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Transsex
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Sex Change Is Often Expensive

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In 1952 the Christine Jorgensen story burst upon a shocked America like a bomb. Over night, it seemed, the entire world knew the tale of the former G.I. named George who went to Denmark for sex change surgery, and returned as a woman named Christine.

A quarter of a century later, transsexuals are still causing controversy and making news most recently in the case of Dr. Renee Richards. A New York ophthalmologist, former husband and father, Richard Raskind decided to change his gender and emerged as the woman he had always wanted to be. "Emotionally, the desire to be a woman and a girl had been a most overwhelming drive ever since I can remember," said Dr. Richards.

Once available only overseas, in the last 14 years sex change surgery has been obtained in this country by an increasing number of transsexuals. Perhaps 3,000 Americans have undergone what doctors call "sexual reassignment," and the process is currently being performed at some 20 centers in 17 states. Among the pioneering institutions was Johns Hopkins Medical School, where such surgery began in 1966; in the West, Stanford University Medical Center has been a leader in the field.

Transsexuals are the victims of gender identity dysphoria, which means unhappiness of an overwhelmingly intense degree about one's sex. It is estimated that between one in 10,000 and one in 100,000 people suffer this dissatisfaction.

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so violently that they are revolted by their own sex organs, and develop a compelling desire to be of the other sex.

Not only is such a transformation lengthy, painful and expensive (usually ranging between \$5,000 and \$10,000), it is also difficult to find. There are far more applicants than can be accepted at any of the recognized centers, and potential candidates are subjected to a fairly rigorous medical and psychiatric screening process to determine their suitability for reassignment.

Some of those rejected in this country (where sex change surgery is still controversial even within the medical profession) go abroad to get what they want.

Gradually, however, more sources of help are becoming available, and public tolerance is increasing. Gender identity clinics now exist in many major cities, and further information about transsexualism and reassignment surgery can be obtained by writing to the non-profit Erickson Educational Foundation at 1627 Moreland ave., Baton Rouge, La. 70808.

Operation Is Painful