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Sex-Change Doctor Loses His License

by Charles Feit
Science Correspondent

Dr. John Brown, the surgeon who once aspired to make San Francisco the sex-change capital of the world, lost his license to practice medicine yesterday.

The revocation by the State Board of Medical Quality Assurance apparently ends Brown's bizarre medical career in California.

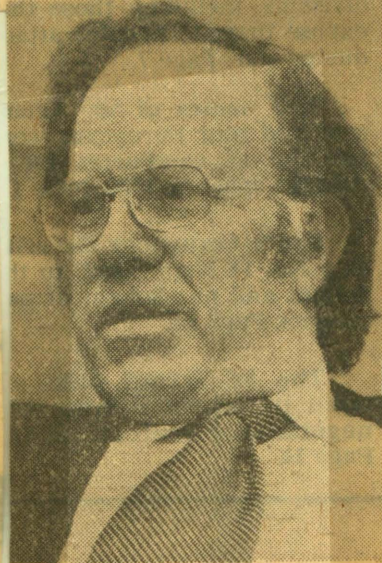
At one point the red-haired physician teamed with a business manager — an ex-convict and former confidence man named Andrew Spence — to work San Francisco's Tenderloin District looking for men who wished to become women.

An announcement of the decision, released by state Consumer Affairs Director Richard B. Spohn, characterized Brown as one of the "bad cookies" of medicine.

Brown, who reportedly has performed more than 100 sex-change operations in the past, was unavailable for comment yesterday. In recent months he has been

performing plastic surgery at a clinic in Los Angeles.

He also faces a \$3 million malpractice suit, brought by attorneys Melvin Belli and Salle Soladay



DR. JOHN BROWN
A bizarre career

for a client named Julie Phillips, the former Charles Beatty, who, according to the suit, was "grossly disfigured" by Brown in 1974.

Spence, Brown's former business manager, is also named in that suit.

However, in hearings leading to yesterday's revocation, Spence, now living with his wife, Janie, in Livermore, brought what was seen as highly damaging testimony against his former employer.

The state decision was handed down in a 12-page list of transgressions and charges which, it concluded, add up to "gross incompetence" and, in some cases, "moral turpitude."

The charges included unsanitary treatment that led to severe post-surgical infections, transportation of patients in private vehicles after surgery to "sometimes unsanitary" convalescent hospitals and falsification of insurance claims.

Two prime witnesses against Brown, Dr. Donald R. Laub and Dr. Norman Fisk of Stanford University Medical Center's respected "gender dysphoria" sex-change clinic, testified that Brown's lack of psychological screening for patients put his practice well outside accepted standards for such procedures.

However, the state report also said that Brown's actual surgical skills are considered by some persons "including former patients" to be "brilliant."

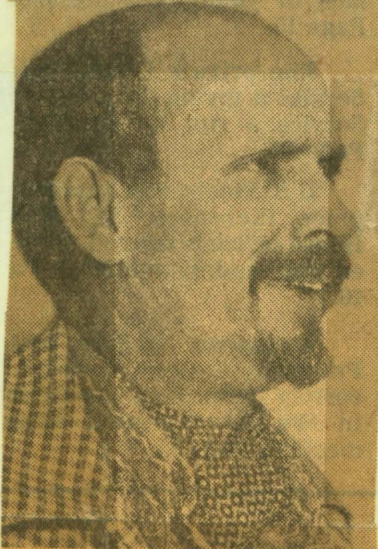
The most damaging testimony against Brown apparently came from Spence in a San Francisco hearing last April.

Spence, 43, met Brown in 1972, following Spence's conviction and sentence to San Quentin on 11 counts of grand theft in Oakland. Spence had masqueraded as a Rabbi Emmanuel Goldstein and picked up office equipment with false purchase orders.

Spence said he had met Brown in Hawaii, after serving time in San Quentin.

He said he had discussed with Brown "promoting a plastic surgery center," selecting San Francisco as a likely place because of the large population of transsexuals and tranvestites who might desire gender-change surgery.

One of the first moves, he told the state hearing panel, was to present a "public relations briefing" at a local hotel, promoting Brown's services, which included castration, creation of an artificial vagina and breast augmentation.



ANDREW JAMES SPENCE
Brown's ex-manager

Deputy Attorney General Louis Castro asked whether Brown had ever performed such surgery before, and Spence replied, "not to my knowledge."

Spence is accused in Belli's pending civil suit of presenting himself as "Dr. Spence" to patients, with Brown's encouragement, and of taking part in surgery without benefit of a medical license.

He testified he has had only three years of education.

He also said that Brown had depended on former patients for office help in the several locations in which he practiced in San Francisco. Asked who gave injections to patients, he replied, "Hell everybody who came along. It was no big thing."

Asked at last April's hearing if everyone was accepted by Brown for surgery, Spence replied, "only those with money. I don't remember anybody being turned down."