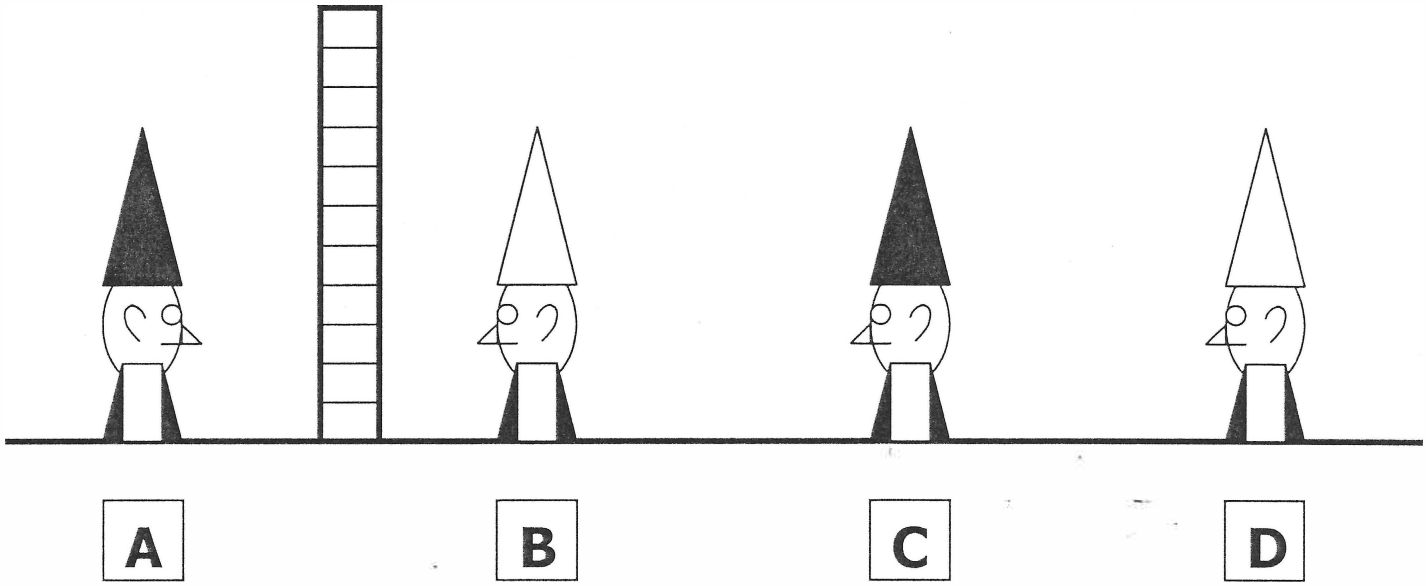
Brain Teaser



Shown above are 4 men buried up to their necks in the ground.
They can not move so can only look forward.
Between A and B is a brick wall which can not be seen through.
They know that between them are 4 hats, 2 x black and 2 x white, but they do not know which colour they are wearing.
In order to avoid being shot one of them must call out to the executioner the colour of their hat. If they get it wrong, everyone will be shot.
They are not allowed to talk to each other and have 10 minutes to fathom it out.

After 1 minute:

Q Which one of them calls out ?

Q. Why is he 100% certain of the colour of his hat ?

This is not a trick question.
There are no outside influences nor other ways of communicating. They cannot move and are buried in a straight line. So A & B can only see their respective sides of the brick wall, C can see B and D can see B & C.

See next page for the answer.

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NOTE: 'Your SOFFA VOICE' is a quarterly newsletter produced in partnership with the American Boyz organization.

Answer to the Brain Teaser:

C. Because C knows that the person in front of him is wearing a white cap....and if he were also wearing a white cap, then the person behind him (D) would see that both people were wearing white and know that he, himself, must be wearing black cap and would yell out. So, because D did not yell out, then C deduces that he must be wearing a black cap. Tough one, eh?

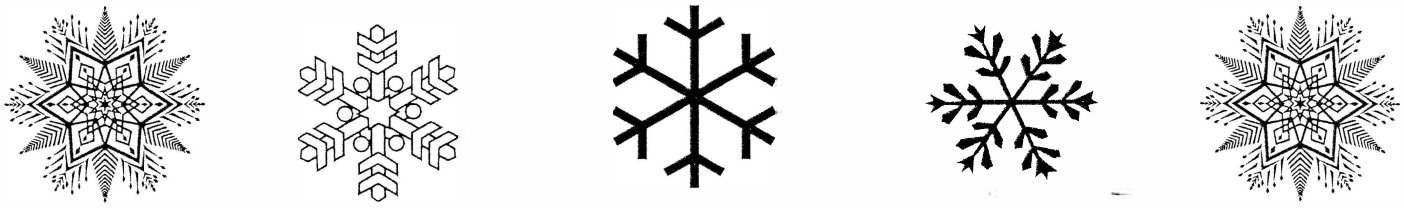
Your SOFFA VOICE

Volume 3, Issue 4 **November 1, 2000**

Greetings!!

As the holiday season fast approaches, I want to take a moment to thank all of you for your continued support. I hope everyone has wonderful holiday and a very happy new year!!

~Jodi



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Going Home

~by Arthur Freeheart

"Moving away to start a new life", during or shortly after transition, is a popular fantasy. I've had trans friends who seriously considered that option. I've had non-trans friends who assumed that moving away to start a new life is usually part of transition.

I downplayed the similarities between that scenario and my experience. I moved from a rural area to an urban area in my mid-twenties. At least seventy percent of my local peers moved away for economic reasons. My reasons for moving were more complex.

I hoped relocation would ease the tremendous sense of isolation involved in being " one of those" in a place where few if any other "one of those" were in evidence. Migration of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from rural areas to urban areas is another wide spread demographic trend. I began transition five years after I moved to the big city. My parents and surviving grandparent live 1100

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FEATURED ARTICLE

Transgendered times two: musings of a genderqueer SOFFA

~~By Zane Barlow

I started out life as
a heterosexual, femme female
ended up a gay, effeminate FTM
and it has been
quite the journey
I was
a hetereosexual, femme woman
dating a straight biomale
wearing dresses and high heels, I made-up my face
a bisexual, femme woman
married to a straight biomale
wearing jeans and tank tops, I painted my toenails
a bisexual femme
dating a straight pre-transition FTM
wearing jeans and tank tops, I painted my toenails
again/
a bigendered individual
partnered to a now bisexual pre-transition FTM and a gay transitioning FTM
I bought a split bureau for my clothes
put my Victoria's secret underwear on one side
boxer briefs on the other
I bought men's shirts and men's jeans
brought my dresses back out
and my high heels
a third gendered other
partnered to a bisexual transitioning FTM
I threw out my dresses and cut my hair
bought Timberland boots
and stopped shaving
a non-transitioning genderqueer
partnered to a bisexual transitioning FTM
I bought plaid shirts from the GAP
left my white undershirt collar showing
packing and passing
a pre-transition gay FTM in a relationship with a pre-transition gay FTM
I threw out my plaid shirts
bought Hawaiian surfer T-shirts, pierced my bellybutton
I cut my hair
again

Continued on pg. 3

Throughout my gender permutations, I have always been a SOFFA. Being a transgendered SO of an FTM is an interesting place to be in the community. Support groups are very often split into the transgendered guys in one meeting and the non-transgendered significant others in another meeting. ..or into the guys in one room and their SOs in another. In these situations, I am always somewhat torn about which room to choose and whether I belong in either... or both. As I have never fit the traditional definition of transsexual man, having an alternate male gender identification, I have had to fight for acceptance in FTM support groups, justify that my being bigendered/third-gendered/genderqueer FTM was not just the trendy "four year plan" of gender but true gender dysphoria. I thought perhaps I belonged more in the SOFFA meetings. And yet sitting in a group consisting of mainly women-identified biofemales felt even more strange, aware that my struggles as an FTMSO were very different, in part because my perspective is colored by my gender history and my own feelings and experiences as a transguy. I am the queerest of the queer, a genderqueer gay FTM in a relationship with another gay FTM.

Two transgendered men in a relationship have inherently two different sets of gender issues to deal with - their own and their partners. Each person deals with gender from two perspectives... as an individual and as a partner. Some SOFFAs reading his piece may think that being a transgendered SO of an FTM is an easier position to be in, I must know all there is to know about supporting a trans partner because I myself am transgendered. However, while we both may be transgendered, gender identity and the path from female to male in the FTM community varies widely. There are almost as many ways of being a guy as there are guys doing it and while I may have similar opinions on gender identity, gender expression, and medical transition as my partner(s)....its almost equally likely that I won't.

Trans-trans relationships have a tremendous potential for support and understanding and personally, I have found extreme comfort and support in having partners who are FTM. As a pre-transition FTM, I spend a good portion of my time around people that either don't know I'm transgendered, or though good intentioned still don't quite get my gender identity. I ignore the mistakes if I can, or I educate strangers, acquaintances and even my best friends as to who I am, how I got here, and what is and is not appropriate now that they know. While I personally love to discuss transgendered issues, some days I just want to go home to people who understand me implicitly and perceive me as male so instinctively that it completely negates all the awkward gender situations of the day. Someone who affirms and validates my gender identity in such a way that I'm not the only one holding up the tenuous edges of my reality, not the only one fighting the monsters lurking underneath my bed. With a trans partner, I have a common language in which to more easily explain my dysphoria, my feelings about my body and my complex gender identification.

However, there is a flip side to this coin, if there are as many ways of being a transguy as there are transguys, stress can be generated if the two partners differ radically in their place in the trans community... or if in the process of transition the two lovers suddenly find that previously mutual opinions or perceptions are no longer mutual. FTM partners may be in different stages of transition or have different opinions on the necessity of medical transition. Some FTMs choose full medical transition, other no transition or only partial transition. As a result, there may be unconscious pressure on the non or pre-transitioning partner to "catch up". If one partner is pre-transition and the other post, there may be concerns about being man enough for the now post-

Continued on pg. 5

AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO…

...worries about interfacing with the heterosexual world, a world whose language, customs, expectations seem utterly foreign to me...yet a world I seem to have a much harder time avoiding as the female/femme spouse of an FtM?

…doesn't feel all that connected to the queer world anymore?

…has fantasies about relocating-- if not to a new space maybe to a new religion, a new look, a new hobby, some new way to share this transitional drama?

…gets turned on by thinking this is sorta like having an affair with someone different without having to be unfaithful?

…plays the pronoun game even when it is not mandatory?

…thinks a little tiny dick and peach fuzz are cute and even sexy but worries about a real dick and stiff whiskers showing up in her bed?

…feels like I'm in some huge RPG (role playing game) that I might get booted out of if I break character?

…is tired of the word "transition"?

…wishes people would remember that there's two of us on this transition roller coaster, not just one?

…hates feeling like a wallflower-silentpartner-invisiblelesbian, forever doomed to the role of Supporting Actor, with no chance of ever getting the Emmy for Best Actor?

…hates it when people ask my partner how I'm doing with all this instead of asking me?

…hates it that he doesn't get why that upsets me?

…gets uncomfortable when people (ok, women) I don't even know feel they have the right to ask my partner about his genitals?

…Is tired of explaining, yes I'm really a lesbian but I love my partner for who he is inside, the rest is just aesthetics blah, blah, blah.

…misses lesbian sex?

…feels I've done way more accommodating in this relationship than he has?

…feels an awful lot like I never left Hetville?

…who gets annoyed when I tell my partner I think I want to see a therapist and he suggests I see the guy he saw for his letters. Why? So we can talk about HIM some more?

…Is happy my partner finally has a small support circle--he actually knows 3 other local FtMs now, so he's in heaven--but I get uneasy because none of these guys are partnered... which means I still have no one to sit down & talk to in person who knows what I'M feeling.

…felt more important to this process way back when we were researching it and worrying about what people would do when we "came out." Now he's the local trans celebrity in our lesbian community, basking in the glow, crowing like a rooster in a hen house, while I'm thinking do I really need this shit?

…sometimes would like a little more attention, like to feel a little important too? And not just on shot day...

…needs to shut up and find a shrink?

~~The previous was taken from an online list. They are real thoughts, concerns, and issues from real SOs. A special thanks to Sue, Mel, Teresa M. and the other ladies who opened their hearts and contributed.

transition partner. Partners may have different opinions with regard to gender expression, passing, or what is appropriate male behavior. Some guys prefer more "traditional" male presentations while other guys are more genderqueer. Some FTMs are "out" and identifiable as trans, others prefer to transition and go "stealth". Some FTMs experience extreme body dysphoria while others have less issues with our biofemale bodies. We may all be transgendered/FTM but we are in the end individuals with our own individual paths.

As a transgendered significant other, I need
a space to be with other transguys and genderqueers
to get support for my personal gender issues such as
gender fluidity
dating FTMs as a genderqueer
sexual dysfunction
transition or not
a space to be with significant other, friends, family and allies of FTMs
to get support for supporting my partner(s) with gender issues such as
passing/
transitioning/
body dysphoria/
sexual dysfunction/
a space to with transgendered significant others of FTMs
to get support for our unique relationship issues such as
he's wants to transition and I'm not sure
he passes and I don't in public
am I man enough for him if I don't transition?
he's a transsexual man and I'm genderqueer

I still feel awkward attending SOFFA groups, and have not found much discussion of the particular and unique issues faced by transgendered SOFFAs. This article is an attempt to start a dialogue in the SOFFA community about the place of transgendered/transsexual SOFFAs.
With the number of FTMs/genderqueers I know dating or partnered to other FTMs/genderqueers, I think the time has finally come to admit that although trans we don't have all the answers and we too need support as lovers, friends and allies of other transguys.♥

~~Zane Barlow is a polymorous, male identified, genderqueer FTM leatherfag who hails from Western Massachusetts, where he is a research scientist in neurobiology at the University of Massachusetts. A proud member of Compass, New England's largest FTM support group and the Northeast Regional Coordinator for the American Boyz, he is active in the New England trans community and advocates loudly for inclusion of genderqueers and people of alternate gender identity in the mainstream FTM community. He is also a member of the New England Leather Alliance and the Enforcers Rhode Island, where he advocates for trans inclusion in the leather BDSM community. Privately, he writes and performs gender spoken word, and is currently smitten with a certain Boston-based FTM transactivist and writer who knows who he is.

AMBOYZ SOFFA CONTACTS

National SOFFA Coordinator:

Scott
FTM SOFFA FAQ web page:
http://members.xoom.com/ftmsofaq/
Email: AnXYGuy@sprynet.com.

Local SOFFA Coordinators:

-New York City: Natalie: Email: natalie@everest.hunter.cuny.edu
-Tennessee: Tracy: 615-431-9540; Email: WrkingGal@aol.com
-Minnesota: Beth: 612-376-7648; Email: kent0021@maroon.tc.umn.edu
-Arizona: Debra: 520-903-1421; Email: debra@hwr.arizona.edu
-Toronto: Kaia Kruus, 416-466-0235; FAX: 416-466-8812 ; Email: kaia@ca.ibm.com
-San Antonio, TX: Debra: 210-434-6044; (leave msg on answering machine);
Email: debra@mac.hwr.arizona.edu
-Richard Brown in Delaware, (gay man, tg ally): Delaware: Richard Brown: 302-366-1805; Email: horned@sprintmail.com

We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

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

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

Continued on pg. 8

SOFFA RESOURCES

~~EMAIL LISTS

♦ Support

FTMSOS – for any type of SO of FTMs, regardless of background, gender, or sexual orientation. For more information, go to: www.egroups.com/FTMSOS

Nytecafe – a list for straight-identified wives/lovers/girlfriends of FTMs. Send email to: Nyteflyer1@aol.com or go to: www.egroups.com/Nytecafe

Trannyfags – a list for gay-identified FTM/SOs. To join, go to www.queernet.org and search for trannyfags.

Transgenderedcouples is a list for TG people in relationships where all partners are transgendered and dealing with gender issues. www.egroups.com/transgenderdcouples

Transensualfem is an email list for femmes who are primarily attracted to tgbutches and/or FTMS. To join, go to www.queernet.org and search for transensualfem.

♦ Dating/social

FTM_Dating is a list designed as a place where FTMs both gay, straight and bisexual can meet people (TG and non-TG) who are attracted to or open to the idea of dating or being a partner to an FTM. www.egroups.com/ftm_dating

TG_leather is a list focused on FTMs and their SOFFA's who are active in the leather/BDSM/fetish community. www.egroups.com/tg_leather

FTM_n_WWLT is an email list for FTMs and the women, who prefer their company ---and who are interested/concerned with today's FTM issues. www.egroups.com/FTM_n_WWLT

Continued on pg. 8

ANNOUNCEMENTS

~~ELIST HAS MOVED

FTM n WWLT, has moved to eGroups
The new address is
http://www.egroups.com/group/FTM_n_WWLT

FTM n WWLT is an email list for FTMs and the women, who prefer their company ---and who are interested/concerned with today's FTM issues. This list was created as a narrower subgroup to the broader, less specific forums available to all FTMs on America Online and the World Wide Web, and while not intended to be exclusive, is primarily for those FTMs who are interested in women romantically and the women who, however they identify, prefer their company and who wish to exchange ideas and experiences. This is a Social List. While information about dosages of T, and assorted Doctors and Surgeries will not be censored, it won't be encouraged either. Again, there are several other lists which deal specifically with such issues.

~~LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP

DEZERT PARTNERZ SUPPORT GROUP
FOR NON-TRANS PARTNERS OF TG/TS
INDIVIDUALS MEETS IN TUCSON,ARIZONA THE
2ND MONDAY EACH MONTH, 6:30-8:30 PM
CALL KARLA FOR DETAILS (520-318-1219)
E-MAIL karlakrazies@aol.com

~~TRUESPIRIT CONFERENCE

The American Boyz, Inc. announces the 5th Annual True Spirit Conference

ELKTON, MD -- October 6, 2000 -- The American Boyz, Inc., a national organization for people who were born female but who feel that is not a complete or accurate assessment of who they are (FTMs) and our significant others, friends, families and allies (SOFFAs), will host its 5th annual True Spirit Conference (TSC) in Washington, D.C., February 16-19, 2001.

The conference, co-chaired by Mike Sanders and Tynan Power, will feature interactive workshops and caucuses presented and facilitated by leaders within the trans+/SOFFA community. Workshops and caucuses will range in subject from health and

Continued on pg. 8

Conversations with D

You told me you weren't a typical lesbian.
Fine, I said, neither am I.
I love your masculine side
that sets you apart from other women.
And I admired your honesty.

You told me you weren't lesbian.
Fine, I said. You have the right to define yourself.
Labels are mere words
which rarely tell the story accurately.
And I admired your individuality.

You told me you weren't female.
Ok, I said. You don't feel female
but your body says otherwise.
Gender is in the head, you said.
And I admired your certainty.

You told me you were a man.
Oh dear, I said. Been there, done that.
But not with me, you said.
I'm not like other men.
And I admired your cockiness.

You told me you had to change your body.
Why? I said. I love you as you are.
These breasts aren't mine, you said.
They have to go so I can be who I am.
And I admired your bravery.

You told me you wanted hormones.
In time, I said. No, now, you responded.
So we made the appointment, you had the tests,
and the injections began.
And I admired your tenacity.

You told our friends
and I waited for rejection that never came.
Instead, they affirmed you, encouraged you.
We were overwhelmed by the love and acceptance.
And I admired your roots in this warm lesbian
community.

You told me I'm the wife of your dreams.
And you, I said, are the partner of mine.
For gender is between the ears
but love is between the shoulder blades.
And I admire the brave heart that is within you.

--Teresa M.

Contacts...cont. from pg. 6

The following special contacts are also SOFFAs:

-Legal Issues: Phyllis Randoph Frye, Esq: PRFrye@aol.com (lawyer and transwoman)
-Medical Issues: Dr Kathryn Thomas, Phd, RN: 410-625-1095; Email: katesx@juno.com (gender therapist)
-Family Issues: Mary Boenke; Email: MaryBoenke@aol.com (parent of tg)
-Official Jewish Mother: Leslie Ann Alpert: Email: fluffy@access.digex.net (ally)

If you think you'd like to be an AmBoyz local, regional,or SOFFA contact, see the American Boyz website, http://www.netgsi.com/~listwrangler for a "job description" and then contact national SOFFA coordinator,

Scott at: AnXYGuy@sprynet.com or American Boyz's Coordinator-in-Chief, Gary Bowen, at: transman@netgsi.com.

Resources...cont from pg 6

~~SOFFA WEBSIGHTS

SOFFAUSA is a resource websight for SOFFAs of any type of TG person. Go to: www.aol.com/SOFFAUSA/index.html

FTMSOFAQ is a dedicated to answering all those questions about being a SOFFA of a transman. Go to: http://members.xoom.com/ftmsofaq/

COMING SOON: A SECTION FOR LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS. BE SURE AND CHECK OUT FUTURE ISSUES FOR EVEN MORE RESOURCES!!

To submit your email list, websight, or local support group to be added to this resource list, send a blurb to SOFFAUSA@yahoo.com.

Announcements...cont. from pg. 7

wellness; identities; SOFFA issues; legal, political and activism topics; "out" in the world; relationships; sexuality; spirituality; and much more. Each night will culminate in entertainment and keynote speeches from trans+ people and SOFFAs.

The True Spirit Conference is open to all who wish to attend and covers issues of interest to a broad spectrum of people, including significant others, friends, families and allies (SOFFAs).

Registration for TSC 2001 will be $60 for advance registration before January 1, 2001 and $90 after January 1. Student registration is $45 at all times; work scholarships are also available. The True Spirit Conference will be held in the Washington Plaza Hotel at 10 Thomas Circle, NW. This central location is convenient to public transportation via the Washington, D.C. subway system and metropolitan bus routes.

For more information about the conference and to obtain a registration form for TSC 2001, visit http://www.amboyz.org/tsc or contact Mike Sanders at hoobieone@aol.com. To make a hotel reservation, call the Washington Plaza Hotel at (800) 424-1140 or (202) 842-1300; use group #9840 when you make reservations. For travel arrangements, please call Bruce Forchheimer at 703-522-3777 ext.3106, or email him at bruce@rttl.com.

~~Two Philadelphia groups:

We Transition Too
For partners of trans people
Meets in Philadelphia
2-4 PM, first Sunday of the Month
at Washington West, 1201 Locust St.

Also, the first hour of WeXist, a group for people assigned female at birth but do not solely identify that way is now open to SOFFAs. WeXist meets 6-8 PM on the second Friday of the month in Philadelphia at William Way, 1315 Spruce St.

**Note: If you have any announcements of interest to SOFFAs, please send them to SOFFAUSA@yahoo.com

miles away. I rarely visited "due to" financial difficulties and transportation challenges. Calls and letters were few and far between because they didn't call or write any more often than I did.

Nine years elapsed between my two most recent visits. I came out to my relatives as trans and transitioned during those years. I lived as a man for seven years before I went home!

My greatest fear was that my one surviving grand parent might die before I visited again. My grandmother celebrated her eighty-first birthday a few days before I dropped by her house.

I'd long suspected that my grandma would never comprehend my transexuality. She steadfastly called me by my birth name for decades after my first name change. One of the first things she said to me when I visited was, " Things don't change around here." That was largely true.

The immediate social environment in which my parents and grandma live is more or less the same as when I was growing up thirty years ago. " The way things are" overshadows any sense of novelty or innovation. Its innate conservatism runs much deeper than political preferences and allegiances.

Gender wasn't a topic of family discussion during my visit. My mother asked me about hair length before my visit. Its shortness was mildly shocking to both mother and grandmother even with advanced notice. I didn't tell them it'd been awhile since I had a haircut. I directed conversation about it toward how much less shampoo I need to use.

My father almost didn't remember my current name when someone asked for me by it on the telephone. He later went out of his way to tell me it was a family name because it was his paternal uncle's name.

Relocation can easily be self-exile for transexuals and other gender non-conformists from conservative communities. It doesn't need to be. ♥

~~Arthur Freeheart is the American Boyz Gay/Bi FTMs & SOs liason.

American Boyz

American Boyz is a support and social group for people who were born female but who feel that is not a complete or accurate assessment of who they are and our significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs). Our membership includes Butches, FTMs, Transmen, FTV's, Gender Outlaws, Transexals, Drag Kings, Boychicks, She-Bears, Shapeshifters, Tomboys, Passing Women, Amazons, Intersexuals, Female Guys, Boss Girls, Transgenderists, Sirs, and our SOFFAs. We provide education, support, social events, newsletters, online forums, local meetings, political action, and a national conference.

To learn more about The American Boyz, send email to amboyz@iximd.com ***or check out the websight at http://office.iximd.com/mailman***

Or send SASE to: The American Boyz, 212A S. Bridge St., Suite 131, Elkton, MD, 21922 FAX: 410-620-2024

The column "View From the SOFFA" is on honeymoon this issue and due to return for the first issue of 2001.

Congratulations L & B!!!!

I Just Don't See It That Way

~by Jodi Burchell

My family has never been overly spiritual. My mother tried to raise us Catholic, but we all stopped actively going to church when I was 16. My youngest brother, who happens to be the most spoiled and angry, found God a couple years ago. Now, I can't talk to him about anything without him quoting some phrase or verse from the bible. On one hand, his faith is a good thing. He has grown up a lot and became more responsible. He does take care of himself and his family. On the other hand, the bible is his only playing field. I hate that. As far as I'm concerned, if you 'have' to argue a point using the bible, then you don't have much of an argument at all.

When my mother told him about my lover being FTM, his reply was that he needed to look in the bible to see how he felt. WHY? "Thou shalt not transition" is not one of the commandments!! Where in the bible does it say that it's a sin to feel like you are a different gender than what you were born? It doesn't! Where does it say that it's wrong to want to be happy? To present the gender that you feel inside? To take hormones to give you different features or to grow body hair? To surgically alter your body? It doesn't.

I was talking to him one day. Somehow, I'm not sure how, we got on the subject of the bible again. And before I could lie and say I needed to get to a meeting, my brother told me that you have to accept who you are or you will never be happy. I can agree with that basic statement. However, he was implying that FTMs need to accept the fact that they are born female and live with it. I choose another interpretation. I think that It's better to accept the fact that they were born female and rather than being angry, resentful, or bitter about it, work to make their lives better. Change their appearance to match the gender of their minds so they can be happy and live the best life possible. What could possibly be so wrong about that?

Then he told me that God puts afflictions on people. Some people are made blind, some lame. In other words, its all God's will. Okay. So, then my response is, "And, if there are ways to medically or surgically fix these problems, to make themselves have a better or perhaps more comfortable life, shouldn't they take full advantage of them?" The answer is Hell yes! Fix it! Make your life better....or at the very least much more bearable!

I didn't argue with him much that day. I was at work and this conversation could have lasted for hours. I was thinking about it later and realized that my brother and I have the same God. His word is good and is there as a guide for us to live by...if you believe in the essence of what the bible is trying to teach. The only difference is in the way we choose to interpret that word. I choose to believe in love and acceptance. Pity that everyone doesn't. ♥