

Denver Parks And Recreation A Department At A Dangerous Crossroad

by Charles C. Bonniwell

For over a hundred years there has been no governmental agency in Colorado more beloved by the people it serves than the *City and County of Denver's Department of Parks and Recreation* (Denver Parks). Over its history it has been headed up by extraordinary individuals from a multimillionaire who did not wish to be paid a salary to a husband and wife team who uniquely served as co-managers. Denver Parks today has an annual budget in excess of \$46 million. The department oversees 30 recreation centers and 200 parks both within and outside of the City and County of Denver. The newest manager, Lauri Dannemiller, has a salary in excess of \$130,000.

Entire legal entities have been set up by

Denver citizens to assist Denver Parks in everything from fund raising to citizen input. Such entities include *The Park People* and *FANS (Friends and Neighbors of Washington Park)*.

Denver citizens have always been somewhat leery of what some politicians might do to the city's parkland if the citizens were not directly involved in decision making. Under Denver City Charter Section 2.4.5 any sale or lease of any City parkland requires the majority vote of citizens, although the Denver City Attorney's office found ways around that provision under the administrations of Wellington Webb and John Hickenlooper.

Some of the longtime supporters of Denver Parks have come to believe that over the

last 10 to 15 years the department's close ties to the community have become increasingly frayed.

Advocacy groups wonder if Denver's new mayor Michael Hancock and his recently appointed Manager of Denver Parks Lauri Dannemiller will be able to prevent Denver Parks from becoming simply another governmental bureaucracy that is no

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Lauri Dannemiller: The new manager for Denver Parks and Recreation comes with high hopes and expectations. Unfortunately the proposed changes to the Washington Park Running Trail have been a public relations disaster.

Steve To Stevie



Transformation: World famous photographer Steve Crecelius has changed genders and is now known as Stevie Crecelius.

by Laura Lieff

Everyone knows Steve Crecelius. He is a world-renowned Cherry Creek Valley photographer. Known as "the photographer to the stars," he has worked with Garth Brooks, Bill Cosby and Harrison Ford. He is also the official photographer for the City of Glendale and *Infinity Park*.

But there is no longer a male named Steve Crecelius and in his place is a female



called Stevie Crecelius. With the aid of modern medical science Steve has transformed himself into a female named Stevie.

Five years ago, a kidney stone ultrasound revealed something that Steve never thought he'd see. He saw an ultrasound that showed evidence that he was in part a female.

"I always knew there was something about him but I didn't know what it was," said Debbie, Steve's wife of almost three decades.

When Debbie and Steve married all those years ago they had both been married before and brought six kids into the marriage — four from Debbie and two from Steve. They have no children together but do have 10 grandchildren.

According to Stevie, as she prefers to be called now, she knew she was a girl when she was young but felt that she couldn't tell anyone.

"I put this away when I was 13," Stevie explained. "I wasn't ever going to tell anyone. It was the '60s and I couldn't tell anyone. There were no support systems and no tolerance for people like me just like there was no tolerance for anyone who was gay, black or Jewish."

He certainly didn't want to tell his fellow police officers in Rapid City, South Dakota, and Gillette, Wyoming, where he was part of law enforcement for almost seven years. He was Police Officer of the Year in Rapid City and was in charge of the Crime Lab. After his years as a cop, Steve worked in television as a news photographer for close

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Glendale Chooses Mike Dunafon As Mayor Bovo Becomes Mayor Pro Tem; Franssen, Logan Join The Council

by Glen Richardson

With no more candidates than offices to be filled, Glendale has elected a new Mayor and added two new faces to the City Council. In the past two election cycles, the Mayor and City Council have run unopposed.

Mike Dunafon, previously the Mayor Pro Tem, is the city's new Mayor replacing Larry Harte who was term limited. He has been a major player in initiating and shepherding the 14-year transformation of Glendale into an entertainment hub and internationally known city. In addition to serv-

ing as Mayor Pro Tem of Glendale Dunafon has chaired the Planning Commission for the city the past 10 years. Dunafon is also the city's alternate representative to the Denver Regional Council of Governments. He sits on several boards including Cherry Creek Transportation Solutions, the Glendale YMCA and the Greater Glendale Chamber of Commerce. Under his direction, Glendale became the first city in the United States to adopt rugby as the official sport of a city.

Dunafon has a BA from the University of Colorado. *Continued on page 4*



Glendale Leaders: Members of the Glendale City Council are, from left to right, Scott Franssen, Paula Bovo, Pat Oppen, Mayor Mike Dunafon, R. Wayne King, Jeff Allen and Mary Logan.

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Steve To Stevie

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to eight years and won a news film Emmy. He also spent time working in the education department of a hospital where he produced videos for their closed circuit television.

When the nurse told Stevie the news about the ultrasound it validated that all the thoughts Stevie had as an adolescent were not just in her head. Those feelings were facts. At the time Steve was worried about what Debbie was going to say so he



Former Life: A police officer for close to seven years, Steve worked in Rapid City, South Dakota and Gillette, Wyoming. He was Police Officer of the Year in Rapid City and was in charge of the Crime Lab.

pretended like nothing happened. But after they went home and Debbie brought it up, they both acknowledged that Steve in his heart of hearts was more comfortable as a female and as Stevie.

Talking To The Family

After struggling with what to do with the information for four years, last December Debbie and Stevie decided it was time to tell their family. It was a very emotional conversation but their children took it well.

"I feel even closer to you now," said their daughter-in-law.

"A trillion people on this planet would give anything to have the love in this family and you will always be the patriarch," said their son-in-law.

Adding some humor, their son said, "We would be the perfect TLC reality show."

While both Stevie and Debbie say that the family support has been amazing they also acknowledge that the journey has been tough. Debbie and Stevie are staying together and staying married.

"I had to mourn the loss of my husband," Debbie said. "Initially I thought to myself, 'I didn't sign up for this' but then I thought who signs up for anything? Alzheimer's, cancer, a significant other becoming a paraplegic — none of it is planned. Stevie is still the most caring and talented person I've ever known and that has not changed."

Added Stevie, "Once I found out that what I had been feeling my whole life was true and that my family was so accepting, the expression of who I was changed and the façade of the male persona I created started to fade."

While Debbie has embraced Stevie she also does not want Stevie to forget who Steve was.

"Steve protected Stevie for 50 years and now Steve is allowing Stevie to come out and be a strong woman," Debbie said. "Steve or Stevie would take a bullet for the family."



Local Celebrities: As Denver's official photographer for the 2008 Democratic National Convention, Steve photographed then Mayor John Hickenlooper, left, and then Governor Bill Ritter, right.

"Now that I can be who I am I see my world in color — a world that used to be in black and white," Stevie explained. "My whole world has opened up."

Letting The Clients Know

Once the family was told the news Stevie and Debbie decided it was time to let their friends and clients know. They have been working as photographers together since 1994 and have an extensive client list including the City of Glendale and *Infinity Park*.

When Mayor Mike Dunafoe heard the news his response was, "I'm delighted to know that Glendale is getting two photographers for the price of one — Steve and Stevie."

Infinity Park General Manager Bobbi Reed sent Stevie the following message: "Stevie, you started out as an incredible person so however you present yourself to the world, that person is still inside guiding you."

Debbie said that their clients have been accepting and supportive so far — something they both appreciate — but that they always let clients know ahead of time that Stevie's appearance has changed.

Stevie chose last month's Glendale City Council meeting as the place to present herself as a woman for the first time in public.

"I watched incredible acceptance that night," said Debbie. "We are finding that our clients are way more concerned with the photographs we take than the way Stevie is dressed."

Complicated But Liberating

While Stevie was dressed as a woman the night of the city council meeting, on the day of this interview she was dressed as more of a metrosexual guy but with makeup, nail polish and feminine jewelry. As Stevie is getting used to dressing as a woman she is taking testosterone-reducing medication along with estrogen hormones but will not



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First Look: Stevie chose last month’s Glendale City Council meeting as the place to present herself as a woman for the first time in public. She received a warm greeting from everyone including former Glendale Mayor Larry Harte, left, and new Glendale Mayor Mike Dunafon, right.

be going through gender reassignment surgery. At 63-years-old Stevie says that it doesn’t make sense to spend that amount of money, be in that much pain and be unable to work for such a long time.

“The whole idea is to feminize my body as much as possible without surgery and to match who I am on the inside with the outside,” Stevie explained.

As a public figure Stevie says that the transformation has been both nerve-racking and liberating. She points out that she has to pay attention to which restroom to walk into because it depends on how she’s presenting that day and that if she gets pulled over while driving she has to keep in mind that the way she looks might be different than what it says on her driver’s license. If Stevie gets on an airplane she has to remember to dress more masculine.

“Unfortunately I can’t be who I am 100 percent of the time and overcoming the male physical features and logistics is com-

plicated,” said Stevie. “A year from now things could be different. It’s only been a few months at this point so it’s a process.”

She continued, “The whole goal is to be accepted as who I am and to be an example for others. I don’t want anyone to be ashamed or bullied and I hope that there are people out there like me who don’t have to wait as long as I’ve had to wait.”

To help celebrate Stevie’s transformation, some of her friends are putting together a “rebirth” party and she is very much looking forward to the event.

If anyone has any questions Stevie would like for them to contact her directly at stevie@wonderworksstudios.com or contact one of the following support groups: *The Gender Identity Center of Colorado* can be reached at 303-202-6466 and is located at 1151 S. Huron Street. *The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center of Colorado* can be reached by calling 303-733-7743 and is located at 1301 E. Colfax.



Supportive Team: Debbie, left, and Stevie, who have six children and 10 grandchildren, are staying together and staying married.

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