

AS THE TRANNY TURNS

Masculine – Feminine

M. - F.

Businessman – Businesswoman

Biker – Whore

Father – Parent

Man Woman

Miss Understood

Father Anne

Intersex Trans

Transwoman

MY TRANSITION?

Uncle – Auntie

Tony – Anti-Toni

Trans Anne

Annie the Tranny

An to Net's = Antonette

My name is Antonette, without the “I” as in Mary Antonette the *Maryonette* (marionette) “pull the wright (right) strings and I'll do most anything” fame. Not to be confused with Antoinette, as in Marie Antoinette of “the people have no bread, let them eat cake” fame: to show how uninformed and out of touch the Aristocrats were about the plight of the commoner at the start of the French Revolution.

This “Mary” sees many varied and unique paths that lead to, “The Land of Gender Transition and beyond.” Under the Trans umbrella, we are as diverse as we are human. I'm often *queer-ied* (queried) about my transition from “Commoner to Queen.” I'm going to avoid all the very technical and clinical aspects of gender transition and hopefully, shed a little light on my unique path to and through gender transition. To begin with, there is no set time frame for which gender transition is to take place, it can vary considerably from one to another. For me, I've evolved as a person over the years. This evolution of character has involved gender exploration and transition of presentation, from male to female.

Imagine, a hand sliding up inside the body, grab hold, then pull the inside, out. I'm revealing and expressing what has always been, only hidden. Now, the masculine is subdued inside, held down by the “her” chains that bind, so he'll stay hidden, for it's time to let the Feminine shine. The testosterone activated features are now camouflaged by feminine expression. My feminine character is softer and somewhat transparent which, unlike the alpha masculine who beat away anything feminine, will allow and acknowledge some masculine influences of my personality, but you may have to look close, “many hats worn under one rainbow.”

The secrets we keep internalized may eventually start to fester and can cause many psychological problems. These secrets may influence aspects of our lives, with or without

us even being aware they are. They did for me. I had lots of internal confusion, feelings of never quite "fitting in." I was very moody and felt as though I was forever on the outside looking in. My femininity is entangled with my earliest memories, well before I knew anything about gender variance and how babies were made. Sexually, I identified and fantasized as a female right from the "get go". I didn't realize I was "training" for the "other" (girls) team. Imagine my surprise, when I lost my "mental virginity". Once I learned of how babies were made and of my so called "mistake", the embarrassment and sexual confusion created an intense fear in me. A fear of being found out by anybody, to go along with my fear of being alone, which I realized much later in life, was because my manifestation of hearing a voice that would dominate me, especially when alone. This voice would direct me to act out sexual fantasies, at times of a mildly masochistic nature. I later interpreted this voice as that of my male ego, which would exercise its domination over my feminine sexuality, to keep her submissive and hidden. I made a promise to myself; "never tell anyone about these episodes with the voice and all." People, I told myself, would think I was "crazy" and I'd be taken away from my family to be locked-up in "Essondale Mental Hospital". (The name was later changed to "Riverview Mental Hospital," as kids we all knew about "Essondale" and had made up nasty little rhymes, as kids can do). Oh, how I cried and cried. I was always crying inside; as if I had a wound that would never heal. During my "high school years", if I "skipped out" of class, there was a good chance that I had wandered off into the woods to be alone. I would then just sit there by myself and cry. (I've always been very emotional, especially for a "guy".) I flirted with her, Antonette, when I was younger by presenting, at times, a more androgynous look. "Low Spark of High Heeled Boys" takes a "Walk on the Wild Side" 70's sort o' thing. My desire to have children was so strong; I put the feminine all the way back in the closet. (Except on Halloween) I got married and we have two beautiful children.

The next phase of my transition occurred after the breakup of my marriage. I found myself divorced from my family, wiped out financially, with no motorcycle, jobless and soon to be homeless. I realized I hadn't been happy for a long long time and that if I was ever to find happiness and love, I had to start being honest with myself first. Stop the living a lie, attempting to satisfy what others might expect of me. In a way, I felt free to be me, all of me. My life had come crashing down all around me. Yet, in a way I was fortunate to be in a position where I could say "to hell with what anybody else thinks". I felt free and so relieved to finally let out what was held inside, suppressed for as long as I can remember. Secrets I held within, that were eating away at me from the inside out. I like to think of the renewed beginning of my "transition", as an "awakening", where I unveiled a part of me that was always there, only hidden. Looking back, it was as if I embarked on a personal "journey" to re-invent who I was or perhaps find my true self. This, so called adventure might be best described as like a "walk-a-bout", discovering, uncovering and developing all aspects of my character, physically, spiritually and psychologically. I picked up my transition where I'd left off in the 70's, before marriage. I started dressing more androgynous again, eventually pushing the boundaries to gradually become more feminine in my presentation. My writing and creativity appear to be closely linked with my feminine side. Without it being a conscious act, I picked up the pen and started writing again, something I hadn't done since college. Initially, when I let Antonette out of the closet, my relief and joy was immense. I was so happy to have the opportunity and freedom to express my femininity. Unfortunately, as much as I would have liked my family and friends to share

in my newfound joy and be happy for me, they, like most families, let my “Transition” have the opposite influence. I suppose I’d done such a good job of hiding Antonette under the “Biker, hockey/soccer player/coach, Businessman” persona, that to family and friends, Antonette, was so alien and such a shock to their understanding of who I was and how I fit into their reality that they refused to accept her. With virtually no support, living in “Small Town Rural B.C.”, I was victimized again and again, severely testing my faith in humanity. I was about to take my own life when I was saved by Divine Intervention. J.C. descended upon me and walked three days with me. He enlightened me, showed me things normally veiled. He gave me insight and strength of character, so I’d keep going in the face of so much evil and hate. At the time I didn’t know what, who or how this was all happening. Not for another couple of weeks, I was gathering what stuff I had left, before heading out of town. I got jumped by the cops, who beat me and cuffed me so tight that both my wrists were cut all the way around and bleeding, before picking me up and throwing me sideways into the back of a cop car. I prayed to God for help, “please, not again” and “please, make them let me go”. He listened and Jesus let me know it was him, who had walked with me, like in the “Footprints in the Sand” poem, I guess you could say “the light went on”, but that’s another miracle. My journey eventually brought me back to Vancouver and the downtown east-side. I’ve survived extreme prejudice, discrimination, ridicule, humiliation, violence and rape. I worked the streets as a prostitute with a drug addiction. I had been hiding behind alcohol and drugs most of my adult life. By the way, I eventually realized that I hadn’t heard “the voice” ever since I had freed Antonette to be me.

Drugs and Hormones don’t mix; my transition couldn’t go any further as long as I was an addict. I really had no desire to further my transition. I felt trapped in an existence I couldn’t change or get away from. I hoped for death each day. I had tried to get out, from life in the ghetto, with the help from “Peers”, an organization to help and support girls trying to exit from the sex trade. I couldn’t find a decent place to live or get a regular job anywhere. I kicked my “meth” addiction by sleeping and isolating for about four months, but I couldn’t change my overall environment. I became so frustrated with my situation, eventually I went back to working the stroll. I started smoking “rock” again, the drug of choice for the girls working the east-side “Tranny Track”. Drugs and the sex trade seem to go hand in hand.

I was constantly standing up against prejudice, challenging ones bigotry, inconsideration and rude behaviour. I met violence with violence, in other words, I’d “answer the bell”. I often joked that “I lead with my face”. I could handle myself fairly well; at times I resembled a female bodybuilder on steroids, with full sleeve tattoos, protecting myself and my sisters of the street. For a long time I felt cursed because of my femininity, the “so misunderstood” dark cloud followed me around wherever I went. (I used to sign my earlier poems: by; Miss Understood and I’m sure many people still only know me by this, my “street poet” handle). About ten years ago, I felt so beat down and tired of fighting for my feminine existence that I’d had enough. I was throwing in my “heals” and going back to being a guy. I thought I’d had enough after being seriously injured and ripped apart at the hands of the authorities while in custody. I’d spent a couple of weeks in the hospital, handcuffed naked to a hospital bed with two armed guards 24-7. I had an I.V. delivering morphine, stuck in my arm to numb the pain after surgery to piece my flesh back together, much like you would a pot roast to keep it from falling apart. The surgeon was so shocked with what they had done to me, he was afraid to release me back into their custody. Only

when I could handle the pain of standing upright would he release me. The pain medication was also switched to Demerol so I could do some “dead time” before my court date. It took me two months before I could get the bright pink nail polish off my toenails. They don’t have nail polish remover in jail, at least not in the men’s institution. A female guard in the infirmary took pity on me and found some clove oil that worked with lots of elbow grease. I was having my dressing changed twice a day and it was about two and a half months before they were able to remove the tubes (shunts to drain the blood and puss from my wounds while they heal) from my flesh. When I got out of jail, I started giving away all my dresses and outfits. I had experienced so much adversity and violence. I had even survived an attack where I was hit on the head with a sledgehammer. I thought I couldn’t take any more extreme abuse. I only lasted two weeks! I couldn’t resist the seductive call from “makeup” any longer. I just had to do my face, put on a dress, the only pair of heels I had left and go out. I realized, that once I’d let Antonette out, there was no going back. She had tasted freedom and was now too strong. Antonette wasn’t going to settle for “second string”.

Gender transition is not a journey to be taken lightly. The lives of Transwomen and Transmen are often filled with depression and loneliness. Often family, parents, siblings, wives and husbands, won’t accept the transition. Parents may try to “lay down the law”, resist until the bitter end, hoping that it’s “just a phase they’re going through” and “call me, when you finally come to your senses” kind of thing. Their hopes for you didn’t include Gender transition. The marriage often ends in divorce as the spouse married someone of the opposite gender. The rejection from family can hurt so much and appear so cruel. With little support, gender transition may become a daunting task, especially when all alone. I’m very encouraged when I see individuals transitioning sooner at a younger age. Many have the encouragement and support from family and friends, which is so important. Many are transitioning on the job without being fired. Others are being hired while in the middle of their “real life experience”: You must live full time for at least a year in the gender of transition before consideration for S.R.S. (Sexual Reassignment Surgery)

My transition progressed again once I got the opportunity to enter the new “Trans friendly” Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addiction. My regular doctor at the time, Dr. A. Mead, was hired on to be the Dr. for “the Centre”, and April Sumpter-Freitag, who ran the drop-in and dinner for the “T-girls/Queens” in the sex trade, were both instrumental in helping me to access treatment in a safe environment and escape “the ghetto” of the downtown east-side. My daughter’s unconditional love, strength and understanding gave me the incentive and desire to care about life and try again. She let me know she loved me and wanted me in her life. (Depression and despair can play tricks on the mind, where you tell yourself your children are better off without you.) I was in a safe place with help, which enabled me to get my I.D. again; it’s almost impossible to hang on to identification in the environment that I previously existed in. Once I had my I. D., I was able to legally change my name, so that the name and sex matched the gender of the picture I.D. and complete another phase of my transition.

I’ve recently moved from “Dream Weaver”, a transitional house for women located on the Riverview Hospital grounds and supported by Coast Mental Health. (Can everyone see the irony in that) into my own place. Besides substance abuse, I had to learn how to deal with depression and P.T. S. D. (post-traumatic stress disorder), without the use of alcohol or illegal drugs. A little more than a year ago I found myself homeless and struggling with depression and trauma issues. My counsellor, Teri Dean, at the Pender

Clinic, made the call that led to my rescue by Dream Weaver. The environment created by the support staff, Jen Hanson my personal support worker and the Coast Mental Health facility to deal with my many issues, have been invaluable. They are directly responsible for me being where I am today, which is in a safe, affordable place to live and write of my own.

I've been taking testosterone blockers ever since I retired from "The Business" and made a commitment to stop the drugs and stay clean. It's not as important now for my male organ to achieve the same level of performance as when still in the sex trade. The testosterone blockers impede male sexual performance, but this then allows my own body's production of estrogen to have a feminizing effect, as testosterone, otherwise, overpowers estrogen. For health reasons, taking additional estrogen would be too risky for me. To meet the requirements for S.R.S. (M.S.P. of B.C., normally, just covers "bottom surgery" for M to F's and top surgery for F to M's). There is also a psychiatric evaluation done by two M.S.P approved psychiatrists, to be accompanied by letters of verification for your real life experience. They also like to see that you have some sort of support network or person(s). For me, bottom surgery isn't really an option, because of health complications. I'm just trying to be me, all of me, which is a bit of both masculine and feminine characteristics. After all, I was born intersex, with a bit of both male and female parts. I often joke that "I was made for couples". It's been a long and challenging adventure to find my true self, where the journey or process, became as important and personally beneficial, as the outcome. I've experienced real growth as a person both spiritually and psychologically.

My poetry and writings were my most valuable possessions; they're like snapshots that shed various hues of light on what is the essence of my spirit and soul. I wrote on scraps of paper, the backs of flyers, anything I could lay my hands on at that time. Over time, these worn and tattered poems were like old treasure maps that I had stuffed into my zippered binder and carried with me wherever I went, not just when homeless. My writing was like therapy; it helped me to process so much adversity and allowed me to think things through. My pen became my best friend and my poetry became a way for me to get things out, especially when all alone with no one to talk too or lean on. My writing and performing has now filled the space previously occupied by drug addiction and the sex trade. I still find writing very therapeutic and the "drama queen" in me loves to perform my poetry and share bits of my life experience, from a mature Transwoman's perspective.