

# **SHE'S A BOY I KNEW**

**A film by Gwen Haworth**

**70 Minutes**

**Video, Color, Canada, 2007**



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## PRESS QUOTES

"Honest, intelligent and absolutely clear-eyed. Unlike most autobiographical docu helmers, Haworth has a degree in filmmaking, and her thorough understanding of the medium results in a well-edited portrait smoothly interweaving talking heads with home movies while steadily moving forward both chronologically and emotionally. Humor is another unexpected plus, picked up on by brief animated segments ("How to Be a Girl," etc.) that provide just the right amount of leavening." - **VARIETY**

Witty, brave, and vulnerable, Haworth gave us the most affecting and memorable documentary of the year." -  
**Vancouver Magazine**

"Haworth creates an emotional space that engulfs the viewer in a way that's extremely rare in any film, whether fiction or non-fiction." - **Kevin Griffin, The Vancouver Sun**

"Rarely does a film live up to its promotional tagline. She's a Boy I Knew guarantees to be "...the most compelling DIY, gender bending, feel good film directed by a transsexual you've seen all year!" And in this case, I can't agree more." **Sarah Caufield, CJSF RADIO**

"A personal story of transexuality, becomes a tribute to family and in the truest sense, unconditional love."  
**Bethina Abrahams, SUITE101.com**

"I loved 'She's a Boy I Knew' - made with loving care, it dares to reveal an inner journey without restraint. Beautifully executed, profoundly insightful. I found myself appreciating it as a mother, a friend, a sister and a filmmaker." **Anne Wheeler, BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE**

**PLEASE READ THE FULL REVIEWS AT THE END OF THIS PRESS KIT**

# **SHE'S A BOY I KNEW**

## **Festival Screenings**

**Audience Award for Most Popular Canadian Film  
Women in Film and Television Artistic Merit Award**  
Vancouver International Film Festival

**Audience Choice Award for Documentary**  
image+nation: Montreal International LGBT Film Festival

**Best of the Fest Audience Award**  
ReelOut9 Queer Film + Video Festival

**Runner Up - Greg Gund Memorial Standing Up Film Competition**  
Cleveland International Film Festival

**Winner - Audience Award for Best Documentary Film**  
**Runner Up - Best Canadian Feature-Length Narrative or Documentary**  
Inside Out: Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival - Toronto, Canada

**Winner - Audience Award for Best Documentary**  
**Winner - Riley-Metzger Jury Award for Best Documentary**  
Fairy Tales, Calgary

**Winner - Audience Award for Best Documentary**  
Connecticut Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

International Documentary Festival Amsterdam

Palm Springs International Film Festival

Cleveland International Film Festival

International Documentary Film Festival of Nicosia

Amnesty International Film Festival – Netherlands

Women Make Waves Film Festival

Dortmund Frauenfilmfest

Provincetown Int'l Film Festival

Seoul Int'l Women's Film Festival

Int'l Doc Festival of Nicosia - Cyprus

Our Island, Our World Film Festival

Thessaloniki Documentary Festival

London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival  
Melbourne Queer Film Festival  
Madrid Lesbian and Gay Film Festival  
Vancouver's Pride UBC OutWeek  
Vera Film Festival - Finland  
WIFTV Women in Film Festival BC  
Philadelphia LGBT Film Festival  
Outfest, Los Angeles LGBT  
Budapest LGBT Film Festival  
Frameline, San Francisco LGBT  
Ballaria Film Festival  
Winnipeg Int'l Film Festival  
Portland LGBT Doc Film Festival  
Fairy Tales Calgary  
Inklusiv LGBT - Romania  
Boston LGBT Film Festival  
Flying Broom Women's Festival  
Seattle Translations  
Seoul LGBT Film Festival  
Ljubljana G&L Filmfest  
Cineffable Paris Feminist Lesbian Festival  
Torino LGBT Film Festival Rainbow Reels Waterloo  
Festival EDOC - Equador  
Miami LGBT Film Festival  
NewFest Film Festival  
Salt Lake City Film Center

Image + Nation, Montreal

LesGaiCinemad South American Tour

LesGaiCine Mad, Madrid

Toronto Inside Out

Hamburg LGBT Film Festival

Seattle LGBT Film Festival

Tampa LGBT Film Festival

Fresno LGBT Film Festival

Lisbon LGBT Festival



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## Short Synopsis

Using archival footage and animation, Vancouver filmmaker Gwen Haworth documents her male-to-female gender transition partially through the voices of her anxious but loving family, best friend, and wife. Finding self-empowerment through self-representation, **SHE'S A BOY I KNEW** is a comic, heartbreaking, and uplifting autobiography that focuses on the interpersonal relationships of a family who unexpectedly find their bonds strengthening as they overcome their preconceptions of gender and sexuality.

## Long Synopsis

They say that when someone comes out of the closet, they can't stop talking about it. Vancouver filmmaker Gwen Haworth not only talked she made a movie. Using archival family footage, interviews, phone messages, and hand-drawn animation, Haworth's documentary **SHE'S A BOY I KNEW** begins in 2000 with Steven Haworth's decision to come out to his family about his life-long female gender identity. The resulting auto-ethnography is not only an exploration into the filmmaker's process of transition from biological male to female, from Steven to Gwen, but also an emotionally charged account of the individual experiences, struggles, and stakes that her two sisters, mother, father, best friend and wife brought to Gwen's transition.

Under Haworth's sensitive eye, each stepping stone in the process of transitioning becomes an opportunity to explore her community's and our own underlying assumptions about gender and sexuality. When Steven starts to wear his wife Malgosia's clothing, she struggles with whether Steve "wants to be with me or to *be* me;" when Steven changes her name to Gwen, her father comments, that's "when I realized I lost my son;" Haworth's gender reassignment surgery, or vaginoplasty, forces her sister Kim to grapple with her own experiences in the medical establishment and raises questions about the implications of the medicalization of gender.

In these tender and difficult moments, **SHE'S A BOY I KNEW** forces us to question our own assumptions about the role that names, clothing, and anatomy play in our constructions of gender identity. As her transition progresses, Gwen is forced to reckon with the end of her marriage and the loss of her status as son and brother. But in doing so, she also discovers that while the nature of personal relationships may change, the love and support present within those relationships can remain just as powerful and sometimes even more so.

At turns painful, funny, and awkward, **SHE'S A BOY I KNEW** explores the frustrations, fears, questions, and hopes experienced by Gwen and her family as they struggle to understand and embrace her newly revealed identity.



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# SHE'S A BOY I KNEW

## CAST LIST

**Steven (Gwen) Haworth** – *I never dreamt of monsters chasing me, or trying to kill me. My childhood nightmares were about being ostracized, being purposely left behind.*

Despite demonstrating a childhood penchant for living-room wrestle-mania, Steven knew from the age of 4 that he was a girl inside, but also knew to hide it – deftly playing the part of a regular boy. Yet after 23 years of hiding, he finds it impossible to conceal his true self any longer. As Steven transforms into Gwen, choosing to act from vulnerability and love instead of from fear, she finds herself challenging many of the boxes that she would be placed in as a transsexual and as a woman. With quiet openness and light-hearted humour, Gwen bares all to tell her story: the dark moments, the light, the heartache, and the optimism.

**Malgosia Rawicz** – *If a part of me got what you were getting at, this would be changing my whole entire world.*

An eloquent and thoughtful native of Poland, Malgosia's love and support for her husband Steven is complicated by her frustration that he did not disclose everything to her until years after their wedding. Committed to family and also to a life lived honestly, Malgosia's love hits new levels as Steven finally shares all of him/herself with her. Yet both of them face the un-foretold consequences of how Steven's transformation into Gwen will affect their relationship and future lives.

**Colleen Haworth** – *Now I see my son, who is now my daughter, with bumps on his chest, and dating a woman. So everything is ok except the bumps.*

Born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Colleen was a good Catholic schoolgirl with dreams of higher education and motherhood. Yet her sweetness belies the subtle inner-strength she developed from the adversities of her youth. She expresses an endearing combination of the trappings of her 1950s prairie upbringing and her desire to be a part of the lives of her unconventional children, whom she embraces with open-ness and interest, but not without struggling to let go of her hopes and expectations for them. The fact that Steven was her first-born and only son – but has become a daughter – certainly complicates matters.

**Thomas Haworth** – *Is there something I should do to prevent this from happening?*

A high school quarterback and captain of the hockey team, Tom enlisted with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the late 60s, after a year of partying at the University of Saskatchewan. The picture of the reserved, hard-nosed, strong silent type, Tom saw young Steven as his mirror image. Yet he is startlingly open in revealing his emotions to the camera. His next challenge is to return to Saskatoon to tell his own stoic father that his grandson is a transsexual.

**Kim Haworth** – *Is it necessary? Why not just be feminine? Why not just be a feminine male?*

An elementary school teacher and new mom, Kim is the most maternal and family-oriented of the three siblings. Concerned and thoughtful, the prospect of Steven's transition stirs up painful memories of both the emotional distance she has felt from Steven since they were little, and her own experiences with medical institutions as a childhood survivor of cancer. She finds that her fears around Gwen's surgical outcomes contrast with the joy she experiences now that her sibling is finally opening up to her.

**Nicole Haworth** – *I remember before you became transgendered I didn't even know any gay people, and I remember thinking that was so unfortunate for me.*

A bicycling queer vegan with a penchant for eco-sustainability & communal living, Nicole's approach to life seems to cause her mom as much stress as Gwen's gender identity does. As one of the growing generation of young eco-queers, she easily embraces Gwen's gender transition, a relative non-issue in a world that is in dire need of an environmental overhaul and the redefining of social norms.

**Roari Richardson** – *My first response was to be really excited.*

Charming, gregarious, extroverted, Roari met Steven in high school during an audition for the school play. As Steven/Gwen's best friend of over 18 years, Roari's view on Gwen's gender transition is both insightful and refreshing, while his unwavering compassion supports Gwen as she struggles through some of her darkest moments.



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# SHE'S A BOY I KNEW

## Filmmaker Biography

Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, Gwen Haworth is a transgender filmmaker, editor, and instructor. After graduating with a degree in psychology in 1995, Gwen went on to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees in Film Production at the University of British Columbia. She has trained as a director's intern with the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television and served as a programmer and board member for Out On Screen, which holds Vancouver's Queer Film & Video Festival.

Critical of the construct of objective filmmaking, Haworth's experimental documentaries re-envision the genre from a humanist perspective, embracing a point of view approach that strives for empathy and collective storytelling. Her first short film *Not Kokura* re-examined the WWII bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, questioning the use of weapons of mass destruction on primarily civilian targets. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, and won recognition at both the Atlantic and Montreal World Film Festivals. Gwen has continued to play a creative role in a number of documentaries and shorts including directing her mockumentary *Road Movie (Working title...)* and co-editing Allison Beda's feature documentary, *How to be a Model: (A Twelve Step Plan)*.

Between 2000 and 2004, Gwen came out as transsexual to her friends and family and transitioned genders from male to female. During this process, she became painfully aware of the media's marginalized depictions of transgender individuals, often as victims of discrimination & violence or objects of fetish. In *She's A Boy I Knew*, Haworth turns the camera on her own family, capturing an intimate, complex, and emotionally charged account of their collective journey through her transition.

When not making films, Haworth divides her time teaching film production, working at an emergency homeless shelter and DJing for queer non-profit dance parties in Vancouver's Eastside.

### Filmography:

**She's a Boy I Knew**, 2007, 70 minutes, feature documentary

#### Awards:

*People's Choice Award for Most Popular Canadian Film* - Vancouver International Film Festival ('07)

*Women in Film and Television Vancouver Artistic Merit Award*

**Road Movie (Working title...)**, 1997, 26 minutes, 35mm dramatic short

#### Awards:

*First Place Award; Best of the Fest Audience Award* - North West Film Festival ('97)

*Best Student Entry; Best Student Scenario; 2<sup>nd</sup> Best Comedy* - Canadian International Annual Film Festival ('98)

**Not Kokura**, 1996, 9 minutes, 16mm experimental short

#### Awards:

*Best Canadian Student Experimental Film* – Montreal World Film Festival ('96)

*Special Citation for a Film Under 60 Minutes* – Atlantic Film Festival ('96)

*Student Honorable Mention* - North West Film Festival ('96)

*Best Post Secondary Experimental Film* – British Columbia Student Film Festival ('96)

# SHE'S A BOY I KNEW

## Full Cast & Crew

**Cast:** Gwen Haworth  
Malgosia Rawicz  
Colleen Haworth  
Thomas Haworth  
Kim Haworth  
Nicole Haworth  
Roari Richardson

**Producer / Writer /  
Director / Camera /  
Editor / Sound:** Gwen Haworth

**Animation:** Michael A. Mann  
Diego Maclean

**Composer:** Daniel E. Moxon

**Graphic Designer /  
Publicity stills:** Tif Flowers

**Additional Camera:** Heidi Ravenel  
My friends & family

**Additional footage:** 'Steve's Walk' 1993  
directed by Michael Hey

Gwen Bicycling footage, 2007  
directed by Desiree Leal  
camera by Curtis Gray

**Additional music:** 'Don't Worry Baby'  
Written by Daniel E. Moxon  
Performed by Daniel E. Moxon and Emma Pierce  
Released on Deer and Bird Records. 2002

**Only for festival use!!!!!!**  
'Standing In The Way Of Control'  
Written by Hannah Blilie, Nathan Howdeshell,  
& Mary Beth Patterson  
Performed by The Gossip  
Courtesy of Dark Lives Music

**Web development:** Tif Flowers  
Tobi Stern

Thanks to:

Simon Bailey, Allison Beda, Barbe Bowen Saez, Rambles Ryan Carmichael, Tzu-Pei Grace Chen, Tzu-Yu Eunice Chen, Linda 'Cori' Corrigan, Terry Crawford, Travis Cross-Haworth, Diana Dahr Cullen, Jillian Deri, Alison Drysdale, Nancy Duff, David Fargey, Chris Gallagher, Joshua Goldberg, Ray Hall, Nichola Hall, Sid Hawkins, Solomon Haworth-Kambeitz, Jeff Hayes, Michael Hey, Clare Hodge, Agnieszka Holland, Hugs, J. Aaron Kambeitz, Christopher D. Lasko, Desiree Leal, Brian McIlroy, The Mann family, Benjamin Maron, Laura 'Boo' MacDonald, Stuart McFarlane, Daniel Moure, John Newton, Annie O'Donoghue, Bens Owens, Amy Painter, Lázló Pal, Richard Payment, Katherine Pettit, The Ravenel family, Andrzej Rawicz, Wieslawa Rawicz, Tara Robertson, Emily Rose, Nitin Sharma, Shobna Nathan Sharma, Graham Sheard, Coral Short, Terri Sudeyko, Anna Swanson, Nicholas Travers, Garry Wallace, Lukas Walther, Wanli, Kurtis Whitelaw, Reese Willis, Diana Wilson, Ian Wojtowicz, John Wright, Edward/Amy, Isabelle, Kicia, Dexter, Yuki, Gunther Frank, Mic, Don, Ron & the extended Haworth family

The UBC Film Production Program

The Department of Theatre, Film, and Creative Writing  
at the University of British Columbia

Peggy Thompson & Stephen Heatley

**Special thanks:**

Sharon McGowan

Heidi Ravenel

Mom, Dad, Kim, Nico, Malgos, Roari, Bolko, Michael



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# SHE'S A BOY I KNEW

## ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

### VARIETY

**She's a Boy I Knew**  
(Documentary -- Canada)  
By JAY WEISSBERG

**A Shapeshifter Films production. (International sales: Outcast Films, New York.) Produced, directed, written, edited by Gwen Haworth.**

**With: Gwen Haworth, Malgosia Rawicz Mann, Colleen Haworth, Thomas Haworth, Kim Haworth, Nicole Haworth, Roari Richardson.**

Honest, intelligent and absolutely clear-eyed, "She's a Boy I Knew" proves there's still more to be squeezed out of transsexual documentaries. Helmer Gwen Haworth turns the camera on herself and loved ones to chart not just her path to gender reassignment surgery, but the toll the decision took on those around her. Though unflinching, Haworth avoids the kind of narcissistic, sensationalized public confessional of TV chatshows, going deeper into the emotional morass sparked by definitions of gender and its roles. With several awards already under its belt, the docu is set to be a fest fave.

Mastering an impressive degree of self-analysis, Haworth narrates her life, editing older homemovies with interviews of family and friends. Born Steven, the eldest child of Colleen and Thomas, he knew early on that he wasn't comfortable in his skin, though as Haworth explains, she thought of herself as a girl, not a transsexual, expressing a refreshing distaste for the phrase "a woman trapped in a man's body."

This pull, however, had nothing to do with his sexual attractions, which were directed firmly to women. In college, he fell in love with Malgosia Rawicz, and they married in 1997. When Steven first told her of his desire to live as a woman, she was understandably shaken. His parents, too, were shocked: "This was so out of left field," says his mom. Fully appreciating that the emotional and physical journey he was embarking on was not a solo voyage, Haworth provides a sympathetic platform to those around her, and interviews are painfully honest.

While Haworth's family take up a suitably large amount of footage, her docu is, in many ways, a love letter to Malgosia. Though the marriage couldn't survive the transformation, it becomes clear Haworth is still very much in love with her ex-wife, and Malgosia herself displays an unexpectedly high level of supportive warmth and generosity.

Unlike most autobiographical docu helmers, Haworth has a degree in filmmaking, and her thorough understanding of the medium results in a well-edited portrait smoothly interweaving talking heads with homemovies while steadily moving forward both chronologically and emotionally. Humor is another unexpected plus, picked up on by brief animated segments ("How to Be a Girl," etc.) that provide just the right amount of leavening.

## **Kevin Griffin, Vancouver Sun**

Published: Thursday, October 04, 2007

It's not often that a film creates a world that you never want to end. In the documentary *She's a Boy I Knew*, director Gwen Haworth creates an emotional space that engulfs the viewer in a way that's extremely rare in any film, whether fiction or non-fiction.

The basic story is Haworth's journey from a man to a woman -- from Steve to Gwen. What's unusual is the fact that the film has been created by someone like Gwen: a female born with the physical appearances of a male. (Haworth doesn't like the word transsexual as she always considered herself to be a female with the wrong plumbing).

As the narrator, Haworth tells her story rather than having it told by someone else. What makes the film even more interesting is how Gwen tells her story. Instead of always putting herself centre stage, Gwen shifts the focus onto the six most important people in her life who talk about how they reacted to her transition.

Gwen's former wife Malgosia recalls wanting to throw up when Steve told her his secret on the Granville Street Bridge. Their relationship eventually breaks down when she realizes that for all the talk about being attracted to the person inside, she married cute, blond-haired Steve -- not Gwen.

Gwen's mother Colleen talks about how Steve was a "regular Vancouver boy" who played hockey and never showed anything she would regard as feminine. Gwen's father Tom, who joined the RCMP as a young man, says he realized he lost his son when Steve legally changed his name. He says he'll call her Gwen now but on occasion still refers to her as Steve. "Too bad if you don't like it," he says in a way that sounds gruff but really shows how much he loves the only son he raised.

In an interview, Gwen said she was able to get such intimate, honest and compassionate responses from her family, which includes her two sisters Kim and Nicole and her best friend Roari, because of her low-tech interviewing style. Operating a digital video camera by herself meant that it was only Gwen and her family member in the room during the interviews. "I knew that my family was not used to being in front of a camera," she said. "If I brought other people into the room, they might self-censor how they were feeling."

She did something else that's unusual among other documentary filmmakers. Instead of getting everyone to sign waivers before they were interviewed, Gwen didn't ask for them until after they'd seen an edited version. Gwen said she did that because she didn't want anyone to feel that she had betrayed their trust by misrepresenting their stories. "If you do a very personal story about people around you, it can sometimes wreck relationships," she said. "To me, this film is an ode to my family who was there before, during and after my transition."

*She's a Boy I Knew* has its world premiere at the Vancouver International Film Festival this evening at 9:15 p.m. at the Vancity Theatre. It will be shown again on Tuesday, Oct. 9 at 1:30 p.m. at Granville 5. "I'm scared about [my family] watching it in a room with 200 people and how the dynamic will shift," she said. "It'll be an emotional moment for me."

Gwen made the film without any grants or financial support. She's not exactly sure how much it cost but said adding up the cost of transitioning, her UBC graduate degree, and the film, she's \$90,000 in debt.

Gwen said it took her a long time to come up with a title that honoured her past as a male. "My mom says early

on that she had decided she would see me as Steven and 'he' and then Gwen and 'she' -- that her son has almost gone or is dead. As time as gone on, she's organically changed to see me as one person throughout. I think that's incredibly important; I don't want them or me to have a disconnect from our past."

Gwen said she decided to record her story on film in the fall of 2004 after she had finished her surgery but before the passage of time softened everyone's feelings. After two undergraduate degrees and some experimental films, she realized she didn't want to create anything more until she found her voice as a filmmaker. "I came out at 27, told people about my gender identity and found a lot of support. I realized I could now approach things that were personal in life, things that I'd kept at shoulder's length," Gwen said. "This film had the chance to have an impact on other people's lives and other families going through a similar process."

**EDGE Ft. Lauderdale**  
**by Robert Newton**  
**Monday Apr 28, 2008**

**She's a Boy I Knew**

"To me the great hope is that now these little 8mm video recorders and stuff have come out, people who normally wouldn't make movies are going to be making them, and you know, suddenly, one day, some little fat girl in Ohio is going to be the new Mozart and make a beautiful film with her father's camcorder. And for once the so-called 'professionalism' about movies will be destroyed. Forever. And it will really become an art form." -  
- Francis Ford Coppola

So predicted the oft-quoted grandfatherly "Godfather" guru way back in the 1980s. Of course, after seeing Gwen Haworth's beautiful and deeply personal testament *She's A Boy I Knew*, he may as well have said "some little boy-girl in Vancouver." Haworth, born Steven into a typical Canadian family in the early 1970s, tells with humor and passion her story of personal discovery and transformation in much the same way Jonathan Caouette delivered his 2003 confessional, "Tarnation." She taps a vast reservoir of family home movies (and recorded phone messages) and pairs them with the obligatory talking heads and appropriate or contrasting cutaways, mostly smart and high-quality original animations. Her film is less manic than Caouette's burlesque, though, creating its tension with multiple story lines, and even though it feels a little short, the big questions we come up with at the outset all get answered, and in a most satisfying way.

At first, when we hear Gwen's slightly unmodulated girl voice narrating this "auto-ethnography," our first reaction might be, "This better not be another whiny missive about how you're a delicate snowflake that the world just doesn't understand you." Quickly, though, she gets to introducing her cast of characters -- the people in her life who love her -- and then gets them all to spill about how her decision to change her sex affected them and their view of the boy they knew. Of course, a more stereotypical family of a transsexual would make for much more high drama through shunning and disowning and the like. The greatest beauty of "*She's A Boy I Knew*" is not in insincere milking of non-events as would a reality show, but in the tempered layering of one very real family's very real feelings and the angst-frought and sometimes alien journey of their son, brother and husband into womanhood.

One of the only feature films about transsexuality in which the filmmaker herself is actually transsexual, Haworth's straightforward and efficient storytelling techniques do occasionally leave one wanting more. While she explores her past relationships with others and how her Big Life Change affected them, she does not look at other interesting connections, most notably the bond between Steven's enchanting Polish wife, Malgosia, and her handicapped brother, Roko. Their relationship is more a matter-of-fact, and reactions from her family are untended, also. Steven's best friend, Roari, chimes in only occasionally; either he wasn't as open as Haworth's parents and two sisters were or the story we'd really like to hear -- the so-overdone "guy falls for best friend who's now a girl (but still dates girls)" tale -- just wasn't.

What is, though, is an accessible little piece of art, warmly drawn, lovingly sculpted and colorfully painted. It is an celebration of identity and the lifelong quest for it, and a precision call to stop mourning the living and

instead embrace all the things that they still are. It is a film about real people by real people who refuse to play the victim, instead charging ahead without all the answers but with the willingness to grow and learn without a single, fetishistic goal becoming the finish line in the lifelong journey. It is the DIY sensibility and outright boldness of people like this willing to risk so much to tell their own story that makes Gwen that proverbial fat girl from Ohio, the maestro of her own life and the confident creator of a world we get to visit for a precious 70 minutes. Robert Newton is Editor of Worcester Movies Weekly, and a film and TV writer for a variety of newspapers, magazines and websites. He is also an award-winning novelty recording artist (aka "Fig"), and programs independent film series and festivals on Boston's North Shore for The MassBay Film Project.

**Monday, January 14, 2008**

### **She's A Boy I Knew Makes U.S. Premiere**

The Palm Springs International Film Festival rang in the new year with a splash and a large dash of star power. The festival now proudly bills itself as the largest U.S. film festival second only to Sundance. The biggest difference, however, is the audience. While Sundance is heavily attended by filmmakers, would-be filmmakers, distributors and international press, the audiences in P.S. are made up of locals, true film lovers and those looking to check out offerings that rarely screen in the U.S. or make it to the multi-plex.

On Saturday, audiences were in for a treat with the Canadian documentary *She's a Boy I Knew*. From director Gwen Haworth (far right), the film is a first-person account of Haworth's transition from straight male to gay female. Blessed with two generations worth of archival footage, Haworth has made a 70-minute trans-primer that is part genealogical record, part family drama and part love story — with comedic observations and a handful of animated sequences to lighten the mood.

With revealing and emotional interviews with her two sisters, parents and ex-wife Malgosia, Haworth weaves a tale of a family who mourned the loss of Steven and eventually came to embrace Gwen. The film doesn't shy away from details (or video) of Haworth's sexual reassignment surgery and the high price — financial, physical and emotional — the director has paid.

The doc won the Audience Award for Most Popular Canadian Film at the Vancouver International Film Festival, as well as the fest's Women in Film and Television Artistic Merit Award. "That was extremely gratifying," says Haworth about being recognized by a jury of her peers, female filmmakers.

Haworth was on hand in P.S. for the U.S. premiere of her film, missing the last-minute wedding of her lesbian sister in the process. Hopefully the trip was worth it and the exposure of *She's a Boy I Knew* at the festival will lead to a television deal because this is one film that deserves a much larger audience.

### **Review: She's a Boy I Knew The Metamorphosis of Steven Haworth**

© Bethina Abrahams

Oct 14, 2007

#### **A review of Gwen Haworth's documentary "She's a Boy I Knew"**

"She's a Boy I Knew" has been touted as a cutting edge, transgender success story. Really it is a story of love, loss, and transformation. On the surface, we have Steven Haworth, only son, and husband to Malgosia. Steven soon reveals a closely guarded secret which sends his loved ones reeling. And so, begins the journey of Steven as he transforms into Gwen. But the true story lies in the narrative of those around her.

While the film does depict a supportive family, unwavering in their love as they grapple with the issue of transexuality, what is more compelling is the difficulty of the situation for all involved. The suppressed heartbreak of Gwen's father is painful to watch. The mother, on the other hand, fares better at keeping her

emotions under wraps beneath a slightly oblivious, but humorous chatter. Only a fleeting expression betrays her near the end of the film.

It seems only Gwen's little sister, Nicole, and her best friend, Roari are able to be the consummate cheerleaders providing unfaltering support. But perhaps this is because, for various reasons, their identities are not as tied up in Gwen's. Gwen's transformation does not impact their futures or the way they perceive their pasts in the same way that it does for the others.

Identity does not occur in a vacuum. When Gwen Haworth decided to be true to her identity, her loved ones lost something in theirs. As Gwen's mother says, when she had Steven her work was done. She had produced a son and fulfilled her role as a wife. The sense of loss subtly and powerfully permeates the narratives of Gwen's loved ones. A father losing a son. A sister losing her brother. A wife losing her husband. What Gwen has gained, it seems her family has lost.

And for no one else is the impact greater, than for Gwen's ex-wife, Malgosia. Loving her husband greatly she decides that the physical cannot trump the mental and spiritual. She stays with Steven for two years as he undergoes his transformation. However, if the physical did not matter, Gwen would still be Steven. Malgosia eventually comes to the realization that she had not chosen to be a platonic roommate to Gwen, but a wife to Steven. Malgosia's parting is a more difficult undertaking for Gwen as her desire to be with Malgosia has not changed through her external transformation.

Gwen Haworth has shown a sensitive ear and obvious talent as a filmmaker. A personal story of transexuality, becomes a tribute to family and in the truest sense, unconditional love. An exceptional film experience, the world debut of "She's a Boy I Knew" garnered high praise from film-goers at the Vancouver International Film Festival, capturing both the Vancity People's Choice Award for Most Popular Canadian Film and winning filmmaker Gwen Haworth the Women in Film & Television Vancouver Artistic Merit Award.

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Web link: [http://socio-political-documentaries.suite101.com/article.cfm/quotshes\\_a\\_boy\\_i\\_knewquot](http://socio-political-documentaries.suite101.com/article.cfm/quotshes_a_boy_i_knewquot)

**SHE'S A BOY I KNEW** has been touted as a cutting edge, transgender success story. Really it is a story of love, loss, and transformation. On the surface, we have Steven Haworth, only son, and husband to Malgosia. Steven soon reveals a closely guarded secret which sends his loved ones reeling. And so, begins the journey of Steven as he transforms into Gwen. But the true story lies in the narrative of those around her.

While the film does depict a supportive family, unwavering in their love as they grapple with the issue of transexuality, what is more compelling is the difficulty of the situation for all involved. The suppressed heartbreak of Gwen's father is painful to watch. The mother, on the other hand, fares better at keeping her emotions under wraps beneath a slightly oblivious, but humorous chatter. Only a fleeting expression betrays her near the end of the film.

It seems only Gwen's little sister, Nicole, and her best friend, Roari are able to be the consummate cheerleaders providing unfaltering support. But perhaps this is because, for various reasons, their identities are not as tied up in Gwen's. Gwen's transformation does not impact their futures or the way they perceive their pasts in the same way that it does for the others.

Identity does not occur in a vacuum. When Gwen Haworth decided to be true to her identity, her loved ones lost something in theirs. As Gwen's mother says, when she had Steven her work was done. She had produced a son and fulfilled her role as a wife. The sense of loss subtly and powerfully permeates the narratives of Gwen's loved ones. A father losing a son. A sister losing her brother. A wife losing her husband. What Gwen has gained, it seems her family has lost.



And for no one else is the impact greater, than for Gwen's ex-wife, Malgosia. Loving her husband greatly she decides that the physical cannot trump the mental and spiritual. She stays with Steven for two years as he undergoes his transformation. However, if the physical did not matter, Gwen would still be Steven. Malgosia eventually comes to the realization that she had not chosen to be a platonic roommate to Gwen, but a wife to Steven. Malgosia's parting is a more difficult undertaking for Gwen as her desire to be with Malgosia has not changed through her external transformation.

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## **Article: She's a Boy I Knew**

### **East Van filmmaker premieres at VIFF**

Author: Denise Sheppard

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At the age when most small children are thinking about their first day of school and how to ride a bike, Gwen Haworth (who at the time was a young boy named Steven) knew that her gender identity was awry. It was a secret she kept to herself for more than two decades. "I've been aware of this since I was four," says Haworth. "That meant 23 years of keeping this secret hidden, 23 years of self-hate and internalized transphobia." The frustration in her words is palpable, but the softness in her spirit resonates peace above and beyond all other emotions.

Know this: this is no queer tragedy. In fact, Haworth's story is inspiring and worth celebrating, and even comes complete with a happy ending. The 'ending' however is really just another beginning —Haworth's anticipated film debut called *She's a Boy I Knew: Gwen's DIY feature transgender documentary*. Haworth's first- and second-person account of her evolutionary journey pre- and post-transition is something that should be required viewing in every school, at every PFLAG meeting, heck, at every prenatal class out there.

Haworth, now an East Van-based dyke filmmaker, takes on a host of brave topics in front of the camera, asking difficult questions not just of herself, but also of her parents, her siblings, her ex-wife (whom she married while still identifying as a man) and her dearest friends. The candor and bravery of her family members results in both touching and deeply honest vignettes that will resonate with all who watch it.

Celebrated Canadian director Anne Wheeler of *Better Than Chocolate* and *Bye Bye Blues* fame, had these words of praise for Gwen's film: "The fact that you made this journey, and documented it 'enroute' amazes me. It is a genius piece of exploration and a tribute to love enduring beyond question." Haworth relates Wheeler's words with obvious pride and excitement. But, she says, she's still only partway through her mission: to finally see a loving, non-disparaging full-length documentary film about trans folks appear on the big screen. No doubt *She's a Boy I Knew* will bring her one step closer to completing her mission when it opens at the Vancouver International Film Festival Oct 4.

As Haworth tells it, being trapped in the wrong body was incredibly difficult, but having no access to stories of successful transitions — either on screen or in print — meant the process of transitioning was far more difficult and confusing for her and her family than it needed to be. "When I came out, people important to me didn't really know what it meant to be a transsexual. There were a lot of things to learn, yet there wasn't anything out there to watch that we were aware of. There wasn't anything that showed a family experience, to see other

people like them going through the difficult questions but still being able to be there for each other through hard times.”

"The suicide rate in the trans community is really high," she notes, "and a large part of that is through isolation and depression because of not having those people to fall back on. I hope that by showing my family's experience, that would give other people something to dialogue from."

As a result, the award-winning filmmaker decided to make *She's a Boy I Knew* her thesis project while finishing up her Master's of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia. The timing — beginning filming mere months after her fourth surgery and 'official' transition from male to female — was a conscious decision on her part. "If I had made it five years later, people would have forgotten a lot more, pain would have felt more distant, it wouldn't have been truthful to the emotion of that time. I really wanted this film to be that resource tool that wasn't there for any of us, and they understood that."

Haworth has succeeded in spades. Her film is a moving, oftentimes humorous and deeply courageous documentation of her and her family's evolution through her transition. "So much of my life has been about this moment... all the hiding, the fear, the feeling that people wouldn't accept me. I cried so much making this film, I gushed buckets and buckets. I've learned to love and appreciate these people so much more from hearing their words and learning more about them in the process."

She says she's both thrilled and nervous about the upcoming premiere, an event that will bring much of her friends and family together in one room. "I'll either be bawling or throwing up in the bathroom," she laughs. "That is going to be an extremely intense moment for me. It'll be scary and exciting." her newly revealed identity.



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