

Club
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Sex Change Uproar in Emeryville

By Carolyn Anspacher

Until six months ago the job of physical education teacher at Emery High School in Emeryville had been held by Doris Richards, pert, pretty, immensely popular and, in the words of a former superintendent of schools, "the sweetest girl I've ever known."

But in those six months Doris Richards underwent a sex change operation, with all the accompanying hormonal and psychiatric therapy, and — as Steve Dain — has informed the school board he wants to continue teaching, preferably in the same tenured job.

Dain did not appear at Thursday night's long and agonizing school board meeting, which was conducted behind closed doors and discussed the future of the teacher and the controversies that have erupted in the small East Bay city.

But he did come in to the administration office last week — short, stocky and unrecognizable with a luxuriant beard — "to pick up my check."

The check was made out, as it had been for the last 13 years, to Doris Richards.

According to school officials, it was just about six months ago that Richards called in sick and after two weeks reported she was going to have to undergo surgery.

Her sick leave checks were mailed to her regularly and no questions were asked about her operation.

Flo Bigelow, a member of the five-member school board, said there were hints that Richards had undergone a sex change operation.

As a worker in the Board of Education office put it: "Everybody had heard about the operation and a lot of us had seen her, too."

"Why she was here just last week. She stood

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DORIS RICHARDS
She returned with a luxuriant beard

SEX CHANGE

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around in the middle of a circle of people. She had a beard, closely cropped. It kind of makes your skin crawl . . ."

Bigelow was not nearly so critical.

"I can walk with him," she said. "It's a delicate matter and it looks like a case for our lawyers. Some parents are up in arms.

"Life is complex — full of change and if it makes, this person happy to change lifestyles, that's all right with me."

What puzzles most people, including Bigelow, is that Dain is not seeking a new identity in a new locale.

"This certainly is the first time such a thing has happened to Emeryville," she sighed.

Lewis Stommel, Emeryville's new superintendent of schools and on the job less than a week, had no official comment, but did note that Richards gave no warning that she was returning as a man.

It was generally agreed that Richards was an outstandingly successful physical education teacher.

As Cheryl Burton, one of her young pupils put it: "She coached

us to championships and everybody just loved her."

Most of Emery High's students want Richards retained, beard or no beard.

Many of the city's parents, however, are reported to be "up in arms" and at least some of the board members are said to be "terribly upset."

"I don't think we yet understand all the legal ramifications involved," said Stommel, the bewildered new superintendent. "We certainly can't practice sex discrimination under Title 9 and we've got to do what is legally proper."

Although Dain could not be reached for comment, it is understood he is already writing a book on his metamorphosis, and is "recording reactions when he shows up with a beard and reveals his new identity."

Hotel Fire

San Juan, Puerto Rico

A fire that forced 300 tourists to flee their rooms at Puerto Rico's big Americana hotel for at least three hours caused an estimated \$7000 in damages, authorities said yesterday.

Associated Press