

Oral History interview with Tony Manriquez (Tani de Molina)
10/15/00, 9 P.M. Lyons on Van Ness in San Francisco
by Don Romesburg
transcribed by Don Romesburg

TM: A relationship between a female impersonator and a stripper depends on the person. Just because you were a female impersonator does not mean that you would hang out with a stripper. You may not like her or she may not like you. We did get along just fine with Lili St. Cyr, who used to be at Bimbo's 365, and since her I have not seen a stripper. Nowadays what you have is just naked women. I don't mean to demean them, they have to make a living, but that's where the culture is taking them. There's no tease in the strip tease. Speaking for myself, I enjoyed tremendously a good stripper, striptease. Sexually, maybe, I was not motivated or turned on, but I admired and I could see where the strip tease was going, and it's like a drum. You'd have a Tahitian number or an African number, or any number that has a drum like a heartbeat. A well-done striptease will not turn you on sexually, but will bring out emotions you did not have when you came into the club. For myself, I got along just fine. I got along better with women than I did with the people I used to work with. And they were my friends.

DR: What was your stage name?

TM: My name was Tani deMolina.

DR: Did you have a particular persona or skill you were known for?

TM: It was the flamenco dancing.

DR: Did you dance with a partner?

TM: No.

DR: What clubs or club did you work at and what years did you work?

TM: Okay. I only worked Finocchio's. I came from Tijuana. I worked the Mona Lisa club from '53 to '56. I was born in Santa Barbara but I was raised in Tijuana, and I was going to get experience. My idea was to--I took a lot of Spanish dancing lessons and I paid a very high financial price for it. But no one would give me a job as a male dancer. Somebody make a remark, 'They come in to see the girls. If you get a wig and a dress I'll give you a job.' Well, next week I had a job. That's what you do when you have a need, a financial need. And that's what I did. I was only 17.

DR: Where was the Mona Lisa?

TM: In Tijuana. It doesn't exist anymore.

DR: Was it a venue that primarily had impersonators or mostly women?

TM: It was a straight club. And I was trying to pass. And did. Barely. Most of the time (laughs).

DR: So then you moved up to San Francisco when?

TM: I came up to San Francisco in '56. And first I went to Santa Barbara and got some wardrobe together. My goal was Finocchio's. Of course, it was not that easy. I did audition about three times. Then the time came when they signed me up.

DR: How many years did you work there?

TM: I was there '57, '58, '59, '60 and I left the early part of '61.

DR: Do you remember what other female impersonation venues were in San Francisco at the time?

TM: There were none. The closest thing would be Jose Sarria at the Black Cat. But he was doing comedy.

DR: What were you doing to make ends meet when you were auditioning?

TM: Oh, I worked in a restaurant.

DR: Was working at Finocchio's what you had expected it to be?

TM: Working at Finocchio's was more than I expected it to be, because it was by far more glamorous than I had ever lived, and to me, you have the movie stars come to see you, it was the big thing. I met some very, very big names there. It was more than I expected. And then once I got there, I realized I had to work a lot on makeup, hair and whatever. I was way too green when I came here. And lucky for me, somebody took me under her wing. Her name was Gilda and he was a French-Canadian. He had a French accent. He was only there about a month after I got there and then he left. He had a beautiful face, beautiful wigs, beautiful wardrobe. Very, very, very glamorous, and took me under his wing. And then showed me tricks of makeup and hair. Then of course there were others. And Gilda would not give all these secrets to anyone, but she gave them to me. And I'm grateful for that.

DR: Sure. How do you think that the business changed, if at all, from the time you started working until the time you left?

TM: It was only five years. If anything, it got better, because when word got out that so many movie stars were coming in, they would come to see us and then hoping to run into a movie star. I was just thinking walking over here to meet you. A lot of people I didn't even know who they were, but they were somebody famous, would meet me. Obviously, they were famous, because if they were not, they would not have been allowed to come backstage or buy us champagne. We were not allowed to drink. We were not allowed to go to gay bars or be caught in a situation that would look bad for the club--they had a morality clause. If you got caught with that you were out, they would cancel. And of course, you did not want to have your contract canceled. When I tell people how much money I was making then, they say, 'is that all?' I was making \$140 a week! The studio apartment [I had] I was paying \$44.50 a month! So \$140 was almost four times the rent, four months rent. So imagine how much that would be today.

DR: That's good money compared to most of the other clubs I know from that period, people were lucky if they got \$75 per week or \$100 per week.

TM: At the Mona Lisa for two years I made \$35 a week, and I was happy to get it. And that's the truth.

DR: How many shows a week did you do?

TM: (laughs) Oh god! I did four shows a night. I did an opening, my spot, and a grand finale with two or three costume changes. And the dressing room was up on the second floor (laughs). So twelve appearances per night, five nights a week, and in the summer six. It was so much fun, though.

DR: Were you always really happy with the work, or were there times you felt you were being treated unfairly?

TM: I can only speak for myself. You have to understand where I came from and how I came. I was working the fields. I'm a Mexican-American who was working the fields from when I was 12 years old--are you crazy? If they had asked me to stay for two more extra shows I would have, and that's the truth.

DR: Sure. I've heard other people complain about the management. But for you--

TM: You knew what was expected of you. Lucky for me, I had had discipline in my life. I knew how to--if not to obey orders, to follow instructions. I knew what was expected of me at this particular job. No, I have heard of other people who came from the My-O-My in New Orleans and 84,86 Club [82 Club] whatever it was in New York City, which according to what they say it was mafia owned. I don't know. And they were really mistreated. Badly. Basically abused, hit. Somebody wanted to quit--this is what I've heard--and this guy took a shovel and beat this drag queen, female impersonator, up. But I don't know, I never had to go through that.

DR: But you did pay for your own makeup and wardrobe? That wasn't supplied by Finocchio's?

TM: Oh yeah.

DR: Was there a choreographer for the routines?

TM: The opening and the finales, we had a choreographer. Lester La Monte. He did those things. Your specialty you had your own routines. Changed them every three months, supposedly. Sometimes I would just change the dress (laughs) or change the music. Same routine. You know how it is.

DR: What really made a great show for you?

TM: The talent that I worked with. Nowadays, I resent very much the people who get up there dressed in a wig, with a tape and makeup, and go up there and get applauded and traipse about on somebody else's talent, like Judy Garland or whoever they're trying to sing by. To me that's sad. Even if you look like Judy Garland. If you don't look like Judy Garland, and you put the face on of Judy Garland and you have the mannerisms, something of Judy Garland, then you're making an effort. This is only me speaking. But when somebody doesn't look anywhere near Judy Garland, a six-foot-two football player with a wig and makeup and lip-synching a Judy Garland tune and getting applause, I resent that very much. It angers me. Mainly because I worked very, very, very hard for many years, studying flamenco dancing and the music and rhythm. Was I had was maybe a little bit of talent, because I liked it so much, and I was a hard worker. We prepared ourselves for the show. We brought something into the show. You had to or you didn't work at the club. I should introduce you to Ray de Young, who is still alive, he's 72-years-old. He had a soprano voice that he could fill the whole club with without a microphone. It was a natural talent he had. Then we had Elton Paris, who was 6'7" with heels on but had a sweet, sweet, sweet soprano voice also, and he could really sing. LaVerne Cummings, you couldn't tell in a million years that he was a man. He was a great singer, too. Talent. Talent is what made it. If you didn't have it, you didn't work.

[Break to eat and talk about our day]

DR: So what would you say made up a typical audience at Finocchio's?

TM: Tourists. Tourists and tourists and more tourists. Finocchio's was on a Gray Line Tour. Sometimes there would be two or three buses parked outside and then two or three more on the next block waiting for these people to get out so they could come in.

DR: Were they audiences generally pretty enthusiastic about the performances?

TM: Oh yes.

DR: Did you ever have audiences that you felt were laughing at you in a sort of degrading way?

TM: No. Absolutely not. No. When I spoke to somebody who would say, 'How can you do this?' I would say, 'Well, this is what I do for a living.' They'd say, 'But how can you?' I'd say, 'Easy, I come in at

seven, I put some make-up on, I put a dress on, and that's it.' And they'd say, 'No, no, I mean *how can you do it?*' and I'd say, 'So I can have fools like you come in and buy tickets and pay my salary, that's how!' Absolutely. Some people I see in showbiz nowadays, I saw on the Discovery Channel, have surgeries, like scales put on or sharpen their teeth, there's this one called the Alligator Man. But he's always employed! Tattooed makeup on his whole body, but it's permanent. That's a little bit too far. And nobody would take you seriously about any kind of job.

DR: Were there nights when it felt really great?

TM: The audience was always on. My best nights were when my number would stop the show. How often did that happen? Every other week. (laughs) I remember Elton Paris, he's a black male, 6'7" with high-heeled shoes. I would follow him and if he was feeling good, as he was coming off the stage he would say to me, 'Follow that with your purty shit.' (laughs) And I would say, 'Sit tight. Watch me.' If I was in a good mood. But there were so many shows. Most of the times you would just go out there and perform, and then sit. But there are times, and then there are *times*.

DR: Did you ever have arguments with other performers?

TM: I have arguments with my pastor. I'm that kind of a person. Oh yes, absolutely. We wouldn't speak to each other for a week, and then we'd forgot about it. But it's normal. Don't try to find out if we were more vicious than others. All the people there had their own lifestyle. And some of them were different than I was. Fortunately for me, I was not a minority as I am in church [works at all-black church]. At the time I was there [Finns] three of us were Mexican. Kara Montez was also from Tijuana. He was born in Los Angeles, but was raised in Tijuana.

DR: So did you ever meet people from the audience? Besides the celebrities?

TM: Do you really want to know that? You also want to know what I did with them?

DR: Um-hmm. (They laugh)

TM: Remember what I told you. I will tell you my story if I can tell you where I'm at now. I need to encourage and empower the people who are doing whatever they are doing they need to to survive in their younger years, that there is a life after that. This, to me, was good, but it was only five years of my life. I've done other things.

Usually, there would be several gentlemen waiting for me. And depending on who we were or where we were at the time in our relationships with somebody, we'd be available.

DR: When you did go with someone did they generally pay for everything? Treat you like a lady?

TM: Well I should hope so. Treat you like a female, I don't know about a lady. In those days I didn't want to be treated too much like a lady because--if this paper is for a transgendered group, I should say I've never had any inclination about becoming a female. That was not it. I have never in my life been with a woman. To be a transgender is not for me. I'm too freaky.--But did they pay? Of course they paid.

DR: What were some of the most lavish things that people did when they took you out?

TM: Usually, by the time I got out of there, I didn't want to go anywhere. I wanted to go home and get my money. I just wanted to be treated well. But I had to put my face on six days a week, and then I have to go there on my day off? I don't think so. Or getting home and them expecting for you to pull out silk stockings or a negligée or a wig or lipstick and make-up. Oh no, baby. You want that, you gotta buy a ticket. That's not what I had in mind. Bye. Nothing wrong with doing all that if that's what you want to do. But I didn't have to do that for money. So when you're alone, of course you would get to choose and pick who you would want. David Niven was a very good client. You don't want to put that in the paper,

because you could be sued, but David Niven was a very good client. But that's all he was, a client. I mean his name and his fame, all good. But just a client.

DR: I won't put that in, probably, but that's interesting.

TM: It should stay with you.

DR: It seems that Finocchio's in those days was shying away from using people who were having sex changes and taking hormones and stuff like that.

TM: And I don't blame them.

Dr: Did you ever know anyone working there who was going through anything?

TM: Yes. Stormy Lee was going through that. And he was kind of a 'stripper.'

DR: Why do you say 'kind of a stripper?'

TM: Because he was not a stripper. He didn't have what a stripper has to have.

DR: You mean in terms of a body?

TM: In terms of performance. He just did not have what it takes to be a stripper. But he did strip. He was going through the hormones and he gave me some of that stuff and the first time I did, it made me very nervous and depressed. And then I lost my sexual drive. Baby, I'm Mexican. I cannot afford to lose my sex drive, okay? (laughs) That was the end of that after two weeks. Uh-uh, oh no.

DR: What was the talk about Stormy?

TM: It got to the point where the breasts were starting to get shape, and it was getting to the point where he would strip and just show a little bit. And he was told that if he was going to do that, he was not to remove the strap. *I'm sure the hormones or whatever that they were using in those days must have been very crude.*

DR: But the management allowed her to continue working throughout the whole thing?

TM: By that time, I left. But I don't think so.

DR: Were there other people who did striptease-like performances as part of their routines?

TM: No. Not as striptease, no.

DR: Do you remember ever having any trouble with law enforcement during those years?

TM: I was always afraid, because I had seen and heard what happened. But I was very low key. I have ever been to jail. Up until now, when I minister there! I go twice a week. So I really cannot tell you how much. You had to be careful when you went out with a bunch of gay people leaving at the same time. I would stay back. And on the street I was, certainly not butch, because I could never be that, but I was not like I was onstage.

DR: Did the police or fire inspector ever give Finocchio's trouble while you were there?

TM: Not that I know of. Mr. Finocchio either paid them very well or had all his permits in order.

DR: Which do you think it was?

TM: Probably both. He had a goldmine. He would pay them.

DR: Did you ever have problems with people on the street near the club?

TM: No. You got in, you got out. You would not wear—they would not let you wear your costume or makeup out. We would share a cab that would be waiting for us.

[Tape machine screwed up]

Tape 2

TM: What really turns me off is the ones that get dressed up in women's clothes and refuse to shave their mustache or hide their beard. It's disrespectful to women. Because we tried to be as close as we could to women because that's what it was. We had to learn how to walk, how to act, everything. And for some of us it became second nature, sort of. For some of us, we never had to come out to nobody, because they knew from day one. They knew before we did, because we acted differently. Of course in those days it was very, very, very difficult to live like that. But that's the price one has to pay for being who one is.

[Discussion of his church today. Invites me to come to church and meet transsexuals. Suggests considering writing a paper on the ways that organized religion has hurt people. Even though there is much good in his Hands on Heart ministry. "If all this was a lie, and I know that it is not, I would still live this way."]

DR: So before the tape fiasco, we were talking about what you did in your offtime and where you lived and stuff. Can you tell me again who lived in the building and where it was in the city, again? [Had mentioned on the destroyed part of the tape it was called "Vaseline Heights"]

TM: It was in about 1959, almost 60. I moved over to where Ray De Young, Cara Montez, and LaVerne Cummings living. And the reason I moved over there was because we all got into one cab and went to work together. And it was cheaper to share a cab. You know how much it was? At least a buck and a quarter. So we each chipped in fifty cents, that included tip. From McAllister and Octavia to 506 Broadway. It was convenient. Oh, we had a driver, a friend of Lucien or somebody, who used to come and pick us up and drive us home. All of us in an old station wagon. I think it was 25 cents a night per person. Sometimes we would ride and sometimes we wouldn't, depending on where we were going. And with whom. And why. (laughs)

DR: Do you recall any striptease or exotic dancing venues in San Francisco from around that time?

TM: The strippers were not necessarily involved in a club all to itself. They were introduced into a variety show. Strippers did not do what they do now. And of course, a nightclub was for adults. I'm thinking specifically of the Sinaloa Club. I liked to go there because they had Mexican dancers. It was on Broadway, a few blocks down. What was his name? Anyway, he is now about 75 years old and is still teaching Mexican dance. Him and his wife would dance, and there would be singers—not necessarily Mexican—and strippers, one or two strippers. There was no such thing that I could remember that was just a strip show. There were not burlesque houses that I can remember. So it's not like the Mitchell Brothers.

DR: So there weren't places like the Condor?

TM: No. No. It was after '61.

DR: Any others in that area?

TM: Lili St. Cyr at Bimbo's 365. You know what her big number was? Bubble bath. What she did was she would come home from a party and remove her clothes and jump in the tub filled with bubble bath. The tub was made of acrylic--see-through--and she would at times go to the wall of the bathtub and put her breasts there and you could see her breasts--not pressed, because it would be distorted--but just touched. And that was all you could see. I saw Sally Rand and I saw Gypsy Rose Lee there too. Of course they were in the decline of their lives. They were already old. But they were good. They were entertaining. Sally Rand's fan dances, the way she moved, the artistry of the movement, you couldn't see nothing. She'd lift and turn and by the time you thought you saw something, she would have turned around. And that was exciting.

DR: Did you ever visit those clubs as an impersonator?

TM: Oh please, no. That wasn't me. From 7 to 2 I would wear the mask. But it was always exciting to go places and be introduced. At the Cow Palace they would have, when the circus came, we would have special seating for us. And the clowns knew who we were! (Laughs) Oh, they were cute.

DR: How do you think being a talented stripper is different or maybe similar to being a talented impersonator?

TM: You said it. Talent. It didn't matter who you were. Like Sally Rand and Gypsy Rose Lee. They didn't have looks anymore but they had beauty--talent. I saw Josephine Baker in 1960 when she did her last tour to the United States. A little old lady--and I'm not talking badly about her--most of her hair was gone. She would crawl--I don't mean crawl actually--she would plod slowly to the middle of the stage where her aids would put a dress on her and zip her up and in the dress was the body. And she would have kind of a cap with a stud in the middle of it, and a wig like chandelier crystal. And as the curtain rolled, she would be standing there hunched over, and she would straighten up, straighten up and all of a sudden she became Josephine Baker and she was moving and singing and dancing. Then the crowd went crazy. And then the curtain went down and her hands went down and her spirit went out and she waddled offstage to her dressing room. And she came to see us. And that was the best lesson that I had of whatever it is and however you feel, you're in the business. Give them all you've got. It may be your last breath onstage, but give it to them.

DR: Wow.

TM: Because if you are an entertainer you get the energy from the crowd. Wherever they are, that's where you go. They say there are no bad audiences, only bad entertainers, and I believe it, because when they are cold you have to make sure before you get offstage, they love you. Whatever you have to do.

DR: How do you think that the income of strippers were compared to impersonators in those days?

TM: It was probably--I can only speak about Finocchio's. I'm sure some of them made more than \$140 because of their pull. Because people knew them and stuff like that. Not much more than that. Now a headliner like Lili St. Cyr of course made more. But neither, I believe, neither the strippers nor the impersonators worked for their salary. There were ways of making money. If you wanted to. The waiters don't work for a salary, they work for their tips.

DR: But how could people tip at Finocchio's?

TM: I wasn't talking about tipping (laughs). It need to be told. It was the truth. And it is happening right now. Fortunately, when you are a "celebrity," people want to get close to you and you need to take advantage of that while you have it. Take advantage of the fact that you are who you are and people are willing to pay the price and you would have gone with them anyway because you like them. Since you were alone [single] anyway, and somebody admires you and adores you, sort of, they'd be willing to do almost anything because you are you--You are what they remember from the stage--then there's nothing

wrong with that. And if there's a few dollars exchanged, then that's okay, too. This coming from a minister [laughs] Mary Magdalen was a self-employed woman.

DR: What were some of your memories of hanging out with strippers, including Lili St. Cyr?

TM: Always a lot of fun. None of us ever had any problems we discussed. Those years were the fun years. We were all young, we were all healthy, we all had money. So our association with them was not about sadness, it was always about fun. I remember one time that we [he and St. Cyr] went out and she had an admirer waiting for her. Asked me if I would carry her coat. And I said, 'Lady, I don't carry coats. I don't even carry my coat. No, I will not.' So she had to ask her admirer to carry it. You're not going to treat me like that, you know? But I'm sure it happened because she was a bigger name, bigger star. But you can't use me unless I let you. And then it's okay. Do you remember the little Hispanic one in *To Wong Foo*?

DR: John Leguizamo?

TM: I was very much like that. Real feisty. Even though I came from real humble beginnings. When I knew my worth, nobody could take advantage. Like we'd be stuck in the middle of nowhere, and I'd say, 'What do you mean we're going to sit here, I'm going to go get us a ride!' That's how I used to be. Afraid of nothing.

DR: Do you remember other specific times?

TM: Lots of very foggy nights. We would stay out late. Sometimes go down to the Tenderloin where there used to be after hours spots to go dancing and stuff like that. And the relationship between the women and us was very friendly. Especially with the prostitutes and the strippers. In those days, that's because they were like us. Very much like us. They were not about spending time with somebody who was across the street. And it wasn't always about sex, it was mostly about being seen with somebody. Very much like us, and very down to earth. Because you may be a big star, but I'm a star too, and don't you forget it. I may not have my makeup on, but you know who I am, and don't you forget it. There are the people who came to the shows who were doing theater in San Francisco who would just love to invite us out. It all goes back to talent. Either you have it or you don't.

DR: You mentioned that you went out to clubs in the Tenderloin, do you remember the names of any of them.

TM: I don't remember any of the names, but they were on Mason Street. There were some after-hours spots. You brought in your own alcohol, your own bottle. They would sell you the setup. A bucket of ice and glasses, whatever. And you could put in on the table. And the vice cops were busy there with entrapment with the gay people.

DR: And the prostitutes?

TM: Not so much the prostitutes but the gay people. They would sprinkle this powder on their pants that you could not see and then they would arrest somebody who say, 'I didn't do nothing,' and they'd say, 'Oh yes, you did,' and they'd flash this light that was fluorescent and get the hands.

DR: Did you know of any impersonators who either lived with or had relationships with strippers?

TM: No, not with strippers.

DR: Did you ever hear of experiences of one-night stands between impersonators and strippers?

TM: (surprised) No! (laughs). We didn't have any male strippers then so we didn't have any one-night stands, okay?

DR: So you are basically saying that most female impersonators tended to be homosexual. Would you say that strippers, in general had any one sexual orientation?

TM: I think that most of the strippers that I knew would play the field either way, and a couple of them were living with women and still dating men. That was quite prevalent.

DR: Do you happen to remember names of strippers besides the big names?

TM: Most of them I only knew their stage names. We knew first names, Rosie or whatever. That's the way it was.

DR: Do you ever hear of stripper problems with management.

TM: No, because the clubs in San Francisco were not, I do not think, mob owned. But if they were, they did not act mob-like. And strippers would not go back to places when they would have trouble. I remember in Alaska they were having a lot of trouble and they were never going back because whenever things happened to strippers in Alaska they were not protected by the police.

DR: That's where I grew up. It seems like a lot of impersonators throughout the 1950s and 60s went to Alaska for just a little while because the pay was so good.

TM: Kara Montez did. The pay was very good. But he said it was very strange to get up at 10:00 at night to go and do a show and the sun was shining. It would drive me nuts.

[Don briefly talks about light and dark as a child in Alaska]

DR: Were you a member of AGVA?

TM: Yes. Everyone there was.

DR: Do you think it represented impersonators well as a union?

TM: We never needed them. And as far as I'm concerned, they never represented me. Because in five years, I never saw one. My dues were paid by Finocchio's, so they were working for Finocchio's. I'll tell you one instance when Ray deYoung did something onstage that nowadays would be nothing but then it was unthinkable. He had bring drinking and started walking through the tables and singing to the tables, and the guy followed him with a spotlight. Everyone came out of the service bar and told him to get back onstage and he didn't. So [Mr. Finocchio] really told him off and Ray never came back. And they called him to a meeting and the AGVA representative told him that if he didn't go back, follow instructions, and fulfill his contract, they would make sure that he would never work anywhere else in the United States. So him, being who he is, said, 'Well f-- you, I don't want to work anymore.' And he didn't. So who was AGVA representing? Instead of saying, 'What happened? Why did you do that? If you were going to change your act, why didn't you tell somebody?' something, give him an out. No. They just said, 'If you don't go back to work and follow instructions, you'll never work again.'

DR: Do you think some entertainers were served by it?

TM: No, they were just collecting dues, like most unions. I never saw a representative. Never in five years.

DR: Do you have any other memories of people who were at Finocchio's? Did any of the others see female impersonation as a long-term career?

TM: Lucien Phelps and Lester La Monte had been doing it for a long, long time. Lester would make these dresses of crepe paper. However, it was canvas-like, and paper cut and sewn on. So every now and then he would come out trailing some because someone or the other would pull on it. People don't believe it, but they were entirely made of crepe paper.

There is a life after female impersonation. And we had a good time, but it was only a job. I did it because I was hungry and needed the money. Hungry for the attention, and the status, and the money. And of course I suffered from low self-esteem. But when I changed from Tony Manriquez to Tana de Molina and I had all the power because I could see it in their faces, and I say, 'I know you want me. For the money you can have me.' (laughs) You know what I mean. You're blushing. But when you have that assuredness, when you know who you are, that is a great thing. I needed that mask. But even after that, adjusting from featured dancer to civilian life, it took me at least two years of knowing around and not finding myself, and I could have easily fallen into drugs and all that other stuff, but I didn't. I was fortunate. I did drink to much at the time. I thought I was an alcoholic. I was just a lush. There's a difference. In the meantime, I adopted two little boys and raised them. I have grandchildren. My grandson is sixteen. I got involved with real estate, I bought several pieces of real estate in San Diego. I owned my own restaurant. I raised my two kids by being a waiter. And I did it for almost 35 years. And now I'm a minister of outreach, I'm an elder of my church, a very well-respected gentleman in my community. The inmates love me, and my pastors think that I'm really something else. I'm a very hard worker, because I learned the hard way. Now I live in a way that I work very hard at what I do. I'm semi-retired, and actually disabled. But still manage properties and deal with all the day-to-day with electricians and plumbers and whatnot, and go and work in the church. I'm on the Board of Directors for the Ark of Refuge working with people with AIDS. So there's life after drag, or we have several transgendered ministries to help people with their transitions and skills training. We sent them to school, help them get their own shop. As long as you are going to hire more transgenders. There's nothing wrong with having a shop full of six transgenders if you know how to behave. Just like everything else. Don't act stupid or you won't have any business. But we help them out. We go to jail and help get a transgendered group. I strongly believe that God owes me a living. But you have to work for it. People who don't really do anything for myself. That really gets me. The more you do, the more you can do.

[End of tape]

DR: Do you keep in touch with anyone from that time today?

TM: I'm not too close, but I can call Elton Paris. Richard Carlson in New York. [Just before Tony at Finns, worked in Hawaii and Alaska]