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(Register Photo)

JOANNA CLARK WITH PHOTO OF HER FORMER SELF, MICHAEL, THE NAVY MAN

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**FIGHTS FOR REINSTATEMENT**

# Transsexual Takes On Army Reserve

By STAN WULFF  
Register Staff Writer  
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO — Joanna Michelle Clark is fighting for her reinstatement as sergeant first class in the U.S. Army Reserve from where she was "booted out," she says, solely because she used to be a "he" a he known as Michael Clark, chief petty officer, U.S. Navy.  
She has sought the help of several politicians and even written to President Carter who promised an investigation of her dismissal, she says.  
"There is no valid reason for excluding a person from military service on the basis of sexual reassignment," she said.  
Before her sex change, she served as Michael Clark for nearly 12 years in the Navy, saw action on Vietnam missions, earned a distinctive record, was married twice, fathered a son, now 16, and served five years in the naval reserve.  
At 39 she has now lived as a woman for more than two

years, experiencing happiness, she said, but also much discrimination because of her sex change.  
In addition to her 19 months of U.S. Army reservist status she spent some of the past two years working for the county Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and, later, in federal civil service.  
She left the EMA, she said, because of "sex discrimination." Her superior, Robert Marshall, ignored her tax money-saving suggestions, she said.  
Marshall, however, said that "her problems apparently stemmed from her inability to adjust to the red tape unique to local government."  
"It was easy for her to follow military procedures," he said, "but here she ran into difficulty. There are times to fight red tape and there are times to stay within the rules and regulations."  
Despite the tensions the operation has caused, "for me it was the right thing to do," she said emphatically.

She had a relationship with a man for 14 months after the surgery scars had healed, she said. She broke off because he was in the military, too, and she wanted to avoid "problems" for him, adding:  
"But I would marry, if the right man came along."  
Michael was born in 1938 in Pontiac, Mich., and his early years were difficult because he "didn't fit the role of a male," said Joanna, lapsing into third person to talk about her former self.  
"I was called a 'faggot' whenever I allowed myself to express myself the way I felt," she recalled. "I wasn't. I avoided the homosexuals and the transvestites."  
"But in those days the male and female roles were even more defined than today. As a boy, you couldn't cross your legs, you had to carry your school books a certain way or other boys would laugh. I carried my books like a girl.  
But Michael was really

very lonely, recalled Joanna, and he found his most satisfying companionship on the air as a ham operator. Though he did poorly in school he was very interested in electronics and operated his own station since he was 13 years old.  
"For me the radio was a way to communicate without having to be face to face with somebody. They couldn't see me if I acted feminine."  
When Michael graduated from Pontiac Central High School in 1957 he placed 419th in a class of 420, and went immediately into The Navy.  
"On one hand I enjoyed the military," said Joanna, "but on the other hand I felt very uncomfortable there. My body hair distribution was feminine. I had no chest hair, little hair on arms and legs and I was quite skinny, weighing 140 pounds at six foot one."  
"I got a lot of remarks from the guys. It came to

## Reinstatement

ed her retention in the service.  
She alleges the word came down from 6th Army headquarters in San Francisco to "get rid of that pervert."  
Joanna sits on a couch at home clutching a thick folder filled with military forms in showing excellent performance of duty, letters of recommendation from superiors, and other documents attesting to her unblemished work record. She is living with her retired parents in a spacious mobile home in San Juan Capistrano.  
She has one consolation, she says. "I have two wonderful and loving parents who accept me."  
She has contacted Sen. Alan Cranston's office whose help was "worthless," she said. Rep. Robert Badham's office has promised to help. And a letter to President Carter brought an assurance that the Army will in-

vestigate her case, she said.  
"I don't blame the Army," says Joanna. "My dismissal was only because of a few individuals. And I want to be reinstated."

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## Homosexual Fights For Reserve Reinstatement

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the point where I had to sneak into the shower room.

"For a while I tried to be macho and went along on details picking up AWOLs but it didn't work and I finally ended up typing in the chaplain's office."

He later took basic aviation electronics at the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Norman, Okla., then was transferred to Memphis, Tenn., for 32 weeks of special training.

After one week he was called in by a superior who was studying his high school records. "Why do you want to waste your time here?" he asked Michael. "With your school record you're not going to make it. We will find you a job somewhere else."

"I said 'I'll graduate first in the class'" recalled Joanna. "And I did. I was top in a class of 90."

Because of his excellent record he was given the choice of his next assignment and he went to Bermuda for three years.

In 1961, he returned to Memphis — where he had nearly been rejected — as

instructor in aviation electronics. His rank was petty officer.

From Memphis he went to Hawaii and, later, he flew on support missions over Vietnam.

In May of 1969 Michael left the Navy. He had been on active duty for 11 years and 10 months.

"I had problems," said Joanna. "I had been married since 1969 and we have a son. My friendships were shortlived. I was not homosexual. I once tried it but when the guy started getting down to business I bolted from the room. I knew that was not for me. In 1970 I was divorced."

Michael stayed in the naval reserve and in 1972 married again.

"It was a last ditch attempt," said Joanna, "to conform to society. But it didn't work." He was divorced again in February 1974. In each case he had loved his wife as a companion, he said. That was all.

Joanna said it was at that point she became convinced that she wanted to be a woman. She was a woman trapped in a man's body.

Two months after the last

divorce Michael entered the "gender program" at the Stanford University Medical Center. The program consisted of hormone therapy to encourage whatever feminine characteristics Michael had. It lasted 18 months.

In September 1974 he was discharged from the naval reserve after he wrote his commanding officer and asked if he could become a wave.

"No way," was the answer, recalled Joanna.

The later stages of the program consisted of living 24 hours a day as a woman, dressing, using makeup, and moving in public as a female. His facial hair was permanently removed by electrolysis.

Surgery was performed in June 1975 at the Oklahoma City Baptist Medical Center.

Rejected by the Navy in her new role as a woman, Joanna went to the Army and was sworn in as a sergeant first class in October 1975.

With the help of politicians, she had found a legal way to change all her naval records to her new identity,

which eased her way into the Army, she says.

"But still they knew," claims Joanna, "My physical was three months after the operation and there were still minor cosmetic problems that were visible to a physician...They apparently had to fill a quota and I was accepted."

Her months in the Army reserves went virtually without incident at first, she said, except for Joanna's being asked to pose for a recruiting poster.

"I was photographed in diving gear and in uniform," she said, "But in the end they selected a 'Racquel Welch' instead of me. Can you imagine if it had been me on that poster?"

Later, the harassment began, she claimed, and she was put through a physical examination in which she claims four Army physicians reported that she had had a sex change operation, but still recommend-

ed her retention in the service.

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