



On death bed, Georgia Black smells fragrance of rose from bouquet brought by neighbor during fatal illness. Man who lived as a woman for 30 years had funeral cortege of more than 30 cars, was buried in woman's clothes. Death certificate had no stipulation as to sex. Georgia Black was leader of Women's Missionary Society.

THE MAN WHO LIVED 30 YEARS AS A WOMAN

Georgia Black married twice,
even 'mothered' devoted son

BY EVERY LAW of society, Georgia Black should have died in disgrace and humiliation and been remembered as a sex pervert, a "fairy" and a "freak."

But when Georgia Black died in Sanford, Florida, four months ago, both the white and colored community alike paid its solemn tribute. A solemn funeral cortege wound its way through the hushed, crowded streets of the Negro section. And, lining the sidewalks of the Dixie town that once barred Jackie Robinson from its stadium, Negro and white mourners rubbed elbows, bowed heads and shed genuine tears.

Now that Georgia Black is dead, the story of this man who lived as a woman for 30 years can be told in full. It is a bizarre and moving drama which had its finale in a simple grave at Sanford's Burton Cemetery. It began

when Black, a seemingly normal boy, growing up on a South Carolina farm, rejected his sex at the age of 15. For the rest of his life he lived a masquerade so perfect, acquired feminine mannerisms and interests so genuine that not even his closest friends suspected the curious secret. He became the "girl friend" of one man, the "wife" of two others and the "lover" of a number of men after the death of his two "husbands." He adopted and tenderly "mothered" a devoted son who never dreamed, until a few months before Georgia's death, that his "mother" was a man.

To get the incredible history of Georgia Black, EBONY went to Sanford, interviewed Negro and white physicians who had examined Black, queried scores of his neighbors of both races, and heard from Black's own lips a death bed recital of his fantastic story.

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With group of fellow churchworkers in Sanford, Georgia Black (1st row, 2nd fr. l.) looks part of respectable community figure and church leader. Black, who owned rooming house, often used home to raise funds to support church.

EXPOSURE OF HIS SEX MADE

EXPOSURE of Georgia Black as a man who had passed for a woman for 30 years was the tragic anti-climax to his death and revealed one of the most incredible stories in the history of sex abnormalities.

The exposure came about after County Physician Orville Barks of Sanford, Florida, found to his shocked amazement that the sick "woman" he was examining had all the physical characteristics of a man.

Black's decision to camouflage these characteristics and cross the sex line was made when, as a 15-year-old boy (then named George Cantey) on a farm near Galeyville, South Carolina, he rebelled against the gruelling slavery of work in the fields and ran away to Charleston. There he became a house servant in a mansion where a homosexual—a male retainer at the mansion—invited him to become his "sweetheart." Illiterate, untutored and insecure, having only a faint notion of right and wrong, the simple farm boy from the South Carolina hinterlands gratefully accepted. Black's "boy friend" dressed him in women's clothes, coached him in feminine actions and mannerisms.

Under the schooling of this unidentified "boy friend," the masquerade of Georgia Black became second nature. Even when



Accepting congratulations on sermon in which he asked church's prayers for "Sister Georgia Black," Pastor Joseph Williams of Allen Church shakes hand of member of congregation.



Typical town sentiment was expressed by Mabel Clark. She declared: "I didn't know her personally. I heard nice things about her. As far as I'm concerned, her life is her business."



Combing Georgia Black's hair, Lugenia Black, sister of one of homosexual's late husbands, demonstrates that revelation of Black's true sex made no difference to her. Rumor in town is that Hollywood is thinking of movie about Georgia.

BY DOCTOR'S EXAMINATION

his "lover" eventually forsook him, Georgia had become so accustomed to an unnatural way of life that he began looking for another man. In Winter Garden, Fla., Black met Alonzo Sabbe, at the time, a seriously ill man. An unselfish, generous person, Georgia nursed Sabbe back to health. When he recovered, Sabbe asked Black to marry him.

It was during the marriage to Sabbe that Georgia adopted a "son," a fact which made her masquerade all the more convincing. The boy, Willie Sabbe, was the son of a cousin who came to visit Georgia in Florida and deserted the child when he was three weeks old. The "son," a Pennsylvania steelworker, was devoted to his "mother," often sent her gifts and money, was astounded to learn Black's true sex. Sabbe died shortly after the marriage and Georgia, now living in Sanford, married again. Her second husband was Muster Black ("When I got married the second time, I was dressed all in white chiffon. Those days are still fresh to me.") The marriage took place in the home of Mrs. Joanna Moore, principal of Sanford's Negro elementary school. A prominent Negro minister officiated. Black, a World War I vet, died seven years after the marriage. As his "widow," Georgia collected a pension from the Veterans' Administration.



Representing Sanford whites who refused to accept revelation that Georgia Black was a man, the Walter Hands, operators of town's Greyhound Bus agency, declared: "It's just impossible. We've known Georgia for years. Why, we think the world of her. We've been to see her and taken her food and gifts. If she was a man, she really fooled us. It's impossible. "She" fooled town.

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TOWNSFOLK WONDER ABOUT MARRIED LIFE

THE REVERENCE which friends and neighbors gave gentle Georgia Black in death was equalled only by the fierce loyalty townfolk of both races accorded him during the last days of his life when sensational radio and newspaper publicity revealing his true sex spilled across the nation.

Police Chief Roy Williams, who had immediately opened a probe of Georgia's background when it was revealed that he had been masquerading as a woman, said: "I see no basis for prosecuting Black. At first we believed he might have been a criminal in disguise. We carried the investigation clear back to his native South Carolina. We could find nothing to show that Black had done anything legally wrong. She—er—I mean he has lived decently, is highly respected by everyone in town."

Dr. Orville Barks, the county physician who reported Black's secret didn't care to be quoted, seemed somewhat regretful that he had become involved. A number of people bitterly condemned Barks for what they termed his "indiscreet" revelation.

The Sanford Herald, local daily, came in for its share of condemnation. Pastor James Murray of the Trinity Methodist Church phoned the Herald editor, protesting the paper's front-page story on Black. The editor apologized and forthwith ended local publicity on the case.

Members of the St. James Methodist Church uttered approving "Amen's" each Sunday as Pastor Thomas Flowers asked their prayers for "our worthy Sister Black, who has been one of the most important leaders in the church."

Succinctly, Sanford public opinion was divided into two classes: those who didn't believe Black had deceived them and those who didn't care.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hand, who operate Sanford's Greyhound bus agency, were in the class of the non-believers. Representative of the well-to-do whites who stoutly defended Black, the Hands said Georgia had done domestic work in their home for more than ten years.

"Georgia is a perfectly wonderful person," Mrs. Hand declared. "I don't believe what they say about her."

Another wealthy Sanfordite for whom Black did domestic work said defiantly: "I don't care what Georgia Black was. She nursed members of our family through birth, sickness and death. She was one of the best citizens in town."

Black himself gave the impression of an amazing innocence of the double life he had led. In fact, despite all the evidence, official statements and pictures, Georgia insisted that fate had intended him to be a female. Admitting that he had male organs, he dismissed them as "growths," declared he had never had any emotional feeling for a woman.

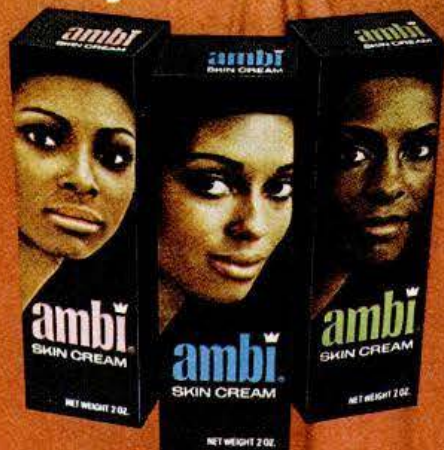
"The doctor says he didn't see how I coulda married, but I don't pay no 'tention to that doctor. My husbands and me had a peaceful, lovely life," he stated.

Sanfordites attest to the truth of this statement but speculate on intimate details of Black's married life. Even though they know that examining physicians say Black was not a hermaphrodite, and had a man's body, Sanford people hotly contest whether the husbands knew the truth about Georgia. Some believe he deceived his husbands. Others, believing this impossible, say the husbands must have known the truth.

A month before his death, as he lay in his bed, arms skin and bone, fingernails like thick encrustations of lime, sunken jaws sloping down to a chin covered with a light, white beard, Georgia told *EBONY* his story. His clear dark eyes gave life to the wasted face, topped with coarse, heavy black hair, fringed with white where the dye had faded. The final thing he said was: "I never done nuthin wrong in my life." People in Sanford, where Black lived and died, loved and was loved, agree.

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