

From Man To Woman

By Delisa Newton

(Ed. note: In the first part of Delisa Newton's story the young singer called herself a "complete misfit." "I had the mind and soul of a girl and the body of a boy." She explained her life from birth in New Orleans 32 years ago into a large family. Her mother was a beautiful woman from Haiti. She never knew her father well because of the separation of her parents. Doctors told her that the absence of a father figure patterned her life. She identified herself with her mother. As her body awakened sexually she indulged in a homosexual affair while serving in the army. After discharge the man known as Lionel Newton went to San Francisco and began wearing women's clothes. This was the step that lead him finally to seek help through a sex change which is told in this second installment.)

**Because I am a Negro
it took twice as long
to get the operation**

Part II

Because I am a Negro it took me twice as long to get my sex change operation as it would have a white person. Because I am a Negro many doctors showed me little sympathy and understanding. "You people are too emotional for such an ordeal," one doctor told me.

But finding medical attention wasn't the only problem complicated by the color of my skin. Even with my college and nursing education, I couldn't get a good, steady job to raise money for the operation. For a three-year period I worked as a crop picker in the California fields by day, a nurse at night, and as a night club singer on weekends.

The exhausting schedule reduced me to skin and bones. My height is five feet, 10 inches but I weighed only 105 pounds. But I was saving money and each dollar bought me closer to the expensive sex change opera-



From Man To Woman *continued*

a luxury I couldn't afford during the last two years, so I went out and bought a new car.

And as I browsed around the dealer's showroom, I met a handsome young man who was obviously more interested in my shape than the latest style automobile.

It was a perfect way to meet. We simply started discussing the pros and cons of the various autos on the showroom floor. And

laughing, we decided to buy identical models in identical colors.

And it was just as natural that we should have lunch together and congratulate each other on such excellent taste in autos.

After lunch we went to a film, and he took me home to my apartment.

Then I acted like the woman I had always been inside!

Of course, I didn't tell him about the operation. I simply let nature take its course.

As a new-born woman, I was looking forward to what was coming with all the



Relaxing with favorite records.

As a new-born woman I looked forward to my first sexual experience with great anticipation

I am not only playing the role of a woman - I am a woman in every way

by the surgery that altered my body to fit my mind and spirit.

This relationship could turn into something serious, but I don't know, I want to be free for a long while.

I was confined in the wrong kind of body for too long, and now I feel that I'm truly breathing for the first time in my life.

Before, when I only dressed as a woman, I always had to sneak around, hoping that someone who knew me as Lionel Newton

wouldn't recognize me. Now I can dress up, go anywhere, and not worry about public opinion. Nor must I worry about the police and the laws against being a transvestite.

Now when I love, there is no secretiveness. For the first time, my mind and body are in unity. I am not only playing the role of a woman, I am a woman in every way.

The problems I have now roll right off my back. Sure I stew when "he" doesn't call on time. Sure I get upset when a man

gets too fresh and forward with me. But these are problems for every woman, and I'm glad to have them!

I can honestly say that I have never regretted changing my sex, not for one instant. I have read the stories of some sex changes who regret the day they went under the knife. I think these girls may have acted on the spur of the moment, and didn't really search their souls carefully before making their decision.

I know I went through six years of psychiatry, trying to adjust, trying every possible way to be happy as I was born — a man.

It was only when the doctors and I agreed I was meant to be a woman that I decided upon the operation.

Had I had any doubts, had there been any question that I was trying a sex change operation just to see how I'd come out, I would never have gone through with it.

This is an irreversible change and you have to be positive that you are making the right decision.

I was positive then and I am positive today.

I've given up my nursing career to try and make it in the career I've always wanted, show business.

I got the courage to leave my position in the hospital shortly after my sex change operations were declared a total success. It seemed a perfect time to make a completely new start.

And now, to light up the last bit of dark on the stage, I've told my story in *SEPIA Magazine*.

Everyone will read about me, think about me for awhile, and eventually forget that I wasn't born a woman.

And if they meet me somewhere, I think people will realize that I'm as much a female, and maybe more so, than many natural ones!

End



All dressed up and ready to go. Delisa poses for quick photo before leaving for theater date.