

JACKIE PHILLIPS, TAPE #6, March 2, 1994

x I'm going to throw some names at you that have come up in the last couple of weeks and have you talk about them. Jack Long.

j Him and his wife were up there to see a show on her birthday. He took her to Finnochio's, and I don't think she was, or maybe was just 21. Anyway they were a young couple. And I looked down and I saw this face -- and I just flipped because I'm one that **looks** -- is he pretty, pretty, pretty. I try to find fault so I don't get too hung up but I couldn't find fault with him. And it never dawned on me that I would meet him; it was just that it was something pleasing to look forward to while I was working and seeing his face. Anyway, at 2 o'clock when the show was over, I came downstairs and here the two of them were standing there. And he walks over and he says, "We just wanted to say how much we enjoyed your show. And would you like to have coffee with us. This is Barbara." Not my wife, this is Barbara. And I said, "Well, I have a long way to go and a bus to catch" and all this. And I said, "Otherwise I would." He said, "We'll drive you home. Where do you live?" I said, "Highland Avenue." He said, "Oh, how nice, we live on Moultree."

x Which was close?

j **Very.** So we went for coffee and he talked and praised the show and she was very quiet. But I was swooning over his face. He looked like a young Gordon McCrae -- and Gordon McCrae was gorgeous is those days, too. So, anyway, we finished the coffee, he drove Barbara home to his house, let her off, and said good-night. I thought that was the end of the friendship -- I didn't know it was his wife. So he says "Now where do you live?" And I said, "Highland." So he drove me home and we **parked**. Not in front of my house but on Bennington, and he says, "You mind if we park for a while and talk." And I said, "Not at all." So we were there talking and I could feel my blood rushing. I thought, "Oh, God! Do I **dare**?" And I said, "You better take me home." And he says, "Why?" I said, "Because I have an awful urge to kiss you, and I don't want to get bashed in the face. He says, [low, sultry voice] "You wouldn't. . . ." Well, he leaned over, we kissed, and it was like 50,000 pigeons taking off from my head, my blood was rushing, and I was out of breath, and I said [sings] "I don't know why I love you like I do -- I just do." I fell right then and there. And I never had that feeling with anyone -- so emotional. You get tingling, but not like that. And I was just obsessed with the man. He found out I was in love with him, and so he played his little game of "I won't tell you that I'm married so that you won't get turned off on me." He didn't want anything. He just wanted admiration. He loved being admired. He was one of these people who could go across the street and say, "How do you put this gate

together?" The guy would tell him and he would go home and make a gate! This was the way he was. So eventually he talked me in . . . My aunt hated him! I brought him . . . he came up to pick me up or something or drove me home and I introduced them and she saw this change over me and right away she thought, "Oh, someone's going to steal my little hen!" So there was this ostracizing and hate and "I don't like you" and this and that. No competition, you know! My aunt wanted no one, none whatsoever. So anyway, he saw that I was having trouble being with him and worrying about her and this and that. So he says, "Why don't you get your own place?" So I said, "Ummmmmm. Decisions. Decisions." And such a big jump. So I said, "OK." So I looked for an apartment. And 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. I was \$35 a month. And I said, "Can I let you know?" And he said, "Well, I have another place." So we went to Valencia Street over a barber shop and 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. So I said, "I'll take this for \$50 a month." And I went out and bought furniture, had them deliver it, and I was singing all the time, and cleaning up the house, and re-arranging stuff, waiting for him to come over. But he only came over when he was drunk. After a night out and he was drunk, he would come over. And he didn't reciprocate the love like I was giving out. So, I was crying because I was miserable and then, finally, one night, after three months, I got so mad. I took 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. Next morning, the landlord came, the man that rented it to me, and he says, "There was a fight here or some commotion last night?" I said, "No. I live by myself." He said, "Oh, because the people next door in the hotel heard all this racket. Things breaking and crashing." No screaming or anything. Just. . . oh, I had a fit! So I said, "No." And so I said, "I think I'll be moving back home." So I called my aunt and I said, "Do you have any rooms for sale." And she says, "Yes, darling, 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 says, "I've been sitting here in the window every morning with my rosary beads praying that you would come back." Now this was the jealousy. Instead of wishing me happiness -- go on and make your life and enjoy life. And so you're Gay -- so what? She was wanting me back. Her little chicken. So I went back home, and when I heard her say that "I was praying for this. You won't leave again?" -- but I stopped, I shut the door on her and I stopped being devoted, attentive, and everything. I said, "If they're 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, paid her rent and this and that. But I was very anti-aunt from then on. Because his wife, later on

I found out he was married, **liked** me because I wasn't competition to her as another girl. Her mother didn't like the idea of him running around with the queens and being married and having children and all that. So there was two praying against me. And his mother also -- either his mother-in-law or his mother and my aunt -- all three praying that this would break up so it broke up - with a lovely scene.

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 and what were we drinking but Black Russians. But I had the **pills** with me so we were sober as long as the pills were lasting and finally they ran out and the Black Russians took over and we were going home. We were going up 3rd Street and he says, "I'm too tired to drive. I'm gonna park for a while and rest." And I said, "You want me to drive?" He moved over in my seat and I sat behind the steering wheel so he could stretch out, and I don't remember him saying Yes, No, or Go Ahead or whatever. And I started the car up and I started and I'm going down 3rd Street and all of a sudden it was like nudging somebody in the street, bumping somebody as you walk by. I had hit a car. A **parked** car! And kept on going. And all of a sudden this jolt. I said, "I think I just hit something." And I said, "I better stop." And I turned the corner and from three streets these red lights! "All right! Get out of the car!" And I got out. They frisked me and said, "You're drunk." I said, "Yes. Yes. Yes. I admit I'm drunk." He said, "All right. Where's your driver's license?" I said, "I don't have one." He said, "You don't have one?" I said, "No. This isn't my car." I said, "It's the one I'm with." He said, "There's nobody with you." I said, "Yes. The owner of the car is." He said, "There's no one in the car." And here they went back and Jack had . . . I had hit this car so hard . . . Jack had went underneath the dashboard and was laying down there. They didn't see him because they just saw me sitting there behind the wheel. Dumb-dumb. And I got out and they frisked me and I said, "No no no I admit I'm drunk." And so they got Jack out and he was "Oh! Oww! Ouuu!" Someway or another he had hurt his leg so they rushed him to the emergency and me to the jail.

**Weelllllllll**, with the hangover and the no pills and whathaveyou, I said, "Ohhhh, no!" And I was just dumbfounded the next morning in court. The judge said, "You have five counts against you (or four or whatever it was): speeding, hit-and-run, driving without a license, and driving under the influence." I said, "Guilty to all of them." He said, "So, I think we're going to give you three months -- two suspended -- in San Bruno." And that was it. The case was over. Closed. And I was on my way to San Bruno. As I was pulling out of the jail in the back of the van, Black Maria, I looked out the bars, and there's Barbara standing there with her hands like "What? What do I do?" So anyway, she took care of

everything. She got a lawyer and she did this and that. And Mr. Finnochio put up the \$500 for my aunt to get me out. So I was there for a week.

x At San Bruno.

j At San Bruno Farm.

x What was that like?

j **Ohhhhhh, we won't go into that!** We will not! Anyway, it wasn't pleasant, I'll tell you that much, kid. And they got me out and I went back to work and I paid off. . . the car I had hit was a cop's car. He had just gotten out of **his** car -- it was not a police car -- **his** car to go into the station to get to work. I had hit it and kept on going. Well, right then and there they all were furious and that's how I got caught so fast. Two blocks later. But 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. Then that was a fabulous amount of money and the other was the fine. And 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. But that's how we separated. They got there wish but I almost got killed and killed him with me. But to this day, we're the best of friends.

x So he's still alive.

j Oh, yes, he's still alive and he's got his third wife and they live in Redwood City and he calls me all the time. Like it never happened. But we're still the best of friends. He never charged me for wrecking his car or anything 'cause I really tore it up. We are the best of friends, and his wife loves me. Sonny, she thinks I'm a camp. I don't know -- I come across like another girl to women. Especially wives, you know, because they think this one's so campy, there's no competition and I'm not embarrassed with him and stuff like that 'cause I ask them if they are. "If you're embarrassed," I say, "that's fine. Tell me. Because I don't want to embarrass you if we go shopping or something." But Susan's the same way. All girl. And she loves to go out with me because . .

x Susan is Jack's current wife?

j No. Sonny is Jack's current wife. Susan was Ollie's wife. Ollie Pishkar is from Iran and Susan met him and they married and they opened a rug store on 24th Street. But anyway, when I go out with her -- she lives in Santa Rosa now -- when I go out with her it's just a ball. And anyway, Jack calls me every once in awhile and I send them birthday cards and Christmas cards.

And they call me up and thank me. And they've been by the house many times. There a very, very sweet couple. But it's just one of those things where a love affair didn't work and we ended up good friends, which is rare for people. I don't. . . .

x            Was he bi-sexual?

j            Yes. But I haven't found anything yet to equal him. I've seen faces. . . !

x            Do you have any pictures of him.

j            Oh, yes. I took a whole roll of him out at Cliff House. I had a good camera and I took the whole roll of him and he's just perfect in all of them.

x            Did you often see somebody from the stage that you got to know later.

j            No.

x            Were there Stage Door Johnnies?

j            Yes. For the other queens. There was many many customers that would come in all the time and they would meet out front because their friends would come to town and they'd bring them up and introduce us and say, "I told my friend all about you" and "You have to meet Jackie" and this and that. And Eunice was one who got acquainted with us and wanted me so she took the whole show to dinner -- but that was for my company. And we became good friends eventually because she realized it was hopeless. But other than that, there were certain customers that would come in all the time. You'd meet 'em out in front and maybe have coffee with 'em or something. But there was, as I say, it was very difficult for me because I have a special kind of look I have to have that drives me crazy. And then, if I fall in love, I'm ruined! But I get a glow about me. I get a strange look. And I have pictures where I say, "What's wrong with me? I look so different in these." And they say, "That's the time you were going with Jack." Because, I don't know what it is, I sort of glow when I fall in love. And people see this and certain ones can't stand it. They have to wreck it and so they find out and sneak in and whisper and instigate and try to break it up because they're miserable and they don't like it when I'm happy. Because when I'm happy, everything around me has to be happy, and I just glow and think of things to do and I'm just glowing. But I'm miserably happy. What's that song -- Unrequited Love or something? I'm just 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

somebody else to think about. And the funniest thing about me -- all these songs I ever 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. Certainly! Because it's a beautiful emotion, the feeling of love.

x           Especially if it's returned. . . .

j           Yes. [Long pause] 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 of. . . kind of can't wait to see them! The only other one where that happened to me was a girl, Babe Roletto [see above]. I couldn't wait to see her. And Jack Long -- I couldn't wait to see him.

x           Who was Babe?

j           Babe was Elvira Roletto that lived up the street, that we used to kiss. . . .

x           Ohhhh, early on!

J           Yes. My first female lover. But that feeling was there. Ohhhh, I can't wait to see 'em. And this is the way Jack was. Others I have loved but they're always different. All my loves were different. But Jack was. . . .!

x           About when was this business with Jack?

j           '49.       No no no. '59. Right after I started at Finocchio's he was up there. In fact, I think last time I was here I wore a brown sweater and I have a picture of him wearing it at the club. He gave it to me and I'll never part with it because. . . I keep sewing the holes up because I love it. OK!

x           On one of the tapes, probably the 2nd one, you were talking about when your aunt was in the nursing home and the house was going to be sold and you said, "One of the kids who was living with me" did something, tore something out which upset your brother.

j           Oh, that was Harold and Barbara. Barbara had a key and Harold lived there. I think Hal lived downstairs at the time.

x           So it wasn't a lover of yours living with you at your aunt's.

j No no no no no.

x Your aunt rented rooms?

j No. No. This was after she was in the home. I had the feeling that she wasn't coming back and so I asked her before she went. . . I knew that. . . . I was talking to her or something and she says, "I don't understand you." She says, "You don't seem to want anything." I said, "I **do** want something" She said, "What is it?" I said, "I want a **home** of my own." And she said, "Well, I didn't know this." She says, "I'll leave the house to you then." So she had her will made up leaving the house to me. She asked my brother does he want his part. He says, "No." And that was all there wa because my other aunt had died and the whole house became my aunt's. And so I have this will. Well, while my aunt was in the hospital, my brother came home and said, "Can I see the will." And I said, "Yes," innocently, stupidly, openly, trustingly.

x You've told me this. . . . Did your **two** aunts live there together.

j No. no. My other aunt lived around the corner on Andover. Innocently I let him have the will and he probably took it to his wife and she said, "Now you know what's going to happen. All the fags are gonna be in there" and this and that. Which was none of her business anyway. I think it's probably greed. So, let it be. So, anyway, when she died, the nursing home phoned and said "Is this William DelTorre" and I said, "Yes" and he said, "I want to tell you your aunt just passed away" and I said "Oh" so I turned around to the kid that was there, I think Wee Willy, and I said, "I'm a house owner!" He says, "Oh, good for you." Well, the next day my brother took care of all the matters of burial, whatever, cremation, and so he said a couple of days later, he says, "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you." I said, "What?" He says, "Nanny left the house to me." We used to call my aunt, Nanny. And I said, "Oh, really." And I calmed myself and took it with a grain of salt, 'cause I said, "Well, what else is new?" He said, "But, when and if I ever sell it, I'll give you your half." Which he's never done. The only witness I have is Harold that was in the front room and he heard my brother say that.

x Now, who's this Harold?

j Harold's the queen who came to San Jose with the little camera and said, "Do you mind if I take a picture of you." And from then on he followed us from club to club.

x But he lived at your aunt's house?

j He lived downstairs with me.

x But again, you were just friends?

j Oh, just friends, yeah. But it was just kyky, remember. Because both of us took pills, and would be today if we had 'em.

x Is Harold still alive?

j Yeah. I call him every day. He lives over on Polk Street.

x Oh. I want to talk to some of these people, I think.

j All right. Because he asked, "Am I in it." And I said, "You have a whole chapter. He says, "Oh." So he says, "What are you saying." I said, "Don't ask me. I don't remember five minutes after I'm with the man." But we talk about what I tell you and this and that. And he said, "Do you mention this one and that one. Maybe Billy DeVoe can help you with some dates. And I says "Perhaps, I'll think about it."

x Maybe sometime you can bring Harold over and we'll sit around a table and tap. . . . Just think about it.

j I will. 'Cause he has an elephant's brain too. He remembers everything. Movie star's names and this and that and dates and he asks me questions and I say I can't tax my mind to think. If I volunteer information fine because I rattle on for hours. And last night I said something about John Raitt and I was babbling on and on and on for no earthly reason. And he enjoys getting. . . because he remembers what I say and he . . . I insulted him one time and he had made a slam towards me and I had cut him to the quick with. . . I said, "Well, some of the things people say are overheard. . . !" Some of the things people say are overheard. In other words, I had overheard him make a comment. . . and he always brings this up. He says, "Um hum. I remember, some of the things are overheard." And another time I slammed him was "you can do anything to me you want, but don't touch my pills!" I had one left for the day and somehow he had found it and taken it. And I had blown up to the degree where I was ready to throw him through a 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, but for someone to pull that from underneath you, it was very. . . and he still regrets doing it. But we laugh about different things like one night I came home and I says, "He should be home any minute. What's keeping him?" I said, "I'll go look for him." So I went down to the front sidewalk and I looked down the street and there, on hands and knees on the sidewalk was this little guy cussing up a storm. I said, "Is that you, Harold?" HE says, "Yes. Get me a flashlight. I dropped my roses!" [pills] Now these were the little



green Syndrox [sp?] and they're so small and it's night, it's dark, it's sidewalk . . . what are you gonna find. And I got the flashlight and the **two** of us were down there on the sidewalk looking for pills because they were like **G O L D** to us! But we laugh about it, but that was it. That's the way pills were, and no one ever took anyone else's pills! There was time in an after-hours bar years ago. Now this is before I worked a Finnochio's. We used to go to bars years ago and from one bar to another and then after this one bar would close everybody would get out and go downstairs to a coffee shop or upstairs to a coffee shop that was open after hours. Well, I was there and all of a sudden I was in the bathroom taking a leak and all of a sudden this queen came in and she said, "Oh. Oh. And she started choking over the sink and she coughed up, and I saw an orange pill go into the washbasin of this sink. And she said, "Oh, thank God, that's out!" She says, "It got caught in my throat." And I said, "You don't want it?" She says, "No! I almost gagged on it." I reached over, ran the water, washed it off and put it in my mouth and went out. I says, "Thank you!" She couldn't get it down her windpipe, but Miss Phillips certainly did! Went down like air! They were precious. These were precious 'cause you knew . . . all of the people I knew that took pills all got in the same mood, giggly, lovely, "how are you. . .?"

x           And they were all uppers?

j           All uppers! Who needs a downer? 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, everybody was in a glorious mood. And like I said when we took them at the house, they all got on projects. Harold would be cooking, trimming the dog, bathing the dog, taping records, taping tapes, all at the same time and sweating up a storm. But he knew what he was doing because they put you on an even keel and you can do anything. I'd got out in the front yard and I'd start at one end and work my way around and five hours later I had all the weeds out. It was just **trips** you'd go on! Margie used to make furniture.

x           Now, who's Margie?

j           There was a bar years ago called The Black Cat. So the owner was married, but Margie was his girlfriend on the side. And she loved queens and the queens all loved her. And eventually we got to meet and we found out she took pills, she found out we took pills, and everybody was passing pills back and forth. But we'd go to different houses where she lived, and you'd set yourself up on the floor in front of the coffee table with your paint, your board, your turpentine, and your brandy glass. Food is in the kitchen if you want some crackers, cheese, bologna, whatever. But just go on your trip. And everybody would set in different corners with their

paint.

x           Painting?

j           Painting. Cutting out paper. Bead work. Macrame. Whatever! They were all stoned, but they all were on the same keel. There was never any arguments amongst these queens that took pills. You know, like if you came in in a bad mood, they'd say, "Go have some coffee." And someone would talk to you to get you calmed down. They'd give you a pill and then you'd get back into the mood with these people. But, no, there was never any outrage or steam. There was always beautiful harmony. **That's why I miss them so much!**

x           Jimmy Howard.

j           Jimmy Howard I met through Melvin. Melvin was a friend of Ruby's and would do the Gay and Miss San Francisco, Miss Princess of San Francisco and all these things, but his mother didn't know that he was gay. And through the course of the revue, Jimmy and Melvin had been to Europe. . . .

x           When you say "during the course of the revue," what do you mean?

j           During the course of their **life!** During the course of their revue, our revue, this revue . . . was something Lester Lamont said. "During the course of our revue, I will be wearing many gowns that I've made out of crepe paper myself. You will see them." During the course of our revue. . . . Well, I use it in different phrases like that. But Jimmy had worked with Melvin overseas or in the Far East or something and they had been friends. Then through Melvin, who saw Jimmy one day on the street as Melvin was driving me to Ruby's after I had moved away. . . he honked the horn and Jimmy came over and he introduced me. Then, Jimmy and I became friends after Melvin died and we're still friends. Jimmy lives over where the bowling alley used to be across from the Safeway on Mission Street and 30th, above the paint store, which is gone now, in a big condo building. Beautiful place. He lives by himself. And he collects stamps.

x           He was not a drag queen.

j           No. He collects stamps and postcards. Well educated. Has been to Europe several times on vacations and everything. He says, "Oh, I just love Germany, and German people" and this and that. And he has taken lessons at the German school down on 4th Street. The college. Teaches you German. And he used to bring little phrases with him when we'd go have coffee and I would read the phrase in English and he would say it back in German. And I'd

say, "No. No. Back up. That's wrong." [mock German phrases] And then he'd read it right. And I said, "What are you learning all these words for?" He says, "In case I ever go back to Germany. I want to be able to speak their language." So I used to help him memorize these phrases. Don't go near the dog. Here comes the train. That door is for. . . . Whatever. Eventually he stopped bringing them with him so I stopped helping him learn them.

x J.J. VanDyke.

j JJ was a queen at Fin's and he worked at many clubs and did his Phyllis Diller act. And he was MC at the club and he got us. . . he was a representative from the Union -- AGVA, American Guild of Variety Artists -- he got us better wages because he would complain and this and that. So Mr. Finnochio said, "Well, since it's for the kids I've gotta have it because they're all good and I want 'em to be happy." [mock italian accent] "Anyway, don't ask-a for too many raises. That make-a me happy!" OK. What else about JJ? JJ was clever, but she was a bit over Finnochio's head -- I mean, over the audience's head 'cause a lot of them seemed to have [the nerve ???] but didn't care for her. I think they wanted you to just be yourself and not somebody else. That kind of an audience. Because now-a-days there's Cher and Madonna and they do all these things to records. The one who doesn't do 'em to records is Jim Bailey. Now this is why he doesn't want to be classified as a female impersonator; he wants to be classified as an illusionist or something like that. Which is fine. And he is very clever. He gives you the impression -- and so does Charles Pierce -- fabulous! But they give you the impression. And you can swear . . . if you like 'em as a star, you watch everything they do, memorize everything they do. And you can tell if a queen is good at it or not. And Jim Bailey is good. And there was another one, I can't think of his name that did Peggy Lee, Tallulah Bankhead. . . .

x TC Jones? I saw him years ago.

j TC Jones. I had sex with her and her brother at the same time. Ahhhhhhhh! It was fabulous!

x We've never talked about your sex life, Jackie.

j We won't! That gets too involved. Weird. Weird.

x I saw him in **New Faces of '56** on Broadway.

j I saw him in **New Faces** here. He was very, very clever and one of the first ones to break the ice with drag, good drag. You know what his first wig was made out of. Feathers! Black feather bangs and he just trimmed them across, and you couldn't tell because . . . I've never seen it, but I wouldn't think it was

feathers. But one time I looked at the picture and, sure enough, you could see the feathers.

x I saw him interviewed on TV and he was talking about his wife and just playing it very straight.

j They will do that! CW does that! Was interviewed one time in the dressing room at Fin's: "My wife says. . . and blah, blah, blah!"

x Did TC Jones ever perform at Finnochio's?

j No.

x 'Cause he was from San Francisco, I thought.

j Yes. I believe he played at the old Beige Room. When it was on Broadway. [after it was on Bay and Powell] Now, there was another club years ago called The Seven Seas on Geary Street and that had drag and there was Gene Burke played there -- Gene Burke was classified as The Male Marlene Dietrich -- he used to sing all her songs.

x Would this have been in the '30's and '40's? '40's and '50's?

j '50's. And he did a strip. Had a beautiful face, bone structure. And looked like Dietrich in a way. Out of drag he was very regal. Stood for no nonsense. If a flighty queen came into the apartment or around him, he would say, "Would somebody please calm her down! We don't need that kind of excitement here." Everything had to be very suave.

x How many drag bars were there in San Francisco?

j There was The Seven Seas, The Beige Room, and Finnochio's, that I can recall. Now, there was probably others that did record acts once in awhile for drag. Now, The Hyde Cow was a Gay bar but on Thursday night they would have talent night. So if you wanted to, you could go and perform in drag.

x High Cow?

j Hyde. Hyde street and Cal. California.

x Oh, Hyde Cal. OK.

j Hyde Street and California. And that was run by Gene Burke, Al Burgess, the one who lived in Napa and just passed away last year. And he knew all the queens, but they were an investment

for him. I can't think of any other drag shows. . . . I'll ask Harold later on and see if he can remember.

x           When you say you would go to bars after hours. . . were these Gay bars or just after-hours bars?

j           They were for both. I mean, the lower class, not high society. Whores, pimps, hustlers, queens -- the underdogs. And put up like coffee shops. After hours coffee clubs. There was one called Don's Coffee Club and that was on Mason and something. And there was another down on The Embarcadero and different ones around. But they were just after-hours coffee spots. . . if you didn't want to go home after the bars closed, you could go there and have coffee and get sobered up or whatever you wanted to do -- meet people, have a sandwich. There was nothing, no big deal about it.

**end of tape 6**

JACKIE PHILLIPS, TAPE #7, 3/10/94

x           It's March 10th. I'm here with Jackie Phillips and we were talking about an article in a September 1972 issue of Sepia magazine about "Men Who Dress in Women's Clothes." The article was on Elton. . . Elton Paris was in the article but there's also a picture of the whole crew at Finnochio's with Jackie in the forefront looking very glamorous -- so we were talking about comedy and glamour [earlier, on a tape that didn't work, Jackie mentioned Alice Ghostly and another comedienne -- whose name escapes me at present -- in connection with comedy/glamour].

j           I knew I did comedy, but I wanted to look glamorous, too. So that's one more conquest you have to do. Because the time it took to make up, if you didn't produce anything, it was a waste of time.

x           How long did it take you to make up?

j           About 45 minutes to an hour.

x           And you would do that after you got to Finnochio's?

j           Yeah. I'd shave first because then your chances of having a beard grow out were less if you did it late -- so I'd shave when I got there, and then I made up. 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, so I didn't fool around. I concentrated on \_\_\_\_\_ and I listened to classical music and I was the first so I could roam around and relax before the show started.

x           So what time did you usually get there?

j           Seven o'clock when the door opened.

x           And the first show was. . . ?

j           Nine.

x           So you had two hours to get ready and just get used to being there.

j           The club opened at eight -- so that gave them an hour to get the customers in and then gave us an hour to make up and an hour to relax.

x           How much body shaving did you have to do?

j           Armpits and chest.

x           Legs?

j           No. Because I wore panty hose. . . . Years ago they didn't have panty hose. Now they had the mesh stockings. Now they were supposed to. . . Soft Tan was supposed to soften a girl's legs -- well, girls shaved their legs years ago, anyway. But it didn't **hide** the hair; it just made it look softer. You could bleach your [leg] hair with Lux Flakes and peroxide and it make like a paste and it would bleach the hair blond because it was so soft. Delicate hair. Not like a beard or your own head hair. But I didn't want to shave, but then we wore the elastic hose. But then panty hose came out. So I wore the panty hose, but they were always. . . your nails would catch and you were always having runs. So I would have at least six pairs of panty hose on. . . which would soften the bones 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. And then I'd take 'em home each week and wash 'em all. But they flatter your legs very much. And mine weren't gorgeous, but I knew how to pose.

x           They look pretty gorgeous in this picture.

j           I knew how to hold them and when the camera was in front how to arch them so that they would look soft and feminine -- about as much as I could.

x           They look pretty glamorous here. Are any of the people we've been talking about in this picture [in Sepia]. Now, I know that's Elton.

j           OK. I'll name them to you and you tell me, stop me if you want to know something. Me. Frances Blair -- one of the old bags from Oakland. Who he worked with, I have no idea. I think probably here he was doing a single. All right, that's Harvey Lee, dead. Elton Paris, lives in Arizona. This is Al St. Clair, dead. Lucien, dead. Bobby DeCastro, dead. LaVern Cummings, works at The Emporium in bedding. This is Carrie Davis, **beautiful** voice, **very** convincing when he sang soprano. This is Reggie Dahl, he's dead. This is Juan Jose, a real woman now, had the operation. And this is, I can't think of his name, **never** could, but he was **gorgeous**. And he did a little dance.

x           How did you all get the cleavage?

j           [showing me with many gestures, etc.] You. . . if you're fleshy, which I'm fat now, you could push [hands pushing tits in from sides under armpits] and then when you put your bra on it would hold it there. You pull up with your hand under your tit [flesh at top of tit] and it pulls more flesh up -- if you're fleshy. Now, I'm skinny there. Skin, skin, skin, skinny. So that

I could fit into the costumes, I took pills to keep my weight down. Not realizing how **wired** I'd get each night. But it was something my act needed. Da da dit da da da! Here's comes dingy, dingbat Jackie! You know. They all knew I took pills but I didn't bother anybody. I didn't go on any bad trips. I was always up up up up up. If you're fleshy, you just pulled it.

x           Was it uncomfortable to pull it so tight?

j           I didn't do it! I'll tell you what. I had pulled and pulled and pulled for years. All I got was a wrinkle! And, after you get a little puffiness, you take brown rouge and run your fun down your front [in center of cleavage] and it's shadows it, shades it.

x           There are two people whose names came up in last week's session that I want to talk with you about and then we can start going through the scrap books. Wee Willy.

j           Wee Willy? [drawing a complete blank]

x           I would have to look through last week's transcript.

j           Don't know.

x           Billy DeVoe.

j           Billy DeVoe. I have pictures of Billy DeVoe. He was the male. . . what was the hillbilly's name. . . Dorothy Shea.

x           Oh, OK.

j           He was the male Dorothy Shea. [sings] "Ma and pa, da da da, they ain't had any learning. Still they do it, da da da, doing what comes naturally." He did hillbilly songs. In fact, in one of these brochures the city used to put out years ago for all the clubs' advertisements and stuff, they were advertising. . . they had an ad in here for Dorothy Shea. She was appearing at the Fairmont or someplace. And, on the same sheet, on the same page as I am, is an advertisement for Mitzi Gaynor, who was . . . Bobby Lane was her hairdresser for over 20 years. Bobby Lane was a drag queen, well, I knew him from when I first came out in Union Square in '43. He lived in Vallejo and used to come down in his little sweater and khakis and he looked like he stepped out of a safety pin box. He was very neat. Always was. Anyway, he left drag and he went to work for Mitzi Gaynor. And when she would come to town at the Golden Gate, he had nothing to do on his night off or whatever, so he'd come up to the club. And he'd talk to different ones that he knew. There's these . . . space between jobs and people and towns and stuff with a whole new realm of queens that



you don't know. So he knew me and he'd come up and see me and he'd come with Ricki San Juan or something, somebody else he knew and they'd buy us drinks and we'd talk for awhile and then the show would start and they'd see it.

x Did Mitzi Gaynor ever come up?

j No. Not while I was there. But we. . . he got tickets for me to go see her when she was here. He's allowed like four seats and I went and saw it and he says, "Come around the back and you can come in and I'll introduce you." Because it's all done in routine. Everything has to be just so. So he says, "You wait here until I call you." Because her manager, her husband -- Jack Bean -- was there, and he says, "As soon as he's done talking to her or she has something to discuss with the chorus boys, then I'll bring you in." So he brought me in.

x Was this a one-woman show that she did?

j Yeah. . . no no, she had a chorus. . . but she was the only one, the only star! And I saw two of them and I was dumbstruck 'cause she is sheer talent. And full of zest and the costumes were all crisp. She was fresh and looked fabulous and you could hear her. So anyway, I got to meet her. And I was just awestruck because she looked sixteen. And she's up there. She just looked gorgeous. And Bobby told me, he says, "Don't touch the body! She wants no one hugging, squeezing, touching 'cause the slightest bruise and that would be sheer hell!" She wears these gorgeous costumes. So before I met her, I was roaming around on the Golden Gate stage and I looked down and here is all these orange sparkling, glittering things and I looked down and they're bugle beads! And I started picking. Well, I got a little envelope full of bugle beads. I gave it to Stephen [Smith, dollmaker], of course. But I'm sure Stephen would keep them separate for the purpose of a story of where did these beads come from -- or make an earring out of them and say these are from Mitzi Gaynor's dress. Because she was dancing and they were flying. I mean, a fringe dress you **don't** dance in! But she was dancing and beads flying. She says, "It happens every night." But, anyway, I met her and she was very nice and she was just, 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 and are just perfect people. That's what she was like. And, ohhhhhh, God, to think of all the times I've seen her in movies! In **South Pacific** and everything, and cried. And I said, "Now I'm meeting her. It was a great, great, great honor for me! And so the second time, I had been out of drag. And so I said, "I like you so much, I can't find anyone who I like as much as I'd like you to have this" and it was my. . . what do you call square, Sapphire cut ring. It was square. And I said, "I would like you to have this because it's the only one I

ever wore." And it was a white, it looked like a white square diamond. And she said, "Oh, thank you very much!" And I was pleased that she liked it. Now I asked Bobby later on, I said, "Did she really like it?" He said, "Honey, we went to dinner later on that night." He said, "I wish you could have **seen** her!" [begins to mimic her with hand gestures like a young girl showing off her engagement ring] "Oh, may I have a cigarette?" "Oh, did you. . . [with hand out across the table]" She had the ring on her index finger 'cause it didn't fit and he said she was with the arm out all night getting compliments on this ring!

x This was after you'd left Finnochio's.

j Yeah. I was getting rid of my jewelry. After 50. Well, I was 50. Well, anyway, I said, "She liked it?" And he said, "Oh, you should have seen her" because she was just going all night with this ring out with different people for cigarettes and coffee and "Ohhhh, my hands need cold cream" and stuff like that. And naturally they'd see the ring sparkling because I told her, I said, "Always make sure you clean it before you put it on. Soak it in ammonia," I said, "because it has a gorgeous sparkle." And he said she wore it all night and I was pleased about that. Like when I gave Tallulah the bracelet.

x Tell me that story.

j She was, what I consider, my most unforgettable character. She was in town in "Crazy October" or something. It was years ago. She was at the Curran or the Geary.

x When you say "years ago" are talking about the '60's? '70's?

j Somewhere back there when I was in drag at the club. But she was in a play and she had come to the club, saw the show and 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; they took them and somewhere along the way, pictures they took at the club, if you didn't coat them, they faded. And this was one of them and I couldn't ever find it again. But it shows us all standing there. And while she was talking, I had gone upstairs, gotten my wig off, got my boy's clothes on and came back, still had the face on, and got into the picture. Now, she said, "I like the show so much, I want you all to come and see my show." So it was a matinee 'cause we couldn't go at night. So I said, "Oh, she's so fabulous! What can give her?" And I had this smoked topaz bracelet with just big square stones in it and I never wore it and I said, 'I think I'll give it to her.' So we went backstage. 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. . . a valet for a man is a valet. . . .

x           A maid?

j           OK, but it was a boy, it was a queen that she had -- hold  
the door, take in the mail, answer who's who, inspect everybody,  
screen everybody. So he said, "The kids from Finnochio's are  
here." She says, [aping Tallulah throughout] "All right, Dahling,  
you'll have to go. You get out. I'm going to see some royalty  
now. All right, let 'em in." And we went in and she was **just  
Tallulah!** You know what she was wearing? Brown. . . ! Sweater  
and a beige skirt. I said, "**Thank God!**" She said, "What?" 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 for me. I can't \_\_\_\_\_ with these nails." So I put the  
bracelet on. I was **shaking**, but I was. . . I was 'peeing'! What  
you call 'peeing.'

x           You were what?

j           When you go over in a show, if you stop the show, the  
queens say to you, "Oh, Mother, you **peed!**"

x           Peed?

j           "You **peed** that show!" In other words, you walked away  
with the show. I was walking away with our little visit with her.  
Because I was throwing out all this love and affection just  
mentally 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. Everyone knows her. And she's touching me.  
And I'm honored when I'm with a movie star and they show any  
affection toward me whatsoever.

[Jackie gave me a further example of **peeing** as he was leaving. He  
said, "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!'" ]

Now, we saw the show, she got the bracelet and she loved it and  
Elton and I went in on a cigarette lighter and you could have it  
engraved for a dollar in those days, just an old flick: "Tallulah,  
a great lady with a great soul. Jackie and Elton." Now, she was -  
- I didn't see it but the queens told me -- she was on an interview  
on one of these talk programs one night and -- she smoked constant-  
ly. 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'd missed it! But, the idea that she carried this lighter around with her, you know. Because I was just pleased that she had the bracelet, and she loved that. So anyway, she said, "After the show. . . ." No. No. 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, 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 we were going in and there was two dykes 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 ushered us into the room, she says, "Un-uh. You two boys. Go!" She told the dykes to leave. She says, "No. Just queens tonight." And, again we feel flattered because she's taking us out of. . . don't want to share her attention or affection or something. So the queen says, "I'll let you know when you can see her" because she went into her bedroom, she got in bed and took off all her make-up and everything and she had psoriasis or something so she had to have that all taken care of before she could visit with us. So we go in and she says, "Sit down wherever."

x           And she's in bed.

j           Yes. And all the make-up's off, you know. But there was no shock because you're talking to Tallulah. You don't compare, "Oh, my God, she's a mess." No. No. You didn't say that.

x           What was she wearing?

j           I don't know. A negligee or something. But she had all this psoriasis that the queen had taken care of. But we waited in her sitting room until she was ready to see us. And when we went in, she sat everybody down and talked. And we were there for about 20 minutes, talking, and everybody said what they had to say. She said what she had to say and then the queen nodded her head like "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 and she says, "Oh, Jackie, I want you back. Come here!" And she called me back and I said, "What is it?" She says, "Go ahead, Elton, I'll send him home in a cab. He'll be all right." So everybody left and I was dumbfounded. What? What? What? What? What does Tallulah want to talk to me about? So she says, "Sit down, Dahling." And I sat down on the side of her bed and she says, "Something's bothering you." And I said, "I don't know what you mean." And she says, "You've got a problem, dear. Let's not go into. . . what? What's bothering you. Something." And I said, "Well, I'm in the middle of a triangle." I said, "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 she says, "You **are** confused!" She says, "Well, there's only one way to handle it. Either shit or get off the pot, Dahling."

So she says, "Otherwise, you'll drive yourself insane." She says, "You're a nervous wreck already. Pills?" I says, "Umhummmm!" And she says, "Good for you." But she said, "Just make up your mind what you want and go that way. Don't be a borderline case because you'll get very neurotic and confused" and all this. So I left feeling better because I had somebody tell me the answer to something personal which I'd never discussed with anybody. So I felt a heluva lot better and I said, "Oh, how wonderful!" So that was it. Tallulah! And that's why I think this was a woman who took time out for me.

Ruth Roman was another one that liked me. She'd come to the club - she was there about three times -- she'd come to the club and we could hear her at the bottom of the stairs: [loud and brassy] "I 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 here on both sides of her are two Italian adonis's. As her body guards, her escort or whatever. And I looked at the two of them. She says, "Don't bother, dear." [Makes gesture with little finger]. I said, "Oh, pity. How are you?" And I grabbed her and kissed her.

x [referring to gesture] Is that a signal for something, raising the little finger and crooking it? What's that a signal for?

j Small dick! I'm idolizing these two beauties and she says, "Don't bother, dear."

x Small dick. OK. See. I'm learning so much.

j But they didn't see it, no one knew.

x How did you meet her?

j She came to the club and they announced her. And whoever was on when they announced her said, "Come upstairs after the show." And 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 jump her. She was just the type. And 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 do anything. She's just sexy! And she liked me and I beam. I go to pieces when somebody likes me. And you can see it. I can feel myself getting red and every ounce of happiness and admiration comes out.

x I like you.

j Thank you. No one makes me talk as much as you do and you don't do a damn thing.

x I love to listen to you.

j And when I hear my voice back, it makes me sick.

x Well, you don't have to listen to it.

j I say, "Thank God for Jim. He like **feeds** me electricity when he starts this thing off. Before I get here, I think what am I gonna talk about today? And I have nothing on my mind.

x Get the scrapbook out that has the celebrities in it. Since we're on celebrities now, we might as well stay on celebrities.

j OK. You can read the names and ask me what you want to ask me. [handing me 8x10 glossy print] This is Lester Lamont [see above T.5 or T.6] and this is all made of crepe paper with sequins on it.

x Wow!

j Now this is the MC. So you see how put together it is.

x And he would wear how many costumes in one evening?

j Change every act.

x So he'd wear nine or ten costumes.

j What ever the act's amount. Plus the finale and the opening.

x How long did a paper costume last? I would think he'd have to be so careful of them.

j There was a dressing room as big as these two rooms together [a space of approx. 12'x20']. Now from here to the wall in the next room is a pipe made for hanging things on and it was covered. Now there was four rows of these. And they're all years of his costumes. If he didn't want to make one he could go back here. Fifteen years ago. He could pull out one that would be brand new. As long as they didn't get damp they would always remain. He had an unbelievable amount of \_\_\_\_\_. OK. Now, my second, my second greatest movie star was this one! She came in twice. [hands me another 8x10 glossy -- of him and Elton Paris with Lana Turner between them.]

x Lana Turner!

j First time with a man who didn't want to be too involved with sitting around while she talked and got introduced to the queens. Now, she sees this. We see it. She leaves with him. She comes back the second night by herself. She says, "I don't know what that was last night, but I couldn't talk to you boys and I want to talk to you." I said, "May I ask you a question?" She said, "Of course!" "Could we have a picture taken with you?" She said, "My pleasure!" And, of course, when you get a movie star of that calibre and that beautiful to pose with you! And there it is! I have the proof. See, I can say, "I've met movie stars." I have the proof! That's why I want to get a picture. Now, then, this woman, 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. And you know, she's been on how many covers?

x Oh, yes. And that whole Johnny Stampanada thing.

j Yes.

x Can you tell me, was this about the 1970's?

j I couldn't tell you. But she was so fabulous.

x Is that mink?

j Is that mink? No, it's rabbit! It's a bunny! Is that mink!

x It's dripping!

j Oh, honey! She was just absolutely lovely. They had little benches here [on picture, points to a place at Finnochio's next to where picture was taken] with tables in front of them outside the bar, and this one's just going into the bar [points to man in background of picture]. Luckily, he saw the camera. And so this is Ray, one of the waiters. But he knew we were being photographed with Lana, but no one else got her! No one else got to photograph her because we're ball-y. Elton and I are very ball-y when it comes to movie stars. [Emphatically, clapping hands with each word] We want to be photographed with them! As you'll see. Because she'll grab 'em or I'll grab 'em. And we're right there! Right there! There she is next to. . . [points to a black man in a photo with Jackie and Elton] . . . I don't know who he is.

A singer or something.

x This looks, with her eyes closed, like Linda Darnell.

j It is! That's the third one I met that's fantastic. She was another one! And all I can feel from Linda Darnell was this "I love life! I love you boys! I think you're fabulous!" And. . . she didn't say anything. But all of this love and 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. And so she sat down and had her picture taken with us. Which is. . . what do you call it. . . a treasure trove, you know. And this is Nancy Kwan. And now, then, you know this one. [hands me another 8x10] I told about him. I'm sorry there's no dates and names though.

x That's OK. That's Jerome Cowan.

j OK.

x Tell me more about these people.

j Well, he was up a couple of times, too. He was photographed with his wife and him. I have someplace.

x You showed me a Christmas card that he had sent.

j [another photo of Linda Darnell] There she is with her eyes open! Yes, I did [re. Christmas card]. I took it back last time. I'm talking movie stars here, dear!

x You certainly are!

j I'm talking big time movie stars!

x And I want to hear as much as you can tell me about them.

j Well. Here it is! Here's Jerome with his wife.

x Was he in a show in town?

j I couldn't tell you. But he was up like three times. And he would always come upstairs to the dressing room to say hello to us. And he was very nice. And, we found out later that he was Gay. But, I mean, who would know it? Who cares? You know. . . as long as a movie star will be seen with you, that's fine.

x Now in this picture you've got on a turtle neck sweater and a skirt and beads and earrings. Is this what you would appear on stage in.



j No. To go to the bar. To go to the bar, I would put this on.

x Between acts?

j Yes. Between acts.

x I'm trying to get a picture of what a typical evening at Finnochio's for you would be like. And you got there at seven and you put on your makeup and the show started at nine.

j Well, now, now this was years ago. So I think there was only about three shows. So you didn't have a long time period.

x So you didn't have to stay back stage.

j No. You could go to the bar, get a drink and sit **outside** the bar on these little benches. Right outside the bar where the manager and the waiters and the cashier could all see you and, if a customer come up and sat down with you, that was fine. But you couldn't go and mix with the customers.

x Could you see the show from there?

j Oh, yes! If a customer wanted to come over and buy you a drink, that was fine. He'd sit down. . . .

x But you didn't hustle drinks at Finnochio's the way you had to do at the bar in New Orleans.

j No no no no no no. You didn't need to. You were getting a good salary. And it was a respectable place. And it wasn't a dive. And that was it. You had to keep your pins in!

x So you just had to get back stage in time to get ready for your next performance.

j Right! And after a couple of times, you'd know how long you had. There wasn't production numbers in the middle of the show [back then]. So it was just acts. One act after another. So you had a lot of time to kill because -- if you weren't in the opening -- you just went on in your spot. Then you had to get ready for the finale. But, then, after the finale, you had like a half an hour or something to mix with. And then, when a movie star would come up, we'd have them come upstairs and they would come up. [hands me another 8x10] That was her and her escort.

x Who's **he**? [reacting to very handsome man in photo]

j I don't know. If you weren't a movie star, you were lost

in the heap. The movie stars got all the attention.

x That's young Debbie Reynolds.

j Yes.

x She's **very** young there.

j Now then. . . . There's two of these. And one is on the floor and the other one is. . . . Now do you know who that is?

x [reacting to a color portrait of Jackie **not** in drag] You're a **handsome** man, Jackie!

j Do you know how that was done? [nasal, female voice] "Will you answer: what year was the San Francisco Exposition on Treasure Island?" I said, "1939." "That's right. You have a chance to go down to -- some studio on Mission Street -- and get your portrait taken free!"

x We're looking at a very handsome color portrait of Jackie at this point.

j So I went down and had it taken.

x Your eyes look brown in this picture. In real life they look gray-blue. Handsome!

j Well, thanks. Now, then. I can't find it. There's two. One with his eyes open and one. . . not. Anyway. Let's skip that one. Here his is.

x Charlie Ruggles.

j Faux pas! He came upstairs. And Russell Reed is standing behind me. He's at the top of the stairs! I said, "Oh, Mr. Ruggles, I loved your Topper movies!" And he said, "I'm afraid you're thinking of Roland Young." And Russell Reed said, "You **idiot!**" And, literally, I sank **right through the hall floor of that dressing room! Sank right through!** After I had said it, it was out. He looked at me and said, "That's all right. Don't worry about it." But that's the faux pas you make with movie stars. Now this, is I said -- Elton was pushy and couldn't quite get next to him. [Hands me photo]

x Arthur Godfrey?

j Robin Hood!

x Oh! **This** is Erroll Flynn? My God, he looks like Arthur

Godfrey. . . ! You have another picture of Erroll Flynn. I remember seeing it. God, he looks awful!

j Now [pointing to young man in picture] this is the boy and the girl he was involved with. This is the girl he was involved with at that time, that seventeen year old.

x Beverly Adland?

j Yes. Now this boy was with them. OK. Now this [pointing to another person in picture] is Walter Hart who brought them up [to the club]. He knew Erroll Flynn.

x And you've told me about Walter Hart.

j Walter Hart was the male Sophie Tucker for years. But he would come up as a customer and . . .

x God, Flynn looks awful. I've seen another picture of you with Erroll Flynn and Beverly Adland also.

j That has to be the same one. 'Cause I don't think there were two.

x Seemed to me it was a different picture. Maybe not.

j No. Now it could be I had two and I gave him [Elton] one. Because he's got the one of me and Jesse White. You know Jesse White.

x Yes.

j He came up and, again, I pushed this thing: Movie Star! Movie Star! What? What? What? "I love your Maytag commercials!" And he said, "You do?" He says, "They're so silly. It's just between jobs." But he was happy that I complimented him on that.

x [still looking at Erroll Flynn picture] He does look like Arthur Godfrey here!

j Poor Arthur!

x So. . . was Flynn servicing both this young stud **and** Beverly Adland?

j I'm not saying. I can't say. But if it was, it was fine.

x Certainly.

j            He was a fabulous movie star. He was. I loved him.  
[hands me another picture]

x            That's Robert Clary.

j            Yes.

x            Now. At the risk of offending you. Are there any  
pictures of CW around.

j            [Brittle] Oh, yes!

x            I'd just like to see what CW looks like. Not right this  
minute.

j            Do you know this one? She loved Elton.

x            It's Martha Raye.

j            She **loved** Elton. They got in his dressing room and  
between the two of them you couldn't hear nothing. 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 home when he lived in Corte Madera and  
she just ignored everybody -- she was polite -- but she just went  
with Elton. Just followed him all over and just had a marvelous  
time.

x            Now, were most of these people in town because they were  
doing shows or. . . .

j            Just shows or between movies or whatever. Things like  
that.

x            Is that Anne Jeffreys?

j            Yes!

x            Do you know how I knew that. She used to be a member of  
the beach club I worked in back in New Jersey so I knew what she  
sort of looked like.

j            Yes. Sterling. Robert Sterling.

x            He was her husband and they did a Topper series on TV.

j            Yes. But he wasn't with her. Otherwise, we would have  
gotten him in there. Then, do you know this woman? She's from  
Canada.

x Gisele McKensie.

j Yes. Have you ever heard of . . . .!

x You have different wigs on in every one of these pictures.

j Yes!

x How many wigs did you have?

j 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. Because tripping over on the side 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 times a night, walking on the floor, you wear them out. And scrape them and wear them back. A queen would come in. Charlie Kaye his name was. Now he would hit all the garage sales, all the thrift stores, and he would see a box of wigs for \$5. He would come up there and sell them a dollar apiece. And I would say, "I want the whole box!" I would take the whole box and then give away what I didn't want but take out all the red.

x So you weren't buying expensive wigs.

j No no no no no. Never! I had one but that's another story. Remind me about that. That was Honolulu. That was my first paste on. You called them paste-on's. Glue or paste on. I would buy all these wigs and I would find out which color suited my face best or which length or style and all that. But I was always changing. I was like a little Sad Sack model. Any new thing I got from the Good Will. A shirt. A pair of slacks. A skirt or sweater. I would have to model it. And I would say, "LaVerne, get the camera. Modelling time!" And I would go from room to room to room showing off my new wardrobe -- which was ridiculous. Because it was 35 cents for the whole things. I had 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 -- every color you can imagine. I had sweaters every color. I had skirts every color. Shoes every color. And every variation of red wig.

x They mentioned in those clippings you gave me, a red sweater that buttoned down the back all the way to your knees.

j Yes.

x Where did you get that?

j It was a cardigan. And, I'm not sure if it had pockets or not. But it was. . . . No no no no. It was that loose weave.

What is it? Alpaca? And I washed it and I hung it on the line and it stretched. It came down over my hips to the middle of my thigh. Well, I said, "Isn't this a bitch!" But that night, I took it to the club and the skirt was only 6 inches long underneath the sweater. That's all of the skirt that showed. Because the sweater hung clear down to 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 and that was all I needed. For the sweater to be loose enough for these things to bounce and not look phony inside but like real girl's tits bouncing.

**end of tape 7**

JACKIE PHILLIPS, TAPE #8, 3/15/94

j Have you ever heard of Yanni?

x Yanni?

j Y A N N I. He's a pianist. Long Hair. I saw him for the first time last night. I was spellbound. He did a concert in one of the amphitheaters in Greece underneath the Parthenon.

x I saw that was going to be on this week.

j Oh, I died. His music is fantastic. He reminded me of Christ. It was on two times yesterday so I got to watch it twice.

x So, it's March 15th and Jackie and I are sitting here ready to do another tape. I've got just a few questions from last week and then we can either go through the scrap books or go through this photo album or talk about the various places you worked. I want to do all three.

j [with photo album] There's a story about her.

x The week before I had asked you about someone named Wee Willy and you didn't remember. I looked that back up and you were talking about . . .

j Willy Page?

x I don't know. It was somebody who lived with you on the house on Highland and you said, "I turned to Wee Willy and said something." [looking up reference] It was when they called to tell you your aunt had passed away. . .

j Oh! Willy Lee. Ah, Lee Willy. He was living there at the time in the front room. He was the brother of Eric who got in drag eventually and used the name Jodi Summers. But he was staying at the house at the time. And he had never been with a queen and he liked them as long as they didn't throw themselves out. So I said, "Fine. I respect that."

x All right. Last week. You're at Tallulah's suite and there are two dykes with you and somebody says, "Just queens tonight." Was that Tallulah?

j Yes.

x OK. You're alone with Tallulah and she says, "What's wrong?" and you say, "I'm in the middle of a triangle." Was that the Jack Long triangle?

j Yeah. And his wife and me.

x Another question. We were talking about wigs and you said that you always bought 'em cheap but you had one expensive wig and you would tell me that story sometime and it was about Honolulu.

j Fine. Now after so many jobs and this and that somebody suggested why don't you get a paste-down, a glue-down wig. And I said, OK. So her name was Marilyn LeRoy. She was a chiropractor's wife. None of us knew that she had a husband who was a chiropractor at the time. But anyway. . .

x This was in Honolulu?

j No. This was in San Francisco. And she lived in South San

Francisco. So this queen drove me down there and she measured my head and she said, "What color?" I said, "Red." And so she showed me different colors and I picked out the one I wanted. And it was like a Rita Hayworth length. And just gorgeous. Real hair. Now it's all sewn on a cap. Knotted 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 is \$125 wig. It's real hair. It's going to look very, very nice. So I was very pleased with it and when I got to Honolulu the wig arrived. Unfortunately, she had not rinsed the color out that she had dyed for me. I didn't know this. I put the wig on. It looked lovely. I felt great. I went downstairs did my show. I came back upstairs and I'm flipping my hair around because I'm in love with this wig and all of a sudden someone says, "You're bleeding! Did you stab yourself?" And I said, "What are you talking about?" And they said, "Look!" And they held up a mirror and all the red is coming from underneath the wig down the side of the cheek. And I said, "I must have stuck myself with a bobby pin." And I take the wig off and I rub kleenex in the hair and it's just coming out pink, but it's not looking like blood. And I said, "Good grief! It's dye!" So I had all this red streak down the front of the face. I wiped it off, put the wig back on, and, eventually, I washed it in. . . . you had to use cleaning solvent. You got it at a gasoline station. It would clean your wig without . . . it would dry in a second; it would evaporate. The smell and the liquid. Now then, STOP!

x We're back on the air and you've just washed your wig in cleaning solvent.

j It turned out all right. . . . And I don't like curly hair. I put a roller in it and . . . like Rita Hayworth's. So that was the wig story. Now then. . . ?

x OK. Let's talk about the places you've worked.

j OK. Did you get the Fan Club in Eureka?

x No.

j OK.

x What I'd like to do is just give you the name of one of the places you worked and just whatever you remember about that place. What it looked like. The people there. Just whatever. Because if we're going to do a history of your career, I need that information.

j You can have it, but. . . .

x And it doesn't matter if you don't remember a lot.

j Now, I'll give you Gold Beach, OR.

x That was another one?

j Gold Beach. In Oregon. Was the Balboa Club. Now, this is a town that had probably never seen drag before. Didn't know what drag was. So Carrol sold the owner . . .

x So both these places you're telling me about now were with Carrol Wallace.

j Yeah. Most of them were with Carrol Wallace because it was a revue and she just hustled jobs for us. . . . Gold Beach, OR, and that would be the Balboa Club. No no no no no no. Koos Bay was the Balboa Club. What Gold Beach



was I don't know. But this was, as I say, a straight town. And there was no. . . no screaming queens. They weren't existent in these days. They just didn't come out of the closet. But anyway we got the job and they like us. And it seemed that the club owner had two cleaning women come in in the morning and clean the club. Tables, straighten things out. Sweep. All that stuff. They went into the dressing room and saw wigs. Oh, my goodness, they must have just had a ball. When they saw this. This is the people that work here! They wanted to find out what the wigs looked like on them. This 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 adhesive!" Liquid Adhesive, Johnson & Johnson Liquid Adhesive for your eyelashes! Not your wig! Well, honey, they must have just had a ball, putting this stuff all on, gluing the wigs on, running around sweeping up the floors. Well, they must have taken them off, put 'em back on the blocks and left. And that was it. Anyway, that night, when we got to work, Ray Saunders said, "What the hell is this!" And we all looked. Both his and Russell Reed's wigs had all this white rubber balls in it. "Somebody was playing with these!" So we called the manager. And he said, it could only be one person -- the cleaning women. Well, they had to get all this liquid adhesive out of the net because you can't fuck a net up because it is supposed to be flawless. Even now-a-days, I look, when I see a movie, with someone who doesn't have long hair naturally or red, I look for the lacing. 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 I see them, and I call my friend Harold [see above] and I say, "Hmrrrr! I didn't know she wore a wig for this!" And he says, "What?" I said, "Eleanor Parker has on a paste-down for. . . ." I think it was some movie that she made and she had long hair in it and it wasn't hers but it was a paste-down. I told Harold about it and he says, "I'll watch for it if I see it." These things you have to take care of. You can't have your eyelashes on upside down; they'd be curving down. Anyway, the boss said, "I'm very sorry. Is there anything I can do?" "No. But just warn them not to touch anything in here. Because we know where everything is and how to use it." That was the story about Gold Beach.

x I'm assuming that Gold Beach is on the Oregon coast.

j Yes. When I stop to think of the towns I played in, why I didn't venture out to see the coast,, to see the sights of these towns I'm in that I'll never be in again. It was sad because there was so much beauty on the coast in Oregon and everything. Although one time when we worked in Oregon. . . does the Sacramento River run through Oregon?

x No.

j A big river?

x The Columbia River?

j I suppose so. That you can go and play in.

x I guess so.

j Has beaches on it? Anyway, we went there and some queen said we're off today so let's go for a picnic. So this was a beach that went for miles up and down the river. And there was just everybody there. Straights. Gays. And whathaveyou. But it was fun. And the best part about it was, someone got a sheet that they put on the sand and they want to wash it off so they took it in the river and they were flapping it up and down and when they flapped it down all four corners, it made a big bubble, trapped the air in it. And the queens that were inside were talking and laughing but you could here them up on top of the mountains. It was like a little echo chamber and it was so funny. "Cause here

in the middle of the river is this big white ball and all this giggling coming out of it and you didn't see anybody except these four queens holding it down to make a big bubble. [Nostalgically] And it was so fabulous. . . the fun we used to have. Just on a day off. OK.

x What else do you remember about Gold Beach?

j This wasn't Gold Beach. It was, I think, Portland. Where these queens took us to the river for our day off. It was just lovely.

x The Beige Room?

j The Beige Room was . . . there were two Beige Rooms. I worked at the one at Powell and Bay and that was where I auditioned three times. I won twice for the talent contest and the third time I lost. And I never sang the song again that I sang that night I lost.

x What song was that?

j "Am I Blue?" It was one night. . . . Oh, God! I had gone to the Good Will, saw this drag, and I said, "Identical!" Now, in one of Judy Garland's movies she does a song called "A Safety Pin."

x Yes.

j OK. Now she's wearing, I think it's pink or lavender and it's high neck, padded shoulders, long sleeves, and it's jersey and it hangs down, the waist has got a belt-like. . . .

x I think it was off-white.

j All right. White then. That's probably why. I see this white jersey drag in the Good Will on the rack. I don't know what size it is but I fling it off and take it to the counter. If it didn't fit I would have added things because it's my Judy Garland thing. So that night I'm wearing this drag and I sang this song I'm supposed to sing and they loved me so much they gave me an encore. So the piano player is saying something to me, like what do you want to sing? And I turned around, thought he said something else, and I said, "Who?" He said, "Fine!" And I said, "My version of Judy Garland's version of 'Who?'" And the arms go up and [sings loudly] "Whoooooooo stole my heart away? Whoooooooo?" Well, the audience had all seen the picture and it had just come out and they knew what I was doing. They went insane! Here's this skinny queen up there, red hair, screaming out Who. And then I said, 'And now she dances!' And I ran around the stage in my Groucho Marx walk. And they said, "Unbelievable! She looks like a fucking model, made up to look like a real woman and then she just breaks out into a Cass Daley routine! Or Judy Canova! Oh!"

x Was this at The Beige Room?

j This is at The Beige Room. They saw what they had. This dynamite little package all wrapped up just dying to do drag. Not money! He doesn't think of money. He wanted to dress in drag! And get it all out. And that's what I was doing. And that's why drag was so fabulous to me. You could get away with **murder!** And they thought, "Oh fine! You know, it's just an act. He isn't really like that." But inside, I am. And I still am. I love making people laugh."

x And you're good at it!

j Somewhere along the way, I have seen and picked up on it, people that

make expressions with their face. Behind somebody's back. Not behind their back deliberately but like that kind of a look like "Oh, really, you think that's right?" And I love to do that. So I caught different expressions on movie stars and comedians and right away I said, "That got a laugh. I'll do it." And I always used to do it on stage. Especially they'd see me do it because the audience liked to watch my facial expressions. The songs, the jokes, they weren't important. My facial expressions and what was coming out of my mouth because I was never the same. I didn't have a routine right down pat. Jokes and everything follow each other, but there was always something extra added each night, each show. And they would be watching me and if I would get a heckler they were, oh, you could drop a pin and hear it. In that club, when I got a heckler. Because they knew it would rattle me and they knew I had to answer . . . cleverly to outwit the heckler. Well, somebody would say something, I'd turn the head and I'd give one of these glares and the audience would say, "Ummmmm. Here it comes!" And they would just be on pins and needles waiting for what was going to happen. So I'd hear his remark and I'd say, "Please don't get excited over me. I have the same thing you have." If it was a man. Usually it would be a man. It was better if it was. And then one night I had this heckler and I used up as many nice repartees to him and then I finally. . . he kept saying on and on and on, and I said, "I've got to end this now." So I said, "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 looked up and he waved -- OK, you win! And I said [very softly], "Thank you."

x           Was that at Finnochio's?

j           Yes.

x           Did you get hecklers often?

j           No. But when you did, you had to have a nice repartee because he didn't want you to get filthy. He didn't want nothing ever to ricochet his show or down it. That's why he was in the business for so long.

x           He? Mr. Finnochio?

j           Yeah.

x           Did they heckle you as a comedienne rather than. . . .?

j           No no no no. They would heckle me, they would heckle Elton, they would heckle Lucien. Anyone who had the advantage to talk back to them. Now singers they didn't bother because the singers came out and sang their song and introduced the next one and went right through -- they never said anything. Dancers didn't have a chance to get heckled. They also loved dancers because you didn't have to explain anything to an audience for a dancer. And when we had complete tours from Mexico that didn't understand what I was saying, I was at a loss. Tanya de Molina did Spanish numbers: they went crazy! And Ray de Young sang in Latin -- all those Spanish songs -- they loved him. But the comedians just laid eggs! So it was that -- and a Japanese audience. And the other rude ones were the Lions. The Lions Club. They were rich and rude -- I called them. Because they didn't applaud and the waiters had shit as far as tips go. We just cringe when we know they're coming in. But they were rude to the waiters and the show. Not saying things but just didn't applaud and didn't appreciate. Didn't respond. And this is what we're all there for. Forty-five minutes of putting on all this crap [indicating make-up] for nothing. This is work. Now, this is work. Tonight you have to work your ass off. But when they're good and they understand you and they love you -- it's heaven! Like this man last night, Yanni, he was. . . he had finished his show, he had stood up for the ovation. . . . It was the end and he had stood up to bow and he stood up after he bowed

over and he looked at the audience and he backed up as though their love for him was knocking him over. And I thought, "Oh, God! I know what he's going through." Like that night I got that ovation. It's something you can't. . . nothing can describe it, nothing can ever take it away from you. It's a beautiful feeling knowing you pleased so many people. Now, this man has a great big fucking arena. I only had 400 that liked me. But I transferred it back and I said, "This 400 gonna go out when they leave San Francisco, I hope, and say, 'Oh, see Finnochio's. There's a redhead there!'" and this and that. And people had told me, they said, "Oh, we have friends that have just come from here on vacation and they told us to come out and see it and we should look you up especially." And they'd stand down in front and wait for you to tell you, to get your autograph, and, at one time, there was a bunch of teenagers that came over from Oakland or something. One saw the show and told another one. And they were coming in. And they just fell out over the queens when they came down the stairs. And one night I came down and there was this group there getting an autograph from Russell Reed. And . . . "There's Jackie!" . . . and they all busted out started applauding and yelling and Miss Reed said, "We'll e x c u s e me! I didn't know you were gonna pee!" And I said, "I didn't know it either. I don't know these people around here." But it's fun because here you're not a movie star, here just a female impersonator.

x                   And a good one!

j                   I was always -- thank you -- I was always sort of, I was happy but it dawned on me later on that recognized me right away. And I thought, when I look in the mirror, I don't look like I do. That's what. . . I don't see me as a boy. I see Joyce or Joan Crawford or whoever I'm portraying. But they would recognize me. So evidently there wasn't that much change in my appearance.

x                   They would recognize you out of drag?

j                   Yes! And this was pleasing. But it didn't dawn on me that they recognized me. Now, if they **didn't** recognize me, that would have been more. Because LaVerne would come down and they didn't know who in the hell Laverne was. Because his transformation was so fabulous. But I would walk on stage and they would start laughing right away. And I said, "I haven't even opened my mouth! What are they doing? And I'm not bouncing the tits! I'm not walking on the side of the shoes! Why are they laughing?" It was just. . . I think it might have been my make-up because from the throat beneath the Adam's apple up, my face was, you might say, orange! Because the heavier, the thicker and darker I could make the make-up, the better I thought I looked to me. Now you can see pictures of me with my hand next to my face. My hand is like a piece of paper next to my face -- but you didn't make up your hands because you were only using them. But the darker I got, the more the eyes would shine! And the more the black eyelashes would show, and the teeth would be snow white next to this cherry red lipstick. As I say, I wasn't a beauty but, to me, I convinced myself I was **gorgeous!** And I believe that if you think hard enough -- and they knew fuckin' well what I was doing -- I was making fun of. . . I was just having a ball! I guess I convinced myself that I was gorgeous and they thought, oh, look at Miss Pussy up there. "Miss Pussy! Here comes Miss Pussy! Get your hands together. Here she comes!"

x                   You look pretty gorgeous in some of those pictures.

j                   I thought so.

x                   Yes!

j                   I have slides that                   I have given all the pictures away in one of those books and I had 35 mm's made up. Everyone into 8x10's. Cost me a mint!

But the guy was testing his camera. This was in Redwood. This was in Fresno at The Redwood Inn. And he bought a new camera and he said, "I want to see what kind of pictures I take." And I said, "Fine! Fine! I'll be your model." And I said, "Providing I can have the pictures." And he said, "Sure." And he gave me the whole role of film. But he took pictures of me, and I was using a fall and my own hair combed into it which wasn't perfected yet. 'Cause once I got into the red hair, I found different styles, and I said, "Oh, God!" And there's one picture there taken in . . . The Beacon Club in Falls. . . Idaho Falls. . . Idaho? The Beacon Club in something Idaho.

x I don't think I have that one down, either.

j I'm outside the club because it was slow and the manager said, "Come on. Let's go outside and take a picture." I was standing there with the manager in a boy's shirt, this beige skirt and these black pumps, and the red hair, and, to me, if it wasn't for the Adam's Apple, which I always wore a scarf or something high, turtle neck, you couldn't tell. As far as I'm concerned. Because I had everything down pat. The eyebrows were accentuated. Too much this or too much that. Everything was perfect as far as I'm concerned, looking like a girl. It's one of my favorites. You'll see it 'cause I'll throw it in your face. And anyway what do you think of this!

x Back to The Beige Room. . . ! Just tell me everything you can remember. Who ran it. . . .

j Al Burgess ran it. And Chinky was another one. And there was a silent partner you never saw, very rarely, who had nothing to do with it.

x And they let you work there for a week. . . .

j They let you work there for a week or you got \$50 when you won.

x But did you also work there and get paid ever?

j I just worked that free week. . . as a Beigette.

x A what?

j Beigette. Like Rockettes. Beigettes came out in little costumes like heart-shaped red and sang [sings] "Candy. I call my sugar, Candy. . . ." Whatever the holiday was. Valentines or something. And the costumes were made for smaller queens. But I had to wear one because I was a Beigette working for the week and I had a specialty in the show. And when it came time to throw the hands to the left [raises hands to demonstrate] and to raise 'em and throw 'em to the right, the costume stayed where it was and the body came up and you could see the hair and the nipple bouncing back and forth, sliding back and forth underneath the top of the costume. Well, of course, I don't know this is happening and the audience is seeing all this hair, 'cause you shave your chest to the top of your lowest gown and that's it. And this was showing when I went [waves upraised arms from side to side and sings] "Candy. . . I call my. . . ." And they were having a laugh and so we said, "Somebody's acting up more and doing something extra special in the chorus line!" And they got jealous. They couldn't see it because we were all looking at the audience. And the audience is looking at us but they're laughing and the queens didn't have enough sense to look at their eyes to see who they were looking at, so they couldn't figure out it was me. But little things like this happen. But it was fun-ville! And then, as I told you, Murphy. . . . Tom Murphy? Frank! Frank Murphy was on the Vice Squad and . . . Murphy and Gallagher. Were two of the Vice Squad. Now they're two big Irishmen and they were on the Vice Squad and they used to come to The Beige Room. I don't know . . . for payoffs or just to see the show or just to see if there was anyone under age in the club. But it was on their

rounds. And I saw them one night and I flew upstairs and I'm shaking like a leaf and I said to Al Burgess, I said, "I can't go on!" He says, "What's the matter?" I said, "Murphy's down there!" He says, "Murphy? Frank Murphy on the Vice Squad?" I said, 'Yes! He arrested me one time! And I said, 'If he sees me," I said, "he'll do it again." He said, "He won't even recognize you!" And it dawned on me that I had a mask on so it didn't matter. He said, "He's in here all the time. He loves the queens!" So, that was that. But as far as running into Murphy, I thought, "Oh, no, not this again. Not being hauled in in drag!"

x                   How was The Beige Room different from Finnochio's?

j                   The Beige Room was freer! It was a younger set. There was no discipline as far as one show an hour long and there was youth. There was no venom. No vicious queens. And it was just, as I said, like me -- queens who wanted to do drag. Finnochio's was authentic, competitive, and well-known. You had well-known names and, Oh, it was a high class club! And it was run just fine -- until Lester died! Then, then, then, then the roller coaster started. Not up. But d o w n! And she tried. She tried. And he tried different queens to MC the show. Constantly. And they just didn't want to hold the show together. They wanted to do their act. The show wasn't important. Their act was! And they couldn't keep the queens together.

x                   So was there a lot of bitchiness and rivalry?

j                   No no no. There was a lot of. . . . like going out with half a face on after the show was done, after the club closed. These young queens that came in off the street, Filipino mostly, or Spanish, that wanted to do drag. . . . After Lester left they different MC's and they didn't say, "No leaving club with the face on!" 'Cause, as I said, we got there, I got there at seven, put the face on and made sure everything was right 'cause I'm doing a job which is called Female Impersonating. Not going on with needing a shave and looking bad. Or no wig. Or a moustache. No. It was a Female Impersonation. Now, they're leaving the club with a half face on because they're young and they're cute and they think they can get by with cruising, passing off as a girl to get men after they got out. But this could cause trouble. Not just for them. Not that they'd get beat up and that's it. They could cause trouble for other queens that were coming out in regular dress, dressed as they should be in their 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.

x                   So are you saying it was sort of dangerous to walk the streets in drag in those days.

j                   Yes! Yes!

x                   'Cause things are so much different now.

j                   Well, now, yes. But those days, as I say, it still wasn't accepted. This is a novelty.

x                   Even in San Francisco it was dangerous to walk around in drag?

j                   Yeah, because there's always somebody out to bash. And if you walked down the street with a sign on your head: "Fairy" -- all right, now you're going to be watched as to who you associate with, and if they're clever enough to want to beat up faggots, who you associate with. Now you may be talking to me, and they may know I'm a drag queen and then they want to beat me up and then who was he talking to last night, that guy that lives on. . . all right, now you get it the next night and you don't look Gay. You have nothing about you that is Gay. But you get it because you associated with me. This is wrong! For queens to do

this. Because it hurts the rest of the game. Like the queens nowadays. Holding hands is fine. But it's still not accepted.

x Holding hands in the Castro is different from holding hands on Union Square.

j Yes. But still, the buses go here. Back and forth. They've got all. . . I've been on it in the afternoon. "Hey, we're in Fruitsville!" "We're on Queer Street!"

x The 24 is notorious for that.

j All right, fine. Now, when I open my mouth, I give myself away automatically. And I don't intend to, but it just happens because I've seen people turn when they hear my voice. 'Cause it's so affected and everything. It's not deliberate. It's just that I get excited when I start in on a subject and the voice goes high.

x It's called enthusiasm, Jackie.

j Yeah, but you can't do it. OK. How many tapes do you have left so I know when to bring some more.

x I bought some today.

j Well, I have some so you let me know.

x I bought four today.

j Now, where was I.

x We were talking about the difference between The Beige Room and Finnochio's. Anything else you remember about The Beige Room?

j There was another club. The Seven Seas. Did I mention that? The Seven Seas on, I think, it was on O'Farrell or somewhere.

x Did you perform there?

j No.

x But it was a drag bar?

j Yes.

x OK. I don't want to put that here then [in chronology] because this is where you performed.

j Seven Seas would come under Gene Burke, the old \_\_\_\_\_. Gene Burke worked at The Beige Room, too. He was 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 all resemble her very very close on stage. And he would sing all her. . . [sings with Dietrich accent] "Johnny, when do the la la la. . . And you would swear it was Dietrich up there because he had all her gestures. . . she was desirable. . . he had all her gestures down. And eventually, as the years go by, he had the operation and was as **h a p p y** as a lark. He worked at AGVA which was our union as a secretary/receptionist.

x Did he ever work at Finnochio's?

j I can't tell you that now. I'd have to ask somewhere around. Could be.

x But not while you were there.

j I don't know. The mind goes, jumps around. Like Billy DeVoe worked there and when I came in to work one night. . . or was it my night off or something, but anyway I turned around and she said, "Hi, Bonzo!" and only certain people know me as Bonzo. I said, "Hi! I can't place you." And she said, "Miss Devoe! Modine to you." And it was such a comparison. . . difference. . . years and the fatness of the face and the bloat. I didn't recognize him.

x Where did you get the nickname Bonzo?

j When "Bedtime for Bonzo" came out with Ronald Reagan and whoever. . . Nancy. . . somebody. . . Jane Wyman? I had seen it. In San Jose. And was impressed with Bonzo running around on his feet and "Oh Ou Ah Ah!", throwing the arms, so along with that movie, "Abba Dabba Honeymoon" came out with Debbie Reynolds and Carlton Carpenter and they sang "Abba Dabba Honeymoon." Well, I was doing "Abba Dabba Honeymoon," I saw "Bonzo," and I put this into the act: "Oh Ou Ah Ah Ah!" and when I'd go around the floor before the second chorus. Well, the audience is all seeing this movie, understanding what I'm doing and they're picking up and they're loving this and laughing. I had a couple of pills too many one night, a couple of drinks too many, and after I sang my first chorus -- I think this was the last show -- after I sang my first chorus, I made a beeline for the bar. Now this is the club we're working in: the stage is here and the tables are around it and beyond that is another opening where the bar is as you come in off the street and you sit and the bar and then walk down here and somebody will seat you for a table. I saw there's nobody on the bar, no glasses, nothing. And I made for the stool, jumped up on the bar, and monkied all the way down the bar! Ou Ou Oh Ah Ah Ah Ah! [with appropriate chimp gestures]. All this with the music playing and they're not bothered; they're just watching this queen's going and think she's snapped completely and I'm up and down the bar and the bartender is so mesmerized, everybody is so shocked at what I am doing, no one bothered to stop me! And they'd let me up and down the bar in drag and singing and Oh Ou Ah Ah Ah! And back down on the stage and I finished the song. And. . . "Abba Dabba Honeymoooooooooon!" And I walked off the stage and they were insane. They were insane. They said, "We didn't see what we thought we saw!" Because it was spasmodic, at random, ad lib, anything, anything I could do to make somebody laugh. I always loved it.

x Is this The Colonial Club?

J Yes. Loved it! There was another episode about The Colonial Club - about Gerri Lane and I.

x Go ahead.

j We got loaded at the club, did our show. . . .

x When you say "got loaded" are you talking about roses or booze?

j Both. Now you take a rose and you're wired [flubbers his lips]. Now, have a drink over it and it sets it off like a 45 record being played at 78. OK. Now, we are too wired to go home and sleep so we went to this coffee shop and sat in the booth and had coffee and calmed down or whatever it was we had to do before we went to the hotel room. Well, this didn't help. Gerri Lane and I, we're still wired by the time we get to the hotel. I went to my room and changed, took off my clothes and slipped into something comfortable -- [laughs] I'm dying to say negligee but I didn't have any. I was unwinding the best I



could. And all of a sudden I hear knocking and I walk to the door and I say, [very softly] "Who is it?" She said, "It's Miss Lane." I said, "OK." I opened the door and she comes in and she says, "I can't sleep!" I said, "That's nice. I can't either. I can't come down." And she says, "Well why don't we do something silly." I said, "What?" She said, "Oh, let's make up." I said, "I have no make up here." She said, "I have an eyebrow pencil!" I said, "OK." Off the sheets came on the bed and around as togas. Off the towels came and they're wrapped around as turbans. No make up. And we did the eyebrows up like Mr. Spock in Star Trek. The mouth we painted black for lipstick. The eyes were all Egyptian. And so we proceeded to roam the halls, and we couldn't wake anybody up, we couldn't do anything so I said, "Let's go up on the roof!" Now this is just sheets and our shorts and a towel and this make up. We were up on the roof walking around the ledge of the hotel which is about this wide [holds hands up to indicate maybe a foot]. Which is a sheer drop down three floors. Now, the both of us are stoned and we're walking on this ledge around the roof doing [sings] "A pretty girl is like a melody. . . ." But no one sees us because this is like two-thirty, three o'clock in the morning, no one can hear us 'cause we're not too loud but we're up there -- two ghosts walking around the hotel. This wears us out and we say, "OK, let's go down." We came down, tippy-toed down off the roof, just about to come into the back entrance of the hotel and the garbage man is coming down the hall with his great big garbage barrel on his back. The screen door opens and he sees the two of us and goes "Whooooooa!" -- backs up and drops his garbage can. We jump by him and fly to our rooms and then we listen with our ears against the door. The manager and his wife screaming, "What the hell is going on up-a here [Fake Italian accent] you wake-a the whole hotel up with this goddam dropping the can!" He said, "I just saw ghosts!" Now this, of course, sets Charlie and Debbie [the owners] off to a point where, "You're drunk! You come in here and take-a the can and drop it and say you saw two ghosts that scare you and make you drop the can!" No one knew the truth that man was telling! He didn't know what room we went into. He couldn't say we went into a room.

end of tape 8

[Before we started the tape, Jackie told me that he hadn't had a cigarette since Sunday last -- he was chewing FreeDent gum furiously and was, understandably, quite antsy.]

x It's Wednesday, March 30th, and we're here again with Whacky Jackie Phillips who's just given up cigarettes.

j Day before yesterday. I went to shopping. . . the Salvation Army on 19th and Mission and all of a sudden some man. . . I picked up a cat [probably a porcelain one] and some man said, [gruffly] "Is that for you?"

And I said, "Of course not!" I said, "It's for Alice Ghostly."

He said, "Oh, you know her?"

[Laughs] And that's all I needed. Well, I went on with this man. . . .

[in same gruff male voice] "Oh, you're from Finnochio's. Well, we've seen your act! Your the one. . . . Oh, Dorothy. Dorothy! Look at who's here. Look at who's here? Do you know the pretty one?"

I said, "Yeah. LaVerne."

"Yeah, that's the one with the high voice."

I said, "Yes. He works at the Emporium."

"We gotta have you over for dinner. I'm Italian. I cook, you know."

I said, "There's only two things. Spaghetti and Macaroni & Cheese."

"Whatever you want. Whatever you want. Just a small gathering."

I said, "Like how many?"

He said, "Six. Four or six."

I said, "Four would be fine. I don't like crowds."

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, you're so fabulous so I'll cook!"

And his wife says, "Yes. I remember him, dear."

He was so excited about it! And he told me his name is Larry Christenson or something. So I gave him my number and he's going to call me for dinner sometime.

x How wonderful!

j He was soooo elated. "I can't believe I'm meeting you! Yes! I used to go up there all the time!" He said, "How long were you there?"

I said, "Seventeen years."

He said, "Do you do it anymore?"

I said, "Of course not." [Laughs] I said, "There's nothing to do it with!"

He said, "Oh, you hold up well!"

I said, "Thank you."

x That's wonderful! That was the reaction I got from my friend from Monterrey. He was so excited that I knew Whacky Jackie Phillips. Yes. You were a big influence on his life.

j Yes. So you said. To me, I'm just me.

x That's right. You were a star, Jackie, and you still are.

j I don't go around with a big fat head because. . . . [interruption to check tape] And I think, that poor queen having to listen to all that man's bullshit [referring to me] day in and day out just to write this book. Where did she think up these things. No. Really. I mean, some of them you would say, "No. . . ."

x I sit here typing this and I chuckle all over again.

j . . . . this couldn't happen to a person. No one could be this ding-a-ling, walking around on the roof of a hotel."

x I want you to finish that story. The story about walking around the roof of a hotel in a sheet. Because the tape ended before you finished it. We got to the point where Charlie and Debbie who, I assume, owned the hotel. . . .

j Managed it.

x . . . . are yelling at the garbage man, saying you're drunk and saying you saw two ghosts and he didn't know what room we went in to. He couldn't even say we went into a room and the tape ended. What happened after that?

j That was it?

x Did they fire him?

j No no no. They couldn't fire a garbage man!

x Oh. He didn't work for the hotel.

j No. He just came in to collect the garbage that morning and here these two maniacs. . . . You couldn't distinguish who we were because the markings, black lipstick, heavy Egyptian eyes and a towel. These two creatures coming at you when you've got a garbage can on your back, you're not thinking something like this is going to happen this hour of the morning anyway. So when he dropped the can, we both flew! They were talking about it the next morning in the lobby. "What was all that racket last night?" And Gerri and I would just look at each other and turn away. We knew if we snickered we would give it away. But it was soooo funny. We laughed about it for years.

x OK. There's something that you've brought up several times about Finnochio's after Lester died and it has to do with, you've always mentioned Filipinos and Young Queens and my question is, were they hired to MC?

j No no no. They were just recommended by one of the Filipinos there. And so . . . . Oh! A parrot! A parrot on a man's head just went down the street on a bike! . . . He would recommend them to Mrs. Finnochio and she would say, "Bring them in and we'll have a look at 'em." Now, she saw how feminine they looked in drag and this was . . . they answer was "Yes!" All right. Talent? It didn't matter. Just they could dress up and look pretty on my stage. They were her "Eve-ettes."

x Her what?

j Eve-ettes. Her name was Eve. So she called them -- the little chorus line -- the Eve-ettes. Who got away with murder. Ohhhh. This will all have to be censored.

x Why?

j Because she'll sue!

x No she won't. She'll never see it.

j I know queens, honey! I know queens. And the eviler they are, the faster they would get the book to her. "Have you seen what she said about you, Mrs. Finnochio!?! Eve, read this! Oh! She put you down something awful!"

x           The Eve-ettes.   Wow!

j           Eve-ettes!

x           And they didn't have any specialty acts or anything?

j           Oh, they did.   A little song.   Or a little dance.

x           But no talent.

j           None!

x           And did they take the place of the people who'd been there for awhile who did have talent?   He's nodding yes!

j           Ahhhhh, yes.   That's where the resentment came in.   Why should she get rid of me to have a chorus?   You had a chorus line, plus an extra act in the show.   Whereas you can take the chorus line out in the middle of the production and have a nice comedian or a nice singer and fill up that time spot.   No.   As many acts as you could get on that stage for as little money and stuff like that!   No!   It was. . . .!   No!   I was. . . !   No!   It's just irritating to talk about it because when you stop to think of people ripping you off and you think of those things that people do!   And it was all deliberate.   Anything to upset us or make us upset -- and make her happy!   All right!   Next!

x           You don't want to talk about that anymore, huh?

j           No!   Sorry. . . !

x           When we met Harold last week -- or week before last -- I was glad to meet him, by the way -- and I want the three of us to get together sometime.

[Much laughter during this next exchange. . . .]

j           Yes, I know you do.   And he's dying to get together.   I said, "No no no.   Not unless he asks you.   You don't volunteer this information."

x           Well let's do it sometime!

j           "Not unless he asks you!"

x           How do you want do it.

j           He's ready to give you answers that I have no intention of bringing to the surface.

x           So you don't want me to talk to him.

j           Yes!   You can talk to him all you want.   In my presence!

x           In your presence?

j           Oh, definitely in my presence!   And he thought you were very nice.   And I said, "Of course he's nice.   I only know nice people."

x           That's true.   We're both very nice.   He seemed very nice also.

j           Oh, he is.

x           Do you want him to meet us here some Wednesday morning?

j Don't look forward to it because it was all I could do to get him out that far.

x He would come.

j You see how heavy he is. All right, now, this is his problem.

x Well, we could go to his place.

j He has this breathing and walking and have to stop and rest.

x We could take the tape recorder to his place.

j Whatever! If it's all right with you. Because he doesn't get out much. He's becoming a recluse again. And this is not what I want because him and Jimmy are both good friends and when they stay in, I say, "Oh, oh."

x Now who's Jimmy?

j Jimmy's the other heavy-set one I run with?

x Was he a part of your. . . ?

j No no no. He has nothing to do with drag. He worked [laughs] at Salvo. Salvo Dreyage. Like van lines.

x Moving vans?

j Yes! And there was a soap one time. Salvo. Now this is what I was associating Salvo with but he said, "No, it was a dreyage company." He worked in the office typing. And he used to tell me stories about different truckers that would come in. Knowing Jimmy -- now you have to appreciate this -- knowing Jimmy, he's 3 something [meaning over 300 pounds] and it's like a small herd of people coming down the sidewalk when you see him coming to meet you. Now this size of a person to be petite and winsome and [small, high-pitched voice] "Hello. How are you?" with this little, teeny-tiny voice is just not Kosher. You hear him tell a story and it just grinds my gut that I wasn't there. [Same teeny-tiny voice] "Hello. You're a new truck driver, aren't you. My name is Jimmy. Would you like to meet me in the tea-room in fifteen minutes?" Whatever the procedure was to get this truck driver, and then she'd tell me, "Oh, loved it! All down my chin and everything!" I said, "At work?" She said, "Oh, no one knew. I always took coffee breaks!" I said, "Oh, how lovely!" She's a campy queen. But she's just huge with this little wispy voice. My friend, Tony, calls her. . . . Harold's called "The Lung," and Jimmy's called "Whispering Smith."

x Why is Harold called "The Lung"?

j Because one time Tony was at the baths and you know the baths are walls and doors and everything and dark rooms and stuff and so there was this dark room and all of a sudden Tony said I heard this [strong wheezing sounds] Ohhhggghisshhhh! And he said, "Is that you, Harold?" Harold said, "Yes. How did you know?" "I heard you breathing!" Couldn't see. Pitch black room! He said, "The Lung was there last night. "Who?" "Harold. I call him 'The Lung.'" [wheezing sounds again] Next?

x Now, when you and I met Harold last week, he said the guy who owned Josie's Juice Joint was in and wanted to do a show with all you old Female

Impersonators. Did anything come of that?

j [Laughs] Did you hear what you said?

x Yes. Did all you old Female Impersonators. . . !

j Thank you. Anyway. . . .

x Hey, I'm of your generation. I can say things like that.

j The minute he told me he has a bar, I put a big question mark.

x Oh, no. Josie's is a legitimate place.

j No, **him!** Because he doesn't look anything like he has anything to do with a club.

x The guy from Josie's.

j Yes. 'Cause he just struck me as a queen who wanted to have . . . to impress somebody -- so I'll make this up. And I didn't know if there was a Josie's or not. But then you confirmed it.

x So have you followed up on that?

j I forgot all about it until you just mentioned it now.

x Would you do it if he. . . .

j No!

x . . . if he got a show up?

j No. . . ! No. . . !

x No, huh?

j No! You see I have a horrible problem. When I see Greta Garbo in Camille and then they show pictures of her that some asshole took running around years after, waiting day and night just to photograph her, that to me is cruel. And then to **publish** it is crueller. Because I want to remember her like I used to. [low, throaty voice] Marguerite Gautier!

x Beautiful.

j But. . . to me. . . I want people to remember me when I was running around swinging beads and ripping out fur and falling off heels and keeping you in stitches. And when somebody comes on, "Oh, would you do. . . !" Of course not! No. No. Because there may just be someone, just one would be all it would take: "Oh, my God! Don't tell me that's Miss **Phillips!**" No. 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. I wouldn't want to hear it. 'Cause I don't like seeing it when I look in the mirror. Because I'm still **seventeen** inside. And this is the irritating part!

x Certainly you are!

j I see all these young beauties and I have a mind as equivalent as theirs and all of a sudden I say, you're sixty-eight, dear! You look sixty-nine! Don't even give it a second thought! And I have to just turn myself away from

getting frustrated. So! [Claps hands!] No, I wouldn't. . . . I have nothing. . . . I lost all the yen to do drag and forgot all the material. I don't have no make-up. Wouldn't want to buy all that. . . spend that money for just one night. No no no. Because what routine you gonna have. Who runs around at sixty-eight years old that can barely walk and is coming off cigarettes and trying to write a book and trying to get her housework done and can't pull weeds because cactus gets her fingers. . . . No.

x                   OK

j                   My problem with me is -- the less I do, the less I want to do. And it's awful. I just look at all these projects at home and I don't want get into anything. I have no initiative! And I'm wondering what happened to the brain? What died down? What wore down? You know, once in a while. . . . The only thing I like to do is wash clothes or cook.

x                   Well, that's OK. . . . And come over here and talk. You certainly have a lot of enthusiasm and energy when you get over here.

j                   Cooking makes you fat. Washing doesn't do anything but [Lily Tomlin's Edith Ann's voice] "it keeps me busy. . . ." I'm very nervous today.

x                   Well, that's because you haven't had a cigarette in four days.

j                   Ok. Now then. . . .

x                   And congratulations. I think that's wonderful that you're giving up cigarettes.

j                   I think it's nice, too, but I'm so afraid I'm going to slip!

x                   Well if you do, you do.

j                   No no. No, I'm having a fight with myself doing this. And I say, "You're doing something good and you're frustrating yourself at the same time."

x                   It's going to get better.

j                   This is what I said the other night: [shrill, nasally voice] "If you can forget how to clean house, how to pick up this and how to wipe this and how to wash that and how to mop this, why can't you forget how to smoke?" And I thought, if I can do all those things, I can forget how to smoke. There's no reason.

x                   But you're also dealing with withdrawing from a physical addiction. It's a drug.

j                   [Edith Ann again, breathing hard] Mister. It's driving me up the wall. If I could suck dick as good as I can cook, I'd be fabulous!

x                   I'm going to ask you a question that will probably upset you.

j                   [Loudly, with laughter] That's good! That'll take my mind off cigarettes!

x                   I want to get this out of the way early. What I'd like to do to get a true chronology of all this is to write Carroll Wallace and ask her for the dates you played various places in the Northwest and Alaska and Hawaii. Would that be a possibility?

j [Whispers to control outburst] No. [Louder] No.

x Ok

j Because you would get. . . . You would open Pandora's Box.

x OK

j That would be all over you like a rash. They would want complete. . . . They would give you their complete acknowledgement and they would be on you like a rash.

x OK

j I want all the publicity! I want all the credit! I want this. . . .  
!

x OK. Then I won't do that.

j No.

x And I would have no way of knowing how to get in touch with her.

j No, I don't either. But, I mean, if you open. . . it would just be "Oh, certainly, I have all the dates and everything." But they would want something from you.

x OK

j And you would be bamboozled 'cause they're that clever. They could see you the moon -- if you owned it already. I'm serious. . . .

x I hear you.

j . . . That's exactly how we got into all these clubs! Bull shit and finagling and. . . and one lie on top of another. No. No. I'm sorry about the dates. I can't help you with that 'cause I told you in the beginning. . . .

x Don't apologize. That's right.

j I'm not apologizing. I'm just explaining. I have a bad memory. Did I tell you about Missoula, Montana? Have you got that down there?

x No, I don't.

j Oh, good. There was a club! [Makes a face]

x What was the name of the club in Missoula. Do you remember?

j I don't know. It was in a hotel.

x Tell me everything you remember about Missoula, Montana. I have a nun friend in Missoula, Montana.

j It was next to the train depot. Or a train depot for hooking up and coming in and out. Maybe not a depot. But anyway it was next to the train tracks. They were in the back of the hotel and we could hear them all night. It was fabulous; I love trains. Missoula, Montana, it's a butch town -- as far as I can remember, because we were on stage behind the curtain making up. And we could hear the customers in the club because this was all part of the club.



There was no partitions or anything. And rowdy, rowdy voices! And then pretty soon I heard Boom! Crash! Breaking of glass. And it was a bottle came across the room, hit the curtain of the stage and dropped and broke on stage. I said, "Now this is cute, Carroll. You want us to go out there with these nice, quiet gentlemen-like folks?" And I said, "They'll kill us! They throw bottles at each other, what do you think they're gonna do to queens?" So anyway, Carroll went to the boss and she said, "Now you know we're impersonators?" And he was stunned at how pretty she. . . he looked, and he said, "Oh, you'll have no problem. They're just friends of mine. I'll quiet 'em down." So they were all right. But, again, I say, "Thank God, I sang western songs."

[Loud, raucous voice] "Ohhhh! Bring on that hillbilly kid. Bring on that crazy Jackie!"

[sings] "Hey, good lookin'! What you got. . .!"

If I'd gone [sings an operatic note] "Ohhhhh! De Deeeeee. De de deeeeee!"

Un un!

x How long did you play in each of these clubs.

j Two weeks.

x Two weeks. With Sundays off?

j If you were lucky. What for? You could rest while you were. . . between jaunts.

x And you drove between jobs?

j Oh, constantly! Constantly.

x In a bus? A car?

j No. That station wagon pulling the half of a car with all the wardrobe in the back. Attracting attention on the highway. Not just in town. On the highways! Trips across country. We never knew. . .! We had one place there was snow or something. We were going up a hill or down a hill or something and we had no chains. Well, there's truck after truck after truck slowed down, broke down, needing chains. They were all along this long stretch of snow highway. So they said, "I'm sorry." The highway police said, "I'm sorry you can't go no further without chains. It's too risky." Ohhhhh! Well, we had to buy chains from this garage, whatever. Luckily it was there. Not one of us -- five queens -- not one knew how to put chains on a car! 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 the snow, in the mud, under the car, fixing all and asking questions about this half a car in the back. And Carroll said, [mock Katherine Hepburn] "Actually, we carry our wardrobe in it. We're show people."

And I said, "Oh, that's good! Get us killed! Tell them we're faggots!"

And they were intrigued because of this half a car that was made up to be a trailer. They [the other queens] didn't proposition or anything like that because it was sheer. . .you'd be asking for. . . to be strangled to death.

x Do you remember where you were going to and from.

j No. There was just snow and it was very scary. Washington? Let's see. Idaho has snow.

x Certainly. Missoula has snow.

j Oh, all of those little towns. It was winter season whatever it was.

It was just hysterical. Five queens and not one could put a chain on.

x Was Missoula about as far east as you got?

j Is Lewiston further? Lewiston, Idaho?

x No. Because Montana's on the other side of Idaho.

j OK. Then probably. Then we were in Sweetgrass.

x Sweetgrass?

j Sweetgrass, Montana. Which was on the borderline of Canada.

x You played a club in Sweetgrass, Montana?

j Now, this club is about as big as your apartment, I'd say. Small. And I said, "Where. . . There's no town here, Carroll. There's five buildings."

She said, [same nasal 'Carrol' voice] "I don't know! 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 and I look through the curtain toward this club. The club is packed! "Where," I said, "did they come from? There's nobody around here!"

"They come across the border from Canada!"

**They loved us!**

I said, "Ahhh. Never heard of this stamp on the map and here are all these people!"

Yes. They come from Canada. They loved us! She got us into some deals!

x How did she find these clubs?

j She followed Lee Leonard, who was breaking the territory. Lee Leonard and Robin Ray were breaking the territory.

x Did Carroll just write to them or did she actually visit. . . .

j Carroll. On her day off, she'd travel all this way and make the dates. She'd scout ahead or phone or have somebody phone or something. And get all these jobs. Crazy jobs.

x Now, did she just pay you all a straight salary and then she pocketed the rest. Or did she. . . .

j [Laughs] You are **determined** to make me upset today with that woman! First it's shall I write her! Now it's did she pay you! [with mock (?) anger] She paid us good! Yes, she did. She gave us a straight salary and pocketed the rest! That's how she got all her apartment houses! You son of a bitch! Ahhh, I love her savagely.

x I'm sorry.

j No no no no. She used to think when I called her "Ortho," I meant the mattress.

x What did you mean?

j The "Ortho Grow!" [with intense feeling] The **weed killer!** That's what she was. [voice getting lower and lower] She could kill weeds -- with her breath! Not to mention her hole -- which you could get the Titanic into.

Without having to push. [Brightly again] Now, then. Next.

x Do you remember the name of the club in Sweetgrass?

j No. It was like a baby fingernail on the street. It was so small.

x OK. Missoula and Sweetgrass.

j I would like to keep talking about these clubs you played, and I'll just call out a club and you tell me what you can. . . .

j OK

x Do you remember anything more about Sweetgrass or Missoula?

j There was a girl. She was . . . she worked in the hotel in Missoula. Very, very pretty young thing. She used to have a boy's haircut. But she'd wear these dresses with puff sleeves. During the day. . . there was like a long bar and it was, like, for cowboys. Cowboy town. And here she was, a bar girl, sitting there in this little frilly, puff-sleeved dress and a boy's haircut. And I said what happened to her hair. I'll ask her. I said, "How come you have a short hair when you're so feminine?"

She said, "The dress is for the men to turn them on. And the hair is so I don't muss it while I'm having sex with them!"

I mean she was. . . "Excuse me. I'll be right back." And you'd think she was going to the toilet. Some guy just came in, gave her the eye, she knew his room, she'd go check the room at the desk, go to his room, and five minutes later she'd be back. With twenty or thirty dollars. Blow jobs or whatever.

x Good for her.

j And she was the sweetest little thing. She just loved us. Because it was somebody in show business. In entertainment. Someone of her own kind. It was just. . . . I can't even remember her name, but I remember she had this little blue dress with the little puff sleeves and the boy's haircut. So she didn't get it mussed while she was rummaging between their legs. Oh, my God, my tongue's loose! Anyway. . . . Next.

x One of the best porn flicks I ever saw was filmed in Missoula, Montana. Heatstroke with Richard Locke.

j I met him one day! On Castro. And I told him, I said, "I enjoy your movies," I said, "so much."

He says, "I enjoy makin' 'em, too. Thank you."

I thought it was nice. Because they don't have to speak to people, I guess.

x They don't have any stars like him anymore.

j No.

x Hot man.

j What was it L.A. Trucking?

x Heatstroke. I'll lend it to you.

j No no. L.A. Tool and Dye.

x It was Kansas City Trucking. And El Paso something.

j El Paso Wrecking Company.

x Right. And Heatstroke takes place in Missoula, Montana.

j Really.

x I'll lend it to you sometime if you want to borrow it.

j [laughs]

x It's a great movie.

j Ahhhhhhh! I just watched Jim Bentley in New Zealand Under Cover.

x Yeah. That's not a very good one.

j You've seen it? Oh, I said, "Please! What is this? Get on with it.  
. . .!"

x The Miami Club in El Cerrito?

j OK. I gave you stuff about Alan Terry?

x No.

j Well, he was the MC. 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. But he was a hairdresser. And during the night he was the MC of the show. Had a lovely voice. Male singing voice. And was very meticulous about how he looked before he left the dressing room. But, the unfortunate thing was, he drank. And he'd get through the show, and by the time he'd get his make-up off, he would be so drunk that he would forget he was driving us to and from the club in El Cerrito. And he would leave without us. We would say, "Alan, I'm ready. . . ."

"No. He's gone. He left a little while ago!" the cook would say. "I'll drive you over."

x You were probably better off.

j Yes. We were better off. But the thing was we were stranded and had to impose on these people. Luckily, they saw the problem and they didn't squirm -- like "You faggots will have to take care of yourself. We can't be driving you back and forth." No. No. They were nice to us. And we would talk to Terry. He would completely have forgot the next day. "Oh, did I do that again? I'm sorry." But other than that, it was a fun club.

x He MC'd in drag?

j Yeah.

x And you were there with Ricki San Juan?

j Yeah. But the customers didn't come in that much before the show started. They'd have a singer. They had a band you could dance to. And they would come in -- just like the neighborhood crowd. But when the queens came in, they had flyers out, they had tongues wagging, and there was people coming in to see the faggots. Because, as they say, it is a gimmick when you put a man in a dress and find him entertaining. [looking out window, across the street] Is

that a garage sale? Or are they just moving.

x That is, basically, a used furniture business that runs pretty much all the time over there on the sidewalk.

j Then I'll have to check it out before I go back to see if there's any fabulous bargains.

x Weekends is when they line up the whole thing.

j Just was I need. . . ! Anyway, let's see.

x The Miami Club. And tell me more about Ricki San Juan and that revue.

j Vulture Mary.

x What does Vulture Mary have to do with Ricki San Juan?

j Flying Fingers. I mean it's [making grab for other person's crotch] "Hello! How are you?"

x Ricki?

j Yes.

x Oh, OK.

j So. I mean, fine if you dug it! Fine if you dug it. But I mean if you didn't, you could get your face bashed in. And a bad reputation for not only you, all four or whatever amount of queens were in the show. So, a few drinks and the fingers would be flying. Now, I'm not a prude. But I believe there's a time and place for everything. I should speak not like this because there was something in New Orleans where a man got very anxious to be taken care of before he left the state or wherever he was leaving and "Oh, won't you please help me out?" And so, underneath the table cloth, Miss Phillips worked his. . . !

And I said, "Well, thank goodness, no one saw me jacking him off."

And this queen said, "Yes, no one saw you except the leader of the band was watching you the whole time."

The band was behind me and I'm not watching for the band. I'm watching customers, and I completely forgot about the band. And the piano player said, "Yes. That was very ladylike!"

He wasn't putting me down, but he just said, "That was very ladylike."

And I just broke up. But the guy was gorgeous! And he was "Oh, please! Oh, I just. . . !" And he had a lovely hardon and everything, and he came and that was it. But Miss Elegance here just "Ohhhhh, I'm too good to do that!" No, she's not! She's just as low as all the rest of the faggots. But it was my first and last. I didn't make a habit of it. But some queens, I mean, they were just like. . . they played like it looked like hopscotch. If you sat at a table while watching queens, Jean LaMar and Ricki San Juan looked like they were playing hopscotch at tables. They were there for two seconds total and got the B-drink and flew. They kept score with matches. I kept score with bracelets -- I take one of this and put it on this one [right wrist to left wrist]. If I had five bracelets, oh, I was lucky.

x Was Ricki San Juan in New Orleans with you?

j Yes.

x And LaMar. . . who was the other person?

j           Jean LaMar. She. . . he was a Cuban queen and . . . .

x           And he was in New Orleans with you also?

j           She lived there. She was bi-sexual. She had a wife and she had a lover. But the thing was, she had a voice that was gorgeous. She sang [sings]

              "You won't admit you love me and so  
              how am I ever 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 the bridge or something and [sings high note] "Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!" -- hold this high, lovely note and then [low, bass speaking voice] "You didn't think I could do it, did you, Lady?" The audience would break up and then she'd go back into this high note and then the song. [Bass voice] "You didn't think I had it in me, did you?" I mean these are crazy things queens did because it made people laugh.

x           And you only knew her in New Orleans?

j           No, she came here to San Francisco. The Finnochio's travelled. . . used to travel, and they were in New Orleans and saw Jean and they said, "Come to San Francisco when you're through with your contract or whatever it is you do down here." And so she came to San Francisco and she was quite a . . . stir up there. New Latin blood! With the old San Francisco tigers! And oooooohhh! Much, much friction I heard.

x           This was not while you were there [at Finnochio's]?

j           No. Much friction with this new Spanish blood.

x           This was before you went to Finnochio's?

j           Years before. Because the old ones, as I say, resented any new blood coming in because that would push them out because there was somebody in with more talent. So there was a lot of shit flying around when Jean was there. But Jean, like so many queens, Jean just liked to get in drag, do her show, and that was it. Not. . . not. . . not cause a lot of friction and everything. So she went back to New Orleans after that.

x           The Miami Club.

j           No. no. Jean. Jean. There was one queen came from New Orleans and she was gorgeous. . . .

x           This queen from New Orleans. Is this about the same time that Jean LaMar was here?

j           No. I think it was after. But she was gorgeous and she had a speech impediment. She stuttered. When she talked to you. Hu. . . Hu. . . Hullo. But when she sang, you wouldn't. . . . I don't know how they do it, but Tillis does it.

x           Yes. I knew a stutterer in college who could sing beautifully but he could barely talk.

j           And this was the way this queen was. And she came from New Orleans and she said, "I'm not happy here."

And they said, "Why?"  
And she said, "Because I miss my lover."  
She said, "We'll send for him"  
Mrs. Finnochio sent for the lover. They made him a waiter, and she said,  
"I'm still not happy. I want to go back." So she went and the lover went back,  
too.

x           That was nice of Mrs. Finnochio.

j           Yeah because there's something about working conditions. . . now, if  
you're not happy, you should move to another section of the office or something.  
A lot of queens didn't do this. And I said, "No. No. No. No. I will not MC!"

          "Well, then you're through!"  
I said, "OK. I'm through." But if I was to MC, I would have been a  
nervous wreck! And why make yourself a nervous wreck and try and do a good show?  
When you're insane? No! 'Cause I did it for nine days. And I said, "No. No."

x           And you'd done it all for seventeen years!

j           And the thing was, if you're gonna be an MC, you have to train your  
whole self to. . . lights and announcements and heavy, heavy, heavy set routine.  
I didn't want that. I wanted to be free when I was on the floor. And that's  
exactly what I was. I told what jokes I wanted. And. . . wear what I wanted.  
And they never said anything. But then when they wanted me to MC and I said,  
"No. No. No." They said, "We can't have anybody ricocheting against us!" So,  
I said, "OK. Fine!"

x           It was their loss, Jackie.

j           But. . . it's their loss, but it just makes me mad to think that  
people can't say, "This queen ain't bothering anybody. She's a fair MC but she's  
gonna be a nervous wreck. No. Let's not do this to her. Let's find another."  
No! "You're gonna do it -- or else!" And this authority figure. Un-uh.  
Bullshit! So you used your authority and you got rid of an act. Did you get  
something to replace me? They've been going downhill for years now! But that's  
neither here nor there. Stop when you want to.

x           You want to stop at this point?

j           Sure. Do you?

x           Sure.

j           OK

x It's Wednesday, April 6th, and I'm here with Jackie once more, and he's telling me about meeting an old friend who's in the city from New York.

j Wrong! Not New York. Chicago. Anyway, it's Tony Midnight. You asked me how we met. Now, this is strange because years ago, when I was doing my jumping around from department store to department store, stock work, I ended up at Southern Pacific, applying for a job, and I got one -- so it was carrying typewriters around from office to office where they had to go. So this one morning I got in the elevator and I said the floor I was going to and this voice said, "Hello."

I said, "Hello."

"What's your name?"

I said, "Billy. What's yours?"

"Tony."

And so that was Tony Midnight running the elevator.

x Is that his real name, Tony Midnight?

j No. Murdoch. 'Cause when I went to the hotel to ask for him, I said, "Midnight doesn't sound like someone's name." But I had to say it anyway because he didn't tell me. So I said, "Tony Midnight."

"No. We have no listing."

So I said, "Well, he told me to meet him here in the lobby."

He says, "You're sure he's staying here in this hotel?"

I said, "Yes!" With a big question mark above my head. And so I turned around and looked for a place to sit and here comes out of the elevator Tony Midnight. Now I haven't seen him since 16 B.C. -- and he had black hair, he was thin, he was tall. And now this gray haired, husky man comes out of the elevator looking very distinguished and breaks out in a smile when he sees me. I'm thinking, well, good, he recognizes me! But he had sent me a picture and when I compared the memory to what I was seeing, I said, 'Yes!'

So, anyway, he said, "Hi!"

I said, "I didn't know what to ask for."

He said, "Murdoch. I forgot to tell you."

I said, "Well, I asked for Midnight, and they said you weren't here."

He said, "Let's go outside."

So we went out and started walking. We went through China Town and looked at all the windows, and he loves beads 'cause he makes gowns and stuff, so he likes colored beads. And sequins and all that stuff intrigues him. So we were looking at all the beads and I was ou-ing and ah-ing and saying, "Good thing I don't do drag anymore, otherwise I'd be in here buying all this shit." So one thing led to the other, and we finally found, I think it was Washington Street -- isn't that the one before Pacific? It was Washington Street and I looked and here it says, "Wooley, Looey and Gooey." I think it's Gooey -- but anyway it's downstairs, these old stairs and this big, like a basement, but it was all different from the time we went there [he'd told me earlier they ate at a place the used to go to years ago] because it was booths then, and we went over and sat down and I told him to order because I said, "I don't know what I want." So he ordered and I came back from the bathroom and he said, "I don't know if he understood me or not. I said, 'Hot mustard' and this and that."

And I said, "OK."

So the food came and it was delicious. We ate and walked back down Stockton Street and through the tunnel. There was no sense in talking -- not in the tunnel. So anyway, we got to Sutter, went up Sutter to the hotel where we had the drink [Marguerita's] and then we went up to the room and he showed me a picture of him in drag -- and he was elegant, every hair was in place and the make-up was just right and he made all his own gowns and he wore nothing but sequins. Beautiful work! And then he showed me a picture -- I can't tell you



the year -- but it was when they all worked for "The Jewel Box." Which was a big revue that travelled throughout the United States. And he's on a pedestal with his arms upstretched and all this like bat material -- looked like a bat costume -- of solid sequins [hanging down from his arms]. He's on top of this pedestal and then there's chorus boys in drag leading down the thing and then over on the left, he said, "This is Tommy Baker and this is Harvey Lee." Well, you couldn't distinguish who they were but, anyway, he told me himself. It had to be because they both worked for the revue.

x Who were Tommy Baker and Harvey Lee?

j Tommy Baker lives over on Polk Street with my friend, Harold, in the same building. Harold that you met. And Harvey Lee was known as "The Male Alice Faye" years ago. Beautiful! And one of the most -- out of five, I would say -- meticulous queens I've ever met as far as make-up goes and every hair, every brush, comb, scissors, eye-lash tweezers, shoes, gloves, every thing was in order, in plastic bags and everything so it wouldn't get soiled, because when he walked on the floor he looked like a safety pin. Absolutely gorgeous! And very precise. Didn't stutter. He talked fluently. And incessantly! Because when I first heard him, I was in my dressing room at Finnochio's, and he came up to visit somebody or see the show or something -- he was always going to shows -- and his hangup was drag. Everything he collected was of drag. Memorabilia. Pictures. And all that stuff. Because he was going to write a book someday. But he didn't want anything else. He gave me his whole porno collection which was, oh, album after album after album. And I said, "Well, why?"

And he said, "I don't want it anymore."

So I grabbed everything I got, and he was in the hallway talking, and I was making up, and I said, "Whoever that queen is out there. . . ." I said this to Russell Reed. I said, "Whoever the queen is out there," I said, "has gotten too many pills!" I said, "Her mouth is going like a Roto-Rooter!"

And, anyway, she said, "Oh, that's Harvey Lee. You've never met her."

I said, "No." So I told Harvey. I said, "When I first heard your voice," I said, "I swore you were on pills."

She said, "No no no no."

She was very, very vivacious and the brain must have been going thousands of miles a minute because she was another one with an elephant's brain. Could remember dates and names and what she wore and who was there and what club it was and what street it was on and all the data that you need to write a book. All sorts of information like that. And she was very, very good at it. But after the earthquake, the big one [in 1989] here, she panicked and flew to her sister's in Oklahoma.

x That's where she is now?

j No, she passed away. She was at her sister's house. And just a couple of years ago she passed away. Had a stroke, I think it was. Just a marvelous queen. And knew everybody! And worked everywhere and just a mountain of information. And had tons and tons of wardrobe. She used to have garage sales after she got out of drag. She used to have garage sales and got rid of a lot of stuff.

x Did either one of these ever perform at Finnochio's while you were there?

j Harvey was the MC for awhile there. And Tommy Baker worked there, but I think he worked there when I was there but I'm not sure. I'm doubtful about that.

x Continue the story of how you met Tony Midnight in the elevator.

j            That was it! And then I left for some unknown reason [with an impish expression on his face], and we lost contact. And he seen me years later in drag and there was no connection with "Jackie Phillips" and this elevator operator, but he said, "The minute I saw you smile," he said, "I knew who you were." He said, "I remembered you as that little messenger in the elevator."

I said, "Oh, well. . . !"

But I forget what club he said it was at. I can write him and ask him. But he runs a bookshop now in Chicago. Porno. So I must write him and send him a lot of beads!

x            Good for him. He still makes costumes?

j            Yea. For different queens that keep in touch with him, I guess. But he said that he has tons of material and beads and stuff like that.

x            Was he here on business or . . . .

j            No. Just a vacation. He wanted to come out and say hello. So he saw me, but the night before he say LaVerne, the one that works at The Emporium. And they went to dinner and then he saw me and we went to lunch. And then he mentioned. . . Tommy Baker's name came up somewhere and he mentioned, "Is he still around?"

And I said, "Yeah. He lives here in The City."

He didn't know this. So he said, "Can I have his phone number?"

And I said, "I'll give it to you when I get home." So I gave it to him. I called him and gave him the number and then I called Harold, asked if he, if Tommy mentioned that he got in touch and he said, "I haven't seen Tommy."

So I called Tommy and Tommy said, "Yes! We're going to meet tomorrow."

So I heard that they met and had an hour-long dish, because they had lots of memories from the tour, from "The Jewel Box Revue." OK. That's the deal on Tony. But I didn't work with him. He worked San Jose, too. But he worked at different times at The Colonial Club than I worked there. OK.

x            OK. Two things. I'll ask you the first question early on so you can get upset and. . . you may have told me this already: how did you meet Carroll Wallace? She's such a big part of a part of you life.

j            He came to Brisbane.

x            The Forty-Seven Club?

j            Yeah.

x            And you were there with Ricki San Juan's show.

j            While we were working there. And he wanted me to go to Alaska with him.

x            OK. And you said you wouldn't go unless he took everybody.

j            No no no! I said, "I don't want to go." And I said, "I'm enjoying my life, my work here with these kids."

And he said, "Well, what if I took them?"

I said, "Probably. All right!" And then I went. Ohhhh! But I did see Alaska, Hawaii, and all the northern states.

x            You certainly did.

j            But, I mean, up until the. . . the treachery, it was fun and I could

get along, but I didn't realize that I was being . . . scraped like a razor blade. Tons of skin taken off and not feeling it! But the thing that hurt was, he admitted it to our face. Oh, of course, yes, I made lots of money on you guys! You know. And, of course, he was buying apartment houses and everything and sending the money home that he was making of us. But that wasn't kosher. You didn't have to do that, you know. If you're pulling someone's balls off, don't tell him it gonna hurt. And the other thing was. . . which I overlooked all that. . . but the other thing I never could and never will overlook is turning my volume down on my work! And I can't find the fucking tape! Which would prove. . . . And I said, "What is this jump in sound?" Somebody said, casually they said, "Sounds like the volume was turned up." And then it registered! Carroll Wallace was singing, and I'd seen him do this to other acts. They said, "Leave my volume alone." And all of a sudden it dawned on me why I wasn't going over. And this. . . this. . . ! Luckily, I wasn't around the man when I found this out. Because it just flares me up. I can get over a lot of things, but I don't like that! I don't like somebody to do that. I don't mind talking about it.

x I can appreciate that.

j That's my living! I don't mind you fucking me up with the money you're making off me and all that stuff, but this was my home -- Finnochio's -- and I wasn't bothering nobody! You know. But but but -- let's start the day off with a fun time!

x OK. I've got a new list -- adding the clubs that you gave me last time. I'm gonna give you a copy of it and, I know you say you don't remember a lot of it, but if, sometime, will you just look at this and if you can say, "Gee, I acted in Eureka before I went to Long Beach." Or something like that.

j OK. Fine.

x If you think of any order here.

j Because, like the other day, I was saying, "My God. Montana. Montana." There was something about 'Visit Montana' on the TV. Pushing Montana. And I said, "Missoula was in Montana!" So I said, "I better write that down." So I had to tell you that.

x I think I've got all the ones you've mentioned here. And, you know, if you think of anything else, or you think "I was here before I was here," that would help somewhat. And what I'd like to do today. . . . I want you to know that when I was typing last. . . .

j I've hit a lot of places, you know that.

x You sure did!

j [counts to 26]

x You got around.

j It was fun. Oh, I was thinking. I got a letter from this old time . . . I don't know whether she was a stripper or not, but her name was Dagmar. Did you ever hear of her?

x I remember Stephen and I talked about this 'cause I thought you were talking about. . . .

j Oh, it was you.

x . . . about the big blonde.

j She said, "Since you're going to write your memoirs," she said, "get a good title for it." And she told me and I wrote 'em down and I left it home.

x She wasn't the Dagmar I remember. I was thinking of the Dagmar that was on Jerry Lester's "Broadway Open House" years and years and years ago. Remember the big blonde with the big tits?

j No. But probably if I saw her I would.

x Stephen and I thought it might be the same Dagmar, but it turned out to be a different Dagmar. I want you to know when I was transcribing last week's tape, I laughed out loud several times. I don't know whether you were funnier last week, but I just had the best time typing last week's tape.

j [little boy voice] Don't say that.

x Why?

j Because that makes me have to do something crazy next week.

x No, you don't have to do anything crazy. I just want you to know that I thoroughly enjoy it. I just sat there giggling as I was typing.

j This is important to me because, as I've told you, when I'm home my mind is a complete blank. I don't think of nothing. I don't want to do anything. And Tony was there the other day and I said, "Get everything ready so he will be impressed with you spraying and weeding and all this shit." And I said, "I don't know whether you're going insane or not, but you're helping yourself by not smoking." This is the second week.

x Good for you! I was going to call and ask how you were doing.

j And I'm a wreck! But I keeping saying to myself, "Now, if you don't feel like cleaning house and you just throw it out of your mind like that and it doesn't bother you, throw smoking out the same way.

x It'll happen.

j Oh, I know it'll happen. Tony says, "You just can't think about 'em. If you do, just do something else."

x Good for you. That's ten days!

j I know. I know when. . . when the urges hit me because it was after I eat or in the morning after I have my coffee.

x It was hardest for me with a cup of coffee. I used to love my cigarette with a cup of coffee.

j When I went to Burger King the other day, I stopped in to have a hamburger and after the hamburger, then I have a cigarette with my coffee, and I said, "Just sit here and forget about it!" And, so I'm glad I'm fightin' that because that's a lot of energy being directed in a good cause.

x And you're saving a lot of money.

j You know that too. What is it, seventeen dollars a week.

x            Good for you.

j            I'm pleased with it. Yes, I will check this [list of places worked] over and when I find something. . . .

x            And what I'd like to do it continue what we were doing -- just talking about these clubs, the way they appear here, and having you tell me everything you remember about 'em because that's the information. . . .

j            Do you have one in particular you want to ask?

x            Well, we were talking about The Miami Club last time. You were talking about Terry Alan or Alan Terry. . . .

j            Alan Terry.

x            . . . and the fact that he would get so drunk he'd forget to take you home. And if there's anything else about The Miami Club before we go on to another one.

j            Isn't there a naval base over there.

x            In El Cerrito?

j            No. On that side of the Bay.

x            There's Alameda Naval Air Station.

j            OK. It was. . . they had access to El Cerrito. Which they used to come into the club. Well, there was a table of four or six, a booth of four or six one night, and however it happened, it was rememberable, but I was asked to sit down or join 'em or something, and I had a habit of checking faces, picking out which is the cutest and finding the flaw to turn me off and finding something else about someone. Anyway there was this one that was sitting there. His name was Lenny Bergeron. And he turned every which way you could possibly turn while he was talking to somebody and I couldn't find no flaws! Then I made up my mind, I said, "Who does he look like?" He's a combination: Guy Madison and Burt Lancaster. The masculinity and the beauty! Ohhhhhhhh! Well, the rockets started flying and I said, "Oh, dear! Forget it! No!" It seems that Lenny was very aware of being admired by looks and stuff, so he played his cards right and I fell over the cliff. I said, "Well, here we go. Anything this table wants, put on my bill!" And that got me in a good sitting with all of his buddies, you know. As long as they like me, he could like me and it wouldn't matter, they liked me, too. I played my cards right and was sunk hook line and sinker, but the thing was, I took him and put him on a pedestal. OK. He saw that he could have anything he wanted or do anything he wanted. And that was fine. There was this block from his father that said, "No man should another man." So he had this and there was no kissing, just the sex part which was. . . dull.

x            But he was beautiful?

j            Oh, he was beautiful! Absolutely! And shorter than me which I have a phobia [misuse of word -- he loves short men] of falling for short men. And anyway, he was gonna lose his little car. I said, "What's wrong?"

          He said, "I owe \$100."

          I said, "Here. Now you can keep it."

          He said, "Sorry I'm late but I didn't have a watch."

          I said, "Here. Don't worry about it."

          He said, "I want some pictures of you."

          I gave him a camera full of film. I said, "Take this. Have somebody take

the whole roll of you at the base, and bring it back to me and I'll have it developed." Never saw him, or the camera, or the film again in my life. So I don't have a picture of this beauty. And it makes me sick. The thing is, years later, when I was working a Finnochio's, he came up, saw the show, was waiting for me outside, and he was pissy-assed drunk and I said, "Do I still feel the same way?" And there was no feeling there for this man. And I said, "Well, come home and stay at my house." And I sneaked him in the house, but I had taken the hose and I sprayed it all over his face to get him sober so I could get him in the house without falling down and everything 'cause I still lived with my aunt. Now, this is really risking it for a man. Desperate Doris here. I said, "Oh, hell, I'm still in love with him!" Anyway. . . the next morning, I was awoken by him shaking my pill bottle to get a couple of pills so he could get hisself sober enough to go back to the base which woke me up. Now, I did not check anything. But a watch of mine was gone. An identification bracelet and a watch on great big gold links. This gigolo bought me years ago that I met and he was just beautiful and he say that I was in love. . . that I liked him, and he said, "No, I appreciate your liking me but I can't commit myself to you. I have a commitment to women." He was a hustler for women, a gigolo. Anyway, he bought me this watch because he liked me. And I just had it laying on. . . somewhere around and it was gone when Lenny left. So. . . I said nothing. Didn't notice it until after he was gone. And a couple of weeks later he comes back and knocks on my door and he says, "Oh, you aren't going to invite me in?"

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

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

Knowing, knowing I didn't say anything about it! Knowing he had taken it and that was on his conscience! So he committed hisself right there. And it was a sad thing because he coulda had. . . he coulda had the fucking bank as far as I'm concerned, you know. I can't stand petty theft. If you want to steal something, take the whole fuckin' place and disappear. But. . . no. So I'm sort of disappointed with people. You can see what I am: Goodhearted Gloria. But don't. . . don't fuck with me. Because then you don't get nothing. You might get a watch, but that's it. Though you coulda had the whole lot. All right.

x Now, you've told me a lot about The Colonial Inn, but is there anything else you can remember.

j I told you about walking on the roof?

x Yes.

j And the fire?

x Yes. And about "Abba dabba. . . ."

j [sings] Abba dabba honeymoon. . . .

x Tell me more about the fire. I know you pulled somebody out, but tell me that story again.

j It started in. . . . Kitty Carlisle was the colored dancer, and it started in his dressing. . . her dressing room which was next to the bandstand and it was just a curtain covering it. There was no door or nothing, just a curtain. And there was this big, what are they, 150 fat lightbulbs. . . over one of the shelves and on the shelf was Kitty Carlisle's head-dress. All these big pheasant feathers. . . head-dress. She was a campy little dancer. And the lightbulb, they surmised, had exploded, busted, because it had probably got too hot, over this feather head-dress and it got a good start with no 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 air and it went, the flame just came out and just chewed up this asbestos ceiling over the stage, and you didn't

have a chance to get into that dressing room anyway. And then I was across the club in the dressing room on the front of the club. They had windows all in the front of the club, then the doorway, and then windows on the other side. And Vicki San Juan and I dressed together and she said, "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 boy's clothes, skirts -- oh God, I had gorgeous skirts! Jewelry. Wigs. Shoes. Everything! Just walked out. Blank mind. Not letting. . . not panicking that this fire is chewing up your. . . not realizing. And that was it. We just walked across the street and sat there.

x                   What about saving the manager?

j                   Oh, that was the drummer. He says, "Come on!"  
When we got outside, he says, "Where's Dominick?"  
I said, "I don't know."  
He says, "He's probably still in his office." He says, "Come on!" And he says, "If you ever did anything butch, do it now!"  
And the back door to the office was locked from the inside. And so he said, "Help me break it down."

So I just picked up one. . . my skirt and kicked up the leg and rammed it through this panel, broke the panel. He 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." 'Cause she always wore high heels, straps and everything. And they were gorgeous. . . black suede. And that was the shoe story and that was to help him get out. And we got Dominick. He was. . . oh, his face was black! And we pulled him out. And 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.

x                   Did it burn right to the ground?

j                   No! No, they got some of it. . . most of it put out. And so we left. Went home to our hotel. No nothing. No identification. No shoes. No clothes. We went home in drag. I. . . I don't remember. As I say, these blank-out moods. I have this tendency to forget weird things. Put 'em out of my mind. And that was one of 'em. But. . . the club caught again. . . after that night. It caught again early in the morning or something and the rest of it went.

x                   Oh, so they didn't get it completely out.

j                   No, they didn't. And, I guess. . . "Well, we got it done!" I guess it should have stayed out. But, anyway, it started up again and went. Everything!

x                   So, did they rebuild it or was that the end of . . . .

j                   [interrupts] No. No. They said if they ever rebuilt, he said, "You'll be the first. . . . Who worked here the last, the night of the fire, will be in the opening if we ever build again." But they never did. And I told you about when he was paying us: "I'm-a not take out-a your bar bill or your food this-a week!"

x                   After the fire?

j                   After the fire. Big deal! You know, here we are out of everything.

x                   So you never got reimbursed for your wardrobe or anything?

j No. . . .

x So what did you do then? Come back to San Francisco?

j Somebody said. . . after the fire, we went to . . . aaaah. . . Castle Inn.

x In San Jose.

j Yeah. That was after. . . in San Jose. But I thought we had gone to New Orleans.

x So The Castle Inn is after The Colonial Inn. OK.

j And after that, Harold said we went to New Orleans.

x So The Silver Dollar and The Redwood Inn and the Casanova Club are after New Orleans. . . or were they before The Colonial Club burned down?

j . . . The Silver Dollar in Sacramento, I think, was going at the same time The Colonial was going. So it was jumping around from place to place. So I can't say whether it was after. I think it was during. Now, that's it. When you get Harold, you can mention these dates of clubs because he knows. He remembers the dates and years and stuff.

x Let's set that up sometime soon.

j Well, you give me a date and then I'll tell him. He's supposed to come over to visit. . . .

x What about next Wednesday?

j He's supposed to come over to visit the bartender again [at Uncle Amos on 18th Street].

x Today?

j No! No no no no no! Not today! Today is shot! I have **you** today.

x Well, I thought maybe he was coming over today.

j No no no. I try not to make dates. . . . That day [last time Harold came over] I had three. You! Him! And church! So that was a very busy day. One in a day! Once a day!

x Do you want to try to get together with Harold next Wednesday?

j Fine. I can call him tonight. Give me your number. I can't find where I put things. . . . I want to call you, and I say, "What. . . what. . . what. . . ?" Anyway, I forget what time I'm supposed to be here today. I said, "Is it eleven? Am I early? Am I late? What?" OK.

x And, if necessary, we can go to his place. If it's hard from him to get around.

j When he comes over here, he visits Marlowe [the bartender], so that's it. Now, if he wants to come with me, all we have to do is go to the corner, we get on the bus and we can go up the hill and to my place. It's all flat. But this. . . it's up to him.



x OK. And if you can't set it up for next week, we'll set it up sometime. But it would be helpful if he could. . . .

j Now, when did you say you're. . . the last two weeks in this month?

x The last week in this month I'll be in Hawaii.

j What's that?

x Between the 22nd and the 30th.

j [writing on piece of scrap paper] Gone twenty-two through thirty. OK. Now, I'll see what I can arrange for next week. . .

x That'll be fun.

j Because, as I say, I just know certain things. Dates are not important to me.

x That's OK.

j He's got this brain like an elephant. He says, "No! That movie came out in 1923!" And tell me who's in it and all that.

x Tell me about The Castle Inn.

j That I worked there with Tommy Baker. It was like a long bar and this little section cut out and set back and the three-piece band was in it, and then you played to the bar and the few tables here. And it was just like a neighborhood bar on, I think, it was on the main drag. I'm not sure. He knows. Harold knows the street it was on. And, as I say, it was a week or two weeks or whatever it was, contract-wise. And they, I guess they figured if they kept shifting the queens around week after week, people wouldn't get bored and drop off 'cause, as long as the queens are in their club, there's always customers!

x So it was generally always a drag bar, then, but just with different queens. . . .

j Yeah. Tho' it wasn't a Gay bar.

x Right.

j It was for drag which was their gimmick. To get customers. And there was queens that came there, but they just. . . it wasn't like **dancing** and **everybody wear make-up -- the queens won't mind!** No no no. 'Cause it was a lot of breaking of straight territory. And, of course, all we wanted to do was put on the dresses and play dress-up. . . .

x And get paid for it.

j Yes! And there was never any fear of going against the law or doing something wrong. It was just fun-sies for us -- that we didn't look at background problem, people were putting up a petition -- "We have to have those queens out of that bar!" I don't know. But there was never any trouble. They just told us: "Behave yourself when you work here." And so we did. It was fun.

x So did anything special happen when you worked The Castle Inn? Do you remember anything?

j [laughs] Not a thing!

x Did you work there more than once?

j [ignores question] No. Not a thing!

x Come on, Jackie. Tell me.

j No no no no no no. This is one of the taboos I'm keeping to myself. . . . I'll tell you. Off the record but not on the record. No. . . . No no no.

x OK. I'm gonna turn this off so you'll tell me.

[Machine off]

x OK. We're back. OK. The Silver Dollar in Sacramento.

j Oh, that! That was a fun club, too.

x How did you get there?

j Club owners know this queen that's working for them. She's gonna leave. He says, "Who can I hire to replace you?" They say, "Jackie's not working. He lives here. I'll get in touch." "Send him. Blah. Blah. Blah." And it was all done by word of mouth.

x So you didn't even have to audition?

j Never. . . never audition because they took the queen's word for it. Yeah. So that was one of the finest things about drag that I know. You could go into a club without having an audition. Not having. . . it was like being censored. You didn't get censored before you were. . . .

x So it was a whole network. . . ?

j Yeah, it was a 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! And it's a great club" or whatever. So that's probably how I got in Sacramento. Besides, Ray Saunders was there and being that she was the first queen I met in drag . . . when I first came out in '43, she said, "Now that you're doing drag, you can come here and go there." And she recommended me or took me with her, probably, when she was up there. But there was Russell Reed and her and I again! Up at Sacramento. And while I was there, all this time now, these are the early years, all this time I'm improving. . . with the make-up, with the wig, with the jewelry, and all this act and everything. And I said -- since this is another club we could mix [with customers] -- I wanna look the opposite of what I wear on the floor. So I went to this -- it was like a Lerner's here, or Grayson's here -- a woman's store. It was like one of those stores up in Sacramento. And I looked in the window and here's this mannequin in a white linen suit and a blue turtle neck and a great big medallion. And I said, "There I am! There I am!" I went in and bought the suit for me, whatever size it was. Eighteen's the largest, I guess. But anyway, I got this white suit, blue turtle neck sweater, and I had medallions anyway. So that night, I had the Joan Crawford feather hair-do, feather cut and my white suit and my turtle neck and between shows, and so I says, "There's nothing here. I'm going in the doorway and get some air." So I'm standing in the front doorway, smoking. And this car goes by and honks! And so I wave, thinking "that's what one stupid person would do when somebody honks" -- they'd wave. Well, it's not anybody I know. It's somebody cruising for women. So he comes back and I'm not there. So he figured I went into the bar since I was standing in the doorway. He comes in and sees me at the bar and comes over and buys me

a drink and starts a conversation. And I'm just being normal, not high-voice or nothing. And I said, [in a soft voice] "You'll have to excuse me." I said, "I have to go do the show."

He said, "Oh. You're in the show?"

I said, "Yes."

And he probably wasn't ever there before and, thinking 'the show,' and I'm a girl and it was gonna be a girl's show and when I came back and sat down, he said, "I didn't see you."

I said, "You didn't see me?"

He said, "No. I didn't see you."

He was expecting what he was looking at while I'm mixing.

And I said, "I was the redhead. With the plaid shirt and the beads and the huaraches."

He said, "Oh. You're a boy?"

I said, "Yes. I'm a boy. I'm sorry if you didn't know."

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

x           What a compliment!

j           **Of course!** My head is almost falling over the back of the bar. But this man doesn't get insulted because I wasn't trying to lead him on. It was just: "You want a drink?" "OK. Fine." So we're talking. I'm having a beer, probably. But he was so intrigued and amazed and flabbergasted that he didn't get upset. But he was just nice. And he came back several times and talked to me. But never. . . never cruised. He just liked the idea that I was a girl and he could talk to me . . . and underneath it, I was a boy. But it was just fun-sies.

x           What did the women in the dress shop. . . how did they react. . . .

j           Could not possibly tell you. Could not. Because, as it is, you didn't pay too much attention to what a woman thought. Now, if she would have said something: What are you ordering this for or What do you want to try this on for? Your excuse was "I'm going to a party." And that covered it. . . the whole multitude of sins. He's going in costume as a girl. So it wasn't necessarily a queer thing. But, I mean, that's the way you did everything. "I'm going to a costume ball. I need some make-up and wigs and all this and everything." I mean, nowadays, you go to the Good Will just before Halloween and you turn around and here is six feet of masculinity in a negligee or a silk beaded dress or whatever and "Do you think it fits? Do you think it'll work?" And on top of it, a beard! Now this is all. . . you just look at it and just go on your way because you know they're just a bunch of queens getting in drag for Halloween. And the cheapest thing to do is go to the Good Will and get it.

x           That's all you want to tell me about The Silver Dollar.

j           That's all I can remember. Except. . . that's where Tommy Baker and I worked, also, and I was trying to get dressed and I said, "Tommy. Would you do me a favor and zip me up."

She said, "This once! If you cannot zip it, do not wear it!" And so she showed me -- you tie a string to the zipper and throw the string over your shoulder and [struggling] and pull the string and that zips you. You. Not imposing on anybody else. So that was "if you can't zip it, don't wear it." There are little things like that kind. And don't borrow. **Never!**

"Can I borrow your lipstick?"

No no. 'Cause once you do that, it becomes a habit. If you're not there at the time 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 'cause it was like a cold cream and you put it on with a brush and you didn't put straws

or cigarettes or touch it or lick your lips or nothing! 'Cause it came right off! But you had gorgeous red lips. So you put it on before you went on the stage or before you went to mix. Mine was always off. My lips were **always** out of lipstick. Because after so many pills, 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. . . cherry -- Mehron lipstick and it came in a tube, a little jar about the size of a salve jar, about the size of fifty cent piece and it was about an inch deep. Now it was theatrical lipstick. You didn't put a tube on because you didn't get it off at two o'clock and it was just taboo. But this was just for drag.

x                   What was the brand name?

j                   Mehron. Or was it Mah. . . Marhron. Meh or Mah -- ron. And then they had the pancake -- was Max Factor's.

x                   Was that street make-up you used. . .

j                   No no no.

x                   . . . or did you actually use theatrical grease paint?

j                   You put . . . you got a close shave, closed up all your pores with alcohol, then you put Max Factor's grease paint on, down the neck, up to the hairline and put powder on that and then, if. . . . [end]