

He wants to be she Inmate creates stir over sex change bid

By DAVID WHITNEY
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Oregon State Penitentiary inmate Linda Hughes says he wants a state-paid sex-change operation so he can become a she and be transferred to the women's prison.

Linda Hughes, the only name the inmate is known by, is a 25-year-old Californian whose transsexuality has created a dilemma for prison administrators since his incarceration in October.

Hughes wants to wear women's clothing. And despite Hughes' breasts and hormone-produced feminine curves, despite Hughes' "husband" locked up in the Oregon State Correctional Institution, OSP Superintendent Hoyt Cupp says Hughes' male sex organs mean he is male.

Hughes has been "under observation" in the prison's psychiatric wing since his arrival because, as some prison sources freely acknowledged, the administration just didn't know what to do with him.

But one must have mental problems to remain in the psychiatric wing, and a prison psychiatrist, Dr. Wesley Weissert, said last week that Hughes is not insane. So Cupp has decided to move Hughes into the general prison population — a move that Hughes said in a December interview may put him in grave danger of sexual attack.

"We'll give him a try," Cupp said. "We've talked to him about his conduct in the general population and we'll give it a try. We've told him that if he causes any problems, we'll lock him up in segregation."

But Hughes said he feels his incomplete metamorphosis into womanhood is bound to lead to problems. Aware of a sex-change operation performed on a

male inmate by the state 15 years ago, Hughes wants the state to pay for his sex-change operation and then transfer him to the state women's prison for the remainder of his 20-year sentence. He said that had he not been convicted and imprisoned for kidnap and armed robbery, he would have had such surgery this month in Trinidad, Colo.

"I am not blaming anyone for why I am here," he said. "I'm just concerned about my life and what might happen to me."

Hughes said that about a week after his arrival at the prison Oct. 29, prison staff wanted to test other inmates' reaction to his appearance and so assigned him a task that required him to go among the general prison population.

"It was like I was a freak," he said. "They were yelling and screaming my name. They gathered around me and a couple of guards had to take me back here (to the psychiatric wing). I can understand why they don't put me down there. I'd be eaten alive."

"It is very difficult when you think of yourself as a woman to be housed in a prison with 1,500 men. In a women's institution, I feel I could finish my trade in cosmetology and I wouldn't live in fear. If my sex-change were finished and I were living in the women's prison, I think (the women inmates) would accept me as a female."

The state in 1965 paid for a sex-change operation for a male inmate May to Greg Carothers, a 20-year-old South Dakotan. Judy Bailey, Washoe County Clerk in Reno, Nev., said a marriage license was issued for the two on May 28. Other sources said the couple was wed across the street from the courthouse at the Heart of Reno Wedding Chapel.

The legality of that marriage is questionable, however, since Nevada law recognizes marriages only between

men and women. Nevada law does not require blood tests or other medical examinations at which one's sex could be confirmed. Ms. Bailey said Hughes indicated he was a woman in applying for the license.

"Johns Hopkins University, which has performed more than 400 of these operations, has said recently that it won't perform any more of them because it is not a viable surgery," Diacconi said. "I wholeheartedly subscribe to the position of Johns Hopkins University."

Hughes said he agrees with the skepticism at Johns Hopkins, because such operations don't always bring the psychological relief the person seeks. But he said his decision to go through with it was well considered, adding that he had decided years ago to wait until he was sure.

Hughes was born in San Francisco on June 5, 1954. He said he started seeing a psychiatrist at age 13 because of adjustment problems related to transsexuality.

After leaving home at age 17, Hughes said he began receiving hormone and silicone breast treatments under medical supervision. He put on women's clothes and began living as a female, first in the San Francisco area and then in the Sacramento area.

For the last three years, Hughes said he was employed as a female, including work at the Comstock Casino in Reno, Nev., as a "21" dealer.

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After the wedding, the couple moved to Sacramento, where Hughes said they managed a hotel before leaving for a trip through Oregon. They were hitchhiking along the Oregon coast near Coos Bay when they were picked up by a man who agreed to bring them to Portland.

Hughes said Carothers pulled a knife on the motorist in Portland and that the motorist was forced to drive into Washington where he was robbed and then forced to drive back into Oregon through Astoria, where the couple was arrested.

A Columbia County investigator in the district attorney's office confirmed Hughes' account of the incident. Hughes was convicted of first-degree kidnap and armed robbery. Carothers was convicted of unauthorized use of a car and sentenced to 10 years.

Before deciding to move him into the general prison population, prison officials had considered transferring Hughes to a California prison at Vacaville, where there are several other transsexuals in custody.

But Hughes is strictly against such a transfer, claiming he still would be housed in a male institution and that because of "personal reasons" — he said later that he once had an affair with a man now imprisoned at the Vacaville facility — he would object to serving his time at the California institution.

Hughes also wants the opportunity to visit with his "husband," but says



WANTS SEX CHANGE — Linda Hughes, a male inmate in the state penitentiary, wants a state-paid sex change and a transfer to a prison for females.

Cupp won't recognize the marriage. Cupp said he has not received any request for visitation privileges and that if he did, the question of males married to one another would have to be explored.

As

the days pass, Hughes said he is fearful he is losing what femininity the hormones, provided by the prison, and hormone treatments have given him.

"My hormone level has been de-

creased since my incarceration," he said. "It's causing me a lot of anxiety and distress. I feel like I am backsliding some."

"I had a 28 waist when I came in and now I'm up to a 34. I've gained about 60 pounds. My bra size has decreased from a 38C to a 36B."

And, he says, he is now having to shave facial hair monthly.