

Dear all

Its Saturday the 15th of December, a soft, warm day, an inky cloud on the horizon may threaten rain, it would be welcome, Wellington is unusually dry for this time of the year.

I sit here, my cat curled on my lap struggling with the notion that we are close to the end of 2007.

A big year for me and a significant year for the Trust.

I am not long back from a rushed trip to America.

Some of you know that Max Beck, from the 1996 film *Hermaphrodites Speak*, Max who once appeared on the front cover of Newsweek magazine, Max known and loved for his clear thinking, thought provoking writing and eloquent speaking has been battling a rare form of cancer for the least three years. It is with great sadness that I write that Max is losing that battle.

He is 41, is married, has two beautiful children, just completed a Degree at Emory University.

I was able to visit, spend some time with Max.

It leaves me thinking how hard it is for so many of us around health related issues.

So many of us had child experiences that left a sense of physical disenfranchisement – a disconnect from ourselves.

It can be hard to relate to, care for, know about a body that others have seen as flawed, as something to be ashamed about in need of fixing and or hiding.

Layer on top of that experiences with the medical system that often did not build trust or respect.

Too many of us have poor and inadequate information as adults about our various conditions, lack of knowledge, difficulties obtaining records about what was done to our bodies as children.

Doctors and sometimes ourselves who want to see us, or we need to be seen as 'normal' male female humans, either not seeing or not able to think about how our unique physical situation may require different eyes, different health care approaches to monitor, to check.

We have come some way (theoretically at least) improving a frame work of best practice care for children (I say theoretically) I am yet to be convinced that intersex babies/children and their parents are really getting universally a more safe, caring, informed and open hearted care that preserves an open future.

But my sense is we have so much work to do for adults.

Work that will ensure we will all get safe, respectful, informed health care that is appropriate for our unique situation and sense of self irrespective of where that is in the gender and sexual orientation spectrum of human existence.

My trip to America took me to Honolulu where I had the great pleasure of a weekend with Professor Milton Diamond and his wife Connie. Meeting some of the intersex staffers who work with and alongside Mickey.

I had time with David Vandertie and partner Carol in Wisconsin. It was the three of us who traveled to Atlanta to spend time with Max.

A time that included reflecting on the many amazing and astonishing things that have happened in the Intersex world during the last 15 years.

On my way home I spent time in San Francisco – staying with David Cameron, who was ISNA's (Intersex Society of North America) first volunteer. Later a board member and now involved in marriage equality activism.

<http://www.marriageequality.org/meusa/community-voices.shtml?intersex>

I managed to squeeze some time with Hida and talk about he/r recent appearance on the Opera Winfrey Show.

Visit with and shared thanksgiving dinner with Anne Tamaris, talk about her new Trust. Advocates for Informed Choice (AIC)
www.aiclegal.org

I also wonderfully spent time talking with Cheryl Chase..

As we end the year, I give thanks to all who do work to make the world a safer better place for all people who are different, including intersex people their partners and those who love them. If you live in a country that takes holidays at this time of the year go well – if not may you get time to rest and recharge and reflect soon. I look forward to continuing the work, the challenge, the change the networking next year.

Hermishly yours
Arohanui

Mani

