

Francine Logandise Interview

by Susan Stryker

in cooperation with
Joanne Meyerowitz

and the
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Introduction

Francine Logandise was born in New Jersey 1928. (S)he left home, lied about her age, and joined the merchant marine at age 14 during World War II. After serving twenty years in the Navy, she retired to a civilian Department of Defense job at the Pentagon. She relocated to Anaheim, California in the mid-1960s, where she owned a Western Auto store. Later, after divorcing, she moved to the San Francisco Bay Area with her new girlfriend, who had introduced her to both cross-dressing and S/M. Francine began living *en femme* in 1969. She spent several years collecting transgender-related materials, writing about transgenderism, and lecturing on the topic. She went back into business for herself in 1977, owning a string of bars in San Francisco and a resort on the Russian River. Logandise owned the 222 Club on Hyde (mixed), both Black Rose bars (transgender prostitute), The Depot in the Outer Mission (mixed), Francine's (lesbian), Elaine's (lesbian), the Deja Vu (gay/mixed), and Café San Marcos (lesbian/gay/mixed), as well as the Triple Rock Resort. She retired from business in 1991.

SS: So I'm all ears. Where do you want to start talking--your days in the Navy, or when you first started understanding that there was something going on with you about your gender, where?

FL: See, that's just the thing. This is what a very good shrink told me once--never try to psychoanalyze yourself. I ran away and joined the merchant marine when I was 14 so that I wouldn't miss the war.

SS: And what war was that--World War II or Korea?

FL: World War II--I'm almost 70. Shh! Don't tell anybody.

SS: OK, I won't.

FL: So I joined the merchant marine and stayed there a year.

SS: Where were you from originally?

FL: Jersey. But I've lived here a long time. Lived in Long Beach. Lived in Washington. That's when I was a child. Then I joined the Navy. I was in the Navy for 20 years. Married, of course. Raised four children to the age of 18, and I knew I was going to leave her after that but I wouldn't make my children step-children because I was a stepchild myself. And when I was fourteen my stepfather said "You are no son of mine." And then later, seven years after I was in the merchant marine, I said to him "I'll be your friend, but I'm not your son." So I raised my children. I was in the Pentagon, retired from the Navy, came back west because my ex, she was "I don't like Virginia, I want to live in California." So we came back, lived in Anaheim, where I opened a Western Auto Store. Biggest mistake I ever made. I lost \$36,000 so fast I never knew what hit me. So I went into the bar business. I opened a topless and bottomless bar. Boy did she [her ex] have a fit! Of course, she didn't know I was planning on leaving her.

SS: About what year was this?

FL: 1968. Then I divorced her, and she kept pestering me, and I talked to my mother, and my mother was living in Castro Valley, and my mother said "Just junk it all and come on up here. If you need any help just let me know." And I had this real cool girlfriend. Well just before we left, one Halloween night, this friend of mine, 26 years old, had married the most mature 15-year-old you ever met in your life. This girl was more mature than a lot of 40-year-old women I've dated. And she said "Let's dress the guys up for Halloween." Well, my friend wouldn't have anything to do with it. Too macho. But Sue said to me "Whaddaya think, hon?" And I said "I don't give a damn." And I put on a dress for the first time in 40 years on this planet. Now you explain that to me! We trotted up to LA, and were in this place having a drink, one of the girls said to one of the guys there, "Now where's a place where we could really have some excitement?" And he said "The Sewers of Paris." We said "What!?!!" He said "you have to go in this little alley." Well, believe me, it lived up to its name. We went down and we found it. And it was, well, let me tell you--I've never even owned a bar like this! All the thats, thems, whos, whats. And they were having an amateur contest for people who were out for the first time. And the girls put my name in, unbeknownst to me. So they called my name out. And the girls said go on, go up there. And I said "Are you insane? I'm a business owner over in Orange County." And wouldn't you know that I won?

SS: Well.

FL: But anyway we soon moved up here, and I would still be with her if she hadn't wanted to have a baby. She had been an only child, and she really wanted a baby, but I said I couldn't, that I had already done my duty. But anyway, that's how I started. This guy brought me a book called A Year Among the Girls. That was written by one of the 10 richest men in the country under a pseudonym. I was fascinated. I'm nosy by nature. I wanted to know about all this--these guys doing all these funny, kinky things. So one day, Sue said to me "I want you to throw out all your male clothes. You're just not the same. You're not as comfortable. So get the hell out of them. If you don't I'm just going to take them away and leave you here naked and bring you back some other clothes. So one day we went down and we shopped and shopped, and she did--she took them all away. And I haven't had on an article of male clothing since 1969. When I opened my first bar here the gays fought me. "No transy is going to open a gay bar in this city!" And I just said "Come on. If I can fight three wars I can take all of you on." And I founded a bar, and I expanded.

SS: What was that bar called?

FL: The 222 Club.

SS: And where was that?

FL: 222 Hyde. It was built during the Jack Demspey-Jack Sharkey fight, we found out when we were remodeling. In those days they used newspapers for insulation. And when we were pulling the walls down we found all these old newspapers--we wanted to preserve them but they crumbled in our hands--but that's how we found out when that damn bar was built. 1931. So I just expanded, and before it was over I owned 11 bars in this city. Straight bars, mixed bars, drag queen bars, show lounges, lesbian bars.

SS: OK--if you could just run through the names of the bars. The first was the 222.

FL: The next one was the first Black Rose on O'Farrell. But I outgrew that real quick.

SS: When was that?

FL: 1980. Then I went way out in outer Mission and bought a bar and named it the Depot. The Hell's Angels sold it to me under the table. They were not quite kosher. The money wasn't even in escrow. Then while I was running the 222 Club, the Depot, and the Black Rose--the first one--it got so packed that the police were harassing us, because they said "You've got 50 people standing outside every night because they don't have any room, and they have to go across the street to urinate. Now you're going to have to get off this block or we're going to shut you down." So I bought another place--turned it into a show lounge. And then I went around the corner from

that and bought another place and called it the Deja Vu. Then I bought a place and called it Logan's. Then from there I went up to the river and bought a resort.

SS: Russian River?

FL: Yeah, I bought the Triple Rock. Then I bought Elaine's, which was on Guererro, which ironically was at 222 Guererro. Then I bought Francine's, but I intended to sell it the day I bought it. They were broke, they were so god-damned cheap, that I settled with the tax people for ten cents on the dollar. I told the broker when I bought it that "I'm retiring." Because I had my social security, and I had my Navy retirement, and I knew that I would never be flat broke, and that I could live. Not high on the hog, but I can live. So I wanted to sell it, but it took us three years waiting to get a respectable bar in there. A lot of wannabes, but I wanted to sell it, and then I finally did.

SS: And now you're doing all this? [Indicating all the collecting of transgender related materials]

FL: Well I was doing all this as far as gender identity until I got back in the bar business. As soon as I got back to work that took up all my time. Oh, I've kind of pitter-pattered with it, but, well, people who had known me for years just kept saying "Look--get back in the action." And then one thing that I'll have to say about transvestism, what's really got me fascinated--is that it and S and M go hand in glove. Moreso than anything else. I've seen the dykes in operation and I think they are miserable. They are cruel. And the gays are just kind of crude. Heterosexuals--they know how to do S and M properly. They are more into the costumes. They are more into the teasing and that. They are not as into the whipping and blood-letting and all that stupid stuff. You don't go to a heterosexual S and M meeting or a house and have to see all these things stuck through noses and all over the place. That is just revolting. The heterosexuals now have this place here called Bondage a Go-Go. You see the straight couples come in, and then you see the others, the dyke girls, they don't go for all the--and gay men, they do go for all that stuff, but the girls, I almost threw up one time at the Janus Society, one of these girls was beating the other one so bad that she was bleeding. I said to them that I'd seen people beat and killed in three wars and that I didn't need to see that sort of crap here. I said that wasn't S and M, that was just bullshit. What some of my girlfriends call it is "leather and pleasure."

SS: Different strokes for different folks, I guess.

FL: I agree, until you get cruel. There is no excuse for cruelty. If you've seen as many killed as I have, you just can't stomach it. I don't care whether it is a man or a woman, don't give a damn. Now my ex-girlfriend Penny. She knew how to use a whip erotically. I mean erotically! She knew exactly how to do it. She was a skilled woman. Now another thing I've gotten into recently is pony-boy and pony-girl. This has really

gotten me fascinated. I've been writing to this guy--[indicating a pony-girl fetish magazine]--and have just written an article for him.

SS: Tell me some about the Black Rose. The Black Rose that I knew, the one I used to hang out in some--

FL: The Black Rose is the one that was on television all the time. Mike Douglas, People Are Talking.

SS: Oh, I didn't even know that. See, that's one that I used to hang out in some, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I guess it was. Over on Jones.

FL: Yeah--OK. I sold that in 1987 to this black guy, and he made a lot of mistakes. You don't play in your own back yard. You don't date customers. You do like Miss Francine did and you go to another bar. But he did it. And he lost \$225,000 cash. I had a hook in him. And I knew it was a weak bar--I tried to sell him the 222 Club, because this was his first bar, he'd never even bartended, and I said to him "George, this bar is a horse to run. We'll run 350 to 500 people here on show nights." His eyes got big as saucers. I told him that I took \$400,000 out of that bar in ten years. I told him that that bar was always busy. He wouldn't have it. I held this property on Scott Street, and he had inherited some property from his grandmother. He went down to this shyster down in San Jose--Commerce Loans, or something like that--and they give him the loan. On \$425,000 worth of property, this jackass only got a \$285,000 loan. He owes me a hundred sixty five grand yet. That's all he had left. Last I saw him he was standing in the line at St. Anthony's to eat. Just like that--two years--all gone.

SS: So was the Black Rose always a tranny bar?

FL: It was many things. The dykes tried it there for a while. Let's see, what was it--the Thousand and One Nights, the Tortuga, the Wall Palace, it was a cowboy bar when I bought it, owned by the same people who owned that place up on Polk Street, but they didn't make a go of it there either. I went in there and said well, damn, the only thing this can be is a whore's bar. Like I said, the girls tried something there and they couldn't make a go of it--even had a kitchen there. They tried everything--they tried food, they tried gimmicks. They were saying that they had the longest bar in San Francisco, they tried roller-skates. So there I was, I had the Black Rose up on O'Farrell. And I said "We're going to gut this joint and bring the drag queens in, and they will bring the johns in, and the johns will buy drinks. Drag queens are like lesbians--they won't spend any damn money. The lesbians won't spend anything. You'll go dead broke in a lesbian bar. That's why none of them last. Good girls pair up and settle down and you never see them again. Bad girls come in to fight and won't spend any money anyway. That's the combination. That's why--The Cafe tried them--they were rubbing their hands with glee. First thing they said when I sold it was "They're outta

here." And now the Cafe is all men--[sarcastically] now isn't that strange? But that's why no lesbian bar has lasted. Don't buy any of this BS that women don't have money. They do. I've got a lesbian friend over in Oakland who makes a hundred twenty four grand a year. So women have money, two cars, and a house. It's just that when they pair up they don't go barring. The trouble-makers do, yes, but they don't buy anything. They stink.

SS: So was the Black Rose the first transgender bar that you had?

FL: Yes, the first Black Rose.

SS: Tell me something about running that bar. I've never talked to anybody who's done that work before.

FL: Nothing to tell. Ninety hour a week job. Those drag queens--there's only two human beings I don't want to associate with on a regular basis. That's dykes and drag queens. And I have a hard time figuring which goes on top and which goes on bottom. You can ask any of my bartenders. Those girls would come right out of Francine's and fight right out on the street. Oh, yes. I had more cop calls than at any other place. I had my landlord on my butt daily--"Are they women or are they not?!?" And I said, "No, I don't think so." Those queens were the same way. I had a lesbian come into my Elaine's one day and go up to the bartender and say "I'm Francine's wife." And he says "Like hell you are. I know who's sleeping with her right now." And she picks up an ashtray and smashes my mirrors. A lady! Ha! I mean a woman. They cured me of opening another bar again. Which I ain't going to do, unless it would be a straight or gay men's bar. That's the only two I would ever have again.

SS: Can you tell me anything about how--well, just how it worked to own a drag bar? How did the girls find out about it? Did you go out and recruit people?

FL: Oh, yeah. Word travels. Word of mouth. Whores have to have a place to pick up their johns--nothing better than a drag queen bar for that. And a lot of them are junkies. A lot of them say that they want the sex change, but I would say that less than one half of one percent really deserves a sex change. Especially any of those who had actually been gay before they started living this way. Most of the real true sex changes I have found to be asexual before the operation. There have been some married guys--there's one, Marie, who was married 31 years and has five kids, then got a hair up his butt to change. I said "Have you ever slept with a man?" He says no, he's only slept with this same woman for thirty-one years. So about a year after she's got this operation she calls me and she's living with this lesbian woman and running a pottery shop in Minnesota. Another one I know lives over here in San Pablo, if she's still there. Was Jeffery, living with a little gal named Louise. They'd been together for twelve years, when she up and says she wants a sex-change. Well Louise goes to pieces--"What's the matter, how have I

failed you?" Well Louise leaves and runs off with this man, and Jeffery starts going through this, but he doesn't tell people yet what he's doing. And I said are you serious about this? Because if you are you need to go in and tell your boss what you're intentions are. And if you get fired you just let me know and I will take care of you until the day you die. And the boss didn't care, and she's still working on the same job as Jennifer. And Louise came back a couple of years later and they bought a house and are living together as lesbians. See what I mean? See what I said about sleeping with men? I said to all of those people, you all think I'm stupid, but that's two that I know personally.

SS: I'm still interested in hearing stories about what went on in your bars.

FL: OK--I've got one going right now, where this guy has just left his wife and kids, and it just so happened that he had a brother who worked for me at Francine's. And he doesn't know whether he's gay or transsexual. He's really wacky. He started out as a tranny. But about six months ago, I was asking him, he'd gone down to Bloomie's spent three hundred seventy five dollars on a leather corset, and I said "What! Are you insane? Honey, women don't wear those god-damn things. Women don't even like garter belts unless they're for playing around in the bedroom.. Look at how a woman dresses. She dresses comfortably. Wait till you've been in that son-of-a-bitch all night--you'll learn. Well, he's just starting out as a typical transvestite. We all have to go through that phase, every one of us do. I did. But then I wised up. "This in nonsense. This is ridiculous. Give me a pair of pantyhose and a pair of panties and the hell with the rest of it!" Standing there, trying to put all this crap on, struggling into it. I don't blame women at all. I won't even wear a bra now that I've had my chest done.

SS: I was going to ask what sorts of physical things you had done to yourself.

FL: Not much--that's about it. I wanted it because when I stood on the stage at the Black Rose introducing shows I wanted to wear a revealing gown. Those padded things are a pain in the ass. So there was this guy, he stopped by, Dr. Newton, and I said "Hey Doc--I don't want nobody putting a damn knife to me." He said, "Well, can you keep you mouth shut?" I said, "Hell, I'm in the bar business." He said, "Well, I'll fix you up." He had a hotel room where he did injections. So I rushed out to see Carol Doda, because she got injections. I said, "Carol, how many problem have you had since you got your injections?" She said "Zero. The only reason we don't have much more injections in this country is that they're screwing the women. Can't make as much money off them." These [indicating breasts] cost me four hundred dollars. If I'd have gone to a doctor--fifty five hundred. So he explained it to me. He said "This is a silicone-collagen mixture. We do it in three stages." He had me lay on the bed, injected me, and I said I'd be back in six weeks. And he showed me what to do, how to do this stretching exercise with my skin, and how to massage them. He said "Lay with your head up here all during this process, don't let your head get lower than your body."

Now, I'm one that believes in following--why pay for something if you're not going to--? Well, I went the next time and I said "I want you to pull that mirror over so I can see-- It was exciting, watching them blow up like a balloon. So I went back the third time, and he said "What do you think?" And I said "I think we quit. You're paid in full. Here's your hundred and fifty bucks, now let's go have a drink!"

SS: So when did you do that?

FL: God, it must be twenty years ago now.

SS: And you still haven't had any trouble with them?

FL: No. [inaudible] When I went to my cardiologist one time it was funnier than hell. He takes me in a room and says "Francine, would you mind showing the nurse what you look like?" I said "Sure, Doc, and that way I can see your nurse, too, and I like to see cute women." And the nurse says "Jesus Christ! She's bigger than I am." I says "Yeah, but you got yours for free--I had to pay for mine!" It's true.

SS: Were you involved with a group called Salmacis?

FL: Years and years ago. Sally Anne Douglas.

SS: What can you tell me about them?

FL: Oh god, I'll show you something, honey. Pause that thing right there for a minute.

[break in taping]

SS: [reading caption on an artifact--lapel pin?] "I am a Salmacis Girl." Very interesting.

FL: You know what Sally Douglas has gone and done--married a woman! I heard that from a friend of mine, one of my best friends since 1971, who I met at a Salmacis meeting.

SS: I've just read a few little things about Salmacis. Tell me what it was all about. And tell me about Sally Anne Douglas, because I don't know anything about her--just the name.

FL: Oh, I don't know anything either--she was just running it, that's all.

SS: Was it mostly transvestites?

FL: Yeah, mostly. Now, there's a real strict club that's run by that Virginia Prince down in LA.

SS: Tri-Ess?

FL: Yeah. She's weird, you know. You can't come to a meeting dressed, you know? You've got to bring it in a bag and get dressed at the hotel room. She came up here once and invited me to a meeting, and I said "What the hell do you mean I can't come to the meeting dressed? I don't own any male clothes!" But that's her rules.

SS: Yeah, strictly for heterosexual men.

FL: Well, 99.9% of transvestites are heterosexual men. And we won't ever see 99.9% of them on the streets because they've got jobs and families and they won't risk it. But we know, we estimate, that there are 27 million heterosexual TVs in this country. I can tell practically from my own correspondence. They all use post office boxes. I never did, because I don't give a damn.

SS: So tell me a little about Salmacis.

FL: It was nothing, just meetings, sitting around. They had girls night out, similar now to this ETVC that they have here in the city. Only they do have meetings in the back rooms of a bar somewhere. Well, they invited me to come, but I didn't really want to go, I said they are not exactly my cup of tea. These truck driver types coming in all-- [indicates feminine body shape with hand gestures]--because that's a typical heterosexual TV thing. And their wives come. And they're all "honey this" and "honey that"--it's all that same bullshit. It's almost like the limp-wrist faggot. That's why I told this friend of mine that this ain't exactly my cup of tea.

SS: So have you been involved with any of the other TG groups here?

FL: Oh no, not at all.

SS: Just lived your life, ran your bars?

FL: I have a very, very, very mixed group of friends. Gays and straights. But they are all upper class. And why do I use that word? Because--all working people are nice people. I'm a good friend of Mark Thompson--you ought to know about him; he did a biography of me. I just found it here recently--let me look,. Young lady, there is more shit in this house than anybody will ever know until I die. Somebody will have a ball.

SS: What are you planing on doing with all this stuff, by the way?

FL: I want to donate my books to the right place. I talked to San Francisco Public Library, talked to the gay archives there, I want them kept all by themselves, I don't want them integrated. Yeah, Mark did this biography of me. And Jonathan Katz--he interviewed me once, and I criticized him, and he jumped right down my throat, he said "Francine, we didn't even know about you, about your type of people when we wrote that book." Oh--I just love that man. Love him. I think he's superb. I got him to autograph my book. Made John Retchy, too. I said to him, "Come here. I've got about six or seven of your books," and he said "You do?" and I said "And you have to sign every god-damned one of them." I knew Christine Jorgensen. Let me show you her picture.

SS: You did? Tell me about her.

FL: She was very senile in her later years. She told me I was a fool for ever championing our cause. Here you go [handing over picture], this was several years ago.

SS: 1978.

FL: [Handing over Mark Thompson article] Here you go. That's my Penny right there. Though he calls her Nickle in the article.

SS: [Reading] "Life Among the Heterosexuals"

FL: Here's the funny thing about this man--he calls me up in about 1976 and says "I've heard all about you. I'd like to come over and see you." So I said "Huh. OK." Well, I was living over in Fremont. Then I opened the door, and that man was standing there, and we instantly became the best of friends. Before we even opened our mouths. I've even met his parents. His father is a big doctor, they have a home down near Big Sur. He called me up one weekend and said "Hey, I want you to come with me down to Big Sur this weekend," and I said "OK, but we're not going in your god-damn Volkswagen. We'll take my Corvette." So we're at the dinner table, and his mother, who's a hot shit woman lawyer, and his father says "I know what this one is, and I know what that one is, but I'm not sure about this one."

[End of side]

FL: And his wife says "You doctors, you don't know nothing." They were peaches. Lovely people. My mother was the same way. I met my mother--I didn't know how she'd feel--Mark was the first gay person she'd ever met, the first I'd ever taken there, the first really that I had ever run into that I would want to take. And I say "Mom, this is Mark, and he's gay, and he works for the Advocate." And she says "What would I want to know his business for?" And then she turns to him and says "Glad to meet you."

Would you like a glass of wine? Sit down, please." You should have seen her the first time she saw me dressed. You'll die laughing.

SS: OK, hit me.

FL: She's sitting there on the couch, just like you are. And I walk in, and she says "My, don't we look pretty today? Where'd you get them nice legs?" And I said "I think I got them from you." And she says "Must you wear your skirt so short?"--I was in a micro-mini--and she says "Must you wear your skirt so short? And why are you wearing lace-up boots? No woman in her right mind would wear lace-up boots that high. Now take me out to brunch." So we were sitting there, at her favorite brunch place, and I hadn't told her that I had been on television, I didn't think it was really worth mentioning, and I used to take her to brunch every Sunday, so we're sitting there, and the waitress walks up and says "Oh, we have a famous person here! She was on television!" And my mother says "What! You were on television and you didn't tell me?" I said it slipped my mind, which was a lie, I just didn't think it was worth mentioning. I took her to the Hooker's Ball one year. She was a riot. My son--one of my sons--is six foot four, two hundred eighty pounds, and I said "You have to escort grandma." She tells her hairdresser "I'm going to the Hooker's Ball and my grandson is escorting me." So he drove his little flivver over there to her place, and then drove grandma to the Hooker's Ball in her big-ass Cadillac. Now, my mother has a small bladder like me. She has to pee. And you know how ladies' public restrooms are--especially in places like ball parks. If men had their problems, we'd do something. My Mom says "I'm going with you." And we went in the men's room, and got right through. Of course they have stalls in most men's rooms. And my Mom walks right in, and goes "Hi guys!" [making big waving gesture] and whoosh! you should have seen them. And she comes back out of the stall and says "Bye guys!" So she comes out and goes over to the other line and says "Hey you fools, there's plenty of room down there in the men's room." And you should have seen them make a beeline.

SS: So how did you start getting in touch with people like Jonathan Katz and Vern Bullough?

FL: Because of my writing. I'll give you a copy. Let's go up to my library. You're not squigglish are you? [because the library doubles as an S/M play room.]

SS: No.

[break in taping]

SS: [Looking at framed mementos on the walls] Who holds a Francine Look-Alike Contest Every Year?

FL: Well, Castro Station now, because all my bars are closed.

FL: [Rummaging through file drawers.] --stuff like Salmacis Society, this is all my TV junk. All that stuff is in here.

SS: Oh, the Haldeman-Julius sexology books, those are great.

FL: Bullough gave those to me--signed them, too. Pull them out and take a look.

SS: Yeah, I've actually seen most of these, but I haven't seen this many of them all in one place.

FL: Look.

SS: The Story of Bessie--A Transvestite Tells of His Passion for Women's Clothes, signed, Vern Bullough. Confessions of a Hermaphrodite, Confessions of a Transvestite.

FL: Those are some others he gave me.

SS: Sexology magazine, the one with Cauldwell's article. Cauldwell sure wrote a lot. [Reading off other titles] Yeah, these are all important books.

FL: Now years ago a guy named Lee Brewster--

SS: Oh, I know about Lee Brewster!

FL: OK--here's all his books.

SS: Drag Magazine--that was so good.

FL: Yeah, he had really good stuff.

SS: He did, he really did.

FL: When he calls up, I just sort of listen, because he knows so much. It's not like most of this crap that gets published nowadays.

SS: No, I agree, it's all really good stuff. I've pawed through most of the old Drag magazines.

FL: Oh--did you see this thing on TV the other day about Jan Morris?

SS: No, didn't even hear about it.

FL: I've got it down stairs, I'll show it to you. I've got her book Conundrum, too.

SS: [Continuing to look through files] Let's see what else--Lee Brewster's Mardi Gras Ball, Mirage, --

FL: You know I've got an original set of Turnabout.

SS: Really? That's great.

FL: Von Fredricks--remember him? And have you ever heard of this guy called Mags?

SS: Mags? No.

FL: Well, he's got transvestite stuff running out of his ears--Oh, yeah!

SS: Do you know Bob Davis? He's got a very nice collection.

FL: No. Well, this guy Mags has got over 16,000 pieces. He sells them--he's in business. You know, I've got every issue of Drag.

SS: That's great. They're pretty rare. Now this--Mirage--I've seen this picture on the cover somewhere else. Is that Tisha Goudie? I've seen her in TAO stuff before--Transsexual Activist Organization--with Angela Douglas.

FL: Angela K. Douglas.

SS: So Mirage--is that what Moonshadow became?

FL: I think so, but I've been out of it for so many years.

SS: [Looking at the magazine more] Yeah--it says here that this is what Moonshadow had been.

FL: Here, I can give you a copy of this, as much as I've got.

SS: "A bibliography of female impersonation, transvestism . . ." hmm, cool, I'll have to look through that.

FL: It's only about a third done.

SS: This is all the stuff that you have here?

FL: Yeah, it's about 1200 books. In the bottom drawer is some more stuff, if you want to look. Yes, I was quite busy with all of this until I went back to work. Once I went back into the bar business, everything here went to pot.

[break in taping as we continue looking through books and magazines]

SS: So you bought your first bar in when, 1968?

FL: Well, I bought my first actual bar back in 1965, back in Virginia. I bought a little beer bar, a trucker's bar. Now, you ought to have seen that bar if you want to see a wild bar. I had to have a bartender that was ten feet tall. Then this bitch one night--you know what she does?--she's in that bar and takes off all of her clothes and does a dance across the god-damn top of the bar. And of course the truck drivers are egging her on, throwing her money, saying "Come on baby!" I said--"Good way to go to jail."

SS: So then you came out west, bought the Western Auto Store--

FL: Bought the Western Auto.

SS: Then came up here in 1968, '69--

FL: And didn't do nothing for seven years except write, lecture, and travel.

SS: So it was in those seven years that you collected most of the material that we've been looking at this afternoon?

FL: Right. And I've even got a whole women's section up there that I didn't show you, that I keep separate, because of course the women all deny that there is any such thing as a female transvestite. And I say, bullshit ladies--you just get away with it because nobody pays attention to you. But don't kid me, because there were lots of famous ones. Lady Esther Stanhope--what was she if she wasn't one? Queen Christine--what was she? And then there was the one I fell in love with when I was 12 years old--George Sand.

SS: Oh, sure.

FL: My mother got me my first library card when I was nine. I'm a voracious reader. And I--[inaudible]--my mother only had a sixth grade education, a Sicilian immigrant--[inaudible]--said, "why don't you give George Sand a try? Go ahead, take it home." So I was reading it and after a while I said "Mom--this guy's a girl." And she said "Well, what do you think about that?" And I said that I loved it. Now, have you ever read anything on the Chevalier D'Eon?

SS: Yes, I have.

FL: How about the Abby de Choissy?

SS: Not nearly as much, but I'm familiar with the broad outlines of the story.

FL: Bullough gave me an original manuscript that he wrote on de Choissy, I have it in there.

SS: Oh, really? I'll have to look for it.

FL: Well, you won't be able to find it, he never published it. It's just the manuscript, or whatever you college-educated expert people call it. I'm just a ninth-grade educated sailor lady. Or sailorette, if you prefer.

SS: OK, I'm just trying now to get your story straight in my head. You say you never cross-dressed until you were about 40 years old?

FL: Once--when I started reading--when my mother was gone--when I was baby-sitting my little brother, I pulled her girdle on. God only knows why. And then another time I was over at a friend's house, and her father was a policeman killed in World War II, and I played with her and her brother, and we were in her bedroom one time, and she "try my bathing suit on." And I did. And her mother walked in and said, "Hm. Looks cute." And walked away. And that was about the only stages I ever went through. [Notices SS looking at art on the walls] As you can see, I really like women's art. I love those pictures, they used to hang on the walls at Francine's. I'm Sicilian, and we're derriere people, but you probably know that. You can take the rest of a woman and just leave that--we're derriere people.

SS: So--back to the chronology. You had the first bar in 1965, then you were up here and not doing anything except writing and running all over.

FL: And collecting, and reading. Sue was working, and she had a pretty decent job. I had my Navy pension, so we had more than enough to live on. It wasn't like we were destitute or anything.

SS: And then you started owning bars again when, in 1977, 78?

FL: Yeah, in 1977. The 222 Club. I still have no idea why I bought it.

SS: And you kept that until--?

FL: 1991. That's when I quit.

SS: [Looking over bibliography again] This is all stuff you have here?

FL: Yeah, it's all here. Oh, here's something else I can show you. A picture of our lady Christine, the last time I saw her--well, not the last time, but the last time that I saw her when she was still in good shape. Now where the hell is she? It's in here somewhere. I saw her dress once as a woman to a man--as a publicity stunt. As a joke for a publicity stunt. [Looking through memorabilia] Remember Lavern Cummings?

SS: Uh-huh. Well, there she is. She sure was a looker. I've heard that she's working as a man in a department store. Do you know anything about that?

FL: No. Now this is one of my stars, at one of my bars. That's Rory. Oh, there's Christine.

SS: [Reading autograph on Rory's publicity photo] "To Frank--you are one god-damn son-of-a-bitch, but you are OK for a man, sort of. Love, Rory."

FL: [Laughing.] That kid made me a lot of bread. When he did his flower dance he could bring the house down.

SS: She's gorgeous.

FL: [Handing over picture of Jorgensen] You know about this place called ONE in LA?

SS: Yeah, sure.

FL: OK--they had this thing and she was there.

SS: I just saw a film of Christine Jorgensen from back in the 1950s. It was a Danish film called Paradise is Not for Sale, and it had about 20 minutes of old footage from the '50s of Jorgensen doing her nightclub act. It was really great. I'd never even heard of that film.

FL: You know, she lived with her niece in her later years down in Laguna. She wrote me a couple of times, and I came and saw her once up here, and god was she ever senile. I didn't even know it was the same person.

SS: Was that like in 1986 or so? I've seen some other pictures of her up here around then.

FL: I can't be sure. Paul Walker--and Bullough was still around in the area then--Oh, Pat Gandy, remember him?

SS: No.

FL: He was from Stanford. Doing stuff down at Stanford, doing stuff with, oh, what's his name?

SS: Donald Laub.

FL: Yeah, that's it--doing stuff with Laub. [Looking at other pictures] That's me, one that Mark used for one of his publications. That's my wife. She was the one that got me heavy into S and M, and then we split up because her life changed. She got to be an executive and didn't want to be among the peasants anymore. She wanted to come home to me a couple of years ago, and I said no.

SS: Too gone for too long, like the song says.

FL: Sixteen and a half years. I love her. But I don't want to live with her. Now there's a gal on the east coast, damned if I can remember her name, and she runs a big TV club. And here's another of my old girlfriends, a sex change. Her name was Stormy and boy, was she ever stormy. She went to Vegas. She's down there doing camera work. Taking pictures of things. She called me up, wanted me to move to Vegas, wanted me to take care of her, and I said "I'll do no such damn thing."

SS: She's MTF transsexual?

FL: Yeah--she's beautiful, isn't she? But let me tell you--she's wild. Wild wild, wild, wild when you go out with her. Still too much man in her. Whew!

SS: Who's this? [pointing to another picture of an MTF]

FL: That's one of my bartenders. Oh, and that's Tessie and Gene Mettis, when Tessie was just 15. Oh, and here's one of my wedding. Pat Monclair was one of my bridesmaids. And there's Marie again, the one who's a lesbian now. And that's Sally Anne Douglas, I think--I wouldn't swear to it, but I think. The best person would be Gary Parson, my friend down in Santa Cruz, he would know where Sally is, even, because he keeps up with tranny stuff even more than I do. Gary is one of these scardey-cat heterosexual transvestites who won't go out dressed unless it's with a whole group. He won't just go out on the street. Here's my second wife. Nicest woman you ever met. Seven and a half beautiful years with her. But I can't make babies anymore. This is my wife's ex-boyfriend. Now this one here, isn't she something? [showing picture of herself]

SS: Oh, yeah. Look at those skinny little legs.

FL: And look at that corset. You remember me telling you about that guy earlier? I told him, "I know. You just wait till you've been in one of those things all night. If you start drinking you'll wish you hadn't!" [pause, looking at more stuff] Mark Thompson and Vern Bullough both have been on my butt for years to get finished with my writing.

SS: Some of this stuff is really nice--you have a very expensive collection here. All this Ed Wood stuff--I've seen Death of a Transvetite before, but I didn't even know about some of these others.

FL: Oh, yeah, he wrote about nine books. He was wacky, you know, about as cuckoo as they come. Somewhere around the house here, I've got some more--he was something else. Now, Roger Baker's Drag I think is a damn good book.

SS: Yeah, I've looked at that.

FL: And A Year Among the Girls is a damn, damn, damn good book.

SS: Wow, there are so many autobiographies listed here in your bibliography that I've never even heard of.

FL: Oh, yeah, there are a lot. Now let me show you this book I got completely by accident. I could have kissed this guy's rear end when he sold it to me. We went up to Sacramento. This friend of mine was a science fiction nut. So we went to this store up there, and were rooting around, and this friend of mine saw this book and said, "Hey Francine, do you want this?" And I trotted my ass up to the register and held my breath, because I thought "This guy is going to sock me a fortune for this." I asked him what the price was. He looks at it and says "Eh, about two and half bucks." Well two and a half bucks flew out of my purse quicker than anything you ever saw in your life.

SS: So what have you got?

FL: Well, I would say that you would have to fight me to get this book out of the house. Now let me tell you a story about this book. This guy was having trouble with his car, and this other guy stopped and helped, and this first guy says are you in business. And this other guy said that he was. And this first guy says well, you did me a huge favor, and if you ever need anything like pencils and paper and stuff, here's my card, and you just let me know. So this guy comes in to this guy's office, and he sees all these beautiful pictures of women. And he says "who is that?" And the guy says, "Well, that's me." And the other guys says "What!?!". And that's how this book came about. That's one of my rare finds.

SS: Oh my--Femme Mimics, by Carlton Winford, 1954.

FL: That's getting old. When that guy in the store said two and half bucks--well, after we got in the car my friend said "I bet you could have kissed his butt." I said I would have killed a man if he had wanted. He said, "Well, I know that you love books."

SS: Anything before the 70s is pretty hard to find, and anything before the 60s is really, really hard to find.

FL: And this, the guy only printed 160 copies. So how many do you think are still around? Keep going--you're about to get into the pictures. OK--you're getting into it now. What do you think about those? Now try to find that book today. That's why I'm objecting to what they are trying to do to my library. That's why I'm fighting with them.

SS: You're talking about specifically with the San Francisco Public Library?

FL: It was like trying to talk to Jesus Christ: "You're not going to tell us what to do, we're going to tell you what to do." Well, you're giving it so I think you should say. And I like women, but I tell you, I almost slapped that woman. She said that she would split them up and mix them in with the rest of the collection. And I said over my god-damn dead body you will. Oh, now there's a famous one [pointing to book]--Lucien Phelps. A friend of mine worked with her in New York.

SS: She was here in San Francisco, too--worked at Finocchio's.

FL: Oh, yeah, I'm sure she did. She was one of the good ones, the real good ones. Isn't that some book?

SS: Yeah, this is a real rare one--you're not likely to see another one. Lester LaMont--he's another one who was at Finocchio's. He was a vaudeville performer, originally, known as the papier mache fashion plate, because he made all of his costumes out of papier mache.

FL: I heard a woman describe fashion better than I have ever heard it described in my 69 years on this earth. It was at one of these fashion shows--somebody made a remark about fashionable, and she turn around to them and said "Fashionable is what I wear. Unfashionable is what other people wear." I said, lady, you hit the nail on the head.

SS: Harvey Lee!--He was another one who was here. Now, I've actually seen a lot of these photos before, in Finocchio's programs. And we've actually got a fair amount of Harvey Lee's papers at the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society.

FL: Good, good. He was something.

SS: He was here in San Francisco until fairly recently, until the late 1980s.

FL: So are you running this gay archives here in the city?

SS: No--I work with them, I'm on the Board of Directors, but I don't run it.

FL: Because I gave Philip a whole bunch of stuff to put in there.

SS: Phillip Turner?

FL: Yes. I sure hope it got in there.

SS: Well, I'll have to go down there and see.

FL: I gave him bags of stuff, all the stuff from all of my gay clubs. It sure as hell better be down there. I'd say I probably, being conservative, gave him probably 500 pieces of merchandise. Because they wanted pictures--he was running for emperor or something, and there were pictures of him in my bars, and they wanted them--and I thought since I was out of the bar business, and a lot of the people in the pictures were all dead, so I decided that I'd just give them to him--he was always yelling at me to give them to him.

SS: Well, I'm sure that if they haven't made their way down to the archives yet, that he must have--

FL: This was maybe two years ago.

SS: I'll find out. Well, you've sure got lots of good Harvey Lee pictures here.

FL: They damn well better be there. I gave him buttons from the different contests, flyers, pictures--even some really good ones of Flame, when she was in her glory, with all of her flaming red hair and her red gown, that she robbed that company she worked for to buy it. You know where she is now, don't you?

SS: No, where?

FL: You haven't heard? She's in love and she and her lover went and opened a little bed and breakfast.

SS: Oh--Elton Paris!

FL: Now here's another little something--

SS: Wait, this is really great.

FL: --don't know you'll ever see anything like this. [shows SS a piece of old sheet music]

SS: I'm really interested in these pictures here of Elton Paris, and the Beige Room.

FL: So I hope Phillip didn't confiscate all of my stuff for his own personal use.

SS: I can't imagine that he would have. The GLHS is a big place and I can't claim to know everything that goes on there. But I will check into this.

FL: Well, we are not very much in love with Philip Turner, when he gets a disabled parking sticker for his car and then leaves it there all day while the rest of us hunt for parking meter change. He's not very popular in the Castro. Now here's a comic book--

SS: [Still looking at *Femme Mimics*] Ray Leen--this thing has got all the famous FIs from the 40s and 50s. You know, I think Elton Paris still lives here in San Francisco.

FL: Here's another picture of Rory. You can have that if you like.

SS: Oh, thank you.

FL: Ain't she something? Now that ain't signed is it?

SS: Yes, right here--"To Frank, Who's Lasting Longer than the Last Set."

FL: Here's another flyer for a Francine Look-Alike Contest. I liked last year's better, though. That one was cuter--this one is kind of drab. Yeah, I gave Phillip everything I had on my gay clubs--everything. Ah, Rory, I told her more than once that if she didn't have that anatomy I'd have probably wound up in Reno. She'd just giggle. Just the nicest person.

SS: Know where she is now?

FL: Haven't the faintest idea. Haven't seen her in years.

SS: This is a treasure. [handing back *Femme Mimics* book.]

[Another five minutes or so looking over ephemera.]