

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

Dave or Diane

Being Different is No Reason for Guilt

Reprinted with kind permission from Mark Brown, Chicago Sun-Times
Article appeared in Polare magazine: July 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Diane Schroer

Each time I talk to Diane Schroer it gets a little bit easier to accept what's happened to my old room-mate Dave, a little less worrisome about whether I've slipped up and used the wrong name or called her 'man' as in "thanks, man" or "hey, man." That's not to say it didn't come as a shock at first or that it still doesn't have its awkward moments.

... the most painful part is hearing how Diane, as Dave, grew up with thoughts always clouded by the sense that there was something wrong with him because he should have been a girl.

But she's convinced me it's the right thing for her, and that has helped make me aware that this is one of those areas of human experience about which I had previously chosen to remain wilfully ignorant.

That's why I'm hoping you'll stick with me long enough to hear me out on this again today, and occasionally in the future, when the natural inclination might be to look away to avoid seeing something that we might prefer not to know. People in Diane's situation could use a little more understanding from the rest of us. There are more of them out there than we realise, many suffering silently with their tortured thoughts.

How the story began ...

If you missed Thursday's column, it was about how Diane, a twenty-five-year Army veteran and Special Forces commander, is suing the federal government for sex discrimination. Up until a few months ago, Diane was known as Dave, which is who she was when we shared an apartment at Northern Illinois University for the 1976-77 school year.

Last fall, the Congressional Research Service offered forty-eight-year-old Dave, a job as a research analyst on terrorism, then rescinded the offer when Dave disclosed he was in the process of making the medical transition to Diane. A.C.L.U. lawyers filed suit Thursday in the District of Columbia on behalf of Diane, who now lives in Virginia.

It had been a couple of years since I'd heard from Dave, but my curiosity didn't go on high alert when I received an e-mail in early April from "D.J. Schroer," one of Dave's nicknames, requesting my current address. A letter arrived at home a week or two after that. The first few paragraphs were full of foreboding with a warning that he was about to disclose something I might find extremely disturbing.

My God, I wondered. What did he do? Sell secrets to the Chinese? That led to a strange mixture of relief and stunned amazement as I went on to read that after many years of uncertainty and inner discomfort, he had decided to live his life as a woman and had already begun doing so. He wrote about the burden of shame and guilt he had been carrying his whole life and about how he was confident he was now on the right path. He also disclosed that he and his wife of sixteen years were in the process of divorce. I knew they didn't have kids.

I responded fairly quickly with an e-mail to 'D.J.' (I couldn't bring myself to use 'Diane' yet) offering reassurances that the news, while stunning, did not upset or offend me and saying that I had always known Dave as someone who knew his own mind. I promised to be in touch soon.

But it was a couple of weeks before I screwed up my nerve to call and was relieved when I got a recording that allowed me to just leave a message. I think I was afraid because I didn't know quite what to expect. Early the next week, I answered the phone and found myself talking to somebody with a quiet woman's voice who said her name was Diane. It took a couple seconds to register. "Oh! Diane," I said, and each time I've said it since, it gets a little easier, and when I slip up, she doesn't seem to mind. Diane asked me to tell her story.

Since Thursday, I've heard from several other buddies of Dave's going back to high school and college who expressed support because they knew him as a quality person, something who's not dependent on any feature of his anatomy or how he dresses. I haven't heard from anybody in the military, but Diane says her friends there have been very supportive, too.

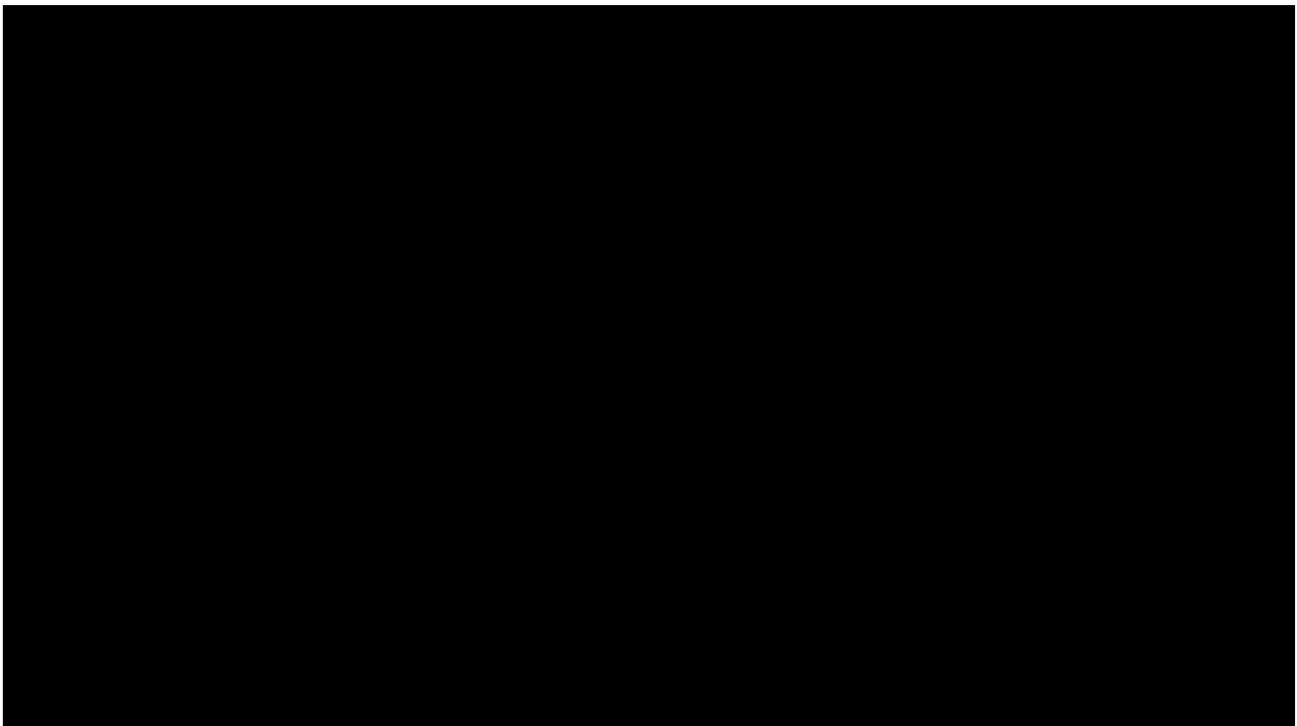
We've talked several times in recent weeks, and the most painful part is hearing how Diane, as Dave, grew up with thoughts always clouded by the sense that there was something wrong with him because he should have been a girl. He had those thoughts every day of his life, on the playground, in college, in combat, until he decided to become one.

Doctors say transsexuals are born with a disconnect between their bodies and the gender identity in their brains. It is a recognised medical phenomenon. A large number of individuals with this condition end up killing themselves, possibly more than go through with the expensive medical procedures Diane has started.

On the chance that Diane's story can inspire more of them to hang in there and shed the guilt, I plan to keep telling it.

Diane Schroer

From You Tube: in Anti-Discrimination Ruling  Starting a new life and searching for a new career isn't easy, but Diane Schroer, a highly-decorated veteran, is no stranger to a challenge. A former Airborne Ranger qualified Special Forces officer, Schroer began taking steps to transition from male to female shortly after retiring as a Colonel after twenty-five years of distinguished service in the Army. When she interviewed for a job as a terrorism research analyst at the Library of Congress, she thought she'd found the perfect fit. Schroer accepted the position, but when she told her future supervisor that she was in the process of gender transition, they rescinded the job offer. The [A.C.L.U.](#) is now representing her in a Title VII sex discrimination lawsuit against the Library of Congress. This is Diane's story ...



On 19th September 2008, a federal district judge ruled that the Library of Congress illegally discriminated against Schroer, in a groundbreaking decision that found that discriminating against someone for changing genders is sex discrimination under [U.S.](#) federal law. On 28th April 2009, the judge ordered the government to pay nearly \$500,000 in compensation for the discrimination, which was the maximum he could award in the case.

Further Information

The following links are provided for further information about this case:

[A.C.L.U. website: Schroer v. Library of Congress - Case Profile](#) 

[Time Magazine: A Transsexual v. the Government](#) 

[The Bilerico Project: Col. Diane Schroer Awarded Half a Million in Anti-Discrimination Ruling](#) 

Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre [Inc.](#), which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the [S.A.A.P.](#) program and supported by the [N.S.W.](#) Health Department through the [AIDS](#) and [Infectious Diseases Branch](#). Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre [Inc.](#), the Department of Family & Community Services or the [N.S.W.](#) Department of Health.

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and

service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.