

# 'I was a transsexual now I'm a woman'

Wendy, formerly Michael Keady, describes the protracted traumas of 'changing' sex and how she finally came to terms with herself as a person

OVER the last few months I have written a great deal about my life in an endeavour to understand what happened and to put it into perspective. My hope is that my story may be of assistance to those thinking of "changing" their sex and those who may be called upon to assist, or to come into contact with a transsexual in a professional capacity.

I was born into a Scottish working class family. My father (in fact my step father although I didn't know it) was in the army and the family lived in Germany. I spent a great deal of my childhood in and out of hospital, on more than one occasion I was near to death. My mother metaphorically wrapped me in cotton wool. I barely knew my family and had no social life, never being allowed to play with other children. As a consequence I grew up very lonely and isolated.

I grew up being and feeling different.

From Germany we went to live in Berwick on Tweed. My health improved by leaps and bounds so I came into contact with other children. There my troubles began. I had no idea how to behave with other boys so the name calling began — "poof" and "queer". All I knew about those sort of people was that they were different and bad. Well, I felt different so I must be bad.

I was brought up a Catholic so I went to my priest and confessed my badness, especially touching myself — masturbation. This was a great sin, I did it but had no idea why.

My physical health had improved but emotionally I was a mess. As I got better my mother's attitude towards me changed, I was encouraged to join in with other boys in their games. I think by this time I had started to wear female clothes.

The family moved to Edinburgh and I got into deeper trouble. I felt so out of place and just could not mix with other boys. The name calling got worse and slowly but surely I withdrew into my own life. In an attempt to be more like other boys I joined the scouts. I was raped.

This episode seemed to confirm my femaleness for me. My masturbation took on a new meaning but it was all wrong. On my father's demob we moved to Glasgow. My parents seemed to spend a good deal of time fighting, this had always gone on but now it was worse. It seemed to be because of or about me. I hated being at home so I took myself off to the local library where I found a friend.

When I was 13 I was raped again, only this time it was worse, a lot worse, horrifying in fact. My father took me a number of times over a three-month period. There was no one I could turn to, after all he was my father (finding out later he was not didn't help one bit). I felt lost, frightened and alone. The female in me went right on growing and I became even more isolated. Masturbation now meant something definite. It meant a man making love to a female.

The female started off as a baby and quickly grew into a girl living inside of me. It felt good to be able to retreat into this other me, my secret self. Life as a boy was a living hell, I could not participate in male-orientated occupations. My isolation became much worse.

My father was ejected from the home, the marriage had finally fallen apart. When I was 15 my mother was taken ill, and died when I was 16. Although I was working and doing quite well her death threw me completely for a while. I met my first girlfriend when I was 17 and a half. After

about a year we had sexual intercourse but this didn't always work for me because I was still masturbating and thinking of myself as female. This caused me to become very confused and frightened. My social and religious upbringing told me that what I was doing was wrong yet it seemed the only right thing to do. I cross dressed, (or should I say dressed properly) whenever I could. The female was very strong by now so she became dominant.

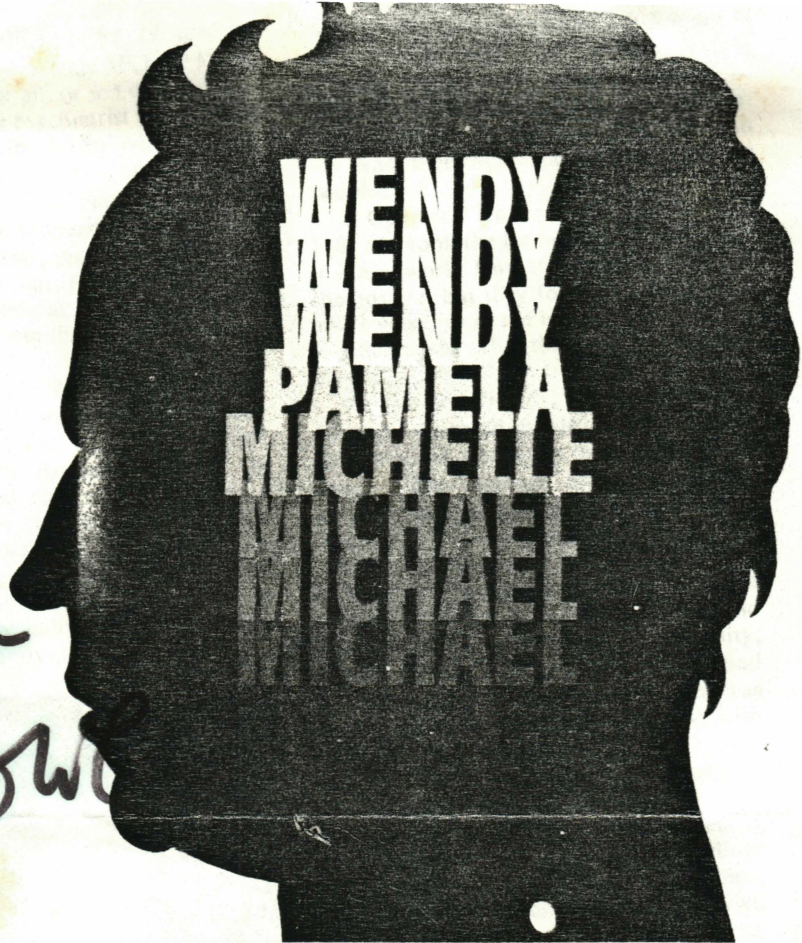
I was sent for psychiatric assistance when I was about 19. I didn't tell about the female me, that was a secret. I talked about my mother's life, about my life, about being called homosexual, anything except my female self. I was diagnosed as suffering from "anxiety state, emotional instability or depression". These diagnoses went on for years.

I broke off the relationship with my girlfriend when I was 21, I spent the next few months as an alcoholic, in and out of hospital where my psychiatrist didn't want me. I worked briefly in public houses. I had one homosexual experience before I left which I found unsatisfactory.

I went to Butlins where I spent the season then moved on to Bradford. There I met my wife (now ex) She had a 10-week-old boy. I took them both back to Glasgow and found work in a public house. Like a moth to a flame I put myself back in the hands of my psychiatrist.

We moved back and forth between Glasgow and Bradford over the next few years. There were two girls born, one in 1968, the other in 1971. At first I thought this must prove I was a man. But it was a foolish hope. The female me was as strong as ever.

We finally settled in Glasgow late in 1970. By that time I was almost



...ly on the sicklist. In June 1971 I  
...convicted for embezzlement and put  
...two years' probation. My psychiatrist  
...made me a day patient at the hospital. This  
...lasted for about four years.

What of the female me? She just kept on  
growing and living inside me with no way  
out. I tried leading the life of an ultra-  
conservative male, always wearing a suit,  
shirt and tie and short back and sides. That  
was the person I presented to society but it  
wasn't the real me. At times I became very  
frightened and confused and made a  
number of attempts at suicide.

This went on until 1975. Psychiatrically  
I'd made little or no progress. I made one  
last attempt to lead the life of a man. I took  
the family back to Bradford. It worked for  
six months then I just fell apart. I lost my  
whole sense of identity, so I went back on  
the sicklist in about April 1976 and I've  
been there ever since.

Another psychiatrist, another hospital,  
more drugs, the same old diagnoses. I  
wanted to scream, and did so, I also kept  
on overdosing. Someone somewhere must  
pay attention to my state. It became so bad  
my wife couldn't take any more and told  
the psychiatrist to keep me in until I was  
cured. At first he told her there was  
nothing he could do, but then he came up  
with the idea of a psychologist. Eureka!

When I started to work with this person I  
could see no difference, but there was, as I  
soon found out. When I talked he really  
listened, but would stand no nonsense from  
me. Our work began to bear fruit. He told  
me that they had been treating me wrong  
for years. He decided to take me apart,  
piece by piece, and then rebuild me as a  
man.

As my confidence in him grew I spoke  
more and more about the female me. I  
nearly told him all about me. He wanted to  
incorporate both of me to get me to accept  
I could be both. It didn't work because the  
female me (Wendy) was free and I was  
determined it should stay so.

I told my wife and together we found the  
Beaumont Society for transvestites. We  
told the children, friends and neighbours.  
The children accepted, as did most of the  
others, but there are always some that  
don't. I tried to live my life as a transvestite  
but it was just no good. By June 1978 I was  
in trouble again. The stronger Wendy  
became so Michael became weaker.  
Sometimes I was one, sometimes the other.  
The tension in the home was terrible. I left  
Bradford and went to live in Manchester to  
try to sort myself out once and for all.

In Manchester I mixed with all kinds of  
people — transvestites, transsexuals,  
homosexuals and all sorts. For the first  
time in my life I dressed casually and  
allowed my hair to grow — unisex, in fact,  
women's clothes but not dressed as a  
woman. But this only worked for me for a  
few months. I ran back to Bradford.

This was it, decision time. Was it to be  
Michael or Wendy? My wife could not and  
would not take any more. The hospital was  
no help. My psychologist advised me to  
think carefully, not to make a mistake.  
Then he referred me to a psychiatrist who  
dealt with people like me. My wife and I,  
plus our closest friends, sat and discussed  
the whole business. On the night of  
October 18 I finally made up my mind.

The morning of October 19 saw the  
emergence of me — Wendy Michelle Keady  
— for once and for all, or so I thought.

I went to see the psychiatrist who was not  
much different from the others. He put me  
on a male reducing hormone and told me it  
would take up to four, maybe five, years  
before I would be referred to a surgeon. I  
was to see him at least once a month, which  
I did. So that was that. Everyone took it in  
their stride, the general reaction being as I  
was not hurting them they would let me get  
on with it.

In May 1979 I was referred to the  
surgeon. He said it would be at least two  
years before I could be considered for  
surgery. Then in August that year he  
changed his mind and said Christmas. I  
had no idea why. So, on December 28,  
1979, I had my operation. But I had made a  
mistake, the biggest mistake of my life. It  
was too fast, far too fast. I've paid for  
that, by God I've paid. It nearly cost me  
my life and my sanity.



Wendy Michelle Keady has finally come to terms  
with who she is

I convinced myself that all was well. I  
was a woman now, what I had always been  
in my mind's eye. My life, I thought, would  
go from success to success. But I lied to  
myself and to others.

I caught an infection, after coming out  
of hospital, and had to lie on my back for  
six weeks. My ex-wife nursed me back to  
health but the psychiatrist refused to have  
anything to do with me. "Go and lead your  
own life," was his instruction to me.

The next two years were more or less  
disastrous. In April 1980 my ex-wife, who  
had run off with the neighbour, began  
campaigning to cut off my contact with the  
children. In June I had my second  
operation. I was very lonely, frightened  
and in a daze. I went to the employment  
rehabilitation centre for seven weeks, but I  
was drinking and taking more and more  
drugs. One night I came home from a disco  
and wrecked the place. The police kept me  
in custody overnight then let me go. The  
social worker came just in time to stop me  
taking an overdose, she persuaded me to  
admit myself to a psychiatric hospital.

In an attempt to bring some stability  
back into my life, in February 1981, I  
started to attend a day centre. But that  
didn't help either and I made repeated  
attempts to take my life.

All through that year my condition  
steadily worsened. I went to a speech  
therapist thinking there was something

wrong with my voice. There was but not in  
the way she expected. By that time I  
thought I was four different people —  
Wendy, Michael, Michelle and Pamela.  
The other three began by talking to me in  
my head, then they began to speak to other  
people.

In October I stole some dihydrocodeine  
118s and took the lot hoping that this time  
it would work. I was "dead on arrival" at  
the hospital but they found a spark of life  
and I woke up in the intensive care unit. I  
was alone, the other three had gone. I was  
myself.

My two best friends, who had stood by  
helpless, watching me disintegrate, finally  
took matters into their own hands. They  
pleaded for someone to help me. My  
psychiatrist was only going to keep me in  
hospital for a few weeks. She said if I  
wanted to die there she couldn't stop me.

Another psychiatrist agreed I needed  
time to think and take stock of myself, and  
I was placed in the therapeutic community,  
a place of safety. Then she looked around  
for some expert help and a counsellor was  
found. He was a specialist in dealing with  
gender identity problems.

John Hart subsequently wrote a  
description of how he had offered to work  
with me to "clarify her gender role identity  
confusion" and to "explore her feelings  
about sexuality in terms of relationships,  
roles and orientation". This we started  
doing in November 1981. We met on  
average for two hours, each week.  
Sometimes the meetings were longer,  
sometimes twice a week. They continued  
until April 1982 with little or no break.

We looked long and hard at my life and  
why it had taken the course it had. We  
established that I was once a male called  
Michael and what sort of a person I had  
been then. And we confirmed that the  
female Wendy was very much like Michael.  
The change that really had to be affected  
was in me the person, male or female.

John had a tough job convincing me that  
Michael was still very much part of me. So  
we examined the Michael me. Every aspect  
of my life was looked at — my social and  
religious upbringing, my relationships with  
those around me, especially with my step  
father. Once John had persuaded me to  
look at Michael we studied the Wendy me.  
How much had I changed? What had  
changed, besides the physical aspect?

It was a long hard slog for us both. I had  
had so many entrenched ideas which had to  
be rooted out and dealt with. John got me  
to look at the whole me, the person, and  
helped me to accept myself. I was forced to  
realise there was more to being a woman  
than just the body. It had to be in the mind  
that the change occurred. The training  
centre helped me to come to terms with  
myself. People knew about me but they  
treated me as a woman as long as I behaved  
like one, but above all they treated me like  
a person with problems. There I learned to  
behave just by being myself. The members  
of the group were free to express  
themselves. I learned that sometimes my  
behaviour upset people so I changed it.

John and I made a short video film  
about our work and my life. I know now  
why I wanted to destroy myself and have  
come to terms with who I am. I am Wendy  
Michelle Keady, and proud of it.