

MAINLY FOR WOMEN

Judy was a man

By Tracey Kandohla

"I'M a sculptor." A broad grin then crossed her face as she corrected the slip of tongue . . . "I mean a sculptress."

Twelve years ago, when Judy Cousins was 53, something happened that changed her whole life.

Everything she had she gave up — her family, her friends, her job, but above all her identity.

Although it seems a lifetime ago, she vividly remembers checking into an hotel as a man and leaving a few days later as a new person — a woman.

What happened during that gap put years of suffering to an end. She had achieved what she had always wanted ever since she was . . . a young lad.

"It was very complicated and took about five hours," Judy told me frankly. But it had all been worth it. The sex change operation had been 100pc. successful. "I felt great."

When I arrived at Miss Cousins's comfortable Ascot flat, she was waiting at the door to greet me. A bright summer dress hugged her figure. A touch of red lipstick was the only trace of make-up on her tanned, feminine face. She looked fit and healthy, which is not surprising as she plays golf four times a week, and she certainly belies her 65 years.



BEFORE — Judy Cousins (right) as a man at the age of 47. AFTER — Judy today as a 65-year-old woman. "Even I find it hard to believe when I look at the pictures," she says.



It seemed hard to believe that this lady was once a major in both the British and Indian armies.

Because so little is ever revealed about why people become transsexuals and how they cope, the whole topic creates a certain mystery and therefore a great curiosity to find out more.

Judy, confident and chatty, was able to talk freely of her life as a male-to-female transsexual.

She was born in India and came to England at the age of seven with her parents and two brothers. "Even in my childhood days I used to play with dolls instead of boys' toys," she remembered.

As a young man she had girlfriends "but they were mainly chosen because they were what I wanted to be like." However, she stressed that she could "enjoy male feelings towards females."

She never uttered a word to anyone about her thoughts. "I was born a male but I very much wanted to be a female. It is a compulsion and once you have it, it is

very difficult to stop it. I thought I was the only idiot about in the world and felt very ashamed.

"At the time transsexualism had not been invented. There was no medical cure and I never thought there was any possibility of a sex change," she said.

At 20 Judy took the first steps into her long and successful career in the army by training as an officer at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst.

She served in the Indian Army till 1947 and then the British Army till 1958, holding the post of major with both.

Working was fine but when it came to socialising

Judy described it as difficult "because it was a male dominated world."

She described how she used to go to London on occasions and book an hotel room. "There I used to change into women's clothes and go out in the city. I felt relaxed and normal, but very lonely because I was on my own."

She will never forget how embarrassed she used to be "because in those early days it was very strange and people thought you were just idiots or sexual perverts."

She used to buy clothes,

make-up and wigs from shops. "That was easy," she smiled. "I'd go along and say 'Please can you help me. I want something for my wife.' Shoes were the biggest problem."

In 1953 — while she was still in the army — Judy learned something that threw a new light on her situation.

"I read in a newspaper about Christine Jorgenson, an American, who went to Denmark to have a sex-change operation. It was the first fully publicised case and it made me blow my top. I just had to go and see someone," she continued.

But her hopes were shattered when she visited a psychiatrist. It was the first person she had ever revealed her feelings to but he offered no help whatsoever.

"He gave no reason why I should feel the way I did and I had no idea what triggered it off. My brothers were quite normal," she added.

When Judy was 27 she got married — "I was desperately hoping that marriage would solve my problem." In fact it did not.

On retiring from the army at 40 she went to art school in Surrey for three years and eventually became a sculptor. Her creative mind was soon at work and, having invented a new method of making decorative plastics, she decided to form her own company.

At this time she was living in Farnham and had already started a family. She had two daughters and a son. Marriage, Judy described, as "calm and content without being exciting."

"As the children were growing up the pressures were still on. My marriage hadn't solved anything and I knew I had to do something

lyst in London to see if he could help but that was a failure. I had still kept my feelings quiet from friends and family," she said.

Judy, a husband and father, then separated from 'her' wife — but never revealed the true reason why. Later she moved up to Scotland with her firm and there she discovered that a surgeon could carry out a sex-change operation.

She had such "an intense need" to become a woman. And finally, after all those years, that need was fulfilled. She had broken away from everything — her family, friends and job — to have the operation and start a new life as a female.

The process involved taking female hormone tablets to round the figure through increased fat deposits, including developing a bust; improve skin tone and weaken muscular power and strength. Then came the operation, which by cosmetic surgery changed the male body into that of a female.

Judy Cousins — who changed her name through legal sources — has never regretted it. "It was marvellous," she declared. Eventually her doctor explained to the ex-wife — who since remarried — and children what had happened.

At a later date she met the family. Not at all surprisingly, it was a great shock to her former wife. The children took it well and her friends have accepted it.

She remembers meeting her youngest daughter — then 14 — after the operation. "She was marvellous. She said 'Hello Judy' and went on with life as if no-

A year ago Miss Cousins, a 5ft. 10in. medium-built lady with a husky voice — moved from her Windsor home, where she had been for 10 years, to Liddell Way in Ascot.

Today her time is devoted to playing golf at Stoke Poges, sculpting and running a self-help association for transsexuals (SHAFT).

Judy's parents never got to know of her sex change because they had died before she made it public.

"Everyone in my social life and the golfing world knows about me and accepts it," she was pleased to say.

So what about boyfriends? Since the operation she admitted having had sexual relationships with men. "But at 65 it's not that easy to find a boyfriend," she joked.

Judy is a very pleasant, confident person with plenty of personality and a sense of humour. She describes herself as "a relaxed, non-worrying type, who has been well educated and able to cope with the problems of life."

She regards herself as lucky "because the whole change has not really affected me."

SHAFT, which Judy formed three years ago, gives full support to transsexuals. There are 250 members from all over the country — a good dozen of these living in Berkshire.

Her definition of a transsexual is: "A person who feels an overwhelming need to live and function in the opposite gender role to that of his / her biological sex."

Although there are no definite statistics, knowledgeable estimates suggest

are at least 10,000 transsexuals. Female transsexuals, women who wish to live and function as men, appear to be "three to five times as rare as male transsexuals," commented Judy.

The causes of the condition remain obscure, although several widely held explanations are that it originates from endocrine, genetic or environmental causes.

Judy believes in reincarnation and has come up with a theory that transsexualism "is something to do with what happened in your previous life."

SHAFT, of which Judy is president, has published a very useful handbook to provide a comprehensive guide for the male to female transsexual on his path from the earliest realisation to his eventual achievement of a life lived wholly as a woman socially, mentally, and within the scope of present-day surgery, physically.

Judy pointed out that the voluntary association "also works to promote a climate of public opinion favourable to a reform of the law concerning transsexuals."

For those who accomplish the change successfully they want nothing more than to live a normal life as a woman. But under British Law this is made impossible in some important respects.

For example, Judy said, a post-operative male-to-female cannot contract marriage to a biological man; if sentenced to a prison term would be sent to a male prison, and is not entitled to a State Pension till the age of 65.

She emphasised the "constant battle against the legal authorities."

"We should be recognised as women. Look, I'm 65 and only just started."

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