

San Francisco, Calif.
Examiner & Chronicle
(Cir. Sun 640,823)

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She wants Medi-Cal

to make her a woman

**It'll cost \$4,500:
Other states have
paid, but not Calif.**

1269 By Ivan Sharpe

Gina Baillie thinks it's time her torment ended. And she'd like help from the people of California.

Attractive enough to draw many admiring glances, she says, "I hope to make a good wife for some man one day and raise children."

But first she has a problem to solve — she's still a man herself, anatomically speaking. In her mind, however, she's a woman and old-fashioned enough to be the despair of women's lib.

To the medical world, people like Gina are transsexuals. There are about 10,000 of them in the United States, according to most estimates. More than 2,000 have undergone painful sex-change operations since 1966.

What makes Gina unique is that she's the first transsexual to demand that Medi-Cal pay for her operation, at a cost of about \$4,500.

Superior Court Judge Edward Cragan is expected to rule on her suit next week. But the decision likely is to be appealed because of the precedent it would set for other transsexuals who can't afford the surgery.

(Several states, such as New Jersey and Georgia, have paid for the operations under state medical plans.)

The State Attorney General and the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation, which represents Gina, can be expected to take the case to the State Supreme Court.

Briefly, the state's novel legal argument goes like this:

The Medi-Cal law was never intended to finance every conceivable health or emotional service, say Deputy Attorneys General John Klee and Daniel Johnson.

While undoubtedly desirable from Gina's point of view, it is not medically necessary in that there is nothing organically wrong with her. In fact, the surgery is cosmetic in nature, similar to plastic surgery or a hair transplant.

Finally, surgically creating female sex organs will not make Gina a woman, any more than bleaching one's hair releases "a blonde trapped in the body of a brunette." Gina would still have no ovaries and could not bear children.

On Gina's side, attorney David Moon denies the operation is superficially cosmetic. He quotes experts who say Gina has an emotional problem only surgery will cure, which may otherwise lead to self-mutilation and possibly suicide.

The state has already paid for hormone treatments and extensive psychiatric counseling.

Gina would obviously not want to risk such an agonizing and complicated operation for frivolous reasons.

And, finally, Moon argues that if she does not have the operation she is likely to remain on the welfare rolls

for the rest of her life, since she cannot hold a job at present.

Gina, 27 this week says she worked as a dancer, barmaid and secretary in The City until her employers discovered her ambivalent sexual status and fired her.

Being ordered to use the men's toilet while dressed as a woman created obvious problems.

"It's funny, though, the women usually gave me all the trouble, not the men," she says.

Gina (she has legally changed her name from "Lee") decided she wanted a sex-change operation when she was 18, although she had realized there was something different about her when she was only 11.

At high school in her home state of Florida, she dressed in baggy clothes because she was ashamed of her body. She buried herself in books and study and avoided boys.

MORE

Her wealthy father was furious at her decision to change sex. He cut off her funds, forcing her to drop out of the University of Florida in her third year.

Now she's studying to be a psychologist at San Francisco State University and still avoiding men, with more difficulty since hormone treatments enlarged her

breasts and electrolysis removed traces of facial hair.

"I don't swing in the gay world," she says. "Gay men don't turn on to me, but it's amazing how many straight men ask me for dates."

These days she's living on hope. As long as there's a chance of eventually having the operation, she'll hang on.

But that was another decision she took after a suicide attempt put her inside San Francisco General Hospital. "Either I wind up on the surgeon's table or on a table in the morgue," she says fatalistically.

"I think I have a lot of potential as a human being. People are more than just their bodies.

"If I was going to change my mind, I'd have done it long ago. I've seen the results of the operation and I know what would happen to my body.

"And there's no way it can be cosmetic. The agony they go through is unbelievable."

Dr. John Brown, Gina's choice of plastic surgeon, says the sex-change operation is complicated and challenging. The risk of infection is high.

He has performed 110 sex changes in his first-floor office surgery on Jackson Street. He says no hospital in the Bay Area will allow him to use its facilities because of the controversy he has stirred up in the medical world.

He claims to be the only surgeon who has perfected a surgical technique to construct a clitoris, and he says most of his former patients are now enjoying normal sex lives. Many are now married.

About 20 hospitals and medical centers around the nation now perform the operation. Stanford, for instance, has performed several hundred with generally



GINA BAILLIE WANTS TO CHANGE SEX

'I hope to make a good wife for some man'

Examiner Photo by Bob Bryant

favorable results.

And 33 states will now change the sex on birth certificates after such operations — more than double the number only three years ago.