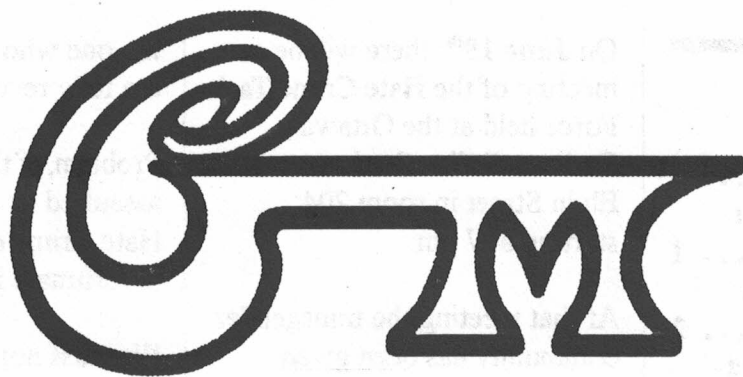


# **Notes From The Underground**



**TG PROUD**

**PARTNERS, PARENTS, FAMILY,  
CHILDREN, FRIENDS**

**A FREE PUBLICATION**  
**Vol. Volume 3/2000**

**June 2000**

# Notes From The Underground

A FREE PUBLICATION

## TG Proud - Partners, Parents, Family, Children, Friends

### CONTENTS

**We Need You - There President's Report** ..... 1  
**Thank You for being You**  
 by Jan Hobbs ..... 1  
**My Montreal Adventure**  
 by Lynn L. .... 2  
**Just Some thought about going beyond your closet**  
 by Joanne Law ..... 5  
**Once Again Transgender Power**  
 by Margo Ross ..... 6  
**A Question of Honesty**  
 by Kaitlin Acres ..... 6  
**Did You Know** ..... 7  
**Up Coming Events** ..... 7



**WE NEED YOU - THERE**

On June 19<sup>th</sup> there will be a meeting of the Hate Crime Task Force held at the Ottawa-Carleton Police Station on Elgin Street in room 204 starting at 7 pm.

At that meeting the transgender community has been given 1 hour to share our concerns, assist their members in understanding just what this term "transgender" means and to see us as more than just one person but as members of families, parents, grandparents and people in relationships.

**"SO WHAT YOU SAY** - First this opportunity has been a long time coming and has been made possible because Joanne Law had the courage to attend and then NOT go away.

Secondly Jan Hobbs realized a very important but often dismissed truth, that when a non transgender person is out with their transgender friend, partner, family member they are

the one who is at risk as they are fully revealed.

Problem, if they were verbally assaulted or attacked is that a Hate Crime or just an unfortunate incident?

We must not permit others, be they Gay, Lesbian or Straight to see us as individuals in isolation, it is a lie and it opens up the option of dismissing you, your community and your family. **Be Seen, Be Present, Bring Your Family.**

*There will be NO media contact permitted during the presentation and individuals who do not want to be photographed will be protected.*

**Thank You for being You**  
 by Jan Hobbs

As a woman, who has been accepted as a member of the transgendered community I have been given a unique opportunity to learn more about

myself. I have grown and become more confident in my appearance, feelings and self worth. The ladies and their partners have enabled me to explore what is valuable to my survival....ME!

Prior to meeting and talking with you all I felt I was invisible and was only identified as someone's mother. In this community I am recognized as an individual whose opinions are listened to and valued.

In my dedication ritual to the WICCAN pathway I was asked "Who am I?" My response listed all sorts of qualities and ended with the following: "I now have the ability to be the person I always was but never allowed the freedom to know." May each of you be allowed that freedom to know yourselves.

I wish to thank each and everyone of you for allowing me to live, learn and grow as a person. Most of all I want to say thank you for accepting me for who I am. God Bless You All

### **My Montreal Adventure by Lynn L.**

As you may know, I took a trip to Montreal in early November for my Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). This article was written to share my reasons for

having SRS, my reasons for choosing Montreal, and to highlight my experiences there.

The first question is why SRS? The biggest step for me was transition, and I could likely have lived without surgery. For me, this was the "icing on the cake". It brought the whole process to completion and allowed me to finally match my body with my mind. I no longer have to worry about having an M on my drivers licence or health card. I no longer have to worry about "hiding" certain parts when wearing a bathing suit or changing in a public place. I no longer have to worry about what a potential partner would think if they discovered I had the wrong body parts down below. I am now free to be myself in all situations.

So why Montreal and why Dr. Menard? There are a number of reasons. Dr. Menard is one of the top rated SRS surgeons in North America. Because he is located close to Ottawa, I had visited the clinic and residence a number of times. This helped me to understand his approach to the whole process, and to get to know some of those who have had surgery there. Everyone I know who has gone there has been happy with the results, both cosmetic and functional, as well as the care they received.

I especially liked the total

approach they take in caring for their patients. Many of the surgeons will discharge the patient to a hotel room for the second week of recovery. Dr. Menard has a different philosophy - he has set up a recovery residence so there is always a knowledgeable staff member available to assist you. As a bonus, the closeness to Ottawa made my travel there and back easier and allowed my friends to visit me during my stay.

I arrived on Sunday afternoon - Halloween to be exact. I must say, the new residence really impressed me. It's a large house on a secluded island outside of Montreal. There must be at least 10 bedrooms, 2 kitchens, 6 bathrooms and an indoor pool, all kept immaculately clean by the warm, friendly staff. The grounds around the Residence are well kept, calm and peaceful - a great place to relax and prepare for the upcoming changes.

I was a little nervous, but had an advantage - I had already been emailing two of the other people staying there and the person staffing the Sunday day/evening shift was a friend of mine (she was the first Transsexual I had ever talked to).

One of the best things about the "Montreal Experience" is the bonding that usually happens between the (usually) 4 people

who are there for SRS each week. You are all sharing the same experience and help each other make it through (it's 4 months later and I still keep in touch with the other 3 people who were there with me). Because of my "late" arrival (many people arrive the Thursday or Friday before so they can visit Montreal or relax), I missed out on some of the bonding. I didn't mind though, as it gave me some time to do some final inner reflection and preparation.

Another wonderful thing about the experience is the food at the Residence. It's not fancy, but it is good, hearty, tasty food. If I had stayed there much longer, I would have gained far too much weight.

I was able to relax until Monday evening, when I had to start preparing for my upcoming surgery. The first thing you have to do is pack a small bag for your stay at the Clinic. The second thing you have to do is clear out your system with enemas - one in the afternoon and one in the evening before your surgery. Not my idea of fun, but much better than drinking the NuLitley that some surgeons use.

My roomie and I were sent over to the Clinic in a taxi on Monday evening (our surgeries were scheduled for Tuesday). For those who haven't been there, they put two patients per room

and each room has it's own TV and Telephone. Also, there is a small safe for each patient to store their valuables.

Once I was settled into the Clinic, I received a rather pleasant surprise. One of my good friends from days gone by (pre-transition) found out I was having surgery and managed to track me down and call. I really appreciated the thought and effort behind it.

I had three major complaints about the Clinic. The first was their TV's. Ours was broken and the one from the other room had an antenna that would not stay in place (we "borrowed" the one from the other room). The second complaint was the beds. They are HARD. I really had a tough time sleeping in them - especially after surgery as we were forced to lie on our backs (something I cannot easily do for long periods of time). The third complaint was the nurses. Most of them were good, but a couple of them had an attitude and the language barrier (they did not speak very good English) didn't help matters.

We didn't find out which one of us were going in first until after we were checked into the Clinic. Unfortunately, I ended up being third on the Tuesday schedule - after my roomie's SRS and someone else's breast implant repair. I would have preferred to

go first, but managed to doze my way through most of the morning (we had been given sleeping pills the night before and I was still feeling the effects of them up until it was time to go up for my surgery).

I don't remember much about Tuesday night, other than the lack of a clock in the room, and the nurses stopping by every few hours to check on us. If there is one thing I would do differently it would be to make sure I had a clock or watch close by. You are only allowed pain killers every 4 hours and you have to ask for them. I never knew when it was time to ask and hated bugging the nurses all the time.

Wednesday morning I was feeling amazingly well, although I am certain that had more to do with good pain killers than anything else. It didn't take long for that to change, as I was hit with rather extreme gas pains, something that all patients experience to some degree. Unfortunately, there is not much you can do about it while lying in bed.

Thursday was my first attempt to get out of bed. I made the mistake of drinking Orange Juice in the morning and when I tried to get up, my stomach reacted. Needless to say I ended up lying down for a while before trying again. I eventually did make it up and sat in a chair for a while (I

needed to get out of that uncomfortable bed). Getting up also helped ease the gas pains. By the end of the day on Thursday I had managed to take a couple of walks around the nursing station.

Thursday night was a little better as I was able to move a bit and strategically place some pillows to ease the pain of lying in bed. The only major problem I had was with my catheter - it wasn't draining into the bag. By 3am it was backing up so much it was actually leaking out at the joint. At that point I had the nurse disconnect the bag completely so I could drain it in the bathroom.

Friday was a busy day. After breakfast, I took my first shower in 4 days. After that, I started packing up my things as we were moving back to the Residence that day. When Dr. Menard arrived, he removed the outer packing and checked the healing (all was OK). That left a short amount of time for us to have lunch and finish packing before heading off to the Residence.

I should mention the bruising. It can be, and usually is, quite extensive. There are two main causes - the method he uses to loosen the skin away from the areas he is working on and the way you are placed in the stirrups while he is operating. Fortunately there is little pain associated with them and as time

goes by, they fade away.

As soon as we arrived back at the Residence, I received a phone call. As the week went by, there was a running joke that if the visitor's line rang, it was for me (of course I was staying in the room that was furthest away from the phone). As expected, I had quite a few calls and visitors while I was there, which made my stay even more enjoyable.

The pain I was expecting to experience never really happened. Many of the pain killers I took at the clinic were to combat the pain of the bed I was sleeping in. While at the Residence, I only took the occasional Tylenol to help - especially at night. Others haven't been as lucky, so I guess it varies from patient to patient.

Bright and early on Monday it was time to remove the packing - and it was about time. The stitches holding it in place were getting very tight and at times, painful. It was a relatively painless process, and the only really uncomfortable part was the removal of the catheter. The nurse then showed us how to douche, dilate and clean up. From this point on, I settled into a regular routine of eat, sleep and dilate.

Dilating turned out to be less of a problem than I had feared. It

just takes patience and the ability to relax the right muscles. Even going to the bathroom was easier than I expected - just sit down, relax and let nature take its course. One surprise was the "electric shocks" or "bities" as one of our group was fond of calling them. They come at the most unusual times and can be sharp enough to make you jump. I found them especially bad if I slept in the wrong position for too long.

Another item to watch out for is mood swings. Going off hormones before surgery was bad, but it got worse for me as my body re-adjusted to taking the Estrace afterwards. My moods swung from happy to depressed in the matter of minutes. Not something I would want to experience again.

Before I knew it, it was Thursday morning and time for everyone to head home. I had made three new friends over the past 2 weeks and saying goodbye to them was not easy. My ride showed up at Noon, and soon I was on my way home. Of course, prior to that I had shed quite a few tears as I packed up and said goodbye to everyone.

It has now been 6 months since my surgery and I'm almost fully healed. My energy levels are finally back to "normal" and I have only a couple of small stubborn spots that my Doctor

says should heal soon. Needless to say, I will be very happy when it is ALL healed. Was it worth it? For me, the answer is a resounding YES.

### **Just some thoughts about going beyond your closet** by Joanne Law

Did you ever notice when taking the bus that women sit with women and men sit with men? The bus could be full and the same scenario takes place. I take the bus often and when I am sitting by the window seat I usually have a lady sit beside me. When I see an open seat with a lady sitting by the window and the bus is quite full, I will sit next to her. It's a normal thing to do. So if you are ever confident about taking the bus as your true self sit by the person that you relate to. Another thing, don't bath in perfume or talc. It's a small place and some people are allergic to strong aromas.

When driving your car and still not confident about your identity and you come to a stop light, do not pull up beside the other car like you were parking it. Pull up along the side so that the person in the drivers seat of the other car has to twist their head around more than usual to look to see who is driving. Even if there is a passenger sitting in that seat it's still awkward for them to look too. Basically they have to look through the door frame centre

post. When you do that they won't even bother to look at you.

When high school kids are driving around in their cars and they notice something different about the person in your drivers seat, either try to drive a little faster (don't exceed the speed limit) or slower. Pretend that you are looking for something in your purse beside you, or turn at the next intersection.

The next time you are sitting at your kitchen table, place your hand on a table and spread your thumb and fingers flat on the table. You will notice a very wide hand with short fingers, now take your thumb and curl it under the palm of your hand. Noticed what happened? Your hand just became smaller and your fingers became longer. It takes time and practice of this illusion but the next time you are in public, sitting in the fast food section or resting your poor feet, remember this illusion. It eliminates that masculine hand.

When you are walking in a mall or along the side walk, and a lady smiles at you, smile back and keep on walking. **DO NOT NOD** (that a male thing). Always have a smile for the sales person and a sense of humour.

If you are not confident about using the proper washroom yet, don't have too much to drink before your excursion.

Get to know your surroundings for that safety factor and know how to get to your car just in case you become nervous, putting yourself in a lowered confidence level.

Watch the people in the mall and try to emulate their moves; sitting, walking, drinking coffee, taking money from your purse to purchase a item, looing at clothes on the racks, or just resting on the park bench. Look at the mannerisms of the people you want to relate to.

Don't wear too much make-up as this is a dead give away. Pick up a how-to books on fashion, make-up etc. at a garage sales. Buy several books at a time of other issues too, and buy in bulk. Put that special book in the middle, make an offer, people hate to re-pack books into the boxes.

Measure your shoulders (at the back), chest and waist and record the measurements on a piece of paper and keep it in your wallet or in your purse. The next time you are thinking about purchasing a skirt blouse, dress or sweater use these measurements for your own safety. Add a size and a half from a male shoe to a female shoe, Most of the time it works. A lot of good deals are found at the thrift stores.

All these little things adds up to your own comfort level and enjoyment of being who you are for the first time. Good Luck.

## **O N C E     A G A I N TRANSGENDER POWER**

by Margo Ross

If you are a student of TG history then you will know that the transgender community has a long and outstanding history of putting its foot down and saying no more.

Be that at: Stonewall", as a religious native American leader, in the Hate Crime Task Force or as a series of non disclosed political leaders.

Well we have just done it again. Bill C-23, the equality bill designed to provide Gays and Lesbians with fair and equal access to the resources and benefits of Government was never seen as the "marriage bill" but did move Canada toward that reality by acknowledging same sex partner relations. Yes there have recently been several attempts by the GB community to push for the marriage right.

From the perspective of the courts and the Government that would be extending a right previously not held to these groups of individuals, not an easy task in law.

Now arrives the TG equalizer, in

the case of a TG person who is married and under goes sex re-assignment surgery they move from a heterosexual designation to that of a same sex partner designation.

PROBLEM, now the government and the courts are in the position of removing a basic and achieved right that of marriage from both the TG person and their non Transgender partner.

The courts have a long history of resisting the removal of basic rights and the TG component of this process may just be the factor which ensure full access to marriage for the TGLB Community in Canada. So watch the three cases go forward and see your community battle wrong one more time.

## **A QUESTION OF HONESTY by Kaitlin Acres**

I spent about 55 years not even knowing the truth about myself so I suppose honesty was not an issue until last June when I finally connected to the web and accidentally discovered the term Transgender. A light came on and I realized I was not some sort of a freak that had to bury completion for female expression to be considered a sane acceptable person. The question of honesty was now a real one. In particular, with whom did I need to be honest about myself.

For years, in working with people, I had been saying that to have a happy fulfilled life one had to know oneself, and to accept oneself. Be honest with your self. I was a bit of an authority on this because my own unadmitted problems of not fully knowing myself, nor fully accepting myself. It was not all that bad because there was much about myself that I liked and affirmed. I just had to keep from thinking about those desires that I did not understand but knew they had to be denied. It's amazing how much time and energy that wastes.

Now when I look in the mirror while shaving in the morning I see the male presentation that is an OK person, no Greek God, but OK. Rather than denying the "dark side" I know what I see is simply incomplete. When I look in the mirror and see my femme presentation I know this too is me and OK. Definitely no Helen of Troy for sure, but still it's me and that's just fine.

But I don't just live to myself. As a human being I am a social being. Who else do I need to be honest with. First was my wife. I am lucky, this new information just answered some puzzling questions. Now that my complete self is expressed in our marriage our life together is even better. (I wish that could be true for everyone but human relationships are not that simple.)

A community of two is too small to satisfy the needs of the vast majority of people. It wasn't long before my feminine dimension needed to "get out of the house" This is a much more difficult decision. Fortunately I discovered Gender Mosaic, a safe community for my complete self.

Kaitlin stepped into a larger community for the first time at the Annual meeting. While business meetings are not the joy of my life, it was a very significant, positive experience for me. My wife and I decided not to go to the "Coral Reef" as we had much to talk about back in our motel room. Sunday Kaitlin spent a few hours walking around taking in Winterfest. The experience made the six hour round trip worth while.

It has been a good beginning. How much further I need to go will be discovered. I can now be honest with myself and a significant number of other people. Our family has grown and now live their own lives some distance away. I don't think they need to know about Kaitlin, and I don't, at least for the moment, need them to know. This kind of honesty is needed but need not be universal with everyone.

This is a bit of my story, it may or may not be helpful for others.

## Did You Know?

The Gender Mosaic, PO Box 7421, Vanier Ontario. K1L 8E4 can be used by all members for their packages, delivery of books or magazines. I will pick them up and get them to you some way. Just let me know. Thanks Margo 770-1945

## Upcoming Events

- GM Support & discussion Group fourth Thursday of each month contact Margo

- TS Support & discussion Group - **DUE TO LACK OF CONSISTENT PARTICIPATION IT IS ON HOLD BUT IF YOU COME - IT WILL HAPPEN** - contact Gwen 828.7988

- Partner's Support & discussion Group **DUE TO LACK OF CONSISTENT PARTICIPATION IT IS ON HOLD BUT IF YOU COME - IT WILL HAPPEN** - contact Jan 236.9110

## UP COMING MEETINGS

- July BBQ AND GIANT SWAP ( CLOTHES, SHOES, HATS, WIGS, JOBS)

August - TBA

September - Therapist

October - Building Community Links with local GBLT groups

For Member Feedback on any GM linked services talk to Lynn, Gwen or Randi

## Executive Committee

President: Margo Ross  
ethics@magma.ca

First VP: Lynn Nicole Lefevre  
lynn99@sympatico.ca

Second VP: Gwyneth M.  
gwyneth@toadware.on.ca

Secretary: Jan  
janhobbs@mail.com

Treasury: Doreen  
doreen34@hotmail.com

Ombudsperson- Kaitlin Acres  
koolacres@yahoo.ca

Committee Chairs  
Library - Lynn Nicole Lefevre  
Membership -  
Newsletter- Margo Ross &  
Linda S.

## Gender Mosaic

P.O. Box 7421 Vanier,  
Ontario, K1L 8E4  
770 - 1945

Email gender\_mosaic@  
geocities.com

Next Edition  
September 2000