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'MORE TOGETHER THAN MOST PEOPLE'—Doris Richards before undergoing transformation at Stanford center, and as Steve Dain.

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WOMAN-TO-MAN TRANSFORMATION DIVIDES TOWN

Teacher Sparks Battle Over Sexual Identity

BY BELLA STUMBO
Times Staff Writer

EMERYVILLE, Calif.—After 36 years, Doris Richards got tired of being a woman.

It was a gradual thing.

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And, finally, it was physical too. She'd eaten so much yogurt and lettuce, just to keep her muscles from bulging, that she was practically starving.

The burning stench of hair removers began to nauseate her.

And she was tired of shaving so close it hurt, then searing her chin with an astringent to close the pores, which she had to plaster with pancake makeup anyway to hide the inevitable 5 o'clock shadow.

And so, one day Doris Richards, a girls' physical education teacher at Emery High School for 10 years, decided to take action.

She took six months sick leave from her job and went to Stanford University where, after an exhaustive series of tests, she began the process of becoming a man—Steve Dain.

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Times photos by Boris Yaro

by Berkeley to the north, Oakland to the south.

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Furthermore, they declare, Doris Richards had been one of Emery High's most respected teachers—the only physical education teacher in anybody's memory to be voted Teacher of the Year by the students—and there is no reason to suppose that Steve Dain would not be the same.

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Because, in the first place, board members themselves were bitterly at odds, voting 3 to 1, with the president abstaining.

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That was last summer.

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Since then, all hell has broken loose in Emeryville, a small, industrial enclave of about 4,000 just across the bridge from San Francisco, bounded by Berkeley to the north, Oakland to the south.

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Chief among Dain's antagonists is Dr. Lewis Stommel, Emeryville school superintendent and principal of Emery High.

A jovial, middle-aged man—whose convictions are as firm as his language is forthright—Stommel leans forward in his chair, his blue eyes sparkling with amusement, as his voice slides to a hushed, intimate level.

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Now the stage is set for round two, a mandatory hearing on the evidentiary merits of the suspension.

Stommel sounds absolutely grim as he describes what could happen if Steve Dain wins.

"They'll be coming out of the closets everywhere, thousands of them—transsexuals, transvestites and every other weirdo—all demanding teaching jobs. Every school in America will have to fight them."

If Steve Dain loses, Stommel says he intends to then sue Dain, alleging that he defrauded the Emeryville School District.

"The question the courts are going to have to resolve," says Stommel, "is whether these people, transsexuals, are legitimately ill. And, if Doris Richards wasn't ill during those six months we paid her sick leave salary, then she owes the taxpayers around $12,000."

But, he continues, although the cause is a good one, he is deeply sorry that Emery High has become a nationally publicized guinea pig in such a sordid legal hassle.

Because of the kids. The students at Emery, he says, simply don't have the sophistication to handle it.

"Remember, this is the East Bay, not San Francisco. And trying to compare them is like, well, like comparing Watts to Beverly Hills."

Emeryville, he says somberly, "is still just a little industrial community, predominantely black, filled with broken families and confused kids . . .

"And I'm telling you, kids here just don't understand this hanky panky of people going around chopping off their breasts!"

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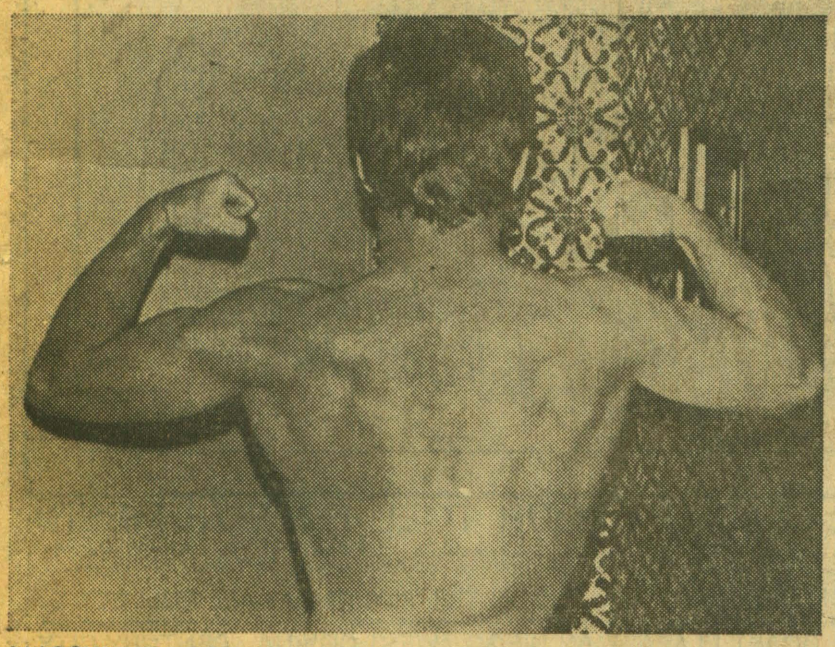

MASCULINE LOOK—Steve Dain displays musculature of his back.

EX-CHANGE OPERATION ISSUE

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those girls had permission," she declares, smiling wryly at her own indignation.

Actually, she says, she originally didn't intend to even get involved.

In the first place, she didn't think there would be any need.

"Sure, when Steve first appeared before the board, we were all surprised," she says. "But I honestly didn't expect any problems. Doris Richards was an excellent teacher, qualified to teach courses like science and physiology, so I just assumed he'd be reinstated without any flap . . ."

She laughs softly. As a matter of fact, she adds, "I thought, heck, this will even be a good thing—a valuable educational experience for the kids."

Then, when a flap began to develop, Bettie Sutton still tried to keep a low profile.

"My daughter Tamara loved Miss Richards, so she was passing around petitions and demonstrating . . . but I was just going to stay out of it, let her do her own little thing. Until I started hearing all these rumors and lies, and it just incensed me."

Unlike Mrs. Sutton, other board members are reluctant to discuss the Dain affair publicly.

Board President Felix Capellino, for example, who abstained in the suspension vote, smiles sheeplishly as Mrs. Sutton speaks, but refuses to comment.

Another member, Flo Bigelow, fumbles uncomfortably for words and sounds almost apologetic.

"Well, I've always been known as a personal liberal, and, I mean, I don't think a person should walk through hell if he can find his true identity," says Ms. Bigelow, a frail, weary-looking woman who is a local bartender.

But, she adds, despite her "compassion for people like Mr. Dain," the board "has a duty to the parents, too, to let this go through the legalities."

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The room, as usual, lately is filled to overflowing with adults and students. Several others sit in the lobby outside where they can hear but not see. Most are black.

Some have come to this meeting of the Emeryville school board because they have a legitimate interest in the agenda for the evening.

Other are here just in case the issue of Steve Dain comes up.

Carol Cheechov, a big woman in a print housedress, whose daughter is 16, is here on business. As far as she's concerned, Doris Richards is dead. "I just don't think there's anything the kids can learn from him," says Mrs. Cheechov quietly . . . "My daughter said herself that she'd just bust out laughing in a class with her, the way she is now."

But, Mrs. Cheechov adds, Miss Richards had been a wonderful teacher. "My gosh, she could really relate to kids. She brought my own girl up from straight F's in P.E. the first year to straight A's the second."

Juanita Forester, an Emeryville preschool teacher who also heads the Emeryville Teachers Assn., is asked about Dain, perhaps for the 100th time. She draws her breath and visibly composes her short, direct statement:

"As president of the ETA, I support Steve Dain's right to return to a tenured teaching position in the Emeryville school system."

She wants to leave it at that and elaborates only reluctantly. "Who's to say whether he's unfit to teach or not, except a doctor. Certainly not

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the moon, to Mars . . . I accept the person as a very fine teacher, and I frankly think this is an educational opportunity—for adults as well as students if they would only take advantage of it!"

Wilma Blow, a huge black woman whose children have all attended Emery and who plans to run for the school board next year, laughs out loud and applauds Juanita Forester's last statement.

"Good lord, the man's a tremendous teacher! He's taught three of my kids and I've known him for 10 years, and he's on the ball, more together than most people. That's why the kids have always loved him.

"Heavens, people talk about students here not being sophisticated enough to handle it, and that's just plain insulting! These kids know what's going on in the world. And, they're smarter than most adults. They know that the outside has changed, but the person inside is the same. And, if he says he's just more

wait and see. They try to put him back in this school and there's gonna be a battle like you never saw before!"

In the lobby, Alfred Avelino, a Teamster whose niece attends Emery, and LaCondra Davis, an Oakland instructional assistant, are trying to outshout each other.

The Teachers Assn. president supports Dain's right to return.

Not, as it turned out, because they disagree. To the contrary, probably no two people in Emeryville are stronger in their support of Dain.

"I tell you what exists in Emeryville," bellows Avelino. "What exists here is *ignorance!*"

Mrs. Davis tries unsuccessfully to interrupt.

"I mean, hell, the major factor is

"See this?" she challenged. "Well, I got a dozen wigs, even a purple one, and I wear 'em because I *like* to look different!" She wore the rhinestone pasted between her eyes for the same reason, she added.

"And, now maybe some people think I'm a sidewalk hostess, honeybunch, but nobody says a damned word where I work, and you know why? Because I do a damned good job! And that's exactly the way it should be with Steve Dain."

"Amen," says somebody in the room.

"I mean, hell, he's doing his own thing, and it's for God to judge him, nobody else, unless he's freaking around with the kids. And he's not. They super-dig him!"

"Yeah, that's sure the truth," declares a girl of 14 sitting on the floor. She sounds sad. Then softly, almost pleadingly: "Say, would you do me a favor? When you see him, would you tell him that LaJuana Holmes said

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one. Besides, now everybody will just be going around gig bonfire gling and wondering what's under her clothes. It's just na those ruf- tural."

Still, says Donna Hancox, almost defensively, "Mr. Dai prever. ysical too. irt and let- uscles from practically

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There is an uncertain silence, finally broken by a giggle laster with pan- "Boy, I tell you what hurts me most of all," says one ay to hide the in- the girls. "I'm just sorry I didn't get to her before she ga hadow. away all those fancy clothes, because, I'm telling you, th Doris Richards, a lady really dressed to the butt!" ducation teacher at

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Doris Richards may have been, as one male teacher pu it, "just about the cutest little pixie gal I ever saw."

But, apart from being a little short (no more than feet-4), Steve Dain is an attractive man, too.

His features are pleasantly regular, his eyes are str kingly blue, he has a full head of well-styled sandy ha streaked only slightly with grey, and, now freed of t need to keep his figure at a feminine 110 pounds, his 1 pound frame is well-developed enough to make even professional muscle-builder look twice in respect.

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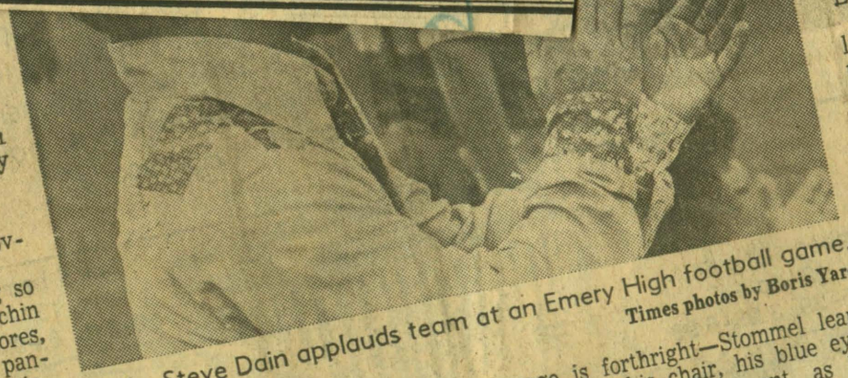

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Times photos by Boris Yaro

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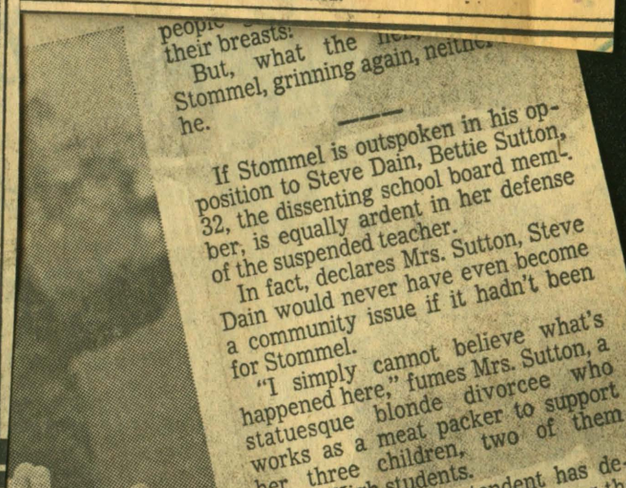

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("Sure, I told her that—and every other board member, too," Stommel readily admits. "But it's not rumor. It's a fact that a couple of parents have complained to me that Dain has been guilty on occasion of, well, some 'show-and-tell' stuff. Indecent exposure. But I won't give their names because they asked me not to.")

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High School Teacher's Sex-Change Operation Divides Bay Area Town

Continued from Second Page

Superintendent Stommel. I mean, I may have a hart murmur, or a brain tumor . . ."

Finally, with a small resigned smile, Juanita Forester, a petite soft-spoken woman stops studying her fingernails and, with direct, half-angry gaze, adds:

"Besides, it *is* 1976! New things happen every day . . . We've been to the Moon, to Mars . . . I accept the person as a very fine teacher, and I frankly think this is an educational opportunity—for adults as well as students if they would only take advantage of it!"

Wilma Blow, a huge black woman whose children have all attended Emery and who plans to run for the school board next year, laughs out loud and applauds Juanita Forester's last statement.

"Good lord, the man's a tremendous teacher! He's taught three of my kids and I've known him for 10 years, and he's on the ball, more together than most people. That's why the kids have always loved him.

"Heavens, people talk about students here not being sophisticated enough to handle it, and that's just plain insulting! These kids know what's going on in the world. And, they're smarter than most adults. They know that the outside has changed, but the person inside is the same. And, if he says he's just more comfortable as a man, then they take his word for it, and they're happy for him, period."

Inside the board room, a tall, handsome boy who refuses to give his name says he thinks Steve Dain is "sick" and "having him in class now would just turn education into a circus."

Behind him, another black mother agrees, somewhat timidly. "You just wait and see. They try to put him back in this school and there's gonna be a battle like you never saw before!"

In the lobby, Alfred Avelino, a Teamster whose niece attends Emery, and LaCondra Davis, an Oakland instructional assistant, are trying to outshout each other.

The Teachers Assn. president supports Dain's right to return.

Not, as it turned out, because they disagree. To the contrary, probably no two people in Emeryville are stronger in their support of Dain.

"I tell you what exists in Emeryville," bellows Avelino. "What exists here is *ignorance!*"

Mrs. Davis tries unsuccessfully to interrupt.

"I mean, hell, the major factor is teaching. All this other stuff is isolated, passe. This is 1976, not 1916.

"And all this crap about sophistication. I tell you, this doesn't bother kids here. Hell, black kids were *born* doing the Watusi!"

Mrs. Davis, a slender black woman dressed in a slinky white knit dress, leaned close, pointing to her hair. It was a huge platinum bouffant wig and the effect was, to say the least, unusual.

"See this?" she challenged. "Well, I got a dozen wigs, even a purple one, and I wear 'em because I *like* to look different!" She wore the rhinestone pasted between her eyes for the same reason, she added.

"And, now maybe some people think I'm a sidewalk hostess, honeybunch, but nobody says a damned word where I work, and you know why? Because I do a damned good job! And that's exactly the way it should be with Steve Dain."

"Amen," says somebody in the room.

"I mean, hell, he's doing his own thing, and it's for God to judge him, nobody else, unless he's freaking around with the kids. And he's not. They super-dig him!"

"Yeah, that's sure the truth," declares a girl of 14 sitting on the floor. She sounds sad. Then softly, almost pleadingly: "Say, would you do me a favor? When you see him, would you tell him that LaJuana Holmes said

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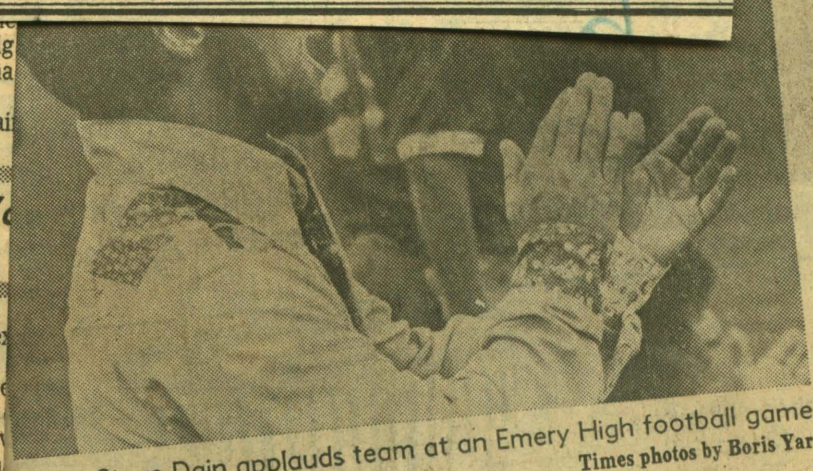

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Furthermore, they declare, Doris Richards had been one of Emery High's most respected teachers—the only physical education teacher in anybody's memory to be voted Teacher of the Year by the students —and there is no reason to suppose that Steve Dain would not be the same.

Students, most reflecting their parents' views, have taken sides, too. And now Emeryville school board

Emery High students, like their parents, have taken sides on the issue.

meetings, formerly routine and ill-attended affairs, are sometimes packed with people who sit sullenly, side by side in the small board room, refusing to even speak to former associates.

It did absolutely nothing to allay tensions and anger when the school board voted Oct. 14 to suspend Steve Dain on grounds of "immoral conduct" and "unfitness."

Because, in the first place, board members themselves were bitterly at odds, voting 3 to 1, with the president abstaining.

And, in the second place, encouraged by his supporters, Steve Dain is waging a determined legal battle to get his job back.

Chief among Dain's antagonists is

guage is forthright—Stommel leans forward in his chair, his blue eyes sparkling with amusement, as his voice slides to a hushed, intimate level.

"Well, then, you tell *me*, baby! Just what *is* it? It had a double mastectomy, it's taking male hormones and it grew a beard. But does it have the *other* male equipment? Can it produce sperm? Or does it still have a clitoris?"

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Now the stage is set for round two, a mandatory hearing on the evidentiary merits of the suspension.

Stommel sounds absolutely grim as he describes what could happen if Steve Dain wins.

"They'll be coming out of the closets everywhere, thousands of them — transsexuals, transvestites and every other weirdo—all demanding teaching jobs. Every school in America will

Teacher Sparks Battle Over New Sexual Identity

Continued from 4th Page

Dain, who quite often jokes about his own notoriety, suddenly laughs softly. "But, you can't win," he says. "Because now those same gossips think I whimsically decided to become a man because Pat *wasn't* a lesbian!"

He continues, remembering, "One night I went down to the local McDonald's, alone, just to get a hamburger. And I suddenly found that I simply couldn't get out of the car. Because, except for times when I was dressed up in lace and a pound of makeup, I'd been called a 'bull dyke' and even 'sir' for so long that, I guess, it finally just paralyzed me. Anyway, that's the night I knew I needed help . . ."

At Stanford, where it was decided that the male gender did predominate in Doris Richards, she was advised to live as a man for a year—complete with a name change and regular injections of the male hormone testosterone.

Then, if that worked out, total surgery would be performed.

Steve Dain's year is up. And he plans to remain Steve Dain, because, unlike Doris Richards, he's had no nightmares, no feelings of panic in crowds, no aching periods of depression.

Dain, who has already had a full mastectomy but still requires further surgery, smiles at the obvious, inevitable question. Yes, he says, in 50% of all cases, the penis, created through one of two complicated operations, is ineffective.

But, he adds, that doesn't concern him nearly as much as most people think it should.

"I don't need a penis to make love to a woman," says Dain simply. "All I need is to feel like a man—and now I do!"

Then smiles, as if he sometimes finds the whole business of changing sexes nearly as comical as it is serious.

For months after he had become Steve Dain, for instance, "I had trouble remembering my name. I constantly confused my pronouns. I couldn't get used to being called 'he.'"

Added to that, Dain says, grinning, it took months after he stopped having menstrual periods—a result of hormone injections—to get over the ingrained panic that, "Good grief, I'm pregnant!"

On the other hand, says Steve Dain, suddenly sobering, much of what's happened to him is not funny at all.

"Probably the worst thing about doing this," he says, "is that you go into it absolutely alone. You never know how people—your family and your friends—will react later, no matter what they say before."

With that, Steve Dain's mind is forced back to the subject which he lately finds most painful of all: his students. He misses them. And, he's convinced, the overwhelming majority want him to come back to Emery High.

But, although their phone calls, letters and visits provide him with moral support, they are not the reason Steve Dain is suing the district to get his job back.

"On a purely practical level, if I let a handful of people discharge me on grounds of unfitness and immoral conduct, I'll never be able to get a teaching job again anywhere," says Dain. "My entire future is in jeopardy, my livlihood . . ."

He also hopes his case will help enlighten the general public about transsexuality.

His mood is no longer even remotely light-hearted.

"You know, the board suspended me simply because I was honest about having a sex operation," he says moodily.

"But I wonder what they would have done if I'd simply stopped shaving and started dressing like a man—but still called myself Doris Richards, the same woman. . . I wonder if Emeryville's educators would have liked that better?"

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Please Turn to Page 5, Col

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TRANSFORMATION DIVIDES TOWN

attle Over Sexual Identity

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Times photos by Boris Yaro

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...own Divides Over Teacher's Change

Continued from Third Page

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And, shyly: "And tell him, too, that we all sure do miss him."

Outside the Emery High gym, four young girls are practicing a dance routine on the steps.

"Well, my personal feeling about Mr. Steve Dain," says Frances Dean, a junior, "is that she shouldn't have done that to herself."

Looking puzzled, she adds, "I mean, if she had all that money to spend, and her hormones weren't right, then why didn't she get her female hormones to overpower the male ones? You know what I mean?"

Donna Hancox, another junior, thinks Dain had done the wrong thing too. "Because, here at this school, they're trying to teach us to be ourselves, you know? To accept what we are . . . but how can we do that when one of our teachers just up and changes herself if she doesn't like the way she is?"

Unlike the others, Linda Washington, a senior, sounds almost angry, perhaps because she had been particularly close to Doris Richards.

"I mean, she was like one of my best friends. I could always talk to her about anything," she says.

"So I feel like she let us all down. Because, you know, our parents—and Miss Richards, too—always taught us to be proud to be black. But, I could always go out and get some of that bleach and make myself white. I could change myself altogether, like Miss Richards did. And I'd be a shame to my mother and a disgrace to myself . . . ."

And so, Linda Washington said harshly, she didn't want Steve Dain back at Emery. "I just don't want to have to look at what she's done to herself."

"What bothers me, too," says Darla Majors, a junior, "is that, if God wanted her to be a man, he'd have made her one. Besides, now everybody will just be going around giggling and wondering what's under her clothes. It's just natural."

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Please Turn to Page 3, Col. ...

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...MAN TRANSFORMATION DIVIDES TOWN

...s Battle Over Sexual Identity

...AN—Steve Dain applauds team at an Emery High football game.

Times photos by Boris Yaro

by Berkeley to the north, Oakland to the south.

Many outraged parents, some armed with Bibles, declare that Steve Dain has violated God's laws, that he is not a he, or a she, but a thing, and they will not tolerate having such a creature teach their children.

Other parents, equally impassioned, shout back that what Doris Richards chose to do to her body is nobody's business but her own. His own.

Furthermore, they declare, Doris Richards had been one of Emery High's most respected teachers—the only physical education teacher in anybody's memory to be voted Teacher of the Year by the students —and there is no reason to suppose that Steve Dain would not be the same.

Students, most reflecting their parents' views, have taken sides, too. And now Emeryville school board

Emery High students, like their parents, have taken sides on the issue.

meetings, formerly routine and ill-attended affairs, are sometimes packed with people who sit sullenly, side by side in the small board room, refusing to even speak to former associates.

It did absolutely nothing to allay tensions and anger when the school board voted Oct. 14 to suspend Steve Dain on grounds of "immoral conduct" and "unfitness."

Because, in the first place, board members themselves were bitterly at odds, voting 3 to 1, with the president

guage is forthright—Stommel leans forward in his chair, his blue eyes sparkling with amusement, as his voice slides to a hushed, intimate level.

"Well, then, you tell *me*, baby! Just what *is* it? It had a double mastectomy, it's taking male hormones and it grew a beard. But does it have the *other* male equipment? Can it produce sperm? Or does it still have a clitoris?"

A split second pause is all he needs. Slapping his knees, he falls back into his chair, guffawing.

"Aha!" he pounces. "You don't know either! So how, I ask you, can we have her, or him, or whatever it is, teaching kids at Emery High?"

It isn't really a question.

"And, try this on for size," Stommel rushes on, grinning good-naturedly. "What toilet do I send her into? Do I have to have one that says 'Men Only' one saying 'Women Only' and one for 'Dain Only'?" Then, "I mean, would you want *your* little girl in the powder room with her . . .?"

Stommel starts to chuckle, then thinks better of it. Actually, he admits, it isn't entirely a laughing matter—especially since the school district has already lost the opening round of the legal battle.

At first, the board had tried to fire Dain, not just suspend him. But an Alameda County Superior Court judge ruled that not only had the board acted illegally (Dain had not received the required 30 days advance notice), it also owed Dain two months back pay.

Now the stage is set for round two, a mandatory hearing on the evidentiary merits of the suspension.

Stommel sounds absolutely grim as ... what could happen if people going around chopping off their breasts!"

But, what the hell, concludes Stommel, grinning again, neither does he.

If Stommel is outspoken in his opposition to Steve Dain, Bettie Sutton, 32, the dissenting school board member, is equally ardent in her defense of the suspended teacher.

In fact, declares Mrs. Sutton, Steve Dain would never have even become a community issue if it hadn't been for Stommel.

"I simply cannot believe what's happened here," fumes Mrs. Sutton, a statuesque blonde divorcee who works as a meat packer to support her three children, two of them Emery High students.

"Our own superintendent has deliberately instigated alarm among the parents and encouraged snickers and ridicule from the students. He's the most unprofessional superintendent we've ever had."

Stommel, she says, "was going around, even into student meetings, and bringing up the subject of Steve Dain every chance he got. And his attitude was always one of 'Don't worry, folks, we'll protect you.'"

And, Mrs. Sutton declares, Stommel fanned the flames by spreading rumors about Dain.

"Once, for example, he told me that he'd heard Dain was showing his genitals to some girls. Another time, he said he'd heard complaints that Steve was fondling the girls . . . but he'd never give me any names, no solid evidence at all."

("Sure, I told her that—and every other board member, too," Stommel readily admits. "But it's not rumor. It's a fact that a couple of parents have complained to me that Dain has been guilty on occasion of, well, some 'show-and-tell' stuff. Indecent exposure. But I won't give their names because they asked me not to.")

Stommel's public allegation that Dain had taken several students to his home last summer without parental permission particularly angers Mrs. Sutton.

"Since my daughter was among ... them, I know for a fact that every one ...

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...ntity

Some have come to ... Emeryville schoo... ...y have a legitimat... ...nda for the evenin... ...ther are here just ...teve Dain comes u... ...arol Cheechov, a ... ...t housedress, wh... ...s here on busines... ...erned, Doris Ric... ...don't think there ... can learn from ...chov quietly . . ..herself that she ... ...ing in a class w... now."

Mrs. Cheech... ...ds had beer... ...r. "My gosh, ...