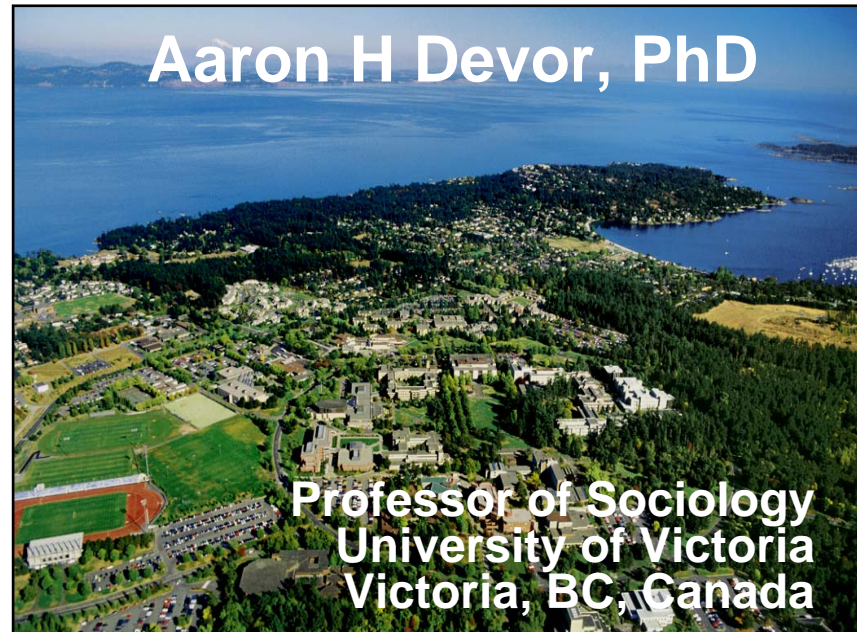


# Providing a Founding Framework: The Vision and Activism of Three Transgender Pioneers



Canadian Professional Association  
for Transgender Health



University  
of Victoria

Toronto. June 28, 2008

# Three Transgender Pioneers

Vision, Advocacy, and Activism

**Christine Jorgensen**

**Virginia Prince**

**Reed Erickson**



Canadian Professional Association  
for Transgender Health

# Christine Jorgenson



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# Christine Jorgenson

- Born May 30, 1926. Bronx, NY. George
- Socially conservative Danish family
- Slight 5'6" boy, didn't date girls
- Early crossdressing
- Feared being labeled as gay
- Saw self as partially fe/male
- Brief military service after WWII was over



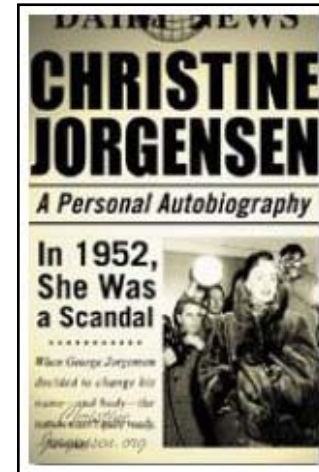
# Christine Jorgenson

- Depressed. Searched for sex change info
- Got prescription for estrogens in US
- May 1 1950 left for Denmark in search of doctors who would do sex change
- A friend sent him to Christian Hamburger
  - July. Jorgensen accepted as research subject
  - Danish law allowed estrogens and castration treatment at the request of homosexuals
- September 1951 & November 1952. Surgeries
  - More in 1954, 1970, 1980



# Christine Jorgenson

- World's first transsexual celebrity
- December 1 1952
  - Front page of *NY Daily News*
  - Numerous inaccuracies
- *Los Angeles Times* story
  - Medical model, Intersex condition
  - “World’s most talked about figure”
- Dec 11 press conference
  - 50 reporters in Copenhagen
- 50,000 words on wire service Dec. ‘52
- \$25K for series in Hearst newspapers



# Christine Jorgenson

- Arrival in USA @ New York
  - 350 people at airport
- *NY Post* article
  - Not really a woman
- Night club performer
  - Glamorous
  - Always dignified
  - “Welcome to My World”
- Some small legitimate theatre
- Universities & colleges lectures





# Christine Jorgensen

- Autobiography, 1967
- Life story movie, 1970
- Career over by 1980s
  - Unhappy, drinking
- Died May 3, 1989.
  - Age 63
  - Bladder cancer
  - 200 people at her funeral
  - May 3 in many places is now Trans Awareness / Trans Day of Pride





# Christine Jorgenson

- Had the courage & drive to find transition
  - Very few resources available
  - Tremendous isolation
- Always wanted respect & admiration
  - Wanted to be more than a transsexual
  - Strived for dignity and legitimacy
  - Was only able to work as “professional trans”
- Provided a role model for people world over
  - Made it possible for others to dream & quest
  - Hamburger received 765 letters from 465 people
- Spoke out for trans acceptance & integration



# Virginia Prince



# Virginia Prince

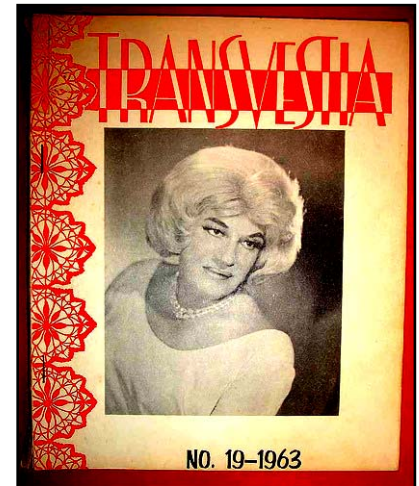
- Born Arnold Lowman, Los Angeles, Nov. 23, 1912
- Slight but athletic young man
- Crossdressing to orgasm at age 12
  - “Full blown” by age 16. 1929
  - Never heard of anyone else like himself
- 1939. PhD Pharmacology UC Berkeley age 27.
- 1941. 1<sup>st</sup> marriage.
  - Continued to secretly crossdress
  - Began using the name Virginia Prince
- 1946. Birth of son
- 1951. Divorced from 1<sup>st</sup> wife





# Virginia Prince

- 1953. Custody court case exposes crossdressing
  - Story appeared in at least four LA newspapers
  - Awarded custody as requested
- 1955-1961. Age 42-47. Taking estrogens
  - Called himself Femmiphile (FP)
- 1956. 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage
  - Wife aware of and assisted with crossdressing
  - Did public speaking together
- 1957. Article in *Am J of Psychotherapy*
- 1960. Started *Transvestia* Magazine
  - 6/yr for 100 editions. Up 1000 subs
  - Edited by Prince until 1980
  - “I have...dealt with the whole subject of cross dressing more deeply, more thoroughly and more usefully than anyone else in this country or elsewhere.” Vol. 100
  - Sold to Carol Beecroft in 1980. Defunct in 2 yrs
  - Replaced with *Femme Mirror* still published



# Virginia Prince

- 1961. Started 1<sup>st</sup> TV organization Hose & Heels Club
  - Public crossdressing illegal
  - 1962. Became Alpha Chapter of Foundation for Full Personality Expression (FPE or Phi Pi Epsilon)
  - 1975. Became Society for the Second Self (Tri Ess or Tri Sigma)
  - Heterosexual male crossdressers only  
No gays. No transsexuals
  - Chicago chapter member Naomi Owen started “Be All You Can Be Weekend” now 26th yr
  - Boston chapter member Marissa Sherrill Lynn started International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) now 22<sup>nd</sup> yr
  - Boston chapter member Ariadne Kane started Fantasia Fair now 33<sup>rd</sup> yr
  - Helped start clubs in England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand



# Virginia Prince

- 1961. Postal obscenity conviction started “accidental career”
  - Exchanged sexually explicit letters with another crossdresser
  - 5 yrs probation ended after 1 yr. Almost lost *Transvestia*
  - No improper use of mail. No crossdressing.
  - Lawyer requested permission to crossdress for purpose of educational presentations to service clubs, schools, churches, radio, television, newspapers, police, medical professionals
- 1966. Divorced from 2<sup>nd</sup> wife
  - Never dated women again
- 1967. Published *The Transvestite and His Wife*
- 1968. Age 55. Began living full-time
- 1971. Published *How To Be a Woman Though Male*
- 1980. Retired from activism
- Now over 95 years old, living in southern California



Photo: Aaron Devor





# Virginia Prince

- Worked to conceptually separate sex and gender
  - “my gender, my self-identity is between my ears, not between my legs”
  - Praised for this work by Harry Benjamin, Richard Green, Vern Bullough, Robert Stoller. Prince’s ideas influenced DSM on transvestism
- Advocated primacy of gender identity and the right to live with various combinations of sex and gender
  - “There are a great many people...[who] think that the only way that you can be a woman is the way mother made it.”
  - “surgery is not necessary to be a woman. It is only a painful, expensive, dangerous, and misguided attempt to achieve between the legs what must eventually and inevitably be achieved between the ears.”
- Coined terms “transgenderist,” “transgenderism,” and “trans people” (used in late 1960s, published in 1978)
  - To describe people who live non-op
  - “I live in the feminine gender but I have no desire to change my sex.”



# Reed Erickson

- Born October 13, 1917  
(Rita Alma Erickson)  
El Paso, Texas
- Grew up in Philadelphia
- 1946. 1<sup>st</sup> LSU woman graduate in  
Mechanical Engineering.
- Transitioned in early 1960s  
with Harry Benjamin
- Married several times
  - Two Children
- Wealthy Philanthropist
- Died 1992



1946 LSU Yearbook

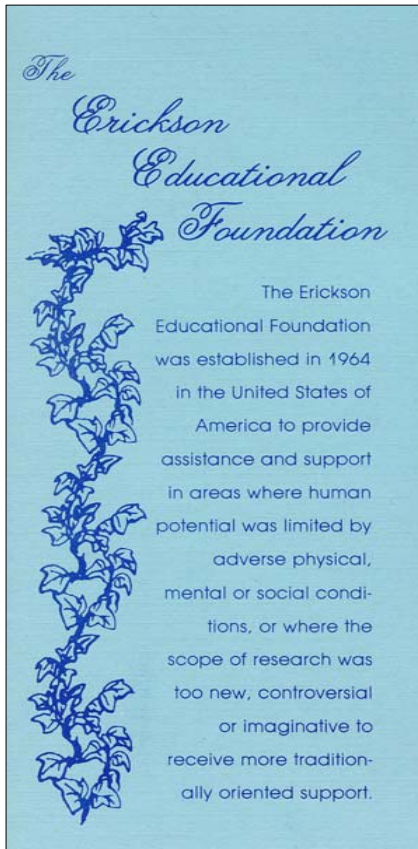


March 10, 1966  
Reed Erickson & Aileen Ashton



# Reed Erickson

Established 1964



## ***THE ERICKSON EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION***

*is primarily a medical research foundation engaged in the conduct of investigations, experiments, and studies to discover, develop, or verify knowledge relating to the causes, diagnosis, treatment, prevention or control of physical or mental diseases and impairment of men and women.*

*Within this framework, one of the purposes of this tax exempt foundation has been to underwrite or initiate essential but unusual medical type research projects that might find support difficult to come by from the larger foundations. Emphasis is on support of endeavors likely to lead to permanent benefits rather than to temporary alleviation.*



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# Reed Erickson

## The Erickson Educational Foundation

- **Structure**

- President Reed Erickson
- Board of Directors (e.g., John Money)
- Advisory Boards (e.g., Rev. Ted McIlvenna, Evelyn Hooker, Leo Wollman, Anke Erhardt, Charles Ihlenfeld)
- Director Zelda Suplee
- Office Staff

- **Main Foci**

- ONE Inc
- Transsexualism
- New Age movements (e.g., Robert Masters & Jean Houston, Stanley Krippner, John Lily, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of *A Course in Miracles*)



# Reed Erickson

## The Erickson Educational Foundation

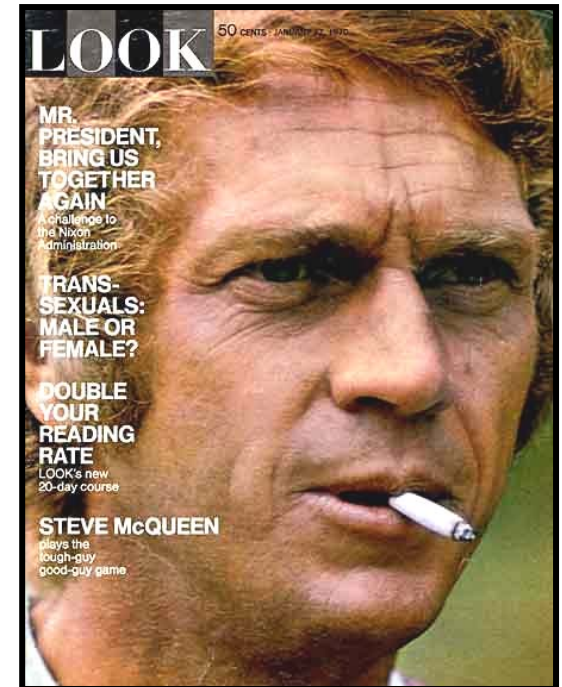
- **Individual Support & Referrals**
  - Only national clearinghouse
    - Service providers referral list
      - 1971: 250 names in US & Canada
    - Support groups referral list
    - Announcements of local meetings & newsletters
  - Informal one-to-one counselling & advice via telephone, mail, in-person
- **Advocacy & Education**
  - Library & clipping files
  - Speakers Bureau
  - Media outreach
  - Pamphlet series
  - Newsletter (1968-76, 1983)



# Reed Erickson

## The Erickson Educational Foundation

- **Speakers Bureau**
  - Churches & Theological Schools
  - Medical Centres & Medical Schools
  - Police Academies
  - University & College classes
  - Psychological & Sexological Assoc. Meetings
- **Media Outreach**
  - Magazines
  - Newspapers (Dear Abby, Ann Landers)
  - Radio
  - Television
  - Educational films
  - 105 Dictionaries & Encyclopaedias



Roland Berg Jan 27, 1970

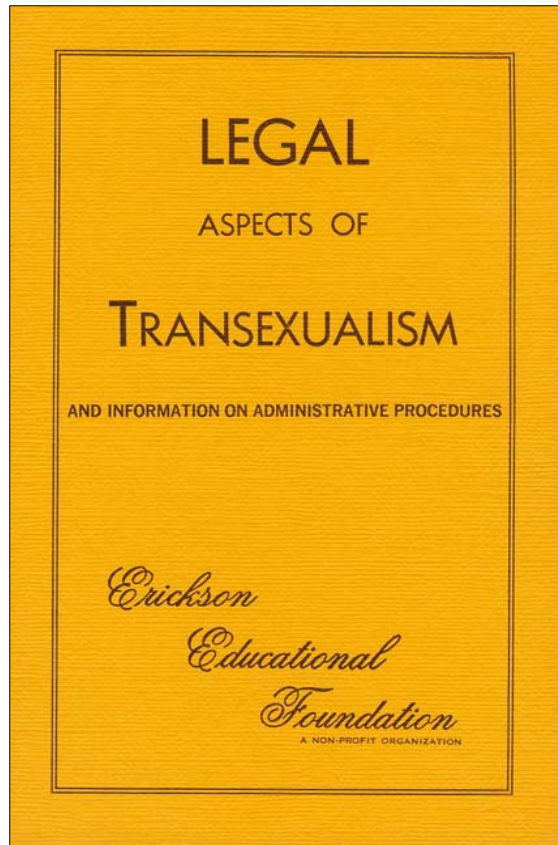


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# Reed Erickson

## The Erickson Educational Foundation Pamphlet Series



- Letter from a Mother (1969)
- Letter from a Brother of a Transsexual (1969)
- An Outline of Medical Management of the Transsexual (1971 & 1973)
- Legal Aspects of Transsexualism and Information on Administrative Procedures (1971 & 1973)
- Information for the Family of the Transsexual and Children with Gender Identity Disturbances (1971)
- Religious Aspects of Transsexualism (1971)
- Information on Transsexualism for Law Enforcement Officers (1973)
- Counseling the Transsexual: Five Conversations with Professionals in Transsexual Therapy (1973)
- Guidelines for Transsexuals (1974 & 1976)



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# Reed Erickson

## The Erickson Educational Foundation Research & Professional Development

### Some Researchers Supported

Harry Benjamin  
Vern Bullough  
Harold  
Christensen  
C.J. Dewhurst  
Milton Edgerton  
Anke Ehrhardt  
Deborah  
Feinbloom  
Norman Fisk  
Roger Gorski  
Richard Green

Donald Laub  
Elizabeth  
McCauley  
Jon K. Meyer  
John Money  
Ira B. Pauly  
Richard Pillard  
June Reinisch  
Paul Walker  
Irvin Yalom

### The Harry Benjamin Foundation 1964-1968



- 1966. Johns Hopkins Clinic
  - “Many have been referrals from the Harry Benjamin Foundation .... endowed by the Erickson Educational Foundation, which is also the sole source of support for the Hopkins endeavor.”
- 1969. J. Money & R. Green, *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*  
(Foreword by Reed Erickson)



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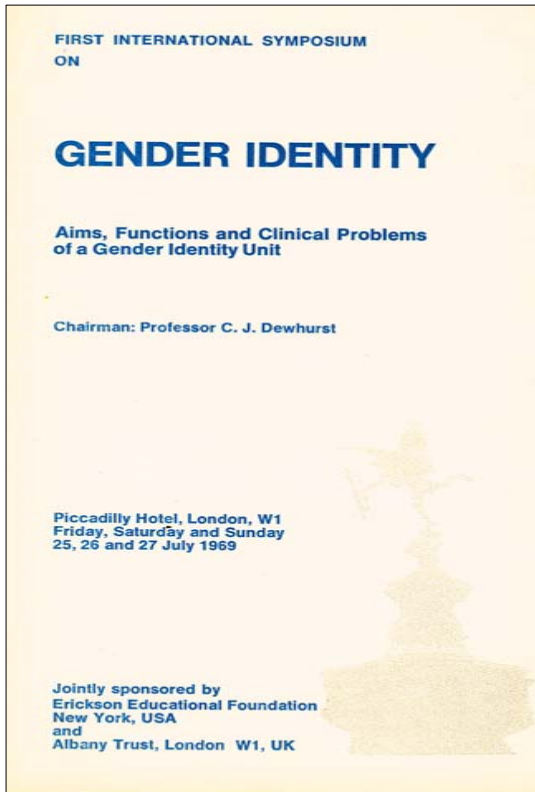
# Reed Erickson

## The Erickson Educational Foundation International Symposia

**1969. 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium  
on Gender Identity. London, UK**

**1971. 2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium  
on Gender Identity.  
Copenhagen, Denmark**

**1973. 3<sup>rd</sup> International Symposium  
on Gender Identity.  
Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia**



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# Reed Erickson

## Founding HBIGDA

- 1975. The Harry Benjamin 4th International Conference on Gender Identity. Palo Alto, CA
  - Honouring Benjamin's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday
- 1977. 5<sup>th</sup> International Gender Dysphoria Symposium. Norfolk, VA
  - HBIGDA founding cmte formed
  - Standards of Care cmte formed
- 1979 (Feb). 6<sup>th</sup> International Gender Dysphoria Symposium, San Diego, CA
  - HBIGDA Incorporated.  
Sept, 1979, Galveston, TX

## Program cover. 5<sup>th</sup> Intl Symposium

Just prior to the meeting we have learned that the Erickson Educational Foundation, which we all consider a vital force in the area of transsexualism, will cease to exist. This impartial educational agency has been of inestimable value to the field. The conference planning committee will schedule a business meeting in lieu of one of the discussion periods to discuss the expected effect of this event on the field and to brainstorm about the implications of this.

## 1<sup>st</sup> HBIGDA Newsletter

The Erickson Educational Foundation was the pioneering source of support for research, referral and public and professional information in the field of gender dysphoria.



# Reed Erickson

## What Happened to the EEF?

- Erickson interests shifted to New Age projects
- Erickson's health, financial, legal problems closed EEF
- **Janus** Information Services
  - 1976. Paul Walker. Galveston, TX
- **J2CP** Information Services
  - 1986. Jude Patton. Joanna Clarke / Sister Mary Elizabeth. San Juan Capistrano, CA
- **Aegis** (American Educational Gender Information Service)
  - 1990. Dallas Denny. Atlanta, Georgia
- **GEA** (Gender Education & Advocacy, Inc.)
  - 2000. Sandra Cole, Dallas Denny, Jamison Green, Gwendolyn Ann Smith. Ann Arbor, MI



# A Founding Framework

- Reluctant activists
  - Would have preferred to just quietly live their lives
  - Social values and laws would not allow them civil inattention
- Role Models for other trans people
  - Worked to turn shame into pride
  - Were builders of support networks
- Educators of public
  - Lead change of social attitudes and beliefs
  - Used mass media & public speaking
  - Reached out to next generation
  - Fostered & supported research community





# A Founding Framework



Christine Jorgensen



Photo: Mariette Pathy-Allen

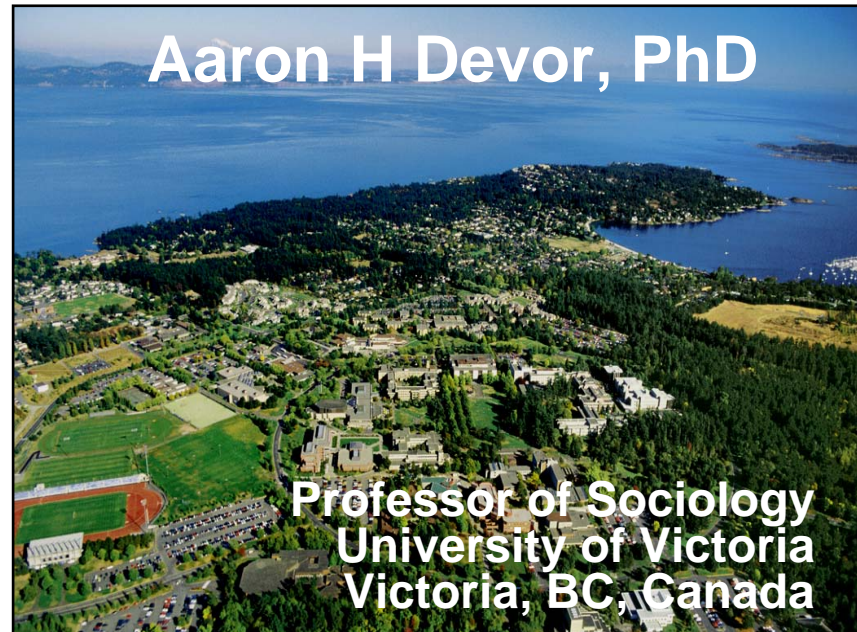
Virginia Prince



Reed Erickson



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