

My Transition

Romana 01-04-2021

This is a strange title, since I did not view myself as transitioning, but simply changing course during experimentation.

Based on my start in life, it seems preposterous that I actually transitioned legally to live full-time as a trans-woman. I wasn't just born autistic, but I was extremely autistic. However, I was very curious and constantly investigated things I did not understand. Although I tended to isolate myself, I was still an impish brat. My escapades included sending my dad's car down a hill, shooting a hole in a car door, firing off a cherry bomb in a car, taken things apart that no one could repair, and going places without parental permission. By the fourth grade, I had really calmed down, but I still had problems with anger management. I was also an expert at procrastination.

A major mystery was the nature of girls. As I approached puberty, I wondered what it was like to go around in public wearing dresses and skirts. Still, I thought the whole idea was dangerous and illogical. At no time did I envision living as a girl.

This was a time when there was an information blackout for all topics concerning human sexuality. Any information about gender and gender-bending was especially forbidden. Also, my parents told me nothing. All I had to go on was what I saw in movies, especially those of the 1940's and 1950's. Some had incidents of gender-bending, and I homed right in on those. I shared none of this with my parents. While I did learn much later that my dad was in some way transgender, I was expected to be a jock.



So, I was interested in cross-dressing long before the term had been coined. I was watching the movie *Project X* one day, when the hero suddenly pulled off the cigarette girl's hair to reveal she was a he. To make matters worse, he ran and was shot in the back. Okay, he was a commie spy, but this was still an execution. The message was clear that men in drag were unsavory characters.

I saw others where men dressed as women for robbery or espionage. The smart detective could always reveal them by a cheap trick, such as throwing a coin onto their skirt. Even Melvin Douglas once dressed in drag as an ugly woman.



There were many movies about Army drag shows. One of the things noticed is that the men were made ugly on purpose; they did not want it revealed that a make up artist could turn men into beautiful women. This is where the term *ugly man in a dress* came from. Today, trans-women are still dealing with this stigma.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVoQGDhLlaE>

During the recent fuss about LGBT people in the military, the Army canceled all drag shows, but they are now back in full force.

I was very stubborn in my youth. I think my urge to cross-dress was part of my slow journey away from autism. There was a major change after high school graduation: I finally had to admit I was interested in girls, so cross-dressing was moved deeper into my *illogical* list.

The next part of my journey from autism was an enlistment in the Air Force from 1965-1969. I had to keep urges to cross-dress a deep secret. Still, after my rough life in the Air Force, I had learned to live on own. I have essentially done so ever since. I did not much care for being in the military. That I survived enlistment was a major accomplishment.

After the Air Force, I got a job on Vandenberg AFB from 1970-1977. My desire to cross-dress was minimized, but the urge to have a woman in my life grew stronger, which is why I moved back to Washington State to work for Boeing.

I met Carolyn in January 1979. I was not a good catch, but she chased me, and I let her do it. I procrastinated too much, so she finally said in March, 1980, "People are starting to talk; we need to get married!" We were married in June, 1980. Even though I was not that great a husband at first, this was a major step forward for an autistic man. Being sexually active for the first time in my life was fantastic. All sorts of questioned about intimate relationships were answered. Best

of all, I presumed the desire to cross-dress would be gone for good. But there would be no such luck.

Carolyn was a bit manipulative, and she complained to me a lot.

- You always dress like a bum.
- You never get dressed up.
- We never go to any dress up events.
- You don't know how to talk to me.

How was I going to respond to this, considering that I did not have any social skills? This was a dilemma. My stepson had come out as a homosexual in 1984, so maybe it was now my turn to come out. Maybe it was a moment of crazy insight, but I decided to go to work at Boeing cross-dressed on Halloween, 1989. I had a new flair for risk-taking, but this was off the charts. Despite all the disbelief from others, I actually did it! Instead of feeling embarrassed and afraid, I felt relief, but I had no idea where to go next. I refused to be in any closet.

I named myself after a character on the British science fictions series: *Dr. Who*. She was a time lady named Romanadvoratrelundar, or Romana for short.

My lack of discipline was hard on Carolyn. I had no plan whatsoever. I had few moments of self-reflection. I also did not know that my narcissist stepson was working against me in the background, while he destroyed Carolyn's self-esteem.

I would like to say cross-dressing was thrilling, but it was more tedious due to all the push-back. At least, I finally got to wear dresses and skirts, and I continue to do so.



Gradually I got better at cross-dressing. There were more Halloween escapades; in fact, I spurred a lot of cross-dressing at Boeing on Halloween. Carolyn wanted more than skill; she wanted answers. In December 1997, we got a therapist. In May 1998, we went to our first transgender conference in Port Angeles, which is a town that loves trans-people. Carolyn's conclusion was shocking: in comparison to other cross-dressing husbands, I was not like them at all. Therefore, I was not actually a cross-dresser, but something else! This was actually obvious, since I carried a letter from our therapist, just like transsexual women. Carolyn decided to become more supportive.

It was a comedy of errors for Carolyn out in public with me. At restaurants, she would often say, "I'm having what he's having." At another restaurant, we met one of her male teaching associates. Carolyn tried to pass me off as her daughter. It was outrageous, but it got worse when we moved next door to the man.

Carolyn did not like the attitudes of a lot of the other sisters in her Mormon Ward; they said how *sorry* they were. Carolyn deduced that some of them had cross-dressing husbands too, but I was dangerous by not being in the closet.

Carolyn had suffered a variety of ailments, due to bullying in the background, but one of the worse came in December 1999, when she suffered a perforated colon. She recovered, but she was now handicapped and had to retire early.



At first, I was hardly part of the marriage. Once I started cross-dressing, I realized that I should give Carolyn a lot more attention. I started taking her to operas, ballets, and symphonies. At first, Carolyn made me alternate between

being Dennis and Romana. Finally, she got tired of the switching, so she said, “This isn’t working; just be Romana!”

In 2000, we moved to a new house, and Romana became part of the household. I also opened the door on my gender-bending to Carolyn, making her my partner in crime. There was comedy when we were in the bathroom, each getting made up at our individual sinks.

I learned to take Carolyn’s advice, and she always checked me over before letting me out the front door.

In 2001, I went alone to my 40th high school reunion as Romana. This upset the reunion committee, so I did not get a *most changed* award. Carolyn went to my 45th reunion, but that turned out to be her only time. I have gone as Romana to all subsequent reunions. Finally, they are getting used to me.

I decided to live full-time as a woman in 2005. I did still not have a plan; in fact, I was more than a bit obsessive. I could have shown more skill, for sure. I had no idea that this would help me survive what was coming next.

Carolyn’s last years is the subject of another essay. Her health declined and she became increasingly handicapped. Although I had sensed something was wrong all along, I was in the dark. I was frantic when my stepson managed to steal Carolyn from me and put her in a nursing home. I was kept out of the loop and was not there when Carolyn died in 2010. My ordeal was not over, since two years of battling my evil stepson followed.

In 2011, I went back to my Buddhist meditation practice. I had many issues to deal with, such as my tragic loss and my ever present anger management issues. I was serious, and I have made progress.

I tried dating. I was successful at getting dates, but not at getting a relationship. I will detail my dating problems in another essay.

In 2014, I became legally Romana, with a driver’s license, Social Security card, and a passport. I had procrastinated too long, so I needed to finish my transition. Fortunately, President Obama had finally made it possible to transition without any requirements for surgeries.

I started HRT, but I was shocked how it changed me. My HRT combined with insights during meditation gave me a whole new point-of-view.

- Becoming a woman has not been easy...there has been pain. Not the pain of surgery, which is really bad, but the pain of electrolysis and laser treatments. I started in the early 1990’s and I have one last treatment.

- I don't put a lot of energy into passing. Instead, I rely on attention to detail and boldness. I have no protruding Adam's apple, have small breasts, and have a reasonably contralto voice. Of course, I devote a lot of energy to create a credible image, but it's no big deal. Believing I'm supposed to be this way helps too. I am confident enough to function in nearly any social situation. Being socialized as a male really helps my self-confidence. Good manners are important too.
- My woman-identity itself is not sexual, but I am sexually interested in women. I seldom wore any clothing while having sex, especially not female clothing.
- My latest revelation came in a dream. For most mammals and a lot of humans, males are not allowed to be part of the social networks run by females. When I learned to present as female, I became part of several women's social networks. Clothing, jewelry, makeup and so forth became part of my networking. Now, I always wear women's clothes and I especially like skirts. I feel powerful. Women friends tell me I'm a woman, but none of them will date me. This has been a quantum leap for a male-born person who started out autistic with no social skills.
- I view myself as a woman, not a man dressed as a woman. When women are discriminated against, I feel it is against me too. I think hormones have rewired my brain to that of a woman.
- Gender is not a cultural construct. 90% of the populace could never switch gender; instead, most people are firmly locked into their gender. If gender were a cultural construct, women could become gender-queer and date me.
- As a Buddhist, I believe everything happens for a reason. My guess is that there are realms of existence where men are allowed to switch gender. Therefore, this tendency is in my karma. When I needed to transition, I was able to give myself permission because of this.
- I estimate that at least 90% of the U.S. population is transphobic. I don't care how liberal or supportive people and their institutions claim to be, their actions are not supportive. To me, inclusion means I can date and marry within a group. This has not happened to me.



I've lived as a woman for over fifteen years, and I have been legally female for over six years. Hormones have changed my face. At age 78, some people even say that I'm attractive, but no women will chase me. I could never be interested in men.

I am happy that I got a human body, and happy that I got to become a woman. I am not happy about all the flack I have to take; still, for a high-functioning autistic person, my life is fabulous. I have no fear. I can survive in the world, even if it doesn't want me. I manage my medical problems much better as a woman. In 2019, I stopped at a crowded rest stop in Utah. The women's restroom was overflowing with Mormon women, but I had no problem simply being taken for a woman.

My next few years at this point are unwritten, but I will be working on my personality and attitude. Self-improvement is always a goal.