

TG Community NEWS

A publication of The Renaissance Transgender Association, Inc.

Happy Halloween
My Pretties!

Wigstock Replay!

TG in History—Butcher Brown

“Mad Scientist”—Michael Bailey

Denver—CD City?

**Vis A Vis
Regina Antiqua
TG Resource
Guide, and
More!**

October 03 USA \$8/Can. \$12



Transgender Community NEWS



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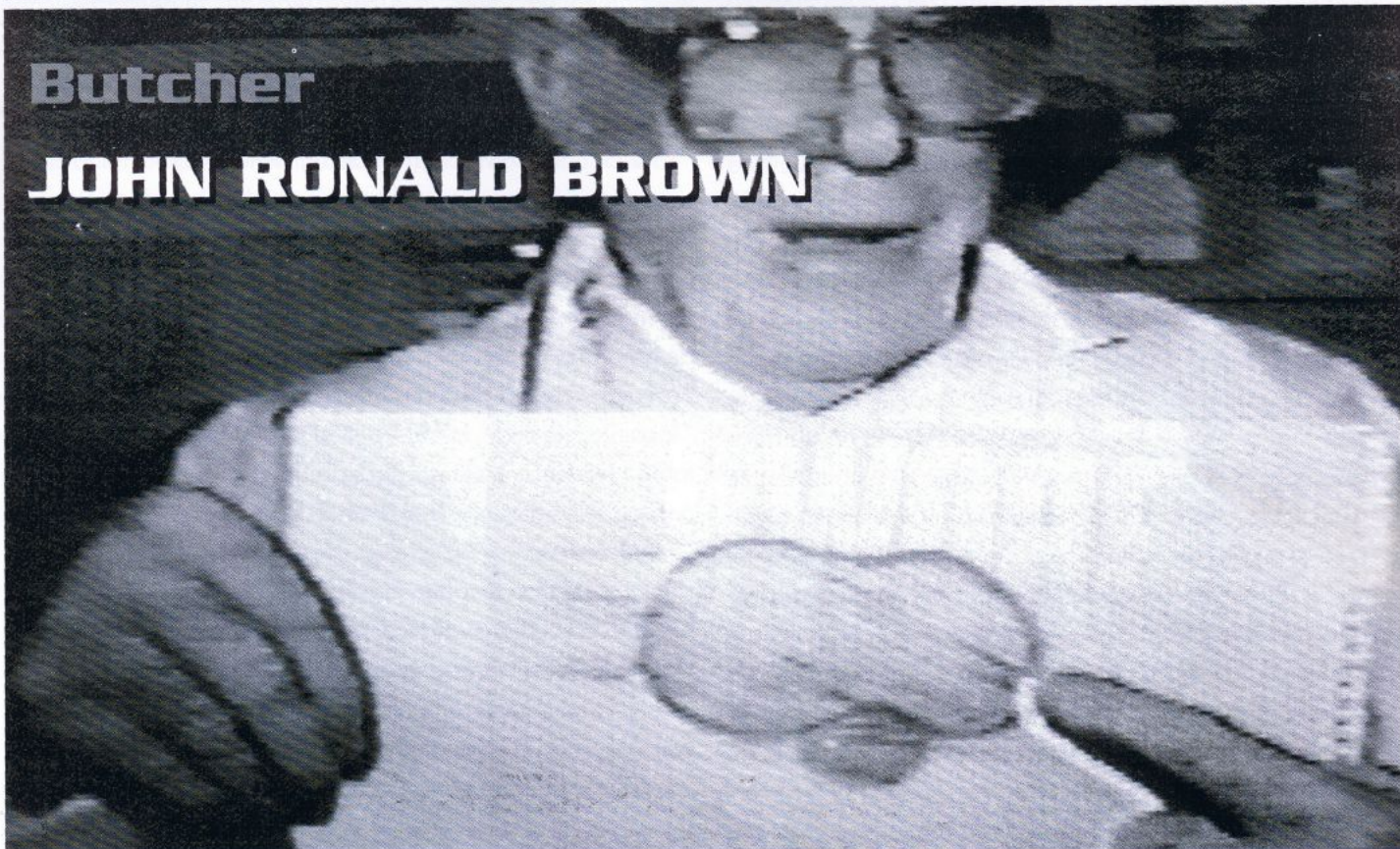
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ON OUR COVER: The lovely Kim, (see picture on right) transformed by Katie Wannabe into the Bride of Frankenstein, visits the grave of an old pal. Photo by Aaron Bolot.



TG IN HISTORY

By Renaissance National Librarian, Michelle Moore



Butcher

JOHN RONALD BROWN

"Doctor" John Brown illustrates his surgical "technique" with crude drawings. Unfortunately Brown's surgery was equally crude.

"I swear this oath by Apollo Physician, by Asclepius, by Health and by all the gods and goddesses: In whatsoever place that I enter I will enter to help the sick and heal the injured — and I will do no harm." —The Hippocratic Oath

Paul Ciotti was a junior reporter working for *Time Magazine's* San Francisco bureau in 1973 when he first encountered Dr. John Ronald Brown. Brown and his business partner, James Spence, held an unusual formal dinner at Spence's home where Ciotti and several other guests were served by a dozen attentive transsexuals. Spence and Brown hoped to convince a group of urologists, proctologists, and internists to join them in setting up "the finest sex-change facility anywhere".

The son of a Mormon physician, Brown had been drafted into the Army where he claimed he did so well on the General Classification Test he was pulled out of the clerk-typist pool and sent to medical school. Brown graduated from the University of Utah School of Medicine in August 1947. For nearly two decades Brown was a general practitioner in

California, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Marshall Islands (nearly losing a patient there). Brown then spent two years at Newark City Hospital as chief resident, and later attended a plastic surgery program at New York's Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital but failed to achieve certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Authority figures, Brown explained, "turn my brain to cottage cheese". Nonetheless, Spence maintained that Brown had developed a "revolutionary procedure" for giving transsexuals "fully orgasmic clitorises and realistic looking vaginas". To make his point, Dr. Brown showed his guests several grisly photos of his surgical technique.

At first, the other doctors seemed interested in Spence's proposal for a full-service sex change clinic. Ciotti watched

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Spence cut up a pear with a pocketknife while one doctor asked how they would select candidates for surgery. "It takes one to know one," Spence told his stunned guests. "We let other transsexuals make the decision. They can tell best when someone is a true transsexual—a woman trapped in a man's body." But a month later, Brown called Ciotti in near panic begging him not to publish his name. The proposed clinic had fallen through and now Spence was saying all sorts of awful things about him.

"TABLETOP"

Yet despite this rocky start, over the next 25 years would Brown claim to have performed over 600 vaginoplasty operations, nearly all without the hindrance of a medical license. In 1977 the California Board of Medical Quality Assurance yanked Brown's license for "gross negligence, incompetence and practicing unprofessional medicine in a manner which involved moral turpitude." The Board charged Brown let Spence (who wasn't a doctor) to perform surgery; Brown allowed transsexual patients to forge prescriptions, diagnose patients, and provide medical care; he misrepresented sex-change surgery on insurance forms, and he exhibited "gross negligence" by failing to perform operations in an acute care facility (Brown just did them in his office, then sent the patient home). In one instant Brown failed to hospitalize a patient who had a "life-endangering, pus-infected wound the size of a softball". Brown never bothered with medical histories or physical exams before surgery and he performed vaginoplasty on virtually anybody, no matter how physically ill or emotionally unstable.

Yet for all that, the administrative judge who revoked his license apparently did so reluctantly, filing a "memorandum opinion" on Brown's behalf, claiming Brown appeared to be "a pioneer" who made "innovative contributions" to the emerging field of transsexual surgery.

How innovative a surgeon was Brown? Brown would claim credit for a vaginoplasty procedure that was actually first developed by Dr. Georges Burou in 1958. However, in the 70's most of the reputable clinics provided only vaginas and labia to transsexuals. Brown—always willing to experiment on patients—was one of the few back then willing to at least try to construct a clitoris. But plastic surgeon Jack Fisher who personally repaired 12 to 15 of what he called Brown's 'pelvic disasters', said: "He's a terrible, appalling technical surgeon. There's just no other way to describe it. He doesn't know how to make a straight incision. He doesn't know how

to hold a knife. He has no regard for limiting blood loss."

There's always been strong opinions about John Ronald Brown. Some patients couldn't praise him highly enough. "He gives you a vagina at a fair price", one witness said. "Whereas with other doctors you had to take hormones, wait up to six years, live as a woman, undergo psychological evaluations and then pay \$12,000 to \$20,000 or more, with Brown it was good old-fashioned capitalistic cash-and-carry."

But Donna Colvin, a transsexual who worked for Brown, remembered a man who shot up with Valium before surgery, who purposely damaged the vagina of a transsexual who angered him, and who left a transman with raw gaping wounds after a botched mastectomy. Transgender author and activist Dallas Denny periodically posted warnings about Brown for years. Among transsexuals he was known as "Table Top Brown" for his willingness to operate on kitchen tables (which sometimes collapsed), as well as in garages and motel rooms. In *The Tijuana Experience*, Denny wrote: "Some of these people, expecting vaginoplasties, received simple penectomies, leaving them looking somewhat like a Barbie doll. Others ended up with something which looked like a penis which had been split and sewn to their groin - which is essentially what had been done. Some ended up with vaginas ... becoming inflamed and infected. Some ended up with peritonitis, some with permanent colostomies. Some ran out of money and were dumped in back alleys and parking lots to live or die."

But Brown offered more than surgery. According to another witness named Cheree: "He'd shoot silicone anywhere you wanted it. For \$200 he'd do breast surgery. For \$500 he'd do cheeks, breasts and hips. After injections you had to lie flat on your back for three days so the silicone wouldn't go anywhere. He plugged the holes with Krazy Glue."

Most doctors who lose their license find other lines of work. Not Brown. After successively losing permission to practice medicine in Hawaii, then Alaska, then the island of St. Lucia, Brown returned to Southern California where he became an underground, black market practitioner in gender-reassignment surgery, breast implants, face-lifts, liposuction, silicone injections, and penile implants. To avoid the law, Brown performed the actual surgery in Mexico. (In his advertising, Brown referred to his "international practice.")

In January 1986, *Penthouse Forum* magazine published an article about Brown entitled "The Incredible Dick Doctor". The article portrayed Brown as a flaky, scatterbrained character who backed into cars and whose pants fell down in the operating room. When he accidentally cut open a penile

shaft causing blood to spurt everywhere, Brown casually declared, "I made a boo-boo."

Then the television newsmagazine *Inside Edition* took its crack at Brown with an investigative report titled: "The Worst Doctor in America". Brown was shown performing a scalp-flap operation to give a transsexual a more feminine hairline. Unfortunately the patient who should have been under deep sedation moaned throughout the procedure, which Brown dismissed on camera as "nothing unusual."

The San Diego District Attorney disagreed and Brown spent 19 months in jail for practicing medicine without a license. Brown had previously been convicted of prescribing narcotics and practicing under a false name after his license was revoked. But jail terms didn't deter Brown. "I didn't like some of the things that organized doctors were doing, so I rebelled," he said. "Later I didn't like what the government was doing in support of the medical organizations, so I rebelled. I chose to ignore the laws." Finally a lawsuit by a former patient, Julie Phillips, helped drive Brown to Mexico. That same year in San Francisco Dr. Paul Walker formulated the *Standards of Care for Gender Dysphoric Individuals* during the aftermath of the Julie Phillips lawsuit. Dr. Walker and other members of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association had been instrumental in helping to

revoke Brown's medical license. There's little doubt that Brown's butchery played a significant role in establishing the *Standards of Care* that today govern who has access to transsexual medical services.

A DEATH IN SAN DIEGO

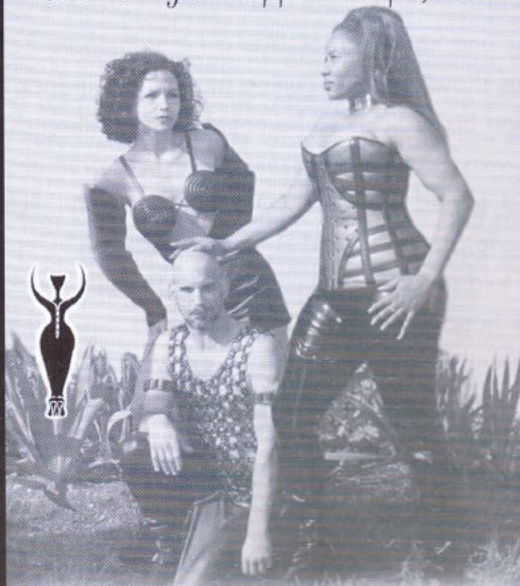
After driving a taxi for a year, in 1992 Brown resumed his surgical practice in Tijuana, posing as "Dr. Ralph Molina" at the "New Woman Surgical Center" while living in San Ysidro, California. One transsexual, Cheree, had visited Brown's earlier Tijuana clinic but changed her mind after she saw the conditions there. "The sewers overflowed once or twice a day. There was never enough running water or enough bathrooms." The operating room was an ordinary bedroom with an ob-gyn chair. After surgery, Brown would just grab the patient's dried, blood-clotted bandages and rip them right off. Sometimes, Cheree said, Brown would sip coffee while performing surgery. "I remember him walking down the hall eating raw weenies right out of the package," Cheree said. "A f**** package of weenies!"

Then on May 11, 1998 San Diego police discovered the body of Philip Bondy alone in his room at the local Holiday Inn. The Medical Examiner's Office determined that Bondy died of gangrene from a recently amputated leg. At first, a

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friend of Bondy's initially told authorities that Bondy had been in a "taxi accident" in Mexico, yet the police were puzzled. Why did the Tijuana police know nothing about it? And why did Bondy have two \$5,000 receipts in his room, one for "surgery" and the other for "hospitalization," both signed by a man named John Brown?

A detective picked Brown up at his filthy apartment and brought him in for questioning. "If a child had been living there," the detective recalled, "I'd have put him in a foster home." Dressed in a wrinkled shirt and stained jacket, Brown offered to make a "little statement". It went on for 29 pages. Although the police still didn't know why Bondy lost his leg they were convinced something illegal was involved. After Brown's statement, the detective in charge left the interview room to tell his superiors that he was going to arrest Brown.

But after waiting 45 minutes, Brown grew bored and simply walked out of the station and headed home. He had barely gone two blocks when suddenly two police cars and nearly a dozen cops intercepted him. When one officer pointed a gun at his head, Brown looked at the weapon in bewilderment. "All I could think," Brown later said, "was, 'What a f****ing big gun!'"

The police still couldn't figure out why Bondy's healthy leg had been removed. Yet while the authorities didn't quite know what happened, there was one person who did. Three thousand miles away Dallas Denny read of the case and immediately recognized Brown's handiwork. Denny called Stacy Running, the San Diego prosecutor, and told her assistant about apotemnophilia, a fetish identified by psychologist John Money, in which an individual is sexually turned on by missing limbs and sometimes wishes to become an amputee. Denny further supplied Running with information that Brown had been performing illegal amputations on apotemnophilics since the 70's.

The police later discovered that another apotemnophilic friend had put Philip Bondy in touch with Brown. Brown performed the amputation in Mexico that Saturday morning. Bondy was happy at first even though he had felt Brown "sawing" on his leg. Since it was also illegal to amputate a healthy leg in Mexico, Brown disposed of the evidence by driving 15 miles into the desert and throwing the leg out the window for the coyotes. Brown then drove Bondy to his room in the San Diego Holiday Inn, where he gave Bondy some lessons in walking with crutches before leaving Bondy alone to fend for himself. Bondy was later found lying half on the

bed and half off, with blood oozing from a blackened and gangrenous stump. "I saw the phone tipped over," Bondy's friend said. "I saw the wheelchair upsidled. I saw the sheets pulled out. I touched the top of his head. Rigor mortis had set in. This man did not have a peaceful death."

THE TRIAL

Deputy D.A. Running asked the judge to hold Brown without bail on the grounds that he was an "incredibly dangerous individual to the citizens both of the United States and Mexico." Initially, Brown had been charged with involuntary manslaughter but after reviewing the evidence against him Deputy D.A. Running upgraded the charges to 'implied malice murder in the second degree'. "This applies in cases where the defendant does something that is dangerous to human life, knowing it is dangerous to human life and doing it anyway." The police didn't exactly lack for evidence – after searching Brown's San Ysidro apartment they found bloody shoes, bloody pillows, used needles, silicone vials, and two or three dozen empty tubes of Krazy Glue, bloody towels in the bathtub soaking in bleach, bloody swabs in a travel bag, and dozens of returned advertising brochures reading:

- "The prettiest pussies are John Brown pussies.
The happiest patients are John Brown patients.
Because . . .*
- 1. Each has a sensitive clit.*
 - 2. All (99%) get orgasms.*
 - 3. Careful skin draping gives a natural appearance.*
 - 4. Men love the pretty pussies and the sexy response."*

Police also found several videotapes of Brown's operations including one entitled *Jack Has a New Piss-hole Behind His Balls*. This showed Brown cutting an opening in Jack's urethra just behind his testicles so he could urinate sitting down.

But it was Brown's transsexual surgery promotion video that most turned the prosecution against him. "He has a microphone, and his hand is kind of shaking," Deputy D.A. Running told reporter Paul Ciotti. "You see him reach up and grab his hand. And this is his dominant hand, the one he operates with. He holds up crude drawings, ripped out of a spiral notebook. He says, 'This is the corpa... the corpa . . .'. He's stumped on the word. He finally says it, 'the capora cavernosa,' the spongy tissue on the underside of the penis. He goes on in this vein. You can see him waving [the camera-man] off when he loses a thought. The tape was so crude - you could hear dogs barking during the surgery and music playing. The scrotal skin was lying on a board. It had pushpins in it. It was so dirty and dried out, it looked like it had

been run over by a tire."

"I've seen medical videos before," said investigator Tom Basinski. "Usually the scalpel slices right in. But Brown's scalpel was so dull he had to push hard, saw back and forth. 'I said to myself, 'Oh, my God. This is why this guy has to be stopped.'"

Not surprisingly, at the trial all the men found watching Brown's operation videos especially upsetting.

"Do I have to watch this surgery?" one courtroom witness asked. "Well, yes, you do," the Prosecutor replied. "You're the Judge."

"Brown does an operation called an 'ileum loop,'" Deputy D.A. Running told Ciotti, "... in which he takes a piece of intestine, leaving it attached to the blood supply, and diverts it to make a vagina. The problem is, your intestines digest food, secrete enzymes, they smell. He almost killed a rebuttal witness (at a prior trial) by doing that to her... Your intestines are connected to your vaginal lining. In many cases he stitches it back to your stomach, and you get peritonitis. He is quite the adventuresome surgeon. He uses human beings for guinea pigs. He is as close to Josef Mengele as you can get. But I couldn't say that in court. It would have been grounds for a mistrial."

But to make the murder charge stick, the prosecution needed to show Brown had a long-standing history of reckless surgery. That meant finding patients to testify against him and they weren't easy to come by. Many of Brown's clients were unstable people who hadn't been accepted by the reputable clinics. Some denied knowing Brown while others made complete statements only to recant them later. Many lived in stealth and didn't want their past exposed. When an investigator began calling people on Brown's patient list, many simply hung up on him. "Some were hookers," he said. "Some thought they were in trouble. Some just didn't like the police. I called one woman and an older woman answered. 'Why do you want my son?' she said. 'He committed suicide two weeks ago.'" Nevertheless several still came forward to tell their own horror stories against Brown.

"It was a tough case," Brown's attorney later admitted. "The evidence, facts, and the law were all against us." With no real defense, Brown's attorney tried portraying him as a kindly man courageously helping a forgotten segment of society. "No one else would deal with transsexuals," went his closing argument. "John Brown said, 'I'll deal with them.' Did he do this for money? No. He did it because he cared. And if you don't believe that, then you have my permission—as if you needed it—to find him guilty of murder."

Unfortunately for Brown, after deliberating but a single

day that's exactly what the jury did, convicting Brown of second-degree murder. Brown's attorney immediately announced he would appeal.

Brown didn't remain idle while awaiting his appeal. He wrote to a dozen states, asking if they would consider giving him a license to serve some remote, rural community. Brown also told Paul Ciotti that in 1977 after he lost his license he went walking up a hill one night carrying a kerosene lantern when God spoke to him. "Words started pushing into my mind," said Brown. "The words kept coming up for two days. The message began: 'Why do you kick against the traces?' It went on: 'You should know that the details of your life have been arranged so that you would be where you are now, doing what you are doing.' I knew that meant working with the transsexuals. It went on: 'What you are doing is appreciated, because these are my children, too.'"

Brown said he knew he'd been given a mission—to take care of the surgical needs of God's children, the transsexuals. After he is released from jail, Brown plans include raising money to finish development of a "hyperthermia chamber" that will cure cancer, AIDS, and genital herpes. And just in case God forgets him, Brown frequently 'reminds' God of "the special program I plan for AIDS babies, and I pray every night He will release me soon."

Postscript: On August 3, 2001, the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, formally denied Brown's appeal. John Ronald Brown is now serving 15 years to life in the California State Prison System.



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