

## Speak Out

changed many of my life plans, several of my many points of view, none of my values or beliefs, or my sexual orientation.

I would like to say at this point that the use of the term mentioned prior has caused many of the people in the trans community to shout at me and attempt to intimidate me. I have met, I believe, the people that Sutree Irving mentioned in her letter in your Dec. 17 issue.

It is my intention to state here that I do not associate with the few angry transsexuals that bring their male-oriented, heterosexually-oriented perspectives to the Lesbian Community Project meetings. I personally have little tolerance for bad manners and people who have little or no knowledge of the subject.

When I started my transition, I knew exactly what I was getting into, or so I thought. I lost most of my lesbian friends almost immediately, after eight years of commitment to our cause, my woman left me.

Alongside all the medical requirements, and the vast array of physical issues, waited the psychological impact. I had to learn to live in a straight world with all these straight people. The only straight people I had known as friendly were my parents.

But of all the traumatic occurrences that were my "lesson plan," one situation affected me the most and probably always will. In that "special way of knowing" that all of us carry just under the surface, I have been able to identify people who are "family." In my past, I had been able to "greet" my sisters in the public eye with the non-verbal communication that attracts gay people to one another. I felt that internal signal one afternoon after returning to town. The closer we walked toward one another, the bigger I smiled.

As our paths crossed and I said hello, I was looking into the face of a very angry lesbian insulted by my eagerness. I saw the same aggression I would have produced in my lesbian years.

I was suddenly reminded of what I am to this woman, and I honored her indignation. What she was seeing, as I backed off and apologized, was some strange male being way too friendly.

Yes, I know this movie! I know exactly what she was experiencing, the hurtful intentions in her words, the reasons for her reaction to this perceived intrusion and the hypocrisy of my own separatism in the past. It is the saddest thing I must do now. I feel the weight of this estrangement regularly. I have missed the interactions, the greetings and the camaraderie of my community.

But I won't infringe on the parameters that make up the boundaries I have so proudly defended in the past. There are too many transpersons out there who will gladly do it, and in doing so, relive the anger and betrayal for me. I will not apologize for them. But I will ask the

women who feel threatened by this infiltration, please do not take the actions of a few (who for whatever reason feel that they have the right to be there) as the sum of all the rest of us who honor the code.

Those people who come defiantly at you have learned that behavior as a male coming from a male perspective. It is my opinion that those people have not truly experienced discrimination or estrangement, in the form that a woman who becomes lesbian has. It is in these settings that those people find rejection, and the indignation they display rises from their earliest teachings that a man must never be refused.

Throughout my life I have just wanted to be all right with myself. Some days I feel hypocritical about the changes I have made. I feel that the position I hold as a heterosexual, and coming from the gay culture, has made me privy to information that I would otherwise not have access to. I have experienced both sides of the human stereotype, both sides of the human condition. I do not know if this is a blessing or a curse; but it is my life, and it is pretty good.

In closing, I would like to thank Amazon Knightly for coming to my defense in the Jan. 7 *Just Out* edition of letters to the editor. I am one of the transpersons she has met and I felt very welcomed by her. I wanted to let her know personally, then decided to thank her here and voice the rest of my thoughts on the matter with the community.

I have felt the anguish of exclusion. I miss my lesbian ways. She has been gracious in her acknowledgment that, regardless of my exterior, my inner self has not changed. Where people once saw a lesbian, they now see a man. A man with morals and values. They see a gentleman and a father. I can walk the streets without fear of homophobic attack; I blend with the crowd and no longer get wild-eyed stares from parents who fear for their child's safety. I feel sad that this could not have happened in my former image. Too bad there is such pressure to conform. I would have liked to be honest about my whole self, and not just the one people think they see.

JESSE HARRIS  
Vancouver, Wash.

### Let's end this war now

TO THE EDITOR:

I can't believe the letters I've been reading lately in this publication. This new bantering back and forth about trans issues and lesbian issues seems like some kind of war. This last letter I read, though, crossed the line. Morgan LeFey's letter in the Jan. 21 issue—telling all lesbians to keep our women-only spaces reserved to potlucks—was disturbing.

Many lesbians spend most of our free time having housewarming parties. I think LeFey's picture of lesbians checking out each other's "panties" at the door for undesirables is grossly uninformed. How disturbing to refer to grown women as wearing panties. The word *panties* seems more appropriate when used to describe a 5-year-old—not to mention some of us dykes have never worn panties in our lives.

I think that women-only spaces are vital and important. I think that if a transgender person identifies as female, a women-only space should include them. If I were at a women-only space that included nudity and saw a transgender person with a penis, I might feel unsafe and threatened. This reaction is an acceptable one for me to have and is a valid one. Women-only spaces will exist as long as women exist.

I have never looked down on anyone in my life and have always tried to accept what I don't understand. I feel that I still don't know as much as I would like about transgender issues, even though my best friend identifies as transgender and I have spent almost every day with her for the past six years, including sharing a romantic relationship with her for awhile. I have never heard a lesbian threaten or hurt a person who identifies as transgender, although I wouldn't doubt that there are women like that out there.

I don't like it when people assume certain things about me. People who try to push their ideas or identities on me repel me. I want to identify as anything and reserve the right to change my mind at a moment's notice. I don't change my speech pattern every time I hear a new politically correct phrase or word.

I think that it's important to recognize that if we are adding transgender issues to our diverse culture more openly, we can't be destructive to what is already there. We can add to, without making enemies of each other.

It bothers me to think of lesbians and transgender people in our community hating each other. I picture religious bigots picking up this paper and having themselves a good laugh at us. And as far as the terminology of "trans women" and "nontrans women," I'm not comfortable calling myself a "non" anything, because that denotes I'm lacking something.

I don't believe that I am a more "acceptable and true" woman because I was born with female anatomy. I used to notice straight women trying to make me feel like I wasn't a "real" woman because I never wore dresses or tried to make men notice me.

There is so much crap coming from everywhere, isn't there? I hope this war ends soon!

(NAME WITHHELD)  
Portland

## Notables

### Goodbye, Bob

Longtime Portland art collector Robert Pitchlynn was found unresponsive and unconscious in his bed by a roommate at 4:50 a.m., Jan. 1, at his home on the 4000 block of Northeast Seventh Avenue. When emergency aid arrived minutes later, Pitchlynn was declared dead at the scene he helped create. He was 57. Cause of death: coronary artery disease, combined with pre-existing medical complications.

Bob Pitchlynn was many things. A father figure. A keeper of secrets. A man who carried the excesses of the counterculture within his own excessive body. A jolly martyr to good times.

Many who knew Bob remember him fondly. And you will be amazed at who knew him, including an impressive lineup of stars from Nico to River Phoenix to Keanu Reeves. Like

the Monks back in 1993, those who entered Portland's creative inner circle—that coterie surrounding Kerr, Snellman, Monlux and Van Sant—were inevitably proffered an irresistible challenge: "You must meet Bob."

Many made their way to Northeast Portland to do just that. Not merely because Bob had the goods (which was true in more ways than one), but because Bob had the spirit. A Benedictine spirit. A catholic spirit in the broad definition of the word. A Portland spirit.

Bob provided a tolerant safe haven, a home. And all who entered came to love Bob for his generosity, for his devotion to bacchanal, for his wicked sense of play, for the unbridled mess of monkhood he had become.

In a memorable scene from *My Own Private Idaho*, a film loosely based around a Falstaffian character named Bob Pigeon, Portland director

Gus Van Sant staged a celebration around the death of his antihero. Fiction mirrors reality. On the afternoon of Sunday, Jan. 30, a party was held at O'Connor's in downtown Portland to mark the passing of the real-life Bob Pitchlynn. Hell bank notes were burned, poet Walt Curtis ranted and raved, Michael Menace juggled, and local prop master Greg McMickle read from the diaries of Chief Peter Pitchlynn, a Choctaw Indian from whom Bob descended and whose birthday it was that very day.

With the sharing of drumsticks, alcohol and a few dozen of Bob's infamous Polaroid snapshots, it was an event the legendary party animal would surely have savored.

■ Written by JIM CROTTY, editor of the alternative travel Internet site [www.monk.com](http://www.monk.com), where the Monks' interview with Bob Pitchlynn can be read.

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