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In prison ceremony

1304 Transsexual weds Vacaville prisoner

VACAVILLE, Calif. (UPI) — Wearing an ivory lace wedding gown, Katherine Bies, 50, a transsexual, married Robert Lonnie Barnes, 29, a convict serving a murder term, at Vacaville Prison Wednesday.

Inmate friends of Barnes attended the wedding, conducted in the prison chapel by Chaplain Archie Allen, after the warden got confirmation the bride was definitely a woman.

The inmates accompanied Barnes to the altar.

The bride, a San Francisco cocktail waitress who formerly was a gay stripper, female impersonator and hair stylist, was half an hour late for the wedding and said excitedly on arrival:

"Would you believe the florist forgot the bouquet? And my hair is a mess."

Born Kenneth Bies in Des Moines, Iowa, the new Mrs. Barnes underwent sex-change surgery at Stanford University Medical Center in 1973.

She said her convict mate insisted on the wedding Wednesday, although he has a parole hearing scheduled for October.

"He's afraid I might run away," she said.

The bride was given away by Richard Nelson, her former

employer at a hairstyling salon in San Francisco.

Inmates carried food to the reception. It featured a large cake made by the transsexual's Chinese friends in San Francisco and was inscribed in Chinese with the names of the bride and groom.

Mrs. Barnes said that as a Hollywood hairdresser her customers included some of filmtown's biggest stars.

The wedding went ahead after Prison Superintendent T.L. Canon checked with the California Department of Corrections and Stanford, which assured him Bies had become a she.

The bride said she formerly lectured in prisons about human sexuality and met her new spouse two years ago.

She said inmates and transsexuals have much in common because "they are here because they went against society and in a way so did I."

Concerning the age gap in her marriage, she said:

"I think men of my age are boring. I certainly don't want to slave in the kitchen while my husband sits and watches TV."

She said she will move to Vacaville to be near her husband.



Robert and Katherine Barnes greet well-wishers following their marriage at the California Medical Facility chapel after an 18-month romance. Kate, 50, who underwent surgery to become a female in 1973, is the first transsexual to marry a prisoner in California. Barnes, 29, was convicted of robbery and murder in Los Angeles County 10 years ago. (UPI photo)