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 2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC
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 6 Interview with Greg Cruikshank
 7 Date of Birth: 1953
 8 By Interviewer: Paul Gabriel
 9 Date: 8/22/97
 10 GLHS OHP 97-33, Shedding A Straight Jacket
 11 Videotape 1 of 1, 00 minutes
 12 PG: Okay, tell me about this table.
 13 GC: In the early '60s, there was an area where
 14 Japantown now is on Sutter Street, and before they
 15 built it as Japantown, it was a lot of really
 16 beautiful old Victorian houses, and they were
 17 abandoned because the Bureau of Redevelopment bought
 18 the land and they let the houses sit until they were
 19 ready to develop Japantown. But a lot of people had
 20 sort of taken up residence in these abandoned houses
 21 'cause they were available. And this table was made
 22 from a floor from one of those, 'cause we, there was a
 23 lot of pillaging because these places were going to be
 24 destroyed, so there was a lot of, you know, fine wood
 25 and extruded banisters and stuff that, I guess, got

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1 an old Victorian and sort of had the group living
 2 experience there in the early '70s. I think we lived
 3 on Oak Street from '71 through '78.
 4 PG: Long time.
 5 GC: Yeah, and that the group itself was together for,
 6 well, at least during that duration. There was a core
 7 group of people that lived in the house and also did
 8 the work, the theatrical work. And there was also
 9 child rearing involved that it wasn't a specifically
 10 household. There were a lot, you know, a majority of
 11 the people involved in the theater were gay, but there
 12 were women involved too, and heterosexual men who had
 13 children. So the children were part of the household
 14 and the whole thing was really like 24, 7 living and
 15 breathing, making theater, which is where I met
 16 Adrian. Adrian got involved with our group.
 17 PG: Did he live in a commune?
 18 GC: Never did, no. But he did contribute to it and
 19 contributed to the shows specifically. And that group
 20 kind of grew out of the energy we were talking
 21 earlier, the Cockettes, and the dynamics of really
 22 being eccentric, moving to San Francisco and realizing
 23 that there were other eccentrics who were like you and
 24 finding really, like, a community within that, you
 25 know, and a solid purpose. Earlier than that, before

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1 pillaged. I wasn't a party to the taking of the floor
 2 but we, one of the guys that lived in with us in the
 3 commune that we had, brought this floor and put it on
 4 these really strong, I guess they're like, they're
 5 really thick wood with old salvaged wood underneath
 6 it. But it made a great table, 'cause we were living
 7 in a commune with at least thirteen people. So this
 8 table was huge and it served a really great purpose in
 9 that way and I just sort of eventually ended up with
 10 it, not the base but the top of it.
 11 PG: Hard to haul around.
 12 GC: Yeah, it got up here and it won't ever leave
 13 (laughs). In fact I think I have cut it down, it was
 14 even a little larger. But the table itself is like
 15 very historical in that we used to sit around and
 16 create the shows that we did. We used to eat there
 17 around the table, and any kind of kitchen table was
 18 usually the center of some sort of activity so.
 19 PG: Tell me about this, where was this commune?
 20 GC: Well, this table was specifically on Oak Street at
 21 Divisadero right at the end of the Panhandle. I was
 22 involved in a theater group called Angels of Light
 23 which were, in the early years, very loosely grouped,
 24 but later on got much tighter and developed into sort
 25 of a system commune, the living situation. And we got

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1 that commune, when I first came to San Francisco, I
 2 was sixteen, and I had a theatrical sort of instinct.
 3 That's what I was sort of drawn toward in school. But
 4 when I got to San Francisco, there was just such a . . .
 5 . the political climate . . . and I can't even say it
 6 was political then but it was a political climate. The
 7 climate in San Francisco at that point was extremely
 8 political in that you were dealing with your politics
 9 almost every minute of the day, the way you looked, by
 10 where you went, who you knew, what you didn't do was
 11 more important almost than what you did do. You didn't
 12 choose to participate in the straight world, which was
 13 overwhelming at that point in time. I mean, it was
 14 always us and them. You know, for the lack of a better
 15 word, it was the hippies versus the straight
 16 establishment, and San Francisco was the battleground
 17 for that. And it was a battle being waged almost daily
 18 by just how much you were committed to being
 19 alternative, to being outside of the loop, to making
 20 sure that you didn't contribute to the establishment,
 21 because the establishment was off on a very strange
 22 path. I mean, this was at the time when there was the
 23 Vietnamese war. It was at the time when, you know,
 24 that I think that our generation was really just
 25 beginning to see that there just things that we

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1 couldn't accept as part of being alive on the planet.
 2 The Beatniks were before this, and they sort of came
 3 to San Francisco and found it as a haven for that kind
 4 of behavior. But at the end of '60s, you know, the
 5 dynamic Flower Power whatever explosion, the community
 6 began to be really visible and really strong because
 7 people were coming from everywhere, not to participate
 8 in the straight world. That was one of the reasons why
 9 you were here, because you couldn't really exist and
 10 support life outside of here. You couldn't support
 11 that lifestyle, you couldn't support the government
 12 choices. At that point in time where I came here,
 13 draft, Selective Service was still very much a part of
 14 the reality for any male and also the reality of being
 15 in the draft, being drafted meant being in the
 16 Vietnamese war. There's an immense feeling that that
 17 wasn't going to happen, that either, you know, you
 18 either were going to be a conscientious objector or
 19 you were going to be a draft dodger, or you were going
 20 to be a homosexual which was not allowed. A lot of
 21 men, I think, really seriously questioned their sexual
 22 identity because, for the first time, it was, I won't
 23 say an out, but it was Make Love, Not War. If you had
 24 that aspect of your character where you could feel
 25 like, you know, being with a man was better than being

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1 to, I'd have to explain myself 'cause I come from a
 2 background where both of my parents are African-
 3 American, but they're very light-skinned. And so I
 4 existed and grew up in the ghetto of Los Angeles in
 5 Watts. And I never felt that the civil rights movement
 6 was making enough progress to be inclusive of people
 7 who had bi-racial features or who would be
 8 marginalized racially because when people perceive me,
 9 they don't immediately perceive a black person. So
 10 that for me the personal exploration of the feeling of
 11 liberation was much more in tandem with being an
 12 individual, an eccentric individual, from another
 13 place and coming to San Francisco and discovering my
 14 identity as an individual person. But, at the same
 15 time that that was happening, in a lot of parts of the
 16 country, the civil rights movement was extremely
 17 strong and yet it was definitely a factor in
 18 everything that was changing. And that it was a tandem
 19 sort of movement with the Black Panther Party for
 20 almost a, you know, that was a little more militant
 21 than what was going in San Francisco because this was
 22 Peace and Love though, it was at the Haight-Ashbury.
 23 And the pacifist movement was really strong, the
 24 feeling of pacifism in the sense that the alternative
 25 was really to be very pro-military, very pro-

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1 with a gun on a field, you were halfway there, you
 2 know, you were in San Francisco.
 3 PG: So this is, it's interesting, so the Vietnam war
 4 almost pushed each person individually into having to
 5 make a really, profoundly reflect on their own geist.
 6 GC: Totally. Not necessarily just the Vietnamese war,
 7 like I said, it was The Establishment, they were doing
 8 and creating an incredibly caustic environment. I
 9 mean, if you really, that was also at the time when
 10 people were, you know, just beginning to realize the
 11 connection between the environment and actual life,
 12 being alive. And it was a time when people were taking
 13 psychedelics. The major part of San Francisco reality
 14 at that point was drugs and the drug reality. The
 15 reality of drugs was that that was also some way to be
 16 alternative. If you were smoking pot, you certainly
 17 weren't going to, you know, necessarily sign up for
 18 the draft either. But a major, I think, throughout the
 19 psychedelia, was the awareness of the planet, the
 20 social community that developed around psychedelic
 21 drugs, lived and existed in San Francisco, and that
 22 was a major force.
 23 PG: Did the civil rights movement have much effect on
 24 you personally or on the scene here?
 25 GC: On me personally, personally I would say, I'd have

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1 government, very pro-the war.
 2 PG: Pro-violence.
 3 GC: Yeah, I think in a certain way, we would have to
 4 agree that the Vietnamese war was an incredible
 5 catalyst for what created San Francisco and the
 6 community that developed around the alternative
 7 lifestyle. Two years, I think, two or three years
 8 after I was . . .
 9 PG: Excuse me, when did you come to San Francisco?
 10 GC: Nineteen-sixty-nine.
 11 PG: Nineteen-sixty-nine. Okay, so go ahead; I'm just
 12 checking. You were sixteen?
 13 GC: Yeah. In 1971, the draft became, it didn't become
 14 mandatory, it became a lottery. And this was in, this
 15 was because of the push, because of the incredible
 16 amount of dissent that war was causing. So they,
 17 instead of say you have to go into the service, they
 18 developed a lottery and your birthday was chosen on a
 19 scale of 1 to 365 and the priorities were from 1 to
 20 180. But the second two years that I was of age to be
 21 on the Selective Service, my number was low, so I
 22 didn't really have to deal too much with that. But
 23 there were, you know, there were very many people who
 24 developed their lifestyle in Canada, in Mexico. There
 25 were a lot of men who just didn't want to stay and one

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1 of the ways to do it was just to flee. And another way
 2 was to come to San Francisco or some other alternative
 3 community in the States and drop out.
 4 PG: So San Francisco was almost like fleeing to
 5 another country which a lot of the sort of drug-taking
 6 was part of?
 7 GC: I wouldn't say it was fleeing to another country.
 8 It was more of it was fleeing to another community. I
 9 think again that's what, basically what I'm saying is
 10 once you got here, you did discover there were lots of
 11 people, people of like mind here. And as an
 12 individual, it just was exponentially, it got greater
 13 and greater until the point where it wasn't just you
 14 and a few other people. It was a community, a very
 15 strong and dedicated community. I mean, drugs, drugs
 16 played an issue, a part of it, and I can't really, in
 17 the context of how things have developed, we have a
 18 really strong sense of right and wrong. Even people
 19 who are cool, I think, have a strong sense about the
 20 idea of drugs. At that point in time, there really
 21 wasn't that much of an issue. There was a really
 22 valid, I think, exploration of just the alternative
 23 viewpoint and perspective that drugs allows you to
 24 have. And the rest of the country was getting drunk
 25 all the time. You know, the term dysfunctional had not

1 even been, you know, invented. But we were all fleeing
 2 from a very dysfunctional family in some way or
 3 another I think. That's what brought a lot of people
 4 to San Francisco. The government itself was
 5 dysfunctional. There was our dad, Lyndon Johnson,
 6 saying you need to go to Vietnam and fight for your
 7 country.
 8 PG: Did you, I have a personal question. Did you run
 9 away from your family for reasons?
 10 GC: No.
 11 PG: Why'd you leave?
 12 GC: My story is really, I can't, again, the idea of me
 13 being sixteen sounds different than the person that I
 14 really was at sixteen. I think I was a pretty relaxed
 15 being on the planet at that point even.
 16 Videotape 1 of 1. 15 minutes
 17 My reality, because of the duality of my appearance
 18 and the world that I sort of existed in but yet was
 19 never allowed to be in, I grew up in a very personal
 20 state or was my own creation. I was aware of the fact
 21 that I was homosexual I think at about four years old.
 22 And when I was 16, I was in Los Angeles with my mother
 23 and I was really aware of the radical society that
 24 was, you know, sort of dissenting. And I guess I was
 25 kind of concerned with being a hippie for lack of a

1 better word. But I was also very aware of my
 2 sexuality. At 16, you know, who isn't? So I was in
 3 Venice Beach which was like the place where people
 4 could go to be sort of alternative in L.A. It's a
 5 really amazing sort of stretch of boardwalk. In the
 6 '60s, the boardwalk was like, kind of like the Haight-
 7 Ashbury in the sense that there were a lot of freaky
 8 things going on, a lot of people of the alternative
 9 community just going geographically to that spot. So
 10 people got to know each other. I met someone there who
 11 was gay, who was ten years older than I was, who had
 12 just left a relationship with a woman and I got swept
 13 off my feet, for lack of a better term. I romanticized
 14 my past to the point where really, the facts sound
 15 much more cold than what I experienced. I fell in
 16 love, madly in love. We both wanted to come to San
 17 Francisco. We hitchhiked up the coast and came to San
 18 Francisco during that summer of '69, which was,
 19 everything was, everything was open. But to this day I
 20 have no idea how we lived, where the money came from,
 21 it just did. When we got here, we were totally
 22 embraced. I was absolutely and totally in love with
 23 this guy, he was my first lover. And so when we first
 24 got here, technically we lived in the park, in Golden
 25 Gate Park. We slept there for two weeks I think.

1 PG: What part?
 2 GC: Way out by the beach.
 3 PG: Out where there used to be the amusement park?
 4 GC: Right.
 5 PG: Were there many people out there?
 6 GC: I never saw that many, but then again, I was star-
 7 crossed, I only had eyes for him. We were in a little
 8 unit and my life was really changing like every
 9 minute. And that experience for me was cathartic. And,
 10 like I say, it sounds really, it could almost be
 11 (inaudible), I mean, there was this guy ten years old
 12 than me, there I was the sweet little 16-year-old. I
 13 had as much part in this thing as he did. There were
 14 drugs involved, of course, and, you know, as soon as
 15 we got here, they were the community to get involved
 16 with. I, at that point too, was really into music so
 17 there was the Fillmore, the Fillmore and the Haight,
 18 which was an incredible scene in itself. There were
 19 all kinds of people here of like mind. Nobody was
 20 hungry, nobody needed a place to stay. The community
 21 was very much already established, I mean, you know,
 22 the Summer of Love was '67 but people were still
 23 flowing into San Francisco looking for connection,
 24 community. And the thing I think that is interesting
 25 is that it took a couple of years for gay people who,

1 like myself and like my lover, to decide well we want
 2 to go there too but we didn't really abandon the idea
 3 of being gay. It was a very heterosexual kind of
 4 climate at first. But San Francisco was always very
 5 pro and very supportive of homosexuality anyway. So,
 6 like I'm sure you've notice in your other interviews,
 7 that there was a very strong and established gay
 8 community here before the '60s, and a very tolerant
 9 atmosphere for gays in San Francisco specifically and
 10 a tolerant atmosphere for the hippie movement which
 11 was also going on. But this was like the culmination.
 12 I kind of felt like I embodied that sort of thing as
 13 being a hippie who was queer who came here because of
 14 both things were tolerated, both things were supported
 15 and there was a community for both of them. But the
 16 community itself didn't really overlap very much until
 17 around '69.
 18 PG: For you it didn't overlap?
 19 GC: For me? But I felt like for a lot of other people
 20 too because I met people who, it seemed to me, we were
 21 developing the places to meet, to congregate, to be.
 22 PG: The gay freaks?
 23 GC: Right, for lack of a better term. There were a lot
 24 of gay bars here: the Rendezvous, the Capri in North
 25 Beach which was famous. Again I was sixteen so I

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1 in the story.
 2 PG: Oh, okay. 'Cause that was a serious problem in the
 3 whole gay community at this time, an outreach to
 4 youth. 'Cause a lot of youth ended up in the
 5 Tenderloin, tricking.
 6 GC: You know, that, I'm sure that that happened and,
 7 again, I have to say that I guess I believe so
 8 strongly in being a radical force for change that I
 9 didn't participate in that kind of, that kind of
 10 scenario at all. The first point, I think, I was going
 11 to make when we first started was that the idea of
 12 being political kind of happened almost every minute
 13 that you chose to be that way, just by the way you
 14 dressed, who you talked to, what you did do, and what
 15 you didn't do, what you smoked, what you drank, what
 16 you didn't drink, what you took. All of that, all of
 17 these choices were really defining and anti-
 18 establishment, for lack of a better word, perspective.
 19 And each one was really important, and the more you
 20 made, the more connected with the community you
 21 became. So if you existed sort of in the world where
 22 you sort of say well, money is very important to me.
 23 I'm going to have to deal with that as a reality and
 24 say you're a runaway, I'm going to have to - I can use
 25 my body as a means for monetary survival. That's a

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1 didn't really want to go to gay bars that much. I
 2 wanted to go to the Fillmore and I had a boyfriend, so
 3 I didn't really go into the arena where . . . Also, it
 4 was extremely middle class which, you know, I have to
 5 say in a certain way, I didn't hold that against the
 6 gay community at the time but there did seem to be a
 7 barrier between, you know, the Establishment and the
 8 Freaks, even within the gay community.
 9 PG: So you saw when you came here that organizations
 10 already existed, say like SIR or Mattachine Society or
 11 the DOB or the Tavern Guild. These, to you, were sort
 12 of older, older establishment types?
 13 GC: Very much so. Well, yeah, and then everything was
 14 older establishment to me; I was sixteen (laughs). I
 15 was sixteen and I was . . .
 16 PG: You couldn't even join SIR.
 17 GC: Oh, no.
 18 PG: 'Cause that was a huge controversy at that time.
 19 They didn't, some people wanted to let youth join and
 20 youth were requesting to join, but they were very
 21 afraid of that because of the law. Because, you know,
 22 you could get in big trouble like the guy who brought
 23 you up here. He could have, you know, if the law found
 24 out, he could have really been . . .
 25 GC: Oh, we did go through that. That's a little later

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1 choice. I didn't have that as a reality. And I met
 2 another kid who wouldn't do that, were looking for
 3 another sort of way to survive and without a community
 4 in a sense that didn't even address - again, I'm being
 5 kind of ethereal in a certain way, but there was a
 6 never a point in time where I thought, you know, I
 7 really need some money right now. There was always
 8 food, there was always something to go to, there was
 9 always someone to take care of us, or we to take care
 10 of them. And it was out there, it was really, it was
 11 freaks. And the thing about it too, again, I don't . . .
 12 the way I looked was a radical statement. The way
 13 everybody looked.
 14 PG: How did you look?
 15 GC: The way everybody looked then was very political.
 16 If you looked like a hippie or a freak, say, those
 17 sort of things, then you were immediately a part of
 18 that community.
 19 PG: Well then, tell me, how did you look in '69?
 20 GC: I had, I had really long hair, of course, my hair
 21 is not straight so it was curly, it was like . . .
 22 PG: Kinky.
 23 GC: Well, it was corkscrews. I looked, and, you know,
 24 I had an out, sort of out there sensibility around
 25 what I could wear, you know. Basically I wore jeans

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1 and, you know, beads, sometimes, that were given to me
 2 by friends at the community, you know, that was a
 3 whole thing right there.
 4 PG: Did you have facial hair?
 5 GC: Probably 'cause I didn't shave. Actually I never
 6 shaved, I didn't shave until I was about twenty-four,
 7 so I had a very thin probably a little beard, a little
 8 mustache.
 9 PG: 'Cause there was the whole idea that you were
 10 supposed to just let go.
 11 GC: Right, but I didn't let it go into a big bushy
 12 thing. It was very sort of just barely there. But, and
 13 then it wasn't extreme in the sense that it sounds . . .
 14 It was extreme in the reality of what was going on
 15 there. Anybody with long hair, I mean, it was totally,
 16 that was the statement, that's why there was the
 17 musical, that's why there were the Beatles and the
 18 Grateful Dead. You belonged to a community by doing
 19 that. That was a great commitment because there were
 20 people immediately who would say look, there's a long-
 21 haired hippie. You were immediately ostracized or
 22 alienated by the rest of the country. And so what was
 23 the progression of that was that, yeah, there tended
 24 to be even more of an exploration of freedom in the
 25 choices to make and present yourself once you got

1 despite all these dysfunctional things in the society
 2 you're talking about: the war and all these other
 3 things, there was a real innocence in the young people
 4 of the Haight.
 5 GC: Totally, very much so. And, again, once you made
 6 that commitment in a sense on a very physical plane,
 7 just by what you did, how you looked, you couldn't
 8 really exist in the other world. It was a separate
 9 thing. If I had long hair and, you know, whatever, I
 10 couldn't really go to the Tenderloin and sell my body.
 11 That wasn't going to happen because that kind of look
 12 was freaking people, who had paid for it, out. So I
 13 really, what we really did was develop and exist in a
 14 community that wasn't, that was really, you know,
 15 separate.
 16 PG: Okay, sorry, let me. Do you mind if I back up here
 17 a little bit?
 18 GC: No, no.
 19 PG: When you first got here, you said you were
 20 embraced. Do you remember when you got here and, okay,
 21 you told me where you slept for a while. About how
 22 long were you in the park?
 23 GC: Just a couple of weeks.
 24 PG: A couple weeks. And then where'd you go?
 25 GC: We stayed with someone that we had met who was

1 here. So there was a radical challenge sometimes by
 2 people, on a political front, though not really
 3 addressing it that way, just by being more
 4 (inaudible), more freaky, nose rings, sandals, robes.
 5 People were developing those kinds of images and it
 6 was immediately political. It was immediately, you
 7 could not go into Walgreen's and get anything but
 8 people would just, it would cause a commotion. But you
 9 could go to other places where people would see you
 10 and think, my god, you're incredible, you look
 11 beautiful. There was a very strong power behind men
 12 looking feminine at this point in time. I wasn't as
 13 feminine as some of my friends, but there was the
 14 degree of being comfortable with my homosexuality
 15 combined with the fact that I did have long hair,
 16 combined with the fact that I was probably, at
 17 sixteen, pretty attractive. You can't help it, I mean,
 18 you know, I'm not bragging, I'm just saying that there
 19 was, yeah, there was a very innocent sort of beauty
 20 around a lot of the people that were here. A lot of my
 21 friends looked stunning. And it was a political
 22 statement, but it wasn't necessarily overt. It was
 23 just a development, a feeling that you can be an
 24 explorer of the alternative about yourself.
 25 PG: Excuse me, so you're telling me that at this time,

1 also gay, who was sort of like a gay hippie, who had
 2 an extra room.
 3 PG: And this was over in the Haight area?
 4 Videotape 1 of 1, 30 minutes
 5 GC: No, he lived on 18th and Irving.
 6 PG: Irving, okay. And how did you meet him?
 7 GC: We met him at the beach one day. Again, because of
 8 the way that we looked, you could see someone else who
 9 was of like mind, you know, so we're walking along the
 10 beach, we see somebody else, and because of being gay,
 11 which was a whole other narrow margin, it narrowed the
 12 margin. I mean, you could walk by and see a hippie but
 13 then you could walk by and see a gay hippie, and then
 14 you'd want to know that person, he wanted to know who
 15 we were and we wanted to know who he was. It wasn't
 16 necessarily sexual but it was a very, it was, again,
 17 finding community. And I can't, you know, the details
 18 are very fuzzy after so long, but he said what's going
 19 on, where are you guys staying? We said in the park.
 20 He said you don't have to stay in the park. I've got a
 21 place, that extra room at my house. And, you know, we
 22 were there. He had a job in the Tenderloin though as a
 23 . . . He worked in a book store, in a dirty book store.
 24 PG: Yeah, there's a lot of porn stores there.
 25 GC: Right, which was like, because of innocence, I

1 I thought that was really filthy. I didn't like that and
 2 . . . I liked him.
 3 PG: It's interesting what you say about things you do
 4 and don't do. That was one of the things you shouldn't
 5 be doing is selling porno in the Tenderloin. It's not
 6 what a hippie would do.
 7 GC: Right. And ah, god, you know, at the same time, I
 8 was incredibly naive and self-righteous, you know.
 9 That was part of the innocence, you know. And actually
 10 it served me well. All I can say is that it did serve
 11 me well. We stayed with Richard for the summer I
 12 believe, and then when the summer was over, I called .
 13 . Well, when I left home with my lover, I told my
 14 mother I was doing that. I said, Mom, I'm going to San
 15 Francisco for a couple of weeks. I'm going to be okay.
 16 And my mother was, she was, I like to think she was
 17 trusting enough of my sensibility and intelligence to
 18 know that I was going to be all right. And she let me
 19 go. We had that kind of relationship. I don't really
 20 think that she ever thought that I was going to do
 21 something really stupid. And that if I had, you know,
 22 I said I was going to do this and I really wanted to
 23 and if she'd tell me I couldn't do it, forget it. So,
 24 at the end of the summer, I was still madly in love
 25 with this guy and I had gone through so many changes.

1 I had felt so liberated. I had, you know, committed so
 2 extremely to being out there that there was no way
 3 that I thought I could possibly go back, finish my
 4 last year of high school, and live with my mother
 5 again. I just couldn't. So we talked about it, my
 6 lover and I. And, you know, I had said he'd just over
 7 a relationship with a woman in Seattle. It turned out,
 8 you know, that he had left, he had dropped out of a
 9 situation where he was computer-literate which, in the
 10 '60s, late '60s, was a really amazing skill to have.
 11 And he was able to get a job really quickly. And he
 12 said, you know, I'll get a job at RCA . .
 13 PG: Despite looking like a hippie?
 14 GC: Well yeah, he cut his hair a little bit and me. I
 15 like to think. And he got a job in telecommunication
 16 at RCA and, you know, within a month, we had enough
 17 money for an apartment, and I told my mom that I
 18 wanted to stay up here. And she said well you can't do
 19 that, you know, you're still in school. And I said
 20 well what if finish school here and I don't know why,
 21 but she said well, I would let you do that if you
 22 promise me you would finish school. So that's what got
 23 us involved in him getting a job, me finding an
 24 apartment and so we got an apartment on McAllister
 25 Street by September.

1 PG: McAllister and?
 2 GC: And Larkin across from the Library. And I went
 3 down to Galileo High at the foot of Polk Street to
 4 enroll.
 5 PG: So you actually ended up over just on the edge of
 6 the Tenderloin.
 7 GC: Yeah, but I really never trudged through there.
 8 Again, if I had have gone to the Tenderloin the way I
 9 looked, I really think it would have been a problem
 10 for me. And so I went to Galileo and I enrolled and I
 11 said that I was living with my legal guardian. And
 12 they demanded, of course, that I have legal papers
 13 stating that my mother had transferred her right as
 14 guardian to this guy that I was living with, and I
 15 needed to have those papers before they would enroll
 16 me in school, which was kind of a stumbling block.
 17 It's a real funny story to me. I was in the office, in
 18 the enrollment office. I had just gotten that news and
 19 this, I don't want to call him a little queen. But
 20 this guy, who was obviously gay, and not, you know, a
 21 freak, but an establishment San Francisco gay and he
 22 had like an all gold ensemble. He had a Paisley shirt
 23 and a gold tie, I'll never forget that actually, and a
 24 gold, you know, sport coat. And he just minced in the
 25 office.

1 PG: Very nelly, huh?
 2 GC: Yeah, a little bit nelly. And I was just sort of
 3 stunned, I guess, you know, and I would like to think
 4 that the angels were just there over my head. And he
 5 turned too me and he said what's the matter? And I
 6 said well I've got my classes picked, and I'm all
 7 enrolled and everything. I just need to get my
 8 guardian to sign this paper. And he said, oh, well
 9 let's just choose your classes and, you know, I'll get
 10 you started and we'll get you a homeroom and you make
 11 sure you bring that signature in. Which was like
 12 somebody had just walked in and said okay,
 13 (whispering) never mind about the guardian. Because
 14 there was no way I could really come back with my
 15 mother signing. I mean, that's a legal process. My
 16 mother would not have gone for it. I don't think my
 17 lover would have like really stood the test of
 18 scrutiny, you know, to even get that sort of thing.
 19 But he just sort of pooh-poohed that little detail,
 20 got me enrolled and I started school. And I kept
 21 saying well, I'm going to bring that signature and,
 22 you know, and I felt this incredible affinity, you
 23 know, just because that guy. He turned out to be my
 24 homeroom teacher and, and I don't know whether he knew
 25 it as far as, you know, recognizing it in me, but I

1 knew that we had a kindred spirit there. He was, you
 2 know, a sister. So I enrolled and I called my mother,
 3 I said enrolled and I'm going to school, and I was
 4 really actually very serious about it, you know,
 5 'cause Dan had a job, we had an apartment and, you
 6 know, the basic thing to me was that I was with this
 7 man, you know, for the first time in my life, I was
 8 really in love with someone that I wanted to be in
 9 love with and wanted to live with. So I was happy. And
 10 I realized that I had enough credits to get a diploma
 11 after my half season, or half semester in June.
 12 Instead of going all the way to January, I was five
 13 credits short. I asked if I could work in the office
 14 after school for another five credits, so I could have
 15 my diploma in January of 1970. And so I did that. And
 16 I guess I have to say again too that I was fairly
 17 intelligent, so it wasn't a problem going to school,
 18 you know, I got B's and C's. 'Cause I really didn't
 19 really, I hardly participated. At the same time I was
 20 going to school, I was going to the Stud at night and
 21 I was, you know, taking every drug in the book. I took
 22 my California History final on the remnants of an acid
 23 trip from the night before. And it's funny because
 24 this homeroom teacher that I was telling you about,
 25 this guy that helped me was my California History

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1 teacher. And I don't know if I'm really like
 2 exaggerating this because I was stoned. But I took the
 3 test and I handed it to him and he turned to me and we
 4 had this moment. And he said what do you want out of
 5 this? And I seriously like felt like I was telling him
 6 from the depths of my soul that this is how it has to
 7 work out. I said all I want is a C, I just need to
 8 pass, you know, I'm getting out of here in January and
 9 I just need a C out of this course. And I believe that
 10 basically he just let me go on from there. I can't
 11 tell you too much about California History but that's
 12 what seems, that's how I seemed to get through Galileo
 13 High School. There were only a few other people there
 14 that I even remember connecting with. My existence was
 15 outside of that. But I showed up every day to get my
 16 diploma and make my mom happy, to make it possible for
 17 me to stay there.
 18 PG: Okay, well let's back up. Tell me about what, the
 19 more important things you were doing besides going to
 20 school. What were you doing?
 21 GC: Psychedelics (laughs).
 22 PG: And when you were doing psychedelics, what were
 23 you doing on them? Were you staying at home, were you
 24 walking around, going out?
 25 GC: Well, again, like I said the idea of music was

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1 really important to me and as a kid, obviously I'm
 2 still into music. I'm a disk jockey now. I was really
 3 excited by the culture and the music that was the
 4 scene in San Francisco and the Fillmore was an
 5 amazing, amazing place.
 6 PG: Tell me about it.
 7 GC: Every week, every week there'd be an amazing band,
 8 at least for a 16-year-old who'd just ran away from
 9 home. It was an amazing chance to see everybody you'd
 10 ever heard of, you know, and the, you know, the pills
 11 were like, you'd see Janis Joplin and Bebe King on the
 12 same bill, you know. So, of course, around that
 13 circle, there were drugs, there were psychedelics,
 14 Psychedelics were ingested.
 15 PG: What was the scene like when you went to the
 16 Fillmore? Describe to me what was the show.
 17 GC: There was another very great strong sense of the
 18 community in San Francisco, the community that had
 19 been established earlier on in '67, even before that.
 20 The Family Dog and Bill Graham represented structure.
 21 They gave you the sense of here's a place to be with
 22 the community that's alternative, but it's
 23 established. Here's a musician to entertain you, to
 24 help you with your burden by being in this alternative
 25 reality. Here are the other people that also think

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1 like that. Here are the other draft dodgers, here are
 2 the other hippie fags, here are the other whatever,
 3 you know, at this point, it's so hard to really define
 4 what I think was magic. There was a magical sense in
 5 the air that everything was possible and that there
 6 was a strong sense that this philosophy, this thing
 7 that you didn't do with something that other people
 8 were doing too. And the community itself was coming
 9 together around Rock, around drugs.
 10 PG: So you'd often see the same people?
 11 GC: Yeah, definitely.
 12 PG: It was very tight in a way.
 13 GC: In a certain way, yeah. And at the same time, it
 14 was really, you'd see people traveling through, but
 15 you would know them as a kindred spirit, you know,
 16 they would be passing through but they would come to
 17 San Francisco and they would come to the Haight. They
 18 would, they would on their journey. I don't want to
 19 get too like California hippie-dippie about it.
 20 PG: I know what you're talking about.
 21 GC: But I'd have to say that there's, that in
 22 retrospect to me, the time itself was tremendously
 23 magical. No, I don't feel like . . . There was such an
 24 incredible feeling of positivity and potential, and
 25 the idea that we were really young and it wasn't

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1 wrong. What was going in the other part of the country
 2 was wrong. And that solidarity was really very
 3 nurturing, very powerful on its own. And what I'm
 4 saying, in a sense, was that it was very political,
 5 although we had, it hadn't been defined that way at
 6 all.
 7 PG: I know what you mean, getting together. Just
 8 getting together at the Fillmore and everybody dancing
 9 was an incredibly political act.
 10 GC: Seeing the numbers too was incredibly affirming.
 11 PG: The numbers?
 12 GC: The numbers of people that were there. You know,
 13 it was like you weren't alone.
 14 PG: How many people would go to the Fillmore in a
 15 night?
 16 Videotape 1 of 1, 45 minutes
 17 GC: God only knows. I was just stoned (laughs).
 18 Videotape 1 of 1, 45 minutes
 19 PG: How many would you guess though, like say like a
 20 thousand?
 21 GC: Yeah, I would say though the Fillmore held about
 22 five hundred comfortably.
 23 PG: See, that's very interesting, this little sidebar,
 24 doing an interview I realized that things went very
 25 fast. So, in '64 the first gay organization that you

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1 of . . . And the thing is that there were, that was a
 2 gay bar. There were heterosexuals at the Fillmore and
 3 that community and that hippie stuff. But the Stud was
 4 a gay bar and that's where sort of, like the gay
 5 people that were at the Fillmore would go after the
 6 Fillmore. That's where other gay hippies who didn't
 7 happen to do to the Fillmore that night but who had a,
 8 you know, life sensibility around the community, would
 9 go. That was the bar. And next to it, I think I told
 10 you, was a storefront that was call the Universal Life
 11 Church which was just an outreach program. It was a
 12 place to stay after the bar closed, and it had coffee
 13 and juice. And people who were still up or whatever
 14 would gather there.
 15 PG: Kind of like a hospitality house?
 16 GC: Yeah, it was like a coffee house I guess, for lack
 17 of a better word. It was very Bohemian in that way and
 18 there were Bohemian queers there, as opposed to going
 19 to a coffee house in North Beach where you could be
 20 Bohemian, but you'd be around Bohemian heterosexuals.
 21 Or you could go to the Fillmore and you could be
 22 around hippies but you'd be around heterosexual
 23 hippies. So this was a place where you were involved
 24 with being an alternative person but with other people
 25 who were homosexual.

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1 found very middle class had just got started and were
 2 very cutting edge, held the first gay-sponsored dance
 3 in San Francisco outside of a bar. And they were at
 4 California Hall, and there were about 500 people. And
 5 people who were there still have, they get goose bumps
 6 when they remember the dances. It was so thrilling to
 7 have gay people together in their own space, that I
 8 think of what you're talking about is the same thing.
 9 And it's not tied to a bar and it's not tied to
 10 somebody else's. It was something that this group
 11 created for themselves to raise money for themselves
 12 to do their own thing.
 13 GC: The ah, there was a law against same-sex dancing
 14 in San Francisco for years. And it could be enforced -
 15 for the most part it wasn't, but it was always there.
 16 I mean, it was an incredibly oppressive kind of
 17 feeling that, you know, you still had to deal with
 18 that. Any minute maybe the cops would come in and bust
 19 the place. Again, I was young, so I didn't really go
 20 to the bars. But after the Fillmore, there was the
 21 Stud, and the Stud was a bar that I could get into.
 22 PG: You mean after leaving the Fillmore.
 23 GC: Right.
 24 PG: This was the after-hours show.
 25 GC: Right, this is what we would, this is a night sort

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1 PG: Do you know who ran it? The people, were they
 2 ministers?
 3 GC: Well, the designation of the Universal Life Church
 4 was easy to get. It's a ministry that you just send a
 5 thing in. And I think that the reason that they did
 6 use that designation was so they could be open after
 7 hours, because then it became an outreach program for
 8 a ministry. But I mean, it really was quite bad, you
 9 know. And I'm sure, again, I'm whitewashing this
 10 'cause this was a magical time for me and I was out
 11 there very young and very stoned. I'm sure there were
 12 things going on there that were not as beautiful as
 13 I'm painting it, you know, but it's 3:30 in the
 14 morning and there's a bunch of horny queers there, you
 15 know. There was cruising, there was drugs, blah, blah,
 16 blah. But the sense of community was still there. The
 17 sense of being alternative and finding other
 18 alternative homosexuals was really strong.
 19 PG: Okay, let's back up for a minute. I want to talk
 20 to you now just as a musician or somebody who's really
 21 passionate about music. I know that in the '60s there
 22 was a lot of rapid innovation in concert technology,
 23 sound technology. I know when the Beatles first
 24 started playing stadiums, they had woefully inadequate
 25 sound systems and I know that the Yard Birds, the

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1 people at the Yard Birds began to innovate these
 2 things.
 3 GC: I saw the Beatles last concert at Candlestick.
 4 PG: Oh really?
 5 GC: Mm hm, and I saw the Yard Birds when Jeff Beck and
 6 Eric Clapton was playing guitar for them.
 7 PG: Oh really?
 8 GC: Yeah.
 9 PG: So anyhow, what I wanted to ask you was how about
 10 the Fillmore in terms of the music? There must have
 11 been, I mean, that venue is very famous. And I'm
 12 wondering whether, can you tell me something about how
 13 they, what was it like when you went in? How did they
 14 create a music experience? Were you aware at that time
 15 of sort of being on a cutting edge of sound
 16 technology?
 17 GC: Uh huh. I think so. When I got here, the Fillmore
 18 had moved. It was originally on Fillmore where it is
 19 now. But when I got here in '69, it moved to Van Ness
 20 and Market.
 21 PG: Oh, it was down there?
 22 GC: Where the auto dealership is. Fillmore was
 23 upstairs. There's a huge upstairs loft over that auto
 24 dealership was and I think they technically called it
 25 the Fillmore West because at the same time they had a

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1 was always a cut above. It wasn't like going to the
 2 local blues club down the street. It was the Fillmore
 3 or the Fillmore West. By that time, the place had a
 4 very strong reputation. Aretha Franklin wanted to play
 5 at the Fillmore. She recorded an album at the
 6 Fillmore. I thought of that show and it was very
 7 interesting because obviously there were a lot of
 8 hippies that would go to the Fillmore but they were
 9 expanding and they were reaching out to really serious
 10 musicians. But Aretha Franklin had a extremely strong
 11 black audience, so when they came to the Fillmore,
 12 they walked in. They were all decked out, you know,
 13 big deal. There were no seats, you know, the Fillmore
 14 was a place where you went, you sat down on the floor
 15 cross-legged, if you didn't dance. It was a really
 16 tense atmosphere because these people were not about
 17 to sit down on the floor when they had gotten all
 18 dressed up to see Aretha Franklin. But the idea was
 19 that you were going to see an amazing show, that the
 20 performer was going to put on a really amazing, you
 21 know, that was recorded. There is an album called
 22 Aretha Franklin at the Fillmore. It was documented.
 23 Revi Shankar would play there, he would record there.
 24 You know, the Grateful Dead, I was never a Deadhead,
 25 but they were dedicated to creating an event every

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1 Fillmore in New York. Bill Graham Productions. And the
 2 whole process was, let's start with the posters. The
 3 posters were state of the art. They were, you know,
 4 really far out there, artists like Stanley Mouse and
 5 Mascoso Satti, just a really amazing artform, amazing
 6 talented artists would put their work into the
 7 announcements of these events every week, and there
 8 are people who collect them now. They're outrageously
 9 beautiful. They were scripted so that you couldn't
 10 really read them unless you were stoned. (inaudible)
 11 don't help. And they were collectible, I mean, there
 12 was an automatic appreciation, at least I think in a
 13 sense, of if you have, you know, an appreciation for
 14 the arts, of the integrity that they were dedicating
 15 to just getting the word out about these events. The
 16 graphics were worth collecting, the artists were worth
 17 knowing about, the artists that were performing were
 18 worth, these graphic artists putting their time and
 19 energies behind creating a one-of-a-kind event poster
 20 for the them. So it infused the whole thing with like
 21 this isn't fly-by-night. This is a directive from the
 22 community of another exponential, you know, an
 23 outgrowth of the community that you could actually
 24 tangibly sort of feel, feel the integrity behind. And,
 25 again, the integrity behind performing at those venues

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1 time they played. That grew out of the integrity that
 2 was really being addressed in that spin, in that form.
 3 Maybe that's what you wanted to hear?
 4 PG: Yeah, and they have, did they start doing things
 5 like light shows?
 6 GC: Totally, yeah. Light shows, the environment, I
 7 mean, the environment itself was to encourage people
 8 to feel comfortable with being sort of loopy, you
 9 know. If you're not going to be in a normal state,
 10 then you're going to need something to focus on.
 11 You're going need something to enjoy and entertain
 12 you.
 13 PG: 'Cause, I guess what I'm thinking of is that,
 14 let's say for example now there's a young gay male who
 15 wants to go out to a big dance, so they all go to
 16 something like Club Universe or Pleasure Dome. And I
 17 have a feeling almost, and I know that are a lot of
 18 people there are going to be taking hard drugs to
 19 enhance the dance environment and the sexual hunt
 20 environment. But my feeling now, I go to the venues,
 21 is that the, how do I put this? They're sort of like
 22 thirty years of research, almost, into how to create a
 23 technical laser show and where to position the
 24 speakers and sound system quality has become
 25 comparatively, you know, it's almost like Star Wars.

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1 And so what I'm thinking is, what I'm getting at maybe
 2 is, what was happening in the Fillmore was really
 3 inventing, inventing sort of a multi-sensory
 4 environment. Is that fair?
 5 GC: Yeah.. I totally agree with you.
 6 PG: It had this feeling of like if you go back and
 7 maybe they're changing things. Is that happening,
 8 watching them adapt and making it more interesting?
 9 GC: There were two or three lighting companies that
 10 were always involved in the shows and I think in a
 11 certain way, people would go - there would be an added
 12 bonus by going and following like The Family Dog's
 13 light show. Because they always did something or they
 14 would have a really interesting tangent. I can't
 15 remember their names now, there's three or four of
 16 them. And people still talk about that, they still
 17 talk about the light show specifically and some people
 18 don't even think that they compare now. In a certain
 19 way, the technology has advanced but there was a real
 20 sense of being connected to what the music was doing
 21 and what the crowd wanted. I have to say too that . .
 22 .
 23 PG: When you said community, artists making posters,
 24 people making light shows, they all knew each other.
 25 GC: Exactly. And the musicians making the music. And

1 the thing about, I have to say, in a sense that when
 2 you were in that crowd, so to speak, on their
 3 (inaudible) with other people who were just as stoned
 4 as you were, the band couldn't suck.
 5 PG: (laughs) I know what you mean.
 6 GC: It was a really, really big responsibility, in a
 7 certain way, to almost transcend the environment, to
 8 make a community. And so there were very, you know,
 9 there was a great degree of commitment on all levels:
 10 on the tech level, on the idea that these people were
 11 performing, almost, in a tribal sense. You know, there
 12 were the tribal dancers. We were the tribe, they were
 13 the shamen. There are times when, you know, it sounds
 14 really stupid now, but (inaudible) would play guitar
 15 for the Jefferson Airplane. He would do a guitar solo
 16 that would bring everything in the room together. I
 17 would say that if he and Doctor Pick was not in touch
 18 with what everybody else was with, going with him
 19 there, chaos would have been, you know, it would have
 20 been all hell. All hell would have broken loose at a
 21 certain point. It was that much of a communion. It was
 22 that much of a sense of you are taking everyone here
 23 on a trip. And so those nights were filled with like
 24 psychedelia and beyond that, a sense of community
 25 around the society that was looking for itself.

1 PG: How often did you do this?
 2 GC: (shrieking laughter).
 3 PG: Twice a week, three times a week?
 4 GC: No, actually, it was like you said. The '60s was
 5 really foul. I went to the Fillmore while I was going
 6 to high school, which was, you know, that was a
 7 semester. So, say from September to January, I was
 8 really central. I had house, I had a schedule, I had
 9 a Friday night free, probably went to the Fillmore on
 10 those weekends.
 11 PG: Oh, I see, I see, okay. Now I want to ask you
 12 about getting interested. I don't mean to sound kind
 13 of silly to you but I got really interested in the
 14 '60s 'cause there were a lot of new things that were
 15 going on in the '60s and I think that San Francisco,
 16 there was other places, but San Francisco was doing a
 17 lot of cutting edge things. Let's talk about the Stud,
 18 because what I'm wondering about the Stud, and see if
 19 you can tell me if I'm wrong, is you leave the
 20 Fillmore and it's live performance. And as you said,
 21 there's communion of different kinds of artists who
 22 create a really sensational drug enhanced live
 23 performance experience. Then you go to the Stud and
 24 it's not a juke box.
 25 GC: Oh yes, it is.

1 PG: It is a juke box. It's pre-recorded music on the
 2 juke box?
 3 GC: Yeah.
 4 PG: See, I was wondering, when did you start to get
 5 disk jockeys? You can't dance to a juke box.
 6 GC: The Stud, well, let's say this. You would go to
 7 any bar in San Francisco, there wasn't disk jockeys.
 8 Any gay bar in San Francisco at that point in time,
 9 I'm pretty sure, had a juke box. That was the going
 10 thing.
 11 PG: And what was on the juke box?
 12 GC: Well, that's what I would say, now that's why the
 13 Stud was the Stud because it had a cool juke box. It
 14 had the music that, you know, you really wanted to
 15 hear.
 16 PG: That does draw a clientele.
 17 GC: Oh, for sure, for sure. I mean, look, I'm a disk
 18 jockey now (laughs). So I know the importance of it
 19 and I know what it meant to the people that went to
 20 the Stud. And, again, there was a law on the books
 21 that said same-sex was illegal. In the very back of
 22 the Stud, by the juke box, people were dancing. What
 23 was on the juke box? I remember dancing to the Rolling
 24 Stones and we were dancing to Honky-Tonk Women. I
 25 remember dancing to Jackie Wilson.

1 PG: Jackie Wilson!
 2 GC: Your Love Has Lifted Me Higher. I remember dancing
 3 to, well let's, George McRae and Rocky Babe was a
 4 little bit later. But right about that time was also,
 5 it was hippie times, right. So there was like the best
 6 that was coming out at the moment, you know, that most
 7 of those people would be excited by, you know. And I
 8 really remember a, again, a sense of being that people
 9 of the same sex could dance. Not only could they dance
 10 there, but they could dance to Honky Tonk Women, which
 11 you wouldn't hear if you went to the Rendezvous or the
 12 Capri.
 13 PG: What would you hear at the middle class gay bars?
 14 GC: I couldn't tell you because I wasn't allowed to go
 15 there. I wasn't that old, I couldn't get past the
 16 doorman. I was sixteen. I was getting into the Stud
 17 simply because the Stud existed way on another part of
 18 town, South of Market, which was really South of
 19 Market then. It was like industrial, this was a little
 20 small ex-leather bar that was starting to get an
 21 influx of really cool hippie type queer at the same
 22 time. And so it was an outpost basically where a lot
 23 of people didn't seem to think they had to worry about
 24 carding at the door, or, you know, smoking marijuana
 25 in the alleyways, you know, outside of it. Everybody

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1 PG: 'Cause you weren't constricted to a juke box.
 2 Somebody could bring in lots of records.
 3 GC: Well, not only that but the tape of the records
 4 was good. I remember being really into Oil Can Harry's
 5 because it was part black. So I would say that there
 6 was probably . . .
 7 PG: And it was gay?
 8 GC: Yes, but there was also, as usual, you know, the
 9 influx and influence of black music and soul would
 10 probably be where disk jockeys first were able to get
 11 started, in a sense that you'd go to Oil Can Harry's
 12 and know that the music would be rockin' because the
 13 black clientele and when they got on the floor, it was
 14 a party and they would dance and they would know the
 15 best music.
 16 PG: Well, this was also sort of when funk starts
 17 getting started, like early '70s, right?
 18 GC: Yeah, but funk was a much more commercial kind of,
 19 visible marketing tool. What I'm talking about is gay
 20 disco which was really, at that point in time,
 21 communion again. I believe that house music refers to
 22 the house where you went, that was a safe place in the
 23 house. And you went there and there were other gay
 24 people there and you danced. And the music that
 25 developed through that became known as club music,

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1 would go out, get stoned and come back in. The music
 2 would sound even better. But so, you know, I'm not
 3 saying that you wouldn't hear the Rolling Stones. I'm
 4 saying I couldn't hear them anywhere else and I
 5 wouldn't go anywhere else because I didn't need to.
 6 PG: Where did you, this is just really just a brief
 7 question, I'm just curious. When did dance bars start
 8 to have live DJ's. Instead of having a juke box?
 9 Somebody would come in and start to spin disks.
 10 GC: Really early on in the '70s.
 11 Videotape 1 of 1, 60 minutes
 12 PG: Places like the Trocadero?
 13 GC: There was the Trocadero, but before that, there
 14 was a bar called Buzzby's on Polk Street, Polk and
 15 California. And I remember they had a DJ and a small
 16 dance floor. Oh my god, there was another bar, Oil Can
 17 Harry's.
 18 PG: Where was that?
 19 GC: That was in the Tenderloin. It's on, or it was on
 20 Ellis or Eddy or one of those streets. It's a
 21 Vietnamese restaurant now. Oil Can Harry's had a dance
 22 floor that was rockin' and I'm pretty sure it was
 23 because there was a DJ there. I remember getting
 24 involved with those, and going to those clubs, 'cause
 25 the music was good and I think that was why.

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1 became known as house music because it comes from the
 2 house.
 3 PG: So you're telling me that places like the Stud and
 4 Oil Can Harry's are sort of the predecessors of pop
 5 music clubs today?
 6 GC: Well, I'm saying that, yeah, the generation of
 7 what became disco was really just the idea that you
 8 were at the mercy of the DJ, but you wanted to be, you
 9 knew he could make you dance, and it was a celebration
 10 on that level.
 11 PG: And at a place like Oil Can Harry's, it was very
 12 clearly . . . Also a lot of people remarked about
 13 discos, a strange hybrid marriage between black music
 14 and gay male tastes in a way, for enjoyment for that,
 15 sort of that . . . It seems to me too that, what you
 16 talked about, hippie, gay hippies, this willingness
 17 to, the gay male was willing to let go, to dance, to
 18 not use their body in a constricted straight way. Is
 19 this . . .
 20 GC: Well, again I have to say that there is a real, we
 21 have to underscore the fact that there was a law on
 22 the books, no, same-sex dancing was illegal. So it was
 23 incredibly illegal act just to do it, just to find a
 24 place where it was okay to dance with one another. The
 25 times were really different, you know, I've discussed

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1 this a little bit. What I would say now is that it is
 2 so incredibly difficult to impress upon these kids
 3 what it was like to be a homosexual in the '60s and
 4 early '70s. You didn't walk down the street and see
 5 another person. You didn't hear about gay people on
 6 the TV, whether it was AIDS, Andrew Conanan or Gay
 7 Pride Day. You looked hard and you looked for a long
 8 time to be able to go and find some place where other
 9 people like you were. One of the things that I think
 10 people really have a hard time understanding now is
 11 that the idea of free love isn't necessarily that
 12 everybody was as promiscuous and like bath houses,
 13 everything was just wide open. I think one of the ways
 14 that you really celebrated finding another gay person
 15 was to actually have sex with them, because it would
 16 so rare. It would be like, oh my god, you will do that
 17 too. It wasn't sort of like I'm going until, you know,
 18 my prince comes. He's got to be beautiful, he's got to
 19 have a bank account, he's got to work out at the gym.
 20 It was like you are a gay person too?
 21 PG: Oh my god!
 22 GC: Oh my god!
 23 PG: It's not like now where you walk down the street
 24 and you just sort of, you know, it's over-abundance.
 25 GC: I can't, I mean, it's really astounding to me, I

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1 mean, that's one of the things that I have to say that
 2 I've gathered in living forty-four years and being in
 3 the times that I have, is to see the difference
 4 between what I grew up and was introduced to as gay
 5 society, and what a person who is sixteen now, with
 6 the same kind of conflict, and saying I know I'm gay
 7 and with the alternatives they have to go to. The
 8 support that they get subtly by just having it exist.
 9 What I'm saying is at that point in time, it didn't
 10 exist. It was incredibly powerful to go to Oil Can
 11 Harry's, get out on the dance floor with another man,
 12 and get down. It was a joy.
 13 PG: It was a complete breaking of a taboo.
 14 GC: Exactly. And it was a communion. It was like going
 15 to church, especially if you went to a really good
 16 black one, you know, it'd be easier to break the ice
 17 there. Everybody was doing the hustle, you know, those
 18 kind of dances that got everybody on the floor were
 19 really ice-breakers.
 20 PG: So you're telling me that you'd go to the Fillmore
 21 and you'd have one kind of communion, and then you
 22 could go later to the Stud and have another kind.
 23 GC: What I'm saying, in a sense, is that at that point
 24 in time that we're talking about, '69, '70, is where
 25 those two things stopped existing separately but

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1 became kind of more of a unit.
 2 PG: See, this is what I wanted to ask you then, 'cause
 3 you mentioned places and we started to talk about it,
 4 and you said the Stud was the place where, quite
 5 literally, people would leave the Fillmore who were
 6 gay and then bring that spirit with them to the Stud.
 7 Oil Can Harry's was another place.
 8 GC: Oil Can Harry's happened a little bit later on.
 9 PG: A little bit later. Can you start to name some of
 10 these places where there was starting to be. At these
 11 dance places, where did the fusion of gay and hippie
 12 happen, where the two began to congregate?
 13 GC: The Cockette shows.
 14 PG: Okay.
 15 GC: I would say, again, the, let's get back to the
 16 idea of people being personal frontier, the body
 17 itself being political. There were people who were so
 18 astoundingly beautiful in this new sensibility of
 19 being androgynous, of being a male, of not being
 20 afraid to be feminine about it. It was, again,
 21 awesomely political. There are people who would walk
 22 down the street and could literally change your
 23 perspective about what you thought your whole life.
 24 These people were, you know, bold I think, they were
 25 courageous. They were working . . . There's, I'm sure, a

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1 whole other school of thought, where they were like
 2 out of their mind, they were drug addicts or whatever.
 3 But essentially, again, there was a magical feeling of
 4 innocence around a certain, my experience coming
 5 there, and my peers. And when I saw somebody who was
 6 of my age group, about 17 or 18, let's just say we
 7 bought the farm. We got the whole hippie experience
 8 and it made total sense to us. It wasn't sort of like
 9 well, I'm still attached to making money, I'm still
 10 attached to my family's values. We were so young and
 11 we were here early, so we were, this was our paradise,
 12 our playground. And I have to say that those people, a
 13 few of them, were what would be loosely termed,
 14 Cockettes. The Cockettes were a very hip group of gay
 15 men who had come to San Francisco and who had sort of
 16 had brought that kind of willingness to be as
 17 outrageous as possible and being as gay as possible.
 18 PG: And part of this, I know sort of their signature,
 19 and this is a lot of, for me, this now beginning to
 20 understand, this really sums up everything you're
 21 talking about. They'd get on stage and they'd show
 22 their cocks.
 23 GC: No.
 24 PG: 'Cause that's what I've heard, that they'd lift
 25 their skirts up.

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1 GC: Well, I mean, that's like saying Hair was that
 2 play where everybody got naked.
 3 PG: Oh, okay, okay.
 4 GC: The idea of the Cockettes, even that name, I mean,
 5 it was a radical statement to be a male and to adopt a
 6 feminine persona or in any way be feminine. A male
 7 wearing makeup was a big statement. So, so they were
 8 the more outrageous of the more talented, I mean, a
 9 lot of them were, like I said, theatrical bent. And a
 10 couple of them were, you know, had lived in drag in
 11 the real strip, in the straight world 'cause that was
 12 the only way that they could exist. They were
 13 beautiful androgynous men, and they loosely formed a
 14 collective called the Cockettes. And they would put on
 15 shows which were the alternative to going to the
 16 Fillmore. Instead of having a really heterosexual
 17 hippie experience, you could have this amazing
 18 homosexual experience, which was, had the same sort of
 19 integrity. Lots of very incredibly talented artists
 20 would get together to create an event that would allow
 21 the community to find itself. And it was homosexual in
 22 its nature, first and foremost, where the Fillmore was
 23 heterosexual, couldn't help but be.
 24 PG: Yeah. How did you find out about the Cockettes for
 25 the first time? Do you remember how you hear and . . .

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1 far as I was concerned. And he had taken that on a
 2 personal level to the Stud. On a bigger level, he
 3 involved himself with other people like Mike who did
 4 the theater group called the Cockettes.
 5 PG: When you met Tahara, how long had the Cockettes
 6 been a group doing shows? Do you have any idea? This
 7 was about 1970 or '69?
 8 GC: Since '70. I think they had done maybe five or six
 9 shows.
 10 PG: And they formed in about '70, right?
 11 GC: Mm hm. And what happened, I'll tell you what it
 12 was. The shows happened at midnight at the Palace
 13 Theater in North Beach. And they were called Nocturnal
 14 Emission Shows. And essentially, this is a time again,
 15 I have to also say, that things had really changed.
 16 There was no such thing as video.
 17 Videotape I of 1, 75 minutes
 18 There was no such thing as cable channel. There was an
 19 incredible rediscovery of motion pictures. There was a
 20 real desire to know and see the movies that had been
 21 gone, that had gone before. You couldn't see them. So
 22 the Palace started showing midnight movies which gave
 23 you the opportunity to go to a movie that you really
 24 always had heard about and wanted to see. A Busby-
 25 Berkeley movie, get stoned at midnight with a bunch of

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1 GC: I was at the Stud, I'm sure, and I saw someone who
 2 I thought was astounding and someone me who
 3 immediately thought I was pretty hot stuff. We started
 4 talking and they said, you know, I'm a Cockette. I
 5 believe the first person I met that was a Cockette was
 6 named, at that time, Tahara. And Tahara was a little
 7 older than I was. He was nineteen, and he was
 8 beautiful. He was an incredibly beautiful vision. He
 9 would come to the Stud and he would have some
 10 elaborate thing on where he would look like he had
 11 dropped from another planet. And he was incredibly
 12 dedicated to being a gentle and a naive and an
 13 innocent person in a certain way. And we were drawn to
 14 each other in that way. And he was, I'll never forget,
 15 he was one of the people that would give you a kiss
 16 when he saw you. For a male to kiss another man was a
 17 major statement. You know, you see it on the street.
 18 Now you see a friend, you don't even bother to give
 19 them a kiss. It was a political statement. I remember
 20 having, when seeing Tahara come toward me, thinking,
 21 oh my god, here comes Tahara. He's going to kiss me,
 22 it's okay, it's fine, I can deal with that. And he did
 23 that to practically everyone. And I know he knew what
 24 he was doing. He was forcing you to be queer. And
 25 that's a political statement, he was an activist as

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1 other people in the movie theater and Busby-Berkeley,
 2 there's a camp sensibility around that movie. The
 3 audience itself would be drawn to that as sort of a
 4 homosexual event. And I'm not very clear on that, but
 5 that's how the Cockette shows evolved, from the
 6 feeling of going to a movie at midnight to a feeling
 7 of going to a show. And they developed some of those
 8 shows as an outgrowth of the movies that were being
 9 shown. And there was a big interest in the '30s and
 10 the Busby-Berkeley stuff and the musicals. And so the
 11 logical thing was sort of let's do a musical ourselves
 12 and do it at midnight, 'cause everybody's coming here
 13 anyway to the movies, to see these '30s musicals. The
 14 other thing about the audience that came to those
 15 things was that they were people who were, I don't to
 16 say they were elitists, but they were the beautiful
 17 crowd. There was a reason to get dressed up and an
 18 event to go to. Add that subtext to the alternative
 19 community where, you know, you go to the Fillmore and
 20 people would be in jeans and whatever. You'd go to
 21 this event and people would dress up. They would look
 22 as astounding as possible because you could. Because
 23 there was the feeling that we weren't just hippies, we
 24 were beautiful creatures.
 25 PG: It's almost like Rocky Horror Picture Show but

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1 You know, so that in itself was just what would be
 2 going on. We'd be over there, there'd be a show that
 3 night. So eventually everybody would end up over at
 4 the Palace. And then everybody would end up at a party
 5 afterwards or whatever, you know. Those were really
 6 early times for me and the experiences themselves were
 7 just, the best thing about it for me was just to be in
 8 that environment.
 9 PG: So what was it like in the house where people
 10 were, okay, you'd go to the house the day or the night
 11 of a show and what was going on at the house?
 12 GC: Oh, well, it was chaos, pandemonium, in a certain
 13 way. I can't, again, I feel very sensory about the
 14 experience. I really didn't do it in a narrative kind
 15 of, you know. It was just overwhelming. It was like
 16 there were sequins everywhere, there were things to
 17 do, there were like, you know, other hangers-on, there
 18 were other stars who had gotten to this sort of, you
 19 know, hierarchy of who you would talk to and who would
 20 talk to you, who you would want to know and who would
 21 want . . . who would be glad that you were there. You
 22 know, you'd show up at the house and somebody would
 23 say, oh my god, doesn't that person have any place to
 24 live? And some queen would say that. Another person
 25 would be, you know, there's a show. You want to come
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1 the entire downstairs would totally shake, you know.
 2 Well, you know, if you're stoned or whatever, that was
 3 the big event for me. I don't remember the rest of the
 4 night clearly, but I remember experiencing that kind
 5 of scenario where like Oh my god, those people
 6 upstairs are having an amazing time. I remember that
 7 in that show, somebody drank blood. But specifically
 8 for me, I guess, those shows were as far as I could
 9 possibly get. They were the idea of why I left home.
 10 They were also very indulgent. They were a chance for
 11 me to get as totally fucked up as I wanted to be. They
 12 were a chance for me to be as gay as I ever felt I
 13 could be around other people. There was a chance for
 14 me to be really excited because it was a theatrical
 15 production and there were actors and acting and sets
 16 being constructed around me. It was a chance for me to
 17 be with people that I was absolutely stunned by their
 18 or their talent. And, again, I was really, really,
 19 really, really young. I was a little baby around that,
 20 the whole thing. So I think people were really nice to
 21 me.
 22 PG: How were the shows, were the shows all conceived
 23 as a group thing or was their a sense of somebody who
 24 did choreography, somebody who did . . .
 25 GC: Well, Scrubly, God bless him, was the musician and
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1 tonight and the guest list or whatever. But
 2 specifically, you know, I can't really, I can't
 3 remember, you know, event after event. It would be
 4 something to totally immerse yourself in, I felt, and
 5 I felt totally immersed in it, you know.
 6 PG: So when you go to a show, I'm sorry, I'm trying.
 7 When you go to the show, what were the shows? You say
 8 they did Busby-Berkeley. I've heard somebody say they
 9 constructed staircases, sort of like the Busby-
 10 Berkeley staircases and they would descend.
 11 GC: Sometimes. There was a show, I think, that had
 12 that in it. Let's say specifically, I remember a
 13 Halloween show where they showed Night of the Living
 14 Dead first. And, you know, Night of the Living Dead
 15 was pretty new actually at that point. I think it was
 16 about five years old. You couldn't get it on video.
 17 You had to rent the 16, you know, millimeter film. So
 18 it was an event that would get people out. I remember
 19 being there and being in the dressing rooms
 20 underneath, you know, just hanging out, getting stone,
 21 whatever. And at a real scary part, everybody in the
 22 theater would go like this (stomping feet). And nobody
 23 really noticed that until you're underneath and you
 24 hear. I didn't know where it was, but at a certain
 25 point, people would start Oh my god! Oh my god! And
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1 he still played the piano. I think he played with his
 2 band, sort of an a capella '30s group (?) Scrubly
 3 always seemed to me like the guy who knew what was
 4 going on, and he would play piano, and his interest
 5 was in the '30s too. A lot of the Cockettes' early
 6 stuff was trying to be a Busby-Berkeley musical. But,
 7 you know, Scrubly actually could play music and there
 8 are a couple of Cockettes, like Sylvester, who could
 9 actually sing, who actually, you know, you were aware
 10 that they not only could get their drag together, but
 11 that they had talent. And, you know, the show was
 12 built around them sort of saying well, this is what I
 13 want to do. Let's make sure that I get to do this, you
 14 know. And my experience, formerly, as becoming part of
 15 a theater group was because there was an offshoot of a
 16 schism in the Cockettes that wanted to be more
 17 radical. There was a point at the Cockette career
 18 where they became San Francisco's premier thing, talk
 19 of the town. Straight people wanted to go too.
 20 Straight people who were gay positive were extremely
 21 excited by coming at night to the Palace. And they
 22 would get dressed up too. It became known on the East
 23 Coast.
 24 Videotape 1 of 1, 90 minutes
 25 Rex Reed knew about the Cockette shows. Rex Reed was
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1 nobody knows they're going to go see it. It's the
 2 dress up anyways.
 3 GC: The Rocky Horror Picture Show I always felt was a
 4 distinct and total rip-off of the culture in San
 5 Francisco. The English writer came here, I'm sure, and
 6 experienced the community that was going on here. The
 7 idea of men dressing up like, you know, the sweet
 8 transsexual, people lived like that, they literally
 9 lived like that, every day of their lives. Men would
 10 walk out on the street in fish net and makeup with a
 11 beard on, and challenge everything, you know. And this
 12 was even added to that. On top of that, you could go
 13 to the Cockette shows and get all dolled up. I can't
 14 describe what it was like in a certain way for me. I
 15 know it changed my perspective because when I would go
 16 to those shows, I wouldn't even go for the Cockettes.
 17 I would go to look at the audience, to see the other
 18 people 'cause they were seriously beautiful people.
 19 Just, I felt like, you know, it was like a Fellini
 20 movie. There was another thing that you really
 21 couldn't see a lot was Fellini, but Fellini was
 22 incredibly influential on the entire scene. I remember
 23 when Tataricon (phonetic spelling) opened and
 24 everybody in San Francisco, it seemed to me, got
 25 totally freaked, you know, totally dressed up, went to

1 see this movie. It was not just a movie; it was a
 2 lifestyle. And the idea of being extreme visually was
 3 just an outgrowth of the idea of being a hippie here.
 4 And being part of the gay scene meant that it was very
 5 much acceptable for a male to examine and become a
 6 feminine persona. And so, where are we?
 7 PG: That's okay. Tell me, do you remember what it was
 8 like? What was the performance like? So you're in this
 9 audience. I've talked to a few people who also went to
 10 Cockette performances. They had very similar memories
 11 in a way. They said sometimes too, they said they'd be
 12 waiting to go into the midnight show, and the Chinese
 13 audience would come out. So there was that real strong
 14 contrast between somebody who'd maybe gone to see
 15 Chinese opera or a Chinese movie, and then this
 16 totally whacked out gay crowd. People would be getting
 17 stoned or maybe even dropping.
 18 GC: Oh sure. I have to say that I wasn't really an
 19 audience member, I mean, I became, Tahara and I were
 20 of like mind of a couple of other people that were in
 21 the contest became extremely close friends of mine.
 22 And so almost every event was a very personal sort of
 23 an outlet, you know, I wouldn't come and just get in
 24 line. I would come with the Cockettes or I would come
 25 with Tahara or somebody else and I would participate.

1 I was really driven to be in theater anyway. So I
 2 wasn't officially a member of the Cockettes but, for
 3 lack of a better term, I guess I could say I was part
 4 of the entourage, just peripherally. Again, I was
 5 still very young. So I was really drinking it all in.
 6 But I was drinking it in from the backstage.
 7 PG: Oh, so you were on the stage but in . . .
 8 GC: Not, no, I wasn't on stage but I was backstage
 9 with them. I would, you know, I would.
 10 PG: What did you do, as part of the entourage, what
 11 did you do? Tell me, when you got to the theater?
 12 GC: Well, the thing is it's like it didn't necessarily
 13 start at the theater. That's the thing. It's like
 14 you'd get over, you'd be over there. There'd be the
 15 night of the show, so you'd be at the Cockette's
 16 house. You'd be getting stoned, you'd be getting . . .
 17 PG: So they all lived in a house?
 18 GC: There was one house where everybody lived then on
 19 Haight Street.
 20 PG: Where on Haight Street?
 21 GC: Right at Haight and Divisadero.
 22 PG: Oh, so down away from the Haight proper?
 23 GC: Yeah, a little bit.
 24 PG: A little bit, but they were sort of hippies too?
 25 GC: Yeah. It was a very interesting mix of people

1 there.
 2 PG: Can you, I'm sorry, can you just describe this
 3 house a little bit for us?
 4 GC: Oh, it was outrageous. Sylvester lived there,
 5 Another person that lived there was Big Darryl,
 6 Johnny, Bobby. These were people that were in the
 7 Cockettes and it was a big flat, and it had been
 8 subdivided vertically into lofts, so that everyone
 9 sort of had a loft. The shopping, at that point in
 10 time, was outrageous. So the thrift stores had doubt,
 11 so this place was really opulent. There was fabrics
 12 and furniture and drag and feathers and posters.
 13 Harlow lived there, who was a woman within the
 14 Cockettes, and she was blonde and she was fascinated
 15 with Jean Harlow and so she read that Jean Harlow had
 16 (inaudible) everything, so she, her part of the house
 17 was green. She had a green vanity and a green room and
 18 everything in it was green, and she had her hair
 19 bleached blonde. And that was just one person there.
 20 And the thing is that that house very dreamy there in
 21 a certain way sometimes. Not so much me as my
 22 boyfriend, for some reason, I don't know why. That's
 23 his story. But we found ourselves there a lot, you
 24 know, just as hanging out, knowing we knew everyone or
 25 it seemed like we did, or we wanted to know everyone.

1 gay but, you know, he couldn't say that. But there was
 2 this sensibility developing around the community of
 3 gays.
 4 PG: They actually went back East and were panned,
 5 right?
 6 GC: Yeah, so eventually word got to the point where
 7 they were invited, so to speak, to go to Broadway. And
 8 they weren't ready for that, you know. And there were,
 9 you know, that caused a lot of challenge inside the
 10 group because there was also the feeling, in a certain
 11 way, that they were a radical political statement and
 12 they wanted to always be that. And then there was the
 13 other faction that wanted to be successful as a show
 14 biz phenomena.
 15 PG: Busby-Berkeley.
 16 GC: Right, and, you know, once it got to New York,
 17 nobody knew what the hell was going on. There were too
 18 many bosses, not enough thing. And, of course, New
 19 York was not ready to just be charmed by this sort of
 20 . . . I mean, when you really look at it on the standard
 21 of New York City and Broadway, okay, that didn't rate.
 22 You know, the sets were good here because, who knew?
 23 You know, they were just pasting things together
 24 (phone rings, camcorder turned off momentarily).
 25 PG: Yeah, but it actually is nice because you were

1 that ah, he was down in the East Village in the '60s
 2 and came out to San Francisco in '69, and he was
 3 heavily involved in the anti-war movement and all
 4 these radical movements. And when he talked about the
 5 Cockettes going back East, he just said that it
 6 wouldn't work because the Cockettes were a piece of
 7 San Francisco. You had to see them in the Palace
 8 Theater like you talked about. It was the whole thing
 9 of going to this North Beach Chinese Theater and
 10 taking over at midnight, and showing movies you wanted
 11 to show and it being, again, very community based.
 12 GC: Right, totally.
 13 PG: People not having normal theater expectations by
 14 any stretch of the imagination.
 15 GC: And the thing is that, too, that, you know, Rex
 16 Reed in a certain way had built it up. Rex Reed has
 17 his own modus operandi. He was moved, he was
 18 definitely moved by the experience of what you just
 19 said. Of being in a gay environment with a gay theater
 20 company in front of him, being campy about all these
 21 icons that he wrote in Myra Breckenridge, you know,
 22 that there was a communion for him. He went back to
 23 New York and tried to explain that and he was also,
 24 you know, created the expectation for that to happen
 25 when they went there. And, of course, it didn't. But

1 getting back it again, with the Angels of Light, which
 2 is kind of nice 'cause this is basically what I
 3 thought we were, about as far as we get today. So.
 4 GC: Well, that is the genesis in a sense what I was
 5 just explaining is that I was around that but we,
 6 there was a certain faction of people who felt a
 7 commitment to doing things radically, not selling out
 8 to Broadway, and continuing to experiment and making
 9 spectacle and theater for the community but dedicating
 10 it to the seriously sort of radical aspect of the
 11 social structure that had been developing ever since
 12 1964, even before that, the idea that San Francisco
 13 had its own tribe and that we were addressing it and
 14 we were going to be the theater for it, and that it
 15 didn't exist in New York. You couldn't take that to
 16 New York and you couldn't sell it, you know, because
 17 basically a lot of us believed in the magic that was
 18 going on in that time. Again, I can't not say that it
 19 was a very magical experience for me. I don't know
 20 whether it was real or not but it was an incredibly
 21 romantic, fantastic, magical time.
 22 PG: Gary Allinder, who was with the Gay Liberation
 23 Front over in Berkeley and lived in a commune and
 24 first produced Gay Sunshine out of Berkeley, he
 25 remembers very fondly the Cockette shows. And he said

1 that's essentially what it was, was being immersed and
 2 something that is so incredibly homosexual in
 3 derivative that you just lose yourself, you transcend
 4 it. Again, given the time and the fact of the
 5 repression that everybody had gone through. Stonewall
 6 was happening, political upheaval as far as the
 7 military and the war. All of that was contributing to
 8 really trying to see if it could happen. Can you live
 9 your life openly? Can you be a homosexual in this
 10 society? Can you see other people doing it? Can you
 11 laugh about it? Do other people think that Joan
 12 Crawford is as funny as I do and why? It was the first
 13 time, it was the first time for a lot of people and so
 14 it had an incredible power around it.
 15 PG: About what year was that? When was that when the
 16 Cockettes . . .
 17 GC: Went to New York?
 18 PG: Yeah, 'cause they went to New York (both speak).
 19 GC: I would say '71, '72. I'm really.
 20 PG: Within a year or so.
 21 GC: Yeah. And at the same time, we were our little
 22 ragtag that was sort of around them. We were sort of
 23 formulating our own kind of stuff and we were, again,
 24 creating our, using our bodies as theatrical tools in
 25 a sense, and living the life, which meant every time

1 you'd walk out on the street, you would have to deal
 2 with that kind of reality, which was very (inaudible)
 3 theater. And then we would decide . . . I think the
 4 first thing the Angels did, sort of collectively, was
 5 the Christmas show, where we all went to Glide, no,
 6 not Glide, Grace! Grace Cathedral on Christmas night
 7 as angels. And when I, you know, because Fellini, I
 8 speak of the fantastic imagery that politically
 9 infused people's images, this was a phenomenon for
 10 people to come out of midnight mass, and I don't know
 11 if they were shocking or not, but we didn't mean it to
 12 be that shocking. We meant it to be beautiful, but
 13 there were these beautiful visions of angels, you
 14 know, people in silver and sequins and rhinestones and
 15 wings and doing it, and on bikes. You know, risking
 16 actually being arrested and all of that, but in actual
 17 fact, bringing more of that kind of outrageous
 18 activism collectively on a visual scale to a place.
 19 That's what sort of The Angels developed outside of
 20 the stricter show biz dominated kind of desire that
 21 the Cockettes had.
 22 PG: Is that where the name came from, that Christmas
 23 performance where these people decided to do this,
 24 appear as angels?
 25 GC: Angels of Light?

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1 PG: Yes.
 2 GC: No. I think the name came from one of the people
 3 that was in the group read about The Angels of Light
 4 being mentioned in the Bible, I think, as the
 5 seductors, the seductive cohorts or something, a band
 6 of incredibly seductive angels that might be in league
 7 with the evil side.
 8 PG: Lucifer.
 9 GC: Right. Which was kind of scary but also, at the
 10 same time, we were playing with that kind of imagery,
 11 you know.
 12 PG: Being antiestablishment.
 13 GC: Sure.
 14 PG: Okay, just a couple more questions I want to ask
 15 you. Could you tell me, basically, original Cockettes
 16 were how many people, vaguely? Do you have any idea,
 17 ten, twenty?
 18 GC: Yeah, I would say about ten.
 19 PG: About ten.
 20 GC: I can't remember technically how many people lived
 21 at that house. I know there was John Rother, there was
 22 Darryl and there was Bobby and there was Johnny,
 23 Sylvester, at some point. There was a big
 24 philosophical schism and it happened in that house
 25 with a certain person who actually started, one of the

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1 founding members of the Cockettes who called himself
 2 Hibiscus. And Hibiscus grew up in a show biz family in
 3 New York and he came out here and he was one of the
 4 main members of the Cockettes, and he also was the
 5 person who dissented from the Cockettes when they
 6 started to think about commercializing their selves.
 7 And he was spiritually guided as a youngster. He
 8 wasn't very much older than I was but he was much more
 9 flamboyant and much more schooled in theater. So he
 10 created a theater group because that's what he did as
 11 a kid from eleven on. He worked on the Lower East Side
 12 with La Mama. But he stayed in a commune, when he
 13 first got here, that was . . . One of the founder
 14 members was a Bohemian poet named Irving Rosenthal.
 15 And Irving had written a book called, oh god, Hummer?
 16 Anyway he was in league with or in the same sort of
 17 peer group as Alan Ginsberg. And he and his commune
 18 spent a lot of time philosophically sort of
 19 demonstrating activism as far as it relates to being a
 20 tangible reality of what the idea of living in San
 21 Francisco could create, what you could do as an
 22 alternative society with the power of a commune, with
 23 the power of really seriously committing yourself to
 24 not using products that create waste, to understanding
 25 what organic meant. To understanding what your life,

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1 how to live your life in a sort of pure way and also a
 2 radically queer way. Hibiscus was familiar with this
 3 commune and one of the people that he really, really
 4 respected moved into the Cockettes' house with them,
 5 and began to infiltrate the commercializing of the
 6 group that questioned the value system, questioned the
 7 motive, questioned the potential. And it sort of
 8 created a schism that turned into the Angels of Light
 9 on the one hand the Cockettes on the other. Does that
 10 make sense?
 11 PG: Yeah. Now is Sylvester one of the people who
 12 wanted to go commercial?
 13 GC: Yeah, I mean, Sylvester not only wanted to, he
 14 did.
 15 PG: Yeah, that's true. I mean, I'm not making a
 16 pejorative, it's not a pejorative out of this.
 17 GC: Well, the thing is, it's all very much, it's
 18 easier to say this in hindsight. Nobody knew what was
 19 going on at the time. It was incredibly chaotic and
 20 there were differences of opinion, there were, you
 21 know, flaming egos everywhere. I'm not saying Hibiscus
 22 was a saint by any means and he also played people at,
 23 you know, opposites. And he wanted to be definitely
 24 the star of the show and so one of the reasons, also
 25 that the Cockettes and the Angels of Light started was

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1 because he wasn't getting all the energy and attention
 2 that he'd got, that he could get. You know, there was
 3 Sylvester and all these other queens. So nobody
 4 really, at the time, had that much stuffed out. What
 5 happened was we, very philosophically, developed our
 6 perspective by being the anti of what the Cockettes
 7 were. We knew we wanted to do theater, we knew we
 8 wanted to be in connection with the tribe, in
 9 connection with the spirit that was alternative here,
 10 that was really strong, that was a community, that was
 11 defining what it was to be alternative and defining
 12 what it was to be an alternative faggot, you know.
 13 Drag was only a tool, it wasn't the be-all. Some of
 14 the people in the Cockettes lived in drag and they
 15 wanted to be beautiful women. That was okay, but that
 16 wasn't essentially what the Angels were about. So
 17 there was a schism in that kind of desire. And again I
 18 have to say that the idea and impact visually was
 19 where it worked immediately. We created, on an
 20 individual level, sometimes studying, erecting
 21 challenges to what you could do in society. And then
 22 as a group, it became even more so. Like I say, you
 23 walk out of Grace Cathedral and you see angels, you
 24 see an apparition of 16 incredibly beautiful, I would
 25 say, it's a matter of opinion. But, you know, this

1 apparition that is really stunning to say the least.
 2 PG: Some of the Cockettes, you say, wanted to be
 3 beautiful women. Were any of these people transsexual,
 4 do you think?
 5 GC: I think they were working towards it. Yeah, there
 6 are a couple now who have had operations and one of
 7 them is a, as far as I last heard which, you know,
 8 this is now 1997. I think in 1992 I heard about one of
 9 them who had moved to Las Vegas and was working as a
 10 show girl there, is married to a policeman, and had
 11 done a couple of Hollywood movies as a woman.
 12 PG: Wow.
 13 GC: And I kind of, you know, at my point, I was
 14 extremely vulnerable and naive and young and innocent
 15 walking into this world. I thought that they were
 16 their most gorgeous women before the operation. There
 17 was that impact on me of, well, at about that time, I
 18 think Death in Venice came out.
 19 Videotape I of 1, 106 minutes
 20 You know the idea of the androgynous beautiful boy.
 21 There was one guy in the Cockettes named Johnny who
 22 went on to have a full operation and change. But while
 23 he was in that transition, he, to me, was awesomely
 24 gorgeous, not just physically but what he embodied as
 25 the male who is soft, who is perceptive, who is

1 angelic in that he hadn't been forced by that
 2 establishment out there to be a man. I mean, that was
 3 all bullshit, you know, everybody was discovering how
 4 to be who they really were, and he, I thought, was a
 5 really beautiful soul because he was living his life
 6 completely and as honestly as possible. He was not a
 7 man, he was an androgynous sort of thing to behold.
 8 And, again, all I'm saying is that coming into the
 9 presence of someone like that was really very powerful
 10 at that point in time. Just seeing someone living like
 11 that. And that was the power behind our idea of
 12 becoming a group and doing it enmasse and doing it on
 13 Christmas Eve and, you know, saying Angels, come out,
 14 you know, let the Angel come out in you, you know.
 15 PG: I'm going to ask you one other question. It's
 16 going to sound really kind of boring after this
 17 because you talked about beautiful. So this is kind of
 18 a boring part of the question. But when the Cockettes
 19 finished the show out there, because you were talking
 20 about finishing in the Fillmore and people would go to
 21 the Stud. When you finished the show at the Palace
 22 Theater, where'd you go?
 23 GC: Okay, well let's go back to the community. The
 24 main thrust, again, like I said, I didn't even, there
 25 are points in time where I didn't even pay attention

1 to the show. The idea was that there were people there
 2 and they would be there on that night, and only that
 3 night, and they would go only there. They would do
 4 whatever they did during the week and there'd be these
 5 amazing creatures that would all be in this one spot.
 6 So it was an incredibly social event. You would go
 7 with it. You would meet someone, you would want to
 8 meet someone, you would go to a party, you would go to
 9 someone else's house. That's about as much as I can
 10 say. The fact of the matter, there was a sense of
 11 community there would create a catalyst for your
 12 individual, you know, thing. It would be, instead of
 13 going to a bar, it'd be a great time to cruise, a
 14 great time to make contact with someone, you know. a
 15 great time to be cruised. You would get dressed up,
 16 because that was a very much part of the potential of
 17 what the event was. It was like I'm going to meet
 18 somebody that I would never have, you know, this is
 19 the only venue where I can meet that other person.
 20 PG: There's a couple guys who owned an after-hours
 21 club in North Beach who said they remember the
 22 Cockettes going there sometimes after shows. It was
 23 called the Big Basket. It was downstairs. It was like
 24 a renovated underground amusement park.
 25 GC: I was really, really, really young.

1 PG: So you couldn't get in to these places?
 2 GC: No, I would probably go to the Stud, simply
 3 because I knew I could get in there, or go to the
 4 Universal Life Church because it would be open after
 5 the Stud. I'm there were other places I had no
 6 connection with, and also, again, I'm sure people who
 7 were 25 at the time were having an incredibly
 8 different experience, after the shows of the
 9 Cockettes, than I was as being 17. And the community
 10 there was an outlet for them too. And, you know, I'm
 11 sure there were people doing that, you know. They were
 12 a very, very, very beautiful audience as far as I
 13 remember. And so I think it was just very exciting for
 14 people to get together. The Cockettes would probably
 15 go some place, you know, and explode, crazy! But the
 16 thing, to me, was very similar in a sense to what
 17 probably what The Factory was in New York, you know,
 18 there were always people who wanted to take your
 19 picture, always people who wanted to make a movie,
 20 always people who wanted to be with you, always people
 21 who wanted to connect on that level, you know. And
 22 then I also have to say that there was an amazing
 23 influence. Rock and Roll had an amazing influence on
 24 everybody at the point, and the Cockette shows were
 25 okay but they weren't Rock and Roll. So, you know,

1 even the Cockettes wanted to go see whoever was
 2 playing in town, you know. One of the biggest times
 3 the Cockettes, big fiasco, is they wanted to open for
 4 Captain Beefheart when he played at the Berkeley
 5 Theater, you know. And it was ridiculous but there was
 6 a definite desire to do that, a definite desire to
 7 link up with that kind of Rock persona, you know. That
 8 was another alternative for that, for the group to
 9 find its way was to be a Rock band. But don't be a
 10 Rock band but be the Cockettes, you know, associate
 11 yourselves with them.
 12 PG: And I know that they played, Cockettes played
 13 places outside of the Palace Theater sometimes too,
 14 right? Later they did sort of little benefits or
 15 something.
 16 GC: Sure, there were a lot of shows and there were a
 17 lot of different groups of people who would call
 18 themselves Cockettes too, you know. And, again, I'd
 19 have to, we're documenting this but I guess I do have
 20 to put a disclaimer at the bottom of it and say that I
 21 was completely overwhelmed by the experience and my
 22 details are subjective and, you know, I know people
 23 who were there who remind me of what I did and of what
 24 the show was and who know exactly who was there and
 25 who did what. I'm just . . . that's as subjective as I

1 can be right now.
 2 PG: That's all right, that's all right, okay. Well,
 3 we'll just, you've got stuff to do. I hope you're
 4 feeling well awake.
 5 GC: I'm feeling ready to do my project.
 6 End of Interview

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