1. Voices of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC
2. 973 Market Street, #400
3. San Francisco, CA 94103
4. Telephone (415) 777-5455, #1
5. Interview with Jose Sarria
6. Date of Birth: Early 1920's
7. GLHS OHP #97-28, Shedding a Straight Jacket
8. By Interviewer: Paul Gabriel
9. Date: 7/9/97
10. Videotape 1 of 1
11. 1S1:000-099 = Tape One, Counter 000-009
12. 1S1:000-099
13. Unidentified Voice: I don't know, I got a call on
14. Monday. I said it's all contingent on whether or not I
15. hear from my rehearsal piano . . .
16. JS: Oh, is this for Fred?
17. UV: Yeah.
18. JS: Oh, good. And tell him that this is, yeah.
19. UV: What's it for? I'm sure it'll be a good cause.
20. JS: Godfather's Fund or something like that.
21. UV: Oh, that's good.
22. JS: But I told him that he's doing too many. This is
23. the last one; he should stop. But tell him the kitchen
24. floor needs something, and the bathroom needs
25. that in the '20s, there was a lot of, there was a lot
26. of kingdoms in the world. They hadn't shut them off
27. and World War Two hadn't come. There was still a lot
28. of places where there were kings and queens that you
29. read about in the paper. I remember later on in the
30. '30s, we read about King Carol and Madame Magna
31. Lustique, his mistress, he left the throne in
32. Yugoslavia. Then we read how his son Michael started
33. to study at Stanford University. Of course, everybody
34. wanted to go down there and take a look at what a
35. Yugoslav prince looked like. But there was a, there
36. was a lot of royalty (phone rings).
37. (Unidentified Voice speaks on telephone in the
38. distance, clock chimes, camcorder turned off
39. momentarily).
40. JS: We'll just have to wind that up so it never stops.
41. Okay now.
42. PG: So, who'd you play dress-up with when you were
43. growing up?
44. JS: Okay, where was I at?
45. PG: You said you were . . .
46. JS: And we'd always play dress-up because it was,
47. royalty was something you heard people talk about and
48. it was like kids always played house. There was always
49. momma and poppa and there was always . . . I didn't
50. 1 something, 'cause he's the one that's inclined to do
51. 2 that maybe.
52. 3 PG: Who's Fred?
53. 4 JS: Fred is the Mister Gay San Francisco I think.
54. 5 PG: Oh, this year?
55. 6 JS: Yeah, very nice man.
56. 7 PG: Does he have like a contracting business?
57. 8 JS: Yeah.
58. 9 PG: Okay. Tell me, Jose, when you were little, when
59. you were a young lad . . .
60. 10 JS: You should identify yourself, shouldn't you?
61. 11 PG: No, the tape is identified. This is Jose Sarria.
62. 12 JS: People are glad (laughs) bully-bully.
63. 13 PG: When you, when you were a little kid, you told me
64. you used to put on girls' clothing sometimes?
65. 14 JS: Are you trying to make me look funny?
66. 15 PG: No, not at all. I'm trying to make you look
67. 16 fabulous.
68. 17 JS: There's nothing wrong in playing dress-up. We have
69. men who have waited, we have women who have waited
70. until they've been almost dead to think about dressing
71. up. I did not have that much time. I dressed, I played
72. dress-up and it was very common in those days. I was
73. born in the beginning of the '20s and we played dress-
74. up. We played king and queen because you must remember
75. 1 play that 'til I got a bit older and I knew a little
76. 2 bit about the birds and the bees. Then we would play
77. 3 Farm, you know, I'd be the bull, I mean, you did all
78. 4 kinds of things like that.
79. 5 PG: You were the cow and somebody'd come milk you?
80. 6 JS: Yeah, and then you'd have to milk me . . . kids
81. 7 copy. But as a youngster one year old, one and a half
82. years old, I was already with the neighbors then. We
83. were, I was raised with other children, and we were
84. not allowed to travel. They had to come to us; we had
85. a very large yard. Our backyard was as big as this
86. downstairs, and so we had a lot of room. And we had
87. wagons and we had, we scrounged boxes and we had wood.
88. 14 If I needed something, I'd ask my godfather and they
89. would get it for us, and I had my closet and we would
90. dress up and we would be queens and kings and ladies
91. and all day long until it was time to eat lunch at
92. which time, sometimes my mother fed the whole gang. At
93. other times they were sent home because after lunch we
94. had to take a nap, and we took naps until . . . oh, we
95. even took naps after we were in school. Naps then were
96. very important. So I, so I started playing . . . and
97. because of this, members of the, female members of the
98. family - aunts and cousins and sisters - if they had
99. something that they didn't want anymore, they gave it
100.
GLHS OHP #97-28, Shedding a Straight Jacket

Jose Sarria

1 I carried, they pulled! I was the boss.
2 PG: Were there, ah, at that time when you were a little kid, do you remember people who were doing drag that were famous, that you would hear about in American, I'm talking about American popular culture.
3 Nobody?

7/9/97

with Katherine Hepburn playing Jo. That was it.
1 JS:1:100-199

2 Now, I had, I was taken to live productions. There I didn't really have to be good, and I think I was taken anyway, and I remember seeing at the Curran or the Elks, the Curran, Alice in Wonderland, and I sat way, way up. I remember Mother taking me and pinning my name and whole works in case I got lost, and taking me there. It was an afternoon performance for children. I don't know who played the part but I remember it was Alice in Wonderland. We could really do some research; we'll find out when it was. But that was, that was in, that was before the Crash.
14 PG: And so the theater, so it sounds to me like the theater fascinated you but also female roles fascinated you. Is that true that you liked to look at like Bette Davis, or was it more just make-believe.
18 JS: Bette Davis wasn't an actress yet.

PG: Or Katherine Hepburn rather, excuse me.

JS: Katherine, I really liked her because I was told about the story of Little Women. It's not that I tried to imitate them. But I liked costume, period. When I began going, I still today, I will go to see costume pictures right away. But they always take from old stories: Emily Bronte, Withering Heights (sic), who...
questions. How come they got such a small waist? And then they told me.

3 PG: Huh! But you were more interested in, like when women got dressed up than men or both?

5 JS: I don't know how, that's difficult to say. If you're trying to say that my being today is based on 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 shows and they showed pictures, early pictures, of Oscar Wilde, pictures like that, that story of Oscar Wilde and the way that they dressed. I was very interested. I was interested to know that it wasn't until, it wasn't until Lincoln that there was a right foot and a left foot to a pair of shoes. Otherwise shoes were made and then by usage that they took a form. But there was no such thing as a left shoe and a right shoe. Did you know that?

19 PG: Uh uh.

20 JS: They were just made and if you wore this one shoe all the time on the . . . then it took the shape of 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 understand, but there was no . . . they weren't doing it all over town, see? See, the Beige Room was early, 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 little boy, you dressed like a boy and they took you out to eat. Not as a girl. They didn't to pick up a little girl, I mean, they picked up a boy.

11 PG: Huh! That's interesting. So you're saying a lot of people . . . I'm sorry, you're getting me off on a tangent here, but you're saying that some people would go to drag shows or female impersonation shows and 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 boys.

20 JS: No, I'm talking about when I was younger. And I was additionally went to the afternoon tea dances.

22 They're going to pick you up. They weren't going to pick up a little girl. They wanted to fuck a little boy, have sex with a little boy.

25 PG: Where were these tea dances?
**Jose Sarria**

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### GLHS OHP #97-28, Shedding a Straight Jacket

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<td>PG: (laughs) Do you remember, do you remember who, you</td>
<td>PG: And you won?</td>
<td>Carter left, then I went to the Black Cat. I used to</td>
<td>Carter left, then I went to the Black Cat. I used to</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>go to the Black Cat and that’s how I began there.</td>
<td>go to the Black Cat and that’s how I began there.</td>
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<td>said doctors and lawyers, but do you remember</td>
<td>JS: Yeah, I won second place. Fifty dollars a week and</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>two shows, two weekends.</td>
<td>two shows, two weekends.</td>
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<td>particular individuals aside from Walter?</td>
<td>JS: Yes, I sang Smoke Gets In Your Eyes, during intermission. And the main line</td>
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<td>JS: Oh yeah, he was the host, oh yeah. I knew some</td>
<td>headliner at that particular time was Lynn Carter and</td>
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<td>the Four Cartiers.</td>
<td>the Four Cartiers.</td>
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<td>famous people that would come. Now we're going to</td>
<td>Well, in the interim while I'm doing the intermission</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>and while Lynn Carter's doing her thing, the Mexican</td>
<td>and while Lynn Carter's doing her thing, the Mexican</td>
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<td>to leave it like that.</td>
<td>headliner at that particular time was Lynn Carter and</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>the Four Cartiers.</td>
<td>the Four Cartiers.</td>
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<td>JS: Most of them are dead now, but even so, what good</td>
<td>Well, in the interim while I'm doing the intermission</td>
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<td>would it do?</td>
<td>and while Lynn Carter's doing her thing, the Mexican</td>
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<td>JS: Most of them are dead now, but even so, what good</td>
<td>to leave it like that, okay, that's fine.</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>JS: That's right, that's right.</td>
<td>JS: They were not corrupting me and they certainly</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>didn't corrupt me. I would have never continued the</td>
<td>didn't corrupt me. I would have never continued the</td>
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<td>profession that I continued. I'd have a teacher had</td>
<td>profession that I continued. I'd have a teacher had</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>not been a (inaudible). That changed my whole life.</td>
<td>not been a (inaudible). That changed my whole life.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>I had to end up doing something that I could do. I was</td>
<td>I had to end up doing something that I could do. I was</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>on the verge of graduating, I was just at the end of</td>
<td>on the verge of graduating, I was just at the end of</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>it. This is the end of the trail. Now I was going to</td>
<td>it. This is the end of the trail. Now I was going to</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>be a teacher. So now here I got all of this education,</td>
<td>be a teacher. So now here I got all of this education,</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>all this knowledge, all this everything, and I can't</td>
<td>all this knowledge, all this everything, and I can't</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>use it. And I'm very practical. So I had to sit down</td>
<td>use it. And I'm very practical. So I had to sit down</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>and figure out what I was going to do.</td>
<td>and figure out what I was going to do.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>PG: Well, I'm curious. How did you get involved in</td>
<td>PG: Well, I'm curious. How did you get involved in</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>doing... you told me that you participated in a</td>
<td>doing... you told me that you participated in a</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>drag contest over in Oakland.</td>
<td>drag contest over in Oakland.</td>
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<td>JS: Yeah.</td>
<td>JS: Yeah.</td>
<td>JS: Not then.</td>
<td>JS: Not then.</td>
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<td>JS: Yeah.</td>
<td>JS: Yeah, that's right, that's right.</td>
<td>JS: Not then.</td>
<td>JS: Not then.</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Carter left, then I went to the Black Cat. I used to</td>
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<td>go to the Black Cat and that's how I began there.</td>
<td>go to the Black Cat and that's how I began there.</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>PG: To socialize?</td>
<td>PG: To socialize?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>JS: Yeah, socialize and then host and then cocktail</td>
<td>JS: Yeah, socialize and then host and then cocktail</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>wait, and then the star and then the Black Cat.</td>
<td>wait, and then the star and then the Black Cat.</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>at Finocchio's too?</td>
<td>at Finocchio's too?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>JS: Not then.</td>
<td>JS: Not then.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>PG: Not then. Okay, now when you first started, when</td>
<td>PG: Not then. Okay, now when you first started, when</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>you went, when you went to this contest, you were</td>
<td>you went, when you went to this contest, you were</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>there for two weeks, and then you went over to the</td>
<td>there for two weeks, and then you went over to the</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Beige Room and doing the intermission show, about what</td>
<td>Beige Room and doing the intermission show, about what</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>year was that?</td>
<td>year was that?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>JS: In the early '50s.</td>
<td>JS: In the early '50s.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>JS: Yeah, something like that.</td>
<td>JS: Yeah, something like that.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>PG: But I'm curious, so that you knew Michelle by then</td>
<td>PG: But I'm curious, so that you knew Michelle by then</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>'cause you said...</td>
<td>'cause you said...</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>JS: Michelle had come to The City, Michelle had come</td>
<td>JS: Michelle had come to The City, Michelle had come</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>to San Francisco when the Atlantic Navy stood still,</td>
<td>to San Francisco when the Atlantic Navy stood still,</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>when there was a big purge of the Atlantic Navy.</td>
<td>when there was a big purge of the Atlantic Navy.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>PG: From homosexuals?</td>
<td>PG: From homosexuals?</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>JS: Maybe it had been later.</td>
<td>JS: Maybe it had been later.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>PG: You mean there was a purge of homosexuals in the</td>
<td>PG: You mean there was a purge of homosexuals in the</td>
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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 Garretty. 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.

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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

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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 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.

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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 anywhere 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

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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 JS: Yes, 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 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 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
And one person that was in common to us was - she owned the house here in Healdsburg. What's the name of the big house in Healdsburg, the big (inaudible). She was the, she was a daughter of the famous brick manufacturing people in San Jose, ugly duckling. The father was nervous because he was never get her married off. And this was in the '20s when they shipped her ass to Europe and she married a titled man. She bought a title.

PG: An aristocrat.
JS: And his name was - Oh Mary, you're taxing my mind!
PG: I'm sorry.
JS: You should know.
PG: I wish I did.
JS: On the Peninsula.
PG: I wish I did. Anyway, so she comes home with this title?
JS: No, no, no, it was through her . . .
PG: Anyway, she comes home with this husband.
JS: She comes home with the husband and she bought a big home in which she established society and they used the downstairs hall. It was willed to the City of Burlingame.
PG: Oh, I think I know this place.
JS: It was subdivided except one hundred acres around the house. Okay, then she went and lived in Oakland, in Oakland. And I have a first cousin that was her maid, Maria Finegas. And she used to come every Sunday, right after Depression, to visit my godmother who were . . . they were related through the second wife, Mary Finegas, and the Mateos. And she wore pince-nez glasses and she was very correct. I can always remember it. And she worked for the, what was she, why she was a Baroness. She was a Baroness; I've got papers on her too. He got two hundred dollars a month and she got the title. And he started playing around so she kicked his ass out, got a divorce from him. So, what was the name of that place? Oh, anyway, she was very good friends with Mrs. Cameron, the wife of Mr. Cameron, who was president of the Hibernia Bank and who was connected with The Chronicle, the Call-Bulletin and The Chronicle, the Hearst Papers.

PG: Do you have this stuff?
JS: No, I don't have the tea set; my cousin has the tea set. I have the pictures. And the pictures were done when they were on satin from pictures that they had of scenes of California, when they went to Europe where the boy got sick and died.
PG: But Henry worked as a butler, right? Down the Peninsula, didn't he?
JS: Yeah, Henry worked, Henry worked in a very, very big book publishing company on the, in Palo Alto, that manufactured books. He was part owner. Something happened. Henry had to leave them. Now Henry was very socially connected through his mother and father society-wise. He knew a lot of people. I happened to know some people, the same thing, through my family.
1. I think I 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. . 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. 1S1:700-799
7. And the gardener and the chauffeur because he couldn't
do that. And all he had to do, the house was made a
8. museum until it was through escrow, and it took ten
9. years to go through escrow. And he got half his salary
10. for ten years. And he lived in Rose Court. When it was
11. finally sold, then that was the end of it. Then what
12. did Henry do? Well, by this time he had invested some
13. money. And a nephew sat on it and broke it, and Henry
14. said Can I have it for Jose, because she knew who I
15. was. She says yeah, take it. If Jose can fix it, he
16. can have it, and I took it to the carpenter who's now
17. dead, and he rebuilt the wheel and everything on the
18. 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 Rongonieri. 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
tell, she had name. She was La Senora Dona, Senora Sabajara (spelling). So she groomed the little boy:
You will become a doctor and you will study. And she said to her daughter, you will become beautiful. She was a very beautiful woman. And made sure because she was an ex-president of high society, was in society, okay? Well, Sabajara met her. No, no, Rongonieri met her and married her, much against the wishes of the father, because she really didn’t have a dowry. All her had was name, and so he married her. And from that union was, oh no. Mrs. Sabajara had the daughter and the son. From that marriage, then came Betty, she had a son, and Audrey I think. They lived in San Mateo; beautiful home. He was a very prominent doctor, Doctor Rongonieri. And the uncle owned the Turkish baths on Ellis Street, which was patronized, it’s got a swimming pool, patronized by the police department. That’s why he was able to operate it, which was very gay at night and very straight in the daytime. Okay, she has an argument with her husband, packs the children and goes to Europe. In the meanwhile he has a heart attack and dies and (inaudible) buries him. And after he’s in the ground, informs the wife your husband has died: you’d better come home. So she comes home and he has become administrix (sic) administrix

1 to get married. And she becomes Mrs. Sabajara and comes out here to San Francisco and establishes. They had one daughter called Susan and Mrs. Sabajara never knew why the doctor was always so kind to my mother, in good times and in bad times.
1S1:800-899
7 There was always a place. At one time my mother lived in the house. She never did understand and finally one day he told her. My mother paid for his education and she was like a second mother. He always remembered me. In fact he offered me a job just to live in the house and make meals for him because nobody would do it. His daughter was very young, very pretty. I contacted her the other day (inaudible) about a year ago. And she said Oh, Jose, god, to I remember you. I said you were a spoiled little child. I said you’d take off your dress; you wouldn’t wear it anymore. My mother would collect them and give them to my godmother’s niece and nephew, nieces, to wear. My little niece had a white mink coat because she refused to wear the goddam thing. Well, my sister said, Theresa said there’s no kids in Redwood City that got, little girls that wear white mink coats. But I think she wore it until . . . and then my sisters made something out of it afterward. But all these beautiful clothes, beautiful

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

1 Foster-Kaiser Sign people. She had two sons who would
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 the 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 . . .

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, 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 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 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 1911:900-999
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,

and the back bedroom and pile it up along the side of
the house. There's an empty lot there. And I had
a canvas and I covered it up. And I spread sawdust all
through the house and the music started playing: Oh,
the farmers and the cowboys must be friends. Oklahoma
music and they all come back. And it was a huge
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

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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?
24 but it was the Widow.
25 PG: Marquise.
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Jose Sarria

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 find china. I had service for
16 50-60 people at one time. Don't have it anymore. And
17 everything matched.
18 1S1:1000:1099
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

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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

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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?
JS: Lee Ackerman was the one that was the son
  (inaudible) make-believe to Henry (inaudible) Jewish
  boy that married a very wealthy man. They had the big
  wedding at Mark Hopkins Hotel.

PG: When was that?

JS: That's in the newspapers. Oh, they had nothing to
do one day so they decided, Henry said, oh, Lee
Ackerman said, you know, I want to get married. And so
they asked the husband if they could have some money
so they could go out and have a little party, a
wedding party. He said fine. He gave them a credit
card with five hundred dollars. So the first thing
Henry says, oh, we have to buy a dress. So they went
down to Magnin's to buy a wedding dress. Well, the
lady-in-waiting who's going to give you away needs a
dress, so he bought a dress. Well, Mary, the money
went faster than nothing. So now that we have the
dress, we have to have a place for the reception. So
they went to the Mark Hopkins Hotel and rented the
hotel. Oh, we've got to have a cake so they had
caterers. And they had to have invitations
PG:

JS: 1S1:1100-1199

1 So now they've got everything rented. By this time it
cost an arm and a leg. The old husband didn't know
about it. And Lee Ackerman, yeah, had to have a
wedding dress and Henry had to have a wedding dress,
you know. So they said well who is going to be
invited. Well, they invited their closest of friends.
But that still didn't compensate, so they went out on
the street. The Navy happened to be in town that day
or that weekend, so every sailor they met, they said
do you want to go to a party? It's up at the Fairmont
Hotel. Well, my dear, about 300 sailors showed up plus
everybody else and they were having a wonderful time.
Champagne is flowing and the cake and everything. And
the elevators all stop going up and down in that hotel
on the mezzanine and they look in and they see these
sailors dancing with one another, which is a no-no.
They see the sailors with their fingers up one
another's ass which is a no-no; they see sailors
kissing one another and men kissing one another which
is a no-no. And the people went down to the head
office and threw a thing. The man came up and he gave
them twenty minutes to get the fuck off of this
premises. And he didn't even wait for twenty minutes;
had called the police. The police came. The wedding
party jumped out the windows into waiting limousines
and drove off and the next day in the headlines in the
paper, and I have it downstairs, Big Wedding Bash,
Only The Bride was a Man.

PG: Well now, was this the '50s or '60s?

JS: It might have been the '50s I should think.

PG: So you were still at the Cat when this happened?

JS: I was invited to that. I think it had to be
(inaudible) or yeah. This was one of her things. And
another time Henry bought a fur coat and forgot to pay
for it. He appeared in the paper on that one. He
walked out of the store with the coat on. Oh yeah.
I'll have to find those newspaper clippings. I got
about seven boxes I have to go through.

PG: But I'm just curious. Is this whole thing of
throwing these huge, huge parties . . .

JS: That was my way of becoming, I became the gay
Perle Mesta. I was known in The City for the parties.

PG: But what I'm saying is that seems to be something
that carried over into Court, this idea of like
throwing big parties. But for the Court, the parties
were also, seemed like they were also always fund-
raisers. But the idea that, you know, people get into
fabulous costumes and some have titles.

JS: That's was the coronation when the Court . . . but
prior to that, when the league, it was education and
SIR began, we would throw big dinner parties, at which
time . . . I then donated all the silver. We could
feed 150 people and everybody had silverware and
dishes.

PG: And were those fund-raisers?

JS: And then, and the gay, yeah.

PG: So these things, then they developed into fund-
raisers?

JS: Yeah, but I always threw fund-raisers, I always
threw fund-raisers.

PG: Did you do any fundraising at the Cat?

JS: Oh yes.

PG: Really?

JS: Yeah, we raised money for the, what was it? We
raised money for who was it? The Heart Association.
And they told us they couldn't take our money because
it came from the Black Cat.

PG: Really?

JS: And I got a letter to that. I said fine. 'Cause I
never gave to the Heart for a long time; we gave it
somebody else.

PG: Do you remember the first fund-raiser you did at
the Cat? Can you remember it at all?

JS: We were always doing fund-raisers at the Cat and
giving it to poor people. I've always done fund-
raisers, long before the Court. I always was doing
something to help people.

PG: I mean, just listening to you, it sounds to me
like somehow the Court system was sort of putting
together these big fun outrageous parties and
fundraising.
4 JS: Well, the really outrageous parties became, was
the Coronations. Individuals did parties for fund-
raisers because that was . . . the original, the
original intent of the Court was to unite the
community which I did do. And how are you going to
unite them if you don't give some kind of parties or
functions or shows? And when you're going to charge,
you had to have a reason. Where was this money going
to? So then I had, and right away, it had to be a
nonprofit corporation. That's why they go along with
the Barony, the baronesses, because they weren't a
nonprofit; they were a D.B.A. And as long as they were
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
that you do it for charity. It's, read it in the
paper, you're doing it for yourself. (inaudible) made
that you do it for charity. It's, read it in the
11 JS: Doing
12 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?

JS: Big tall woman. The name will come to me. She's
the one that got him to go to the Cat. And he looked
at me, Dr. Benjamin and Kinsey was the ones that came
out with The Third Sex. And he said that I was the
perfect example of the third sex, neither here nor
there but a well adjusted homosexual. And that's how I
met Dr. Benjamin.
8 PG: At the Cat.
9 JS: He sat there and he watched me for two weeks. I
didn't know what he was doing making notes. But I was
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
that bitch's name? Can't figure it, and we became
friends. Then there was the one who worked for a
doctor on the Peninsula and she always wanted to have
her peter cut off and he wouldn't do it. So they went
to the opera and they came back home and they found
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
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
PG: Okay. In the '50s, do you remember anybody talking about where there were these kind of people? I'm wondering, you didn't see them in the Tenderloin then, did you?

JS: There were respectable ones, but I don't remember them. One I knew, and then there was a little group of them. Pauline, later on I met people like Pauline. They had their peter but they had tit implants.

PG: Okay, she just was curious 'cause we're trying to figure out when the Tenderloin began to become a neighborhood for these people, about what . . .

JS: It's not yet, it's not now.

PG: It was in the '60s, in the early to mid '60s it was starting to become, there were a lot of people living down there who were . . .

JS: They lived like women because they wanted an excuse. Now whether they were true transsexuals, I don't know.

PG: Okay. And you were saying that there were some, later, of course, you said that the Beige Room and Finocchio's were very early, but later you said was, okay, the Gilded Cage came along about in the '60s?

JS: Yeah, that's where Pierce came to make it famous.

PG: And Uncle Billy's was '60s?

JS: That was on Mason Street. And The Rose, yeah, there was entertainment there. The Fantasy on Mason Street, there was a lot of entertainment there.

PG: Do you have any, I'm just curious, do you have any idea why it, why there was so little, why there were so few venues that would have any kind of . . . there was like, of course, there was Mona's that was for women, right, doing male drag. And there was Finocchio's and then you said the Beige Room and then you at the Cat. But why did it take until about 1960 for there suddenly to be all these places? I just wonder if you have any guess.

JS: Well, because that's when all the gay bars boomed because at that time you had 150 gay bars.

PG: So you see it just as a growth in the gay bar community?

JS: Yeah. It was because of anything else.

PG: So this was all for the, these were all gay bars, this was for the gay male clientele?

JS: Yeah. The straight clientele, they would go to Finocchio's. They didn't go to Mona's either. No straight person would ever walk into Mona's. Then you had the Chi Chi Club where you had a nightclub and . . .
they would see me and people would come to see and hear the little Mexican dancing on the tabletops. I was very clever. And this caused Finocchio's and Mona's, which later became the Chi Chi Club, to have headaches because they couldn't figure out how to put me out of business, because they were doing no business. And then she started running a four o'clock show.

PG: On Sundays? Oh, to go up against your opera?
JS: Yeah. Talent show! And this is where you had people like Phyllis Diller and a lot of people that, Me1 Young. You had a protégé of Frank Sinatra. You had a lot of people that, well, Johnny Mathis. PG: Bill Cosby.
JS: All these people began at the Chi Chi Club. Meanwhile, I merrily did my thing at the Black Cat. PG: Did these people come into the Black Cat to see you, some of these people who were working at the straight clubs?
JS: Oh sure, yeah, Mel Young did. I knew a lot of them, theatrical (inaudible). I did not go to their place. You came to the Cat to see me. I did not go any place. My name appeared in the paper, you came down there. Herb Caen wrote about me, first I was the nightingale. I will find that piece in the paper. Then sense. I was written up in the society page as the Widow Norton from when Joan Collins was here. I was mentioned in the . . . we're going to come across that article too. But this was a queen feeding this straight woman who wrote the article, didn't realize what she was writing about. When that appeared, everybody phoned me and they said Louise! You in the new society page. Steigler. PG: Steiger, Pat Steiger.
JS: Yeah, she wrote about me. You know her?
PG: I know of her.
JS: Yeah, she wrote about me.
PG: Yeah, yeah, all right.
End of Interview

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

Jose Sarria

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