

# Transsexual teacher faces uphill fight

EMERYVILLE, CA—Nearly a year after it began, the battle between transsexual teacher Steve Dain and the school district that took his job away remains steeped in bitterness and uncertainty.

One thing, however, seems clear. When the controversy finally ends, Emeryville's three-school district, its pupils, parents,



Steve Dain

teachers and officials, will never be the same.

The 37-year-old transsexual who had been Doris Richards, a girls' gym teacher at Emery High School, has lost his \$1,610 monthly salary and can collect neither unemployment insurance nor retirement pay because of his suspension.

"I live from day to day," Dain said at his Union City home. "As of right now I'm working as a laborer for a construction firm in Hayward. I've done other odd jobs like gardening and tutoring."

He talks of writing a book about the events of the past year, but says the venture as yet is only a possibility. "The material is sure there," Dain said.

Dain, who was married and

separated during the Doris Richards years at Emery High, said he still hears from former students, boys and girls, who considered Doris Richards one of the school's most popular teachers and once voted her teacher of the year.

"They tell me to really hang in there and 'we'll see you soon,'" he said cheerfully.

But Dain contends it was the school district that leaked news of his sex change operation last summer. And he said even if he wins the fight to teach again, he is unsure if Emeryville is the right place for him.

The resentment spreads father.

Betty Sutton, who resigned her post as a school district trustee during the heat of the Dain dispute, said the district administration "has really turned me off." Her children, she said, have been harassed at school because of their support of Dain.

"I want to take my kids out of school, and I'm thinking about moving out of Emeryville because of all this," Mrs. Sutton said.

An Emery teacher who asked not to be identified says the Dain episode has caused distrust and animosity toward the administration.

"This thing has been handled all wrong from the beginning," the teacher said.

Particularly disturbing to teachers, she said, is a sex survey being conducted by the district. It asks frank questions of children, parents and teachers about sex, transsexuality, homosexuality and seeks reaction to transsexual and homosexual teachers.

"I want nothing to do with it," the teacher said. "I'm writing 'abstain' on it and sending it back."

She said there is general agreement among other Emery teachers to boycott the survey specifically

because of the Dain issue.

"I wonder what the reaction to this thing would be if they asked questions about blacks, women or other minorities instead of about sexuality," she asked. "I think they should have asked his (Dain's) permission to do the survey."

Supt. Lewis Stommel, who was hired just as news about Dain's

sex change erupted, admits that the 29-question survey could figure heavily in an upcoming hearing on the district's attempt to fire Mr. Dain.

Stommel described the survey, recommended and designed by a psychiatrist and two psychologists, as "fair and aboveboard."

The memo indicated that the school board sanctioned the

survey to strengthen its case against Dain. A previous administrative hearing last October was dismissed after the hearing officer termed two of the district's charges "vague and indefinite."

Later, an Alameda County Superior Court judge said the hearing officer erred and ordered the state Commission of Professional Competence to rehear the case.



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