

San Francisco, CA
(San Francisco Co.)
Examiner-Chronicle
(Cir. Sun. 637,201)

Transsex

DEC 11 1977

TELEVISION

Jason—A Man Trapped In the Body of a Woman

1304

JASON WAS born a woman 30 years ago. Although he lived his life as a woman, he had the feelings of a man. It was as if he were a man trapped in the body of a woman.

Then, three years ago, Jason heard of the Stanford Gender Dysphoria Clinic where sex change surgery and a psychological adjustment program for transsexuals are available. Jason decided to make the change.

The process of changing from one sex to another — the intricate surgery and the social, psychological and familial barriers to overcome — are the subject of "Behold a Man," a three-part documentary on KQED's "A Closer Look." It will be shown this Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30 p.m. on Channel 9.

The story began as a three-minute news spot on the phenomenon of transsexualism, but reporter Pamela Young

wanted to do a more thorough report on Jason's metamorphosis. It would become a year-long project for her and filmmaker Lorne Morrison as they recorded Jason's birth as a man.

When Young first contacted the Stanford Clinic, psychiatrist Norman Fisk was not very optimistic about the chances of finding a transsexual who would agree to being the subject of a television report. "The primary concern of post-surgery patients," he said, "is to achieve anonymity, to blend into the mainstream and leave the nightmare of transsexualism behind them."

But a month later, clinic director Martha Norberg contacted Young and said she had found a subject who might agree to the TV coverage.

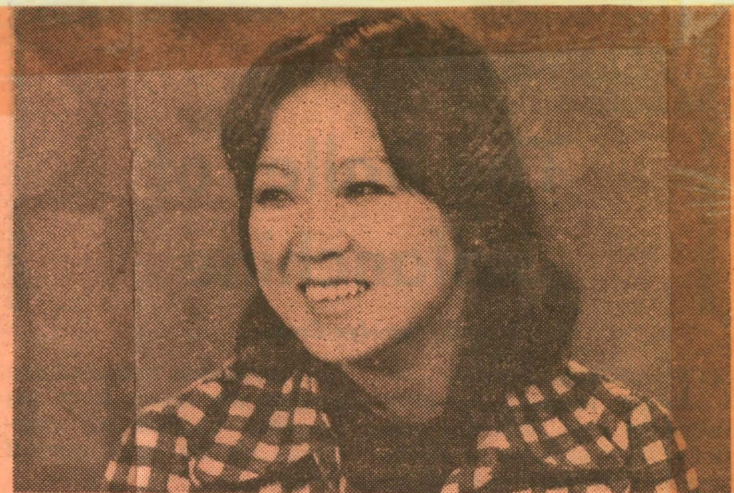
When Young met Jason, who had then been cross-living as a man for a year-and-a-half prior to surgery, she found him responsive and cooperative. He

wanted to help dispel the misconceptions about transsexualism.

Before being accepted into the sex change program at the Stanford Clinic, applicants are put through an intense screening process to eliminate those who mistakenly believe that surgery will be the answer to all their emotional problems. The doctors will accept only those with severe gender dysphoria — a feeling of existing in the wrong anatomical body.

Jason had been a tomboy and throughout his life he was attracted to masculine pursuits and interests. He felt that he should be a man. "Most people in this position know that something is wrong," he said, "but they can't put it into words. They don't know what the problem is."

The Stanford Clinic accepted Jason and he began to live as a man prior to surgery. Hormone treatments deepened his voice and gave him a beard.



PAMELA YOUNG

After nearly two years, Jason was scheduled for surgery. There was to be a series of operations. A mastectomy removed his breasts and his chest cavity was reconstructed to produce a more masculine appearance. Then a hysterectomy was performed. In another operation, a tubular flap of skin was removed from his abdomen tissues to form a penis. Later, prosthetic devices would enable him to have sexual relations.

After the surgery, Jason finally felt like a complete man, as if he were whole and normal for the first time in his life.

However, although Jason

had come to accept himself, others would not. His mother, with whom he had been very close, refused to see him. Some of his fellow workers remain distant and hostile. Life for Jason is still lonely.

"Most of the girls expect a man my age to have a certain amount of experience," he said. "But I walk around with my foot in my mouth and I can't tell them, 'Ah, this is pretty new to me.'"

Reporter Young, though, believes Jason will make a successful adjustment to his new life. "Jason is very normal, very matter of fact," she said. "His only problem is how people accept him."