

anatomically incorrect

by Ronda Shouse
Special to Q-Notes

Emotional problems

I left my marriage in October 1998, nine days before our 23 anniversary. I left behind some emotional baggage, but I soon developed new crises. Beginning in January, 1999, I began hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which was supposed to cause emotional turmoil. The only things I noticed at first were hot flashes. I was living with a former friend who was showing increasing signs of hostility towards me. By January I was told, rudely, to get out. I had recently met someone who would go on to become a dear friend. I asked Terry if she would allow me to sleep on her couch, as I had to get out of the apartment. I lived with her for the next five months. During that time I had two panic attacks which sent me home from work. There were episodes of tears, but not many, and I was still in touch with my children. Six months into HRT, with increasing dosages of estrogen, I began having horrible crying spells, which came in cycles - every 28-30 days.

By May 1999, I had lost two jobs. I began experimenting with make-up, wearing nail polish and earrings. Both employers questioned me concerning my appearance, and one threatened to fire me. I decided to chart my own path, and started a maid service. It began wonderfully, with plenty of work, but by late summer business was gone. When school started and nothing improved, I knew I was in serious financial trouble. (In the divorce, I did not want to upset my children's life by forcing the sale of the house, so my ex got everything.)

I had never before sought aid from a state agency, but rent was due and I didn't have the funds to buy my prescriptions. I did get Social Services to pay the \$350 for my prescriptions. A friend offered to pay my rent for a month. The next month I got food and rent money from Crisis Assistance Ministry. During this time, the hormones were literally altering my brain and I became overwhelmed. Fear was taking control of my life and I became suicidal.

Meanwhile, I met J. She could tell in my voice that I was steadily losing control, and invited me to move to California with her. I sold everything I had for a chance to get away, relax and enjoy the holidays.

The peace would last one week. J's soon-to-be ex became hateful and violent. Barb's wild ways left the household in turmoil. Twice she became abusive to both J and me. Barb was a heavy smoker and constantly had a cigarette. One night she came up behind J and as she turned around, Barb pushed her cigarette into J's eye. I jumped to help her and Barb ran to a neighbor's house and called the police on us. When they arrived, I explained to them what had happened. Barb was surprised when they arrested her for felony spousal abuse and locked her in jail for two weeks.

She came back home changed ... for a day. Then she began to make verbal attacks on me. She could be very sweet and then suddenly your worst enemy. In early November I had to get out: Barb had set a deadline and because her name was on the deed, J could not help me. I had lost my children. I had sold everything to move. Now I had to find another home immediately. I had been sharing email with a few

people here, mostly members of the church I had been attending. A few got together and wired me a bus ticket back to North Carolina. I hated to leave J but I had no choice.

Back in Charlotte, I had to establish myself again. I had no place to live and no job. For a month I lived with two different families from the church and stayed in a studio apartment that another family owned. On January 1, 2000 I moved in with an older woman to keep her company. It was rent-free and no cost to me except for groceries. I was also cooking Louise's meals. She knew I was diabetic and had to watch what I ate, and said she would eat anything that wasn't alive. But soon she began to complain.

Towards the end of February she said that things were not working out between us and I should find a new place. She said we do not agree on anything. I fixed food she didn't like, after telling me it was OK. She said we didn't like the same programs on TV, though she had a TV put in my room. It was a pattern of complaints about everything. She is a Jehovah witness. I was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church. She promised not to let religion get involved, but she was constantly wanting to "discuss" issues. As with any right wing religion, there is no discussion - she would simply tell me why she was right and I was wrong. She also began making derogatory comments on my looks, even suggesting I should try to look more like a man.

I realized Louise was jealous of my ability to go out while she was confined to a wheelchair. She had expected me to buy a car to take her out on weekends. The constant complaining was getting to me. Sometimes she would say something so hateful that I would leave the room in tears. While my reactions were becoming more and more feminine in nature, the continued depression was the same.

During this time I had asked my doctor for Depra Provera to assist in breast development. While it did help in filling my breasts out, taken in conjunction with my regular hormone regimen, it contributed to my depression. I stopped the injections after March. By late April the depression began to lift. I was away from Louise and in my own apartment. I was working again full-time and I asked God to take over my life and lead me. Life began to change.

In December I had been hired by one of Charlotte's largest employers. They have a strict diversity policy. Weather I was hired because I had experience or to fulfill an anti-discrimination policy, I do not know or care. During my training I was having serious problems staying awake. I was placed on a medical leave. My doctor determined that I have narcolepsy. When I am in an unstimulating environment, my brain shuts down. The problem has been with me since I was a teen but had been getting worse. Now the problem has been defined.

My outlook is focused. My hopes for the future are positive and the depression is under control. My sister noted that I was on a bubble and when it burst it could be very hard. She was right: the bubble has burst recently. But I refuse to let myself be dragged down.

I depended on my faith to get me through and on my belief in God to help make decisions. Life is good. Two of my relatives have come to my assistance and are closer than ever before. Maybe someday my children will also come to understand. And maybe my new relationship will blossom into a marriage. That is the future I really want: Unlike many women today, I want to be a housewife. ▼

[Send comments about this column to editor@q-notes.com or fax to 704-531-1361. Send column ideas or questions about transgender life to rondashouse@yahoo.com.]

Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte

"Where God Does Not Discriminate"

invites you to our

21st Anniversary Celebration

Saturday-Sunday, February 3-4



Saturday, February 3, 7:00 pm
Gospel Concert with Imani-MCC Ensemble
from Durham, NC
Dessert social to follow

Sunday, February 4, 10:45 am
Anniversary Worship Celebration
Covered-dish dinner to follow



Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte
1825 Eastway Drive Charlotte, NC 28205
Phone: 704-563-5810 Fax: 704-535-1791
MCCCharlotte@juno.com

Join us for services each Sunday at 10:45 am and 6:30 pm

OUT to EAT



is now open in Plaza-Midwood

1220 Thomas Avenue
704/358-8888

1537 Camden Road
704/332-PHAT (7428)

Mon-Thurs
Fri & Sat
Sunday

11:00am-9:00pm
11:00am-10:00pm
11:00am-7:00pm

"What about Cremation?"

We're glad you asked!

Introducing the most unique and beautiful cremation garden in all the Carolinas, only at Charlotte's premier cemetery —

Sharon Memorial Park & Crematory

Monroe Road at Sharon Amity

With no obligation, call 537-5011 or mail this coupon to:

Sharon Memorial Park & Crematory, PO Box 220346, Charlotte, NC 28222

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____



Advertise your restaurant
starting at \$28 per issue

Call

704.531.9988



Come Visit Your Friends at
GOOD OL' DAYS

The Arboretum
3351 Pineville/Matthews Rd.
704.543.4100
One First Union Center
301 S. College Street
704.339-0004