

<p>1 2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC 3 973 Market Street, #400 4 San Francisco, CA 94103 5 Telephone (415) 777-5455, #1 6 Interview with Reba Hudson 7 Date of Birth: Not stated 8 GLHS OHP #95-112, San Francisco Literature 9 By Jim Breeden, One Tape/90 10 On 8/23/95 11 IS1:000-099 = Tape One, Side One, Counter 000-099 12 IS2:000-099 = Tape One, Side Two, Counter 000-099 13 Tape One, Side One 14 IS1:000-099 15 RH: The thing that Nan did, she hoped to get a book 16 out of it, you know, that was her dissertation. 17 JB: Oh, oh, to parlay that into something of a 18 larger, larger piece. 19 RH: Uh huh, right. 20 JB: I don't know, I don't know Nan, I've never . . . 21 RH: Oh, very charming person. I became quite fond of 22 her. I introduced her to Nona and Dan Bidadetti and a 23 lot of people that she wanted to meet. She suffered 24 certain things and, of course, all of it was just, was 25 just very cooperative. We had a very wonderful day</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 and we all took Nona to lunch and ah Ricky brought her 2 cameras and Nan brought her cameras and they took 3 pictures, Nona's pictures, and Nona was very generous 4 with them. As a matter of fact, she loaned Nan her 5 scrap book from all those years some time. So that 6 was probably at least the last interview that she had 7 really been in, you know, like well enough health to 8 give. 9 JB: Well, actually, a lot of the stuff that I wanted 10 to, wanted to ask, I noticed going over some material 11 that you already in the magazine, but I just want to 12 establish it and then just move on from there. 13 RH: Okay. 14 JB: So, let's see, you first came to San Francisco in 15 1943 and ah, and you came with a couple of friends. 16 RH: Three, as a matter of fact. Well, actually two. 17 One of my friends was ah, we all grew up together. 18 Well, they were from Phoenix and I was from Glendale 19 which is only seven miles from there. Well, when 20 softball was a big thing then, even though we went to 21 different high schools, we all met through ball 22 playing. 23 JB: Okay. 24 RH: And ah, Mary was a freshman at Stanford and 25 Margaret was her girlfriend, and Margaret was also my,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p>
<p>1 probably my closest friend of those teen, those teen 2 years like. She went back after about a year. But 3 ah, and so did the other girl that came with me. She 4 was someone that I was seeing at the time. 5 JB: There. 6 RH: In Phoenix, yeah. And who came along. She went 7 back about a few months later. 8 JB: So were you all out to one another? 9 RH: Oh absolutely, I was out at fourteen. I fell in 10 love at fourteen. 11 JB: Oh, my god. 12 RH: Yeah, I was a sophomore and my girlfriend was a 13 senior. 14 JB: So ah, did your, did your parents know? 15 RH: Oh, yes, my mother knew. 16 JB: And what did she say? 17 RH: My father died when I was five. She said that 18 she raised her children to be happy and if it made me 19 happy that, it was all, she was all for it. She loved 20 to meet the girlfriend, the one I went off to L.A. to 21 live with. 22 JB: So she was, she was very accepting, she gave her 23 blessings. 24 RH: Oh yeah, my mother was a very intelligent woman, 25 very remarkable woman, and actually, you know, what do</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p>	<p>1 you say if you love your child? 2 JB: Yeah. If you really love your child. 3 RH: Right. And she brought us up to be independent 4 and to cope with the world per se. I think what the 5 greatest gift any parent can give a child. And ah, 6 and it's like Mary (inaudible) at home I was twenty- 7 one at the time we left, and like, god hold her, I was 8 able to appreciate my mother as a person and I was one 9 of those lucky people. We were friends, became 10 friends, we liked each other very much. 11 JB: Would she come and visit? 12 RH: Oh yes, yes, absolutely. My sister, who just 13 died about a year ago, they were ranchers down around 14 Modesto, and Mother used to come over and get Helen 15 and I, and visit Helen and I'd go down to the ranch. 16 So yes, she visited here a number of times. 17 JB: Isn't that wonderful! You're lucky in that way. 18 19 RH: Well, my brothers and sisters have always known 20 it too. I always bring my girlfriends down to the 21 ranch, right? Never a word was said but we're all set 22 up in the same room. Ah, my sister would say there's 23 books in your room, Reba. We were also all of us a 24 book reading family, I think, all of us. 25 JB: All of them, right.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p>

1 RH: Including my mother.
 2 JB: And your brothers and sisters would be accepting.
 3 RH: Uh huh, oh absolutely. Never had any problem
 4 with it at all.
 5 JB: Wonderful.
 6 RH: Well, really, what's to say. I'm the same
 7 person.
 8 JB: Yeah. But it's rare. Most of the people that
 9 I've talked to, both gay men and women, very few, I
 10 don't think I've encountered a single person who, in
 11 the course of my interviews, that has had a - it
 12 sounds like that kind of acceptance that you got from
 13 your mother and from your brothers and sisters, it
 14 was, it's a rare thing. And even today ah.
 15 RH: Well, yeah, when you consider the years, a little
 16 town too.
 17 JB: Yeah, considering the back. It wasn't a
 18 cosmopolitan. It was down on the ranch.
 19 RH: No, population of Glendale, pre World War Two was
 20 like thirty-five hundred and a lot of that rural. My
 21 parent were cotton farmers.
 22 JB: Why do you think, why do you think that your
 23 mother was so accepting? Why, I mean, what's in her
 24 background?
 25 RH: Well, she was brought from Chattanooga,

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1 very well thought of in the, in the community itself.
 2 And I think a lot of it had to do with that. People
 3 had to be what they were to each other. There was a
 4 lot of reliance . . .
 5 JB: Upon one another.
 6 RH: Oh, well, yeah, because there weren't -
 7 everything was not right there at your fingertips.
 8 You had to help one another.
 9 JB: So there was kind of an attitude, sort of like,
 10 you know, what you did and who you were.
 11 RH: Yeah, I didn't go, I didn't go out and embarrass
 12 my family or anything like that, you know, I behaved
 13 just as I was brought up to behave. I treated people
 14 as I wanted to be treated, which is my mother's
 15 admonition to us always: Treat people like you'd like
 16 to be treated. And like, given an atheist, but I
 17 believe in the Christian concepts and so was my
 18 mother.
 19 JB: She too was a . . .
 20 RH: Well, no, she wasn't an atheist, but she was no
 21 church goer. She made us go to church until we were
 22 thirteen. There were twenty-two churches in Glendale
 23 (inaudible). It just goes to show you. Why I became
 24 an atheist, anyone that could think at all could look
 25 around. The Methodists are sprinkling, the Baptists

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1 Tennessee, and ah there were no colleges for women in
 2 those days. She went to a finishing school. She came
 3 from an - well sort of a middle class. It was, in
 4 those days, it was middle, lower, upper, baloney. And
 5 ah, she was an intelligent woman, and her whole family
 6 was, her brothers and sisters - she came from a family
 7 of eleven. They were all like that. They took people
 8 at their, for what they were. They were not
 9 prejudiced either, unlike most Southerners.
 10 JB: Do you think that, it's true, well, I guess I -
 11 this is not exactly on my topic, but do you think
 12 there is some kind of American character trait, sort
 13 of, and it might be even sort of a frontier kind of
 14 sort of live and let live.
 15 RH: Absolutely.
 16 JB: And you take a person . . .
 17 RH: I think that has a whole lot to do with the
 18 gender. You're very, very right, because they settled
 19 in Arizona while it was still a territory. As a
 20 matter of fact, my older sister was born there while
 21 it was called the Baby State (Laughs) in those days.
 22 And it became a state in 1912, was born there before
 23 it became a state. My mother's first husband, she was
 24 married twice, widowed twice, ran for Territorial
 25 Representative, and they had a big dairy farm and were

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1 are immersing and they won't speak to each other over
 2 this issue. God, to think how could they possibly.
 3 JB: It's true. When I was twelve or thirteen, when I
 4 was old enough to really think about the God and the
 5 Christian concepts, and I just decided no, that I
 6 really didn't believe it, believe in it. I just came
 7 to that conclusion on my own. Even though I agree
 8 with you, I think, I think a lot of the examples which
 9 Christ had to teach, which are wonderful true
 10 examples.
 11 RH: Oh, absolutely. If people would just follow like
 12 Jesus' teachings and the moral of the so-called moral
 13 majority have as much right to call themselves
 14 Christians as I do to call myself president (Laughs).
 15 JB: Well, exactly. And do they really follow the
 16 example of Christ and his teachings?
 17 RH: No, none whatsoever. Love is supposed to be the
 18 focus. And they hate, they just hate, hate, hate.
 19 But anyway, that's getting us off the . . .
 20 JB: Yeah, well talk a little bit about when you ah,
 21 when you first came here, 1943 about, describe a
 22 little bit about the lesbian scene and what you
 23 discovered when you first moved here.
 24 IS1:100-199
 25 RH: Well, the lesbian scene was like, as you probably

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<p>1 read in that article here, how you saying at the 2 Oxford Hotel down on Turk Street, five days, that was 3 the limit because somebody else (inaudible). There 4 was no housing in World War Two, and ran into these 5 old friends of ours from Phoenix. Brownie was in the 6 Navy and his wife was with him and we used to go hang 7 out at the bar in Phoenix, and Brownie tended bar and 8 his wife, Grace, was a cocktail waitress. I don't 9 even know whether they knew whether we were gay or 10 not. 11 JB: This wasn't a lesbian bar. This was just, or was 12 it? 13 RH: No, we didn't have any lesbian - we had one 14 lesbian bar in Phoenix, and that was way out in South 15 Phoenix run by an old dyke from New York, right? And 16 she sort of ran it as the South Phoenix Bar, although 17 she was gay. I don't know if people just liked you as 18 a person, they never thought about it one way or the 19 other. 20 JB: Right, there in Phoenix. 21 RH: Right. 22 JB: But how about. 23 RH: So anyway, we just hung around together. We all 24 played softball. I wasn't good enough to play on the, 25 we had like three really good teams. They were non,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p>	<p>1 they were non-professional, they were amateur. But 2 PHSW Ramblers won a couple of national championships 3 and stuff and teams came there to play, and we used to 4 run back and forth from Salt Lake all the time because 5 we had girlfriends back there. 6 JB: Oh boy. 7 RH: Oh yeah, oh absolutely. We had a wonderful time 8 and ah, once in a while we'd go out, what was the name 9 of Kay's place? The Happy Landing (Laughs). 10 JB: This was in Arizona? 11 RH: Yeah, the one gay, the one gay bar, right? 12 JB: The Happy Landing. 13 RH: And once in a while, we'd go out there, but a lot 14 of us weren't - I was, but a lot of us. No, I wasn't 15 either. We weren't twenty-one. We were like 16 eighteen, nineteen, twenty. 17 JB: So you were underage? 18 RH: Right, so we couldn't hang around the bars, but 19 there weren't any to hang around anyway that were gay. 20 We were just accepted anywhere we wanted to go to. It 21 didn't matter, we were the softball team. Hey 22 (Laughs), that was the big thing and those stands were 23 full. 24 JB: And women's softball there was very popular 25 RH: Yeah, right. We played, they played softball,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 10</p>
<p>1 they didn't play baseball like the pro women's, like A 2 League of Their Own. 3 JB: Well, what was it like in San Francisco as far as 4 . . . 5 RH: Oh, when we first arrived here, like the stories 6 that I told Nan, Brownie and Grace asked us to go out 7 that night. So we went to Slapsy Maxie's, which was 8 over on O'Farrell Street in (inaudible) at that time. 9 Billie Holliday was singing there. 10 JB: Oh. 11 RH: Oh yeah, I was already loved her music. I was a 12 jazz lover before I ever got here. One of my brothers 13 played jazz guitar and ah while Brownie was in the 14 rest room, he was a sailor and he had on his sailor 15 suit, I guess the waitress didn't know what the 16 situation was but she picked up on the fact that we 17 were gay. And ah, well, we're wearing Levi's and Tony 18 Lama cowboy boots and starched white linen shirts. 19 JB: You were wearing pants? 20 RH: Oh yeah. 21 JB: During that time? 22 RH: Oh sure, yeah. God, yes. We had . . . used to 23 hang them out in the sun for days at a time to get 24 them that look, after washed look that they have now, 25 the whole thing.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 11</p>	<p>1 JB: Well, wasn't it unusual for women to have, wear 2 pants, I mean, wasn't there a real . . . 3 RH: In San Francisco, yes. We had just arrived here 4 at this period that I'm telling you about. And we 5 also had suits and well, dressed pretty much like that 6 picture of me in there, you know? Every night, those 7 clothes, I've worn those clothes like while we were - 8 four times in my life and they were totally 9 fashionable each time (Laughs). Anyway this waitress 10 said that I think you kids would be a lot happier if 11 you went to Mona's. And ah, we said oh really? Like 12 we're nice kids, we're naive and everything, and she 13 said oh yeah. Where is it? We want to see 14 everything. So she writes it down for us and she 15 tells us to ask for, oh, what the hell was her name? 16 Great big black dyke, weighed about - Gladys Bentley. 17 JB: Gladys Bentley. 18 RH: Right. And she played the piano and thumped with 19 this big cane and sang little risqu parodies to her 20 own songs at Mona's. So the next Saturday night, Mary 21 comes up from Palo Alto, right, our friend who's a 22 freshman at Stanford. You know, off we go to Mona's. 23 And they can see that we're green as grass, right? 24 And we were really attractive, very personable well- 25 dressed group of four, right? And they welcomed us</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 12</p>

1 there and made us feel right at home, like Kay Scott,
 2 Mickey and Jimmy Renard, Mike, all of them. We went
 3 to their houses for dinners. We got to know them.
 4 They all lived right here in North Beach. And then,
 5 of course, that was ah about the only gay club when we
 6 first came here that we really knew of, so we kept
 7 going, on going back there. Mona no longer had it at
 8 that time. She had disassociated herself from it
 9 because she had to take in a partner and he was the
 10 one who came up with Where Girls will be Boys, and
 11 that slogan, which was not Mona's intent to run a
 12 commercial gay club at all, ever. We won't get into
 13 that. But anyway, after that, ah, as I say, that's
 14 really the only gay club that we went to. It's like
 15 this was the early '40s and then I moved down to
 16 Hollywood, which was in '47, right. Laid off my job
 17 and Erlene had, her mother had died in child birth and
 18 she was left to care of a baby, so she couldn't move
 19 up here until such time as her father got a
 20 housekeeper, so I moved down there. Was laid off from
 21 the Marine Corps, the war was over.
 22 JB: Right, it sounds like a funny, I mean, you
 23 couldn't recount how long the affair or the
 24 relationship lasted (both speak at once).
 25 RH: Absolutely, I could even tell you that after

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1 JB: Why not?
 2 RH: Right.
 3 JB: You know, one of the things that I think it makes
 4 it interesting to the reader too, and I want to take
 5 advantage of your good memory, and that is sort of
 6 physical descriptions and first impressions to make it
 7 vivid for the reader. In other words, when you went
 8 to Mona's, you know, ah what was your, say, impression
 9 of the neighborhood during that time? Sort of like
 10 the sights, the sounds that you heard. Can you
 11 recollect sort of . . .
 12 RH: Not really.
 13 JB: . . . a sense of your impressions.
 14 RH: Once inside that door, I can certainly recollect
 15 (both speak at once). The ah, Broadway didn't mean a
 16 thing to us at that time. We'd only been in town like
 17 a week.
 18 IS1:200-299
 19 JB: Right, it was all very new.
 20 RH: Oh, absolutely. So what we're, we're concerned
 21 with what's inside there, not what's around there.
 22 JB: Right.
 23 RH: We had, took a cab, got out of the cab and
 24 marched right into Mona's and we had no idea what we
 25 were getting into. We asked for Gladys Bentley. I

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1 living in San Francisco which I just fell in love with
 2 - as a matter of fact, our plan, we were Depression
 3 kids. We never had any money to travel except to
 4 neighboring states and that kind of thing like New
 5 Mexico and Texas and Arkansas and Oklahoma. After I
 6 graduated from high school, three of us took my car
 7 and we went to Kansas and Oklahoma and New Mexico,
 8 everywhere we had a relative where we could stay for a
 9 while (Laughs).
 10 JB: Wow.
 11 RH: And ah, yeah, bummed around all summer in those
 12 states. But ah, so, jobs were plentiful because World
 13 War Two was on, we thought we'd just go, come here and
 14 . . . my brother was here in, in the ah, Coast Guard
 15 and then my brother-in-law was here in the Army which
 16 eased my mother's mind considerably about my coming to
 17 a big sinful city.
 18 JB: Well, you had family, so.
 19 RH: Right, exactly.
 20 JB: To sort of look after you.
 21 RH: And ah however, she thoroughly approved of my
 22 going, she said that her life had been different and
 23 she'd had the opportunity that I had, she certainly
 24 would have taken advantage of them and go and have a
 25 good time.

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1 don't know what this woman's point at Slapsy Maxie's
 2 was in telling us to ask for Gladys Bentley because
 3 Gladys Bentley was probably the most unfriendly person
 4 in that place. She was just, like I said, huge. Have
 5 you ever heard of her?
 6 JB: No, this is the first time.
 7 RH: Big, black, she must have weighed three hundred
 8 pounds, black, she'd wear a tux and a top hat and a
 9 cane which she kept tuned to her music on and sang
 10 like sort of parodies of popular songs and that risqu
 11 type things. I read later in some book that I was
 12 reading that she had her own place in Harlem, like
 13 there was a big colony of lesbians, black lesbians, in
 14 Harlem at one time, but I guess it was all pretty
 15 undercover and she had her own place.
 16 JB: At that, during that time.
 17 RH: Uh huh.
 18 JB: So when you opened the door to Mona's, what was
 19 your first impression? What struck you about the
 20 place?
 21 RH: Wow. Besides we weren't used to big nightclubs
 22 like that in Arizona either, I mean, you know, 'cause
 23 it was a cow town.
 24 JB: Nothing like that.
 25 RH: Not until the Easterners came and started

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1 flooding out there and retirement thing, but ah, very
 2 different city from what it was then.
 3 JB: So what was it like, what did you see when you
 4 first . . .
 5 RH: All of the, we didn't know whether the - we knew
 6 they were women dressed as men and ah Mickey was the
 7 hostess and she was very, very nice to us, introduced
 8 herself, we introduced ourselves, and she showed us to
 9 a table and after we were seated and ordered a drink,
 10 checked everybody's ID. I asked, asked for Gladys
 11 Bentley and Mickey gave me this real funny look and
 12 she says she'll be on in a little while. And ah, I,
 13 of course, never even approached her once I saw her
 14 because I realize we'd been put on, for what reason I
 15 don't know.
 16 JB: Who can say?
 17 RH: I don't know. Some little warped sense of humor
 18 on the part of that waitress (Laughs). But we got to
 19 know everybody else. As a matter of fact, they came
 20 over and introduced themselves.
 21 JB: It was very friendly.
 22 RH: Oh very, made us feel totally welcome.
 23 JB: So how were they, you mean, dressed like men.
 24 How were they dressed like men? What were they
 25 wearing?

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1 was her choice. Everybody else wore pants.
 2 JB: Everybody, that's what you said, everybody.
 3 RH: Oh sure, they wore a tux.
 4 JB: The complete outfit.
 5 RH: Oh, Absolutely. As a matter of fact, Mike
 6 dressed as a man outside the club too and she wore
 7 men's suits and ties and fedoras and the whole bit. I
 8 remember one time she came to pick me up to take me to
 9 a party and you'd never know she was a woman. She was
 10 about six foot. My landlord said boy, that's some
 11 good-looking guy you had a date with last night. And
 12 she took me to a big gay party, my first gay party.
 13 It was the first time I saw men kissing men and all
 14 this kinds of thing. I thought it was just great.
 15 Mike was just great.
 16 JB: So, what about the ah, you know, did you know
 17 many gay men also when you first moved?
 18 RH: Well, after I lived here in the neighborhood, oh,
 19 yeah.
 20 JB: So what was your . . .
 21 RH: The neighborhood became more and more gay.
 22 JB: As it continued into the '50s too.
 23 RH: Uh huh. Well, see, I didn't move into North
 24 Beach until the '50s. I didn't live in North Beach.
 25 We lived at 1635 Bush, Rick and I and Pat Bond and . .

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1 RH: Oh, they all were wearing tuxes.
 2 JB: They were all wearing tuxes?
 3 RH: Oh, yeah. Every one of them, that was the . . .
 4 JB: How about the customers themselves?
 5 RH: Well, there was a lot of straight people there.
 6 JB: Oh, there were?
 7 RH: Oh yeah, it was that kind, it was sort of like
 8 Finocchio's in that . . . it was more of a tourist
 9 place than a . . . there were gay people there too,
 10 but there were more straight people. It was a
 11 nightclub.
 12 JB: So there were, there were men too?
 13 RH: Oh yeah, as a matter of fact, men were tending
 14 bar because women couldn't tend bar at that time. And
 15 ah, they were gay men. But everyone else wore, oh,
 16 everybody wore a tux. That was part of the ah,
 17 because everybody entertained as well as waited table.
 18 JB: And that was sort of the ah standard performance.
 19 RH: Oh yeah, they all got up and sang a song and et
 20 cetera.
 21 JB: Well, I understand that ah - well, we were on an
 22 interview yesterday - wear a jacket but they had to
 23 wear a skirt. They couldn't wear pants. Is that
 24 true?
 25 RH: Beverly Shaw always wore a skirt but I think that

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1 . . .
 2 JB: Oh, Pat Bond too?
 3 RH: Oh yes, she'd just got out of the Army (Laughs)
 4 kicked out of the Army. And ah, oh, I knew Pat Bond
 5 very, very well.
 6 JB: So, what was, what was your, what was it like
 7 knowing other gay men? Were they, were they helpful?
 8 What kind of relationships did you develop with them?
 9 RH: Oh, we were all very, we were all very good
 10 friends.
 11 JB: You think gay men were supportive?
 12 RH: If you're a, well, I think if you knew them, they
 13 were supportive, because they formed friendships. But
 14 I have walked into men's bars, even like the Paper
 15 Doll, that's basically a men's bar when Dan Benedetti
 16 had it. And you could just feel the hostility of the
 17 men toward the women even though we were gay.
 18 JB: So that was true, you could feel, you could
 19 certainly feel.
 20 RH: Oh that, oh yeah, that was very, very, generally
 21 speaking, that was true.
 22 JB: Yes, if you were strangers?
 23 RH: Exactly, well, even if you weren't strangers.
 24 JB: They were generally hostile toward women.
 25 RH: That's right. Men and women did not hang around

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1 the same bars. Well, we would all went to the Paper
 2 Doll because they served dinner and gave women work
 3 there. But the main patrons were male.
 4 JB: Right.
 5 RH: And a couple of other gay bars, men's gay bars,
 6 that I can't think of at the moment, but ah, that we'd
 7 gone to, that you could feel all the hostility . . .
 8 JB: That was there.
 9 RH: Oh yeah. They'd turn around and look at you and,
 10 you know, just generally make you feel unwelcome,
 11 right.
 12 JB: Like who are you; what are you doing here? Ah,
 13 well, but did you develop personal friendships with
 14 some of them?
 15 RH: Oh, absolutely, oh sure. As a matter of fact, I
 16 lived over the Tivoli and about half the building was
 17 gay and the other half was lesbian, and formed a - I
 18 had a lot of gay friends, gay men friends. I have a
 19 lot of straight men friends as far as that's
 20 concerned. I like men. The fact that they're
 21 actually boring me is not their fault.
 22 JB: Right. So you were able to form friendships?
 23 RH: Oh, yeah, sure.
 24 JB: Ah, and how about your other . . .
 25 RH: But there was definitely an antipathy between

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1 everybody, you know, the help was friends of ours.
 2 But there was ah Chi Chi, which was a girls' bar, and
 3 there was Mary's Candlelight, which was a girls' bar.
 4 And then Tommy LaSue opened the ah, Tommy's up on the
 5 Broadway side. Now it's the old Twelve Adler and
 6 that's what it was called then, across the street from
 7 Vesuvio, still called Twelve Adler. And our, or I
 8 guess not. Is Speck's, is Speck upstairs or
 9 downstairs?
 10 JB: I don't know.
 11 RH: But anyway, it was called Twelve Adler, Tommy
 12 owned them both but there was the upstairs bar and the
 13 downstairs bar. And when Broadway Bar was called
 14 Tommy's and the downstairs bar was called Twelve
 15 Adler. You came in it from a - Twelve Adler is just a
 16 little baby fifty yard place right across from City
 17 Lights Book Store.
 18 JB: Okay.
 19 RH: And you just walked right into the entrance off
 20 Columbus into it. It's called Twelve Adler Place.
 21 JB: Well most of the, most of the bars were spread
 22 along Columbus then.
 23 RH: Broadway.
 24 JB: I mean, Broadway. Almost all the . . .
 25 RH: Oh yeah, we'd just to go down there and make the

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1 some gay men and some gay women, but I'm a people
 2 person. You've got to remember that personality.
 3 JB: Right, to begin with. Sure, so you got along
 4 with . . .
 5 RH: Yeah, I'm a very social person.
 6 JB: Yeah, I can tell that.
 7 RH: And ah I like people enormously. I mean, I love
 8 a good story and I'll talk to anyone who doesn't bore
 9 me (Laughs).
 10 IS1:300-399
 11 And, you know, stranger and the Hud. As a matter of
 12 fact, people have always proved to be, turn me on, you
 13 know, like I enjoy them enormously.
 14 JB: Were gay men at all, your gay male friends, were
 15 they helpful to you at all, you know what I mean, or
 16 you know what I mean? The City was ah, especially
 17 during the '50s, was still pretty well, I mean, the
 18 underground scene was pretty gay male oriented. I
 19 mean, it seems like the majority of establishments and
 20 the restaurants that were more geared towards gay men.
 21 There was a much more gay male culture.
 22 RH: Well, not really, like down on Broadway we had
 23 ah, of course, there's was Mona's which was more or
 24 less true. You know, it was like, kind of like
 25 Finocchio's but we hung around there because we knew

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1 rounds. And then there was a few up on Grant Avenue.
 2 There was The Paper Doll on Union and then there was
 3 The Tower . . .
 4 JB: Oh, I hadn't heard.
 5 RH: . . . which used to be an old Italian restaurant.
 6 It was called some, some gay guys owned it and called
 7 it Poopsie's or I don't know some ridiculous name that
 8 I don't even remember, that lasted for a very short
 9 time. And this Mary, the old woman who . . . that was a
 10 very popular Italian restaurant at one time, huge
 11 place. It was the old Moody's ah for years and years
 12 and years. It just got divided up here, oh, late
 13 '80s.
 14 JB: The Moody's, I didn't know that.
 15 RH: Well, that was the old Tower, yeah, but anyway
 16 Mary loved the gay kids and she had gay bartenders and
 17 ah we all hung around there. It was like a
 18 neighborhood bar, but it was gay, and men and women
 19 hung out . . . the neighborhood people all got along
 20 fine.
 21 JB: Regardless of their background.
 22 RH: Oh, absolutely, oh sure, our gay guys or boys,
 23 men or women or whatever, we all had gay friends and
 24 everybody was gay.
 25 JB: Straight or gay, I mean, everybody . . .

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1 RH: I mean, no, everyone was gay and there was none
 2 of this lesbian-dyke men being called one thing or
 3 another. Everyone was gay, all gay. You were gay.
 4 If you were homosexual, you were gay (Laughs).
 5 JB: So did you encounter much of a, sort of,
 6 hostility, not from you but from your gay women
 7 friends towards gay men? Was there any reverse
 8 hostility, did you notice?
 9 RH: Not really, not on a one-to-one basis.
 10 JB: You think most gay women were a lot more
 11 receptive and more comfortable?
 12 RH: My friends were. I don't know about people that
 13 were at other parts of the area. I guess there were
 14 other places around that I considered dives, like
 15 Tommy, before she opened, she had before it was a
 16 parking lot, she had a place called Two-Ninety-Nine
 17 down on Front Street that was just an absolute dive,
 18 right? There was a old hotel up above it, mainly
 19 prostitutes and seamen and all the, all the gay people
 20 that hung around there were dykes, I mean, they had
 21 short hair and dressed like men and that kind of
 22 thing. That was, we used to go down there and slum
 23 (Laughs).
 24 JB: That also brings up something, an interesting
 25 thing that I've come across. I wonder if this is true

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1 Gay.
 2 JB: Were they, were they dressed differently? Were
 3 they more with dresses?
 4 RH: Oh I dressed, we dressed ourselves. I wouldn't
 5 have dreamed of going downtown with a pair of pants on
 6 after I became aware of the . . .
 7 JB: Of the etiquette.
 8 RH: Exactly, oh, no. Heavens, no. As a matter of
 9 fact, we used to dress to the teeth to go to the
 10 theater and all that of which we did a great deal of.
 11 Ah, and then I knew a lot of gay girls who married gay
 12 guys just to satisfy their . . .
 13 JB: Their parents.
 14 RH: . . . families. Yeah, they were like the
 15 Peninsula, Peninsula crowd. But they used to come to
 16 the Chi Chi and that kind of thing, places that I
 17 considered dives were like Scott's Pit and ah, oh god,
 18 another was - I don't think I was ever there over
 19 there was - I've always hung around North Beach and
 20 North Beach bars.
 21 ISI:400-499
 22 Of course I went to Maude's because of Rickie. But
 23 even so, I pretty much stuck to North Beach.
 24 JB: Was that considered, the women that would go
 25 there were principally working class?

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1 to your experience. Ah, I've been told that there has
 2 been a real divide in the, the lesbian world in the
 3 '50s between working class and more middle and upper
 4 class women, and that the bars themselves were
 5 principally geared towards working class women. And
 6 like, a lot of girls from, you know, more well bred
 7 backgrounds. It wasn't sort of socially the right
 8 thing to do for a lady to be, to go to a bar by
 9 herself. Did you notice any kind of hidden hostility
 10 about this.
 11 RH: Oh yeah, as a matter of fact, I knew, I knew
 12 women like that. Did you ever hear of the Claridge
 13 down in Maiden Lane?
 14 JB: No.
 15 RH: Well, it was owned by a woman named Elaine Brooks
 16 and ah she also owned a tea room down in Maiden Lane
 17 there. And this was a place where the higher class
 18 lesbians hung around and they usually had a gay
 19 boyfriend or, or ah, and all the bisexual married
 20 women hung around there because it was . . .
 21 JB: Oh, interesting. It was their, it was their
 22 place to go.
 23 RH: Oh yeah, exactly. 'Cause it was downtown and
 24 they'd go there and have lunch while they were
 25 shopping. Elaine, Elaine had a maitre-de name Sir

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1 RH: Oh yeah, uh huh.
 2 JB: And were there any, did you notice, I mean,
 3 RH: As time went on, there were, it attracted all
 4 kinds of women because it was the only really girls'
 5 bar in San Francisco. If you wanted to go to a girls'
 6 bar, you had to go to, you went to Maude's.
 7 JB: Well, was there any tension between working class
 8 and middle class, I mean, when middle class women
 9 would go to these bars, did you notice any tension or
 10 any friction between these different classes?
 11 RH: Well, if the working class, if the dykes went
 12 over and tried to pick up the well dressed attractive
 13 Peninsula woman, she would not welcome her.
 14 JB: Hm, so you did observe some attitude, some kind
 15 of -
 16 RH: Oh, absolutely, just the same kind of attitude
 17 you'd observe with straight people too.
 18 JB: Right, that you can see it.
 19 RH: Oh yeah, I don't think it was definitely so much
 20 a gay thing as it was as just a life thing.
 21 JB: Right.
 22 RH: And ah, of course, people were a little more
 23 discreet about their private lives in those days, and
 24 ah they didn't go to certain places because they
 25 didn't want to be seen there, because the minute you

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1 set foot in a gay bar, you came out, whether you
 2 wanted to be known as that or not, you were and.
 3 JB: You were typed that regardless with
 4 homosexuality.
 5 RH: Oh, exactly, so a lot of people just didn't go
 6 because they didn't want to be - they were afraid
 7 they'd be seen by someone who knew them or somebody
 8 who you just never know. San Francisco was a very
 9 small town in those days.
 10 JB: Yes, yes, you could be seen by anyone.
 11 RH: Oh yeah. As a matter of fact, especially when
 12 the war was on. And after that I ran into people I
 13 knew from Glendale, Arizona, on the streets of San
 14 Francisco, up in Reno and all over the place, I ran
 15 into people that I knew from all over (Laughs).
 16 JB: So, what did you think of, you were of a, you
 17 know, Phyllis and Del, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin.
 18 RH: I knew Del, I never knew Phyllis. Del made the
 19 rounds of the bars a little bit. This was before
 20 Phyllis. This, we're talking old days.
 21 JB: Okay, the rounds of the bars, as, as a, she would
 22 patronize the bars.
 23 RH: She'd ah, on occasion, that's where I met her.
 24 JB: Did you have anything to do with the Daughters of
 25 Bilitis?

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1 JB: So did you find that true among lesbians also?
 2 RH: Oh yeah, absolutely. I don't find that - would
 3 you like some more water, Jim?
 4 JB: Ah yeah, that'd be great.
 5 RH: Here. This ah, excuse me. I get stiff after I
 6 sit for a while.
 7 JB: Oh, it's probably good to move.
 8 RH: Yeah, it is.
 9 JB: A little bit instead of staying in one place.
 10 RH: Definitely change positions ah.
 11 JB: Interesting. Ah, I understand that what I've
 12 read about Del and Phyllis, about, they had a sort of
 13 a mission, in a sense, to perform.
 14 RH: Well, that's what they tell because god knows
 15 I've heard and read enough about them to see that, to
 16 realize how they felt. Like Last Call at Maude's, you
 17 know, and ah some of their, you know, interim papers
 18 and that kind of thing, but I have never really
 19 identified with the gay community as my sole, as my
 20 sole community. You can't, I can't really probably be
 21 as honest with you as most people can 'cause I've
 22 never encountered it.
 23 JB: Well, you know, it's like you can only, you can
 24 only tell, talk about your own experience and what and
 25 what you've done and what you observe.

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1 RH: Oh hell no.
 2 JB: Why is that?
 3 RH: Oh, those people -
 4 JB: There you go, tell me.
 5 RH: Were weird.
 6 JB: What made them so strange?
 7 RH: I don't know, for one thing. And the Mattachine
 8 the same thing too, they were strange to us. Because
 9 we were, we liked what we were and we didn't need to
 10 go out and join any of these things. I'm not a joiner
 11 to begin with. I can go and lead something but I'm
 12 not going to join it. And ah, they were just oddballs
 13 to us.
 14 JB: They seemed a little strange.
 15 RH: We weren't having any, you know, I have never
 16 felt that I was discriminated against in my life. I
 17 ran for union office, like was for nineteen years, and
 18 elected officer of the United Steel Workers of
 19 America, recording secretary and Grievance Committee.
 20 And I can tell you that I was elected primarily by men
 21 because women will not stand up for one another.
 22 They're great in the locker rooms but you can't get
 23 them out of there to file grievances or anything else.
 24 As a matter of fact, that's women's biggest fault;
 25 they don't trust one another.

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1 RH: Well, that's right. And like everybody, you
 2 know, in American Can knew I was gay but I wasn't
 3 making passes at their wives and their girlfriends or
 4 anything else. I respected them; they respected me.
 5 Life is pretty simply. I find that a lot of these
 6 people who feel that they were treated badly and were
 7 prejudiced against are just plain assholes and, and
 8 would have been treated that way regardless of whether
 9 they were straight or gay. Jerks, they were jerks.
 10 JB: So, you really didn't think that much of Phyllis'
 11 and Del's mission and what they were trying to do.
 12 RH: Well, they didn't have anything to offer me. I
 13 was already out and having a great time and in love
 14 and having long-terms relationships, and wonderful
 15 friends. We had our own group.
 16 JB: Your life was just fine the way it was.
 17 RH: Oh, absolutely, I didn't need them. As a matter
 18 of fact, I remember one time we were sitting down at
 19 The Tower and there was a big banquet room.
 20 IS1:500-599
 21 As a matter of fact, there used to be a huge Italian
 22 restaurant and the Mattachine had reserved it for a
 23 meeting. They come up from L.A. and all over, and
 24 they filed past the bar there to go back to the
 25 banquet room. Why I guess they were having dinner and

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1 a meeting. They was the weirdest looking bunch of
 2 people I'd ever seen in my life. I mean, physically
 3 unattractive, all the rest of it. Boy, we all turned
 4 around and looked. I guess we were snobs in our own
 5 way. And ah, Jesus, no wonder they had they had such
 6 a lame something, look at them. I remember there was
 7 one great big tall guy, had a huge Adam's apple, and
 8 they looked just really strange.
 9 JB: And when you talked with them?
 10 RH: Well, we didn't talk with them. They just filed
 11 passed to go back, yeah, just passed us to, they had
 12 to pass the bar to get back into the banquet room.
 13 And Mary, of course, the owner, had told us who they
 14 were and that kind of thing. And as far as, I don't
 15 know of anyone who belonged to the Daughters of
 16 Bilitis frankly.
 17 JB: No, not in your - did you get The Ladder at all?
 18 RH: Oh no, why?
 19 JB: Okay. Did you ever pick up an issue though? You
 20 must have been -
 21 RH: Oh homosexual. But I, I probably saw it. We
 22 used to pick somebody to bring it over and we'd sit
 23 around and laugh about it.
 24 JB: And what would you laugh about, what made it so
 25 funny to you?

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1 deal to me and ah friends would do anything for each
 2 other. Ricky and I would have done anything for each
 3 other right up until her death and did. Even got me
 4 to go out there and work as a volunteer for Gay Games
 5 so she could be the Treasurer (Laughs) her volunteer
 6 (Laughs). She didn't have the time because she had
 7 all the businesses, right? Calls me up and tells me
 8 you're absolutely the only one that can do this for me
 9 because of the trust of handling the money, right?
 10 And the prestige of everything. She knew I would no
 11 way, you know, like embarrass her in any sense of the
 12 word for any reason which, of course, I did not.
 13 JB: She could count on you.
 14 RH: Exactly.
 15 JB: You could be trusted to do it.
 16 RH: Absolutely.
 17 JB: You worked, you were a steel worker? What was
 18 your?
 19 RH: Oh, I worked for American Can for twenty-one
 20 years.
 21 JB: As, what was your position there?
 22 RH: Oh, I just worked in the factory and ah was the,
 23 worked also for the union as an organizer.
 24 JB: I see.
 25 RH: Started out as a - I wanted to be easy with

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1 RH: The fact that people just couldn't go out and
 2 meet people and come out. And why did they need all
 3 this stuff, this stuff?
 4 JB: Organizing and the house parties that they had.
 5 RH: Well, yeah. We didn't have any trouble making
 6 friends.
 7 JB: So you see, saw the whole thing as just
 8 unnecessary.
 9 RH: Well, it didn't have anything to offer me or any
 10 of us.
 11 JB: Right, in your group or your circle of friends.
 12 RH: No, and it was a large circle of people. We
 13 still ah see each other of that same, the ones of us
 14 that are left are of that same circle of friends. We
 15 were all, we were all attractive, we were all
 16 personable and it was just ah - we never understood
 17 what they really wanted to do. We already had it.
 18 JB: You already had what their aims were.
 19 RH: Yeah.
 20 JB: Well, a lot of, I guess, I guess one of their
 21 missions -
 22 RH: And we were like a family too in a sense that if
 23 one of us needed anything, they got it.
 24 JB: You looked after one another.
 25 RH: Oh, absolutely. The word friends means a great

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1 management, right? Started out as a shop steward and
 2 worked my way up the ladder.
 3 JB: I see.
 4 RH: Through the elective process. They closed the
 5 plant and I retired from there in '72. I had the
 6 magic number as they used to call it in those days,
 7 years of service and your age combined. So I came out
 8 with a little pension and a health, life and health
 9 insurance policy, which I'm enjoying to this day
 10 (Laughs).
 11 JB: Very glad that it's there.
 12 RH: Uh huh, glad that I was able to negotiate it.
 13 JB: So you, it sounds like you're, as you told me
 14 over the phone, that you were a great reader, but you
 15 really didn't read much of, oh, like the lesbian pulps
 16 that were being published, the dime store kind of -
 17 RH: We were living them, and a lot better than those
 18 books. Those books were pretty badly written, god,
 19 and everything had to end unhappily. I can remember
 20 one of the biggest moments of despair in my life was
 21 when Dorothy and I were going together, when I was
 22 fourteen and she, well, she must have been seventeen.
 23 Was that my mother had to sign to allow me to read in
 24 the restricted room of the library when I was sixteen.
 25 You had to be eighteen to be there, and that's where I

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1 found The Well of Loneliness by Radcliff Hall. And
 2 when I read that, I had, we just thought being in love
 3 was natural. We held hands and I laid around my head
 4 in Dorothy's lap on the high school campus.
 5 ISI:600-707
 6 JB: And nobody thought.
 7 RH: Well, they didn't say anything to us if they did.
 8 Her parents were like Reformist Dutch. They tried to
 9 break up our friendship, plus I kept kind of a bad
 10 reputation as far as they were concerned like I smoked
 11 at a high school dance, and drank wine.
 12 JB: You were a wayward, you were a wayward girl, wild
 13 girl.
 14 RH: Oh, I was wild, wild wild, wild, right.
 15 JB: That's how they saw you.
 16 RH: Oh, absolutely. And ah, when I look back on it,
 17 it was nothing (Laughs).
 18 JB: So when you read The Well of Loneliness, what did
 19 you think?
 20 RH: Well, I realized then that I was gay and like for
 21 the first time I was depressed because I just thought
 22 I was just like anybody else. It never even seemed
 23 strange to me that Dorothy and I were in love. My
 24 mother did say to me at one point before we talked
 25 about sex and I was gay, she said, you know, I was

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1 portrait of lesbian life that you saw in that book was
 2 so -
 3 RH: Oh absolutely, because here I am in Glendale at
 4 the time I'm the only lesbian that I know.
 5 JB: And you were happy with that too.
 6 RH: Oh, absolutely, as it turns out. Dorothy never
 7 went with another girl, but she married some faggot
 8 who was also teaching school pretending that he
 9 wasn't. My brother was bisexual so he filled me in on
 10 this kind of gossip of hometown, right? He kind of,
 11 he died about a year ago. He's my younger brother.
 12 He alternated between men and women.
 13 JB: Oh, interesting.
 14 RH: Oh yeah, he married about seven times
 15 legitimately, right? He was a florist and ah then
 16 he'd have a long-time relationship with a guy and
 17 they'd break up, and then he'd meet some woman and
 18 JB: And go back and forth and alternate it.
 19 RH: Right, I think he was basically gay and all,
 20 yeah, toward, especially toward the end there. Not
 21 the end of his life, but I mean, after he got out of
 22 his like twenties and thirties.
 23 JB: He'd settle down mostly with men, that's really
 24 what he was primarily interested in.
 25 RH: Right, he had long-term relationships. But he

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1 beginning to worry about you. You, you're seeing
 2 entirely too much of Dorothy. Dorothy'd pull up and
 3 honk and we'd go out and find some back road where we
 4 could neck, right? She said you're not seeing your
 5 other friends. I wish that, you know, 'cause you have
 6 so many friends that you'd see more of them and devote
 7 less of your time to Dorothy and she said people may
 8 think that your relationship is a little strange. We
 9 had two new school teachers come to town named Miss
 10 Pilcher and Miss Toast who wound up living together
 11 and I think that ah partly because they were
 12 strangers. People didn't really know them; they were
 13 gossiped about and I guess they were gay now that I
 14 look back on it.
 15 JB: So ah, I guess I want to, what I want to know is
 16 what about The Well of Loneliness depressed you?
 17 RH: Well, because Stephen was so terribly unhappy,
 18 right? And alone and her girlfriend left her 'cause
 19 she couldn't stand the gay life. I was really mean, I
 20 gave the book to Dorothy (Laughs). Misery loves
 21 company, you know? (Laughs). And then I should never
 22 have done that (Laughs).
 23 JB: Not a very friendly thing to do.
 24 RH: No.
 25 JB: So it was, so in other words, like it was the

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1 also got married and had children too.
 2 JB: Well, it's, it's been known to happen. I mean,
 3 there's a lot of gay men who do indeed marry and still
 4 do.
 5 RH: Oh yeah, right, well who knows, you know, there
 6 are reasons. I've even know guys that married their
 7 secretaries and had children with them that were
 8 still, you know, gay and having a hell of a good time
 9 but just felt that it was required -
 10 JB: To do so.
 11 RH: Uh huh.
 12 JB: So ah, ah, what about ah, let's see what I want.
 13 I, are you familiar at all with any ah, you read
 14 Dorothy Allison, (inaudible) I seem to remember. So
 15 it sounds like you just really had no time or patience
 16 for a lot of the lesbian writing of the time. I mean,
 17 you read it and you saw all those unhappy endings.
 18 RH: No, other than The Well, other than The Well of
 19 Loneliness (Laughs), which was a well-written book.
 20 JB: Right, but it didn't reflect your life.
 21 RH: Oh no, not at all. I just couldn't identify with
 22 any of the stuff. Besides they were lousy writers.
 23 Talk about pulp fiction of that, I mean, the gay books
 24 were no better than -
 25 End of Side 1, Tape 1

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1 152:000-099
 2 JB: . . . ah, that reflected your, your life or your
 3 sensibility about being a lesbian, was there any kind
 4 of material, literature, out there that sort of struck
 5 you as being . . .
 6 RH: Of course, I read a lot of - I've read a lot of
 7 lesbian books that I didn't know were gay, like I was
 8 a big, read everything that Carson Colors ever wrote
 9 and ah, of course, Truman Capote, but I read them
 10 because they were good writers and didn't even, well
 11 we knew Capote was gay, right?
 12 JB: Right.
 13 RH: But (Laughs) and ah Giovanni's Room and that kind
 14 of thing, but that was more or less mainstream
 15 literature because it was written by people who could
 16 write for one thing.
 17 JB: Well, you go for quality literature, I mean, why
 18 bother?
 19 RH: Oh absolutely, I mean, as a reader I'm just not
 20 going to be bothered. There's too many good things to
 21 read.
 22 JB: Out there. Time is short enough as it is to read
 23 mediocre material.
 24 RH: I read purely for entertainment, you know, these
 25 days. But ah, I read a lot of really good mysteries

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1 RH: Well, we thought, just thought it was great that
 2 ah and the story of Oh, that ah and, of course, we
 3 also read Andre Gide and got involved with
 4 existentialism (stumbles on the word) - to tell you
 5 the truth the pain in the pain pills. I can get some
 6 tongue twisters here - existentialism. And the
 7 French, the French writers who, it turns out, were all
 8 gay (Laughs) right.
 9 JB: And probably Thomas Mann.
 10 RH: And The Balcony. I read all those things.
 11 Anything that had the slightest hint of forbidden was
 12 our meat.
 13 JB: (Laughs) That's a great line.
 14 RH: Yeah (Laughs).
 15 JB: You had an appetite for that.
 16 RH: Decadent, right. Still do.
 17 JB: Whether it's either straight or gay decadence,
 18 even, it's more the element of forbidden that ah -
 19 RH: And I like my books gritty, I like contemporary
 20 realistic literature, no romance novels for me.
 21 JB: So is there, is there anything out contemporary
 22 within lesbian literature that has ah, strikes you,
 23 strikes you that you think is pretty thrilling?
 24 RH: Other than what I just happened to run across
 25 like ah -

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1 like I love Elmore Leonard and the ones that can
 2 write, right? And ah, there are a lot of good writers
 3 out there, James W. Hall, and James Lee Burke, and I
 4 like some of the women mystery writers. I think Sue
 5 Grafton just amuses me no end. and I like Sarah
 6 Pereski and Julie Smith has gotten a little better but
 7 - and Shelley Smith who is gay. I haven't seen any of
 8 her books around yet much. I like her, but she wrote
 9 like a couple of sort of mainstream little mysteries
 10 here probably ten or fifteen years ago. I think, does
 11 she write mainly gay literature now?
 12 JB: For the most part.
 13 RH: Uh huh, she's good.
 14 JB: Yeah, I think she's . . . what about the ah, the
 15 diaries?
 16 RH: But I never sought any writer out because they
 17 were gay.
 18 JB: Right, that wasn't . . .
 19 RH: No.
 20 JB: Although when you said you picked up on reading
 21 the diaries of Anna Smith, that you all sort of were
 22 excited about that.
 23 RH: Oh, we all did, and we all read, and we all sat
 24 around and discussed books.
 25 JB: Hm. Do you remember what struck you about her?

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1 JB: The mysteries, some of the mysteries you like,
 2 some of the women.
 3 RH: Well, that. I also like, god, I can't think now.
 4 I like Dorothy Allison but that, the ah, well, The
 5 Language of Cranes.
 6 JB: Oh, David Levitt.
 7 RH: Yes, I like him very much and I think he's an
 8 excellent writer. And ah, oh me, of course, I always
 9 liked - gee, I'm having a pain, a pain and pain pill
 10 amnesia - he came. I'm going to have to go in there
 11 and look. I've got one of his books. He's one of the
 12 earlier gay writers that ah -
 13 JB: Do you remember a title?
 14 RH: Some of the Night.
 15 JB: City of Night, by John Retchie.
 16 RH: John Retchie, I like him very much. I read
 17 everything that he wrote.
 18 JB: Well, you are quite a reader.
 19 RH: Yeah, well I read a book by an author I like and
 20 I file that author's name away and -
 21 JB: Read some more.
 22 RH: Right, I'll read him an author right on down to
 23 my dying day, right on until their last book, even
 24 after they get bad like Mark Sanders and (Laughs) a
 25 few more on the road to (both speak at once).

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1 JB: Well, if ah -
 2 RH: But no, I can't think of anything that I've ever
 3 read that influenced my life as a person or as a
 4 lesbian either. I have no, I have never felt that my
 5 identity was built around my being a lesbian. As a
 6 matter of fact, I have always felt that that was
 7 probably the least thing about me as far as being a
 8 person goes. I mean, my friends are not exclusively
 9 lesbian. I've got a very wide circle of friends
 10 because I enjoy people, and all kinds of people. I
 11 have lots of straight friends, lots of straight female
 12 friends, lots of straight male friends, I have a lot
 13 of gay friends.
 14 JB: But, it sounds like that it was never really
 15 that, that important part of your identity.
 16 RH: Yeah, As a matter of fact, I don't really think
 17 it's anyone's business what I do in my bedroom, as we
 18 used to say in those early days. And ah, when I ran
 19 for office, this one guy circulated rumors that I was
 20 gay and he was just a little jerk, right? And I said
 21 hey, Pete, I don't ask you what you do in your bedroom
 22 so don't ask me what you do in mine. I wouldn't want
 23 to give you the satisfaction knowing how good it is in
 24 my bedroom (Laughs). So why don't you just knock it
 25 out and go out there and run, run on your record

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1 RH: So, my life has not been at all ah -
 2 JB: Revolving around -
 3 RH: No, or that typical of anything either. So I'm
 4 probably not that much good to you.
 5 JB: Well, that's all right. What's good for me is
 6 just, you know, sort of like this is your experience.
 7 This is, this is how you lived your life, and sort of
 8 the choices that you made. So your relationships
 9 really didn't reflect this kind of . . .
 10 RH: Well, not that kind of ah - all, a lot of
 11 laughter . . .
 12 JB: About it.
 13 RH: About it, but it certainly wasn't that big part
 14 of our relationship.
 15 JB: You just didn't take it out seriously.
 16 RH: Oh, no. Plus the fact, you know, that I just
 17 loved women and I wanted women to look like women. Be
 18 beautiful and intelligent and fun, and they were.
 19 JB: So women who dressed like men or who behaved like
 20 men, no way -
 21 RH: Right, nor was I attracted to lesbian girls who'd
 22 been to bed with practically everybody in the bar
 23 either.
 24 JB: In other words, one who dressed like femmes.
 25 RH: No, or even an incestuous relationships in our

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1 (Laughs).
 2 JB: And did he?
 3 RH: I was also called a communist too. Oh yes, it
 4 shut him up. I made sure there was two or three
 5 people around to hear me.
 6 JB: (Laughs) Well, you know, that was a smart thing
 7 to do.
 8 RH: Oh yeah, well, politics.
 9 JB: Do you want to, a little bit, talk a little bit
 10 about the, you know, the butch-femme dichotomy that
 11 was really about identification about a lot of women.
 12 RH: Well, that was certainly, the butch-femme was the
 13 thing, was the thing then, even though, though one was
 14 particularly looked that butch or that femme.
 15 Although I guess they did to a certain extent but I
 16 mean not to the point of dressing like a man or
 17 anything like that. Ah, I never did. But ah, and I
 18 never thought that my girlfriend should get up and fix
 19 my breakfast either or do any of those things. We
 20 usually did ah - I've always been attracted to good-
 21 looking intelligent heterosexual women or bisexual
 22 women and that's mainly whom I've ah have lived with
 23 and have never really gone with a straight-out lesbian
 24 who's had five or six lesbian lovers before me.
 25 JB: I see.

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1 circle of friends (Laughs) where everybody wound up
 2 over a period of ten years with having gone to bed
 3 with everybody else's girlfriend at one time or
 4 another (Laughs).
 5 JS2:100-199
 6 JB: Well, it's a big thing in girls' circles, or gay
 7 circles, both male and female I think especially.
 8 RH: Oh well, sure it is. Well, it's, you know, it's
 9 reasonable. It's just like straight people that have
 10 maybe six or eight couples that get together all the
 11 time. Sooner or later -
 12 JB: Something's going to happen to somebody.
 13 RH: Right.
 14 JB: The chemistry's going to click.
 15 RH: Yeah, it's just life.
 16 JB: Yeah, that's how we all evolved. So ah. Okay.
 17 I guess ah, I guess really the only other things that
 18 I would, I do want to include some more descriptions
 19 about ah some gay bars. Were the atmospheres pretty
 20 smoky in the bars?
 21 RH: Well, it depended on the kind of bar that it was.
 22 Like, you know, there were bars that were nicer than
 23 others. A lot of them were smoky, oh yeah, Scott's
 24 Pit, and I'm trying to think. What was the name of
 25 that other one? That ah, oh, there was a couple

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1 little bars around that were girls' bars that didn't
 2 last long. And the cops did, vice squad.
 3 JB: You had problems with the police?
 4 RH: Only one time and I think they were hassling the
 5 bar rather than hassling us. We were all dressed. As
 6 a matter of fact, we'd been somewhere to a matinee and
 7 we decided we'd go to Mary's Candlelight and have a
 8 drink and my friend Mary who was going to Stanford and
 9 another friend of mine who was going to Cal, and
 10 Erlene, my girlfriend who was very beautiful. And I'm
 11 dressed. We're all wearing like good-looking suits
 12 etc. And we were the only people in the bar sitting
 13 at a table and they came over and - As a matter of
 14 fact, shortly after we'd moved up, in fact, well
 15 Erlene had never lived in San Francisco but I had. We
 16 met up here through a mutual friend, with a woman I
 17 went to Hollywood to be with, and we moved back up
 18 here together after. Ah, and they came over and asked
 19 us to step outside. This was on Broadway. So we
 20 stepped outside and they wanted to know did we know
 21 what kind of a place that was?
 22 JB: Because you were dressed what they would assume
 23 as straight women?
 24 RH: Well I don't know what their point was. I think
 25 they were just trying to intimidate us, that they

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1 really didn't know how far they could go because we
 2 weren't the type of thing that they were usually used
 3 to dealing with either. We weren't out and out dykes.
 4 We looked like it, and we were well dressed too, and
 5 we were attractive. As I say, I think they were
 6 hassling the place more than they were actually
 7 hassling us. But they asked, they asked, made us show
 8 our ID and one, and I said I was unemployed and they
 9 wanted to know why, and I said because I had just come
 10 to town and I hadn't found a job yet, and what
 11 business was it of theirs.
 12 JB: So you were pretty assertive with them too. You
 13 weren't about to be intimidated.
 14 RH: Ah, absolutely, because they, oh, why? I wasn't
 15 doing anything. None of us were doing anything. And
 16 I told them that too. I said well how dare you come
 17 in a bar, we'd been to the theater and we stopped by
 18 to have a drink and talk about the play that we'd
 19 seen, and you come in here and drag us out into the
 20 street like we're some kinds of criminals. I says
 21 what the hell is going on here? What do you want?
 22 JB: And how did they react?
 23 RH: Well, hey, we're just checking you out, that kind
 24 of thing. We just want to tell you that we don't
 25 think that if you knew what kind of place that was

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1 that you'd want to be in there.
 2 JB: Uh huh, and what did you say?
 3 RH: Why don't you leave that up to us? I think
 4 that's our decision, not yours.
 5 JB: And did they just back away at that point?
 6 RH: You can see why I made a good union official.
 7 JB: Yes, yeah, you dealt with authority pretty well.
 8 RH: Hey, I've always believed I was the easiest way.
 9 If something's not there, you do what you can to
 10 change it. And I didn't think that there wasn't a
 11 fair thing about this. And they were, and I don't
 12 like being bullied. And that's exactly what they were
 13 doing; they were bullying us.
 14 JB: Right, and you just refused to be bullied.
 15 RH: That's right.
 16 JB: Did they back away at that point?
 17 RH: Oh, sure. They apologized and left. And they
 18 were like five cops in plain clothes, shitty suits and
 19 black shoes and white socks and stereotypes,
 20 stereotypes, right? Cop stereotypes.
 21 JB: And you were far better dressed than they were.
 22 RH: Oh much, far better educated too. All of us.
 23 JB: Well, good for you. Well, I think that really -
 24 RH: Rickie got thrown in jail once, you know, this
 25 happened.

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1 JB: Oh, really?
 2 RH: Oh yeah. She was working over at the Paper Doll,
 3 living up above there. And they raided it and ah she
 4 was in jail overnight I think. But she was going
 5 through a phase there before she was, you know, how
 6 little she was. I'll never forget this awful green
 7 gabardine suit that she had to have made. She was a
 8 pimp during this period. And ah, this was all public
 9 knowledge. Rickie looked (inaudible) and they'd
 10 interview her, right? And this awful green gabardine
 11 suit, shiny, awful color green, the cuffs came down to
 12 about here, right? It had padded shoulders, they were
 13 almost down to her elbows. Rickie was only four foot,
 14 eleven and a half, right? And the collar was way too
 15 big. She used to - even when we all dressed, Rickie
 16 would have to buy sample heels, I think she wore a two
 17 or a three or something like that. I think that's one
 18 reason why she set out to make some money 'cause she
 19 wouldn't have to shop for clothes in the boys'
 20 department and have them tailored (Laughs).
 21 JB: She wouldn't have to deal with the humiliation.
 22 RH: That's right.
 23 JB: A little too proud to do that. So what do you
 24 think of this ah, the organizing and sort of the
 25 assertiveness about the gay and lesbian community?

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1 RH: I think it's great. I think it's, I'm all for
 2 it. I don't find that it's ah, I don't vote for a
 3 candidate because they're gay, I'll tell you that
 4 right now. I'm furious at the gay community for
 5 backing Angela Alioto and allowing the jerk Jordan to
 6 be elected. They should have - They're politically
 7 aware, they should have been a little more politically
 8 aware than that. Just because she's a great little
 9 fag hag.
 10 JB: Doesn't necessarily mean that they're all -
 11 RH: No, and my god, you know, old shoot from the lip
 12 Angela.
 13 JB: How about with Roberta now?
 14 RH: I like and I respect Roberta but I can tell you
 15 right now that I'm voting for Willie Brown, that it's
 16 going to give me the most pleasure to vote for Willie
 17 Brown than it's given me to vote for anyone. I am so
 18 sick of our Citizen Mayor that I can't wait to see a
 19 polished politician to get in there and run this City.
 20
 21 JB: And Willie Brown is certainly a polished
 22 politician.
 23 RH: Yes, and I admire him for it. And he did a lot
 24 for this city as the Speaker of the House and I think
 25 he can do a lot for this City as a mayor and I don't

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1 There's just been total fiascos, I mean, come on,
 2 it's just ridiculous. I admire and respect Roberta,
 3 getting back to what we were saying. Why didn't she
 4 stay in Washington?
 5 JB: I don't know. I -
 6 RH: I wish, I have never heard - she has never even
 7 hinted at - I don't think, it was no place for a gay
 8 couple with a little kid to be I suspect. Washington
 9 is mean and cruel and has no ethics or integrity and
 10 doesn't care who gets hurt. I would never have gone
 11 there in the first place had I been Roberta.
 12 JB: She probably couldn't resist as far as the
 13 political opportunity.
 14 RH: Well, probably not.
 15 JB: It'd be a hard thing to turn down at this point
 16 in her career. But she's still developing as a
 17 politician. She's nowhere near ready.
 18 RH: Oh, I know that. Uh uh, I just can't, she's not
 19 ready to take on This City, particularly now. This
 20 City's in a trouble, deep trouble.
 21 JB: Yeah, well, it was a mistake. I don't understand
 22 why she keeps jumping about and just . . .
 23 RH: Well, I don't understand either and I'd really
 24 like to know why she left Washington. She could have
 25 done a lot of good there at working with Cisneros.

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1 foresee any problem. He may even be able to pull this
 2 City together again which has become widely divided
 3 due to Jordan, that jerk. How could he make all these
 4 stupid appointments and all the rest of this shit.
 5 I've never seen anyone as dumb as this guy is.
 6 JB: Well, he's so incompetent.
 7 RH: And he never learns.
 8 JB: No, no, well he's not a -
 9 RH: And he surrounds himself with stupid people.
 10 JB: Well, he just - I had a friend of mine -
 11 RH: Look at this Noel Griffin, for example. Here he
 12 is, the Mayor's spokesman, right?
 13 1S2:200-243
 14 Turns out all he is ambitious and he's comes over
 15 here, lies about his address because Jordan tells him
 16 he's got to appoint him as supervisor, right? And so
 17 he has to reside here in town. Lies about that, gets
 18 caught at it, and tells everybody that he did this
 19 because Jordan promised that he was going to appoint
 20 him as a supervisor and it was necessary for him to do
 21 it, laughs it off.
 22 JB: What an embarrassment for the Mayor!
 23 RH: Another one, and like this Eugene Lumpkin fiasco.
 24 I mean, come on. I would at least know what these
 25 people stood for before I appointed them for anything.

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1 The two of them could have finally made HUD operate
 2 the way it should have been and the way it didn't
 3 throughout all the Reagan years, and all the fraud and
 4 all the - everybody just walked in there and got rich
 5 off of it, right? And ah, everybody winked, all the
 6 Republicans winked. And here was a chance to really
 7 do something but she said . . . she wanted to be a
 8 politician but she could have stayed back there and
 9 done it. Look at the housing, public housing, here in
 10 San Francisco, god knows it can use a big boost. I
 11 don't understand why she left that post.
 12 JB: I haven't heard anything either. Those would be
 13 good questions to ask, why did you leave Washington?
 14 I have not seen it addressed.
 15 RH: I know, and I find it odd that no one has asked
 16 her that.
 17 JB: Yeah, why hasn't it, I think it's a real
 18 important question.
 19 RH: And I would really like to know.
 20 JB: Yeah, well she, from what I've read, she hasn't
 21 really ah, you know, what does she really plan?
 22 RH: She has never even, she has never even given a
 23 hint. She just decided to come back here and run for
 24 mayor is all I've managed to ascertain.
 25 JB: Ascertain. Yes, and what she plans to do once

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1 she's here, what she plans to do once she's mayor, I'm
 2 still very confused about what she's really after and
 3 what is her program? What does she want to -
 4 RH: Well, I'm not either. Or why she would even want
 5 to be mayor with ah, just a few years as a supervisor
 6 doesn't qualify her anymore than it qualifies Angela
 7 Alioto for god's sake.
 8 JB: Yeah, just far too inexperienced. Ah, I don't
 9 think it's, I don't think it's going to work. I'm
 10 afraid Jordan might get, might get in. It's sort of -
 11 End of Side 2, Tape 1

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