

see signs of gender questioning. Although Steve had told Ani that he occasionally cross-dressed, about two years into the relationship, he started to do it more often. Ani introduced him to a trans woman she knew, and eventually Steve came out as Theresa.

For Ani, Steve's transition to Theresa was a relief. "I could go back to being dyke-identified," she says.

Pam Rahn of St. Helens introduced Markie Acevedo to cross-dressing five years ago, shortly after they started dating. "Because I like to dress up and play drag queen, I handed him one of my black vinyl corsets," says Pam, 57. "When he put that on, he went into a different space. He really liked it. For a year and a half, I thought that was fun. I said, I've got a drag queen. But then as time went on, he kept going."

Pam and Markie have had a hard time of it, almost breaking up last Halloween. An advertising representative for *Just Out*, Markie uses the female pronoun for herself, and most of her friends refer to her as female. One of the compromises Pam and Markie have come to in their relationship is that Pam still refers to Markie using male pronouns. Markie identifies as transgender and is not taking hormones or considering surgery. If she does, Pam is not sure she will stay.

Pam says: "I am a person who believes people should be who they really are.... If it means we have to break up, I want you to be who you are. That's my highest value in life. You have to express yourself. I'm just saying, if you go there, I'm not going with you."

Sue Bloomfield of La Grande had been dating David for about two years when things started to shift. "We spent a lot of time talking," says Sue, 53. "We had a whole yearlong conversation about what it's like to be a woman and a man. I heard a longing in his voice when David was talking to me about the fact women got to wear things that felt nice."

Sue bought him a woman's satin nightshirt and, she says, "Gradually Angela became known to David."

Who am I?

Partners who face their significant other changing genders may have to rethink their own identity. That may mean redefining one's own sexual orientation. For

someone who has lived a traditional life in the context of a heterosexual marriage, this can be especially jarring.

Portland psychotherapist Reid Vanderburgh says people who are flexible by nature are more likely to accept transition. Those who have a rigid worldview are likely to have a harder time with it.



Pam Rahn (left) introduced her partner Markie Acevedo to cross-dressing five years ago. Markie now identifies as transgender, though without hormones or surgery, her appearance hasn't changed much since 1999 (inset).

Brenda identified pretty strongly as a dyke when she met Devan. She was involved with Lesbian Avengers and was a part of the Amazon Dragons boat team. Letting go of that dyke identity was difficult.

"I was in love with the culture," she says. "The bond I saw between women is what I wanted. I also loved the camaraderie, the support, the family."

Although she and Devan both identify as queer, she knows they are perceived as a straight couple by strangers. "I live what appears to be a heterosexual life," she states. "I lost that little bit of thrill of walking into a restaurant and being a lesbian couple."

Even though Pam identifies as bisexual, she

still had a hard time when her partner, Markie, came out as transgender. Pam had been in lesbian relationships for 17 years when she decided she wanted to be with a man again. Markie fit the bill. "When I met him, he was a full-on guy—mustache, lifting weights, speed skating, macho, hot stuff," she says.

Markie thought that because Pam was bisexual, her transitioning would not be a problem. "The only women I was ever attracted to were butch," Pam says, "and here he was all femmie, flitting around in skirts. I never dated a woman in a skirt."

Even though they still struggle from time to time, Pam and Markie credit couples therapy, a competent therapist and their deep love and spiritual connection with saving their relationship.

Relationships transition

One of the biggest challenges for couples is that the relationship does change. Wolmark says, "A butch/femme dynamic is not the same as a male/female dynamic."

As a feminist, Brenda was afraid that her relationship with Devan would end up like some of her previous relationships with men. "In the past I would get into a relationship with a guy and I would change," she remembers. "I would turn into someone they wanted me to be. I would not like who I was. I was afraid that was going to happen again with Devan because he was becoming a man." She says that has not happened, and she even credits herself with turning Devan into a feminist.

Now that David is Angela, Sue says, "I now have someone who understands how much time it takes to get ready if you want to look nice." She jokes that she has a spouse who understands the concept of fun shoes. Sue also says her partner sees the world differently, closer to how she sees the world.

Both Angela and Theresa are much more social than their male selves. "David needed time away from people every single day," Sue says. David was depressed and often suicidal. With a low dose of estrogen, that went away.

Continued on Page 26.

Resources for significant others



TransFamilies, an organization for family and friends of trans people, meets 1 p.m. on third Saturday of each month at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 1126 S.W. Park Ave. 503-228-7219.

PFLAG—Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—maintains a resource library and meets 7 p.m. on second Tuesday of each month at 1838 S.W. Jefferson St. 503-232-7676 or www.pflagpdx.org.

Basic Rights Oregon offers a list of trans-friendly counselors who have been recommended by trans folks. 503-222-6151 or melissa@basicrights.org.

Coqsure is a group for Portland-area trans guys. It holds social gatherings 6 p.m. on first Sunday of each month at Barley Mill Pub, 1629 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. Significant others and children are welcome. There is also a mailing list and a support/social group for significant others. coqsure-owner@onelist.com or groups.yahoo.com/group/pdxsoffa.

Love Makes a Family offers family peer support groups for sexual minority families in Portland and Vancouver, Wash. Each group meets monthly, and child care and children's activities are available. 503-228-3892 or www.lmfamily.org.

Northwest Gender Alliance is a Portland-based social, support and educational group for individuals who desire to explore and express another gender. Some events are open to partners. 503-533-8787 or www.nwgapdx.com.

Web sites

- Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere: www.colage.org.
- Esprit: www.espritconf.com.
- Femme SOFFA: femfemfire.proboards20.com.
- FTM International: www.ftmi.org.
- Gender Education and Advocacy: www.gender.org.
- TransFamily: www.transfamily.org.
- Transster: www.transster.com.
- True Spirit: www.true-spirit.org.

it's ME!
wigs

breast forms, bras & more!
trans friendly
cosmetic makeovers & consultation
susan johnson owner/fitter
2041 ne burnside, gresham
503/491-5110 ~ www.shopitsme.com

PERSONAL CONCIERGE

Finally! A Personal Concierge Service available in Portland!

Your time is valuable and we aim to help you increase your free time by doing things you don't have the time to do!

- PERSONAL ASSISTANT
- COMPUTER TUTOR
- WEB/GRAPHIC DESIGN
- TRAVEL PLANNING

See all our services at:
www.Go4Updx.com **GO**
(503) 957-9792 PDX

raindrop laboratories
www.rdrop.com

Connecting Portland to the World since 1985
Portland's oldest locally owned ISP!

Internet access - dialup & high speed DSL
Web hosting Unix shell access
Spam filtering Static IP addresses

Affordable: \$5-15/mo dialup, \$20 DSL

Visit www.rdrop.com or dial in for details!
56K/ISDN access and signup: 503-972-0365

You can even connect to a real live human at. 503-574-4195
Gay owned and operated

HURRY - OFFER ENDS AUG 30TH
\$15.00 OFF
EVERY WINDOW TREATMENT

Looking For Quality On A Budget?

Lowest Guaranteed Prices!

Budget Blinds
Specializing in HunterDouglas

- Free Estimates
- Free Installation
- 90 days same as cash on approved credit

Serving Oregon & SW Washington
Call Now! 503-590-4333
Salem 503-362-1643