

## **Confessions of a Gender Defender**

*by Randi Ettner, Ph.D.*

Many in the transgender community are familiar with this series of reflections on patients and situations Dr. Ettner has dealt with during her career as a therapist specializing in transgender. Although published in 1996, it is still relevant today. Newcomers to transgender are showing up daily – especially parents of young children – who need her perspective.

“Confessions” is made up of a series of anecdotes, notes, and memories accumulated over nearly three decades as a therapist. It encompasses segments about transgender patients ranging from young children to octogenarians. Dr. Ettner includes stories both happy and sad, as seen through her eyes.

The book closes with a chapter on historical perspectives by Drs. Leah Schaefer and Christine Wheeler, well-known therapists based in New York City. In this afterword, they list brief reports on Dr. Harry Benjamin’s first ten patients. They conclude:

“Can it be a coincidence that the characteristics manifested by all of Dr. Benjamin’s first patients (beginning in 1948) appeared at a very early age – or as far back as they can remember – with or without education, guidance, or conditioning? We don’t think so.”

We still hear exactly the same symptoms and characteristics in 2006. The amazing – and wonderful – difference is the number of parents who LISTEN to their children when they insist “I’m not a boy – I’m a girl!” or vice versa. We owe a special thanks to Dr. Ettner and therapists like her who help us understand and accept our transgendered children.

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