

Texas A&M The Battalion

Serving the University community

Thursday, November 21, 1985/The Battalion/Page 3

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Reporter

Phillip Frye, once a khaki-clad member of Texas A&M's Corps of Cadets, now answers to the name Phyllis and wears skirts and pumps.

On Sept. 13, 1976, Phillip Frye walked out of his front door as Phyllis, never to return as Phillip again. Until then, Frye says, he hid his real self inside men's clothes and played a man's role in society.

Frye, 37, came to Texas A&M in 1966 on a four-year Army ROTC Scholarship and a one-year engineering scholarship. He was a member of the Corps of Cadets in Company F-1. He also sang with the Singing Cadets for two years.

During his junior year, he married and transferred to Company H-2.

In 1970, after 3½ years at the University, Frye graduated with a degree in civil engineering. He was commissioned in the Army, but was given leave to obtain his mechanical engineering degree. He also witnessed the birth of his child.

In 1971, Frye served as a first lieutenant in the Army. However, Frye says, "I was forced out when the Army realized that I might change gender or sex in the future."

Frye says he told his wife that he was considering a sex change and "she went crazy." In 1972, Frye was divorced from his wife. A year later, he married his current spouse, whose gender Frye protects from public knowledge.

Shortly after he remarried, Frye says he gave in to the taunting person inside of him.

"No matter how macho I tried to act, that over powering urge to be Phyllis was real," Frye says.

Frye's spouse agreed to stand beside him and give him support as he began his metamorphosis. Frye says that his second spouse was able to accept his change.

"Our relationship is based upon friendship," he says. "We love each other, but it's friendship first."

Frye, who now prefers to be referred to as a woman, says she started cross-dressing and acting as a woman that day she walked out of her house as Phyllis. That year, she also began physical alterations, including extensive electrolysis to have the hair on her chest, face and arms removed, she says.

A year later, she started taking large doses of the female hormone premarin, she says.

She says that when she decided to let her real self out, she considered several consequences, such as the emotional strife and strain to which she would be subjected.

"I knew in my heart that my parents were going to bury me," she says. "I knew that I was going to end a promising career in engineering. I knew I would have to let my son go, and I knew that I was going to be subjected to a lot of hatred."

"I was effectively blackballed from meaningful employment, and I was on the (welfare) dole for almost two years. I received \$63 a week and lost a lot of my self-esteem and began to despair."

She says that A&M's registrar refused to change the name on her transcript which further frustrated her employment-interview efforts. Frye says that she was buried in a mock funeral by the members of her family.

Unable to find a job, she entered the University of Houston business college using her veteran's benefits. In 1978, she entered law school at UH. And in 1981, she graduated with an MBA and became a licensed attorney.

During the years that she was without work, Frye says she found support and friendship within the gay community.

Frye says she believes that she is a lesbian. She says that she knows she is a woman, but since her childhood days she has been attracted to women.

Frye says that she became an activist for gay rights, women's rights and human rights. She says she vigorously fought to change the law in Houston which allowed the police to arrest anyone found cross-dressing for any reason.

"I lobbied vigorously against that law," she says. "I went into the bowels of the police department, where I debated the vice squad about it. I debated with judges at city hall. I was always up at the city council meetings to speak against it."

Frye says she is a card-carrying member of Houston's Gay Political Caucus and a delegate to the Texas Democratic Convention. She funds her voluntary efforts with her independent Amway distributorship incomes, she says.

The 5-foot-9-inch, brown-eyed brunette openly says that she is a transgenderous or transperson. A transgenderous is a person who has taken hormones in order to take on physi-

cal characteristics of the opposite sex.

Frye says she keeps in shape by working out to Jane Fonda tapes and running. She says she also enjoys women's softball. Frye recently led her team to victory in the women's softball championship.

Frye recently celebrated her 12th anniversary with her spouse. Although she is dead to the other members of her family, Frye says she has begun to develop a wonderful and new relationship with her mother. Although Frye has not seen her son in four years, she says corresponds with him through letters.

"He calls me Phyllis," Frye says.



Phyllis Frye

Today, Frye's eyes shine. Her smile is friendly. She is ambitious and lives the life she says she's always wanted to live. She's lived two lives, that of a man and that of a woman. She says the greatest advantage that a man has over a woman is that people will always listen to what a man has to say.

"Women must be assertive," Frye says. "Don't let society, or any man, label you (women) as inferior or submissive."