

# Female-to-male trans conference is a first

By Jordy Jones

FTM. Butch dyke. Masculine woman. Third sex. TransFag. Metamorph. Crossdresser. Just a dude. A heterosexual man. A punk boy. A trannie. Just words to describe being, but no words can quite describe being there. The First FTM Conference of the Americas was a roaring success. It was hot. Over 300 attendees were packed into spaces in which they didn't quite fit, but these guys are used to that, and barely seemed bothered.

Three days of peace, love, and understanding. Three days of workshops, programs, and social, ranging from the silly to the sad, and from the awful to the awe-inspiring. Up and down the spectrum, tweaking those levels, not content to settle, the conference managed to avoid the unitary, bypass the binary, and celebrate a culture of difference.

Saturday's sessions included "Spirituality and male consciousness raising," a panel which thankfully did not involve being taken to the woods to drum with Robert Bly. There was "The no-hormone/non-operative option," which served to validate the transgendered status of those individuals who choose to not go "all the way" with their transitions. "Coming Out," a panel addressing an always sticky subject, was moderated by San Francisco's own Stephen Thorne, an SF Police Department sergeant who successfully transitioned on the job with the full support of the Chief of Police. Alas, he did not wear his uniform...

Especially popular was "FTM Sexuality," a closed workshop moderated by Sky Renfro, which addressed such complex issues as disclosure of transsexual status to potential sexual partners, body image, the brain as sex organ, and the use of prosthetic penile devices for penetration. Although this workshop technically was moderated, the moderators had little to do to keep it going. Each person there had his own opinions, concerns, and questions, and few were shy.

Many of the guys, especially those from isolated areas who may have little contact with other transgendered people, were relieved to find that their emerging bisexual feelings were echoed by many others. It was a veritable fag-fest, and a hot time was had by all.

In the afternoon, Shadow Morton continued the discussion of sexual variation among FTMs with "Queer/Straight Issues." "Racism and Transsexuality" focused on the problems marginalized communities so often and so unfortunately have with further marginalizing their own members. "Academic Perspectives" allowed sociologist Henry Rubin and anthropologist Jason Cromwell to present their research on their own communities. MTF historian and SM dyke Susan Stryker presented a eye-opening, heart-wrenching, and ball-busting account of the life of Lou Sullivan, a transsexual queer man and founder of FTM International.

Sunday's programs were devoted entirely to body modification issues and medical information. Endocrinologists and plastic surgeons presented the latest in transsexual hormone therapies and surgeries. Gory slides of surgical procedures induced queasiness even among those who had themselves undergone such procedures.

Although there was a lot of good information to be had, the method in which it was presented served largely to highlight the pressing need within transgendered communities to gain more control over our own medical interventions. Slides with titles such as "Problem: no penis," and insensitive comments like "Of, course, I'm a man." made this observer question the motivation of certain parties who hold a great deal of power over those seeking sex reassignment surgeries.

The weekend was rounded out with a variety of social and entertainment opportunities including the Twilite Club, an evening of gender-friendly fun featuring Elvis Herselvis and Annie Toone of the Bucktooth Varmints, a sunset sail on San Francisco Bay, and an evening of gender-perv fun at LINKS. Altogether, the first FTM Conference of the Americas provided not only contacts, information, validation and networking, but also a wankin' good time. Until next year, Dude!

For information about monthly Bay Area meetings for FTMs, their partners, and interested others, write to FTM International, 5337 College Ave. #142, Oakland, CA 94618, or leave a message at 510- [REDACTED] or e-mail [REDACTED] (just FTM News, if you're on AOL).

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