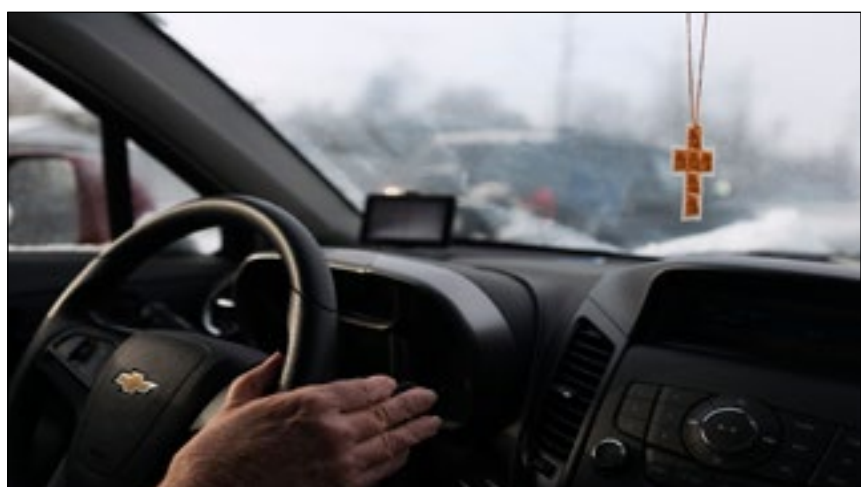




Love sits alone in her home in Kanata, Ont. on a Saturday afternoon. For most of her life she said she felt different but was unaware of what was different.

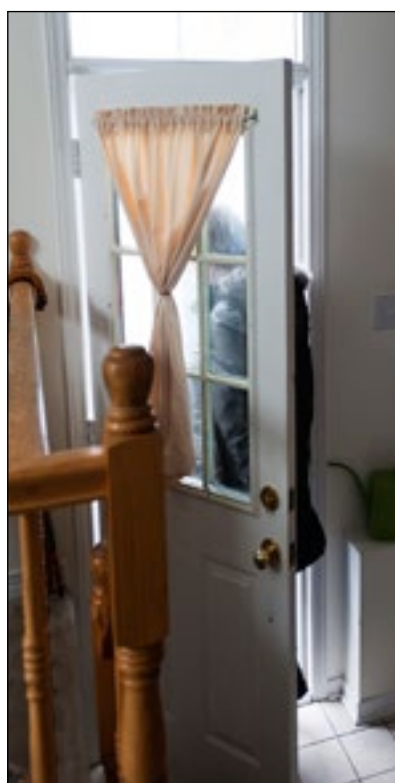


Love has a cross hanging from her rear view mirror in her car. Religion has come back into life in recent years and she attends church events frequently.



Love still has photos of herself as a boy, such as this one of her at age seven or eight sitting on a horse.

FOUND LOVE



Three years ago Roger became Denise.

How do you imagine life at 70? Maybe it's looking back at all your accomplishments and fulfillments. Or is it starting a new chapter? Even starting a new life entirely. For Denise Love it was putting the pieces of her life together and finally taking a leap towards becoming the person she was always supposed to be.

Love, who is now 73 years old, began her transition from man to woman at the age of 70. "It wasn't something that hit you like a ton of bricks, it just worked on you over time," says Love. Love struggled for many years to identify what felt different about her. There were a lot of little things in her life that eventually combined into something bigger but it was hard for her to determine what they were at the time. "You knew there was an inner difference and you weren't sure what," says Love. Love was never married but had many friends and a close family. She had a very close relationship with her sister, Wilma, who died 15 years ago. "The older we got, the closer we got together," says Love. After her sister's death, it started to become more and more clear to Love what was different about her. She started to realize what she had never been able to explain before. Her identity did not match

her gender.

From then on, the mental and physical process felt very natural, a "natural progression" as she would call it.

In 2009, Love moved to Kanata, Ont. to begin her new life as a woman and came out full-time.

Love spent most of her life in Trenton and decided to move away to begin her transition. Ottawa was the perfect new location for Love to move on. She sold the campground her and her family had owned for nearly 40 years and felt she needed to get as far away as she could. She felt Ottawa was a more "accepting city", and it's medical facilities also had a huge impact on her decision.

"You've got good doctors, good therapists, good psychologists and that's the big thing," says Love.

After nearly two years of therapy, meeting with doctors and becoming as much of a woman as she could on her own, Love went through with the gender reassignment surgery.

"You have to live totally as a female for at least 12 months before they'll allow you to do the surgery," says Love.

This includes dressing as a female; hair, make up, clothes. Her life had to transition before her body physically could.

"ze old you and become the new you," says Love.

This process felt very natural for Love and she began her surgery sooner than people typically do. She was ready to start her new life and was at ease with the significant changes that accompanied the transition.

Although Love notices she is much more emotional as a woman, she is very happy and feels herself. One of the biggest attributions to her happiness is being accepted by the people in her life.

Her friends and the people she's known for years as a man are very accepting of her transition. This is very important to her. She has also made many new friends in Ottawa at her church. She started off fresh when she moved to the Ottawa area and says those friends only know her as Denise.

In her new life she associates much more with the female crowd. She says this is one of the things that is different from her former life.

Though there have been many changes in Love's life, she is happy to now be the woman she was supposed to be.

For a multi-media version of this story, go to <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=33573>

Photos and Story by Sarah Taylor.



Love gets her service bill from service advisor Joe Pacheco. She has been coming to McCurdy's car dealership for many years and many of the staff members have known her as Roger. She says she has never heard one negative comment.

"You knew there was an inner difference and you weren't sure what."



Love looks through one of her photo albums in her living room. She has many photos of friends, family and some of herself over the years.