

Once a woman always a woman, judge tells wife who married one

ATTRACTIVE Sandra Peterson ended her six-year marriage to a doctor yesterday on the ground that her husband is, in fact, a woman.

After the London Divorce Court hearing, the 37-year-old medical secretary said she knew of her husband's sex change operation before she married him.

But that didn't matter, she said. 'Our love life was satisfactory.'

Judge Sir Jonathan Clarke said that in spite of a sex change operation, Dr Edward Peterson, a 47-year-old psychiatric consultant, was still a woman in the eyes of the law.

He said: 'A person's sex is determined effectively and for all time at birth. An operation which purports to change sex may do so in the physical sense, but not in the legal sense.'

The judge said he granted a decree of nullity (that the marriage never existed) because when the couple were married in July, 1979, Dr

By JOHN HAMSHIRE

Peterson was a woman and not a man.

On his birth certificate, Dr Peterson, of Virginia Close, Longthorpe, Peterborough, was shown as Wendy Patricia Acton, the daughter of Norman and Mildred Acton.

She was first registered as a doctor under that name on the Medical Register, but is now registered as Edward Benjamin Peterson.

Dr Peterson qualified in 1962, and is now a consultant in child and adolescent psychiatry at Peterborough District Hospital.

Granting a nullity decree to Mrs Peterson, who has a 15-year-old son by an earlier marriage, the judge said that the term 'change of sex' was only appropriate in cases where a mistake had been made over a child's sex.

'I am satisfied that this person is, in fact, and has at all times in law been, a female, and that Wendy Peterson was the correct description of her sex and name.'

Masculine

'Accordingly I am satisfied that on the date of the marriage, the person concerned was a woman.'

At her home in Longthorpe Green, Peterborough, last night, Mrs Peterson said: 'It was before we married that he told me the truth. It didn't matter to me,

'He's as masculine as the next man, so it wouldn't have mattered to me if he had come from another planet.'

She said the divorce had nothing to do with the fact that her husband had once been a woman.

'The reason was an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage. It's as simple as that.'

A spokesman for the Cambridge Regional Health Authority said it was aware of Dr Peterson's sex change before he was given the appointment at Peterborough.