

OH, WHAT A DRAG!

The Life and Career of

WACKY JACKIE PHILLIPS

Finnochio's Riotous Redhead

as told to

Jim Dewsnap

Oh, What a Drag!

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QUEENS

Adair, Joe:		30+
Baker, Tommy:		79+
Barrios, Jean:		127+
Barry, Jean (Black Bess):	130+	
Burke, Gene:		39
Carlisle, Kitty:		57
Carlson, Teddy (Theodora)	15	
Cummings, LaVerne		48, 195, 217
Darling, Johnny (Kismet)		15
DeLane, Gaby		250
DelRio, Jan		136+
DeMolino, Tanya	195	
DeYoung, Ray		195
Francis & Lonis	63	
Gregg, Chuck		82+
Harper, Lonnie		175+
Hart, Walter		63+, 195
Kaye, Charl E.		229, 245
Kenrad, Don		52, 120
LalMar, Jean		94+
Lamont, Lestra		63, 193, 240+
Lane, Bobby		164+, 264+
Lane, Jerry		52+
Lane, Poppi		86, 88
Lee, Les		133, 188+
Leonard, Lee, & Bobby Ray	148,	157
May, Jackie		63
McFarland, Johnny		99+
Montez, Kara		63, 120, 180+
Paris, Elton		219+, 221+, 228, 235+
Parker, Rusty		45, 50+, 141+, 154, 252
Phelps, Lucien		195
Ray, Bobby	86+	
Reed, Russell		3, 15, 18, 20, 69, 76, 105,
111,		122+, 126+, 135+, 177, 230, 249
San Juan, Ricki (Salome)		15, 54, 68+, 94, 100
Saunders, Ray (Mother Pauldy)		14, 15, 20, 69, 75+, 105, 111+
		135+, 155, 254+
Shannon, Laurie	249	
Silver, Willie (Penny LaPage)		13
Stafford, Cleo Gordon		20+, 66
Stevens, Jay		247+
Stillman, Francis		64+
Terry, Alan		70+
VanDyke, J.J.		226+

CLUBS

Beacon Club (Idaho Falls, ID)	148+
Beige Room (San Francisco, CA)	35+
Blue Note (Honolulu, HI)	167+
Castle Inn (San Jose, CA)	42
Colonial Club (San Jose, CA)	41+, 47, 57+
Elko, NV	189
Fan Club (Eureka, CA)	158
Forty-Seven Club (Brisbane, CA)	100+
Gene's Supper Club (Eugene, OR)	134+
Gold Beach, OR	139+
Great Falls, MT	147+
Kenniwick Social Club (Kenniwick, WA)	137, 156
Magic Inn, (Seattle, WA)	155
Miami Club (El Cerrito, CA)	68+
Missoula, MT	142+. 146+
My-Oh-My (New Orleans, LA)	88+
Pair O' Dice (Lewiston, ID)	148+, 157
Portland, OR [Mirror Room?]	132+
Redwood Inn (Fresno, CA)	81+
Rendezvous (Fairbanks, AK)	111+
Sazarac Room (Long Beach, CA)	161+
Silver Dollar (Sacramento, CA)	75+
Sweetgrass, MT	145+
Tropics (Portland, OR)	127+
United Nations Club (Ogden, UT)	20+
Walla Walla, WA	154
Yuma, AZ	158, 160+

CELEBRITIES

Adland, Beverly	229
Bankhead, Tallulah	233+
Burnett, Carol	231
Darnell, Linda	232
Fields, Toti	232
Flynn, Erroll	229+
Gaynor, Mitzi	264+
Ghostly, Alice	216+
Raye, Martha	228
Roman, Ruth	231+
Ruggles, Charlie	230
Turner, Lana	220+
White, Jesse	231

Part One

Do you know what a star is, dear?

A star is a flaming ball of gas!

Knowing **that** helps me keep it all in perspective.

Yes, dear, I **was** born in San Francisco!

Actually! Yes, I was.

Yes, I **was** the lead comic at Finnochio's.

For seventeen years.

Yes. Seventeen. It is a long time.

Who did I know?

What did I do?

What was it like?

Wait a minute, honey, we'll get along a lot better if you let Miss Phillips tell it her own way. Not so fast. My memory's not so good, and all those questions just make me come up blank.

Let's start with what was it like? That doesn't require any names or dates.

I take it you mean the **feeling** I got when I was performing in drag?

I remember one special night at Finnochio's. It was a rare and wonderful night when the audience was really on my side. They understood everything I was doing, everything I said, and they **loved** me! When I got through with my act, they started applauding like crazy!

I left the stage and they were still applauding.

I came back and took a quick bow and they were still applauding.

I floated up the backstage stairs and they were still applauding!

When I got to the top, one of the queens there said, "Go down! Go down and take another bow!"

But I said, "No." For the moment, it was enough!

And when I tried to go into the dressing room, my head was almost too big to fit through the door!

God, the **feeling!**

This is something no one can give you. And no one can take away from you, either. It's something you acquired all by yourself. It's maybe only for a split second, but you have this absolute, supreme sensation of "I feel **gigantic!**" And it was because I had given, and **they** had given back!

When I came out in the finale, they went crazy again. "Jackie! Jackie! Jackie!" they were screaming and carrying on because they wanted more.

"**This** is the reward!" I said to myself. "This is why I do it!"

Such a fabulous and emotional feeling! Its worth . . . how much? You can't buy it. But you know that for those few minutes you were on the floor performing, it was **you!** It was something **you** gave out to all those people, and they gave you this wonderful gift back. It's a **marvelous** feeling! I'll never forget it. Never!

Later that night, I came down to the street after the last show. It's after two in the morning, and there was this group of people there getting an autograph from Russell Reed, my heavy-set friend who performed there, too. All of a sudden, someone said, "There's Jackie!" and they all busted out and started applauding again and yelling.

And Russell drew up his whole three hundred pounds and said, "Well e x c u s e me!"

Oh, it was fun!

You're not a movie star, you're just a Female Impersonator. But they recognize you. This is pleasing! This is fun! This is why I did it as long as I did!

How did it all happen? How did I end up on the stage of the most famous drag emporium in the country dressed like a woman and feeling absolutely marvelous? Just sit tight, dear. It'll all come tumbling out.

As I said earlier, I was born in San Francisco. I was! St. Luke's Hospital. 1925. November the 5th. William Dell Torre. But always known as Billy. And we lived on Highland Avenue up in Bernal Heights, next door to my Aunt Millie. There was a window from our house that looked out to my aunt's house across a lot that was too narrow to sell or build a house on. So, I used to look out that window over at my aunt's window in her kitchen, and whenever I saw her, I'd call, "Me tum over? Me tum over?" It was always "Me tum over?" Anyway, I was sent over a lot of the

time, and when my father and mother split up, I stayed. In fact, they sort of actually gave me and my brother Bud to Aunt Millie!

There were three sisters. My Aunt Gussie. My Aunt Millie. And my mother. She gave me and my brother to Aunt Millie to raise. And my other aunt, Aunt Gussie, gave Millie her daughter to raise. Millie never married. She had no children of her own, but she raised the three of us. So now there's a girl (my cousin) and another boy (my brother Bud) and me.

I was the youngest, and I wasn't, let's say, masculine enough to play with my brother. Football, cars, and all that stuff, I never cared for. I was like a weakling. I was always sick when I was a kid. I had Whooping Cough and Pneumonia at the same time, and when they sent for the doctor, he said, "It's a wonder this boy isn't dead!" So they gave me four hot shots in my spine and this pulled me through whatever I was dying of.

After that illness, I started to think more about myself, to brood almost: "I have no more time to be sick. I have to find whatever it is that's missing from me, whatever it is I'm looking for before I get sick again. I need an idol. I need an image. I need **someone!**"

Around this time I started playing with girls. All the games the girls played, I'd play with them. Skates. Jacks. Jump rope. Picking up their ways. Their motions.. Their gestures. Their characteristics.

My brother was two years older than me, and he wouldn't play with me. He had his own crowd. And here I was living with my

old maid aunt and my cousin and playing with all those girls. My father would come in once a week and take my brother and me to lunch at a bar in Redwood City. But nowhere did I have a real male image.

So I'm having this horrible problem of trying to find out what's wrong with me. Why can't I be like my brother Bud? And anytime I find a male, at school or somewhere, I say, "Do you like classical music? Do you like poetry?" And they say, "Nah! Nah! Nah!" And I can never find any other boy who likes the things I like. So I'm searching, searching, searching, and all the time getting all these female characteristics.

One time I even asked Aunt Millie for a doll. And I got it! Came in a big red box. And it had the little clothes. Everyday I'd come home from school, and I'd wash the clothes and hang them out on the line.

The neighbors would call over to my aunt. "Oh, Millie," they'd call, "it's so **cute** to see Billy out there playing with the dolls and washing the clothes. He's going to be a little homemaker!"

Then I wanted a swing! And my father built one with those 4 x 4 posts, some chain, and a rough board seat. I had to be careful of splinters, but I would swing and swing as high as I could. It made me feel so free! And while I was swinging, I would be singing, too. Every song that I heard on the radio, I would start singing. I memorized them all. I'd be out there having a ball!

Every time it rains . . .
It rains . . .
Pennieeeeeees from Heeeeeaavennnnn!

My little voice was like Bobby Breen's. You're too young to remember Bobby Breen, dear. Bobby Breen was that child star who had a fabulous voice. It was very high. Oh, he was featured in all the movies. Everybody loved him in the Thirties. Bobby Breen. Freddie Bartholmew. Jane Withers. Shirley Temple. They were all singers and stuff, and I always saw them when I would go to the show on Saturday afternoon to see Flash Gordon with Buster Crabbe.

Oh, God, that Buster Crabbe! I guess you can blame most of what happened in my life on him, dear.

You know the theater's still there! It's a temple now. A Presbyterian temple or something. Every Saturday I had my 11 cents there at the box office. I'd get a picture of a movie star, and I'd go in and sit down. There'd two features, a cartoon, newsreels, and a serial. And Flash Gordon was the serial! Being young, you didn't pick, you didn't criticize, you just looked at the action. You just loved it! Everything was exciting!

And Flash Gordon! Oh, Buster Crabbe was so gorgeous! Ah, at last, my idol! So it was then and there I started with the imagination. I just loved Buster's capes and Dale's gowns. He and his girlfriend -- they look so beautiful in all those long, flowing things. I got hooked on them.

Eight. Nine. Ten years old. It was the excitement that started stirring my world of the imagination. And I said to myself, "If I can't have a real life, I'll make one up!"

So Flash Gordon was the idol, in the very beginning.

I asked my cousin for one of her blue skirts to make a cape like Flash Gordon's. (I knew with all that blond hair, Buster Crabbe would have had to wear blue!) When I threw that blue cape around my shoulders, I **wanted** to perform. I **had** to perform! So I ushered Aunt Millie and my cousin to seats on the front steps. I held a flashlight on myself and shouted, "Show time!" And right there on the Highland Avenue sidewalk I performed all the songs I knew. On the spot, I made up some little tap dances to go with the songs. They applauded and applauded and applauded and I **loved** it! The seed was planted. Drag was for me! I was ten years old at the time!

Then, on Sundays, when my cousin and Aunt Millie would go to church, I'd have a whole hour to myself. Well, as soon as the door closed, I was up the stairs and into my cousin's closet to get this graduation dress of hers that is powder blue satin and has a wide circular skirt. The top means nothing. It's that skirt! Just spinning and spinning and spinning and watching yourself spin. This big skirt flowing out all around you! And this little mouth full of my cousin's lipstick, with a towel wrapped around my head for the turban!

I'd spin and I'd spin and I'd spin and I'd spin! I'd spin until I was dizzy! Then I'd have to get the dress back and get

out real fast when I heard them come in. One time, I was spinning and spinning and spinning and I got so dizzy, I got caught!

My cousin was coming up the stairs before I heard them so I hid in the closet, and she didn't know I was there. I wanted to get her out of the room so I could get the dress off and get out myself -- and save my ass from Aunt Millie! So I pretended I was a mouse. I wiggled my foot on the floor.

Instead of running out, my cousin screamed, "Nan!" (We called Aunt Millie, Nanny -- the three of us, Bud, my cousin, and I; Nan for short.) "Nan!" she cried again. "There's a mouse up here in my closet!"

"I'll be right up with the broom!" Aunt Millie yelled back.

So before my aunt could come up and start beating the closet with me in it, I said, "No, it's not a mouse. It's just me!" And I made a grand entrance with the dress and the turban and the lipstick on. **Then** the scene started!

I got laid out for it! That took some of the zip out of my going behind someone's back to do something that was wrong. But it didn't take any of the zip out of my wanting to wear a dress! When I had that dress on and was spinning and spinning and spinning, I was in a different world!

Oh, God, those big, **big** spins. . . !

That really started the sissy stuff, I guess.

I went to Junipero Serra Elementary School which is no longer. That was on Holly Park Circle. Now, after that, I went to Paul Revere which was within walking distance of my house.

And from there I went to Horace Mann Junior High School which was my favorite. About this time, one of my girl friends, Gloria Christensen, a little older than me, wanted to give a play in her basement. She asked me if I'd like to be in it!

"Yes!" I said. "Oh, yes!" It would be a chance to put on a costume and perform, and I wanted to take it.

In her basement, she had these sheets lined up and we were to perform on this bulkhead there, and she had chairs for the neighborhood to sit on. In the play, I was a pirate, and Gloria gave me an old white satin blouse of her mother's with these, you know, like Don Juan wore, these big puff sleeves. Well, the material was so smooth, so silky, and those puffed sleeves were so exciting, I guess it just turned me on.

"You're in costume! You can do anything!" I thought to myself.

It was so exciting a thing for me to realize. It was the **costume!** The costume made it all possible. In costume, I could be a different person. It wouldn't be me, and I could blame it on the disguise. Because that's what people saw performing, the disguise, not the one under all the make-up.

And this is how, over the years, I got by with so much stuff. With my mask on, I could jump and laugh and make faces! I could **cavort**. Really cavort! And, then, when I found out you could put on make-up and become a girl and no one would know who you were, when you put on the biggest disguise of all, you could

get away with murder! Thank you, Gloria Christenson, for letting me wear your mother's blouse!

I guess one of the craziest things that happened to me during these years -- and one of the most important -- was the Halloween I went to the neighborhood party dressed as a girl. I was fifteen, maybe sixteen. I was probably out of my mind. It was a gutsy thing to do in 1940. But it was exciting!

I wanted to do it, to see if I could get away with it. So I did it! I got this green sweater and this white skirt and white socks and white shoes. Not from my cousin this time. No no no no no. I got them from one of my girl friends. From Fern.

So I put a bandanna around my head and I went to this neighborhood indoor basketball court where they were having the party. And I danced and this and that and when anyone asked my name I said, "Rosie." Just off the top of my head. But when it came time to go to the bathroom, I went to the one marked BOYS.

Two of my classmates followed me in and said, "What are you doing in here? This is the BOYS room! You're in the wrong place!" They laughed and laughed.

I felt triumphant! I knew I had fooled them.

I said, "Oh, no, I'm not!" And I ripped off my bandanna as dramatically as I could. "I'm Billy Dell Torre and I have to pee!"

And, thank God, after all the hooting and hollering subsided, they agreed I was a "cute cookie"! One laughed (which usually means they're not going to beat you up), and the other

one, his name was Walter, as I was about to leave the bathroom, after I'd finished my nonsense and put my bandanna back on, he grabbed a hold of me and kissed me!

There went all the pigeons and the feathers and the balloons!

The blood just went crazy!

A boy had kissed me!

My first real encounter in drag and my first male kiss!

What a Halloween that was!

As I said, Horace Mann was my favorite school. There I learned a little something about sex and about caring for boys. Boys caring for boys and what have you.

They had this printing class. And the teacher stood at one end of this room, and there were all these desks full of trays of letters, type, you know, that you put in a stick to make a sentence. Now, you had to know where all these letters were and put them in accordingly.

Once, while there was a long delay with the teacher giving an explanation of something to someone who didn't understand, this boy standing next to me reached over and touched me. There! And I found it exciting. So I reached over and touched him. There! And I found that exciting, too.

That was the "touch" scene! Nothing happened. Ever. Nothing came out of the pants. But it was exciting!

The pigeons and the feathers and the balloons again!

My blood was racing.

And then, from there, I went to Mission High School and the quest got heavier and heavier and heavier. Looking for somebody like my own self. Finally, I just couldn't stay in school any longer. I had no interest in anything. I wasn't like anybody else, I thought. I was failing almost everything including shorthand and typing which I was sure I'd like because I wanted to be a secretary.

So, as soon as I was eighteen, I went to the principal and said, "I'm quitting school!"

"You can't!"

"Yes, I can!"

"Why?"

"Because today I'm eighteen!"

"Well, I guess that's a good reason," he says, defeated, "but you're very foolish."

And I left school and started my first job at Kress's, a Five and Dime at Mission Street and 23rd, as a Stock Boy.

For a while it was fun there. I would be running up and down the aisles in the basement storeroom, filling orders that came down, putting stock in the baskets, and singing the whole time. Any song I could think of. I knew them all. As loud as I wanted. Because I was down there all by myself.

Once, I found a package of Lovalon -- I think that's the name -- Lovalon Hair Rinse. It said *Auburn*. So I go to the basin in the washroom, fill it with water, dump this red rinse in, and pour a cup on my hair every half hour. When it dries, I

put more on. Brush it. At Kress's. While I'm working. I'm tinting my hair red. I went in as a brunette and came out -- a redhead! My very first experience with red hair!

Then, one day I found this bottle of peroxide. And that was it! I went into the bathroom and every half hour I put more on with a toothbrush. This time, I went in as a brunette and came out as a blond -- in front! Behind, I was still a brunette. 'Cause all I did was the front. I wanted to make a big blond pompadour. When I left work that night, the woman behind the counter screamed, "Oh. Oh. Oh! Billy! What happened to your hair?" She laughed and laughed.

And I laughed back and said, "Nothing!" and left the store.

I quit soon after that and went downtown to work at the Kress's on Market Street. Another Kress's! And it was there that I met my first real queen. Willy Silver. Now known as Penny LaPage! Not a drag queen. Just flamboyant. He had a lisp and was very nellie. That's what we called it in those days. Nellie! You couldn't pass him on the street without knowing he was different. Just a likeable, obvious queen. Well, he came swishing down the aisle with orange hair. Orange hair! At Kress's! He came in and I was pulling a basket down the aisle to some counter.

He said, and I have to raise my voice for this one, dear, "Hello!"

"Hello."

"What's your name?"

"Billy. What's yours?"

"Willy. Ever been in Union Square?"

"No."

"Why don't you come up tonight?"

"OK."

I'm so excited! I run home. Eat. Lie to my aunt. "I'm going to the show!" And I fly back downtown!

For the very first time, I meet the queens in Union Square!

Queens!

People like me!

They look like I look!

They like what I like!

Blond hair. Long nails!

Queens!

And they are all over the place!

And I think I've died and gone to heaven!

Eventually, we all had nicknames. There was Ray Saunders. He was from San Francisco, too. He went to Washington High School and used to brag that Lana Turner went there. His real name was DePaulday, but they said it was too long so they changed it to Paldy. I guess he was my best friend.

In fact, when I first came out on Union Square, I cruised Ray Saunders. I just sat there staring at him with moon eyes, and this older queen said, "We don't do that! We're all **sisters** here. We don't **ki ki**."

All innocence, I said, "What?"

"**Ki ki.** No no!" He shook his finger at me. "That's taboo!"

And then he had to explain to me that two queens never went together. They always had one opposite the other. One masculine. One feminine. One top. One bottom. But two sissies going together was **ki ki**.

So, if you did, you did -- and I did, sometimes -- but you never told anyone about it. And Ray Saunders and I never did. But I met his mother and father and his sister and brother, too. And they accepted me because I wasn't a ruffian. I'd been well brought up, they figured. On Union Square they called Ray *Mother Paldy* because he, like, mother-henned all the young queens that came out: how to conduct themselves, what to say, what Gay life was, what to do, and all that.

And there was Ricki San Juan. We called her *Salome*. And Russell Reed. He was *Ramona*, and heavysset, like I said. He weighed 300 pounds. Johnnie Darling was *Kismet*. Teddy Carlson was *Theodora*. And I was called *Coolie*.

I got that nickname because I was working at Benitar's at the time. Across from where Grodins used to be. Where Merrill's is now. Fourth and Market. One of my jobs was to cut up Clark Bars for the fudge they made upstairs, and at noon, when I'd go for lunch, I'd grab a handful of candy for the kids on the Square who weren't working. I'd have something for them to eat called "Coolies." They were like little Neccos. So each day when I'd come to the Square at twelve, they'd say, "Here comes Coolie!"

That was Union Square in those days! Nineteen Forty-three. It had to have been Forty-Three. I was eighteen because I'd quit school and had a draft card. You hadda register when you were eighteen. And I'm pretty sure I was never called because Aunt Millie talked to a man that lived across the street and was on the draft board. I'm not sure what she told him. Something about my being "different." Oh, I was furious with her for mixing in my business with the neighbors. And, of course, we all had our draft cards fucked up so we could get into the bars, but there was hell to pay if you got caught!

We called Union Square **The Office**. You couldn't go home without going to The Office first. Even if you were all the way out at the beach, you couldn't go home without going by The Office. You hadda see what was going on, who was there, what they were doing. This was the local gathering ground for queens that couldn't go to bars legally. All under age. Eighteen. Nineteen. Twenty. Thank God, for these last few years before I'm twenty-one, before I'm legal for the bars and such, I have a place to be!

It's Union Square!

It's The Office!

It's meeting other queens and making friends and contacts.

It's meeting tricks.

It's meeting lovers.

It's meeting all these people like me that I thought didn't exist!

My whole world is opening up and I'm starting to bloom!

At eighteen, nineteen, twenty, I say you're beautiful.

Everyone is. I know I was! So I had all this. The discovery of Union Square, plus trying to learn the knowledge of how to cruise, how to get all the expressions of Gay life and this and that. Living on top of a pin. Gathering as much as you can. It was all very exciting!

Of course, there was the Vice Squad who had to make sure that vice wasn't rampant in The City. They had to make arrests so they could get their salaries. They picked up queens who had no jobs, and they called them misdemeanors and delinquents and all that stuff. We went to jail several times. But only overnight. Next morning we were released with warnings to stay out of Union Square, and we'd go by The Office on our way home from jail!

Many a times we didn't have money for ball games and food because we couldn't get jobs, or, if we got them, we didn't last long. Five and Dime. Nickel and dime. Well, anyway, we got into what was known as "The Record Racket." Oh, I'm so ashamed of this, but there it is, dear. You said you wanted to know just about everything.

Well, you would go to a department store with a newspaper folded up into the size of a record album bag. Now, your newspaper came out when you got your albums in the booth to listen to, and some records went in the bag and some records stayed so they

would see you taking records back -- but not all of them. They didn't know this.

Then we would take them to a man that had a shop on Eddy Street. A great big record store. Records from the beginning of the store window solid clear to the back of this long building. Stacked! Shelves and shelves of records. And he could find a record for you in seconds. His name was Bill. An old man. An old queen. We would take them to him -- LP records. Symphonies, overtures, rhapsodies, anything! Brand new albums that sold for \$12. He would give us \$3 or \$4, and he would sell them for \$8. We would take the money and have lunch and go to the football games.

Now, I don't know **what** we were thinking about, but we were getting away with this record racket. It went on for a long time! I mean we were just kids. I know that's no excuse. And, then, it happened what was bound to happen, and we were very, very lucky!

One day Russell Reed and myself were in -- at O'Farrell and Stockton, where Macy's is now -- we were in O'Connor & Moffet's, in the record department. Now, I had an album from my own collection in the bag with the newspaper. I wasn't planning to take any records but I was going to sell my own album to Bill to get money.

Well, while I'm getting another album to bring in and listen to, Russell Reed hides a new album in my bag along with my album.

When we were going to leave, the Sales Lady said, "My I look in your bag, please?"

I said very innocently, "I just have my own album in there that I'm going to sell."

She says, "May I look?"

I say, "OK. Fine."

And there she found one of her brand new ones!

The store's!

In my bag!

"Now this has been going on for years with thousands of dollars worth of records missing!" she says, and we're petrified. "We're going to let you go this time with a warning. But never, **never** come back into this store again!"

I thanked her.

Russell Reed thanked her.

I was dying of embarrassment because he had done this and I got blamed. And I was happy that they let us off with just a warning. When we got outside, I screamed, "Why did you do that?" There was a big hullabaloo. And that was the end of "The Record Racket" for us.

But another queen got caught very soon after that. Would you mind, **a suit box!** Full of albums. It was so heavy he had to balance it on his foot in the elevator to get it up in his arms to walk out of the store. And they caught him on the sidewalk outside. His aunt paid a lovely settlement to keep him out of jail.

So, "The Record Racket" was over as far as we were concerned because you don't need to be hit on the head twice for "Stop it!" to sink in. But those were risky times and we didn't have any money. We had to figure something else out!

Then, like a bolt out of the blue, Ray Saunders gets this telegram from Cleo Gordon Stafford. Now, Cleo Gordon Stafford's a Female Impersonator, a dancer, from way back. She's working, of all places, Ogden, Utah. She had met Ray Saunders through the years some way or another. I never heard that part. But, anyway, now, she's working Ogden in drag, putting together this show. She knows Ray is a drag, and she telegraphs, "Come up. Bring risque singer. Bus fare for two. You open at the United Nations Club Friday."

Now, dear, you'll notice I called Cleo Gordon Stafford *she* even though we both know Cleo's a he. It's a way we drag queens have of talking to, of talking about each other. So, when I'm talking about a queen I knew as a drag, one I was in a show with or at Finnochio's with, one I was a Female Impersonator with, then I'll probably call her *she*. If I'm talking about a queen who I wasn't in drag with, like just a queen I know from somewhere, then I'll say *he*. In other words, I don't use *she* just because you're Gay. Only if I knew you in drag.

Now when Ray got this telegram, he was pretty new to the whole business of drag, but he liked doing it, and he didn't have a job then, anyway, so he wanted to go. He said, "Since I don't know any risque singers and can't find any on such short notice,

why don't you come up with me and use the other bus ticket. You can work at a Five & Ten while I'm doing drag, and we'll come back together when I'm through."

Now Ray Saunders looks like butter won't melt in his mouth, he's so good looking, so sweet looking, so creamy looking. And he's a singer **and** a dancer. So pretty. Just starting his drag career then. Later, when he'd polished his act, when he'd refined it, Russell Reed and I would watch.

One time, "Oh, God!" Russell screamed, "where did she dig up that costume?"

It was a Teddy! You know what a Teddy is -- old-fashioned, soft, lacy underwear, one piece, top and bottom. A Teddy! This was years before Victoria's Secret, and she had on a Teddy! And a short, see-through plastic raincoat with white trim. With see-through plastic boots! And a see-through plastic umbrella! And she came out spinning the umbrella over her shoulder and minced around the stage. Then she stood at the mike and sang in that soft, pouty, breathy voice:

Rain. . . .
Let us cuddle [big breath]
When it raaaaaiiiins. . . .

And, then, after she sang "Rain," she walked around the floor again and slowly peeled off this plastic raincoat and closed the umbrella and took a pin-up pose.

And that was the act!

Nothing else!

That was all of it! And the audience loved it! Applauded like crazy!

Russell Reed and I were furious!

We said to each other, "We work our **ass** off to get applause and she stands out there **doing nothing** and singing in a bad voice and the wrong key, and she goes over like a house afire -- because she's **pretty!**"

Ray **was** pretty. And she was **feminine!** And the guys saw nothing but cunt in her. Not no boy. Not no man. Nothing masculine! They saw his little cunt singing, carrying on. And this was Ray's **gimmick**. We used to watch her, Russell and I, even when she wasn't on stage. She'd curl her fingers with that little girl gesture when she was talking to a guy at the bar. All that baby talk, all those gestures would turn a man on. Beauties. Straight men. Anybody. Everybody. And we would get furious! We worked our **asses off** to get people to love us -- and she'd just sit there and do all this animated, little girl stuff! And we'd just fall apart. But all that was much later.

Back in 1947, I'd just been fired from Kress's for singing in the aisles picking out the stock. They thought, "We can't have somebody **that** happy working here. He's making everybody else miserable!"

So I said to Aunt Millie, "I have a chance to go to Ogden, Utah, with Ray Saunders. Can I go?" She had met Ray and she liked him, so she said, "Yes, Billy, you can go."

We went all the way up on the bus.

When we get to the United Nations Club, they're having a rehearsal. Well, the two kids that want to leave the show see the two of us come in and figure that both Cleo's dancer **and** her risque singer have arrived, and they leave without a word to anyone because that was their agreement with Cleo.

When she realizes what's happened, Cleo says to Ray, "Well, I hired you as a dancer but I need you more now as a singer."

Then, she turns to me. "What's **your** name?"

"Billy Dell Torre," I say to her.

"The name has to go, but I guess **you**'ll do."

"What are you talking about?"

"Here. Try on this wig."

"What for?"

"Never mind. Just try it on."

When I did, she says, "I guess with makeup you'll be all right."

"What **are** you doing?" I say, getting a little anxious.

"You're going to be in the show tonight!"

My voice goes up an octave. "I've never done drag before in my life!"

"You're Gay aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"You used my bus ticket, didn't you?"

"Yeah."

"You like to play dress-up, don't you?"

"Well . . . yeah. Sometimes."

"Bingo!" she says. "You open tonight!"

That's it! That's the story of how I started in drag.

I opened that night!

Welllllll, you should have seen me. Talk about nervous!

Ner-voooooouuuuuusssssssss! They had me doing "The Hawaiian War Chant." I practiced all afternoon. That night, in a borrowed two-piece sarong, when I was supposed to go on, I was so nervous I couldn't pull back the curtain.

The stage was just a platform at one end of a big bar room. It was about as high as your hip, and at the back of the stage was this huge partition, this huge plywood partition, with a doorway and a curtain in the middle that you separated and came out of. And on the top of the partition were the flags of the United Nations. That's where the name of the club came from. You know, dear, this was only two years after the United Nations was formed. So it was a popular name.

On the other side was our dressing room. Dressing room? Ha! A board for a shelf with a cracked mirror on it and a metal folding chair for each of us on a tiled concrete floor. Bare light bulbs to make up by. And we couldn't even dish! If you said anything above a whisper, the audience could hear it.

And that first night, I'm so nervous I can't even pull the curtains apart when they announce me. And Ray Saunders whispers as loud as he can without being heard, "You're on, you dumbbell!" and he **pushes** me through the curtain.

Later, I come back and sit down in the dressing room, and Ray Saunders says, "What's the matter?"

And I say, "I'll never be able to go on."

He looks at me funny and says, "What are you talking about? You've **been** on. You just came off!"

Well, the nerves had blocked out the fear -- and everything else, too, and I'd just done the show from routine, remembering the rehearsal in the afternoon. I **still** don't remember anything about doing the dance that first night. But ever since then, I've never been nervous -- except if there's a celebrity in the house, especially a comedienne. Because, with a comedienne, you want to make them laugh. If you can make another comedienne laugh, you're all right. But I'm getting away from my story.

Opening night in Ogden, Utah.

Even though I don't remember it, I was on my way! I was a professional Female Impersonator. My career in drag had begun! And I had started as a Specialty and not a Chorus!

We were there for three weeks and they held us over for three more. They put us up in the hotel upstairs from the club -- all one building, all one business just like a lot of the clubs we played later. The address was 4576 Keasle Avenue. My God! Why is **that** still in my head? And don't ask me how to spell *Keasle*. I can't spell and I can't remember dates. Don't ask me to spell it or when it was because I'll come up blank.

That first week I did "The Hawaiian War Chant." The second week, I was supposed to be a Gypsy. I don't remember the music,

but I had this full peasant skirt and this biiiiiig peasant blouse, off the shoulders. And a bra full of bean bags. And the bra straps were showing.

"We can't have that! No no no no no. Take it off!" Cleo Gordon Stafford said. "Put the bra straps under the blouse, dear, on your upper arms."

But that was pretty uncomfortable, so when she left the dressing room to do her number, I took the bra straps off entirely and made my entrance.

Well, since this is the first performance and we haven't rehearsed nearly enough, the music is too slow. I raise my arm up to tell the piano player to pick up the tempo. And the bra slides up! And the fake tits pop out, and the goddam bean bags are bouncing around in the blouse!

Of course, the audience thinks, "Isn't this funny!" and they start laughing, and I don't know what they're laughing about until I look down, and I see my tits down around my waist! And I run off the stage!

"What are you doing back here?" Cleo Gordon Stafford screams. "Your music is still on!"

"Look what happened!" I wail, my tits below my belly.

"Take that blouse off!" she snaps and puts a strapless bra on me. It was hers and much too small for me and I couldn't breathe, but I had the tits back where they belonged. And I went out and finished the dance. The audience hadn't stopped laughing -- and they didn't for the rest of my number.

Later, backstage, Cleo Gordon Stafford says as nicely as she can, "What songs do you know?"

"Why?"

"I don't think you were meant to be a dancer!"

But I'm all she's got, so she says. "We're going to make a risqué singer out of you instead."

"I don't know any risqué songs."

So she gave me a one. I'd never heard it before in my life, but I learned it and sang it that night. It was called "Was I Drunk?"

Was I drunk?
Was he handsome?
And did Mama give me hell!
Did I get a thrill?
And am I still a-quiver?
Was he hot?
And was I?
I don't think I should tell
Every time he kissed me
How I shivered. . .

. . . or something like that.

I started out with that one, and then I sang regular songs like "Cuddle Up a Little Closer" and "Give Me a Little Kiss." Just the old standards. I knew them all. I used to sing them on the swing in the yard all the time while I was waiting for my doll's clothes to dry. Little by little, they gave me some jokes to tell. Some patter. Sing a song. Tell a couple of jokes. Sing a second song. That was it. That was my act!

That's where I got my name, too, in Ogden, Utah.

"What are we going to call you?" Cleo Gordon Stafford says just before the show that first night. "Certainly not Billy Dell Torre!"

So we went through the whole alphabet, the whole routine: Abbie? Annie? Alice? Bea? Bette? Finally, we got to the J's. Jerry? Joanie? June? Jackie? **Jackie!** I liked it. It felt good. It seemed to fit.

"OK. *Jackie*. Jackie's good. But Jackie What?" Cleo Gordon Stafford asked.

My mind was a blank. I was too busy trying to remember the steps to "The Hawaiian War Chant" to think of anything else at all! I looked around the room for inspiration. On the dresser was a bottle of Milk of Magnesia.

No? You don't believe it? Well, it's the truth! There was a bottle of Phillips Milk of Magnesia on the dresser. And I said, "What about Jackie *Phillips*?"

She thought a minute and said, "That's good! I like it. Jackie Phillips! That's good. That's catchy!"

And that was it!

That's how, when, and where Wacky Jackie Phillips the Riotous Redhead was born! At least the Jackie Phillips part was. The wacky and the *riotous redhead* parts would develop over time.

During those first weeks in Ogden, my confidence grew. What I liked most was the audience, their laughter. I said to myself then: "You're giving something that doesn't cost you an arm and a leg. You're getting response for it. They give you their

laughter, and that makes you feel, 'I've given you something. I've accomplished something. It didn't cost me anything. It gives you pleasure and it gives me pleasure!'" And I felt that same way for the rest of my career.

I still feel that way.

Besides, I knew that when I was in drag, when I had on my disguise, I was able to act silly and to do and say things I never could before. Whenever I was in disguise, I was always a clown. I always wanted to make people laugh. Like that second week when I played the Gypsy and had the trouble with the tits, and I got laughs!

And one other night, I went flying out and forgot the little shelf of footlights. Instead of going down the steps, I was gonna to be real smart and leap off the stage and onto the floor where the audience was sitting. My foot caught in the lights and I went flying tits over ass onto the floor!

Of course, I'm the comedienne, right, and the audience thinks its a part of the show. Well, they screamed with laughter.

"Do it again! Do it again!"

I stood as tall as I could, and got that Joan Crawford look down my nose, and I said, "The joke is never as funny the second time!"

From that line of Kitty's. You know, *Kitty* with Paulette Goddard. The time she broke from her elegant thing, her pose,

into the cockney. "A joke is never as funny the second time!" she says. I love that line.

I'll never forget that stage at the U.N. Club. Just a plywood platform and, behind, a plywood wall with a drape over a whole in the center of it. And the flags of all nations over the doorway in those things that hold a lot of flags off at angles. Well, anyway, when you moved on the stage, when you shook the stage just a little, these flags would jiggle.

So this queen -- oh, God, what was her name? -- this queen who came after we'd been there a couple of weeks, this queen tapped!

Honey, she **tapped!**

It sounded like she had army boots on. These big taps that you put on your shoes. Oh, God! She had enormous feet and she'd tap and this stage would rock and these flags would just be shaking to beat the band.

The harder she taps, the more they shake! And the audience sees this. It's funny! They're howling. And the louder they laugh, the harder she taps!

It was Don, I think. No. John? Oh, I can't remember her name but she was a riot! She wasn't supposed to be funny. But she was! This audience was just used to singers. And singers stand **still!** Or exotic dancers that are graceful and who don't rock the stage. But this one **tapped!** Those legs went a mile a minute.

The first time she went on and those flags started shaking, I turned to Ray Saunders backstage. "What is that? An earthquake?" I could say it as loud as I wanted because no one could hear us over **that** noise!

"No. She's tapping, I guess," Ray shouted back. "A very hefty queen!"

You know, I met her years later when I was performing at Finocchio's. She came back stage and reminded me who she was.

I said, "Who?"

"You worked with me in Ogden, Utah."

She was in town as a dresser for some Broadway show. Joe! Joe Adair! That was her name. And she said, "You've really come a long way, haven't you?"

And I said, "Yes, honey, I have come a long way from Ogden, Utah, where it really all started. And where **you** worked with **me!**"

Funny, I was going through my scrapbooks the other day -- I do that a lot -- and I came across a picture taken of that first drag in Ogden. In the picture there's Ray Saunders, Cleo Gordon Stafford, and me, all in drag, and a customer who wanted his picture taken with "the girls."

This little old man's just sitting there with a proud, cocky expression on his face, like he's thinking, "I've got all these girls on **my** shoulder!" And we're all lined up in front of his table, his booth.

You can see what the room looked like. It was huge. Just, you walk in, and there were tables all around and the stage at one end, higher than some club stages. The stage had one of those shields down front, one of those footlight things, to keep the lights from shining in the audience. The thing I tripped over that time. And, behind it all, over it all, those goddamned flags!

Utah was a pretty uptight place then. Still is, I guess. But the club had no liquor license. You brought your own in a brown bag and ordered a 7-Up and ice. And you mixed your own drinks and stuff like that. Or you drank the beer they had. Near Beer, I think it was called.

As for being in drag there, I didn't know anything about the laws and regulations and this and that. I just thought, "As long as we're in the club and aren't getting arrested for what we're doing, it must be OK!"

It seems to me -- in Ogden and everywhere else in those days -- it was OK to do drag as long as you were making money for somebody else! Usually somebody rich already and powerful.

Little by little we got to meet people that were very nice and friendly. No down the nose and **are you queer?** They knew you were Gay, and they would still invite you to their table for a drink. It wasn't like New Orleans where you hadda hustle "B" drinks to keep your job. This was just friendly mixing, friendly drinks.

And we met some dykes who'd come down from Salt Lake City to see the show. They came back the next day.

"It's Sunday! Let us take you for a ride!"

It was snowing but we decided to go anyway, and I was glad because I'd never seen snow before. We were driving around and, oh, I was looking and loving everything.

They had a classical music program on. I'll never forget this. Mahler's *First Symphony*. It was playing loud. We were driving along side of a huge lake. Now the dam was here and we were driving on this snowy road.

At the crescendo of Mahler's Symphony, she steps on the brakes for some reason and the car swerves, starts sliding sideways on this ice.

"We're all going into the lake!" I scream.

But we hit a pile of gravel instead of going over the cliff and into the water. Talk about nervous in cars! To this day, if someone takes me for a ride, I'm a nervous wreck.

Those are experiences you never forget. I don't swim and if we would have went in! Trying to open that door under water. No no no no! And waiting for the water to get in before you can open the door to get out! No. I was panic stricken. But, this is **youth**. It's all **fun**! And it was over in a second.

I was awestruck by the scenery. The snow! To see it falling was beauuuuutiful! It was so soft and everything is quiet. You don't hear no sound. Nothing. It was just beautiful -- except for that one experience. And to this day, in my

prayers, I thank Him for saving me! For that one thing. Because, I don't know, even when I was younger, life was **fabulous** to me! I **loved** doing things, being out, seeing people, seeing things. I did try to take my own life one time and I'm still paying for it, but that was a very, very low moment in my life at Finnochio's.

When we finished the run at The U.N. Club, we decided, Ray Saunders and myself, to go back to San Francisco in style. We'd come up by bus. We were going back by plane! I'd never flown before. The fare was only \$39.00. I had this dress that this queen in Ogden had made for me out of a World War II parachute, and where the insignia was, of the Air Corps or something, she had sewed blue flowers. Now, I had to have money, and I sold that dress. **Gorgeous** dress! But I sold it for \$8.00 so I'd have some money in my pocket when I got home.

And I didn't know about meals on an airplane. When the Hostess came down the aisle and said, "Do you care for anything to eat?" I said, "No," thinking I'm not going to spend my **last money on food!** So I sat there and watched Ray Saunders eat.

It was free!

And that was Ogden, Utah, and my first drag! My first big breakthrough!

As the plane left the ground, I shouted to myself: "I'm in show business! I can make it on my own! I can do drag and earn a living!" And I would say it again and again to myself in the

mirror every time I put on Jackie's make up, her disguise. Life, I decided at age twenty-two, was just heavenly!

It seems I was always in drag once I got started. I have no memory of lapsing between jobs. Because when one club owner would come to see you, the show, he would see something in it that he liked and he'd approach you during intermission and say, "After you're through here, come to my club!" Or, some queen was recommending you or taking you or suggesting you. So I never had to apply for a job. Lucky for me there were a lot of these small clubs in California in the late '40's and early '50's that had drag.

Surprised?

Me, too. I didn't even know they existed outside of San Francisco until I started working them. Most of them were away from the center of whatever town they were in. Non-descript places on non-descript streets. No fanfare. Just regular customers who liked to see drag. Stockton. Sacramento. San Jose.

The Beige Room right at Bay and Powell Streets here in San Francisco! Al Burgess ran it. With two other owners. Chinky was one -- I didn't know his last name -- and a silent partner we never met.

The Beige Room was freer than Finnochio's turned out to be later. It was a younger set. There was no discipline as far as one-show-an-hour-long was concerned. There was no venom. No vicious queens. It was just queens who wanted to do drag.

Finnochio's was authentic, competitive, well-known. You had well-known names. Oh, it was a high class club. But The Beige Room had youth. Excitement! It was more fun! And, the Beige Room had talent night on Thursdays.

So when I got back from Ogden, someone said, "Why don't you try out on talent night?"

Well, I **had** done drag professionally, hadn't I? I **had** broken the ice. So I said, "Why not?"

I went one night.

I won! My first time there, I won!

I went back the next Thursday.

Lost the second time. (I **never** sang the song again that I sang the night I lost. "Am I Blue. . . ?" Yes, I was! No no no no no! Never sang it again. It'd be bad luck!)

Third time lucky! Won again the third time.

That day I had gone to the The Salvation Army to shop for my drag, and I saw this floor-length, sort of oyster color, off-white, jersey dress hanging on the rack. Well, it's about this time that Judy Garland sings in one of her movies about a safety pin. *Ziegfield Follies*, I think it was, or *Words and Music* or something like that. And she has on this white jersey dress and its got a high neck and padded shoulders, long sleeves, and it hangs down and the waist has got a belt! And here's this **same** dress! Almost.

And I say, "Identical!" and I grab it off the rack. If it doesn't fit, I'll let it out here, let it out there because this is my Judy Garland thing!

So that night, I'm wearing this swanky Judy Garland drag and I sing the song I'm supposed to sing, and they love me so much they give me an encore. The piano player is saying something to me, like in a loud whisper, "What do you want to sing?"

I'm turning around, and I think he's saying something else, and I ask, "Who?"

"Fine!" he says and starts playing.

So I say, "What the hell! Ladies and Gentlemen, my version of Judy Garland's version of 'Who?'"

And the arms go up, and I belt out as loud as I can:

**Whoooooooooooo stole my heart away?
Whooooooooooooooooo?"**

Well, the audience had all seen the picture -- it had just come out -- and they knew what I was doing. They went insane! Here's this skinny queen, red hair, clinging white jersey dress, screaming out "Whooooooooooooooooo?"

I get so carried away, I say, "And, now, she **dances. . . !**" And I race around the stage in a Groucho Marx walk. I don't know why. I'd never done it before. But it became my trade mark. This was the very first time!

"Unbelievable!" they seemed to say. "She looks like a fucking model, made up like a real elegant woman, dressed in that stylish dress and then she breaks into a Marx Brothers routine!"

Ohhhhhh, it was wonderful!

Al Burgess comes up to me right away and says, "Well, you've won twice. You must have something. Would you like \$50 for winning or would you like to work a week in drag?" And he adds real quick, "Free! No pay!"

They saw what they had! This dynamite little package of energy all wrapped up just dying to do drag.

"A week in drag!" is my answer. Of course!

I want more experience, more exposure! Not money. I don't even think about money. I want to dress in drag. To get it all out! That's what I'm doing! That's why drag is so fabulous to me. I can get away with murder!

Everyone thinks, "Oh, fine. You know, it's just an act. He isn't really like that."

But they're wrong! Inside, I **am** like that. I **still** am. I still love being crazy, making people laugh.

So I worked there a week for free. I had my specialty, and I was a also Beigette. Yes. A Beige-ette! Like the Rockettes. The Beigettes. Get it? We came out in little costumes like strapless red hearts, singing,

Caaaaandy.

I call my sugar, Caaaaandy. . . .

For Valentines day. Unfortunately, the costumes were made for smaller queens than me.

When it came time to throw the arms up to the left and then to raise 'em high and throw 'em to the right, this costume stayed

where it was, and the body just came up and over! You could see the black hair and the nipples sliding back and forth over the top of the red heart.

Well, at first, I don't know this is happening, but the audience is seeing all this hair because you only shave your chest to the top of your lowest gown and that's it. And all this is showing, the nipples, the hair, when I wave my arms and sing, "Caaaaandy. I call my sugar. . . !"

The audience is howling! And we're all thinking, "Somebody's acting up and doing something extra special in this chorus line!"

Even I don't know it's me until I see all the audiences' eyes are focusing on my chest and I look down and I see what's happening. I love the attention so I wave and shake even more! And the other queens are all jealous, but they don't know who they're jealous of because they don't have enough sense to look at the audiences' eyes to see who **they're** looking at!

They never figured out it was me. Not that entire week!

There was one queen who really impressed me at The Beige Room. Gene Burke. Billed himself as The Male Marlene Dietrich. Gorgeous bone structure! Beautiful blonde wig. And he had enough pictures of her where he knew how to make up to resemble her very, very close on stage. And he would sing all her songs in that low German-sounding voice. And you would swear it was Dietrich up there because he had all her gestures -- she **was** desirable -- he had all her gestures down. Eventually, as the

years went by, he had The Operation and was h a p p y as a lark. He worked at AGVA, which was our union, as a secretary/receptionist.

Oh, what fun I had at the Beige Room! Here I was performing in my own home town! I was young and starving and innocent. As far as I was concerned, I didn't have a care in the world. Then, one night, before I go on for my specialty, I'm already in drag and I'm sitting in the balcony -- the Lounge was upstairs -- and I'm sitting there and I see this face come through the door.

I damn near die!

It's Frank Murphy! From the Vice Squad! Frank Murphy and his sidekick, Gallagher. Now, they're two big Irishmen and they've both arrested me before on Union Square. More than once! Back when I was underage. And here they are at The Beige Room! For payoffs, maybe? Or just to see the show? Or to see if there's anyone underage in the club or something? I'm frantic. I don't know why they're there. I fly to the office, shaking like a leaf, and I say to Al Burgess, "I can't go on!"

High drama!

"Why not? What's the matter?" He looks really concerned.

"Murphy's down there!"

"Murphy? Frank Murphy? Vice Squad?"

"Yes! He's arrested me before. So has Gallagher! If they see me in drag, they'll do it again!"

Al Burgess looks at me like I'm crazy.

"He's going to connect Jackie Phillips with some kid he arrested before on Union Square? He won't even recognize you! Besides, he's in here all the time," Al Burgess laughs. "He **loves** you queens!"

And it dawned on me. I had on my disguise so it didn't matter. Frank Murphy was not going to haul me in. Gallagher wasn't going to haul me in. They weren't even going to recognize me. My disguise, once again, made me safe.

As luck would have it, before my week as a Beigette was up, this short, heavy-set guy sees the whole show and then comes over to where I am, sitting at the bar trying to look as much like Joan Crawford as I can.

He says real friendly like with an Italian accent, "What-a are you-a doing when you leave-a here?"

I think he's coming on to me!

I play Miss Indignant. "Going home to my Aunt Millie's!"

"No," he says. "I mean-a when you finish this-a engagement here. Do-a you have another date lined up?"

I'm flabbergasted. "No," I say.

"Well, then," he says, "come-a perform for me!"

He hands me his card.

It says **Colonial Club/San Jose!**

It wasn't quite the big time. But it was work! **Exposure!**
Experience!

My star was continuing to rise!

And for the first time, I got a contract for working. Through A.G.V.A. The American Guild of Variety Artists. They said you can't start any lower than \$65 a week as a chorus. If you were a principal, a specialty, you got \$85. So I started at \$85. We all had contracts in those days, even in the little clubs. Through A.G.V.A. The club signed it; you signed it. It had an option for a week and they would always pick mine up because they liked me. I wasn't a trouble-maker. You know, you drink too much, you cruise, you cause problems for the club and this and that. Not me. My main thing was just to get in drag each night.

The Colonial Club was on the outskirts of San Jose. You couldn't have these kinds of clubs within the city limits, I think the law was. Or maybe they just didn't want to be too close to the center of town. And there was another one there, too. The Castle Inn, where the owners lived in the back of the club and that's where you dressed, in their home.

The Castle Inn was like just a bar. You walk in and it was a bar and off to the side was a knocked out thing, a small room where we performed with piano and drums. And you performed for the people sitting outside this room, at the bar. It wasn't table, chairs, and drinks. It was just bar stools and this little room where the queens did their act. That was The Castle Inn.

Now, The Colonial Inn was run by Ma and Pop Grissano. He's the one who caught my act at The Beige Room. Strictly Italian.

They were like a real Ma and Pop to us. Ma, she used to ask, "Have you boys eaten?"

And I would say (in my little boy voice, the one I always used with Aunt Millie), "Nooooo."

She'd fix me a big platter of spaghetti. I'd put it all away like nothing! Delicious!

I saved Pop's life, too, but that was later. Maybe the fourth or fifth time I performed there.

We always stayed at The Colonial Hotel when we worked San Jose. Totally separate from the club. Just the same name. For \$12 a week you got a **front** room with a **view!** The other ones were cheaper where they had an air shaft to look out on. Charlie and Debbie Lolly. They were Italian, too. This was their hotel. They were like a mother and father to all us kids, too, because we all stayed there when we worked San Jose.

And they loved me at The Colonial Club! They loved me because, while I was on the stage, I gave the impression, "I'm not a beautiful woman. I'm not trying to be a cunt. I'm just a drag queen and I'm enjoying myself!" (When I was off stage, honey, the impression I wanted to make was an **entirely** different matter!)

Another reason I went over is because I sang Western songs. That was a town that liked, "**Hey, good lookin,' what ya got cook-in'?**" I could really belt out those songs. It was just a fast act and crazy. I made fun of drag and I laughed at it all

because I gave the impression on stage that I didn't take myself seriously.

That drove the other queens nuts! Dingbat!

And, in addition to being able to hide behind my disguise, I'll admit I had all this extra crazy energy. It was the pills! Have I mentioned them before, dear? No? Diet pills. Benzedrine. But you couldn't say if you'd had a Bennie. Someone would understand what you were talking about.

I said, "Let's give them a special name! Let's call 'em **roses!**"

So that I could fit into the costumes, I took pills to keep my weight down -- in the beginning. Not realizing how **wired** I'd get each night! But it was something my act needed, anyway. Da da dit da da da da! Here comes dingy, dingbat Jackie! They all knew I took pills, but I never bothered anybody. I didn't go on bad trips, I was always up!

I was getting supplies of pills, of roses, from this one and that one and that one and this one, which was, if you've ever taken one, you **know** what it is. It's up up up up up! And happy, happy, happy, **happy!** And talk talk **talk!** And sing sing sing **sing sing!** I was always in gay spirits when I went on the floor. And when I came off the floor. And when I went home. I was **always** in gay spirits!

I said to myself, "This is fun! **Feeling** this way! It accentuates my desire to make people laugh. To think of things that are funny. To come out with more expressions. To just feel

great! I can make other people feel good by feeling good myself!"

Up up up up up!

Once, my friend, Rusty Parker, was staying over. I had one pill left for the next day and somehow he found it and had taken it. I blew up to the degree that I was ready to throw him out the window! Now this is just because of a pill. But it was religion to us! You got the pill in, and, bingo, you were off sailing. And that took care of your day. And for someone to take your last pill, to pull that from underneath you. No no no no no! He still regrets doing it.

And one night, Rusty was really late getting there for something, and I decided I better go out and look for him. Halfway down the block, on the sidewalk, there he was on his hands and knees. Here was this little guy cussing up a storm.

"Is that you, Rusty?"

"Yes! Get me a flash light. I dropped my roses!"

Now these were the little green Syndrox. They're so small and it's night and it's dark on the sidewalk. What are you going to find? What? But I got the flashlight, and the two of us were down there on our hands and knees looking because they were like **G O L D** to us!

We laugh about it now, but that's the way pills were.

There was one night in an after-hours place years ago. Now this is before I worked at Finnochio's. We used to go to bars,

from one bar to another, and after the bars would close, we'd go to a coffee shop that was open after hours.

Well, I was there. I was in the bathroom taking a leak when all of a sudden this queen came in.

"Oh! Oh!" she said. "Oh!" And she started choking over the sink. She coughed and I saw an orange pill go into the washbasin.

"Oh, thank God!" she said. "It got caught in my throat."

And she starts to leave.

"You don't want it?" I say.

"Hell, no!" she says. "I almost gagged on it!"

I reached over, picked it up, ran the water, and washed it off.

"Thank you!" I say and pop it in my mouth.

That queen couldn't get it down her windpipe, but Miss Phillips certainly could!

They were precious. Precious!

They were all uppers! Who needs downers? You can come down by yourself. And after you came off the pills, you were on a downer -- for **days!** Until you got another pill. But with the roses, everybody was in a glorious mood.

It was the pills that kept me thin and lovely -- and happy!

That's why I miss them so!

But we were talking about me not taking myself too seriously on stage. I was "Wacky Jackie," right? So this is the early '50's, around the time that Ronnie Reagan made *Bedtime for Bonzo*,

and I went to see it in San Jose. I was impressed with the chimp running around and going "Oouu! Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!" and throwing out the arms and making monkey gestures and movements and sounds. And along with Bonzo, at about the same time, Debbie Reynolds and Carlton Carpenter came out in that other movie with "Abba Dabba Honeymoon."

I put the song into my act. And then I put Bonzo into the act. I would sing "Abba dabba dabba dabba. . . !" and then, before the second chorus, I'd go around the floor like Bonzo, like a chimpanzee, doing "Oouu! Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!"

Well, the audience has seen these movies, too, and they're understanding what I'm doing and they're picking up on it and loving it and laughing. And, I guess I had a couple of pills too many one night, a couple of drinks too many, too, maybe, and after I sang my first chorus, I made a beeline for the bar.

Now in The Colonial Club, the stage is here and the tables are around it and beyond them is another opening to the room where the bar is. As you come in off the street, you hit this long bar first and then the room with the tables. Well, I passed all the tables and made for a stool. I jumped up on the bar and monkeyed like Bonzo all the way down the bar!

"Oouu! Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!" the entire length of the bar!

The customers are just watching wide-eyed and thinking "This queen's snapped completely!"

And I'm up and down on top of the bar, and Ma and Pop Grissano are behind the bar begging, "Please. Please. Watch the glasses! Watch the customers! Don't fall! Don't fall!"

Finally, I leaped off the bar and across the room and back onto the stage and finished the number. The audience went insane! Because it was spasmodic, at random, *ad lib*. Anything, anything I could do to make people laugh. I loved it!

I spurred myself on: "Go on! Go on! Do some more! You're making people laugh! Go on!"

But **off** stage! That was different. I really **did** give a damn off stage what I looked like, what impression I made. At that time, Joan Crawford was my idol, after *Mildred Pierce* and *Humoresque* and this and that. Off stage I wanted to look like her and be like her. She always wore those big shoulder pads and black swanky dresses. So I tried to look as much like her as I could when I'd mix with the customers.

But for the show it was skirts and sweaters and crazy red wigs and what have you! Anything I could find that was colorful and, in general, loud. I was like a little model. Any new thing I got from The Salvation Army. A shirt. A pair of slacks. A skirt or sweater. I would have to model it.

I would say, "LaVerne!" LaVerne Cummings was at Finnochio's then, too. I'd say, "LaVerne! Get the camera. Modelling time!"

I would go from room to room to room showing off my new wardrobe, which was ridiculous because I'd spent only thirty-five cents for the whole thing at Sally's. That's what we called The

Salvation Army! Sally's. "Oh, yes. I got it at Sally's!" I'd say. Sounds exclusive, doesn't it? Like a ladies' dress shop or something.

I'd have jewelry up to the elbows and bracelets and necklaces and different color wigs. And this sad sweater and a sad skirt. But it was loud! It wasn't dull gray! There was screaming orange, yellow, red. Every bright color you can imagine. I had sweaters every color. I had skirts every color. Shoes every color. And every variation of red wig.

They even wrote about my wardrobe in the papers. Here's a clipping from the old *San Francisco Progress*:

Comedienne Jackie Phillip's new wardrobe at Finnochio's includes a red sweater which is an eye popper. It buttons down the back all the way to the knees, making Jackie look like a '47 Studebaker, hard to tell which way he's headed.

It was a cardigan I got at Sally's. I only bought it because it was red. It was that loose weave. What is it? Alpaca! I washed it and hung it on the line to dry. And it stretched! It came down over my hips to the middle of my thigh.

"Well," I said, "isn't this a bitch!" But I took it to the club that night anyway. The skirt I wore was only six inches longer than the sweater. That's all the skirt that showed. Because the sweater hung clear down over my hips. And it didn't **cling** to the body -- it sort of hung on the body. So the tits came to a perfect shape, and when I walked, they bounced! That was all I wanted. For the sweater to be loose enough for these

things to bounce and not look phony inside but like real girls' tits bouncing.

Wacky Jackie wasn't pretty; she was colorful!

People would actually say that! "You aren't pretty, Jackie, but you sure are colorful!"

And I'd say, "Well, thanks. . . !" As long as I made them laugh while I was on stage, I said, "This is important to me because this is what people go to nightclubs for. To enjoy themselves. To have laughs!"

But off stage, no no no no no! I wasn't Wacky Jackie anymore! I was someone more sophisticated, more glamorous. That's how I met my friend, Rusty Parker. (You've probably figured out by now that's not really his name. That was Rita Hayworth's name in *Cover Girl*. You know, that technicolor musical with Gene Kelly. And that's the name he wants me to use.)

Rusty's still around and he's still one of my best friends. But when we met, he was underage. Maybe seventeen, eighteen. A little underage kid from Canada, holding a camera, sneaking into The Colonial Club with his Gay uncle to catch the drag show. He saw me sitting there and said to one of the other queens, "Who is that at the end of the bar?"

And the queen said, "Oh, that's Jackie Phillips."

And he said, "She looks very elegant."

And the queen said, "Oh, no, she's not elegant. She just thinks she's Joan Crawford!"

I did! I did think I was Joan Crawford -- or at least that I **looked** like Joan Crawford.

No! No! I **did**!

I wore the black turtle neck and the big gold medallion and the shoulder pads and all this sophisticated look. Just the **opposite** of when I was performing out on the floor. And this intrigued a certain type of person who liked mystery and meeting me. Seeing me so different was a mystery.

"I wonder if I could go talk to her," Rusty says.

"I suppose so. Sure. Go on, kid. . .!"

So Rusty, this pretty little teen-age kid, comes up to me, and he says in his little teen-age voice, "Hello."

And I say in my lowest, most sultry Joan Crawford voice, "Hello. . .!"

Very cold. Very arch. Down my nose.

"What's this little **kid** coming on to me for?" I'm thinking. And then Rusty says the magic words!

"Would you mind if I took a picture of you?"

The **whole** wall disappeared! The haughty veneer just drained away. I was thrilled!

"Of **course**!"

Well, dear, I got into the most fantastic poses on that bar stool for him to snap. And he's having to look up at me because, he's a very short queen and **very** cute. **Very** cute! A **gorgeous** little kid. But more than his cuteness, he was getting this Joan Crawford queen to emote in front of his camera. He liked to take

pictures, and I liked to have pictures taken. The perfect couple. So this is how Rusty and I met. He's been taking pictures of me for years.

There were two other queens I remember from The Colonial Club, both performers. Don Kenrad and Jerry Lane. Don't know why they should just pop into my head, but there they are.

Don Kenrad was a comedienne, too, and a favorite of San Jose. They all loved Don Kenrad. Because he had risqué material. He sang one to the tune of "Humoresque":

Passengers will please refrain
From flushing toilets on the train
While standing in the station;
We thank you.
We encourage constipation
Till you reach your destination.
Please abide by these old golden rules:
If you must make water
Kindly call the porter
And he will fetch a vessel
To your vestibule.
Every evening after dark
We'll goose the statues in the park --
If Sherman's horse can take it
Why can't you. . . ?

. . . or something like that. And she sang it with . . . it looked like she had no teeth. She did. Have teeth. But her mouth would fold up and she'd make all these weird faces while she was singing in these crazy get-ups -- hats and old-fashioned Gay Nineties dresses and everything. And she made little quips, such as, "Oh, Dearie!" and this and that that she'd say to men in the audience. Then she'd do another song and tell a couple of jokes. Risqué jokes.

And what I learned was, I didn't have to worry about being on the bill with another comedienne as long as we had different material, different styles. And with Don Kenrad, her comedy wasn't clashing with mine whatsoever.

And there was Jerry Lane. There still is Jerry Lane. We see each other a lot, in fact. But I met Jerry Lane at The Colonial Club. She was a dancer. And she looked like Susan Hayward when she was made up. She was pretty, and you thought you were talking to a girl when you talked to Jerry Lane even if she wasn't in drag. Because she was so soft spoken, had such soft features. There was nothing hard about her. Which is what makes what happened all the funnier. To us anyway. . . !

We got loaded at the club, during the show. Roses. A rose is a rose is a rose. . . ! And booze! Now, take a rose by itself and you're wired. Then, have a drink over it, and it sets off like a 45 record being played at 78!

OK. Now, we're too wired to go home and sleep so we went to this coffee shop and sat in the booth and had coffee which, I guess, was supposed to calm us down. Well, it didn't! Jerry and I, we're still wired by the time we get back to The Colonial Hotel.

I went to my room. Changed. Took off my clothes and slipped into something comfortable. I was unwinding the best I could. Composing limericks. I did that when I was on roses and wasn't ready to go to bed. Couldn't have gotten to sleep even if

I'd tried. And it's the middle of the night and all of a sudden I hear tap tap tap.

I say (very softly), "Who is it?"

"It's Miss Lane." Also very, very soft.

I open the door and she comes in.

"I can't sleep," she says.

"I can't either."

"Well, why don't we do something silly!"

Soft-spoken, soft-featured Jerry Lane! Miss Innocent! And she says, "Why don't we do something silly!"

I'll bite. "Why not?" I say.

"Oh, let's make up first!"

"I don't have any make up here."

"I have an eyebrow pencil!"

No other makeup, but, with that pencil, we did the eyebrows up like Mr. Spock on *Star Trek*. The mouth we painted black for lipstick. The eyes we made all Egyptian. Then, off the sheets came from the bed. Instant togas! Off the towels came from the bathroom rods, and they're wrapped around our heads for turbans.

We left my room and roamed the halls, but we didn't want to wake anybody up so we couldn't do much of anything. It was getting boring.

"Let's go to the roof!" I said.

Now this is just sheets and shorts and the towel-turban and the black makeup! And we're up on the roof, and I look over and Jerry Lane is walking around on the ledge of the hotel which is

only about maybe a foot wide. And which is a sheer drop down of three floors. I jump up there with him.

Both of us are stoned and we're walking on this ledge around the roof singing as softly as we can, "A pretty giiiiirrrrrrrlllll is like a meeeeeellllloooooodyyyyyyyyy. . . !" We're Ziegfeld Follies girls and this is our runway!

No one sees us because it's like two-thirty, three o'clock in the morning. No one hears us because we're careful not to be too loud up there. We're just two ghosts walking very quietly around the ledge of the roof of the hotel like showgirls.

Finally this wears us out.

We started down, tippy-toed down, and we're just about to make an entrance through the third floor back door from the roof when the garbage man is coming down the hall with this great big full barrel on his back. We don't know he's there, and we fling open the door!

"WHOA!" he screams when he sees the two of us.

He backs up so fast, he drops his barrel, and now there's trash all over the hall! In the confusion, we tear by him and fly into my room. Then we listen with our ears against the door. By this time, the manager and his wife, Charley and Debbie, are up and screaming. When they're excited, the Italian accent gets thicker and thicker.

"What-a the hell is going on-a here? You wake-a the whole hotel with this-a goddam dropping the can!"

The garbage man says, "I just saw two ghosts!"

"You goddam crazy? Or you-a drunk?" Charlie and Debbie are really set off. "You come-a in here in the middle of the night and take-a the can and drop it and say you saw two ghosts that scare you and make-a you drop-a the can!"

No one ever knew it, but the man was telling the truth!

He really thought we **were** ghosts. He didn't know what room we went into. He couldn't even say we **went** into a room! All he saw was the sheets and the black lips and the Egyptian eyes. And when you've got a garbage can on your back, you're not thinking that something like this is going to jump out at you at this hour of the morning on the third floor of The Colonial Hotel! We were afraid they might fire him, but then we realized, you can't fire the garbage man. He doesn't even work for you!

They were all talking about it in the lobby the next morning.

"What **was** all the racket last night?"

And Jerry and I just looked at each other. We knew if we even so much as snickered, we'd give it away. But it was soooo funny. We've laughed about it for years. It and the time I was thrown out of the swimming pool in San Jose.

I was wearing a Jackie Phillips Original Creation for a bathing suit. I made it myself. A piece of bright yellow jersey. Cut in two triangles and tied on the side, like a diaper.

I went in the water for a while and when I got out, one of the life guards came flying across from the other side of the pool.

"I'm sorry, Sir, you'll have to leave!"

I said, "What did I do?"

He said, "You didn't do anything, but neither is your bathing suit! It's not doing enough for you."

Since it was jersey, you could see right through it when it got wet! And what am I going to look down at myself to see if my dick's showing? I had no idea what the jersey would look like wet. It looked good enough dry when I tried it on. But there must have been comments from the mothers and other concerned citizens around the pool: "Get this dreadful man out of here!"

Oh, well!

How The Colonial Club ended, that's not so funny. That's when I saved Pop Grissano's life, too.

A fire!

It started in . . . Kitty Carlisle was a colored dancer, and it started in her dressing room which was next to the bandstand, and there was just a curtain covering it. No door or nothing. Just heavy drapes. And there was this big, what are they, 150 watt lightbulbs, over one of the shelves and on that shelf was where Kitty Carlisle put her head-dress. All those big pheasant feathers! She was a campy little dancer. And the lightbulb, they surmised later, had just probably got too hot, over this feather head-dress and bursted into flames!

It got a good start with just a little air and, of course, once the smoke worked its way through the curtain, people saw it. And the minute they pulled the curtain down, it got more air and it was off! The flame just came out and chewed up this asbestos ceiling over the stage, and you didn't have a chance to get into that dressing room anymore.

I was across the club in the dressing room up in front. Ricki San Juan and I dressed together and she screamed, "Quick! Grab your wardrobe and run!" And this, of course, threw a big blank in front of me, and I just grabbed my watch and walked out. Left my boy's clothes, my skirts! Oh, God, I had gorgeous skirts! Wigs. Shoes. Wallet. Everything. Just walked out. Blank mind. Not letting it in. Not panicking that this fire is chewing up everything. Not realizing. And that was it.

We just walked across the street and sat there. This black smoke and everybody screaming, "Get out! Get Out!" And more black smoke. And accepting that you can't put it out, it's taking over, it could kill you if you stayed around long enough. But it's taking over the building **right now**, while you're standing there with . . . with a sunken heart. Just sickening. Knowing everything was gonna go.

And then the drummer runs up and says to me, "Where's Pop?"

I said, "I don't know."

"He's probably in his office. Come on!"

The back door to Pop's office was locked from the inside.

"Jackie, if you ever do anything butch, do it now!" the drummer yells. "Help me break it down!"

I picked up my skirt and kicked up the leg and rammed my spike heel through this panel. The drummer reached in and unlocked the door, and when I pulled back my leg, the little sabre I had going through to hold the strap around my ankle, I had lost it. And they were my, well, in those days we called 'em "Joan-Crawford-Come-Fuck-Me Shoes!" because she always wore high heels with ankle straps and everything. And they were gorgeous. And expensive! Black suede.

And we saw Pop on the floor! We pulled him out and his face was all black from smoke and everything -- and he had the money, tight, in his hand. So tight, you couldn't even open it! When we saw that he was breathing, people took over from there. And I went across the street from the club and sat there on somebody's car fender, and Ricki San Juan and I watched the club burn.

We saved the boss and his money, but all I got out with were the drags I had on and the watch some customer had bought me. All my clothes. My wallet. My identification. What little cash I had. Everything went up because it was so far out of town the fire engines didn't get there.

There was a write-up about it in the San Jose paper. I don't know where it is now. I had it for years but I was looking for it the other day and couldn't find it. I don't know whether I threw it away or not. But anyway, we sat there and watched the

club burn down. And what did I get for my heroic rescue, for all that I lost?

"If-a we ever rebuild, you'll-a be the first!" Pop said. "Who worked-a here last, the night of the fire, will-a be in the opening!"

But they never rebuilt.

And when he was paying us off after the fire, after we'd lost everything but the drag on our backs, his last big gesture: "I'm-a not-a take out-a for your bar bill or your food this-a week!"

I guess maybe it's time I explained how these drag bars worked, dear. These bars where we put on drag shows.

First off, they weren't **Gay** bars. They were **drag** bars. Although they weren't really called that. It was just "Drag Show at The Colonial Club" or "Drag Show at The Redwood Inn." They were clubs that were known for having drag. That was their gimmick. To get customers. Mainly straight customers. And drag brought customers in because, in those days, people were curious. It was a grabber! And queens came there, too, of course. To see the other queens. But they didn't come in drag. It wasn't men dancing with men and everybody wears makeup. No no no no no! Because it was a lot of breaking straight territory. And all we wanted to do was put on the dresses. Play dress-up! And get paid for it!

There was never any fear of going against the law or doing something wrong. It was just fun-sies for us. There was never

any trouble that I knew of. No petitions to get us thrown out of the neighborhood or anything like that. They just sort of told us: "Behave yourself when you work here!" And so we did. And we still had fun.

Some things were the same about most of the clubs. Usually, they had four or five performers. Because . . . say they wanted an hour show or an hour-and-a-half show, you'd have someone opening it, that's one, and then a song, jokes and some stories, that's two, and then, maybe, a dancer, that's three, and then, a comedienne, that's four, and then maybe another act with songs. Five! Whatever.

And there were basically three kinds of shows. The kind they had at The Colonial Club, where the boss -- either the manager or the owner -- hired a certain number of queens independently and they put together the show with their individual talents. And someone was chosen to be MC -- Mistress of Ceremonies. Either because they wanted to be or because nobody else wanted the job. It might sound like a big deal, but I sure never wanted it!

Then there was the kind of show that was a ready-made revue -- like that cunt Carroll Wallace and The Carroll Revue. Or, even before that, on a smaller scale, Ricki San Juan's little revue that got us to the East Bay. The head of the revue would put together a show and then sell it to club owners and managers. Then she'd direct the revue, make all the decisions, be MC. And, sometimes, like as it turned out with Carroll Wallace, she'd

pocket all the money, too! It was sort of "Let's get up a show and take it to El Cerrito! Or to Fresno! Or to Sacramento, even!"

And then there were a few showcase rooms like Finnochio's where they had headliner acts and catered to tourists and put on a new show every six months or so. You signed a six-month contract to do three or four shows a night, six nights a week, and they advertised the show in the papers. It was all very legitimate! It was really show business!

Finnochio's started on Stockton Street. Just before the tunnel. There had been a small club there. The Old Rat or The Pink Rat or something. And Finnochio's had to have started there before 1935, because in 1935 they moved to Broadway where they still are. So that was ten years after I was born. Before Finnochio's, it was a dance hall. There on Broadway. Called La something. La Tarentena? Some La club. And that's where my father pointed out to me one time. We were going down Broadway and he said, "That's where I met your mother. Up there. In that dance hall." I was just a little kid, less than ten, and I remember that. The same building. The same space were Finnochio's is now. My father and mother met there, and, then, I spent so much time there later on! I put it down to karma.

Rooms like Finnochio's were possible because San Francisco had more of a history of drag than most places, seemed to be more tolerant -- as long as you kept it off the streets! For years the headliner at Finnochio's was Walter Hart, the male Sophie

Tucker. This is **old** times, honey, **before** Lestra Lamont got there. And long, long before I got there.

Walter Hart was the star. Then you had all your other old names. Niles Marsh was a comedian. And, Francis and Lonis, The Two Old Bags from Oakland. There was one called Jackie May who had a body **just** like a woman! (Like Kara Montez, later, who I knew and who worked with us sometimes in The Revue with the hips and the tiny waist.) These are all the Old Timers that came up from the old place on Stockton Street, when Finnochio's moved to Broadway.

Except for Walter Hart, they were all Female Impersonators that had the fear of someone coming in younger, someone coming in **prettier**, someone more talented, pushing them out of this soft job they had. Because you didn't need much talent when it started years ago. All you needed was guts! So the bitches were very jealous that somebody new might come in. They were always on their guard -- with each other, even.

So this was the situation when Carroll Wallace, who worked there years and years ago as a specialty act, started at Finn's. She billed herself as "The World's Most Beautiful Boy." Imagine! That's how she worked her way in. She was young, had a beautiful face, a glorious wig, a lovely wardrobe. And **absolutely no talent!** A gravelly, flat voice:

Powder your face with sunshiiiiiiine!

Oh! **Bad** voice! But it didn't matter. She had a face lovely enough to stop a clock! And skin so thick that no amount of Old Timer's bitchiness could get through it! She picked up all the viciousness of these Old Timers -- and kept it! And much, much later, after tormenting me for years, when she came back, she **still** had all this viciousness in her.

Now, Walter Hart came to Fresno once while I was performing there -- years after he retired from Finnochio's, from drag -- and I said, "Oh, God, a big **star!** I'll be a nervous wreck!"

He turned out to be one of the nicest people you'd ever want to meet. You know, **real**. And he liked me, and he said, "I'm going to San Francisco for the weekend. You wanna come?" So we drove up to San Francisco and I stayed at his house. **Gorgeous** place! Lovely furniture and everything.

He was one of the ones who got a raw deal from the law! Not a misdemeanor like we used to get on Union Square. He got lewd conduct or something like that. Something very serious. Both he and another Old Timer, Francis Stillman. The both got raw deals. Separate scandals. What they did, I don't know. But the thing is, they made a big issue out of it. Notoriety-wise, in the papers. Probably very heavy fines for both of them.

I always say, if you're in the public's eye, you **cannot** fool around. I don't care what you are. Movie star, singer, rock star, anything, you **cannot** fool around because there is always somebody out there waiting for a little PeeWee Herman to sit in a

dark theater and play with himself, and they'll catch him and make a scandal.

I think it was while Walter Hart was at Finnochio's that he got arrested. In fact, he was performing there when they had the matinees at the Tivoli Theater. They did a show at the Tivoli in the afternoons, and then they'd go back and work at night at Finnochio's. Francis Stillman, the other Old Timer, was there when Walter Hart was there, and he was one who got arrested, too. And the show was packed because Francis Stillman had just got arrested the night before. It made all the papers. He got out on bail, came to The Tivoli, and burst into his opening song, "What Did I Do. . . ?" Well, the audience went insane because everybody had just read about him getting arrested. He couldn't sing any more lines because it was just such an uproar! The audience loved him!

The Tivoli was on Eddy or Ellis Street. It was there for years. I think it was a burlesque theater at one time. But this was all long before I got to Finnochio's. Long before I really got into drag, even. As I say, in those years, drag wasn't in vogue. It was just a novelty. People went out of curiosity. And those that understood it, loved it!

When I was starting in drag, San Francisco had Finnochio's and The Beige Room and The Seven Seas. And there was probably others that did record acts once in a while for drag. And The Hyde Cal, that was a Gay bar on Hyde Street where they would have

a talent night, and if you wanted to, you could go and perform in drag. Al Burgess owned this one, too, I think.

Now, dear, in the first kind of club I was talking about before I got so carried away with the Old Timers, in the clubs where they just hired individual performers, the show was put together usually by whoever was most experienced or whoever wanted to MC. Like Cleo Gordon Stafford in Ogden.

It's a real **bitch** to MC!

I **never** wanted it! **Never!**

You have to know everybody's entire act. Everybody's cues. Light cues. Sound cues. You have to have some patter, something clever to say about everybody in the show, whether you like them or not. You have to keep track of your own specialty, of your own costume changes. You might even have to think up and direct the finale. Your timing gets off and you have to. . . ! Oh, shit! It gets me so angry!

Whoever wanted to take **that** on was **welcome** to planning the show as far as I was concerned. The owner of the club, the manager of the club, if they were smart, they'd have almost nothing to do with what went on. They hired the performers. They hired a couple of musicians. But, most of them, didn't know shit about drag or about shows. **Not a thing!** That was certainly true at Finnochio's. After Lestra Lamont died, it all started to go downhill. But these managers, these owners **were** smart enough to know when they had a money maker. And drag made them money!

Nobody got upset because someone was going on first or getting more time. That might be true at a place like Finn's where there were always lots of prima donnas. But at these small clubs? No no no no no. There was no time limit to your act because they weren't crowding tours in and out every hour on the hour the way they did at Finnochio's. Four houses full of Oriental tourists who don't understand a word of English! Try telling jokes to **that!**

In these smaller club shows you could run your act as long as you were entertaining. If your act was long, fine. That would mean if the other queens were mixing while the show was on, they'd have more time for drinking or talking or cruising. If their specialty came late in the show, they could sit there for almost forty-five minutes with some customer drinking. This was good for the manager. Good for business. Good for the queens!

There was always plenty of drinking. Even while the show was on. There was no . . . like if Barbra Streisand was singing, she wouldn't want glasses clinking, the cash register dinging. Well, it wasn't like that! These were just rowdy, noisy, neighborhood bars. But they weren't **hustling** bars. Not like that one in New Orleans where you had to hustle "B" drinks to keep your job and to make any money at all.

"B" drinks were . . . if the customer ordered you a shot of whiskey and a coke chaser, the whiskey was really vermouth and coke mixed to look like whiskey, and when you took a sip out of

your real coke, you made enough room to spit the shot so you didn't have to swallow the Vermouth.

Nobody told me that, at first. I drank a helluva lot of Vermouth in New Orleans before they clued me in! All the customers there were tourists from out of town, so they weren't going to stay and cause scenes. They were there to see the show. To talk to the queens. To buy them drinks. If you were pretending to drink "B" drinks, they didn't know and they didn't care.

But at a neighborhood bar if somebody bought you a drink, you got a **real** drink. So you had to be careful -- if you had a tendency to get drunk. But everyone knew I usually had my roses, my pills, and if they were drinking too much, they'd say, "Do you have a little half? I'm getting a bit whoozie." And bingo! They were saved! The roses kept you on the alert and ready for the show. And you could still drink and not be as drunk. Because . . . I don't know . . . Bennies just stimulated you. What were they called? Amphetamines? And anything that could keep you alert **and** in Gay spirits, well, **fine!**

Now there are several other clubs I'm working at between the time I first went to The Colonial Club from The Beige Room and later when it burned down and I ended up going to New Orleans. Ricki San Juan was responsible for getting us into one of them: The Miami Club in El Cerrito. Ricki San Juan, who now owns a florist shop at Geneva and Mission, he scouted around and he found The Miami Club.

"I have this show!" he says to the owner. Ricki San Juan, who we called Salome on Union Square because he danced exotic dances and liked Yvonne DeCarlo, he put this thing together with Russell Reed and Ray Saunders and myself. And he sold it to The Miami Club. After we opened, the boss saw all this laughter, and each night the crowds got bigger and bigger. Because in those days drag was not common! It was rare and people wanted something different. Live acts. Not miming to records. So the boss saw he had a money-maker, a gold mine. We did very well for him.

We were there long enough for him to start driving around in a Cadillac, but he was always saying, "Oh, I'm on the borderline. I'm on the fence. I don't have the money to give you guys a raise, but if I get it, you'll be sure to get it."

So that went on and on and on and we never got the raise. But we didn't really care. We just liked doing drag! It was a fact that he never had that many customers before he got the queens performing there. He'd have a singer sometimes and maybe a band you could dance to. And the neighborhood crowd, a small crowd, would come in. But when the **queens** performed there, they had the flyers out, they had the tongues wagging, and the people were coming in from all over to see the faggots. The straights were coming in. Because, as they say, you gotta have a gimmick. And it's a powerful gimmick when you put a man in a woman's dress!

There are two other guys I remember from there besides Ricki San Juan and Russell Reed and Ray Saunders. One was a queen. The other was masculine and beautiful -- and trouble!

The queen was Alan Terry. He was the MC at The Miami Club. During the day, a hairdresser. To look at him, you wouldn't think there was a feminine bone in his body. Huge. Tall. Six something. And very, very distinguished. He was a hairdresser during the day and at night he was MC of this drag show. Had a lovely voice. A male singing voice. And he was very meticulous about how his drag looked before he left the dressing room. He wore false eyelashes, one of the few queens who did in those days. And he had this gown, It was lavender, purple-ish, orchid-ish, with yellow dots. And gauntlets on each wrist. Gauntlets! One purple and one yellow. I have a picture of it somewhere in my scrapbooks.

The unfortunate thing was, he drank. He'd get through the show OK, but by the time he got his makeup off, he'd be so drunk he forgot he was driving us back to The City. And he would leave without us.

We would say, "Alan, we're ready . . . !"

"No. He's gone!" the cook would say. "He left a little while ago. I'll take you over. You're better off with me driving."

We **were** better off. But the thing was we were constantly being stranded and had to impose on these other people. Luckily, they saw the problem and they didn't mind. They didn't say, "You

queens will have to take care of yourselves. We can't be driving back and forth!" No. No. They were very nice to us. And we would talk to Alan Terry, but he would completely have forgot the next day.

"Oh, did I forget you again last night?"

Completely oblivious! No apologies. Nothing.

And then he'd do it again!

I guess that's why I remember Alan Terry so clearly after all these years. He was such a pain in the ass!

And the other one? The other guy I remember? The one who was trouble with a capital T? He was a sailor from the Alameda Naval Air Station. They had access to El Cerrito which they used to come into the club. Well, this night, there was a booth of four or five of them, and, however it happened, it was remember-able.

I was asked to sit down and join them.

Now, I have this habit of checking faces, of picking out which is the cutest, the handsomest, the most beautiful, and, then, I have to find a flaw, **need** to find a flaw, so I'll be turned off! So I won't fall for the guy. Well, anyway, there was this gorgeous one sitting there from the Naval Air Station. His name was Lenny. And he was turning every which way he could talking to the other guys, and I'm looking and looking and looking, trying to find **the** flaw. **And I couldn't find a flaw!** Not a one!

He's a combination, I decide. A combination of Guy Madison (his lips were made for sucking, don't you think, dear?) and Burt Lancaster. The masculinity! The beauty! Ohhhhhhh! Well, the rockets started flying.

And there went all the pigeons and the feathers and the balloons!

I said to myself, "Oh, dear. Forget it! No!"

But it seems that Lenny was very aware of being admired by me, so he played his cards just right, and I fell off the cliff!

I said, "Well, here we go! Anything this table wants, put on my bill!"

That got me in good standing with all his buddies, you know. As long as they liked me, he would like me, I figured. And I was sunk hook, line, and sinker!

I put him on a pedestal. OK. He saw that he could have anything he wanted or do anything he wanted. And that was fine. Of course, there was this block he'd gotten from his father about "doing it" with another man. So there was no kissing or anything romantic. Just the sex part. Which was dull. But, oh, he was beautiful! Absolutely. And shorter than me! And I have this passion for short men!

One time he got real mopey, and I said, "What's wrong?"

"I'm going to lose my car," he said. "I owe \$100."

I handed him the money. "Here. Now you can keep your car."

Another time: "Sorry I'm late, but I lost my watch."

I handed him my watch. "Here. Don't worry about it."

Another time: "If I had a camera, I'd take some pictures of us."

I gave him a camera full of film. "Here. Take this. Have somebody take the whole roll of you at the base and bring it back and I'll have it developed."

I never saw him again after that!

Or the camera!

Or the film! So I don't have a picture of this beauty.

It makes me sick!

And the thing is, years later, at Finnochio's, this same guy, Lenny, he comes to see the show, and he's waiting for me after outside at two a.m. He's pissy-assed drunk, and I ask myself, "Do you still feel the same way?" And, now, there was no real feeling for this man. Not that I notice then, anyway. But I **am** sorry for him, so I say, "Well, come home and spend the night at my house."

He passed out on the front steps! Passed out! Right outside Aunt Millie's bedroom window! She forbids me to bring anyone in the house. No people! No lovers! Especially, no drunks! So I'm taking a **big** chance for this guy. Finally, I had to take the hose and spray it all over his face to get him sober enough so I could get him in the house through the back door without him falling down and everything. Desperate Doris here!

"Oh, hell, I must still be in love with him!" I say to myself.

Anyway, the next morning, I was awoken by him shaking my pill bottle, my roses! Without asking, he takes a couple of pills so he can get hisself sober, which woke me up. Now, I should have checked everything at that point. But I didn't. After he left, I realized a watch of mine was gone!

I love flashy jewelry and this was a watch on an ID bracelet with big gold links. This gigolo I liked a lot years before had bought it for me. He was beautiful and he saw that I liked him so he gave me this watch, and he said, "Jackie, I appreciate your liking me so much, but I can't commit myself to you. I have a commitment to women!"

He was a hustler for women, a gigolo. And he bought me this watch because he liked me. And the watch was gone after Lenny left!

A couple of weeks later, he comes back! Can you believe this guy? He knocks on my door in Bernal Heights and says, "Aren't you going to invite me in?"

I said, "I am not going to invite you in." I said, "Not now! Not ever!"

He said, "Why? Don't tell me you're still upset."

Knowing!

Knowing he had taken it.

The watch was on his conscience!

He committed himself right there. And it was a sad thing, really, because he could've had the fucking bank as far as I was concerned. But I can't stand petty theft. If you want to steal

something, take the whole fucking place and disappear. But don't . . . don't fuck with me! Because then you get nothing! You might get my watch, a couple of roses, but that's it! And you could've had the whole lot. Oh, I get so disappointed with people. You can see what a Good Hearted Gloria I am.

So that was The Miami Club. That was drag in El Cerrito, the East Bay. After that, I went to Sacramento and, then, Fresno.

Ray Saunders was at The Silver Dollar, a Country/Western saloon in Sacramento, and one of the queens is gonna leave the show. The club owner says "Who can I get to replace her?"

"Jackie's not working," says Ray Saunders. "I'll get in touch."

"Yeah. Yeah. Get him. That'll be good. Blah. Blah. Blah."

It was all done by word of mouth. There was never an audition because the owners took the queen's word for it. That was one of the best things about doing drag professionally. You could get into most clubs without having an audition. Not having to . . . well, an audition to me was like being censored. So this way, you didn't get censored before you were hired. It was this whole network. And you were always working because somebody would be leaving this club this week and they'd say, "Well, I told Joe to call you so if you hear from him, go! It's a great club!" or whatever. So that's how I got to Sacramento. The

Silver Dollar. They loved me there because this was a Western town. "Hey, Good Lookin'. . . !" went over fabulously.

So Ray Saunders recommended me being that she was the first queen I did drag with in Ogden, Utah. And Russell Reed was there, too. There we were up in Sacramento, the three of us again. Direct from The Miami Club in El Cerrito!

These were the very early days of drag for me, and all this time I'm improving, improving with the makeup, with the wig, with the jewelry, with the act. Improving with everything.

And, as I've said, I've already decided that, when I mix, when I'm not on stage, I want to look the complete opposite of the way I look on the floor, during my act. I want there to be mystery about me when I mix. I don't want to be any Riotous Redhead off stage!

So one afternoon, I'm bored and going stir crazy in the little hotel room I'm renting so I go out for a walk, and I'm going by this -- it was like Lerner's or Grayson's -- this woman's store in Sacramento. And I look in the window and there's this mannequin in a white linen suit and a blue turtle neck and a great big medallion!

"There I am!" I say to myself, all excited by this suit. "There I am! That's me!"

I go in and buy the suit, whatever size it is. Eighteen's the largest, I guess. The woman in the store looks at me kind of funny, so I say, "I'm going to a party. A costume ball!"

And that covers it.

Oh, she thinks, he's going in costume as a girl. That's OK. It wasn't necessarily a **queer** thing. I mean, nowadays you can go to The Salvation Army just before Halloween, and you turn around and here's six feet of masculinity in a pink silk beaded dress saying, "Do you think it fits? Do you think it'll work? Do you think it's **me**?"

So, anyway, I got this gorgeous white linen suit, skirt and jacket, the blue turtle neck sweater, and the large medallion, which I already had a lot of. It cost a bundle, and this is not even for the act! For the act I go to Sally's for my drag. This is for the mysterious other woman inside me.

And that night, I put on my Joan Crawford feather-cut wig, and my new white suit, and between shows, I say to myself, "There's nothing going on here. I'm going to stand in the doorway and get some air."

I lean against the front doorway, smoking. Elegant. Lady like. Joan Crawford in *Humoresque*. And this car goes by and **honks**.

I automatically wave, then I look and I don't know the guy. I think: "Now, that's what a stupid person would do when just anybody honks -- they'd **wave**!" Because it's not somebody I know, I go back inside.

Well, he parks the car and comes back! He figured I went into the bar since I'm not in the doorway anymore. He comes in and sees me sitting at the bar. He comes over and buys me a

drink and starts a conversation. And I'm just being normal. Not high voice or anything.

Finally I say, "You'll have to excuse me. I have to go do the show."

"Oh!" He sounds impressed. "You're in the show?"

"Yes," I say and slip off the bar stool to go change for my act, to put on the red wig, the crazy plaid shirt, the Spring-o-later shoes. You know the kind. They have nothing around the heel. High heels but no strap or anything to hold them on. They were easy to fall off. To walk on the sides of. Which was a part of my act. I'd lose my balance on high heels anyway, so I thought, since I do, I might as well make a joke out of it so I'd fall off the heels and walk around the floor on the sides of my shoes.

Later, after the show, when I'd changed again into my Joan Crawford drag, I come back in my white linen suit and he's still there.

"I didn't see you," he says, disappointed-like. As if maybe I'd lied to him.

Of course! He was expecting what he was looking at while I'm mixing, while he's buying me drinks.

"You didn't see me?"

"No. I didn't see you.

"I was the red head!" I say.

"Oh." He looks at me funny. "Oh! Oh, my God!" he blurts out. "You're a boy!"

"Yes. I'm sorry if you didn't know."

"No, I didn't. Because, the way you look now, I would never guess."

What a compliment! What a **compliment!**

My head gets so big it's almost exploding. And this man doesn't get insulted because he knows I'm not trying to lead him on. He's so intrigued, so amazed, so flabbergasted that he doesn't get upset.

He'd honked and waved at me. And I waved back, never dreaming! Because I don't think, when I'm in drag, that you see me as a woman. I think you know I'm a man in disguise. I'm not even thinking about what you're thinking. I'm just thinking of how to please you with my looks and my actions and my ways. And, naturally, he thought he saw a **girl** in the doorway. He doesn't know it's a boy in drag.

He thinks, "Well, she waved back. I got a chance here!" And he parks the car and comes in. He's never been in this bar before. He doesn't know they do drag here, so when I say I'm in the show, he thinks it's a girls' show! Honest mistake!

What a thrill! The on-stage me and the Joan Crawford me **are** growing farther and farther apart. More distinguishable from each other. I'm making **exactly** the impression I want to make, on stage and off!

Before I leave my memories of The Silver Dollar, I want to share some back-stage, dressing room tips I learned from another queen working there, Tommy Baker, who I also knew from San Jose.

I was trying to get dressed for my act and I said, "Tommy, do me a favor, please, and zip me up?"

"This once!" she said, sort of snotty. "But, in the future, Miss Phillips, if you cannot zip it yourself, **do not wear it!**"

And so she showed me -- you tie a string to the zipper and throw the string over your shoulder and when you pull the string, that zips you. You do it. Not imposing on anyone else. So that was "if you can't zip it, don't wear it!"

These are little things you learn as you get experience. Like **don't borrow! Never!**

"Can I borrow your lipstick?"

No! No! No! No! No!

Because once you do that, it becomes a habit. If you're not there sometime when they're there, they're using your lipstick before you get there and, all of a sudden, you're out! And lipstick, in those days, was expensive! It was like red cold cream. You put it on with a brush, and you didn't put straws or cigarettes in your mouth or touch it or lick your lips or nothing! Because it came right off! But, while it was on, you had gorgeous red lips!

You couldn't use the Five & Dime stuff, the cheap every-day lipstick in tubes that women used, because you couldn't get it all off after the show, not even with cold cream, and if you appeared on the street even with just a tinge of lipstick on, you could get arrested for being in drag. That was taboo! So you

put this cream on just before you went on stage, on the floor, or just before you went to mix.

Mine was always off. My lips were **always** out of lipstick! Because after so many pills, roses, you get the dries! And when you get the dries, you keep licking your lips for saliva -- and there's nothing there except this red -- what was it, cherry red? It came in a little jar about the size of a fifty-cent piece. It was theatrical lipstick and you used it just for drag.

So you never **ever** borrowed! Or let anyone borrow from you!

Next stop Fresno!

In between stops at The Colonial Club and The Silver Dollar and The Miami Club, I spent some time at The Redwood Inn in Fresno. That was a fun club, too! Even if it was almost out in the desert. Isn't there a desert near Fresno? I'm not good at geography but it seems to me I remember there was this town to stop in, and this club was the end of the thing, off the far end of the town, and from then on it was desert.

It was a big club. It was more like a . . . it looked like a hunting lodge or something. It was big and rambling, wood and bricks and everything, big fireplace, and a nice bar. It was a lovely club. Lovely club. Very well laid out. This side was the dining room. This side, the bar. And it had a nice entrance and all. But you hadda go some to get back into town.

Run by two nuts! Sam and Laurie . . . or was it Lonnie? Yes. Lonnie. Tolero. Sam was gorgeous. Italian. Black hair. Eyes that could melt you. Crazy for women! Drove the queens

insane. But he didn't tease them or lead them on. And Lonnie was . . . his wife. She was discontented with him. So she drank . . . at the bar. And she would cruise different men. Send them a look that says, "I'm yours!" and this and that. And Sam would be the bartender and pay no attention to what she was doing. She was like a B-girl for the bar!

We had a settu one night, her and I. She said something to me and I said something to her, and it went on and on. I'm on roses and she's on booze. And all of a sudden, I don't know what it was I said, but she threw a drink in my face!

While I'm in drag! At the bar! In my face! Ruining the make-up it took me an hour to put on!

And to my best recollection, I think her husband, Sam, leaned across the bar and caught my arm just before I went starting for her face! I'm not Joan Crawford, the mystery woman, now. I'm Joan Crawford who beat her kids with a coat hanger! I'm resenting what she did -- my makeup's ruined -- and, now, I'm a cunt on wheels! You slap me, honey, there's no way I'm not slapping you back!

Her husband caught me just before I slapped her. And I would have slapped her hard. I would have gave it to her! But anyway, it was over, and he was very nice about it. But she was still a bitch on wheels . . . like so many cunts are. Like Carroll Wallace! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

But there was one nice queen there. Chuck Gregg. Not a drag queen even though he looked cute in drag. Just a campy

queen. He played the piano at The Redwood Inn. Lived there, too, sometimes. When he was playing there. Otherwise, he lived in Tulare. I can show you his picture. It's in the album. He was meticulous! A haircut, a suit, everything. He'd come to work looking just great. He played the piano and, luckily, he took pills! So he had this connection in Fresno, and if I didn't get any from The City when I went, he would have some for me.

We were like two magpies together. We would have what we called races. See who could finish the song first. Him playing the piano? Or me singing it? There was only one song we could do this with. "Just Because." Remember it? It takes a real country twang:

Just because you think you're so pretty,
Just because you think you're so smart,
Just because you think you have someone. . . .

Then the second chorus, **after** the pills hit:

Justbecauseyouthinkyouresopretty,
Di di di di di dididididididi. . . !

His hands would be flying on the keys. And my mouth: di di di di di dididididi.

One night, I finished before him, and I cried, "I won!" Not thinking . . . not realizing I'm on stage doing this in front of an audience! Once we got started, I just said to myself, "I've gotta finish this before he does!" And I was di di di di di didididi!

We were both on pills or we couldn't have done this otherwise. Well, the audience realized what we were doing because my words were coming out so fast you couldn't understand them and his little fingers were going up and down on the keys.

"More! More! Encore encore encore!" The audience is screaming. And I looked at Chuck and I said, "What could follow that?" And he said, "Nothing! I give up! You win!" And that ended the duel for that night. The audience loved it!

He was a real sweetie, Chuck.

One night, after work, we're both in our rooms wired on roses. I'm working on my limericks, as usual. And he must have been working on his face because he shows up at my door.

"I'm not sure," he says. "Did I get it?"

"I don't know what you're looking for."

"I've got a blackhead or an ingrown hair right here." He points to a spot in the middle of his cheek. There's nothing there. I check carefully 'cause I know how meticulous he is, and there is **absolutely** nothing there.

"I don't see anything!" I tell him.

He went back to his room.

I stayed up, playing with my limericks.

Here's to the girl from France
Who boarded a train in a trance --
While the engineer fucked her
So did the conductor,
And the brakeman went off in his pants!

Then I would re-arrange it seventeen times before I liked what it was. I'd give her a name. I'd change the situation. I'd have all these different versions of the same limerick and page after page scratched out. And when you start . . . when you start on the pills, your handwriting is just **f l a w l e s s**! Like, what was that system we all learned at school? Those cards over the blackboard. White writing on black. Flawless! Your handwriting was beautiful because you were just starting on your trip. But by the next morning, you couldn't have read what I had written. The mind was going tic tic tic tic tic tic! And you'd be trying to put all these tic tic tic's down. If it could've been shorthand, fine! But I had to write furiously. The pencil had to be writing what your thoughts were, and you had to finish whatever it was. Otherwise, you'd have no gift to show Chuck -- what you had created all night long.

In the morning, he came in with this huge scab on his cheek.

"What the hell have you done to your face?"

"I couldn't find it! I couldn't find it. . . !

"You shouldn't have started looking for it in the first place!" I snapped at him like a mother hen.

He used to call himself Charlotte even though he wasn't in drag. He had lots of different jobs. And he was just a jewel! Because anybody who takes pills, who takes roses, you don't have to explain anything to them. He dug me and I dug him. Taking pills was just fun-sies. It wasn't going on a bad trip or wrecking things and this and that.

When you're on the road, I was learning, you have to look for people that you can get along with, that are Gay. And after awhile, all the towns are alike. We slept most of the day and then stayed up late after work so I never got to see too much of Fresno or any other town. It was just get up, eat, go to work. It was two weeks here, two weeks there, two weeks somewhere else. By now, I was getting used to it because, after Ogden, I was never too far from San Francisco, never too far from home.

Then, after the fire at The Colonial Club, one of the queens, Bobby Ray, got a telegram from Poppy Lane: "Come to New Orleans!" Now, Bobby Ray was a dancer, a stripper, who was working The Colonial Club with us when it burned down. A tall, thin queen -- had a very pretty face, a lovely body. He was the one that gave me advice about falsies. Tits.

"You want 'em to bounce!" Bobby Ray said.

He filled his with bird seed. Put 'em in a nylon sock and then put 'em in his stripper's bra and had elastic on the bra straps so that when he walked they would bounce like a real girl's do.

So I tried bird seed.

It didn't bounce quite right.

I tried rice. I tried sand. I tried rocks, even. I tried everything. And, finally, I ended up with water! In the plastic bags you buy groceries in at the market. I put water in one and then inserted it in four more and tied knots. I'd heat them before I put them on because cold water against the body is

chilling! So they were warm to your body and then they would take your own temperature and stay warm. And they bounced! Oh, they bounced just right for effect. That was the gimmick -- the tits! Making 'em bounce!

But never wear black. I made the mistake of wearing a black sweater once, and I just wasn't going over. Why? Why?

"It's the tits!" Bobby Ray said when I came off the floor. "Wear black and they can't see the tits bounce!"

No wonder I wasn't going over!

So after the fire, we're all stranded in San Jose with no clothes, no money, no nothing! Then, Bobby Ray gets this call from Poppi Lane, a queen he knows from somewhere -- we're all part of the same network -- to come work at The My-Oh-My Club in New Orleans. Bobby Ray says to me, "Why don't you come, too! There's nothing here anymore."

Why not? It seemed like a good thing to do.

I packed up what little I had left, said goodbye to Aunt Millie, and prepared to start all over again in New Orleans.

I thought it would be fabulous!

It was -- and it wasn't!

We went by train. We took *The Coast Starlight* from San Francisco to L.A. A beautiful ride! But, then, we got a cattle train out of L.A. to New Orleans. It was called *The Argonaut* and it went from L.A. to New Orleans through Texas. I thought Texas must be the entire world because it took us **days** to get across it.

And the train was loaded with servicemen! Overflowing with soldiers, sailors, marines! Like cattle! I guess it must have been during the Korean War or something. It was after World War II, I know that.

And it was loaded with servicemen!

And their wives.

And their kids!

And we had all this going on in the car because we couldn't afford a private compartment, a sleeper. We sat up the whole way!

When we finally got there, Poppi Lane said, "Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" Then he left us high and dry. He'd never made any arrangements for us to stay in a hotel or anywhere. And we didn't know anything about New Orleans. But we got this room, Bobby Ray and I. We got a room in this hotel. Huge. And hot! It was **hot** weather. We had to get a fan for the window in order to survive.

I found out pretty quick that New Orleans was **hard**! You had to work to **survive** there! And I survived there for five-and-a-half months. For one thing, The My-Oh-My was a slave shop! Talk about a club that was **cheap**! He didn't even want to pay union wages. He gave you what he thought you needed instead. And he **made** you mix with the customers to hustle "B" drinks!

"I'm here to do drag!" I said, very indignant. "I'm **not** here to hustle drinks from the customers!"

"You hustle drinks," he said, "**or else!**"

So I mixed with customers and hustled "B" drinks and all that stuff. It was vile! You got 25 cents if they ordered you a whiskey and 50 cents if it was a brandy. Both of them were really cheap vermouth mixed with coke! And you table-hopped as fast as you could and told them jokes and flattered them and this and that, and then got back and did your show!

But it was still fun because you were in **New Orleans!** Which is one of the three things in life I'll never forget. Mardi Gras in New Orleans! The second was the Aurora Borealis in Alaska. And number three was meeting Tallulah Bankhead when I worked at Finn's.

Mardi Gras was the wiiiiiiinnnnndiest day in the city. Windiest day in the world! We'd stayed up all night getting ready because we could actually hit the streets in drag! Legally! Bobby Ray was wearing a harem outfit -- a great big white skirt with gold brocade around the bottom and a beautiful wig that won't stop! He had set this wig the night before so it would look really curly. And he was **exquisite!**

I wore a purple blouse, a brown skirt, my black high-heeled shoes and my feather-cut wig. Ms. Well Tailored. And off we went to Mardi Gras!

Well, as soon as we hit the street, the wind took every bit of curl out of Bobby Ray's wig. But he still looked lovely. So we just laughed about it and went to downtown Canal Street which is where the parades were. It lasted three days and the queens were allowed to go out in drag the last day, which is what this

was. We took up the whole street. There was no traffic! There was just Mardi Gras!

Now, we're in high heels. In the clubs, we walk on rugs and on the stage so the heels don't bother you. But now I'm on concrete for a good ten hours. In heels! So we're walking around and our feet hurt. And we're just tossing the pills down like crazy to make one club after another. 'Cause you'd be walking down the street and somebody would recognize you from the club.

"Come in! Come in! Have a drink with us!"

Booze! Dexedrine! Benzedrine! Uppers!

Ooooooooooh, God! Why did they take them off the market!

And we were doing all this drinking during the day and had to go to work that night but that wasn't worrying you because you were having a **fabulous** time! And you had your roses!

It was club club club club club! And all this walking on the streets, with crowds like Market Street in San Francisco when everyone's out shopping the day after Thanksgiving. This is what it was like on the sidewalk. You're in drag. There's people all around you in costume. And there's people not in costume.

Now, straight guys don't know you're in drag if you're not made up funny or exotic. And I'd made up serious. Well, I'm walking along with Bobby Ray. And some guy reaches down and **gropes** me before I even see who he is!

He **gropes** me -- I mean, he grabs a real handful -- and then he gets a **funny** look on his face! Like its taking something a

few seconds to register before he pulls his hand away. In a hurry.

"Oh!" he says. "Oh, I'm sorry, **Sir!**"

It all happened so fast, I just kept on walking. Then it dawned on me what had happened. The handful he had grabbed wasn't a **box!** It was a **basket** instead! And when he realized this, he couldn't get his hand away fast enough!

I must have blushed, because Bobby Ray said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?"

"That guy just **groped** me! And then he said, 'I'm sorry, **SIR!**'"

Well, Bobby Ray broke out laughing. And then I broke out laughing. It was embarrassment but it was also pleasure.

My appearance convinced this guy that I was a girl! Until he touched me!

We just howled after!

But we made all the clubs, drank ourselves into a stupor, and went to work. And all the next day we paid the consequences. Walking around hadn't bothered us because we'd been loaded and stoned and all that. But the next day -- the feet were like bricks! **Sore!** You wouldn't believe from all the cement walking!

And that was Mardi Gras! Which I'll never forget!

It was fabulous!

But the working conditions at The My-Oh-My were shit! You got \$65 a week -- which was barely union minimum for **chorus**, not for specialty acts like we were which should have paid at least

\$85 a week -- and what you made off hustling "B" drinks. It was like a small Mafia club.

There were three owners; you only saw two! The third one was a silent one; you never saw him. And one was a queen named Pat Waters, and he used to come in the dressing room, and he would stir the shit! A lot like Carroll Wallace later on.

He'd pick up somebody's compact and would be puffing his face, patting his face with somebody else's powder, and he'd say, "I don't know, Miss Phillips, but I don't think I'd let her talk that way about me!"

And I'd say, "Who? Who said what?" and I'd get all enraged, and he would get off on this, on upsetting me. And later, one of the queens would say, "Don't pay no attention! She's only bullshitting." But he'd go on and on, and I'd fall for it every time. I'd be a nervous wreck!

The club liked me, though. And the town liked me because I did comedy and I sang Western songs, and if they were Western, they liked me. It was outside the city, The My-Oh-My Club, on Lake Ponchartraine. And there were certain customers that came into certain clubs that liked certain queens and would have them to their table. There was this one woman, a straight woman named Betty who'd come in with her bottle and she'd get set-ups and she'd say, "Tell Jackie I want her over at the table." And I'd be there all night, usually me and some other queen, for all the floor shows. She was such a nice woman. And she liked queens. That was all there was to it. And then, if you weren't with

someone comfortable like Betty, there was the hustle and bustle of jumping around, table hopping, and getting as many "B" drinks as you could.

There was one time I was hustling drinks at a table with another queen and a couple of guys. This one guy got very anxious to be . . . to be **taken care of** before he left the city or wherever he was going.

"Oh, please. Please!" I heard him begging this other queen. "Won't you **please** help me out?"

Well, I could tell that underneath the table, this queen was working his. . . ! You know, dear.

Later, after he'd come and gone, this queen says to me real confidential, "Well, thank goodness, I don't think anyone saw me playing with him under the table!"

And Miss Phillips couldn't help smirking, "Oh, yes, dear! No one saw you **except the entire band!** They were watching you the whole time!"

The band was **behind** her, and she's not watching the band. She's looking around the room, very demure-like, so no one will know what she's doing under the table. She completely forgot about the band!

The piano player, when he took his break, came over and said to her, "Well, that was **very ladylike!**"

And we just broke up!

But the guy was gorgeous!

And he was "Oh, please please please. . . !"

And he must have had a lovely big hardon and everything from the expression on that queen's face.

Oh, hustling "B" drinks! I hated it. Some queens, I mean, they were just like . . . they played like it looked like hopscotch. If you sat at a table and just watched the queens like Jean LaMar and Ricki San Juan, they looked like they were playing hopscotch at tables. They were there for two seconds total and got the "B" drink and flew to the next table. They kept score with matches. (You had to keep score or the boss'd cheat you!) I kept score with bracelets. I'd take one off the right wrist and put it on the left wrist. If I had five bracelets on my left arm by the end of the evening, I felt lucky.

Now, Ricki San Juan I knew from San Francisco. But Jean LaMar. She lived in New Orleans. She was bi-sexual in that she had a wife and a male lover. But the thing was, she had a voice that was gorgeous.

You won't admit
You love me,
And so
How am I to know?
You only tell me,
Perhaps,
Perhaps,
Perhaps. . . !

She'd sing that in Spanish. And she -- crazy queen -- she'd get in the middle of a bridge or something and she'd hit this high note: "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!"

She'd hold this high, lovely note for a long time and then, in a low bass voice, she'd say to some woman in the front row: "You didn't think I had it in me, did you, honey?"

The audience would break up and then she'd go back into this high note and finish the song. These are the crazy things queens did to get laughs.

She came to San Francisco once.

In the old days, the Finnochio's travelled a lot and they were in New Orleans one time and saw Jean LaMar, and they said, "Come to San Francisco when you're through with your contract here." So she came to San Francisco and caused quite a stir. New Latin blood! Thrown to the San Francisco Old Timers! **Old Tigers** is more like it!

Ohhh, there was lots of friction, I'm told, at Finnochio's. The Old Timers at Finnochio's in those days -- this was long before my time there -- resented any new blood coming in because that might push them out if the new one was someone with more talent. So there was a lot of shit flying around when Jean LaMar was there. But Jean LaMar just liked to get in drag and do her show. Not be the cause of friction. So she got tired of all the shit went back to New Orleans.

There was this doorman at the club in New Orleans, and he liked me. He said, "If anyone every bothers you," he said, "you just let me know. I'll rip their head off!"

And he was able to rip their head off. I mean, he was a butch, macho man! And I thought he was cute. He was straight, I

think. Unfortunately, he was still straight after I got through with him!

He asked me for a date one night. Could he take me home? So, after the club closed, when I got out of drag, he took me for breakfast. And everybody in the restaurant knew him and knew who I was so this could be very dangerous on his manhood, his reputation. Evidently he didn't care.

Well, he took me home. And we were going to bed. And as he was getting undressed, he took off his wooden leg! He just had a limp when I saw him at the club. I didn't know he had a wooden leg! And I'm ashamed of what happened. But I cringed. I couldn't do anything! It just upset me.

Today it wouldn't bother me. Because . . . I don't know how it is that you go through life and experience things and change, but today it wouldn't bother me. I'd say, "OK. Fine. No problem." But I couldn't do anything then, and . . . and . . . and he saw this reaction and there was no verbal words passed, but you could feel he sort of like was sorry.

It was very frustrating for both of us. And I was ashamed of doing it. I was embarrassed by doing it. Because it wasn't intentional. It's just that I was unprepared for it. And he was such a sweet man.

I guess he might have told me beforehand. Like I **always** tell people I'm Gay.

"Can I stay in your house? Can I eat off your plates?"

"Oh, sure!" or "No! No!"

I learned my lesson a long time ago on that one!

My friend, Angela, a hostess from one of the clubs in Oregon, was in The City and she was invited to someone's house on Hill Street for supper and asked, "Can I bring a friend?"

"Oh, bring him!" they said.

And this is where I made up my mind to tell people I'm Gay or for you to tell them I'm Gay **before** you take me to their house because Angela didn't tell them I was Gay because she thought nothing of it.

Well, we had dinner. The two women went into the kitchen to wash the dishes, and he says, "Come in the front room. I want to show you something."

He pulls back this enormous tapestry on one of the living room walls, and there was this Greek painting! *Worth His Weight in Gold!* That was the title. This guy in the picture's dick was laid on this scale, and on the other side was all this gold. So it's **big!** Like over fourteen inches of solid dick on this scale!

I said, "Oh, my word!"

I felt I was being told in so many words: "This is a secret of ours, and I'm showing it to you to let you know you can feel free to say anything you want here."

I thought, "Well, fine, they're showing me this so I can relax."

Later on, the women came back and we were sitting having coffee. He turned to me and said, real friendly, "By the way, Jack, what do you do for a living?"

"I'm a Female Impersonator," I said.

Well! Not only did the walls shed ice, the coffee table and everything that was crystal cracked from this absolute freeze that took over the room! The dog even got up from my feet where I was petting it and moved away!

He looked at his wife.

She looked at him.

They both looked at Angela.

I knew exactly what had happened! She had brought a freak into their house. They were furious with her for bringing me. How dare she bring one of those into their house because now they had to throw those dishes away that I ate off of. It was this kind of an attitude.

And I said to myself, "Get out of this quick, Miss Crawford!"

"Oh, Angela. Angela," I said as nice as I could. "We have to go. We're already late for that other engagement this evening."

And I got us out of there!

The minute I got us on the sidewalk, I said, "Now, don't ever do this again!"

She said, "What? What was that all about? What appointment do we have?"

I said, "Didn't you see? The minute I told the man I was a Female Impersonator, the dog even got up and moved! That's how cold it got. That's what kind of a reception!"

I said, "Not only did they want me out of there immediately, but the dog even sensed their hatred of queers."

I said, "Always tell people from now on that I'm bringing a friend, and he's Gay! Do you mind? So we can eliminate this kind of embarrassment."

I said, "Because that was awful. Not only was it bad taste them doing it, they did it so obviously! You don't need those kind of friends."

Angela was a lovely person, but she hadn't realized what was happening. What straight person would? She's never felt that kind of prejudice; she was just taking a friend to dinner.

"Always tell people," I said.

"I had no idea. You took care of it lovely."

"I had to. . . !"

One last nice thing about New Orleans. I met an old friend there that I hadn't seen in years. Not since the early days on Union Square. Johnny McFarland. I knew him before I did any drag, before I went to Ogden, Utah. One night, I got arrested by the Vice Squad on Union Square, and so did Johnny McFarland. And Aunt Millie came down to bail me out, as usual, and she bailed Johnny out too because he had no family in San Francisco.

We became good friends and ran around together for awhile. Not lovers. Just queens. Then, for some reason, people part. And Johnny McFarland went to New Orleans -- years and years before I went there. I didn't meet him again, even hear from him again, until I was working The My-Oh-My. He was bartender in an

after-hours Gay bar, The Rendezvous. It was in the French Quarter and all the queens used to go there after their own bar, their own club, closed. We went there after drag. And so Johnny McFarland and I recognized each other and we were able to refresh our old memory days. And it's like -- I love this -- when you meet somebody years and years later, and there's been no time lapse. You just pick up the conversation from wherever, whatever you were talking about. To me, this is a sign of staying young. You don't let time interfere with your life. You don't say, "I've become old. I've become dull!" You pick up this freshness, this youth that you had when you first met! That's the way Johnny McFarland and I were.

Oh, and the Army almost got me while I was there! I got called in for a physical! And this green psychiatrist asks me what I do for a living. "I'm a Female Impersonator," I say. Well, honey, he didn't know what to do! Finally, he's so flustered, he has to ask another doctor to come in and take over the interview. That was the last I heard from the Army.

After almost six months, I was homesick and wanted to go back to San Francisco. And Ricki San Juan, who had joined us in New Orleans, got us into The Forty-Seven Club in Brisbane. That's where The Bitch, Carroll Wallace found me!

People say, "Is that where you met Carroll Wallace?"

And I say, "No, Honey! That's where Carroll Wallace met me!"

But that's a whole story in itself, dear.

The Forty-Seven Club was a fun club, and Ricki San Juan somehow got us in there. Maybe because he and I were both Italian. The club was run by Tony DeMarco. And I'm Italian -- Dell Torre -- and Ricki San Juan's Italian. And dagos stick together. Now, she's a go-getter, Ricki San Juan. A pusher. A get-up-and-go queen. She hustled the jobs for us in El Cerrito and Brisbane. She would say, "Direct from New Orleans. . . ! Ricki San Juan. And Wacky Jackie Phillips, the Riotous Redhead! With Ray Saunders and Russell Reed" and this and that.

Brisbane is close to San Francisco. It's set in a gully. You drive by on the freeway going South and if you don't look to your right, you won't see it. I never knew it was there. I heard of it but I never knew it was there. It's just a sleepy, quiet little town. So The Forty-Seven Club was a real neighborhood bar. And Tony DeMarco liked me. Liked me because my name was Dell Torre. No matter if your professional name is Jackie Phillips or not, they know you're Italian and that's good enough for them.

"Ah! Another one of the clan," they say proudly, and they hire you.

So it's just a neighborhood bar, as I say. And I'm not dreaming that customers from San Francisco would come all the way down to Brisbane to this little bar. So the first night I'm just singing along, singing my heart out, when I hear this commotion.

"Yeeeaay! It's Billy!"

"No. Can't be!"

"Yes! It's Billy, I tell ya. Hey, Billy! Come on over and have a drink when you're done!"

And I'm singing, I'm performing, so I'm not paying full attention. I'm not responding. But I know I heard someone say "Billy . . . it's Billy!" and my guard is up. I'm saying to myself through my whole act: "What what what what what?"

And when I come out to mix after my number, someone calls, "Hey, Dell Torre, over here!"

I damn near died because nobody I know, **nobody** up to this point, certainly nobody in Bernal Heights, knows I'm a drag queen!

I go out of town so they **won't** know this!

My Aunt Millie knows, but she doesn't want the neighbors to know that Billy turned out to be a girl after all! So it's not discussed. Aunt Millie tells them anything, the neighbors: "Oh, Billy's out of town working. Blah. Blah. Blah. Blah. Blah." And I'm not flashing myself around the neighborhood in girls' clothes -- not since that teen-age Halloween party -- or telling anybody that my life is different now since I've found I can make a living as a drag.

So I'm in Brisbane. Which is close to San Francisco. And bingo!

"Billy! Come on over and have a drink!"

I look and here is my neighbor, Bobby Cicero, and his family! His wife and his cousin and the brother. All of them were kids I skated with when I was a kid, and they're all here in

Brisbane at this table in The Forty Seven Club! 'Cause they're Italian, too!

"My God, Billy, we had no idea!"

"I didn't either -- for a long time!"

And they think the show is great! In fact, they think I'm great! They loved my act!

I didn't say, "Oh, don't tell!" There was no discussion about it. Because I realized something very important.

I didn't care anymore!

It was like Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager* when she comes home from that cruise after the sanitarium, and she gets that calm, proud expression on her face, and she says, "I'm not afraid anymore, Mother! I'm not afraid!"

Well, I wasn't afraid anymore, either! It was just fun seeing neighbors having fun. And here I was entertaining my neighbors the way I had on the front steps all those years ago. For the first time in my life, it seemed to me, I was out! Publicly out! And there wasn't no violence. No beating up. No being arrested.

It was a freeing moment for me!

Here you are holding all this frustration in. You only get it out in drag. And then, all of a sudden, here are some people that know you and know you're in drag. And they're enjoying your performance. It's twice as exhilarating!

And they came back! Yes. We played there three weekends -- Friday, Saturday, and Sunday -- and they came back every weekend.

They loved us! And Tony DeMarco loved us. For three nights each week while we were there, he'd say, "Jesus, my club has never been packed like this!"

And The Forty-Seven Club's where Carroll Wallace and I met! Carroll Wallace. "The World's Most Beautiful Boy." Still gorgeous, even when I met him. Had lovely bone structure. She looked fabulous in drag because of that face. But she had no talent. None! A deep voice: **BLAH BLAH BLAH**.

A manipulator from the word Go! She saw her chance to grab on to this little bundle of talent in Brisbane and make money off her. She sees the show, she sees how good I am, and she wants to take me to Alaska for her revue, The Carroll Revue.

Alaska! Shit! It's cold up there!

"I don't want to go to Alaska!" I say. New Orleans had been far away enough. But Alaska!

"I don't want to leave. These are my friends. I've been working with them for a long time."

And Carroll Wallace, without batting an eye, says, "Oh, they're fabulous, too! Why don't I take the whole show to Alaska?"

Little did we realize, she didn't **have** a show without us! So we're playing right into her hands.

"All right," I said, innocent that I am. "If they'll go, I'll go!"

Except for Ricki San Juan, they said, "Yes!"

So Russell Reed and Ray Saunders and I are going North to Alaska with The World's Most Manipulative Bitch!

Now, I didn't know it then. I didn't know Carroll Wallace well enough to know that it would be one of those "I'll promise you this but I'll give you that" deals. I had a contract with her for the whole Alaska tour. She promised me \$150 a week! And that was good money for drag in those days.

So, because I don't know any better, I'm taking her at her word. I join The Carroll Revue. But she was a manipulator, and I wasn't a clever queen or money-conscious contract-wise and all that. So, still wanting to do drag, I went along with her for much too long! I would be gone for months at a time, but I got the experience I wanted, I needed. I got to see Alaska and Hawaii and all the states in the Northwest: Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho. Even Nevada and Arizona.

Other than that, she was a nasty person! I mean, the **treachery** of that woman! It was fun to do The Revue, and I could manage to get along on the little she paid me -- but what I didn't realize was the toll it took. I was being . . . **scraped!** Scraped like a razor blade. Tons of skin taken off and not feeling it. And the thing that really hurt later was her admitting it to our face.

"Yes. Yes, of course!" she said when we confronted her years later, that sick smile on her face that you wanted to slap off. "Yes. I made lots of money on you guys."

Then she looks right at me. "I got a lot of apartment buildings from you, my dear!"

She said this to my face!

She gave us a straight salary. As little as she could get away with. And she pocketed the rest.

She was buying all that real estate on money that should have been ours. She was sending it home to her wife! Gets confusing doesn't it when you're dealing with a married drag queen.

And throwing that up in our face wasn't kosher. You didn't have to do that, you know. If you're pulling somebody's balls off, don't tell him how much he's being hurt! She used to think, when I called her *Ortho*, that I meant the mattress. Oh, no, honey. I meant the weed killer!

And the other thing. The one thing I never could and never will overlook -- the thing she did to me years later! May she burn in hell for that! But that's getting ahead of my telling you first about my years with *The Bitch* and *The Carroll Revue*!

Part Two

The lovely CW!

Carroll Wallace, the world's most beautiful boy!

And the most manipulative.

The most vicious.

The most cruel.

The most vile.

The most dishonest.

The Bitch of all ages!

When I even think that name, there's hatred. I get so angry, I come up blank. The other day I was having lunch with some of the old queens, and someone just said the name, *Carroll Wallace*.

"Please. I'm trying to eat!" I said. "Don't mention that name. It makes me too nervous even now!"

It's so difficult for me to deal with these memories because I can't forgive her. I **can not** forgive her! I forgive everyone else in my life. I forgive my Aunt Millie and my brother Bud for what they did to me later. But I **don't forgive her!**

Examples?

You want examples?

Once, I quit her revue and went back to work for Kress's again, and because Carroll is Carroll, she was having trouble holding on to queens. I mean, nobody liked her. Nobody! And she needed me. She needed me to spice up the show. She needed me to hold the revue together, to hold the kids together. People

liked me. They liked my act. And the other queens liked me because I never started any trouble. I minded my business. And I had left her revue. I was just tired of dealing with her, and I went back to work as a stock boy at Kress's.

So, about a year after I quit her, CW called me and said how she wanted me back.

I said, "No. I'm working at Kress's. I don't want to be bothered going in drag again."

And I thought that was that.

But that Friday, the boss comes up to me and says, "Pick up your paycheck."

"What?"

"Pick up your paycheck. You close tonight!"

"But I was hired for permanent!"

"You close tonight," he says again.

So I went and got my check and left. It didn't dawn on me till afterwards, he'd said, "You close tonight."

That's not a **business** expression, that's a **show** term.

I said to myself, "Now, why would he say **that**?"

The next day I found out.

Carroll Wallace called me again. "Are you interested in coming back?"

"I might as well. I just was fired."

"Oh?"

"And, you know, the boss used the funniest term. He said, 'You close tonight!'"

"I know!" said CW. Then, after her usual pause for effect,
"I told him to say that!"

The bitch!

The bitch!

She had called Kress's after I told her I was working there
and said, "Is William Dell Torre there?"

"Yes."

"May I speak with him?"

"No. Not during working hours."

"Well, he was in my drag revue once before. The Carroll
Revue. . . .!"

She went through this whole routine and told them I was a
Female Impersonator. She said, "I'd like to have him back in my
show." She said, "If you're going to let him go, tell him he
closes tonight and see how he responds to that!"

And she told me she did all this! Whatever worked for her
was all right. She didn't care about anybody else's feelings,
their needs!

But I was young.

I was gullible.

I was out of work.

And I was stupid again!

Still, I can overlook this. All these things. Except that
one thing of fucking me over at Finn's. **That** I can't get over!
That gets me agitated all over again. Oooooouuuuuuuuu! But

getting angry like this just wears me out. Still! After all these years! I could still . . . !

You know, I left her one other time while we were touring. Just couldn't take any more. Then I missed drag so I went back with her, out on the road. And we'd go into these clubs I'd played before. And people would see me and say, "Oh, my God, Jackie, I'm so glad to see you're still here!"

"Why? What did you think happened?"

"We heard you died?" Looking right at Carroll Wallace.

Prior to my coming back to her, Carroll would tell people when they asked why I wasn't in the Revue anymore, "Oh, didn't you hear. Jackie died!" She just couldn't stand for them to think anybody might leave her. Then she must have forgot all about it because she took me back to these same clubs where she'd told the people I was dead.

Why else would she tell them that? Because I wasn't with her. Because I didn't want to be with her. She would get revenge that way. "Oh, Jackie's dead. I'm sorry he's not with us any more. He died!"

Enough!

Take three deep breaths, Miss Phillips!

All right, dear, what was life like on tour with The Carroll Revue? Drag in the great northwest! Now, I've already told you I can't remember dates. Or the names of some of the clubs, either, for that matter. Or even the names of some of the lovers I had along the way. Can't remember what order I played the

clubs in -- when we were here and when we were there and this and that. So, if it's all right with you, dear, I'll just go state by state, and, since Alaska and Hawaii weren't even states then, territory by territory!

I know the first stop. Fairbanks, Alaska!

Russell Reed and Ray Saunders and I left San Francisco for the frozen tundra! We took a plane to Seattle. Changed there for a plane to Fairbanks. Well, flying over all that country on the way to Alaska, I looked out the window and I saw **nothing!** Nothing except mountains and **slush!** Gray slush!

I thought, "If this thing goes down here, no one will ever find us!"

No one in the world would know where we were in all this rubbish! And it was scary! But we landed, finally, and, before we could even unpack our bags, we immediately had to do a show.

Ray and Russell and me, we were supposed to live in one of the boss's houses. A house he owned that was not in town, just on the outskirts where there was not a lot of houses. Like this was on one block and there was a couple of houses on the next block. There was no sidewalk. Just gravel for walkways. And the street was gravel, too. But we were gonna live there for free. The first night, after the show, some customers volunteered to drive us home and came in with us. Jesus! It was cold in that house!

We looked all around for the switch to turn the heat on, and they said, "Oh, no. No switch! You have to go down in the

basement and build a fire in the furnace and keep throwing coal on it to get the place warm. We'll come back tomorrow and help you."

And they left.

Well, what did three queens from San Francisco know about building fires in furnaces in basements in Alaska after midnight? We decided to wait for them to come back in the morning. And we piled everything we owned, all our clothes, everything, on top of the beds.

The next morning, after a cold, cold night, I sat on the edge of the bed to put my shoes back on -- and they were **frozen to the floor!** Frozen solid.

We were in hysterics!

The customers did come back, though, and helped us shovel out all the ashes from the furnace. You touch ashes and nothing but a cloud of smoke comes up, dust comes up! We were covered in ashes. They were covered in ashes. But we finally got the furnace cleaned out and shovelled the coal in and it got lit and it got started and it worked its way up the pipes and finally heated the house.

There was a coal stove in the kitchen that you could put coal and wood into. And the first time we lit it, the fire in the stove got so hot it turned red. The whole stove! We could have set the house on fire, I guess. But we were so **cold!**

And things at the club weren't much better.

To save us from any problems, any embarrassment of the queens using either the men's T-room or the females' T-room, they gave us this . . . do you know what a five-gallon oil can is? Square? And the little hole where you pour it out of is like on the top. Well, they had cut the entire top off and left the two hooks, the two handles on this five gallon oil can. Put it in the dressing room.

"You can pee in that!" they said. "Use that for your bathroom."

"Not number two," they said. "Just number one."

"At the end of the night, you can dump it out the front door," they said. "Somewhere. Anywhere."

Well, we didn't bother dumping it that first night. Or the second night. Or . . . the third! Now, this was a mistake! I guess we were there a week or more when we reached the point of no return. It couldn't have anymore put in it. When we came to work that night, we **had** to take it out, with Russell Reed screaming: "There's no more room! There's no more room!"

Russell Reed and I picked up this five-gallon can of piss (which was a combination of four queens peeing) and waddled our way to the front door with this odorous can. No lid. Nothing covering it up. Thank God the club wasn't open yet!

We were lucky. We got it out the front of this club without spilling any and threw it on the ground and turned around and came back in the club. Not realizing that liquid thrown on top of ice freezers. It just freezes!

Any customer from that point on for an entire week came through the front door with the same words on their mouth: "What in the world was that awful odor as we came through the front door?"

Not looking down, because it was night -- it was **always** night there -- they wouldn't have seen it. The snow, the ice was **yellow!** The piss had frozen solid! We didn't realize. They said throw it anywhere. We thought it would just soak into the ground.

And every customer that came in had the same question: "What **is** that smell?"

Even us. We almost lost our guts when we went through the front door to go home. And it was **our** pee! Because it was strong! A solid week's waste. It was strong!

But that was Alaska!

"There will be no mixing! It's forbidden!"

That was also Alaska. Or was it just Carroll Wallace?

"This is a Territory. It's not even a state. And these are mainly servicemen. Any repercussions would cause a scandal for the United States and would mean a war between state and un-statehood!" Carroll Wallace gave us these dire warnings. "No mixing at the club," she said. "And no dating outside the club!"

Not that I was completely celibate while I was in Fairbanks, but we had to be so careful. Not careful of the authorities so much. Of Carroll Wallace! She was hell on wheels if she got crossed.

There was this one young man, though, that came in night after night. His name was Don, I think. Or Ron. No, Don. Now, he came in night after night, and out of a room full of men, to me, he was the best looking one! And he got hung up on Mother, so, finally, he spoke to me. When CW wasn't around, he would buy me drinks and stare and talk and sit there and pant. And, finally, one night he came home with me to help with the furnace to get the place warmed up.

He spent the night.

And I never saw him again in my life!

Now, maybe there was something wrong but I don't know what it was because he saw me in drag and he saw me out of drag, and I think, maybe, he was just scared of sex.

Other things made up for it, though. One night I had off, I remember. We were working seven nights a week then because there was nothing else to do. So I must have been sick or something, but I had this night off. Anyway, something in my head said, "Go outside!" And I went out of the house and I looked up in the sky, and what was going on but the Aurora Borealis!

I had heard about it. But I had never even seen pictures of it. And there it was! It was breathtaking! Different patterns after different colors and all these gorgeous things, these bands of light playing up there! It made me stop and figure how little you are when you see something that big and conducted by the biggest, the best conductor of them all. It was number two of my three most unforgettable experiences!

Well, anyway, things got worse at the house. Our shoes freezing to the floor each night. The furnace going out because we'd forget to shovel coal. And there was a pipe from the outside, a water pipe from the outside into the house and it was dripping.

"Well," I said, "this is ridiculous wasting water!"

And I turned it off.

I'm from San Francisco where the temperature never goes below 50 degrees, what do I know about dripping pipes? You don't turn pipes off in Alaska because they freeze, and I froze all the pipes up. Oh, we were a panic!

Anyway, the owner says, "If you want to pay for an apartment," he says, "the best place within walking distance of the club is The Polaris Building." Which was a new highrise. Highrise! It was nine stories up. But it was quiet, had elevators, was very respectable. And it had heat! Brand new building in Fairbanks. It cost a lot of rent.

We were on the seventh floor. And Carroll Wallace was on the ninth. She'd been in this place from the beginning. She knew how bad that house was going to be. And she'd said, "If you want to stay there free, go ahead!" That's just one of the little knick-knacks she pulled on us.

Anyway, Ray Saunders, Russell Reed, and I. No. Ray Saunders and I shared the apartment. Half and half rent. Russell Reed got a room in a cheap hotel down the street and saved more money. Russell Reed had a very brilliant mind and she

just didn't bother with the elegance of elevators and all that stuff.

So, Carroll was on the ninth floor. We were on the seventh. And somewhere along the way we noticed a lot of tricks flying up to the ninth floor, up to CW's apartment! Slut that she was! Telling us *NO TRICKS* because this is a Territory! So she could have them all for herself! *Do as I say but not as I do!* When we start paying attention and all this is going on, we figure we're missing out on a lot of stuff.

Anyway, Ray Saunders and Russell Reed and I go up to CW's room to confront her about this *NO TRICKS* business, and it got into an argument with CW saying, "I did not say that!"

And Russell Reed, louder, "Yes! You said that!"

And CW, louder even, "No, I didn't say that!"

And Russell Reed dashes across the room, grabs CW by the neck and screams, "Tell the truth, you cocksucker, or I'm sending you out this window and we're on the ninth floor!"

Now this is Russell Reed! She weighed 300 pounds, and she didn't want no nonsense about lying. This mild mannered person who never usually got angry even just went savage! "You tell the truth or else you're going out the window," she's screaming! And she was mad enough to do it.

All this time, Ray Saunders and I are sitting on the side of her bed chanting, "Throw her! Throw her! Throw her!"

Russell had Carroll Wallace by the throat, and CW must have seen the anger because she said, "All right!" She admitted that

she'd been lying. "But it was for your own good!" she said, trying to weasel out. "This is just a Territory. There are rules!"

"You're disgusting!" said Russell Reed and let go of her throat.

And we were just sitting there mesmerized, Ray Saunders and me, at this one little scene. It was like a movie! I mean this queen, this wonderful queen that's usually so calm, cool, and loveable turned into a raging bull! Believe me, she was ready to throw Carroll Wallace out the window.

"Throw her! Throw her! Throw her!" The two of us sitting there chanting.

Later, Russell Reed said it best: "That queen will make dissension in hell!"

But Russell wasn't a complete innocent, either.

After the scene with CW, we all started "mixing" a little bit more, especially outside the club, with the servicemen. And there was this one guy I saw a lot of. He understood the score. But I split up with him because one night he was late, and I went to Russell Reed's hotel to see if Russell knew where he was. And I meet the guy coming down the stairs just as I'm going up! I'm going to ask Russell Reed if she knows where this guy is, and he's been there in her room all the time. Fucking with Russell Reed!

So we stopped seeing each other immediately -- the serviceman and I -- because I said, "Oh, no. We can't have this!" But you know, dear, I never thought of being angry with Russell Reed.

And in Alaska the same thing happened again that had happened in Sacramento. This time Russell Reed was in on it, too. After the argument with CW, we began mixing more at the club, too, having drinks with the servicemen when we weren't on the floor.

This one night I'm sitting at the bar with Russell Reed, all 300 pounds of her. In drag. She looks like a Sophie Tucker-type woman. This man comes in and starts talking to her, and he buys her a drink.

We're all three sitting talking when Russell says, "Excuse me. I have to go do the show."

"Would you believe it?" the man says, a little bit angry.

"What's that?" I say.

"All this time I'm buying that woman drinks, and I've found out just now she's a man! I'll be damned! Here. Let me buy you a drink."

About halfway through this drink, I say, "You'll have to excuse me. I have to go do the show, too."

"I'll be damned again!" he says.

"Thank you," I say. "Thank you, very much."

And I walked off and left him.

That's a real compliment when someone mistakes you for a woman. Because I wasn't glamorous or petite. I was just me.

Well, dear, after three months, I'd had it. With Alaska and with CW!

"I can't stay!"

"I'll give you a raise."

"You've never paid me what you promised me in the first place. I'm leaving! No money on earth could make me stay!"

I was tired of the whole routine. Of dealing with CW. But I was mainly afraid that the air strip, the airport was gonna get so much snow on it that planes wouldn't be able to take off and I wouldn't be able to get out of there. Or worse, they'd try to take off! I could see this plane trying to get off, the wheels going and nothing happening on ice and it would crash and me being killed in Alaska.

I was panicky! No no no no no! I wanted to go while the plane still sees the ground, the dirt, the gravel -- whatever it is to take off on! And when I left, Ray Saunders and Russell Reed left, too! That's when CW had so much trouble keeping the revue together.

Now, I didn't say, "You kids have to come with me."

I just said, "I want to go!"

And they said, "No! We'll go, too."

CW was bringing in queens. . . little by little. Kara Montez, I think, worked there with us, if I'm not mistaken. Yes yes yes yes yes. She brought Kara Montez up and, I think, Don Kenrad. But she was going to have to hire others to replace us when we all left.

The flight back was a panic.

First, we hadn't been in the air very long when we start hitting air pockets. One air pocket we hit, Ray Saunders flew out of his seat this high and when he came back down, he broke the seat. And the Hostess is saying, "I'm so sorry. Are you all riiiiight? You should have had your thingie on."

And Ray says, "How did I know. No one told me we were going to hit a hole in the sky!"

And at that same time the pilot, the captain says, "Ladies and Gentlemen, fasten your seat belts. We're having a bit of rough weather."

As if we didn't know.

But there was fun, too.

Russell Reed, when they start serving food and the Hostess is going up and down the aisle, Russell Reed says, "I think I'll offer my services."

So he goes back to where the Hostess is and says, "Would you mind very much if I offered my assistance in serving the trays?"

She says, "No. I think that would be very nice."

They struck up a conversation, she saying which trays go to which seat, and Russell's up and down the aisle helping her serve trays to the people.

Well, all of a sudden, the door to the cockpit flies open and the pilot is standing there.

"You!" he shouts, real angry, pointing at Russell Reed.

"Sit down!"

Russell sits down.

"Your weight going back and forth is throwing the whole plane off balance!

Russell was so embarrassed.

And, of course, Ray Saunders and I were laughing along with the rest of the passengers. The audience, the customers. It was so funny.

Russell was a fabulous person. Memory like an elephant. We met in Union Square in the Forties. I liked him and he liked me. We worked lots of clubs together. He was a comedienne, too, but he didn't clash with me. With my act.

Russell Reed would do a strip. Three hundred pounds. All her gowns hadda be made for her. She'd have snaps so that she could pull the blouse off, and the sleeves, and whatever it was she was stripping out of. The skirts and all this would be snapped together. And she'd strip down to red BVD's, with jingle bells, like Santa's sleigh bells, on the end of the tits. One big one and one small one. Not bells. Tits! One big and one small tit. And she'd stand there and shake these two different size tits. Just flopping.

She had this panel in front saying "Slippery When Wet!" And the back panel, the one over her ass would say, "No Rear Entry!" Then, she'd strip these off, and the front would have a bunch of cherries hanging down at the crotch. The back would have a great big rat trap clutched to the red BVD's!

Russell Reed had guts! He knew he was fat, and he made no bones about it. But when he mixed with customers, he'd sit at the bar or at a table with the one who was buying him drinks, and after the preliminaries of drag -- how are you and this and that -- a conversation would start on any subject, sports, politics, history, Europe, England, and Russell would have them enthroned in his grip with his knowledge. He wasn't just another fat comedienne; he was intelligent. Had a brain like an elephant.

Even though Russell Reed and I didn't clash as far as our acts were concerned, we didn't like to work together, to appear together on the floor at the same time. Such as in the finale, putting us together. And, later, Mrs. Finnochio saw there was friction between us and she would do it **deliberately**, would get us together on stage. She was an instigator. This was an instigating institution, Finnochio's! So Mrs. Finnochio figured if you put these two clowns together on stage, you'd have something. Sparks flying on stage!

There was this one finale where Russell Reed and I had to wear costumes made for us. And so that they wouldn't wear out, she had them lined with canvas! Canvas! Against the skin! She took us to a dressmaker in Portola. He was a straight man. He and his wife, they'd never touched a queen before in their life. You could tell. And they were gonna make dresses for us, Russell Reed and me. Now, this is not funny. It's **pathetic!**

This is the way this poor woman, Mrs. Finnochio, thought. She had this man make us dresses and when it came time to measure

the bust and put the tape around, the man was sweating, he was so nervous. This little old German man was out of his mind: "What am I **doing** touching these queers?" And all this. You could read his thoughts, and I was picking up on it and I was just falling over.

"This poor man is gonna have a heart attack with you and I," I whispered to Russell Reed.

"I know," said Russell Reed, "and I could **care** less. I can't **wait** for this to be over!"

Anyway this old man made our drags and lined them with canvas. They looked lovely from the front of the club, but we were in sheer agony. **There was no air!** We were just embedded in these things.

"How do you like 'em?" Mrs. Finnochio asked the first time we put them on at the club.

"Oh, Mrs. Finnochio," I said, "I can't wait until that finale! I just love this dress. **I just love it!**"

I had to say this because once before she had asked me what I thought of a finale, and I said, "You want my real opinion?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "I think it's ridiculous. You have singers up there doing comedy, and comedienne's up there singing. And it's not working!"

I got laid off for two weeks!

Because I told the truth.

Somebody told me when I got back. "No no no no no," they said, "that was your fault! You should have agreed with her!"

So when she asked me what I thought of the new canvas-lined costumes, I said, "I love 'em!"

And Russell Reed and I would be in sheer agony. I would sweat because I was getting warm. She would sweat because she was heavy. And we would have to sing from *Annie Get Your Gun*:

Anything you can do
I can do better!
I can do anything
Better than you. . . !

Russell would sing a verse. I would sing a verse. And then one of us would say:

Yes, I can!
No, you can't
I can be a la la
I can be a de de. . . !

And one night, instead of the real lyrics, I said,

Can you make a lap!

And Russell Reed went blank! Through her make-up, you could see her blush. She didn't know I was going to say that. I didn't know I was going to say it **either!** It was strictly *ad lib*. But **it brought down the house!** Because, when you think of it, when Russell Reed sits down, there **is** no lap!

"You got me!" he said.

He's dead now, Russell Reed. Had an ingrown toe nail. This was years after we both left Finnochio's. He was living in a hotel down in the Tenderloin District and got an ingrown toe nail and went to San Francisco General Hospital when it got infected and the poison had started up his leg. They had to cut it off at the ankle. His foot. But they didn't get it all. Then they cut it off at the knee. So he was on crutches, then in a wheel chair.

It was just pathetic because he was a person who loved life so. Brilliant! Read everything. He could talk to you on any book. And football scores! He knew them from beginning to end, who played, who ran, and what year, what school, all the colors, everything! All the cheers. He went to football games since he was a kid and he always dragged me along because he needed, wanted company.

Well, anyway, when I got back from Alaska, I was tired of drag and, as I said, I went back to work for Kress's. That's where Carroll Wallace found me again!

So, The Bitch had me back!

As fast as she could, she whisked us off to Portland, which became sort of a home base for jobs in Oregon and Washington and Montana and Idaho. And since I've already told you I can't remember anything, nothing specific like dates and this and that -- blame it on age, blame it on roses! -- I'm gonna take you through this Carroll Revue situation a little out of kilter. State by state. I'll tell you everything I can remember about

those years. Well, just about everything. There are some things a girl just doesn't discuss in public.

We used to joke about the agony and the ecstasy, Russell Reed and me. Touring all around the Northwest, doing drag in lots of different places and getting paid for it, meeting some wonderful people, having occasional affairs. That was the ecstasy!

Dealing with Carroll Wallace?

The agony, honey. Real **agony!**

And, when you get right down to it, you wonder whether there ever **was** a balance. Or did Carroll Wallace create just too much agony over the years! No no no. Yes yes **yes!**

YES!

Oh, well. The clubs, the towns we played. . . .

The Tropics. That was the club in Portland, Oregon, where we played the most -- four or five times in a couple of years. I have a "What's-Going-On-Around-Town" clipping from Portland in my scrapbooks, dated 1954: "This will be the third time The Carroll Revue has played at The Tropics during the past year. . . ."

These scrapbooks sure help jog the old memory! For instance, here's a picture of me and Jean Barrios. She's smiling here, but, oh, there was one bit of drama that went on with her backstage at The Tropics.

Carroll Wallace had hired this older drag queen named Jean Barrios to fill out the revue for one of our stays at The Trop-

ics. It was a warm night. Very warm for Portland. Hot, almost. And I opened a window in the dressing room.

"Oh! Ooohh!" screams Jean Barrios. "Oooooohhhh!"

We all turn and look. She's clutching her throat and pointing at me!

"Ooohh!" she screams again. "Close that window! My voice!"

"But it's stuffy in here with all of us smoking and inhaling this powder," I say.

"I can't help that!" she says. "I can't have my voice ruined."

She sang soprano.

Falsetto.

She softened just a little. "I don't know, Miss Phillips, but you're being very nasty to your mother here."

"No," I said, not softening at all. "I just can't breathe."

So she hardened again and called out to The Bitch.

"Carroll! Do something! I have incipient bronchitis! I can't have this boy opening this window."

"All right!" I shouted before Carroll could come down on me. "I'll close the fucking window!"

And that was that. High drama at The Tropics!

That was Jean Barrios.

Campy queen. Campy queen.

She was one of the real Old Timers. She'd been in vaudeville. The Pantages circuit. Years ago. As I said, she sang falsetto. She'd rehearse and rehearse with this one song, "More

Than You Know." She had this record of it. An old 78. And she had the same pitch as the woman on the record. Was it Jane Froman? Jo Stafford? I can't remember. Anyway, it was a lovely voice. And she'd put the record on in the dressing room, and they'd sing together, her and the voice on the record:

"More than you know.
More than you know.
More than you'll **everrrrrrrr** know. . . !"

And they would both hit this same high note.

Once she hit the note, Jean Barrios would stop the record and say, "I can go on now. I've done my vocalizing. I'm ready!"

When she got to the floor, she could really get the audience going. She could have been another Lucien Phelps (he was at Finn's for years!) because she had the ability, the talent of making bullshit up as you go along with people that you never saw before in your life. You're having to talk to them and they're talking back to you and you're asking them questions:

"Where are you from, Darling? Chicago? I thought so. I could smell the stock yards on you."

Or:

"Oh, Darling, I didn't recognize you with your clothes on. Tell me, dear, is that your wife or the other woman you're with?"

And for some reason, the audience would go insane. I guess it was the idea of this old lady, supposed to be so dignified, making all those cracks!

She was from San Francisco. In The City, you'd see her on the street sometimes out of drag and you'd introduce her to a friend and she'd immediately say, "Oh, have you seen my show? Come up and see me sometime!" And she'd hand the friend a picture postcard of herself in drag.

Speaking of Jean Barrios reminds me of this other queen, Jean Barry. Oh, I haven't thought about her in years. . . !

Her nickname was Black Bess.

Everyone called her Black Bess because she was an evil queen. Now, she would go to clubs and introduce herself to the manager as Jean Barry. Well, that sounded a lot like Jean Barrios, which was a well-established, good act. And the managers would hire her.

Well, honey, during the first performance, they'd realize what a mistake they'd made!

"I'm sorry," they'd say in a hurry. "We thought you were someone else. We have to let you go. Here's your two-weeks' salary."

"No!" she'd scream. "I'm not taking no payoff! No no no no no!"

And she would not leave. She would not! She'd work her two weeks. She wouldn't quit. And she was so bad! She had no talent whatsoever.

Now, are you old enough to remember years ago in the store windows when they had mannequins with the spun glass wigs? The hair shined! Just glistened. The wigs were so beautiful. You

could put 'em in anything, they never moved. Put 'em in a wind tunnel, they wouldn't move. Well, she wore those kinds of wigs, Jean Barry. Upsweep up-do's! Buns and everything and they were all shining. They were all glass plastic wigs. And solid sequin dresses, honey. Solid sequins. You know what that costs? Classy! And she insisted on having this big long scarf because Jean Barrios used to sing with a long scarf in her falsetto: "I'm a-waitin' for the train to come in. . . ." And this one would sing a **bad** version of Jean Barrios:

Oh, I'm a-waiting for the train to come in!
Yes, dear!

And she'd point at some man in the audience.

Yes, I'm a-waiting for my man to come home. . . .
You, dear!

She'd point at another man. Bad! Oh, just bad!

When you get together with old queens and reminisce, they'll agree: "There were two queens we just didn't like. Carroll Wallace, number one. Black Bess, number two."

And, dear, I'm certainly not one to argue with public opinion.

The Tropics in Portland was upstairs off the sidewalk. And it was a very friendly club, like a neighborhood bar. We always had a lot of people in there who were regulars. The band was nice. The people were nice. So people that you recognized would come in and you'd say, "Hi."

And they'd say, "How are you tonight?"

"Fine!"

"Good. Come over after while for a drink."

Portland was very, very friendly town.

And a lot of queens. A lot of queens! At least three or four a night were in the audience. So you had somebody to sit with when you came out to mix between shows. And this was always comforting because you didn't feel like a stranger to everybody in the room. You could always mix with the queens.

There was another club in Portland that we played once, too, but I couldn't tell you the name of it. I want to say The Crystal Room or The Mirror Room. It was like a great big hall. Like a union hall or something. And there was one week when we were there because the other club, The Tropics, had booked a singer or something and we couldn't work there. The owner owned this club too, so he put us there.

It had in the middle of it one of these big balls with all the mirrors on it that turned. No stage. We just performed on the same floor as the tables, as the customers. In the middle of a ring of tables. Nobody could see my Spring-o-later shoes!

Remember? Those shoes that have no strap to hold it on your ankle. Just a piece over the front. And I used to hold them on with rubber bands because the rubber band would give when I slipped off the shoe, and I could come back up and the shoe wouldn't be broken and would just snap back into place. And that was one of my gimmicks, falling off my shoes.

So I'm working my ass off under that damned rotating ball with the mirrors flashing lights on everything but me, and nobody but the one's in the very front row can see what I'm doing!

That's the only thing I can remember about **that** club.

I have a picture of Les Lee and I, sitting at a table there with Les Lee's boyfriend, so Carroll Wallace must have added Les Lee to the revue for that week.

Les Lee was one of my favorites. She's the one who encouraged me to audition at Finnochio's later, in 1959. She was just my idol as far as beauty goes. A dancer, Les Lee. She was from Canada. And she just looked gorgeous in drag. But I mean *class*, honey. She could just throw the wig on, put on some lipstick, and she'd be ready. That's bone structure!

I can't even remember how I met Les Lee. But I'd known her for a long time. She had introduced me to her Aunt Rita, who I found out later was **not** her aunt at all but a friend who was a trans-sexual. Talk about **mean** in your old age! Here I thought she was just a cranky old German woman. Never dreaming it was a man that had had the operation! I didn't know too much about those things then.

So I'm thinking Rita is a real woman, and she owned a little card shop on Hyde and California, across from where Cala is now, and she would pay me something when I was out of work to wash the windows or put some cards away, and this and that. Or go to the store for her, and lots of time I used to go to the drug store to get her prescription. Now, I found out later, this was her pills

for whatever you take pills for when you're having the thing.
The operation.

So Les Lee must have been in Portland with The Carroll Revue
for a time.

Then there was Eugene.

No. Not a trick. Not a person. The town. Eugene, Oregon.
Gene's Supper Club. Like a dinner theater. Different from other
clubs we played in because they served food there. Dinner up to
a certain hour, and, after that, if you wanted to see the show,
you could stay or whatever.

We followed . . . what was her name? Chi Chi, her name was.
Colored girl singer. Chi Chi. . . ?

I can't give you anything
But **Chi Chi**, baby. . . !

Rose Murphy! That's it! (The old memory still clicks in occa-
sionally, dear.) Chi Chi Rose Murphy. That's who she was! She
played there before us. A real woman. Not a drag.

I can't give you anything
But **Chi Chi**, baby. . . !

She had a record album. And she was famous. So she was there
before us. And we were moving in, bringing in costumes and
equipment.

When we finished, we sat at the bar and one of the customers says, "So you're the new troupe that are coming in to replace Chi Chi?"

And either Ray Saunders or Russell Reed says, "Yes, we are."

"Well," he says, sort of bitchy-like, "you've got a helluva long way to go because Chi Chi really packed this place."

All we could say was, "We'll try!"

And it was fabulous because we **packed** the place, too!

They **loved** us in Eugene!

He came back a few nights later, this guy, and he says, "The other day when I saw you guys coming in, I told you I didn't think you could make it here. Well, you sure changed my thought." He said, "You do real well!"

Now, I just mentioned moving in to a new club. Since, we were a touring company, we were always moving from place to place. Moving in. Moving out. Carroll Wallace always drove us between jobs. To save money more than anything else. She had this beat-up old station wagon. It was Blue. Blue-grayish or something. And we had our suitcases on the rack on top, and towing behind, in back of the wagon, was half a car. Half a **real** car! Cut in half and sealed. Just the back half. Carroll had it made or found it somewhere. And that was the wardrobe. It was just like half a car hooked onto a whole car, the station wagon.

Well, when cars would pass us on the highway, people would look at us in wonderment.

"We're not carrying on! We're not in drag! We're not creating a scene!" Russell Reed would scream. "Why **are** they staring?".

And it wasn't until somebody pointed at the trailer. The trailer! The half a car! That's what they were looking at flying behind this station wagon. It was causing people to stare and honk and wave. It was the silliest looking thing. This half a car flying behind with Carroll driving. Like a small car bugging a big one! That's what it looked like! But that's where all the wardrobe was.

And after CW hired Jan Del Rio, we had to travel with a damned **snake** in the station wagon. It was in a box, but even so!

Jan Del Rio.

Picked up in Portland somewhere.

Someone suggested her.

It's how we all got a lot of our work.

Well, someone suggested Jan Del Rio to Carroll Wallace. He danced with a snake. And right off, he showed us.

He took us to his room and he said, "Now, I dance with a snake, and I don't want you to be afraid of her."

He unwrapped this red and orange scarf on a tray and there she was, curled up! He held her up and showed us.

He says, "This is Ophelia!"

And I say, "OK. Hello, Ophelia. Nice to know you."

He covered her up again.

"All right," I said. "I'm not afraid of snakes, but don't **ever** scare me with it!"

I said it nice, but it was a warning.

"No," he says. "Never."

But in Kenniwick, Washington, I'll never forget it! He was coming off. Carroll was announcing me, and I had to pass him down this little alleyway, this dim little narrow hallway, to the stage. And he had Ophelia. He'd finished dancing, and he had her wrapped around his shoulders and he had her head in his hand.

He says to her as he crowds past me, "Say hello to Jackie!" And he pushes her head up to my face as I'm coming down to go on stage!

All I saw was **snake!**

Open mouth!

Fangs!

And I screamed and **flew** clear around the club to come out on the other side of the stage because **that** was the fear, the **scare** I didn't want to happen! So I went on stage and did a rotten show for these people who didn't like us anyway. They **never** liked us in Kenniwick. Well, when I came off I was fuming. **Flames** were shooting out of me.

I said, "Carroll! **Come!**"

We went to the dressing room, and I said, "Carroll, this is what happened and it's **never** to happen again! Or I quit again! Because I'm not to be scared before I go on the **fucking floor**, **and that's all there is to it!**"

She saw how upset I was and made Jan Del Rio apologize and promise it would never happen again.

Don't throw a spider in my lap, honey, because that's it!
Watch out!

One time, in one of the hotels -- might even have been Portland -- he put Ophelia in the bathtub because she was shedding her skin. Molting . . . whatever it is. Well, she got out of the tub and worked her way up the wall and got hung up on the towel rack. Ophelia got wound around that rack and we heard all this, "Mother-fuckin' son-of-a-bitch asshole!" And we went into Jan's room -- because we all had rooms next to each other and you could hear everything in these cheap hotels which was all we could afford on what Carroll Wallace was paying us -- and here she is wrestling with this snake trying to get her off the towel rack.

Oh, she treated that snake rotten. Just rotten! She even had to force feed it sometimes. Live mice! Raw meat. Push it down her throat.

But Jan Del Rio had this exotic act. Lovely body. **Big schwantz!** A nice queen, but hard. Hard! Beautiful bone structure. Gorgeous face. Not a blemish at all. Pretty eyes and everything. She was a fair dancer, Jan Del Rio. But oh, that fucking snake!

Once, Carroll booked us into Gold Beach, Oregon. Now this is a small town on the coast that had never seen drag before. Didn't know what drag was. Carroll Wallace had balls. I'll give

her that. She sold the owner on us, sight unseen. Because this is a straight town. There are no screaming queens there. They weren't existent in most places in those days. They just didn't dare come out of the closet. And here we were, Ray Saunders, Russell Reed, Carroll Wallace, and me!

And they liked us!

But it seemed the club owner had two cleaning women come in each morning and clean the club. Tables. Straighten things out. Sweep. Mop. All that stuff. This and that. Well, we figure they went into the dressing room and saw the wigs. (Thank God there were only two of them or my wig might have been involved, too!)

Oh, my goodness, they must have had a ball when they saw this and thought, "This is the people's that work here!" They wanted to find out what the wigs looked like on them. They must have been hysterical!

We surmised all this, what happened, because of what we found that night when we got to work.

They must have said, "Oh, let's put these on."

"What do you put them on with?"

"Oh, here's some glue!"

"That must be what they use!"

"Let's use it!"

It was liquid adhesive!

Johnson & Johnson's Liquid Adhesive.

For your eyelashes!

Not your wig!

Well, honey, they must have had a ball putting all this stuff on, gluing the wigs on, running around mopping up the floors! Tossing their heads with all that long hair! We wondered what they thought when they tried to peel 'em off, to put 'em back on the blocks as messed up as they were.

Anyway, that night, when we got to work, Ray Saunders screams, "What the hell is this!"

We all looked. Both his and Russell Reed's wigs had all these white rubber glue-balls on them.

"Somebody has been playing with these!" Russell screamed.

So we called the manager. And he said it could only be one thing -- the cleaning women.

Well, Russell Reed and Ray Saunders had to get all this liquid adhesive out of the netting because you can't fuck a net up. It's supposed to be flawless. (And they never could get 'em clean, really. Those wigs were never the same. And they cost at least \$125 a piece, which was pretty fucking expensive on our salary!)

Even now-a-days, I look, when I see a movie with someone who doesn't have long hair naturally, or red hair naturally, I look for the lacing, the net. And if you look close enough in movies on TV, you can see this thin line. You have to know what you're looking for.

And when I see them, I immediately call Rusty Parker, and I say, "HMMMMM. I didn't know she wore a wig for this."

And Rusty gets all interested. "What?" he says. "Who? Where?"

"Eleanor Parker," I say. "She has on a paste-down in *Interrupted Melody!*"

"Oh, good! I'll watch for it!" he says, all excited. "When I see the movie, I'll watch for it!"

These are things you shouldn't ever see. Things you have to take care of if you're a professional. Like you can't put your eyelashes on upside down. And some queens **do**, you know!

Anyway, the boss at Gold Beach says, "I'm sorry? Is there anything I can do?"

"No," we said. "Just warn them not to touch anything else in here. Because we know where everything is. And **we** know how to use it!"

That was Gold Beach on the Oregon coast!

One other crazy, fun thing happened while we were in Oregon. Portland, I think, because there was a big river there.

You know, when I stop to think of all the towns I played in, why I didn't venture out to see more, to see the sights of this town that I'm in and that I'll never be in again? It's sad, because I missed so much beauty.

Anyway we're down at the river with some local queens.

"We're off tomorrow!" we'd said.

"Fine! We'll take you on a picnic!" they'd said.

So here we are on a beach that went for miles up and down this river. And there was just everybody there. Straights.

Gays. And whathaveyou. And it was fun. Especially when some queen got a sheet that they'd brought to put on the sand, and they took it in the river to wash it off. Four of them were flapping it up and down. When it got wet and the four queens flapped it down on all the corners, it made a big bubble with trapped air in it.

And there were other queens that got inside. They were talking and laughing, they thought, in private. But you could have heard them on top of a mountain. It was like a little echo chamber, and it was so funny. Because here in the middle of the river is this big white ball and all this giggling and dishing coming out of it and you couldn't see anybody except these four queens holding it down to make the big bubble.

It was so fabulous . . . the fun we used to have! Just a day off. But it was so fabulous.

Now, on to Montana and back across the Great Northwest!

The farthest East I ever got in the forty-eight states and the farthest North, both were in Montana.

Montana! Oh, God, Montana in the early fifties! Fun!

First stop, Missoula!

I can't remember the name of the club in Missoula, but it was in the same hotel we stayed at. Next to a train depot for hooking up or coming in or going out or something. In the back of the hotel. We could hear them all night. The other queens hated it, but I thought it was fabulous! I love trains!

Oh, Missoula, Montana, was a butch town!

The first night we're there, we're sitting in the dressing room which is not really a room at all but just the backstage, right behind the curtain we'll be performing in front of. We're putting on our makeup, snapping on our garter belts, and we can hear the customers in the club -- it's all just one big room with this curtain we're behind. There's no partitions or anything.

And, all of a sudden, rowdy, **rowdy** voices!

Then, I hear a boom! And a **CRASH!** And breaking of glass!

A bottle had come across the room, had hit the other side of the curtain from where I'm sitting, and had dropped and broke on the stage!

"Now this is cute, Carroll!" I had to shout above the noise. "You want us to go out there and perform for these nice, quiet gentlemen?"

"They throw bottles at **each other!**" I said. "What do you think they're going to do to **queens!** They'll **kill us!**"

Well, even Carroll Wallace, who had balls the size of an elephant's, was shaken! She goes to the boss and she says, "You **know** we're Female Impersonators?"

Now, he's been calling CW, *Bud*, all day, but he's so stunned at how pretty she looks in drag, how feminine, he gets real polite.

"Oh, you'll have no problem, **Ma'am,**" he says. "They're just friends of mine. I'll quiet 'em down."

And he did!

How? I don't know.

But they loved us!

Thank God I sang western songs!

"Hey, good lookin',
What ya got cookin'. . . ?
How's about cookin' something up with meeeeeeee?"

Now, if I'd've sung opera? OOOOoouuuuaaaaaahhhh! No no no
no no!

We were there two weeks with the Sunday off in between.
That was our usual routine. Two weeks of performing with one
Sunday off, and the next Sunday was the jaunt. The drive between
jobs. Constant. Constant. That station wagon pulling half a
car. Attracting attention on the highway. In the towns. Those
trips across country. We never knew what would happen next.

We had one place were there was snow. Lots of snow. We're
coming to this hill, this mountain, and we have no chains and
we're passing truck after truck slowed down, broke down, needing
chains. They were all along this long stretch of highway. And
then we're stopped by the highway police.

The highway police said, "I'm sorry but you can't go no
further without chains. It's too risky!"

Well, we had to buy chains from this garage, this store,
whatever. We're lucky it was there, but they didn't put them on.
And not one of us -- five queens standing there shivering -- not
one knew how to put chains on a car!

So we had these truck drivers helping us. I mean **muscles**
like you wouldn't believe! They could lift a house and put it

across the street. Gorgeous! And all these five faggots fainting over these muscle men fixing these chains, laying in the snow, getting wet in the mud, under the car, fixing the chains and asking questions about this half a car in back.

And Carroll Wallace answers in this uppity, mock-Katherine Hepburn voice of hers! "Actually," she says, "We're show people! We carry our wardrobe in it."

"Oh, that's good!" I whispered to Russell Reed. "She's gonna tell 'em we're faggots and get us all killed!"

But she didn't!

And, luckily none of the queens propositioned any of them either. You never can tell what some queens will try when they see all those muscles. And it would have been sheer suicide!

We must have been on our way up to Sweetgrass! Sweetgrass, Montana. On the borderline with Canada, that's how far North it was!

Now this club is about as big as a studio apartment here in The City! Small! And the town itself. . . ! Like a baby's fingernail in the middle of the street!

"Carroll!" I said, "Where. . . ? Five buildings. . . ! There's no town here!"

"I don't know!" she snapped back at me. "But we're here! It's a club! It's a job!"

So we rehearsed and that night we're making up, and I hear all this chattering and commotion. I look through the curtain and the club is packed! S.R.O! Standing room only!

"Where?" I said. "Where did they **come** from? There's nobody around here!"

"They come across the border from Canada!" said the boss, who was pleased as punch.

They **loved** us in Sweetgrass, Montana!

"Ahhhh!" I said. "Never heard of this stamp on the map and here are all these people!"

Yes!

They came from Canada and they loved us!

Carroll Wallace got us into **some** deals!

Back in Missoula, there was this girl. She was . . . she worked in the hotel. Very, very pretty young thing. She had a boy's haircut, but she'd wear these pretty Alice-Blue-Gown dresses with puff sleeves. Very feminine. During the day . . . there was this long bar and it was, like, for cowboys. Cowboy town. And here she was sitting there in this little frilly, puff-sleeved, blue dress and a boy's haircut.

I whispered to Russell Reed, "I wonder what happened to her hair?"

"Ask her," he whispered back.

So I said, "How come you have such short hair when you dress so feminine?"

"The dress is for the men," she said, "to turn them on!"

"And the hair?"

"Oh, that's so I don't muss it while I'm having sex with them!"

Honey!

And she was busy!

You'd be having a conversation with her, and she'd say, "Excuse me, I'll be right back." All polite and everything.

You'd think she was going to the Ladies' Room.

But some cowboy'd just came in, gave her the eye. She'd check at the desk for his room number, and up she'd go. Five minutes later she'd be back. With twenty, thirty dollars!

Blowjobs? Whatever! I never asked. But she was the sweetest little thing. She just loved us queens because we were somebody in show business. In entertainment. In a way, someone of her own kind.

I can't remember her name but I remember she had this little blue dress with the little puff sleeves and this little boy's haircut so she wouldn't get it mussed while she was rummaging between their legs.

Oh, God, my tongue's loose today.

The only other club we played in Montana was in Great Falls and all I remember about that is what I see in this picture in my scrapbook. Part of the name of the band on a sign. The *something* Trio, which I can't quite make out the name of in the picture and me performing in front of the bar. We had to perform on the floor with the customers. Right in front of the bar. Oh, they spared us no expense in Great Falls!

Then to Idaho, and not much to say about it, either.

Idaho! Two places. Idaho Falls and Lewiston. Not too big on the map, either one. The Pair O' Dice Room in Lewiston. The Beacon Club in Idaho Falls. One of my worst and one of my favorite experiences.

The worst was The Pair 'O Dice Room.

Now, I have to give you a little background for this.

Lee Leonard and Robin Ray were drags, a risqué singer and a dancer, and they had been on tour in the Northwest long before Carroll Wallace ever thought of it. They were the **real** pioneers, breaking in all this new territory in the Northwest!

Now, Carroll Wallace heard about them, knew about them, and she said, "Since the managers, the owners of the clubs know Lee Leonard and Robin Ray and make money off them, I'll follow in their footsteps."

Which was **blood** because she followed too close!

On her day off, she'd travel all this way to make the dates. She'd scout ahead or phone or something. Bull shit and finagling and one lie on top of the other. But she'd get all these jobs. Crazy jobs. And it was rough because we were getting criticized, compared, and all this.

In The Pair O' Dice Room they said to me, "You're not as good as Lee Leonard! You're not as funny as Lee Leonard!"

While I was on the stage, performing!

And this, of course, twists your brain around. It's hard to go on.

So, after working my ass off and taking all this abuse, I come off the floor steaming, and I say, "Why do you do this, Carroll?"

"It's ground!" she says. "We're opening new ground!"

"But we're getting all the nasty stuff," I say. "They're comparing us to Lee."

"Well, never mind, Miss Phillips," she says. "It's work!"

"But it's not right! I want to do a good show. And I want them to like me!" I say. "This is really stupid!"

And she says, "Just mind your own business!"

All right.

So I mind my own business.

That was an irritating thing that she had, Carroll Wallace. She just couldn't discuss. And she had to have the last word. Always!

And The Beacon Club in Idaho Falls. It's one of my favorites only because of this picture I have in my scrapbook from there. See? I'm outside the club.

I remember, business is slow so the manager says, "Come on. Let's go outside and take a picture."

I'm standing there with him, the manager. I'm in a boy's shirt, this beige skirt, and these black pumps, and the red hair. To me, looking at this picture, if it wasn't for the Adam's Apple which I usually wore a scarf or a turtleneck to cover, if it wasn't for that, you couldn't tell I wasn't a woman!

By then, I can see, by the time that picture was taken, I **had everything down pat!**

The eyebrows were accentuated.

The cheekbones.

Not too much this or too much that.

As far as I was concerned, by then everything was perfect!

I had it pretty much down to a routine. Oh, the routine might change slightly over the years but never by much. I usually got to a club, whatever club we were working, a couple of hours early so I had plenty of time to get ready and just get used to being there. I'd have an hour to make up and an hour to relax. I was like the first one made up all the time because I had the routine down. I knew what I was doing I had everything right where I wanted it. I concentrated on doing a professional job and I listened to classical music. I was always first so I could roam around and relax before the show started.

My routine was I'd shave first. Never shaved **before** I went to work. Always shaved **after** I got there. Because it was freshest. Your chances of having your beard grow out were less if you did it late. So I'd shave first. The face, that is. I'd shave my chest and arm pits at home. Then, after you've shaved the face, close the pores with alcohol.

Then you put the nose putty over the eyebrows. Get them down first. It's to hide them, to flatten them down. You didn't follow the line of your own eyebrow, 'cause you would have boy's eyebrows. After the putty, you powdered them. After that, the

grease paint. Then more powder. Then the liquid body make-up. Then I found out you can use pancake which is just with a wet sponge and cover all the powder and it gives you a nice smooth finish.

The darker I looked, the better I looked to me. Sort of like an exotic creature. Marta Toren . . . Valli . . . exotic women! That's what I wanted the effect to be. I knew I did comedy on the floor, but I wanted to be glamorous, too. So that's one more conquest you have to do in drag. Because the time it takes to make up, if you don't produce anything, it's a waste of time!

Grease paint. Powder. Pancake. Now, you put your eye shadow on. Get that done.

The color I used varied. At first, you had a routine. You wore the same shades every year. No matter where. This is all on the road. Now, later, at Finnochio's, these little queens are coming in and squealing, "Oh! Guess what! Look what I found today!" And they'd have new shades. They'd bring this color in. "Oh, it's lovely. Looks lovely!" And then you'd have to try it! They'd have green, blue, orange, tans, rusts, brown, pink, all lavender. All shades of eye shadow so you'd experiment with 'em. But I always came back to the tans and browns and rusts.

OK. So you'd put the eye shadow on. Then the eye liner with a fine paint brush. You'd draw the line. Mascara your eye lashes. Then you'd stick your false eyelashes on with liquid adhesive. Just the ends. Because if you wore full eyelashes in

the corner toward your nose, you'd have all this eyelash touching your brow, your skin. So we'd trim them and cut them in half. And they'd be clean and curled and you'd just lay them above your own lashes and hold them still until they dry.

Then you did your eyebrows starting from the corner of your eye up. Not where your nose starts, where the eyebrows are. The other corner. And this will give you a broader, a wider opening, and you go to the top, you make the point, peak of your eyebrow even with your pupil -- about half an inch from the corner, and then out or down, whatever way you want them formed. You tried to make your eyes up so they would look happy. If you had down eyebrows, then you had a down face. I always wanted everything up! The mouth, the lipstick, the eye, everything. All up! Up up up up up!

I didn't wear much rouge. I hated rouge! I hated rouge because you had to get it even. And I had this brown makeup on, this exotic makeup. How you gonna see red on brown? It was just senseless for me to wear rouge -- unless it was a dark one or something.

Now, the legs. Once they finally came out with panty hose, I wore panty hose. Before that we wore elastic hose. Some queens shaved their legs. But I didn't want to shave. So I tried something called Soft Tan that was supposed to make the hair look softer. And then I tried a paste of Lux Flakes and peroxide and it would bleach the hair blond because it was delicate hair, soft, not like a beard or your own head hair.

But then panty hose came out! So I wore panty hose. But your nails would catch and you were always having runs. So I would have at least six pairs of panty hose on. Which would hide the hair and also soften the bone lines in the leg and smooth the leg out. Plus, if you got a run, you just put another pair over it and that was it. Then I'd take 'em home once a week and wash 'em all. Oh, panty hose flatter your leg so much. And mine weren't gorgeous. I just knew how to pose! I knew how to hold them, how to arch them so that they would look soft and feminine.

Now, cleavage! If you're fleshy, you can push your tits in from the sides, from under the arm pits. You can pull up with your hand under your tit and it pulls more flesh, and then when you put your bra on, it would hold it there -- if you're fleshy. Now, I'm skinny there. Skin, skin, skin, skinny! I pulled and pulled and pulled for years, and all I got was a wrinkle! So you take brown rouge and run your finger down your front, in the middle, between your tits, and it shadows it, shades it enough for cleavage.

Whew! That's a long-winded way of telling you why this picture outside The Beacon Club is one of my favorites. But in this picture I can see I'm right on track! I can see that I'm preparing myself for something bigger, something much bigger and much, much better than The Carroll Revue! Though I still had **years** to go, honey! **Years** to go with that Bitch!

Washington. The state of. People from back East always say that when you say *Washington*. They want to know if you mean DC

or the state of. Out west, they never think of DC when you say *Washington*.

Walla Walla.

They liked the town so much, they named it twice. . . !

That always got a laugh!

I can't remember the name of the club, but I met a beautiful woman there. Her name was Jessica Jasimento. A real woman. Not a queen. Not a drag. She was married to an Italian guy who was gorgeous himself, and she used to come in to the club a lot.

And she was so pretty, I had to ask her one night, "Were you a model?"

"Why, yes," she said in that low, sultry voice of hers, "Yes, I was. What makes you say that?"

And I said, "Because you're so gorgeous!"

She appreciated that, I could tell

And when her husband died, I found out she moved to San Jose from a Christmas card she sent, which was a lot closer than Washington. So right around then, Rusty Parker called me, he still lived in San Jose then, and he says, "Come down and visit me."

So I went down and I say, "Let's call Jessica."

And, anyway, he and I, she picked us up and we went over to her house. Gorgeous house! And her husband had just died, so I was in my general pick-this-person-up, cheer-this-person-up mood, so this helped her a lot. And I have pictures of her somewhere. I'll show them to you. Gorgeous woman. I mean **inside** also.

Truly real. And I was elated about our meeting again because I like holding on to old friends that were nice.

In Seattle, it was The Magic Inn. It was downstairs off a street and under the sidewalk. That's the one where Ray Saunders at the rehearsal, which we usually got only one of, where Ray Saunders hands the band the music to "Sheherazade"! Ray was into exotic dancing then.

"'Sheherazade!'" the piano player shouts, "What the hell is this!"

Ray used to insist that "Sheherazade" be played in just a certain way so he could dance to it. He called it dancing. He would just roam around the floor and wave his arms and smile and look pretty. No real dancing whatsoever. But he would play the big star at rehearsal, and he would insist. He would be screaming at the band, "No! No! I want this a little quieter. This a little louder." And it wasn't necessary. Because he wasn't going to do anything, anyway!

I handed the band "Hey, Good Lookin'" and they beamed.

Now, they were musicians. They could read music. And they played it for her. They bluffed their way through "Sheherazade," but they weren't into classical music!

Always, the biggest, biggest problem of any club you were going to was what the band was like. How many pieces? Did they like queens? Could they read music? If the band couldn't, then you could usually change songs and sing something the band knew, if necessary. But the finale always had to stay the same because

there were four or five queens involved and all those costumes. So the finale was the only thing we really worried about as far as rehearsal time went.

But it was lovely. Seattle was great. They really liked us. They really liked us there. The weather was always drizzling. Everything was green and the air was so fresh. You had to take an umbrella out with you most of the time. But I didn't mind it because it was just a nice town. And the people were nice. They liked us.

Not in Kenniwick!

I don't even know where Kenniwick is in the State of Washington. I just know they hated us there. Hated us!

It was The Kenniwick Social Club. (The place where Jan Del Rio shoved his goddamned snake in my face!) And they didn't like us. I called it The Kenniwick **Anti-Social** Club. Oh, I'm telling you when you're in a club with people that don't like you, you can't do anything!

That's when drag becomes work! That's when it becomes **work!** Because you have to think. Think. Think!

"What the fuck do these people want?" you ask yourself. You're sweating under your wig, your makeup. "What can I do out of my repertoire? What? What? **What?**"

And they just say, "No! No! No! No! No!"

And these are times I really had problems with Carroll.

"Why do you do this?" I'd say because, again, we went right in after Robin Ray and Lee Leonard had just finished playing there.

And in both their act and as people, Robin and Lee were outspoken. You know. "Yes! Yes! Yes! We're Gay and so what!" That's a part of their act.

But Carroll's trying to keep us in tact, to keep us in the closet so to speak. "Don't get in any trouble. Find little queens to trick with so you won't get in any trouble."

Or she'd say, "Don't be too Gay in your specialty!" And, of course, she was talking directly at me because I was the only one who said anything in their act besides her.

So it's just like Lewiston, Idaho, all over again. I get on stage and they say, "You're not as funny as Lee Leonard!"

Out loud! Out loud! In my face!

And this is very cutting and you hold the anger in because you can't answer a comment.

You can't say, "Well, Stupid, I'm not Lee Leonard!" You know. Where's the argument? He just says, "No you aren't and we don't like you."

And I told Carroll, "Why do you do this?" I said, "They just laid a bloody trail here. And you're following it. You're dragging us right through it."

And Carroll, in her real-life nasal voice: "Don't start Miss Phillips!"

O.K. And I grind my jaws all night!

The farthest East in the Southwest we went was Yuma, Arizona. The farthest South we went was Long Beach in California. We got around! We played at dozens of clubs I can't even remember the name or the town of. Unless something happened there or I find a picture in my scrapbook, they all seem the same. Like there were a few more places in Idaho, and I know we played somewhere in Nevada. Some places in Northern California, too, like The Fan Club in Eureka. I have a picture of the waitress, the bartenders, the lovely CW, and me lined up at the bar in The Fan Club, and I'm standing with my feet pointing to each other. So everybody's looking at me. I was what you'd call "a cut up." Always wanting to be the center of attention. Not conceited. Just acting up enough to keep everybody's eyes on me. Loved it. Just loved it.

One time, we even played a highway truck stop! A truck stop which was a restaurant with tables and a counter for truckers. It was like next to the freeway on top of a mountain. I'm not sure where it was. Oregon someplace. On top of a mountain at an overpass, and we played there for four days, a long weekend.

The owner had seen us somewhere and said to Carroll Wallace, "You must do a show for us!"

Carroll, with only dollar signs in her eyes, said, "Well, we're between shows and it's on our way. OK. Can you find me some musicians?"

"Oh, don't worry about that," he said. "We have a librarian who took piano lessons."

We got there and there was **nothing!** They just shifted tables back and put us on. We came out of the kitchen. Made up in the kitchen. And even though it was just a Truck Stop, it went over like a house on fire because the truckers were all big, burly men and thought, "Oh, my God! Look at these faggots carrying on. Isn't this something up here on top of this hill?"

And the piano player. Oh, it was funny. She was the town's spinster librarian during the day, but on each of these four nights that she came and played for us, she was in **show business!** This was probably the biggest event of her whole life, to play for these actors, these queens!

"Oh, isn't it marvelous!" She just giggled and carried on, but she was hitting the right notes. I mean, she was fine. Because she could follow us and we could follow her. She could even play "Sheherazade"! And at the end, she was applauding like crazy along with the truckers.

Land o' Goshen! These men running around in dresses! Oh, I tell you!

There were three piano players I really remember. Chuck Greg at The Redwood Inn in Fresno was one. The Librarian at the Truck Stop was two. And the piano player in Yuma, Arizona, was three.

I can't even remember the name of the club in Yuma, but it was big, and they thought we came from Mars or something. The one bright spot was the piano player, Tiny Watson.

She was a real woman and, at one time, had weighed almost 500 pounds. Then she lost 200 pounds, and now she was just big. Built like Sophie Tucker. Heavy set. Somehow Carroll Wallace knew her from somewhere in the past because she had this picture of her when she weighed 500 pounds.

"She's so happy," Carroll said, "that she's lost all this weight. And I'm happy for her."

But, bitch that she was, she couldn't let it go at that.

"Do you see the front of her formal when she walks? The way it pushes out underneath?"

And I said, "Yeah."

"Well," says Carroll in a real secretive way. "That's her stomach! That's her belly!"

And it was!

Tiny Watson had this big flap of skin that she had lost the weight from, and it didn't dissolve, it didn't go anywhere. She just lost the weight but the skin was still there. Flapping underneath this dress! Like an apron of skin. So, she wore formals day and night to hide it as best she could.

But she was a good piano player.

In fact, she was one who threw me the first time she played for me on stage. Now, she rehearsed with me and that was one thing. But to play for me, to sit there and hear the audience's reaction. Well, that was another thing. Right in the middle of my act, she'd stop playing and start applauding, too!

But the club in Yuma was dull. Like they didn't know what we were there for. Like they were saying, "Here's a bunch of men running around on our stage in women's clothing and there's nothing happening here."

It's difficult to play for these people that don't like you! But Tiny Watson loved us, and of all the people I must have met in Yuma, she's the one I remember. I guess that's what really counts.

Back to California every once in awhile. We even played a Drive-In in Long Beach. The Sazarac Room at The Circle Drive In. A drive-in restaurant not a movie! The Sazarac Room, the club where we performed, was sort of like attached to this Circle restaurant. And for the whole two weeks we were there, my eyes were red!

From what? What? What? What? I'm thinking, "What am I doing to cause these red eyes?" Maybe it's from staying up late. And I'm always on pills. So Murine, Murine, Murine! By the bottle full! Not helping!

You're trying to be a Female Impersonator, right? You want to look like a girl. Not just **any** girl, but a **pretty** girl. And a pretty girl does not have red eyes! This was so annoying. Especially when I mixed. I hadda sit with people. I hadda look at people. And they'd say, "Oh, what's the red eyes for?"

Finally, I'm sitting with this customer one night, complaining about my eyes and the Murine not helping, and he says one word that makes it all make sense.

"Smog!"

And that's what it was! I must have been allergic to it. And for the whole two weeks I was just miserable. Except for the saxophone player in the band. But, eventually, that made me miserable, too.

He was the brother of some famous girl singer. April Stevens. He was April Stevens' brother, and he played the saxophone. And he was very good looking. Well, there went all the pigeons and the feathers and the balloons!

I was in love with him, and I couldn't say anything about it. I kept telling myself, "You don't even know if he's Gay. You must admire him from a distance!"

He was gorgeous.

And he used to take the sax and hump it when he would be playing and the women in the audience would be going crazy. And I'd be going just as crazy along with them.

But I never let him know! No no no no no! Now, I may let you know I like you. But then you have to take it from there. Other than that, no, I'm not about to get slapped in the face or punched in the face just because I reach over and grabbed your coo-coo-loo-coo and said it was nice! No no no no no. You know I like you, and, then, if you're interested, you make the next move. Ask me out for coffee or up to the roof. Or down to the basement. Or out into the fields with the cows. Something! I don't care. Ask me. Just do it!

But the saxophone player never did! Ask me, that is.

Oh, well. . . .

And going back to San Francisco from Long Beach, we got to the top of Pacheco Pass and it was snowing up there because it's a high altitude on top of the mountains. So we started down the other side and this half-of-a-car-for-a-trailer with all the wardrobe in it (and a bunch of new finale costumes we'd picked up in L.A.) is sliding back and forth all over the road.

And Ruth was driving. She almost never went out on the road with us, but she'd come down to Southern California to see about the new costumes, and she was driving us back.

Carroll said, "Whatever you do, Ruth, don't put on the brakes. Just put it in low gear. Don't put on the brakes!"

She started to skid.

She panicked.

She slammed on the brakes!

And the back half, the bugging half, the trailer buckled, and the car went into a pile of dirt and gravel on the shoulder! But the half-assed half of the trailer was still out on the road. Now, looking back up this mountain, you see trailer-trucks a house long coming down full of lumber, steel, crates, whatever. Huge!

Bobby Lane and I. He was another queen who toured with us for awhile. Bobby Lane and I, the two of us, both screamed, "That truck is going to hit us!" This truck looked like it was going to take the trailer and knock it and us off over this cliff.

Bobby Lane and I both climbed -- like we had claws -- the two of us climbed up this mountain of little rocks to get away from the crash. But the truck swerved at the last second and just missed the trailer.

Then this other guy stopped and put on our chains for us. Again. It was pathetic. Five queens and a woman, this time, and we still didn't know how to put on chains!

Now, these costumes we picked up were for a new finale. And I should have my head examined for the costume I chose. Anyway, Bobby Lane and I used to do this number:

Although you belooooong to soooooomeone new,
Toniiiiight you belooooong to meeeeeee!

And Carroll decided to use it for a finale. She's going to put Bobby Lane in some sort of little gingham Gay Nineties costume. But what about me? We're in *Jacks of Hollywood* for something, and Carroll finds this great big bear costume.

"How would you like this?" she asks.

I said, "Oh, I'd love it!" Not dreaming that I'd be in it in hot weather. But I love bears.

"OK!" she said. "We'll work the finale around the bear. Around you!"

She had me hooked. Now, this bear had a cute face, thank goodness. But it was hot, honey. And it was all wired, so it was fat, too. A cute, big, fat, white bear. And Ruth insisted on having a little tutu made for it. Which was ridiculous 'cause

it wasn't supposed to be a girl bear; it was supposed to be a boy bear.

But that was Ruth!

Ruth? Haven't I explained Ruth yet? Ruth was Carroll Wallace's wife! I'm sure I mentioned her before! Well, she was an ex-Madam that he met in Portland years ago. Years before I joined the Revue. Her name was Sally, then. She was a blonde and she ran a House. And Carroll must have convinced her that he wasn't Gay.

He was probably bi-sexual. He must have been able to perform with a woman. On the road, there were these waitresses, customers, and different other women he associated with. He would come in some nights and say, "Look at this lovely ring I got from so and so."

Some woman had given him the ring. Expensive jewelry, sometimes. Probably for a little dick. It was **never** for love! It was never free! Never! It was always for something. All of it. Any of it! It was always for something with Carroll Wallace. Never, **never** anything for free!

So anyway, he and Sally got married and she went back to her real name, Ruth. In addition to her whorehouse, she'd worked for the phone company for years. She was very business-minded. And when she retired, she could make any phone calls, long distance, free, anywhere in the United States. So Carroll used all this freedom to call different towns, different cities for jobs, and he'd tell them, "My name is Carroll Wallace. I have a show, The

Carroll Revue! Blah. Blah. Blah." He'd talk for as long as it took to get the job. And there was never any charge. He'd just say, "Transfer this call to my home number!" and Ma Bell picked up the tab!

I liked Ruth, up to a point. She liked me because we were both Scorpions and this and that. We got along. But, underneath, she was just like him. For example, when we were getting ready to go to Honolulu, Ruth was making all the arrangements because Carroll had already left, and she called one day, "I got a letter from Carroll, and he says if you'll pay your own airfare over, which is \$125 for a round-trip ticket, he'll give you \$125 a week instead of \$85."

I figure since we're going to be there for several months, this is a bargain!

So I said, "OK. Fine. I'll pay my fare." And I give her the \$125.

Now my ticket is paid for round-trip, and I expect to get the salary Ruth told me. So I ask Carroll when I get there, "What am I getting?"

And she says, "Blah blah blah blah blah."

Oh, she manipulated and bull-shitted and manipulated me right from the start in Hawaii. I ended up **not** getting \$125 a week. I didn't even get the \$85. It averaged out to about \$75 a week.

I'm not very business-minded. I trust people. And people have always taken care of things for me. I'm not thinking that

Carroll Wallace is making \$5,000 a week for this Revue, and he's poor-mouthing to me and only giving me \$75. This is how she worked for years!

One time she says to me, "You handle your own income tax?"

And I say, "Yes."

She says, "You want me to get you more money returned? If you give me a hundred, I'll get you back four hundred."

I said, "OK. Fine." And I give her the hundred.

A couple of months later I get this notice from the IRS.

"You're being audited!"

I call Carroll Wallace. "I'm being audited. You have all my receipts. I need them."

"Well, I don't have them anymore," she says. "They must have been burned or misplaced. I can't find them!"

And she didn't give me **one receipt back!** And I hadda pay all this money to the IRS!

She had got her hundred. She had fucked me up, and she **couldn't** give me my receipts because she would have been in Dutch with the IRS herself for making out my income tax.

These are the things this queen has done to me which I have forgiven. I let them pass. What she did to me at Finnochio's! No! I cannot forgive that!

So let's finish with The Carroll Revue (although, unfortunately, we won't be finished with Carroll Wallace herself).

Six months at an after-hours bar in the Territory of Hawaii!

"I wanna go back

To my little grass shack. . . ."

Oh, but I don't wanna!

I don't ever wanna go back!

I was miserable the whole time I was there, and it wasn't
just Carroll Wallace!

It was The Blue Note. It was Honolulu. It was Hawaii!

First off, The Blue Note wasn't the kind of club I was used
to performing in. I mean, this was a dive even by Carroll
Wallace's standards! For one thing, it wasn't just drag.

It was also a strip joint!

An after-hours, near-beer, strip joint that had **real** strip-
pers. **Women.** Real women strippers!

And us!

Queens playing dress-up!

They were taking it off. We were putting it on.

Imagine!

It was a place you could go after all the other bars closed.
And what came in was nothing but white uniforms. Sailors!
Already drunk and looking for a little excitement.

At all these other clubs they hadda drink and be quiet, but
in The Blue Note there were sexy, live girls roaming around on
stage, taking off their clothes, and showing what the men wanted
to see.

And here was this drag queen, Miss Carroll Wallace, MC-ing
this real strip show -- with us performing in between the strip-
pers. Oh, it was just ducky!

The runway . . . the stage ran down this way at the end of this long bar across from the entrance, and they had a runway that the girls (and us!) would go down.

It was shaped like a big peter! Straight out from the stage with this big round head at the end. And the girls came down and did their turns on this big cockhead, and the guys were all hands, grabbing for ankles or legs or some piece of costume, something stripped off and lying on the floor. Anything they could reach!

Then one of us would come out!

After one of these naked women!

Then we came on! They even grabbed for me when I walked down on the sides of my shoes. Now, a comedienne has to have your attention to hear. But they didn't want to hear a lot of jokes. They just wanted to whip it out and show it to you!

"Hey, Baby! What do you think of **this!**"

You'd look down and what would you see but the white uniforms stretched over big lumps behind the flies. And your imagination would run wild!

This is not for frustrated queens to be seeing!

In drag!

No no no no no!

Frustrated?

Yes yes yes yes yes!

Because it was like Alaska. Only worse. A Territory. And we couldn't mix. At all! Any repercussions, they told us, would

mean . . . what is it . . . war between state and unstatehood or something. So rather than have all that, they just told you not to mix. Not just CW's rules this time.

Oh, Honolulu was dreadful to work.

You worked late hours. Very late! You had all these drunks coming in and most of them were sailors, and you couldn't mix with a bunch of drunken sailors anyway. They were hot for girls. They didn't want to see a queen with red hair and skirts and sweaters falling off her shoes. No No No No No. Not that they weren't gorgeous or anything like that! You'd like to mix with them. But no. No no no no no!

Now, I like looking at beautiful men.

And uniforms? Yes, honey! Sailor uniforms especially.

So here you are a boy in your realm of being a girl, but not completely, and if someone handsome is looking at you and cruising you, maybe, and you think they are beautiful, and you get all excited -- and they drop a sign in front of you: **DO NOT TOUCH!**

I mean, my whole career in drag, one of the things which I really enjoyed was socializing at the clubs. Not hustling! Socializing. With tourists. With other queens. With celebrities, even, sometimes. But you couldn't socialize under Hawaii conditions. At all the other clubs, yes.

Of course, when you socialized, there were assholes that asked, "Are you queer?" You still got those stupid questions. But for everyone of those, you had ten more that said, "Hi! Come over here and sit down and have a drink. . . !" And this was

rewarding because they were people that liked you. They didn't know you. They didn't even know what you looked like out of drag. And you were accomplishing what you wanted with putting on all this make-up. You were mesmerizing these people.

Some couple would be sitting there, and he'd call you over. And when you'd sit down, she'd say, "Oh Harry. You mean that's a **man**? I don't believe it!" And this was fun to hear. When they took you for a real girl . . . that was the reward you put all that makeup on for.

But not in Hawaii!

You couldn't even get to know them. They couldn't get to know you. Not even the local Gays who might come to see the show. How could you meet them? You couldn't mix! You had to stay in the dressing room when you weren't on the floor performing. There was just this big wall. There was no social life at all. And not only not at the club.

I mean, I was pissed already, right? Because The Bitch had promised me \$125 a week if I paid my own air fare, and, honey, I was lucky to get \$75.

"What am I getting, Carroll?" I screamed every payday.

"What am I getting this week?"

"Oh, there's so many expenses here. All I can give you this week is \$75"

And we were working seven nights a week!

So when are you going to socialize?

You had all day to yourself -- when everybody else is working.

And you don't know anybody to call, anyway.

Because you haven't met anybody!

And you had to sleep sometime. And rest before you went to work which wasn't until after midnight. And then you couldn't mix! You had to stay in the dressing room which was upstairs like a loft so the heat from the club and the heat from the day was all in the roof and you were like up inside the roof and there was no opening to let the heat out!

All that heat!

And humid!

By the time you got your makeup on, it was off!

Melted!

It was just irritable, irritable, irritable!

And what made it even worse, she forced me be MC for a month!

A whole fucking month!

Me! Who hates even the thought of being MC!

Carroll Wallace says one night, "I've always wanted to go to Japan and I'm so close now, I'm going to go! So you have to MC while I'm gone!"

"No!" I screamed. "No! I've never MC'd before! I don't want to MC! Let someone else do it!"

"Who?" she screams back at me. "Who, Miss Phillips? Tell me. Who else have I got? Who?"

It was a left-hand compliment, but she did have a point. There was only me and Kara Montez left. Kara was the little Latino queen who spoke with an accent and who'd worked with us before. And there was a local queen from Honolulu, Lonnie Harper, who hated us anyway.

"Who? Who? Who?" she kept screaming.

I MC'd for a whole fucking month! And I was . . . !
Oooouuuuu! I was angry! I didn't want to work in the conditions we had to work under, anyway, and she'd been screwing me out of my salary for five months saying she's too poor. And now she can afford to go to **fucking Japan!**

And leave me to be MC!

As MC, you're seen all the time. And it's a matter of learning what to wear for your own spot which is supposed to be different than what you wear as MC. The MC is supposed to look glamorous. But if you open the show as the MC and your own spot is second, you have to be dressed for it because you don't have time during one of the stripper's turns to get it all done. I mean, you don't go from Joan Crawford to Wacky Jackie and back in just a couple of minutes! And you hadda go down there each time in a different outfit and you hadda be **UP UP UP!**

"Come on! Let's hear it for . . . !"

Again and again and again!

And then there were the performers you had to deal with.
The queens and the strippers!

There was this one woman. She was new. She came in and she was from Texas and she was one of the real strippers.

Now, I wanted everybody to give me something in writing on a card to say about them so I didn't have to make it up and so I could say the same thing at every show.

Just before I'm going to go out to introduce her, I say, "What do you want me to say for an introduction? Where's the card. . . ?"

"I don't know. I don't have anything," she says in a simpery, helpless voice.

"OK. Fine!" I say. And I got my brain together on my way out through the curtain. I burst out on stage and I said, "Let's hear it for the Terrific Torso from Texas!"

She comes up to me after the show and gives me a big kiss, right on the mouth.

"Ohhhhh! I liked that!" she squealed. "The Terrific Torso! Ohhhhhh!"

And she kissed me again!

As far as I know, she's still using it in her act! If she still has an act. She'd only be in her 60's now!

But, oh, it was hell on wheels. I just didn't like it. It was aggravating. Up and down those stairs. Sweating. And the after-hours crowd just didn't want a man dressed as a woman!

They wanted girls!

The real thing!

Oh, it was just dreadful. Sheer agony! Even the local drag queens didn't like us! Competition, I guess. I don't know. You were on your guard all the time. It was just . . . **DON'T DO ANYTHING!** Not with men. Not with local queens. Not with customers. I mean, you just felt uncomfortable!

And the worst local drag queen for attitude was the one who was performing with us, Lonnie Harper! She didn't like us, me in particular -- for no reason that I know of. Just -- you're a mainlander and that's it! You may take my job away and I'm a local and I don't need you here!

So this has been going on for the whole time we're there, and one night when I'm MC-ing, she thinks I didn't give her as much hoopla as everybody else 'cause they didn't applaud as loud for her or something. After the show, she's making remarks like "How dare these white people come over here!" and "that goddamned redhead. . . !" and "that silly comedienne. . . !"

Remarks about me!

We had words, and somewhere along the way something snapped and she slugged me. Not slapped, like a queen in a bitch fight. Slugged me, honey, like a man!

And I slugged her back! Like a man!

So we had this big fight.

Which neither of us won.

And later, she says, "I do have to admire you for one thing."

"What's that?"

"You didn't let me beat you up."

"Why should I?" I said. I said, "I'm gonna defend myself as best I can." And I said, "First of all, I didn't want to hit you because I have nothing against you and hitting is like putting your fist into a cement wall! It's gonna hurt and there's no need for it."

Now, I'm not a violent person. I'm not.

But inside. . . !

Inside, I think of things. Ohhhh. Vicious things to do to people. Hit 'em on the head with planks. It's like . . . with me, some people are like insects, spiders. I hate spiders! So in order to relax my own self, sit in the room without having this spider annoy me or irritate me, I have to kill it. I just can't pick it up. I'm afraid of 'em. I can't pick it up and throw it out in the street. I have to kill it. So it won't bite me while I'm asleep or at any other time. And this is the way I figure with people who annoy me. If they're irritating you, either stay away from 'em -- far, far away -- avoid 'em as much as possible. Or else make sure you show them you're not to be fiddled with!

So we got along after that, Lonnie Harper and me.

Nice looking queen. Lovely male voice. And she sang all the hit tunes from America and one or two in Hawaiian or Togali or whatever it was. She didn't even wear a wig. Didn't have to. Had a heavy head of hair and a feminine face. She just put makeup on and that was it!

And speaking of wigs, I had a real disaster while I was MC-ing in Honolulu!

Back when we'd heard I was going to Hawaii, Russell Reed had said, "For God's sake, Miss Phillips, get yourself a good wig!"

I'd always bought these cheap wigs or second hand ones. So I decided Russell was right. I did deserve to have a good wig. With real hair. Paste down and this and that.

So I went to this woman in South San Francisco. Her name was Marilyn. She was a chiropractor's wife (although none of us knew that she had a husband who was a chiropractor at the time). But anyway . . . she lived in South San Francisco, and this queen drove me down there, and Marilyn measured my head.

"What color?"

"Red."

"What length?"

"Rita Hayworth in *Gilda*!"

Oh, it was going to be just gorgeous!

Real hair!

Now it's all sewn on a cap. Knotted by hand on a cap. A mesh cap. Then they put lacing in front the same transparent color so that your skin will show through and it'll look natural after it's glued down.

Now this wig is \$125. A lot of money for those days. But it's real hair. And it's going to look very, very glamorous. And she promised to send it to me in Hawaii as soon as she finished it.

And I waited and waited.

I waited five months!

And wouldn't you know, the thing arrived about a week after I started MC-ing.

I'm still a nervous wreck anyway with MC jitters, but I'm pleased with the wig.

I put it on and it looks lovely. Long, red, and lovely.

I feel great in it! Just like Rita Hayworth!

I go downstairs and open the show.

I come back upstairs while the first stripper is on, and I'm flipping my hair around because I'm in love with this wig.

All of a sudden one of the queens says, "Did they throw something at you?"

"What?" I say.

"You're bleeding! Did you stab yourself?"

"What are you talking about? Don't shit me! I'm a nervous wreck already!"

"Look!" And they hold up a mirror and all this red is coming from underneath the wig and down the side of cheek.

"I must have stuck myself with a bobby pin!"

And I take the wig off and my whole head is red but it's not looking like blood!

"Good grief!" I say. "It's dye!"

Five fucking months and she forgets to wash out the dye!

So that whole night, with everything else I have to deal with, I've got all this red dye running down the front of my face

every time I start sweating, which I never stop doing because of the heat!

But I guess it wasn't all a bad time in Hawaii.

The best thing I liked was early in the morning . . . most nights I never went to bed right after the club. Four or five in the morning, who's going to go to bed. And besides, roses bloom in Hawaii, too!

So we lived only a block from the beach in a house we rented. A hundred and a quarter a month. One block from the beach in Waikiki! So every morning I was in the ocean, which was jettied off. It stops the waves from coming in so you could just float freely in all that salt water. You could just float and not have the waves knock you over. And I used to lay there for h o u r s just floating around in this salt water.

You can't do this in California! The water's too cold, too rough. So it was lovely and I was getting this lovely suntan. I was looking just gorgeous and everything. Thinking I won't have to wear a lot of makeup. Just cover the beard, some lipstick and eye makeup -- that's all, because I was getting so tan.

Well, after a week, the skin decides it's going to renew itself. And one night, I was a leper! Putting my makeup on, it was coming right off. Putting it on! Coming right off!

I was peeling!

Honey, I'm from San Francisco! What do I know about peeling?

I looked ugly for days!

But I kept on floating every day that I could. Because the weather was beautiful. It would be warm warm warm and a cloud would come over and it would start pouring. You go into anything on the beach, any restaurant, and sit down and have a cup of coffee and watch it pour outside. Ten minutes later it was over and the streets would be dry again. Fabulous! And at night the skies were thick with stars. . . !

Once I was on the beach with Kara Montez. Now he had this little black bathing suit on and a full head of long black hair which he wore loose at the beach. So he's laying on his stomach, and he looks like a girl laying there on the sand on her stomach with all the hair. And his shape! The waist came in. The hips went out. The butt was real fem.

Well, when men would pass by they'd think here's this woman lying here who's unhooked her bra because she doesn't want a tan line. They're all thinking maybe she'll raise up without thinking and we'll see her tits.

After a while there's this whole circle of guys walking around us.

A parade! Circling the two of us!

Kara Montez suddenly lifts up and says, "What happened? Where's my sun? Who's blocking my sun?"

Immediately, they saw it was a man! And they all took off in different directions! They didn't know each other. They just wanted to see something.

And what they saw was Kara Montez's chest!

Kara looked around at all the men leaving and said, "Oh, dear. What have I done?"

But I played dumb. "Don't ask. . . !"

Kara was a strange one, dear. She could do these strange things with energy.

"I'm beat and I have to go on the floor," she'd say. "Give me some *manna*."

"*Manna* is strength!" she told me.

She'd clasp both of my hands and say, "Exhale!"

And when I'd exhale, she'd inhale -- and she got my energy to go on the floor with, and she'd make it around the floor -- even after a few drinks -- and do her show just perfect.

Now Kara also had this knowledge about how to contact spirits or whatever, and this she showed me in Honolulu. Her guide . . . I don't know if it was her guide or what she knew about the underworld, but she sat across from me in this room, put a scarf over the lamp shade and said, "Now stare into my face."

And I just see his face, Kara's face, and I was staring at his eyes. And from his head -- as he's sitting -- from his head came this little body! It had the most ugliest, gruesomest, ghoulitest face I've ever seen in my life! No movie could ever equal the fear on this face that was now coming towards me across the room!

I screamed!

It went ffffffffffffftttttt! **Back!** It disappeared! And Kara's face came back into view.

"Oh, shit! I forgot to tell you not to scream!" he said, almost in a whisper.

"I could have lost whatever it is that you have in you that keeps you sane!" he said. "It could've went flying anywhere instead of back into you!"

"That was sheer evil power you saw!" he said.

I mentioned this to him years later, and all he'd say was, "We don't talk about that any more!" He'd given it up, he said.

Kara gave me a view of fear and the devil and what we all possess but we can't control. When I think of the times I've been mad, it produced the anger. It, the destructive force. It's there waiting in all of us. And sometimes it comes out. Kara helped me see this.

I've even seen him quiet an entire audience so they wouldn't clap for this girl he was mad at. He **stopped** the audience from clapping. He'd say, "I have this wonderful power. Do you want to contact a spirit? Do you want to contact that person over there. Now, you can't get to him directly. But through me, as your channel, you can get to him."

He actually got a lover for himself once when we were in Fresno! A drummer. Straight boy! To fall in love with him! Have sex with him. Through me! Now how he did this, I don't know. He won't explain. But he used me! I would lay in the bed

and just breathe softly and he would take this boy's spirit and put it through me.

And they got together! I swear. They did!

Anyway, Kara showed me the evil. He even said to me once, "You have bad, yes, but it's not as equal as your good!"

The good came to me one time when I was praying to work at Finnochio's at my church on Cortland Avenue. St. Kevin's. I was at the altar rail praying to one of the statues. I think it was St. Theresa. I was asking her to help me get a job at Finn's.

I usually prayed to St. Theresa because my cousin had a statue of her that was in glass, in a glass dome. And I guess having that in the house impressed me to pray to her in church. At the time, I had no special saint. At confirmation, you have to take a saint's name, so I wanted Jesus.

But they said, "No! You can't have his name!"

So I took the closest to it, his father, St. Joseph. So St. Theresa and St. Joseph were two that I prayed to. And then a friend told me about St. Jude.

"You can ask him anything," she said. "He's for the underdog. You can ask him a favor and he'll grant it like **that!**" And she snapped her fingers. "But you must never go back on your word when you promise!"

So, when I met St. Jude, I asked if I could stop masturbating so much. And he **granted** it! Like that! Snap! I **had no desire whatsoever!** The thought didn't cross my mind. Then, I had a relapse. I went back on my promise to him. I killed it.

Now I can never ask him for anything for myself again. For other people, I can. But not for myself. That's it. That's the understanding I have. So I pray to him for people to get well or to get jobs or to watch over people and stuff like that. I thank him. And I'm sorry I broke my promise to him. But he understands. I guess I made this little law up with him and me, but that's the way I am.

Now, back to my story about St. Theresa. I'm kneeling there praying, and, all of a sudden, a hand came and touched me on the shoulder. Right there! My whole body went to ice and chills.

"There's somebody behind me, touching me, and I didn't hear him come in!" I whisper to myself.

And I turned around and there was no one there! But there **was!** I was touched by a holy spirit!

The good!

So these two things are very important in my life as far as being good and bad.

Forgive me, dear, I tend to ramble sometimes. We were talking about Hawaii, weren't we.

Other than Waikiki Beach and, oh yes, the Pali, I didn't see too many sights. Because we were working all the time.

But, finally, through the strippers at the club, local woman mostly, we met some of the local queens. Some really nice ones. It was through the ones the strippers introduced us to that I had my most frightening experience and my most wonderful one while I was in Hawaii.

One night I had the night off. I don't know why. The club must have been closed because Carroll Wallace would never just **give** somebody a night off! Anyway, these queens I'd met through one of the strippers took me for a drive up in the mountains. It was after dark and we went to the top of the Pali . . . the High Mountain. These queens and I. A sacred spot, they said, and we all got out of the car to look.

I went to the edge of this cliff, and they said you could throw yourself over the cliff and you'd never hit the bottom because the wind was so strong it would push you back up over to where you were. And so I was standing there fascinated by the wind and by this sight which I could barely see in the dark, and the queens got back in the car and left!

Left!

Left me there! Alone! In the fucking dark!

I was standing there panicking! I'm . . . I'm a stranger on this island. I'm on top of this mountain you can't even jump off of, and I don't know how I got up here because I wasn't watching the road. I was thinking, I'll go back with these queens so I don't have to remember these directions. And I started to worry.

Will they know I'm gone?

Do they even know my name?

Did they do this deliberately because I'm a mainlander?

All this is going through my head. In the pitch dark. With the wind blowing up the cliff.

And they pulled up!

Thinking I had got back in the car with them, they were halfway down the mountain going to somewhere else when they realized I wasn't there.

"Well," someone shouted like a friendly old fishwife, "what the hell are you doing up here?"

I was so glad to see them, I couldn't even be mad.

And it was a stripper, Orchid was her name, who I will always remember for giving me my most wonderful experience in Hawaii. She was gorgeous. And she liked me. So she introduced me to her brother, Bunny.

She said, "He's nice and I think you're nice and I think you both should get together."

At first sight, I took a liking to him and he took a liking to me! You could turn his face on a pedestal and there wasn't one flaw. Not one! And I'm looking for a flaw so I won't get hung up and I can't find one. He was just gorgeous.

And when we got together, the pigeons took off!

I mean, they were more like eagles!

And he wasn't beautiful just to look at; he was beautiful inside. He knew how to be tender and gentle and still masculine.

Gorgeous boy!

And after loving him for two months, I said, "I can't work for Carroll Wallace any longer. I have to leave Honolulu. . . !"

We looked at each other for a long time.

"I have to stay here. . . !"

Years later, I heard that he was down South somewhere. I never got in touch with him.

It was over. . . .

But he was just beautiful. . . !

So in spite of being so much in love, my dislike for Carroll Wallace was so strong, I was so miserable, I left and came home to San Francisco.

Through with Carroll Wallace for good -- I thought!

Little did I know!

Part Three

Finnochio's!

Finn's

Mecca for every queen west of the Mississippi who ever put on a dress and wanted to perform!

The good. The bad. The ugly.

The best and the worst.

Fired four times. Rehired three!

I met the love of my life there.

I almost got killed during the time I was working there.

I had my picture taken with scores of celebrities there.

I even performed with some of them there.

I met the most interesting character I ever met there.

I spent seventeen years of my life there, running around on the sides of my shoes and swinging my beads!

And I loved it. I loved it!

But where to begin?

It's all one big exciting moving picture show, like some Gay newsreel dancing back and forth in my head.

I guess the best place to start is at the beginning. My audition. Yes, dear, I had to audition to get this job. But it was worth it!

Remember Les Lee? The gorgeous queen who worked with us in Oregon. Well, by now Les Lee was working Finnochio's. This is

1959, and I'm back from Hawaii for a while. Doing drag whenever I got the chance. Mostly with Ricky San Juan.

We played one town in Nevada. El? El . . . something. El. El. Elko! That's it! Elko. This club was like a great big old fashioned saloon you see in Westerns. It had a long bar and a great big room with tables and chairs for the customers to play cards and the dance hall. It was like that. Typical cowboy barroom set up. You expected to see John Wayne walk in any minute.

It was this great big bar, and we got hired there. Bobby Lane, Ricki San Juan, and me. And, I think, Russell Reed. or somebody, one of the other ones. Yeah. Ray Saunders was there, too. OK. This club had no stage, had no lighting for shows. It was just great big white neon tubes across the ceiling. Bad lighting for a man in girl's makeup! And we had the gall to work there! I mean, you make up in the dressing room and you look lovely, and then you come out and perform under those florescent lights, which are death on queens!

They didn't care!

They just thought we were God's gift to the cowboys or whatever it was we were playing to!

But, in general, the work wasn't as regular as The Carroll Revue. So I'm wondering what I'm going to do next when I get this call from Les Lee!

God, she was one of my favorites! Just my idol as far as beauty goes. She was a dancer. Did I tell you that already? A

dancer from Canada. I knew her before Oregon. I met her through different queens -- I don't know how. You meet people and you can't remember all of them. But this was my **chance!**

She calls and she says, "I'm leaving Finnochio's. It's a good time for you to audition because there'll be an opening in the show."

"I'm not ready!" I was terrified!

"It's now or never!"

So, scared as I was, I got my ass in gear.

I went and auditioned.

Finnochio's didn't take you on recommendation the way the smaller drag clubs did. They threw you to the wolves! An audition at Finnochio's was to go out on the floor and do the show. To actually do your specialty as a part of the main show. In front of an audience! And it was a tough audience. Mainly tourists, a lot of them couldn't even speak English.

So that night, I'm wearing a bright yellow cardigan and skirt and a red, red wig, and strings and strings of orange and amber beads. I'm standing backstage, nervous as hell and I hear, "And here comes Wacky Jackie Phillips, that Riotous Redhead!"

I'm on!

I walk up to the mike. Stand there a couple of beats and say, "What were you expecting? The real thing?"

That gets a laugh.

"I know I'm not pretty but I'm colorful."

Another laugh.

"Right now I'd like to belch a little song for you called 'Kiss me on my Upper Lip, My Bottom's Cracked.' Hit it, Helen!"

Helen was the piano player at Finnochio's. A real woman, not a drag. She never took her eyes off the music. No matter if she knew it by heart, she never took her eyes off. Like she didn't want to see what was going on. But she had the right beat, the right notes, and everything.

"Hit it, Helen!" And I go into my first song.

That night I did "Hey, Good Lookin'!"

In my act, after the first chorus, I'd fall off my shoes and run around the floor like Groucho Marx used to walk. I'd run around the floor and, at the same time, I'm swinging the beads. I'd swing them around my neck like a Hoola Hoop while I was running around the floor.

Then when the audience and I are all dizzy, I go back to the mike, and finish the song. Do a couple of jokes.

"Thank you, savagely. It's so nice to know that you like classical music. Speaking of classical music, it's joke time, should you care for it.

"Did you hear the one about the little boy who sat on the curb crying his eyes out? And an old man came by and said, 'Little boy, what are you crying about?' And the little kid looked up and said, 'Because I can't do what the big boys do.' So the old man sat down and cried with him!"

A couple of more jokes and then I'd say, "I'd like to belch another song for you. This is an aria for a famous opera I used

to sing many years ago at The Metropolitan -- [then I'd swallow and pause. . . .] -- Life Insurance Company."

Always got a laugh.

"In fact, I used to sing it to my boyfriend before he found out I was a phony. Yes. One night he reach for me -- and I was there! Now he tries to hold it against me just because I made it hard for him!

"But, nevertheless, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is an aria from a lovely opera I used to sing, and it's called 'Whoever Hit Nelly in the Belly with the Jelly Sure is in a Helluva Jam!'" Then I'd go into my second song, run around the floor like Groucho Marx again and off I'd go!

That was the act. A solid, zany, fast four or five minutes. Just like a crazy teen-age girl. Skirts, blouses, and tons of jewelry.

Well, I got through the audition fine. The audience liked me! So I went down during the intermission and asked Mr. Finnochio. I said, "What do you think?"

"I can't-a make up-a my mind," he said with his Italian accent. "You'll have-a to do another show."

So I stayed for the second show and did my act again for a whole new audience.

I went down to see him again.

"I'm-a not ready to tell you yet," he said. "You-a stay and do another one!"

I had to do **three** shows that night!

Somewhere in that man's mind, he was saying, "This-a guy is-a good! I-a like him and I wanna see what he does-a for three shows."

Plus, he got me free for one entire night! And I went home not knowing whether I'd be hired or not.

After I auditioned, I waited a week! Nothing!

So I went and knocked on the backstage door, and Lestra Lamont, the MC, opened the door and said in his Tallulah Bankhead voice, "Yessssssss?"

"What's the word?" I said, "Did he say I could come in and work?"

"He hasn't spoken yet, darling."

So I waited and waited.

Through the years, when I was young and first doing drag, I always used to go to church and pray to St. Theresa or St. Joseph or St. Jude. But St. Theresa was my show business saint. I'd say to her, "There's only two things I want out of drag -- that's to work Finnochio's and to have my picture taken by Romaine!"

Romaine was the biggest show-people photographer in The City at that time. And everybody who was anybody had their pictures taken there because it was professional, honey. She did gorgeous work. I met her once. She said, "You have beautiful bone structure." Oh, honey, Miss Crawford was in a tizzy for days!

I never got the Romaine pictures. Which was fine. I have enough pictures to last me a lifetime if I'd only get them organized. . . .

But finally he calls. Mr. Finnochio himself.

"I want-a you to open!"

I got Finnochio's!

Thank you, St. Theresa!

I signed it for \$125 a week. Which was the highest I'd gotten so far (because Miss Shitpot never paid me the amount she promised me in Alaska or Hawaii. Never!)

The contract was for three months with three months option. And all of my options were always picked up. They saw that I was a good entertainer and I was not a trouble-maker and they liked me.

One way I used to stay out of trouble was by making jewelry, beads, necklaces. Things I could wear in the act. Sometimes you had a tendency to be bored there waiting for the show to start or for your specialty to go on, so you'd walk around to different dressing rooms to talk, and you'd repeat something somebody else said the night before, and it could cause friction.

Gossip. That's what it was. Just back-stage gossip.

So, in order to avoid this, in order to keep everything calm, cool, and collected before I went on, I'd stay in the dressing room and make jewelry. There was a lot of backstabbing and antagonism by trouble-makers that weren't content with their act or were jealous because you got more applause or jealous

because they didn't have a good spot in the show. And gossip was a way of getting shit stirred up against somebody. To keep you in hot water, constant turmoil.

I figured if I had confidence in myself, that's all I needed. When I opened my mouth and the audience laughed, I knew I was doing **something** right, and I took all the pettiness and jealousy with a grain of salt!

In 1959, the show at Finnochio's when I first started there went something like this. LaVerne Cummings opened the show. LaVerne was one of the stars She sang falsetto. Just beautiful. Flawless act. Still alive. A salesman at The Emporium. Bedding. And next on the show came a dancer called Tanya DeMolino. Then, oh, different ones I can't think of. It was like singer, dancer, comedienne. Break them up. There was no chorus in the middle, then. This was just all acts! And the last two were Ray DeYoung, another falsetto, and Lucien Phelps, the real star of the show, who had taken over from Walter Hart as "The Male Sophie Tucker." The whole show built up to the climax of Lucien. And then they had the finale which everyone was in.

So this was an hour show. But you had enough time to get your act across. Then, later on, they started having an opening with a chorus and a middle production number with a chorus and then a closing finale with a chorus! These took fifteen minutes out of the show. So now each act was on and off quick. Because they wanted to get four shows in!

They used me where they needed me. Eventually, they'd have me in spots where they wanted something to pick up the act that just drug, bombed or whatever. Then later on, years and years later, they started opening the show with me.

Get the show off to a good start!

I was very resentful of this.

I didn't want to open the show.

I wanted somebody else to start and then, all of a sudden, pop me on!

But I did what I was told.

And, as I said, that was years later. At the beginning it was all wonderful! Seeing people. Being seen. Meeting people. Celebrities. Friends. Lovers.

Who I met there, I can remember.

When I met them? No no no no no. Miss Phillips' mind comes up blank.

But who? Who. . . ? Who comes to mind first?

Jack!

Oh, my God, yes! The love of my life! Jack Long.

It was right after I started appearing at Finnochio's.

Him and this woman were up there to see the show on her birthday. He took her to Finnochio's, and I don't think she was, or maybe just was, twenty-one. Anyway, they were a young couple.

And I looked down and I saw this face!

You know I always try to find a flaw so I won't fall in love. Especially when it's a pretty face. And I just flipped because this one is pretty, pretty, **pretty!**

I try hard to find a fault so I don't get hung up on some guy that's there with a girl!

I can't find a fault. Anywhere! He's a young Gordon McRae! Like in *Moonlight Bay* with Doris Day. Gordon McRae was **gorgeous** in those days!

I know it's an impossible situation, so I just enjoy looking at him every chance I get while I'm working. Just seeing his face. It never dawned on me that I would meet him.

Anyway, it's two o'clock when the show is over, and I come downstairs. And the two of them were standing there!

I'm completely out of drag now, you understand.

And he walks over and he says, "We just wanted to say how much we enjoyed your show. Would you come have coffee with us. I'm Jack and this is Barbara."

Not -- this is my **wife**, Barbara!

And I say, "Well, I have a long way to go, I have to catch a bus," and this and that. I say, "Otherwise, I would."

"We'll drive you home," he says. "Where do you live?"

"Bernal Heights."

"Oh, great!" he says, "we both live in Bernal, too."

Like, it's almost next door!

So we went for coffee and he talked and praised the show, and she was very quiet. But I was swooning over his face. And there went all the pigeons and the feathers and the balloons!

He was wearing a brown sweater. I know because later on he gave it to me. I still have it. I'll never part with it. I just keep sewing the holes up because I love it so.

So, anyway, we finish the coffee. He drives Barbara home, lets her off, and says goodnight. I'm thinking this is just the end of their date for her birthday.

And they were married! Yes yes yes yes yes! I didn't know it. He had driven her to **their** home. And I didn't know it. I didn't know what time it was when I saw him, my dear. No way!

So after she goes in the door, he says, "Now, where do you live?"

"Highland."

So he drove a ways.

Then, he says, "You mind if we park for awhile and talk?"

I can hardly speak.

"Not at all," I manage to say, trying to sound as calm as I can.

And, honey, we **parked!**

Not in front of my house, but on Bennington!

So we're there talking and I can feel my blood rushing. I'm thinking, "Oh, God! Do I **dare?**"

But what I say is, "You better take me home."

And he says, "Why?"

"Because I have an awful urge to kiss you, and I don't want to get bashed in the face."

"You wouldn't. . . !" he says in a low, husky voice,
Well, he leaned over.

We kissed!

It was like fifty thousand pigeons taking off from my head.
My blood was rushing. Rushing!

My ears rang like I was blasted by radar!

My whole system went crazy with that man.

I was out of breath!

And I'm singing inside my head, "I don't know why I love you like I do -- I just do. . . !"

Honey, I fell right then and there! I mean, I fell!

And I never had the feeling with anyone else. Before or since. So emotional. You get all tingly. I was just obsessed with the man.

Oh, but how Aunt Millie hated Jack Long!

He came to pick me up or drove me home or something and I introduced them. And she saw this change over me -- I get this look when I'm in love -- and right away she thought, "Oh, someone's going to steal my little chicken!"

I have pictures of me during the time I was with Jack and there's an **expression** on my face. I look different. And when I see them, I say, "Oh. No wonder. This was my Jack Long period. I was in love!" I can see the glow in my face that I don't show in other pictures.

When queens are in love, honey, they **beam** somehow!

I've seen a queen walk through the door with a new trick from last night and, honey, from the expression on her face, you know she's in love! It's sickening sometimes because you know she's just been screwed stupid. Fucked to the **ends** of the earth. And she's in love! **This** morning. Over **this** cup of coffee. She don't know who she'll be with tomorrow morning, but for right now, she's got this shit-eating grin on her face, and she is **in love!**

And this is how queens act.

I've **seen** them walk into places. And they **change!**

Their whole attitude changes.

If someone says, "What's wrong with that queen?" all you have to say is, "It's that trick over there with the big bulge in his pants. That's what she's got on **her** mind!"

I suppose I was that same way!

If someone has that special kind of look that I have to have, that look that drives me crazy, then I'm in love and I'm ruined. I get a glow about me. I get a strange look.

While I was with Jack Long, I had this glow. I was happy, and when I'm happy, everything around me has to be happy. I'm just glowing. But I'm **miserably** happy. I'm miserable because I'm so happy. I can't believe that I'm finally living. And I'm living **for** someone, not just myself. And it's a beautiful feeling. **Beautiful!** Because you're not thinking about yourself;

you've got someone else to think about. But is that person thinking about you? Is **he** happy? Is **he** miserable?

And the funniest thing about me -- all those songs I used to hear never bothered me, but then, all of a sudden, when you're in love, all the words are associated with **your** affair. They're all familiar with the things **you're** doing. And that's why I can see these people that write these Western songs, ohhhhhh, crying and everything while they are writing. Certainly! Because its a beautiful emotion, the feeling of love. Especially if it's returned. . . !

Yes. That's very important, too. Because then . . . I don't know . . . you seem to be able to do anything you want.

You have this confidence.

You can't wait to see them!

The only other time where that happened to me was a girl! Evelyn Bottazzi. *Baby Girl*, we called her. I couldn't wait to see her, either.

What? I've never told you about Baby Bottazzi?

Well, dear, I was going through the change -- through puberty. And the attraction was, first, with Baby Bottazzi.

Now this girl was everything in the world to me -- only to kiss. To kiss her was -- sent all the blood rushing.

Which is a feeling you never get back.

This is youth blossoming.

All right, now it's blossoming for this girl, too. And I'm loving just this . . . just this **kiss** contact. There was noth-

ing, no touching, no groping, nothing. No sexual advancement at all. Just the kissing was sending all this blood rushing inside of me. And this went on for awhile.

Then, one day, she told me, "I don't think we should do this any more . . . kiss in my father's truck!"

I couldn't believe it!

"When you get a deeper tan," she said, "when you are taller and heavier, then maybe we can go together again."

Evidently, she sensed I was not . . . masculine enough for her or whatever it was that women wanted in those days which I knew nothing about. So my little heart was broken and I cried for two weeks.

I vowed then and there -- no girl would ever do it again!

Well, there was one girl. Dianna. And I tried kissing with her but there was no blood rushing. Nothing. Nothing! My lips said nothing.

So I said, "Give up!"

And I gave up and started looking for something more . . . more exciting. And the homosexual blood started in.

I found one neighbor that was willing to let me . . . !

Well, dear, let's just say my craving for men got stronger.

But we were talking about Jack Long, weren't we. And the fact that I was so in love with him, I couldn't wait to see him.

Aunt Millie saw it in my face. So there was this ostracizing and hate and "I don't like you!" No competition, you know. Aunt Millie wanted no one. None whatsoever! Anyway, Jack Long

saw that I was having trouble being with him and worrying about her and this and that.

One night he says, "Since your aunt doesn't like me, why don't you get your own place?"

I said, "Oh, God! Decisions. Decisions."

Such a big jump! I'd travelled a lot with The Carroll Revue. But whenever I was in San Francisco, I lived with Aunt Millie.

For the first time, I had to choose.

Finally, I said, "OK!" and I started looking for an apartment. The first one I saw was on 22nd Street. It was a basement apartment. Very dark and had a little garden. The garden was the only thing that intrigued me. It was \$35 a month!

I said, "I want to look around some more. Can I let you know."

He said, "Well, I have **another** place."

So we went to Valencia and 16th Streets over a barber shop. It was like an office emptied out. It was just one big room with a partition here for the sink and a partition for the bedroom, and that was it. Otherwise, it was just one big room.

I said, "I'll give you \$50 a month for this one."

He said, "Sold!"

And I went out and bought furniture, had them deliver it, and I was singing all the time while I was cleaning up the house and re-arranging stuff, and waiting for Jack to come over.

But he only came over when he was drunk! So, I was crying because I was so miserable and then, finally, one night, after three months, I got so mad, I exploded! I took the records and I just flung them across the room, and they went sailing into the wall and breaking the plaster, and I broke dishes and everything!

The next morning early, the landlord comes to the door, the man that had rented it to me, and he says, "There was a fight here or some commotion last night?"

Not letting him in, I said, "Oh, no. I live by myself."

"Oh," he said, trying to see past me into the place which was still a mess, "because the people next door in the hotel heard all this racket. Things breaking and crashing."

"No," I said, as innocent as I could.

And when he left, I went to the phone and called Aunt Millie.

"Do you have any rooms for rent?"

"Yes, Darling," she said. "Come home!"

Well, when I went home, she said, "Oh, you don't know how relieved and happy I am."

And I said, "Why?"

She said, "I've been sitting here in the window every morning with my rosary beads praying that you would come back."

Now **this** was jealousy!

I had called Aunt Millie everyday that I was on Valencia Street: "Hello! How are you?"

And all I ever got for the whole three months every day was "When are you coming home blah blah blah and this and that!"

Instead of wishing me happiness, -- "Go on! Make your life! Enjoy your life! So you're Gay, so what! Love is hard to come by, and you've found it. Good! Enjoy!" -- instead of that, she tells me, "On a daily basis, I was asking God and the Saints to send you back to me!"

Her little chicken!

So I went back home, but when I heard her say, "Every day I was praying for this! Never do this again! I was worried sick!" I stopped caring for her. I shut the door on her. I stopped being devoted, attentive, and everything.

To myself, I said, "If she's gonna act like this, I'm not gonna give love and be shit on!"

So, I did what I was supposed to, took care of her, went to the store for her, paid rent to her, and this and that. But I was very anti-Aunt Millie from then on.

Later, I found out Jack Long was married! His wife liked me because I wasn't competition to her as another woman. But her mother didn't like the idea of him running around with queens and being married. So there was two praying against me. And then his mother started! She was praying, too! His mother-in-law, his mother, and my Aunt Millie! All three praying that this affair would break up.

So it broke up -- with a lovely scene. In fact, it was a whopper!

We were out drinking one night from bar to bar. It was my night off and we were stopping at this one and that one, drinking Black Russians. But I had my roses with me so we were sober as long as the little pills were lasting. Finally, they ran out and the Black Russians took over and we were going home.

We're going up 3rd Street and Jack Long says, "I'm too tired to drive. I'm gonna park for a while and rest."

He moved over in my seat and I sat behind the steering wheel so he could stretch out.

"You want me to drive?" I said.

I don't remember him saying anything -- Yes, No, or Go Ahead or whatever -- so I started the car up. And I'm driving and I'm going down 3rd Street and all of a sudden it was like nudging somebody on the street, bumping somebody as you walk by. And then this jolt!

I had hit a car!

A **parked** car!

And I had kept going. . . ! Dumb. Dumb!

"I think I just hit something," I said.

No answer from Jack Long.

"I better stop," I said.

Still no answer from Jack Long.

So I turned a corner to stop, and from three streets come these red lights! It's the police!

"All right! Get out of the car!"

I got out.

They frisked me.

"You're drunk!"

"Yes. Yes. Yes, I admit I'm drunk."

"All right! Where's your driver's license?"

"I don't have one."

"You don't have one?!?"

"No. And this isn't my car. It belongs to the one I'm with."

"There was nobody with you."

"Yes. The owner of the car is."

"There's no one in the car!"

But then they went back and there he was.

I had hit the other car so hard, Jack went underneath the dashboard and was laying down there on the floor. They didn't see him because they just saw me sitting behind the wheel.

So they got Jack out, and he was, "Oh! Ouuuu! Oooowww!" Someway or another he had hurt his leg.

Him, they took to emergency.

Me, they took to jail!

Weeeeeeeeee, with sobering up and the hangover and no pills and whathaveyou, I could only moan all night in the lock-up. "Ohhhhhhh, no! Oh, no no no no no!"

The next morning in court, I was dumbfounded.

The judge said, "You have four counts against you: speeding, hit and run, driving without a license, and driving under the influence. How do you plead."

"Guilty to all of them, Judge," I said.

"Three months in San Bruno!"

I about died! That's the county jail!

"Two suspended."

At the moment, that didn't make me feel much better.

That was it!

The case was over!

Closed!

And I was on my way to San Bruno!

As I'm pulling out of the City Jail in the back of the van, the Black Maria, I look through the bars and there's Jack Long's wife, standing there with her hands like "What? What do I do?"

I found out later, she took care of everything. She got a lawyer and she did this and that. And Mr. Finnochio put up the \$500 for Aunt Millie to get me out.

I was there for a week.

At San Bruno.

What was it like, you ask!

Ohhhhhh, we won't go into that!

We will not!

It wasn't pleasant, I'll tell you **that** much, kid.

But they got me out in a week and I went back to work, and I paid everything off.

The car I hit was a cop's car! He had just gotten out of it. It wasn't a police car, it was **his** own private car to go into the station to go to work. I had hit it and kept on going.

Well, right then and there they all were furious. That's how I got caught so fast. Two blocks later.

I had to pay for his car. I must have wrecked it something awful 'cause it had to go to two garages to be fixed. So that was a fabulous amount of money. And then there was the \$500 for Mr. Finnochio.

I was on probation for like two or three years or something. That cured me of ever driving a car and drinking and all that stuff. Since then, I've never driven a car again, drunk or sober!

And that's how we separated, Jack Long and me. The three praying old women got their wish, but I almost got killed and killed Jack Long with me.

The experience just confirmed my views about how people can screw you. They see you're interested and they say as sexy as they can, "Hi . . . what's your name? I think you're cute!" And you're sunk! And they know it -- they just jerk you around. One kiss on the lips and your head goes flying off into the clouds.

You're sunk and they know it and they just take you for it. They are good at it, Honey. I've met some experts -- Jack Long excluded -- that just rattled my brain and shook my cage and all of that love stuff. And after they win you over and you put them up in a penthouse, they can't be bothered with you. They'll shake their hand and whatever crumbs come out of it are yours. And you grab for 'em gratefully.

Un un! No no no no no!

Not that I'm too good. But I don't like to be shit on when I'm giving all the fuckin' love that I store up and everything, and admiration, and making myself feel wonderful. Because I don't think you're living unless you're in love! Most of the time you just exist. But when you're in love, then you **live**, because you see color, you hear songs you didn't like before, and now they become fabulous to you, and you walk around with this silly grin on your face twenty-four hours a day!

I had really fallen for Jack Long!

Then it was over!

The lover part anyway.

To this day, we're still friends, Jack Long and me. It's just one of those things where a love affair doesn't work but we ended up good friends, which is rare for people. He still calls me or I call him. And, you know, dear, he never charged me for wrecking his car or anything because I really tore it up. We're the best of friends, and his wife, his third wife, Sonny, loves me. She thinks I'm a camp. I don't know -- I come across like another girl to women. Especially wives. Because they think this one's so campy, there's no competition, and I'm not embarrassed with him and stuff like that.

I ask them if they are. "If you're embarrassed," I say, "that's fine." I say, "Tell me because I don't want to embarrass you if we go shopping or something."

We talk on the phone and we send each other birthday cards and Christmas cards. And I haven't found anyone yet to equal

him! He has white hair now, but he's as beautiful as ever. He lives down the Peninsula. And I still get a thrill when I see him!

Enough! Let's change the subject.

I haven't told you about my accident, have I, dear? My other accident. The one where I was almost killed and was laid up for a year.

October 1969. I think it was Friday the Thirteenth. This is after two in the morning, now. I left work, went to Kearny, got the bus down to Third and Mission. And you either waited for a bus there or a jitney came by. There were still jitneys back in '69, dear. These were like limousines that ran from almost Daly City to the Ferry Building. They were privately owned and took people that wanted to get home early or fast. If the bus came by, you took the bus. If the bus was crowded and you couldn't get on or if the bus was late, you took the jitney, if there was room.

This night, the jitney came by first. There were like . . . one . . . five six seven eight. There were nine people in the jitney that night. It was packed! So when we got to this intersection underneath the freeway at DuBoce, this guy comes off the ramp and never stops. He hits us and knocks **everybody** in the jitney out into the street! That's how hard he hit!

I must have been dozing because the only thing I can remember is a vision of the side of the jitney coming in on me. Now whether I saw it or not, that's immaterial, but the thing was

that's all I can remember of the accident. I felt no throwing out in the street. I wasn't conscious until I woke myself up trying to pull my coat from underneath the wheel of a car -- either the jitney or the car that hit us -- and I'm trying to pull my coat out as I'm waking up.

"What the hell!" I thought.

I'm in the middle of the street, cooooooovered with blood because I had a fractured skull and dislocated shoulders and everything.

"Don't move!" The first voice I heard said, "Don't move! We're getting an ambulance!"

Now, I'm very obliging. I must have passed back out again because the next thing I remember I was in an ambulance and
WWWWHHHHIIIIIIIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!

Then, I was in San Francisco General Hospital laying on a table and they were saying, "Get me more tweezers! There's more glass here in his wrist. And on his head. He's got a fractured skull. This'll have to be taken care of!"

Well, I'm . . . demobilized!

So my friend, Barbara, Jacks' wife, hears that I'm in San Francisco General, and she says, "No no no no no! You have insurance with AGVA!"

And she gets me out of General and puts me in St. Joseph's, and I'm there a week in recovery. I left with a big bandage on my head.

But I have to stay off for a whole year from drag!

I had lost my equilibrium. I couldn't walk! I would stagger. I would stand up and start walking, and I would fall into a wall or topple over.

I had no fluid.

I don't know what the fuck equilibrium fluid is. But I had had it and I lost it! It ran out my ear.

They got me a doctor. Dr. Hart, I think it was. He was the top . . . what-do-you-call-them . . . neo . . . neuro surgeon. And he was very nice to me and this and that.

"Oh, it'll come back eventually," he'd say, trying to make me feel better. "You're going to be all right, but it's gonna take time."

It took a year! A whole fucking year for that fluid to come back!

Then I went back to work. Here's a clipping from *The San Leandro News*:

Jackie Phillips, the irrepressible red-haired comedienne at Finnochio's, has returned to the cast after an absence of a year due to an auto accident. This zany performer is better than ever and brings down the house every time he appears with his off-beat humor and droll antics. His costuming and make-up are reminiscent of British star, Beatrice Lillie, which helps to make him an instant hit in the spa of Female Impersonators.

You know, I'm so crazy for pictures for my scrapbooks, I even have pictures of the accident. They show a bar or restaurant under the viaduct at 13th and Mission. It shows the clock over the doorway, and the time on the clock is after two a.m.

The photographers came and took pictures of the cars, and there's three pictures with me in them, lying there!

But good things come from bad, too.

The settlement I got, that's how I got my house.

The guy that hit us was a Rent-a-Car, and the lawyer sued both the Rent-a-Car and the jitney.

He asked for seventy-five thousand dollars, but, after three years, we settled for thirty.

"That's all we can get," the lawyer said. "I get ten and you get twenty."

"OK fine!" I said.

That's how I got my house. After waiting three years to get the settlement in and out of court, I got the money.

And I asked a friend, Tony, "What do I do? Go to Europe? Greece? Or buy a house?"

He said, "Buy a house!"

So I bought the first one I looked at. Which is the one I'm in now. This was one of my smarter moves.

You wouldn't believe how happy I was (especially since my brother screwed me out of inheriting Aunt Millie's house)! A homeowner! Me!

Today, it's just falling down around my ankles, but I'm so much better off than a lot of queens that are . . . are . . . they're **settled** but they're not content. One's got the mother. Another has the brother. Another had the aunt. And all this. Cousins and all. To take care of! And I just have me. I always

consider myself fortunate that I don't have anybody I have to answer to!

I do ramble on, don't I?

And I promised you **celebrities**, didn't I, dear?

Celebrities! Movie Stars! The two are the same as far as I'm concerned. And I've always loved movie stars -- ever since those Saturday afternoons I spent at the movie theater on Cortland, drooling over Flash Gordon.

I always had my celebrity crushes. When I got older, about the time I started hanging out at The Office, first, there was Carole Lombard. Because she was beautiful and blonde, and she did comedy. Beautiful but could still do comedy. And then, after she died, was killed, awful, I said, "Who's next?"

And since I was a singer, I went for Kathryn Grayson. Ohhh, if I could have had a voice like that, could have looked like that! I loved her voice. They said she didn't go into opera because she wasn't equipped for it, but everything I saw of hers was fabulous. And I liked her for a while.

Then, after she fell out, I can't remember why, I went to Joan Crawford. I had a long Joan Crawford period. That's when Rusty Parker met me, when I was being Joan Crawford way back in San Jose. But when she did something vicious to her kids, I stopped caring for her and I went to Suzy Parker, who was a model.

I said, "Oh, she's gorgeous!" But I found out she didn't like queens so I dropped her and, then, let's see. . . !

Ohhhhh, Capucine! She looked like Crawford. She was gorgeous and dramatic. Beautiful neck and shoulders! I liked her.

And after her, we went to comedy. We liked Lily Tomlin for years. Still do. And then I met Alice Ghostly! After seeing her in *New Faces of '52*, I said, "Oh, no! She is too much!" I love her. And then I met her and we've become friends.

In fact, day before yesterday, I was shopping at Sally's. The Salvation Army at 19th and Mission. And all of a sudden some man . . . I had picked up a porcelain cat . . . and some man said, "Is that for you?"

"Of course not!" I said. "It's for Alice Ghostly! Alice collects cats."

"Oh. You know her?"

That's all I needed! Well, I went on with this man about Alice, about Finnochio's.

"Oh, you're from Finnochio's!" he says, getting all excited. "You're the one. We've seen your act!"

And he shouts across the whole Salvation Army, "Dorothy! Dorothy! Look who's here. Look who's here!"

Then he turns back to me and says, "Remember the pretty one? The one with the high voice?"

"Yeah," I say. "LaVerne. He works at the Emporium now. Bedding."

"We gotta have you over to dinner!" he says. "I'm Italian. I cook."

"Spaghetti?"

"Whatever you want. Whatever you want. Just a small gathering.

"Like how many?"

"Six. Four or six."

"Four would be fine. I don't like crowds."

By this time his wife has come up.

"Yes," she says. "I remember him, dear." And she's off to another part of the store.

"I can't believe I'm meeting you!" he keeps saying. "How long were you there?"

"Seventeen years."

"Do you do it anymore?"

I said, "Of course not!"

"Why not?"

"There's nothing to do it **with!**"

Recently, one of the local cabarets wanted to get together a show with some of us former drag queens. And I just said no. No no no no **no!**

You see, I have this horrible problem. When I think of Greta Garbo in *Camille* and then they show pictures of her that some asshole took years after, waiting day and night just to photograph her as an old woman, that to me is cruel! To publish them is cruel. Because I want to remember her as Marguerite Gautier!

And I want people to remember me when I was running around swinging beads and falling off my heels and keeping them in stitches!

Somebody comes now and says, "Would you do a show?"

Of course not! Because there would be someone -- and just one would be all it would take -- some queen who would say, "Oh, my God! Don't tell me that's Miss **Phillips!**"

No!

I see it, and I don't like it. But I wouldn't want somebody to throw it in my face. Not viciously. Just casually. Innocently. But I wouldn't want to hear it. I don't like seeing it when I look in the mirror. Because I'm still **seventeen** inside! I see all these young things today, and I know my mind's the equivalent of theirs. And my talent. But then I say to myself, "You're sixty-eight, dear, and you look sixty-nine!"

So, no, I wouldn't! I've lost all the yen to do drag. I've forgotten most of the material. I don't have any make-up. And I wouldn't wanna buy all that for just one night. And what routine am I gonna have? Who runs around on the sides of their shoes at sixty-eight years old? Most of the time, now, I can just barely walk!

But I didn't say all this to the man at The Salvation Army. Why bother?

He goes off laughing. "I can't believe I'm meeting you."

All because I was buying a cat for Alice Ghostly.

Male stars? Yes, dear, there were some men stars that I liked. Movie actors. I've fantasized a lot about them. Neville Brand. He's one of the more masculine ones. Of course, I loved Guy Madison for years. I had him and Burt Lancaster's pictures all around my room on Highland Avenue.

But, then, at Finn's, I started meeting real celebrities, real movie stars! Not just ones I liked in my imagination. And, dear, if I'm going to give you my celebrities, my movie stars, I've got to introduce you to Elton Paris first.

Elton worked at Finn's, and he and I were partners in crime. We never let one go!

Push-yyyyy!

We were very ball-y when it came to movie stars! We were. We were! And we admitted it. You didn't have a chance if there was running space. We never let a star go by if we could get our picture taken with them.

Look. Look at all these pictures!

See!

In all the pictures, who's next to the celebrity?

Who's next to the star?

It's either me or Elton. Or both of us if we could squeeze them in between us! She'll grab 'em or I'll grab 'em! We had to have the first shot at every movie star!

Since we couldn't really mix at Finnochio's the way we did at the other clubs, it wasn't easy to get to the stars. You could leave the backstage, go to the bar, get a drink, and sit

outside the bar on these little benches where the manager and the waiters and the cashier could all see you. If someone would come and sit with you, that was fine. But you couldn't go in the main room and mix with the customers. So we had to get the stars as they passed the bar on the way in or on the way out or if they came upstairs between shows.

We got Lana Turner when nobody else did!

She came in twice. The first time she's with a man who obviously doesn't want to be too involved with sitting around while she talks to the queens. Elton and I are pushing and shoving to get next to her, and he says, "No. no."

So she says, "Excuse, me. I have to go."

We're soooo disappointed when she leaves with him. No picture to prove we met her! Then, she comes back the second night. Alone!

She says, "I'm sorry about that jerk I was with, but I wanted to talk to you kids."

"You **did**?" I'm flabbergasted. This is Lana Turner!

"Yeah!"

"May I ask you a favor?" I say in my most manipulative voice (the one I always used with Aunt Millie). I'm so nervous!

She says, "Of course."

"Could we have a picture taken with you?"

And she says, "**My** pleasure!"

So Elton and I squashed in the seat and said, "Quick! Snap it!"

And we were the only ones!

Of course, when you get a movie star of that calibre and that beautiful to pose with you! Oh, God! What a thrill! And there it is! I can say, "I've met movie stars! I have the proof!"

That's why I always wanted to get a picture.

Now, then, this woman, Lana Turner, as you know, is a beauty. But what came across to me was ". . . I am so lonely!" And I felt so sorry for her! Because you have all this beauty and you're not happy. And I can understand it. Because you're under the camera all this time. You're in the public's eye. You can't do anything. You can't have a love affair because it will be invaded. What angle were you in bed? They're after you all the time. She's been on so many covers. And that whole Johnny Stampanato thing.

But she was so fabulous. And that mink! It was dripping elegance. Oh, honey, she was absolutely lovely. And we were photographed with her!

Nobody else got her!

When it came to stars, Elton and I wanted to be photographed with them! That's all there was to it! We were always right there. Right there first!

And I still haven't told you who Elton Paris was, have I?

Elton was a beautiful Black singer from New Orleans. I knew him as a queen years before we worked together at Finn's. He'd worked Alaska once, too, and they always introduced him as That

Long Tall Gal from Alaska -- so people are expecting an Eskimo, and out comes this gorgeous Black guy! Tall! Long! And a voice that wouldn't quit, dear, just wouldn't quit!

We were friends for a long time. We still are, as a matter of fact. He lives in Arizona now. Elton was written up in *Sepia Magazine* once. "Men Who Dress in Women's Clothes" the name of the article was. And they took a picture of the whole crew at Finnochio's and I was right in the front row.

National coverage!

And Elton was with me when I disappeared that time -- and got fired again.

Remember I told you I got fired four times and rehired three?

Well, a couple of those times were because of roses. The pills. Like when they'd cut my act because it was late and the show was running over. And I'd scream and holler.

It was **greed, greed, greed** on their part! But this was the way the man was. He saw nothing when you came up those stairs, never saw a face! He only saw dollar signs!

They jumped from three shows to four! Tours. They'd just herd them in. He would smile, push them to the cashier, and they would pay their fee and go in. A two drink minimum and the show was on and off in one hour! On and off! Make 'em fast!

You'd get four tours in. The Gray Line brought 'em by the busload. Four hundred people and that would fill the club up.

It was in and out. And if it was gonna run more than an hour, cut the show!

Who'd they cut? Jackie!

So I'd be screaming my head off because I'd get all this preparation, an hour's worth of making up, and then I'd get cut out of the show. But I couldn't go home! I couldn't leave! I hadda stay there . . . because of the next show. If I was in it. If I was lucky enough to be in it! And that's when I used to throw tantrums!

"No no no no no! I got cut last show. Have somebody else cut!" I'd scream.

And they'd say "No!" and I'd be cut again.

I used to get furious! And, of course, when a person gets furious on pills, they have to calm 'em down. So it was "give her another drink." You'd get smashed, and, oh, my! So through those tantrums I got fired more than once.

But the time Elton and I disappeared was different.

There was this woman. Eunice. She came up from Marina. Southern California. Marina, I think. No. Maria. Santa Maria! And she was married to -- what do you call a guy who makes medicines for drug stores? He owned the company. He made medicines for pharmacies. Pharmaceuticals. That's it. He made pharmaceuticals so she was wealthy.

She had a beautiful home in Santa Maria. But they were having this big pharmaceuticals convention in San Francisco, so she came up here with her husband.

Well, dear, pharmaceuticals cover **speed**, and she had **speed**. She came to Finnochio's alone one night and she saw my act on the stage, and she picked up that I was stoned and she wanted to meet me.

So she met me and went out of her mind!

I'm not saying I was a beauty, but she was intrigued with the idea of how good looking I was out of drag. This pleased her. So when she met me, she sort of went haywire and thought she was in love with me.

To get acquainted, she said, "How would you like to come to breakfast with me after work?"

I said, "Oh, I don't think so. We have to get up early. We have to sleep. . . ." and this and that.

She says, "What if I took the whole cast?"

Well, right down from Finnochio's was this Chinese restaurant -- I can't think of the name of it off-hand -- and I said, "OK!"

So she took the whole cast to breakfast at this Chinese restaurant, and everybody ordered steak because she had . . . she was just dripping with wealth. Fur coat, diamond rings and everything. Polished nails. Beautiful nails! And she was just going a mile a minute! Speeding like you wouldn't believeeeeeeeeee, my dear! She had **real** good roses!

Anyway, she got emotionally involved with me, and when she found out I had a week's vacation coming up, she said, "Why don't

you come down and visit me in Santa Maria. I'll pick you up at the airport."

This is where Elton comes in.

Now, Elton's got a week coming, too, and he's going to visit some dyke friends in Los Angeles. So we both get tickets together, and we both get off at Santa Maria. (I'm thinking Elton's going to stay for a couple of days, at least.)

She meets us and drives us back to her house. And it's gorgeous. Huge!

And, after about half-an-hour, Elton says, "Well, it's lovely, but I've got to go. I'll see you on the way back."

And he takes off for Los Angeles and leaves me with this crazy woman. He says he'll pick me up or something when he goes back to San Francisco.

Well, dear, I have pictures taken of me during this period, this visit with Eunice, and not once do you see me without a glass in my hand! In the pool. In the front room. At the dining room table. In the breakfast nook. All!

Always got a drink in my hand because I'm being fed pills! Pills and liquor at the same time! So I am being Chatty Cathy to this woman who is on speed herself and is therefore **not** interested in what I have to say. She's wanting only one thing -- to get me into bed -- so she's having to pretend to be listening, to be interested. And I'm just having a ball talking, talking, talking.

And meanwhile, I'm keeping out of her reach. I'm making sure that I stay in the middle of the pool in a tire tube since she can't swim! Because, if I'm left alone with her, the nails are in the skin and up the back and through the hair! My skin. My back. My hair! All this admiration, all this sexual energy, and I'm a **queen**, for God's sake! I mean . . . I like dressing up in womens' clothes!

Now, I don't want this woman carrying on like this. But I can't be rude and say "Stop! Don't do this!" because if she throws me out, I'm in Santa Maria, and I don't know where the fuck I am. So I don't have no way of getting home and, meanwhile, this is going past the week of vacation. Three days past the week of vacation and no Elton and no way to get home.

Everybody at the club is wondering, where's Jackie, where's Jackie, where's Jackie? No one knows where him and Elton disappeared to for their vacation. Mr. Finnochio fired me four times, one of the queens, J.J. VanDyke, told me. In the same night!

"Is he back yet?"

"No."

"He's fired! Tell him he's fired! I don't want him in this door!"

An hour later.

"Is he back yet? Tell him he's fired."

Now J.J. VanDyke himself is not one of Mr. Finnochio's favorites. He was the representative from the Union. A.G.V.A. And he got us better wages because he would complain and this and

that. So Mr. Finnochio finally said, "Well, since it's-a for-a the kids, I've gotta do it because-a they're all-a good and I want 'em happy!" That was for us to hear. Then, later, when he gets J.J. alone, he says, "Don't-a ask for-a too-a many raises. That make-a me **unhappy!**" But J.J. got us better working conditions, too. He got us a new toilet upstairs near the dressing room. And he got the roof patched over the costume storage. And he got them to open up some dressing rooms that were sealed for years and made more room for the queens. And a new sink. No wonder Mr. Finnochio told J.J. don't ask-a for too-a much!

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Eunice finally gave me the \$40.00 for the flight back to San Francisco. But she never got me. Sexually, I mean.

I really liked her as a friend, but she couldn't accept this. And I never met her husband. She made sure he was never around. He was always running the laboratory or whatever it was. But he was never there, and she had no children so she adopted two girls. **Beautiful** children. She raised them and when she died, here in San Francisco as a matter of fact, they came and picked me up and took me to the funeral. I didn't recognize her! She had shrivelled up so fast! Because she was a husky woman, full of life, always on the go, always doing something, always looking good.

So, when I got home from Santa Maria, I went back to Mr. Finnochio and paid my penance. This time he re-hired me. Elton, too.

So there we both were again -- hunting celebrities. We were ruthless!

Look at this clipping, dear. From the *San Francisco Examiner*.

Martha Raye stole the show at Finnochio's last night. In fact, she practically took over the show. Introduced at ringside, the great comedienne bowed to great applause, then hopped on stage to put in a pitch for her favorite cause: the plight of the GI's in Vietnam. Later, she slipped backstage, borrowed a frilly dress and a blonde wig and delighted the audience by singing a song with lanky Elton Paris. She topped it off in a comedy number with Jackie Phillips. At the finish, the audience gave her an ovation.

Oh, she loved Elton! They got in his dressing room and between the two of them you couldn't hear anything else. The two of them were singing all of her old songs. Together. Out loud. And, you know, Elton had a fabulous loud voice. And she had one also. They didn't call her Big Mouth for nothing. The two of them just hit it off.

He had her over to his house when he lived in Corte Madera, and she just ignored everybody else. She was polite, but she just went with Elton. Just followed him all over and had a marvelous time.

Have you noticed? I have a different wig on in almost every one of these photos.

I had boxes full, dear. Boxes full! Wigs and shoes, I bought. Because I wanted every red wig there was, and I wanted every pair of Spring-o-laters there were. Tripping over on the

side three and four and five and six times a night, running around the floor, you wear them out.

A queen would come in -- Charl E. Kaye his name was. Now he was one who went to garage sales and estate sales and he would bring in things for drag. A full bag of wigs one night! A great big plastic bag.

I screamed, "I want first view!"

So I went through the wig bag. I found at least twenty. Anything red I was pulling out. And if it looked like a good long blonde, I'd take that because I could dye it red!

And a bag full of shoes one night. I grabbed that first, too, because I wanted all the Spring-o-laters for the act. The shoes were important because they'd wear out fast and break fast so I had to have a lot of them.

But back to the photos!

Do you know who this is, dear?

Good heavens, no! It's **not** Arthur Godfrey! No. It's Robin Hood! Erroll Flynn, dear, Erroll Flynn! He **does** look awful, doesn't he? That's Beverly Adland with him. That's the girl he was involved with at the time, that seventeen year old. Or sixteen. Whatever. Remember? Of course you don't! But it was quite a scandal, dear, for its time. Quite a scandal. And Elton and I got **them**, too!

And that's the boy that was with them! Some people thought Flynn was bi-sexual. Servicing **both** of them. Beverly Adland **and** the boy. You know -- **in like Flynn!**

I can't say.

If he was, so what? It was fine! Why not? He was so nice. He just kept staying and staying at the table and wanting us, Elton and me, to stay with them. Two waiters and, finally, the Manager had to come over to get me to go back and change for my act.

"Here, here, I'll take care of them, George," Erroll Flynn kept saying to the Manager. "I'll take care of them. I'll take care of them."

You know, dear, I never found out what he ~~meant~~ meant by that!

And here. This is when I became Miss Faux Pas!

Charlie Ruggles. He came up the stairs after the show. And Russell Reed is standing behind me. (He was working Finnochio's by then.) And Charlie Ruggles gets to the top of the stairs, and I rush forward to be first.

"Oh, Mr. Ruggles," I say, "I loved your Topper movies!"

Silence. Long pause.

"I'm afraid you're thinking of Roland Young," he says, finally.

And Russell Reed snorts, "You idiot!"

Literally, I sank right through that hall floor outside the dressing room. **Sank right through!**

After I had said it, it was out! I couldn't take it back.

He looked right at me. "That's all right. Don't worry about it!"

But I did for days.

And Russell Reed made sure I didn't forget it, either!

And Jesse White. Remember him? He came up after the show, and, again, I pushed this thing: Movie Star! Movie Star!

"I just love your Maytag commercials!" I say.

"You do?" He looks at me like I'm a little cheeky. "But they're so silly! It's just between jobs!"

But I could tell he was happy that I complimented him on that.

And Carol Burnett. Oh, she was so lovely. She wanted to keep a picture of her with us. Had someone take a polaroid.

"I can't wait until Julie Andrews sees this!" she said and popped it in her pocketbook.

And that's Ruth Roman!

She was one who really liked me. She'd come to the club -- she was there about three or four times. She'd come to the club, we could hear her at the bottom of the stairs, loud and brassy, "I sure hope Jackie's working tonight!"

She'd come in, not see the show but come straight up to the dressing room.

"I hope Jackie's working tonight!"

And they'd say, "Yes. Yes."

"Well, where is he? Where is he? I'm here, Jackie!"

I'd come out and I'd say, "Ruth!"

And, once, on both sides of her are two Italian Adonis's. As her bodyguard, her escort or whatever. They're gorgeous! And I'm stripping them both naked with my eyes.

"Don't bother, dear," she says and behind their back makes a gesture with her little finger.

"Oh, what a pity!" I say, knowing full well the little finger means "little weanie."

"Don't bother, dear," she says, and I grab her and kiss her.

The first time she came to the club, someone invited her to come backstage after the show. She came up and she was just oooooozing with personality. Just gorgeous. Gorgeous!

Ruth Roman was just, just beautiful! Reeked of sex! If I was straight, I would like to have her for a lover. She was just the type. She shows it in her pictures. But she doesn't flaunt it. She's not cheap! She's just a sexy woman. She doesn't walk sexy or anything. She's just sexy! And she liked me. And I beam. I go to pieces when somebody likes me. You can see it. I can feel myself getting red and every ounce of happiness and admiration comes out.

Here! Another beautiful one who we got photographed with was Linda Darnell! All I could feel from Linda Darnell was this: "I love life! I love you boys! I think you're fabulous!" And she didn't have to say anything. All of this love and this beauty is coming out of this woman. So she's not only pretty in the face; she's pretty inside, like Lana. She's gorgeous! And she was very sweet.

Here's Toti Fields. This was at her club, where she was playing in San Francisco. First, she came up to see us. At Finnochio's. She was playing at the club out on Columbus. You

know the one. Bimbo's! That's the one. She was playing Bimbo's Three-Sixty-Five Club. And we went to see her backstage and somebody said, "Here. Take a picture!"

And Elton was sitting on one side and Toti Fields, to be funny, sat on my lap! I almost went through the couch, her and all! You know how **big** she was! But she loved us. She was a very campy personality.

But my **favorite** person, what I consider my most unforgettable character, was Tallulah Bankhead! Yesssss, dahling! Tallulah! She was in town in *Crazy October* or something. It was years ago. She was at the Curran or the Geary.

She was in this play, and she had come to the club and saw the show. They announced her and she made a speech and got us all lined up on the side of her. This is the finale. They announced her, and she got up and stood there holding on to us all.

I don't have the picture anymore. Some pictures they took at the club, if you didn't coat them, they faded. And this was one of those.

She said, "I like **your** show so **much**, Dahlings, I want you all to come and see **my** show!"

It had to be a matinee because we couldn't go at night. I said to myself, "Oh, she's so fabulous! What can I give her?" Well, I had this smoked topaz bracelet with these big square stones in it. I loved it, but I never wore it in the act, so I said, "This is it! This is what I'll take her."

The stage entrance was on Mason Street and we went up these old rickety stairs and down this dingy hallway and her . . . what do you call 'em? A valet is for a man. What's a helper for a woman? Not a maid because this was a boy, a queen that Tallulah had hold the door, take in the mail, answer who's who on the phone, inspect everybody, screen everybody.

So The Queen calls to her through the door, "The kids from Finnochio's are here."

And we can hear her. Inside her dressing room she says to the people that are there already, "All right, Dahlings! You'll have to go. You get out. I'm going to see some **royalty** now!"

We went in and she was wonderful! She was . . . well, she was just Tallulah!

And do you know what she was wearing? Brown! A brown sweater and a beige skirt!

I said, "Oh, thank God!"

She said, "**What**, Dahling!"

I said, "Thank God! I have something for you and it goes with your wardrobe."

So I gave her the bracelet and she said, "Oh, my **God**, Dahling, it's lovely! I just love it, Dahling! You'll have to put it on me. I can't do a fucking **thing** with these nails!"

So I put the bracelet on her wrist.

I was **shaking**, but I was . . . I was **peeing**!

No. Not really peeing! Just what you **call** peeing!

Like when you really go over in a show, if you stopped the show, the other queens say to you, "Oh, Mother! You peed! You peed that show!"

In other words, "You walked away with the show!"

Or for example, if Elton was leaving the stage as I was going on, he'd snap his fingers at me and say, "Oh, Mama peed tonight! Follow that with your red wig!"

So with Tallulah, I was peeing! I was walking away with the show, walking away with our little visit to her dressing room. Because I was throwing out all this love and affection and she was picking it up, and she just took me under her wing from that moment on.

And this I loved!

Because this is Tallulah Bankhead! Everybody knows her! And she's touching me! (I'm always honored when I'm with a movie star and they show me any affection whatsoever. But this is Tallulah Bankhead!)

So, now, we saw the show, she got the bracelet and she loved it, and Elton and I went in on a cigarette lighter. You could have it engraved for a dollar in those days, just an old flick lighter that said, "Tallulah, a great lady and a great soul. Jackie and Elton."

Later, she was -- I didn't see it but the queens told me -- she was on one of these talk programs one night after all this happened, and she smoked constantly. They went to light her cigarette and she said, "No, Dahling, I have my own lighter!"

And she held it out after she lit her cigarette, and she said, "See that! Two fabulous queens from San Francisco's Finnochio's gave that to me. Elton and Jackie!"

And I missed it!

But the idea that she carried this lighter around with her! I was just pleased that she had the bracelet and that she'd loved it so much.

So anyway, she came back to the club after we saw her show. She came back to the club a second time, and she talked to us all, and she said, "After you close tonight, come up to my suite at the Huntington Hotel. All of you!" And she had drinks and everything for us when we got there.

But as we were going in, there were these two dykes that had gotten up there somehow that weren't with us. We didn't know who they were. And as we came into the room, The Queen, the one who'd been at the dressing room door, says to them, "Un un. No. No. You two must go! Just queens tonight!" And again we feel flattered. We're not going to have to share her attention, her affection.

So as The Queen goes into the bedroom where Tallulah is, he says, "I'll let you know when you can see her."

Because after Tallulah went into the bedroom, she had to take off all her make-up and everything, and she had psoriasis or something and she had to have that taken care of before she could visit with us. So when they're ready, we go in.

She's propped up in the bed and she says, "Sit down wherever, Dahlings."

And all the make-up's off, you know. But you don't show any shock because you're talking to Tallulah Bankhead. You didn't compare. You didn't say, "Oh, my God! She's a mess!" No no no no no! You didn't say that!

She was wearing a negligee and she had all this psoriasis that this queen had taken care of. And we were there for about twenty minutes talking.

We all said what we had to say.

She said what she had to say.

Then The Queen nodded her head, like saying, "It's time to go!"

So everybody got up and I got up and I started going and I was just about to get to the door when Tallulah says, "Oh, Jackie! I want to talk to you. Please, come here!"

I turned back and said, "What is it?"

"Go ahead, Elton. I'll send him home in a cab," she says. "He'll be all right."

I was dumbfounded!

What? What? What? What? What?

What could Tallulah Bankhead want to talk to me about?

After everybody leaves, she says, "Sit down, Dahling."

I sit down on the side of her bed, and she says, "Something's bothering you."

I say, "I don't know what you mean."

She says, "You've got a problem, dear. Let's not go into denying it. What? What's bothering you? Something. What? What is it?"

I let it out all at once: "Well I'm in the middle of this triangle where I love this boy and his wife is infatuated with me and I like her to like me but I'm in love with him and he. . . !"

She interrupts, "You are confused, Dahling! There's only one way to handle it."

"What's that?"

"Shit or get off the pot!" she said, looking me right in the eye. "Otherwise, Dahling, you'll drive yourself insane. You're a nervous wreck already. Pills?"

"Umm hmmmmm. Yes."

"Good for you!"

Then she says, "Just make up your mind what you want and go that way. Don't ever be a borderline anything because you'll get very neurotic and very confused!"

I left feeling a hell of a lot better because I had somebody I respected, somebody who liked me, tell me the answer to something personal which I'd never discussed with anybody before.

That was it!

That was her!

That was Tallulah Bankhead! My most unforgettable character. My favorite celebrity. My favorite star! This woman who took time out for me.

But as time went on at Finnochio's, dear, it seems that there was more and more trouble, and it was always MC's and MC-ing that were at the center of it! Either from one particular Bitch MC, who I hope is roasting in Hell right now for what she did to me, or from them wanting me to be MC.

I told you before. I **never** wanted to MC! **Never!** I hated the whole job. Everything! And at Finnochio's it was even harder, more confusing than on the road. You hadda know everybody's lighting, because while they were singing, you'd have to run the dimmer board, put their lights down, put 'em up, or on, or off, or dim, or out! Or spots up! Whatever!

You hadda know each one's announcement. It had to be recited each night the same way. The **exact** same way. Each night. You couldn't vary. You couldn't be different or some queen would throw a fit! And I don't have a memory bank to hold this kind of stuff. Never did. And with all the roses I was taking just to hold it all together! Forget it, honey. I did all the time -- forget it, I mean.

You hadda change wardrobe to bring each different act out. You have to change your wardrobe between each act if you MC a drag show. It's expected! And even if there was enough time for a complete change, which there usually wasn't, I don't have that kind of wardrobe to change into six, seven, eight times a night! Skirt and sweater every act? No no no no no! They wanted **costumes**, honey, not the Salvation Army wardrobe I had!

Then, you hadda fit your own spot in right after one of the specialty choruses -- those would come three times: the beginning of the show, the middle of the show, and the end of the show, the finale, so you didn't have much choice for where to put your spot. And because these numbers included all the principals also -- I mean these were real production numbers, honey -- you had to put your spot right after one of the choruses -- not the best place, dear -- so that the queen coming on the floor next would have enough time to run upstairs and change.

Now this was all done with finesse when Lestra Lamont was MC. He ruled with an iron hand, but he was good. Absolutely perfection speech-wise, MC-wise, show-wise. And Mr. and Mrs. Finnochio let him run the show because he knew what he was doing, and they didn't. As it turned out, they didn't know **anything** about how to run a show. But Lestra Lamont had enough bizazz to keep the show in tact.

"Don't fuck around with me, girls!" he seemed to say just by his attitude. And he got the show on and off on time!

When I had to do it, I was a nervous wreck! I never could get a system. And I would be going on without the **tits!** Or without the bracelets. Or without the wig or something just to keep the show moving! Oh, I was very frustrated.

I'd done it before in Honolulu when that bitch Carroll Wallace took off for Japan. And then, at Finn's, Lestra Lamont got sick **and they made me be MC!** I did it for nine days, and I was a complete wreck! You've never seen pills fly so fast as I

got them down because as long as I was stoned, I was **unbothered** by all the disasters!

For the whole nine days, I was beside myself taking pills and trying to MC and everything. And the queens are bitching, "Oh, my lights are wrong!" or "Oh, you didn't announce me right!"

And I said to Mrs. Finnochio, I said, "I'm going **insane** with this!"

And she said, "You're doing a **marvelous** job, dear!"

And I wasn't!

And she knew I wasn't. But she was just Irritating Aggie. She said it because she needed me to do the job! And the one thing I wanted out of being MC, I didn't get. After nine days of MC-ing for Lestra Lamont, I brought my tape recorder in and I was gonna tape me MC-ing.

But that night, Lestra came back!

I said to the drummer who was setting all this up, I said, "There's no sense in it now. Lestra's back. I won't be MC-ing."

He said, "We've got it set up. Do it!"

And luckily, I did!

Because it was -- the tape I have -- the night Lestra came back, the audience was **outrageous**! So when I came on, you could hear this. I'm making comments which are not being picked up by the tape recorder and the audience is laughing because I'm just walking around the floor saying, "Oh, what a fabulous bunch!" and this and that. They're just on my side! You can hear it! And this saved me from being completely destroyed. I had worked my

ass off for nine nights. I wanted to tape the show of my MC-ing. And it didn't work.

You can hear Lestra say, "Oh, by the way, this is a new gown. Brand new. It's all made out of crepe paper."

And it was!

Lestra Lamont was known as "The Paper Fashion Plate" because all of her gowns were made out of Dennizen's Crepe Paper, which the company would furnish her free crepe paper for just mentioning their name in her act. So she had crepe paper every color of the rainbow. Just unbelievable. Hugh boxes of crepe paper which she made all her costumes out of.

There was one room at Finnochio's they used as an excess wardrobe room. Used wardrobe. Wardrobe not in use. Old finale costumes. And it was full, rack after rack, pipes made into clothes racks. And rack after rack of those racks were Lestra Lamont's costumes alone. She'd been there for eons and all her costumes were put in this room.

As long as they didn't get too damp, she could use them and re-use them. If she didn't want to make a new costume, she could go back there. Fifteen years old some of them were. And she'd pull one out that would look brand new.

But sometimes, with leaks in old buildings and all, they'd get a little damp but still be useable. And she'd put on these paper gowns that were damp with cold and stuff, and they'd just be heavy, heavy, and there she'd be looking gorgeous with this cold, wet paper on her.

She'd come out and say, "During the course of our revue, I will be wearing many gowns that I've made myself out of Dennizen's Crepe Paper!"

Some nights, she'd wear nine, ten different gowns -- one for every act announcement and one for the opening and one for the finale -- for three separate shows!

Then Lestra just got ill and died.

Oh! Chaos! You could feel it! The rain is turning to hail! The hail is turning to ice cubes! It was just. . . ! Well, it was just right then that the club started going down. We were on the Titanic!

Now **Mister** Finnochio had been the boss, and he tried different MC's and this and that after Lestra died. He tried his damndest to get the show back up again. But he couldn't. And **Mrs.** Finnochio was at him constantly. Constantly! So, to get her off his back, he said, "Here. You play with the show! I'll run the club!"

This was really the beginning of the fall of the Roman Empire. Mrs. Finnochio had **no** idea of how a show should run. And since she didn't have any idea (and he'd **never** had any idea; it had all been Lestra), it was just **awful!**

Some queen would come in and tell her about this fabulous talent he'd "discovered," and she'd was so gullible, she'd say, "Oh you know a pretty boy who wants to work? All right. Bring them in and we'll have a look at 'em." And she saw how feminine

they looked in drag, and the answer was always, "Fine. We'll hire him!"

Talent? It didn't matter. Just so they could dress up and look pretty on stage.

They were her Eve-ettes!

The **Eve-ettes!**

Her name was Eve. Mrs. Finnochio's. So she called them -- called this no talent chorus line -- The Eve-ettes!

They each did a little song or dance or something. But **no talent, honey. None!** Just a pretty Filipino boy with long hair and a pretty face.

The roller coaster had started. Not up, honey. **Down! Down down down down down!**

She tried different queens to MC the shows, but they just couldn't hold it all together. They just wanted to do their own act. The show wasn't important. Their act was! And they couldn't keep the queens together. Couldn't keep them in line.

Lestra used to give advice to the new, young queens. He'd say things like "No leaving the club with the face on!" Now us old-timers, us real professionals, we got to the club two hours early, we put the face on and made sure everything was all right because we were doing a job -- a job called Female Impersonation. But these new ones she hired, they're leaving the club with half a face on! Because they're young and they're cute, they think they can get by with cruising, passing off as a girl to get the men they go after.

But this could cause trouble. Not just for them. If only they'd get beat up and that would be it, it would be OK. No. They could cause trouble for other queens that were coming out of the club with them in regular dress, without the face on, dressed as they should be in straight attire. We could be watched by some guy who just beat up some little fairy the night before, and we could get beat up next just by association.

It was dangerous to be in drag in those days -- even in San Francisco. There's always somebody out to bash. And if you walked down the street with a sign that said "FAIRY!" on your face, all right, you're gonna be watched as to who you associate with. Now you may be talking to me, and they may know I'm a drag queen, and they beat me up one night and then they say, "Who was he talking to last night?" So you get beat up the next night and you don't even look Gay. You have nothing about you that is Gay. But you get it because you associated with me!

Just once, dear, just once I went somewhere in drag, and it was a disaster. It was a benefit, some sort of a benefit at a Roller Rink in South San Francisco. Charl E. Kaye. The guy with the bags full of wigs and shoes. Well, he got us interested in this benefit on roller skates.

"Come in drag," she said, "and we'll have a band and you can perform!"

So we went. In drag. I had on a white cardigan sweater and white slacks. Thank God, I wore slacks and not a dress! And a blonde wig. Short and wild. Italian cut. Big white earrings.

A light green chiffon scarf. And lots of bracelets. They were always my trademark.

And I was fine. I was fine on the skates.

Until I decided to skate backwards!

There was a loose board on the floor. Now, we all knew where it was when we were skating forward. Backwards, I wasn't paying any attention. I hit it and went flying. On my ass. In this outfit in drag.

Now, you want embarrassment? **This is embarrassment!**

Every eye in the place was looking somewhere else while I was standing. The minute I'm sprawled on the floor, every eye is on me!

And all these queens skating by, looking down at me. Just dying to say something but didn't. You know that look of "Ha! Ha! Such a swan, you old bag!"

Well, I just shrunk into the floor.

And it was even worse later when, for everyone who got up to sing, the microphone worked fine. They held **me** for the big spot, and when I got up there, the microphone went out. Dead! So I had to shout my lines, and they were shouting back: "We heard that one!"

I did not need hecklers. At a roller rink. Where I've just fallen on my ass and the microphone doesn't work! I guess the moral of that story is don't go in drag. Or don't skate backwards!

Hecklers were always a problem at Finn's, too. If some guy said something, I would turn the head and I'd give one of these Joan Crawford glares, and the audience would say, "Oh, oh. Here it comes!" And they would be on pins and needles waiting for what was going to happen.

If the glare didn't work, I'd say to the guy, "Please don't get excited over me. I have the same thing you have."

One night, I had this heckler and he just wouldn't quit. I'd used up all the nice repartees to him -- and Mr. Finnochio didn't want us to get nasty with hecklers -- but this guy kept on and on and on, until I said to myself, "I've got to end this now!"

So I said as archly as I could, "I'm sorry, darling. I'd tell you to close your mouth but I don't want to interfere with your sex life!"

Well, I won!

The audience goes crazy and he looks up and waves as if to say, OK, you win.

I curtsied and said softly, "Thank you."

Well, dear, where were we before I got off the track? The MC problem at Finnochio's. That's where we were, wasn't it?

Finally -- it was just a stroke of luck -- they brought in this young queen named Jay Stevens. A local boy like me. He was an act that worked to records, wore moustaches, did different things around the different clubs in San Francisco. I had never met him before, but I had heard of him. And as I said, after

Lestra died, the MC's didn't have the power, didn't have the finesse to hold the show together. So lot's of MC's would come and go. And then they brought in Jay Stevens!

You couldn't be happier with a person. Oh, loooovely queen. Nice. Considerate and everything. And he got it all down to perfection. The show came on and off on time. And he announced everybody and got all the lighting right. And the queens weren't bitching. And he was learning how to do his make-up better. And for two weeks we were all very happy.

Finally there was somebody to replace Lestra Lamont!

Then, one night, Maria, Mrs. Finnochio's sister who did all her dirty work for her, came to the dressing room and said, "Jay Stevens was killed! Murdered!"

Oh, it was horrible!

His sister was insane and she had stabbed him. There was a big write-up in the papers. Something about a rumor that she had killed the mother and the father, I think, and burned the bodies up in the fireplace. Then, one day she went after Jay Stevens with a big knife. He got away safe. But, a few days later, she had called him at the club and asked him to meet her in Golden Gate Park that night after work. And he went, at two o'clock in the morning, thinking she's over her thing! And he went there and she stabbed him in Golden Gate Park and killed him and left the body there. A witness had seen a boy running away in a cap and jeans and stuff, and, when they found her, the sister, she was dressed as a boy. They put her away.

And we lost the only good MC we had after Lestra.

Sometimes it seems you can't have anything nice.

And, then, dear, **who** do you think finally ended up as the MC at Finnochio's? Oh, I could retch now just thinking about it! None other than the Bitch Goddess of all time, Carroll Wallace! It was pandemonium day. Really! Russell Reed and I couldn't believe it when we found out.

"Of all the places in the world that we should end up, here, at the top of the circuit, to think this **snake** found us here and came back to aggravate us again! It's pathetic!" we said to each other.

And aggravate us he did!

He just irritated the two of us to points where he'd instigate little innuendos and make things up and get us at each other's throat -- and this made him happy.

Sometimes he'd go to Mr. Finnochio. Now Mr. Finnochio usually didn't bother with us queens at all. But one night he came back and said, "That joke was too-a dirty. Take it out!" Because CW had gone to him and told him. She wanted it for her own collection! So she said to him, "Oh, that joke is **too** dirty for Finnochio's!" And I had been using it long before Carroll Wallace started to MC. No one ever said anything then!

When Laurie Shannon headlined there -- she was on *All in the Family* once and got real famous -- well, she told a lot of stories that I wouldn't **dream** of telling. But she says, "I'm not changing my material. If you don't like it, I'll leave."

And my jokes weren't that bad, but when I said, "How come she can tell them and I can't," they said, "She's drawing!"

Once, CW brought in a queen named Gaby DeLane and put him in the show. They needed an extra act at Finnochio's, and Carroll suggested Gaby. He looked like Carole Lombard when he got in drag. But, as it turned out, he was a ding-a-ling like me!

The first night he's on the floor at Finn's, some queen comes flying up the stairs and says, "Oh, have you seen the new act?"

"No."

"Did you know he swung beads?"

My trade mark!

"Yeah. He's down there swinging beads right now!"

I fly down the stairs and when he comes off, I say, as nice as I can, "Gaby, I want to talk to you for a minute." I say, "We have to work together, and I want us to get along. But I was here first." I said, "Don't think I'm high falootin or acting like a star, but I swing beads. We have that in common. So, if you wouldn't mind. . . ."

"Oh, fine," he says. "I'll do something else."

That was it. It was over with. Much to Miss Wallace's disappointment. She had brought him in and put him on before me so that by the time I came on, all my stuff would have been done. So the audience would say, "What. Is this one copying the first one?" Lovely man, CW. Lovely man!

He was there for over four years! Four years!

Oh, God! I still get so angry! People say, "Forgive and forget!" And I forgive most people. I even forgive my Aunt Millie.

She got me from the grave, you know. Aunt Millie. Had promised to leave me her house when she died. I'd paid her rent all those years. And just before she went in the home, she said, "Billy, I don't understand you. You don't seem to want anything."

I said, "I do want something."

"What is it?"

"I want a home of my own -- that no one can throw me out of!"

"I didn't know this, Billy. I'll leave the house to you then."

So she had her will made up leaving the house to me. She even asked my brother does he want his part. He says, "No!"

But while she was in the hospital, before she went to the convalescent home, my brother asked could he see the will.

"Yes," I said stupidly, openly, trustingly.

So my brother, while she was sick, got her to change her will.

When the home called to tell me my aunt passed away, I said, "Well, at least now I'm a home owner."

The very next day, my brother says, "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you. Nanny left the house to me!"

"Oh, really," I said. "So what else is new?"

And I took it with a grain of salt.

"How much do I owe you for rent then?"

"A hundred a month."

I'd been paying fifty!

That was it!

I paid him the hundred. Until I got my settlement for the car accident and I bought my house on Sanchez Street. Then I moved out.

I told my brother, I said, "I'm moving. I got my own place. Come and tell me what I can't take with me."

"Oh, noooooo problem!" he said. "And when I sell the house, I'll give you half." Rusty Parker was there. Rusty heard him say it.

My aunt said, "When I die, you'll have a place."

My brother said, "When I sell, you'll get your half."

But I didn't get it. From either of them!

And, to add insult to injury, Aunt Millie, supposedly, had bought a grave with two plots in it. One for her, one for me. I'm there to order her headstone which I'm going to pay for, and I say, "This is a headstone for two."

And he says, "Oh, no. This is just a single plot." And he shows me on the cemetery map. Just room for one!

"She got me from the grave!" I shouted.

This is the truth. I said that. I screamed it. I was livid!

Then I broke out laughing. I said to this guy who must by this time think I'm crazy, "They don't stop, do they? They go right on!"

Blood is thicker than water?

Blood is shit as far as I'm concerned.

But I still forgive my aunt and my brother.

The only person I don't forgive is Carroll Wallace! I can't get her out of my craw -- after all these years! And it's not that she cheated us out of all that money while we were touring with her. That's forgiven.

It was turning my microphone down while I was on stage at Finnochio's!

My volume!

This is my living!

Don't fuck with it!

This is my volume and they can't hear me!

I'm doing jokes and patter, and they can't hear me!

I'm not going over and I don't know why and I'm working my ass off, and they can't hear me!

They wouldn't laugh because they can't hear me!

This is evil!

That's why I wasn't going over while she was MC. I'd seen her do this before to other acts. On the road.

I don't mind you fucking me up with the money you're making off me and all that stuff, but this is my home -- Finnochio's --

and I wasn't bothering you! You resentful and envious and jealous bitch!

And I have proof! Or at least I did have until it got lost. A tape.

When I think about it now, I could cut her head off with a hatchet, a knife! It wouldn't bother me. Ooouuuuu! I can understand how people can murder! 'Cause they can get so mad. And I used to think sometimes, if I could just get that man up here, it would be so simple to murder him. These countries that do nothing but fight and kill, they must have so much anger in them that it doesn't bother them anymore to go out and kill . . . or be killed. But I don't like to get that way. It takes up too much energy.

As I say, I can forgive many, many things that have been done to me. Rotten things that have been done to me. But fucking around with my . . . with my living by turning the microphone down, I still can't forgive!

Once, while Ray Saunders was still alive, years ago now but after I left Finn's, I went to visit him in Redwood City. I used to go down on a weekend sometimes to spend the day with him. We'd have lunch. Oh, Lord, what a cook! He'd be fixing this great big fabulous lunch, and he'd say, "All right! It's movie time!" and I'd go in the front room and he'd put the pornos on and I'd sit there watching all this while he ran back and forth cooking and whathaveyou.

Well, one day I'm down there in the kitchen, and Ray Saunders throws this snapshot on the kitchen table and says, "Do you know who this is?"

It's a picture of a heavy-set old man with white hair, standing in a yard, a garden or something.

"I haven't the **vaguest** idea!"

"That," said Ray Saunders in his bitchiest voice, "is The World's Most Beautiful Boy!"

"Oh, my God!" I gasp. "Not Carroll Wallace!"

"Yes!" says Ray, who can hardly contain himself. "The lovely CW!"

"You're jesting!" I laugh out loud. "She looks like a fucking troll or something worse!"

All those beautiful features that she had been so proud of, that she had used to get her own way, all of it had turned to a giant blob of fat! Suet!

I was so pleased!

And he's dead now. I heard recently. The wicked witch is dead. And even now, when he's dead, I can't forgive him! If I'd seen him before he died, I couldn't have been nice to him because it makes me mad even to still hear his **name** come up in conversation. I get nervous, tongue-tied, dry-mouthed. And I don't like to feel that way.

I would never do that to anybody. Not fuck with their job!

It just flares me up to think about it. But it's good for me to get the anger out like this, dear, even if I seem to be

upset. But it was my job! If I fuck up, fine -- then it's my fault. Then fire me for that. But I don't want you turning my volume down and make the audience not hear what I'm saying and they're not complaining about it and his not getting caught screwing me up!

But they caught it on tape! Some dykes had taped me, and all of a sudden on the tape the volume comes up real loud when Carroll's coming on to take me off!

Suddenly my voice comes up!

Loud!

And I said, "What's this! What's this jump in volume!"

Then it dawned on me. Carroll Wallace had turned my volume down after he announced me! Purposely turned my volume down!

No no no no no! You wouldn't want me to stand outside your door and sell pictures if you were an artist! Well, this is the same thing! Fucking around with your living!

No! That's unforgivable!

But that's the way Carroll Wallace was! The dirtier, the nastier he could get, the happier it made him. He would sit and glow at the chaos he caused.

So, while she was at Finnochio's, Carroll Wallace had screwed me over one more time! But the final blow, the fatal blow at Finnochio's came because they wanted me to MC again.

I was fifty and had just had cosmetic surgery. I'd been there seventeen years, mind you. Seventeen years I'd given them good service. The best I had. I brought a lot of customers into

that place. People who came back again and again just to see "Wacky Jackie Phillips, the Riotous Redhead."

You know, dear, I had somebody tell me just last week that seeing me at Finn's years ago, seeing me when he was a young man just coming out, seeing Wacky Jackie run around on the sides of her shoes and swing her beads and enjoy the hell out of life made him realize that it was OK to be Gay, it was OK to dress like a woman if he wanted to, it was OK to be crazy! That it was OK to be himself! He thanked me for that!

Much thanks I got from the Finnochio's. After seventeen years, I went to work one night, got all made up, and Marie came upstairs. Marie, that's Mrs. Finnochio's sister. Well, Marie came into the dressing room and she's saying, "Blah blah blah blah blah **this** and blah blah blah **that**, and will you have. . . ." It was like she was on roses!

And I looked up at her and I said, "What **are** you talking about?"

"Well, you're gonna be the MC!" she snapped.

"I knew nothing about MC-ing," I said.

"Oh, yes. They want you to be MC," she snapped.

"No no no no no!" I said. I said, "I don't want to."

"Well, if you don't MC," she snapped one more time, "you can just get dressed and go home."

In other words: "You're fired!"

After seventeen years, that cool. That blase.

Because I wouldn't MC! That was their excuse. Maybe somebody just didn't want me there anymore. I don't know. Whatever.

I thought to myself, "Bingo! Take it with a grain of salt!"

I got dressed, put my stuff away, and went home.

For me, there is something about working conditions . . . if you're not happy, you should move to another floor of the office. A lot of queens, a lot of people, don't do this, but I said, "No no no no no! I will not MC!"

"Well, then, you're through!"

"OK. I'm through!"

But if I was to MC, I would have been miserable. I would have been a nervous wreck! And why make yourself a nervous wreck and have to try to do a good show? When you're insane?

So I said, "No!"

I didn't want that.

I wanted to be free when I was on the floor, not tied down to some set routine. Free! And that's exactly what I had been. I told what jokes I wanted. I wore what I wanted. And they never said anything. But when they wanted me to MC, and I said, "No," they said, "We can't have anybody ricocheting against us!"

So I said, "OK. Fine!"

It was their loss, I know that, but it still makes me mad to think people can't say, "This queen ain't bothering anybody. She's a fair MC, but she's gonna be a nervous wreck if we force

her to do this. No. She's done a good job for us over the years. Let's not do this to her. Let's find somebody else."

But no. "You're gonna do it, or else!"

You know, it really didn't dawn on me until the shock wore off a couple of days later. I was fired! I was let go! I was out! And then I was furious! Because, I thought, now this is shitty, this is not the way to do things. So, anyway, I got someone to help me get my stuff, some of my stuff, out. And I left. A long while later, I went back to get the rest of it, and people had helped themselves to jewelry and beads and whathaveyou, makeup and all that. Anyway, I just took it as a grain of salt. But I was furious for years that I'd been dumped on again!

So, then, I had to say, "Now what? You have to figure out what you're going to do until you retire."

I still had twelve years to go before I was gonna sit back and fan. Oh, I did collect unemployment. Yes. Yes, I drew that. And I finished that. Now, when that was done, I talked to one of my next door neighbors, Arturo. He worked for a man named Mike who owned a photo lab down on Jessie Street. And Arturo said he would talk to Mike about me.

"I have no experience," I said.

"That's all right. I'll tell him."

So he got me a job in the lab.

At first, I was putting slides in boxes and dusting them off and cleaning up and painting and different things. They didn't want me touching anything important, good material, if I didn't

know how to handle it. Little by little, they taught me how to take film out of the dryer, how to put it in envelopes, not to touch it with your fingers. And I learned this.

But all the time, underneath, I was resenting. There was a voice inside me growling: I hadda ask for a job; I hadda apply for a job; I hadda go to work every day. I wasn't doing what I liked. All this is aggravating me. And so, I guess, I'm not putting my all into this job.

They can see this. And they kept talking to me and trying to teach me, but my mind said, "No no no no no. I will not learn. I refuse to!" I was very stubborn. Scorpions are. Then something happened in my head and I was able to get in with the thing. I got a little routine. I used to get up at five o'clock. Leave at six. And be there by seven. Always on time. Always! With any job. And I got into this routine, and I found out how to take film out and how to mount pictures and stuff. And I was learning, slowly but surely. And they wanted to teach me. I was there for about four years . . . four or five years, and I was on their pension scheme and everything was fine.

But one of my jobs was mixing the chemicals. Now it's a five gallon plastic bottle full of chemicals that you have to lift. And there's three kinds of chemicals you have to put mixed together. And I was lifting 'em the wrong way. I was getting kinks in my back and, oh, I'd get pains in my back when I'd bend down.

Finally, the pains got so severe, one morning I woke up and was gonna get out of bed, and I couldn't move! I hadda roll over on my side and drop the knees to the floor. I got to the phone and called that I couldn't come to work.

"What? Why? Why? Why?"

"I can't move. I can't walk. I can't stand up!"

So I went to a chiropractor.

"I can't touch you without an x-ray," he said. "That'll be a hundred and a quarter!"

When he developed the x-rays, he said, "You have three slipped disks."

He was a **mean** motherfucker!

He would say, "Now stop being a wimp! Stand up! Do this! Do that! And do this!"

I guess he was trying to make me mad so I'd fight back mentally. But I didn't know this and I just thought he was being vicious to me. Finally, I was getting better because I'd go in, I'd go to him every day. So I went to him every day for a week and he was making me better. I'd go in and I'd say, "Hey, Doctor, look at what I can do!" And I'd crack my neck and kick my legs and all that.

All he'd say was, "Yeah. Pretty good."

He wouldn't encourage me.

What I didn't realize was that he was smart and knew how to handle a wimp, which he kept calling me. Ouuuuuu, I resented it.

But he got me back to walking. And I was paying him for every visit out of my savings account!

Oh, God! I have a brain that's like ice water. I kept thinking it was going to replenish itself! And I was putting nothing in and taking everything out. Because it was so easy. That's exactly why I don't want a credit card of any kind. Won't have one! Because you just use it without thinking and buy everything you want at the fair and go home, and then next month you say, "Where the hell did **this** bill come from!"

No no no no no!

So I was paying for this all out of my pocket because I wanted to get well. I hate being sick. And this was something . . . it's not a bad cold, it's not a bad hip . . . you just moved the wrong way and you went out of your mind because it went sssssshhhhhhttt! Like a streak of lightning back up to your head!

So I was getting better and the chiropractor said, "Do you have a lawyer?"

"No."

"Well, get one immediately! Here!"

He handed me the phone book and I picked out a lawyer for accidents, and the lawyer sued the lab for my accident because it was done at work. And I had to go to this doctor and this doctor and this doctor from the lab because they wanted to find out if I was getting better or if I was pulling their leg and being phony about it. And I wasn't because I couldn't move.

Anyway, dear, eventually I got better, but it took a long time for the settlement to come through. In the meantime, I had to have a way to earn some money. Another profession, another occupation.

So I went to a job counselor and he said, "We'll put you through framing school. We'll pay for it and then you'll have a profession."

So I went to South San Francisco, Paul Fredericks School of Framing. That was for two or three weeks. And I paid the motel bill myself, out of what little savings I had left. I got through with school and got a job at a framers on Castro Street, but their firm is in a big warehouse down on Mariposa. There was this Chinese kid there who found out I was Gay. He was a reborn Christian and he was doing his number on me.

"Why do you do that? It's against God's will!"

"I have my own beliefs!" I said.

But he would stare at me all the time while I was cutting glass for the frames, and I would get very nervous and cut myself or break the glass because of this fool trying to convert me to be his kind of Christian.

I was there five-and-a-half months. I never made half a year . . . so I could get unemployment.

They said, "We're letting you go because you're not doing your job properly."

They had asked me to do a thing and I had forgotten about it and went home. The next morning they came in and were going to

pick it up -- and it wasn't ready. And I was responsible. So the boss said, "We have to let you go."

So I didn't get unemployment from that. And I was going insane! The money was coming out of the bank, out of the savings account.

But while all this shit was going on in my life, something really nice happened. Remember Bobby Lane? I knew him from Union Square way back in '43. He lived in Vallejo and used to come down in his little sweater and khakis, and he looked like he just stepped out of a safety pin box. He was very neat. Always was. Anyway, he toured with The Carroll Revue for awhile, too.

I guess Carroll Wallace was too much for him, too, because he left drag and went to work for Mitzi Gaynor, and when she'd come to town in her one-woman show, on his night off he'd come to the club. And he'd get tickets for us to see the show.

I did it once while I was still at Finn's. And that was wonderful because she was sheer talent. Full of zest, and the costumes were all crisp. So I got to meet her and I was just awestruck because she looked sixteen.

And Bobby Lane told me, he said, "Don't touch the body! She wants no hugging, squeezing, touching 'cause the slightest bruise and that would be sheer hell with the costumes she wears!"

I met her and she was very nice. She was like an airline hostess! If you've ever seen an airline hostess -- they don't make mistakes. They don't fumble with words. They're just perfect people. That's what she was like. And, ohhhhh, God, to

think of all the times I've seen her in the movies. In *South Pacific* and everything, and cried.

And I said, "Now I'm meeting her." It was a great, great honor to me.

And the second time was during this awful period. I had been out of drag for a long while. And Bobby Lane came to town again with Mitzi Gaynor, and he called me and gave me one of his tickets so I could go see the show and meet her again.

So this second time, I said, "I like you so much that I want you to have this."

It was my square sapphire cut ring. It looked like a white square diamond.

I said, "I can't find anyone who I'd rather have wear this. I wore it every time I performed. It's the only one I always wore!"

And she said, "Oh, thank you very much!"

Now, I asked Bobby Lane later on, I said, "Did she really like it?"

He said, "Honey, we went to dinner later on that night." And he said, "I wish you could have ~~seen~~ her" He mimics a young girl showing off her engagement ring, with her hand out across the table.

"Oh, may I have a cigarette?" and her hand goes out across the table so she can flash this ring that looks like a diamond.

"Oh, may I have another cup of coffee?" and her hand goes out across the table again, flashing this ring.

Bobby said she had the ring on her index finger 'cause it didn't fit her ring finger, and he said she was with the arm out all night getting compliments on this ring!

I was pleased about that. Like when I gave Tallulah the bracelet.

It was one of the nicest things that happened to me during those years after Finn's. They could have been pretty depressing if I'd let them be. But, lucky for me, just about the time my money ran out, my lawyer came through with my suit and I got enough money to hold me till I turned sixty-two!

And that's the story of my life! You're a witness to it. You've got it all on tape.

After all this is accomplished, they'll say, "Whatever happened to Jackie Phillips. Where is he now?"

And you'll say, sadly, "He's in an institute! I watched him go. Carroll Wallace got the best of him."

You'll say, "He snapped. Right here in front of me. He snapped!"

That's how they'll remember Jackie Phillips!

Totally wacky now!

Totally gone!

Totally!

But even when I'm totally gone, I'll still hear 'em applauding like crazy -- like that rare and wonderful and special night I peed at Finn's all those years ago!

Jackie! Jackie! Jackie!

But for right now, Wacky Jackie is alive and well and still living in his own home on Sanchez Street, surrounded by stuffed animals, Avon bottles, and a file cabinet full of porno. And, believe it or not, he's rather happy!