaurant afterwards, and I had the best piece of lasagna I think I have ever had.

Well, I'm tired and I'm going to call it a day. You take care, and have a great Sunday. I'll call you on Monday during the day when I find out what my travel arrangements will be, and am looking forward to seeing you....

Donna

**10/10/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's Sunday evening, and I am shaken. It has been a very very very difficult day. Not for my being Donna, but for me and Elisabeth. I wrote and told you about the message she read to me last night. The one about me being seduced by Satan. She called here this morning, and we talked. We yelled. We cried. We talked about everything...from my inability to stop this to money to the future. It was far too intense and long and wide-ranging to even begin to write about it here. We talked for 90 minutes. It was awful. We're both dealing with so much pain.

After that, I was out all afternoon. While I was out, Elisabeth called and left a message. She said she had told her parents EVERYTHING. She told them about me living as Donna, and changing my name and all of it.

I am so glad I am going to Dallas tomorrow. You have no idea. Just getting away will be an unbelievable relief. I wouldn't be surprised if Elisabeth's folks hop a plane out here tomorrow. Now that they know what is happening, and just how hurt their little girl is, I would be surprised if they could stay home and do nothing. A confrontation with her parents is something I absolutely do not need right now. Oy.

I did something this morning that surprised even me. I went out and sat by the pool for an hour to get some sun. In my bathing suit. It was pretty quiet there, and no one seemed to take any notice, but considering the fact that I couldn't even go into a store by myself not too very long ago, and here I am sitting out by the pool in a bathing suit....that sure is a dramatic difference.

Donna

**10/11/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

Things went great with mom tonight. As you said....it wasn't even an issue. We went to Outback Steakhouse and had a nice dinner, and then I went back to her house to help her do some stuff she has wanted done on her computer. I think I had something that didn't agree with me, as I've had an upset tummy for the last hour, but perhaps it's because I'm just not used to eating that kind of food anymore.

I talked with one of the managers here this morning. I asked if the people that I usually deal with know about my situation, and she said she met with them yesterday and told them. She said it shouldn't be a problem, and it wasn't. I went to lunch with one of the managers here from Scottsdale, and a couple of the programmers that I am here to deal with. Everyone has been very good at using Donna instead of Dave, and *she* instead of *he*....

Well, it's almost midnight so I'm going to get ready for bed. Take care and I hope you're feeling better tomorrow....

Donna

**10/15/99 8:59pm =====**  
***From: my wife***

Dave,

The gap is too wide now. You are doing things that will NEVER settle well with Matt or I. In my eyes, when you chose to change your name, you chose to end our marriage. I see us going nowhere...what's the point in staying together if it is only going to cause us constant hurt and pain. I just hope we can settle this peacefully and fairly. We both love each other and always will....that we know. But as far as a marriage, that just can't work with what you are doing.

**10/16/99 =====**  
***Journal Entry***

The evening with mom last night was good. I think I mentioned that she has a dance at the Senior Center every Friday from 7 to 9, so I got here fairly early and we went to Country Kitchen up near your place on Collins for a quick dinner. I was in the mood for pancakes, for some reason....Very tasty.

I decided to hang here at her house while she was dancing the night away, so I watched a little baseball and installed a couple of things on her computer for her and answered an email from Elisabeth. She had sent me an email yesterday morning, and had asked me alot of questions in it, and I answered the questions as honestly as I could. Apparently, she did not like the answers, and it seems to me we are on the verge of that dreaded "D" word. This does not come as a surprise, but similar to my own appearance at work, there is a big difference between knowing it will happen, and it actually happening....

Today I have a few chores to do for mom, and my flight leaves a little after 5...

**10/16/99 =====**  
***Journal Entry***

I'm back at my apartment. I already did a load of wash, and unpacked a bit. It's almost midnight, and I'm pooped.

The trip home went ok. For some reason, they upgraded me to first class. I was in the first row. I don't know why, but I'm not complaining. The guy next to me tried to strike up a conversation. My luggage did not come off with everyone else's, so I had to go to the office. The guy there acted all sweet on me. You should have seen him. They finally tracked down my stuff (after well over an hour). Sheesh.

I'd write more, but I'm too pooped to pop. I will tomorrow. I hope your party went ok, and you're feeling better. I have a bit of a scratchy throat, but I think it has more to do with my voice than any type of "bug". I hope so....

**10/17/99 =====**  
***Journal Entry***

It has been a long day. In many ways....

Mentally, it has been draining. I talked for quite a while with my wife this afternoon. She needed to know my address so she can serve me with the divorce papers this week. We both addressed the hope that we can keep things as "friendly" as possible, but I see our positions as being so far apart that things will eventually get nasty. Just a hunch. It makes me ill.

I had electrolysis this morning. 8-11:30. The battle now is regrowth, so Angie did my upper and lower lip....I'm settling into a regular schedule. Wednesday and Sunday nights from 6 until 9.

I went to "Head Shots" for pictures. They did the makeup fairly heavy, and said it needed to be like that so as not to get washed out in the lights. Perhaps. If nothing else, it was kinda fun. I loved the way they did my hair with the hot rollers, so we talked about that for a little while and I am going to try it myself this week. I have an appointment for next Saturday to look at the proofs. I have low expectations (when it comes to my own appearance, that is), but we'll see....

I had dins, and a wine cooler, and should spend some time straightening up, but I am tired. It's 9:30. I think I'll get ready for bed....

**10/18/99 =====**

***Journal Entry***

It's only 10:30am, but it feels as though my day has been in high gear for quite a while. I woke up at 4:30, and decided to get up and do some stuff around the apartment. I ironed, and arranged my closet, and generally "putzed"....

I really liked the way the girl at the photog studio yesterday did my hair. Since I had a little extra time on my hands, I decided to spend some of it trying to get the hang of using my curling iron. I am very pleased with the results. It must be beginner's luck.....

I had an appointment for my shot at 7, and stopped by Maria's on my way past to drop off a good-morning cup of coffee for her. I know she misses that!

I told you that I have a "snack" bowl up on the shelf in my cube. I usually put Peanut M&M's in it. People snack on it when they go up and down the main aisle. This morning I filled it with mini Snickers bars. I have had a couple of people who have thus far avoided me come to take one, and say 'hi'. I don't know if they had a meeting about me while I was gone or not. But I thought it was odd that some of these people are coming by all of the sudden. Maybe it's just the Snickers....

I am about to call my lawyer to set up a time to meet him regarding the divorce. I am going home at lunch to pick up my mail, and to do a few things around the house. I have a meeting with Brian this afternoon to go over the trip. All in all, a pretty busy day...

**10/18/99 =====**

***Journal Entry***

I had a busy lunch....I had to go to my bank to deposit my check. Go to my wife's check to put some in her account. Stop at my apartment complex to pick up a package and chat about my move. And drive the 20+ minutes up to my house. When I got there, there was a bunch of stuff on the table. All my mail. Some things for me to sign. A card for me. My wedding photo album, with a note saying to take a last look because I was "throwing all this away". That was crappy of her – it's like emotional blackmail. She didn't need to do that.....This is hard enough without doing things like that.

**10/18/00 5:03 pm =====**

From: Michelle  
To: Me

Hi Again,

I so sorry that you are finally having to deal with all of this stuff about the divorce. We've known for a long time that it would have to happen. But talking about it and actually doing it are two entirely different things. You're about to go through one the most painful experiences known to the human heart and that is to close a relationship. Knowing that you are the reason that the divorce must happen is not going to make it any easier because I know that you are a kind and decent person and that you are only doing what you have to do to survive. It is that decency that will make you vulnerable to some bad decision making to assuage that sense of guilt you may be feeling. Take care my friend. As always, I am here to talk to.

Michelle

***My response:***

Hi Michelle:

Thank you for your frank words of advice. Much of it I know to be true.

I am sick to my stomach. I mean that physically, as well as figuratively. Since late afternoon. I just feel awful. I feel like I'm going to be sick. I have no energy. I'm in no mood to eat, and am actually afraid to send anything down there, but all I have had all day is a yogurt. I think I'm going to curl up in a ball, take one of my sleeping pills, and hope that it does its work....

I finally talked with Matt tonight. It brought a smile to my face. It was a high point of the day.

I talked to my lawyer late this afternoon. I had questions. Elisabeth refuses to even acknowledge my new name, as her marriage certificate says she is married to "David Rosen", so that is who she is making up the papers for. She had better check with her attorney first...

Brian was extra nice to me today. I don't know what gives. He commented on my clothes. Very curious....

I talked with someone from Rochester who I used to do work for today. She is partners in the company the just hired my brother. She knows about my work, and in fact I would be a good fit in their company. She called this afternoon to "chat", and we did for an hour. She wants to meet with me when I am home over Thanksgiving. This should get very interesting soon. That's my second "interview" for while I'm there....

Your words on my divorce ring true. It is, and probably has been, inevitable for a long time. I suppose we both hold on to our marriage because it's all we know, and to lose it is like death in a way. To lose it is to admit defeat. To lose it is to completely sever the tie that has bound our lives together for a very very long time, however tenuous it may be now.

I'd talk more about this, but I just feel awful. I'm going to try to get some rest. I'll try to write more later....

Thanks again. I appreciate your candor.

Donna

**10/19/99 =====**  
*Journal Entry*

I'm feeling a little better today. What a night. I felt just awful. Nauseous. Tummy was just twisted in knots. Light headed. Chills. I got into sweat pants and sweat shirt. Absolutely no energy. I slipped in and out of sleep for a while before I did take one of my little sleepers, and actually slept pretty well. I felt considerably better this morning, but am still feeling the effects.

I talked to Matt last night. Elisabeth was collecting things that she wanted me to take, and he was playing his drum set, so I listened to him for a while. We ended up chatting for 15 minutes or so. It was very good....

I did stop home today during lunch to pick up some stuff and do a little work around the house. I can't make a habit of it, as it takes me 40 minutes roundtrip to drive, and I'm just not going to be the maid when I don't even live there.

Nice wardrobe today. Black pants. Pink blouse. Very comfortable.

My nail tech can't fit me in until a week from now, and I need to find something closer. I've had a couple of people suggest their nail person, so I made an appointment with another one for Thursday. We'll see how that goes.

**10/20/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's after beddie-bye time, but I'm spending a few minutes unwinding so I thought I'd write real quick...

It has been another "interesting" day. I started to write to you earlier, but don't think I ever sent it, so if I did and any of this is repetitive, I'm sorry...

Brian stopped by at 9:30 and said that I was invited to a meeting with a Vice President at 10, and he would forward an email regarding what was to be discussed. As it turns out, it dealt with my trip there to Dallas last week. I think I mentioned that I had been sent as the result of a series of events that caused a very tense relationship between my company (XYZ) and one of our vendors. This company has developed some software, which we use to control our inventory, and now our companies are haggling over price, etc. It turns out that the president of this consulting company, whom I worked with last week, called the Vice President to praise the work that I had done, and had suggested that I am uniquely qualified to act as a liaison between our companies in transitioning this software from them to us. It was an unexpected compliment. It also means I will be back in DFW for a bit of time between now and Xmas.

I had electrolysis from 6 until 9. Fun fun fun. My friend, Amanda, invited me over to her place for a bite to eat afterwards and I was there for a couple of hours. Hence, I am a bit late to bed.

I have not heard from Elisabeth today. We spoke last night, and we are already arguing over money. She expects me to cover all her bills. I cannot do so. It is Wednesday and I still haven't gotten the papers from her. I have come to the point where I want them to get here so we can get this mess over with and move forward with life.

I am going to a conference in Milwaukee in November. Several notables will be there. Of most interest to me is Dr. Schrang. I will bring money for a deposit in case I decide I need it....

Well, time for bed. I'll talk to you later.

Donna

**10/22/99 =====**

Howdy Michelle:

I went to a new nail tech yesterday. She was very nice. It is a bit closer for me. She is much faster. And I like her "shapes" better. Unfortunately, she is in a hotsy-totsy salon and fills cost \$15 more than with Bo. If I stop seeing Bo it will hurt her feelings....

I went out to dinner at Black Angus last night with Kathleen....my shopping partner. I haven't been eating much this week since my stomach thing on Monday, so it was nice to have a substantial meal. I was feeling kinda down for some reason when I got home, but ended up falling asleep on the couch so it must have been one of those passing things.

The last time I had talked with Elisabeth, it was about money. She wanted more. I told her I could not give more. The conversation did not end on a happy note. I sent her an email yesterday to try to make her understand that I am not doing this to put her in a vulnerable position, but I absolutely cannot leave myself without a source of income. I still haven't gotten the divorce paperwork, and am beginning to think she is dragging this thing out more than it needs to be....

Well, I gotta get to work. I'll write again later...

D

**10/22/99 =====**

*Journal Entry*

I had my free flu shot today. The nurse told me to keep my arm active. It aches. I can't keep it active when it aches....Brian and I walked over together. There are some big changes ahead for this company, and this group, in the very near future. We are about to be bought by someone, but no one knows by who yet. And there are rumors that the group I'm in will be either restructured, or sold off separately. All very hush-hush. But it really doesn't matter to me. I just do my job, and whatever happens happens.

I stopped at my house during lunch. I didn't feel like cleaning anything. I played with my dogs and enjoyed a beautiful day. It just doesn't feel like home anymore.

One of the people that I've known for a long time and works in another area stopping into my cube to see how I'm doing, and we had a nice chat. He figures the reason some people are uncomfortable with this is because of how I look. He says the men are uncomfortable because I'm more attractive than 3/4 of the gals here (those are his feelings, not mine), and that freaks them out, and the gals feel uncomfortable for the same reason. I don't know if I agree with that, but I do know I look better than I ever thought I would. Or could. And the prospect of "blending" into society as a female is not as remote as it once seemed to be to me...

I think about relationships from time to time. What lies in my future? I don't know. I try to visualize it. Sometimes I see romance scenes, and I never see myself as the male. I'm always the female. And it just seems to be right to me for men and women to be together. But for me to allow that would be a major major major hurdle. I'm not saying it won't or can't happen. But it is a huge leap to even consider it. I have a hard time thinking of myself with another female as well. I fear that I would feel the need to be the "husband", and I don't want that. All in all, I find it all very confusing. I'm not ready for any of it.

I am looking forward to going up to Milwaukee in November. I am inclined to schedule an SRS date with Dr. Schrang while I'm there. We shall see. It is fairly close to NY, and my sister has said she will come to visit. I have a friend in Madison, WI, who will stop by as well. He does a very good job (although pretty expensive). I don't know the specifics of things yet, but all in all I'm seriously considering it....

I do think that the wheels turn slowly. Elisabeth called me to ask me where we keep the deed to the house, as her lawyer needs to see it. Oh well.

**10/22/00 =====**

***From: Carolyn B. – a good friend of many years  
(Her response to me after finding out about my situation)***

Dee,

I think I had better start with Dee as I still think of you as Dave. This all seems so unreal. I guess because it is such a shock. It will take some getting used to. I never was that close with Dave, but I am looking forward to getting to know Donna. I feel like I should be welcoming you to the sisterhood. You must have such great insight to share on the "man" world and the differences you face everyday. In a way, it must be very exciting.

I know that for myself, I strive to be a caring , understanding, loving person. I am happiest when I am surrounded by the same type of person. I know that you are that type of person no matter what your gender is so I consider myself lucky to have you as a friend.

**10/23/00 =====**

Last night was an interesting one. Karen called and asked if I wanted to go to a movie. I told her fine, but I needed something to eat as I hadn't had much all day. So we arranged to meet over near her house at a plaza that just so happens to be the location for my favorite restaurant, The Claim Jumper. Well, as I was on my way over there, she asked if I would mind if her neighbor, Janet, joined us.

So we decided to skip the movie and go to the restaurant where we could talk. And drink. Karen was wondering how Janet would handle this, as she is a very "straight" and rigid type of person. She seemed to handle it fine. She had questions, some regarding boobs because she wants a pair like mine, and although I'm sure she felt a little awkward at first, we had a very nice time. Just the gals. They were talking about breast feeding, and penis size, and what pigs men are, and nails, and clothes, and what pigs men are...and several times it hit me just how far I have come. In fact, I am able to offer a very unique perspective on the whole thing....

The place was absolutely mobbed....we waited over an hour for a table so we found a place to park at the bar, and all was well. Eventually, Janet's husband called to say he'd meet us there for a couple of drinks. He got there just as we were having dessert. I was introduced as Donna, a friend of Karen's. He has met me as Dave before, but we didn't tell him anything, and he didn't say anything, so all was well.

I am kinda tired, as I didn't get home and cleaned up until late, and was up at 5am to be at Maria's for ekeetro. I have another appointment for tomorrow night from 6-9pm, and then on Monday for 5-8am. I am having some regrowth, and since I will be out of town all week, I'd like to nip it in the bud.

As I wrote this, I called our old neighbors from Rochester. I've mentioned them before. I usually stay at their house when I go to Rochester alone....before all this happened. They are like second family in many ways, and we love them to death. They are so loving and giving and caring.....just incredible. They have two kids who I have watched grow from 6 year old children to young adults who have graduated from college. In any event, Elisabeth called them last week to tell them what was happening. That, in itself, was a huge step for her. They are the best sounding board I could ever hope for. Mrs. T had a sister who committed suicide at 20 something because of depression, so she knows first hand how difficult things can get in life. Anyways, I talked with Mrs. T for well over an hour, and will see them when I go home over Thanksgiving. This trip is turning into quite the watershed event. It will be the first time that friends who knew me as part of Elisabeth and Dave will meet me as Donna. It is going to be difficult, all the way around. I can already tell it will be emotional. Sigh.

**10/24/99 =====**

*Journal Entry*



This situation that I am handling for work is a time bomb waiting to go off. None of the parties trust each other. I don't think any of them like one another. Everyone has hidden agendas. Except me. I just want to do my job. And that's why I think they selected me to do it.

I worked all day yesterday. From 8 until 5. I have a major implementation this week, and the fact that I'll be in Dallas didn't help things. I'm taking some time off in November that I don't have as far as vacation is concerned, so it will all balance itself out in the end.

I looked at my proofs on Saturday. Some of the shots came out ok. I'm getting a bunch of wallet sizes of a few different "poses", so I'll be sure to send you one :)

Elisabeth and I have been talking. About divorce mediators. She finds divorce lawyers to be on the same rung of the evolutionary scale as car salesmen, and would prefer to try to do this a little more amicably. Some of her thoughts are thoughts I have had as well. For example, I can sign over the house to her, and she can sign over our land up north to me. But as far as making payments and \$\$\$ are concerned, we still have a lot of work to do. She set up a meeting with one next week on Tuesday, 11/2, which is the 20th anniversary of the day we met....

They finally changed my email at work to Donna. It's about time.

I made all the arrangements for moving. I changed the electricity. And the phone. I hired some apartment movers for Sunday (for the big stuff...). All I have to do now is move all my stuff the 100 yards or so to the new apartment.

**10/28/99 11:42 pm =====**  
***From: Mark L.- used to work with me in Rochester***  
***Title: what I value***  
***Responding to the email telling him about myself***

D:

I have been completely immobilized by your e-mail. I appreciate the opportunity to process this offline. I don't think I could have had a dialogue without thinking about this first. My friends know that I am more of a "think out loud" thinker. For me to think BEFORE I speak requires a lot of effort and quiet time to sort out my thoughts- I've needed a lot of quiet time the last day. This is one of the hardest letters I've ever written.

I have to start by saying I respect you for being upfront with me.

I have been trying to define what I feel- Its been very challenging and very difficult. In a book I read a while ago, I wrote down a quote in my dayplanner "...there is no formal difference between the inability to define and stupidity" - I feel really stupid right now.

I realized a way of understanding others by having empathy for them. Not the I-feel-sorry-for-them empathy, but to put myself in that persons shoes and try to feel what they feel & understand their situation, not to rush to judgment. The bible says: " ...restore one another in fear and meekness, considering oneself" . I have learned and grown with this advice. It has been extremely helpful in personal and professional life.

I have to say I am so grieved for the pain you, your wife, son family must have (and still are) going through. I can't say I understand your choice- but I'm a long way from your shoes.

I keep on rewinding to the times we've worked together and I see someone who is intelligent, funny, considerate, has integrity, respect, creativity, sincerity and someone who was patient enough to work with a goofy college kid who needed a job. Whether you realize it or not, you affected my life in a great way.

I have a list of attributes that I collect that describes what I value- you had many of the qualities that I value today. What I keep asking myself is what do I value in people. What is the essence or spirit of a person that I value and how does sexuality fit in?

Simply, I think a person's essence is not in their physical heart, but in their brain.

I did some research and I found a study that I think sums up the sexuality part: "...the organ that appears to be critical to the psychosexual development and adaptation is not the external genitalia, but the brain," Source: Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine (1997;151:298-304)

"Dave" if we talk- If you don't mind, can I call you "D"? Also, please forgive me If I say something that offends you. I've found the best way understand others is to build a mutual trust so a true alternating dialogue can take place. I hope you will realize that I don't have mean intentions if I slip up.

I look forward to talking with you. Our prayers are with you, your family & friends.

**10/29/00 =====**

Hi Michelle:

The trip home seemed longer, and harder, than usual. The traffic was nutso. The plane was jammed. I dunno. But I made it ok. Things have been pretty hectic since I got here. Plane landed at 3. I was at the dentist for a cleaning by 4. I went to take Steph to work after that, and then met my friend Tracy and her Significant Other for dinner on the other side of town at 6:30. Here it is 10pm, and I haven't been home yet. To top it off, I rolled down my window to give the person in the parking garage the ticket and the money, and now it won't go back up! So I'm stuck with it wide open until at least Monday. Good thing it's not supposed to rain here.

I never get the feeling that you're trying to avoid me. Don't even worry about it. I was just glad to have a chance to pass each other for 15 minutes as we did. With your busy schedule, and my commitments to my mom and at work, it's a wonder we see each other as much as we do!

Well, I'm gonna go home to BED. I'm tired. Sweet Dreams....

Donna

**10/30/99 =====**

*Journal Entry*

It has been a lllloooooonnnnnngggg day. I was at the doctor's at 7 for my shot, but they hadn't called me by 8:15, so I left as I was late for my 8 electrolysis appointment. I did go back afterwards, and got in no problem.

The rest of the day was spent moving. Back and forth, back and forth. Box after box and bag after bag. I have 90% of it moved now. The movers are coming tomorrow (for the big stuff) at some point between 7 and 9 am, so I'm going to keep this short. I'm not used to all this physical labor, and my ankles are sore and my arms are sort and my hands are beat. I'm tired....

I had been invited to a couple of parties this evening, and didn't plan to go to either. But there was a couple of TG's who are now married (the only legal same sex marriage in the state of Arizona, we think). They met me one other time.....the day that Maria cleared my upper lip for the FIRST time, way back in April. Back with the hair extensions....I have been wanting to chat with them, so I went to Amanda's party. The gals were there, and needless to say, they didn't recognize me from the last time we met. They were very complimentary, and I enjoyed talking with them.

But here it is....midnight....and I better get home and get cleaned up and get to bed, as the movers will be there bright and early...

**11/1/99 =====**  
*Journal Entry*

Life just gets curiouuser and curiouuser....

It's 4, and I'm on my way out the door. I've been in class all day, and I have an electrolysis appt. at 4:30, but I just wanted to take a sec to say 'hi'.....

I busted my hump yesterday moving. And Saturday. It was the hardest manual labor I have done in a long, long time. Even harder than shoveling that 12 tons of gravel earlier this year. I have met all my neighbors, and they all know me as Donna, and there is something very satisfying about having people know you and meet you and accept you for what you seem to be, rather than on stuff that they knew before. That probably makes absolutely no sense, but I think it's part of the reason I like working at the facility there in DFW lately.

Brian wants me to come down there a day or two early. I told him the earliest I can get out of here is Thursday morning. I have the conference thing with the divorce mediator tomorrow. I'm dropping my car off for some much-needed servicing for the day on Wednesday, and have some much needed electrolysis on Wednesday night. Brian says I may end up going to our brand new facility in Birmingham next week, but we'll see how that goes.

I talked with Elisabeth briefly last night, and it was not a good conversation. Her expectations of our post-divorce arrangements are very different from my own. I told her about how tight money is at the moment, and she was not sympathetic. She expects things to be exactly the same afterwards. She told me that everything I spend money on is a "waste"....nails, clothes, electrolysis, and that the fact that I will spend money on those things before giving the money to them just shows where my priorities are. As I said, it did not go well, and my expectation that this divorce mediator can make any progress is very low.

**11/1/99 =====**  
**To: a friend Donna**

Hi Donna:

Thanks for the compliment on the picture. I have finally gotten to a point where I have always wanted to be.....to be able to "blend". I can pretty much fit in as Donna anywhere I go. For example, I moved over the weekend to another (larger) apartment in the same complex, and I have been meeting all my neighbors. They only know me as Donna....the gal from upstate NY who works with computers. And whereas I used to worry all the time that someone would "read" me, I never give it a second thought now. My voice is a little low, but it'll have to do. I do what I have to do, and I keep my head up and a smile on my face, and it is truly a wonderful thing.

*>Are people at work treating you well, or are there any problems, like with bathrooms or anything?*

At work, there are a couple of different groups of people. The people here in Arizona knew me as Dave, and some of them have a problem with this. But they have been told what is expected of us all (by our HR department), and so they either limit their contact with me, or they ignore me altogether. Which is fine. Others go out of their way to stop by and see how I'm doing. The second group is in Dallas, where I have been doing quite a bit of work lately, and it seems as though that work will continue. They make me feel totally at home and comfortable. It's really wonderful.

The bathroom situation has worked fine. I am supposed to use one specific female restroom here in Scottsdale. There are only a dozen or so people who use it, as it requires a key. I have my own copy of the key. In Dallas, I use whatever washroom I want to use. They do not know me as anything other than Donna, so it is no problem.

*>Do you feel the people who knew you before treat you differently from the new people you meet?*

For the most part, yes. There is something to be said about starting over where no one knew you before. I think that for people who knew you as male, you will always be little more than the male they knew in a dress in their minds. You will always be up against mistakes in name, pronouns, etc. In a new environment, you start fresh, and it really is different..

*>I was referred to as a drag queen in an anonymous public posting by someone in my department  
> at work. So, things may be getting ready to hit the fan.*

It certainly sounds like it. Brace yourself....

*>It has got me to thinking about the unlikelihood of transition in this little town with any semblance  
> of a life afterward. But I hate the thought of giving up my house!*

I moved into a new (larger) apartment over the weekend. I have been back to my house several times since I left there in July, and it no longer feels like "home" to me. I am determined to make my apartment feel like "home", rather than just a rented room.

*>I've been trying to hold out and wait for my kids to all grow up -  
>the youngest is in tenth grade, but on days like this, I just can't  
>imagine two more years of this strange existence in two worlds.*

My son will be 14 next month. People have asked me why I couldn't wait until he was done with high school to do this. Well, unfortunately, any time you do it will be inconvenient for one reason or another. If I could have delayed it, I would have. But when the feelings and the needs to move forward wash over you like a tidal wave, you won't have much of a choice....I have been there.

The double-life thing is a killer. It is like a boat stalled in shark-infested waters. You are not comfortable being either male OR female. I hated it. I detested it. And to be honest, it makes your appreciation for being accepted as female just that much more profound. I suppose it is a right of passage of some sort....I dunno. But I do know that once you get to the other side, it is a wonderful feeling.

**11/1/99 =====**

Hi Cassie:

*>It's just that reality is overwhelming. The closeness of everything, doubting myself.....*

Don't let it overwhelm you. Once you realize that you are the driver of this train, and not a passenger, you will do better. Just keep your perspective. Keep your expectations realistic.

I had everything a person could want. House. Family. Cars. Friends. And I understand that this path chose me. I didn't choose it. I have never doubted myself. Not once. I don't look back. I take little steps, and when (and if) it feels right, I take another one. Little steps. And now, looking back, they have carried me a long way. Doubting yourself will ultimately crush you. There is no answer. Just frustration in searching for something that isn't there. Just accept things for what they are, and take the little steps.

*> Although it does include being lonely!*

Loneliness is bad. I know. But I have had lots of time to think lately, and I don't think I would take a roommate right now even if I could. I want to spend time with me. It's hard to explain....

**11/2/99 =====**

**To: Lois T.**

***Responding to an email she had sent***

Hi Lois:

*> I got a wonderful book called "True Selves". Have you read it???*

You bet I have. I think I suggested it to you. It really is a wonderful book. Some of it applies to me, and some doesn't. The very first time I met with my psychologist, she suggested that I buy it and read it so we could discuss it. And when I told my mom about my situation this past July, I gave her a copy to read, as it explains things far better than I ever could. My sister, my niece, and my brother have all read it as well. I tried to get Elisabeth to read it, but she didn't want to....I think it would help her if she did.

*> I saw your picture that you sent Jo..You look like ME!! I think you look very natural as a woman...are you comfortable with your looks so far??*

I'll take that as a compliment. Thank you. You shouldn't have told me I look like you! Now, if you laugh at me, what does that say??? I am getting comfortable with it, even though it changes from day to day. I have titanic struggles every morning with nasty utensils like curling irons and I'm lucky I'm not covered with burns. I can go anywhere, and am totally accepted as female. People don't even look twice. And that makes me very happy.

*> Are you following the Bills?*

Of course I am! You bet. Those things don't change. I still have a season ticket, even now. I'll be going to a game while I'm up there (11/28 vs. New England).

*> So tell me what is making you happy these days?*

That is a really good question.

*>What do you do so you don't get so down????*

Mainly, I try to keep busy.

**11/2/99 7:37 pm =====**  
**email From: Dan T. (an ex-neighbor – we used to baby sit for him)**

What's going on Donna/A.K.A. Dave,  
How is everything going? I know your life took a 360 degree turn so I can imagine you are still adjusting to the entire change in your life. First of all when I heard about this entire situation, of course I could not believe it. It took a long time to sink in. I think that it was the fact that it was so unexpected. But after I heard the entire story of what happened and thought about it, I knew you would never do this on purpose to hurt Elisabeth or especially Matt. So I knew that something else must be going on, or that you have been battling with this for quite a while. So I went on the one internet site and read just about everything I could on what you are going through. I think it did a very good job of explaining your entire situation. After all of the psychological crap that our family has to deal with especially with my direct family, my grandfather, and myself, I know personally that these types of things are not something that you personally want, but I know for a fact that its physiological and has to do with your overall chemical makeup.(or what you call gender imprint--I think?) I also know from talking with many gay people (thanks to my mom!) that no one wants this, it is just the way they are. All they want to be is the person they feel they really are. I understand this. So to make a long story short, I trust you, and I know you would not do this intentionally, its just the way you were meant to be. Even though I hate to see you and Elisabeth separate  
ESPECIALLY because of Matt, I support whatever both of you think is best. The one thing I hope is that you and Matt stay close, like you have always been. I don't think it matters if your a man or woman, he needs you either way. I hope Elisabeth and Matt see it the same way too.

**11/3/99 8:27 am =====**  
**From: JeElyn T. (an ex-neighbor that we used to babysit when she was young)**

Hi there-  
I am really glad you finally wrote me because I have been so busy with work and school that I haven't had time to call you (or write you- for that matter)!

Ok- Let's get a couple of things right out there in the open-

- 1) Was I shocked? ...that would be an understatement!!
- 2) Does it make me love you any less? ... not one bit!! It doesn't change my feelings for you one bit!!
- 3) Will I be able to call you "Donna" from now on? ... yes, with a little practice and probably a few slip-ups...(calling you 'Dave' a few times when you come visit us near Thanksgiving)
- 4) Do I understand all of this? .. not really but I am willing to listen and learn!
- 5) and lastly- Do I think that you make a good looking woman? ...HELL YA! AND You better stay away from my boyfriend because I get extremely jealous and violent for that matter- ...just kidding!

SO THERE- I hope that you are relieved that I feel that way and I want you to know that no matter what has happened (with you, you and Elisabeth, etc)- I would never, EVER stop talking to you! Dav-- ooops- I mean- DONNA, I am a very open minded person and I owe it all to my parents, my church and my faith in God! They have all taught me what it means to love and accept people for who they are- no matter who they may be! If you feel that Donna is more the REAL you then I can't wait to see her face to face...because I already know who the real Donna is "inside"... and I love that person very much!

I know that you have been through 'a lot' but I truly hope that you are happy- especially just being yourself for once!! It must be a huge relief. I can't imagine keeping that inside all this time. I will pray for you,

Elisabeth and Matt because I know that the road ahead is a long one- and I will do EVERYTHING in my power to help them try to understand and accept all of this- I think that it will come in time (I am hoping anyway) because both of them need you as much as you need them.

I haven't spoken with Elisabeth or Matt yet but I hope to hear from them soon!...they might not want to talk to me after I tell them the way I feel but I hope that Matt will at least think about what I say...(and listen to what Danny has to say, too)...

I am so excited that you are coming over during the holidays (it is only a few weeks away)! I am going to be up to my ass in school work- writing papers and taking my finals but I will try to write you all I can...

I love and miss ya tons...  
JoElyn oxoxoxoxoxoxoxoxo

**11/10/99 =====**

**From: Carolyn B.**

**Responding to email explaining my situation**

Dee:

I think I had better start with Dee as I still think of you as Dave. This all seems so unreal. I guess because it is such a shock. It will take some getting used to. I never was that close with Dave but I am looking forward to getting to know Donna. I feel like I should be welcoming you to the sisterhood. You must have such great insight to share on the "man" world and the differences you face everyday. In a way, it must be very exciting.

I know that for myself, I strive to be a caring, understanding, loving person. I am happiest when I am surrounded by the same type of person. I know that you are that type of person no matter what your gender is so I consider myself lucky to have you as a friend.

You mentioned that you would send me a picture if I wanted. I think I am ready. I didn't think so at first because I was so shocked that I thought I would laugh out of nervousness. As I grow to understand this more and more, I know it has been no laughing matter to you.

**11/11/99 2:31pm =====**

From: Sal (my neighbor in Scottsdale)

To: Me

Re: seeing Donna for the first time (she was VERY nervous)

Amazingly enough, I feel so much better after seeing you. I really wasn't expecting that reaction, but you are definitely more at peace with yourself and I think I understand that this was so huge that you couldn't control it. I have always known that you did not reach this decision lightly, many years of thought have gone into your decision to change. You are the same caring, funny person on the inside that you have always been. Since seeing you yesterday and talking with Ray last night, I have talked with Rob, my Mother and my sister and told them. I seemed to be holding back, but after our visit, I realize that I must deal with the "This is" and it isn't going to change aspect and then go on, and my verbalizing the situation makes it easier to move forward. But then, I have always thought talking about anything that bothers you is the best way to help you move forward. Everyone of course has the initial shock that we have all gone

through and I am sure my reading and research have helped me to get where I am with this today. Bottom line is that I am glad we met so I could see the new you.

Hope your weekend goes well. I will keep you and your family in my prayers.

Love, Sal

**11/4/99 =====**  
*Journal Entry*

It's 10:30pm, and I just had dins. I'm at work. I haven't been home since before 7 this morning. I still need to get home and relax and get to bed, as I need to get up early tomorrow to pack and make my 7:45 flight. I will be in Dallas thru Monday morning, with Thursday and Sunday being the least hectic of the days (pre and post physical inventory).

So much has been happening. Elisabeth and I talked with the divorce mediator yesterday. Although the chat itself went ok, the chat I had with Elisabeth afterwards about her expectations, did not.

I brought my car to the dealer for some service today, which was my first time dealing with car dealership people as Donna. It was a trip.

At work, my time to shine is just on the horizon. We gave the consultants that I have been dealing with our final offer, and gave them until Friday to take it or not. If not, they are out the door and I will need to build a similar software tool from scratch. If they do, then I am the XYZ resource that has been selected to learn the specifics of their tool, and to support it, maintain it, install it in Birmingham, and generally own it. Either way, I am involved, and I like to do this kinda stuff.

People (friends, ex-neighbors, etc.) from back home in upstate NY are finding out about my situation. I have been getting emails daily. They have been VERY supportive. I have been kinda emotional lately, and wrote emails to a couple of people who I felt had forgotten what friendship was about....I also sent an email and got a reply from Dr. Schrang. I will meet with him when I am in Milwaukee next week.

**11/9/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

In your note, you talked about the joy of the simple things. Of being excited by something as simple as a squirrel. That's alot of what transition is like. It's like being a kid again, in alot of ways. Back to a time when things were fresh and new, and you looked at the world through big wide eyes. I hope I never lose that.

My day yesterday was nutso (again). I was scheduled to take a 12:30 flight, but had so much to do I called and got re-ticketed on a flight that was scheduled to leave at 2:45. By the time I finished up at work, drove to the airport, dropped off the rental car, took the bus to the terminal, and got to my gate, it was nearly 2:30. And on top of that, they had cancelled the flight and the next one didn't leave until 5:30. I called our travel department, and they rebooked me on an American flight that was scheduled to leave at 3:45. So I went to the other terminal, and even had a chance to grab a pasta salad before boarding....

Unfortunately, my flight arrived at terminal 3, and my car was in terminal 4, so I had to fart around with that once I got in. And with all that, I even got to my electrolysis appointment on time!

I think Maria is pissed at me, and I'm a little ticked at her as well. She called over the weekend, and I mentioned that I needed as much time in there as I could muster as the regrowth is pretty thick, so she



scheduled me for today from 5-7am. I had told her that I can't do mornings anymore, as I have to go back to my apartment, shower, do my hair and face, and it makes me very, very late. So....I had a message on my cell phone to call her. I called her from the airport as I was scurrying around. She asked me if I could pick her up and bring her to work today. That is way way way out of my way, and I wasn't planning on coming in anyways, so I told her no. She asked why, and I told her it was just too inconvenient. I have 2 days here to get my sh\*t together before I leave for Milwaukee for 4 days, and then I'll be in Dallas for 5 days, and then I'll be in Rochester for 9 days.....it just doesn't fit. She didn't sound happy.

We have a teleconference this morning as a "post-mortem" to last weekend's physical inventory. It should be an interesting conversation....

No word from Elisabeth for the past week. I have no idea what she's up to.

Well, I gotta go back to work. I'll be back in Dallas for the week of 11/15-11/19. My schedule should be much more normal, so we'll plan to get together some evening if you're not too busy...

Take Care,

Donna

**11/10/99** =====  
*Journal Entry*

My week is all fucked up. Today seems like Tuesday...if any day can actually seem like Tuesday. It's only my second day of work here this week, and I think that's how I gauge the progress of the week.

Maria is ticked at me. She told Angie that she had been counting on me to go AAALLLLL the way out to her place to pick her up to bring her to work before my 5am appointment. That would have meant getting up at 3, and after a long trip and a ton of crap to do for myself (laundry, etc etc) it would have made me a mess. Not worth it. So she had her husband drive her to work, which is what she SHOULD have done in the first place. I rarely see her anymore, as she works mornings and days. Angie usually works on my face now, and she's alot of fun. She's a 21-year-old spunkette who's just as funny as can be sometimes.

I had my nails done yesterday. I let her paint them something other than a neutral beige/white....she was urging me to be daring. I let her be a little daring....a frosty light pink.

I'm only working a half day today. Too much to do. I have to pick up my portrait shots at 11:30 on the other side of the city, meet Julie for lunch at 12:30, hair appointment at 2, electrolysis from 6-9. At some point I also need to do my bills, go to my apartment complex office to pick up a package, go to Costco, pick up some stuff at the dry cleaners, and various other side trips. I really do think that this will be my last full day here for a month....

As of the moment, I'm scheduled to get back to Arizona on Sunday evening. I'll leave for Birmingham, AL on Monday, and then fly to Dallas from there early on Tuesday for the rest of next week.

Last night I was hungry at dinnertime, before my 7-9 electrolysis appointment, so I stopped by Maria's restaurant for pasta. I don't know if it's because I was hungry, or because of the pace of my life right now, but I was literally shaking. It finally calmed down, and once I got to electrolysis and lay there for a little while it was better.

**11/14/99** =====

### *Journal Entry*

Right now it is 12:45am. I flew back into town at 8:30, had electrolysis from 9-midnight, and just stopped off at work so I could get a couple of things and write to you. I will not get to bed tonight. I have a doctor's appointment at 7, and then a flight to Birmingham that leaves at 8:45, and I haven't even been home yet. I need to check the mail, pay the bills, do the laundry, unpack, repack, get a bite to eat, take a shower, do my hair and face....all of which will keep me pretty much busy between now and when I have to leave for my doctor's appointment less than 6 hours from now....

It was a wonderful trip. Lots of big events. I stayed with the gal that flew down to San Fran while I was recuperating from my surgery in July. Her name is Cassie, and she'll be going full time in the next couple of months. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin. While I was there her father met her as Cassie for the first time as we met for dinner on Friday night. As far as I could tell, all went better than we can hope to expect. We went out to an "alternative lifestyle" type bar that Cassie frequents on Friday night, which was quite interesting. We didn't stay too late, as we had to drive to Milwaukee for the conference early on Saturday, but I did have time to win 3 games of pool and talk with some folks. It was actually a pretty good time.

The conference was great. Dr. O and Mira were so happy to see how things were working out for me. There was another gal there, who was absolutely gorgeous, and I could tell that she was "eyeing" me from afar. I started up a conversation with her, and we spent a good deal of the day together. She and I and Cassie went out to dinner with Dr. O and Cassie at a Serb restaurant (Mira is Serbian), and we had just a wonderful wonderful time.

I talked with Dr. Schrang for about 20 minutes, and he is quite the character. His slide presentation is a bit more graphic than I like, so I spent a good deal of that time looking down at my pad and scribbling rather than watch the gory details. I know the general idea. I asked about scheduling, and he told me he thought he could fit me in whenever I was ready. I'll be calling his office this week to get a mailing from him and see what's available.

### **11/15/99 =====** *Journal Entry*

It's almost 6 here, and I think I'm running on adrenaline and little else. I didn't have a chance to get to bed last night, although I did sleep a bit on my flights. I'm here at our facility now, and am looking forward to heading back to the hotel for dinner, a few drinks, a nice warm bath, and early to bed.

The trip has been fairly uneventful so far. This facility just opened a couple of weeks ago, so everything is brand spanking new. Whereas there are people in Dallas I work with who know the details of my situation, there are only a couple of people here who do. It seems to be working out very well...

I talked with Dr. Schrang again today. He is sending me the paperwork I need....

My sister's baby is in intensive care, and they don't know if she'll recover. My sister is a mess. This is going to be an unbelievable Thanksgiving there for a lot of reasons.

My Bills did a number on those watery sea mammals from Miami yesterday. There are few things that give me as much satisfaction as stomping the Dolphins. Watching the coaching staff implode afterwards is just an added bonus.

### **11/16/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's early Tuesday morning, and I'm still full from last night. The hotel has full, made-to-order breakfasts, which looked and smelled wonderful, but I still feel huge from dins, so I was able to steer clear.

I fell asleep as soon as I got back to the room, at halftime of the game. And I'm feeling much more rested today (except for the headache).

As I mentioned, my flight is scheduled to leave here at 4 and arrive in DFW at 6. By the time I get my luggage (I decided to bring a suitcase instead of trying to stuff a week's worth of clothes into my carry-on bag) and my rental car it will probably be between 6:30 and 7. I bought a warm jacket while I was in Wisconsin over the weekend, so I'm hoping I don't freeze during the brisk evenings you get....

One benefit to being on the road is to get away from all the hassles of life back in Phoenix. Steph is a mess, and frankly I can't help her. I had offered to give her my car for these next 2 weeks, as I'll be out of town, and she called me as I was on my way over to get her yesterday to say she didn't think she'd be needing it. She is definitely depressed....and I think dangerously so. Now that she has lost her job, she has extra time to sit and stew and be bored, and her life has no direction, and she's in real danger.

I haven't heard hide nor hair from Elisabeth since our chat with the divorce mediator two weeks ago. I called her and talked to her for 30 seconds last week, but that's it. I had expected to hear from her before now. Oh well.

I got this from someone, and thought some of them were funny.

#### FEMALE COMEBACKS

Man: Haven't I seen you someplace before?

Woman: Yes, that's why I don't go there anymore.

Man: Is this seat empty?

Woman: Yes, and this one will be if you sit down.

Man: Your place or mine?

Woman: Both. You go to yours, and I'll go to mine.

Man: So, what do you do for a living?

Woman: I'm a female impersonator.

Man: Hey baby, what's your sign?

Woman: Do not enter.

Man: How do you like your eggs in the morning?

Woman: Unfertilized.

Man: Your body is like a temple.

Woman: Sorry, there are no services today.

Man: I would go to the end of the world for you.

Woman: But would you stay there?

Man: If I could see you naked, I'd die happy.

Woman: If I saw you naked, I'd probably die laughing.

**11/21/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

I'm in Rochester at my sister's house. So much is happening...it's really odd....

The flight up yesterday was ok. I got back from Dallas, and by the time I had my nails done, had 6 hrs. of electrolysis, got something to eat, stopped by work, and gone home, it was after 1. I decided I needed at least a couple of hours of sleep to even function at all, which I did, and that was just enough to keep me going.

The guy sitting next to me on the flight to Rochester from Chicago was nervous as hell. He was flying to meet someone he had met on the internet. We actually had a nice talk. My brother and sister-in-law were at the airport to meet me.....My sister's baby is at the hospital in the PICU, so we stopped by there before the evening was over...

I spent most of today with my old neighbors. To tell you about them would take far too long right now. We went to church together and I cried like a baby.....We spent the day talking and it was just wonderful.

I feel like I've gained 20 lbs. After church we went back to their house and they made a full breakfast....omelettes and hash browns and all the fixin's....I went over to my brother's place to watch the Bills game (most disappointing), and they made tacos and stuff at halftime. All in all, I probably haven't eaten a terribly lot...it just feels as though I have.

Tomorrow I'm meeting many people from my life here as Donna for the first time. I meet with the guy whose wedding I am taping on Friday at 9. I'm having lunch with my brother's boss, and I'm going to some other friend's house for dinner. It should be interesting....

I have to cut this short, as my niece needs a computer to do her homework. I hope all is ok for you. I'll keep you posted on how things are going....

I'll talk to you later.

Donna

**11/22/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

I think I'm going to rent a car for the time I'm here. I usually use my sister's car, as she rarely needs it during the day, but now that her daughter is in the hospital she uses it to go back and forth, and is proving to be a logistical nightmare.

I'll be spending the day introducing Donna to people who knew Dave. We'll see how it goes. I don't even get the slightest twinge of nervousness or anxiety about doing it, which I find pretty amazing. Mrs. T told me last night that she could see that I had a peace within myself that wasn't there before, and that tended to make people around me comfortable as well. I don't know if that's true, but I'll just be me and let the cards fall where they may.

**11/23/99 =====**

***Journal Entry***

The Donna World Tour continued today here in Rochester. I met with the person whose wedding I am supposed to tape on Friday. I met with a gal I worked for for several years. I met with the person who cut my hair for 12 years while I lived here. I met with the gal who gave makeup lessons when I first decided I needed an outlet. A pretty wild day.

Tonight I meet with a gal who lives here in Rochester, who I've chatted with a few times on the Internet who had some work done by Dr. O a little while after I did. And then I go to my brother's place. All in all...pretty busy.

Tomorrow I meet with my ex-partner for lunch. I had a feeling that he would have trouble with this....and his wife would DEFINITELY have issues, as she has always had a stick up her butt. I think I'm right. We'll see. I'm also going to an electrologist for a couple of hours, as I need to keep up with the regrowth. Maria checked out a bunch, as she is very particular about her modality and whatnot, and this is the one she feels would be best, so we'll give it a try....

### **11/24/99 =====** ***Journey Entry***

The funniest thing happened yesterday....

I was passing the salon run by the person who used to cut my hair. His name is Christopher. He cut my hair for at least 12 years. I followed him all around the city, as he moved from salon to salon. He has cut Elisabeth's hair, and in fact has even been to our house.

I popped in, and he was there cutting someone's hair. He looked at me, and I could tell right away he had no idea who I was. I said "You don't remember me, do you? I let you cut this hair for 12 years, and you forget me when I don't come around anymore. What is that?"

He looked at me closer, and said that he still had no idea, and wanted me to give him a hint. I asked him what kind of hint, and he wanted a last name.

So I said "Rose".

He looked at me again, studying me, and got a smile on his face and said, "Now I know! You're Dave Rosen's wife!" I almost split a gut.

I said "How can you say that? You KNOW Elisabeth! Do I look like Elisabeth?". And that's when the light finally went on in his head. It was pretty wild....

I can already tell that tomorrow will be a difficult day for me. I can feel the flood of emotions just under my surface. I remember many years of teaching Matt how to cut celery, or how to fold a cloth napkin in neat patterns, or of having my in-laws over for dinner. I was feeling kinda low tonight, so I took my nieces to go and see Toy Story 2, which we all enjoyed and lifted my spirits a bit.

### **11/26/99 =====** ***Journal Entry***

These next few weeks are full of memories for me. Matt's birthday is Dec. 19. Christmas. The millennium thing. I need to stop at my house to clear out some of my stuff, as Elisabeth's folks are planning to come to Arizona for the holidays. All in all, I certainly have my emotional moments.

My sister's baby is going in for surgery on Monday. They're going to do all the things that she has been hoping to avoid. The hospital called in the middle of dinner last night, and said the IV site had deteriorated, and they couldn't get another one going, so that they had called in a doctor to put one into the big vein in her groin. Poor thing.

I went to have my portrait done today. I didn't like any of them last time, and I know several good photographers in town thanks to our association during the time I was taping weddings. This time I did my own hair and my own makeup, so for better or for worse, it will look like ME. She's going to email the proofs to me by the end of the week, so I'll share them with you.

I cooked everything yesterday, which gave my sister and her hubby the afternoon to get out and see a movie. I took my nieces to see Toy Story 2 the other night, and it was just wonderful. We all had fun.

I feel like I've been eating eating eating, when in reality I really haven't been such a bad girl. I did go out and ran 3 miles yesterday, though, and my leg and thigh muscles are feeling that today. I'm taping the wedding this evening, which is down at the Convention Center. Mark says that he expects 280+ guests at the reception, so this should all be pretty interesting....

My mom is in LA with my aunt and uncle and cousins for Thanksgiving. She told them all about my situation, and I have gotten a couple of emails of support. I'll probably talk to them later today.

**11/29/99 =====**

Hey Michelle:

It's Monday night and I'm back in Phoenix. At work. It has been a loooonnnnggg day. I got up, packed, went to the hospital to spend some time with my sister (her daughter went in for surgery at 11), went to the airport, flew home, and then went to dins with Steph. It's 10:30 (12:30 east coast time) and I haven't been home yet. I have a doctor's appt. tomorrow at 7, so I better do what I have to do here at work, and get home to bed.

I'll fill in details when I write again tomorrow. As far as I can tell, the trip went well. Lots to say. Little time tonight....

**12/1/99 =====**

Michelle:

Rather than try to make sense of everything in complete, coherent sentences, I'll give you snippets. The reader's digest version, so to speak...

Flight home on Monday went well. No probs. Steph picked me up at the airport and took me to the restaurant, where we met another TG still stuck in male mode. I have met her once before, as she was being worked on at Maria's. I can tell that she has a "thing" for me. Her name is Eddy. She stopped by Maria's yesterday and dropped off a present for me....it was a handmade Xmas decoration.

My sister's baby had surgery on Monday. All seems to be going ok.

I am having difficulty processing the magnitude of Karen's cancer situation. She goes in for surgery on Friday. Doctor's say that based on the location and the size from the x-ray, her best hope right now is 75% survival, and will go down from there. It's so tragic.

I had a doctor's visit yesterday. I found myself to be very emotional...angry, sad...lots of stuff. I felt like crying a couple of times, and didn't know why. But I eventually realized that it was probably the shot...and I made it through the day ok.

I had 3 hours of electrolysis yesterday, and will have 6 hours today.

I am leaving tomorrow for Birmingham. I will be there thru 12/14. I am hoping to be able to stay here for the rest of that week (the Bills play here on 12/19 and I have 2 tix, and my bro is trying to come down for the game), and then fly to Dallas on 12/20 through the New Year. I'll keep you posted...

I talked to Elisabeth yesterday for the first time in a month. She wanted me to stop by the house to pick up some of my stuff, so I went there during lunch. I didn't have room for everything (lots of male clothes, my CD's, pictures, etc.) so I'll head back up there during lunch today....Their PC is on the fritz, so although I was going to bring my laptop on the road with me, I think I'll set it up there for them so Matt can do his homework on it....

I went to the Bills game on Sunday. It was wonderful. Cold. Snow flurries. Real football weather. If anyone had EVER told me I'd be able to use the Women's restrooms at Rich Stadium, I would have told them they were loony....

I feel more comfortable at work in Dallas or in Birmingham than I do here in Scottsdale. There's just something very nice about not being around people who know the situation and who judge you...

I'm going to set up an SRS date with Dr. Schrang. Probably for late August.

They have arranged for Dana Rivers, the TG teacher from California who was in the news recently, to come and talk with our local TG group next month. That should be interesting.

My car is in bad shape. It needs new brakes (\$350). I can't put it in park anymore, as the gear thing is all whacked up, and need to start it in neutral. I am going to leave it with Steph while I'm gone, and she is going to take it to the dealer for me....

**12/3/99 =====**  
*Journal Entry*

I called Dr. Schrang's office today and set up a date for SRS. I go in August 9 for my pre-op, and SRS on August 10. I had to answer a bunch of questions over the phone....one regarding marital status...and if the divorce is not final by then I will need a spousal waiver. Otherwise, all is set once I send them their \$500.....

I'm still in shock. I can't believe this is really happening. Pinch me, but not too hard. If I'm dreaming I don't want to wake up.

**12/3/99 =====**  
**From: Steve ( a friend I had known for 20 years from Rochester)**

Donna:

I thought that it would be much more uncomfortable while you were here, too, but after a while, I felt just fine with you. I think that you have the right personality to get through anything, and that relaxed me right away. I can't believe by the end of the night we were in the garage talking about snow tires!

Steve

**12/5/99 =====**  
**December 1999 – Birmingham AL**

Hi Michelle:

It's Sunday morning at about 8:45 and I'm at work. We have a huge building here, and I think me and the security guard are the only two people in it. Sheesh.

For some reason, I'm feeling kinda down this morning. I don't know if it's from feeling alone, or stress, or what...but I can feel it. I was planning to go for a run at the fitness center at the hotel this morning, but I just don't have the motivation or the energy. On top of that, I have a scratchy throat, and a bit of a sniffly nose, so I may be at the early stages of a cold. Great....

I worked here yesterday from 7:30am-6pm, and actually got alot done. Unfortunately, the computer that this program runs on is physically located inside the pharmacy, and that area is only accessible as long as there is a pharmacist here. The pharmacist was scheduled to leave yesterday afternoon and not return until Monday morning, so I had to get a cart and take the system apart and lug it to a cube outside of the pharmacy area and set it back up again....

When I left here, I really wasn't hungry for dinner, and I didn't want to go and park myself in my hotel room for the rest of the night, so it was a tossup between going to a movie or going to the mall. I decided that I wanted to walk around a bit after being cooped up here all day, so I went to the mall. It is a very nice one, and needless to say was VERY busy. I enjoyed walking around it. The entire city of Birmingham was riveted by the SEC title game (Alabama vs. Florida), so this place was very happy about the outcome.

I talked with my friend Amanda yesterday. She just returned to Phoenix from SRS with Dr. Meltzer in Portland. She sounded good, and I'm looking forward to hearing her impressions.

I think I'll treat myself to a good dinner tonight, but that's a long way off at this point. I suppose I should concentrate on what I'm here to do, and get to work. I have tried to call you the last couple of evenings, but you must have been out carousing.....Oh well.

You take care, and we'll chat again soon.

Donna

**12/6/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It has been a loooooonnnnggg day. There is just so much to do. I have been here since 7 this morning, and it's almost 7 at night. I'll be heading out in a couple of minutes, going to get some dins, going to the hotel to clean up and unwind, and then it gets busy again tomorrow. I guess this is life in the fast lane....

I got an interesting phone call today from Amanda. I have mentioned her before. She recently got back from SRS in Portland, and takes great pains to explain that she is a lesbian. She had moved in with another lesbian as her roommate, but ended up falling for this roommate. When she told the roommate, the roommate was "wierded out" by it, and now avoids even being at home. Amanda is thinking of moving out and getting her own place, but may need a place to stay for a little while. She hinted at staying in my spare bedroom, and frankly I would do that for her. But I do not want a roommate, and I do



not want anything even remotely "permanent". I do not want her furniture in my place. We'll see how it pans out.

Another friend who is just beginning transition applied for the name change. In her state, they post them in the paper. Well, people at her work apparently read that stuff, so she was "outed" before she or HR had prepared.

I fell asleep in the 3rd quarter of the Dallas game last night. What happened to the offense? Pretty ineffective. I'm sure it was difficult for Dallas fans to watch. For those who don't care so much for the blue and silver, however, it was very satisfying....

Well, I'm gonna go and get some dinner. I'm coming down with a cold, and need to take some aspirin and nose medicine.

Donna

**12/7/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

I didn't get out of here until 8 last night, and had a nice steak dinner at Outback Steakhouse. You don't seem to like it there, but I've never had a bad meal there and I like it a little more each time I go. By the time I get home, and clean up, I am usually very very tired, so there's not much time to do anything before I crawl into bed and fall asleep with the tv on....

Today will be another busy day. I better get to work. So much to do and so little time. The people here are taking a very relaxed attitude towards this physical inventory, which worries me. But I'll be ready....

Take care.

Donna

**12/8/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's 9:15pm and I'm just leaving work. I don't know if this is the calm before the storm or what. This physical inventory is gonna roll whether they're ready or not. I tend to think the "not", but it's too late for them to call it off now. They're getting more and more worried about not being done in the window of opportunity that they have, so they keep pushing the starting time up farther and farther. Right now it's scheduled for Friday at 6am. There is a TON of work to do before now and then, and I have no idea who is going to do it all. All types of corporate types are coming in to be a part of the event....accountants, vice presidents, directors, lawyers, auditors, etc. Just like last time. But now I (as in me, Donna) am the critical path. I sat with the asst. director of the facility for a little while today and built some reports he wanted to see, and he asked me if I would ever consider relocating to Alabama.....

I got a call from Amanda today saying she'd like to move in for a month or so. That's ok, but she has cats and I told her the cats are bad for me (I'm allergic to them) so she has to make other arrangements for them.

I'd love to stay and chat a little longer, as lots is happening, but I'm too pooped to pop. Tomorrow will be another crazy day, and the weekend is just scary. Oh well.

You take care, and wish me luck....

Donna

**12/9/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

>> *Tomorrow will be another crazy day, and the weekend is just scary. Oh well.*  
> *Why is the weekend scary?*

The weekend starts tomorrow, and it scares the \$%\$\$# out of me. This is the weekend for the physical inventory here. The software that I have "inherited" is the centerpiece for this process. Teams take handheld scanners out into the pharmacy and scan EVERYTHING, and everyone needs to download the data into my databases. Once all is said and done, I need to reconcile all the counts, create totals, provide a file to our accounting software, and pray. It will be a hellacious task. This is all compounded by the fact that the people here just don't seem to grasp the enormity of this task, and are far from prepared. It's 9pm (it starts tomorrow morning at 6am, and they are STILL out there in the warehouse putting stuff away. I can't do what I need to do until they finish.

In the few minutes it has taken me to type this, I have been paged over the intercom twice.....

The days have been long and intense. I had to work through lunch again today, so I decided that I was going to go out for a nice dinner NO MATTER WHAT. I found a small opportunity, so I headed over to Outback Steakhouse again. A group from XYZ showed up and invited me to join them, so I didn't have to eat by myself for once. I was very, very stressed when I left here, and the break did wonders for me. I keep having visions of pressure building on me, and just breaking down and crying in front of everyone. God forbid.....Tonight is our group Xmas party back in Scottsdale.....not that I would have gone even if I was back home.

I got an email from my brother and he is flying to Arizona next weekend for the Bills game. I have 2 tix on the 40 yard line....25 rows up, and it's the first time the Bills have ever played in Phoenix, so it should be fun. I'm looking forward to it. He flies in on Saturday night, the game is the Sunday night game (starts at 6 local time), and then he flies out on Monday midday...

Well, I better go and see if they have finished up. I don't know how much time I will have over these next few days to write, but I'll try. Wish me luck....

**12/10/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's 10:30, and I just had some dinner. A hot meatball sub from Subway and a cookie. It was a pretty amazing day. Everything seemed to work. All the preparation seems to have paid off. It's not all done yet, but the hardest part is done. Now it's just a matter of playing with the numbers. I'm so relieved....

Not much more else to say. I was there from 7 this morning thru 10 tonight. My back is sore. My eyes are sore. I have a cold. I need to be there at 7:30 tomorrow. I'm gonna wash up, and get some sleep.

Donna

**12/11/99 =====**

*Journal Entry*

Right now it's 6pm on Saturday evening. It's the first time I've gotten to my hotel room before 9pm since I've been here. I could go and eat anywhere I want (there's a Ruth's Chris steakhouse nearby) but I don't have the energy. The physical inventory went very well, but it has taken a toll on me both mentally and physically. Tomorrow is my first day off since Thanksgiving, and it is sorely needed. I am finding myself very lonely lately, especially being on the road like this. No friendly faces around...feeling like a stranger in a strange land. Oh well, I suppose it comes with the territory....

When I look in the mirror lately I see myself as looking too "male". Perhaps it is the length of the hair as it grows itself out. Perhaps it is the fact that I desperately, desperately need electrolysis. Perhaps it is all the above. I fiddled with my hair for half an hour this morning before giving up in frustration, deciding that today was just one of those bad hair days....

I had planned to either go shopping or to the movies tonight, but I see there are several good movies on the pay-per-view here in the room, so I think that's the plan. I can do the other two things tomorrow if I want.

**12/11/99 =====**

***Saturday Night Blues***

Hi Michelle:

As I enjoy my first few hours of free time in a long, long, time I sit and get more confused. One moment seems to bring clarity, while the next brings the clouds of fear and doubt. I think I know why I have kept myself so busy these last few weeks/months, as down time tends to provide too much time for thinking. I don't know if my attempt to live day-to-day is more an attempt to take life in bite-size chunks, or more out of fear of what the future holds. I think both are equally valid.

I watched a pay-per-view movie here at the hotel. It was "The Runaway Bride" with Richard Gere and whats-her-face. And as I watch these love story type movies, I wonder about the future. I feel lonely, and whereas most people leading "normal" lives can hope to meet someone and move on, I almost fear that. I wonder how many TS's actually find someone to fill the hole in their lives where a "mate" would usually go. We are plagued by dealing with something so foreign and taboo to most people that it is not uncommon for family and loved ones to disown us. And though we try to ease our mind and the awkwardness we feel in our own bodies....what is the cost? As I sit and contemplate this, I come up with a "damned if you do...damned if you don't" answer.

I try to avoid fear and worry. I find that those emotions are very destructive, and are usually far worse than the reality of what happens. I sometimes joke that if I worried about everything that I SHOULD be worrying about I would be in a coma. But as I sit and cry, I know that I have friends that I could call. I have family. But I don't have someone here. I don't have someone to come home to, and to talk about my day with, and to share with. And I have real fears that I never will.

This is probably one of those hormone-induced moments that tend to jump up out of nowhere. It could be the release of all the stress that I have been feeling at work. It could be that I am missing my wife and son, and that the holidays are upon us. I dunno. But I am sad and I am crying and I am lonely right now. I'll get over it. But it hurts.

In some ways, I wonder why I am even telling you about all this. I think I'll try to go and clean myself up and get to bed. This is not an easy path....

Take Care,

Donna

**Michelle's response:**

Hi Hon,

*>This is probably one of those hormone-induced moments that  
>tend to jump up out of nowhere. It could be the release of all the  
>stress that I have been feeling at work. It could be that I am missing  
>my wife and son, and that the holidays are upon us. I dunno. But I  
>am sad and I am crying and I am lonely right now. I'll get over it.  
>But it hurts.*

Yes it does hurt being away from familiar faces and your home environment. Especially this time of year when families are gathering and shopping for gifts in anticipation of Christmas get togethers. Right now there isn't a whole lot you can do, but when you get back to Phoenix I really think that you need to surround yourself with your friends and talk with family so you can get reconnected with yourself. Right now you've been on the road and living in hotels and it's very hard to keep up one's spirits when you are isolated from familiar things. Be strong Donna...this is just a little bump in the road and you'll get through this as you have everything else so far. Keep in mind that you ARE dealing with some hormones and that your ARE feeling some very feminine feelings. You need to feel warm and safe and when you're on the road so much like you have, that's a little hard to do.

In regard to what the future holds. I don't know for certain anymore than you do, but I REALLY do believe that you are going to meet someone very special again. Someone who loves Donna and doesn't care about anything else other than the fact that you are who you are. I remember reading in a book during the first year of my divorce that you needn't worry about meeting someone else. There is ALWAYS going to be other people who share similar interests. Be it a love of animals, photography, transgendered people, and on and on. It doesn't matter what that point of commonality is, the point is that there is going to be someone out there who loves and cares about you and will want to be with you. And just as importantly, it's not something that you need to be spinning mental wheels on. For now you need to remember that you have a family that DOES love you and support you. You have friends that DO love you and support you. Your course is laid before you and it will have ups and downs. Just like EVERYBODY else. So QUIT WORRYING ABOUT IT!!! You're going to be fine. Just be patient and remember the love and support you have. Another thing that I really want to stress to you tonight is that it is very EARLY in your real life living. A year from now you are going to look even more different than you do now. Looking feminine will become second nature and an afterthought. You won't even think about it anymore than you think about breathing. Hormones and Mother Nature (and a few more trips to the electrologist) will wipe away what vestiges of maleness remains. Just Give her time to work and Mother Nature will bring all sorts of good things to you :)

I need to go. Remember Donna, that there is much around you that is wonderful if you will open your eyes to it and not worry so much about what will come to pass. What happens will happen and in the end you will NOT be alone and there will be wondrous experiences for you to behold.

Love,  
Michelle

**My response:**

Hi Michelle:

Thanks you for your kind words of support. I do know that I have much to be thankful for and I have high hopes for the future. But the burden of the here-and-now is very heavy sometimes. I have felt this outburst just under the surface for a while now, and was fearful that it would come out during the stress and pressure of the physical inventory. At least it waited until I was alone so I could deal with it in my own way.

Very few people in this world face the questions and pressures and fears that we do. Sometimes I wonder why life has to be so difficult. But when I see kids like my sisters daughter who have things far worse than I could ever imagine, such thoughts make me ashamed of even having thought them. I guess sometimes I just feel sorry for myself and those that I have hurt. But life goes on.....

This morning brings a better mindframe. I had a good sleep (thanks to an Ambien pill), and have spent the morning doing paperwork and bills and all the things I have been too busy to do lately.

I do have some plans for today. I am going to go by the mall for a few minutes. I need to do some X-mas shopping, but don't want to buy too much as I have no room in my luggage to cart it around the country. I will get some X-mas cards and do those. I will go to work for a little while, as the people that I did the consulting for so very long ago need me to do some documentation before the end of the year, and I need the \$\$\$\$. I thinking of making dinner reservations at Ruth's Chris to have myself a good steak dinner, but those plans may change. And of course....I will watch some football.

Have yourself a great day, and thanks again. I don't know why I even wrote to tell you about my little "episode", other than it helps to get it all out. Thank you for listening.....

**12/14/99 =====**

Hi:

I'm back in my apartment. It's good to be home! I was supposed to fly out today at noon, but I called our travel department yesterday to see if there were any late flights home, and there was one leaving Birmingham at 6 and arriving here at 10:30pm. I jumped on it. The flights were uneventful, and I even got some sleep out of the deal!

I was at electrolysis for 8 hrs today. My face was VERY hairy with regrowth, and I am scheduled for several more hours tomorrow. I also have a doctor's appt., a nail appt., and various other things to do to get caught up...

I stopped by work tonight to drop some stuff off, and Brian was still there. We had a nice talk. He hadn't had dins yet, so we went over to Applebee's so he could eat and I could drink. He has been getting lots of feedback on my job in Birmingham, which is good.....

I need to get to sleep. I just wanted to say that the emails that you sent to me yesterday were amongst the best I have ever gotten. From anyone. I don't know if it's because they provide inspiration at a time when I can sure use some or what, but they really struck home. Both of them. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We can chat about it more when I see you next week. Right now plans have me flying there on Tues., and then coming home the following Tues. I have decided to spend New Year's here. Dec. 30 is the anniversary of my dad's death, and I plan to drive up to the Grand Canyon on New Year's day and spread some of his ashes. To me, that's the perfect way to end one millennium, and start another....

Luv,

Donna

\* \* \* \* \*

By this point, my face was very clear, so electrolysis sessions usually consisted of clearing any regrowth. We were about to start on a new process that made the old one look like child's play....

During SRS, very little is "wasted". They do not cut anything off and not use it again. This is true for the area around the penis, which is to become the labia, the penis, which is to become the inside of the vagina, or the scrotum, which is also used inside the new vagina to give added depth. In order to "prepare" these areas, it is necessary to remove the hair from them.

At this point, electrolysis moved from the face to the "surgery area". The same concept is involved...pull out each hair one follicle at a time. Only now we were not worried about scarring, so the power was significantly increased. It was horrible.

**12/16/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It is 10:10am. As I sit at work and write this, I am totally physically and mentally drained. After two days of intense electrolysis, we actually started working on the "surgery area" this morning. Oh my God. Just thinking back to it makes me want to cry. She shaved most of the hair down there, and then went at it with the needle for 2 hours.....

I got 4 hours of sleep. I have a cold. I am one sad looking puppy right now....

I left there to go to the dentist, who put on a crown. That, too, turned into a long, tense, uncomfortable experience. I need to go home and take a nap....

There is such a huge difference between coming to work here and going to DFW or Birmingham. Here I am pretty much ignored. I have been gone for 2 weeks, and it was like I was not gone at all. No "Hi, how are you?"s or anything like that. And that doesn't bother me, but it is really the contrast to our distribution centers where Donna is totally accepted and even appreciated.

The rest of my day is a busy one. I have lunch with Julie (the image consultant), and then a meeting with my psych at 4. I am setting an appointment with another local psychologist to get my 2nd letter.

I talked with Amanda yesterday, and she is going to move into my spare bedroom for a few weeks. I expressed my concern that often friendships are ruined when quarters are tight, and that I do NOT want a full-time, permanent, roommate. I do not want ANY of her furniture, as I am moving Matt's bed and desk in there, and all I really really need right now is an entertainment center to hold my tv and stereo stuff, and I'll buy one of those soon.

I gotta go. So much to do to get caught up, and so little energy....

Donna

**12/17/99 =====**

## ***Interesting article***

I recently got this from a friend, and have found the information in it very interesting and helpful...

=====

### **Staying Sane and Whole While in Transition**

by: Dallas Denny

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Gender reassignment is one of the most radical and disruptive things that an individual can do. It strains and often severs social relationships, imposes economic hardships, involves a good deal of physical pain and a great deal of psychic pain, and requires study and hard work in order to even begin to hope to pass in the gender of choice. Transition must be pursued in the face of the general disapproval of society and the specific disapproval of loved ones, the reluctance of the medical community to provide services, a scarcity of resources, and countless legal and social obstacles. The body of one sex must be somehow whipped into the semblance of that of the opposite sex, generally after puberty has wreaked irreversible somatic changes. Old behavioral patterns must be unlearned and new ones added. A new life must replace the old.

The transsexual person runs a gamut of obstacles, with no guarantees of success. Indeed, probably fewer than ten percent of those who set out to change their gender succeed in doing so. And yet, tens of thousands of people are happily and successfully working and living in the gender of choice. Transition is possible. It can be done. It just can't be done without disruption and sacrifice and hard work. It can't be done without stubborn determination. It can't be done without money. It can't be done in the absence of support, and it can't be done without pain.

My crossdressing friends tell me that the transsexual people they know are no fun: "They whine all the time. They're preoccupied with their problems and their bodies. They need to lighten up." To them I say, "Please appreciate the tremendous pressures that these people are experiencing. Please understand that every aspect of their lives is affected by their decision to change gender, and that they must become somewhat self-absorbed in order to prevail against odds which are nearly insurmountable." And to those who are in transition, I say, "Lighten up!"

I don't have the space in this article to point out all the potential hazards in the minefield of transition. OUR SORORITY simply isn't big enough. ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA isn't big enough. You'll have to look elsewhere for that (you'll find a listing of such resources at the end of this article). I do have some strategies and approaches that may be of help. Here they are.

1. Keep Your Sense of Humor (and if you don't have one, cultivate one). You will only be as unhappy as you allow yourself to be. You can plod miserably along, or you can enjoy yourself. You can find humor in the ludicrous situations you will find yourself in and the things people will say which have a whole different meaning because of your genderal status. Those you meet along the route will prove amusing, if you allow them to be. They will be your comrades in arms, and some of them will become your friends. If you approach transition with a sense of wonder and awe, your experiences will be more pleasurable than they will be if you inject fear and guilt. Yes, it'll be damn difficult, but you can still have a good time. Being miserable and depressed does not make for a good prognosis.

2. Don't Allow Transsexuality to Become Your Entire Life. You shouldn't go through transition as if you were Ahab in pursuit of the White Whale. Ahab needed to get a life, and so do you. You mustn't defer your entire existence in anticipation of a hypothesized bliss once you jump genders. An empty life in the gender of original assignment will probably become an empty life in the gender of choice. Reassignment

will not solve your problems; you'll still have the same troubles, but in a different gender. You would do well to have life goals other than transition. You should cultivate friends and interests outside the gender community.

3. Keep Your Perspective. You must not allow your transsexualism to become a fantasy or a fetish. As my friend Rachel has said, "You must weave reality back into the fabric." Don't place undue weight on reassignment surgery; it won't magically transform you into a man or a woman. You should at all times know where you are and where you are going, and this should be firmly grounded in reality. You must come to terms with your physical and behavioral assets and liabilities and incorporate them into an emerging identity. You must have realistic ideas about the social roles of men and women, and what sort of man or woman you want to be. Remember that transition is a process—a becoming, if you will. You will be gradually changing. You won't just wake up one morning and find that you are magically different.

4. Don't Box Yourself In. You must somehow keep functioning. If you prematurely dismantle your old life, you will be unable to replace it with a satisfactory life in the gender of choice. You will be left with a twilight existence, an identification as a transsexual. And if this negatively impacts your earning potential, you can get stuck, unable to complete the procedures which will produce the bodily changes necessary to successfully pass in the gender of choice (for instance, electrolysis for the male-to-female; reduction mammoplasty for the female-to-male). You must maintain as much support as possible. You should know that in some cases that may mean clinging onto your old identity a little bit longer.

5. Let Go of Your Crutches. As your body changes, it will become less difficult to pass. You should rely less on contrivance and incorporate your natural aspects into your presentation. This may mean using your own hair instead of a wig, doing away with padding, and using less makeup. Or it may mean using your birth name, if it has a chance of working, instead of an idealized feminine name. It may mean becoming comfortable with interests or aspects of your personality that aren't a good "fit" in the gender of choice. But whatever your perceived shortcomings are, you will need to face and come to terms with them and let them go.

6. Sacrifice and Compromise. Being in transition will cause big changes in your life. You must be prepared to meet all challenges and to give your transsexualism a high priority. You'll be deluding yourself if you think you can maintain your previous standard of living in the face of bills from psychologists, endocrinologists, electrologists, and plastic surgeons. You must maintain your pace. If you delay procedures such as hormonal therapy because of lack of money or time, or for other reasons, your transition will eventually be delayed. And here I will insert a caveat for the male-to-female transsexual person: Don't put off electrolysis. You'll be sorry if you do. Once you are living in the gender of choice, it will nearly impossible to bring yourself to grow the hair long enough for the operator to grasp it with her tweezers. And passing will be at best a struggle, and quite likely impossible, until the hair on your face is gone or at least appreciably diminished.

7. Be A Good Consumer. You must at all times act with discretion and proper respect for your body. You should not act out of desperation. Although services can be difficult to obtain, they are available. You will minimize your chances of failure if you use competent service providers. Otherwise you will risk delays in obtaining diagnosis (and hence hormones), a regimen of hormones inadequate to masculinize or feminize you, and even botched surgery. You have only one shot at transition, and it is decidedly in your best interest to proceed with reasonable precautions and care, making sure that your doctors know what they are doing.

8. Join a Support Group. It will be to your advantage to find your peers. Support groups can educate you, assist you with referrals, and help you to perfect a masculine or feminine appearance. You will probably make friends with other group members. But more importantly, you will see your peers in action, making decisions both good and bad. By observing them, and by talking with them, you can learn strategies for coping and avoid pitfalls.

9. Follow the Benjamin Standards of Care. The Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc., are guidelines to safeguard transsexual people and those who



provide services for them. Many transsexual people see them as obstacles to be overcome, and so they are. But by following the Standards of Care, you will minimize your chances of failing in your transition, and maximize your chances of surviving failure, if it does occur. The Standards will let you opt out anywhere short of reassignment surgery. The best of transitions will be painful. The worst do not even bear thinking about. You should not expect a perfect experience, but by exercising common sense and foresight, you will minimize disruption and conflict, and have a smoother ride.

**12/18/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's 8:30am, and I stopped by work for a few minutes. I had to do a little grocery shopping, and stopped by to get a cup of coffee and check my email.

The last couple of days have been chock-full. I already told you about my Thursday morning pain-fest. But that has subsided and I'm ready for more. I had lunch with Julie, which was very nice, and had a meeting with my psych. She is preparing my letter for Dr. Schrang, and I am making arrangements to get my second one, so that it in the works.

I stopped for dins at Maria's restaurant, and Steph was working. The holidays must be weighing heavily on her, as she is very down.

Yesterday seemed to be a busy day, but in retrospect not too much happened. I did my expense reports. I called several places to change my address. I had breakfast with the guy in the other building who I did some consulting for way back when. Our group went out for their Christmas lunch, but I begged out of going. I do not feel a part of the social fabric of the group, so it doesn't hurt my feelings to keep myself apart.

I changed my voice mail message at work today. In the beginning I tried to keep it very "generic", but not using a name. But now the people from DFW and Birmingham call me, and my voice was deeper on my message, so people would often start by saying "I'm trying to reach Donna Rose...." for fear that they had reached the wrong number. So I changed it and gave my name. Well, Elisabeth called it and heard it and was VERY upset about it. She got a hold of me and said that she thought I had agreed NOT to do that, as what would happen if the school called or what would happen if there was an emergency or this or that. And I flat out told her....DONNA IS WHO I AM! IF YOU SAW ME YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT! If the school calls, who do you think is going to go there and get Matt? I can't, and won't hide this. She told me I was selfish and that she was too upset to talk, and hung up on me...

After work I went to Best Buy with Maria and her sister and her cousin. Despite my \$\$\$ situation, I bought Matt a computer. It cost \$550, and is an Intel Celeron 466 with oodles of memory and an 8GB hard drive. I stopped by my neighbor's (Sal and Ray) to put it there so he can get it, and we ended up talking for 2+ hours until after midnight.

So here I sit, ready for another busy day. I have so much cleaning and straightening to do at my apartment. I have 3 hrs. with Maria. There is an Xmas party for a local TG group that I have promised to stop at. My brother, Jay, arrives at 11pm, and we will try to catch the tail end of a Bills Backer Club get-together. All in all, a long and busy day ahead.

So I'll say bye for now....

Donna

**12/19/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

I have not been near a computer since my brother got here, so I will give you the summary of what's been going on, and we can chat more when I see you some time over these next couple of days.

Saturday was a very difficult day. I was supposed to be at Maria's for 3 hours, but only made it halfway through before I just couldn't take it anymore. When you're hurting emotionally, the physical pain just gets unbearable. I left there shaking and hurting, and cried all the way home. Although I had tons to do, I just curled up in a ball in my bed and eventually slept for a little while, and felt a bit better. I called home and told Elisabeth that it was important that I talk to Matt for his birthday (which was Sunday), and if that did not happen I would travel up there and do it in person. She called back, and I talked to him, and it was a relief.

I ended up going to a TG X-mas party, and there were lots of folks there. At least 50 people ....probably more.

I picked up my brother [Jay] at the Airport, and we ended up heading to a crowded bar on the ASU campus that was having a Bills Backers get-together. The place was packed, and we had to wait in line for 15 minutes to get through the door. No problems with my confidence, or with passing ....One guy even came on to me, asking Jay if I was his wife or his girlfriend. Jay told him I was his sister...

Yesterday I had some furniture delivered and we went out to breakfast. I showed him around a bit, and we stopped at another Bills bar, but I got very tired so we came back to the apt. for naptime.

The game was lots of fun. Lots of Bills fans. No probs with confidence, or with passing. We went to a pre-game tailgate party, and stopped for a bite to eat afterwards.

I did lots today. Part of the day was spent showing Jay around, and taking him to the airport. We packed alot into less than 48 hours. Right now it's almost 1 am, and I have a flight in the morning, so I gotta get to bed....

I gotta get some z's. One thing I plan to do over these next few days is get some rest. My New Year's resolution is to spend more time for me. I need to start running/exercising again and just having time for R&R, rather than running myself into the ground.

**12/20/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's 11:15pm, and I'm just packing up and getting ready for bed. My flight leaves at noontime..

My Christmas was quiet, both in reality and spiritually. I am relieved. It was wonderful to spend it with my mom. She introduced me to her congregation at church today, and mentioned the fact that it was the first Christmas we had spent together in 20 years. That got some applause...

I figured that everyone there knew about my situation. I talked with one guy for half an hour, and mentioned that I considered myself to be a good father, and it turns out he had no idea. Sheesh....

In any event, I gotta get to bed. I hope your xmas was good. I'll write more when I get home tomorrow...

Gnight.

Donna

\* \* \* \* \*

I flew to Dallas to spend Christmas with my mom. It was the first Christmas we had spent together in over 20 years. I had been concerned that it would be a difficult time, as the holidays still brought "family thoughts". My time with mom was very comforting, though, and I was not overwhelmed by the "joy" of the season.

On Christmas day, mom and I opened presents and sat around and talked. She made a wonderful dinner. All in all, it was a wonderfully quiet, comfortable day.

The following day we went to church. I felt very comfortable there, and found the small congregation to be a very intelligent, friendly, diverse group. They had become a second family to my mom, or maybe they had become a first family and WE were the second family. In any event, much of her life over the previous few years was spent working for that church.

At the beginning of the service, the pastor asked if there were any praises or sorrows to be shared by the congregation. My mom raised her hand, and when it was her turn, she stood up and proudly stated that she was thankful that her daughter, Donna, was there to spend Christmas with her as we had not spent one together in 20 years. The entire congregation clapped, and I cannot express how happy I felt at that moment. Some people strive over their entire lives to gain that kind of acceptance, and never live to see it. I felt absolutely and totally appreciated and comfortable, and those are the feelings that Christmas will bring for me in years to come.

**12/27/99 =====**

Hi Michelle:

> I got to thinking about what you said about that guy in the church who didn't know you were  
> TS. I think that is going to be a pretty common theme. I think that the only people that  
> are going to be able to "make" you in the future are members of the sorority.

I guess. I was thinking about what YOU said, about telltale signs, and I suppose it comes with the territory. The most amazing thing about this entire transition so far is not how far I have been able to come on the OUTSIDE, but how I have been able to deal with it mentally. At one point, the thought of being "made" scared me to death. But with the acceptance of this situation, you slowly accept that being "made" is not the end of the world. There will ALWAYS be something to give you away if a person looks closely enough.

But even as in the case of that table next to us at dinner the other night, they didn't KNOW. They had suspicions, but they also had doubts. The goal of this is not to FOOL everyone....it's to allow what you have on the inside to be reflected on the outside, and the fact that I can pretty much go anywhere without any hassle or without heads turning immediately is amazing to me in and of itself. It just makes it that much easier to be me.

My trip there was very good for me, but it's also good to be home. My flight yesterday went without incident, and Steph was there to pick me up and take me to lunch. I did come to work for an hour on my way through, but this place is DEAD this week. Good.

The evening went very well. I went to Target to get some hardware to hang things up on the wall and some hangers, and I went to the Warehouse Club to pick up a few things, and to top it all off, the Dolphins LOST so the Bills are in the playoffs. Whooooopppeeee!

I am getting quite a bit of work done this morning. I have decided that I need to be more organized, so I have created lists of things I need to do and need to follow up on. We'll see how long this kick lasts....I went to the doctor's for my shot, and have a hair appt. tomorrow...

I did talk to Matt for a while yesterday, which was very good. I heard him laugh for the first time in a LONG time. I also talked with my ex-neighbor, Sal, who is really heartbroken about the way Elisabeth is handling things. Sal treated Elisabeth like the daughter that she never had, and the fact that Sal refuses to "pick sides" has meant that Elisabeth has cut her out of her life. That has hurt Sal tremendously.

Anyway, on that note I will say bye for now. Amanda called to ask if I would be home for dins, as she wants to cook, so this should be interesting...

**12/28/99** =====  
*Journal Entry*

It's 8pm, and I stopped back at work for a little while....

I got my shot today, and I have figured out that my emotions go nuts the day of the shot, and for a few days afterwards. So far so good, though, except that I have a very nasty headache at the moment...

When I got home Elisabeth had left a snotty message telling me to get over there as she had a bunch of my stuff in the garage, and she couldn't get the truck in. She threatened to have a truck come and take it all away if I don't come by and get it. I stopped by there tonight and got most of it. Needless to say, they were gone.

Also when I got home, it was kinda early and Amanda had just finished dilating (sounds like NO fun at all). I cooked dins, and we chatted for a while before I headed off to my ex-house, and it was actually pretty calming.

**12/29/99** =====  
*Journal Entry*

It's 9:30pm, and all in all my 6-hour electrolysis marathon this afternoon/evening didn't go too badly. I took some pain medication, and I can tell that it's still pulsing through the system. Tomorrow morning we do the "surgery area" again. Oy.

I have been in pretty good spirits for most of the day. I have much to do at work. I got a haircut (more like a trim, but the gal was very nice and we plotted for the future of my hair...). I had electrolysis. But as I headed home I started to get a little melancholy. I talked with Karen and Kevin, who invited me out to do something for New Year's eve. They told me they don't want me to be alone, and won't take NO for an answer. I'm having a hard enough time facing the fact that tomorrow (Thursday) is the first anniversary of my dad's death, and am not feeling like doing all that much partying. Oh well. We'll see what happens.

Well, I'm gonna get home and get some sleep. More pain tomorrow am. Ouch.

**12/30/99** =====

Hi Michelle:

There is a gal here in town who formed a TG Group, and is very active in the community. I think she is more CD than TS, although I think she is struggling to find out exactly where she fits. She lives with her mom, who supposedly doesn't know about "Dawn", but I find that hard to believe.

As with Amanda, I can tell that Dawn has an *interest* in yours truly. She recently wrote and asked what I planned to do for Y2K eve, and I told her I planned to stay at home with a bottle of Asti and a picture puzzle and some appetizers and my stereo and my TV. The thought of crowds and booze and noise and smoke just doesn't appeal to me. In any event, she sent this back to me today:

*>If one does decide to to sit at home in the company of Martini and Rossi and watch the mayhem,  
>but finds something missing and would like some company to bring in the new century...  
>Dawn*

She's a nice gal, and I do like talking to her. But as I said to you before, so many people in this situation are lonely and looking for physical contact. I'd feel that if I did have her over she would be expecting something MORE than an evening with a puzzle and a tv, if you know what I mean, which is all I have in mind. What do you think?

I had 6 hours of electrolysis last night, and 3 more this morning. Today's plucking was largely in the "surgery area". It was far less painful or traumatic than last time. I dunno why. Oh well. I go back for a second dose tomorrow from 9 til noon.

I met with my friend Tracy for lunch today. She's the gal who used to work here, and told me she was a lesbian (I had dinner with her and her SO at one point...). She had 2 huge bags FULL of clothes for me. Some of it looks like it will fit great. Other stuff is too small. It was very nice of her.

My car is full to the gills of stuff I got from my house the other night, but haven't had time to unpack yet. I will spend some time tomorrow afternoon doing that, I think....

It's almost 5, and I have a 6:30 nail appointment. I'm going to stop by Target and buy a puzzle, so I suppose I better get going. You take care, and I'll talk to you soon.

**12/31/99** =====

Hi Michelle:

This may be my last email for the century. I just stopped by work on my way past, and stopped in for a moment. I spent 9:30-1 having electrolysis, but for some reason I have felt very strong there these last couple of days. The face is VERY clear right now, and the "other" area is coming along as well, so I've deserved some time off for good behavior ;)

I was thinking about something. I was thinking about ALL that has happened to me this year. It is truly amazing to me. You mentioned that you had saved many of my emails. Those emails are the best record of my life this past year. I do not keep a journal, and in a way, my emails to you represent my journal. Is there any way to save those emails to a diskette and send it to me, or I can pick it up next time I am in town? If you saved them in hotmail, the only way I know to do that would be to go into each one and do a "Save As" and give it a filename on your c: drive. It will save the page as an .html file. In any

event, this has been an incredible journey so far, and I'd be interested to see how things have gone. Any thoughts???

I'm actually looking forward to spending tonight alone. I stopped by Price Club yesterday and bought some mini-quiches and some cheese sticks and some snack mix and stuff like that, and am perfectly content to spend the evening with me. Of course if I start eating and drinking early enough, I may be in bed by midnight....

I also got a call from Dawn last night. We chatted for a while. Apparently, she told her mom about her "situation" the previous day, and it was no big surprise. But her mom still hasn't SEEN Dawn, and I explained again how knowing it is one thing and seeing it is another. She's trying to find a "good" way to introduce her mom to Dawn...

Well, I better be going. I started to set up my new computer last night, and if I get everything hooked up correctly I may be on the internet by this evening. If not, so be it. In any event, have a happy and safe night tonight. Take care of yourself, and don't do anything even remotely dangerous, because sometimes I don't know what I'd do without you around.....

Happy New Year.

Luv,

Donna

# 2000

**01/01/2000 (just after midnight) =====**  
**Journal Entry**

Happy New Year!

It's 12:44am and I'm just about to hop into bed. I got my computer set up, and my software configured, so I thought make the first entry of the new millenium.

The early part of yesterday was spent out and about....electrolysis from 9:30-1, and then a quick stop by work to see how some programs that were running were coming along.

I spent the rest of the day unpacking my car. Actually, there's more to it than that. I needed to straighten up the storage area on my patio, as it was FULL of Dave's male clothes. I carefully went through it all and folded it, and will donate most of it to a suitable charity....I felt it was actually kinda symbolic to be doing that on this last day of the millennium.

By the time midnight had rolled around here I had finished a bottle of Asti Spumanti, and am actually kinda surprised that this seems to be coming out coherently considering how much I drank. I feel ok....both physically and mentally....

After midnight Kevin called. I spoke with him 2 days ago, and he said that he wasn't sure what they were doing for New Year's, but that they wanted me to join them and he would let me know what was what when they had some plans. I didn't hear a hoot from him, and pretty well resigned myself to the fact that they just didn't really want me around. When he called, he asked why I hadn't stopped over, and I told him I had no idea where they even where, much less chasing them around because I was afraid to spend New Year's alone. He said they had been wondering what I was up to all night, and I told him he know my phone number....all he had to do was dial. Whatever. He was all apologetic and wants to get together on Sunday to make up for it. Another pity call....

Dawn called twice today. I ended up telling her I had spent a long, hard day, and plan to be on the road at a decent hour tomorrow, so perhaps it would be best if she took her other option, which was to go to the trusty Phoenix drag show.

My wife put bags and bags of stuff for me to go through. One of them had an envelope full of Matt's 8th grade picture! Actually, there were 2 poses. One smiling, and one more serious. I haven't seen him in a while, and he sure is growing up! Wow. And after not having seen him for a while, I see resemblances to Elisabeth more than I ever did before.

**1/3/00 =====**  
*Michelle was my most faithful email partner. More than anyone, she experienced my transition with me.*

Hi Michelle:

Things here continue along.....I think it has been a couple of days since I wrote, so I'll start with Saturday (New Year's Day). It was a nice day, weather wise, here in the valley (60 degrees and sunny). I had decided several weeks ago to celebrate the passing of the millennium by taking my dad's ashes up to the Grand Canyon and spreading some there. Dad would have approved.

Well, the weather reports from the area indicated that it had been snowing, and it was pretty nasty up there. I decided to wait for a little while, in hopes that the afternoon would bring a respite, and some warmer weather. So I left the apartment at 10, got gas, bought a paper, and filled the tires with air. By the time I actually hit Bell Road to begin the trip, it was 10:30. Based on my odometer, it is 220 miles from my door to the Grand Canyon. Under normal circumstances, that would be 4+ hours. Things went fine until I got to maybe 40 miles south of Flagstaff. I could see the cars coming South had snow on them. Lots of snow. And there were signs on the side of the highway warning about ice and bad driving conditions. Boy were they right. It started snowing, and gradually, the highway was a sheet of ice. We were going maybe 35 miles an hour, and I was seriously considering turning back. But it was very important to me. I had to do it. I had to do it THAT DAY. I prayed that dad would help me make it in one piece, and I continued. At one point, the highway was closed because a tractor-trailer had jackknifed and was blocking things. The line of traffic didn't move for almost an hour, and I ate some raisin cake and read the paper. But eventually it got going again. I saw dozens of cars off the road. Several were, or had been, upside down. It was awful.

I finally got to the Canyon a little after 3. I parked at the first outlook inside the South entrance of the park. It is called Mather Pt. The view was awesome. I remember getting there with Elisabeth and Matt. The sight is unbelievable. And I know that dad would want to be there. He would be able to appreciate the awe, and the grandeur, that people will feel upon seeing the canyon for the first time. So I took a cup of his ashes, and I went to a secluded area, and I talked to dad for a couple of minutes, and I spread his ashes into the canyon. I didn't get too too emotional. In fact, I felt a sense of relief for having made it. I felt as if he approved. And it made me more happy than anything, I think. I took pictures, and I think the sight of the canyon with dark gray storm clouds above it, and snow on it, and small patches of bright where the sun was shining through, will be spectacular. After the difficulty of the trip, it was worth it. It's funny....but the more difficult the journey, the more satisfaction we feel at having made it. That kind of sums up this journey I'm on, as well....

I wanted to get on the road back before it got too dark. The thought of driving back through that mess in the dark, after temperatures had dropped, kinda scared me. I was only there at the Canyon for less than half an hour, but I stretched a bit, and hit the road again.

The trip home was no piece of cake, either, but I had done what I had set out to do, so some of the pressure I had felt on the way up was gone. I took my time, and much of the highway was deserted, so I could drive in peace. I got home a little after 8.

I made myself some ham, and a baked potato, and had some wine. It was a good way to unwind after a very difficult day.

Yesterday was a pretty dismal day. It rained out for the first time in 100+ days, and it was dark and gray and cold. In fact, is snowed a bit up by my house. I'm glad I didn't wait for an extra day to head up north, as it was worse than the day before. I spent some time installing software on my computer, and decided to work on the documentation for Susan. If I don't get it done, I don't get paid for it. I need the money. So I worked on it for the entire day. There are 50+ pages already, and it's still not done. In between I made some cookies, and watched the Bills beat the Colts, and talked on the phone. All in all, a very productive day, but also a pretty lazy day as well. Amanda finally made it home after dinner, so we ended up talking.

Everyone else seems to be such a mess at the moment. I finally talked to Steph, and her situation sounds dangerous. She's confused, and she's lonely, and I think the reality of where she is and what she is doing is bearing down very heavily on her. Same for my friend from Wisconsin. She called me the night before last at 2am. I told her if she does that again, I'll kick her butt! There's nothing I can do 2000 miles away, and dead tired after my day up at the canyon. I don't know if it's the holidays or what, but it's pretty nasty....



Right now it's 5am. I couldn't sleep AT ALL! I have a pretty big event today, as well. I meet with a local psych to get my second letter for Dr. Schrang. I have met her once before. I'll let you know how it all goes....

Well, I need to do some more work on the documentation before taking a shower and getting back to the grind. I see that the Cowboys got to the playoffs. I'll bet there is much happiness throughout the metroplex. The Bills have their playoff game on Saturday at 12:30 against the Titans. Andre Reed set a record yesterday, and watching him and the way the fans responded, I got all goose-bumpy and I cried. Pretty amazing stuff for someone who couldn't shed a tear for 30 years.

**1/4/00 =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I had my meeting with a second psych yesterday, and she said she would be happy to write me a second letter for SRS. It was a pretty nice chat, and although it doesn't really seem like such a huge thing right now, it's another milestone on this journey...

I have come to a realization that Karen and Kevin have basically distanced themselves from me, except that they won't admit it either to me or to themselves. I sent them an email basically saying that I'm tired of this little game, and that they don't need to FORCE themselves to be my friend, and thanking them for being my friend in the past. People change. Times change. Things change. All have conspired to make us more acquaintances than friends. In my mind there is a difference.

I was kinda shaky this morning for some reason. I went home, had lunch, de-stressed for a little while, and things have been a bit better this afternoon....

**1/5/00 8:16am =====**

**I sent an email to Becky Allison regarding her observations on keeping good friends through transition, and the fact that in many ways they slowly move away. Here is her response:**

*>Yes, it has definitely been my experience that the closer the friend pre  
>transition, the more difficult a time they had with it. Especially people  
>who were my close friends in the years immediately before transition. On  
>the other hand, people who knew me in the more distant past have been  
>great. My high school classmates are almost unanimously strong supporters  
>for me.*

*>I think there's an element of "you deceived me all those years" to some of  
>the lack of acceptance. I've tried to tell them that our friendships were  
>real, not bogus, but it's hard for them to understand.*

**1/5/00 2:46pm =====**

I dunno what happened. Perhaps I got blindsided by a hormone rush sometime yesterday. Maybe it's a delayed reaction from the holidays. Whatever it is, it continues to be almost overwhelming. I fear for my electrolysis appointment this evening, and especially my one for tomorrow morning. They're harder to get through when I'm like this.

There are so many things I need to do.... pay bills, clean, iron, put stuff away. When I get home I have

absolutely no strength or motivation to do any of it. I hope this doesn't last too long.

Amanda [*a post-op friend I met through our electrologist*] came home from her organizational meeting and asked me to do stuff. She is very much into the political side of things, and their group (It's Time, Arizona!) is sponsoring Dana Rivers (the teacher from CA) coming here this weekend to give a talk. They are using this meeting as a "kick-off", and are hoping to spread the word by having Dana speak at the meeting. I, on the other hand, have absolutely NO INTEREST in the political side of things.

I knew that the stuff I sent to Kevin was way too "deep" for him to respond to, so today I got a long email from Karen. I expected that Kevin would forward my letters on to her, and he did. I have nothing more to say to him/her/them for a while, as I am in no condition to be doing this right now. I'll let some time go by and see if things mellow out a bit.

I picture myself leaving here. I picture going somewhere where I can start fresh. No traces of Dave. For some reason San Fran comes to mind. It's probably a lot of so-much-wishful-thinking, but it is the ghost of my old life that haunts me more than the prospect of my future one. A lot depends on what happens in these next few months with custody, money, etc. etc., but it is something I think about....

I called Maria [*my electrologist*] to ask what size of clothes her husband wears. I have a trunk full of male clothes, and it turns out most of it will fit him. I told her to donate what he doesn't want/can't use. I'll drop it off tomorrow when I see her assuming I remember...

**1/6/00 8:41am =====**

I'm feeling a bit more "even" today. So far, anyways. I haven't been sleeping all that well, and woke up at 4:00am, and couldn't get back to sleep.

Today I am going to my insurance company during lunch to change all my policies. They still have the old name on them. I have a "date" tonight with Tracy and Kathy [*a friend from work, and her partner*] for drinks and a movie. I have a "date" tomorrow evening with Dawn, and need to make sure she understands that there is nothing "romantic" about this. I can tell what she is thinking based on the fact that she calls me every other evening, and sends me little emails every day and how she talks to me.

**1/7/00 10:30am =====**

**To: Dan Spector [*a childhood friend*] replying to a note he sent to me about my disclosure to him**

*>Yours is one of the most courageous moves anyone I have ever known has ever made.*

Living in fear and guilt and frustration and confusion for a long long time, with no outlet or possibility of resolution inside their existing life, can drive a person to do desperate things for the sake of self-preservation. I find that people tend to fight against things they don't want or of which they fear. Death is a good example. But there comes a time when people overcome the fear, and they learn acceptance of what "is", not what they want to be, and with that acceptance comes peace. I know that this all sounds like so much psycho-babble, but it is in fact true.

I no longer live in my house. I have not seen my wife since June. I have not seen my son since Labor Day. Friends that I have had (especially male ones) have a hard time, and slowly fade away. I am alone for the first time in nearly 20 years. I am staring at the tragedy of divorce from the woman that I still love. I have undertaken a path that much of society (in their unbounding ignorance) considers perverse, or sick, or worse. But my dad once told me that our lives are 10% what happens to you, and 90% of how you deal with it. And although I am so NOT equipped to do this, I have decided to live my life with

integrity and dignity. I cannot change people's minds about this. But if I can be a good example to others, my struggles have been worth it.

Dad also said that remarkable things happen to unremarkable people. That sums this up in a nutshell. But whereas I used to see it as a curse, or a punishment of some kind....I now see it as a blessing. I am able to experience things (thank God for a sense of humor) that very few people in this world will ever know. And although I am losing many things that I value in my life, I am also finding tremendous things. Most prized among those things is the love and support I have gotten from my family and close friends. I never knew how much they really meant to me until faced with the prospect of losing them...

In any event, it was wonderful to hear from you. I have only been living this way since October, so don't expect too much from the web page. They call this stage of the process "Transition", and with good reason. I built my home page during a boring Sunday afternoon in Birmingham, Alabama during one of my last business trips there....

You take care, my friend, and thanks again. Your words have been the highpoint of my day (of course my day has consisted of 4 hours of electrolysis starting at 5am, and burning myself with a curling iron, but that's not what matters here).....

GO BILLS! (Lots of things have changed. Some things haven't)

Donna

**1/7/00 1:54pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

I am feeling surprisingly awake. Probably because I took some pain drugs and zoned out during the 4 hours of electrolysis. The meds make a HUGE difference down there [*when working on the surgery area*]. Take my word on that...

I made it to work, spent an hour here, and then hustled my butt off to see the attorney. We chatted for a couple of hours. I have a couple of forms to complete, and he will file the petition for dissolution of marriage in the middle of next week. I am going to make sure Elisabeth knows ahead of time, but leaving a message on the answering machine about something like that seems so pathetic. But it may be the only way, since she does not have email (as far as I know) and won't answer the phone. We'll see....This is gonna be tough.

**1/8/00 11:40 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

The Bills had a playoff game against the Tennessee Titans today and broke my heart. I cried. Talk about roller-coaster rides! And I just had my hormone shot, to boot! I was joking that I need to find a Buffalo Bills fan support group, but I was only half joking...

I dragged my sorry self to go to Amanda's meeting. They all talked for a little more than 90 minutes, and I think the best speech came from a gal married to a trans-guy. She was fired for it. Dana Rivers did very good as well, and I had a nice chat with her at the reception afterwards. Her time was in big demand (other T's, media, community leaders), so a small group of us is getting together tomorrow for breakfast in a little less hectic environment.

I went to another meeting afterwards, where a couple of psychs discussed a survey on Quality of Life issues for Trans people. One of the results said that 86% of the people surveyed were happy, or very happy with their lives. I raised my hand and asked if they actually believed these numbers. Do they feel that people would really admit if their lives sucked? What population did they use for the survey? I don't think they appreciated my skepticism.

Annah was there. I had no idea it was her. I see her laying on one of Maria's tables from time to time as her male self, and the female Annah looks so so much different.

**1/9/00 11:29pm =====**

It has been QUITE the interesting day. I went to meet Amanda and Dana for brunch at the Sheraton. There was just me, Amanda, Amanda's girlfriend Robbie, Robbie's daughter (she's probably 10 years old or so), Monica (the co-chair of It's Time Arizona), Dana, and her administrative assistant. It was a wonderful time. We were there for almost 4 hours until they had to leave to catch the plane.

Lots of news on the Dana front. She is going to be on Oprah next month (Feb 16 she thinks...it's her birthday). Her autobiography is being written. She is having SRS done by Dr. Schrang in June. We had a very interesting chat.

But of more interest to me was the chat I had with her Aide (whose name escapes me at the moment no matter how hard I try to remember). This was a person with whom I felt an instant connection. We talked and talked and talked. She is the president of It's Time California, and I will be attending their inaugural meeting next month. She had SRS five years ago. She was talking about how we need to get comfortable in our new role before we could really ENJOY it. She kept kidding to me that once I get going, she thinks I'm going to really LOVE it. Really really love it. [Note: This person is Kate, who would become my 'big sister']

I called Elisabeth this afternoon, and we talked for over an hour. It was very emotional. I don't want to go into all the specifics at the moment, but I will be going there during lunch tomorrow....She told me she loved me for the first time in a long, long time....

**1/10/00 8:23pm =====**

Right now I'm listening to a song that has grown to mean a lot to me lately. At least now I can listen to it without getting too upset although it does affect me for some reason. It is called "Angels" by a bloke named Robbie Williams...

Here are the lyrics:

*I sit and wait  
Does an angel contemplate my fate?  
And do they know  
The place where we will go  
When we're gray and old?  
'Cos I've been told  
That salvation lets their wings unfold.  
So when I'm lying in my bed  
Thoughts running through my head  
And I feel that love is dead...  
I'm loving angels instead.*

**CHORUS:**  
*And through it all she offers me protection*

*A lot of love and affection  
Whether I'm right or wrong  
And down the waterfall  
Wherever it may take me  
I know that life won't break me  
When I come to call she won't forsake me....  
I'm loving angels instead.*

*When I'm feeling weak  
And my pain walks down a one-way street  
I look above  
And I know I'll always be blessed with love  
And as the feeling grows  
She breathes flesh to my bones  
And when love is dead  
I'm loving angels instead.*

REPEAT CHORUS

I was wrong. It's gotten me all teary again....

Work was the same as ever. I did email my resume off to the folks at Dell who wanted to get an updated copy. I don't see much happening, but I figure it couldn't do any harm....

**1/11/00 8:57am =====**

**To: Dan Spector (childhood friend)**

My mom still can't call me Donna on a regular basis. She calls me Dee....kinda a generic hybrid between Dave and Donna. Whatever makes her comfortable....

She is taking this better than I could ever have imagined. I'm sure it has been difficult for her, but she hasn't shown that side to me. People have no idea how difficult it is to vocalize a deep dark secret to a loved one....to deal with the fear and the guilt and the disappointment that you feel, and that the other person must feel. But she really has been a trooper.

When I started this, I talked with my psychologist about this path I am on. We embark upon it with the understanding, or at least we THINK we understand, that we have the possibility of losing EVERYTHING in our lives. Our family. Our friends. Our wives and children. Our homes. Our jobs. EVERYTHING that we knew from our lives is at risk, and whether we keep any of it or not, in a large sense, is not up to us. I have not seen my wife since June, nor my son since Labor Day. I have a house full of my stuff, and a garage with a Lexus and a Mercedes in it. I have all the toys and trappings of a fairly successful middle-aged person. But those things pale in comparison to the love and the support that I have gotten from my family.

*>I have been thinking back, trying to unearth clues in retrospect that  
>indicated your predilection...*

You won't find anything, so don't hurt yourself thinking about it. Even my mom had no clue.

*>I just think of you and all of you as some of my  
>best friends ever in the world, regardless of how many times we've seen  
>each other over the years;*

Friendship is about duration over time, not how many times we see each other. We shared a common

history for many, many years, and that bond that we built on Irving Terrace has endured over time. We have all moved on with our lives, but the bonds are still there. I remember so many things about growing up around your family...sleeping over at your house and making sure to eat the same foods to see if we had the same dreams, eating plain break out of the bag for a snack, Nancy and the White Album, Rachel and all her horses, spending hours setting up army men so we could destroy them, playing that football game with the cards, planning the band we would one-day form (The Diamond Five), and drawing pictures of how we would look.....I remember TONS.

Also, don't worry about saying or asking anything "inappropriate". I tell people to ask questions, and put no limits on that. Some people ask fairly insightful questions. Some people ask about the tie between gender identity and sexual orientation. My life is pretty open right now.... It's all out there to see. Feel free to ask...

*>It just must be a lot harder than she or I thought to marry an actor.*

Yep. Since you were a little kid, that was your passion. And I'm sure it takes up a huge part of your life, both time-wise and emotional-investment-wise. It's hard to put 100% into a relationship when that happens....

My wife sees ME as an actor. She sees me as having played the role of Dave for many years, and is very angry at me for that. She feels that I deceived her. I tried to continue that role for as long as I could. In a very real sense, the role became too difficult to continue. And to come to that realization is a terrifying thing.

*>I may never watch another Bills game for as long as I live.*

Being a Bills fan (or a Buffalo fan in general, for that matter) is like slow painful torture. It's like a gory car wreck, but you just can't turn away. It's like dropping a huge rock on your foot, picking it up, and then dropping it on there again. We are the Job (that's biblical, if you remember any of that) of the sports world.....

*>Anyway, we will talk soon. (Has your voice changed? Must've...)*

Actually, I don't think it has. I have been on hormones for quite some time now, which does lots of "interesting" things (boy does it ever). But it does not change the voice. I refuse to speak in some cartoonish high squeaky voice, so I think what I have now is ok for now. I am learning to handle so many new things, that I can concentrate on that later.

You take care, and best of luck to you and Brooke and the puppy. Stay strong, and call if you ever need to talk. You know where I am.

Donna

**1/11/00 7:13pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

I have made arrangements to go back to San Fran at the end of February for a follow up with Dr. O. He does something called a "Scalp Revision" to get rid of the hairline indents on the widow's peak. It doesn't cost anything except hospital costs, but I will have to stay there for 4 days until they take the staples out. I will not be so nearly incapacitated on this visit, and will rent a car and drive some of my dad's ashes up

to Yosemite while I am there. The gal from San Jose that I "clicked" with [Kate] has been to Yosemite many times, and offered to be my guide. I may take her up on that....

**1/12/00 8:31am =====**

Hi Cassie:

I hope all remains well in your world. The key to these next couple of weeks is to remain focused, don't worry too much about ANYTHING, and call friends if you need to.

When I finally went full-time, I came up with some rules to live by. I needed a "guide" that I could refer to as to what to do in different situations. I needed to keep it simple, as I'm kinda blonde and forget things easily ;). So I came up with 5 rules.

1. Live with dignity. Walk with your head and shoulders up, and look others in the eye when they talk. Don't be ashamed of who you are.
2. Don't let fear rule your life. Fear is a barrier that must be overcome. Have the courage to do it.
3. Experience everything. Enjoy life. This transition takes a very real emotional and physical and physical toll. Don't get so caught up in the details of the "doing", that you lose the pleasure of the "being".
4. Be totally honest. To yourself, as well to others.
5. Set expectations realistically. Don't allow disappointment to overwhelm you.

Read them. Learn them. Live them.

I won't be home until late tonight. Electro from 6-9.

You take care, and drop a line when you get a chance.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of my goals for the New Year was to take care of all the details surrounding my SRS. In early January I sent a letter to Lin in HR to inquire about what needed to be done. I didn't expect any problem, as I knew other gals who had been through similar transitions and none had a problem with respect to short-term disability coverage for time missed. Boy, was I wrong....

**1/12/00 9:21am =====**

**To: My HR Rep, Lin**

Hi Lin:

I hope your holidays were quiet and happy...

As I look at the coming year I have a few questions about things that are on my horizon that I need to ask about.

The next step in this process is the actual Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). My final obstacle was to obtain a concurring letter from a 2<sup>nd</sup> psychologist to confirm the recommendation of my primary provider. I have obtained this.

I am scheduled to travel to Neenah, WI for SRS on August 10, 2000. This leads me to my questions:

- I have increased my Health Care Flexible Spending Deduction in order to help cover this operation. Who do I speak with in order to pre-verify that there won't be any trouble, and that this procedure is indeed covered?
- Where can I find a complete copy of my Health Care Benefits to determine whether they will cover all or part of this procedure?
- What needs to happen beforehand in order to apply for and receive Short-Term Disability?

Call or write if you need any further information from me....

I thank you very much for your help.

Donna

***Her response (1/13/00):***

Hi Donna:

Unfortunately, our benefit programs aren't going to be able to help you much with your sex reassignment surgery. Since the surgery is elective vs. medically necessary, it isn't covered by your Health Plan. For the same reason, you won't be able to use your health care flexible spending funds, nor would the absence be covered under short-term disability. You are free to use paid leave and any vacation time to cover the absence, though. This is how we cover absences and coverage for any elective surgery an employee has.

I know these aren't the answers you were looking for but I hope it helps to explain the rationale behind them. If you have further questions or want to discuss this, please let me know.

Otherwise, how are you doing? I haven't had an update in a few months...hope all is well.

Lin

***My response (1/14/00):***

Hi Lin:

You're right. Those weren't the answers I was looking for. I can provide documentation to you that is accepted around the world to indicate that the surgery is NOT elective, and it IS medically necessary.

I don't really expect my Health Plan to cover it, but I have not seen a clause that specifically excludes SRS, which I do want to see.

I have a friend at Honeywell who recently had her SRS. Her FBA paid for the hospital expenses associated with her stay (not the surgery itself). Also, she did receive short-term disability to cover her time off from work following the surgery. I expect the same. In fact, I will not accept less.

These are important issues to me, and I am more than open to discuss them.

Thanks for your help.



Donna

***Her response (1/14/00):***

Donna,

Thanks for your input...I appreciate your point of view and will do further investigating on my end for you. It might be helpful if you could send me the documentation you have supporting the medical necessity of the surgery. I'll be in touch very soon so you can plan accordingly.

Thanks-

Lin

**1/12/00 2:08pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

Today is a pretty "regular" day. Sheesh. A regular night followed by a regular day. What the heck kinda pattern is this?

I called Dr. Schrang's office to verify they have everything they need from me. My second letter hasn't gotten there yet as Dr. Grubb is out of town, but she should have it there some time next week. My surgery date is August 10th, and I am the first patient of the day.

I sent a letter to my HR rep today informing her that I am having SRS on 8/10, and I had a couple of questions. First, I wanted to know what was necessary in order to get my short-term disability. Second, I wanted to make sure the \$\$\$ they are deducting for my Flexible Benefits Account can be used towards the surgery. I will raise holy hell if there is a problem with either of those.

I filled my prescriptions today through the Mail Order pharmacy that I support at work. Originally, before I had Prescription Coverage, I spent \$100+ per month on the scripts. Now, I pay around \$23/month. With Mail Order, I pay \$15 for 3 months. That's quite the benefit....

Well, I better get back to work. You take care, and I'll talk to ya later....

Donna

**1/13/00 10:42am =====**

Hi Michelle:

A couple of interesting things going on at the moment....

I mentioned that there was a gal from San Fran that I met on Sunday, and I felt we "clicked". It's hard to describe. I wrote to her and told her so. This is part of what she wrote back:

> *"Hi girl ! Thanks for the note! I too really enjoyed our  
> conversation and time together and I'm really looking forward to  
> your visit. Yes, sweetie, you weren't the only one that felt chemistry  
> in the air. You are an awesome woman...so much I can't even believe you are  
> TS at all (and I know lots about these things)!"*

Her name is Kate in case you want to add her to the cast of characters.....

I told you I had updated my resume and sent it off to Dell. I got a call from a recruiting manager yesterday to "chat". I called back this morning and we spoke for 45 minutes. I know what I'm good at, and what I'm not good at, and as I've told you before I do know how to interview well. They are not looking to do anything right away, as this is the 4th quarter of their fiscal year. I told them that was fine with me. I'm not actively looking anyway, and my annual bonus isn't given until March, so I want to be here for that. Mark my words: I will hear from them again.

Amanda is down. Part of it is because she is generally a "needy" person. She is trying and trying to organize and raise money within the TG community, and the results are disappointing her. I tried to explain to her that much of this community is a "phantom" community. Many see this stage of transition as a stepping stone, and move on with life. Others have so many personal/career/financial problems of their own they have no room for anything else.

**1/13/00 2:47pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>For some reason you seem to be putting forth so pretty heavy  
>endorphins for the fairer sex.*

I don't know why.

*>I wonder sometimes (as I'm sure  
>you do from previous conversations) just how you will be finding  
>yourself sexually oriented. Not gender oriented, but sexually.*

I think about that alot. While we were sitting at the buffet on Sunday, three nice looking blondes were seated near us and went to get their food. I said a simple "WOW!", which got Kate to look over. We had discussed a little about the sexual orientation thing, and she said something to the effect "You may THINK you're confused, but based on the way you react to those girls I think your mind has already made up its mind."

*>I can't help but wonder if you aren't going to end up in the Lone  
>Star State at some point. Things seem to be pointing in this direction for  
>you sometimes. I know that you mentioned S.F. as a preference at one point  
>should you find yourself in the position of moving.*

Both do cross my mind....

*>You know me and I don't tend to mince words when it comes to asking the  
>tough questions. I have one now that I would like to ask you. Do you feel  
>yourself distancing yourself somewhat from your wife and more importantly Matt?*

Yes. Most definitely. I have had to get used to this "physical" separation, but even harder to adjust to is the mental one. I find as I move forward, there will be fewer and fewer ties to Dave's old life. The discomfort I have with the few ties that remain to what Elisabeth expected of Dave as a husband, and Matt expected of Dave as a father, will not go away until I have been able to achieve both types of separation. And I think part of that will be to create a physical distance between us.....

Karen said something interesting to me the other night. She said that her one wish for me is to fall in love

while on Estrogen. She said the intensity of it will just blow me away. I have been thinking about that. I do not doubt that. And I also do not doubt that it WILL happen at some point.

*>In the past few months I have noticed that you mention Matt  
>less often as you used to. Almost as if you expect to lose contact  
>with him at some point ....*

Right now our contact is 0. Zilch. Nothing. I don't know how it could be less.

*>I think that at some point this year, one of these Donna friendly companies  
>is going to lure you away. Probably after SRS and when you do leave I think  
>that there will be people within your current company who will be relieved  
>to not have to relate to you and others who will think that you only stayed  
>there so long as the insurance, benefits and the company's HR Dept  
>protected you.*

All are possible. I won't disagree with any of that.

**1/14/00 1:23pm =====  
Journal Entry**

A couple of interesting things today....

First off, I beat the expert level of Minesweeper on my new computer at home with a time of 642. That's pretty good....

Secondly, I dropped the paperwork to apply for a "Petition for Dissolution of Marriage" of at my attorney's during lunch. It will be filed first thing next week. Oy.

Thirdly, I stopped by a health club on the way home, as I really really want to get back into shape and I really really like working out. So I stopped in at an upscale kinda place near my apartment. All I wanted was a pricelist, but I knew better.... I knew they would want to show me around and dicker with me and this and that... So they call some guy named "Tony" to explain everything to me. He is from New Jersey. He tried to do the hard-sell, but I told him to save his breath as he couldn't put pressure on me if he tried. The club was nice, and I didn't even feel awkward walking around it. Until we got to the locker rooms. He wanted to prove to me how clean the women's locker and shower areas are, so he had me go in and stroll around and come out the far door. I still don't know where one's eyes are supposed to point in a situation like that. Can you picture me walking through this lunchtime locker room with ladies of all ages in various stages of prepping? Even though my \$\$\$ situation sucks, I think I'm gonna do it. I priced it out, and it costs a little less than my cable on a monthly basis. I'd rather cancel the cable....Needless to say, I won't be changing or showering there for a long while (the membership is good for 36 months), but I get my own locker for when I'm ready....And use of a personal trainer or massage. This should be "interesting".

Today is Friday. I am going out tonight. Even if it's by myself. There are some places (predominantly lesbian from what I hear) that I want to see for myself. So whether anyone wants to go with me or not, I'll spend some time out and about a little later....

When I stop to look at what I have done today, and what I plan to do later, and compare that with where I was even 6 months ago, it boggles my mind. It feels like a whole other person. I sometimes feel that I am watching this happen to someone else. I have no idea how this came about, but it really is incredible....

1/14/00 10:32 am =====  
From: Cassie

Dear Donna,

Sorry I didn't call yesterday....no excuse. What I wanted to tell you yesterday was that I have decided that I will be moving on here at the end of the year or the beginning of next. I have more than a few reasons for this decision and oddly enough, most of them have nothing to do with work.

1. I have always been afraid. Afraid of what other people think, afraid of change, afraid of being lonely, afraid of a lot of things. I'm tired of that and there are a lot of things I want to do and see and accomplish in my life and it's time I started doing! I have never truly been on my own. The only time I was "kind of alone" was when I was in the Army and then you are never alone! I now feel a definite need to find out who I am on my own and I am no longer afraid.

2. I feel that as long as I'm here in Madison I will always be identified as a transsexual and not a true woman and if I am going to have any kind of chance to find the right person for me, I'm going to have to go where I am only known as a woman.

3. I have wanted to participate in adventure racing for quite some time now and if I am to do it I need to go where I can train on a more consistent basis and where the disciplines necessary are available for training. This is my passion and sitting here on my butt won't get it done!

4. I want to broaden my work experience and feel I need to test myself in other markets outside of my comfort zone. I want to find something which will allow me to take a more responsible leadership role and to move on into what I feel is the second phase of my career. I could do it here but because of the sheer number of people I work with the opportunities are few and far between.

5. I want to see just how much I am "worth" on the job market. I have a feeling I could be doing much better than I am doing now. (at least a little better) This is imperative if I am to shorten my transition timetable to a more acceptable period of time. It is also a "greed" type thing as well although I don't think that the negative connotation associated with greed is fair in this case. I have dreams and these dreams cost money and if I am going to accomplish these dreams while I am still young enough I need to increase my means.

I suppose there are more less significant reasons but with the ones above have more than enough reasons to pursue this course of action. I don't know but just to show that I can is reason enough.

Like all of my transition .....IMPORTANT NEWS FLASH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

They just stopped by and dropped off my new nameplate for my cubical!

YES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Now, where was I? Oh, yea.... like all my transition I want to do this right and not in some kind of spastic, frantic rush!

My transition is from lost to found, from chaos to peace and from childhood to adulthood! When I think about the 24th I have a feeling unlike anything I have ever experienced or ever anticipated. It is like a door opening up and beyond I see an entire universe! It is like finding a profound peace amidst confusion

and anxiety and like Christmas (X 1000). WOW. It is like my life is just starting and there's just so much out there to do and experience.

I think that I have come a long way from the day I walked out of the house into this transition. I am now looking beyond the transition of gender to who I am and what I want my life to be. I don't want to wait any longer to live it and I want to live it the way I want to! My only regret is that this came so late in my life, so I have a lot of time to make up for!

Love,

Cassie

**1/15/00 11:52am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I'm about to grab some lunch, but there have been a few interesting happenings. After work last night I went to sign up over at the health club. I have got to go and choose my own personal locker....locker #99. It's kinda symbolic at this point, but one day I will get full use of that bugger. This package includes pretty much everything....swimming, steam room, sauna, aerobics, weights, tanning....you name it I got it. The camera was broken for the id badges, so I'll go back for that today and begin the regimen on Monday at 5. I'm figuring I can work out early, be back here by 7 and get ready, and be at work just after 8. Lunch is really the best time, but I'm sure it would be much more crowded and then there's that little issue of hair and makeup...

I never did make it out last night. I made the leftover meatball stroganoff for dins, and Elisabeth called, so we talked for an hour. She had some things she wanted me to pick up, so I drove up to the house. While I was there, I knocked on Matt's window, and actually got to see my little man! That made me happy. We chatted for a couple of minutes and I headed back home.

This morning was electrolysis. Mostly "surgery area" stuff. Oy.

**1/15/00 6:21pm =====**

Elisabeth and I have had 2 civil, almost friendly conversations in the last 2 days. I don't know what to expect once the divorce papers get filed this week. I have a feeling this is a roller coaster ride that neither of us want to be on...

**1/16/00 4:52pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

Last night turned out to be a loooooonnnnnnggggg night. I didn't get home until almost 4am. I'm not used to that kinda lifestyle. I met Annah at Maria's restaurant and we shared an Antipasto salad and talked about our similarities. She told her boss at work about her situation a couple of weeks ago, and was married for 13 years and has an 8-year-old son. A bunch in common...

Dawn eventually showed up so we headed off to the 307. From what I could tell, the "straight" crowd goes there to see the drag shows in the front. The TG crowd (and various admirers and hangers on) goes to the back by the pool table. There were lots of faces there that I have seen at the various meetings. Lots of new ones, too. I played a couple of games of pool, and actually played very well considering how little I play nowadays. Dawn is a "regular" there, and was much in demand. Monica was there. I think I have told you about her. She was at the very first support group meeting I ever went to, and works with Amanda in all her lobbying efforts. But whereas many of us have come a long way in the past year, she is stuck. She had a "thing" for Katie (the gal from CA who came here with Dana last

week)...in fact I think she has a thing for most people. She took me aside to tell me how far I've come and how proud she was in me and how nice I looked and that she found me attractive and I should remain "open" to the many new inputs I will be getting....

After a couple of hours, we went to another club that was nearby. It was a gay club. When we got there, there were only guys in there. At that point there were 4 or 5 of us. It was a pretty quiet place, but it is attached to a dance club and you could hear the thump-thump-thump of the beat through the walls. We eventually headed over there, and got there at 12:30ish. Although bars in Phoenix close at 1am, this is an "after hours club", and there was still a cover charge. Sheesh.

I have never seen anything like this place. I have never even imagined anything like this place. It was totally totally modern with all kinds of lights and strobes and stages for people to dance on and fog machines and different side-rooms with stuff going on in there. It was totally gay, with the guys dancing without shirts to show off and the girls dressed in leather and long, black gowns and stuff. The dancers were pretty amazing. There were people making out everywhere. It was totally about pleasures of the flesh...sensual pleasures. Amazing. I stood and watched for well over an hour. But eventually the noise and the smoke and the late hour started to get to me. Even at that, I didn't get out of there until 3:15am.

I only slept until 8:30, and am pretty much useless today. My voice sounds like Burl Ives and is scratchy scratchy scratchy. I feel like I've been hit by a truck. I did manage to get out and do a little shopping, though, but have spent the rest of the day putzing. Doing laundry. Cleaning. Straightening. All that fun stuff. I talked to Elisabeth and Matt, and Elisabeth admitted she is trying to get Matt to talk to me more. It was good....

**1/17/00 6:08pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

I talked with one of the gals from San Fran [*Kate*] last night for over an hour. I don't know how to explain it, but we just click. Not necessarily a sexual thing, but more than that. I think you and I click on a very deep level, so you'll know what I mean. She had SRS 3 years ago, and is one of the few people (besides yourself) who gives me things to actually THINK about. Things to consider in a way I never had before. We were talking last night about how we always knew we were different, but we are also different than other TS's that we know. We don't "fit the mold", if there is such a thing. But I also think that's what tends to attract other TS's to us, which I am definitely noticing.

I stopped at my house during lunch. I dropped off a note to MaryAnn telling her that I had filed the paperwork that is the beginning of divorce. I explained what was going to happen, and that I love her very much. Reading the letter over made me cry. It's just so sad.

**1/17/00 7:54pm =====**  
**From: Michelle**

Hi Hon,

I guess sometimes I tend to forget some of the things in my life that are very important to me...my health, a home and food to eat, a job that pays for all of it. I could go on but I really wanted this letter to be about you. Yes you. I've known you now for two years and we two have been through so much together that I can't believe at times just where we were and where we find ourselves at this point in our lives. You have been my trusted confidant and friend, someone that I always felt that I could say anything to and know with NO UNCERTAINTY that you would take my feelings and what I have shared with you and take it to the grave rather than break that bond we share. I just wanted to tell you how much I cared about you and how I love you as my friend. If ever two souls could meet and give so much of themselves as we have

over the years, then we are those two souls. I remember how despondent and tired of life I was when we first met and always you told me that all these things would pass and that there would be a better life ahead for me (and for you). I can never repay the time and energy you spent trying to bring me up when I felt so very down and out. You have always been there for me and I for you. I would do anything in my power to bring you the happiness and joy in your life that you want so badly. There have even been times when the words you spoke to me were tough love of a sorts...a challenge for me to pick myself off and get back into the game of life. A friend who was not afraid to say that I was wrong and that I needed to hear the truth behind my own words. I cannot say what the future may hold for me. There are so many paths from which to choose. Some dead ends, others a long and arduous trail that will eventually lead to yet better paths and choices. I value your words and your friendship. Each has touched my life and moved me beyond my little cocoon that for so long I spun about me. You are so very important to me and I want so badly for the two of us to be happy and find joy in life. I know that we will be there in the end will be the better for having traveled the paths together.

Michelle

**1/19/00 10:43am =====**

Hi Michele:

Some weeks just fly by. This one seems to be crawling along. I don't know why..

I talked to my attorney yesterday. The paperwork for the divorce is being filed today. Elisabeth and I have been talking, and the other night she finally said some things I have been hoping to hear her say. She said that she is finally not crying about this, and actually gets a good feeling when we talk now. She doesn't know if it's because there is some closure ahead, or from the passage of time, but it was good to hear her say that. I can hear it in her voice, too, and Sally and Ray say they have noticed it as well.

Also, when we were talking about our expectations of how things will be distributed in the eventual settlement, I said I was willing to give up much of the material stuff we had accumulated over our years, as I was starting new. But I also would not allow myself to give it up, and also be saddled with the all debt to buy new. We have to end this on an even playing field, so whatever needs to happen so I can pay off the debt I now find very burdensome (thanks to 20+ hours of electrolysis a week I endured for those many months, and buying a wardrobe, and furniture, etc. etc) must happen. She agreed. Up until now, she felt that it was MY debt. In reality, it is OUR debt. We will see if her thoughts continue along those lines, but it was nice to hear her say it in any event.

Amanda is getting on my nerves. I knew this would happen. She can tell that I have been stressed a bit lately, and is always wanting to talk about it or give me a backrub or something. I don't want either. Not with her. I told her early on that one reason that I don't want a roommate is that I need my space. I don't need spectators for what I am about to endure. I tend to turn inwards to deal with difficult situations, not outwards. She needs to lay off.

Her dreams include finding a butch lesbian, getting married in a BIG wedding, and living happily ever after in a big house. I told her that none of those were in my future. I have no interest in any of those things. She asked what I DID want, and although I couldn't give specifics, I told her all I want happiness. I don't know where happiness is, but I'm looking for it, and I hope to find it someday. She feels I need more concrete goals. I don't.

**1/20/00 3:59pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I am a little shaky this afternoon. I don't know why. Kinda like I am on a coffee-rush. I'm cold, and that could have something to do with it. It was worse a little earlier than it is now....

Wife called me a few times today. She and Matt are going to see the Buffalo Sabres vs. the Phoenix Coyotes downtown tonight, and she has no idea how to get down there. Matt has some super challenger math problems for extra credit. I love that stuff. Some of it was practically impossible, so I had to write computer programs to figure them out. But I did.

I spent my 4 hours at electrolysis this morning, and Maria asked if she could treat me to breakfast. We went down the street for a quick bite before I headed off to come to work.

**1/21/00 6:57am =====**

Hi Michelle:

I made arrangements for my trip to the Bay last night. I realized that the Internet Special fares were only good until midnight, and didn't want to dilly-dally any longer.

I had this email waiting from Dawn this morning.

> *I had a nice time last night. We must do it again. Soon.*  
> *But, the next time I go to a movie with you I must remember to bring allot of tissue:-)*  
> *I must say there is a certain aura when I am around you. Makes me feel comfortable and*  
> *positive. Thank You*  
> *Have an absolutely great day!! Talk to you soon.*

Her attentions to me are not all that subtle, but they do not make me uncomfortable. Nothing "romantic" or physical or anything of that nature will come of them, but she is a good person with her head on straight and she really CARES about this community. I need to learn to be able to keep some of the people I meet who want to move closer to me (intimacy-wise) at arms length while at the same time letting others who I DO want to be closer to get through. I think learning to do both are difficult. In fact, I think the second of these is harder, as letting others in has never been easy for me, while keeping them at a distance has.

Whereas I don't know what I will eventually need in a "partner" in life, I am learning some things. Amanda is always talking breaking down lesbians into two groups. First there are "butch" lesbians, and I absolutely have no interest there. I do not want anything to do with a gal who is more male than I am. I also don't want a "fem", as I keep feeling that I will be considered as the "male" of the relationship. If this is the way I go, I want an equal. Not too far one way, and not too far the other. As far as guys are concerned, I have not closed that door. When I close my eyes and wonder what it's really like to be treated and considered female, it is always with a man. But I tend to think that this process is a learning process, and I am definitely doing that.

**1/23/00 10:36 am =====**

Hi Michelle:

I was out late again last night. These people are a bad influence on me ;). Not really, though, as I haven't done anything that I'm sorry about.

Last night I headed out to a meeting a group here was having. I was going to meet with some of the gals to go out afterwards. They had a fashion show of sorts, but I refused to participate and got called a party-pooper. I have absolutely no interest in that stuff.

We went back to 307 (the bar with the drag show) for a little while, and then off to the Biz at 11 (the lesbian dance club that I went to on Friday). I had more of a chance to look around last night, and it was



VERY interesting. I even danced to a couple of songs, which is a first for me...

My schedule is still all cockeyed, as I didn't get home until 2, but I did sleep until 8:30 and feel ok. I have all kinds of putzing to do today...stop at work to pick up some stuff, stop at Target, pay bills, bathroom duty, go for a run, electro 6-9, pack. Plus, I want to make sure to be around for as much of the conference championship games as I can.

\* \* \* \* \*

Over the first 6 months of 2000, my job kept me on the road almost constantly. In fact, I think that during those 6 months I wasn't home for a total of 6 weeks. I was usually in either Ft. Worth or Birmingham during the week to help build and install the software that they used to track all of the pharmaceuticals that they stocked on the shelves in the pharmacy. The facilities are HUGE drug warehouses with rows and rows and rows of shelves stocked with drugs.

As if my schedule weren't already crazy, I often arrived back in town on Friday night, had electrolysis all day on Saturday, spent Sunday doing laundry and then packing, and then back out on Monday morning.

This did not bother me. The people that I worked with totally accepted me, and I very much enjoyed the work. I find that it is important to find SOMETHING in life that provides a sense of fulfillment and pride, and my work in DFW and Alabama provided that to me. Plus, my busy schedule did not leave too much time for my mind to wander, which was a very good thing.

**1/29/00 6:56am =====**

Hi Michelle:

I'm home. Week one of the "Traveling Donna Show" is almost over. I truly enjoyed my week there. I got lots and lots and lots done, and it was great to see you and mom. The flight home was a pain, as flying out of DFW on a Friday is like trying to shop on Christmas Eve. Lots and lots of people. The plane was full. I sat in the middle seat. It was an hour late in leaving. All in all, a long trip. But I got here, and Dawn picked me up, and we went to Maria's restaurant for a bite of dins, and all was well. Steph was there, and she seems pretty low, but these days that's par for her course...

I stopped by work on the way past, and picked up some stuff that HR had sent to me regarding the exclusions in our insurance policies. One shows that my health insurance has a specific clause that excludes SRS, which I expected. The other shows the Short Term Disability plan has a similar clause. I will write to her at some point over the weekend. I absolutely cannot accept this. I told her early on that I did not expect anything MORE than anyone else, but would not accept LESS, either. The fact that their policy excludes my situation, while no one else I know has had this problem, is putting a "one size fits all" on something that you just can't do that with. I will tell her flat out that, unless we can work together towards some sort of exception so they will cover it, I will begin to search for a new job with a company that will cover it. There is a principle involved here that I will not compromise.

**1/30/00 9:50pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's almost 10 [on Sunday night] and I'm at work. I had to send out some status memos and whatnot.

One of them is a schedule that was developed by one of the directors regarding the duties/responsibilities thru the beginning of March. I am scheduled to be on the road the entire time. I have a feeling some of the managers here in ITD will squawk, as they feel it is up to THEM to determine my schedule, not my users. We'll see how it all plays out.

Otherwise, it has been fairly quiet but very busy. Lots of electrolysis (3 hrs yesterday and again today), I went out for a while last night, I did lots of cleaning/straightening/laundry stuff. All in all, a pretty productive weekend.

I still have to go home and pack and pay bills, so I'll say bye for now. I have an 8:30 flight tomorrow morning, so I'll talk to ya from Birmingham.

**1/31/00 4:14am =====**

Hey Michelle:

I am in Birmingham. It was a crazy, hectic morning. First, I cracked one of my nails! Tragedy!!!! Then, I was late in leaving the house, and got to the airport twenty minutes before the flight was scheduled to leave. As I looked at the "Departures" monitor, I realized that I was in the wrong terminal. Most of my flights are on America West, in Terminal 4, but this was on American in Terminal 3. So I grabbed my stuff and left my car there and got the inter-terminal bus, and made it to the gate just as they were closing the door. I had a layover in Dallas, and the rest of the trip went without incident.

I went to work last night to write a status report, and send my schedule for the next few weeks to my managers. My direct manager, Bill (you may remember him from many of my pre-transition emails) has a problem with all my traveling, and sent an email saying so. He is trying to micromanage me, and that won't happen. I sent a reply to all the managers saying that I was available should other projects arise, but my best use at this point was at our distribution centers and I am not planning to change the schedule. That should go over like a fart in church....

I got here, checked into my hotel, came to the facility and had a meeting, and here I sit. The real fun will start tomorrow....

**1/13/00 10:42am =====**

**From: Michelle**

**In response to my email telling her of my situation at work**

*> I stopped by work on the way past, and picked up some stuff that HR had sent to me regarding  
> the exclusions in our insurance policies. One shows that my health insurance has a specific  
> clause that excludes SRS, which I expected. The other shows the Short Term Disability plan  
> has a similar clause. I will write to her at some point over the weekend. I absolutely cannot  
> accept this. I told her early on that I did not expect anything MORE than anyone else, but would  
> not accept LESS, either. The fact that their policy excludes my situation, while no one else I  
> know has had this problem, is putting a "one size fits all" on something that you just can't do  
> that with. I will tell her flat out that, unless we can work together towards some sort of exception  
> so they will cover it, I will begin to search for a new job with a company that will cover it. There  
> is a principle involved here that I will not compromise.*

Donna,

I don't think that you are going to be able to win in this situation. It's there in black and white about their policies concerning the coverage of SRS. I looked at mine and it's the same way. Once it's written out and is company policy and you have been paying the premiums, you're in a no win situation. Looking for a more TS friendly company is going to be cutting off your nose to spite your face and your

company knows this. They know that they have the law on their side and whether the law is right or wrong, you're stuck with it unless you want to do what so many TS's have had to do and that's go public and into the courts. It's like that teacher that lost her job and accepted a settlement rather than face the ordeal of the publicity. Besides, the cash settlement she received will go a long way towards paying her own bills for the SRS. I don't think that quitting your job is such a good idea. In fact at this juncture I believe that it would be the equivalent of financial suicide considering the debt that you have incurred thus far. And let's be very real here, TS's aren't exactly going to garner a lot of support from the judicial system no matter how blind the law is supposed to be. Judges (and your probably going to get a male one) are human and just as homophobic as the rest of the population. They may say that they are unbiased, but their decisions are going to be based on their most primal and subconscious feelings. I wouldn't push this issue of leaving my job if I were you. I can't emphasize that point more.

Michelle

**1/31/00 5:16pm =====**  
**To: Lin – PCS HR rep**

Hi Lin:

I'm sorry it has taken me a little while to get back to you. I was in Dallas at the mail facility last week, and am in Birmingham this week.

One of the first things I did upon arriving back in Phoenix over the weekend was to go to my desk to get the information you had told me you sent. I cannot tell you how important a matter this is to me, and how disappointed I was at what you had sent to me.

This situation far transcends the \$4,000 or so in salary for the 3 weeks that I am planning to be out. It stabs at the very heart of my situation.

I wear a pendant that is inscribed with the Serenity Prayer...."God grant me the peace to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I cannot accept, and the wisdom to know the difference". It is a motto that means much to me. And THIS is something I cannot accept. It involves principles that I feel so strongly about that I am hoping we can come to a resolution to this before any damage is done.

I am following an internationally accepted protocol of treatment for people in my situation. These steps are supported both by the medical community as well as the psychological community. The medical risks are very high. For example, I am taking a dosage of estrogen that far, far exceeds that produced in a genetic female body (5mg/day + 2cc biweekly injections). I have been on this regimen for 3 years. The chief concern for people in this situation is that the hormones must be metabolized in the liver, and leads to an increased risk of liver cancer. In fact, my chances for liver cancer are at least 10 times what yours are as long as I continue this dosage, and my liver enzymes are monitored every 6 months to ensure that the levels are not elevated. There are only two ways to change this situation. The first is to go off hormones, which is absolutely not an option. The second is to have the surgery, which removes the source of the testosterone, and the need for the high doses of estrogen. So beyond any "cosmetic" or quality of life issues that can be raised by the surgery, it IS irrefutably medically necessary for people in my situation.

I know of a half dozen other gals in the Phoenix area who have had their surgery in the past 2 years. ALL have had their convalescence absence covered by the short-term disability policy of their company. Every one. And all have told me that it was not a problem. If I were to accept this exclusion, I would be alone among them as the only one who did not receive this benefit. The thought of working for a company that would not fight for me in this instance, under these circumstances, would be one I simply could not accept.

The road I am facing has been horrendously difficult. No one who has not faced it can begin to imagine it. And the hardest part is the roadblocks that continually seem to try to stop nature from taking its course. To this point, you and PCS have been wonderful in helping me in my transition. For my own part, I feel I have made a commitment to this company, and remain a valuable asset of it. My users will attest to that. Many transsexuals transition at their job only to leave and start fresh somewhere else. I do not want that to happen. I am hoping that the corporate values that we preach will not fade down the homestretch, and we can all be proud of the way in which it was handled....from start to finish.

I have spoken with my physician, Dr. Fisher, and my psychologist, Dr. Sheila Dickson, Phd. Both are willing to talk with whomever you feel appropriate regarding my situation. I can also provide names of HR managers at IBM, Honeywell, and Motorola who have worked through this without incident. I am hoping that, based on the overwhelming evidence of specialists respected throughout the United States, and the desire of all parties to continue our relationship, that some arrangements will be made and I will be granted my 3 weeks of paid leave while convalescing. I need that assurance.

I will be on the road constantly between DFW and Birmingham until the beginning of March, so meeting with you face-to-face until then may be difficult. However, the sooner that I can have an answer on this the better off we will all be. Please let me know what I need to provide in order to move things ahead.

Thank You,

Donna

**2/1/00 3:11pm =====**

***From: Susan (old friend in Rochester)***

D.,

First of all, I still want to get together when you're in Rochester. What kind of friend would I be if I didn't? I've always enjoyed spending time with you because of what's inside. I am very sad for all you have had to go through. Your email made me cry. My heart aches for you, your wife and Matt.

I would not do or say anything to betray your confidence. I do have questions, but they can wait till I see you. Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me. I'll be in touch in the next day or so.

Fondly,

Susan

**2/1/00 5:58pm =====**

***Journal Entry***

I have a feeling that life is about to get a little more complicated.

I got paged this afternoon, and there was a group of Managers in Scottsdale who were meeting and wanted to talk to me. They basically told me that they are going to curtail my work on this system. It made me very angry, and it came across in my responses to their questions. They want me to put together a list of everything that is supposed to be completed by the end of this month, so they can prioritize/analyze/etc. What a bunch of crap.

Bill called afterwards to follow up. He was all full of bullshit, about the fact there are plans for each of us for the coming year blah blah blah. I told him I didn't believe a word he was telling me, and he finally

admitted he hasn't seen a single project plan past March. I told him that this was one thing in my life right now that I feel good about...I feel good about the job I am doing and being appreciated for it...something that I don't get in Scottsdale. He started to tell me how we're all one big team, and I told him that we may all be playing the same game, but we're not on the same team. I am a member of that team in name only. I am an outsider. And all the crap he tried to feed about giving the team time, and giving them some credit, was just so much horseshit, and no one disappointed me more than him. I told him he couldn't even look at me when he talked to me...how is he supposed to manage me? I've been out of town for how long now, and how many emails has he sent to me? How many phone calls? None. Needless to say, a lot of frustration came out....

I told him I would do as he asked. Not because I agree with it. Not because I like it. Not because I want to be a "team player". But because I have been told to do it. And as an employee, we all have to take our marching orders from someone. Needless to say, by the time the conversation was done, we were both pretty angry.

Brian called shortly afterwards. I had nothing to say to him....

Bill sent me an email later to apologize. He agreed that he has not handled my transition as well as he had hoped, and asked for more time. And I wrote one back. And it has made me cry. So here I sit...all shaky and sniffling...freezing my little hiney off. There are two cars in the parking lot. Mine, and the guard's. I need to go home.

**2/2/00 6:43am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

It's 7:30am, and a night of sleep has been a good thing....

When I got to my hotel last night I decided I needed to talk to someone. Someone who knows what I am dealing with. I called Katie, my friend from San Fran. It was good to talk to her. She feels that I am far too strong for my company to allow me to "run amuck", and that they will eventually get me. I told her that won't be hard, as I will stand up for things that I believe in, and will leave rather than humble myself to them. She said that they are very afraid of me, and of what I can and might do, so they are handling things very delicately right now. But eventually, they will get me. She's right.

We talked about a lot of stuff. We talked for almost an hour. I felt better afterwards, not because of any reassuring words she had for me, as we are both realistic, but in just being able to get it off my chest.

We'll see what today has in store for me. Never a dull moment in transland.....

**2/2/00 12:11pm =====**  
**From: Lin – PCS HR**  
**Subject: Re: SRS Coverage**

Donna,

Thanks for the update you sent. You are right, I can't imagine what you are going through. I can only try my best to help.

I'm more than happy to continue to convey your concerns about Short Term Disability coverage of sex reassignment surgery on to the benefits committee. However, I don't think that this will be enough information to change the company's guidelines on coverage for an elective surgery. Based on our recent conversations, I thought that you might be able to provide documentation supporting that your surgery is a medical necessity. When you are back from Birmingham and Ft. Worth, if you can provide

any of that documentation, I'll get it to the benefits committee for further consideration. Without it, there isn't really anything more for them to discuss.

With that additional information from you, I still can't guarantee that there will be a change and PCS will support paid time off under short-term disability for your surgery. I'm open to considering an unpaid personal leave for the surgery so you don't have to exhaust your vacation time. Maybe that's another option we should discuss when you're back in town. In the meantime, let me know if you have anything that supports the medical necessity of the procedure and I'll pass it along.

Lastly, I appreciate the info. you sent as well regarding how other local companies have handled your situation. However, I don't need to contact them. PCS is very confident in the rich benefit provided by our STD plan and we don't feel the need to compare it to others in the valley. How they approach STD doesn't have any bearing on how the PCS plan is administered.

Take care. I'll talk with you soon-

Lin

***My Reply (2/3/00):***

Hi Lin:

Thanks for getting back to me.

Needless to say, I do not share the high regard in which you hold the PCS STD plan. I find a blanket exclusion such as the one you have regarding SRS to be totally unacceptable and ignorant. But I suppose that, at this point, that is neither here nor there.

I have not given up. I am gathering information from my doctor, and from the Harry Benjamin Committee, and from others to help me in my efforts. I will forward the information to you as soon as I have it all.

Thank you again.

Donna

***2/2/00 5:30pm =====  
The Search Begins....***

Hi Michelle:

I have started my search for a new job. I am in no hurry, as I am supposed to get my annual bonus in March and I NEED that very badly. But I have called some friends and some contacts, and the search begins again....I have not completely given up hope at staying here, but I think the writing is on the wall....It really sucks to be doing a good job, and basically enjoying the job, and feeling the need to move on over this. But I do. And I will.

I didn't hear a peep from any of the managers in Scottsdale today. I was at work until after 9 last night writing the task list they asked for, and I sent that off.

The high point of my evening was getting home and feeling the need to talk to someone about options. So I called Katie in San Fran. She has a way of laying it on the line and speaking from experience. In a nutshell, she says that they'll get me. Now. Later. Whenever. She says that there are very, very few

companies that can tolerate a transsexual who has a strong personality to be in a very visible, critical-path position. They fear me. They would be much more comfortable without me than they are with me (I'm talking about an HR perspective here....not necessarily a user/peer perspective). So be it.

I did have a good chat with the lady that I work for here, Nancy, as we get along very well. In fact, she and I and her husband are going to dinner tomorrow. I didn't go into specifics with her, but told her some of what I had been told yesterday, and I told her I felt that I was slowly being eased out. She told me the story of her last job, where both she and her husband (prior to their marriage) worked for the same company. When they got engaged, HR told them that it was against company policy to employ 2 spouses, and they forced her to quit. Her HR rep indicated that it wasn't personal, and it wasn't fair, and it wasn't right....but it was business. Even though there are OTHER married couples on the payroll, someone wanted to make an example of them. And that's the situation I face at the moment.

I do believe that Elisabeth should receive the divorce papers in the mail today. I tried to call Monday night to warn her, but she wasn't home so I talked to my son. I was far too upset to do it last night. I will try again when I get back to my hotel.

**2/3/00 4:59pm =====**  
**From: Michelle**

Hi Donna,

I can't help but wonder if it wouldn't be such a bad thing for you if you were to bend a little with the flow of things at work. I know that some things might appear to really rub you the wrong way. I'll use the short-term disability issue for an example. YES I KNOW! You are very committed about this but hear me out. In the long term, if it were me and I exhausted my options with HR, I think that I would tend to take the leave without pay. It's only three weeks compared to having a stable source of income for the long-term foreseeable future if and that's IF you don't get bent out of shape about anything that rubs your principles the wrong way. Sometimes I think you tend to forget that these people have had a tremendous personal burden placed on them too. Not every office has a transitioning MTF TS working alongside so many people. We've talked about how some will relate and some won't. That's a simple fact of life. But I also believe that by

keeping a low profile and keeping your mouth shut on some battles, you can win some of the bigger ones while at the time preserving your source of income. NOW is not the time to push too many people's sense of reality around too much. Transitioning right now with an expensive surgery in 6 months and an impending divorce is not the time to be pissing people off at work. I know this might not sound as supportive as you might like, but I really think it would be in your best interests and those of your family if you were to take a bit of a lower profile and also take the leave without pay. Like I said, three weeks of no pay and continued employment is a lot better than no job and no pay at all if you continue this "my way or the highway" approach to things. You're not going to win with that approach and finding a new job while transitioning is going to be next to impossible. Imagine yourself as the hiring person and you walk in the door and you have to choose between a TS who is having surgery in a few months and a "straight" person. Guess who's going to be hired. Imagine what the superiors of that person doing the hiring would do when they saw who the personnel person brought in! In a nutshell, I say back off a little and give these people some room to breathe. You've got six months to get this issue settled slowly and quietly or to make plans to take three weeks without pay. Don't push the issues so hard and with such a militant attitude. Sorry if that pisses you off, but it's the way I see things from what I read and what I hear from you. Oh, one more thing, I think that the more documentation you present to the HR woman, the more she can pass on to the review committee. Make it medical journal articles that support your decision and any articles that show a favorable outcome when the employer cooperated with the TS in transition. Don't show them a bunch of stuff that featured confrontations and legal battles. That will only scare them more and give them desire to be rid of you. Use the honey for the flies dear.

Michelle

**My response (2/4/00):**

>You're not going to win with that approach and finding a new job  
>while transitioning is going to be next to impossible. Imagine  
>yourself as the hiring person and you walk in the door and you have  
>to choose between a TS who is having surgery in a few months and a  
>"straight" person. Guess who's going to be hired.

Why do you say that? Do you really believe that? I can't believe you would doubt me like that. I am not looking to "win". I am looking to do what is right. And your statement about not being able to find a job while transitioning was ignorant. I will prove you wrong.

**Michelle's response (2/4/00):**

I AM NOT IGNORANT!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And you know darn good and well that if a Human Resource Manager had to choose between a so-called "straight" person and a transitioning male to female transsexual that they would choose the straight person 99.9% of the time.

**2/7/00 1:37pm =====  
Journal Entry**

I have arrived [in Dallas]. Again. I set my alarm for 4am, and timed things so well that I got to the gate just as my row was being called to board. I am almost getting used to this commute....

I had to go to work for several hours yesterday to get caught up on paperwork...expense reports, status reports, reply to e-mail, etc. Brian had invited me to call him so he could treat me to dins over the weekend, but I did not feel like calling him. He left me a message on my answering machine this morning saying he is sorry I didn't call, and to have a nice trip.

I sent an email to HR requesting a copy of the STD plan in its entirety...not just the list of exclusions. As it turns out, it is a self-administered plan. PCS basically runs it, and developed that exclusion list themselves. I find that to be very interesting. I am about to indicate to them that I am going to work to get that exclusion removed. My ex-neighbor, Sal, has a husband who is the VP for a large insurance company in Phoenix, and I sent her a note to inquire whether he knows of a good attorney who specializes in STD that I could sit with for an hour to go over this situation to see if they have any thoughts/suggestions....

**2/9/00 =====  
From: Lin**

Donna,

When will you be back next week? I think it would be really useful if you and I could sit down with Denise Eisen, Director of Benefits and talk through your concerns. This isn't a closed issue by any means so let's get together and talk some more. Just let me know what works for you and I can set up a meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you then-



**2/9/00 4:40pm =====**

I talked with Mira at Dr. O's office to make all the arrangements for the surgery. This should be pretty simple after the last batch I had there. I had the option of Novocain only, or drugs (but possible upset tummy). The thought of being wide awake during this makes me ill in and of itself, so needless to say I'm on the drug plan...As it is, I need the stitches out on the following Wednesday (it can't wait until the weekend), and may need to do that myself. Oy.

**2/10/00 11:41 am =====**

**From: my psychologist**

**Re: A letter that I asked for, to give to HR in support of my request of STD during SRS.**

Hi, Donna -

Here's a draft letter:

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Donna G. Rose concerning her application for short-term disability coverage following sexual reassignment surgery.

I am a gender specialist who is treating Ms. Rose for gender identity disorder (302.85). I am a member of the Harry S. Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, the international gender identity research and treatment association of medical care providers, and I follow the Benjamin Standards of Care in diagnosis and treatment. This means that Ms. Rose's diagnosis and treatment have been conducted in accord with accepted and standard medical practice for the condition.

The Standards require that patients preparing for sexual reassignment surgery obtain diagnostic evaluation from a second gender specialist, in addition to obtaining clearance from their primary medical care providers. In Ms. Rose's case she was evaluated by Christine Petrus Grubb, Ph.D., who found Ms. Rose to be an appropriate candidate for sexual reassignment surgery.

Sexual reassignment surgery is not necessary in all cases of gender identity disorder, just as breast reconstruction is not necessary in all cases of mastectomy done to remove breast cancer. Both are individual decisions made by the doctors and the patient following careful examination of the patient's condition.

I have worked as a gender specialist for over twenty years and have served scores of patients either as the primary treatment provider, an evaluator for second opinion concerning SRS or as a consultant for the individual's employer, helping them prepare an uneventful and successful workplace gender role transition.

It is my professional opinion that sexual reassignment surgery is a medical necessity in Ms. Rose's case. As a non-physician I cannot speak to the well-known deleterious effects of long-term high dose hormone treatment that Ms. Rose would require if she did not undergo SRS. I can say in passing, though, that high dose hormones are clearly associated with increased morbidity in gender identity treatment, and the rule of thumb is to get patients off them as soon as possible.

Secondly, in Ms. Rose's case, not undergoing SRS would be inadequate treatment. Her psychological health necessitates the procedure; the absence of the procedure would adversely affect her condition. I believe that SRS is necessary in her case to prevent significant functional disability and alleviate severe

emotional pain. I understand that Ms. Rose is a valued employee and has performed well on the job. I believe that the emotional and physical comfort that typically follows SRS will lead to improved job performance. This can only benefit the organization.

Third, in deciding that SRS was medically necessary in Ms. Rose's case, alternative methods of care were attempted and were unsuccessful. Psychotherapy failed to change the underlying condition. The requested care offers a greater opportunity for success.

In summary, it is my professional opinion that SRS is medically necessary to Ms. Rose's treatment. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions concerning this.

Donna - Think about this and let me know. I am optimistic; reading Lin's stuff it seems to me that they are saying "give us a reason to call it medically necessary; unless we can do that, our rules won't let us help you."

I was going to say that it's not about you, Donna, but that's not completely correct: the part that is about you is that they are trying to find a way to include you. Be of good heart and keep saying the serenity prayer for all of us.

**2/11/00 7:53am =====**

I have called home each of the nights this week, and she [*Elisabeth*] is screening her calls and doesn't respond. I'm seriously thinking of heading to my house on Sunday night. We'll see. I fly home this afternoon.

**2/12/00 4:41am =====**  
***Journal Entry***

I have spent the balance of the day doing things for ME. Amanda has moved out, so I finally have my space back. I slept very well, got up and went to the club for a run, came back and had a cup of coffee, and just enjoyed a little down-time. I had a hair appointment at noon, and had found a picture of a hairstyle that I like and would like to grow into. Dona thought it would look good on me, and trimmed my hair accordingly. It looks very good now, but unfortunately I don't know if I'll be able to get it to look like this again. I'm gonna try, though.

I had a couple of emails waiting for me at work. One was from Lin in HR, setting up a meeting with me and the director of benefits for next Wednesday.

Tonight I have a support group meeting, and my psych will be there. You didn't comment on the note that she wrote to HR for me, but Kate is of the strong opinion that it will weaken my position rather than strengthen it, and I should not send it. She said that talking about the psychological aspects of gender dysphoria, which is recognized in DSM-IV as a mental illness, gives them the hard evidence they need to terminate me. My point back to her is that they do not need any hard anything to terminate me....they can do it just because. I am going to mention her concerns to my psych, though, and see what she thinks....

Dawn is hot to trot to go out somewhere afterwards, but I have no desire to go to any smoky loud places, and no desire to stay out too late, so we'll see what happens.

**2/13/00 =====**

Hi Karen:

I hope all is well in your world. I haven't heard from you in a long while.

I was sitting and wondering what to put in this note. I do now, and always will, consider you and Kevin to be good friends. You once mentioned that the quality of a friendship is measured not in the number of times you see each other, or talk, but its duration over time. But I must be honest and tell you that being your friend is a very frustrating thing. At least with most people, I know where I stand. Good or bad. I don't with you. I have absolutely no clue. And whereas Elisabeth was continually frustrated at the one-wayedness of the friendship and could not accept that, I feel that way too, but I can and do accept it.

We all have busy lives. But that does not preclude any of us from sitting down at the computer and sending a quick "howya doin?" email. I still don't feel that you and Kevin are being honest with me as far as your feelings towards what I am doing is concerned. My dad told me to judge people's motives not on what they say, but on what they do. And I have the feeling that if I didn't send out these little "feelers" from time to time I could go a whole year without hearing from either of you.

**2/14/00 10:12am =====**

***From: Kelly [a friend from work in Rochester]***

***Reacting to my news to her disclosing my situation....***

Hi

I have to say I was very surprised and shocked, but I really give you a lot of credit for doing what you believe in. I have been thinking about it all weekend.

I feel bad about people being like that at work. I know what it is like to be ignored. The people I work with are hard to get along with at times. ...

What does your son think about it? I know you said you haven't talked with him. So are you with support of other people who are going through the same thing?

**2/15/00 4:10am =====**

***From: Kate***

***Re: our upcoming meeting***

Donna,

Honey ... I was trying to call you ALL the time you were writing that! I was so compelled to call even though I knew it was late ... I must have hit the redial 10 times. Wow ... Talk about psychic connections!

The answer to your question is so simple honey ... gee .. YOU'RE A GIRL. (Duh)

Translated, that means that the organ that hormones affects the most is your BRAIN ... Between finally getting some distance psychologically, and the year you've been operating on the new "software" ... you are proving Joy Shaffer's point. You simply have a female nervous system. Look, 80% of the TS's never regain their libretto because they aren't real women ... you, however, obviously ARE. It's simply getting the chemistry right inside and "presto."

Now ... if you want me to share in the shaky, "I shouldn't be saying this" kind of thoughts ... here they are.

Well, you scare me to death girl. But, I can't help but be attracted to your intelligence and spirit. I suppose

if you were post-op I wouldn't feel so freaked out. (Well, kinda ... maybe.) However, at the same time I am haunted by the memories of my own nuclear meltdowns of being involved with a GG girlfriend and then a postie as a pre-op myself. Well, let's just say that I never cried so hard in my life ... and, I wouldn't wish that kind of pain on anyone, no matter what. Oh, I know I'm making the quantum leap here ... but nonetheless ... it bothers me.

So, I don't know ... do I even want to give us the chance, or do I simply want to put you in the spare bedroom and close the door? I honestly don't know. This is a tough one. Especially when I know its out of my hands and just one of those damned destiny things. Both my roommate and my girlfriend Maureen are telling me to keep my distance ... for both of our sakes. But, at the same time ... there is something going on here that is calling me to look deeper than the sexual attraction at the surface.

So, there you have it. Not that you wanted it or needed it ... and I'm sorry to dump that on you like that. But it sounds like we've both been thinking the same things.

Regardless of what you have just read, I AM looking forward to seeing you, and against the wind ... I will not rule anything out. It's going to be an interesting week ... hang on tight. Let's just see where things go.

Kate

**2/16/00 10:36pm =====**  
**To: Michelle**

Hi hon:

I had another interesting experience this evening. It was the first time a man got near me, and if I had moved my head towards his even a quarter inch, he would have kissed me.

I told you that Dawn has been after me. We made arrangements to meet after work this evening. He/she (I get confused with pronouns in situations like this) called to say she/he would be coming straight from work, and would be Dan....not Dawn. I said that was fine by me. Same person. No difference.

So I go to Applebee's, and there he is. I have never seen him as a guy before. We got a seat, and we talked as we always do. Near the end of the evening (after my 2nd Long Island Iced Tea) he admitted that tonight was a test for him. He said he wanted to see if I acted different towards him in any way as a guy. He also said he wanted to see if his feelings towards me changed when he was a guy. This set off a half hour chat, and we then proceeded to the parking lot as I had to get going. As we hugged goodbye, he did that thing with his face to put it in position for a kiss, but I am not ready for that, and I did not reciprocate. So he stared at me for a few moments and told me he doesn't know if he can make it for three weeks without seeing me again. Oy.

My meeting with HR seemed to go well. We shall see. The bottom line is that they said they are willing to work with me in hopes of finding an answer that fits all our needs. They seemed very sincere in their wish to work with me, and I take them at their word. We shall see. I have my review tomorrow, so we'll see how that goes....My expectations are low. Not because I don't do my job, but because of other "factors".

It's almost 11, and I have electro tomorrow at 5 again, so I'll say goodnight, and I'll talk to ya tomorrow....

Donna

**2/16/00 2:16pm =====**  
**From: Linda B. (ex co-worker)**

**Re:     *Our phone conversation where I told her about my situation***

Hi There,

The night after we spoke, all I could do was think of you. You really knocked my socks off when you told me about your life in the past year. I have such strong feelings about our society and how we judge people instead of looking at what their needs and feelings are. Because of knowing you and the person you are, only makes me feel stronger about this subject. What you must of gone through all these years. I feel glad you decided to become the person you are. I'm also sad cause I know this can not be an easy transition.

**2/18/00 6:10am =====**  
***Journal Entry***

It's 6am, and I have a doctor's appt. at 8:45. I was originally scheduled to have electro this morning, but I went yesterday instead. Maria really killed the surgery area....it is very swollen and painful and sore this morning. Whereas I usually just see an your wife for my shot, I will see the doctor today. He has prepared a letter for me regarding the medical necessity for surgery for me, and I will pick that up. I will also talk to him about the fact that I would like some blood work done to check the liver enzyme levels, and hormone levels, so that ought to be fun (gulp!). I also have a nail appointment later this afternoon, which I am truly looking forward to as I chipped one and it is driving me nuts....

**2/18/00 6:41pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>How are you feeling about the "possibilities" this weekend?*

I don't know. I have very much learned to keep my expectations down, as I very much dislike to be disappointed. I suggested to you that you "go with the flow", as that is my general outlook on life these days. We shall see what happens. Our total time together up until now has been 3 hours during brunch. I absolutely cannot be intimate with anyone just for the sake of loneliness. But on the other hand, this is the first remote opportunity for any intimacy for me in a long, long time.

*>Did you talk much to Eliz this week about the divorce?*

Nope. She has conveniently ducked my calls. I did stop by there last night to pick up some things that she left out front, and to drop off some papers. I'm sure it looked like a drug deal to the casual observer, with a big white car driving up to the house, a lone occupant taking something that was conveniently left there, and leaving something in its place.

*>What happened at work today concerning your eval?*

I wrote a "rebuttal" letter and gave it to Bill. I did not agree with some of the comments and findings in it, and although I do not expect him to change it, I want an official record of my own thoughts on these issues. I gave it to him this morning, and he asked me to come into one of the meeting rooms after lunch. He said that he felt I made some valid points, and he would sign my document and attach it to the review. That is all I wanted. He also apologized. If you remember back to some of my emails from earlier in the year, he had become a good friend. He said that accepting this was far harder than he ever imagined, and the reality of it didn't hit him until my emotional outburst at him a couple of weeks ago. He

admitted that everything I said was true, and he wanted to know that he was doing his best and it was HIS issue to deal with, not mine, and he was sorry. That was unexpected, but nice.

**2/20/2000 9:38 am =====**

**From: Sally S. – a friend**

**Re: I wrote to her asking for specifics about the forehead revision surgery,  
which she had recently had, as well**

Hi,

Don't know when you will get this, so I'll keep it short. I hope everything goes well. Don't worry., it's pretty minor. I mentioned to Nancy that you were doing a General anesthetic with it, and she said "Maybe she needs to. Remember how painful the stitch removal was for her". And indeed it was compared to me.

*Donna Rose wrote:*

>

> *I am staying with a friend near San Jose during my time in CA. I have only  
> known this person for a short time, but we both agree that there is a  
> "chemistry" between us. I think both of us are a little afraid to see where  
> things will lead....*

Well, just take it easy and see. I think it is easy for us T folk to rush into relationships when newly transitioned.

> *Anyway, do you have any advice as I head into this round of the surgery?*

> *Lots of swelling? Bruising? Additional numbness? Does it look better?*

I thought this was going to be a cakewalk and it wasn't. Wasn't bad, but not negligible. I did bruise around the eyes and swell up a bit. Enough to look obviously bad. Then it went to the cheeks. It was obvious something had happened for about 4 days. Then poof, it was better. My surgery was on Monday and by the next Monday I looked like normal, except maybe a little T I G H T in the skin. I felt awful for about 24 hours after the surgery due to the anesthetic too, so don't plan to do much the next day. With a general it will take you longer.

\* \* \* \* \*

My trip to San Fran in February 2000 was one of the most amazing trips of my life. Of course, I had little idea as to the real affect at the time.

My plan was simple. I had made arrangements to fly to San Fran early so that I could go to Yosemite National Park to spread some of my dad's ashes there. Kate knew the park well, and had offered to accompany me, and I eagerly accepted that invitation.

Kate planned to take me out on my birthday, and I was looking forward to that.

And, of course, there was the forehead revision surgery and aftermath.

Well, the plan changed dramatically once I got there. Kate very much has a zest for life. Her background was more like mine than anyone else I had met. She is totally uninhibited. She is intelligent. She is fun. She is sensitive. She is incredibly spiritual. She takes joy in being a rebel. She is everything I wanted to be, and getting to know her showed me just how far I yet had to go.

Once I arrived there, and we got to spend a little time together, we began to form an amazing big sister/little sister bond....but with a twist. Kate took it upon herself to help me learn. She took it upon herself to put me in situations where I could grow. And she took great pride in watching me blossom.

Our overnight trip to Yosemite is one I will never, ever forget. On the drive up there we talked and talked and talked....so much so that we didn't notice any signs indicating that the entrance to the park to which we were driving was closed.

We walked through the woods to a secluded lake at the foot of El Capitan. She gave me some time to hold a little ceremony, and to cry. She held me. We kissed. We shared wine and crackers, and we left the forest hand in hand. Those were all incredible firsts for me.

That night, we stayed in a hotel near the park. We had a wonderful dinner, and shared a bottle of wine. When we got back to the room, I was feeling somewhat anxious as to what the night held in store. But Kate was the perfect guide. She asked me if I had ever seen a transsexual pussy, and I had not. So, she proceeded to show me hers, and to tell me all about it. I was absolutely, totally amazed and enthralled. We ended up cuddling and touching and sleeping together in the bed. It was wonderful.

The next day was rainy and damp. On the drive home, we listened to the Sarah McLaughlin CD, "Fumbling Towards Ecstasy". Every single song seemed to speak to the pain, and the fear, and the hope I was feeling. Although they were certainly not written with gender transition in mind, they spoke to me and I became very emotional...eventually sobbing as I drove. Kate soothed me, and even offered to drive, but I eventually calmed down.

The emotional watershed of that weekend is something I will never forget.

**2/23/00 5:28 pm =====**  
***Journal Entry during my trip to San Fran***

This trip has been nothing short of amazing, in many many respects. Kate has taken the torch as my "teacher" in some ways, and has seen to it that I am exposed to new ideas and new people and new situations to help me along this path.

I got here on Saturday, and she and I and her girlfriend drove to the coast to a small town named Santa Cruz to have lunch at a diner by the beach and walk along the sand and do a little shopping.

Sunday was windy and a storm was on it's way in, but we took a big circular scenic drive along the coast and up through San Fran and back across the Golden Gate. It was beautiful. I even found a bottle with a message in it washed up onto the shore!

Monday Kate and I left to go to Yosemite. Kate has been there many times before, and has even led groups to the summit of Half Dome and El Capitan. It was a significant drive, especially considering the fact that we got very close to the park before finding that they had closed the highway and we had to take another route that cost us at least a couple of hours. When we did get there, she knew of a remote spot at the base of half dome that we could hike to, so we got there and had a picnic of wine and salmon, and I spread my dad's ashes in a beautiful lake. It was pretty emotional for me.... On the walk back, Kate held my hand, and helped me and it is an experience I will never forget. By the time we got back to the car it was dark, so we went to a small town and got a hotel room and slept together.

Yesterday was pretty amazing as well. We had breakfast and drove back, and ended up going out shopping for a little black dress for my birthday. Kate and a few of her friends were taking me to a place called the "Tranny Shack" in downtown San Fran, as they felt it would "expose" me to the entire spectrum. We got this little black dress (I have T-shirts that are longer than this dress) and a pair of pumps, and when all was said and done I do have to admit that I surprised myself with how good it all looked!

We got down there at 10, and I cannot go into all the details of what happened yet, as I am still trying to explain it to myself. But I quickly became the center of much attention, and did things (and felt comfortable doing them) that a month or a week ago would have been impossible for me. I even met a Tran-Fan GG (her name is Peaches, and she is drop-dead gorgeous) who, it turns out, is pretty famous in there parts and even has a VERY large website [www.trannylover.com](http://www.trannylover.com) if you want to see her), and I did things to her and let her do things to me that were just amazing. And that's the tame part of the evening...The key thing that I kept in my mind was to go with the flow, and to let Donna be Donna, and things just went from there....

Anyway, we didn't get back here until 4am, so today has been a pretty quiet day of recuperation. Tomorrow we are going to Napa for wine tasting, and then head into Surgery on Friday. I am scheduled for 2 hours, so it may be a little more involved than I am led to believe, but I'll just deal with it.

\* \* \* \*

For my birthday, Kate and a few of her friends took me out to the "Tranny Shack". We bought a black dress that was shorter than many t-shirts that I own! I had NEVER worn anything so revealing and provocative.





*Going to the Tranny Shack*

The Tranny Shack is so wild, I have no words to describe it. Let's just say it must be experienced, in all its excess and decadence, to get a good picture of what it is like. I am told that it is crazy, even by San Fran standards. At 10pm, and floor show took the stage. I was near the stage, and people crushed on all sides to watch as the place was packed!

As I watched I became aware that the guy in front of me was stroking and groping my thigh. I didn't know whether to get angry, or to feel honored! Then, I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned around. There was a girl at the bar across the room who was indicating for me to come over, so I extracted myself from the crowd to see what she wanted.

This girl was the spitting image of a miniature Elvira. Black hair. Dramatic makeup. Cute face. Gothic black dress. As I got to her, she asked me if I was the birthday girl. I told her I was. So she took my hand in hers, and slowly placed it under her dress and onto her XXX. It became immediately apparent that a) she was not wearing panties and b) she had more piercings and jewelry in her vagina lips than I owned in my entire jewelry box. With her other hand she reached up and started stroking my breast. She looked me in the eyes, and said "Happy Birthday".

Soon afterwards, one of her friends came over to us. He was a very tall and extravagantly dressed trans-something (I can't even think of a label that fits, at this point). He kissed her, and asked me if I was having fun (which of course I was).

Well, they invited me out to their van for some "fun", but I politely declined. Kate and her friends watched the goings on with great glee.....

This birthday was special for me for many reasons. Perhaps most important is that it was the last of its kind. For every year that I could remember, my wish as I blew out the candles was that this would be my last birthday as Dave. This year, that wish would come true.

2/25/00 12:06am =====

Hi Hon:

We spent the day today in Napa doing wine tasting and doing tours. We brought a picnic lunch of nice cheeses, and salami, and apples, and French bread, and cream cheese....and of course a couple of bottles of wine. It was lots and lots of fun.



*At Berringer winery in Napa*

After all the fun of this past week, now it's time to get serious. Surgery is at 1pm tomorrow, and I am booked there for a couple of hours. Katie will be there to bring my back to her place afterwards.

\* \* \* \*

The forehead revision surgery turned out to be MUCH more significant that I had anticipated. In fact, he redid the entire hairline...from behind the ear across the entire front of the head. It was just like starting out from square one again! One of the benefits is that he took out the two screws that I could feel in my forehead. But I was very much discouraged by the fact that I was just beginning to get the feeling back to the top of my head, and now it was all numb again! My entire scalp was full of stitches and metal staples again. Healing was slow and painful.



*Stitches and staples after forehead revision*

**2/27/00 2:35pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

Today is a pretty nasty day. My left eye is swollen totally shut, and I look like death. The pain meds upset my tummy a bit. I had a bit of a weepy fit this morning as well, so I'm spending the day just resting and trying to recover. Kate and Monica have headed out for the afternoon, so I have the place to myself and will lie down for a nap here in a minute.

I fly home tomorrow afternoon. It's hard to believe. I have the Sunday newspaper, and have a feeling that getting a job here would not be too difficult. The traffic around here is nutso, so the logistics of it would be important. We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. I'm not planning to do anything imminent.

I'll fill you in on the details of the trip after I get home. I'm still trying to sort some of the stuff out for myself...

\* \* \* \* \*

My flight home was very difficult. My head hurt. My mind was still reeling from the flood of new experiences and thoughts that had been unleashed upon it. The thought of healing again over the next few weeks was depressing. I had a fever. All in all, I was a mess.

And to top it off, I had scheduled an electrolysis appointment for 5am the morning after I got home! Amanda took one look at me, and was immediately concerned. She told me to cancel my appointment, which I did, and spend a little time healing. She told me to cancel my trip to Birmingham that next week, which I did, as well. It was all very good advice.

**2/29/00 9:214am =====**

**To: a coworker from work**

Hi Nancy:

I am glad I did not have to come to Birmingham this week. The surgery turned out to be far more substantial than I had anticipated. As I write this I have 60 stitches in my forehead, and 50+ metal staples in my scalp, my left eye is swollen nearly shut, and I remain on Vicodin for the pain, so I would not have made a good playmate this week. I have not talked to anyone here regarding the schedule, but I am sure that topic will come up fairly quickly.

**2/29/00 7:21am =====**  
**From: Denise (Benefits Coordinator at work)**

Donna,

Thank you for taking the time to submit the letter and follow-up letters from your provides regarding the recovery of your pending surgery in August.

The only "gray" area I see in the information presented is the actual length of time off needed, realizing this may vary from patient to patient.

We have an Employee Benefits Committee meeting on Monday, March 13. I will present your request for time off at that time. If we need additional information and if the Committee has any questions, we will let you know the following day.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Denise

***My response:***

Hi Denise:

Realistically, I am told that it will be 4 weeks to be healed enough to come back to work. Right now, I have two weeks of vacation left, and need to use one over the Holidays in December. I am planning to use my remaining week one to cover August 7-11, which will cover my trip up to Wisconsin and the surgery itself. As a result, I am hoping to have the next 3 weeks covered by STD, as I will be out of action. I cannot get out of bed until Aug. 18, and (barring complications) will be released from the hospital on 8/19. My mother and sister are coming to take me to Rochester for the next 10 days to heal.

If all goes as planned, I should be able to come back to work after Labor Day almost as good as new. I may need somewhat of a modified schedule (not necessarily 9-5) for a short while, as I may need an extended rest at lunch, but I am hoping not. I think those are issues I can resolve with the management here should the need arise, and are not necessary to cloud the issue with the Benefits Committee.

I thank you for your help.

Donna

**2/29/00 3:44pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

It is almost 4pm. I am getting ready to go home. I feel awful. Good thing I had some down time last week, as days like today take much of my strength....

I think I mentioned that I called Maria last night to cancel my appointment with her for this morning. She was not happy about it, but I felt awful and just couldn't do it. She wrote me a note today chastising me for the late notice. I wrote back and told her she can take her attitude and shove it, as she will not see me anymore. I don't need to deal with that crap right now.

I got a call from the attorney today about the divorce. That was hard.

My head hurts. I have a fever. I need to go home.....

**3/2/00 7:18am =====**

I knew that Dr. Becky and Margaux were coming over at 7:30ish, so I came home from work and lay down for a half hour to get some strength. I had to clean the apartment if I was going to have visitors, so I did laundry and dishes and vacuumed and dusted and made dinner (salmon with pesto butter, with pasta and corn and ceasar salad). Maria called tonight. She said she was so sorry for snapping at me, as there were lots of big things going on in her life and she had spent the week taking it out on everyone she loved... She was sobbing and saying she was sorry and was trying to do better and loved us all and she hoped we could still be friends. I got all choked up and told her to calm down, and we can meet out for breakfast this weekend to chat.

Becky and Margaux got here at 7:30. We all had a very nice dinner, and she took out the stitches, and didn't get out of here until 11:30.

Dan/Dawn has called 3 times (he is hot to trot) so I called him back, and he and Annah are bringing over Chinese food tonight, and he is taking me out for dins tomorrow. Quite the social calendar...

**3/3/00 2:17 pm =====**

***Journal Entry:***

I am feeling so lousy. Physically and mentally. Yuck. I hate being like this.

I talked with Elisabeth for well over an hour yesterday afternoon. It was our first conversation in a month. Pretty intense. We did discuss some of the specifics of the divorce, as she has a meeting with her attorney today.

I have more to write, but I think I'm going to pack up and go home. I haven't been able to do much all day/week, and have no energy at all. I can hardly even keep my eyes open

**3/4/00 1:34am =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's 1:18am. Time for beddy. I have to meet Maria and Amanda for coffee at 7, have a doctor's appt. for my shot at 7:45, and will meet Becky for breakfast at Coco's at 8:30 before heading to her office so she can remove the staples. A pretty busy morning....I can see serious naptime tomorrow afternoon.

I came home at 2 today, as I was just feeling awful. I realized why my eyes have been so tired lately....The forehead skin is stretched so tightly that my eyes get dried out very easily. In any event, I came home and curled up. My repose was interrupted by calls from Maria and Elisabeth (who was on her way home from visiting with her attorney).

Dan/Dawn came over for a "date". Actually, it was Dawn who showed up this evening. We went to a Southwest restaurant for dins, and planned to go to a movie, but I was coughing and not feeling so good, so we rented a tape (Bowfinger) and brought it back to my place to watch. Parts of it were very funny, which got me laughing, which got all the gunk in my chest to loosen up. Dawn kept her arm around me, and it was pretty harmless as she did not try to advance too far, so it was nice.

We talked for 2 hours afterwards, and here I am...ready for my 4 hours of sleep.

I have a question for you, as this concept came up in my chat with Dawn tonight. Once I have the surgery, and have all the proper "plumbing", will you see me differently? Have you thought about it? Do you ever wonder how it will change us? I do.

**3/4/00 3:03pm =====**

I have had a llllooonnnnggg day and am about to head home for some sleep. I got 4 hrs. of it last night, and needed 4 more. I met Maria for coffee before heading to the doctor's. The doctor felt kind of insulted when I told him Becky was taking out the staples, so I let him do it. He wrote me a prescription for my cold. BP was perfect..120/80. I got my shot. We went over the blood-test results. Hormone levels good. Cholesterol 164. The one scary thing is that my liver enzyme levels were high (3 different readings). One reading is supposed to be between 10-60, and mine was 200+. He reduced my dosage of Premarin because of it.

I had breakfast with Becky. I got my broken thumbnail fixed. I stopped by the beauty brigade to talk for a while. Now I'm at work, and I'm about to go home to bed. I have an email from Dawn, who is all hot to trot, to see if I wanted to go to a party, or to a meeting, or if she could come over and make dinner. I do not want to do anything tonight except rest, so the answer is no on all counts.

**3/6/00 1:34pm =====**

Hi Kate:

Although yesterday was weepy day, today is all business. I got up, to the airport, on my flights, and here to Birmingham. It's the business version of Donna, I guess, but it was nice to get here. It really is amazing how differently I am treated here as opposed to Scottsdale. I have people stop what they're doing when they see me to come over to say 'hi'. Even the cleaning lady exclaimed that it's been way too long between visits. Back home, I was on the road for 6 weeks straight, and not a peep when I got back. Oh well.

**3/7/00 3:33 pm =====**

**From: Michelle**

Hi Donna,

I think that I pretty much agree with you about how the mindset might change after your SRS in August. By then, your divorce should be complete, your "plumbing" will be complete, and I think that your self image and identity as a person will change once you don't have a penis to remind constantly remind you

of your transitions and trials. Once that is gone, there becomes a point when you just start being a woman and all the past is simply that. I don't understand this sudden attraction by TG's etc towards you in an intimate sort of way. What I'm trying to say here is that I don't understand why these people don't listen when you say that you are not interested in "that type" of a relationship with them. I guess some people will only hear what they want to hear. I noticed that you called Dan/Dawn "him" in your last letter. Does this person not merit the female pronoun for some reason? Perhaps I missed something there.

**3/8/00 11:54 am =====**

Hi Michelle:

It's noontime on Wednesday, and all is calming down a bit around here. Most of the folks who have come here from other places are heading home this afternoon, so I will be the only foreign soul left. There's still lots for me to do, mind you, but at least the crowd has thinned...

I got a reply from Dawn regarding my email, and she understands what I have told her and the boundaries I have set. She says she can't help how she feels, and that I should smack her if she oversteps. And I will.

**3/9/00 12:50pm =====**

**From: Kate**

Hi hon,

Well, it's been a tough week. I kinda crashed and burned on Tuesday night and I'm still recovering. After being so high from the experience at the women's group this weekend ... I found out from someone that they all knew, and there were things said behind my back. So much for being accepted as one of the girls huh? Let's just say I've cried a lot the last few days.

We'll just keep pressing on babe ... no one said this was easy. Where we are going, few women, and fewer t-women have ever gone before. We're on our own ... and all alone.

Love,

Katie

**3/12/00 6:59 am =====**

Hi Michelle:

*[My friend, Sally, is visiting from Virginia.]*

We didn't get up until 9:30 yesterday, and we kept ourselves very busy. We chatted all morning over coffee, and then I had a nail appt. at noon. We went across the street to a very nice shopping area and had lunch and strolled, and went to the airport (my bag STILL wasn't there) and went out to a quiet park to sit on the grass and watch the birds and fountains, and ended up out at a lake not too far from here. We packed alot into the day, and although I have done all before, they were all firsts for Donna and it was somehow a fulfilling day. The piece de resistance came in the evening, when we went over to the Hyatt Regency resort to see the classical guitar player. I wore a long blue dress, and going there was a passage-of-sorts. To feel comfortable enough to mingle with all the hotsy-totsy folks, and have a couple of drinks under the stars, and grab a bite at the outdoor bistro....was just so much fun.

**3/13/00 8:39 am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

Well....it's back to work. Back at my desk [in Scottsdale]. Back to being ignored. I do have someone from DFW coming to spend time with me this week, but otherwise I am on my own agenda. I am interested to see how this meeting at HR goes today, although I expect them to say they can't make a decision yet because they need more information or something like that. Whatever...

I stopped by the office at my apartment complex to see when my lease expires, and it is supposed to end at the end of April. I need to tell them whether I want to renew by the end of this month. I will not.

I had my first night of electro in 3+ weeks last night. It was ok. Angie is prego, and looks so cute. She mentioned that another gal who is living full-time (very successfully, by all appearances), and who is even working on her surgery area, went back to being a boy. It was a shocker. I have renewed needs to finish up soon. Maria is moving the business to location even FARTHER away. Right now it is 20 miles from my place, and the new location is probably another 10 away. Yuck.

**3/13/00 5:25 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

No word on the HR front. I didn't really expect to hear anything today. But Brian stopped by. He was whispering, and said that HR called him last week about this. He told them that I was indeed a valuable part of this team, and that he felt they should be "generous".

But he brought up two points...First, he said that I need to follow through with what I ask for. If I say I am going to be back on September 5, I need to be back on September 5. I told him I cannot promise ANYTHING. They asked me for the amount of time that I EXPECT to be off. If complications occur, which is not likely but certainly possible, then I will not be held accountable.

Second, he said something about compromise. He said that he felt they are willing to meet me half way. I don't know what this means. I am taking 4 weeks off. I am covering one of those weeks with a week of my vacation. I expect them to cover the other 3. I told Brian that if I had realized that this was "Let's Make A Deal" then I would have asked for 6 weeks off, and settled on 3. As far as I am concerned, it's not negotiable. And if I DO change my mind, and have to take unpaid time off, I will not allow them to call me or ask me questions of any kind during that time....no matter WHAT happens to my systems.

I went home at lunch and did a grocery shopping. It is the first one I have done in a very, very long time. I just looked at the calendar, and since January 23, I have been in Scottsdale for only 17 days (and only 9 weekdays), and I have been away for 30 days. That is pretty amazing.

I have talked with Elisabeth for both of these last two nights, and our talks are much, much, much more "congenial" than before. For now anyways.

**3/15/00 10:24 pm =====**  
**From: Denise – HR**  
**Subject: Re: Any updates?**

Donna,

Lin will be preparing a formal response to you, but I'll let you know what was decided. The Committee



reviewed your request for recovery time based on the four week period and we believe you will be pleased with our decision.

The four-week period will be 20 days. Given your earned vacation for the year (12 days), paid leave (5 days) and personal holidays (4 days), this adds up to 21 days. However, we will grant you the week of vacation you indicated you scheduled in December (5 days) and allow you to maintain your 4 personal holidays.

This means you would have 7 days of vacation and 5 days of paid leave to use towards your recovery. PCS will grant the additional 8 days of pay, up to the 20 days.

With regards to a work schedule after the four weeks, Liz is currently reviewing that and will include it in the formal response.

Thank you for taking the time to present the information for the Committee's review. As I mentioned above, we believe you will be pleased with the outcome.

If you have any questions, please let Lin or me know.

Denise

**3/15/00 4:44 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

These last 24 hours have been pretty wild. Lots seems to have happened. I don't know if it's just my perception of things right now, or if they really did....

I talked with Sue from Rochester for an hour. I had talked with her last week about firming up her offer for employment with her company, and she asked me to send along an email outlining my thoughts and expectations, which I did. I told her I do not want to be just another hourly employee. I wanted to help grow a business. I have the skillset to do that, and am already making progress. I told her I do not want to do this by myself, and if she can make room for me in her company in a position where I can help and share in its growth, I am very interested. She is on vacation for two weeks starting on Monday, and said she will fly me to Rochester in April or May so we can work something out. I came away from the chat with a very positive feeling....

I got the letter from HR saying they are giving me what I asked for. I was very surprised. I sent them a note thanking them. I will not completely stop my efforts with Sue and for some side income, however. We shall see where these roads lead.

**3/16/00 4:08 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

It's 4pm, and I'm already home from work. Even so, it has been a lllllooonnnmnggggg day. Or perhaps it was a short night. I can't tell...

I talked with Brian before I left work yesterday. He said that they would announce that he is leaving today. He told me who is taking his place, and I know who he is, but little else. This should be interesting. I'm curious to see how this guy will react to me.

I went to Annah's for dins, and her place is about 20 miles from here. She works with computers, and is looking forward to transitioning, so we had lots to talk about. Cassie has the hots for her (based on her

web page) and we are all heading out tomorrow evening, so it should be interesting. Dins was good, and I didn't get home until after 11, and in bed until midnight.

Unfortunately, I had to be up at 3:15 to get ready to go and see Maria, so the sleeping opportunity was not so long. Maria spent 2 hours "down there", and an hour on the face, and everything seems to be going well. I was in la-la land for most of it, so I doubt I was the best conversation mate, but I made it through ok.

**3/17/00 12:59 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

Apparently, my name was mentioned during a conference call this morning by the guy who manages the ITD department in Birmingham. This person has never said more than a dozen words directly to me, and I can tell by his attitude that he has a problem with me. He blamed me for something that he has no idea about, so my boss came to me about it.

I fired off a nastygram, and I included everyone and their brother on the distribution list...Brian, Bill, this person's boss, the VP....basically saying that if he has questions or problems, he should get his facts straight before elevating them, and to do so without talking with me first, as I am the ONLY person who knows the answer, means he is not doing his job. I have not heard back yet. This is a battle he does NOT want to get involved in, because the REASON for his not calling me to get the facts will become very evident....

**3/17/00 2:17 pm =====**  
**To: Lois T. [my ex-neighbors of 16 years in Rochester NY]**

Hi Lois:

It was wonderful to hear from you! I have decided to pull back from most of the people that knew Dave....Karen and Kevin included...as I find they just can't deal with these changes. Even though they may want to. My dad always told me to judge people on what they do, not what they say, and for most I can tell that they're telling me what they think I want to hear, rather than how they really feel. In those situations, it's easier in the long run to just disappear and move on with our lives. And I am doing that.

Much is happening in my life, as well. I have become quite the world traveler, as the project I manage has become very visible in the company. In fact, until this week, I had only been home for 3 weeks for the entire year. My travels may take me through Rochester next month (perhaps even over Easter). I will definitely be there in August, as I have scheduled my SRS surgery, and will be coming there to recover.

I travel in interesting circles these days. I have become pretty good friends with Dr. Becky ([www.drbecky.com](http://www.drbecky.com)) who is the TS heart doctor who lives here in Phoenix. I recently went to San Fran and met with Dana (the one who was on Oprah and 20/20) and some of her friends. I got to meet and spend some time with Millie Brown (she wrote "True Selves") while I was there. I had a TS friend who works at the Pentagon visit me last weekend, and another from Wisconsin visiting me this weekend. All in all.....life is very full.

I rarely talk with Elisabeth or Matt. Our divorce is in the works, and it should be final by the end of May. I still have not seen her in almost a year now, nor Matt since Labor Day. But those are choices they are making, and I have learned to accept them. I will eventually leave Phoenix, and will move on, as I no longer feel anything keeping me here. It's only a matter of time....

Give my "hello's" to the family. I think of you guys often. And of all the people who knew Dave (and who

are not related to me), I think you may be the only ones I want to keep with me as I move forward. I hope that's ok...

***Her reply (3/20/00):***

Hi Donna, So good to hear from you too!! I think I understand what you are doing..Donna is a whole new person to yourself and to others...and if everything you have been has changed, you will survive best with starting over too. We are honored that you will keep us as friends and always know that you are welcome and loved here. I know you will forgive us if we ever offend in anyway as we would not wish to do so intentionally.

I think that you will have to let go of Elizabeth and Matt until maybe later when they are settled in a different life and can understand from a different perspective than they now have. I just hope Matt can come to terms with it and understand, even if Elisabeth can't. I think and pray that both will someday know how to feel about it all and not be bitter or hard hearted. Its a lot to ask, but with God's grace, all is possible.

You are amazing, it is good to hear that you are so busy in your new life and that you are looking forward, not back. I hope God is foremost in your life and that you find people who reflect God and His Love to you always. Be careful with your trust, but I know you have good instincts..so hopefully you will be able to stay safe and not hurt! Donna, you are an amazing person, and very much Loved by God, don't forget it even if all else seems to be for naught at times...and the low moments come, call us or email us and we will fill you up with Love...which hopefully will help

Keep in touch and look forward to you call.....Love from all of us. Lois :))

**3/19/00 7:01 pm =====  
*Cassie came for a visit***

Hi hon:

Cassie has had quite the visit so far. She wanted to make sure to keep busy during her short time here, and we have been able to live up to that....

Friday night we had decided to go out to dine at Maria's restaurant with Dawn and Annah. Cassie had kind of a crush on Annah, as she has seen her website and they are both into the "Goth" look, and she was looking forward to actually meeting her. After I got home from work we got dressed and went over there. I had told her that one of the nice things about the restaurant is that on any given evening, you are very likely to run into another T of one flavor or another, as it is a "connecting point"....

As soon as we got there, other T's pulled into the parking lot. Amanda got there. Eileen and Joanna got there. Before you knew it...there were 8 or 9 of us, and it was a nice dinner.....

Afterwards, Annah and Cassie wanted to go dancing to work off some of their dinner, so we went over to the lesbian dance club (the Biz). They had fun there, and I endured the place (not my style) until 11:30, when we decided to go over to this techno-rave bar that Annah brought me to on our first "outing". We went there, and the place was just starting to get busy. Dawn and I sat and chatted in one of the side-rooms while Cassie and Annah and Annah's on again/off again girlfriend danced and came to cool off and danced and came to cool off.....

Eventually, the three of them started to get very touchy-feely with each other, and I could see where this was going to lead. They started kissing each other, and rubbing each other, and I was tired, so at 1:30 I

said I was going to go home. Cassie could come, or she could stay, and Annah would have to bring her when they were done....The one kicker is that I had to be up at 5:30 for my 7am doctor's appointment. She stayed....

Soooo, when the alarm went off at 5, I had gotten 2 1/2 hours of sleep. I didn't expect Cassie to even be here, but she was, and had only gotten an hour of sleep. We dragged our sorry butts out of bed, took showers, and headed out for what turned out to be a busy day. I had my doctor's appointment (I've lost 5 lbs somehow....) and we met Maria and Steph and Amanda for breakfast, and I had set up a 10am nail appt. with my nailtech Cyndi, and we went over to a shopping area so Cassie could go to the MAC makeup store.

**3/19/00 11:10 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

I am very much down on organized religion these days, and a God who is a punishing ruler who manages his flock through fear of consequences is not my God. I think that is the God that religion would have us believe, as it perpetuates religion, not God. I see God as a gentle, loving nurturer. And although I do not put a gender on God, I feel God manages more in the way of a mother than a father. I do not fear God. I do not ask for forgiveness. I do not fear punishment. I will not let that fear rule or manage my life. I have a relationship with God. I know God loves me. And I will not let an organized religion dictate to me what I can or can't believe.

Thanks for letting me vent....For some reason I am a little bit on edge. Perhaps it is because I am tired. Perhaps it is because of Cassie and her idealistic bullshi#. We were cooped up in a car for nearly 500 miles today. All I can say is that I'll be glad when I have my space back come this Tuesday...

We drove to Sedona and the Grand Canyon. The beauty and majesty of it all were totally lost on her. And that just confounds me. I find my visits to the canyon to be almost spiritual and 100% awe inspiring. Each time I see it. She called it the biggest "hole" she had ever seen....

**3/21/00 5:19 am =====**

Hi Michelle:

I didn't in any way mean to infringe on your relationship with God, or in your own beliefs. I was taking an opportunity to vent my own thoughts and frustrations. I have always felt comfortable in doing that with you, even with a subject as sensitive as God. I think each person forges their own relationship, and it is different for everyone. It is based on faith, and that faith varies from person to person. I certainly don't espouse that my feelings are right, or that anyone else's are wrong. Far be it from me to even imply such a thing and if I did that I apologize.

Well, time to rise and shine. I have far more to do this week than I think I can fit in. Big things. I have to prepare for a meeting with my attorney tomorrow. I have to try to sell the car and/or truck. I have to do my taxes. I have lots to do at work to prepare for my trip to Birmingham next week. I have 3 hours of electro. tonight, and 3 more on Thursday morning. All in all....the plate is full. I am feeling fairly strong at the moment, so that is a good thing.

**3/23/00 4:56 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

Today was a pretty big day. I went home and got to spend some time with Matt.

I had gone home at lunch. There was a mandatory organizational meeting scheduled for 1, so I was going to do a couple of errands. I need to pick up some things from Elisabeth, so I called the house expecting to get the answering machine. Matt answered. He said that his class was out of town on a class trip to Disneyland, and he didn't want to go, so he stayed home today and Elisabeth was at work. I told him I needed to stop up at the house, and I also had something I needed to give him (a Dan Marino rookie card).

He asked how much the card is worth (\$400), and that really grabbed him, so he said I could bring it up during lunch. I asked if he thought he was ready, and he said yes....as long as I wasn't wearing a dress. So off I went.

I didn't think that our meeting was awkward. He has grown up quite a bit, and his baby face is now a pimply teen-aged face with whiskers on it. I went into the house, and he showed me his card collection, and I dropped of what I needed to. The puppies were going nutso, and it was even good to see them, too.

At one point, one of his friends stopped by, and Matt was worried he would see me, but he was just dropping off a video game he had borrowed, so no big deal. I wanted Matt to see what I looked like, and to realize that I am still the same person that is his dad. A couple of times I caught him looking at our boobs as we talked, and I even mentioned it to him. He said he was looking at my necklace.....Right. All in all, I was there for 20 minutes, and I'm hoping that this has broken the ice. I wasn't sure how Elisabeth would react, but she called a little while ago and was ok.

Elisabeth's folks arrive on Sunday for a month. Just in time for me to leave town on Monday. I made my travel arrangements to DFW, and will be there the week of 4/3.

I was a half hour late for the meeting, where they were rolling out a re-org for our group. Brian has been moved to another group (he is actually leaving altogether, but hasn't told them yet), and is being replaced by someone named Mike who I do not know. Bill is no longer my manager. I now report to Brian, which is actually fine by me as he deals with my transition pretty well. It is all welcome news...

In addition, I got a call from Dell Computers in Austin asking if I was still interested and available, and if she could submit the resume to a manager. I told her to go ahead....

As I say – today was a big day. We'll see how this all shakes out.

**3/24/00 5:25 am =====**

**To: Ray [my neighbors from North Scottsdale]**

I came up to the house yesterday at noontime and spent some time with Matt. It's the first time we had seen each other since Labor Day. It seemed to go well, as he had a big grin on his face the whole time. He needed to see that the outside has changed, and the inside has, too, but this is still the same person who loves him and who is his dad. He showed me all his new cards, and his new bed, and we chatted for a while. He has matured over these last 6 months, and I hope our visit was as good for him as it was for me. I will be at the house on Saturday afternoon at 3:30 to wash the puppies (Matt and Elisabeth will be out at his drum lessons), as Elisabeth's folks are apparently arriving Sunday for a month.

I have been here for 2 weeks, and will be out of town for the next 2. Birmingham next week, home next weekend, and then DFW the following week. I am not nearly ready to implement what I am traveling there to do (other issues have cropped up to sidetrack me), but somehow these things always work

themselves out. I don't know if I told you or not, but my HR department decided to pay me for my entire time off for surgery (although I do have to use a week of my vacation as well), so that was a pleasant surprise. I had started a job search, and despite the apparent "victory" I continue to keep my options open...

**3/27/00 4:34 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

I forgot where I left off in my busy weekend, so I'll start with last Friday....

Dawn had wanted to get together, and I frankly didn't want to spend time alone with her, so I invited Annah and her current girlfriend as well. I was kinda hungry for Cajun, and the restaurant I chose is the one I went to the night Maria did my upper lip for the first time (which was just about a year ago, give or take a week)...

I pass pretty well. Annah is pretty, but she's 6"1" and dresses all in black. I decided to wear a dress, which doesn't happen all that often. All in all, I'm sure we made an interesting sight....There is a saying that if you have 20 passable T's, and one non-passable T, the end result is 21 non-passable.

Wouldn't you that they seated us next to a table of 12 guys who were doing shots and watching the NCAA basketball game. They were very amused by our presence, but actually seemed to lose interest in us as the evening progressed. No matter. We didn't pay much attention to them, either, and we had a nice dinner.

I find that I have had some very strong shopping urges lately. I call one of them my "nesting" urge, as I feel a strong push to make my apartment more my "home". I am starting to buy things for the walls, and for the kitchen. I also feel the urge to buy clothes, and did that as well. It took up much of the afternoon. I went up to visit with Sal for a little while before heading over to the house to give the dogs a bath.

When I got to the house, Elisabeth had a long list of things she wanted me to do.....clean the bathroom....do poop patrol....change lightbulbs....I had made arrangements for Tracy and her S.O. to meet me at my apartment at 6 for dms, and had no time for any of this stuff. It takes almost an hour to wash and dry and brush each dog, and that's all I planned to do and all I did. Of course, she called me later to complain at me....

**3/28/00 7:07 am =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>I'm sure that this comes as no surprise to you as much as it does to  
>me, but I too am beginning to feel some pretty strong urges from  
>Michelle to be set free again. I don't know what I am going to do  
>about it. It scares me...*

It's scary stuff. I know it well. But Michelle cannot stay in there forever. And she will have her time. Whether you want to give it to her or not. You know these things. My only bit of advice is....don't be afraid. Do not fear Michelle, as to do so is to fear yourself. In fact, you need to enjoy Michelle. I'm sure part of the problem is that Michelle has urges that need to be addressed, and to fear them and to avoid them will only make it worse. Fearing the end result often doesn't CHANGE the end result, it only changes how we feel about ourselves when we get there.

One of the common things for T's to do is to "analyze" other T's. For example, I know dozens of gals, and

of all the ones I know who consider themselves to be red-blooded, surgery-bound T's, I would be willing to wager that only one, perhaps two, others will have SRS. These other gals are at various places on the gender spectrum, but they enjoy their dicks far too much to part with it if it came to that. They just haven't realized that for themselves yet. Steph. Monica. Annah. All of them. And I don't pretend to be all knowing, but give me five years and we'll see how many of them have had it....

I don't know what kicks off those times when Michelle starts to get restless and needs attention. Perhaps some of my own experiences and life events are triggering that. You mentioned once that, in some ways, Michelle lived vicariously through Donna. I have the chance to do things Michelle would jump at in a heartbeat.

I wrote to you a while ago to ask you if you thought things would change after my SRS. I do. I see it, and it hasn't even happened yet. The fallacy with most people is that they see SRS as a "physical" event. But in my mind, I see it as far more mental than physical. On one hand, allowing someone to permanently remove your last (and most holy) vestige of maleness is a barrier that most cannot make. And once made, the psychological upheaval of that realization is tremendous. I see it in Amanda. I see it in Kate. Perhaps even more interestingly, I see it in how others interact with them now.

Let me give you an example (hypothetical, of course).....

I cannot and will not sleep with a male right now. We have talked about this, and the fact that we do not have the right plumbing. But after the surgery, I WILL have that plumbing. The harder part of that equation is the mental part. To realize that you are a fully functional female, and you can now make love as such with a male partner, takes much adjusting. To seriously consider a man as a sexual partner where you NEVER would allow yourself to do so in the past is a huge mental barrier. Once it is overcome, however, anything is possible. And in that respect, the surgery has changed how you feel about yourself.

Further, I think SRS will change how others will perceive me as well. For example, I doubt you would sleep with (or even kiss) Dave, or even the pre-op Donna. Would you have an easier time considering the possibility of either of those with fully functional Donna? If you answered yes, then I suggest that the surgery will change how you feel towards me, both mentally AND physically. If you said no, then perhaps I am all wet. But I think not.....When I leave your apartment, we hug. You are a wonderful hugger. I never consider the possibility of kissing you. But once SRS has happened, and I have adjusted mentally, I am willing to wager that I will not be able to make that same statement.

In any event, I have a feeling it is going to be VERY interesting, so hold on to yourself....

*>ps. It's funny how you told me a couple of weeks back that you  
>always considered me Michelle. I don't know why that is since you've  
>never been around me when I was "presented" as Michelle. :)*

I can see past that. I know Michelle well. We talk every day. Her life is such that she cannot "present" as herself, but that doesn't change anything. One of these days I will actually get to meet her. Either there, or in Phoenix. You say you are very comfortable in that environment. You will have a chance to prove it...

**3/29/00 6:45 am =====**

As for the sentiments expressed in the last letters, I am glad to talk about these things. I already see my mind gearing up for the changes to come. Kate says that the closer I get, the more it will occupy my mind. More anticipation than anything. I do not have even the slightest hesitation at what is to come,

even though I cannot believe this is really happening. To think that something that I have thought about for my entire life, and that always seemed a total and absolute impossibility, is less than 140 days away, truly and honestly amazes me. To think that I can exist in this world, and feel comfortable in this world, and be accepted in this world, is truly a miracle to me.

As far as I can tell, changing genders in mid-stream is the most major change that a person can make in their life.....bar none. It takes a mixture of luck, and of strength, and of physical attributes, and of financial resources, and of support that is a rare cocktail, but once it all comes together it is an unbelievable powerful force. I see my situation as one in a million, and I think that is not very far off. And I thank God to have blessed me with this mixture.

Please don't mind as I ramble these next few months. The mind goes into overdrive sometimes, and that isn't a bad thing....

**3/31/00 8:09 pm =====**

They distributed the bonus checks today. Mine will ALL go to paying off credit debt in anticipation of things to come. I do think I will take \$1,000 and put it in the bank so I am not left high and dry should my checking account run dry for some reason.

Other than that, I have had a couple of messages from Elisabeth. Her folks are in town. She says they are all sad at the turn of events. I find it ironic that last year at this time I was preparing to transition the first time, and she told them I was out of town for work for the entire time. This year, I really am out of town.

Dawn writes little emails to me pretty much every day or two. She wants to go to dinner, or a movie, or a drive. I told her I have no time for any of those things right now. She has been making wisecracks of how I like to eat, and I told her to lay off with the eating remarks.

**3/31/00 11:08 pm =====**  
***Journal Entry***

Today was a day I had planned to do errands, as well as get some stuff done here at the apartment. In reality, it's 11pm, and this is the first chance I have had to do much of anything. I was up at 5:30 and to the doctor's for a shot at 7. It was kind of an interesting visit. Over these past couple of weeks my look has changed. I can't explain it. My eyebrows have gone back into place, and my hair is growing out, and it is a really nice, cute style, and it is a bit "blonder" now, and to be honest, I really like where this look is headed. Jonathan (the gay Medical Assistant) and I were chatting, and he mentioned that I was one of the most "stunning" TS gals he has even seen come through their office, and he says there are over a hundred. I mentioned that plastic surgery was a big help, and he said he real effect is in the total package, and suggested that the world "watch out" once I have had SRS. I found his words amusing at the time, and am actually kinda flattered, even though I'm sure he says to gals exactly what they want to hear. It's still nice.

Maria spent 4 whole hours working on the surgery area. I told her I wanted her to clear a spot larger than what she was planning, and she spent the time doing that. My entire *[surgery]* area is like hamburger tonight...

**4/1/00 9:18am =====**

Amanda came over last night. I had heard she was RREEEAAAALLLLYYYYYY down..... And she was. She's caught up in this "relationship roulette" thing that seems to be so catchy. Oy. I invited her over and



made Chicken Kiev for her and gave her a half bottle of wine (Wild Horse Merlot - 1979....very nice) and we chatted, and she chipped up.

**4/2/00 10:29pm =====**  
**From: Michelle**

Hi Donna,

I thought about what you said about me sounding more lonely in the last few weeks than you can ever recall. I don't know that I really feel that way. Maybe it's the dating scene. I can go out and make all the new "friends" (female) that I want, but for some reason I have very little interest in following up on them because I carry so much of my past with me.

I yearn for a new life, a new job, a new me. Yet I am tied as much to my past as the strongest oak tree is to its roots. Without those roots the tree dies. I have to live with my past and somehow come to resolution with it some day. In the mean time I go on about my life and try to take the little things in it that I can. I try to make new friends and allow them into my life. I go to my Sunday school class to be with people who believe as I do. What would they think of me if they new the WHOLE me? I can't help but wonder. This is my life. It is who I am. I work and yearn towards change that I think will ultimately bring me the joy in life I once had...the anticipation of what good the next day will bring rather than dreading the coming days for the threats that they may bring to me, knowing that I am loved by someone that I can be with at night and share my home and innermost feelings, to be able to open my door and move about the world without the fear that something is about to go terribly wrong in my life, that special someone that loves me.

Michelle

\* \* \* \*

During my visit with Kate in February, she showed me some photographs. Some of them included a boyfriend of hers. His name is Ralph. The romantic part of the relationship had passed, but they remained good friends. Ralph was a very handsome man. Kate described him as a "man's man", and she was right.

At some point after my visit, Ralph was in one of my dreams! I thought, "How odd is that?" I even told Kate about the dream. That started one of the most amazing parts of my journey....

**4/4/00 2:03 pm =====**  
**From: Kate**

Hey beautiful,

Sit down and hang on to your seat my dear. We have a date with Ralph on Friday night April 21st! I couldn't resist telling him that you had a dream about him ... and so I asked him if he'd like to meet you. Well, duh! After seeing your pictures the poor guy is drooling ...

Anyway, if you guys have any chemistry (duh) ... he could be convinced to go to Shelley's party too. (He even offered to take us to brunch on Sunday too). And in the giant scheme of things wouldn't it be nice to have a man escort us around that weekend? :) I mean I'm good company and all ... but damn, having a man open the doors and fawning over us is pretty cool stuff.

I know this may all make your head spin honey, but its all part of growing up. It's not important whether or not you two get intimate ... it's more that amazing power of female validation. And believe me, you NEED that right now ...

Sweet dreams! :)

Hugs and kisses honey!

Katie

**4/4/00 4:24 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

I got a call from my new manager, Brian, today. He called to tell me that he had given his notice, and will be leaving in 2 weeks. I think I mentioned to you that I expected the decks to clear once the bonus was paid, but I did not expect him. This means I will get an even NEWER manager. Great. I told him 2 things to do before he leaves....get me a laptop, and work to get some additional expertise on this system.

*>So when you go in and have the surgical area zapped for a while, do  
>you walk around the rest of the day bow legged? I've always wondered  
>about that :)*

Well.....

The hard part of having her do the Surgery Area is that she turns the power WAY UP! She needs to be careful of scarring on the face, but they don't care down there. The object is to kill the hair as quickly as possible, so she turns the thing to superheat, and leaves it there for twice as long.

When she is done, I am an oozing, pussy, scabby mess. For days. And I really don't walk like a cowboy, but grabbing the little bugger to go pee is not fun. Also, she has cleared the area down between the legs near the "cooly hole" (as she calls it), and THAT is what makes walking not so fun. All in all, the real surgery area is almost all done, except for regrowth that may come. She is going to do my bikini line area and thin the pubic hair next, which is more aesthetic than anything, but putting a vagina in the middle of a huge bush of hair is not what I want.

Kate has made some fairly wild arrangements for my trip there over Easter. On Friday night we are going on a "date" with one of her ex-lovers with whom she is still on very friendly terms. I mentioned to her that he had appeared in a dream I had (although all I have ever seen is photos), and she sent him a picture, and he is "interested". Hmmm.....

All I want out of the deal is some time with Kate, and a nice Brunch on Sunday. She has promised, and has never failed to deliver. In fact, one of the things I like about being around her is that she pushes me. She represents a world of free spirit and experience, and I trust that she will not lead me where I am not ready to go. She is a gentle, open, uninhibited teacher who knows things that I want to learn. I'm not sure what will happen at any of this stuff, but I go in with an open mind, and facing a world of possibilities. I know what my limits are, and other than that, we shall see...

**4/7/00 2:53pm =====**  
**From: Annah**

Hi Donna,

Hope you're doing fine. When ya gettin in? Was your trip good?

I had a nasty bout of depression last night. Very bad. It was triggered by several different things... My ex-wife, who was "only showing concern for our son". She's having a hard time with letting him see the real me. Actually, if he just sees me she's okay with that. It was some other things I'll tell you about later. Then, just other small things that added up to make it a dismal night. Of course Giullian [*her girlfriend*] called me in the midst of it all and she was depressed too, which only pissed me off. She didn't give a shit to listen to me, just went on and on about how fucked-up her life is. I listened to her as much as I could, but it was very hard to as I was already down. I told her I was feeling like shit and that she really needed to quit talking about suicide and death, and asked her why she was so depressed. Then she tells me, "Oh, me? I'm not down at all." Good grief. I have to quit answering my phone from now on so I can screen my calls.

Pardon me for bitching. I just haven't had anyone else to talk to about it since last night, and there surely isn't anyone here at work that would understand!

Yeah, work. I'm getting the good old "chest stare" much more often these days. I wouldn't mind if I wasn't trying to keep it hidden at this point. I'll be thrilled when people look at it when I'm FT. Which has to wait until after I pay my lovely taxes then catch up on the bills I can't pay because of that. Fudge! Think I'll go sell a few items.

There's another thing...hiding. I'm sick of it. I want to just be. You know? Did you go through that, too? I am so sick of living two lives. I feel like I'm living the lie still... only this time it's the opposite.

Well I guess I've basically complained about everything here. LoL. There are many good things happening, too. Uh, I can't think of any... well, I can actually. My "little girls" are growing nicely. That's a positive thing... albeit vanity. Damn I sound bad. Gads. I shouldn't even send this to you!

Talk to you later.  
Annah

**4/8/00 7:04 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

Yesterday was busy. I had electro from 8-noon. Maria spent a while in the surgery area (it is coming along very nicely, if I may say so). A totally hairless, smooth scrotum is a really weird (but nice) sensation. Take my word for it. She was also able to spend some time on my chest. I have never had much hair there, and currently use my Epilady to excise it, but I will be glad to have it gone for good. I am also happy to see that we are progressing so well that we can move to secondary areas like this.

I got a call from Karen. You may remember her. I met her during my first night out ever, at the support group meeting. I have never seen her in girl mode, and we met a couple of times for lunch and she ended up decided she wanted to take one more try at being a guy. I must say she makes a very good looking guy, with a good physique and a killer smile. In any event, I had heard through the grapevine that she had fallen back into the fold, so to speak, and she called to chat. She said she had heard much about me, as the last time we met was pre-pre-pre-pre transition. I told her I was thinking of stopping out at a group that was meeting last night for a little while, and she said she would be there.

So after dins I went there, and the place was packed. There must have been 50 T's of all shapes and types there. One of the neatest parts was that there were 2 F2M's there, and they were the nicest, coolest guys. Really amazing. But I got a chance to talk with Karen, and Monica, and Annah, and

Dawn. They were all going out to eat as a group afterwards, but I was feeling pretty lousy (although better than Thursday and Friday), so I came home to bed.

Today was more of the same. More taxes. More electrolysis. I stopped by the Thrift store and got a few things (25% off on Sundays). The neat thing is that I did my errands after electrolysis, and just looked like crap. But I still never got an odd look (as far as I can tell). Frankly, I think it's the boobs. As mom says, if it has boobs, it must be a woman. No matter what the face looks like.

I talked with Elisabeth for an hour, and it was one of the calmest, most civil, chats we have had in a long long long time. It was very gratifying.

On the other hand, I wrote an email to Karen. She had called earlier in the week. I should send you a copy of what I told her. Basically, I told her I didn't know how to relate to her and Kevin anymore, as I hardly even saw them as "friends" anymore. I told her that all I felt from them was rejection, and that I felt that they would never come to grips with this, and I would never be more than Dave in a dress to them. She wrote back and, basically, said I was right. When they see me or talk about me, they relate me to Dave. I wrote back and told her that Dave is dead. The person that I am now may consist of the same skeleton, but in a very real sense, EVERYTHING ELSE about me is different. I do not expect to hear from them again, as I have given them their "out" in a graceful manner, and I am sure they will take it.

**4/8/00 5:57 am =====**

Hi Sal:

It's Sunday, so that must mean I'm about to head out on the road again. Sheesh. I am getting kinda worn out.

All the managers above me at work have left or are in the process of leaving. I finally had a chance to sit and talk to the new director, who replaced my friend Brian. He seems like a nice guy, and I think we had a good chat. He was in Birmingham for a few days to learn about the operation there, and it was good that he got to see me actually working, as I am very busy and very much appreciated there. He is the first person in our department to show any appreciation for the hard work and effort I have put in.

I am battling a nasty cold, which has made the last few days pretty miserable. I am coughing, and blowing my nose, and my throat hurts, and I am all stuffy....it has not been fun. I could not get my ears to stabilize the pressure during my flights home on Friday (that HURTS), and even now one remains plugged and it feels like I have "swimmer's ear".

I have made arrangements to go to San Fran over Easter. I am getting together with Kate and Dana Rivers for a brunch. Last Easter was a low point in my life. I'll never forget it. In fact, that's the week before I called off my first attempt to transition. It's amazing how things change in a year....

**4/08/00 6:27am =====**

***This note is particularly interesting, as it brings out a couple of difficult issues that I was dealing with.***

***First, I recognized that I had changed. I was not the same person as I had been. My needs, and my "feelings" had changed dramatically.***

***Second, I wanted to be accepted (or not, as the case may be) as Donna. Not as Dave. It had become obvious that people who were friends with Dave would not be friends with Donna. And that sounds odd to say, as both are the same person, but both were very different. I had come to***

***the realization that I could not maintain friendships with people who would not, or could not, make that transition.***

***Thirdly, I prophesize about my future, and it is interesting to see how much of that prophecy has actually come to pass.***

Hi Karen:

How's things in your world these days? I hope you remain healthy, and happy.

I got your messages from last week. Needless to say, I was out of town again. The schedule I have been keeping is pretty nutso. I find it ironic that Elisabeth told her folks I was out of town all during their visit last year, and this year I really am. I am battling a cold that has made these last few days pretty crummy, but I guess that's what happens when you go from climate to climate to climate.

I am not sure how to respond to you anymore. As I progress through my transition, I have had to assess many things. Not least of which is my needs when it comes to "friends". As I have told you in the past, my needs from my friends, and the investment I make in those friendships, have changed dramatically over the last year. I don't need to rehash all that here, as none of it has changed.

But the bottom line is that I have expectations of certain things, and when those things are not forthcoming, I am disappointed. Through my transition up to this point, some people have surprised me with the level of support and caring, while others have disappointed me tremendously. I would be lying if I didn't put you and Kevin in the second category.

Please don't get me wrong.....I am not blaming you or Kevin for any of this. On the contrary....I blame myself. Disappointment and frustration come from inside each of us. When things do not live up to our own expectations, we feel disappointed. It is not THEIR fault for the perception of failing. It is OURS for setting such high expectations in the first place.

Others (including you and Kevin) have said that it will get better over time. That it will take some time to adjust to accepting Donna where Dave used to be. I can agree with this. But not for people who only see me or talk to me once every 4 months. And I have come to the sad conclusion that those who I felt closest to are the people who display this most. They really do WANT to stay friends. They WANT to be able to adjust. They don't want to hurt me. But they feel awkward around me, and in reality can't be friends, and they do hurt me. So they tell me what they think I want to hear. In reality, they just want to move away quietly and watch from the distance. Instead of using the passage of time to adjust, they use it to gradually drift away.

Eventually, I will leave this city. I will go someplace and start new, and I will cut my ties with most of the life that Dave had. I will build a life where others may know of my circumstances (I make no attempt to hide it), but they didn't know Dave so they have nothing to compare me to. They don't call me D, or Dave, or "he". They call me Donna. That is all they know, and that Donna is a wonderful, warm loving person. They will judge me for who I am, not who I was, or who they want me to be. They will not feel the need to protect their children from me. For those who knew me as Dave....I am perceived (and I fear always WILL be perceived) as nothing more than Dave in a dress. In reality, I am so much more. And the baggage that was Dave's, and that Donna has had to bear, will be left behind as well. In my mind, it's not so much running FROM something, as it is running TO something, and when I am ready, that is my future.

Much has happened since the beginning of the year. Everyone at work who was above me has left (including Brian). I have made some special friends in the Bay area, and went there over my birthday to spend it with them (and I am heading there for Easter as well). I needed some surgery. My liver enzyme levels are almost 10 times above normal due to the long-term stress from my hormone regimen. Divorce proceedings continue. I finally spent an hour with Matt. I have moved, and have had visitors come to

stay with me from Virginia and Wisconsin. I have made all the arrangements for my surgery (THAT surgery), and my mom is planning to be there with me. And I have been in town here for less than 10 days out of the month.

I don't know what I am trying to do in telling you all this, except to say that you have been great friends, and I miss you. The spot you occupied in my life remains unfilled. But the feelings you create in me are feelings I do not need right now, so I am doing my best to deal with that and move on. Instead of acceptance and friendship and support, or any semblance thereof, I feel rejection. And even though I accept the blame for feeling this way, that is one thing I cannot accept from "friends". I am not saying that I will always feel this way, and perhaps my feelings and judgment are clouded by the blur of things in my life as they zip by or by the effects of estrogen on a sensitive mind. Perhaps not. But if things really do change over time, perhaps so too will my ability to deal with all of this. We shall see.

Take Care, and say 'hi' to the big guy for me.....

Luv,

***Karen's response:***

Perhaps you are right in that my friendship with you to this date is still based on Dave in Transition. I have only known you as Dave for almost 20 years. That is half of my life!!!! I cannot just snap my fingers and make all that Dave represented disappear. To do so would take convincing myself that Dave was dead. I have tried to wish away the part of you that was this unemotional yet personable and funny guy I had grown to love. I have tried as I certainly like the more intimate Donna, but it is not possible for me to forget Dave. Like the Barbara Streisand song says, "Memories, light the corners of my mind." Dave is there in the corners of my mind, a vivid memory. Donna is a new comer, with no history in my life if I wipe out Dave. Dave has already established himself there and even in death he would not have disappeared from my memories. Although it may not sound it, it is meant as a compliment. Dave existed, he lived, he breathed and although he had his faults (who doesn't), he was still a lovable guy and he made an incredible impact on my life. New friendships typically are slow to form and take much energy to nurture. That is the joy of youth, you had more time then. At the present, I am still working 2 jobs, raising 2 kids, once again attempting to repair a very damaged marital relationship, leaving a job I have loved to work at for the past 9 years to stay in AZ to keep my struggling family together, going for my treatments and still working through the emotions and worry of having had (or possibly still having) cancer. I have had some side effects this last infusion and I seem to grow more worried by the day. It may not seem that overwhelming for you, but it is for me. I am barely making it through each day, let alone try to fit in the energy it takes to work on a new relationship with anyone (ie: Donna), especially when it would take so much energy with Donna the way you seem to want things, as I would have to keep trying to think of Dave as dead. I hope when I am dead and gone that you will not forget about me as easily as you seem to expect others to forget about Dave. He lived, he breathed and he was my friend for 20 years. When I was able to see you in the past, it was as you know with much difficulty time wise, but when I did see you, you are right, I always saw Dave in Transition. But I was okay with that, you obviously are not. The relationship with Dave was sustainable on long periods of absence as our lives were complicate with jobs, kids, family, distance, etc.

I am sorry you are feeling the way you are about friendships. I am happy however that you are finding new ones that fulfill you. I hope the liver issue calms down and altogether disappears. Is that common during transition? I will continue to hope for the best for you as I always have. I am here always for Dave and Donna, but not just one. I see you as kind of Sybil now. Please don't take this the wrong way. I see two people in one body. One is Dave, who I love dearly and who sustains our friendship and the other one, Donna, the newcomer, who I had hoped to get to know over time as Dave was so fond of her. Maybe in time, I would have, or will, start to see Donna as the better friend. I wish you only the best and hope our paths with always cross.

Love your pal,  
Karen

**My response (4/10/00):**

Hi Karen:

There is kind of an interesting metaphor that is used for people in transition. The question is...."What is the difference between a caterpillar and a butterfly?". The answer is..."Everything". And in reality, this is true, as even the genetic materials change during the metamorphosis inside the cocoon.

So, too, is this true for my transition. I am certainly the same physical person who you have known all these years. But to think I am even remotely the same as the Dave you grew to know over that time would be a wrong assumption. In your note, and in Elisabeth's thinking as well, you talk of Dave being dead. And in a very real sense, he is. The flesh and bone that make up this body may be the same, and the memories of an existence long ago and far away may be Dave's, but I am no longer Dave. And I refuse to look at the world, and to consider an existence, through Dave's eyes. I see a world of unlimited possibilities, which requires an open mind and the ability to reassess things that Dave could never have accepted in a million years.

I would argue with anyone that the transition I have undertaken is one of the most difficult experiences a human being can undertake. Even more so than people who lose a limb, or who become paralyzed. It requires complete relearning and rethinking, in the face of indescribable fear and the disapproval of all of society. But the interesting thing I have found is that it has a profound effect on others, as well.

There is a very interesting essay by a noted psychologist about Transgendered people and relationships in their lives. I don't know if I have ever sent it to you, but I find almost every word of it to be true.

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**Relationships: The Bane and the Promise**

**By: Dr. Anne Vitale, PhD.**

*Relationships are both the risk and the hope for people dealing with gender issues. Recognition by parents, a spouse, children, significant others and friends as the gender they feel themselves to be is extremely important. Ultimately, it is the need to relate honestly with the rest of humanity that eventually forces people to admit first to themselves and then to others that they have a gender identity issue. That all should go well in making that revelation is the hope. The risk is that the almost overwhelming fear of losing friends and family and becoming absolutely alone in life will be realized.*

*In all my years of working with people with Gender Identity Disorder, it is clear now that those who do best realistically accept the condition on its own terms. Even if that means realizing that maintaining the character of old relationships is all but impossible. Further, they must make a drastic readjustment to every relationship they have ever had. As sad as that may sound, it is not necessarily a bad thing. Many times relationships with friends and family improve as they take on a more meaningful quality. Time and the unknowable effects of transition are the key factors in adjusting old relationships and establishing new ones.*

*Not surprising, the effect of opening to others is directly proportional to the extent one has to go to resolve the issues within oneself. If resolution comes through disclosure of cross-dressing, the impact will probably be localized to the immediate family and perhaps a few close friends. If, on the other hand, resolution includes taking on a completely new identity by transitioning, the effect on everyone involved in the individual's life will be profound.*

*There is yet another level of resolution that has a far more profound effect on relationships. That is when resolution calls for a complete and permanent change of physical appearance. Here I am including genetic females who hormonally and/or surgically transition to live and function as men and/or genetic males who hormonally and surgically transition to live and function as women.*

*The key here is appearance. No matter how supportive the friend or partner may be while transition is still in the talking stage, the first sign of physical change almost invariably forces a reassessment of that support. It may not necessarily mean a complete loss of the relationship, but as the transition progresses, the interchange between the two parties typically undergoes a radical redefinition. The new pattern usually parallels traditional patterns of same and opposite sex relationships. I have noticed, the more intimate the relationship prior to transition, the more likely the relationship will be radically changed. In contrast, more casual relationships, if they don't simply drop away from disinterest on behalf of all concerned, often take on more meaning.*

*Interestingly the first attempt people entering transition make at maintaining old relationships is to reassure family and friends that only their appearance will change. The problem here is that this is simply not true. Sex reassignment far exceeds a simple change of appearance. When one thinks about it, if that is all transition did, it probably wouldn't be worth the trouble. Upon starting to take hormones, people routinely report a profound improvement in their sense of well-being and the rightness of their action. This, long before they or anyone else becomes aware of physical changes. Clearly something far more profound is occurring. As their sense of self changes, their needs in relation to others will inevitably change as well.*

*Reassuring friends is rarely meant to reassure friends. More often it is a way for the individual going through transition to deal with fears of becoming isolated and unwanted in his or her new life. These are, of course, valid fears and they need to be dealt with in therapy. In my opinion, the problem is better solved by paying close attention to the new emerging self and following the dictates of all that a close examination reveals. At the minimum, the transitioning individual can expect personal needs and his or her expectations of others to change. In fact it is common to see the individual going through transition to be the one to abandon old friendships because they are too busy making and enjoying new ones, now that they are freed to be fully themselves, whereas old ones simply cannot let go of the old persona.*

*One of the more profound and usually unexpected events is that the individual's sexual preferences may change. A genetic male who is used to being in sexual relationship with women, may realize a strong, and new, attraction to males once he, now she, is free to both look and act female. The new feelings are usually triggered by the sexual response a new presentation to the world evokes in others. When and if it happens, people report that it is too new and too interesting to ignore. Apparently a relationship unlike anything the individual has ever experienced in their old life can be upon them without their doing a thing. The individual may find themselves acting a bit awkward at first (not unlike a teenager experiencing his or her first love) but after a few mistakes and a little advice from others, they usually get the hang of it. I know of at least two of these unexpected relationships that have gone on to become long-term heterosexual marriages. One of the marriages is in its eighteenth year, the other in its fourteenth year.*

*Clearly, looking into resolving gender issues requires a major leap of faith. However, the fear of individuals dealing with gender issues of being alone or abandoned by friends and family is largely unfounded. Time and the unknowable effects of transition have an excellent record of delivering on the promise of an improved life, complete with an assortment of new or modified relationships. The key is patience and being open to all the possibilities that come with a new evolving sense of being.*

=====

*I know you have struggled with this, and I thank you for your efforts. I am glad you felt that maintaining a relationship with Dave was worth the effort. I do take those words as a compliment, as he was as good a*



person as I could make him. He loved you guys. And I know each of us struggles with the reality of our everyday world. But if we are unable or unwilling to make the time and effort to build a new and different relationship, then the old one will die. In fact, I think the old one is dead already. And whereas it is true I have made many new friendships, none will replace the one we had, or that I hoped we would have. It remains unfilled.

My liver situation is not totally unexpected. The liver is used to metabolize Premarin, and it must work extra hard to do that. Over a sustained period of time, it can become damaged, and susceptible to cancer. I have known this risk, and I continue to deal with it. But I am ready to face my mortality as Donna, rather than to try to extend this life as Dave.

I know you are there, and that you continue to care about me. I am not saying that I do not want to be your friend, so go away and I never want to hear from you again. On the contrary, I am saying that the relationship we had, and that I had hoped we would have, are both gone. Everything is new. And as we move forward, we'll just have to see where it takes us.

Luv,

Donna

**4/8/00 7:04pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

It has been another hectic weekend. And of course, I accomplished only a small fraction of the things I had hoped to do.

Yesterday was busy. I had electro from 8-noon. Maria spent a while in the surgery area (it is coming along very nicely, if I may say so). A totally hairless, smooth scrotum is a really wierd (but nice) sensation. Take my word for it. She was also able to spend some time on my chest. I have never had much hair there, and currently use my Epilady to excise it, but I will be glad to have it gone for good. I am also happy to see that we are progressing so well that we can move to secondary areas like this.

I spent the afternoon doing taxes. Ouch. There were some numbers that I had to call Elisabeth for, so she can research them.

I got a call from Karen. You may remember her. I met her during my first night out ever, at the support group meeting. I have never seen her in girl mode, and we met a couple of times for lunch and she ended up decided she wanted to take one more try at being a guy. I must say she makes a very good looking guy, with a good physique and a killer smile. In any event, I had heard through the grapevine that she had fallen back into the fold, so to speak, and she called to chat. She said she had heard much about me, as the last time we met was pre-pre-pre transition. I told her I was thinking of stopping out at a group that was meeting last night for a little while, and she said she would be there.

So after dins I went there, and the place was packed. There must have been 50 T's of all shapes and types there. One of the neatest parts was that there were 2 F2M's there, and they were the nicest, coolest guys. Really amazing. But I got a chance to talk with Karen, and Monica, and Annah, and Dawn. They were all going out to eat as a group afterwards, but I was feeling pretty lousy (although better than Thursday and Friday), so I came home to bed.

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I talked with Elisabeth for an hour, and it was one of the calmest, most civil, chats we have had in a long long long time. It was very gratifying.

On the other hand, I wrote an email to Karen. She had called earlier in the week. I should send you a copy of what I told her. Basically, I told her I didn't know how to relate to her and Kevin anymore, as I hardly even saw them as "friends" anymore. I told her that all I felt from them was rejection, and that I felt that they would never come to grips with this, and I would never be more than Dave in a dress to them. She wrote back and, basically, said I was right. When they see me or talk about me, they relate me to Dave. I wrote back and told her that Dave is dead. The person that I am now may consist of the same skeleton, but in a very real sense, EVERYTHING ELSE about me is different. I do not expect to hear from them again, as I have given them their "out" in a graceful manner, and I am sure they will take it.

Amanda wants to go to a movie tonight, but I have so so much to do I am going to have to beg out of it. In fact, I better get going now.

I hope your weekend was a good one. I'll call ya tomorrow after your run. I'm looking forward to seeing you....

Donna

**4/15/00 5:00 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry:**

I called home and talked to Matt yesterday. He sounded good. I was feeling him out to see if he wanted to spend some time with me during his spring break, but he answered "Maybe" to most of my questions, which all parents know actually means no. He's not ready yet. It was a nice chat, though.

Later, I talked with Elisabeth for an hour. We were making arrangements for me to get the truck (which I have now), and actually had another nice conversation. She tends to get kinda wispy and weepy near the end, but we chat on the phone more like old friends than anything. We talked about some good stuff.....about her family and how they still love me and care for me. I told her they don't love me or care for me...they do for Dave but not for me. We talked about when she might be ready to see me, and she hoped that once she did, we could actually be friends again. All in all, it was a good chat.

I had much to do this morning. Nails at 9. And it was kind of a milestone visit, as I finally chose a color. Cyndi has been urging me to choose a real color, as opposed to light pinks and mauves, and today I did. It is a deep boysenberry color, and I really like it. In her mind, this signals a shift in leaving behind the old, and the safe, and moving forward. She said she was proud of me. It really is odd to see these nice, dark nails at the ends of fingers that are attached to my own hands.

Maria really did a number on me today. She finished the surgery area (YAY) except for any regrowth, and we talked about what needed to be done next. My pubic hair area is really large and dense (she called it "hellacious"), so we both agreed it needed proper shaping and thinning, so she got to work at that. She turned her machine up as far as it could go, and just creamed the area. It will take several visits to complete, but she got a good start on it and I am very happy with the results.

I had stopped by the Infiniti dealership yesterday to begin talking to them about turning in the truck and getting something more practical. I am going to get absolutely killed on the lease penalty, so I'm not sure yet if that's the way to go. I stopped by there again today and we talked a little more. I mentioned that I was getting divorced, so the sales guy kept referring to my spouse as my husband. That kinda stuff makes me smile inside.

Some days I feel so good about myself (how I look, my face, my hair), while others (sometime the very next day) I look at myself and am very disappointed. It's really odd. Yesterday was a "not" day. Today is a good day.

**4/18/00 11:25pm =====**

**To: Kate**

**Title: Fears**

Hi hon:

Our conversations always start my mind going.....

We were talking about passing, and stealth, and reasons we do what we do. You asked me why I had my surgeries if I didn't feel I could pass 100% of the time in all situations.

I told you early on that I'm not afraid of anything. This is true. But there are many things I fear. I refuse to allow the fear to rule me, and in many cases actually look forward to facing my fears.

For example, I fear the power of being a woman. I have not even experienced it yet, but I can see it and feel it and it is awesome. And scary. The power women have in their bodies, and in their sensuality, and even in the way they talk. It is something that I feel I have in my future, but I feel like a 5 year old behind the wheel of a Ferrari. I feel I can't even reach the pedals to even get it going. I feel totally clumsy and awkward and hopeless sometimes.

I fear the power of surrender. I have spent my life trying to be in control. Of Donna. Of my family. Of my emotions. In fact, much of who Dave was about control. To voluntarily give that up is a hard hard thing for me. To a partner. To my emotions. But in many situations, I do not want to be in control anymore. In a real sense, I see the ability to surrender as an unbelievable release. But for some reason, I find this so so hard.

I miss being in love. Not necessarily being loved, although that is certainly a wonderful thing. I miss the tingly feeling we get at the beginning of a relationship when everything is new and special and wonderful. When people can't get enough of each other no matter how hard they try. I think I fear experiencing that as a woman.

Writing this is making me cry. It's late, and I need my rest, so I'll end here. Have a great day, and good luck on the interview.

**4/19/00 8:12 am =====**

**Journal Entry**

I went to the doctor's yesterday morning, and weight is good. BP was up a bit (132/88), but last time it was 120/80, so I don't worry so much. My ear remains clogged, and it is frustrating, but the runny nose and other stuff seem to be going away.

I talked with Elisabeth a couple of times yesterday. Our talks are becoming more and more friendly, and some of them are almost like the old days. We used to talk to each other in a silly little baby-talk from time to time, and she even used that yesterday. I am so hopeful that we can remain/become friends. But I still very much have my doubts.

\* \* \* \*

Elisabeth and I had talked about my spending some time with Matt again. We worked it out in late April. We arranged that I would pick him up at the house, and we could spend an evening together. It would be our first significant time together since Labor Day, 8 months previous.

I had planned that Matt and I could spend some time at my apartment. I was going to order a pizza. I had picked up some DVD's from Blockbuster. I had expected there to be some "discomfort", but once he got into the car, there really wasn't any.

We had both changed much in those 8 months. He had grown quite a bit, and was very much the young man. I, on the other hand, had feminized tremendously, and although his changes were significant, mine were much more so. He seemed to take things in stride, and that was very comforting to me.

When we got to my apartment, Matt indicated he wanted pizza from his favorite pizzeria, and it did not deliver. I had been concerned that he might now want to be seen out and about with me, but he did not seem to feel it to be a big deal, so we went out for pizza.

Throughout the night I was treated and acknowledged as female, and I think that very much calmed any fears that Matt had. As shallow as this may sound, appearance is a CRITICAL thing for a transsexual. People become "uncomfortable" around others who may be of questionable gender. I was very sensitive to this, and also very thankful that Matt felt good enough about how I looked to be seen with me.

Later that evening, we stopped at a bicycle shop. Matt was on one side of the store, while I was on the other side talking with one of the salesmen. Matt yelled across the store, "Hey, Dad...c'mere!" He immediately recognized his faux pas, and covered his mouth.

After we got outside, we laughed about it. He asked me what he should call me. I told him he was free to call me "Dad" if he wanted, as I would always be his dad. But I thought he would be more comfortable calling me something else. I told him that my mom called me "D". "D" for Dave. "D" for Donna. "D" for Dad. He thought that would work, and he immediately started calling me D.

\* \* \* \*

The next day, I left for San Francisco. My last trip there had been an incredibly significant trip. This one was to be no different.

**4/24/00 =====**  
***Journal Entry***

Sometimes things happen in our lives that are of such magnitude that any attempt to try to reconcile them within our own experiences inevitably ends up fruitless. These experiences can cause us to question

who we are, and can even call into question whether we really know ourselves, or are we actually strangers with who we really are.

This has been one of those weekends for me.

And whereas I would think that events of this indescribable importance would leave me shaken and confused and upset, I find that I feel exactly the opposite. Although I certainly cannot explain the powers that led me to do and act and think over this past weekend, I find that the “why’s” continue to be far less important than the “is”. These things happened. I have no regrets. And although I have had inklings of how I might react, the proof is right there in front of me now.

I arrived in Oakland on Friday at 10:30am after an uneventful flight from Phoenix. I rented a car and drove the 20 some miles from Oakland to Kate’s place in Milpitas. She had work on Friday, and planned to drive home for lunch to meet me and let me in, although she had to go back after lunch so I would be on my own.

All went as planned, as it was wonderful to see Kate. Her smile and her eyes are as bright as ever, and she is far more attractive than she allows herself to believe. But that is Kate. She made lunch and we chatted, and she went back to work. I had called to make a hair appointment at a place nearby, as I felt an hour of pampering would be a nice way to spend the afternoon. I really didn’t want much cut off, but I cannot describe how much fun it is to have someone wash and trim and style my hair. It is a simple, but very gratifying, pleasure.

I went to the Salon (Hair Shapers) and had a gal named Maria work on me. She is retiring this week, and we had a very nice chat. I was totally comfortable there, and she made no indication that she knew of my situation (despite my scars on the forehead, and the fact I feel I look my MOST male with wet hair). She did a nice job with the trim, but used a curling iron to make my head look like a little poodle as she styled it. No matter, as I intended to take a shower before the “date” anyways.

The schedule for the evening is that Ralph was supposed to be at the apartment at 7. We were planning to go out for dinner and perhaps dancing afterwards. Kate kept referring to it as “Donna’s date”, and I told her it did not feel like a date, as there would be three (it turned out to be 4) of us. She assured me that this was a date, and she was the chaperone. This turned into a bit of a joke, as we said it was like leaving the fox to guard the hens.

Ralph showed up a half hour early, and we were still in Prep mode. He is a handsome man...perhaps 6 feet tall and muscular with black short hair speckled with gray. Kate had always described him as a real “man’s man”, and not simply a trans-fan or anything like that. He came across that way to me, too.

They had originally planned to do sushi, but I told them they needed to make sure the place served hamburgers as well. I have never had sushi and I don’t plan on liking it, although this was a weekend for new experiences and I was certainly willing to try. They changed course, however, and we went out for Mexican, and Lori decided to join us. After my shower I styled my hair myself, and I must say it really looked nice.

Dinner was very nice. Ralph was the perfect gentleman for all of us....opening our car doors, helping us in and out of the car, helping put our jackets on, complimenting us on how we looked or on our perfume. It seemed totally sincere, and we all ate it up. He commented that this was every guys dream....to be out to dinner with three wonderful women, and in some ways I think he’s right.

We were originally planning to go dancing afterwards, but changed course again and decided to go somewhere a little quieter where we could talk. We headed to San Jose, as there is a swanky hotel there with a jazz bar, but once we got there we found that a) the place was packed and b) there was a Latino band playing very very loud. We walked around downtown San Jose until we found a nice quiet place, and went in for drinks. We stayed for an hour, and then went back to Kate’s.

Up to this point, it had not seemed like a date. Ralph and I had not sat together. The topics of conversation were general topics, and were pretty comfortable. I did not feel any pressure, and was pretty happy with the way the evening was going.

We got home at around midnight. Lori went to bed. Ralph and Kate and I put on a fire log, and sat around chatting. Eventually, Kate decided to go to bed, and off she went. So it was just Ralph and I in the living room on the couch.

We talked. And talked. And talked. I don't remember the general topics, but it was a very nice chat. And it got very late. I was getting tired. Ralph lives 40 minutes away, and mentioned that he would sleep on the couch and head home in the morning, as we had all had alcohol during the evening (not a lot) and didn't feel up to driving home. When I first arrived on Friday, Kate gave me the option of making up the bed in the spare room or of sleeping with her, so of course I chose to sleep with her. I offered to Ralph that it was a big bed, and he would be far more comfortable with us, so he should sleep in the bed. Needless to say, he agreed. Well, I went to the bathroom to wash up, and put on my nightshirt, and by the time I was ready he was already in the bed. And Kate was awake.

It was totally dark. I slipped into bed, next to Ralph, and it felt right. Before two minutes were up, I was lying in his arms, and stroking the hair on his chest, and he was playing with my hair. And before two more minutes, we were kissing. Needless to say, Kate heard all the kissing sounds, and decided that if we were going to be noisy, she was going to sleep on the couch. And despite our pleas to stay in bed, and that we would stop....off she went. She here we were...Ralph and I...in bed alone. I told Ralph that this was very new to me, and he said that we would take our time, and that we wouldn't do anything I didn't want to do, or feel comfortable doing.

I have no idea how long we played. It must have been nearly 5am by the time we drifted off to sleep. I slept for a couple or three hours, but not nearly so much as I needed. And when Kate came in in the morning, and saw me lying there in Ralph's arms, looking happy and comfortable, she smiled knowingly.

Saturday was the "morning after". I have seen it on so many shows. The time when the passion of the night is gone, and the discomfort of what had happened can rear its head in the broad daylight. Happily, this didn't happen. Ralph got up, and gave me a gentle kiss, and hugged me, and told me how happy he was, and I felt happy too. After he showered, he went home, although he was planning to return later in the afternoon when we all planned to go to a BBQ together.

Kate and I went out for the afternoon to shop and have lunch, and we had a very good time. We were like two girlfriends sharing our intimacies with each other. She had no idea (or at least she said she didn't) that things went as far as they did, and she teased me from time to time singing "Donna's got a boy-friend....Donna's got a boy-friend". We talked about my feelings and how she had reacted during HER first time, and had it was very helpful. I even bought 4 pairs of shoes during he afternoon (although I have NO idea how I am going to pack them to bring them home).

The BBQ was in Walnut Creek. There were 4 of us in the car. Me, Kate, Ralph, and one of Kate's frends. It was a pretty tame event, although I did get to meet several people I have heard much about. Apparently, they have heard of me, as well. There were probably 15-20 people there, and we ate and drank wine and watched a video of the LAST party and it was a nice time. There were several T's of all types and flavors there, as well as a few GG's and a couple or three guys.

I don't remember all of what happened on Saturday night after we got home. Ralph was slated to sleep on the couch, as he had been invited to Kate's Easter Brunch. Suffice it to say, that didn't happen. ☺

Easter was a beautiful day here. Totally sunny, although still a bit cool for my tainted Phoenix blood. Kate invited a friend (Shawna) over to join us, and she cooked up a wonderful brunch. Eggs Benedict. Champagne. Asparagus with Hollandaise Sauce. Ham. Fresh fruit. It was totally yummy. We decided that we wanted to get out during the afternoon, so we all went to the new U-boat movie. The theaters were just awesome....big comfy seats, unbelievable sound system...and we all enjoyed the movie very

much. Ralph and I were acting like a couple of teenagers.....holding hands, gentle kisses. It was pretty amazing. Later in the day we decided to go out to Santa Cruz and watch the sunset on the ocean, so we drove out there and ended up at a restaurant/bat called Zelda's. Kate and I went there the first time I visited her, and we got a table in the back. There were a couple of guys playing acoustic music, and they were just wonderful. I tried Calamari for the first time (it was good) and had a couple of Margaritas, and all seemed right in the world. We had a very very interesting chat on what was happening to me and between Ralph and I.

After we got back, it was fairly late. Kate had an early flight to LA the next morning to go and meet with a surgeon, so Ralph and I cuddled for a little while, and kissed for a little while, and then he went home. We exchanged phone numbers and email addresses to keep in touch. Kate and I went to bed, and hugged and talked about what had happened. She said she never imagined how natural this would be to me. I told her it was very scary that these feeling had been in here all this time, but had needed the right circumstances to kick them off. She predicted that now that they are out, I will find myself becoming even more comfortable in who and what I am. I agree with her.

Right now it is noon on Monday. I have an appointment this afternoon with a speech pathologist who is very well known for working with T's to help them on their voice. I am very impressed with her so far, and I mentioned her to Mira during a brief chat this morning and she got an enthusiastic thumbs up from Dr. O. I am very much looking forward to the voice work, as it remains my Achilles heel right now. I feel that I can appear female almost always, but when I open my mouth I give myself away. Of course, this is not always true, but once I have some confidence with the voice, it will be a major confidence boost for me.

**4/23/00 11:25 pm =====**  
**To: Ralph**

Hi Ralph:

In many ways, this past weekend does feel like a dream. So many new thoughts and feelings and sensations have flooded me that I have almost given up trying to sort it all out.

I am almost afraid to pinch myself for fear of waking up myself. I have electrolysis tomorrow morning from 5am-8am, and then again from 6-9pm, so if anything can wake me up....that will. But my reality is that this was a weekend I will never, ever forget. You are a special and wonderful man, whose smile and embrace can do things to me that no one has ever done. Your patience and tenderness and understanding far exceed anything I have ever expected or dared to hope for out of anyone. You are truly a rare combination yourself. And I am so happy that our paths somehow crossed in this crazy journey called life.

I got to the airport tonight, and walked through the metal detector on the way to my gate. I stood waiting for my bags to go through on the conveyor belt, and the guy says to me "You sure do have a pretty smile on your face, pretty lady". And although I had no idea I was standing there smiling, I answered him. I told him "That's because I'm happy". And I am. I haven't been able to say that with much "oomph" in a very long while. In a large way, you are responsible for that. And I thank you.

**4/25/00 3:33 pm =====**

Hi Kate:

I hope all has settled down again. For some reason, I don't think it has.....

I went out during lunch and bought a bike. It is my first girl's bike! It's got a nice cushy seat (as opposed to the little rock that they put on guy's bikes), and its handlebars are up nice and high (as opposed to

guy's bikes where you need to lean totally forward). I figure I can wear some stretch pants, and a sports bra, and can get exercise AND sun at the same time. I am so psyched.

**4/25/00 5:36 pm =====**  
**From: Kate**

Donna,

I'm sure much of what happened to you today was due to your new perspective about yourself. Internal change always creates external change. And the further you get down the timeline, the more you will have conflict in his old environment. Whether you move to Texas or move out here, moving away will be the key. You can't imagine how good it will feel to be in a place where no one knows you. Yes, I know what you think about stealthness, but you WILL be stealth by default.

BTW, congratulations on officially having a boyfriend . Woohoo. That's a MAJOR milestone my dear.

**My response (4/24/00 10:56 pm)**

Katie:

I am ready to move. To Austin. To the Bay. To wherever. The major question I wrestle with in my own mind has to do with timing. I'm still not "ripe". I need to work on my voice. I will be out for a month in the very near future (107 days) for surgery. I am about to be divorced. Opportunities will ALWAYS be there. But timing is everything....or nothing. I found several jobs in your area today for which I am more than qualified. Some in San Jose, and Fremont, and San Mateo, and San Ramon.

Whereas I do agree that what happened with Ralph was a milestone in my life, I cannot see Ralph as an official "boyfriend" (your term). I would not that pressure on him, or on myself. As far as I can tell, and to use your own terminology, we "played". But to expect anything more from him breaks my rule about managing my expectations and leaves me open to get hurt before I even get out of the gate. I am way way way out of my league, and I am very aware of that.

Ralph is a wonderful, sensitive, loving man. He is very special. The feeling of letting him hold me, and running my fingers through his soft hair, and of feeling totally comfortable and feminine with him, are feelings that I will never ever forget. To me, they were feelings that could carry me for the rest of my life. What happened was far more than "playing" to me. The words he whispered to me that first night urged me to go as slow as I felt like going, as there was no hurry. I'm hoping to adopt a similar outlook for whatever lies in our futures.

**4/27/00 7:49 am =====**  
**Journal Entry:**

I'm feeling a bit better this morning. I have been pretty frazzled over these past few days, which is probably fall-out from the weekend events, but I seem to be a bit better today. Of course, it isn't even 7:30 yet, so there's still lots of time to get frazzled.

I got a call from Dell yesterday, and they are bringing me to Austin for an interview while I am in DFW next week. It looks like I'll spend a half-day there on Tuesday. As I have told you many times, Dave was a very good interviewee. I have no idea how Donna will fare, as my confidence is not quite so high yet and I have no idea about the expectations they have for a woman as opposed to those of a guy. But however it shakes out, it will be a good experience for me so we will give it our best shot.



I went out with the Dan half of Dan/Dawn last night. He/she is so deeply emphatuated with me that it's almost scary. I can't begin to tell you. We had planned on dins and a movie, but our conversations were so deep we decided to forego the movie and keep talking over dessert instead. I think this was the first time that a guy has paid for my dinner, as we usually go dutch or I put it on my expense account. As a result of this kind gesture, Dan got a kiss goodnight. After the events of the weekend, kissing a guy is not such a monumental leap anymore, so it wasn't too hard. I didn't want to send the wrong message, but I did have a good time and he was truly a gentleman.....

Elisabeth is not doing so well anymore. Her folks left a couple of days ago, and I call to chat, and she is frazzled and thanked me for fuc#ing up her life yesterday. I have a phone meeting with my attorney today to complete the proposal we are going to give to her attorney. I know once she gets it, it will send Elisabeth through the roof. But such is life. Time to get on with this. And with life.

SRS countdown: 106 days and counting.....

Amanda has been coming on hot and heavy, as well. I don't quite understand her about-face. I thought I had "cured" her of it, but she calls me almost every day and whines and complains that we don't get to see more of each other. I told her the only time I had this week was tonight, and so she jumped at it. Every time we hang up she ends the conversation with "Love You". Those words do not come easy to me, and when I think of Love I think of family love, and of romantic love, and I feel neither of those towards her. So I do not respond in kind.

Maria is moving her offices today to a point even farther away. Actually, it is just around the corner from my doctor's. The good thing is that I can kill two birds with one stone when I go out there. Maria hasn't worked on my face in months.....Angie does that during our evening appointments....and the surgery area is pretty much done. We're now doing bikini area, chest, brows..... Angie is having a baby in June, and I am hoping my face will be almost done by then. If all that comes to pass, my trips there will be fairly infrequent, and I will be much happier for it.

\* \* \* \* \*

By the end of April, I had decided that I needed a change. My entire life revolved around my transition, and my job. Up to this point, I had gotten a sense of pride and satisfaction from my job. But as new managers got involved, and as my "role" was being redefined, I decided to take matters into my own hands.

I felt I had three options:

- To transfer to another group within PCS. I really enjoyed the company, and was hopeful that a change of scenery would help to give me a lower profile. Needless to say, I was confident that news of my situation would precede me, wherever I went.
- To work with my friend, Susan, in Rochester. I had known Sue for 15 years. At one point, I was a consultant at Kodak, and she was a sales rep for a consulting company in Rochester, and she ended up recruiting me to Xerox. We had become friends, and through the years we continued to talk to each other from time to time. She had started a consulting company of her own, and it turned out that my skill set was a good match for her company. I had been a consultant for many years, and enjoyed the consultant "lifestyle" of going to a company, doing a project, and then leaving. It all seemed very "clean" to me. Plus, the money was wonderful.

- To see where this thing with Dell would lead. The thought of moving to a new city to start fresh intrigued me, and it also frightened me...especially so close to my surgery date.

No matter which of these came to pass, staying in my current situation was not an option. At the start of my transition, just being there was good enough for me. But as my confidence grew, and my sense of self developed, I needed more out of my job than to be "tolerated".

I wrote a letter to my boss in an effort to explain my turmoil. It was a very emotional time....

**4/27/00 3:10 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>It really amazes me how you are starting to come into your new  
>role and thinking more and more as woman in the way the you interact  
>with the men in your life. Dating, kissing, "other stuff" :)*

Me too. To be honest with you, it scares the bejezzes out of me. It really does. I had wondered how my sexuality would evolve once I got near this point, but to see what I have seen about myself, and feel as I feel, leaves me speechless. I really am. To make a switch like this, and feel so comfortable and natural in doing it, makes me think that these feelings and needs and urges must have always been in here. They just needed the right set of ingredients to set them off.....I think about it constantly.

I have been very emotional today. I wrote a long note to my manager telling him of my frustrations in this group. I have included a copy of the text:

=====

Hi Brian:

I am a firm believer that the centerpiece of a successful group is based on communication. Teams that communicate well succeed. Those that don't....fail. It is a fairly simple equation. As managers, people are encouraged to keep those lines of communication open. I am taking this opportunity to access that line by telling you some of my thoughts and plans coming into the 2nd half of this year.

I have been doing some serious soul-searching concerning my future in the PCS Mail group. I am seriously torn about my need to shed my burdensome travel schedule in support of the PILS system, and my need for acceptance and interaction and validation. As you have seen, and will continue to see, I am totally respected and accepted in my role by the users I/we support in DFW and in Birmingham. On the other hand, when in Scottsdale, I am totally and absolutely isolated and ignored. I have contact with absolutely no one. My contacts are my users, and my manager, and that's it. Out of a staff of 30+ people, I have not spoken with more than half of them in almost a year. And whereas that was acceptable in the beginning of my transition, it is not any longer. I had hoped that acceptance of me and my situation could happen over time. I am convinced now it will not. I need more out of a career than just showing up, doing my job, and going home. I get that in Dallas and Birmingham, but I do not get that here.

I am looking at my options. Of course, I can leave the company. I do not want to do that. The reasons I accepted a job with this company and my belief in it and my commitment to it have not changed. I feel I

have much to offer to this company, and the company as a whole has treated me fairly and with respect. More realistically, I am considering approaching HR to investigate the option of transferring to another area within the company.

I have made no decisions about this. I don't even have time to consider this until after the frenzy of May is past. But these are things that are very important to me, and I feel a need to let you know as well. As I told you the first time we chatted in Birmingham, I feel a very strong sense of responsibility to my users, and I do enjoy the work that I do. But there is much more to feeling good about yourself than knowing you are doing a good job.

We can talk about the future at some point, but I just want you to know my current conundrum and what I am thinking. My efforts over this next month will be totally engrossed in ensuring the success of the PI's. And once that pressure is past, we shall see what to do next.

Thanks for listening.

=====

I don't know why I felt compelled to tell him all that, but I did. We shall see what comes of it.

I talked with Dell today, and we changed the interview until after the PI *[(Physical Inventory)]*....on Monday May 8.

That's about it for now. I'm on the verge of tears for some reason....maybe I'll go home early and have a good cry.....

**4/28/00 3:25 am =====**  
**To:     *another friend named Donna***

Hi Donna:

I have grown to obtain ownership of the processes in our distribution that manage and track inventory as it moves around the pharmacy, and it has become a very very visible position. To think that I would ever attain such a level is pretty astonishing. To think I have done it while transitioning continues to astound me. I am responsible for organizing and coordinating and supporting all the computer processes in a physical inventory to count and obtain a valuation on approx. \$26 million in inventory.

To top it all off, I have been playing hide and seek with the folks at Dell in Austin. They have gotten to the point where they want to talk to me on-site. I am flying out there from DFW a week from Monday for an interview. I interview VERY well....at least I always have. I am interested in seeing how I do in this arena post-transition. I was filling out the paperwork last night, and there are several places where it asks if there are any former names you have gone by. I did not put in my old name. I refuse to do that to myself. I would far rather them finding that out during their "screening" process, and have them terminate the process for not disclosing it, than to "out" myself like that.

Things are starting to get to the ugly phase in my divorce. My wife continues to have unrealistic expectations in terms of income. I'll leave it at that...

I spent the Easter weekend in the Bay area, and it was truly a remarkable weekend. I have been married for 18 years, and my sexuality has been 100% hetero for my entire life. I had never, ever looked at a man before with any hint of sexual attraction. That changed last week, however, and the ease and comfort I felt in doing what I did confound me to this day and occupy a tremendous amount of my thinking. I have heard of situations where a person's sexuality can change along this path, but to actually see it

happening to myself right there before my very eyes is a change almost as profound as my transition was. Oy.

My face is pretty near complete as far as electrolysis is concerned. I go in for a 3-hour appointment every couple of weeks or so, and we finish the entire thing, from stem to stern, in 2. I spend the balance of the time on the "wanna have" areas....eyebrows, chest, etc. I will be SO glad when we are done.

**4/28/00 4:35 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I have been "out of sorts" for a few days here now. I don't like it.

I almost stormed over to my house yesterday evening. Elisabeth called, and I answered the phone using my name, and she said something nasty. It made me very angry, so I hopped in my car to drive over there to MAKE her see me. The only thing that stopped me was rush hour traffic, which gave me a bit of a chance to calm down and turn around.

I did head over there later. I rang the doorbell, and no one answered. I went around to the back, and all the lights were on, but no one came. I petted the puppies for a while, and thought better of just going into the house, and stopped in at Sal and Ray's (the neighbor) for a bit before heading home.

I haven't heard anything from Brian (the new director, not the old director, who is gone) about the note I sent yesterday. I am relieved on that, as I am not feeling up to talking about my feelings on it right now. Either he hasn't read it yet (possible, as he is buried in email) or he has done the wise thing.

I talked with my attorney, and we finalized our proposal to Elisabeth. She should get it early next week.

**4/30/00 6:52 am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I can't explain my need for Elisabeth to see me. I honestly think she will not be able to move on from this until she does. I'm sure her mental picture is far off the reality of the situation, and her comments seem to imply that she is still counting on this to be a temporary thing. She does not want to continue the marriage, but she would infinitely more prefer me as divorced Dave than divorced Donna.

I wish my divorce could be settled in a phone call. Actually, it could. I could give her everything. I am asking for 3 things...for a larger portion of the retirement \$\$ to offset the fact I am giving her all the furniture and the car and our savings account. I am disputing the amount to pay her and the length. And I want Matt to go and talk with a therapist. In my book, those things are non-negotiable and I will leave them to a judge to decide if it comes to that.

I had a very long day yesterday. Electro in the am (surgery area is done....no regrowth at all yet). Mostly bikini area....odds and ends on face. Way cool.

I had plant to meet my lesbian couple friends (Kathy and Tracy) for dins, and Elisabeth called to see if I could take Matt for the evening. I gladly obliged, and brought him along. Of course, he had no idea as to their relationship, but he had fun. I asked them each how they felt and dealt with the situation when they learned that their sexual preferences were not what they had always thought they were. It was prom night, and there were all sorts of really nice looking guys and gals looking so grown up. All in all, it was a very nice evening.



**Matt and I at dinner**

Afterwards, Matt and I went to my place and talked for an hour, and watched The 6th Sense, and I got him home.

It's a paradox, but the more I am with him, the more I miss him. I have seen him more in the past 8 days than I have in the past 8 months, and I kinda got used to life without him. Being with him makes me realize just how much he needs me, and how much I need him.

Another busy day today. As I write this it is 6:30am and I am already at work gathering stuff for the trip. I have all sorts of packing, cleaning, laundry, ironing, bill paying, etc to do. I need some stuff for my interview at Dell, and I think it is in the attic back at my house, so I may need to go back there to get that.

\* \* \* \*

During my trip to Ft. Worth for the physical inventory, I had dinner with Michelle as we often did during my trips there. We went back to the apartment to chat...as usual. But, as I got up to leave, Michelle held me, and kissed me. Not just a little pecky kiss either....a full, deep kiss. It caught me a little by surprise, but I saw that some of the predictions we had made about our relationship changing over time were actually coming to pass

\* \* \* \* \*

I interviewed at Dell on May 8. I was scheduled to be in Ft. Worth for the physical inventory over the weekend, and arranged to fly to Austin Sunday night for a day of interviews on Monday before flying home.

The way things work in the corporate I/T world is that job applicants are usually put into a meeting room, and various people take turns coming to interview the job hopeful. That is what Dell had scheduled for me. I was scheduled to see 6 or 7 people for an hour apiece. Some were managers. Others were techies.

I had always been good at interviewing. In fact, I was confident that Dave would get any job that he interviewed for. The reason for this interview was not really so much my desire to go to Dell, as I doubted they could offer me anything that would make it worth the major move. Rather, I understood that interviewing as a woman is different than interviewing as a man, and the only way to see that, and work on those skills, was to do it.

Kate and I had gone shopping for an “interview outfit” during my visit to the Bay area in February. I used to laugh when I heard that girls bought new outfits for specific occasions like this, and here I was doing it, too! It consisted of a fairly short black dress (too short as far as I was concerned), a black blazer, and a pair of black pumps. I was not used to wearing these kinds of clothes, but I have to admit it was a pretty amazing combination.

The morning of the interview I was a little nervous. To top things off, I found I couldn’t zip my dress up the back! How the heck is someone supposed to zip a dress all alone without actually dislocating a shoulder in the process??! I ended up calling Kate, and despite the early hour, she had advice for me. It is advice that I will never forget.

First, she helped me find a way to zip the dress. For that alone I am forever in her debt. But she also had some interviewing “tips”. She said to talk confidently, but not to try to manage the conversation too much. She said that if a man is interviewing me, and tries to get into a “staring” contest, I needed to be the one to look away first, as it was a “control thing”. She said that I needed to sit straight...hands folded...head up. And MOST importantly...sit with shoulders back and boobs out! I got a tremendous kick out of this advice, but she stressed that she was serious. I told her that interviewing as a woman would be hard enough, let alone having to remember exactly how to sit! Her call calmed me down, though, and by the time I left for the interview I felt very good, both about how I looked and how I felt.

That did not last long, though. First, traffic in Austin is horrible, compounding to an already stressed mind. Parking at Dell was terrible, and I had to park a half-mile from the building where I was supposed to go. It was a hot, humid, windy day. By the time I got to the lobby of Building 2 I was a sweaty, wind-blown, frustrated mess. So much for looking good....

The interviews seemed to go very well, and I gathered more and more confidence as the day wore on. Usually you have an idea as to your probability of getting an offer by the end of the interview, and after all was said and done I put mine at better than 50/50.

**5/9/00 9:58 am =====**

Hi Michelle:

I am home. Finally. I look forward to sharing a night with Ted (my teddy bear, that is!), and it has been a llooonnnnnnggggg week.

The interviews seemed to go well. At least from a content standpoint. I must say, I was very impressed at how I looked in that outfit. Very impressed. I looked at myself in the mirror and thought that there is NO WAY that this person staring back at me is me. I wish I could have had someone take a picture.

I was not all that impressed with them, though. It is typical big business corporate environment. A huge campus. Parking problems. Traffic problems. Row after row after row of cubicles. Some of the folks who interviewed me were babies when I got started in IT. Sheesh.

Anyway, I was kinda proud of the way it all went. They didn't act odd, or indicate that they felt uncomfortable in any way. I, on the other hand, need to work on the balance thing...

**5/9/00 9:58 am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

We had the PI "post mortem" meeting this morning. It was a teleconference between the 30 or so major players in this effort...here and over at corporate and in DFW and in Birmingham.

I knew that things went well, so the comments and observations that had to deal with my portion of the process were positive. One of the corporate muckety mucks singled me out for the extraordinary success of the counts, and gave special thanks to me for my efforts. I got a standing ovation out of the deal, which was a nice piece of validation for me.

There is concern over the fact I will not be there for the next one in DFW, scheduled for August [*due to time off for SRS*]. One of the upper level ITD guys, who I go head to head with from time to time, referred to me as "this resource". He cannot and will not use my name. The VP asked "What resource are you referring to? Donna?". I know that this guy resents the hell out of the fact of my success with all these bigwigs, and will do everything he can to show they can do it just as well without me. He will fail, as his attitude sucks, and he is a typical corporate ITD stooge, and this requires much more than that. We shall see....

Otherwise, I have a few days of "down time" here, where my schedule is more full of meetings, etc. than it is of pressure. It is much needed. It was so nice to wake up in my own bed for a change.

**5/9/00 11:04 pm =====**  
**Journal Entry**

My emotions are doing backflips. I can feel them just below the surface, but never quite reaching the light of day. I am not overly happy, or sad, but I can sense my mind churning and my emotions flowing. It's hard to describe. I don't know if it's all that is happening in my life right now, or the impending surgery (92 days) or what. But it is not necessarily a bad thing.

I previously mentioned the wrap-up meeting and the kudos that were sent my way. It was a nice gesture, and much appreciated by me. My manager has set up a "1-on-1" meeting for the week after I get back from Birmingham to discuss my email to him and my thoughts and feelings on my future in the Mail group. Those days are numbered.

Brian posted the job opening for my manager, who left a few weeks ago. I am perfect for the job. Yet, I wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole. I did send my resume to someone I have been in contact with in the Bay area, and we shall see if anything comes of that. All in all, lots going on.

I wore a skirt today. It was the first time I have ever worn one to work. It was a nice, light, casual, flowing skirt. I'm sure it had people talking. But times have changed from the point of just wanting to be there and not make any waves, to not caring if I make waves. I have been full-time for 7 months. Can you believe that? I can't. And the difference in me now as opposed to the gal who started at work on October 4th is amazing. I met with my psych today for the first time since December, and we talked about that.

I had electrolysis tonight. I almost look forward to going there now. I can see the light at the end of the

tunnel. Tonight she did the entire face, and we still had an hour left over to do eyebrows. It was great. Angi is a hoot, and I will miss her when she leaves on maternity in a few weeks. I have my appointment with Maria on Thursday morning from 5-9, and that will be spent on the surgery area (that doesn't take long to hit the regrowth these days) and on bikini line, so I am looking forward to that, too.

**5/10/00 =====**

**From: Dell IT Staffing (re: my interview)**

Although I have not gotten all of the interview feedback yet, the ones I have gotten have been extremely positive and I will be in touch this week to let you know the final results. Thanks again, for being patient with the parking, building directions. I am so sorry for that confusion.

**5/10/00 11:17 pm =====**

**From: Michelle**

*> I know that you are angry about the comments I made about them, so I guess  
> they were a little more open-minded than I generally give people credit for.*

First of all, I wasn't angry. I was disappointed in your low expectations for my interview....and for any interview that I ever attempt. I was hoping that you would give me the credit for being able to overcome part of that. But second, you assume that they all knew. I won't buy that. If you had seen me in that black dress and with those pumps, you woulda died. And not one person gave any indication that they knew or suspected. I would think that if a person came face to face with a person they felt was really a man, looking the way I looked, I would have noticed SOMETHING.

*> I never asked you, but were you surprised when I "kissed" you the other night? I was :)*

Yes I was. Pleasantly surprised.

*>My bet is that you looked wonderful in your skirt today :)*

I thank you for the nice compliment! I thought I looked pretty good. For me. I really like the way the hair goes these days. I like how it's getting longer, and how I style it for now, and I think that makes a big difference.

I need to get to bed, as I have to be up in 4 hours to go and see Maria. Lots happened today, but will have to wait until I write tomorrow. I met with the VP about a job in his organization. I went to dinner with Amanda, as we sit in my car chatting afterwards, she asked me if I wanted to sleep with her (I politely declined). I got cranky at a co-worker who keeps calling me "he", and sent an email to get that corrected.

**5/12/00 2:48 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>I think that your offer is fair and that being a person who keeps  
>their word is very important to you. The problem I think is that  
>Eliz doesn't take you at your word anymore because she believed in  
>the marriage and in her mind you betrayed her and Matt.*

That's exactly right. She doesn't believe in anyone or anything any more.



>This is your teenage son!!! He's a baby!

I am mentally leaving them behind. Both of them. My days of calling over there are done. My attempts to make contact are done. I am looking to move farther away, not closer. Mentally AND physically. And one of the reasons is exactly that I DON'T want him to have to choose sides. When I leave Phoenix (which I do expect to be in the next year....actually much sooner than that) I will not give them my phone number. If they need to reach me in an emergency they can call my mom or my sister....but I am going to break the contact. You know me well enough to know that when I say something I usually follow through with it, and I will make this happen.

This is going to be a bitter divorce. You sent me an email quite some time ago trying to prepare me for it. Things will deteriorate all the way around. And I do not want the wreckage and the vengeance, and the bitterness, and the blame to follow me around for the rest of my life. I do not want to have to look over my shoulder every day wondering what she is going to do next to try to get back at me. I do not want to cringe every time the phone rings because Elisabeth is on the other end blaming me for everything that goes wrong in her life from now until she dies. I will not live like that.

Yesterday was the first time I had mentioned to Elisabeth that I do not plan to remain in Phoenix. It seemed to catch her by surprise. She asked when I planned to leave, and I told her I had no definite plans. She asked me where I planned to go, and I told her I had no definite plans. I told her that I refuse to wait in the wings so that some day she might be able to see me, and then to watch her implode once she sees the person she still imagines to be Dave. No thanks. She wants me away, and I will honor that. Far away.

**5/14/00 7:40 am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I had a pretty big day. Dan and I went to the Music Festival in Sedona. It was a day of many "firsts" for me.

The weather was absolutely gorgeous...bright bright sunny sky and temps in the upper 80's. One of my goals was to get some sun on this virgin white body. So I wore a pair of pretty short shorts, and a T-shirt. Under the t-shirt I wore a sports bra (I don't own a halter) so I could strip down and get sun on my shoulders once things got warm. Even with the t-shirt on, I felt naked, as that is far less clothes than I am used to.....

It took about 90 minutes to get to Sedona, and we took the shuttle bus from the parking area to the concert. We parked our blanket about 50 yards from the stage, and had a perfect spot. It packed up very quickly, and we were in the middle of a sea of blankets and chairs. I spent the day listening to music, lying in the sun, and generally enjoying the day. Dan is totally smitten with me, and spent the time stroking my hair, or rubbing my neck and generally doing whatever else he felt he could get away with.

We left there at 6:30, and when we got back to the truck we set up the chairs and watched the sun go down over the red rocks, and I drank a bottle of Asti (Dan doesn't drink).

All in all, a wonderful day, and I am not too fried (or hung over) from the day, so all is good.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dell made me an offer. Dell wanted to hire me. Although I had felt the interview went well, I was still dumbfounded. I was even more dumbfounded by the fact that they were offering me a very competitive compensation package, and moving expenses, and a signing bonus, and a large number of stock options. To me, this was an amazing turn of events. It provided a new beginning, and some cash to pay for my surgery and get my feet on the ground.

Needless to say, I accepted their offer.

**5/20/00 5:31 am =====**  
**Journal Entry**

I am going to talk with a few of my users about my impending resignation today. Off the record. Of course, I expect that it won't REMAIN off the record, but I have come to the conclusion that I'd be a fool to turn this down. They want me to start on June 12, as any time past that would make me ineligible for the employee stock purchase plan until December. That doesn't leave much time. If anything happens between now and then (based on my talks with Susan in Rochester next week, or at PCS) I can always reevaluate. But at this point, I am ready to move on. It is harder than I thought it would be to actually make this decision and move away from friends and family to someplace where I know no one, but everything has to have a beginning....

\* \* \* \* \*

The day after giving my resignation, I went to San Fran for a long weekend. I very much needed a break. Kate and Ralph and I had decided to celebrate my new job by eating dinner on the roof of his house, overlooking the entire bay. It was a beautiful, warm, starry, moonlit night. I can't think of a more romantic setting. I ended up spending that night with Ralph, and we made love again.

**5/24/00 11:15 pm =====**

Hi Michelle:

*>Now you are taking a more "submissive" role with regards to sex and you  
>must certainly feel more a woman now that you have had sex with a man.  
>Does it feel "right" after all these years of "playing" another role that  
>you knew on the inside was not the right one?*

The amazing part is that it comes as naturally as if it had always been so! I see myself doing these things, and behaving this way, and I know that these things have always been in here, waiting to come out. But when they come out, I had assumed it would be in an awkward, difficult way. Not so. It feels so right and comfortable and easy. It is proving to be one of the biggest surprises to me of the entire transition.

I have no idea how I'm going to fit everything that needs to happen before I leave tomorrow morning into this day. But somehow, I will.... I am off now to drop off some stuff to my Infiniti dealer, to have my urine

drug test for Dell, to have my nails done, and to get back by 3 for a meeting. I have electrolysis again from 5:30-9, so I won't be home again until almost 10! Sheesh.

\* \* \* \*

I called my friend, Susan, in Rochester to tell her that I was leaving PCS, and had accepted a job at Dell. She was disappointed that I had not told her I was so serious about leaving, and wanted a chance to make an offer. She arranged to fly me home to Rochester over Memorial Day weekend, so that I could visit with my family, and we could talk business.



*Memorial Day in Rochester*

As with my conversations with Dell, I felt there was no way she could match what I felt I was getting. She asked me what it would take to bring me back to Rochester, so I put it all out on the table for her. But to my surprise, she offered me that. All of it.

Needless to say, I felt quite the conundrum. On one hand there was a chance for a new beginning at a very well respected company. On the other, there was the opportunity to move back to the area that I still considered home...where my brother and sister still lived and where I had known many, many people as Dave.

As I balanced these two options, one thing emerged as the main decision point. As I looked towards my surgery in August, I very much felt a need to be nurtured. The thought of having my family there to help me heal, and to be with me as I moved forward from this, provided me with much comfort. On the other hand, the thought of hiding it and dealing with it alone in Austin scared me.

So, I wrote to Dell and told them I could not accept their offer. And I made arrangements to start with Susan's company at the end of June.

6/6/2000 =====

To: Susan B. (another friend from Rochester named Susan)

Hi Susan:

The decision to leave here has been a difficult one. In a way, I feel as though I am abandoning my family, but I rationalize that with the fact that they have nothing to do with me, so what's the point in waiting around for something that may never come. The opportunity in Texas provided a chance to start absolutely fresh, as I get the job as Donna with no knowledge of my past (I looked mighty fine on interview day....I must admit). On the other end of the spectrum, there is opportunity in Rochester where people I love most and who love me most can provide support. But in Rochester, my anonymity is gone....as I know lots of people there and now EVERYONE will know. I am certainly not ashamed or embarrassed by what is happening in my life. That ended long ago. But there is a huge difference in how people handle it and deal with me depending on whether they knew me before. To many of these people, I will never be anything more than Dave....but I am not Dave any more. I refuse to look at the world through those eyes. Everything now is new, and I approach it as such.

**Her reply:**

I'm sure the decision was difficult and not arrived at easily. You obviously have more strength than you ever thought possible. I'm sure what you have already experienced will have helped prepare you for what lies ahead.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next couple of weeks were very busy.

My sister had started looking at town homes for me. She found one that she absolutely loved. She took some digital pictures of it, and put them on the web, and it looked like a fantastic place. It had everything I was looking for, and was only a couple of miles from both my brother and my sister. I offered full price for it, sight unseen, and bought it. The closing was scheduled for early July, which would give me a few weeks to move in and get settled before going to Wisconsin for SRS in early August.

Much of my time was spent packing. I did not think I had very much "stuff", but it sure seemed like a lot once we loaded it into a U-Haul. My brother, Jay, flew down to Phoenix to help me with the move, and we planned to drive the truck back to Rochester together.

Leaving Phoenix was very difficult for me. Matt came to help me pack, and I find it ironic that the day we spent packing was more total time together than in the entire year prior to that. The knowledge that I was leaving him behind was very difficult, but I tried to block that out of my mind. The reasons I fell in love with the area in the first place had not faded, and I expected to be back again someday. But that did not make saying goodbye to the people and places that had helped me change my life any easier.

Our drive to Rochester was uneventful, and a good bonding opportunity for Jay and I. As we headed north, another page of this story was slowly turning.

It's funny. It seemed that now that I had moved away, my relationship with my son started to get better! He called me. He emailed me. He wanted to spend time with me. He and his mom had arranged for him to visit his grandparents in Syracuse, and he wanted me to pick him up for a couple of days. This was a very pleasant turn of events!

**6/29/00 =====**  
**From: Matt**

I hate it here its always too hot and mostly every day it storms out. She started crying and said to tell me it was your fuckin father who dragged us out here go live with him. I said I would in the summers but then she sent me 2 my room. So maybe after I get back or after I go to the air port U can pick me up and go to your place for a while and fly me back after.

Love Matt

\* \* \* \*

Early in the year I had schedule a trip to the Bay over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Kate and her friends make a big deal about getting ready for surgery, and this was our last chance to spend time together before the big event.

One of the things they do is hold a "weenie roast". This event is much like a bridal shower. The patient-to-be is given all kinds of presents...from gag gifts (your first vibrator) to useful gifts (KY Jelly, Maxi Pads, etc.) Ralph was there. He was our BBQ chef. Of course, he wore an apron...but nothing else. Watching him stand there tending to the meet, with his bare butt and his kitchen apron, was really a hoot. It was a wonderful event.

=====

***Following is a brief journal that I started:***

**7/01/00**

Today is the first day of July. I am on a plane headed for San Jose to spend a few days of R&R with Kate and Co. I have a feeling it will be the last "rest" days that I get until after SRS.

These next few weeks look very busy, as most of my weeks in the past year have been. I get back to Rochester late on Wednesday. I am spending the next 4 days at Jude's (Melissa's folks are coming to town to watch Ben while they go to Toronto). I leave on Monday (7/10) for DFW, where I will be training the PCS folks on how to do their Physical Inventories. I get back to Rochester on Thursday (7/13), which is the same day that Elisabeth and Matt fly to Syracuse.

The two or three weeks after that have yet to come into focus. Matt wants to spend a couple of weeks with me in Rochester after your wife goes back to Phoenix. I am supposed to close on my house

somewhere at the end of July, and will have to move in, unpack, get some furniture, and generally “nest” before heading off to Neenah on 8/8. All in all, there is quite a lot to do.

I do find myself thinking of SRS more and more. It creeps into my mind from time to time, with growing regularity, just as Kate had said it would. I look at it with anticipation, although when others ask me about it they ask if I am scared or nervous. Neither of those emotions are part of the picture right now, and I doubt that they will in the future.

My first week back in Rochester was a good one. The week at work was almost a non-event. I didn't get the usual meet-and-greet that one usually expects at a new job, but that's fine with me. I can never remember names, anyways. Instead, people have been coming to my cube one at a time to introduce themselves. There are a few, including the guy in the cube across from me, who seem like total nerds, and haven't even acknowledged that I am there, but I don't see that as an insult.

I spent much of the week taking care of all the details one must do when they relocate. I went to the DMV for my driver's license, and they took my picture (doesn't look too bad). The confiscated my Arizona license (I would have liked to keep it) and gave me a temporary one until the permanent one arrives. I set up my bank account. I got auto insurance. I did a walk-thru at my new townhouse (I just LOVE it). I visited with my accountant. I called the attorney handling my dad's estate. I got my nails done. Jude and I even worked out a couple of times at the JCC. Lots of piddly little things like that.

This past Tuesday was my dad's birthday. He would have been 66. We celebrated by going to the Scotch 'n Sirloin in his honor. The waiter that used to hit on me was still there, and I even made a point of talking to him, but hen had no clue who I was.

Mentally, I am feeling good. For some reason, I feel more self-conscious in public this week than I have in a long time, but I think that is more a function of my new surroundings than anything. I like my “look” at the moment. Hair is getting longer, and is fairly easy for me to do. I am not using a curling iron or anything at the moment, so it does not take me too long to do. I am planning to spend time with Chris and the gal who works for him (she lives a few houses down from me) taking “hair” lessons once I get back from Neenah.

All of my “sisters” seem to have been having a hard time of it lately. Amanda had her girlfriend move in, but seems very confused on the direction of her life at the moment. Steph sounds bad. Cassie is not doing well. Even Kate seems to be going through something. And Michelle had as bad a day on Sunday as she has had in a long time.

I have talked with Matt several times in the past week, which is good. Very good. He wants to spend some of his time in upstate with me. I can go to Syracuse to get him, bring him back, and he can fill his days visiting with Jude and the Topolskis and everything. I won't believe it until it happens, but I do have my hopes up.

The trip across country with Jay went well. We didn't get going until 9:30 on Thursday (6/22), and drove until after 1am (750 miles) to get to Amarillo, TX. The next day didn't take quite as long, and we stopped just south of St. Louis. The last day was a long one (nearly 850 miles), but roads were good and traffic wasn't too bad and the truck behaved itself, so it was no big deal. Jay and I had a bit of a chance to “bond”. I took one shift of driving for the last two days. I read my first fiction book (“Trans-Sister Radio”) in a long long time. And we polished off nearly 5 lbs of Mike & Ike candies between us.

As I write this, I am 33,000 feet above Nebraska. I am in first class....sipping on a Mimosa cocktail. The guy next to me is watching a DVD of Victor/Victoria (how appropriate is THAT???). All things considered.....life is good.

**7/7/2000**

Well....now I am on the plane headed BACK home. As always, my trip was full of interesting twists and things to consider. I'll try to recount it all....

Rather than give a blow-by-blow account of the trip...I'll cover the highlights....

Over the weekend we watched the DVD of Aliens. The neat thing is that it included several scenes that were not in the theater version.

Monday was a pretty wild day....

Kate spent some time with me talking about "supplies". We did a show and tell of the things I will need after SRS. Lube. Pads. Etc. Very educational. She said we would do a supply run with Dee later.

In the afternoon, we did a supply shopping. We stopped by a surgical supply store to pick up some cases of KY, and a big box of "chucks" (pads). We also stopped by a leather store to pick up some vibrators.

Afterwards, Kate and Ralph and I went to see "The Perfect Storm". It was an awesome movie. Just spectacular. The theater there is the same one where we saw the submarine movie, and it had the big seats and everything. At the end of the movie, everyone dies. And there is a scene where they do a eulogy for them all. It somehow triggered a button in me, because I started to cry. And once I started, the floodgates were open. Not little sniffles. Big sobs. I held on to Ralph's arm and cried in his shirt. For 20 minutes. For the walk to the car. For the drive home. It was pretty nasty.

When we got home, another of Kate's "daughters" was there. Her name is DeAnn (Dee). She is having SRS in Portland at the end of August. She was very nice. We had a little gift ceremony, and ended up having a wonderful bbq salmon dinner. Apparently, she was a girlfriend of Ralph's, and was going to spend a couple of nights with us. Things got a little sticky regarding sleeping arrangements. Dee and I decided that she would spend that night with Ralph, and I would spend the next night with him. And that's what happened...

The 4<sup>th</sup> was fairly quiet. I called Jude to wish a happy Anniversary. We had a nice cookout. I took a nap (as did Dee...who really needed one). I ended up going over to Ralph's new place to spend the night. It is a double wide, and was actually pretty nice.

I do feel a bit uncomfortable there. They are always talking about, or thinking about, sex. Whether sex toys (we did a show-and-tell of sex toys, too) or sex, or whatever...it pervades everything. Not for me...

So that was the trip. 36 days and counting now for SRS. 36 days ago I had just given my notice, and that seems like only yesterday. Wow.

**7/12/00 =====**  
**To: Matt**

Hi bud:

The 17th is a Monday. I can bring you back on the 23rd, which is a Sunday, if that's ok for you. That way we'll at least have a weekend together.....

I'll be there around 7:30 in the evening on the 17th, if that's ok. That way we'll have Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat (5 days) and I'll bring you back on Sunday.

Do you want to meet me on the front porch of Grandma and Grandpa's, or is there someplace they think would be more "comfortable"....

I hope mom is feeling better, and that you're having a good time. I'm in Dallas this week for work, and go

home tomorrow. It's hot here....

Take care, bud, and I'll see ya next week.

Love,

D

**7/14/00 =====**  
***Part of an email to my wife***

I was hoping we would be able to talk more, as it seemed things were getting "warmer" for a while there. However, I doubt things have ever been "colder" than they are right now. We still need to talk about settling all the divorce issues, so I really really need to talk with you ASAP.

**7/23/00 =====**  
***Journal Entry***

This was a good weekend for me. I did more shopping than I needed to do, but that's one of the things that made it good. In fact, I passed up going to the Buffalo Bills training camp for going shopping! We all went go-cart racing this afternoon, and had a blast. And the weather was just glorious. All in all, a fine weekend.

I think I bought more dresses this past week than any other time since transition. I think there is something psychological about it, but don't really care to delve that deeply into it.

My son had planned to go back to his grandparents in Syracuse today, but decided to stay until Thursday. He's having a blast. Times like this are a double-edged sword. I didn't see him, and hardly talked with him, for the first 6 or 7 months of my transition. Although my separation from him was the hardest part of the entire thing, I eventually got used to it. Now, the more time we spend together, the more difficult it is to be apart.

I close on my house tomorrow, and can start moving stuff in on Tuesday. I only have two weeks before I leave for Neenah, and I'll be in Phoenix and Birmingham for 6 of those days. It doesn't leave a lot of time for "nesting" prior to leaving, but I'm hoping to get the heavy stuff done.

I was supposed to go completely off of my hormone regimen as of last Thursday. I did not feel like hitting a brick wall like that, so I have reduced to a half dose, and will go off completely this coming Thursday (I am dreading that) in hopes of easing the effects. I can already feel the difference, and was glad to have some time to myself on Saturday afternoon. Oy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Matt's visit was incredible for both of us. He had originally planned to be with me for only a couple of days. But once he saw that I was still me, and that the people who had loved him STILL loved him, he did not want to leave. It was a huge milestone for us.

**7/26/00 =====**



## ***Journal Entry***

A funny thing happened last night. I was shopping at a home improvement store with my son, when this guy walks by and gives me a double take. I don't think much of it, and continued looking for these chairs we had gone to buy. He walks by again a couple of minutes later, and does it again. This time he stops and tells me that he's sorry for staring, but I look exactly like someone he works with, and it was really uncanny (is that a line or what?). We started talking and he asked what I did, and if I had a business card. I introduced him to Matt, and in conversation it came out that Matt wasn't living with me anymore, he was just here visiting.

We chatted for about 5 minutes, and he took off. Once he left, I told Matt that the guy had been hitting on me, and Matt asked how I knew. I said it was obvious, and even though I'm new at this, I could just tell.

Well, he ended up calling me at work this morning before 8:30! He said he was sorry if he had been too forward, but he thought I was just so attractive, and he could sense in me a strength that just drew him to me. I told him I was flattered. He asked if he could help me move my stuff, or if I need anything done to my place he'd be glad to help. He asked if I was in a relationship at the moment....you get the drift. Pretty wild, huh?

In the end I told him I doubt I'd need more help moving, as I already have half an army to help, and that my schedule was pretty crazy these next couple of weeks, but perhaps I could call him and we could meet for cocktails or something some evening. He thought that would be great. So what dy'a think about that!! A gal can't even shop with her teenaged son anymore without getting hit on! ;)

I'm loving life.....

## **7/29/00 ===== *Email to Michelle***

Hi Michelle:

I did something neat the other night. I spoke to a class about being transgender. I think it went surprisingly well.

I've known one of my ex-neighbors since she was ten years old. Elisabeth and I used to babysit her when she was young, and eventually she started babysitting for Matt. It makes me feel old to realize that she's in college now at SUNY Brockport – almost graduated. Where do the years go?

Anyway, she called to tell me that teams of two students in one of her classes needs to choose a topic for their final project, which is a significant portion of their grade. She said that she convinced her project partner that her topic should be *me*, or at least “transgender” in general. She asked if I would come and talk to the class.

I had to think for a while about this as I don't envision having to do this kind of stuff and I'm not really sure how comfortable I am sharing personal stuff with a room full of strangers. On the other hand, I said to myself that the fact I'm a little uncomfortable with it is the very reason I should do it. And, I did.

There were 20 something students in the class, and all seemed interested and engaged in what I had to say. I wasn't as uncomfortable as I thought I'd be, and although the class was only scheduled for 90 minutes by the time we got through all the questions and stuff I had been there for almost 3 hours! Surprisingly, very few people had left.

Anyway, it was enjoyable and although I don't know if I'll be doing more of those kinds of things I'm glad I did this one.

Oh – one more thing. I made an appointment for Matt and I to visit with a photographer friend to have our portraits taken together. I hope they come out well.

**7/31/00 =====**

***From: Michelle***

Hi Donna,  
Oy! I think that things are really starting to move at warp speed for you. Sometimes I think about where you are and how we both started at about the same point when we met and while it really gives me joy to see what is about to happen for you, I also at the same time feel a sense of loss and sadness that I did not pursue this when I started talking to my gender shrink. A lot of precious time has slipped away and I can't help but wonder how my life would be right now had I not backed away or put it on the back burner as I am so fond of saying.

Still TG'ed and Wandering Around,  
Michelle

**7/31/00 =====**

***To my wife***

Hi Elisabeth:

I got your messages from over the weekend. I have enclosed Matt's insurance card, so show it when you take Matt and you should be all set there (they got my birthdate wrong, so I called to have them fix that).

I will do what I can as far as getting you extra \$\$\$\$. This month is difficult because of all my moving, etc., but that has ALWAYS been my plan (you may need to charge some of Matt's school stuff so I can send you some additional money next month when I have settled in a bit, but I will certainly help with that). On your side, I would appreciate something in return. I would like my old, old baseball cards from the safety deposit box. I want to frame them and put them on my wall. I don't think that's asking too much, and this really needs to be some give and take, so please do that for me.

You also have all my old coins and stuff from when I was a kid in your cedar chest, and I would appreciate those, too.

I hope you are feeling better, and doing well in school. I am hoping that having a little time away from Matt has been helpful to you, as I know the last year has been difficult on both of you and some time to de-compress is a good thing. He is a great, great kid, and we need to do what we can to love him and help him as best we can. I had his portrait done while he was here, and I think they turned out great, so I'll send a few wallet sizes along when I get them.

You said in your message that the goal at the end of this is to remain friends, and that is all I ever wanted. This painful process is about compromise and compassion, and the more we can do to help each other, the better our chances of being friends as we grow old.....

\* \* \* \* \*

At the beginning of August, I prepared to leave Rochester for SRS in Wisconsin. I was very much at peace with what I was doing, and had no doubts, second thoughts, or trepidation on what was about to happen. I have known others who do all sorts of mental gymnastics at this

point, but I figured that if you haven't come to a sense of peace with it by then, perhaps you should wait.

Perhaps part of what made it so "easy" for me was that this step had merely become another detail. Another milestone. I had proved that I could live as Donna. I had found peace and comfort in a role that I had learned to live in a very short period of time. I had a far richer life at that point than I ever imagined I would have. So this trip was merely icing on the cake. I certainly didn't feel I needed the surgery to be able to define myself as a "woman", although I knew that it was something that society used as a gauge and I was comfortable in that...

# Chrysalis - the rebirth

I found myself getting philosophical in the weeks before the surgery. Perhaps it was my way of preparing mentally. I had done my best to simplify my life in preparation for some “down” time. I was still very much plagued by the weight of my financial burdens, but all of those concerns faded into the background as I prepared to leave for Neenah.

My mom had arranged to be there with me the entire time. This originally caused me some concern, as she once referred to the surgery as “self-mutilation”. In addition, she had never met another TS and I was concerned that she would say something inappropriate or awkward...purely out of ignorance. I felt that if she was going to be there with me, she needed to have come to a sense of acceptance similar to my own.

Two nights before the surgery mom and I had a very good talk. She explained to me that it had taken her a full year to come to terms with this. I had caused her much thought, but in the end she had come to the realization that this was right for me, and it was not up to her to question it. She said that part of what helped her to get to that point was a writing by Kahlil Gibran from his book, “The Prophet”. This passage is titled “Children”:

*And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, "**Speak to us of Children.**"*

*And he said:*

*Your children are not your children.*

*They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.*

*They come through you but not from you,*

*And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.*

*You may give them your love but not your thoughts.*

*For they have their own thoughts.*

*You may house their bodies but not their souls,*

*For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.*

*You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.*

*For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.*

*You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.*

*The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.*

*Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;*

*For even as he loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.*

The night before the surgery, I was getting “prepped”, and I stopped to think exactly how I was feeling. I had always wondered what I would feel like if I ever got to that point, and there I was...about to take that step.

I considered many emotions. Happiness. Satisfaction. Relief. But of all the emotions I could think of, the overriding one was PRIDE. I was tremendously proud of what I had accomplished. To be able to say that after overcoming so much in such a short period of time was truly amazing. I will never forget that night.

=====

### **My SRS Journal**

**Tues. 8/8/00 12:30pm**

I am sitting at O'Hare Airport in Chicago. I am halfway to Neenah. My flight arrived a couple of hours ago, and I am sitting at gate 6B waiting for the flight from DFW with my mom on it to arrive. It's supposed to get here at 1:12, so I have a half hour to kill. I have spent my time here so far having a bite of lunch and paying my bills. I am unbelievably tight on money at the moment, and if my mind weren't so sharply focused on other things, it would really scare me. They'll be time enough for that later (I have less than \$100 in my checking account...).

I am going to document this trip as much as I can, as I never want to forget it. It still amazes me that I am here right now...at this point so close to a dream I never imagined had a chance to become a reality. From a young teenager who daydreamed about changing minds and bodies with girls in order to make the universe right, to the career guy who felt more trapped in his life than in his body....it is still amazing that I managed to steer myself here.

The cost has been horrendous. The emotional toll on Elisabeth and her family. On my mom and my family. On my relationship with Matt. The unbelievable amount of \$\$\$ that has me buried under a mountain of debt. But the returns have been beyond my wildest imagination, and I stand at the doorway to the rest of my life. It is odd to me that people tend to define themselves by their genitalia, regardless of anything and everything else. That is the sole criteria that is used to proclaim a newborn as either boy or girl, and I think the impact of this criteria sticks with us throughout our lives. So although I am able to live my life as female, I'm thinking that I will not really be able to consider myself as such until that criteria is met. Although the surgery itself is a physical modification, I think the mental changes that happen as a result are far more profound. We shall see....

I have said that I would rather die on the table than continue with this body. I truly mean that. I am ready to die to finish this journey. I have come to that peace in myself, and I am not worried or nervous or apprehensive in the least. I certainly do not look forward to the drudgery of the post-op care, but being near the end of the road (as far as this journey is concerned) fills me with renewed strength and vigor. I can see the end of the road.....and I'm not going to screw it up now.

I was about to say that the last 6 weeks have been a whirlwind....but in looking back at things, the entire last year has passed at absolutely breakneck speed. As has generally been the case, I have filled these last weeks with sooooo much “stuff” that I haven't had much of an opportunity to fret or get too wrapped in what is about to happen. I feel a bit like a bug who is about to hit a windshield...as my life is about to hit the brakes big-time, and I am very much looking forward to the respite.

**Wed 8/9/00 5:30pm**

Well...I am sitting in Theda Clark...cross-legged on my bed in room 250...drinking an ungodly amount of GoLyteLy. They want me to have the entire gallon done by 6....that's only 2 hrs....and there's no friggin' way I will be able to do that. I absolutely cannot see myself drinking that much liquid, but my roommate, Betsy, says she did it (in 4 hrs.) so I suppose it **is** possible, but it's not gonna be pretty. I think I'll explode first.



*Drinking GoLyteLy before SRS*

Back to yesterday....

Mom arrived and we went to catch our flight to Green Bay, all of which went off without a hitch. No problems at all. We rented a car and drove to Neenah, which took about a half hour, and it was a gorgeous day and a nice drive, so all went well.

We are in room 309 at the Valley Inn. We stopped down to the bar for happy hour, and ended up eating enough free taco bar to make that our dinner.

The Valley Inn is directly across the River from Theda Clark. We had heard that it was a pleasant walk, so we decided to time it for ourselves and work off the tacos. It took 10 minutes, and indeed was a very nice walk across the bridge. Dr. Schrang's office is kiddy corner to the hospital, so we found that, too....

I was very tired, and actually had no problem falling to sleep at a little after 10. I woke up at 2:30, though, and did not sleep much after that. Oh well. I got up at 7 and took a nice, long shower and shaved my legs and spent a little "me" time....

Since I didn't plan to eat much later, I had a fairly large breakfast, and it was very good. We strolled down Main Street, as Neenah has a quaint small-town look to it, and we hit all the hot spots...the pharmacy...the bread bakery...the book store. The entire trip took less than an hour...

We returned the rental car to Appleton airport, and the van from the hotel came to pick us up. I was tired and lay down for an hour, but we got a call from Dr. Schrang's office saying he was done with his surgery early and could see me early. We grabbed my stuff and headed over there.

His office is in a nondescript little building kiddy korner to Theda Clark, and the van from the hotel took is there. My arms were full....overnight bag, teddy bear, computer, book bag. My mom waited in the waiting room while I talked with the doctor.

He told me I was uncommonly "attractive" and I thanked him. He looked over my documentation (letters, etc) and we talked about how his computer hadn't been working correctly lately. I fixed it for him....He spent some time talking about what he was going to do, and asked me if I was ready, and I told him I was, so he asked me to take my clothes off so he could take some pictures. He took a full body shot, a close-up of my genitals, and a close-up of my face. He had me lie on a table and did a prostate exam, and all was finished. Once I got dressed I had my mom come in, as she wanted to meet him, so they talked for a little while before we headed off to Theda Clark.

At that point it was almost 4pm. I went to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor south, and most of the paperwork had already been done so all I had to do was sign a few things. They put me in room 250, bed A. It was right across from the nurse's station. There was another gal in the bed closest to the window, who had had her surgery two days ago. Her name was Betsy. They told me to get into the gown and stow all my stuff, and the nurse would be in to see me.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Sex Reassignment Surgery - On Overview**

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) has changed considerably over the years. During the earliest years removing the penis and just making a "hole" was good enough. Very little consideration was given to aesthetics, or to sensitivity, or to function. Over the years, however, that has changed. Surgeons have become much more adept in finding ways to enhance their SRS procedures so as to actually enhance sensitivity and provide a more satisfying post-op life. Many patients today have full functionality. They are orgasmic. They get moist when aroused. As someone who can speak from experience, it is truly an incredible achievement.

Dr. Stanley Biber of tiny Trinidad, Colorado was the pioneer of modern-day SRS. Since his very first surgery in 1969, this former Army surgeon and simply country doctor performed over 4,000 "sex-change" surgeries. His popularity became so far-reaching that Trinidad was unofficially known as the "Sex-Change Capital of the World".

Dr. Biber perfected the most popular technique of male-to-female SRS, known as the penile inversion method. As mentioned, there have been numerous improvements to this process since the early 1970's. However the concept of denuding the skin from the shaft of the penis, and using the freed skin as the lining of a newly created vaginal cavity remains the chief characteristic of this widely used technique for neo-vaginal construction. Furthermore, if the nerves from the head of the penis are not severed they can be repositioned to act as a fully functional clitoris. Again, as someone who can speak from experience, this is wonderful.

The medical term for this surgery is a *vaginoplasty*. One enhancement in recent years is that it has become common to use the skin of the scrotum, rather than the more invasive use of skin from the hip, as a skin donor site to provide additional depth for the vagina. Additionally, some surgeons perform a second surgery that occurs several months after the first, called a *labiaplasty*, to further enhance the appearance of the vagina by contouring skin to act as the labia and creating a clitoral hood.

The surgery lasts only a couple of hours. Needless to say, it is irreversible. Still, waiting lists for the most well-known surgeons are often nearly a year long.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before this surgery a patient must be “prepped”. Each surgeon does this differently, but the goal is to completely clean out the bowels prior to surgery. Since the surgeon works near the intestines, they want to reduce the risk of infection if they should somehow nick or breach the bowel wall, allowing the contents of the bowel to enter the abdominal cavity.

This can be a fairly unpleasant process. I had been warned about the way that Dr. Schrang did it well in advance of my arrival at Theda Clark. Some people dreaded this process more than the surgery itself. I was about to experience it first hand.

**08/9/00 =====**  
**Journal Entry**

The nurse came in and told me she would need to start me on the Go-Lytely right away, as she needed to give me some antibiotics and couldn't do it until it had done its work. So in she came with this HUGE jug of the stuff – it was a full gallon of it - and a cup of ice. She wanted it gone by 6. I couldn't drink a gallon of Mimosa's in that time, much less this stinky stuff.

Needless to say, I did not have it gone by 6. Or by 7. But I did start going, and going and going. And that actually made it easier to drink more of the stuff. My butt was sore. Good thing my bed was right outside the bathroom, as it came out in gushes.

As the night went on, it got clearer and clearer. The object was to have it completely clear. The nurse was not happy that it was taking me so long, but I was doing the best I could. Eventually (at around 8) there was little more than a couple of cupfuls left, she came in and said she couldn't wait any more so it was time to move “to the next level”. She had a shot-glass full of mag sulfate, and suggested I have something as a chaser, as it was very nasty stuff. Betsy seconded that suggestion, so I used cranberry juice. The stuff was VERY awful – most likely the worst tasting thing that has ever been in my mouth. It didn't start tasting better as she came back with another shot for each of the next 4 hours.

Also during that time they gave me an electric razor to shave (Bermuda shorts...from navel to knees). So I did that. She came by to inspect it, and finished up the areas I couldn't see....

Then, she came in with a jar full of betadyne to paint me. She painted me the shaved area, and the stuff was sticky, goopy stuff. Yuck. I had to stand up for a half hour for it all to dry, and had to run to the toilet every few minutes to do my thing in between. The toilet seat was all covered with the Betadyne by that point, too. Yuck.



By 1am, it was all done. I had been prepped. Now it was time to sleep, so they brought me a pill. I was afraid I would still have to go to the bathroom, but my butt was so so sure by then I was hoping it was all done. Eventually I did drift off to sleep.

**8/10/00 =====**  
**SRS Day!!**

I was supposed to have surgery first thing....7:30am. I woke up at 6:30 and was told I had been moved to 10, as they moved a labiaplasty in front of me. I was actually a little relieved, as I did not want to get sick from the anesthesia and the prepping had taken longer than expected.

My mom stopped by, and time seemed to pass quickly. They came by and took some blood. Eventually, the nurse came in and said they were ready for me. A guy brought another bed in for me to scootch over onto, and they gave me some meds, and off we went. Mom, the guy, and me. Eventually the guy showed my mom where the waiting area was, and they took me to a staging area outside the operating rooms.

After a few minutes the anesthesiologist came out to introduce himself and explain what was going to happen. He asked if I was ready, and when I said that I was they came out and wheeled me into the operating room, and I scootched over onto the table. It was shaped like a cross, and as I put my arms out they used Velcro restraints to hold them in place. As people came and went they introduced all the other folks there (I don't remember seeing Dr. Schrang before the surgery).

The anesthesiologist took a seat so his face was only a few inches from my head and he started talking to me. He put me on an IV in a vein on the back of my hand, which didn't hurt too badly. I took time to assess how I was feeling, and was surprised to realize that I was totally calm, and wasn't nearly as cold or as shivery as I have been in other rooms. He told me he was going to release some stuff that would make me relaxed, and a few seconds later I could feel it. Then, he put an oxygen mask above my face and told me he was going to release the stuff that would put me to sleep, and the next thing I would remember would be in the recovery room. He told me to take deep breaths, and I only remember taking a couple, and that was that.

I woke up in the recovery room. I was aware of people around me. I was aware of the pain in my groin. I was aware that I did not feel sick to my stomach, but also when I opened my eyes and tried to look around, I felt the spins and immediately closed them again. A nurse asked if I was hurting, and I said I was, and she said she would get something for me....

After some period of time – I have no idea how long I was there - they deemed that I was ready to go back to my room, so they wheeled me back there. My mom came right in, and had a big smile on her face. Remarkably, I didn't feel too awful at that point, and she had her arms full of gifts. A book beautiful poems. I pink teddy bear. Some flowers. A card. A box of pink bubble gum cigars that said, "It's a Girl!".



*Mom and I after SRS*

They gave me the hand-held button for the pain drip. I had a catheter in attached to a bag at the side of the bed. I had an IV, and when the drip bag got empty it started beeping. I had an automatic blood pressure cuff on that inflated every so often (early readings were pretty low...60 some over 80 some I think). I had stocking on my legs, as well as inflatable leggings to keep the blood going and to minimize the potential for clotting. My mom set pillows under my arms and legs, and I was actually pretty comfortable considering....

The pain really wasn't that bad. What did hurt was this thing around my waist called a T-Binder, which held all the packing down there in place. There was all kinds of packing on the groin area, as well as ice bags that the nurses re-filled every few hours. The T-Binder was cutting into my right hip, and the pain got excruciating. I finally talked the nurses into loosening it a bit (which they were very hesitant to do), and it made a world of difference.

They brought me clear things that afternoon and evening to eat.....Jello. Chicken broth. I didn't have any upset stomach, so the next morning I got a menu and got to order a regular breakfast. The nurses came by every couple of hours to check blood pressure and blood oxygen and pulse. They woke me up at 4 one morning to take more blood. They were very nice, and there were 2 on at all times. An RN and a CA, and they wrote their names on a board in my room so I knew who was on at any point. Every so often the catheter would back up, and the pressure in the bladder got pretty intense, but my mom did a good job of keeping things flowing, which was a good thing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Different surgeons have different post-op "rules". Some prefer to get the patient up on her feet as soon as possible, often after just a couple of days. Dr. Schrang, on the other hand, keeps his patients immobile and in bed for 6 full days. Mom continually shifted my pillows, so my weight was always evenly distributed, and I spent much of the time sleeping, talking with guests for either Betsy or myself, watching tv, eating, or talking to friends on the phone.

**8/10/00 =====**

***Kate sent this to many of my friends to announce the successful surgery!***

Hi all,

I want you to know that I just heard from Donna's Mom and it's official ... a bouncing baby girl was reborn this morning in Neenah. Yea!

The patient is doing fine and is in room 250-A.

Kate

=====

The second night I got a fever. It was 101, so they put me on something to handle that, and it was back to normal by the next morning.

Mom was on a pretty regular schedule. She got to the hospital at 9am or so, and stayed until early afternoon. She came back just before dinner and stayed until 9pm or so. She liked the cafeteria food, and got to know the people who drove the shuttle between the hotel and the hospital. She was wonderful.

By the end of the second day, we were pretty much on a routine. We got a menu for meals and circled whatever we wanted to eat. No restrictions. In fact, the food was actually pretty good. They came in every day or two to change the linens. There was a T-Bar hanging above my head, so I lifted myself up while they rolled up the dirty linens and unrolled the new ones. I slept a bit, but not as much as I expected I would. I had my laptop so I kept plugged in. Betsy didn't care what we watched, so the tv control was not contested. She even let me watch the Bills preseason game on Saturday night.

Betsy was a wonderful roommate. In fact, I think that having her there made the entire experience much more "pleasant". Perhaps it was the fact that misery loves company. But she was very nice, and had lots of friends coming and going to visit her, and she was just great. I think she had a much more difficult time of it than I did.

**8/12/00 =====**  
**To: Becky Allison**

Hi Becky:

Thank you for your kind words. You have been, and continue to be, an inspiration to me and a much loved friend, so they truly do mean alot.

today seems to be a better day than yesterday. i didn't hurt all that much, as opposed to not being able to find a way to get comfortable. and i faded as the day went on. by night my temp was a bit over 101 so I had an icepack on my forehead and was feeling pretty crummy. i am feeling generally ok and more comfortable today, accepting that the pain in the groin is a constant "friend". My appetite is back in high gear, which is a good thing, as well. Blood pressure is still low...somewhere around 98/60 last I remember, but I am off the iv which is a good thing. It is so neat when they come to change the dressings and wipe down there, and there is no penis to get in the way. It's truly and utterly unbelievable.

I have really done this!!!!

I even think the trip has been good for mom in lots of ways. She feels very much needed and motherly, which I think she has not felt for a long time. She has helped not only me, but my roommate as well, who is full of constant praise for her help and concern. My roommate, Betsy, has had 4 or 5 guests who have driven here from Minneapolis to be with her, and mom talks with them all at length. she even goes down to eat with them. i think the feeling of sisterhood that exudes from these relationships helps to ease her worries of my being lonely and alone...

Believe it or not, I still have the first email I sent to you to introduce myself. It's amazing how much has changed in such a relatively short time....

I passed along your 'hellos' to Dr. Schrang, and he returned them warmly..

Take care, and I'll talk with you soon!

Luv,

Donna

\* \* \* \* \*

People often ask me about the surgery. Did it hurt? What did it feel like? Frankly, it was much less painful and invasive than I thought it would be. My facial surgery with Doctor Ousterhout was much more difficult. Also, I have a relatively high threshold for “discomfort” (that’s the code word they use for pain) which I think plays into it.

My week in Neenah seemed to pass very quickly, and whereas I had thought my “bed” time would be boring and long and painful, it turned out to be oddly “relaxing” in a way. I didn’t feel terrible, and after a couple of days found myself eating and sleeping well. My mom was on regular schedule, and it was nice to see her when she arrived after breakfast each morning. Betsy was a great roommate, and I very much enjoyed talking with her. We had a constant stream of visitors throughout the week – there to see Betsy, not me - and my sister arrived half-way through as well. I had my laptop, although I found the process of trying to hook it up amidst all the wires and machinery by my bed became more trouble than it was worth. In retrospect, I look back on this time with a tremendous sense of pride and peace.

There are a couple of significant milestones in the week after SRS.

The first happens when all of the packing is removed from the new vagina. Dr. Schrang does this 5 days after surgery. That morning he came to the hospital room with a nurse and asked if I was ready for the big “unveiling”. My mom was there, and wanted to watch. I a little nervous about this, but Betsy seemed to have handled it well so I was hoping my experience would be similar.

Dr. Schrang took a spot down between my legs. Slowly and methodically, he started to remove the layers of gauze and packs that had surrounded the surgery area since Day 1. As the last of the layers was removed I dared to take my first glimpse. I was stunned by what I saw.

Does anything prepare you for this? I mean, to look down between your legs at a place where the single most defining physical feature that defined you as a man used to be, and in its place to see a tuft of hair, is almost like a dream. How many times had I fantasized about this, that it would somehow magically disappear? How many times had I awoken to realize that it wasn't true? Although I knew that it was true, now that it had all been unveiled and was there in front of my face it was still a shock.

The doctor grabbed the end of the gauze packing, and began pulling on it. As I watched, I was amazed; he pulled and pulled, and gauze just kept coming and coming. It seemed endless. Once all the gauze was removed, Dr. Schrang took one of the medium sized dilators (1 ½" in diameter) and pushed it into the new vagina! I was expecting pain, and maybe a little blood. But what I got was a pretty incredible sensation, as it slid into the new opening with ease.

And, that was that.

The second big event occurred the next day, on Day 6. I was finally allowed to get out of bed, to walk, and to take a shower. The nurse and my mom were there to make sure I didn't fall, as sometimes getting up after being horizontal for significant period of time can make the blood rush to your head. As I slowly moved my legs around to the side of the bed and to stand I didn't really feel woozy, and they helped me to walk from the bed to our bathroom.

I can't even begin to describe how it felt; to not have something there between my legs any more when I walked. I felt cool air – that's what I remember most – cool, refreshing air. And, when I got to the bathroom, closed the door, and looked at my naked body in the mirror all I could do was stare. I couldn't believe it. After what seemed like an eternity I found myself overcome by a rush of emotion – and I cried. My tears were tears of joy. They were tears of sadness on the toll this had taken on my life, on my family, and on my friends. They were tears of hope, that I could finally find the peace that had eluded me. And, they were tears of relief.

I will never forget that first shower, as warm water washed over my body and ran down off my torso. There's something amazing a warm shower, something that can reinvigorate even the most battered body into feeling almost human again. I stayed in that shower for almost an hour, letting the healing warm water wash over me, energize me, cleanse me. It was magical.

Dr. Schrang has a small number of rooms dedicated to his patients, and we had come to very much enjoy the nursing staff at Theda Clark. Many had actually become "friends". The nice thing about being able to walk around was being able to meet the gals in the other rooms. In the room next to me was a gal named Christine McGinn. She had had her surgery the day before I did. The MSNBC crew had been there earlier in the week and was producing a documentary on her journey. She was very pretty, and had the most amazingly feminine voice. Even my mom was impressed. She lived in Dallas and we would eventually become good friends.

By the end of the week it was time to leave the hospital. The nurse read our discharge orders – it took almost half an hour to get through them all - and asked if we had any questions. It was actually a little bittersweet leaving – they had been like family to me that week. They had cared

for me, but more than that they showed uncommon empathy and kindness. I can never thank them enough.

They sent a wheelchair to take me to out to the shuttle that would bring us to the hotel. It was with a sense of triumph and happiness that I said goodbye to Theda Clark Medical Center.



*Leaving the hospital*

We stayed at the hotel for a few days of extra recuperation – just in case there were any post-operative issues - before making the trip home to Rochester. A group of 8 or 10 of us met for dinner the night before we were scheduled to leave, and it was good. My mom and my sister fit right in, and it was nice to see how everything was working itself out. I don't know how I could have been any happier. It was truly a magical time in my life.

My energy would only last for a couple of hours at a time, and I'd hit a mysterious wall where it was time to sit down and rest and that was that. I learned to listen to my body, and I managed my activities accordingly.

Thankfully, the trip home was uneventful. I had done as much unpacking and prepping of my new home as I could in the two weeks before I left, so I settled down to get some rest and to heal.

\* \* \* \* \*

SRS post-op care is a VERY tedious thing. The truth is that there is no getting around the fact that recovering from SRS takes time and work.

The key word for any MTF post-op is “dilation”. Dilation consists of taking a series of progressively larger plastic dilators, or stents, and putting them in the vagina. The goal at the beginning is to keep the neo-vagina from healing on itself. A strict dilation schedule ensures that you will maintain the depth, and gain as much width as possible.

The dilators themselves are bullet shaped, and look like a round of ammunition for a mortar or an anti-aircraft gun or something. There are typically 5 dilators in a set, each progressively bigger than the previous one. The smallest one is only an inch in diameter, with the largest being nearly an inch and three quarters. It can be very intimidating, if you know what I mean....

Dilating consists of lying down, putting each dilator into the vagina for 5 or 10 minutes, and then moving to the next largest one in order to gradually stretch out the area. As things stretch out, moving to the next largest stent is truly a major event in our healing process. I got to the largest one within a few of weeks after surgery, but ended up breaking a couple of stitches in my perineum in the process. That was uncomfortable for a while.



A set of medical dilators

The entire dilating process, from getting ready, to doing it, to cleaning up, took me an hour. Given the fact that I did this 4 or 5 times a day at the beginning, it meant that much of my day was spent dilating, cleaning up from dilating, or getting ready to dilate. I eventually settled into a “comfortable” routine. I had set up an ironing board next to my bed with all the supplies on it so everything was there within reach.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the weeks immediately following surgery, I found that it was uncomfortable to be on my feet for much more than a couple of hours at a time. Not really painful in the traditional sense, but I certainly had an interesting “waddle”, and did my best to get out from time to time. The surgery drained a lot of strength from me, and it took quite a while to get that back.

I had all kinds of interesting fluids leaking out of me for those first few weeks. At first it was pinkish with splotches of blood, and eventually as time passed it became less pink and less regular. The day I could replace the big, puffy Maxi-Pad that was a constant companion with a mini-pad was a welcome relief.

My mom stayed with me in Rochester for a week after we returned from Neenah. It was good to have her around. She had been concerned that it would be difficult for me to navigate the stairs in my house, but that really didn't turn out to be an issue. She was there to help make meals, and was good company, and I am forever thankful for her help in getting through those two weeks.

\* \* \* \* \*

During my SRS experience, I had done my best to shut out the things that caused pain and uncertainty in my world. My wife and my son. My finances. My career. Loneliness. The future. Once life got back to some sense of normalcy, those things were still there waiting, ready to intrude again.

**8/28/00 =====**  
***To my wife***

Hi Elisabeth:

I hope you are doing ok. We haven't spoken for nearly 2 months, and I don't understand why. At first you said you didn't want to see me, and now you don't want to talk to me? It seems like we are moving farther apart, if anything. You say it is just too painful, but how are we ever going to raise Matt to be a good person if his parents can't even speak to each other?

You never responded to my request to send me those baseball cards and my coins. I take that as you won't do it. I don't understand that, either. I have tried to give you absolutely everything you have asked for....from things as simple as a drill, to the knife set you wanted back....and you can't even reciprocate? The things I asked for mean nothing to you. Why do you feel the need to make things worse?

I am hoping you find the strength to work with me, and perhaps we can indeed become friends again as you once talked about. You always said that “Life is too short....”. And it really is..... Please think about the things that are REALLY important in this world, and I am hoping you will know what to do....

Take Care, and please lets try to talk.....

D

\* \* \* \* \*



I took a couple of weeks off from work before going back. The only person who knew where I had gone or what I had done was my boss. I settled into a daily routine where I'd dilate before going to work, I'd go home to do it at lunchtime, I'd do it when I got home at dinnertime, and I'd do it before I went to bed.

As weeks started to pass I found myself dealing with all those old issues. My finances were a shambles. My relationship with my wife continued to be problematic, and I missed my son. I found that my job really wasn't living up to the promise of all the rosy things we had discussed and that started to bother me.

Some people say that they experience a post-op depression to one degree or another, and although I can't say that's something I remember in the weeks after SRS it was certainly a time of change for me. The goal of *the surgery* had always been out there, almost like a mirage, but now that it had been achieved I needed to focus my attentions on more real-life, every-day goals.

I think there's a huge risk of believing that once you have this surgery life is somehow profoundly different. Some seem to think it will "cure" things, that everything will somehow miraculously get better, that all the issues and problems will suddenly go away. Putting things into perspective is important. And, setting life course remains key.

**9/11/00 =====**

Hi Annah:

> *Had a rough weekend. The TGHarmony meeting wasn't fun. There were a few women (spouses)*  
> *of some of the members there to express their feelings. Two were wives of TSs and one of*  
> *a CD. One TS wife was very angry and vile and got me very riled. While I could*  
> *empathize to her point of view it was still ridiculous and I told her how I felt about that. I*  
> *surely didn't "set her straight" but at least I let it out. It was when she said that a person*  
> *with a penis was a man, no matter what, and had no right to use a women's restroom. Grr!*

Everyone is entitled to an opinion.....whether it be ignorant or not. Spouses of TG folk...especially of TS's...I would think would be the most angry, unhappy, unaccepting group that you could find. I know mine is. And although I think she MIGHT be able to accept it in someone else, she absolutely cannot accept any part of it in me. Too close to home.

If you get into this argument again....consider the following. How do we define "male" and "female" in our society. Well, at the very lowest of levels....it is a chromosome thing. And in that very narrow definition, we are indeed, and will always be, male. You cannot win that argument at that level.

BUT, the definition of "male" and "female" in our society is NOT based solely on genetics. In fact, I argue that it is only based on genetics when it becomes convenient for people who disagree with everything else.

Rather, it is based on much more. In a very, very real sense, is based on genitals. When a child is proclaimed to be male or female, that decision is based on whether the baby has a penis or not and nothing more. No genetic tests are given to babies to determine their gender. And if this is the sole determining factor, than who says it can't be changed? Using these criteria, if the genitals change, then the gender of the person changes as well.

But gender is much more. It is based on roles. It is based on perception. It is based on SELF. If you look like a female, and you act like a female, and you consider yourself a female, and the legal system determines that you are female....then you are female. Perhaps not genetically, but since we don't use that criteria anywhere else in our society....applying it here is simply a matter of convenience and I won't buy it.

I think the real argument here isn't whether a person is male or female...it's whether a person can change between the two. And that's what all the hullabaloo is about. There are very few constants in life. And a person's assigned gender is considered to be one of those. We, as a group, do not accept that, and that is why society (as a whole) has such a problem with this.....

\* \* \* \* \*

Getting used to a brand new vagina takes time. Believe it or not, it doesn't come with an owner's manual, so learning about it is left to our own devices.

Most "interesting" of all these new things was the sexual response. It took me about a month to get to the point where I tentatively started to explore.

**9/12/00 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It is nearly midnight and I am getting ready to go to bed.

Tonight I started "exploring" my new bits a bit for the first time. I was watching "Romeo in Love", and it is a very sensual movie....

It is frustrating to be unable to scratch that "itch", and my clitoris remains sore, and my vagina was sore from the dilating I had done this evening, but that wasn't enough to stop me.

Kate and her friends gave me my first (and only) toy....a vibrator. So I put the bugger in there and turned it up, and it was pretty amazing. I have no idea as to whether I will ever have another orgasm....that's a risk we take in order to be comfortable in our bodies. But I have a feeling that having an orgasm with this plumbing is way different than it was before, and that tonight's "entertainment" is only the first of many such adventures.

gnight

donna

**9/13/00 1:00 pm =====**  
***In response to her response to the previous email***

Hi Michelle:

*>I'm glad that you enjoyed the use of some of your free time last  
>night while watching "Shakespeare in Love". That was a great movie  
>the way they twisted two stories around one another, but I don't  
>recall anything in that movie that would particularly make*

>one "frisky".

It wasn't frisky. It was romantic. Romance is the big turn-on for me...quiet evenings and candles and music and wine and all that stuff....It made me feel romantic, which in turn made me feel frisky, which in turn sent me to the "playground"....

I'll never forget the first time I saw it in the theater. It was the night before my 40th birthday, and I went out and saw it alone. I cried my face off. I feared then, as I do now, that I will never be able to experience those emotions again, but at least now I didn't get upset about it.

**9/18/00 11:34am =====**

Hi Kate:

This was the most relaxing weekend I can remember. It's gotta be years since I had one like this. When I was living at home before transition I used to absolutely dread weekends, as just being around the house was difficult when we couldn't stand to be near each other. Once I moved out, weekends were full of electrolysis, and traveling, and unpacking and repacking. Even since I moved here, I have felt compelled to do things on my weekends....go to Buffalo Bills games....family stuff. This past weekend was totally a "me" weekend. I got my nails done. I spent time at my house putting up artwork and unpacking the last few boxes. I listened to music. I went to Victoria's Secret. I watched the Olympics. I cooked. I was totally by myself, and totally happy about it. It was much needed.

**9/18/00 =====**  
**From: Annah**

Hi Donna, I was going to call you yesterday but I've been in a slump and not feeling so hot about life and all. I'm trying hard not to get too depressed, but I'm not having much luck. I just have no motivation or desire to do anything lately. I think I have pre-surgery depression. Pre because it's so damn far out of sight. Though that's not the cause of my funk (I don't think) I do think that finding a good person to snuggle with and be intimate with would help a lot. I'm feeling so alone in that respect. SOOO alone. I don't just want a fling or quick sex or anything, either. You know, of course. We all want that. It's just basic human stuff. I haven't had it in so long, and staring at what used to be every day is really taxing me. Maybe I need to get away. I don't know. I can't afford to go anywhere else. I'm so stuck. Stuck where I am. Good grief! Listen to me! I sound so fucking pathetic! I shouldn't even send you this crap, but I can't help but think you're wondering what's been going on with me lately. Maybe that's just me. How are you? How's your healing coming? Have you tried any fun-type stimulation down there yet? I'd better go. Only ten more minutes left 'til I get out of this place. But I don't even know why I care, I don't even want to go home. Well, I do want to see my son. But that's about it. Take care, talk to you soon. Annah

\* \* \* \* \*

After I started work again, it quickly became apparent that this had not been a good idea. Everyone's heart was in the right place, but the opportunities to use my skills were just not there. Rather, they had to use me to do things that I did not enjoy, and did not want to do. The end result was general frustration all the way around.

I was more than a bit discouraged by the situation. Here I was...living in a townhouse that I very much enjoyed. Living near my brother and sister, totally accepted and loved. Making very good money. Nobody at work knew about my situation (as far as I knew). It would seem that failure to get a sense of accomplishment from my job wouldn't disrupt this....but it did. I got restless. I needed to be challenged. I needed more.

To be perfectly honest, my memory of those couple of months following SRS is mostly not pleasant. The pressure of it all was getting to me, and it felt like I was suffocating. My friend, Michelle, sent me an email about "Reality" that caused an emotional response.

**10/5/00 =====**  
**Reality**

Hi Michelle:

*>Just a quick note before I'm off to work. "Reality"...I certainly  
>never meant to say anything to upset you.*

I am a believer that reality is in the eye of the beholder. To some people, for all intents and purposes, I am female...mentally and physically. To others, I am a castrated man who has breast implants and an inverted penis, and that does not make me female. Which of those is reality? Take your pick.

Also, in my own mind, there is a difference between knowing your reality, and feeling the pressure of it. I am so well aware of the facts and details of my existence that it isn't funny. If I let the weight of that pressure get to me, I have no idea how I would function. I am very good at forging ahead despite my encumbrance...trying to solve the issues at hand in bite size pieces....one at a time. And so far, I always seem to be able to find a solution.

My original point to you was that the pressure is beginning to seep in. I am feeling the weight of it. I think about it. It keeps me awake. It concerns me. It affects me. And although it has certainly always been here...it has not bothered me so much until lately. The financial picture, and divorce picture, and relationship picture, and job picture....in its entirety (as you very effectively pointed out, as your letter almost made me cry)... it is a depressing and harrowing and daunting "reality". It IS upsetting. But it is my life right now.

If I had no resources at my disposal to climb out of this, I have no idea what I would do. Desperation is not my forte. If I got to that point, I think I would shut down like a toy whose battery has died. But I am not there yet, so I'll deal with these realities one by one, as I always have, and hope to climb back to the light of day.

I will get there, eventually, but I have never had so many fires blazing at the same time, so it will be quite the recovery.

**10/12/00 =====**

Hi Elisabeth:

How are things? I was hoping we had broken some ice when we talked a couple of weeks ago, but it seems we are back to the silence thing again. I suppose I should know better than getting my hopes up too much.

As I told you on the phone message, my \$\$\$ situation is crushing at the moment. I do not have enough in the account to cover the entire check at the moment, so I have included 2 checks. I will let you know as soon as I can deposit some to cover the other part....which will be next Friday at the latest (my next pay day).

I arrive in Phoenix next week on Friday. I am planning to pick up Matt early on Saturday so we can go somewhere and spend the weekend together, and I will have him back on Sunday evening. If he has some homework, he can bring that, but I am not going to spend the little time we have together doing it all. He mentioned to me that it would be nice if he could play his drums for me, and I don't know how you feel about that. I would like to see, but will not go in the house if you do not want me to. Also, you mentioned that you could get my baseball cards, and my coins and that stuff so I can bring it home. If you see anything else that is mine, or that I can have, please get it all together so I can bring it home.

Well, I'm hoping we can talk some time this week. I hope you're feeling better, and I'm hoping all is well.

Take care. You are in my prayers.

Luv,

D

P.S. I have included my baptismal certificate. You can give it to your folks or toss it. I have no use for it. I no longer consider them my godparents, so they are off the hook.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a mere two months after SRS, and life had gotten difficult. How many of us live in a fantasy where we have these kinds of surgeries and life is suddenly and wonderfully better? Not with me. The reality of it is often much less romantic. The question that became clear to me: what could I do to change the way things were headed?

I couldn't change my divorce situation. That continued to wind along with offers and counter-offers, lawyers, and unpleasantness. It was nearing it's conclusion, but that didn't change the unpleasantness of watching my marriage die.

I couldn't change my financial situation. I was making good money, but I had incurred horrific expenses and I was paying for it.

I couldn't change the nagging sense of wanting more, of needing more.

The one thing I could change was my job. It has become apparent that one of us needed to find a good way out of this. So I contacted Dell.

I wrote to them to inquire as to whether the position I had been offered in May was still available. I told them that my personal situation had changed, and that I would be much more able to accept it than I had been.

I got an email in response indicating that they said they would send out the offer letter again that very afternoon. Frankly, I was stunned. And, this time, I was ready to accept it without looking back.

**10/24/00 =====**  
***I was visiting Matt in Phoenix***

Hi Michelle:

It is Monday night and I am preparing to go [*back home to Rochester*]. It has been a chilly, rainy weekend here in the desert....as always my timing is impeccable. I had a wonderful time with my son, and am feeling fairly melancholy about the prospect of leaving him again. He is not happy here, and I would take him with me in a heartbeat.

Much has been happening outside of my visit here. I am close to accepting the job at Dell. It is just too good to pass up. The thought of all the details involved in moving, etc. actually scare me, but being scared has rarely stopped me from doing anything in the past. I have much to consider on the long plane ride home.

It has been nice to visit my friends here. But I find that I feel like a stranger here.

\* \* \* \* \*

I accepted the job at Dell. We agreed that my first day on my new job would be Nov. 27, the week after Thanksgiving. That gave me a little less than a month to find a place to live, take care of the various odds and ends of moving, pack, drive the 2,000 miles between Rochester and Austin, and get settled. Oh, and there was one more thing. I was scheduled to have the second phase of Sex Reassignment Surgery (called a labiaplasty) on Nov. 15. That's quite a bit of stuff, so although having almost a month to get to Austin seemed like quite a bit of time – the prospect of getting it all done seemed daunting.

I do a good job of handling stress, and think I generally handled all the pressure that I was feeling pretty well. What other choice is there? Still, there were times when I'd just start to cry. One of those times happened during the last week of October when I traveled to Austin to look for a place to live. I got to the airport and drove to my hotel on a hot, muggy autumn Friday. As I sat in my hotel room, with nobody to call, no friends at all there, in a place that felt strange and foreign to me I was overcome by emotion. And, I cried. I cried *hard*.

I probably would have cried all night long if the Apartment Finder guy hadn't called and shaken me from my pity party. We had plans to make, and he was a fun guy. My plan was to get an apartment in Austin for the first 6 months and then move the rest of my stuff there – just in case it didn't work out for some reason and I had to flee back to my house in Rochester. So that's

what I did. After a couple of days of looking around and learning about the area I signed a lease. The bad news is that the apartment wouldn't be ready until a couple of weeks after I was scheduled to start work so I made arrangements to move into one of those extended stay hotels in the interim.

The highlight of the visit happened when Christine drove down to Austin from Dallas to visit for a couple of days. We spent a memorable night partying on 6<sup>th</sup> Street – Austin is known for 6<sup>th</sup> Street – and generally just visiting. It was so nice to have a friendly face there, and the combination of having her there and feeling a little better about the move helped to ease some of my stress.

By the time I got back to Rochester I was on auto-pilot. I had lots to do, and I set about getting it all done. I was focused, and I was mentally preparing myself for whatever came next.

Since my surgery had suddenly become very “inconvenient” in terms of timing, I needed to get most of my packing and other stuff done before I left. It was scheduled for Nov. 15 and I needed to allow for the fact that I'd be healing from it for quite some time. The goal was to fit whatever I could into my car and to drive from Rochester to Austin – leaving the day after Thanksgiving.

\* \* \* \* \*

As I started to consider dating, meeting people, and generally making new friendships it was becoming clear to me that these were things I hadn't done in a long time, and did not come natural to me. I had been married since 1981 so most of the relationships I had were in the context of my marriage, my roles as husband, or my role as father. I hadn't been on a real “date” in more than two decades so even under the best of circumstances that alone would have proven to be problematic.

Christine McGinn and I were at about the same place in our journey and seemed to have quite a bit in common. We had been talking often about things. She was much more adventurous in things than I was. I remember the night she wrote to share that she had had her first orgasm, and went on to relate the specifics. The mere fact that it happened at all filled me with hope that I would soon be enjoying a similar experience.

Christine had started dating just a few weeks after her surgery, although it took me a little longer. I met a lesbian woman in Rochester online, and we made arrangements to meet. Christine had some thoughts on things:

**11/1/00 =====**  
***Relationship Retard***

From: Christine McGinn

:)~ couldn't resist with the title...Me and you are similar creatures (except I'm messy messy messy) I was a sexual/relationship retard as well up until 2 years ago. Not that I am any expert, but I can only tell you,

when you let go...you're gonna be amazed at what comes out. The woman in you is screaming to be taken. Have fun. I see this lesbian more as a friend for you. It is important that your life is not ALL T...and it isn't. This is a healthy look at a lesbian...which you don't have much experience with. I love to learn from them since it is in this subculture that I'm going to get laid in .....lol. She has already taught you lesson one. UHAUL. she moved to Rochester for a chick right away probably...and then it didn't work out...thus the Uhaul. Lesbians feel the need to move in to have sex cause their women..its their commitment. Guys can just fuck...like your buddy in SF. You have a contact on both sides of the fence...you're building an all-star team...lol a little of everything.

\* \* \* \*

Labiaplasty is supposedly a much less invasive a procedure than the vaginoplasty is. But because it deals with the external tissues, it involves LOTS of stitches. I had heard some gals complain that the labiaplasty was the more painful procedure. Dr. Schrang did it under general anesthesia, but it would be done on an outpatient basis meaning I wouldn't be spending a night at the hospital.

I made all the arrangements. I made plane reservations to fly through Chicago and arrive the day before the surgery. I made reservations at that same hotel across the river from Theda Clark Medical Center where my mom had stayed during my SRS in August. I expected to stay there for 3 or 4 nights afterwards, giving me a chance to heal a bit before flying home. It all seemed workable.

Things went wrong from the get-go. My flight got into Chicago ok, but the flight from Chicago to Neenah was cancelled. It was cold outside, with snow flurries, and they couldn't guarantee that I'd get a seat on the next flight. So, since I couldn't risk NOT getting there I went to plan B: I rented a car and drove the few hundred miles.

After checking into the hotel I used the car to go to the store and stock up on supplies. Since I'd be there all by myself for a few days and couldn't afford to live on room service I bought a cooler and filled it with yogurts, milk, sandwich meats, and a few other things to hold me over. Then, I settled in for the big event.

This entire experience was the polar opposite from my surgery there just 3 months earlier. Rather than feeling relaxed and comfortable about things, I was feeling rushed and pressured. In August the weather was warm, the scenery was beautiful and green, and it had almost a dream-like sheen to it. In November it was cold and gray, and the grayness seemed to creep into everything else too. In August I had family and friends there to share my experience with me, and a hospital staff to work with me. In November I was very much alone, and would be cooped up in a hotel room passing the time until I could go home. All in all, it was the opposite of fun.

Surgery day arrived, and the transport van came to pick me up at 6am to take me to the hospital. I was prepped, and awaited a 7:30 surgery. I don't remember any of the specifics of being wheeled to the operating room, or of the operation itself.



I do remember waking up in the recovery room. I was in a lot of pain. The nurse asked me to rate the pain on a scale of 1 to 10, and I told her an 8 or a 9. She gave me some morphine to ease it a bit – half of it into my IV and the other half directly into my butt - and it became tolerable. I don't know how long I stayed there, regaining my senses, but it seemed like hours.

They thing that needed to happen in order to discharge me was that I needed to be able to get up and pee by myself. That took a couple of hours. Eventually, the nurse helped me to turn and dangle my legs off the side of the bed, helped my wobbly body navigate the short distance to the bathroom, and stood outside to make sure I didn't faint or become light headed.

My crotch was not happy. It has just been through a traumatic experience and the look of the red, raw, painful stitching actually made me a little woozy. I was dripping blood, almost like a dog in heat, but somehow I went pee and was able to cover it back up again.

That being done, there was no comfortable hospital room awaiting me. I got dressed again, the van came to get me, and I somehow made it back to my hotel room by early afternoon. And that was that.

The next couple of days crept by without incident. I kept myself propped up on pillows, with ice on my painful and *very* swollen crotch. Every few hours I waddled to the end of the hall to get some more ice. I spent a lot of the time on the telephone. I watched TV. I slept. And when it came time to check out and to fly back home I was glad to FINALLY have all the surgery behind me.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thanksgiving 2000 was a melancholy event for me. It marked my last day that I would call Rochester "home". It was testament to something that seemed to have so much promise but didn't work out. It was full of good-bye's and emotional disconnecting. And then, it was time to go.

I had spent the previous week packing up my car. It was so full that there was barely enough room for me in it.

I did the 2,000 mile drive in 2 ½ day, and was in constant pain. Being vertical, and in a sitting position, kept pressure on my crotch so by the time I'd arrive at the end of the day's drive I was a swollen, pained, unhappy mess. I spent the nights taking pain meds and icing it down, but it'd be in bad shape by noon the next day so I just had to deal with it.

I have tried to blot that drive out of my memory. Other than the pain, the thing I remember most about it was the last part of the drive, on I-35 between Dallas and Austin. There is an outlet mall about 60 miles south of Dallas, and since this was the crazy shopping weekend right after Thanksgiving it seems like half of Texas was on the road and trying to get to this mall. I got stuck in traffic and the drive that should have taken less than 3 hours took almost 6. I suppose I should have expected that. But since there wasn't anything I could do about it I crept my way along until I finally pulled into the hotel in Austin that would be home for the next 2 weeks.

I started my job at Dell as scheduled. And, a new chapter of my life started.

\* \* \* \* \*

Several important things happened in the next few weeks. My career flourished. I met new people (several of whom would play pivotal roles over the next few years) and started to feel at home in Austin. I met someone online (her name was Tracy) and we would eventually meet and date for almost a year. I finally moved into my apartment, and bought some basic furniture so I could live in it. And, my son came to spend Christmas and New Year with me.

We drove to Dallas for a couple of days to spend a little time with my mom.

**12/23/00 =====**

Hi Michelle:

It is Saturday at noon as I write this, and I am at my mom's house. Matt is here, too. Mom hasn't seen Matt in over 2 years, and needless to say much has changed in all of us in the interim. Mom is making her usual Holiday fare - fruitcake (which I love), and we are going to have a quiet gift opening session this afternoon before going out to diners and driving back to Austin. Traffic wasn't too too terrible on the way up, and I hope it doesn't get all funky on the way back.

Have a safe trip home. We fly to Rochester tomorrow afternoon, and they are continuing to be blitzed by old and snow. I may spend the entire time curled up in front of my fireplace...

Luv ya!

Donna

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, we flew to Rochester. I was the first time that Matt had been back since moving to Arizona.

The highlight for me was arriving at my townhouse, which I had left a month earlier with a car full of stuff, in pain, dreading my cross-country drive. As I opened the door I expected to see a cold, dark place that once felt like home. Instead, my sister had made the place festive. There was Christmas tree with presents under it, and stockings hanging from the mantle. There were twinkling lights up the stairs. There were Christmas cookies on the table, and a wonderful "Welcome Home" note. It was amazing.

**12/25/00 =====**

***Following is an Addendum to my mom's Xmas 2000 Letter, which she sends out each year....***

DEAR FRIENDS:

Dave has asked me to send this information to those I thought would want to know. He came to me in July of 1999 and said he was Transgendered. That he had felt he should have been a woman since a very early age. He has been having psychological counseling for several years, had been on female hormones for over a year, and was soon going to start living as a woman. This kind of thing only

happens to someone else. My immediate reactions was, what did I do wrong, and my 2<sup>nd</sup> reaction was how could I have missed it all these years.

It has taken me a year to come to terms with this. I was finally able to work it through to realize this was an accident of nature and to establish my priorities. This is my kid!

In October of 1999 Dave became Donna Gail, legally on her Social Security, Driver's License and eventually on her Birth Certificate. She came out at work, had some plastic surgery on her face to look more feminine, and had a lot of electrolysis.

After living as a woman for a year Donna had the genital surgery to become a woman. Donna has changed jobs and now lives in Austin, Tx working for Dell Computers. She seems more at peace with herself.

There is a book entitled "True Selves – Understanding Transsexualism" by Mildred L. Brown and Chloe Rounsley. I bought it from Amazon. It has helped me a lot. There have been several programs on TV about being transgendered. Oprah had one, and Dateline another. They were mostly sympathetic depictions of the situation.

I am very proud of Judy and Jay and their families. Here is a paragraph from Judy's letter which explains, perhaps better than I have, what has happened:

"A few months after Dad died, David told me a secret he has been keeping all his life. It's a situation that has meant enormous changes over these past two years for all of us who have loved him, especially his estranged wife and son. It turns out that David was born with a birth defect that nobody could see. He became aware of it very early on but also realized he couldn't tell anyone – not even Mom. It's called "gender dysphoria" and basically means that a person's gender identity is different from one's body. It left Dave trapped and isolated, dealing with a situation that many people consider freakish or worse – all by himself. I don't know how he survived. He did the only thing he could: Make the best of things and live up to the expectations everyone had of his apparent gender. As it happened, Dave succeeded so completely and thoroughly that nobody could quite believe it when he came out with the truth. But as we all worked to learn as much as we could about this condition, we began to understand. David had decided to make a complete break with the life he had built for 40 years and start over with the correct gender. It's been a long, involved process with many steps, all medically supervised and legally documented. It has been painful, expensive, and harrowing but finally, at the end of it, David managed to correct the birth defect. The way UI look at it is that he's given birth to himself the way he should have been...or should I say SHE. David doesn't legally exist anymore. I now have a sister, Donna Gail. We have welcomed her into our lives with open arms and open minds. As you might imagine, this has forced all of us to look inside at our own value systems and beliefs, our prejudices, our definitions of love, our expectations of ourselves and the people around us...in short, a lot of thinking, soul-searching and discussion. I'm happy and proud to say that our extended family is stronger and closer than ever because of all this. I'm building a far richer relationship with my sister than I ever had with my brother. And my kids have been truly amazing in their ability to accept and love the person inside their uncle/aunt without judgment."

\* \* \* \* \*

As the ball dropped to begin 2001 I was at home, with my son. We spent some time making a picture puzzle, snacking on appetizers, and at midnight we shared some Asti. It was quiet, and very much a non-event. Actually, it was perfect.

I had spent much of the that last day of 2000 considering what had happened over the course of the year. Some people live a lifetime and never experience the change I did in that one year.

I was amazed at how far I had come, and the fact that I was at home, with my family, with my son, and I was actually happy about myself – that's what made it all ok. I had arrived, and I was at peace. All things considered, I could not have asked for more.

**THE END**