

Keystone Conference 2009 Trip Report by Edie

The Keystone Conference, hosted by TransCentralPA, is a new TG event that took place March 12 – 14, 2009 in Harrisburg, PA. On Thursday night about 18 of us went out to dinner at the Hollywood Casino & Penn National Racetrack. We traveled by chartered bus and the driver was very charming. We were seated at tables overlooking the racetrack and they were actually running races, even though it was 30 something degrees. Dinner was good, the company cordial, and it went well. After dinner we went back down to the casino level. When we went past a bar with a live band playing, it attracted most of the girls like moths to a flame; however, I planned on gambling, so I went off on my own to do that. I had some luck in the casino and made some money off the comped \$14. We left the casino around midnight and returned to the hotel.

Friday was pretty much an entertain yourself day; there was only one workshop. Friday night, we went into downtown Harrisburg, again by chartered bus. Now there were about 55 of us, so we couldn't all go to one restaurant, so we had reservations at 5 different restaurants. I chose to join the group going to the Italian restaurant, Carley's Ristorante and Piano Bar. It was an intimate place, with a piano player for entertainment, and the food was excellent. I had a delicious seafood stew. We had wonderful conversation and I had fun making requests of the piano man. After dinner, the chartered bus took us to clubs and back to the hotel.

Saturday was workshops all day, and we had a group lunch in the hotel with an excellent speech by Mara Kiesling of the National Center for Transgender Equality. I attended 3 workshops:

“Feminizing the Male Face without the Surgery” by Amanda Richards - a makeup application seminar; I always love those and Amanda and I are longtime associates.

“Feminine Style, Image & Demeanor” by Lady Ellen (yes, I went to this again, Lady Ellen is always charming, and I get a kick out of the audience participation, or lack of it).

“Walking in Both Worlds” by Jeanine Ruhsam which to be honest was not a complete success because it was promoted as being for people who were comfortable living dual gendered lives, but, as one cranky participant pointed out, it seemed to be that most people live dual gendered lives out of economic and social necessity. It seems only myself and one transman were truly comfortable with our he dual gendered life.

Saturday night was the Spring Fling Gala reception, dinner and dance. For entertainment at the reception, Vicki D'Salle, an excellent TG pianist, played in a '30s boogie woogie style. She seemed pleased that I could request an appropriate song from the era (“Roll ‘Em Pete”). At the dinner, Donna Rose gave an excellent and moving keynote speech. There was dancing after dinner with Angela Gardner playing the tunes. I usually complain about the DJ, but I thought that Angela did a great job, mixing contemporary with '70s and '80s dance music. And then it was time to turn into a pumpkin.

The event was modestly priced, \$139 (note that lunch and dinner on Saturday were the only included meals) for the entire event and it was \$99 per night for the hotel room at the

Sheraton Harrisburg/Hershey Hotel. The hotel was was very nice and the staff treated everyone respectfully. Harrisburg, PA enacted gender identity anti-discrimination laws to protect their transgendered residents in 1983.

They posted some pics on their web page: <http://www.transcentralpa.org/>