



In certainly the most unusual wedding ever staged at the California Medical Facility—or many other places for that matter—the Rev. Archie A. Allen of Vacaville united in holy matrimony Katherine Ann Marlowe, 50, a transsexual bride, and inmate Robert (Lonnie) Barnes, 29. The vows were exchanged in the prison conference room. Afterward the bridal party enjoyed a picnic inside the prison grounds.

# Transsexual Wedding Far From 'Camp' As Bride Steals Show

By BARBARA HUNTER  
Times-Herald Staff Writer

VACAVILLE—The bride was 35 minutes late for the wedding. Her bouquet never did get delivered from the San Francisco florist. In lieu, she broke some pink oleander bushes off the Interstate 80 divider strip. And the chauffeured limousine that was supposed to deliver her to Vacaville failed to show.

Still, "panache" appropriately describes the entry of the former Kenneth Marlowe to the California Medical Facility's main gate—to become the California prison system's first transsexual bride.

As Katherine Ann Marlowe, 50, the former striptease artist, author

and for seven years hairdresser to Gypsy Rose Lee, she was to become the wife of CMF inmate Robert (Lonnie) Barnes, 29. Vows were exchanged Wednesday in the prison administration conference room.

This writer was one of only two media representatives given the nod by the bridegroom to attend the ceremony itself. If we went prepared to observe, then write, about a "high camp" occasion, those plans fell through about midway through the marriage ceremony. As the Rev. Archie A. Allen, retired pastor of Vacaville's Christian Church got to the bride's promise to "love, comfort, honor and keep him from this day forward," Katherine began to shake with sobs.

And you suddenly knew how much this day, those words, meant to her, and how bright the future must appear after years of being alone and terribly "different."

Kate, as she calls herself, apparently never achieved much success at being either boy or man. "I was branded early as a sissy. Rejected by my classmates as different, and by my family as an embarrassment, I was aware of the fact I didn't fit the mold by the time I was five years old." In late adolescence she became a female impersonator, then found she was so convincing that for 15 years she successfully got by as a "straight" strip teaser, dancing as Sherri Marlowe.

Eventually she was drafted, however ("My draft board knew I wasn't 'Sherri Marlowe") but the military career ended when she was gang-raped by 14 fellow soldiers who discovered her secret before the military brass did. She was subsequently discharged.

There followed a seven-year period in Hollywood as hairdresser to stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, and after the latter's death, Kate came to San Francisco. It was there she wrote the first of nine books, "Mr. Madam." She also was the San Francisco hair stylist "Mr. Kenneth."

"My sexual preference since adolescence had been men, but I never really became that involved with the homosexual crowd," Katherine states, adding that this really left her without intimate ties with anyone.

Shortly after the destroyed her San Francisco home, she went to Stanford Medical Center for evaluation. "I always had been a woman trapped in a man's body, but this proved to me that I should take the necessary steps to change my physical sex. It took \$10,000 and three very painful operations. But here I am, as I always wanted to be."

She met Lonnie through guest lectures she gave in behavioral sciences through the College of Marin in 1975, at San Quentin prison. Wednesday's best man, Nathan Ely, introduced the two, who gradually grew closer. Ely and the groom had become friends while both were on Death Row. Lonnie's mother, Mrs. Bea Maloney of Sacramento has accepted Kate. His three sisters, Mrs. Cheryl Moore with daughter Denise, two; Mrs. Wanda Clabough with son Chance, and Mrs. Linda Dunn with son John Jr., both one month old, made a happy family group from Sacramento.

It must be said that Katherine did not allow the wedding scene to remain teary for long. "I'm an instant aunt," she quipped happily following the ceremony. Told by institution photographer Earl D. (Wimpy) Waverly to say "trailer visit" in lieu of "cheese" to produce a smile—an "in" reference to the conjugal visit for which the newlyweds will have to wait a month—the bride replied theatrically "My god, there's more to life than trailer visits. I think."

In appearance, the transsexual bride certainly looks like a woman. About 5 feet, 7 inches tall, slimly built, her low-cut ecru colored wedding gown revealed an unexpected amount of cleavage. And when she lifted the skirt of the gown to show the traditional blue satin and lace garter, she revealed an excellent pair of legs. Nor does she look anywhere near her actual age. Only the voice, masculine in pitch and timbre, is momentarily startling.

After a certain amount of prison-type checking and precautions, we in the wedding party--conscious of hundreds of curious eyes representing CMF employes as well as inmates--made our way to the picnic area and the rest of the press. The bride had brought a huge chiffon cake, baked by the proprietors of her favorite Chinese restaurant. Inscribed on it in Chinese characters was "Lonnie Barnes Loves Kate Marlowe--Happy Marriage." Rosa Kwong, of the Fairfield newspaper, confirmed Kate's translation. Potato salad, fruit salad, fried chicken and soft drinks, also brought by the bride, completed the festive menu. Candles and a cloth adorned the picnic table.

Since the cake knife Kate had brought had been confiscated at the gate, the newlyweds made do with a little plastic picnic knife. Richard Nelson of San Francisco, who gave the bride away ("I've been trying to give her away for 17 years") went to the car and retrieved the wedding rings that Kate forgot to bring in for the ceremony, and the two put them on the proper fingers. 1489

Katherine plans to settle nearby in Vacaville, and is already house-hunting. If Lonnie makes it out of prison when he next appears for consideration, he hopes to put his prison-learned skills as an EKG technician to work in the community. The two went off for a stroll, their only time alone in the day.

As I gathered my notebook and purse to leave and write my story, best man Nathan Ely, who has served 13 years for murder, leaned toward me with a parting request. "Be kind?" he asked.

Vallejo, Ca.  
Times-Herald  
(Cir. D. 29,922)  
(Cir. S. 29,847)

Transsex  
JUN 30 1977