



HeartBeat

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays



PFLAG Olympia, Washington

Issue 74 March-April. 2006

Assumptions

By Julianne Wasilausky

As we get along in this world, we tend to make assumptions about things. It saves us a lot of time rethinking every single incident that comes up.

We see something red and round, shaped like what we're used to thinking of as an apple, and we assume, automatically, that we're going to bite into something crisp and sweet. It's our basic human nature to summarize the data we've collected, and based on a few visual or other cues, we make an assumption.

In the world of GLBT, assumptions that we make automatically about people, based on what we see, can be wrong.

We see a person with short hair and no makeup, dressed in Carhardts, and we might think, *butch dyke*. We could be mistaken, though, as the person might be a completely hetero female who just happens to eschew what society defines as femininity. Or it might be that this person is a female to male transsexual. But our brains have logged in lots and lots of data, and automatically call up a given assumption, based on this past experience, and apply it to the case at hand.

We see someone who has masculine-looking features and physique, and a deep voice, wearing a dress. The database calls up, *crossdresser*. Additional notes appended to this observation say that this person must be a gay male. Again, we just might be wrong. The person could be a crossdresser who is 100 percent hetero. Or it could be they are male to female transsexual. Or it could be Janet Reno. In any case, the assumptions about gender and sexuality could be totally wrong.

Recently I had a dialog with someone who explained to me that he is *not* an F to M transsexual, although people assume him to be that. It happens that he is a rare kind of mosaic chimeras hermaphrodite. He was socialized as female, but did not take to that, and so on some levels his journey parallels the F to M mold. People assume he is an F to M, and he relates that this assumption grates on him somewhat.

Hidden in all of this, I hope, is a lesson. Rather than assume that a person is this-or-that, and pigeon-holing them accordingly, it would profit us all to take a moment and *ask*. In the case of my hermaphrodite friend, I did just that. I took a risk, but feel all the richer for having taken it.

That said, I'd like to move on to the assumptions that get made about gender-variant folks, and sexuality. This is a confusing area, even for those of us who are smack-dab in the middle of it.

Gender expression doesn't always match our assumptions about a person's sexuality or sexual preferences.

In the cases of female-to-male, or male-to-female transsexuals, expressions of sexual preference and sexuality can cover the entire spectrum. If I am a M to F transsexual, and was heterosexual (attracted to women) before transitioning to female, does that mean that I'm now a lesbian? If I now find myself enjoying sex with male partners, does that mean that previously I was gay? Or bisexual? The



▼ SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2-5 PM

Wealth Management for Domestic Partnerships

Guest speakers from Merrill Lynch will present information on financial planning and management for glbt partners. For this special presentation we will extend our normal meeting time until 5 p.m. The financial planning portion of the PFLAG meeting will start at 3:30 following the usual introductions, announcements, support and social time.

▼ SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2-4:30 PM

Safe Schools Coalition

Local and area Safe Schools trainers will present information and talk about the work the coalition is doing. The Safe Schools Coalition works to help schools become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

www.safeschoolscoalition.org



PFLAG-Olympia meeting format

2:00-2:30 p.m.	Introductions
2:30-2:40 p.m.	Announcements
2:40-3:15 p.m.	Support
3:15-3:30 p.m.	Social time/snacks
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Program (see above)

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... **Assumptions** *continued from page 1*

conventional labels we use about being gay, lesbian, or bisexual tend to be based on a stable model where genetic men are men, and genetic women are women.

Those labels get a little blurry when we start trying to apply them to folks whose gender has changed from one polar extreme to the other, or whose gender is somewhere in the middle.

I submit that gender, and sexuality/sexual preference are two different continua, two different scales. They intersect somewhat, as no matter what gender we are, we all do have a sexuality and sexual preference.

To try to make sense out of this, I'll make a short list of things I think are important.

1. Even if a person appears on the outside to be of one gender, or sexual persuasion, or another, we could be wrong. To avoid confusion, aid clarity, and honor that person's self-perception, it's best to ask, as respectfully as possible.
1. Once we know a person's heartfelt perception of self, whether or not it fits our own assumptions, we should be respectful and honor that. If the person prefers the pronouns, "she" and "her", or "he" and "him" we should use them. If they prefer the gender-neutral pronouns "ze" and "hir" we should use those.
3. We shouldn't assume a person's sexuality or sexual preferences based on appearance alone. We might guess right 95 percent of the time. But we'd be wrong five percent of the time. It's not worth offending that five percent by making blanket assumptions.

My dad is a narrow-minded bigot of the first order. But he gave me something I carry with me, despite all that. The wisdom that he drubbed into me, and that I've taken to heart, is: "If you don't know, ask."



PFLAG
Olympia, Washington

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

MEETS at 2PM on the second Sunday of each month at First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE, Olympia. It is handicap-accessible.

DIRECTIONS: From Sylvester Park on Capitol Way and Legion Way, go 12 blocks east on Legion Way to Boundary Street. Turn left around the church. Park in the lot at 5th Avenue and Boundary and enter through the glass doors.

Letters, articles and requests for literature are welcome.

Mailing address:
PO Box 12732; Olympia, WA 98508-2732

For information or to discuss personal matters with an understanding parent and experienced PFLAG member,
**CALL the PFLAG-Olympia HELPLINE:
(360) 866-0511**

Email: info@pflag-olympia.org
Website: <http://www.pflag-olympia.org>

Women "coming out" after 30
a peer-facilitated support group

Please join our ongoing, peer-facilitated, and completely confidential drop-in support group for women over the age of 30 (or thereabouts), who are "coming out" or have previously come out as queer, lesbian or bisexual, or who are questioning their orientation.

We also encourage women who are further along in their process of coming out over 30 so we may gain from your experience, strength and wisdom.

We meet the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month
from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Unity Church of Olympia
1335 Fern Street SW

(When facing the church there is a small building on the left, walk in and turn left. There will be signs when you get to the church)

For more information, please contact
Carmen 360-870-8585
carmen333@comcast.net

Dear friends and acquaintances of Dave McGee

In late January, Dave took his life. He wrote his own obituary that follows for those who haven't read it.

It has been especially hard on his children Ian, Sylvia and Annie and his grandson, Lawrence. Dave tried to prepare them as best he could, but they are nevertheless devastated. His son, Ian, took the responsibility of dealing with the practical matters of death as well as being a support for his sisters. He is a remarkable young man, who I've come to love and appreciate these last few years.

I am sorry to say that very little - a few mementos - was left to the kids. Dave had exhausted his assets because he could no longer work. I know that each of the kids struggle financially - one a single mother of two, one trying to go to pharmacy school and wondering how she'll ever pay for it, and one trying to get a home and a family started. They all work hard, they all struggle.

I know that money cannot make up for the loss of their father, but I am creating a memorial fund to be divided equally between Dave's three kids. I will copy and pass on to each of them any memories or stories of Dave, any kind words about him or condolences that you wish to have passed on.

Please send your gifts - remembrances and any size donation - via me to the following address:

Catherine Dawdy
PMB 232
1410 E 4th Ave
Olympia, WA 98506

Please make checks payable to Catherine Dawdy. If you want to contribute anonymously, let me know. If you would like a receipt, please indicate that along with a return address, and I will send you one. I will be mailing the gifts on March 16th, 2006. If gifts come after that, I will continue to distribute them, but I know the power of community in giving together will have a very special meaning for them. They were quite hungry to hear about his life and they were grateful knowing that he had friends.

I've known Dave since in and around 1994. Since 1998 or so, it has been our gift to one another to have dinner together on Sunday nights. We got to know one another pretty well, sharing our lives in this way. He was a caring and loyal friend, and I will miss him.

Sincerely,
Catherine Dawdy
February 8th, 2006

My obituary:

'David Lee McGee', born January 1954, died January 2006.

Survived by son, Ian, a CA policeman; daughter, Annie McGee, who resides in Oxnard, CA; and daughter Sylvia Roseanne Serrano of Tucson, AZ.

Dave McGee served in the Marine Corps 1972-1978, attaining the rank of Sergeant. He then worked for Litton GC&S from 1978-1987. In July 1986, his second son David, age 6, died in Oxnard, CA, a pedestrian fatality. From 1987 through 2002, Dave worked in the US Postal Service as an Electronic Technician.

Starting in 1974, he suffered increasing health problems. In 2002, he became too disabled to continue working. The medical profession, despite sincere attempts, was unable to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of all symptoms. In January 2006, after all financial assets and savings were depleted, and unable to obtain satisfactory pain relief, he committed suicide.

Dave was a union activist, an anti-child abuse advocate, an anti-domestic violence advocate and volunteer, as well as a LBGTQ advocate. In 2003, after twenty years of denial, the medical/psychological community recognized his assertion that he was, in fact, transgendered.

The author of this obituary is me, David McGee, that is why what would be ordinarily considered "too personal" or "too embarrassing" to be included in an obituary is here. I have always considered that we as human beings communicate too little that is of real life significance!

I sincerely hope that my children and friends are not embarrassed by what I have disclosed publicly... I have always advocated telling the simple truth simply.

I die not in despair, but in hope.

If any feel I have injured them, I apologize. If any feel they have done me injury, I forgive.

At a small private memorial with Dave's family, these two poems were read:
"Shifting the Sun" by Diana Der-Hovanesian
"Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver.

The PFLAG Mission

To promote the health and well-being of
gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends through:

- ▼ **support**, to cope with an adverse society;
- ▼ **education**, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and
- ▼ **advocacy**, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

**The Pacific Northwest PFLAG
2006 Regional Conference**

**PFLAG:
Celebrating Our
Cultural Tapestry**

The Northwest PFLAG Regional Conference will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel in Portland, Or., April 21-23. The hotel is located across the street from the Lloyd Center and is on the MAX light rail line, with easy access from the Portland airport and downtown Portland.

The Conference will be both a celebration and an opportunity to work together to build a strong NW Region. Many of the workshops will focus on enhancing the work that individual PFLAG chapters in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington are currently doing to ensure that GLBT loved ones are treated with respect in all aspects of their lives, whether as students in schools, employees in the work environment or partners seeking legal recognition of their relationships.

Weekend events begin with a special afternoon workshop on Friday, April 21 entitled "Solving the Personal Difficulties in Activism & Advocacy" and continue with a social gathering in the evening on Friday, a full day of workshops on Saturday with special evening entertainment and wraps up Sunday morning with brunch, a special plenary session and closing address. Plans call for a special "chapter tapestry" display, where each chapter in the region will contribute a panel in the tapestry highlighting their unique chapter culture, events or contributions in the community they serve.

Registration materials are available online (.pdf file format) on the conference website.
<http://nwpflagconf.tripod.com>

Terry Rhines, co-chair
PFLAG NW Conference
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Wealth Management for Domestic Partnership

PFLAG - it's not just for parents

Hosted by: **PFLAG-Olympia**

Sunday 3/12/06 (www.pflag-olympia.org)

PFLAG meeting begins at 2:00

Merrill Lynch presentation is 3:30 – 5:00

At First United Methodist Church of Olympia,
1224 Legion Way SE at Boundary Street in Olympia

Domestic Partners have the same financial goals as everyone else – the challenge of getting there may be different

GLBTQ-friendly Merrill Lynch Financial Advisors will help you explore the legal and tax implications of domestic partnership:

- Preserving assets for your domestic partner and/or children
- Retirement strategies such as tax-advantaged distribution alternative and beneficiary designation
- Tax-smart investing and capital gains considerations
- Legacy protection, philanthropic and liquidity strategies including trusts and life insurance

HeartBeat is a free publication of the PFLAG chapter in Olympia, Washington, published six times a year. The editors are Alec & Gabi Clayton.

Unsolicited articles are welcome and are due by the 10th of even-numbered months. The editors reserve the right to reject or edit material.

The deadline for the next issue is 4/15/2006

Mail submissions to:
HeartBeat
P.O. Box 12732
Olympia, WA 98508-2732

Or email to: newsletter@pflag-olympia.org

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with the "Been Out Lately" graphic from our billboard campaign

**t-shirts ~ sweat shirts
coffee mugs ~ mouse pads
BBQ aprons ~ tile coasters
canvas tote bags ~ boxer shorts**

Buy yours now on the web at

http://www.cafeshops.com/pflag_oly

