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 2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC
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 4 San Francisco, CA 94103
 5 Telephone (415) 777-5455, #1
 6 Interview with Jose Sarria
 7 Date of Birth: Early 1920's
 8 GLHS OHP #97-28, Shedding a Straight Jacket
 9 By Interviewer: Paul Gabriel
 10 Date: 7/9/97
 11 Videotape 1 of 1
 12 IS1:000-099 = Tape One, Counter 000-099
 13 IS1:000-099
 14 Unidentified Voice: I don't know, I got a call on
 15 Monday. I said it's all contingent on whether or not I
 16 hear from my rehearsal piano . . .
 17 JS: Oh, is this for Fred?
 18 UV: Yeah.
 19 JS: Oh, good. And tell him that this is, yeah.
 20 UV: What's it for? I'm sure it'll be a good cause.
 21 JS: Godfather's Fund or something like that.
 22 UV: Oh, that's good.
 23 JS: But I told him that he's doing too many. This is
 24 the last one; he should stop. But tell him the kitchen
 25 floor needs something, and the bathroom needs

1 that in the '20s, there was a lot of, there was a lot
 2 of kingdoms in the world. They hadn't shut them off
 3 and World War Two hadn't come. There was still a lot
 4 of places where there were kings and queens that you
 5 read about in the paper. I remember later on in the
 6 '30s, we read about King Carol and Madame Magna
 7 Lustique, his mistress, he left the throne in
 8 Yugoslavia. Then we read how his son Michael started
 9 to study at Stanford University. Of course, everybody
 10 wanted to go down there and take a look at what a
 11 Yugoslav prince looked like. But there was a, there
 12 was a lot of royalty (phone rings).
 13 (Unidentified Voice speaks on telephone in the
 14 distance, clock chimes, camcorder turned off
 15 momentarily).
 16 JS: We'll just have to wind that up so it never stops.
 17 Okay now.
 18 PG: So, who'd you play dress-up with when you were
 19 growing up?
 20 JS: Okay, where was I at?
 21 PG: You said you were . . .
 22 JS: And we'd always play dress-up because it was,
 23 royalty was something you heard people talk about and
 24 it was like kids always played house. There was always
 25 momma and poppa and there was always . . . I didn't

1 something, 'cause he's the one that's inclined to do
 2 that maybe.
 3 PG: Who's Fred?
 4 JS: Fred is the Mister Gay San Francisco I think.
 5 PG: Oh, this year?
 6 JS: Yeah, very nice man.
 7 PG: Does he have like a contracting business?
 8 JS: Yeah.
 9 PG: Okay. Tell me, Jose, when you were little, when
 10 you were a young lad . . .
 11 JS: You should identify yourself, shouldn't you?
 12 PG: No, the tape is identified. This is Jose Sarria.
 13 JS: People are glad (laughs) bully-bully.
 14 PG: When you, when you were a little kid, you told me
 15 you used to put on girls' clothing sometimes?
 16 JS: Are you trying to make me look funny?
 17 PG: No, not at all. I'm trying to make you look
 18 fabulous.
 19 JS: There's nothing wrong in playing dress-up. We have
 20 men who have waited, we have women who have waited
 21 until they've been almost dead to think about dressing
 22 up. I did not have that much time. I dressed, I played
 23 dress-up and it was very common in those days. I was
 24 born in the beginning of the '20s and we played dress-
 25 up. We played king and queen because you must remember

1 play that 'til I got a bit older and I knew a little
 2 bit about the birds and the bees. Then we would play
 3 Farm, you know, I'd be the bull, I mean, you did all
 4 kinds of things like that.
 5 PG: You were the cow and somebody'd come milk you?
 6 JS: Yeah, and then you'd have to milk me . . . kids
 7 copy. But as a youngster one year old, one and a half
 8 years old, I was already with the neighbors then. We
 9 were, I was raised with other children, and we were
 10 not allowed to travel. They had to come to us; we had
 11 a very large yard. Our backyard was as big as this
 12 downstairs, and so we had a lot of room. And we had
 13 wagons and we had, we scrounged boxes and we had wood.
 14 If I needed something, I'd ask my godfather and they
 15 would get it for us, and I had my closet and we would
 16 dress up and we would be queens and kings and ladies
 17 and all day long until it was time to eat lunch at
 18 which time, sometimes my mother fed the whole gang. At
 19 other times they were sent home because after lunch we
 20 had to take a nap, and we took naps until . . . oh, we
 21 even took naps after we were in school. Naps then were
 22 very important. So I, so I started playing . . . and
 23 because of this, members of the, female members of the
 24 family - aunts and cousins and sisters - if they had
 25 something that they didn't want anymore, they gave it

1 to us. They gave it to me. And I had a regular closet
 2 out on the back porch where I kept all my shit, all my
 3 dresses and all my stuff.
 4 PG: And did you continue to play dress-up through . .
 5 .
 6 JS: I played dress-up until about the fourth grade,
 7 until we moved away, until, I would say, until the
 8 year 1929. I continued to play dress-up until '29 when
 9 we left the big house, because then the Depression had
 10 come and we had moved away and I was in, I was in
 11 private schools and public schools (inaudible). Yeah,
 12 there was no playing. Oh, once in a while when
 13 everybody was out of the house and I was making the
 14 beds. I would take the bed spreads and make a dress
 15 out of it and parade around.
 16 PG: Just for fun?
 17 JS: Yeah, it was not, there was nothing like taking
 18 mother's lipstick and putting it on, no, no, none of
 19 that. We never went that route. We dressed up.
 20 PG: It was make-believe.
 21 JS: It was all make-believe.
 22 PG: Did you have any roles that you remember you loved
 23 to play best.
 24 JS: Yeah, I was a queen. They, I rode, they pulled. We
 25 would build carriages and sedan chairs. I rode, they

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1 carried, they pulled! I was the boss.
 2 PG: Were there, ah, at that time when you were a
 3 little kid, do you remember people who were doing drag
 4 that were famous, that you would hear about in
 5 American, I'm talking about American popular culture.
 6 Nobody?
 7 JS: I never went to the theater until moving pictures.
 8 Remember, motion pictures were silent and I didn't, we
 9 did not go to silent movies. I saw, which was 1927 I
 10 think, I happened to see, they took me to see Al
 11 Jolson.
 12 PG: Oh, The Jazz Singer.
 13 JS: The Jazz Singer, and I can remember him kneeling
 14 down and singing, and I got excited. I don't know what
 15 that means. That was the first one. And the second
 16 picture that I know vividly, there may have been other
 17 pictures I went to, was Little Women with Katherine
 18 Hepburn. And I, as I have said that I was a very
 19 mischievous child, and very bad-tempered, and I had to
 20 be good for a couple months. Otherwise I wouldn't have
 21 been able to go to that theater and I went to . . .
 22 they took me to see that movie and it was at the
 23 Golden Gate, it was at the Fox Theater. (clock
 24 chimes). I was taken, and this was now in the early
 25 '30s whenever that picture came out, Little Women,

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1 with Katherine Hepburn playing Jo. That was it.
 2 JS: 100-199
 3 Now, I had, I was taken to live productions. There I
 4 didn't really have to be good, and I think I was taken
 5 anyway, and I remember seeing at the Curran or the
 6 Elks, the Curran, Alice in Wonderland, and I sat way,
 7 way up. I remember Mother taking me and pinning my
 8 name and whole works in case I got lost, and taking me
 9 there. It was an afternoon performance for children. I
 10 don't know who played the part but I remember it was
 11 Alice in Wonderland. We could really do some research;
 12 we'll find out when it was. But that was, that was in,
 13 that was before the Crash.
 14 PG: And so the theater, so it sounds to me like the
 15 theater fascinated you but also female roles
 16 fascinated you. Is that true that you liked to look at
 17 like Bette Davis, or was it more just make-believe.
 18 JS: Bette Davis wasn't an actress yet.
 19 PG: Or Katherine Hepburn rather, excuse me.
 20 JS: Katherine, I really liked her because I was told
 21 about the story of Little Women. It's not that I tried
 22 to imitate them. But I liked costume, period. When I
 23 began going, I still today, I will go to see costume
 24 pictures right away. But they always take from old
 25 stories: Emily Bronte, Withering Heights (sic), who

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1 else, you know, My Fair Lady, those type of the old,
 2 here again, stories of the knights, the stories of the
 3 kings (yawns) oh, excuse me. I like, and I do like
 4 period pictures and then most of the time, that's what
 5 I'd go and see. I don't like this bang-bang shoot-'em-
 6 up although I've seen a couple that were very (clock
 7 chimes) I mean, you kind of wonder where the hell they
 8 get these ideas. Maybe it's true. Maybe we do have
 9 aliens looking in at the window.
 10 PG: So I'm just trying to figure this out. So when
 11 you, when you were growing up, number one, you liked
 12 make-believe, but mostly you were fascinated by
 13 costumes, by how people . .
 14 JS: Yeah, how people dressed.
 15 PG: To transform themselves?
 16 JS: Yeah, I mean, like I can remember the family. The
 17 women in our family were going out, my aunt going out
 18 to the opera, the fancy dresses she wore, and the
 19 jewelry and everything else, that fascinated me.
 20 'Cause they didn't wear house dresses all the time, I
 21 mean, tuxedos and fancy high-heel shoes and buckles on
 22 their shoes and their hair was done up and I mean,
 23 they (cuckoo clock sounds). And then my mother would
 24 sit and tell me (inaudible due to music box playing)
 25 and my aunt would tell me 'cause I would ask a lot of

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1 questions. How come they got such a small waist? And
 2 then they told me.
 3 PG: Huh! But you were more interested in, like when
 4 women got dressed up than men or both?
 5 JS: I don't know how, that's difficult to say. If
 6 you're trying to say that my being today is based on
 7 something I did then, no.
 8 PG: No, I'm just curious, I'm just curious.
 9 JS: No. Oh, like when I began going to the picture
 10 shows and they showed pictures, early pictures, of
 11 Oscar Wilde, pictures like that, that story of Oscar
 12 Wilde and the way that they dressed. I was very
 13 interested. I was interested to know that it wasn't
 14 until, it wasn't until Lincoln that there was a right
 15 foot and a left foot to a pair of shoes. Otherwise
 16 shoes were made and then by usage that they took a
 17 form. But there was no such thing as a left shoe and a
 18 right shoe. Did you know that?
 19 PG: Uh uh.
 20 JS: They were just made and if you wore this one shoe
 21 all the time on the . . . then it took the shape of
 22 your foot.
 23 PG: So you're just interested in costumes?
 24 JS: Yeah.
 25 PG: I'm just curious so I'm just, but then when you

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1 were growing up, you didn't know of anybody who, who
 2 was ah, I'm just thinking 'cause later in life your
 3 work, your line of work, or one of your lines of work
 4 was entertainment and that involved, at times, that
 5 involved female impersonation but not totally.
 6 JS: Yeah, that was why putting on a costume because I
 7 found it easier, because when I began . . . number
 8 one, when I went to work, started to work at the Black
 9 Cat as a host (clock chimes), I'd neither dressed as a
 10 woman nor dressed as a man. It made a little bit more
 11 excitement since it was a homosexual place and they
 12 expected to see a man dressed up (two other clocks
 13 chime). But I was not geared to putting on a dress,
 14 but I was geared in putting on the makeup.
 15 PG: So for you it was more theater?
 16 JS: And then, now if you saw me, I had more hair, and
 17 my hair was cut as it was cut by women who wore it in
 18 the daytime. I looked like a lesbian; that was my
 19 thing. And then I wore something that was neither here
 20 nor there. The tourists liked this because the only
 21 place that you actually saw men dressed as a woman was
 22 if you went to Finocchio's. Outside of that, there was
 23 no other place in San Francisco.
 24 PG: No other? How about the Beige Room?
 25 JS: Oh, there was the Beige Room before, you

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1 understand, but there was no . . . they weren't doing
 2 it all over town, see? See, the Beige Room was early,
 3 early days.
 4 PG: About what time, do you know? Fifties?
 5 JS: In the middle '50s.
 6 PG: But not in the '40s?
 7 JS: Not in the '40s. In the '40s if you were a cute
 8 little boy, you dressed like a boy and they took you
 9 out to eat. Not as a girl. They didn't to pick up a
 10 little girl, I mean, they picked up a boy.
 11 PG: Huh! That's interesting. So you're saying a lot of
 12 people . . . I'm sorry, you're getting me off on a
 13 tangent here, but you're saying that some people would
 14 go to drag shows or female impersonation shows and
 15 want to pick up, like there was prostitution involved?
 16 Or tricking involved?
 17 JS: (inaudible).
 18 PG: Well, you said little boys, they wanted to pick up
 19 boys.
 20 JS: No, I'm talking about when I was younger. And I
 21 was additionally went to the afternoon tea dances.
 22 They're going to pick you up. They weren't going to
 23 pick up a little girl. They wanted to fuck a little
 24 boy, have sex with a little boy.
 25 PG: Where were these tea dances?

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1 JS: Well, there was one that I used to, was given by
 2 Walter Hart. She was the queen bee of San Francisco,
 3 and if you got invited to her place, why you were
 4 okay.
 5 PG: Where was it?
 6 JS: She had an apartment on Taylor and Hyde
 7 (transcriber's note: those streets run parallel).
 8 1S1:200-299
 9 No, because then that meant that you were clean, you
 10 had nice clothes, and the people that you met were
 11 doctors, lawyers and Indian chiefs. And they took you
 12 out to find restaurants and bought you nice things.
 13 PG: How'd you find out about this place?
 14 JS: Oh, don't ask me. I don't know whether I was
 15 propositioned to come to an afternoon tea, or I met an
 16 older man that brought me there, or I used to go.
 17 PG: Do you know how old you were when you first went?
 18 JS: I was nine, eight, nine years old.
 19 PG: That young? Really? So these are men who really
 20 were interested in boys?
 21 JS: Yeah. We were tea dancing. I didn't drink. We
 22 danced, they propositioned, they took you out, they
 23 took you to the movies, they bought you little gifts,
 24 you know. You bend over, honey, or you suck the
 25 lollipop.

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1 PG: (laughs) Do you remember, do you remember who, you
 2 said doctors and lawyers, but do you remember
 3 particular individuals aside from Walter?
 4 JS: Oh yeah, he was the host, oh yeah. I knew some
 5 famous people that would come. Now we're going to have
 6 to leave it like that.
 7 PG: Leave it like that, okay, that's fine.
 8 JS: Most of them are dead now, but even so, what good
 9 would it do?
 10 PG: Yeah, that's right, that's right.
 11 JS: They were not corrupting me and they certainly
 12 didn't corrupt me. I would have never continued the
 13 profession that I continued. I'd have a teacher had I
 14 not been a (inaudible). That changed my whole life. I
 15 had to end up doing something that I could do. I was
 16 on the verge of graduating, I was just at the end of
 17 it. This is the end of the trail. Now I was going to
 18 be a teacher. So now here I got all of this education,
 19 all this knowledge, all this everything, and I can't
 20 use it. And I'm very practical. So I had to sit down
 21 and figure out what I was going to do.
 22 PG: Well, I'm curious. How did you get involved in
 23 doing . . . you told me that you participated in a
 24 drag contest over in Oakland.
 25 JS: Yeah.

1 PG: And you won?
 2 JS: Yeah, I won second place. Fifty dollars a week and
 3 two shows, two weekends.
 4 PG: Can you just tell me about that event? Do you
 5 remember about it?
 6 JS: Well, Michelle went over and she won, and it was
 7 called Perm's. She had an amateur hour show. And I
 8 thought, Mary, if she can win, then I can win and it's
 9 time you did do something. So I had a good voice, I
 10 had a good voice, soprano voice. And the amateur show,
 11 with a good soprano voice, was not going to win
 12 dressed as a boy. So I asked my mother if I could use
 13 her dress maker and her charge account. She said okay.
 14 So the dress maker made me a beautiful dress. And my
 15 mother's charge account gave me what I needed. So for
 16 two hundred dollars, I got on the Toonerville Express
 17 and got off at 12th, 12th and some place in Oakland,
 18 12th Street was where the streetcar used to go by.
 19 Shattuck is it that runs along? Yeah. Went up, went
 20 into, come through the back upstairs backway, and your
 21 mother sang Smoke Gets In Your Eyes, and I won. It
 22 cost me, my mother's charge account, two hundred
 23 dollars and I got two weeks, fifty dollars a week. So
 24 I was in the hole. Then what happens, there was an
 25 opening for an intermission singer with Don Miles

1 playing the piano at the Beige Room. And that's what I
 2 did. And there I sang Gianina Mia and Smoke Gets In
 3 Your Eyes, during intermission. And the main line
 4 headliner at that particular time was Lynn Carter and
 5 the Four Cartiers.
 6 Well, in the interim while I'm doing the intermission
 7 and while Lynn Carter's doing her thing, the Mexican
 8 headliner at Finocchio's, either she died, moved away,
 9 or something, I don't know. And they always had a
 10 Latin singer. So Mr. Finocchio, or it was Mr.
 11 Finocchio, not the one that's now. It had to be this
 12 one because the other one died earlier. Went to the
 13 Beige Room which was the only other place that had
 14 female impersonation. And there was another person by
 15 the name of, by the name of, there was another
 16 entertainer there, Del Rey. Johnny Del Rey, Nicky Del
 17 Rey, Something Del Rey. Now she had already been
 18 entertaining a long time. Her voice was not as good as
 19 mine, but she had a fault because she had worked solo.
 20 I was the inter, I was the intermission singer. So
 21 they picked her; they offered her the job. And she
 22 went and she went to Finocchio's and she stayed there
 23 for twenty-some odd years. She's retired and she's a
 24 hairdresser and lives around the corner. I then went,
 25 after the intermission business was over and Lynn

1 Carter left, then I went to the Black Cat. I used to
 2 go to the Black Cat and that's how I began there.
 3 PG: To socialize?
 4 JS: Yeah, socialize and then host and then cocktail
 5 wait, and then the star and then the Black Cat.
 6 PG: Okay. Just a second here. Now you say you worked
 7 at Finocchio's too?
 8 JS: Not then.
 9 PG: Not then. Okay, now when you first started, when
 10 you went, when you went to this contest, you were
 11 there for two weeks, and then you went over to the
 12 Beige Room and doing the intermission show, about what
 13 year was that?
 14 JS: 300-399
 15 JS: In the early '50s.
 16 PG: Fifty-two, '53?
 17 JS: Yeah, something like that.
 18 PG: But I'm curious, so that you knew Michelle by then
 19 'cause you said . . .
 20 JS: Michelle had come to The City, Michelle had come
 21 to San Francisco when the Atlantic Navy stood still,
 22 when there was a big purge of the Atlantic Navy.
 23 PG: From homosexuals?
 24 JS: Maybe it had been later.
 25 PG: You mean there was a purge of homosexuals in the

1 Atlantic Navy.
 2 JS: Yeah, it was when she first came there. Oh yeah,
 3 by the time you finish kicking the homosexuals out of
 4 the Atlantic Fleet, there wasn't enough men to man one
 5 ship.
 6 PG: Really?
 7 JS: Yeah, that was the big exodus from there.
 8 PG: Oh, she was on, she was in the Navy?
 9 JS: She was the one typing up the names of those that
 10 were getting a bad discharge. She's typing up, she
 11 comes across Michael Garrety. Oh, that's me! But she
 12 went and typed herself a general discharge so she got
 13 some (inaudible). And she helped a few other queens.
 14 Otherwise she wouldn't have a penny to go to beauty
 15 school. And that's it. Now that had to be, that had to
 16 be in the middle '50s, yeah.
 17 PG: But if they were doing that kind of drumming out
 18 of the military, it could have been the late '40s.
 19 JS: This was the big one.
 20 PG: Korean war?
 21 JS: Korean was, when did the Korean war come?
 22 PG: Early '50s.
 23 JS: And then what did it have to go to?
 24 PG: Well later there was the Vietnam conflict, but
 25 that was in the '60s.

1 PG: Yeah. No, I'm talking about before the Oakland
 2 show, before the Oakland . . .
 3 JS: Oh no, no, no, I never did it.
 4 PG: Before that, you had never done any kind of public
 5 singing? When you were in the Army, were you in any
 6 kind of shows or anything?
 7 JS: Didn't sing, didn't use my voice. I didn't use my
 8 voice, up until the time I went to work, and not use
 9 it 'til I came back. And my voice, that's why my voice
 10 stayed soprano.
 11 PG: So before the war you were singing?
 12 JS: Yes.
 13 PG: What were you doing, just singing around the house
 14 or?
 15 JS: Singing in the house and I was in some
 16 productions, Robin Hood, the operetta Robin Hood, and
 17 school productions.
 18 PG: Oh, so you were involved in the theater in school?
 19 JS: Yes.
 20 PG: Oh, that's where you learned makeup?
 21 JS: Well, watching my sisters. You learned as, you
 22 know. In the early days, Alex did my face, kabuki.
 23 PG: Oh, Alex Anderson?
 24 JS: Oh no, I did everything kabuki. Some of the early
 25 pictures that we'll find downstairs, you'll find me in

1 JS: No, no, no, we were already . . .
 2 PG: Well, there was World War Two, right? That was
 3 '41, for us it was '41 to '45.
 4 JS: Yeah, no, no, no, she was not old enough for that.
 5 PG: Okay. I'm just trying to get the dates straight.
 6 JS: I'm trying to remember that too and we could
 7 probably find it downstairs. I know that the first
 8 anniversary of the theater was '58, we found that.
 9 PG: Of the Opera?
 10 JS: Of the Opera. Then you go back a couple, you go
 11 back a year, and then you go back three or four years
 12 maybe, and that's about the time, do you understand?
 13 PG: That you started to get involved with the Black
 14 Cat?
 15 JS: Yes. And I used to go to the Black Cat and sing
 16 before that.
 17 PG: But just as a patron? 'Cause you said other people
 18 would do that as well, right?
 19 JS: Yes, anybody that went there.
 20 PG: Now, I'm just curious. When did you start to get
 21 involved in doing sort of entertainment, like getting
 22 up and singing? Not necessarily always in not costume,
 23 but just singing and then later doing costume
 24 JS: The nightclub act began about three or four years
 25 before the operas.

1 white face. Because that way we could get around, it
 2 was not impersonation. It was kabuki, men dressed as
 3 women, by law.
 4 PG: You could do that? Now what was . . .
 5 JS: By law, that's what kabuki is.
 6 PG: And why did you have to do that?
 7 JS: Then they could not touch . . . we were not a drag
 8 show.
 9 PG: Now why could you not have a drag show in the
 10 Black Cat?
 11 JS: You could not have a drag show any place because
 12 they wouldn't give you a license.
 13 PG: Well, Finocchio's had a drag show.
 14 JS: That's different.
 15 PG: Why?
 16 JS: Well, they were established. Otherwise, as it was,
 17 shortly after, there was five, every little . . . you
 18 must remember that in the beginning there were no gay
 19 bars. This was a tourist trap nightclub.
 20 PG: Oh, the Black Cat?
 21 JS: Well, there was always a nightclub there since
 22 1930. And it was not until after the war that we
 23 developed gay bars, and they wanted to do away with
 24 them because this was a gathering place for
 25 homosexuals that they didn't want it. And yet there

1 was no law that says, or they tried to make laws to
 2 prohibit it and it just didn't work.
 3 PG: So, when you were a little kid and you got
 4 involved with these men and they took you around, you
 5 were not aware of any gay bars in San Francisco?
 6 JS: No, because they could not take me to a gay bar.
 7 There was no gay bar. I'm talking about in the '30s.
 8 PG: Okay. Now how'd you meet Michelle and how'd you
 9 meet . . . see, I'm wondering, how did meet Michelle
 10 and Henry and these other people who were doing drag
 11 of some sort or?
 12 JS: Michelle, she wasn't doing, she was Michelle, she
 13 was a hairdresser. Henry was doing drag 'cause it was
 14 part of the scene here. And I lived on the Peninsula.
 15 And when I sold the house after the arrest and I had
 16 to move to The City here.
 17 IS1:400-499
 18 I decided I was going to be the leader. And I had to
 19 go out and I heard about these queens that lived over
 20 on this hill. And so that was very important that I
 21 get them on my side.
 22 PG: Now these queens, can you tell me about them? Who
 23 were they?
 24 JS: They were the dress-up queens of that day. Henry,
 25 the Baroness, the Everett family boy. There was a very

1 small little group.
 2 PG: About how many, do you know?
 3 JS: Oh, maybe, there was maybe seven or eight, maybe
 4 ten at the most. Other than that, nobody dressed up as
 5 we know dress-up today. Halloween, everybody put on a
 6 dress or a clown outfit or something, do you
 7 understand? But it was these queens dressed to be
 8 women. They emulated royalty into a degree.
 9 PG: And they did it at private parties?
 10 JS: At private parties. There was no such thing as
 11 going to a public bar; there was no bar.
 12 PG: Okay. And, now these queens you call them, is that
 13 what you called them then?
 14 JS: Not what I called them then.
 15 PG: But at that time, were they called queens or what
 16 did they call themselves?
 17 JS: Yeah, they were queens.
 18 PG: They were queens, okay. And most, were some of
 19 them, you said the Gerber, the Gerber, the baby food
 20 family, right? Did most of them come from back East?
 21 Were they like, like the Gerber family? Were these,
 22 I'm wondering, were these children . . .
 23 JS: These had to be sent away from home (inaudible) so
 24 that then Henry's family were from the Peninsula. I
 25 had a picture of the father. The father was very high

1 up in radio.
 2 PG: Henry's father?
 3 JS: Yeah, one of the biggest inventors of radio. I
 4 have his obituary downstairs.
 5 PG: And you don't remember any of the names of the
 6 others?
 7 JS: The other day I came across his name: Bill . . .
 8 he was reputed, he had the biggest company of silver.
 9 Bill Bliss!
 10 PG: Bill Bliss.
 11 JS: Bill Bliss. And he was on Union Street. Yeah, Bill
 12 Bliss.
 13 PG: What was his title?
 14 JS: He was the Marchioness.
 15 PG: The Marchioness. And Gerber was what?
 16 JS: The Baroness because his grandfather was a baron.
 17 PG: And Henry was the Baroness.
 18 JS: Yeah, because her grandfather was the last, was a
 19 member of the Court of St. James.
 20 PG: Do you remember any of the other titles?
 21 JS: That was it. We didn't have any more.
 22 PG: Just those three? But you said there was a group
 23 of us.
 24 JS: Oh, then there was the Marchioness, Mary
 25 Butternick. He was, his last name was Butternick.

1 Whether he was related to the pattern people, I don't
 2 know. Larry Butternick. He lives today very quiet and
 3 closeted; never goes out.
 4 PG: Did he have a title?
 5 JS: Yeah, he was a Baroness, he was a Marchioness.
 6 PG: A Marchioness
 7 JS: Because he was married to Bill Bliss.
 8 PG: Oh, I see, okay. But there, 'cause you said there
 9 were about seven of them or so and I was wondering,
 10 that's four. I'm wondering if there were any other, if
 11 you could remember the titles of other people. But
 12 they all had titles?
 13 JS: Yeah. Nobody was a queen; nobody was a king.
 14 PG: They were all like baronesses and marchionesses.
 15 JS: Baroness, yeah. And I was the Marquise because my
 16 father was a Marquis.
 17 PG: Was there a duchess?
 18 JS: Later on there was one they called Sofie. She's in
 19 Palm Springs. The Duchess of Westfall, very prominent
 20 family. Somewhere along the line there were duchesses
 21 and she was the Duchess of Westfall. Kind of a
 22 peculiar woman. But she was not of that group. She
 23 came later with me. I met her in Menlo Park.
 24 PG: Okay. Now how'd you find out about these people?
 25 JS: Well, when I came to The City here, I would go out

1 and if I liked you, I got your name and address and
 2 I'd compile my address . . . and then I always heard
 3 about those people. But they, they were very
 4 established and I was a new queen in town. So I had
 5 to, I had to throw a couple of shindigs to let them
 6 know that I was here and I have money.
 7 PG: Well, how did, what did that require if you'd
 8 establish yourself and make a debut in this high
 9 society?
 10 JS: Well, I had to have a nice home. And I gave
 11 parties. I gave a cocktail party. And you came to the
 12 party and you saw silver and you saw fine china. And I
 13 would have somebody dress up as a butler and I carried
 14 on like white trash. But you establish yourself. And
 15 they didn't know; they knew that I came from the
 16 Peninsula. They knew I worked. They didn't know where
 17 my money came from.
 18 PG: I'm curious. So they, a lot of these people were
 19 sort of, saw themselves as high society people?
 20 JS: Well, they considered, they were the, they were
 21 the elite of the gay community, the ones that had
 22 jobs, went to bars. Once some of them owned
 23 businesses.
 24 1S1:500-599
 25 PG: I'm just curious because I remember your talking

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1 about how your mom used to, I think it was through
 2 your mom you had connections to the Stanford family,
 3 right?
 4 JS: Oh, well that's through my godparents. My Aunt
 5 Maria's third husband was the police guard at the
 6 Stanford home. And when my aunt married him, she
 7 closed the house here and went to the Islands to live.
 8 And she gave my aunt and uncle a tea set, the pictures
 9 and some other stuff as a wedding gift. And she died,
 10 yes.
 11 PG: Do you have this stuff?
 12 JS: No, I don't have the tea set; my cousin has the
 13 tea set. I have the pictures. And the pictures were
 14 done when they were on satin from pictures that they
 15 had of scenes of California, when they went to Europe
 16 where the boy got sick and died.
 17 PG: But Henry worked as a butler, right? Down the
 18 Peninsula, didn't he?
 19 JS: Yeah, Henry worked, Henry worked in a very, very
 20 big book publishing company on the, in Palo Alto, that
 21 manufactured books. He was part owner. Something
 22 happened. Henry had to leave them. Now Henry was very
 23 socially connected through his mother and father
 24 society-wise. He knew a lot of people. I happened to
 25 know some people, the same thing, through my family.

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1 And one person that was in common to us was - she
 2 owned the house here in Healdsburg. What's the name of
 3 the big house in Healdsburg, the big (inaudible). She
 4 was the, she was a daughter of the famous brick
 5 manufacturing people in San Jose, ugly duckling. The
 6 father was nervous because he was never get her
 7 married off. And this was in the '20s when they
 8 shipped her ass to Europe and she married a titled
 9 man. She bought a title.
 10 PG: An aristocrat.
 11 JS: And his name was - Oh Mary, you're taxing my mind!
 12 PG: I'm sorry.
 13 JS: You should know.
 14 PG: I wish I did.
 15 JS: On the Peninsula.
 16 PG: I wish I did. Anyway, so she comes home with this
 17 title?
 18 JS: No, no, no, it was through her . . .
 19 PG: Anyway, she comes home with this husband.
 20 JS: She comes home with the husband and she bought a
 21 big home in which she established society and they
 22 used the downstairs hall. It was willed to the City of
 23 Burlingame.
 24 PG: Oh, I think I know this place.
 25 JS: It was subdivided except one hundred acres around

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1 the house. Okay, then she went and lived in Oakland,
 2 in Oakland. And I have a first cousin that was her
 3 maid, Maria Finegas. And she used to come every
 4 Sunday, right after Depression, to visit my godmother
 5 who were . . . they were related through the second
 6 wife, Mary Finegas, and the Mateos. And she wore
 7 pince-nez glasses and she was very correct. I can
 8 always remember it. And she worked for the, what was
 9 she, why she was a Baroness. She was a Baroness; I've
 10 got papers on her too. He got two hundred dollars a
 11 month and she got the title. And he started playing
 12 around so she kicked his ass out, got a divorce from
 13 him. So, what was the name of that place? Oh, anyway,
 14 she was very good friends with Mrs. Cameron, the wife
 15 of Mr. Cameron, who was president of the Hibernia Bank
 16 and who was connected with The Chronicle, the Call-
 17 Bulletin and The Chronicle, the Hearst Papers.
 18 1S1:600-699
 19 And she, Mrs. Cameron, before she married was a
 20 DeYoung girl and there was five beautiful DeYoung
 21 sisters. And she was there. One day she tells the
 22 Baroness, it's so hard to keep help. I've lost my
 23 butler and I don't know what I'm going to do and I
 24 have a dinner party coming up and this and that and
 25 the other thing. The Baroness says I have somebody who

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1 I think can fill your shoes. He's very well graced
 2 socially and you may have met him at a party or two.
 3 But he would actually be the, you couldn't do better.
 4 She gets on the phone and she phones Henry and she
 5 says get your ass over to Mrs. Cameron, put on your
 6 best behavior and sell yourself. I've already plugged
 7 you as much as I could. Henry, at this time, needed,
 8 because there was some charade at the bookstore and he
 9 had to leave and they had to buy his share out. And I
 10 never knew what exactly it was. And prior to this in
 11 the interim, he took a job as guard, night guard, at
 12 the Cliff House people, the Whitney brothers, that
 13 owned all that property. At night there used to be a
 14 guard that walked around Playland and the Cliff House.
 15 And that's what Henry did; he was a guard. I can
 16 always remember him coming out and to a party and then
 17 he had to change into a guard uniform and go out and
 18 work. I'll always remember that, and I always
 19 respected him because he paid his own way. And now
 20 he's a guard, not making a hell of a lot of money and
 21 everything. And so he goes and takes an interview with
 22 Mrs. Cameron and he never, and she likes him. Dandini!
 23 The Countess Dandini.
 24 PG: Countess.
 25 JS: She was the Countess Dandini. And the place in
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1 Hillsborough was The Caroline, The Caroline. Do you
 2 know now?
 3 PG: I know now.
 4 JS: The Caroline. All right. When she died, she lived
 5 in The City on Dolores. Okay, so Dandini got Henry and
 6 he stayed and became her butler. And he would go to
 7 the, he would help plan the dinners. He was the butler
 8 of the house, gave the orders to the others directly.
 9 And when it was time she was going to go out, she
 10 would say fine, I want my tiara and I want my diamond
 11 necklace and I want my pearls and this. And he would
 12 go to the bank and get them out of the safety deposit
 13 box and come home and bring them to her. She would
 14 wear them at the party or whatever she did, and then
 15 she would give them back to him and he would take them
 16 back and put them in the safety deposit box. And he
 17 planned dinners for Charles DeGaulle when he came
 18 there. Charles DeGaulle was a guest at Rose Court
 19 which was the place in Hillsborough. And that is where
 20 she served him with the glasses which belonged to
 21 Marie Antoinette which were . . . and they knew. She
 22 had twelve of them. And this, the President's Palace
 23 in Paris had, I think, twelve. Beautiful, old glasses,
 24 beautiful glasses. And she told DeGaulle which she
 25 would then, she would give them back to him up her . .
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1 . she would return them, which she did do, after Henry
 2 had a tea party and we used them first. Okay, that was
 3 in, that's how he got to work for . . . and then he
 4 stayed with her. And she died and he was left with the
 5 cook, because he couldn't cook.
 6 JS: 700-799
 7 And the gardener and the chauffeur because he couldn't
 8 do that. And all he had to do, the house was made a
 9 museum until it was through escrow, and it took ten
 10 years to go through escrow. And he got half his salary
 11 for ten years. And he lived in Rose Court. When it was
 12 finally sold, then that was the end of it. Then what
 13 did Henry do? Well, by this time he had invested some
 14 money. And a nephew sat on it and broke it, and Henry
 15 said Can I have it for Jose, because she knew who I
 16 was. She says yeah, take it. If Jose can fix it, he
 17 can have it, and I took it to the carpenter who's now
 18 dead, and he rebuilt the wheel and everything on the
 19 tea cart. That's rosewood; anyway a nice cart.
 20 PG: Ah, what year was it that Henry had to find work
 21 and then ended up working for Mrs. Cameron?
 22 JS: Oh god, you ask me too many things.
 23 PG: I'm just guessing. Like the '50s?
 24 JS: It was in the '50s.
 25 PG: Mid '50s, early '50s?
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1 JS: Yeah, it had to be that.
 2 PG: Okay, I'm just curious. So Henry was really very
 3 graced in high society?
 4 JS: Oh yeah, because his mother and father, they were
 5 society people. I mean, Henry knew. Henry was, he was
 6 well-known to the society. Just like my mother was, my
 7 real mother was known to society because of being the
 8 maid, the maid for their, the nanny for their chief of
 9 police and those people. She knew the Rongonieris. The
 10 old man Rongonieri, you know, he was in . . . a one
 11 time The City was run by the Italians and Rongonieri
 12 was a big supervisor. He had a son who was a doctor.
 13 Now I'm deviating.
 14 From Costa Rica comes a woman whose president
 15 embezzled and screwed the country and had to flee to
 16 Brazil where he sat there writing poetry. And the
 17 mother was not going to just go. She had, she had
 18 three children: two daughters and a boy. She had a
 19 son, she had Mrs. Rongonieri and she had the other
 20 one, yeah. She had two girls and a boy. And she said
 21 fine, you go write your poetry in the hills of Brazil
 22 and I'm going to go and . . . this is the only thing
 23 we have. You're no longer the president, I'm no longer
 24 Madame President; we have nothing. So she packed up
 25 her kids and came to this country. But what she had to
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1 tell, she had name. She was La Senora Dona, Senora
 2 Sabajara (spelling). So she groomed the little boy:
 3 You will become a doctor and you will study. And she
 4 said to her daughter, you will become beautiful. She
 5 was a very beautiful woman. And made sure because she
 6 was an ex-president of high society, was in society,
 7 okay? Well, Sabajara met her. No, no, Rongonieri met
 8 her and married her, much against the wishes of the
 9 father, because she really didn't have a dowry. All
 10 she had was name, and so he married her. And from that
 11 union was, oh no. Mrs. Sabajara had the daughter and
 12 the son. From that marriage, then came Betty, she had
 13 a son, and Audrey I think. They lived in San Mateo;
 14 beautiful home. He was a very prominent doctor, Doctor
 15 Rongonieri. And the uncle owned the Turkish baths on
 16 Ellis Street, which was patronized, it's got a
 17 swimming pool, patronized by the police department.
 18 That's why he was able to operate it, which was very
 19 gay at night and very straight in the daytime. Okay,
 20 she has an argument with her husband, packs the
 21 children and goes to Europe. In the meanwhile he has a
 22 heart attack and dies and (inaudible) buries him. And
 23 after he's in the ground, informs the wife your
 24 husband has died; you'd better come home. So she comes
 25 home and he has become administor (sic), administrix

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1 to get married. And she becomes Mrs. Sabajara and
 2 comes out here to San Francisco and establishes. They
 3 had one daughter called Susan and Mrs. Sabajara never
 4 knew why the doctor was always so kind to my mother,
 5 in good times and in bad times.
 6 IS1:800-899
 7 There was always a place. At one time my mother lived
 8 in the house. She never did understand and finally one
 9 day he told her. My mother paid for his education and
 10 she was like a second mother. He always remembered me.
 11 In fact he offered me a job just to live in the house
 12 and make meals for him because nobody would do it. His
 13 daughter was very young, very pretty. I contacted her
 14 the other day (inaudible) about a year ago. And she
 15 said Oh, Jose, god, to I remember you. I said you were
 16 a spoiled little child. I said you'd take off your
 17 dress; you wouldn't wear it anymore. My mother would
 18 collect them and give them to my godmother's niece and
 19 nephew, nieces, to wear. My little niece had a white
 20 mink coat because she refused to wear the goddam
 21 thing. Well, my sister said, Theresa said there's no
 22 kids in Redwood City that got, little girls that wear
 23 white mink coats. But I think she wore it until . . .
 24 and then my sisters made something out of it
 25 afterward. But all these beautiful clothes, beautiful

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1 (sic) of the estate. And it's a big charade. The son
 2 was in every high school, in every . . . oh he was
 3 horrible. I wonder whatever happened to him now.
 4 (inaudible) got pregnant before her. So she got
 5 married and went off to New York. Oh, it was a big
 6 mess. Momma died. My mother worked for her for a
 7 while. All right, so then, not the son. her only hope
 8 . . . meanwhile the children supported the mother over
 9 here. She lived on Octavia Street, Octavia and
 10 California. The son became a doctor and he needed one
 11 year of foreign study to put the cream on the icing of
 12 the cake. And Madame, Mrs. Sabajara was very friendly
 13 with my mother because my mother was also in the
 14 society of the Spanish colony here. So my mother paid
 15 for the doctor's one year education in Europe. She
 16 gave Mrs. Sabajara the money, and he went to Europe to
 17 put his final touches on.
 18 Now he comes home, dashing, Paul Gabriel type of man,
 19 very handsome, very, very beautiful man. And there was
 20 a big ball being given in New York City at which time
 21 the society of societies there, and he has become a
 22 doctor, the son of a president of Costa Rica. And, of
 23 course, he's invited and who should he meet but the B-
 24 R-A-N-D, Brand Jelly Preserve people, their daughter,
 25 Brand was their name. He knocks her up and they have

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1 outfits, handmade by the woman who was a seamstress
 2 who was known tremendously here in San Francisco,
 3 sewed for Mrs. Sabajara. Mrs. Sabajara died and then
 4 the father, and he then took over St. Joseph's
 5 Hospital until he died. That lasted until it became
 6 condominiums. That's the story, yeah.
 7 PG: Okay, what I'm curious about is was that typical
 8 of some of, some of, or how typical was that of San
 9 Francisco high society that it was made of a lot of
 10 people who had either a lot of money or a good name
 11 that they were like, for example, there was this whole
 12 story of getting kicked out of the presidency of Costa
 13 Rica.
 14 JS: But it makes no difference. You still had a name.
 15 It goes back (inaudible).
 16 PG: I understand. But were there a lot of people like
 17 that who made up the high society of San Francisco?
 18 JS: Everybody has a black horse in the family. And
 19 when I began to work at the Clift Hotel, I met Mrs.
 20 Sloss who was the wife of the Chief Justice of the
 21 State. And she thought I was the cat's meow. I met
 22 Mrs. Daly where Daly City is named after. She would
 23 take me to go shopping with her. I met Mrs., the
 24 daughter of Mrs. Sloss was a bull dyke. I met, who
 25 else did I know? I met a lot of, oh Mrs. Kaiser of the

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1 Foster-Kaiser Sign people. She had two sons who would
 2 go to . . . Henry used to come down to the Black Cat.
 3 And the other one used to spend most of his time in
 4 Europe. He's still alive. Henry died. Or was it the
 5 other way around? Yeah, 'cause I've met people like
 6 that. That's why when I ran for public office, my name
 7 was known, do you understand, by the right people
 8 because of my mother. But here in this country, even
 9 today in San Francisco, you have a lot of people
 10 society-wise of the old money. They may not have money
 11 today, but they've got the name and the doors are
 12 still open.
 13 PG: I'm just curious 'cause it sounds to me like this
 14 group that you, you tell me whether I'm wrong, but it
 15 sounds to me like this group you got, that you heard
 16 about and you began to have, you wanted to have entree
 17 and it was kind of like a gay high society. A lot of
 18 these people had names and the thing that they took
 19 these campy titles was a way of sort of saying, we
 20 have a name. And the very
 21 JS: But that was a very select group. There wasn't,
 22 the rest of them were just like the list that was
 23 lying downstairs of people that attended my parties.
 24 PG: Mm hm. But I'm saying this group though, you
 25 wanted to get into this . . .

1 JS: Oh yes, because I wanted to be the leader.
 2 PG: Why did you want to be the leader?
 3 JS: Why, because I'm not going to follow.
 4 PG: They're going to carry you in the sedan chair,
 5 right?
 6 JS: I did more, they didn't give parties like I did
 7 for two and three hundred people. They didn't rent
 8 riding stables. They didn't go out and rent a hall.
 9 PG: What kind of parties did you throw? Tell me about
 10 these parties.
 11 JS: Oh, I gave the Merry Widow party because I was the
 12 widow, I became the widow.
 13 PG: What was this, where was this?
 14 JS: That was on Seward Street.
 15 PG: For about what year, do you know it was in the
 16 '50s?
 17 JS: Well, it must have been 'cause I was the next
 18 leader, and I was going to be the leader.
 19 PG: Uh huh. Well, tell me about the Merry Widow party.
 20 JS: Oh, I came in, oh, that was bad, I gave a dinner
 21 for thirty people, a sit-down dinner, and it was held
 22 in Sally Stanford's house which was The Gaslight on
 23 Pine Street. It's now an apartment house. I think you
 24 have may come on it. And there's a picture of me
 25 underneath the gas chandelier going upstairs. And Rose

1 Goldstein, who owned the Costume House, which was one
 2 hundred, over a hundred years old, liked me and she
 3 gave me or loaned me or I could rent, they had just,
 4 when they closed the Tivoli Opera House where 51 Park
 5 Avenue stands? That was the Tivoli Opera House. The
 6 last production there was The Merry Widow. That was
 7 before the war. No, it was after the war. It was
 8 before the war. Oh no, but it had to be, because Paul
 9 was alive. We went with Paul that night and I come in.
 10 There was no stairs in that theater. There were ramps.
 11 My mother said that's because the ladies' dresses all
 12 had tails, trains, and it was easier to walk on ramps
 13 than it was to climb stairs. The California Theater
 14 was another one that had ramps because it was built
 15 turn of the century. So anyway, what am I talking
 16 about?
 17 PG: The Merry Widow.
 18 JS: Oh yeah. So this was all new production and I
 19 loved to be the, I was the widow and so I went to Rose
 20 and she said yes, you can rent 'cause you're the only
 21 one that'll ever rent it because it's a very special
 22 dress made for . . and we've got to get our money back
 23 out of it. And so I wore a beautiful black velvet. We
 24 have pictures of it. And it fit me 'cause I had an
 25 eighteen-inch waistline, that's why. And I wore that

1 and I was the widow and I introduced my dinner and I
 2 served, paid for the dinner, thirty people we invited.
 3 And we ate and then I don't know where we went
 4 afterwards or what we did.
 5 PG: Did you have a butler?
 6 JS: I went to a restaurant, hired the restaurant. We
 7 ate at Sally Stanford's, it was a restaurant. And in
 8 the middle, there was this marble pool that she was
 9 supposed to take a bath in, Anna Held. And the house
 10 was built for Anna Held by a banker. She accepted it
 11 but never lived there. I don't know any more than that
 12 other than I made lots of papers downstairs for that.
 13 And I announced that I was the first. And then I gave
 14 the Oklahoma party, I gave House of Flowers parties, I
 15 would give dinner parties for twelve, thirteen,
 16 fourteen people. I, you know, I had my jewels were
 17 always in the pawn shop to pay for everything.
 18 PG: What was the Oklahoma party and the House of
 19 Flowers party?
 20 JS: Well, Oklahoma party, Oklahoma had just come out.
 21 1S1:900-999
 22 And that's when I rented the stables, Seaside Stables,
 23 so when the son reached over to grope this one pretty
 24 girl and found out she had more cock and balls than he
 25 did and it threw him in a tizzy.

1 PG: Who was this?
 2 JS: I rented the stables because I wanted to have a
 3 party, an Oklahoma party. And so we went and rented it
 4 and I wanted a ride, a ride like you're riding out to
 5 the thing. And when they finished riding around the
 6 park, they sit and all of that, they came back to the
 7 stables and we had it all decorated with music and
 8 everything and we would have that. And we would have
 9 an auction of the box lunches that women had to bring
 10 their box lunches, just like the picture, you know.
 11 And so, so everybody, everybody arrived. Oh everybody
 12 ran to my house and we had, that was the rendezvous,
 13 and then we all got in cars and drove out to, 'cause
 14 they didn't know what was going to happen. All went
 15 out to the stables on Number One Highway. The Miramar
 16 Riding Stables. And we arrived in all pretty dresses
 17 and the men and the cowboys and everything. And so
 18 they got on the two wagons and we are going and taking
 19 our ride. Now while we are taking our ride, we
 20 decorated this, the thing was all fixed up. So then,
 21 now while we're taking the ride, the father drove one
 22 and the son drove or somebody else drove another one.
 23 And one of the girls said well, I'm going to sit with
 24 you. So evidently he reached under her skirt to feel
 25 her pussy, and he felt cock and balls. Well, my dear,

1 and the back bedroom and pile it up along the side of
 2 the house. There's an empty lot there. And I had
 3 canvas and I covered it up. And I spread sawdust all
 4 through the house and the music started playing: Oh,
 5 the farmers and the cowboys must be friends. Oklahoma
 6 music and they all come back. And it was a huge
 7 success. I have pictures of that.
 8 PG: And what was the House of Flowers?
 9 JS: House of Flowers was another motion picture. I
 10 can't tell you, I cannot tell you. I'd have to go look
 11 in the record. Funny. Now that one was there and I
 12 wanted to decorate the house as it was called The
 13 House of Flowers. And now at this time, my landlord
 14 liked everything I did, and the women always liked my
 15 parties because people would arrive in limousines and
 16 they would be all dressed up. And when they knew I was
 17 going to throw a party, the women of the neighborhood,
 18 'cause I lived on a corner, all of them, they would
 19 all ask if they could help fix it 'cause I didn't
 20 have, I did my own food. And then afterwards, they
 21 would sit out on their porch and applaud gay people
 22 that arrived. It was (inaudible). When I told them I
 23 was going to have The House of Flowers, they said well
 24 let's decorate the house with the flowers. I said well
 25 how are we going to do that? They says we'll put, like

1 he stopped and told the other, you know, these women
 2 are not women, they're men. Well, they got upset and
 3 they wanted to see the person, where is the man that
 4 made these arrangements? Here he is! Well, that made
 5 him even more upset.
 6 PG: How were you dressed?
 7 JS: Oh, there's a picture of me there. I look like the
 8 ad in (inaudible), that's who I copy.
 9 PG: And so what did the father do?
 10 JS: Oh Mary, she shit a brick . . . went out, out,
 11 out. I said how dare you? I made a contract with you.
 12 No, no, no, no, no. And besides that I paid you for a
 13 party. No. You, and so then I said you will continue
 14 this ride, and then I will take and break down the
 15 party and take it elsewhere, and you'll get just what
 16 for the ride. He agreed to that. Meanwhile I tried, I
 17 said I need some men and three cars. So we drove back
 18 to the stables, took some hay, I had saved beer cans
 19 and then sprayed them. It was this texture paint that
 20 was quite the fabulous thing of the day. So those were
 21 my cups. And it was beer was in kegs and we got
 22 loaded everything up and we went to my home on Seward
 23 Street. And they said well what did you get, what are
 24 you going to do? I said you'll have to take all of the
 25 furniture out of the front room and the dining room

1 they do on the floats, chicken wire and we stuffed it
 2 with colored paper. He helped me, the landlord. And
 3 the House of Flowers, and I can't remember the story
 4 nor anything about that.
 5 PG: But another successful party, huh?
 6 JS: Huh?
 7 PG: Another successful party.
 8 JS: Oh yeah, all of my parties were successful.
 9 PG: So when you threw, you threw the party to, you
 10 threw the Marquise party in Mill Valley, right?
 11 JS: Yeah, because that's where I was living, in Mill
 12 Valley.
 13 PG: But that was '57.
 14 JS: Well, that's when I threw it.
 15 PG: But, so is that when you declared yourself
 16 Marquise?
 17 JS: No, I was always the Marquise. When I announced
 18 that I was the leader, I said I am the Marquise of
 19 (inaudible). My father was a Marquis. Go look it up in
 20 the books; you can't argue with me.
 21 PG: So you threw that, that was just another big party
 22 you threw?
 23 JS: Yeah, the Widow Norton, No, not the Widow Norton,
 24 but it was the Widow.
 25 PG: Marquise.

1 JS: The Widow party. And I threw the Marquise party
 2 (inaudible) the picture, and my mother attended that.
 3 Oh yeah, we had the, that was very, very fancy, I
 4 mean.
 5 PG: I know. I've seen pictures of that. It looks
 6 almost like a Court function because there are people
 7 dressed in beautiful gowns.
 8 JS: Oh yeah, it was Court dress and everything. The
 9 Court hadn't been developed yet.
 10 PG: But I'm just saying, it looks like.
 11 JS: Yeah, yeah, because I was a Marquise and a
 12 Baroness. There were a few of us that were titled, and
 13 the rest were just faces.
 14 PG: Did you have like fine china at that party?
 15 JS: Oh, I've always had fine china. I had service for
 16 50-60 people at one time. Don't have it anymore. And
 17 everything matched.
 18 IS1:1000:1099
 19 PG: So let's go backwards a little bit. So you, there
 20 was this group of people and you start to meet them
 21 and did you . . .
 22 JS: (inaudible) The King and I. The King and I, I
 23 rented the, whenever that was, I threw The King and I
 24 ball, and I sent an invitation to the Baroness. She, I
 25 figured, was the big queen, and that's where he met me

1 (clock gongs) in the middle of the floor. I had rented
 2 Cafe du Nord, twenty-five dollars, jukebox music and I
 3 threw a party and she was invited. And she came down
 4 the street, clump, clump, clump with all her jewelry,
 5 and we met in the middle of the floor.
 6 PG: How were you dressed at that party?
 7 JS: I had a pink, I'll show you pictures of me, a pink
 8 King and I type of dress. And we met, we met in the
 9 middle of the floor, everybody waved. She curtsied to
 10 me and I curtsied to her. I am the Marquise, I am the
 11 Baroness. Thank you for the invitation; it's very
 12 nice. Thank you for being her (inaudible due to clock
 13 chime, cuckoo clock and music box). Then she sent to
 14 me, and I should have it some place, an invitation to
 15 come to tea. And that was a ritual that we carried on
 16 until my mother died. Once a month my mother would
 17 dress, and we would go over to Henry's house and have
 18 tea. She became very fond of my mother. My mother was
 19 very fond of Henry and that was it. And now Henry, I
 20 mean, we pretended and everybody thought this was wild
 21 but they never could say anything bad about Henry
 22 because I knew Henry and I stood up for him. They did
 23 not know Henry, they didn't know his whole story.
 24 PG: Who's they?
 25 JS: The community.

1 PG: Oh, the community.
 2 JS: They thought he was a snob (inaudible) or any type
 3 of title. And he said he has as much title to it as I
 4 have. Are you going to argue about that?
 5 PG: Now did you socialize with the other people in
 6 this group as much as . . .
 7 JS: Okay, now after Henry accepted, then he threw a
 8 party at which time I met the rest of that group. And
 9 then with me meeting them, they were invited to my
 10 house.
 11 PG: Now what kind of party did Henry throw? Just a
 12 house party?
 13 JS: Oh, a very nice party with food, was catered by
 14 Blum's because he never had a stove. The food came in
 15 the back door.
 16 PG: Did all of them do this, cater these very fine
 17 parties?
 18 JS: If you had money to pay for it. Bill Bliss used to
 19 cater, have parties. But he did his own cooking. He
 20 didn't have that kind of money. You must remember in
 21 those days when we threw parties where we paid for
 22 everything ourselves. If you came to my house, you
 23 came to my house, you ate, you drank (inaudible due to
 24 chiming clocks).
 25 PG: Now at these parties, did people come dressed up

1 or did they just come . . .
 2 JS: It depended on what it was.
 3 PG: Oh, if there was a theme.
 4 JS: Yes, if there was a reason, yeah. Otherwise if you
 5 came to a dinner party, it was, you know, tie, suit
 6 and tie, you came dressed. You wouldn't come to
 7 someone's sit-down dinner party dressed in jeans.
 8 PG: Right, right, but nobody came in drag?
 9 JS: Oh yes, in some cases the women came in drag, and
 10 yeah. Then after the Court, then I would give Court
 11 dinners.
 12 PG: Oh, after the Court got started.
 13 JS: Yes, yeah, then you would have to come in Court
 14 dress.
 15 PG: Now did you stay friends with this group all
 16 through . . .
 17 JS: I buried every one of them; they all died.
 18 PG: But you said ah . . . (both speak at once).
 19 JS: He got married, I mean, my life, I did other
 20 things in my life. My life had to go on, kind of
 21 disappeared from the . . . because he was a follower.
 22 And then he died and Ackerman died. That was, he was,
 23 he didn't have sense enough to do something, you
 24 understand?
 25 PG: Who's Ackerman?

1 JS: Lee Ackerman was the one that was the son
 2 (inaudible) make-believe to Henry (inaudible) Jewish
 3 boy that married a very wealthy man. They had the big
 4 wedding at Mark Hopkins Hotel.
 5 PG: When was that?
 6 JS: That's in the newspapers. Oh, they had nothing to
 7 do one day so they decided, Henry said, oh, Lee
 8 Ackerman said, you know, I want to get married. And so
 9 they asked the husband if they could have some money
 10 so they could go out and have a little party, a
 11 wedding party. He said fine. He gave them a credit
 12 card with five hundred dollars. So the first thing
 13 Henry says, oh, we have to buy a dress. So they went
 14 down to Magnin's to buy a wedding dress. Well, the
 15 lady-in-waiting who's going to give you away needs a
 16 dress, so he bought a dress. Well, Mary, the money
 17 went faster than nothing. So now that we have the
 18 dress, we have to have a place for the reception. So
 19 they went to the Mark Hopkins Hotel and rented the
 20 hotel. Oh, we've got to have a cake so they had
 21 caterers. And they had to have invitations
 22 1S1:1100-1199
 23 So now they've got everything rented. By this time it
 24 cost an arm and a leg. The old husband didn't know
 25 about it. And Lee Ackerman, yeah, had to have a

1 wedding dress and Henry had to have a wedding dress,
 2 you know. So they said well who is going to be
 3 invited. Well, they invited their closest of friends.
 4 But that still didn't compensate, so they went out on
 5 the street. The Navy happened to be in town that day
 6 or that weekend, so every sailor they met, they said
 7 do you want to go to a party? It's up at the Fairmont
 8 Hotel. Well, my dear, about 300 sailors showed up plus
 9 everybody else and they were having a wonderful time.
 10 Champagne is flowing and the cake and everything. And
 11 the elevators all stop going up and down in that hotel
 12 on the mezzanine and they look in and they see these
 13 sailors dancing with one another, which is a no-no.
 14 They see the sailors with their fingers up one
 15 another's ass which is a no-no; they see sailors
 16 kissing one another and men kissing one another which
 17 is a no-no. And the people went down to the head
 18 office and threw a thing. The man came up and he gave
 19 them twenty minutes to get the fuck off of this
 20 premises. And he didn't even wait for twenty minutes;
 21 he had called the police. The police came. The wedding
 22 party jumped out the windows into waiting limousines
 23 and drove off and the next day in the headlines in the
 24 paper, and I have it downstairs, Big Wedding Bash,
 25 Only The Bride was a Man.

1 PG: Well now, was this the '50s or '60s?
 2 JS: It might have been the '50s I should think.
 3 PG: So you were still at the Cat when this happened?
 4 JS: I was invited to that. I think it had to be
 5 (inaudible) or yeah. This was one of her things. And
 6 another time Henry bought a fur coat and forgot to pay
 7 for it. He appeared in the paper on that one. He
 8 walked out of the store with the coat on. Oh yeah.
 9 I'll have to find those newspaper clippings. I got
 10 about seven boxes I have to go through.
 11 PG: But I'm just curious. Is this whole thing of
 12 throwing these huge, huge parties . . .
 13 JS: That was my way of becoming, I became the gay
 14 Perle Mesta. I was known in The City for the parties.
 15 PG: But what I'm saying is that seems to be something
 16 that carried over into Court, this idea of like
 17 throwing big parties. But for the Court, the parties
 18 were also, seemed like they were also always fund-
 19 raisers. But the idea that, you know, people get into
 20 fabulous costumes and some have titles.
 21 JS: That's was the coronation when the Court . . . but
 22 prior to that, when the league, it was education and
 23 SIR began, we would throw big dinner parties, at which
 24 time . . . I then donated all the silver. We could
 25 feed 150 people and everybody had silverware and

1 dishes.
 2 PG: And were those fund-raisers?
 3 JS: And then, and the gay, yeah.
 4 PG: So these things, then they developed into fund-
 5 raisers?
 6 JS: Yeah, but I always threw fund-raisers, I always
 7 threw fund-raisers.
 8 PG: Did you do any fundraising at the Cat?
 9 JS: Oh yes.
 10 PG: Really?
 11 JS: Yeah, we raised money for the, what was it? We
 12 raised money for who was it? The Heart Association.
 13 And they told us they couldn't take our money because
 14 it came from the Black Cat.
 15 PG: Really?
 16 JS: And I got a letter to that. I said fine. 'Cause I
 17 never gave to the Heart for a long time; we gave it
 18 somebody else.
 19 PG: Do you remember the first fund-raiser you did at
 20 the Cat? Can you remember it at all?
 21 JS: We were always doing fund-raisers at the Cat and
 22 giving it to poor people. I've always done fund-
 23 raisers, long before the Court. I always was doing
 24 something to help people.
 25 PG: I mean, just listening to you, it sounds to me

1 I like somehow the Court system was sort of putting
2 together these big fun outrageous parties and
3 fundraising.
4 JS: Well, the really outrageous parties became, was
5 the Coronations. Individuals did parties for fund-
6 raisers because that was . . . the original, the
7 original intent of the Court was to unite the
8 community which I did do. And how are you going to
9 unite them if you don't give some kind of parties or
10 functions or shows? And when you're going to charge,
11 you had to have a reason. Where was this money going
12 to? So then I had, and right away, it had to be a
13 nonprofit corporation. That's why they go along with
14 the Barony, the baronesses, because they weren't a
15 nonprofit; they were a D.B.A. And as long as they were
16 a D.B.A., I wouldn't go to them.
17 PG: The baronesses meaning?
18 JS: No, not, the duchess, the ducal, the Ducal Court.
19 PG: Oh. What's a D.B.A.?
20 JS: Doing Business As. Doing Business As does not mean
21 that you do it for charity. It's, read it in the
22 paper, you're doing it for yourself. (inaudible) made
23 the money, she'd take a trip, she'd go buy a piece of
24 property. (inaudible) same thing.
25 1S1:1200-1299

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1 A qualified person who, and then eventually they
2 became a nonprofit corporation because I screamed. But
3 in San Francisco it did not begin that way. San
4 Francisco began as a nonprofit corporation under the
5 umbrella of the Tavern Guild.
6 PG: So from the very beginning, the Court was a
7 fundraising arm?
8 JS: That's right, 'cause that's the way I set it up.
9 Now I have imposed my will on everybody else that
10 cares to join us. So that's the way I play the music.
11 PG: Huh! That's interesting. I'm going to let you go
12 but I want to ask you just real quickly a question. I
13 was talking to somebody on the phone; this is totally
14 unrelated. But I just wanted to ask you this question.
15 She wanted to know, she's doing research into
16 transgender transsexual people and she wanted to know,
17 do you remember in the '50s whether transsexual people
18 were already in the Tenderloin or whether that was not
19 until the '60s?
20 JS: Not until, no. There was one woman and her name
21 was - she was the one that knew Benjamin, Doctor
22 Benjamin. She lived up on St. Francis, St. Joseph Way.
23 And he used her. She dressed as a woman but she looked
24 like a man. What was her name?
25 PG: A big, a big woman?

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1 JS: Big tall woman. The name will come to me. She's
2 the one that got him to go to the Cat. And he looked
3 at me, Dr. Benjamin and Kinsey was the ones that came
4 out with The Third Sex. And he said that I was the
5 perfect example of the third sex, neither here nor
6 there but a well adjusted homosexual. And that's how I
7 met Dr. Benjamin.
8 PG: At the Cat.
9 JS: He sat there and he watched me for two weeks. I
10 didn't know what he was doing making notes. But I was
11 well adjusted, I was, there was nothing wrong with me.
12 Because this was the first studies of the Kinsey
13 Report that was coming out with Dr. Benjamin. What was
14 that bitch's name? Can't figure it, and we became
15 friends. Then there was the one who worked for a
16 doctor on the Peninsula and she always wanted to have
17 her peter cut off and he wouldn't do it. So they went
18 to the opera and they came back home and they found
19 him on the floor in the kitchen with his peter sliced.
20 He took a butcher knife and cut it off. So they
21 performed, they gathered it to complete the operation
22 and they fixed it up. He works on the Peninsula as a
23 female, one of the early people.
24 PG: Ah, but coming back to this, in the '60s I know
25 that there were transvestites and transsexuals in the

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1 Tenderloin. It was an area that was known for that.
2 JS: But I don't consider them real. They were people
3 they were trying to get out of going to war, just a
4 bunch of kids that thought that they were women in
5 men's bodies. That was that big thing at that time.
6 And they wore the sweater backwards and they wore the
7 falsies, and they gave a bad name. They were the drag
8 queens 'cause they didn't do anything other than
9 whore. They wouldn't go out and work. Now a few of
10 them that were sincere and really had to go through a
11 psychiatric thing, they went to the clinics, and
12 that's when Langley-Porter Clinic was started where
13 they went. And if they felt that it was true, after a
14 couple years, you know, the hormones and this and
15 that, then they went and whacked off your peter and
16 did this. Who you should, who I should, who you should
17 talk to is David Harris. He can tell you more.
18 PG: Right. But I'm just saying in your memory, do you
19 remember . . .
20 JS: I do not remember and I did not associate with
21 those people, because, number one, they would never
22 come to my home.
23 PG: All right. Did any of them come to the Cat?
24 JS: Like I said, they were whores, they lived off the
25 street.

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1 PG: Okay. In the '50s, do you remember anybody talking
 2 about where there were these kind of people? I'm
 3 wondering, you didn't see them in the Tenderloin then,
 4 did you?
 5 JS: There were respectable ones, but I don't remember
 6 them. One I knew, and then there was a little group of
 7 them. Pauline, later on I met people like Pauline.
 8 They had their peter but they had tit implants.
 9 IS1:1300-1399
 10 Not, not all of them cut off their peters 'cause it
 11 was too costly.
 12 PG: Okay, she just was curious 'cause we're trying to
 13 figure out when the Tenderloin began to become a
 14 neighborhood for these people, about what . . .
 15 JS: It's not yet, it's not now.
 16 PG: It was in the '60s, in the early to mid '60s it
 17 was starting to become, there were a lot of people
 18 living down there who were . . .
 19 JS: They lived like women because they wanted an
 20 excuse. Now whether they were true transsexuals, I
 21 don't know.
 22 PG: Okay. And you were saying that there were some,
 23 later, of course, you said that the Beige Room and
 24 Finocchio's were very early, but later you said was,
 25 okay, the Gilded Cage came along about in the '60s?
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1 JS: Yeah, that's where Pierce came to make it famous.
 2 PG: And Uncle Billy's was '60s?
 3 JS: That was on Mason Street. And The Rose, yeah,
 4 there was entertainment there. The Fantasy on Mason
 5 Street, there was a lot of entertainment there.
 6 PG: Do you have any, I'm just curious, do you have any
 7 idea why it, why there was so little, why there were
 8 so few venues that would have any kind of . . . there
 9 was like, of course, there was Mona's that was for
 10 women, right, doing male drag. And there was
 11 Finocchio's and then you said the Beige Room and then
 12 you at the Cat. But why did it take until about 1960
 13 for there suddenly to be all these places? I just
 14 wonder if you have any guess.
 15 JS: Well, because that's when all the gay bars boomed
 16 because at that time you had 150 gay bars.
 17 PG: So you see it just as a growth in the gay bar
 18 community?
 19 JS: Yeah. It was because of anything else.
 20 PG: So this was all for the, these were all gay bars,
 21 this was for the gay male clientele?
 22 JS: Yeah. The straight clientele, they would go to
 23 Finocchio's. They didn't go to Mona's either. No
 24 straight person would ever walk into Mona's. Then you
 25 had the Chi Chi Club where you had a nightclub and
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1 JS: Oh yeah, then you had . . .
 2 PG: Then there was Castaways you said.
 3 JS: You had the Castaways down on Market Street, you
 4 had Uncle Billy's, you had a lot of clubs, all had The
 5 181, Pat Montclair worked at them, the Nighthawk. You
 6 had a lot of bars that had entertainment and everybody
 7 was doing pantomime. You know, that was it; they were
 8 stupid. But then the bad ones died and then a few of
 9 them, but I was always live.
 10 PG: Now these places began to spring up like late
 11 '50s?
 12 JS: Oh yeah, '60s.
 13 PG: Sixties mostly. 'Cause the Castaways, when you
 14 talked about that show that you said produced the
 15 Vendateria Corporation and the blowing the whistle on
 16 the gayola scandal, that whole story, we place that
 17 about 1960 'cause it had to be. Now, had the Castaways
 18 been doing . . .
 19 JS: Castaways was a straight place.
 20 PG: Okay, but how long had it been doing this kind of
 21 entertainment? Just started?
 22 JS: It was a straight place. I was to say that was
 23 really big entertainment there and there was a
 24 speakeasy downstairs.
 25 PG: Okay. And the Gilded Cage was also '60s, right?
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1 Carol Davis across the street from there. Now that was
 2 a tourist place. You had Spiders, Doodles and Spiders,
 3 the first pantomime. You had the beginning of the
 4 hungry I and that where you had straight type of
 5 entertainment. But you had the International
 6 Settlement, you had big stars, you had cabaret, you
 7 know, you had dinner, you had dinner restaurants where
 8 you ate and watched the people sing and dance.
 9 PG: Like supper clubs?
 10 JS: Supper clubs, yeah. As a matter of fact, I have a
 11 credit card for one (inaudible).
 12 PG: And The Cat was sort of in between these two
 13 things?
 14 JS: The Cat was a tourist place. The Cat would not
 15 have, the Cat would have never been what it was had I
 16 not gone there. It's as simple as that.
 17 IS1:1400-1499
 18 PG: Otherwise it would have been just another bar?
 19 JS: Just another bar. It wouldn't probably never lost
 20 its license. I changed it.
 21 PG: And what you did there originally was cabaret or
 22 hosting?
 23 JS: Hosting and singing; it was cabaret. And the
 24 busses would come by and this was notorious anyway,
 25 and they would leave the busses and come back down and
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1 they would see me and people would come to see and
 2 hear the little Mexican dancing on the table tops. I
 3 was very clever. And this caused Finocchio's and
 4 Mona's, which later became the Chi Chi Club, to have
 5 headaches because they couldn't figure out how to put
 6 me out of business, because they were doing no
 7 business. And then she started running a four o'clock
 8 show.
 9 PG: On Sundays? Oh, to go up against your opera?
 10 JS: Yeah. Talent show! And this is where you had
 11 people like Phyllis Diller and a lot of people that,
 12 Mel Young. You had a prot g of Frank Sinatra. You had
 13 a lot of people that, well, Johnny Mathis.
 14 PG: Bill Cosby.
 15 JS: All these people began at the Chi Chi Club.
 16 Meanwhile, I merrily did my thing at the Black Cat.
 17 PG: Did these people come into the Black Cat to see
 18 you, some of these people who were working at the
 19 straight clubs?
 20 JS: Oh sure, yeah, Mel Young did. I knew a lot of
 21 them, theatrical (inaudible). I did not go to their
 22 place. You came to the Cat to see me. I did not go any
 23 place. My name appeared in the paper, you came down
 24 there. Herb Caen wrote about me, first I was the
 25 nightingale. I will find that piece in the paper. Then

1 the next time when I went to work at the World's Fair
 2 afterwards, he wrote about us, I mean, that he wrote
 3 about me other times. Going to the cemetery, serving a
 4 mean planter's punch. Herb Caen (inaudible) when he
 5 died.
 6 PG: Yeah, that's right. Okay, well, we'll have to
 7 continue this but I wanted to just get on tape those
 8 parties that you had that went on in the '50s, you
 9 know, the Merry Widow party, the Oklahoma party and
 10 these people that you met. 'Cause it seems to me too
 11 that in some way that what you were doing in the
 12 Court, like you said, for example you said a lot of
 13 people looked at Henry and they said he's a snob.
 14 JS: Yeah.
 15 PG: And it seemed to me what you did is you took that
 16 idea of having a title and being high society and you
 17 sort of gave it to everybody.
 18 JS: Well, they didn't know who I was. I came and they
 19 said oh, she's a rich bitch. So I said fine, if they
 20 want to believe it, that's good. I had more money than
 21 they did, yeah. I worked for a living but I had more
 22 money and I knew how to spend, what I was doing. And I
 23 was the smart one. If I could call myself the
 24 Marquise, that has a little bit more flair than Mister
 25 Sarria who's dressed as a woman; it doesn't make

1 sense. I was written up in the society page as the
 2 Widow Norton from when Joan Collins was here. I was
 3 mentioned in the . . . we're going to come across that
 4 article too. But this was a queen feeding this
 5 straight woman who wrote the article, didn't realize
 6 what she was writing about. When that appeared,
 7 everybody phoned me and they said Louise! You in the
 8 new society page. Steigler.
 9 PG: Steiger, Pat Steiger.
 10 JS: Yeah, she wrote about me. You know her?
 11 PG: I know of her.
 12 JS: Yeah, she wrote about me.
 13 PG: Yeah, yeah, all right.
 14 End of Interview
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