



LGBTQ SOUTH FLORIDA

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## “I was born a boy, from Venus.” Transwoman's memoir brings laughter and tears

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“Give my mink coat to your brother,” was one of the last things Ella Marques' mother ever said to her daughter, Luisa.

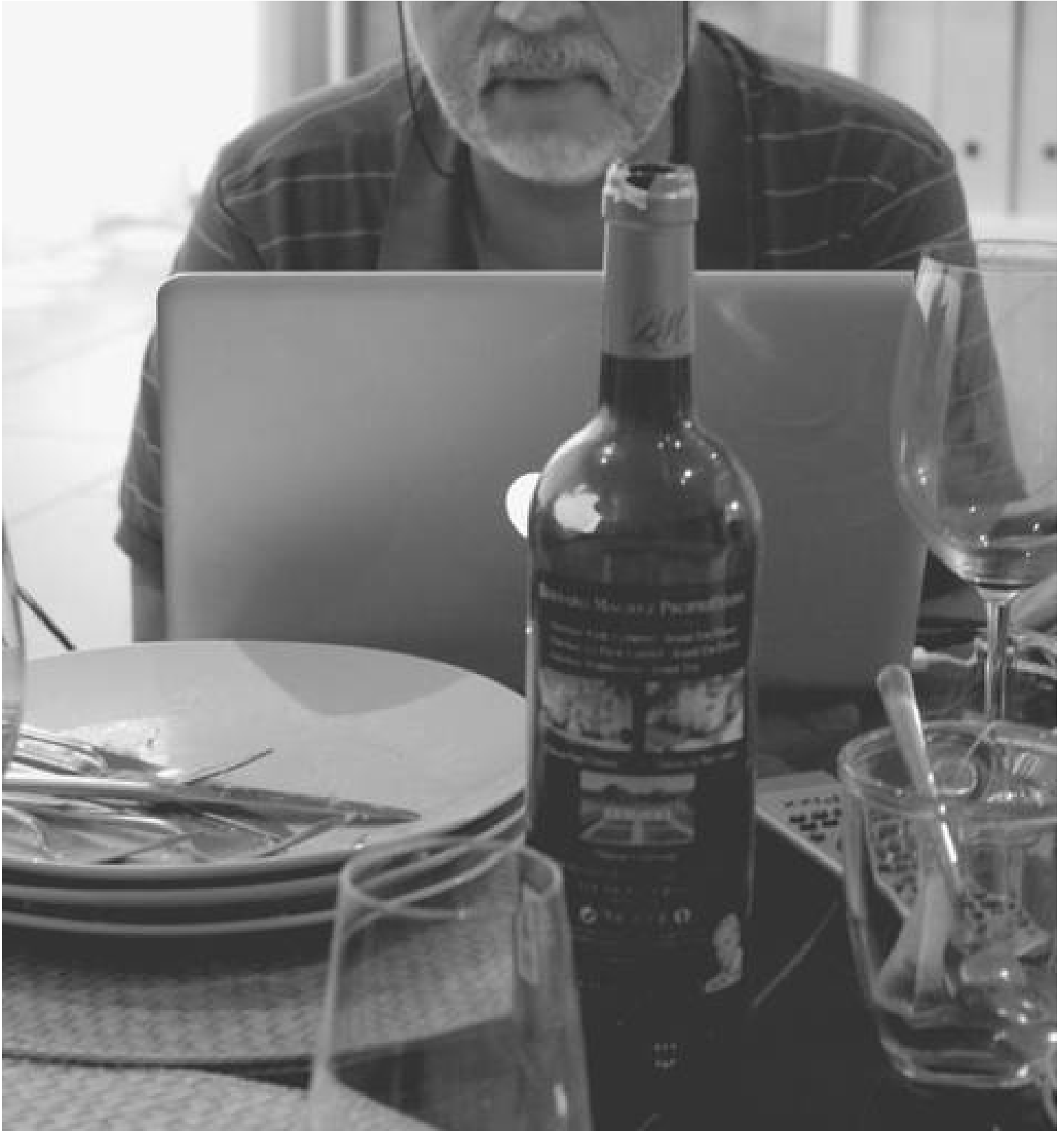
At the time, Marques didn't understand. Now she does — and is certain that her mother knew who she really was, and accepted it.

Marques is a transgender woman.

There was always something about bras and panties that attracted her. When she was 5 years old and known as Fernando, Marques was a frequent visitor to her sister's closet, and blonde-haired dolls always found themselves in her hands.

Now, Marques of Boca Raton has written a memoir to protect transgender kids from suffering the way she did. At the age of 60, she is still in the process of transitioning. Through her book, she shares her life as not only someone who is transgender, but as a citizen of the world.





Ella Marques working at home before her transition. This photo is also in her memoir, 'I was born a boy, from Venus: It's time to be yourself.'  
Courtesy of Ella Marques

In her book, "I was born a boy, from Venus: It's time to be yourself," Marques bares her soul in order to give transgender children a chance to live normally and happily. Readers follow along with her as she travels the world and realizes what it means to be transgender. The book is about the courage it takes to become one's true self and the impact on society at large.

Marques, a longtime manager for several international companies, spent 25 years in a traditional relationship with a woman. They were married 21 years and together raised four children. Two years ago, after 55 years of knowing, she began her physical transition to match her gender identity.

Born in Portugal, Marques spent most of her life painstakingly hiding the truth about her gender identity. She was filled with guilt at a very young age, calling herself a victim of a society that did not understand what it means to be yourself. To run away from herself, she said she worked, ate and drank unsuccessfully to escape her feelings.

While presenting as a man, Marques said she was functioning, but not living. In her book she writes about what she calls "gender gymnastics" as she struggled to find safe places to express herself. Then one day, it became too much. She was depressed, smoking two packs of cigarettes a day and had several nervous breakdowns.

Six years ago, she moved to the United States, settling in South Florida. Her mission is to help protect transgender children from hate, and give them a chance at living normally. She volunteers at Compass LGBT Community Center in Lake Worth and is a member of Transcendence, a social support group and mentoring program for transgender children. The worst things parents can do is force them to be something they're not, she said.

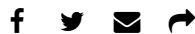
"If you don't let your kids have their own personality, they will suffer all their lives," she said.

Marques said that there is a gender revolution happening, despite the danger of being trans. For those who are less fortunate, awareness is lifesaving. By sharing her story, she said she hopes to be a source of emotional support and help other transgender people feel safe and comfortable to be themselves. All she asks, she said, is for people to open their eyes.

"People are starting to understand what's going on inside of the head of a transgender person," she said. "We're not alone."



Author Ella Marques celebrating a birthday. She will be 61 on Aug. 13. Courtesy of Ella Marques



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