

Italian Girl-Turned-Into-Man Thinks It's Nothing for Story

(Editor's note: The world was startled recently when word came out of a small Italian village about a peasant family whose "daughters" were being changed into sons in almost wholesale numbers. United Press International sent a reporter to visit the family for the first time, the story which follows.)

By ERNEST SAKLER
UPI Correspondent

Giffone, Italy - (UPI) - The young man was black-haired, very small, belligerent, and didn't look at all as though he'd ever been a girl.

Standing there in the field, a hoe on his shoulder and his pretty, 15-year-old wife, Serafina, by his side, Vittorio Alvaro didn't want to answer questions.

Yes, he was 23 years old, Vittorio conceded, and it was just three years ago that he went to a clinic and became a girl-into-boy. But it wasn't much of a story. Why so much interest?

To Vittorio's fellow-villagers, as to Vittorio himself, it was nothing to get excited about. He had never behaved like a girl anyway—"always running after girls," he admitted with a grin. The village didn't find it too exciting that a person's sex should be set straight. That's what those hospitals in the cities were for.

Wonderful Specimens

To doctors, however, Vittorio and his family were very wonderful specimens. There were no less than five

cases in the family of women who had or could have turned man. One of Vittorio's sisters had done so, at the same time he was "corrected." Another he was going to be. And then there were Vittorio's two aunts, his mother's sisters, who could have used sex-change surgery if it had been advanced enough in their time.

Vittorio finally told his story reluctantly, letting it be known that as a hard-working peasant high up in the hills of Calabria ("it is a poor land") he didn't have time to stand there gabbing.

As Vittorio told it, it didn't sound like much of a story.

When he was born he was a girl and they called him Rosa Marina and they combed his hair into tresses. But he never quite felt like a girl and would rove the fields climbing trees and walls and fighting with boys and doing other ungirlish things. He would play cards in the inns and go around at night strumming serenades on his mandolin.

Oh, yes, there was his younger sister, Maria Antonia, who was also like that, only shyer. And there were the two aunts, Pasqualina Sorbara who is now dead and Micheline who is alive, in her 50s, wears men's shoes and carries a whip.

Worked As Maid

For a few summers, Vittorio - at that time still Rosa Marina - worked as a housemaid in nearby Cinquefronde. Then Rosa Marina heard of a girl who became a man in the town of Citanova and was called Edoardo Simonetta. She decided she wanted a sex change too.

It took some time to get a doctor interested, Vittorio said. But Dr. Salvatore Musumeci, a surgeon in Catania, Sicily, heard of the case. In 1955, Rosa Marina and Maria Antonia went to his clinic and on July 23 that year became Vittorio and Antonio.

Antonio is now 19 and helps out in the fields. He was away from home, looking for seasonal work in northern Italy. He hasn't found a girl friend yet because he is shy and also because he wants to marry a rich girl now that his name has been in the papers.

Took Three Years

It took three years, until this summer, to get the sex changes recognized by a court order, and the bureaucratic machinery hasn't quite caught up with it yet. In the general elections in May this year, Vittorio had to vote with a woman's certificate. He is not eligible for mili-

tary service because he is a family head now, but Antonio may be drafted next year.

That was about all Vittorio had to tell, except for the fact that he has a three-year-old sister, Francesca Giuseppina, who also needs a sex change and will get it in the next few months.

In Catania, Dr. Musumeci said it had taken him considerable time and biological and psychological tests to decide if Vittorio had better be a boy or a girl.

"Vittorio Alvaro was a typical instance of a genuine hermaphrodite," the Sicilian surgeon said. "He had both inward and outward characteristics of both sexes. Biological tests failed to prove decisive, but psychological tests showed, but the male side was predominant in his character and I made my decision on the basis of that."

'False Hermaphrodite'

The case of Antonio was simpler, Dr. Musumeci said. He was a "false hermaphrodite of the female type," meaning that his inner organs were male and only outward characteristics were female. Both were prepared psychologically before being operated on, Dr. Musumeci said. They were placed in the male section of the clinic so they would become accustomed to being among men. Their long hair was first combed and then cut.

Both were perfectly normal and fit to marry and have children when they left the clinic, Dr. Musumeci said.

The surgeon said such sex change operations "are not exceptional" but require considerable skill and knowledge. He said the most interesting side of the Giffone cases was their clear hereditary nature.

The heredity, Dr. Musumeci said, came from the family of Vittorio's mother, Caterina Sorbara. She herself is normal, but the two masculine-looking aunts were her sisters.

Dr. Musumeci said that although there was no scientific evidence about the origin of the hereditary factor, he believed centuries of marriages between close kin in the small hill village played a role in it.

First chloroform for use as an anesthetic in America was believed that produced by a Nova Scotia druggist and early medical records have established the year as about 1833.

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Bender Declares Check Returned

Washington - (UPI) - Former Sen. George H. Bender (R-Ohio) confirmed Wednesday that he received \$1,000 from the Ohio Conference of Teamsters last month but said "I returned it immediately."

Bender denied he ever received a \$100 Christmas gift from the Teamsters in 1955. The Senate Rackets Committee presented evidence that the Ohio Teamsters Conference gave a \$1,000 check to a "George H. Bender."

Bender told United Press International that "I never received any gifts or campaign contributions from the Teamsters Union or any other union to my knowledge."

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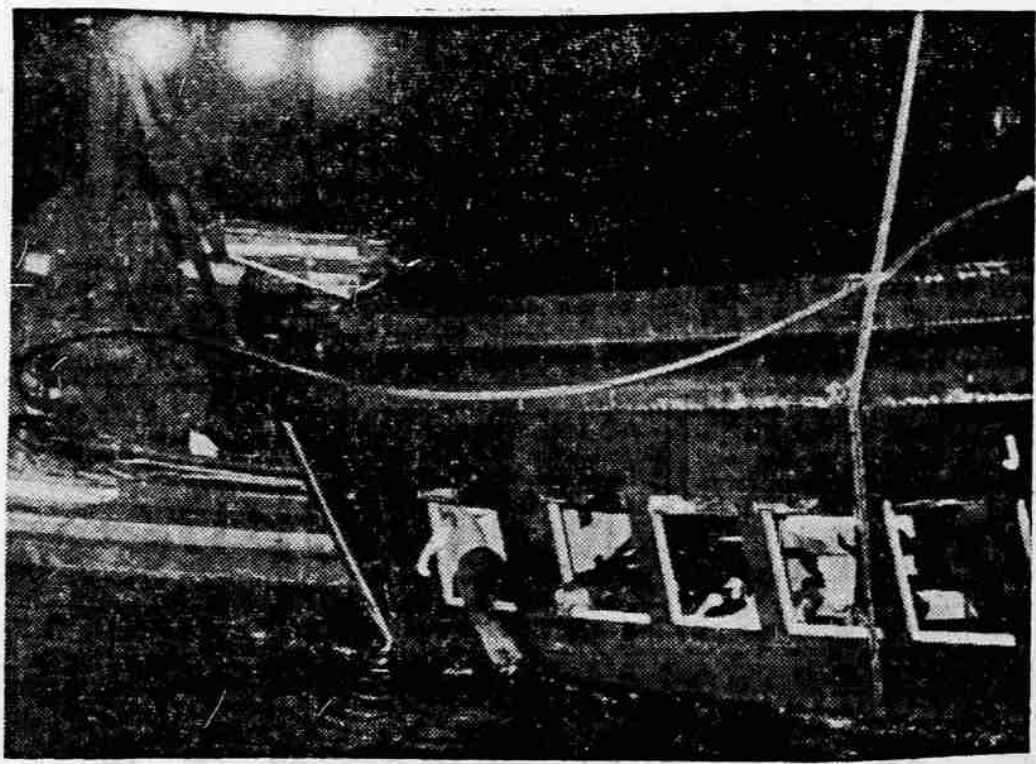
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Rio Grande City, Texas, a town with a population of 3,877, was once army headquarters for young officers Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis and John Pershing.

Minnesota's first governor was Henry H. Sibley, an American Fur Company representative. He also served as Minnesota Territory's first delegate to Congress.

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Is That So?

By OLGA BURNS

Though most people instantly recognize a mallard drake because of his bright green head, white collar and cockily curled tail feathers, you may have seen one this very week and not been aware of it.

If so, it is because you saw him when he was moulting out of his "eclipse" plumage into a resplendent coat of new fall feathers.

His eclipse plumage is well named. It makes him look drab and dull. He gets it when he moults out of his fall or winter plumage, and the transition comes at a time most convenient for a male.



It occurs soon after mating, when his lady is hatching out a clutch of eight or ten light greenish eggs in her down-lined nest. And at that point, the drake, like an irresponsible father, takes off for a secluded marsh where he and other mallard fathers get on with the moulting.

Business is rapid and it used to be dangerous. In two weeks or so he can no longer fly because of the feather loss. Years ago that was the time when the Indians chose to hunt him in the swamps. Today, however, men are no hazard, and by early August he is equipped with serviceable plumage that is just about as colorless as his lady's.

Instructing Brood
She, by this time, is instructing her brood in the business of swimming and flying. The fluffy little fellows sail about behind her wearing a protective pattern of brown or darker hues that make them almost indistinguishable from their surroundings, so long as near the shore.

As for the drake, by early or mid-September he is moulting again for the other and final change of the year.

By October, early November at the latest, the job is done. His head is green once more with a richness of color no emerald could surpass, and soon he and his family take off on their annual jaunt to Mexico or the southern states to spend the winter.

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