

MY JOURNEY

Controversy, corrections and new-found peace, Misty Lane is finally finding happiness with herself

Matt Adelman & Phillip Harnden photos

Misty Lane, 29, calls home a 120-acre plot that belongs to her grandfather on the outskirts of town. Two horses, a dog and the Wyoming wind are her constant companions. Having made the leap in declaring herself a female, Misty begins the long journey toward finding a happy life. Misty, formerly known as Mark, may be moving on from her male identity but will always be a self-declared redneck at heart. She will continue to live under the hood of a muscle car, smoke cigarettes and take care of chores around the ranch. After all, she was born and raised in the West — and she plans to stay.

By Jennifer Kocher

The camper was never meant to be anyone's home, but the 120-acre spread it sits on is the closest thing to a home the tenant has ever known. More importantly, it marks the place where one way of life ends, and another begins. In most cases, a name doesn't matter.

For this story, it's critical.

Start with Mark. For the first 20 years of his life, he was a tattooed, muscled roughneck who worked oil rigs, collected muscle cars and raced mud bog trucks; a real self-described "Wyoming redneck." When Mark was 21, he legally changed his name to Misty. And for the first time in his life, Mark felt he was who he is supposed to be — a woman. Mark, now Misty, puts on eye shadow, wears frilly shirts and dons tennis shoes with pink laces when she climbs under the car to change the oil.

Misty is very much a man's man. In this regard, her gender identity is still at odds with her sex in that she's still very much a guy when it comes to her interests, including her preference for dating women. Ironically, the more comfortable she feels in her female body with breast implants and hormone therapy, the more ostracized she becomes in the community.

Life would be easier if Misty left Wyoming.

But just as her personal interests haven't changed, she loves everything she's always loved about living out West. She doesn't expect people to understand, nor does she blame anyone for



their reaction, particularly given where they live. Wyoming isn't exactly open-minded when it comes to homosexuals and transgenders. The Code of the West is pretty straightforward when it comes to gender: guys are guys.

Despite all masculine traits to the contrary, she identifies female, which she realizes is hard to explain to some-

one who was born with the correct body.

"I don't think it's an issue of want. You have to," she says, biting a corner of her blunt thumbnail. "Essentially,

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