Alan Hart (1890-1962)

Alan L. Hart was an Oregon physician, researcher, and writer and one of the first female-to-male transsexuals to undergo a hysterectomy in the United States and live the reminder of his life as a man.

Alberta Lucille Hart was born on October 4, 1890, in Hall's Summit, Kansas, the only child of Albert and Edna Hart. After Albert Hart died in 1892 following a typhoid fever epidemic, Edna and Alberta moved to Oregon. Edna remarried in 1895 and eventually settled in Albany.

Hart was considered a masculine child and identified herself more as a boy than as a girl. In 1908, she enrolled in Albany College (now Lewis & Clark College), where she gravitated toward the sciences and joined the debate team. She transferred to Stanford University in 1910 and helped establish the first women's debate club there. Exposed to the culture of San Francisco, she adopted tailored clothing and masculine habits.

Hart returned to Albany College and graduated in 1912. The following year, she enrolled at the University of Oregon Medical School (now Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine). When she graduated in 1917, she was the first woman to receive the Saylor medal for achieving the highest standing in all departments of the school.

It was during her time in medical school that Hart realized that her attraction to women was considered abnormal by contemporary society. After her graduation, she sought psychiatric help from one of her professors, J. Allen Gilbert, whose treatment of Hart is documented in his 1920 case study "Homosexuality and Its Treatment." Hart discussed her sexual orientation with Gilbert, who at first tried analysis and hypnosis as means of reverting her sexuality.

Hart asked Gilbert to perform a full hysterectomy on her, citing a eugenic argument that persons with "abnormal inversions" be sterilized. Following the procedure, she had her hair cut and acquired a male wardrobe. With that transformation, Alberta Lucille Hart became Alan L. Hart. "She made her exit as a female," Gilbert wrote, "and started as a male with a new hold on life and ambitions worthy of her high degree of intellectuality."

In early 1918, Hart eloped with Inez Stark, a public schoolteacher from Independence. That July, he received his Oregon medical license and moved to Gardiner with plans to take over a practice. A former classmate recognized him, however, and told people that he had once been a woman, and so he abandoned his practice. The couple moved frequently, living in states across the West, as they often left towns whenever Hart's gender was called into question. By 1923, the marriage had collapsed; Inez later filed for divorce.

Alan Hart returned to Oregon and enrolled in summer writing courses at the University of Oregon, where he met Edna Ruddick. The couple married in New York in 1925. In 1928, Hart received a master's degree in radiology from the University of Pennsylvania and was named director of radiology at Tacoma General Hospital. He eventually became an expert on tubercular radiology and published several articles on X-ray medicine and its use in the detection of tuberculosis.

During his time in Washington, Hart also published four novels: *Doctor Mallory*, *The Undaunted*, *In The Lives of Men*, and *Dr. Findley Sees It Through*. His writing was progressive for its time and contained autobiographical themes that included medicine and homosexuality.

After working for several years as a tuberculosis consultant in Washington and Idaho, Alan Hart moved with his wife to Hartford, Connecticut, where he received a master's degree in public health from Yale University in 1948. Hart served as the director of hospitalization and rehabilitation at the Connecticut State Tuberculosis Commission and continued to dedicate his professional life to tuberculosis research. When synthetic male hormones became available after World War II, Hart used them to grow facial hair and obtain a deeper voice.

Alan Hart died from heart failure on July 1, 1962, in Hartford. When Edna died twenty years later, on March 21, 1982, she left the majority of her estate to the Medical Research Foundation of Oregon in memory of her husband.

Scholarship has disagreed on the identification of Hart as transgender, transsexual, or lesbian. Jonathan Katz was the first historian to identify Hart as the "H" in J. Allen Gilbert's 1920 case study. In his 1976 *Gay American History*, Katz described Hart as a lesbian. Others have identified him as transsexual or transgender, as he worked to keep his life prior

to 1917 a secret and lived exclusively as a man following his transition.

Written by Morgen Alix Young

Further Reading:

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