

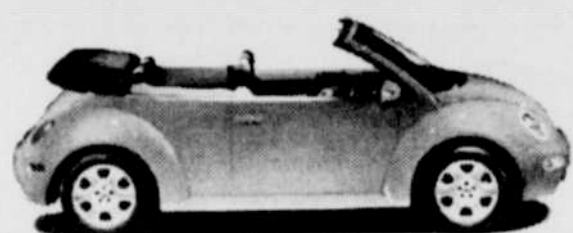
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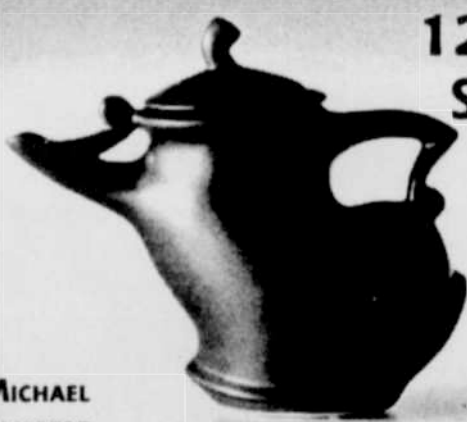


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NORTHWEST news

A WORK IN PROGRESS

Southern Oregon trans woman begins her life anew

by Michael Burdick

Even as a toddler, Laura Calvo knew she was different. But the Catholic tradition she grew up in did not allow deviation from the rules.

"You're scripted into meeting certain expectations despite yourself. I'm left-handed, and they gave me hell for that," she says.

Calvo, a trans woman and horseshoer living in Medford, is serving as chairwoman of the 2004 Lambda Awards Celebration, which will be held Jan. 10. She lives as a woman only part of the time, still using the name Logan when identifying as a man.

To all appearances, Calvo lived until 1995 as a typical American male. Having worked as a Josephine County sheriff for 16 years, Calvo had chalked up a gleaming record of public service, even serving George Bush. "I was on his presidential security detail when he was vice president. I took him fishing. I was there when Gerald Ford was shot at in San Francisco, part of that detail as a paramedic."

As a submachine gun instructor, Calvo was on the cover of *National Tactical Officers Association* magazine, perched outside a flying helicopter. "I've done every macho thing there was."

Then a storage unit was broken into, starting a chain of events that would transform Calvo's life. The unit contained clothes, pictures and other personal effects she secretly kept and used from time to time to express the female aspects of her identity.

"I kept coming back to it, then kept trying to get rid of it. You throw everything away. It's called purging. People will purge, try to repress it for periods of time. I got tired of doing that—having to start all over again. I got a storage unit in a different county, in a different city. I figured I'd be steps ahead with the storage unit."

There was a call from the police. "They said they'd found my things. I said, 'When can I pick them up?'"

But it wasn't that simple. Calvo was told not to come back to work. "They set up a psychiatric review board. They refused to give me my property. They investigated me for crimes." And firing a person purely for being trans was perfectly legal.

Calvo was discouraged by the whole affair and remained in the closet to everyone but her wife and a few close friends for five more years. "I kind of went underground again, thinking, 'God this is horrible!' About a year ago I suddenly had an epiphany: This is just me, so now I've got to do something about it. So I started the process of coming out."



Laura Calvo is busy planning the 2004 Lambda Awards Celebration, which will be held Jan. 10 in Medford

Calvo's wife had accidentally discovered the secret earlier. Though it was hard on the family, she has been supportive throughout the coming-out process. "We still have ups and downs, we have to balance a marriage, balance finding out who the hell I am. We definitely want to stay married. At this point in life I'm the happiest I've ever been. I'd like to stay this way for as long as I can."

A year ago, Calvo began her life anew and has not looked back. "I'm not gonna hide anymore, I'm not hurting anyone...I just want to live my life. So I started to get more involved with support groups, rebuilding my life."

In May, Calvo heard about a Basic Rights Oregon campaign to persuade the state Legislature to protect queer people from job discrimination. She contacted the organization with her story. "Before I knew it, I got a letter from BRO saying they'd really like me to come testify in person. I talked it over with my wife, decided it was right thing to do."

Calvo had no idea how much attention her testimony would generate. "I figured there'd be press on it, but it's just a little rule committee thing. I figured I'd be lost in the crowd. Unfortunately that was not the case—well, fortunately. I came home Sunday afternoon and my message machine was overflowing. There was a phone call from my mom, a phone call from my sister who never talks to me. On the Internet my e-mail is overflowing. The Associated Press had picked it up,

PHOTO BY JIM BAGOISTA