

Remembering Trevor



Trevor's sister Martha and her husband David Spisso sent out this touching memoir shortly after Trevor's death. They have agreed to share it again here.

October 6, 2007

We are happy to have this opportunity to share with you a few moments and a few memories of Trevor Hailey, a San Francisco Icon. Bless her heart.

Thank you for being here where the Cruise begins. Special thanks to Betty Sullivan for her friendship and her work on this event, to Rick Bacigalupi for his documentary film "Only in the Castro", to the guys at the Magnet who also hosted her retirement, to the Gay Men's Chorus, the Gay and Lesbian Marching Band, Kathy Amandola, the cellist, the Rainbow Flag and all of you who helped to organize, advertise, sponsor and attend this tribute to our "sister." Trevor is happy to be here with you, too. It is not only her life and contributions that we celebrate here; it is also her spirit and her existence, within and among us, which we recognize and honor with this

service. Trevor said she is ready to be the Grand Marshall of this lovely parade, so let's begin. Thank you so much for doing this. Bless your hearts, too.

This letter is from Trevor's family. As you may or may not know, she lived in the lives of others like us outside of San Francisco. Trevor is our big sister, our Aunt, our hero and our role model. She was born in Jackson, Mississippi, as Dorothy Evelyn Fondren, the middle child between an older brother, David "Tootie" Fondren and a baby sister, Martha Ellen Fondren.

"Evelyn" filled so many roles for so many people during her life and it is in one, two or all of the roles that you may remember her. She was a big sister, my hero and a person who made me happy when I was a little girl and throughout my life. She was always enthusiastic, energetic and vibrant. By her example, I learned the value of friendships, the importance of laughter and the joy of just having fun.

Of course, there are many stories that can be told about those early years when she was known as "Skinless" among a real tight group of growing-up-girl-friends. You could tell by their names, Brady, Koo, Granny and Beastie, that trouble was brewing everywhere they roamed. Skinless was 100% committed and engaged in every aspect of her life. It is believed that the hills at Camp DeSoto near Lookout Mountain, Alabama still echo with laughter from witnessing the presence of my big sister. She was a camper, a camp counselor, a camp Nurse and a camp alumnus. Here too, she was my hero and my role model.

Skinless was a true friend and a loyal companion. She went on to fame and notoriety at Mississippi State College for Women, especially as a member of the Rogue and Blacklist "social" clubs. The clubs were like "sororities" on this very southern, women only, college campus. How appropriate is it that our favorite personality would be Rogue, or someone who was Blacklisted! Surely those were women's organizations with rituals, traditions and "secret" handshakes. Although I followed her to MSCW as a Rogue and Blacklist-er, don't ask me to explain of the events of those times. Only those who have been there know about them and I will not be the one to reveal those sacred traditions to any unworthy souls.

Evelyn did many things at "full throttle." She had a brain and used her Biology education at the "W" to get into nursing school in Memphis, only to

realize that she needed a fresher course in reality to continue there. Instead, she completed her Nursing studies under the watchful nuns at St Dominic's Hospital in Jackson. It tickles me to envision her with the catholic nuns at St Dominic's School of Nursing and, at the same time, recall the honor bestowed upon her years later in San Francisco by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence when they canonized her as "Saint Joaquin de Castro."

For some, she was known as Lt Fondren, the Navy Nurse. She always enjoyed her life in uniform and developed memories with friends in St Alban's near NYC, at sea on a hospital ship, aboard a Caribou in the Philippines and ashore in California. Although she always had the drive, the personality and the enthusiasm to be totally immersed in any activity, it was in San Francisco in the late 1970s that she discovered her identity and created a life's work that made her world famous.

You know the story; she studied for a Masters degree in Recreation and Leisure, learned about a walking tour in Chinatown, and took a big leap when, in 1989, she created her own walking tour of the historic San Francisco neighborhood of the Castro District. It was through "Cruising the Castro" that Evelyn, became known as "Trevor Hailey," and made her biggest and most significant contribution to mankind.

Trevor was an educator, a storyteller of magnificent proportion and quite a character. With a raspy, accented voice, Trevor taught thousands of hesitant gay, lesbian and straight people to come out and learn about the history and culture that exploded in the Castro of the 1970s. In a frank and entertaining manner, Trevor used her pulpit to encourage the advancement of women in every facet of life. Her communication skills enabled her clients to learn about life in the Castro and facilitated the continuing acceptance of Gays & Lesbians in places beyond the Castro. She was known around the world, on BBC and CNN. Mayors Willie Brown and Gavin Newsome twice recognized Trevor for contributions to San Francisco. The City celebrated "Trevor Hailey Day" in July 2002 and again when she retired in 2005. The "Sisters" were right on when they made Trevor a "Saint."

We, her family, were in Savannah, Georgia to support our children as they anticipated the birth of our new granddaughter on June 11th. The night before, "Aunt Ebbo" couldn't wait until the morning so called us and talked to everyone about the blessed event. Before 5:00 am the next morning we got a call from Jim Chandler in a San Diego hospital where Evelyn was

taken after having a stroke. It wasn't until after 12:30 PM, after Alexis Fondren Spisso was born, that we heard Aunt Ebbo's stroke was very serious.

By mid afternoon on the next day, we were standing with brother, Tootie, and her partner, Norma Sue, at the foot of her bed in San Diego looking at her warm face and telling her about our love for her. We wanted Trevor to hear us, in fact, we expected her to get up and tell us what had happened. But the information detected from the machinery connected to the brain behind her beautiful silver hair was telling us our expectations would be unfulfilled. She experienced a massive stroke that injured her brain and left her with no chance of recovery. We are comforted in knowing that her 66 year-old donated organs and tissues helped over 50 people.

She lives on in our hearts and our minds, not as a sad memory of a wonderful life cut short, but as a refreshing tickle that fills our whole being with love and appreciation for having known her. Isn't it great that we can remember her for all that she did; so full of fun, brilliance and love. Evelyn, Skinless, Aunt Ebbo, Lcdr Fondren & Trevor; God blessed us all when He gave us you.

Bless her heart.

"Do not stand by my grave and cry, I am not there; I did not die."