

<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 Craig Richmond 7 Date of Birth: 2/24/50 8 By Interviewer: Paul Gabriel 9 Date: 6/16/98 10 GLHS OHP 98-029, Shedding A Straight Jacket 11 12 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 00 MINUTES 13 CR: It's on now. 14 PG: Yeah, if I want another drink, I'll let you know. 15 So let's get it over, down and dirty, tell me your 16 birth date. 17 CR: February 24th, 1950. At least I missed the '40s. 18 PG: All right and where were you born? 19 CR: Santa Rosa, California. 20 PG: Oh, you're from California? 21 CR: Third generation. 22 PG: Third generation? 23 CR: Mm hm, my father and his father. 24 PG: Oh, so it's on your father's side. How about your 25 mom's side?</p>	<p>1 CR: Kansas, and that's where I mainly grew up. 2 PG: So you were born in Santa Rosa but you . . 3 CR: My father was in the Air Force and so we traveled 4 around and my mother left him when I was nine and went 5 home to Kansas so I grew up in Kansas. 6 PG: Interesting. So back up here a little bit. What's 7 your dad's ethnic background? I'm curious because I 8 know a lot of . . 9 CR: Basically English I think. 10 PG: See, I'm from Hollister which is down near Gilroy, 11 and the oldest families in the county are all Scotch- 12 Irish. They're ranchers, the oldest ranching families 13 are all English and Scotch-Irish. And then the 14 Italians and Portuguese came later as farmers. 15 CR: Oh really? 16 PG: Yeah, and anyway, there's definite ethnic waves. 17 CR: Well, my father was born in Emeryville of all 18 places over at a hospital there. I guess he was born 19 in a hospital, I don't know. And then he grew up in 20 Sebastopol, a really small town. 21 PG: Do you still have a lot of family there? 22 CR: None, I'm the only one in California. 23 PG: Are you an only child? 24 CR: No, I have a brother, he's in Kansas, he wouldn't 25 leave Kansas for anything, hasn't even come to San</p>
<p>1 Francisco to visit. 2 PG: Really? Now are you older or younger? 3 CR: Older, one and a half years. And then I have a 4 half sister from my father's second marriage and a 5 whole bunch of stuff like that. 6 PG: Oh, okay, are you close to them? 7 CR: Yeah, I probably didn't speak to my father for 8 about 13 years so I missed most of their growing up. 9 PG: You mean you haven't up 'til now or you didn't 10 earlier? 11 CR: Well, when I left Kansas, he lived in Phoenix and 12 I went to live with them for a year and I came out and 13 he didn't approve, being a Jehovah's Witness, and so I 14 moved here and didn't speak to him for years, I think 15 it was 13 years. 16 PG: Thirteen years. So you said you moved here in '74. 17 So you didn't talk to your dad until '87. 18 CR: Right. 19 PG: Are you reconciled with him? 20 CR: Yeah. My stepsister's the one that started calling 21 me and she found me in Chicago, I was there for three 22 years. And one day she said Dad wants to talk to you 23 and I said I don't think we have anything to talk 24 about. So he forced himself on me, I talked to him and 25 he started giving me . . so it wasn't really 13 years,</p>	<p>1 he started giving me this well, you know, you're 2 welcome to come and visit if you come alone. And, of 3 course, I said if my family's not accepted, then I'm 4 not accepting your family, I mean, you know, I won't 5 go visit without him. So and that lasted about four 6 more years and finally my stepmother died and all of a 7 sudden we got a call from my father and he'd like 8 changed completely, very accepting of my partner Tom 9 and, you know, we get on beautifully. Like I never 10 left, I mean, the whole family's like were still 11 family. 12 PG: But when you left you lived with him in Phoenix, 13 or let me back up a little bit, when you were growing 14 up before, 'cause I guess you really were only living 15 around you for nine years, is that right? I mean, you 16 were with your mother. 17 CR: Well, yeah, except that he took us for every 18 holiday and every summer. 19 PG: Okay, was he a very religious man? 20 CR: Well, they were both religious but they wouldn't 21 take us to, when my parents were together, they took 22 us to church, but after they separated, they were both 23 religious in a way but they didn't go to church. I 24 found church on my own. Anyway, I grew up Methodist 25 just because I was the one that went to church.</p>

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<p>1 (laughs)  2 PG: Okay this is interesting. I'm going to try to  3 disentangle this a little bit. Now your folks didn't  4 go . . I can understand what's going on her, so they  5 divorced, they didn't go to church anymore, but did  6 you get a feeling of religion from them. Was your mom  7 Jehovah Witness?  8 CR: Uh uh, she was Baptist for a while. Actually he  9 was a convert with his second wife. They went to the  10 Church of Christ I think when they were together. And  11 military bases just offered Protestant services. My  12 mom though, she never went back to church. Well, she  13 did a couple times, I got her and my brother baptized  14 and they never went back to church.  15 PG: When did you start becoming religious?  16 CR: In the fourth grade, there was a Methodist church  17 at the end of the street and I just started going to  18 church and joined the chorus 'cause I love to sing and  19 then when we moved and we all visited the church one  20 day and then I continued to go.  21 PG: So going to church for you was like a social  22 circle.  23 CR: Well they raised me essentially.  24 PG: Really?  25 CR: Yeah, I mean, my life revolved around the church.</p>	<p>1 I didn't have that many friends at school. I was real  2 shy and I knew I was different. In the church there  3 was a certain acceptance I guess. You just didn't feel  4 anything. In daily life you dealt on a different plane  5 with everybody. You knew everybody is going to be nice  6 to you, everybody got along, everybody had fun.  7 PG: Huh! Like a family.  8 CR: So when my father went away to Germany for a  9 couple years and he came back and wanted us to come to  10 California with him for a trip, I ran away from home  11 and hid in the church, 'cause I wanted to go to church  12 camp instead of coming to California.  13 PG: So this was going all through your late childhood,  14 puberty, teenage years, you really were involved with  15 the church but I understand what you mean, the church  16 feels more like a community or social center where you  17 had friendships. And you liked singing? You were in  18 the chorus?  19 CR: No, I don't sing anymore. In seventh grade they  20 disbanded the chorus 'cause there were only two boys  21 that wanted to take chorus and they had an all girl  22 chorus and so I never took that, I quit singing, I  23 took it one year in high school.  24 PG: What kind of things did you do at church, like for  25 fun?</p>
<p>Page 5</p> <p>1 CR: Oh, we used to go to retreats, we used to go off  2 to Camp Chippewa and sleeping tents and teepees and  3 sitting around the camp fire and tell fairy stories in  4 the cemetery and stuff like that. We went to a  5 Methodist college and stayed there for a week. And we  6 were Climbing Jacob's Ladder after lunch and all that  7 kind of stuff. We went on missionary projects. I was  8 18 and we took a bus trip all though the South and  9 went to poor neighborhoods and went to churches and  10 stayed at Port Igo, one of the first public housing  11 developments that was demolished.  12 PG: Really? That's really interesting. So you're  13 actually were doing, this was happening -  14 CR: That was '68.  15 PG: Yeah, the late '60s. So you were part of the  16 direct from the church civil rights action.  17 CR: Yeah, in fact when I was in 7th grade, no, my  18 freshman year and sophomore year, we canvassed  19 neighborhoods to get people to accept open housing  20 because, of course, we had segregated neighborhoods.  21 So I was handing out leaflets that said Let's Talk and  22 we talked about desegregating the neighborhood and the  23 unfairness of rejecting black people.  24 PG: How was that accepted by the community?  25 CR: Oh, they fought it; in fact that, the grammar</p>	<p>Page 6</p> <p>1 school was an all white school at that time. They had  2 districted, you know, this is Topeka, Kansas. It's  3 Brown versus Topeka Board of Education.  4 PG: That was your own segregation.  5 CR: So they kind of, what they had to do was  6 redistrict.. So wherever the black kids went to Topeka  7 High and then they carved out this whole wealthier and  8 whiter area of town was carved out to Topeka West High  9 School which was the new high school at the time. And  10 we had finally when I was a junior, we got two, two  11 black kids in the school and we put one boy and one  12 girl and the NAACP bought housing for them. He became  13 class president.  14 PG: Really? Good for him.  15 CR: But I still don't think there are probably very  16 many black people in the high school back there.  17 PG: What was the congregation like that you recall  18 then? Was it mixed?  19 CR: Oh, it was very wealthy. No, it was an all white  20 church. I mean, I lived in an all white neighborhood  21 but I didn't live in that neighborhood specifically. I  22 was in the Forest of the neighborhood from which my  23 high school formed. It was all white - the Methodist  24 Church. But in those days it was different, you know,  25 the Methodist church was founded on the belief that</p> <p>Page 8</p>



1 the priests were all the leaders, which means that  
 2 everybody can interpret the Bible in their own way,  
 3 you know, that God's in our heart and we're all part  
 4 of God. And we didn't have a lot of stuff about gays  
 5 being bad or they just said you couldn't drink or  
 6 smoke but they didn't talk about sex. It was a very,  
 7 you know, a very accepting kind of place in those days  
 8 I thought. But I didn't come out or anything but -  
 9 PG: You know, in the '60s here, a lot of pioneering  
 10 social workers went through an organization here  
 11 called the Council on Religion and the Homosexual and  
 12 it was centered at Glide, which is the Methodist  
 13 Church here, but there were also the Presbyterians and  
 14 the Episcopalians and Lutherans and the United Church  
 15 of Christ were the four major denominations,  
 16 Protestant denominations. I talked to those ministers  
 17 and they're really something else. I mean, a lot of  
 18 them went down, a couple of them went down to the  
 19 March on Selma that King called. I think it was 1965,  
 20 '64 or '65. So that whole generation, like you were  
 21 saying, was formed by civil rights and I think there  
 22 were at that time these more progressive Protestant  
 23 denominations were really pushing for social justice.  
 24 CR: You know, we read things at school like @Black  
 25 Like Me@ and I think the a @Nigger.@@ I think was

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1 King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated. And I  
 2 actually got to shake Bobby Kennedy's hand; it was the  
 3 most exciting thing I ever did before he was shot.  
 4 PG: How did that happen?  
 5 CR: His third speech after announcing he was running  
 6 for president was at KU and we heard he was going to  
 7 be there and so we ran around and called my mom and  
 8 got a car and drove to Lawrence to go to see him and  
 9 we couldn't get good seats I guess. We were kind of in  
 10 the balcony but when he was walking through the crowd,  
 11 I stuck my hand out and I got to shake it. To this  
 12 day, I couldn't tell you what his hand felt like.  
 13 (inaudible).  
 14 PG: Ha, your claim to fame.  
 15 CR: My claim to fame. Actually I was a senior.  
 16 PG: Oh, you were a senior in high school?  
 17 CR: I have some photographs of the journalism students  
 18 who were - so I brought them off the bulletin board  
 19 and I still have them to this day of Bobby Kennedy.  
 20 PG: Could I ask you, I mean, I don't - this sounds a  
 21 little bit kitschy but I mean, what did Bobby Kennedy  
 22 mean to you at 18 years old? Or Martin Luther King?  
 23 CR: It meant a whole new world, a whole new society,  
 24 you know, they I don't remember exactly what he was  
 25 running on but everything he said was - spoke to my

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1 another book that was, you know, today they'd be  
 2 outraged if they let people read that in school. But  
 3 yeah, Glide, I mean, I knew about them in Kansas; they  
 4 hated him. They wanted him out of the Methodist  
 5 Church.  
 6 PG: Oh, Cecil Williams?  
 7 CR: Cecil Williams, yeah. I even knew that long before  
 8 I came here. I didn't know why but I knew that they  
 9 didn't like him 'cause he was the shame of the  
 10 Methodist Church. You have to remember also at that  
 11 time the Methodist Church was segregated. You had the  
 12 African-American, what was it? The African Methodist  
 13 Church or something but they used to have a black  
 14 church so even the Methodist Church was at a time that  
 15 they were trying to join to together. This missionary  
 16 project, before I went to the South, I sat in this  
 17 church; I thought it was so funny because this  
 18 minister was up there talking and he says well our  
 19 church was integrated. The whites sat downstairs and  
 20 the blacks sat upstairs. These people had a so pitiful  
 21 strange idea.  
 22 PG: But at least it was the same building, right?  
 23 CR: Yeah, exactly, they probably had separate exits  
 24 too. It was an exciting time to grow up I think, 1968  
 25 was the catalytic year of, you know, Martin Luther

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1 generation I think at that time. More so than Martin  
 2 Luther King because we'd also got to where everybody  
 3 hated Martin Luther King so he was still somewhat  
 4 controversial when he was assassinated  
 5 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 15 MINUTES  
 6 So he didn't probably affect me that much as Bobby  
 7 Kennedy did because he was more speaking for me I  
 8 think. But a tolerant society, you know, people  
 9 getting along and it was just simply that for me.  
 10 PG: It seems to me that - this is what I wanted to ask  
 11 you about, I wanted to ask you to compare this sort of  
 12 this nurturing community of friends you found in the  
 13 Methodist Church as opposed to, sounds like it wasn't  
 14 a very nurturing community in the public school  
 15 system.  
 16 CR: Oh, not at all, it was a very snobbish town and I  
 17 didn't have any friends, very few friends; I was the  
 18 outcast.  
 19 PG: Why were you outcast do you think? Was it a class  
 20 issue? Like you say you came from one of the poor  
 21 neighborhoods.  
 22 CR: Well, I didn't really say I was probably  
 23 necessarily outcast, it was mostly in mind. But it was  
 24 a very wealthy school and so it was a different class  
 25 thing. My parents were divorced which was not done in

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1 those days so I was the only person I knew that had  
 2 divorced parents. You know, I'd go to school and  
 3 wished my father was dead, it'd be easier to explain  
 4 than even I knew. So, you know, I was very insecure  
 5 and I always was very and introverted, the whole  
 6 thing.  
 7 PG: And were you, but I mean, this is true of a lot of  
 8 gay people in their high school have problems. Were  
 9 you branded as a sissy?  
 10 CR: Oh, actually, you know, that wasn't something they  
 11 did in Kansas very much, you know, the word queer I  
 12 rarely ever heard. But, you know, I was branded as a  
 13 sissy. I know one of my traumatic moments was when I  
 14 had, I was in English class in my junior year I guess.  
 15 And the word falsetto came up and this kid, we'd give  
 16 definitions, and the teacher asked, and he said oh,  
 17 Craig Richmond's voice. And I was mortified. And I  
 18 could never walk right, so my brother tried to teach  
 19 me how to walk, you know. So I was very intense with  
 20 who I was.  
 21 PG: But that was no problem with the Methodist church?  
 22 CR: No. I mean, the only problem with the church was I  
 23 had to go alone, I mean, I was the only one in church  
 24 that wasn't sitting with their family and I was always  
 25 insecure about that.

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1 anyway. I grew up with a love for it. But I had a  
 2 father in Phoenix and it was - and I left Kansas with  
 3 five dollars in my pocket and a car with 115 dollars a  
 4 month payments and three gas credit cards. I look back  
 5 and I can't imagine I did things so gravely then.  
 6 PG: Yeah, but you probably just felt like your life  
 7 was over there.  
 8 CR: Yeah, and I left because I knew by then I was gay.  
 9 And there even I had gay friends but nobody ever  
 10 admitted anybody was ever gay. Not 'til the day I was  
 11 leaving town did one of my friends say oh yeah, we go  
 12 to the gay bar. I was never at a gay bar.  
 13 PG: I want to back up a little bit here, when you were  
 14 growing up, did you have any concept of homosexuality.  
 15 I mean, did you even know that it existed, how was it  
 16 referred to? It's very interesting because people -  
 17 I've had the whole gamut of people being absolutely  
 18 tuned into their sexuality, already starting to  
 19 experiment as early as possible, I mean, early as  
 20 possible. And other people who didn't even know it  
 21 existed, kind of came and fell on top of their heads.  
 22 CR: Well, I knew it existed later. When I was very  
 23 small, I remember my father saying two things: you  
 24 don't accept cigarettes from strangers and you don't  
 25 go to the restroom in the bus station. I had no idea

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1 PG: So you tried, like you said you got your family  
 2 baptized and you tried to get them to go.  
 3 CR: Sure, but I'm sure that probably my mother's  
 4 greatest problem was she was divorced and she wasn't  
 5 comfortable in the church, I'm sure was a large part  
 6 of it. And then when I would teach Sunday School when  
 7 I was in college, I was engaged and had my first  
 8 sexual encounter with a man and told her and she told  
 9 the minister and that was my last day in church.  
 10 PG: What was that like?  
 11 CR: It was horrible I mean, you know, and to this day,  
 12 you know, it really bothers me that the church, you  
 13 know, has turned its back on gay people. It was awful,  
 14 you know, because that was my life and I'd wanted to  
 15 be a minister at that point. I planned on going to SMU  
 16 and, you know, I would have probably gotten a  
 17 scholarship through the church, but it changed my  
 18 whole life.  
 19 PG: You must have felt completely betrayed.  
 20 CR: I did, the one time I really could have killed  
 21 somebody; I've never felt anger like that. I  
 22 understand why people shoot people.  
 23 PG: I mean, not only did she betray you, but the  
 24 church betrayed you.  
 25 CR: And so, and I had wanted to move to San Francisco

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1 what that meant. But, of course, later on in later  
 2 life, I kept going to bus stations looking to see what  
 3 was there and there was never anything there (laughs).  
 4 But, you know, I knew I was different when I was five  
 5 and I was humiliated when I did a long trip with my  
 6 father and brother when I was ten, I didn't know this  
 7 happened, and we went to visit of ours in El Paso,  
 8 Texas. And these kids, we were all about ten, and said  
 9 oh yes, she used to sit on the end of our sofa and  
 10 pray that God would make you a girl.  
 11 PG: Before I turned the camera on, I heard you joking  
 12 about that at five, you wanted to be a girl.  
 13 CR: Yeah, we left El Paso after I finished  
 14 kindergarten. I always wanted to be different.  
 15 PG: Why did you want to be a girl, do you think?  
 16 CR: Well, I didn't know there was anything else, boys  
 17 and girls. Kids don't know that, they just know there  
 18 are boys and girls. They don't think there's anything  
 19 else. Now it's probably different but back then, those  
 20 were the two options.  
 21 PG: Why didn't you want to be a boy? What didn't you  
 22 like about being a boy?  
 23 CR: I had nothing in common with any of the boys. I  
 24 didn't like their games, I liked playing with dolls.  
 25 And my grandmother used to crochet and she used to get

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1 these cheap little dolls and crochet these dresses for  
2 them and I loved that. And my father threw them away  
3 one day; boys don't play with dolls. He made me play  
4 baseball and I hated baseball and I didn't have any  
5 friends. I couldn't relate to boys in any way. In fact  
6 when I was 16 and contemplating suicide, my mother  
7 sent - I went to a psychiatrist for a while, like ten  
8 sessions. So I wouldn't go back, and he was an awful  
9 psychiatrist and he told me on the phone, he said  
10 well, you like boys. And I said no I don't, I hate  
11 boys. Of course, I knew what he meant, but I did hate  
12 boys.  
13 PG: You hated the gender, the ways boys would  
14 (inaudible). Boys can be very cruel in that sense.  
15 Were you picked on?  
16 CR: Always, I was picked on the way I walked, the way  
17 I talked. I was fat, I was a fat kid so they called me  
18 Big Bertha and Mama Huey. Junior high was really awful  
19 and I thought it was over when I got to high school  
20 and my first week in high school, somebody from my  
21 junior high called out Hey, Mama Huey! And I'd gone on  
22 my first crash diet when I was eight and when I was  
23 thirteen so.  
24 PG: And I can understand at 16 why you were so  
25 depressed. So the Church for you was really a life

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1 There are some that, you know, they're not  
2 uncomfortable by being with gay people and, you know,  
3 and I have no trouble with being with them.  
4 PG: What kind of pastime did you have as a child or  
5 growing up? Did you like to read, listen to music, go  
6 to movies?  
7 CR: I read a lot, I loved reading. I always loved  
8 reading.  
9 PG: What were some of your favorite books?  
10 CR: Well, I haven't been reading a lot lately, but for  
11 a while I read about everything. When I was growing  
12 up, this certainly wasn't very manly either but I went  
13 to see the Disney movie called @The Moon Spinners,@  
14 and it was Pam Mills and Peter -  
15 PG: Peter Ustinoff?  
16 CR: No, no, no, no. It was this gorgeous English guy.  
17 And I left that movie and I drew his picture and I  
18 bought teen magazines with him in it and so I searched  
19 out the author of @The Moon Spinners@ which was Mary  
20 Stuart. So I bought every book Mary Stuart ever wrote.  
21 And I'd go to the book store all the time to see  
22 anything read, and so there was like @Nine Coaches  
23 Waiting,@ and @Call Me Madame X@ I think was one and  
24 just fascinating wonderful romance, Gothic romance  
25 novels. And I was just in love with them, every one of

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1 saver.  
2 CR: Yeah, it was. Yeah, when I was sixteen I had my  
3 first job and that was part of it too I could not cope  
4 with, working and dealing with people. I had no  
5 special skills. I feel like I still don't.  
6 PG: And then you're an emperor.  
7 CR: Yeah, I'm an empress and don't ask me how that  
8 ever happened. I'm very shy and, you know, I still  
9 don't feel like I'm in the loop, I'm still out of the  
10 loop. I know that's not logical necessarily but it is.  
11  
12 PG: Well, it's hard to go sometimes to things like  
13 that. I was also picked on a lot in school.  
14 CR: You were? I think probably all gay people were.  
15 PG: Whether they knew they were gay or not. I think  
16 that straight boys have some kind of cruelty radar.  
17 They find you and then they hoist you up.  
18 CR: . . and humiliate you and strip away all your  
19 self-worth.  
20 PG: That's pretty amazing, isn't it?  
21 CR: What's amazing is they really, some of those  
22 people continue to do that as adults, a lot of  
23 straight people, straight men I think. I couldn't  
24 relate to a straight man today for anything. Unless,  
25 you know, there are some where sex is not an issue.

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1 them. And then she changed her writing style and I  
2 quit reading her. She went to @Planet of the Cave  
3 Bear@ or something like that.  
4 PG: She also did, I think she did a series on King  
5 Arthur.  
6 CR: Yeah, exactly.  
7 PG: That's how I got introduced to her. Did you read  
8 Mary Renault?  
9 CR: Yes, I did. You know, the (both speak).  
10 PG: She's awful great.  
11 CR: Mm hm, and I read her. And then there was - and by  
12 the time I was older, I was looking for anything that  
13 had to do with, (inaudible) Gray - anything that could  
14 possibly be a gay novel.  
15 PG: So the books you were reading, I mean, that you  
16 remember really loving it as a kid, were sort of -  
17 permitted you to express certain feelings, right?  
18 CR: Well, since I didn't have any real life, I had an  
19 explicit fantasy life. And I'm also a Pisces so I was  
20 a constant dreamer, so I dreamt, created a whole new  
21 life that lived.  
22 PG: Do you like movies?  
23 CR: Oh yeah, I mean, I could really get into movies.  
24 But I liked really sort of emotional movies better  
25 than I liked (inaudible). But I cry in movies a lot.

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1 It seems like I'm always turning on the TV and  
2 catching the end of @An Affair to Remember,@ as we did  
3 the other night and sat there bawling my eyes out when  
4 I walked into the room (laughs). So I'm a romantic  
5 that way but I don't think Tom is a romantic.  
6 PG: Were you aware of anybody being marked as gay when  
7 you were growing up?  
8 CR: I mean, it happened but it just wasn't common. I  
9 really remember there was a (inaudible) queen, I used  
10 to walk over to the school; I walked to high school  
11 and I remember somebody saying that somebody was queer  
12 and calling somebody that.  
13 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 30 MINUTES  
14 But that's the only - I don't really remember it  
15 happening, I mean, you know, the word was there.  
16 PG: Did you really know what it meant though?  
17 CR: Oh sure.  
18 PG: Okay, did you apply it to yourself?  
19 CR: No, because I thought I was asexual, I told people  
20 I was asexual when people started talking about  
21 things. I didn't have my first experience until I was  
22 21. My second experience when I was 23. This is one of  
23 my - most horrifying stories most people think. I was  
24 never lucky in those things and my first experience  
25 was in Nebraska City, Nebraska, when I went home from

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1 engagement, was that the second time?  
2 CR: Yeah. There wasn't really a first time . . . the  
3 first time I wanted to drive the car off the road and  
4 kill myself 'cause I wanted to be a virgin when I got  
5 married and all that stuff. So I never spoke to  
6 anybody about that experience.  
7 PG: So it bothered less with a man that you had  
8 violated the sanctity of marriage?  
9 CR: Absolutely. I never had any of my own prejudices,  
10 I've never been - but I've never been prejudiced in  
11 any way so. You know, I knew I liked it. I didn't care  
12 what other people were. So when I slept with a man, I  
13 was living with my fiancée. And she hated me for the  
14 longest time because I turned her into a 25-year-old  
15 virgin. She really resented that for years. She  
16 finally got married to a man so -  
17 PG: She got over it. I want to ask you just one more  
18 question about your growing up and then we'll just  
19 move forward. With all this stuff going on while you  
20 were growing up, what role did your mom play?  
21 CR: The authority, the tyrant in a way. I loved her to  
22 death and absolutely adored her but she was a mean-  
23 spirited mother. And then when I got older - I guess  
24 she was good when I was little, we had a lot of fights  
25 and I didn't speak to her for four years at one point.

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1 seeing a friend in Sioux City, Iowa, and got picked up  
2 at a rest stop on the highway. Anyway, so he had me do  
3 things to him and I got warts. So I mean, I could not,  
4 you know, I certainly could not go to a doctor and  
5 show him that and I didn't know what it was, you know,  
6 so I went to the health clinic and asked, you know,  
7 described them. And they said oh, those are just  
8 warts, just come in and we'll get rid of them. Well, I  
9 couldn't go back and do that so I cut them off with a  
10 razor blade. Amazingly they didn't come back either.  
11 PG: Thank goodness.  
12 CR: Then I spilled the iodine. I thought somebody  
13 would know what I'd been doing 'cause I spilled the  
14 iodine.  
15 PG: What happened the second time? I can understand  
16 why you waited two years then (laughs).  
17 CR: Yeah, I wasn't real anxious to do that again.  
18 PG: I'll stick with romance novels. So was your second  
19 sexual experience with a man again or was it with a  
20 woman?  
21 CR: No, I never had an experience with a woman.  
22 PG: Oh, so you married as a virgin?  
23 CR: I didn't marry, I was engaged when I broke up with  
24 her and left town.  
25 PG: Now when you slept with a man and broke the

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1 So he we had a tumultuous relationship.  
2 PG: Do you think your parents treated you a little bit  
3 harder 'cause you were the older boy?  
4 CR: No, because they loved my brother and I don't  
5 think they loved me. But probably didn't have anything  
6 to do with age, it was just, when I was little I  
7 remember he had curly hair and I had straight blond  
8 hair at that time and, you know, he got all the  
9 attention 'cause he had these great little curls in  
10 the front of his hair and they couldn't even put a  
11 perm in mine, you know, but he was always a cute  
12 little kid.  
13 PG: That just sort of (inaudible) continue for you?  
14 CR: Mm hm. No, actually to this day I mean, I know  
15 that my parents loved my brother more. I don't know if  
16 they love him more now. They probably don't  
17 particularly love either one of us other than just a  
18 family type love. And I certainly talked to my mother  
19 more than he did. He's kind of non-communicative.  
20 PG: So your brother also was just sort of this other  
21 person that you lived with?  
22 CR: He had his own life. His life was totally  
23 different from mine, totally different from the  
24 family. He was just able to go off and do his thing  
25 and he did all the typical boy things, walked on the

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1 sewer pond when it was frozen over and fell into it,  
2 and built tree houses and things like that.  
3 PG: Sounds like my brother.  
4 CR: He was the one caught smoking in the tree house.  
5 PG: Yeah, my brother got caught, he ripped off a  
6 bottle of whiskey and cigars from the judge (laughs).  
7 I was down in the basement playing with Barbie  
8 (laughs).  
9 CR: I remember when I was 12 there was - the little  
10 girl that was like five and her boyfriend and  
11 girlfriend and her mother and she moved in with us for  
12 a while and she had Barbie dolls. And I remember  
13 playing with these Barbies and her brother was always  
14 going under the covers and coming out and her clothes  
15 had been ripped off. Now I didn't know a thing about  
16 what was going on. I guess I was 11, she was 12. It  
17 was until probably about ten years ago, all of a  
18 sudden it occurred to me that this girl was getting  
19 raped, I mean, she was, you know, (inaudible) about  
20 getting raped. And she was always trying to come on to  
21 me at that time so I'm sure she had a lot of emotional  
22 problems. Well (inaudible) went South after that  
23 anyway.  
24 PG: So tell me about Phoenix 'cause Phoenix seems to  
25 have been an important way station on your way out

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1 have to go so I couldn't go back; my aunt was dying.  
2 And then shortly after that, I moved in with my  
3 partner. After Los Angeles, I moved in with my first  
4 partner and my father and I had a falling out because  
5 we couldn't agree about my car and he told me that he  
6 should take all of my pay checks and give me an  
7 allowance out of it and stuff like this, and so we had  
8 a huge falling out and I moved out on my own. Then I  
9 ended up moving in with my first partner and then  
10 because I didn't have a job, I started working at the  
11 porno book store. Well, somehow my father found out. I  
12 don't know how he found out. He called me at the porno  
13 store and said I was to get myself out of there and I  
14 ended up hanging up on him. So that was the beginning  
15 of where we never spoke again for 13 years. And then,  
16 you know, my partner said the only other place he'd  
17 want to live was San Francisco so we moved here and I  
18 supported him for three months after he moved up here  
19 so he could get settled, and then I moved up with him.  
20 PG: Now, had you known about San Francisco beforehand?  
21 Or what was your game plan? Just what was your  
22 impression of San Francisco?  
23 CR: Well, my father always like to come back to San  
24 Francisco so I grew up with this, you know, mythical  
25 city to me. You know, San Francisco is like this

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1 here to San Francisco.  
2 CR: Well, I moved in with my father and his wife and  
3 the kids and I adored the kids, and my little half-  
4 sister was five and going to kindergarten and her  
5 mother dropped her off to school 'cause she went in  
6 early. Then I'd get up and she'd take her clothes off  
7 and I'd have to redress her and she adored me. And my  
8 father was jealous of that 'cause she was his baby and  
9 so she was with me for breakfast. So then I went to  
10 the credit union and basically lost my job 'cause I  
11 was gay because they were friends with the president  
12 of the credit union who lived in the same cul de sac  
13 and that's how I got the job in the first place. So I  
14 used to go out and I met my first lover in a porno  
15 shop. And so I searched out this porno shop and met  
16 him the first time I went in and then I'd just go in  
17 and talk to him. I didn't even know he was gay but he  
18 was friendly. And then, so then she, I don't know for  
19 some reason she always thought I was gay. Well, I had  
20 a friend come out and visit and she thought he was gay  
21 and I guess that translated that he was and that  
22 translated over. And apparently she told the president  
23 of the credit union and my aunt was dying in Los  
24 Angeles and I went to visit her and they said oh yeah,  
25 you'll be back. It was like their excuse for me to

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1 wonderful place. And then by the early '70s, you know,  
2 I was buying Free Press, which wasn't a gay paper  
3 necessarily, but it was a very ultra-liberal, you  
4 know, a lot of hippie-type stuff and was about  
5 marijuana and all sorts of things. Somewhere I heard  
6 San Francisco was a gay Mecca. I guess everybody knew  
7 it. Working at Pennies', and some guy I worked with  
8 had come to San Francisco and had taken a picture of  
9 two gay guys walking down the street holding hands or  
10 something. So by the time I left there I knew that,  
11 you know, I left to be gay. So I wanted to come here  
12 and be gay. So the truth is I drove over the Bridge  
13 and gay or not, I was home. I mean, there was like  
14 this tremendous feeling of I'm home, at last! And I  
15 still get it to a certain extent every time I drive  
16 over the Bridge, even to this day. But yeah, this was  
17 supposed to be the place to go if you're gay, as I  
18 said before.  
19 PG: Okay, I want to ask you about this city when you  
20 first got here, but also I want to ask you one other  
21 question. Since you were a dedicated Methodist for a  
22 long time, when did you start dabbling in intoxicants?  
23 CR: When I was 21, when I was in college, and then I  
24 was in a fraternity, well pledging for a fraternity  
25 and people used to then, of course, Kansas was a dry

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1 state. So all we had was 3.2 beer in bars. And then  
2 had no windows on bars, and in private clubs, you had  
3 to buy - well I don't think they had then at the  
4 time - but you had to buy tokens and pay for a bottle  
5 and then you'd pay for a set-up; they were all private  
6 clubs. So, you know, my college friends would go to  
7 the local pub and we'd go and drink 3.2 beer. Well,  
8 not having ever drunk, I had a very low tolerance so I  
9 used to get drunk all the time and, you know, my  
10 friends loved it. You know, they loved it when I got  
11 drunk and I was carried out of the bar and, you know,  
12 just -  
13 PG: Why'd they like it when you got drunk?  
14 CR: I don't know 'cause I was always trying to get on  
15 the wagon, I mean, I was a Methodist. I wasn't  
16 supposed to be drinking so I was always trying not to  
17 drink and I had introduced my step-sister to my best  
18 friend and they got married, and we played Hearts at  
19 their house all the time and I'd have a Coke and  
20 they'd sneak vodka into it, you know, to get me drunk  
21 which inevitably it did. I don't know why. I guess I  
22 was probably more fun that way. I think I'm more fun  
23 now when I'm drunk.  
24 PG: Probably just releasing inhibitions 'cause you  
25 said your shyness. Did you start smoking cigarettes?

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1 Somebody gave me acid once but it didn't do anything  
2 so I don't know if it really was acid but they said it  
3 was. But the only thing I really had was speed.  
4 PG: Party drugs.  
5 CR: You know, as I started, you know, having less  
6 energy and feeling worse, then I quit. But it took  
7 away the pain too so.  
8 PG: So you arrived here in San Francisco in 1974. What  
9 month was it.  
10 CR: August, August the 21st.  
11 PG: A good month in San Francisco. It can be very  
12 beguiling. Tell me about your impressions of The City  
13 when you got here.  
14 CR: When I first got here, my partner had gotten an  
15 apartment on Larkin and Sacramento and I was just  
16 horrified that he would get an apartment in a gay part  
17 of town 'cause I was, you know, still not out. So I  
18 made us move. So we moved to the Ingleside for about  
19 three months.  
20 PG: You even moved to the Ingleside? (laughs).  
21 CR: We had a little house in the Ingleside; it was a  
22 little tiny apartment. We were paying \$115 dollars a  
23 month for that apartment on Larkin and Sacramento. It  
24 seemed like so much money at the time. But that didn't  
25 last very long.

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1 CR: Never smoked. Swore off alcohol when I was five.  
2 PG: When you were five?  
3 CR: Actually when I was five, I decided I'd never  
4 smoke, I'll never drink and I'll never have  
5 premarital sex.  
6 PG: One out of three.  
7 CR: Better than most (laughs) (both speak).  
8 PG: Before you came to San Francisco, did you try  
9 marijuana or any other stronger -  
10 CR: I had a friend in one of those fraternities and I  
11 tried it a couple of times; it didn't affect me. In  
12 Kansas, it was pretty weak marijuana in those days I  
13 think, and it didn't affect me and I don't like  
14 marijuana today. All it does is put me to sleep and I  
15 hate the smoking part. My throat's dry and hot. So I  
16 had tried it but I didn't like it.  
17 PG: Did you get involved in other harder drugs like  
18 hallucinogens and anything like that?  
19 CR: No, at the end of the '70s, I was always behind  
20 everybody else. It was like going to the disco all  
21 those years, I never knew everybody else there was on  
22 drugs, you know, until like 1983 when I came back from  
23 Chicago and, you know, I did speed now and then, you  
24 know, when we went.  
25 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 45 MINUTES

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1 PG: Why were you not wanting to live in a gay  
2 neighborhood?  
3 CR: Well, 'cause I'd read about the gay ghetto and I  
4 guess probably the whole idea of ghetto - I don't know  
5 why.  
6 PG: So that's interested, so when he came here in  
7 1974, the neighborhood he went to was Polk.  
8 CR: Polk, you know, it was still a hot area. We were  
9 getting ready to go down to Buzzby's; it was the place  
10 to go dancing and we used to go to Buzzby's and they  
11 had that - every Christmas they had that tree from the  
12 ceiling which was a lot of fun. And it was a pretty  
13 exciting place to be. I didn't go there much. I never  
14 really got involved in things a lot. When I ended up  
15 moving to 18th and Sanchez, I didn't go to the Castro  
16 very often.  
17 PG: When did you live there?  
18 CR: After I left the Ingleside.  
19 PG: How long were you in Ingleside?  
20 CR: About three months. Then I lived between 18th and  
21 19th at Sanchez, a big three-story Victorian,  
22 fabulous, huge flat. It was the first painted lady,  
23 for three hundred dollars a month. When we moved in,  
24 it sold - I love to tell this story; they've heard  
25 this a million times - but the day we moved in, there

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1 was a sale contingent on all three units being  
 2 occupied. So that sale closed at \$54,000 for that  
 3 building. The next month it sold for \$88,000. And the  
 4 next month \$108,000. And then the new owner put it on  
 5 the market for \$121,000; we just laughed; he'd never  
 6 get that because there's no water pressure in that  
 7 building. And, of course, it's well over \$1,000,000  
 8 today.  
 9 PG: Yeah, that's right, but property values were  
 10 already starting to go up then in the Castro.  
 11 CR: Well, yeah, this was 1976. Well, let's see, did I  
 12 miss something. I'm thinking -  
 13 PG: At the latest it would be 1975.  
 14 CR: We didn't actually leave Polk Street for about  
 15 three months. And then we were probably in the  
 16 Ingleside for maybe six months. I've probably got the  
 17 time line wrong. So it's probably 1975. I was there a  
 18 year and a half. And then I moved to Elizabeth in '76  
 19 so.  
 20 PG: So you lived in Noe Valley just about 24th Street?  
 21 CR: Yeah.  
 22 PG: Well, you lived very close to Michelle. Michelle  
 23 was on that street.  
 24 CR: I didn't know that.  
 25 PG: Yeah. The Czarina of Castro Street.

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1 CR: Church and Sanchez? Is that right? The next one  
 2 would be Castro.  
 3 PG: Yeah, not Church and Dolores; the other way. So in  
 4 between Church and Sanchez, you know, and it's really  
 5 almost an (inaudible) at that point. So you were  
 6 between Castro and Noe, just a block over.  
 7 CR: Yeah, it was a cute little two-unit Victorian.  
 8 Then I painted the walls root beer and the molding was  
 9 almond - made my own curtains. Anyway you wanted -  
 10 PG: Yeah, tell me briefly, when did you move to  
 11 Chicago?  
 12 CR: In the summer of '80.  
 13 PG: So from '80 to '83, you were in Chicago? Okay,  
 14 then since '83, you've been in San Francisco? Getting  
 15 a little chronology down here. When you came to San  
 16 Francisco - I'd like to ask you this because this is  
 17 historically interesting. You first were living up in  
 18 the Polk area. And then you moved over to the Castro  
 19 area. I'm not asking here for data. I'm asking here  
 20 for your impressions. What was the difference between  
 21 the Polk and Castro in say late '74 and '75?  
 22 CR: I don't know that there was a lot of difference to  
 23 me, because in a sense it was like everybody of being  
 24 here. It was this new and exciting life that everybody  
 25 was leading and I think it was the same type of people

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1 CR: It's so funny when I think back, because we lived  
 2 in this Victorian, this friend of mine who was a co-  
 3 worker, it was between Castro and Noe. But at one  
 4 point we went into this basement and there were all  
 5 these - and I still wish I'd kept these and if I'd  
 6 know, when I moved out I would have taken these with  
 7 me if I'd known. But the owner of - what was the name  
 8 of that place? What was the hottest bar in the Castro?  
 9 Toad Hall! The owner of Toad Hall. The owner of Toad  
 10 Hall had lived in our unit and our living room, in  
 11 fact, had a shake wall like the front of old Toad  
 12 Hall was. So anyway, he had lived in that unit, while  
 13 we were living there, I found these boxes of pictures  
 14 of drag queens, and stuff that somebody had left  
 15 there. And I wish today that I had taken those things  
 16 because it may well have been some of the people in  
 17 our history.  
 18 PG: Michelle came out here a couple years ago and I  
 19 met him at Twin Peaks and talked to him and took him  
 20 down to the Archives. And he gave us some of his  
 21 stuff, I said if you don't have a car, I'll drive  
 22 you - he was talking about spots so he showed me where  
 23 his hair salon was on Castro Street. And then we drove  
 24 to Elizabeth and his little house was on Church and -  
 25 what's the next street over?

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1 very much. I mean, all the activities were on Polk  
 2 Street. I think the street fair, I mean, my first gay  
 3 march was on Polk Street. And then, of course, the  
 4 Halloween party was on Polk Street. And I don't think  
 5 it struck me as gay then as the Castro struck me when  
 6 I moved to the Castro. I mean, it was a gay area, but  
 7 it was like a part of it was gay. But this was all new  
 8 to me. I don't know, I didn't see a real difference at  
 9 first when I moved to the Castro. The Castro was a  
 10 wonderful place at first.  
 11 PG: What do you mean?  
 12 CR: Well, it was just wonderful, it was exciting. It  
 13 was like children, you know, like everybody was new  
 14 and excited and happy to be here. The camaraderie and  
 15 friendship and by the time in the '80s, if I hadn't  
 16 met somebody to move away, I wanted to move away  
 17 because it was the most - we came to get out of the  
 18 closet and it was like they forced you into the - it  
 19 was the most narrow-minded group of people in the  
 20 world, I thought. You had to dress for them, you had  
 21 to look like them, you had to - everybody had  
 22 attitude. Nobody related to people in those days. It  
 23 was like sex and that's it.  
 24 PG: Castro clones.  
 25 CR: Yeah, and I was very uncomfortable with that

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1 because that's not what I was about.  
 2 PG: When I was 13 - well, I was born in 1964 - so it  
 3 was about '77 or '78, something like that - my sister  
 4 lived on Masonic above Haight and a couple blocks  
 5 above Haight. She had two gay landlords. And I didn't  
 6 know this, but she wanted me to come up and spend a  
 7 weekend with her 'cause I always was very closed to  
 8 her. And she and my mother had this long discussion  
 9 about was it okay. Number one, because they had gay  
 10 landlords. But also at that time, the Haight was also  
 11 a pretty gay neighborhood. And I remember, I still  
 12 remember walking down - 'cause I came from a very  
 13 rural California town - walking down toward Haight  
 14 Street because I thought Haight was hippie, you know,  
 15 my older brother was really (fades). So I walked down  
 16 and there was this guy sitting on the stoop with a  
 17 boom box playing (inaudible). And he had on tight  
 18 jeans and a tee shirt, he was in good shape, and he  
 19 had a mustache and I thought he looks exactly like  
 20 guys in Hollister in construction but something's  
 21 wrong with (inaudible) and I couldn't put my finger on  
 22 it. And then she said down there I think it was at  
 23 Masonic and Haight or Haight and Ashbury they had,  
 24 actually somebody had put up a sign that said @Clone  
 25 Crossing.@ So, you know, the irony was out there.

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1 CR: Isn't that interesting?  
 2 PG: Yeah, it's fascinated to me, San Francisco is such  
 3 a small town. But he moved over the hill with his  
 4 lover over to the Castro. He was part of the  
 5 migration. And then there was like a migration back in  
 6 some time, about '76 I think, '77. So I think when you  
 7 first came to San Francisco, it was really awful, I  
 8 mean, it seemed like there was nothing over on Haight  
 9 Street. Buildings were burnt out. There was like Hoo  
 10 Hoo Roo Record Store. And then the store next to it  
 11 had burned out or something and it was just like a  
 12 scary place.  
 13 CR: Although, one day I was driving home from work  
 14 (inaudible) but here were about six men with beards  
 15 and black dresses walking down the street, and I was  
 16 stunned. And they were apparently - what was that  
 17 group - the Cockettes. 'Cause the straight theater was  
 18 still there and they were doing - I never saw it, but  
 19 I knew the Cockettes were there. But it was the  
 20 beginning of the gender bending anyway. And it was the  
 21 first time I had ever seen anything like that but they  
 22 were walking down Haight Street.  
 23 PG: That's what I wanted to ask you, when you came to  
 24 San Francisco and were in neighborhoods like the Polk  
 25 and the Castro, did you see a lot of people doing drag

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1 CR: Well, I used to work on Irving Street - but I used  
 2 to drive down Haight Street and it was terrible. You  
 3 know, the store fronts were all boarded up and  
 4 everything, I mean, when the I-Beam went in there, it  
 5 was such a beginning of a change in that neighborhood  
 6 and I used to think this must have been a beautiful  
 7 neighborhood once upon a time and it was a, you know,  
 8 it was like nobody would go to a large extent on  
 9 Haight Street when I first went there.  
 10 PG: That's a very interesting story about that  
 11 neighborhood because there were a lot of gay bars  
 12 there in the early '60s: there was the Golden Cask,  
 13 Maude's Study was up above Cole, Bradley's Corner,  
 14 Romeo's. I think there was a couple of other spots.  
 15 They were Italian, I mean, it was a mixed neighborhood  
 16 but there was a gay presence, sort of like on Polk  
 17 Street. And then when the Flower Children came in,  
 18 everything was fine, but by - in my interviews, people  
 19 said, you know, '60 to '69 were the watershed years.  
 20 Heroin came in and it got really bad and got boarded  
 21 up. And it's interesting, a lot of gay people had  
 22 moved over the hill. You know where the Haight-Ashbury  
 23 Free Drug Clinic is? Bill Beardemphal lived in that  
 24 house and in the basement of that house is where the  
 25 first SIR meeting was held, the board of directors.

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1 or gender bending?  
 2 CR: I didn't know there were drag queens in San  
 3 Francisco. And I never knew we had an emperor and  
 4 empress. Well, I did know we had an emperor because I  
 5 remember going to the Castro Station.  
 6 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 60 MINUTES  
 7 And they passed around pictures of Jim Osland who  
 8 owned the Castro Station. And he just this gorgeous  
 9 guy, and they had good food at that place. And another  
 10 one I remember, I do remember Mr. Cowboy.  
 11 PG: There was sort of an imaginary concern and we sort  
 12 of jumped over it.  
 13 CR: Yeah, well I didn't think anyone would be  
 14 interested in me so you'd feel safer in a dress. You  
 15 know, when you're with men, there's all that sexual  
 16 thing and when you're in drag, you're safe. They know  
 17 that nothing can happen; you know nothing's going to  
 18 happen so you can say whatever you want to.  
 19 PG: So that you can actually make it fun, still have a  
 20 sexual charge, but make it more fun. Be careful.  
 21 'Cause that's my feeling about a lot of the drag that  
 22 goes on in the Courts, that people just like to be  
 23 playful. They're playful with social stereotypes,  
 24 they're playful with identity, they're playful with  
 25 each other.

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1 CR: And some people have, you know, are really good at  
2 that. Putting on a different face or something like  
3 that, put on a face, it's also -  
4 PG: What's your mask?  
5 CR: My mask?  
6 PG: 'Cause you say you put on a mask. I notice at the  
7 Court, people do certain kinds of drag, certain  
8 empresses always have their -  
9 CR: Well, you've seen my picture, haven't you?  
10 PG: Well, you tell me.  
11 CR: We can bring down my picture; it's upstairs.  
12 PG: But how would you describe the way that you do  
13 drag?  
14 CR: I'm a glamour drag, but I don't do taping and all  
15 that stuff 'cause I got my own limits - first of all  
16 (fades off). I'm kind of me, but I want to be pretty -  
17 I want to be pretty (camcorder turned off  
18 momentarily). That picture was actually a gift from  
19 Ken Steward who did two pictures of me while my  
20 professional photos were being done.  
21 PG: Actually this turned out better than the  
22 professional. So tell me about transsexuals in the  
23 Court. I'm asking a lot of these questions because  
24 this is one thing that's hard about interviewing about  
25 the Court is it gets so involved with everything, in a

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1 our Empress, felt that people had an issue with it and  
2 thought that was why she lost, but I don't think it  
3 was. But I don't know anybody that has a problem.  
4 PG: But yet it's sort of something that's secret -  
5 secret meaning that people don't talk about it openly  
6 or?  
7 CR: No, we talk about it openly.  
8 PG: Oh, okay, I misunderstood you then. So it's  
9 something that's very open; there's no problem.  
10 CR: Well, sure. I think in the drag community is  
11 there's very much a feeling of, you know, if we're  
12 like this, we should accept you just the way you are.  
13 You know, and so the transgender community has  
14 embraced us and we've embraced them.  
15 PG: It's (inaudible).  
16 CR: Yeah, wonderful woman.  
17 PG: Yeah, she is, isn't she? So from what you were  
18 saying, for most of the people that you met in the  
19 court system, the vast majority of them were doing  
20 just sort of the playful drag, kind of play-acting.  
21 CR: The majority, yeah. There are some that will  
22 really use it as an integral part of their personality  
23 and, you know, they have sex in drag and things like  
24 that. So there's a little bit of everything. So most  
25 people will - don't identify with it beyond, you know,

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1 way, in the gay community that there's an endless  
2 number of questions you can ask. Part of what we do at  
3 the Archives is we're just trying to do like go fetch,  
4 just keep throwing lines in with people, to see how  
5 each person will respond, 'cause we never know what  
6 researcher is going to come along who might be  
7 interested in what aspect.  
8 CR: Well, that's sort of strange to think that anybody  
9 would ever look at this again.  
10 PG: Oh, I'm sure they will. Actually, there's a woman  
11 who's doing really a lot of pioneering - she's a  
12 transsexual, she's doing a lot of pioneering work on  
13 transsexuals and she's very interested on these  
14 topics. And she's one of the persons who asked be sure  
15 you got this question. And I'm just curious when you  
16 entered the Court, 'cause that's all you can really  
17 talk about. But you also had contact with an older  
18 crowd obviously, you'd see them come to events. What  
19 was your feeling about transsexuals being accepted or  
20 not accepted? Was there a difference between the older  
21 and younger crowd? Was it something that kind of  
22 secret, or was it something very open?  
23 CR: No, I don't think it was open at all. If there was  
24 anybody that ever had an issue with it, they never  
25 told me. I'm not saying it didn't. I know that Jackie,

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1 the shell.  
2 PG: So Caresse was glamorous.  
3 CR: Tried to be (inaudible).  
4 PG: So when you were dressing for Caresse and doing  
5 your hair and stuff, did you have certain images in  
6 your mind, certain stars, certain women that you were  
7 kind of modeling yourself after?  
8 CR: No, unfortunately when I do myself, I look like me  
9 and that's all I can do. Like I tried to, my first  
10 Halloween, I tried to be Alexis from the Carriages,  
11 and that's as close as I got. So I don't try for  
12 anything. That's just the way makeup looks on me, or I  
13 look in makeup.  
14 PG: So you just sort of dress yourself as a woman and  
15 you like that style.  
16 CR: Well, I wish I were more talented and could do  
17 something else, but I'm not very talented. Well, it's  
18 true. I'm just not, you know, unfortunately when I  
19 tried to do it, I guess I, you know, I didn't do bad  
20 makeup but, you know, I didn't do outrageous makeup or  
21 I, you know, I'm not creative that way.  
22 PG: How'd you get your name?  
23 CR: Donna John gave that to me. We gone out for  
24 Halloween and we tried to come up with names. We  
25 thought of things like Candy Cane and, you know, the

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1 obvious kind of stuff. And one night he and his  
2 friend, Barry, were watching the Character and here  
3 come Alexis' sister, Caresse. And they said That's  
4 what he should be! And so then we went out and  
5 (inaudible) certainly before Coronation (inaudible).  
6 PG: So, your coronation?  
7 CR: No, my very first coronation.  
8 PG: Oh, the first coronation you went to. So when you  
9 were in the court system, you already had a name. And  
10 how did you come up with the name for your reign? Say  
11 it again, you were the Rainbow?  
12 CR: I was the Rainbow Orchid Empress, because I  
13 actually came up with the name for the Court and our  
14 logo I love. I designed the logo, I mean, I didn't do  
15 the work but I designed what I wanted. And all because  
16 of the rainbow flag and rainbows come from prisms. So  
17 we were the Crystal Prism Court because the crystal  
18 prism creates a rainbow. And our logo is a triangular  
19 prism with a rainbow coming out on a bed of orchids  
20 and a unicorn, because that was Michael's symbol was  
21 the unicorn. So what did I say?  
22 PG: The Crystal Prism Court.  
23 CR: The Crystal Prism Court.  
24 PG: And you were the Rainbow Orchid Empress. Why  
25 orchid?

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1 happened.  
2 PG: So tell me about your coronation, your stepping  
3 down.  
4 CR: My stepping down. Well, it was best of times, it  
5 was the worst of times. In my opinion, it was one of  
6 the best coronations ever. I think we had probably the  
7 best production work ever done at a coronation. I hate  
8 to say, you know, I hate to say I did this and I did  
9 that but the truth is that, you know, I was the one  
10 that had to come up with the contest and everything  
11 and Michael didn't have much input. In fact he had no  
12 input into the coronation, so we not on the best of  
13 terms by the time we stepped down. In fact, the Board  
14 was threatening not to let me step down because I  
15 walked out on a meeting, and it was not a pretty  
16 thing.  
17 PG: Oh, they were not going to give you your title.  
18 CR: Well, what was really going to happen, there were  
19 certain people that were threatening that. They could  
20 not have given me my medal because I'd done my whole  
21 reign and all I did was walk out of one meeting. But  
22 anyway the concept for the coronation was the history  
23 of the gay world since Stonewall. So I wrote up a -  
24 I'll get you a program - all this things I packed up  
25 about two weeks ago, you know, they're sitting in a

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1 CR: Well, because I don't know, just somebody decided  
2 I should use it because we had to name a flower.  
3 Empresses have to come up a bird, a flower and  
4 something else, and colors. So I was very fortunate  
5 because my color I chose, I always liked purple and  
6 white and I always thought of myself coming from  
7 Kansas as being part of Oz. So I took the color green  
8 from Oz and the color purple from my high school. So  
9 my colors were purple and green, which everybody  
10 thought was just a horrible color combination at that  
11 time. Well, fortunately for me that year, everything  
12 that was coming out came out in orchid, purple and  
13 green. You know, nobody had ever seen it; now you see  
14 it all the time. And so it shows a particular type of  
15 hummingbird because that was the only bird I could  
16 find that had purple and green in it.  
17 PG: And you had to have a bird, right, 'cause they  
18 would have hit you with a sledge hammer if you didn't  
19 have a bird.  
20 CR: So, and then we came up with an orchid would be  
21 purple and green, if you had a purple orchid and green  
22 stem. Well, in the transition, when we went to our  
23 first coronation, it's like, you know, he was the  
24 Unicorn Emperor so what was I going to be? So I said  
25 why not the Rainbow Orchid Empress. So that's how it

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1 storage locker. So I wrote a story, kind of prose I  
2 guess, telling the story of gay life, going from 1969  
3 down. So we started it out, production was that I came  
4 out dressed like Dorothy, you know, an updated version  
5 of Dorothy.  
6 PG: We're not in Kansas.  
7 CR: We're not in Kansas anymore. We were going to move  
8 the coronation to the Fashion Center. And so we did,  
9 filled balloons, a lot of things went awry. There were  
10 supposed to be balloons above the stage which ended up  
11 being above the whole room, and we had a triangle  
12 orchid screen on one side and the skyline of San  
13 Francisco on the other side and people said we didn't  
14 have a stage - but anyway. And then we had elevators  
15 in the back. So we started it out with this production  
16 number and I'm there, I'm in Stonewall, the cops come  
17 in, I get hit over the head with a baton. So, of  
18 course, I collapse and then smoke comes in and then  
19 they see me going up the elevator over the rainbow.  
20 And then I come back from that and change and put on  
21 this red-gold beaded dress. Then come back and I'm in  
22 San Francisco. And our theme was Oz where the Rainbow  
23 Begins. So then we started the story of San Francisco  
24 and we had productions numbers where, I don't remember  
25 what the first one was, how we started out, but we did

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1 everything with the disco era, we had an electric  
2 dream, I mean, that was everything. To me disco was  
3 electric dream, I just loved to dance to electric  
4 dream and it was always played. So we had the disco  
5 thing and we're out there and we had all these really  
6 hot men doing numbers and they're out there dancing  
7 the disco. And then we in one section we had the bath  
8 house scene, and they were acting like they were  
9 sniffing poppers and wearing towels. And one guy  
10 actually forgot to wear underwear so people got a good  
11 show on the front row. So we sort of told this whole  
12 story and then in the end, we addressed the AIDS issue  
13 and, you know, how that had transformed our community.  
14 And then the last number, or I can't remember, it was  
15 from Hair. It's Going to Be a Sunshine Day or  
16 something, it was a very hot number. And then we had  
17 Jose come on the top and the stage was supposed to be  
18 transformed into flowers 'cause we had been to New  
19 York and seen The Secret Garden. So we were supposed  
20 to come into The Secret Garden that Jose opened and  
21 the New Beginning and, you know, everything is good  
22 and wonderful again. So that was the concept of the  
23 Ball. Like I said, (inaudible) made a big triangle.  
24 They spent hours and hours and days hand-making out of  
25 tissue paper these little orchids to put on this big

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1 triangle that was chicken wire. By the time it was  
2 finished you couldn't tell it was anything but just  
3 that paper; I felt so bad. They made the little stems  
4 and everything. A lot of things went awry and we spent  
5 a lot of time photographing, buying books and  
6 photographing pictures of all over the country. And so  
7 we were going to have a slide show and I had asked all  
8 the Courts to show their story, you know, tell us your  
9 story and your production number. And so when they  
10 came up, we did a slide show of where they were from,  
11 so there were two screens and they would show slides  
12 from New York City, scenes of New York City, Idaho, we  
13 didn't find anything on Idaho except a shot of a long  
14 lonely road at night. So, you know, we had that. And  
15 then we had, you know, some hot men numbers, we were  
16 flashing pictures of not really nude men I don't  
17 think, but mostly nude men which was pretty risqu at  
18 the time, you know, I figured we'd hear about that but  
19 we didn't. Well, we did the bath house scenes so we  
20 spent a lot of time on this whole projection show. And  
21 like I said, I'd asked everybody to do their courts  
22 and I'm proud - and this is my proudest thing - and I  
23 shouldn't put it this way. But I was very proud of the  
24 number of people that came from Reno for (inaudible)  
25 coronation because that was their town. But for my

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1 stepping down, they had more people, quite a few  
2 people, and they brought for me and I'm so honored,  
3 every monarch's costume marched in our parade from the  
4 day they'd begun.  
5 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 75 MINUTES  
6 So every monarch that was still around wore the gown  
7 or outfit that they wore when they coronated, and if  
8 they weren't there, then somebody wore their dress or  
9 outfit, and every one of them walked on my stage. And  
10 it was just overwhelming that they would do that for  
11 me.  
12 PG: How did you get the connection with Reno?  
13 CR: Well Jackie, he's an incredible person. And Tom's  
14 been driving buses for years, so he knows everybody up  
15 there. But just mainly Jackie from Reno, 5-10-15  
16 Empress, and she's just an incredible person and she's  
17 the one that did this for me.  
18 PG: The 5-10-15 Empress, she was from Reno.  
19 CR: She and the monarchs of the time, Michael. No. But  
20 anyway, this was incredible. Alaska, they remade every  
21 banner from every year that they've had and marched  
22 those up on our stage with these huge gold banners.  
23 But I, you know, I wrote people, I called people, I  
24 talked to people, mainly about them instead of about  
25 me. And that kind of what I was always about. You

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1 know, I don't like to focus on me like here. So, you  
2 know, I told them, I want you to show us what you're  
3 about. Of course we caught hell because we had the  
4 longest coronation ever and we went an hour and  
5 fifteen minutes over or something, you know, and so it  
6 was all my fault. I had no control of time while I was  
7 up there. But anyway, that was really hard.  
8 PG: How many courts came to your coronation?  
9 CR: There were 54 at the time and I think we had 45 or  
10 47.  
11 PG: That's huge, that's huge.  
12 CR: We had the largest representation I'm aware of  
13 ever in a coronation.  
14 PG: Pure percentage, like the percentage of the  
15 courts, sure. How many courts did you visit during  
16 your year?  
17 CR: Well, I figure it at about 35.  
18 PG: Did you go, for example I remember I talked to  
19 Ginger and Ginger said that you'd visited all the  
20 California courts. And I thought a lot of the West  
21 Coast didn't really go farther than Denver. He was  
22 very proud to have been the first monarch to go to  
23 Salt Lake City coronation, the Utah coronation. But  
24 I'm wondering, did you go east of the Rockies?  
25 CR: Well, there really, at that time, weren't very

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1 many east of the Rockies. There was a new court,  
2 Lexington was just getting started, New York was there  
3 but we couldn't afford to go to New York and it was so  
4 soon after our coronation that we couldn't get tickets  
5 and all that stuff.

6 PG: How about Texas?

7 CR: I didn't go to Texas, you know, I didn't go very  
8 far east. I went as far as Denver I guess, Idaho. No,  
9 that's not true. I was the first empress to go to  
10 Connecticut. And I got a big trophy for going the  
11 furthest distance for their coronation. Yes, I did go  
12 east; I went to their (inaudible) coronation.

13 PG: But you stayed mostly West.

14 CR: Well, most of the courts are West.

15 PG: Yes, that's the whole center of the Court.

16 CR: Although I went to Toronto, you know, that's  
17 farther east. But Toronto was just at that time was  
18 getting Buffalo started. They've sort of become a  
19 mother court on the East Coast. They've started a lot  
20 of courts and a lot more since then. Omaha existed but  
21 we didn't go to Omaha although I had a friend that  
22 wanted to go. You can't, you know, you can't be out of  
23 town every weekend, and you kind of have to support  
24 the people that support you, so the Eastern courts  
25 don't come to our coronation by and large. I mean,

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1 ball. And I'm not saying nobody did anything else  
2 but - because it began to grow. But the change, by the  
3 time you'd come around in the '80s, you know, mid-late  
4 '80s and into the '90s, it's just as you were saying,  
5 it got to the point where it almost got out of  
6 control. People had to sort of put the brakes on it  
7 'cause it was getting to be so strenuous financially  
8 and physically. What I'm wondering is why do you think  
9 people cared so much about this?

10 CR: Well, really that was not really the way it was.  
11 The way it was was that the Court was dying when I  
12 became empress. We were really in fear that it was  
13 becoming - nobody was interested in it. I ran out of  
14 votes because you couldn't get people to run, you  
15 know, and nationally it was at a very low point. A lot  
16 of courts were very close to folding and several of  
17 them folded since then or closed up temporarily. And I  
18 think it's more recently that it's become more  
19 involved. Like I said, when I was Empress, they didn't  
20 like drag at the Eagle. Castro, absolutely, they  
21 wouldn't let us in the bars. You could not campaign in  
22 the bars. I was the first one to make Mr. and Miss Gay  
23 out, or anything like that. But the voting for Mr.  
24 Cowboy/Cowgirl, first one in recent times - at that  
25 time back into the Castro because they wouldn't vote,

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1 Omaha has never come here. Dallas had come, but I just  
2 couldn't go that weekend for some reason. But, you  
3 know, I couldn't skip Seattle for example. Seattle  
4 always comes. Well, we can't skip Seattle because only  
5 the monarchs can go, because it's our election day and  
6 nobody else goes. Now it's changed. So, but that's  
7 changing, you know, they really did well on the East  
8 Coast. And Texas is, really, the Courtiers' Ball the  
9 Mr. and Miss Gay is much more important on the East  
10 and Southeast courts. So I guess I'm guilty.

11 PG: I don't know what you're guilty of, what you did.  
12 I wanted to ask you, trying to think about how to  
13 phrase this question. I've asked so many people and  
14 I'm still not sure how to phrase it. But why do you  
15 think the Court took hold and stuck and grew? Because  
16 when it started, it was more or less kind of a joke on  
17 Halloween, you know, and, of course, Jose's Jose,  
18 right? He's a very strong personality. But from what  
19 I'm hearing, I still have to do a lot more  
20 interviewing. But from I'm hearing on a preliminary  
21 basis is that the first empresses, up until about '73,  
22 maybe the mid '70s, it was mostly just a title. Like  
23 running and being like a Miss America or something,  
24 but that was all it was. It was just a big thing, you  
25 know, you had your coronation and you put on maybe a

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1 they just didn't want to support the trip, they didn't  
2 want drag. And, you know, I think thanks largely to  
3 the empresses that have come after me, you know, they  
4 lived in the Castro and they and they, you know, kind  
5 of forced it on the Castro. But times had changed. A  
6 younger group had come in, don't have the same, they  
7 don't have maybe the same clone mentality that was  
8 before, 'cause the clone mentality was certainly anti-  
9 drag. So now it's like everything goes and I think  
10 everybody's a little more accepting of everybody.

11 PG: It's interesting, so at the time that people were  
12 spending so much money and doing such elaborate  
13 production numbers, the Court was kind of doing its  
14 thing.

15 CR: Yeah, it was because it started in the Tenderloin  
16 essentially. The Tenderloin was dying as far as gay  
17 bars go and just in the two years that I got involved,  
18 probably five out of the seven bars closed. There were  
19 only a couple left by the time I went there.

20 PG: What happened?

21 CR: They closed. I guess. Well, the Tenderloin had  
22 gone downhill and there was a lot more street activity  
23 I think, the bars that people had gone down into  
24 before, they stopped going down.

25 PG: So you say the Tenderloin is the heart. You're

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1 talking about what? The Court itself, from the very  
2 beginning? The Tenderloin, for you, is really the  
3 heart.  
4 CR: Well, that's my understanding that that - well,  
5 that was a lot of the support by the time I ran for  
6 Empress, really was the Tenderloin and Polk Street.  
7 And, you know, I don't know exactly, like the people,  
8 they told me that was where all the support was. You  
9 know, you talk to the older empresses and they'll  
10 bring up names like the Blue and Gold and the Two-two-  
11 two. And there's some woman's name bar. But there were  
12 a lot of bars in the Tenderloin in the old days that  
13 supported the Court system.  
14 PG: And now the Courts have moved over to the Castro.  
15 And even sometimes the empresses down in South of  
16 Market.  
17 CR: Actually, when I was Empress, we were South of  
18 Market more than we were Castro. Castro absolutely  
19 really didn't want it. But because of the motorcycle  
20 connection, we knew more people in the South of  
21 Market. You know, the Castro was more of closed  
22 community whereas, you know, the traditional  
23 interrelations between the Court and the motorcycle  
24 still existed. It doesn't exist much now but it did at  
25 that time.

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1 count the vote and there was almost a dollar a vote.  
2 PG: Three hundred twenty votes. She campaigned so hard  
3 too.  
4 CR: She did, you know, and I, being a member of the  
5 Court, I expected a huge turnout from the Court and  
6 things but the truth is is that it just didn't come.  
7 And so everybody's looking at what's going on now and  
8 thinking this is the way it's always been, and it's  
9 not and it won't necessarily stay this way. I think  
10 now it's less about bars and more about personality.  
11 You know, Donna's got this fabulous personality and  
12 she's out to all sorts of places, and she's in the  
13 Chorus and at the AIDS Emergency Fund dinners and, you  
14 know, out of the bars and active. And so I think  
15 that's the main change is that we've taken it out of  
16 the bars and it's more just about people and  
17 personalities.  
18 PG: That's what I find is so interesting is, you know,  
19 the Court itself used to be, well, way back before  
20 there was ever such a thing as the Court, the  
21 empresses were owned by the Tavern Guild. Bob Ross  
22 told me this story about, you know, Frieda was  
23 crowned. Crystal, no, Shirley, who I guess was from  
24 the South and very racist, said something like I'm not  
25 going to be on the same stage with that nigger, you

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1 PG: Well, the motorcycle clubs also, almost gone by  
2 the wayside.  
3 CR: Well, you know, everything was in decline, you  
4 know, in the late '80s.  
5 PG: Late '80s was hit so hard.  
6 CR: Hit so hard and the motorcycle clubs were closing  
7 left and right and, you know, the drag community, we  
8 were losing a lot of our own. So, and that's really  
9 when it became a fund-raising organization 'cause it  
10 did change. And predominantly after Lily Street 'cause  
11 Lily Street, I understand, didn't do fund-raisers. I  
12 mean, for emperor. But that's wasn't their main focus  
13 and then after that, that became their main focus.  
14 PG: Yeah, I'm just to track all this. This is what I'm  
15 trying to find out because I came into the Court  
16 system. My first exposure to it was '93, so was that a  
17 couple years after you? Donna Dacht was running. That  
18 sort of followed that thing and Donna also ran  
19 unopposed. And I sort of saw this world and I've since  
20 watched other people run and what they do.  
21 CR: Well, as an example, for my election we had a low  
22 count; we had about 850 votes, which was pretty low.  
23 But a large part of that was because I ran unopposed.  
24 When Donna ran about two years later, they had a vote  
25 count of about 320. It cost us about 300 dollars to

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1 know, and he, Bob Ross, at that time was, of course,  
2 involved I think with the Board of Directors of the  
3 Tavern Guild. And the coronations and the Beaux Arts  
4 Ball at that time, which were staged by the Tavern  
5 Guild.  
6 CR: I remember that. I went and watched the Beaux Arts  
7 Ball when it was here. I remember that, yeah. It was  
8 incredibly stupid to lose that name.  
9 PG: What name?  
10 CR: The Beaux Arts Ball.  
11 PG: Yeah, it's a great name I think. But they, he said  
12 they had a majority of the Board there, they just made  
13 a snap decision and they yanked Shirley's title for  
14 that year. The whole ball was in her honor, and she  
15 said you can't do that. And they said we sure as hell  
16 can; we own the title, so we can do whatever we damn  
17 well please with it. I thought it was a great story.  
18 It was a great story for a lot of different reasons,  
19 right?  
20 CR: Yeah, especially with - what year was she?  
21 PG: Frieda was the year, she's I think '72.  
22 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 90 MINUTES  
23 CR: 'Cause I remember in the mid '70s when, you know,  
24 we boycotted bars because they didn't allow black  
25 people in so, you know, there was a lot of that kind

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1 of thing going on at the time I think. I remember the  
 2 Midnight Sun didn't allow black people in there.  
 3 PG: Oh, and they had that terrible Midnight Sun  
 4 Welcomes Everyone.  
 5 CR: And I remember they used to not let older men in  
 6 bars and, you know, bath houses particularly or people  
 7 they thought were unattractive. They just wouldn't let  
 8 them in and, you know, I think there was a whole era  
 9 that probably that fortunately ended by the late '70s.  
 10 PG: I've heard too other the old-timers that certain  
 11 bars, depending on how you were dressed, it was kind  
 12 of, it didn't a difference what it was, whether you  
 13 were a sweater queen, whether you were in drag,  
 14 whether you were in leather of whatever it was, had  
 15 long hair, certain bars wouldn't let you in.  
 16 CR: Mm hm, well even when I was Empress, I mean, they  
 17 certainly made you uncomfortable if you weren't  
 18 dressed right in the Eagle. That's why I only felt  
 19 comfortable, I was more comfortable walking in there  
 20 in drag in a policeman's outfit than wearing something  
 21 that wasn't leather or uniform.  
 22 PG: Were you comfortable in other leather bars in  
 23 drag? Did you go to other leather bars in drag?  
 24 CR: Sure.  
 25 PG: And there wasn't so much -

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1 just had the title and I was representing The City  
 2 with that title.  
 3 PG: I want to ask about this too. What do you think  
 4 about this use of royal titles mixed with this very  
 5 sort of intricate sense of like family, sort of  
 6 anthropological, in the Court system? I think it's  
 7 very unique to the system. It's been borrowed by other  
 8 groups.  
 9 CR: Well, you know, it's in one way it works and in  
 10 one way it doesn't work. It works for us, but every  
 11 other title holder is not equal, they're not treated  
 12 equally. This is something that really bothers me.  
 13 Yes, and above all else, no matter what, we may hate  
 14 each other, you know, nobody hates each other I don't  
 15 think generally. But all of the empresses, we've all  
 16 experienced this together. We all know what it's like  
 17 to be an empress, and we have a sister that other  
 18 people don't really understand because they haven't  
 19 done it. You know, they think they do. I thought I did  
 20 before I did it and I certainly didn't. But it does  
 21 blind you in that way so you do have sisters in it  
 22 and, if at all, you can help somebody if they're in  
 23 need, we do that. You know, there's also sometimes  
 24 they stab people in the back if it's not - but  
 25 generally I think we care for each other. But the

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1 CR: Just the Eagle, no, the others were fine. Never  
 2 had trouble in the other South of Market bars. But I  
 3 never had any trouble in the Eagle and I think it's  
 4 because I only went in in uniform. I think they've  
 5 gotten a lot more liberal but they certainly didn't  
 6 want a drag queen walking in in sequins and beads. So  
 7 I thought, you know, out of respect I should wear what  
 8 they would like me to wear in that bar, and I still  
 9 believe that. I don't believe drag queens should go in  
 10 the Eagle in beads, you know, unless they're like  
 11 stopping briefly But I don't think that -  
 12 PG: Whistle Stop tour.  
 13 CR: But that's part of the whole thing, if you're  
 14 Empress, you dress appropriately for the occasion and  
 15 I really, I still think that's part of the whole  
 16 facade, you know, the whole image.  
 17 PG: Did you take yourself seriously when you were the  
 18 community representative? So when you were out as the  
 19 Empress of San Francisco, because you were  
 20 representing in some small way gay San Francisco?  
 21 CR: Absolutely, but I didn't hold myself above  
 22 everybody else, but I think that I was more  
 23 representative than anybody. I guess in a way that I  
 24 was, but I didn't feel superior or anything like that,  
 25 I mean, I didn't feel like I was really special. I

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1 other titles, I think, are largely overlooked. You  
 2 know, we go to functions and, you know, this empress  
 3 or that emperor and, you know, here's the Court that  
 4 raised all the money for this emperor and empress all  
 5 year and they get no recognition at all. And I don't  
 6 think they get that feeling, and I hear it at our  
 7 meetings. And I felt that when I was a Dame, I was not  
 8 an equal and I didn't feel like an equal. Some of the  
 9 things work very well, you know, as far as for  
 10 everybody.  
 11 PG: So do you see the Court system as a kind of  
 12 family, so even if you travel to other courts, you  
 13 have sort of a way of - when I say family, I'm not  
 14 being purely sentimental about that.  
 15 CR: No, but yeah, we do, you know, we're all involved  
 16 in the intrigues of everybody's families and all the  
 17 empresses, I can't speak for emperors, but they're a  
 18 whole different thing. I don't think they probably  
 19 feel it. But they don't do what we do, you know,  
 20 they - this was my big complaint, you know, people say  
 21 well you're not out and I'd say well I'm not out  
 22 unless I'm sitting in a dress somewhere. Michael could  
 23 always could be drunk on a bar stool every night and  
 24 he, you know, he's out whenever he goes out and has a  
 25 drink. So some empresses, I think, are never out that

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1 way and whenever we go out of town, we all talk to  
2 each other about our problems. We all have the same  
3 problems across the country.  
4 PG: What are they?  
5 CR: Oh, we all have problems with our boards, we all  
6 have problems with our emperors, we all have trouble  
7 getting support, you know, just production number  
8 problems, just anything that comes up. We've all  
9 experienced that kind of problem. Being Empress of San  
10 Francisco, you're Number One anyway. It's like  
11 everybody, except Toronto, and those people, they  
12 might hold you in awe, so I went to Fresno's  
13 coronation and here's this Baroness of Chico. And so  
14 we're out, we have a few drinks, we get to know each  
15 other. So the next night she and her Baron are sitting  
16 in my room talking to me about how distressed they are  
17 that Sacramento won't make them a Court, you know, and  
18 they've been a Barony all this time, and, you know, so  
19 I'm counseling them, and say well you declare to  
20 Sacramento that you're too far apart and that you  
21 demand to be released. Well, of course, they went back  
22 and they did that and now they're a Court. Well,  
23 people do that because they talk to San Francisco more  
24 and they think, they think we know more, but ours is  
25 as big a mess as anybody else's if not worse. And so

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1 just because of the origin, but also because in a  
2 sense it's like it's coming out of San Francisco. But  
3 I could be wrong; that's why I'm asking, I'm curious.  
4 CR: Well, usually I think it's been somebody that's  
5 been here and saw it, you know, or read about it.  
6 Certainly there's plenty to read about Jose. If you  
7 don't read anything about the courts, you see her name  
8 all the time and inevitably it'll say something about  
9 first empress of San Francisco. Well, if somebody  
10 likes pageantry, they are intrigued and they want to  
11 find out what is an empress of San Francisco? So I  
12 think it could be any new thing that sparks an  
13 interest. Now, we've run so hard and we're all over  
14 the place that, you know, people from Pocatello go to  
15 Boise and start a court in Pocatello. You know, I  
16 mean, little tiny towns have - we went to Victorville.  
17 They started a new court when I was empress in  
18 Victorville. I never saw those people, but they got  
19 started by people from Los Angeles that had - well in  
20 this case, they went out and started it and they're a  
21 couple of people from L.A. that have done that a  
22 couple of times and they're pretty controversial  
23 people but.  
24 PG: I've heard about them.  
25 CR: I'm sure you have, but don't talk about those.

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1 we all share that, I mean, there's a commonality that  
2 we all understand. It's almost like a third language  
3 or something.  
4 PG: I was going to ask you and, again, this is really  
5 more about expression than the need to know all the  
6 details accurately. But do you know how many courts  
7 outside of San Francisco were started by people who  
8 left San Francisco and went somewhere else with, you  
9 know, this is a great idea; why don't we do this? Like  
10 you said, Toronto has done it to a certain extent.  
11 Toronto has gone out and started courts in its  
12 vicinity.  
13 CR: To tell you the truth, I don't know of any that  
14 San Franciscans have gone out and started. Basically  
15 it's a grassroots thing in each of the cities they're  
16 in.  
17 PG: See, what I'm wondering is how people found out  
18 about this whole thing and wanted to do it on a model  
19 of San Francisco. There had to be some kind of  
20 personal transfer of - I was in The City, I saw this  
21 thing, why don't we do it here? See, that's to me is  
22 logically the only way I can figure it out. And then  
23 maybe somebody had attended another court and seen  
24 what they did, and then mimicked that. But that would  
25 explain why everybody is in such awe of San Francisco,

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1 PG: I'd rather talk about other things.  
2 CR: That was as far as I was going to go.  
3 PG: Yeah, it's like a family squabbling endlessly. It  
4 seems to me too that a lot of the courts, I mean,  
5 there are traditional courts that are in large cities  
6 on the West Coast, San Francisco, down South, Reno,  
7 Portland, Vancouver. Then, of course, New York and  
8 Dallas. Then a lot of the courts, I've noticed, are  
9 actually in smaller little cities. I'm just wondering,  
10 why do you think the court has a tendency to take root  
11 in places like that? Do you think that it serves some  
12 purpose and gives people something they need?  
13 CR: They have nothing else. I can tell you the people  
14 in those towns, their whole lives revolve around the  
15 Court 'cause they have nothing else there. Towns that  
16 don't have bars have Courts. The one I went to next to  
17 Pocatello. They're together now, but the Grand Teton  
18 Empire, there's not a bar in town. Now they're joined  
19 but there's not a bar in town for their Court. And  
20 those people, I know very well their lives revolve  
21 around that Court.  
22 PG: It's a way of sort of forming an openly gay  
23 society.  
24 CR: Not they're not in even those smaller towns so  
25 they're not necessarily all gay. You know, that town,

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1 I can't even think of the name of it, there are a lot  
2 of women involved in it.  
3 PG: Are they lesbians?  
4 CR: Some lesbians, some not. In Long Beach, I don't  
5 know what it is now but that was a virtual lesbian  
6 court. When I was empress, it was almost all lesbians.  
7 And that's kind of unusual with their system, like we  
8 can't drag any into our system, but down there they  
9 seem to love it.  
10 PG: Yeah, they say a lot of the courts sort of out in  
11 the Midwest region, that there's a lot of women in  
12 those courts.  
13 CR: 'Cause there's probably even less for women. They  
14 may have a gay bar that men go to mostly, but in a lot  
15 of the smaller towns, they didn't have any women's  
16 bars. You know, I went back and went to the two bars  
17 they had.  
18 PG: Did you think the title too was part of feeling  
19 good about yourself? You know, I am Empress of the  
20 Grand Teton Empire. I raise money for Toys for Tots,  
21 the American Cancer Society and I was recognized by  
22 the mayor and the State Legislature sent me a  
23 certificate and people travel from all over the  
24 nation, dignitaries, you know, court dignitaries, to  
25 see me. It must make people feel very good about

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1 born, maybe the late '40s, you're right there. So it  
2 seems to me there must be a real generation shift. I  
3 was just wondering if you would talk about that. And  
4 I'm that must be there in the court.  
5 CR: Well, when I first got involved in the Court, when  
6 I got my first title, it was my very first Empress  
7 Council meeting and it was really, it was one of  
8 things if you went there, you'd probably never go  
9 back, 'cause if you really saw it - 'cause we had  
10 Ginger and Lily Street and Lily was of my generation,  
11 and it was the older generation. And at that time this  
12 was the way things were done and it was very much  
13 Ginger. And Ginger's changed a lot over the last few  
14 years whether other people recognized it or not. You  
15 know, it was like this is the way it's done, this is  
16 the way it's been done in the past. And Lily Street  
17 was no cowering nelly, you know, she knew what she  
18 wanted to do and she made it very clear and Ginger was  
19 - I guess it was after she stepped down and Lily was  
20 chairwoman of the Council and Ginger had been. They  
21 literally were screaming at each other and I mean, in  
22 a strange kind of I know I'm right but you don't  
23 respect my opinion sort of thing. And anyway I would  
24 say that was a prime example where they wouldn't come  
25 together, they just couldn't. And both were older

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1 themselves.  
2 CR: Well, I was awfully proud that all of those people  
3 came to my coronation. I don't know that the title  
4 necessarily made me so proud, but other people, it  
5 seemed to make a big difference to them. But I think  
6 the quote-unquote minor titles make people feel better  
7 about themselves. I mean, they're (inaudible), you  
8 know. Give people any title, you know, they're proud  
9 of that title. But, you know, I'm pretty involved. Of  
10 course I'm involved in the Closet Ball too so, kind of  
11 an active year for me I would say. But, you know, I go  
12 to the things (fades). I sort of stepped away for a  
13 while but the truth is it is kind of like family, I  
14 mean, you can't really get away from it. And when you  
15 go back, you're readily welcomed back home.  
16 PG: I just have one question that I want to ask you,  
17 and then if you have anything else that you think that  
18 you should talk about about the Court system that I  
19 overlooked, then please feel free. I want to just talk  
20 about the relationship between the old generation. For  
21 years there were empresses with no emperor. And  
22 they're very proud of that and in many respects  
23 they're kind of a pre-Stonewall generation, pre gay-  
24 lib generation. You were born in 1950 and that is  
25 right about the time that all the gay lib people were

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1 generation, not involved today. See, at that time even  
2 I gave Ginger a lot of credit because she at least was  
3 involved. You know, the newer empress was the center  
4 only because she was the older generation and Lily  
5 Street would have been happy if all the old ones  
6 dropped off the edge of the earth and we started from  
7 there. But most of them, I think, this was a very  
8 linear organization and it's like when you get to the  
9 top, there's no place else to go so people don't stay  
10 involved very much. And I think most of the past ones  
11 stayed involved for a little while, so you don't have  
12 people that are out there a lot of time, you know.  
13 People like this year. You know, when I was empress,  
14 the oldest empress that would have been on the council  
15 Sissy, aside from Ginger. But that was probably five  
16 years before me. And so I think you don't generally  
17 have a popular, haven't traditionally had a popular  
18 more than five years of people involved. You know,  
19 they just sort of drop off after a few years. And like  
20 with my involvement, I'm involved not as much as I  
21 would have been in the past. But now we have the most  
22 I've ever seen that are still involved. 'Cause we go  
23 all the way back to Pat. A large part of that though  
24 is because it's centered around Marlene, not because  
25 we're all staying involved but because there's a

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1 gathering place. So I don't think there's really a big  
2 problem except at that particular point in time where  
3 the new generation really came in, because Tina Tanner  
4 was before Lily and she was then involved for a long  
5 time, so she was still a part of that older  
6 generation, but she was definitely of the older  
7 generation. And Lily was the first, and aside from  
8 Ginger, well, Lily wasn't actually the first. I guess  
9 Sissy would have been the first. In fact she was so  
10 involved with Ginger. So there was a transition period  
11 essentially from Sissy to Tina, I think, and then Lily  
12 was the (inaudible) like our 1968. Here comes Lily  
13 Street and she's going to destroy this former  
14 situation and create a new one.  
15 PG: So some of the empresses for you in the '70s, the  
16 emperors and empresses, they were sort of like a terra  
17 incognito, they just like, you know, Bob Kramer, Bobby  
18 Pace, Hector.

19 CR: I knew Bob Kramer, I knew Bobby Pace. You know, I  
20 know of the boys than I know of the girls. Well, I  
21 shouldn't say that, I don't know. But a lot of the  
22 older empresses, you know, like you say Frieda, I  
23 think I met Frieda once. Maxine had moved away when I  
24 was involved in the gay baths when I was reigning I  
25 think. You know, Reba, when I was reigning she only

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1 I went to get the car. And A. L. Allen, that's the one  
2 I was involved with in my court, so I asked him to  
3 escort me to the car. And so we went to the car and  
4 these four men walking down the street towards us and  
5 they say are you a woman? And I said oh yes, you know.  
6 Well, you'd better be a woman; the next thing you know  
7 they're hitting us. So it ruined my day and as I was  
8 to the street, all I could think of was holding onto  
9 my jewelry. So actually he was actually injured worse  
10 than I was but somehow or other, we were all bloodied  
11 and things, so we went back into the bar. So they  
12 weren't going to call the cops and I don't know if  
13 this is a carryover from the old days, 'cause I mean,  
14 in the '70s the cops and gays didn't get along, but it  
15 makes you wonder if gay bars call the cops anymore but  
16 they weren't about to call the cops. And so I said you  
17 call the cops 'cause those guys are not going to get  
18 away. So they did, and I called Tom and he came and  
19 picked me up. The cops showed up and they were  
20 actually very nice. They put us in the car and there I  
21 was in drag, you know. So we were in this police car  
22 and drove us past some guys they arrested and we said  
23 yes, those are the ones. So we did the whole thing and  
24 went down to identify them, you know. The first thing  
25 is I'm kind of color blind when it comes to people,

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1 came out twice I think, the year I was reigning, when  
2 I saw her anyway. So, you know, people come and go,  
3 but when we stepped down, I think we had the largest  
4 number of former empresses or monarchs on the stage  
5 that we'd ever had because a lot of the old ones came  
6 back for some reason. For some reason during that  
7 period, like Bob Ross didn't want anything to do with  
8 it. You know, when I was with Sable and Marlene  
9 reigned, he would not put an article in the B.A.R.  
10 about it. And when I was reigning, we were surprised  
11 that he started picking up and did write about it a  
12 little bit. And I supposed since then that it's grown  
13 and they mended fences or whatever, people have. And  
14 it's just - times change.

15 PG: Anything else you'd like to -

16 CR: There are people that liked me if there was one  
17 thing the year that I did all year that I was Empress.  
18 This one couple in particular didn't care for me at  
19 all. But when I was Empress, the Polk Gulch was having  
20 their 13th anniversary party and Michael and I were  
21 asked to host the party. So we did and it was a hot  
22 August day. So we did this and they were very good  
23 about buying a drink at the Gulch. Then when we went  
24 to leave, Michael was kind of passed out on the  
25 sidewalk, and I was the one that drove all the time so

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1 you know, I don't notice like you're wearing glasses  
2 and I notice but don't ask me after you leave if  
3 you're wearing glasses, or don't ask me if you're  
4 black or white. It's just, you know, basically isn't  
5 something I'd think about. So I said in my deposition  
6 I said these four white guys went after us on the  
7 street. So anyway, we went to trial and it turned out  
8 it was three black guys and one white guy. And so we  
9 were sitting there and I was the first person they  
10 called on the stand. They had actually mugged four  
11 different people or groups of people. And so I'm  
12 sitting on the stand and then we had to - first of  
13 all, they had just passed the hate crimes to include  
14 gays at that time, I think it what the law had  
15 changed. And three of these guys were in the Navy and  
16 usually the military, the D.A. told me, they ship them  
17 out so they never go to trial. So they were feeling  
18 very good that they were able to hold onto them. So  
19 anyway, I was on the witness stand and so they asked  
20 me some questions. Well, the way we had to (inaudible)  
21 the hate crime 'cause they didn't rob us and so they  
22 said, you know, I had to say of course, are you a  
23 woman and all that. So I said I dropped my purse under  
24 the car and they didn't take it. So this proved that  
25 they weren't there to rob us; that was the main thing.

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1 So then we get to these four lawyers for these four  
2 guys and each lawyer gets a turn at me and they were  
3 asking me, well, were you in a pub? Where were you?  
4 Polk Gulch. Well, that's a pub, isn't it? Yes, it is.  
5 A saloon, right? Yeah. It's a bar, isn't it? You know,  
6 it's like this kind of thing. Did you have anything to  
7 drink? Well, yes I did. How many cocktails did you  
8 have? I said three. Well, and then, did you do any  
9 drugs? Leading into this. No, I don't do drugs, I  
10 really don't, you know. I've done drugs, but I don't  
11 do drugs. And finally I'd just had it. It was my  
12 moment from out of the clear and I stood bolt upright  
13 and I said I am the 25th Empress of San Francisco and  
14 I was in that bar in my official capacity helping them  
15 celebrate the 13th anniversary. I was not drunk and I  
16 was not - and you should have seen the faces on all  
17 these lawyers. They were like, and they were  
18 practically jumping out of their seats.

19 VIDEOTAPE 1 OF 2, 120 MINUTES

20 Because I hadn't told them I was an empress, you know,  
21 I hadn't told them any of this stuff. So then they  
22 called an adjournment and they negotiated and they  
23 apparently told them look, if you're ever a witness,  
24 it looks good. Because I had credentials all of a  
25 sudden, so don't say being the empress doesn't give

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1 lived in Athens for a few months and then I went to  
2 Chicago and suddenly divorced and decided as long as  
3 I'm here, I'm going back to school. And before that, I  
4 worked for the Hercules Chemical Company. Before that  
5 I worked for Gibraltar Savings & Loan. That was a job  
6 where I felt discriminated against and there was a  
7 time before that - I worked a lot. Oh, and after that  
8 in Chicago, I worked for an insurance company and I  
9 worked for Marshall-Fields while I was going to  
10 school, always had three jobs. Oh yeah, I worked for  
11 Erickson Company for a while. And a bank teller in  
12 Iowa, sold shoes at Penny's, worked in the catalog  
13 department at Sears, worked at McDonald's, you name  
14 it, I've done it.

15 PG: And you faced job discrimination because you're  
16 gay?

17 CR: Mm hm, even in my last job. But, you know, it was  
18 a set-up (fades).

19 PG: Yeah, that's right, they will say it's something  
20 else.

21 CR: Well, I wasn't actually ever fired from a job  
22 because of it or anything but they certainly made my  
23 life miserable and this last time I didn't get a  
24 promotion because of it - didn't get a change in the  
25 job title.

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1 you something. So I had credentials and they worked  
2 out a deal and they got the first conviction for a  
3 hate crime in San Francisco, and I don't know what the  
4 sentence, but they got six months in jail and three  
5 years probation and if they did anything else, they  
6 were back in jail. So anyway that was probably my  
7 proudest moment. It had nothing to do with being  
8 empress, that's what gave me my credentials.  
9 PG: I have to ask you something but it's very quick.  
10 And I need a profile of - so if you could just name,  
11 you don't need to go into detail - just name for, you  
12 don't have to do every single one, but basically what  
13 were your jobs from the time you got here - up to now,  
14 do you real estate? So if you want to go backwards. I  
15 should probably have this as sort of a background as  
16 to what you were doing for a living?

17 CR: Well, I've been on disability for the last three  
18 years, and I just started, and I just started doing  
19 real estate. Before that, I worked for the California  
20 Medical Association for about eight years. And I went  
21 there after I had gone back to school to get an  
22 interior architecture degree.

23 PG: So that's when you went to Chicago?

24 CR: No, I went to Chicago because I was involved in  
25 the - I married a Greek and moved to Chicago. So I

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1 PG: Okay, thank you.

2 CR: We're done finally, this was only three hours and  
3 fifteen minutes?

4 PG: Yes.

5 VIDEOTAPE 2 OF 2, 00 MINUTES

6 CR: Jim Osmond, who owned the Castro Station and he  
7 was a gorgeous guy and they had good food at that  
8 place. And another one that I remember was I think it  
9 was Mr. Cowboy because Mark Calhoun, his name was  
10 everywhere, his picture was everywhere. And there was  
11 the Litter Guy. Do you remember the Litter Guy? Not  
12 the Litter Guy, but the Recycle Guy. He went in the  
13 parade and used to wear a white cowboy hat. He was a  
14 real doll. He used to pick up the cans and everything  
15 and he was the recycle guy and he had this truck. I'm  
16 the only one who seems to remember him. I mean, I've  
17 asked several people and nobody ever seems to remember  
18 him.

19 PG: You got to San Francisco at an interesting time  
20 because in '73, Marcus was the first emperor and the  
21 whole title thing starts to explode. You begin to have  
22 Mr. and Mrs. Gay San Francisco and Mr. Cowboy,  
23 Cowgirl. I mean, the titles just really begin to take  
24 off. Of course the ducal courts had gotten started,  
25 Grand Ducal Courts. And then the parades. I think the

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1 first parade in San Francisco, I think, was '72,  
2 actual parade.  
3 CR: I think it was the third one that I was in.  
4 PG: 'Cause there was a gay-in put on the GLF. And then  
5 '71 they did a march; it was political.  
6 CR: Well, I know the first one I went to in '74, they  
7 had a separate fair from the parade and the fair was  
8 in Golden Gate Park and there still was a lot of  
9 hippie presence at the time 'cause in that area,  
10 several people went nude and, of course, I'd never  
11 seen people frolicking in the nude before and playing  
12 in this mud and stuff. And it was kind of like a big  
13 be-in, you know, there wasn't much else to the fair  
14 but that. And so that was kind of interesting and they  
15 never did that again after that.  
16 PG: The feeling that you said in the Castro when you  
17 first moved into the Castro, do you think that was a  
18 direct result of people having sort of a hippie  
19 feeling?  
20 CR: Oh yeah, people still had long hair in those days.  
21 I never liked long hair but they still had long hair,  
22 a lot of people. My hair was very long. Yeah, there  
23 was a lot of strong hippie feeling and Harvey Milk was  
24 not exactly clean-cut looking in 1974. In fact I had a  
25 real hard time voting for him when he ran for

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1 alike, you know, and if they're willing to talk to you  
2 and all they do is give you attitude until they want  
3 to have sex. Well then, the whole Castro got like  
4 that.  
5 PG: Do you have any guess about why that happened?  
6 CR: Well I think all the free sex, you know, all the  
7 sex clubs. You know, before when we'd sit in the  
8 Elephant Walk in the window and watch the men go by,  
9 it was like a joyous fun thing, you know, people  
10 socialized a lot in the beginning. And it seemed to me  
11 -  
12 PG: So you would call to somebody from the window out  
13 onto the street.  
14 CR: Yeah, and then like the Bench Club opened and then  
15 people were going there and so I think they were - I  
16 mean, you don't have to deal with anybody if you're  
17 having sex with them, kick them out of your bed and I  
18 think that just everything was affected by the  
19 (inaudible). What was it? The Hungry Hole was a place  
20 not very many people remember. I remember I saw my  
21 idol from Colt Magazine was Leidermeister and he was  
22 in there one night. Everything that opened had a glory  
23 hole in it: the Black and Blue and it just seemed like  
24 everybody went there, everybody went in the corner and  
25 did something and they'd go in with their lovers and

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1 supervisor because I just - he had that horrible  
2 shrill voice and I thought oh, he's so queeny. How can  
3 he be representing me as a gay person? I'm not like  
4 that. But he used to be a real hippie.  
5 PG: I just wanted to ask you, when do you think the  
6 Castro clone - I'm just using the term for shorthand -  
7 the Castro clone and feel began to really kick in?  
8 CR: Well, the look probably started kicking in I'd  
9 stay probably '76 or '77, maybe even earlier. But as  
10 soon as Village People came out, everybody really  
11 went. No, the look came out before the Village People  
12 I guess. But I think it first came out then. That  
13 would have happened in the late '70s I guess. So  
14 probably '76, '77. It was starting, in fact, it was  
15 starting when I moved there because I remember Toad  
16 Hall was a joke to everybody because they said all  
17 they do is - and that's what we called clone was the  
18 people who went to Toad Hall and we said all they do  
19 is stand and pose and the way they pose. And they  
20 really did. You'd go to Toad Hall and nobody talked to  
21 anybody at all. It was strictly a cruising, look/be  
22 seen place and that's what we called the Castro clones  
23 and then they'd go to the Midnight Sun and pick each  
24 other up. And that sounds like a joke to the people I  
25 knew. We'd laugh about this and like they all look

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1 his lover would go to the Folsom Prison and they'd go  
2 in the restroom of the Folsom Prison together and  
3 always say they only do it to each other.  
4 PG: So for you, being gay meant something very  
5 different in the early, mid '70s, than it did in the  
6 later '70s and early '80s. You say early '80s meaning  
7 before AIDS, you know, really hit the community and  
8 people began to really be aware of AIDS. And I think,  
9 of course, that put a huge brake on all the mass sex  
10 happening.  
11 CR: It was an extremely different town to come back to  
12 in 1983. I came and visited and it was like a whole  
13 different thing. I didn't recognize it at all. Of  
14 course, by then people were not going out at all and  
15 the streets were dead in the Castro and it was really  
16 depressing and I'd get depressed. But that was a  
17 totally different scene.  
18 PG: In the late '70s for you, being gay sort of  
19 reduced itself to having sex?  
20 CR: No, no, no, I was extremely proud to be gay, you  
21 know, it was very political. You know, I still cry  
22 every time I see a photo of the Harvey Milk  
23 march when he was assassinated. It was like  
24 spontaneous, you know, everybody knew together in the  
25 Castro, it was just everybody knew immediately to go

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1 down there. I remember sitting in the Twin Peaks  
 2 waiting for the march to start and we felt like we  
 3 were in the center of the world in those days, center  
 4 of the universe. It was very crowded. If I could be 24  
 5 again today and start over again, I wouldn't. I'd  
 6 rather have been where I was when I was the other  
 7 time. No, it was just the attitude people took towards  
 8 people became that for me. It was just that it didn't  
 9 seem like you had any friends because - and I had to  
 10 make a world for myself. But every time I - I made a  
 11 rule at one point that, well a couple of friends, you  
 12 know, I'd move in with friends, then they'd want to  
 13 sleep together, and then we did and then that would  
 14 end the relationship. And so I made a rule that I  
 15 wouldn't sleep with friends, like I didn't lose that  
 16 many friends either. But it seemed like every time  
 17 somebody befriended you, their ultimate goal was to  
 18 get you in bed, you know, and if they weren't going to  
 19 do that, then they didn't continue the friendship.  
 20 PG: Who really wants to be a friend?  
 21 CR: And then I got involved in MCC towards the end of  
 22 the '70s too and so I did a lot of that. I was very  
 23 involved with MCC and so my life was taking more of  
 24 that direction.  
 25 PG: So you recover your spirituality in a way?

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1 from the Bulldog Baths. Yeah, there's really very  
 2 large panels of all the images of very hot sex  
 3 (inaudible).  
 4 CR: I was never in there so that's great.  
 5 PG: We've got all kinds of stuff like that.  
 6 CR: Did anybody save the panels from the Folsom  
 7 Prison?  
 8 PG: I don't think so.  
 9 CR: 'Cause they had really hot murals in there.  
 10 PG: So, tell me, when did you get involved in the  
 11 Court system?  
 12 CR: Well, after I came back to San Francisco, then I -  
 13 well, a former roommate of mine's best friend, and I  
 14 had known him before, I left San Francisco and we kept  
 15 in touch. Hal Scooper was a member of the Barbary  
 16 Coasters and so I went on one of the runs. I joined  
 17 the Barbary Coasters so I was in a bike club for a  
 18 while and, of course, that's where the whole court  
 19 system seemed to come from in those days. The  
 20 empresses had been drag queens on a run at some point,  
 21 and then they went on to be empresses. When I joined  
 22 it was the GDI's and the Barbary Coasters were  
 23 competing to see who would get the emperor/empress for  
 24 the year. So Peter Tanner was a Barbary Coaster,  
 25 right? And then Willie Streep the next year, or two

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1 CR: Yeah, and relate to people better, I mean, because  
 2 people weren't relating in a sexual way. That's not  
 3 entirely true either. I wasn't relating to them in a  
 4 sexual way and I had friends but, you know, that  
 5 wasn't why we were friends and, you know, I was more  
 6 comfortable there for a while. I met my partner there.  
 7 PG: You said you were politically active in the '70s?  
 8 CR: Well, somewhat. I mean, I didn't get involved in  
 9 anybody's campaign or anything like that but I was,  
 10 you know, I was certainly aware of - I felt  
 11 politically active. I guess just being gay made me  
 12 feel politically active. So I wasn't exactly a barn  
 13 burner or anything.  
 14 PG: Did you ever go into the Tenderloin or South of  
 15 Market?  
 16 CR: Not in those days. I was only aware there was  
 17 anything down there because the Bulldog Baths was down  
 18 there. In fact it was for sale and I have a floor plan  
 19 of the building. And I swear that must be there. I  
 20 never went but these guys would bring coins or  
 21 something, Bulldog coins I think they were - I still  
 22 have that somewhere. And throwing them from the back  
 23 of the thing, there was really a hot man and I was  
 24 like looking at him (inaudible).  
 25 PG: This is just an aside but we rescued the panels

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1 years later, was the GDI. And suddenly I had some  
 2 exposure to that then. Then I really didn't get  
 3 involved with the Court until I - I always used to  
 4 walk to work and I would stop at Wendy's on Market and  
 5 get a diet Coke and walk into the office after walking  
 6 from my house in Pacific Heights. And there was a guy  
 7 in there, Diamond John, who worked at Grodin's, this  
 8 man with heavy makeup and, you know, kind of a, I  
 9 thought, caricature, but he was friendly. We'd just  
 10 say hi in the morning. So he'd eat breakfast there and  
 11 I'd get my soda, then I'd go on to work. Well, one day  
 12 I went in and as I was turning around, my soda fell on  
 13 the floor by his foot. He swears it fell on his foot  
 14 but it didn't. And so I was extremely apologetic and  
 15 he said let's have breakfast some time, so the next  
 16 time I went, we had breakfast and became friends. And  
 17 it turned out he was involved with the Court. And  
 18 actually the Halloween before that, well at that time  
 19 I got involved in the Court. The drag was something  
 20 else. And so then a coronation was coming up and I had  
 21 - I probably dressed for Halloween or the coronation.  
 22 Well, I had drag from the Halloween before.  
 23 PG: For the first time?  
 24 CR: Well, that's another story. Well, the first time,  
 25 when I first came back to San Francisco, I stayed with

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1 a friend in Pacifica and Halloween came and he was on  
2 a business trip.  
3 VIDEOTAPE 2 OF 2, 75 MINUTES  
4 I didn't have a car and he was on a business trip to  
5 New Orleans. So, he was going to be in the (inaudible)  
6 that weekend, so I had gone out with a guy and he  
7 invited me to a Halloween party. I think it was the  
8 Pacific Union Halloween party now that I think about  
9 it. He was a real estate agent. I'll have to look him  
10 up now. He may be still around. But anyway, so he  
11 invited me to a Halloween like this last minute, two  
12 days before I didn't know what I was going to wear.  
13 And I just decided to go to the police uniform shop. I  
14 went to the police uniform shop and bought everything,  
15 you know, a police shirt, a police woman's skirt and  
16 everything that would be a police outfit, and then I  
17 went and bought a wig some place. Oh, there was a wig  
18 shop on Market at the time, and so I went as a meter  
19 maid. Well, I mean, everybody loved the outfit and  
20 so - but I had a mustache. Somehow, well this friend  
21 of mine and I didn't really get together so I was kind  
22 of on my own and I went down to Castro for the party  
23 on Castro. And there were cops there and this one  
24 woman even told me to go out and tell the guy in the  
25 middle directing traffic - I walked out in the middle

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1 at the wheel. Nobody gave me a sobriety test or  
2 anything. I guess they didn't want to deal with this  
3 drag queen sitting there. I called an old boyfriend  
4 from the '70s who was going to pick me up at 6 in the  
5 morning, stay at his house until he could take me  
6 home. So my first drag experience wasn't great either.  
7  
8 PG: So a couple questions, what was the Leather and  
9 Feathers party? Was that leather and drag at the  
10 Eagle?  
11 CR: No, I don't think so. it was just leather and  
12 feathers.  
13 PG: So it'd be a leather outfit with the boas. So  
14 there was kind of a little bit of a drag element. I  
15 also wanted to ask you, I've interviewed some people  
16 who were involved, a couple people were involved in  
17 the bike clubs but earlier than you were. I  
18 interviewed one guy who was one of the Koalas from the  
19 '60s, very early. And I also interviewed Jim Connor  
20 who was president of the Warlocks in the mid '70s and  
21 then he claims that he was the one that basically -  
22 the runs and the organizations were getting so large  
23 and so many that they needed some kind of - there were  
24 so many events - that they needed some kind of  
25 organization so he began to put together calendars and

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1 of 18th and Castro and directed traffic in my meter  
2 maid outfit. Well, so then it went from there to the  
3 first Leather and Feathers party at the Eagle. And I  
4 thought well, they didn't like drag in the Eagle and I  
5 thought well I'm in uniform so I'm going to the Eagle.  
6 Then I went to the Eagle and they had two for one  
7 drinks so I drank and I was sitting by this guy and  
8 they closed the bar and he wanted to continue  
9 drinking. So we bought a six-pack and we went to the  
10 Boot Camp. I was the only drag queen that went to the  
11 Boot Camp. Well, anyway, so we went to the Boot Camp  
12 and lost this guy somehow and driving back to  
13 Pacifica, I got a flat tire and fell asleep about the  
14 same time. And I went to get off the road I think what  
15 happened and, anyway, I hit a truck head on in my  
16 friend's brand new car and I'd only been in town a  
17 couple months. So this man runs around from the truck  
18 and I'm ripping my eye lashes and my wig off so he  
19 wouldn't know I was a drag. Well, he comes to the door  
20 and he says are you okay? And I says yeah, I'm fine  
21 and never said another word. It turned out that this  
22 gas station I was pulling into was owned by the boss  
23 of my soon-to-be partner. So anyway, I got involved, I  
24 didn't know who I could call and this cop asked me,  
25 you know, what happened. I said I guess I fell asleep

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1 put all this together. But they talked about these  
2 runs which were just phenomenally elaborate. But what  
3 I thought was very interesting was from the get-go,  
4 there was always a drag element, there was always a  
5 show. And some clubs were known more for it than  
6 others. For example, the MCC, I think it was the MCC.  
7 CR: CMC.  
8 PG: CMC, excuse me, CMC.  
9 CR: California Motorcycle Club.  
10 PG: Right. Where the Warlocks prided themselves more  
11 on sort of being very butch.  
12 CR: Cam Clary, yes, starter of the shows. He used to  
13 do that around the campfires, him and - but Cam will  
14 always be known for that (third person enters; both  
15 speak at once). He got the show started; then it just  
16 progressed from that point 'cause he'd been going on  
17 the runs since the '70s. Did you ever interview him?  
18 PG: He's been interviewed by somebody in our Oral  
19 History Project, yeah. They finally are getting the  
20 Project so they're getting a lot of important personal  
21 lives (fades).  
22 CR: Actually when I joined that, they all said that -  
23 I knew that right away. It was one of the first thing  
24 you learned was you started the shows by the campfire.  
25 PG: See, that's something that's interesting too. I

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1 wanted to ask you about this. From the outside, people  
2 would look at the Court system and then they would -  
3 some people had told me Market was the dividing line.  
4 And up in the Tenderloin, that was drag, that was  
5 sweaters and feathers. And South of Market was  
6 leather. But what I found, starting to interview  
7 people, is that's actually like all dividing lines. I  
8 mean, you could take one of the oldest members or  
9 honorary members of the Court, Henry (inaudible), and  
10 he was always in high, high drag. He was here in San  
11 Francisco before Jose was. That's where Jose sort of  
12 picked up on the whole title thing, that Henry was  
13 also known as Hank and he was the founder of the CMC.  
14 So that's interesting to me what you're talking about  
15 because you were saying how at one point the  
16 connection was so close, the empresses were coming out  
17 of the bicycle, the bike clubs.  
18 CR: Well, you'll find up until recently, actually I  
19 was the next to the last one to come out of the bike  
20 clubs I guess. 'Cause me and Mozzarella were the last  
21 ones. He was a GDI and I, of course, was a Barbary  
22 Coaster. Actually by the time when I won, I was a GDI.  
23 When the Barbary Coasters had folded, I became a GDI.  
24 So I guess I was the only empress with dual  
25 citizenship.

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1 Sissy was just like this larger than life, you know,  
2 personality 'cause she always, you know, I didn't  
3 think she was the friendliest person in the world at  
4 first. You know, we all go through our changes and she  
5 was one of the friendliest people I ever knew at the  
6 end. But, you know, it was her and Ken, Ken Wright.  
7 PG: What was that, I've seen pictures of that event.  
8 It looked like it was just over the top.  
9 CR: Well, it was the first one in Show Place Square,  
10 it was the first one to brought out of the venue and  
11 it was pretty outrageous. We didn't get to see all of  
12 it because we had another party we were going to so we  
13 were like splitting our evening between these two  
14 parties. But they had a spaceship thing and Butterfly  
15 Galactic Empire and stuff like that. And they did  
16 butterfly things and extraterrestrial things.  
17 PG: So that was what got you intrigued in the Court?  
18 CR: Well, yeah, and I certainly didn't even think  
19 about being empress, you know, up until shortly before  
20 I came, I never strove to be an emperor. I just kind  
21 of got involved accidentally, the whole thing was kind  
22 of accidental.  
23 PG: How'd that happen?  
24 CR: Well, I just, you know, I was happy with Sable and  
25 I just got a little more involved with them and, of

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1 PG: Do you know, just from hearing other members of  
2 the Court, does it always seem to be the case that  
3 there was always a very close connection between the  
4 bike clubs and the leather community and the Court?  
5 CR: I mean, it was closer in some, like you said, than  
6 others. You know, I don't think that the Cal Eagles  
7 would want to think that they were related to the  
8 Court system too much, or the drag queen part of the  
9 Court system.  
10 PG: That's right, 'cause Marcus started the whole  
11 let's be butch thing.  
12 CR: But even in his old age, he started to come back  
13 and be a little more involved in the Court system than  
14 he was for a long time.  
15 PG: So, let's go back to what you were talking about.  
16 You say you went to your first coronation. How was  
17 that? Whose coronation was it?  
18 CR: It was Sissy Spaceout stepping down and Sable  
19 (inaudible) stepping up. It was awesome.  
20 PG: So you were there for Massie and Sable.  
21 CR: Yeah, I had gotten involved before the coronation.  
22 Actually, I had been involved peripherally with the  
23 campaign and that's when I got to know Ken. Well, I  
24 knew Matthew before through the life line. And I kind  
25 of knew Sable but I didn't know Sable very well. And

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1 course, we had the next (inaudible). That was the  
2 first year I met Tatiana and she was running for  
3 empress too that year. And so she was, and they  
4 thought she shouldn't be running because she was  
5 (fades). And so anyway, so I got to know her and  
6 unfortunately she asked me, later on she asked me if I  
7 would work on her campaign the next year and I said I  
8 would. And I just got to know people and I'd go with  
9 Diamond John and then I'd be getting certificates and  
10 things and I thought why was I getting certificates  
11 when all I did was show up. And they made him the  
12 Countess and me the Count of Diamond Heights was my  
13 first title. And well then, well the next year was  
14 Tina Tanner and Lily Street and Tatiana running  
15 against each other and I was friends with all of them  
16 and Tatiana was really the one that I really wanted to  
17 win the least, but I committed to her so I was pretty  
18 embarrassed by it all so I'd not be around when Tina  
19 would come in or something, but I don't know. 'Cause I  
20 wanted to support all of them, I thought they were  
21 wonderful people and would make great title holders.  
22 And then the next year, and I committed then that if  
23 the next year I would support Lily Street because  
24 that's who I wanted to be in. So the next year came  
25 along and I got a little more involved because of

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1 Tina, not a lot because of Tina because she dropped  
 2 out of the bike club at that time. Well, she didn't go  
 3 to meetings anymore. She was definitely left alone.  
 4 And so I got to know more people and just sort of, I  
 5 think we probably went to (inaudible) coronation. And  
 6 then when Lily Street became empress, I'd been on her  
 7 campaign committee and then she gave me my first  
 8 title, I mean, put me on her cabinet so she made me -  
 9 what was I? Oh, something like Countess of the Nieman-  
 10 Marcus Last Call Sale or something like that. Lady of  
 11 the Nieman-Marcus or something like that. So I was  
 12 just overwhelmed; she put me on her council and then I  
 13 was involved with her all year. And then she gave me a  
 14 permanent title at the end of the year and I became  
 15 Princess of Union Square. So I was a dame, she made me  
 16 a dame and I became Princess of Union Square.  
 17 PG: What year were you elected?  
 18 CR: In '91, '92.  
 19 PG: So you were Empress Number?  
 20 VIDEOTAPE 2 OF 2, 90 MINUTES  
 21 CR: Twenty-six. They're so nasty, those people. They  
 22 couldn't wait. They'd rush us at twelve o'clock. If  
 23 they had waited, you know, my birthday is ruined every  
 24 year be a coronation. If they could at least wait five  
 25 minutes to crown me on the birthday, it would have

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1 were the things you were supposed to do?  
 2 CR: For me it was to get everybody to like me, you  
 3 know, just go out and be friends with everybody and  
 4 listen to other people instead of just talking and  
 5 just befriending everybody. During that period I fell  
 6 in love with the kids in the Tenderloin, you know, I  
 7 had never gone down to the Tenderloin really except  
 8 during Court things. Because they may not have had ten  
 9 cents but, you know, they gave me everything they had  
 10 emotionally it seemed like. And so, I forgot what you  
 11 asked me.  
 12 PG: Did you have to go to a lot of bars?  
 13 CR: Oh yeah, this was my pre campaign. By the time I  
 14 campaigned, there really wasn't much (inaudible) I  
 15 don't think. A lot of people don't really realize that  
 16 'cause I had to campaign for about nine months by the  
 17 time I became -  
 18 PG: How many people were on your campaign committee?  
 19 CR: They had a huge committee initially. Our first  
 20 meeting, about 45 people showed up to get a campaign  
 21 committee together. But I had a really strong corps of  
 22 probably about 10 or 12 people, fabulous people. They  
 23 were just - I owe everything to them. They made me  
 24 look good. I ran out of hosts; there were three men  
 25 running against each other and we had the best food

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1 been a nice thing. But no, they crowned me five  
 2 minutes before my 41st birthday.  
 3 PG: So tell me, this is something I've been asking  
 4 people because I think it'd be interesting to compare.  
 5 Tell me about running your campaign and then tell me  
 6 about your coronation because those are two very  
 7 different things. Because under this Court system, you  
 8 don't really get your title until you finish your year  
 9 satisfactorily and then that's your coronation when  
 10 you step down; you get to plan that.  
 11 CR: Well, I was the first empress to run unopposed and  
 12 a lot of people think that that was just luck but the  
 13 truth is there was somebody else I knew that wanted to  
 14 run for empress that I had had a falling-out with and  
 15 there was just no way an empress would represent the  
 16 event. So that's how I ended up running (by) myself  
 17 and there was nobody else running around that was  
 18 going to run. By then Tatiana had lost three times. It  
 19 should have been her year. If she'd waited, she would  
 20 have been empress my year. So anyway, I decided  
 21 several months before I ran that I was going to run  
 22 for empress and so I went out and, you know, did  
 23 everything I thought it was supposed to do and lined  
 24 up all the support early.

25 PG: What does that mean? Tell me about that like what

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1 function we ever did. Every function was decorated by  
 2 Ken Coor and it was fabulous. We put fabric on the  
 3 outside of buildings and everything else and we had  
 4 great parties. They were always out loudly supporting  
 5 me and Rhonda Love was there. They would all be  
 6 (inaudible) a lot of production numbers. When I was  
 7 first starting the campaign, you know, people sort of  
 8 let you do things to get you, you know, people help  
 9 you out. They used to put on (inaudible) for GDI and  
 10 so they gave me a solo (inaudible) and I know it  
 11 sounds like Doris Day. People would say with blond  
 12 hair and, you know, it was boring. People would say  
 13 when are you going to change your hair? I said after  
 14 they elect me. So I decided I would just sort of shock  
 15 everybody and so we bought the tape and revved up the  
 16 music and I stuck my leg through the curtain and did  
 17 (inaudible). Had the cutest costume with these huge  
 18 boobs coming out and Lily Street always told me don't  
 19 perform because I'm not a performer. If you can't  
 20 perform, don't perform. I had this long red hair and I  
 21 did this number and brought the house down and Lily  
 22 Street asked who I was and they said don't you  
 23 recognize Caress? And she told me after the show she  
 24 said I was wrong, you are a performer. And then when  
 25 we did our international candidates, my group all came

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1 together and we did a whole West Side Story medley and  
2 what is that song? (third person enters; all speak at  
3 once). And we did this thing from West Side Story, we  
4 did I Like to be In America. It was really campy and  
5 fun. And my production numbers were actually put  
6 together by Tillie who became empress later. At that  
7 time she was doing every other thing and never thought  
8 she'd be an empress. And I always thought she should  
9 be an empress before I was because she (inaudible) a  
10 lot. But anyway, for an introductions of candidates,  
11 the girls came out and we did a number that, again,  
12 Tillie told me I shouldn't be in it (inaudible)  
13 because I can't dance. But we did @Look at Me, I'm  
14 Sandra Dee.@ There were five girls doing the @Look at  
15 Me, I'm Sandra Dee.@ And we all wore poodle skirts  
16 that Ken had made and my wig, you know, one of the  
17 girls was black and it was a lot of fun and we all did  
18 @Look at Me, I'm Sandra Dee.@ And then I walked off  
19 and went off stage; they finished the number, and I  
20 changed clothes and came back out. Larry Cook came  
21 from the other side; he was my escort at the time. And  
22 he came out in his leathers and I came out in this  
23 sexy leather thing with leather straps hanging down  
24 and said Look, No More Sandra Dee, and came out and  
25 then we did You're the One that I Want and, you know,

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1 along and very much they were trying to keep up with  
2 that and Pat and Jerry I think. And when I came along,  
3 I didn't want to be anything less than anybody and I  
4 didn't want to embarrass myself by doing less than  
5 somebody else so I guess you'd say it was competition.  
6 PG: Apparently one-upmanship.  
7 CR: Well, kind of but in my case, and I would say in  
8 Marlene's case, it's not a matter of one-upping but a  
9 matter being equal to.  
10 PG: Suddenly carrying a torch.  
11 CR: Yeah, and, of course, that was kind of the end of  
12 that. You know, it died down the next year and I know  
13 Pete Mozzarella, I don't think she even had any  
14 parties. She had a real low-key campaign. So I was  
15 kind of the end of a main time that really went on. I  
16 think they do a lot less now than they used to. But  
17 that I think is why we did it so much.  
18 PG: Why do you think it got so intense there for a  
19 while?  
20 CR: Well, in my case, because Marlene was always  
21 telling me how much she had done with hers and, you  
22 know, how much money she spent and, you know, she kind  
23 of, you know, like bragged a lot I guess. I didn't  
24 want to think that I couldn't do that too.  
25 PG: Right, it had become sort of a legend in San

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1 and everybody, of course, had never seen, I don't  
2 think, probably Larry's check before then. I swear  
3 they were looking at him more than they were looking  
4 at me. But anyway, so it was like we were doing this  
5 cycle slot sort of thing and nobody had seen me do  
6 that either. But these kids made it all possible and  
7 Ken had made the outfits and they worked hard and long  
8 on the shows.  
9 PG: Yeah, I'm curious about this. I've read about  
10 this, I've heard about it, but I'm just asking you why  
11 you think - and this is really just an open-ended  
12 question, I'm just wondering - why do you think this  
13 whole thing developed that when you campaigned, you  
14 have to just sort of put on the food and entertain  
15 people and do a good show and have good decorations.  
16 It sort of a known stop, whirlwind. Like why do you  
17 think that developed?  
18 CR: Well, I don't know why it developed in the first  
19 place. But by the time I got there, it was very  
20 competitive, you know, like my role here was in  
21 essence about competition because Pat Montclair had  
22 been Empress two years before me, I mean, she had furs  
23 and jewels and all these things. And, of course, when  
24 they had their campaign parties, they had fabulous  
25 parties and everything else. Well then Marlene came

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1 Francisco.  
2 CR: Well, you know, and they had the advantage of  
3 paying help. I mean, they had a lot of money to work  
4 with and really none of us and really none of us could  
5 have kept up with that. I mean, yes, Pat Montclair was  
6 a legend so I wasn't even going to try to catch up to  
7 her personality-wise. You know, we just would do what  
8 we could do, the obvious things we could control.  
9 PG: Yeah, that's something that's really struck me too  
10 is how expensive it had become to now campaign and to  
11 just hold the title. Because you had to do so much  
12 traveling. You're talking about not one-upmanship but  
13 you say sort of like holding in the water, because  
14 there's this whole thing of maybe the previous Court  
15 visited three courts for their coronation, so you have  
16 to do that as well. Because if you don't, it makes San  
17 Francisco look bad and not enough people come to your  
18 coronation and you don't raise enough money.  
19 CR: Absolutely, it was a very important thing, it was  
20 a big thing to me with our out-of-town show because  
21 Marlene had told me the year before how much money she  
22 had made at her out-of-town shows - we thought a lot  
23 of money at the time. And so, the minute I found out  
24 we made more money at our out-of-town show, I told  
25 Marlene. Not in that way, but it's like well, you

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1 know, we made 1,100 dollars at our out-of-town show or  
2 something and I think she'd made nine or something, I  
3 don't know, or something simple. But she used to face  
4 36,000 dollars and I laughed and I was going to show  
5 them how an empress didn't have to spend that kind of  
6 money. And we figured out what we spent - we didn't do  
7 that. I wouldn't have lasted another month as Empress.  
8 We spent 67,000 dollars to the best of our  
9 calculations.  
10 PG: It's phenomenal, isn't it?  
11 CR: Well, there were expense like - and this isn't so  
12 true anymore obviously but I also had the problem with  
13 having a different dress. In those days, they  
14 criticized me to death. (inaudible) threw a plate of  
15 food at Tina Tanner one time because she told him that  
16 I didn't dress when I went out and the truth was, you  
17 know, (inaudible) well you never dress. But I learned  
18 after while not to go out once without dressing, that  
19 I would never go out if I wasn't dressed. So, but  
20 anyway, but you couldn't wear the same dress. I didn't  
21 feel I could wear the same dress twice because they  
22 criticized me for wearing the same dress. So, you  
23 know, it was - but I think people are kinder now.  
24 PG: Maybe you were just worn out. Because it comes to  
25 a point where you just can't sustain that level of

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1 charitable causes was very important, right? That was  
2 also part of this whole having to keep up with the  
3 Joneses kind of thing, or 'cause you were saying like  
4 not following the role that people had done before.  
5 How much do you estimate that you raised?  
6 CR: Not as much as I would have liked. But we didn't  
7 keep books in those days like we do now, so we would  
8 have a function and just, you know, write a check or  
9 give the money at the function so we never really kept  
10 track of ours.  
11 PG: Considering a normal function, describe to me, for  
12 example, what was in a typical function during the  
13 year and how much money you'd raised to feed this  
14 person.  
15 CR: Well, two of the biggest functions we had is we  
16 had a Cabaret Night and we had Sharon McKnight and -  
17 PG: Oh, I'd heard her the other night. It was at a  
18 Gary Menger Memorial Performance.  
19 VIDEOTAPE 2 OF 2, 105 MINUTES  
20 Yeah, these friends of his got a whole bunch of  
21 cabaret people to come, do a cocktail soiree. We  
22 established then a memorial (inaudible). Guy McGinnis  
23 organized it and I didn't even know they were going to  
24 do this but then they dropped 500 dollars on my head  
25 for the GLHS as well as giving a thousand to

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1 57,000 dollars, 35,000 to 57,000 dollars just becomes  
2 impossible. And, you know, I talked to some people who  
3 were earlier, you know, I think it was about 1970 that  
4 the Tavern Guild voted the Empress of San Francisco  
5 that an annual honorarium of 500 dollars to cover her  
6 expenses. And I thought that was a big crick in  
7 everybody's jaw for a long time because they just give  
8 you 500 bucks and expect you to go off and do all this  
9 stuff. And I know it's changed some now.  
10 CR: Well, when we were doing it, they gave us 250  
11 dollars to travel. Then we had a couple of years, when  
12 I was on the Board one year, that it really got out of  
13 hand and basically whenever they asked for - well, we  
14 mainly turned in receipts for but there were receipts  
15 turned in for things like alcohol in the room which  
16 wasn't exactly appropriate. So now it's I think it's  
17 pretty much they turn in the receipts and there are  
18 certain things we pay for and some we don't.  
19 PG: Like legitimate expenses, room and board and  
20 airplane.  
21 CR: Yeah, but back in those days it was very  
22 specifically only for travel. If we didn't have to fly  
23 some place, we didn't get reimbursed for it.  
24 PG: Now I'm curious, when you were Empress and you  
25 were campaigning for Empress, raising money for

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1 (inaudible), of course, and a thousand to the American  
2 Cancer Society which is logical - Gary died of brain  
3 cancer. And we setting up a Gary Menger Memorial  
4 Collection and we're going to use it as a magnet for  
5 gay theater and gay performance and gay cabaret so we  
6 can collect something for our Archives. Yeah, isn't  
7 that nice? Yeah, so I saw Sharon.  
8 CR: That's the first time you've seen her?  
9 PG: Perform, yeah. I'm just a young 'un.  
10 CR: Well, the funny thing about that is when she  
11 walked in - actually my emperor was the one that got  
12 her to do it - Michael Bowman. I mean, we paid her for  
13 the performance, but she came in and she had a lot of  
14 attitude when she walked in. Well, Lenny introduced me  
15 as like the whole attitude like oh, she's the Empress,  
16 okay. You know, so it was really strange and it turned  
17 me off a little bit because I (inaudible). But anyway  
18 I shouldn't probably say that, but edit that out. And  
19 then we had Michael What's-his-name that did the  
20 impersonations - oh, an old-time - I mean, he's been  
21 he's (inaudible) now. (inaudible) he used to  
22 impersonate Judy Garland, he was from - Michael Grear.  
23 Yeah, he was on our show. And then Jackie from Reno,  
24 and Sheeba was in our show who was at that time was  
25 David Lyle Carver. She - showed her true colors at my

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1 coronation. But anyway, we had a fabulous show and we  
2 didn't overcharge people - it was like 35 dollars but  
3 there was a great line-up. And that night we gave out  
4 about 2,000 dollars. Then not only did we make a lot  
5 of money, we had a June Bride thing, I'd always wanted  
6 to do a June Bride thing. And I kind of didn't keep my  
7 hand in it as much as I should so it wasn't really the  
8 event I wanted to see. But we raised about 1,200  
9 dollars at that so.  
10 PG: Otherwise you're having events and you're raising  
11 a few hundred dollars a year. How many events do you  
12 think you have over a course of a year? I'm not  
13 talking just about big events. I'm just talking about  
14 fund-raisers. Say, how many do you average a week?  
15 CR: (inaudible), you know, I would say we average more  
16 than a couple a month that we put on, but we were  
17 always going to them. We have a picture of Elizabeth  
18 Taylor upstairs that I paid 300 dollars for  
19 (inaudible), you know, and a lot of our money went to  
20 things like that. There's really more support than  
21 organizing most of the time. A lot of people put  
22 functions on to raise money for their court and we did  
23 none of that. I just felt very uncomfortable raising  
24 money for myself so I just couldn't (inaudible). So we  
25 were poor, you know, we were really a poor court that

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1 way.  
2 PG: So your emperor was Michael? How was your  
3 relationship? You're covering your face. I'm sorry I  
4 have to ask because that's a question that I ask  
5 everybody. I know that there has been very - there's  
6 been a wide range of relationships between Emperors  
7 and Empresses.  
8 CR: Well, I liked Michael and I assume he liked me,  
9 and we were both (inaudible), we were both Pisces  
10 people so we tended to be wishy-washy and it was hard  
11 to say no to people. But I think I always liked him  
12 but we had a terrible time reigning together because  
13 from my standpoint, I'm sure he has equal (inaudible)  
14 to say about me, but he when you would plan something  
15 and I think he should have said no, but instead he'd  
16 say okay and not show up. So in my mind he was  
17 irresponsible because he wasn't showing up. I couldn't  
18 count on him for things. And then we gave our titles  
19 at a special event so we could have a more fun  
20 investiture, we gave our titles another night and I  
21 told everybody this was going to be a special night  
22 for the people and so that's why we're doing this. And  
23 I wore a big gown, not a big gown, but a, you know, a  
24 fancy dress and Michael showed, you know, in a pair of  
25 slacks and a sport shirt, short-sleeved sport shirt.

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1 Well, and that's not the way we went casual all year.  
2 So he never probably looked right. And, of course, he  
3 was, what's the proper word these days? He was  
4 physically impaired. He had a lung removed and he had  
5 a degenerative condition so he walked with a cane. And  
6 so when we'd go to Coronation Night so that mostly I  
7 held him up but he really didn't have any problem  
8 walking down the runway or anything. Not that I minded  
9 that. But aside from that Cabaret Night, I kind of had  
10 to organize everything and the people on the committee  
11 and we were really, you know, we depended heavily on  
12 those people. They really came through for us and but  
13 when it came to our relationship, by the end of the  
14 year, a lot of people, they really knew it was a hard  
15 year and people had different opinions of (inaudible).  
16 PG: Who'd you give your permanent title to? You can  
17 give one, right?  
18 CR: No, two.  
19 PG: I guess it's changed now.  
20 CR: It depends every year. It was two then like two  
21 years ago she gave about ten of them. You can give as  
22 many dame or knight titles as are empty during the  
23 year, so you can give those during the year. And I  
24 gave a name title to Bill Rowles who is known now as  
25 Faberge. I gave a knight title to (inaudible) who is

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1 involved with the Golden Gate Guards and who was  
2 involved with the court.  
3 PG: At that time.  
4 CR: Yeah, at that time. But and then I gave a dame  
5 title to Jennie Knute (inaudible) for my coronation  
6 and she was fabulous and I made her a dame. Then I  
7 gave a permanent title to my partner, Tom Harvey. He's  
8 the Prince of the Scenic Highway because he used to  
9 work for the Scenic Highway Bus Lines. And to Larry  
10 Cook was my -  
11 PG: What was he?  
12 CR: Oh, Prince of the Rainbow (inaudible). And that  
13 would be me.  
14 PG: 'Cause I got all these questions coming up. When  
15 we get to coronations, I want to talk about the theme  
16 you chose, with your name Caress and about what  
17 happened, you know, just tell me about coronation. But  
18 I want to go back and ask you a couple things. Tell me  
19 about the intersection of drag and the Court and  
20 transsexuals because I know there was Jackie, right?  
21 Empress Jackie was a transsexual and you talked about  
22 one person in your court, in your committee, showed up  
23 with a sort of a different sex assignment or a  
24 different gender. You say they were a boy and they  
25 became a girl.

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1 CR: Sheeba, well she just went to drag from being a  
2 very good-looking boy.  
3 PG: So, for a lot of people in the Court, it's quite  
4 obvious just from watching them use drag, that they're  
5 not into - how do I put this? Pat Montclair drag is  
6 the kind of drag where there's this whole illusion of  
7 transformation. There was a man who disappeared, sort  
8 of a closet ball, is I think a remnant of that but was  
9 a high - that kind of drag was performed here in the  
10 '60s in the Tenderloin - Charles Pierce and Pat  
11 Montclair and those kinds of people. Then there's the  
12 kind of drag in the Court of just men wearing dresses  
13 and having fun, a kind of more hippie gender bending.  
14 It was not necessarily trying to say I am a woman,  
15 right. It was more of like I'm just a guy in a dress  
16 having fun or what do you think? Or I mean, there are  
17 some people -  
18 CR: Well, the drag people aren't - it's not really  
19 about I am a woman. It's like particularly with  
20 transgender people who think it's all about the show.  
21 You do this to be fabulous, you do this to put on a  
22 show and as soon as you get home, you rip it off  
23 because you felt miserable wearing it - can't wait to  
24 get out of anything. I mean, I'll tell you about the  
25 trails from my stairway. It's the shoes are first. Tom

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1 she's telling me that I should do, you know, she walks  
2 over to these two boys who later on one became an  
3 Emperor. And she'd walk over to these boys and they'd  
4 just whipped out their dicks. You know, I'm like well,  
5 I can never do that; that's not me. And I don't think  
6 I ever did really do it after that except for one, you  
7 know, we talked about it a lot and Michael Goldman was  
8 just obsessed with this, you know, he was like  
9 couldn't stand that we could do this. So he was giving  
10 me some grief or something. He was giving me this  
11 grief in this bar, not the Nob Hill, it was Arnold's  
12 or, what's the name of that, Alvin's, called Alvin's  
13 on Bush Street on Geary. Anyway we were in there and  
14 Michael was there was a show, they were putting on a  
15 show, and there was a guy walked into the bar and I  
16 walked up to him and said I am the Empress of San  
17 Francisco; show me your dick. And this guy just popped  
18 out this huge old thing. Michael just about died and  
19 it was like I'm so glad that he did it, but it was a  
20 little embarrassing that he did it.  
21 PG: So in drag, you yourself transformed some?  
22 CR: Oh yeah, that was Caress. Well, she's basically  
23 me, but it's me with a mask. Like I used to, when I  
24 was with the Barbary Coasters, serve beer at the Eagle  
25 and, you know, being a very shy and young person, it

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1 follows me and picks up the pieces to my clothing in  
2 the hallway. But it's all about show and that's not  
3 really different from the gender-bending because  
4 they're about show in a different kind of way. But we  
5 don't cross over into the transsexual/transsexual  
6 because we don't have any sexual interest in what  
7 we're doing.  
8 PG: So for you a lot of it is just having fun. I know  
9 this has nothing to do with sexuality but do you think  
10 that for some people in the Courts, wearing drag is  
11 also a way to transform themselves, to let out parts  
12 of their personalities or -  
13 CR: Well, I'd say that's true of me too. You do  
14 transform yourself because you become a different  
15 person, you know, without planning it or trying to do  
16 it - you just are. I can do things when I'm in drag  
17 that I could never do out of drag.  
18 PG: Like what?  
19 Third person in room: What was that saying that you  
20 learned when you were Empress?  
21 CR: Oh, I should know - no, it wasn't Chantilly.  
22 Anyway, she had some people (inaudible) so when I  
23 first met her she says well, you know, we were sitting  
24 at the bar after the coronation, she says (inaudible)  
25 I am the Empress of Stockton - show me your dick. So

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1 was very difficult for me to serve beer, you know,  
2 plain looking Irish guy, sort of with all these hot  
3 men in the Eagle patio and so I'd pour beer and it was  
4 a miserable experience, again, I just didn't enjoy it  
5 at all; I didn't feel comfortable. So, you know, I  
6 sort of decided when I was running for Empress, I  
7 decided to go down and pour beer and wear my little  
8 police woman's outfit. They still didn't like drag in  
9 the Eagle at that time. There were only a couple of  
10 people that really went in and - but so I walked in  
11 and I just picked up the pitcher and I'd, you know,  
12 instead of just pouring beer, I'd say let me give you  
13 a little head, you know, or, you know, comments like  
14 that, you know, I'd tease them. You know, I could be a  
15 real tease, never say anything really naughty but  
16 suggestive. And I could never do that as a boy.  
17 VIDEOTAPE 2 OF 2, 120 MINUTES  
18 PG: You'd titillate.  
19 CR: Titillate, exactly. Well, it turned out I was  
20 handing out Caress Soap, well, there's not a lot of  
21 bars of Caress Soap and there's not a lot you can do  
22 with that. Well, early in my campaign, we discovered  
23 Caress Condoms. So we wrote to the manufacturer and  
24 they shipped us like 6,000 condoms I think we ended up  
25 getting. And so I would personally hand these condoms

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1 out everywhere in cute little pink packets and really  
 2 nice except they didn't have an @@ on Caress. And so  
 3 I hand them out to people and I'd say when you use  
 4 this, think of me, you know. Or things like that.  
 5 People walk up to me today and say I still have your  
 6 condom. So I'd could do things like that but although  
 7 I find out, when I pour beer at the Eagle, I can still  
 8 do those things I did in drag because, you know, I  
 9 catch myself doing things, saying things that I  
 10 wouldn't. Although once I said something to this very  
 11 hot tall man and he said Okay, let's go, or something  
 12 like that. I just about died; I didn't know what to  
 13 do, you know, because they never respond to or really  
 14 respond.

15 END OF VIDEOTAPE 2 OF 2

16 END OF INTERVIEW

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