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PARADE'S SPECIAL

intelligence report

by LLOYD SHEARER ©1981 BECAUSE OF VOLUME OF MAIL RECEIVED, PARADE REGRETS IT CANNOT ANSWER QUERIES



Photo by Los Angeles Times

Michael Clark in Navy, 1969; Joanna Clark in Army, 1977, after sex change

From Man To Woman

At this point in her life, Joanna Clark, 43, wants desperately to become a nun. No order, however, will take her. Reason: Clark is a transsexual, the only one known to have served in both the U.S. Navy and Army—in the first as a man, the second as a woman.

Clark recently won a four-year legal battle when the Army Board for Correction of Military Records cleared her of several charges—immoral sexual activities, theft of classified documents, drug addiction—and awarded her an honorable discharge.

"It was a widely publicized case," she explains, "involving false, trumped-up charges by a vindictive woman. And it's not over yet. I only won a partial victory. I'm still suing for my back pay, pension benefits and reinstatement. But I'm getting lots of publicity. And I guess that's why the church orders I've applied to have turned me down. Through no fault of my own, I've been daubed with the brush

of notoriety. I've become a cause célèbre—and, frankly, I don't like it. I just like to do my thing, which is helping people."

As Michael Clark, Joanna served in the U.S. Navy for 17 years (12 on active duty) and was honorably discharged in 1969 with the rank of chief petty officer.

After a sex-change operation in 1975, she biologically and legally became Joanna M. Clark and joined the Army Reserve, serving as a sergeant first class. On Aug. 10, 1977, after serving 19 months at the Fort MacArthur Army Reserve Center in San Pedro, Cal., Clark was notified that her enlistment was being voided on the grounds that the sex-change surgery had disqualified her. She only needed 13 months to qualify for a pension based on 20 years in the armed forces.

"It was simply a case of the Army not wanting a transsexual in the service," says Clark. "They simply said my enlistment never happened. The truth is that before I signed up, I told the recruiting officer all about my surgery. Not only that, I was

examined by an Army doctor—examined very thoroughly, I might add. And he said, 'You're a woman in every way. You're in.'

"The Army is simply guilty of breach of contract," Clark asserts. "I signed up for a four-year hitch so that I would be eligible for a pension. When a catty civil service employee filed all sorts of phony charges, the Army investigated me. All they could come up with was my transsexualism. They tried to get me out on that charge. They've lost that one, and I think they'll lose on my rights to back pay and pension benefits. I'm inclined to believe they'll probably offer me something in a lump settlement." The Army declines to comment, since the case is still in litigation.

Clark—6-foot-1, blue-eyed and auburn-haired—runs a secretarial and business service in San Juan Capistrano, Cal., where she lives with her parents. Her father is a retired machinist, her mother a retired court clerk. An only child, Clark was born in Pontiac, Mich., and christened Michael, a name she retained for 37 years.

"I knew very early as a child," she confesses, "that something was wrong with me. I was a boy, but I didn't feel like one, and as I grew older, I tried to compensate for the constant doubt of my sexuality. I joined the Navy and worked so industriously that, in seven years, I rose to chief petty officer. I instructed in aviation, anti-submarine warfare, scuba-diving, in all phases of sea survival. I was a real 'jock.' I also got married and divorced twice. I had a son by my first wife. All the time she was pregnant, I felt that I should have been pregnant. My feminine instincts were becoming more and more dominant. Our son is now 20. He doesn't know about me.

"My second wife was a beautiful and wonderful woman. We got married after going together only three days. Married to

over

her, traveling under false colors, living a lie, I gradually became more and more depressed. I contemplated suicide, and she thought my depression was her fault. I finally told her I was a female trapped in a male body. And it was she who suggested that I read an article in the 'Honolulu Advertiser' about gender change."

Clark did and concluded that sex-reassignment surgery was "the only chance I had for any real happiness in life. So I left the Navy, then went to Stanford University Medical Center for psychiatric screening, and from there to the Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City, where Drs. Charles Reynolds and David Foerster operated on me and made me the woman I am today."

Joanna, who describes herself as "basically a very religious person," has become of necessity an expert in transsexual legal affairs and says that if she can't become a nun, "I hope to become a lawyer and help other transsexuals, because it's not easy for people like us out there in the cold, cold world."