

SHE WAS FATHER OF TWO

Vickie Finds Problems Changing Her Way Of Life

By GEORGE NEWMAN
Staff Writer

She sat in the chair, poised and seemingly comfortable as the account of her mentally anguished life began to unfold.

Until three years ago, she worked as an aviation engineer, respected and liked by fellow workers.

She was the father of two school-age daughters.

Now, using the name Vickie, one which she hopes will soon become legally her own, the slender brunette prepares for a future filled with problems and uncertainty.

Vickie is one of growing number of persons who have undergone a sex change operation.

"I felt different from other youngsters before I reached the age of five," Vickie recalled.

That was in the Lancashire district of England, where Vickie was born 47 years ago.

"In my head, I was a female, though I had the body of a male," she explained.

According to her lawyer, Roberto Rabago of San Jose, such individuals are commonly classified as transsexual.

In most instances, early childhood influences and experiences are responsible for shaping a female identity in a male youngster; or in some cases the reverse occurs.

As the child grows older, the identity becomes more firmly established. Then, at a certain point in the child's life, the crossed-sex identity reaches a root level at which psychiatric intervention can no longer reverse the pattern.

"Many trans-sexuals suffer emotionally from the constant reminder of their sex identity conflict," Rabago said.

Sometimes, such individuals have found themselves driven to the edge of desperation, Rabago said, citing instances in which some have attempted self-emasculatation or suicide.

In recent years, since sexual conversion surgery has become more popular and accessible, many transsexuals have turned to the operation as a solution to their problems.

Vickie is one of these persons.

Next month, she and another client also represented by Rabago will appear in Santa Clara County Superior Court for a hearing on a legal petition to change their names.

Both will testify that they have undergone corrective gender surgery and that they are seeking to change their names from male to female in conformity with their new identity.

Theirs is not the first such petition, having already been

preceded here by at least a dozen other persons.

In Vickie's case, however, approval of the petition will represent more than a superficial change of name.

During the last three years, Vickie has lived underground as a female, dressing in women's clothing and assuming the role.

She attended college in Modesto last year, as a female, and completed a training course in electrolysis (a system used for removing unwanted hair).

When she applied for a license she was told by a state examining board official that she could not be licensed as a female, since she anatomically remained a male.

"I knew I just couldn't go back to living as a male," Vickie said.

Her surgery was performed in Los Angeles several weeks ago.

Though she no longer lives together with her former wife, of 12 years, she continues to visit her two daughters, with whom she has discussed her situation.

Vickie resides on the Peninsula and plans to work here at her new career.

Emphasizing the importance of the legal name change petition, Rabago ex-

plained that such a court-approved instrument enables the individual to secure driver's licenses, passports and other legal documents necessary to live in their new gender.

Many of Rabago's sex-change clients are products of the Gender Dysphoria Program at Stanford University Medical Center, where more than 50 persons have received conversion surgery since the program began in 1967.

Another program is starting in San Francisco, and there are several reported under way in Southern California.

However, it is no easy matter for those seeking a sexual change.

There appears to be what could be described as an arduous, psychological-medical-legal trail, continuing numerous obstacles and barriers, which leads to the final stage of a name change petition.

Patrick Gandy, coordinator of the Stanford program, said that program officials receive three or four inquiries each day from would-be applicants.

More than a thousand candidates have been interviewed but only a small percentage (about 10 per cent) are selected, Gandy said.

Those accepted must demonstrate their suitability by living in the gender of their choice for at least a year and by obtaining employment. All are exposed to intensive counseling during the pre-surgery period.

"We see this as a social phenomenon," Gandy said. "We don't promote this as the only answer for people with gender problems. This is only one of several alternatives."

Another major obstacle for many of those seeking the change is financial cost.

Rabago estimated that the total cost of surgery, counseling, legal assistance and necessary post-operative medications and treatments ranges from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

The attorney believes that there still exists much public misunderstanding about

trans-sexuals and their conversion surgery.

"Trans-sexuals are not homosexuals and they are not transvestites, though they are often confused with those," Rabago said.

He recalled that his first client, a former male, had undergone conversion surgery some 14 years ago, but waited until recently to file a petition for a change of name.

"She delayed out of fear of publicity," Rabago said.

Rabago said another client was living as a female with three female roommates for more than a year and wasn't suspected. When it came time for surgery, the individual informed the roommates that she was entering the hospital for "minor surgery."

She is currently working as a female fashion model.

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file - transsexual



Vickie, Attorney Roberto Rabago; Below in Pensive Mood

—Staff Photos