

PHOEBE



At two o'clock in the morning of January 31, 1969, I walked across the Mexican border into Tijuana. My purpose -- *sex change surgery*.

I had the surgery, one operation on February 6, 1969 and another on April 13, 1970. I was 30 years old when I had the second operation, a bit old to begin life, but for the first time since childhood, I was happy to be alive.

After sixteen years of struggling -- three wondering which way to turn and thirteen actively searching and working to find a surgeon, etc., I had the surgery and found myself alienated from society.

The past few years have been good. They could have been so much better.

It is difficult for me to imagine that I was ever other than I am now. While writing my story, I have been surprised how much of my troubled past I had forgotten.

It is with confidence that I share my story now. It is sufficiently proven to me and therefore to all, that I am successful as the person I have chosen to be.

How will telling my story change my present life? Well, at this time I have no idea who knows I had the surgery and who doesn't. Therefore, I must assume that everyone knows. This causes me to appear cautious, which often does not encourage people to want to get to know me.

Why do I act this way? Ten years of experience have taught me that it is far better -- easier, perhaps -- for me to appear non caring, though I do care. To protect myself, I don't get involved easily so that when someone discovers me, I'm less hurt. When I am with people I don't know, it proves less painful for me to be on guard at all times, and this is costly.

Since surgery, I have been hurt more than once by men and by women whose interest in me as a person vanished

when they learned that I had had change-of-sex surgery. Some men consider me a threat to their own masculinity. Some want to know me, but discreetly. Some can handle the knowledge of my surgery fine, others cannot.

At 39, I realize that now is the time for me to make any necessary changes in my life or else resign myself to a continuing life of being somewhat alienated from society.

Don't get the idea that I am unhappy with myself. This book is evidence that I am secure in my own identity. Rather, I am unhappy with society's placement of me.

Why a book now, ten years after surgery? I owe it to myself. I must share my thoughts and my opinions of society's placement of me. I do not present myself as a transsexual role model, but I do demand my human rights.

If I don't tell my story, it will always be easy for me to blame society for whatever goes wrong in my life.

It would be rather foolish for me not to do what I want to do and to be able to do it without the fear of someone referring to my sex-change at an inopportune time. If I don't live the rest of life as I want to, then what I have already done will have been for no reason. If I had the courage to have the surgery at a time when it was something that just wasn't done, then I should have the courage to do anything else I want to do.

My thinking is - as I present myself to you - so shall you accept me - - if you can't do that, then you must admit something about yourself.

Note: PHOEBE was written and published by Phoebe Smith
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