



Pamella, formerly Ralph, Brattan finds new life doing feminine things she'd always yearned to do —Staff Photo

NOW RALPH IS PAMELLA

He Hated Being Man

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The Mercury

★★★ SAN JOSE, CALIF., MONDAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1973

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(Ralph was steadily employed at a highly skilled job. Now Pamela is looking for work. Ralph becomes Pamela through a sex change program, a transition which no longer is as unusual as it once was but never-the-less is not without complexities and problems. This is the story of single Pamela who had been twice-married Ralph. While the experience is different from the norm, the person living through it is very real.)

By DALE F. MEAD

Staff Writer

STANFORD — When Ralph Taylor Bratton was four years old, he asked his mother when he could go to the doctor "so he can make me like my sisters."

Thirty-four years later, a four-year-old's absurd and desperate fantasy is becoming a reality.

Now legally named Pamela Bratton, "in fact a female and living in a female role" according to a court ruling, the former Ralph Bratton is going through the sex change program at Stanford University.

Even now she reports an end to the tension which has haunted Ralph throughout a male life: the conviction that he really was a girl despite a man's indisputable physical make-up.

The internal agony has been replaced, temporarily at least, by an external threat. Pamela, who held a \$12,000 per year job as a man, cannot find work and so cannot afford the final \$2,500 sex-change surgery for which she must pay in advance.

Yet even though the financial threat has her cornered, as she tells her story in a practiced high voice she conveys the determination of one who is certain a lifelong nightmare has ended.

Ralph Bratton was born May 13, 1935, in Stamford, Conn., the son of wealthy and socially prominent but alcoholic parents. He had two sisters.

"When I was three or four years old, I was convinced I wasn't what I was supposed to be. One day I asked my mother when I was going to the doctor and be like my sisters," Pamela said.

"Whenever I could I tried on my sisters' clothes. A couple of times I got caught, and as punishment my mother gave me forced hot and cold enemas.

"But sometimes my mother would keep me home from school and let me dress as a girl.

"The school bus stopped at the corner of our property. Just prior to the school bus stopping in the afternoon to let the kids off, she'd take me out to the oak tree and tie me up, still dressed like a girl.

"Then she'd smear make-up on my face and leave me tied there for the kids to see. Children can be . . . unkind. They would taunt me and give me physical abuse: rocks, sticks, spit.

"My father referred to me as his little fairy, his faggot son. And whenever we had company I'd be asked to go to my bedroom. It got so I'd hide under my bed.

"I became very, very frightened of even thinking of being a little girl. I strove in every way I could to become a boy — but it was impossible for me to do.

"Yet I had relative success as a male, socially and financially."

Plagued by reading problems, Ralph was sent to private and special schools for children of below average intelligence and quit at the age of 17 while in the seventh grade.

He joined the Navy, received a general education development certification, which replaces a high school diploma, and trained as an aviation mahinist's mate — a jet engine technician.

During those years he continued to cross - dress. "I would rent a motel room while on leave. While cross - dressed, I would fantasize being held by a man.

"But I never would say, 'I'd rather be a girl.' I'd say, 'I hate being a man.'"

After training in Millington, Tenn., he was assigned out of Norfolk, Va. When he was 21, he met a girl in North Carolina, "fell in love" and was married on the same day. The first night of the marriage was the only time he ever completed the sex act with a woman.

"Two months later I came home to find out she was still married to another guy and had been married when she was nine years old."

They had the marriage annulled, but she was pregnant so they remained together and brought up the boy. "There was a little honor there," says Pamela.

The trans-sexual is convinced the child was fathered by a friend, he once caught with his wife. His own relations with her probably were too rare to have been responsible, Pamela suggests.

After two years in Sanford, Fla., he was transferred to Miramar Naval Air Station in San Diego. He had hurt his back while maintaining jets and was reassigned as a hospital corpsman for the last five years in the Navy.

"Through all this I still didn't have any motivation, zero ambition. I was just floating along, not wanting to

do anything, not even capable of doing anything.

"I rarely spoke to my parents while I was in the Navy. When I was home on leave, I'd stay in a motel. And when my father died (in 1960) that was the last time I saw or spoke to my mother. She died in 1969, and I didn't hear about it until 1970."

After leaving the Navy, he remained unemployed for seven months "until I learned not to mention my back injury," and then he sold used cars for a while.

Ralph and his first wife were married again in 1960 in San Diego, a few months before he was discharged from the Navy. He was given a medical discharge, due to the back injury. The second marriage attempt also failed and they split up in 1963.

That year Ralph was lured to the Bay Area by its "liberal" attitudes. "I was attracted by Finocchio's," a San Francisco club known for its female impersonators, Pamela recalls.

In the Bay Area, Ralph homed in on the technical field, working three years for Beckman Instruments as a trouble-shooting instrument specialist.

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"In 1966 I met a girl who was eventually to become my second wife. We shared many things in common — we liked back-packing, we both were single and had financial difficulties. So we decided to share an apartment," Pamella says.

Ralph enjoyed the job at Beckman Instruments until he was hospitalized with a gastric ulcer and then a collapsed lung at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto.

Ralph married his second wife in 1969, just prior to his hospitalization. They had some sexual relations early in their relationship, but virtually none during the three years of their marriage.

Discharged from the VA Hospital in October, 1969, Ralph got a job as a mechanical technician at Cartridge Television, Inc., with an \$8,400 a year salary. He tackled the job enthusiastically, devising a method of bonding very thin stainless steel to a small aluminum cone, "something the adhesives industry told me couldn't be done."

"When I got out of the hospital, I had started questioning myself, asking why I was driving myself to such extremes. But I never could admit it to myself. I'd break out in cold sweats.

"I still was cross-dressing. I told my wife I had to cross-dress, and she'd let me wear certain things, although she never liked to see me dressed completely as a woman."

"One night my wife and I were sitting on the couch in the living room when suddenly I started shaking and crying.

"She asked what was wrong, and I looked up and said, 'I'm a girl!' She said 'I thought so' and suggested I go and see my doctor.

"He had had two other trans-sexual patients and was quite sympathetic. He directed me to Stanford. I found myself fragmenting, going through an identity crisis.

"After a couple of sessions with the psychiatrist, he asked me what I wanted to

do, and I told him I wanted to get on estrogen therapy."

TOMORROW: Emergence of the female.

7-16-73

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Pamela Bratton

James

Ralph Bratton

The Mercury

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SAN JOSE, CALIF., TUESDAY MORNING, JULY 17, 1973

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Pamella Bratton doing the homemaking duties she loves.

Over

TRANS-SEXUAL SUSPENDED BETWEEN TWO

II (2)

'Man-Woman' Tells How She Leads Frustrated Life

By DALE F. MEAD
Staff Writer

In September of 1971, Ralph Bratton took the first step toward realizing a 30-year-dream.

After nearly two years and many obstacles, Pamela Bratton stands on the threshold of the final surgery that will complete her change from man to woman.

But despite her determination to complete the metamorphosis, at the moment she is suspended in a frustrated life between the two.

Ralph Bratton began his first medical step working through his physician in 1971.

He began receiving daily doses of the hormone estrogen which soon would stimulate development of secondary female sexual development of secondary female sexual characteristics.

It was the first treatment, following extensive psychological, physiological and psy-

chiatric tests, in the sex-change surgical program at Stanford University Medical Center.

Ralph's first reaction upon hearing of the program was "elation, although I was still embarrassed about my own situation." But he was compelled to warn his superiors at Cartridge Television where he did prototype work as a mechanical technician.

"I went to my immediate superior, and he asked me if I still could function. I said I thought I could, but if I could not, I'd let him know.

"I also discussed it individually with my subordinates. It created many reaction — some acceptance, some rejection. There was immediate acceptance by the females.

As the treatments continued, Ralph found it more difficult to act with "masculine" authority, and so he relinquished his position as su-

pervisor while remaining on the staff.

By May, 1972, he had experienced breast and hip development and "some feminization of movement that was not completely caused by the estrogen."

An engineer once commented to him, "Ralph you're beginning to look like my 10-year-old daughter."

Ralph left for a two-week vacation and plastic surgery to improve drooping eyelids. But it was not Ralph who returned to work.

"I went back as Pamela on May 16," she recalls.

In July, Cartridge Television handed Pamela her walking papers, not because of her peculiar circumstances but as part of a lay-off of 30 employees. The company had financial problems of its own.

At that time a company official verified in writing a personality change "from a guarded defensive person (as Ralph) to an open and friend-

II *OS*

This is the second in a series of articles relating the experiences of a man who chose to become a woman.

ly individual (as Pamela) far different than anything I had imagined."

The written confirmations of her technical and social capabilities did not attract a job offer from any other firm, despite some 300 applications and 150 interviews.

Today Pamela Bratton has lost her house in Menlo Park and expects to file for bankruptcy. "I have gone from an income of \$12-14,000 per year to zero," she says.

For a while she openly explained her position to potential employers. "When I disclosed that I was a transsexual, people were professionally sympathetic. Yet they declined to offer me a position.

"When I say I'm having a sex change, they reply, 'Damn. You've got a lot to offer, but I wonder how our people would react.'"

Now she no longer volunteers that information, although "there's a thing about being so covert that it becomes overt. Excuses become so obvious."

Even if they do not apparently detect her position, interviewers may balk because of the more common prejudices against women entering a male-dominated profession.

"That's one thing I've encountered: They ask, 'How did a girl like you get this kind of background?'

"And when they ask me what I've been doing since July, I just say I've been abroad," she laughs.

She also was once subjected to more direct harassment, when the San Jose Police Department vice squad arrested her for using the women's room in the Holiday Inn hotel lounge.

Still legally named Ralph, the trans-sexual in women's clothes presented to a suspicious security agent the documents certifying participation in the Stanford program.

She was allowed to stay at the lounge, but when she went to the women's room San Jose officers followed her in and arrested her for lewd and lascivious conduct.

Amphetamines were found with her prescription pills in her purse. Later, charges of possession of dangerous drugs and two other disorderly conduct charges were added.

After spending a night in jail, the trans-sexual eventually pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor drug charge and the "morals" charges were dropped. She received a \$65 fine and a year's summary probation.

"I only used amphetamines twice, once when I told my employer about entering the sex-change program and again when I went back as Pamela," she says.

"I'd forgotten I had them in my purse. They never would have charged me with that if they hadn't arrested me for the other charge first."

Three months later a superior court judge ruled Pamela Bratton was "in fact a female and living in the role of a female," and the name change became official.

The economic obstacle is a more insidious trap, because Pamela cannot undergo the final surgical adjustment until she can pay for it in advance.

"It's standard policy for all elective surgery that is not covered by insurance," she explains. She did not anticipate the problem when she began because she was in a job that paid well and didn't expect to lose it.

Stanford officials deliberately require a long waiting period so they can observe a participant and determine that a sex-change operation is appropriate.

"If Stanford doesn't feel that sure about a patient they would be reluctant to offer the final operation, but I believe they would do it if the participant wants it done."

If Pamela's circumstances keep her from getting the operation through Stanford, however, "I'd go elsewhere and have it done. If I have to go abroad, I'll go abroad. I've got to have it done."

The interim situation has made it very difficult to keep contact with old friends, especially males.

Her unemployment benefits ran out in April, and her

Menlo Park home was foreclosed. Since then she has sold some personal belongings for cash and gave up a late model car for an older Volkswagen.

"My income tax refund also came through," she says.

She spends perhaps an hour a day grooming and as a rule spends a few hours checking job possibilities. She doesn't date, but "my sewing machine is my pride and joy."

She has tried a little writing and sometimes takes walks in the woods. She no longer back-packs because the equipment was stolen out of her car.

"I've gotten sort of depressed in the past month or so and haven't been looking for work so much, but I'm slowly getting more active.

"I want to get involved in people-related activities. No matter what I do, my greatest satisfaction is working with people.

"And I want to take the course at Stanford in endoplastology," learning to construct prosthetic ears, noses and other items for persons requiring reconstructive surgery.

The program of transsexuals at Stanford is informal and simple once one has passed the initial rigorous testing. Participants in the program meet once a month to discuss their lives and assist each other. Staff personnel occasionally may attend, but not on a structured basis.

"The beauty counselor, a professional model, is there about every meeting, but basically it is our meeting," she explains. "We have a tendency to work our own things out first."

The physical concerns, in Pamela's case, are taken up

with her own physician who keeps in close contact with the Stanford program.

She expresses immense respect for the program, particularly its compassion.

"At all times the singular drive of the entire staff is to help in any way they can to make a person a functional human being. "They are correct in what they suggest — even when the trans-sexual doesn't agree," says Pamela. They are very, very reluctant to do any surgery without thorough testing and a period of observation.

"There also is tremendous help from other transsexuals" made available to guide a participant through the radical changes and to forecast what he or she may expect.

“Talking to the other trans-
sexuals, no matter how long
they've been living under the
sex of their choice, on the
eve of the operation they be-
come frightened — not sure
if they're doing the right
thing.

“After the surgery, there is
a period of depression. Some
become promiscuous — jump
in bed with every man they
can get — because there's no
longer a fear of discovery.”

Despite the drastic
changes that have occurred
for Pamella in the past 18
months, “I'm certain that
once I have the operation I
will have another tremen-
dous adjustment.”

When that time will come
is “strictly a question of fi-
nances.”

**WEDNESDAY: Playing
the woman's role.**

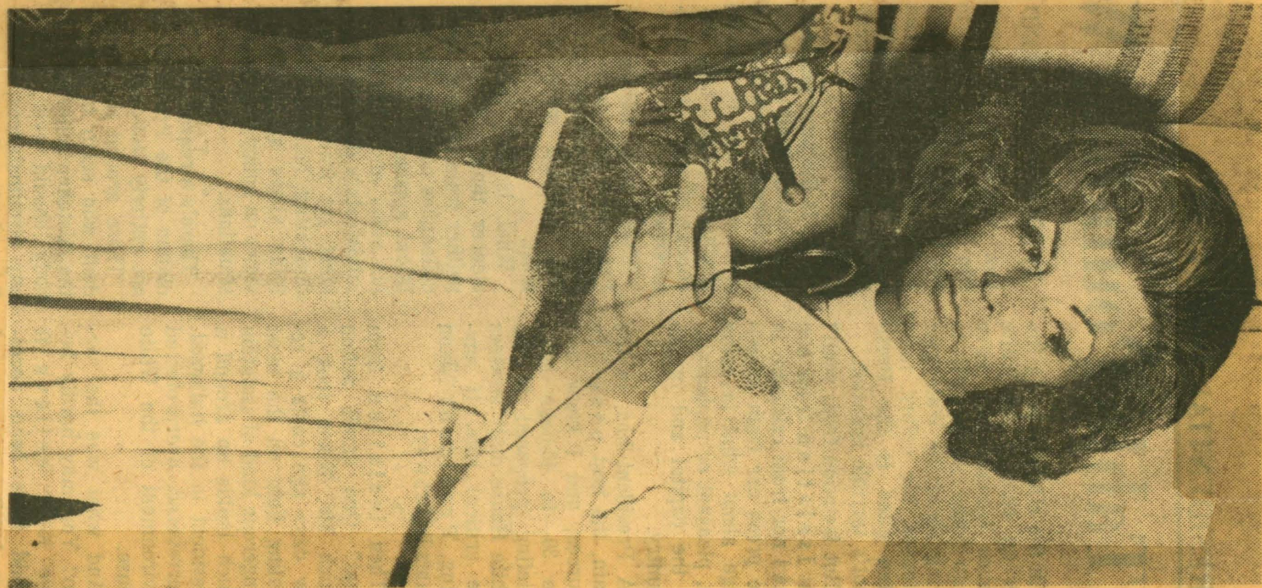
The Mercury

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TRANS-SEXUAL IN BETWEEN

Her 'Ralph' Image Lingers

Pamella still wears pants—but for new curves



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III

In the conclusion of a series, a trans-sexual tells of the trauma and humor of playing a new role and of ostracism from heterosexuals who can't understand her sexual mis-identity.

By DALE F. MEAD

Staff Writer

STANFORD — "The first time I went out on the street dressed as a woman — my God, it was terrifying," recalls Pamela Bratton.

"People weren't stopping because the traffic lights were red. They were staring at me."

The time was May of 1972, when five months of estrogen therapy leading to a sex-change operation had put a woman's curves on a man's 5-foot-10 frame.

Ralph Taylor Bratton, whose name three months later was changed in court to Pamela Bratton, also began electrolysis treatments to remove his beard. Estrogen therapy could not reverse that trait.

Since that time Pamela Bratton has practiced the role of a woman while awaiting the final physiological adjustment done by a surgical team at Stanford University.

Unemployed for several months despite extensive supervisory and technical skills, she still awaits an economic break that will provide the \$2,500 needed to complete the treatment.

In the meantime the role-playing has its hazards. She could not complete the electrolysis because she did not have the money, "and a shadow of a beard is appearing and I get terrible nervous."

"I've also found that when I get uptight, nervous and withdrawn, people detect me. A great deal of it is demeanor. When I get frustrated and tense, my voice will lower and a masculine reaction will surface. Ralph will protect me."

Because the beard is not removed completely and the voice must be controlled by the individual, "some people seem to pick it up right away. Others don't

"And I immediately pick up when people clock me, and I get tense. Ralph doesn't appear, but the things he taught me do."

Learning to play the woman's role "does have its moments of humor," she says.

"I once walked into a supermarket to buy a 50-pound bag of dog food, and when I got to the checkout counter the cashier said, 'Just a moment, ma'am, I'll get someone to help you.'

"This elderly man, bent over with age, came out and took it to the car, huffing and

puffing. I thought he was going to have a coronary.

"Only minutes before, I had lifted the bag with one hand to head toward the check stand until I remembered a woman doesn't do that."

One other time, as she sat in a bar "a guy wouldn't take no for an answer to dance. I finally agreed, and then found I didn't know how to dance backward."

Pamella experienced a "lowering of the libido," a calmness and reduction of drive, when the estrogen therapy began. But even now she "comes on strong" to make a point — an aggressive rather than passive reaction.

"I really don't think I have to bolster my femininity. I consider myself asexual at this time. I do think you can totally suppress sex drives."

Emotionally, "I don't find myself attracted to all men — only certain men, someone who is secure in his identity, who doesn't have to put up a line."

Pamella maintains that Ralph never was attracted to men for homosexual activities, and that transsexuals typically are not interested in getting involved with homosexuals.

She carries a photo copy of legal definitions, in fact, to verify that transsexuals are clearly different from homosexuals or transvestites.

Trans-sexualism, she explains, doesn't begin as part of the sex drive that comes with puberty as do homosexual tendencies or the urge to dress like a woman.

"Homosexuality is a sexual disorder," she declares. "It's an attraction between two people of the same gender, who are aware of their gender and happy with it, who have a nuptial relationship."

"The transvestite almost always is male and aware of his gender. I don't believe he desires to change his gender but only to dress in the opposite gender."

In contrast, transsexualism manifests itself when a child is 3 to 6 years old. "It's the belief one is of the opposite sex; the morphological appearance of one gender and self-identity with the opposite gender."

What sexual activities Ralph had — and they occurred rarely, perhaps once or twice a year — were with women.

"Prior to my estrogen therapy, I could have relations with a female if she epitomized everything I wanted to be. Then I would 'become' the female."

Once the estrogen treatments began, any ability to perform as a man disappeared.

One of the chief obstacles to playing the role of a woman for Pamela is more than

36 years of facing the world as a man.

"It's easy if you've never had an identity. But if you've had a male identity and you're starting from scratch, it isn't easy. I don't know what's expected of me as a 38-year-old person."

"I don't want to look 38 and I don't feel 38. I don't want to feel middle-aged. I want to have a more youthful appearance. A lot of other transsexuals go to a lot of extremes to make themselves look more youthful," she reports.

"Homosexual, heterosexual, transsexual — none of us has an honest opinion of what we look like. We cop out to the mirror on what we want to be."

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But the difference for transsexuals is that they already have submitted to drastic physical changes through surgery. So cosmetic adjustments such as facelift-

ing or breast implantation seem routine and easily done by comparison.

During this interim period, awaiting the crucial operation, Pamela says she has become very pensive. She notices things Ralph would have overlooked in the past and has started to write.

She feels that the experience has heightened her emotional strength to the point where incidents that would shake up most people would be accepted without trauma.

She admires the equanimity of other transsexuals: "I have not met a transsexual who was not so exquisitely strong that if a person noticed it that person would stand in awe."

"I'm not religious and I don't like the word God, but it (the sex-change experience so far) has given me a sense of a power so far beyond us that if we could get a

glimpse of it, in depth, it would terrify us," she says.

Concerning the reaction of society to the transsexual, Pamela observes, "You can't grasp the ostracism. If someone was born with a withered limb, people can comprehend that; they can accept it."

"But sexual misidentity can't be grasped. It can't be seen. It can be felt, but not discussed. They (most persons) gag on it, they retch."

"Our bodies are not what we are. They are a means of communication. We express our identity through our hairdos, beards, clothing or make-up."

"But we (transsexuals) are not molesting children, we're not dope addicts. We're not hurting anybody."

"I'm trying to say, hey people, I'm not really different from you. Nobody's really different."

end of series