

views: Call Me By My Name

One of the things about being a transsexual transitioning is you can no longer use the birth name you were given unless you had a gender neutral name and are comfortable keeping it, which most don't because the name change is an important part of the statement that you're not your previously known gender any longer. I never realized how much my name is embedded in this world for who I present myself as, until I decided to change it.

The first thing I had to decide was which name I would use. I had used a few different names in my own head while I was in the closet about being transsexual. When I decided to tell the world about my "secret," I realized choosing a name was a big decision, as I would use it the rest of my life. I wanted a name to express my femininity and also blend with my last name. I am proud of my heritage and of having kids, and I wanted to keep my last name the same as theirs. I also had to come up with a middle name as my old middle name was the farthest from fem as could be.

I thought of quite a few, going through books and finding the meanings and where they were derived from. A few I liked were names of other family members, and I decided they might be insulted. There was enough friction to my coming out as a female with family.

I was born in the month of April and found out April means "new beginning." The meaning was perfect and the name sounded pretty. I now had a first name, but finding a middle name to flow with April was tougher than I thought.

After months of pondering, I was at a friend's house and asked her. She came up with a few but they didn't flow with the rest of my name. Her daughter came in, so I asked her, and she just came out with "How about Elizabeth?" I ran it through my head a few times and I liked it. That was the moment I became April Elizabeth. To this day I like my name. It fits and feels right. Now, to start

april
elizabeth

to make this official. This part of my journey has changed the way people relate to me.

The first thing I had to do was make April Elizabeth my legal name. That was relatively easy on paper. Finding the courage to go to county court and tell someone I wanted to change from a male name to April was the hard part. On the first try I got to the door and got scared to the point I was shaking, turned around and went home disappointed but determined not to let my fear get the best of me.

The next day, I walked up to that door, faced my fears and opened it. I walked in and had to do the metal detector thing and walked to the clerk's office. I kept thinking, "This person is going to think I am crazy." I told her I wanted to change my name and she handed me a form to fill out. I filled it out and brought it back to her. The sweat was pouring off my face, I was so nervous. "I just have to give it to her and it will be over," I kept telling myself.

She looked over the form and it seemed to take forever. I was waiting for a stare of amazement, maybe a smile holding back laughter. To my surprise she just casually looked at me and said I had to place the change in the paper for two weeks, and the judge would have to look at it. I handed her the money for the ad and the name change, \$120, not too bad, and she told me after the two weeks I would get the court order in the mail. For two weeks all I thought of was all the phone calls I would get from family and friends who didn't know about my new life. I was amazed nobody called, no one noticed.

Two weeks later I received a letter from the judge stating my new name was legally April. It was at that moment that I realized I

really was April, it was no longer a dream, I was legally and formally April Elizabeth! I had a new name but everywhere I looked I was still my male name: my paycheck, my social security card, my hospital records, college transcripts, everything that had my history. My driver's license had to be changed. I first went to the social security office and filled out a form and handed it to the clerk with my name change from the court. I put female down for gender and thought she would give me some kind of reaction. She looked over

accounts, every way I was identified at work was changed to April. My manager deserves a lot of credit because he did all the running around and did it so discreetly. He spent a lot of his valuable time dealing with it all to save me a lot of embarrassment.

Next was the main thing I use for my ID, my driver's license. I filled out the form for a name change and brought it to the desk. Things went well until the clerk got to the gender part. She told me I had to have a letter from my surgeon stating all my gender

so transsexuals transitioning to their new gender are allowed to change their license gender once they are more the new than the old gender and it is not likely they will ever go back to being what they were. It is required to get documentation from your doctor or therapist stating this is true, but it will save me a lot of embarrassing questions I have needed to answer in the past.

The rest of my name changes have been pretty easy, mostly just sending in forms and copies of letters. I want to thank Hawk Stone, a therapist

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the form and told me my new card would be in the mail in two to four weeks and went on to the next customer like it was nothing new. My birth certificate automatically got changed with my name change so that was done.

My next stop was my work place. I went to my manager at IBM and he took my letter and social security card and copied them. That was the last I had to deal with my work. Within a few weeks all my payroll, computer

surgery was done. She changed my name because it was my legal name now but left the M on my gender. I walked away with a license with a woman's picture, the name of April and my gender listed as male!

This was right after Sept. 11 and all that ran through my head is the fact of how important it is to not have questionable ID when you travel. Only recently has the Motor Vehicle Department in Vermont changed the policy

who presented this issue of the driver's license to the state. I would like to also thank a special friend of mine who is a transsexual and had the courage to bring the issue to Hawk Stone in the first place, and the Department of Motor Vehicles for being open minded enough to change a policy that had such a negative effect on us while going through our required fulltime living as our chosen gender before we can get gender sex reassignment surgery. ▼

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Subject: DMV Policy Change

Date: Thursday, January 31, 2002 2:19 PM

From: McCormick, Tom <Tom.McCormick@state.vt.us >

Effective February 1, 2002, this is the new policy regarding gender changes on driver licenses:

In order to change the gender of a person currently on the name file, that person must submit a request in writing accompanied by a letter from a physician stating the gender change is complete and the date of completion. In the alternative, the request may be accompanied by a statement from a physician, psychologist or psychiatrist stating that the applicant is irrevocably committed to the gender change and one gender predominates over

the other. The statement must also designate the target gender of the applicant. The statement must be signed by the physician, psychologist or psychiatrist and contain the printed name, address, jurisdiction in which licensed and license number.

In the event the department listed a person's gender in error, the person must submit a request to change the gender. The department shall research its files and determine if the gender was in fact listed in error, and if so the correction and duplicate document shall be provided at no cost to the applicant. The applicant must surrender the document containing the erroneous gender prior to the issuance of the corrected document.

Thanks for bringing this issue to our attention.

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