

# CHRISTINE JORGENSEN

b. May 30, 1926

d. May 3, 1989

## TRANSGENDER PIONEER

**Jorgensen became one of the first to combine hormone therapy with gender reassignment surgery.**

*“Nature made a mistake, which I have had corrected.”*

Christine Jorgensen was the first nationally known transgender American. She used her fame to speak out on behalf of transgender people.

Born George Jorgensen Jr. and raised in the Bronx, she described herself as a “frail, tow-headed, introverted little boy who ran from fistfights and rough-and-tumble games.” In 1945, after graduating high school, Jorgensen was drafted into the Army.

Jorgensen researched gender reassignment surgery. While visiting Copenhagen, she met Dr. Christian Hamburger, an endocrinologist and specialist in rehabilitative hormonal therapy. With Hamburger's help, Jorgensen became one of the first to combine hormone therapy with gender reassignment surgery. She chose the name Christine to honor Dr. Hamburger.

In 1952, based on an intercepted letter to her parents describing her transformation, the New York Daily News ran the headline “Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty.” The media incorrectly called Jorgensen the first person to undergo the surgery, which had been performed since the late 1920's in Europe. She returned to New York City and used her fame to advocate for transsexual and transgender people.

Jorgensen continued her transition by having a vaginoplasty. In 1959, she became engaged to Howard Knox. They tried to wed, but the marriage license was rejected because Jorgensen was legally a male. The media reported the story, Knox lost his job, and the relationship ended.

In the 1970's and 1980's, Jorgensen spoke at universities across the nation about her life. She became a singer and actress performing in Las Vegas, New York City and Hollywood. Jorgensen appeared in the documentary “Paradise Not For Sale” (1984) and was the focus of “The Christine Jorgensen Story” (1970). Jorgensen authored “Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Biography” (1967).



© ASSOCIATED PRESS

**lgbt**  
**HISTORY**  
**MONTH**

[www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com](http://www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com)

Copyright ©2012 – A Project of Equality Forum