

Elliot Blackstone Interview

by Susan Stryker

In cooperation with the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, and with the Prof. Joanne Meyerowitz, University of Cincinnati.

The interview was recorded at Elliot Blackstone's home in Pacifica, California, on Wednesday, November 6, 1996.

Introduction

Elliot Blackstone was a San Francisco Police Department community relations officer who headed an anti-poverty crime abatement program in the so-called "Central City" area of San Francisco, from 1965 through 1975. In keeping with the ethos of other "Great Society" initiatives during the Johnson Administration, the anti-poverty program administered by the SFPD sought to reduce crime by attacking the root causes of criminal activity and addressing problems of social injustice and inequality. As a SFPD community relations officer, Blackstone functioned as a liason between the police and the emergent gay and lesbian community (which was then concentrated along Polk Street, the South of Market area, the Tenderloin, and other Central City neighborhoods. He worked closely with all the homophile organizations, notably the Mattachine Society, Daughters of Bilitis, the Society for Individual Rights, the Committee on Religion and the Homosexual, and various other progressive social-reform efforts supported by Rev. Cecil Williams and Glide Memorial Methodist Church. After a group of male-to-female transsexual prostitutes approached him in an attempt to end police harrassment of themselves and other transgendered women, Blackstone also helped organize the first known peer-run support groups for transsexuals, in 1967. He was an early advocate of providing social services to transgendered people, and was largely responsible for the web of services available to Bay Area transsexuals by the early 1970s. Blackstone came to work closely with the Erickson Educational Foundation, directed by the wealthy female-to-male transsexual Reed Erickson, which financially supported the National Transsexual Counselling Unit Blackstone oversaw until his retirement in 1975.

TAPE ONE

SS: How did you become a community relations officer?

EB: For over 40 years I've been a part-time staff member [at the Police Officer's Credit Union], 40 years last January. Always being one who believed in continuing education, I took courses in public relations to help better do the job at the credit union, 'cause I help put out the credit union's publications, for 40 some years now. So I took this course in public relations and I began to realize that the police department needed a lot of help with public relations, as we understood public relations in those days. So I submitted a request to the Chief of Police, Frank Ahearn, asking to be allowed to develop a public relations program for the police department. Frank Ahearn was a kind of an old Irishman whose motto was always "Don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made

up my head." Anyhow, he just kind of ignored this whole request. Then he died very suddenly of a heart attack one afternoon out at Seal Stadium, and a fellow by the name of Tom Cahill who had been the Deputy Chief was made Chief of Police. So once again, I brought forward--Tom Cahill was a much more understanding man--so I brought forward once again the proposal about a public relations department. I said "I don't want to be the public relations department, I just want to give you the data that you'll need to establish one. I talked with him, and with the Deputy Chief Alan Elder, who later became Chief of Police, and they said, "Well, yeah, that's probably a good idea but, eeehhhh--we won't do it." So then we had a situation which was known as the Gayola scandal. And that was based on certain bars down along the Embarcadero--"notorious gay establishments"--who allegedly had been forced to pay off the police sergeants and officers on the beat in order for them to look the other direction as they went about their "nefarious activities." When the Gayola scandal hit, I got transferred from the Potrero Station down to Central Station and got the beat, the foot beat, where the bars were located. I went into the Chief's office and said "Why me, Chief?" He said, "Well, you were the guy that wanted to establish a public relations department for the police department, and boy do we need public relations down there. So you got it!" Well, it was very interesting, and I did some work, tried to make sure we didn't have the kind of problems we'd had down there before. Eventually, Tom Cahill had established the community relations unit. I watched it for about three years, and then said "Hey, this looks like my concept of what I talked about as being public relations--a situation where the department couldn't relate to the community, and they could develop some rapport." And so I applied for community relations, and Tom Cahill put me in it. Well, what we used to do, we used to have public meetings with the various police districts. I had the occasion, when we were having a meeting out in the [park?] police district, and we would ask community groups, "What do you want to talk about at your meeting?" KRON had just put out a documentary called "Homosexual," so a group of people had seen that, and said, "You know, we'd like to understand more about what this whole homosexual thing is all about." So I said, "OK, fine." And I went down to get the program from KRON, and show that, and talk about it. So then I got a call from some people--a fellow named Hal Call and some others, Mark Forrester. They said, "Would it be alright if we came to that community meeting and explain our side of the story, because we're homosexuals." I said, "I can't think of a better way for you to get your story told than to show up." So they showed up, and we had a very good conversation. I got a big kick out of the Captain of the police district. They asked him, "What can we do to get public acceptance?" He said, "Oh, that's very easy. Stop committing homosexual acts." Well, he never heard the last of that one. But the meeting was well attended, and I thought people got very interesting information. And it was interesting working with these guys from the homophile community--we didn't have a gay community then, we had a homophile community. Then the northern district had heard about this meeting, and they said, "Why don't we have that?" so I said "OK, fine." Went back to KRON and borrowed their film again, then these fellows called up again and said, "Hey, can we come to this meeting, too?" I said "Sure. You're a part of it." Well, that was the beginning of my contact with the gay community. I didn't, quite frankly, at

that time know a whole hell of a lot about homosexuality. I knew less about lesbianism. And I knew absolutely nothing about transvestism or transsexualism or anything like that.

[EB: tells a long story about working with the Mattachine Society to shut down a Tea Room in the building where the Mattachine Society offices were. The Mattachine Society "didn't want to be tarred with association with the tea room." EB tried posting notices that the place was being surveilled, then sending in uniformed officers on patrols, then stationing officers there for a few hours a day. Eventually there were a few quiet arrests. Mattachine was able to avoid association with the whole affair. EB talks about other work with the Mattachine Society, SIR, Daughters of Bilitis. A funny anecdote: "As a matter of fact a fascinating thing happened there. They had an annual national convention in San Francisco of the DOB. The DOB handed out to certain people--Judge Kennedy, Herb Caen, to me--cards identifying us as Sons of Bilitis. So I would then after that, I could go to people and say, 'Look, let me tell ya. Throughout the community police officers are often identified as S.O.B.s, but I am the only card-carrying S.O.B. that you'll meet!' That was fun."]

EB: So what happened was that in the City we had four target poverty areas--the Hunter's Point area, Chinatown area, Western Addition and the Mission. So people who lived in the Central City area, where a substantial portion of the gay community lived, felt there should be a fifth target area, and that it should be called Central City. So here again, a number of gay men and gay women, but moreso the gay men, were trying to bring this Centra City area in as another poverty area. As a matter of fact we did something that was really fun. We marched up the stairs of the City Hall--you know those big inside stairs with the magnificent supervisors' chambers up on the second floor? Well, anyhow, this whole gang of us from the Central City marched up that stairway singing "We Shall Overcome." That was a very touching moment. They ultimately then did make a fifth target area called the Central City. They asked me to serve as liason between the department and the central city folks, in the Central City Poverty Office. Initially it was located across from the Federal Office Building. I had an office in there separate from the Department. And so one day this tall, football-player type female came in to see me. I said, "Oh, you're a transvestite." She said "No, I'm a transsexual." And I said, "Well, pardon my ignorance, but what in the hell is a transsexual?" That was the beginning--that was a gal by the name of Louise Ergestrasse. She and her husband Jerry still live up in the Russian River area and still contact me every once in a while.

SS: I was going to ask you if it might be possible for you to put me in touch with some of the transsexual people you knew back in the 60s and 70s.

EB: Yeah, I'm not sure if I still have Louise's phone number, but I can sure check when we're done. Now Louise is the kind of a anatomical male that should have never wanted to be a transsexual. She had hands the size of basketballs, just was too

masculine. But personality-wise, she was definitely a female. She explained to me about what a transsexual was as opposed to a transvestite, and she got me a book about it that was called "Transsexuals" by Doctor Harry Benjamin, who later became a very good friend of mine--

SS: That's another thing I was going to ask you about.

EB:--and we worked together over the next couple of years. To the best of my knowledge he must be dead. Because if he's not he must be 99 or a hundred or something.

SS: Yeah, he died in the early 1980s, when he was a hundred and one, I believe.

EB: Yeah I knew that he just couldn't be with us anymore, because I'm 72 this month, and I was a youngster to him. Anyhow, I met Dr. Benjamin and began to learn about transsexuality and what it boiled down to. There were a number of transsexuals in San Francisco, and I brought them to the Center for Special Problems. They had not been working with transsexuals before, and I felt they needed a lot of help getting the kind of psychiatric review that was necessary to persuade the folks down at Stanford who were doing surgery, to take them on.

SS: So when you were working with the people who organized COG, the Stanford Gender Identity Clinic was already set up?

EB: Yeah. They had a psychiatrist and a surgeon down there who was working with people, and actually what they would say was that they wanted a person who had identified himself or herself [as transsexual] to live in that lifestyle for six months at least in order to show that they could exist there. That created some more parts of my job. I met through that a lady who worked for a transsexual going from female to male who was a very well-to-do young man.

SS: Was this Reed Erickson?

EB: Yes. He founded the Erickson Foundation. Zelda Suplee was the lady who worked for him. I got to talking with her. Eventually I went down to Florida through the Foundation, talked to police down there. The father of one of my girls was down there, and I worked with him some to help him understand why his son was now his daughter. Things like that. I went to Little Rock, Arkansas. We had a national community relations conference back there. So Zelda and I went back there courtesy of the Erickson Foundation, and talked to the various policemen there about understanding what transsexuality was all about. As a matter of fact, through the foundation I got a film, which was an excellent film, which had been produced through the Erickson Foundation. It was all about transsexuality, and it included some very, very, vivid footage about an actual surgery. As a matter of fact, if I could ever get it

back, I loaned it to a young attorney when we were in the process of making an educational video for the police department to use in training, and I've been trying to get it back from him ever since, and I haven't been able to get it back.

SS: Do you remember his name?

EB: Um...it just passed by my mind, but no, I can't just at the moment. It may come to me while we're talking. This film, I took to a regional community relations meeting--I was president of the regional association for a while--I took this over and showed it to these guys at lunch time, and ruined everybody's lunch! [laughs] It was very, very graphic. No questions about what was happening. This doctor from New York was performing the surgery. So, anyhow, over the years--as a matter of fact I developed a philosophy as to what kind of an expert you was. In other words, if you were invited to make a presentation someplace else in the United States, you were a national expert. If you were invited somewhere outside the country, you were an international expert. I was invited to go to England--the department would never let me go, but I was invited--to go and speak, and so I called myself an international expert on transsexuality. Which was a lot of fun. Anyhow, we got this organization of--basically it was all male to female. I found that I worked more with male to female than I did female to male. I only worked with just a couple of female to male, and one of them committed suicide by dropping out of a hotel. We weren't entirely sure whether it was deliberate on her part, or whether she was just too drunk that night and couldn't hang on to the window ledge. She died, anyhow.

SS: One of the names I've come across is Robert Martin. Is that the female to male person who was involved with COG?

EB: Yeah, that might have been the person. I don't remember now. It sounds right. As a matter of fact, this person had at least a son, if not more children, who were with the father, back in Oklahoma or someplace like that. When she died, I had a joint bank account with her, to help her with her money, and I proceeded to work out a situation where we were able to go through the father to get the money to the child, so that it didn't escheat to the state, or something like that, but stayed in the family. Anyhow, we had this group of basically male to female transsexuals, and we used to meet at Glide. Matter of fact, I remember once at Christmas time for community relations I posed as Santa Claus in several situations. I had my Santa suit, didn't have to take it back to the rental place yet. We had a Christmas party at Glide, and I told the gals at that time that this is as close as you'll ever see me to being in drag, which is being Santa Claus. We tried to come up with a name for the organization, and so I finally persuaded them to use COG, which stood for Conversion Our Goal. Louise Ergestrasse Durkin--her husband's name is Durkin--also formed another transsexual organization at that time, but they didn't get quite the impact that COG did. And there was this psychologist from Florida who had written some rather derogatory remarks about COG and the work that we were doing. I had a chance to sit down with him later.

SS: Remember this guy's name?

EB: No. I was trying to think if he wasn't the guy who ultimately went down to San Jose and worked for the San Jose police department as a community relations specialist, and actually became a San Jose police officer in a special kind of a situation. In other words, he didn't have to take or pass their entrance exam or qualifications, but could just be recognized as an officer and do his work with them. If I heard his name I'd probably say "oh, yeah" but it's like Robert Martin, I've forgotten that name altogether. He ultimately softened on his position, wasn't quite so tough with us.

SS: You said he'd written something derogatory. Where might he have published that?

EB: It was some psychiatry or psychology publication.

SS: So when you were working as a community relations officer, were there, like, trade publications, newsletters, journals for people who worked in this field, where there might be something written about working with transsexuals, something about the kind of work you were doing with the Erickson Foundation?

EB: Not really, what happened more than that in terms of people telling their story was people like Dr. Robert Money [sic, likely a conflation of Robert Stoller and John Money] in Southern California, and Dr. Benjamin, who worked with the transsexual group, that would write papers, and write their books. Now, I once went down to Stanford, to a national conference of doctors, including the doctor who did that surgery that was in that film, and so I as a non-medical person did a paper there which became part of the journal they did for that conference, and where I talked about society's responsibility, how we dealt on a non-medical basis. So in terms of papers, well that's how it happened. Now there was this fellow, he did a book about community relations officers and their programs throughout the United States, and I wrote a chapter for his book. I couldn't tell you the title of it, but I talked about my community relations work and stuff like that.

SS: Remember when that was—early 70s?

EB: Yeah, I retired in 1975, so it would have had to be early 70s. There were a lot of things. You know, one of the things I had to have people understand was that my job was not to be an apologist for these folks. My job was not to catch them in a crime and to arrest them. My job was to find ways that people with an alternative lifestyle could co-exist with the rest of society without having to be arrested. Well, sounds great, but what does that mean? Let me give you an example of it. It used to be that if a policeman caught a male, no matter how the male was dressed, going into a woman's bathroom, they would be arrested for a sex crime. All they were doing was going in there for the purpose of utilizing the facilities. So I went in to the Captain, and I took

one of my transsexuals with me, and I said, "Now look, Captain. Let me ask you a question. Which is going to be more of a problem. A person dressed as a female who comes into a female restroom. Goes into a compartment, shuts the door, does whatever is necessary. Or this individual dressed as a woman, walks into a men's restroom, walks over to a commode, pulls up her skirt, and utilizes the commode. Now what's gonna create more problems?" "Well, obviously this person coming into the male bathroom is going to distress people." "Absolutely," I said. I said, "So unless we have a complaint from a woman about this person being in the women's bathroom, why don't we just let them go to the bathroom?" He said, "That sounds like the way to approach it." And that's what became the department policy. We did not arrest people simply for using a bathroom for the sex that was the opposite of their genitalia. That made life a lot easier. One other thing I did—we had a number of situations where people would be working for one of the major companies. I had a woman who worked at the drugstore of that big Safeway on Market Street. She had been working there as a man, and she wanted to work there in a female role, because she was going to do this six-month period for the psychologist. I went to the store management, and I went to the union, and I said "Look. Is there any reason this particular individual can't come in to work next week in dress—not in drag, in dress? Because that's what we need to do to make sure they're a proper candidate for surgery." "Well, will they bother somebody in the bathroom?" "They'll go to the bathroom, but they won't bother anybody in the bathroom." "Well, let's talk to some of the union folks." So they talked to some of the union folks. Some of the women were a little nervous about it, but by and large they just said, "We'll try it." And she worked out fine. So we worked with labor unions, and we worked with management, where those kinds of situations came down. But that was it, you see. We let the individual live their lifestyle, where their lifestyle wasn't any kind of violation of the law. But we helped people understand what it was all about. I considered myself basically a teacher. I can give you an example. I've got a transsexual who has an appointment at the Center for Special Problems. She's going to go in to see a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a doctor, whomever. They give her an appointment for 9 o'clock in the morning. I'd say, "Oh no you don't. This individual needs about four hours--doing makeup, getting dressed--for coming in to see you. For God's sake, make the appointment at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Make it at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Don't make'em get up at three o'clock in the morning just to come in and see you!" "Oh . . . OK." It was just a matter of training, getting people to see how their lifestyles was impacted by having to do what they was called on to do.

SS: I have a question for you. You mentioned Louise Ergestrasse and Jerry Durkin, and said that they founded another organization that wasn't quite as influential.

EB: They did, I didn't.

SS: Do you remember the name of that?

EB: I thought you had mentioned it earlier.

SS: CATS?

EB: Yeah—CATS. California Association of Transsexuals.

SS: And that didn't last too long?

EB: Well, basically it was just Jerry and Louise. They didn't really have the back-up to make things happen. Their ideas were very much the same as ours, and Louise was an old friend of mine—though like my wife says you never say an old friend, but rather a friend of long standing.

SS: OK. So COG comes along about 1967, CATS, with some of the same people, about the same time. Now, hm, what were some of the groups that I had not heard of before? There was one I hadn't heard of called the National Gender-Sexual Identification Council at Glide Memorial?

EB: Oh, that was basically a kind of an off-shoot. I think that was what they originally called COG. But it sounded too severe. COG was kind of one of those things where, if you said "I'm a member of COG," well, people didn't immediately turn on flashing red lights.

SS: Then there was the National Transsexual Counselling Unit.

EB: Yeah, that was funded by the Erickson Educational Foundation. They paid the rent of my office away from the Hall of Justice. I had two transsexuals working with me who would do counselling and stuff like that. A policeman who shall remain nameless, and who in my book should also have had a card for S.O.B., because he was a real S.O.B., but anyhow, he came in to my office. My two transsexuals were going to speak to the police academy class at about two o'clock. He came in to my office late in the morning, arrested both of them for narcotics sales. One of them actually went to jail. She did sell narcotics, but what she did--she had a boyfriend who was a police snitch. He asked her to get him narcotics. So she went out and got him narcotics, and when she sold them to him, she got busted. So she was sent to San Bruno, to the county jail. I had quite a bit of difficulty getting her transferred from the men's side over to the women's side. I was afraid she'd get raped on the men's side, if not killed. Couldn't get her out--she was guilty, she admitted it. The other gal beat the rap. At the same time, the officer planted narcotics in the desk in my office. I know it. He knows I know it. And I've never spoken to him since that day.

SS: But you're not naming any names?

EB: No ma'am.

SS: Some of the people who worked at the NTCU—Leslie St. Clair, was that one of the people?

EB: Yeah, Leslie was the one that beat the rap.

SS: Do you remember the one who went to prison?

EB: Jan

SS: Maxwell?

EB: Maxwell. Boy, you got lots of names, kid!

SS: Yeah, Jansie the Transie.

EB: Jan actually went to work for one of the San Francisco newspapers. Drove a truck. She still lives up on the Russian River, too.

SS: Oh, good. I was hoping to get contact information on her, too. So, this bust, was it what brought the NTCU to a halt, or did--?

EB: No, but it sure slowed us down a lot. Eventually I turned the whole thing over to them. We moved our office over to the YMCA building. We had our office in there. Eventually I just turned it over to them, and some of the other transsexuals who were doing the counselling. Their salary was paid by the Erickson Foundation. I'd sure love to know what happened to Zelda Suplee. Zelda was a fascinating woman. She had owned a nudist camp in Florida. A very good friend of hers, and a nudist, was—oh, there was a program done, a television program done in England, where this stocky fellow was a detective, and there was a beautiful woman who worked with him. Can't think of his name right now, but he was a friend of Zelda's and he used to go to her nudist camp. I used to want to meet him. Of course, we've been talking basically about the transsexuals, but there was some contact with the transvestites. There was a fellow—can't think of his name anyhow, now. He worked for the California Employment Department. Can't remember any of the names he was going under then. He was a transvestite and belonged to a transvestite organization.

SS: Remember the name of it?

EB: No I can't. It was located over there in the East Bay. There was this one transvestite who I always told her she was a transsexual, but she wouldn't admit that. She was kind of a national person.

SS: Virginia Prince, down in southern California?

EB: Yeah, Virginia Prince. Boy have you done a lot of research! She was one of the first to have her driver's license show her as a female--though she would not admit she was a transsexual! [laughs]

SS: She's the one who coined the term "transgender." You know, "I'm not a transsexual, I'm not a transvestite, I'm a--"

EB: Right, a "transgenderist". I never was really thrilled by that. That came along after I got out of the business. I thought it was kind of like we used to call the gay community the homophile community. I thought that was kind of, you know [turns nose up in air and sniffs affectedly, indicating pretentiousness]. If you're gay, you're gay--so what? But some people have to have labels that aren't as dangerous. So, fine. Whatever.

SS: Anyway. There was some transvestite over in the East Bay who belonged to a transvestite club.

EB: He had gotten a hold of me, he'd called me up--a lot of people would hear of me, and they'd call me up and say "Well, this is my situation." I had a judge fly out here from Chicago who was a transvestite and wanted to meet other transvestites out here. He couldn't do it in Chicago, but he could do it out here!

SS: Out in the wild, wild, west.

EB: I put him in touch with some people, so he could have some contacts. Anyhow, I went over to speak at that transvestite club in the East Bay, at one of their meetings.

SS: Was it called Tri-S?

EB: I don't remember what it was called.

SS: I just asked because Tri-S was the name of the group Virginia Prince founded in Los Angeles back in the 1950s, and I thought that maybe--

EB: Yeah, I talked to her when she came up here, that's when I first told her, "You're not a transvestite, you're a transsexual." "I'm not a transsexual, I don't want surgery." "Well, in my book, you're still a transsexual."

[EB discusses attending the California Hall New Year's Drag Ball with his wife. He helped deal with some of the fall-out, make sure that mass-arrests didn't happen like that again. Tells of a police sergeant who had a "very negative attitude," who actually shoved EB's wife, claimed he thought she was a drag queen. "I took my wife at the time with me to the ball. She had on one of these disposable aluminum dresses--remember when they made those?--and of course it was quite short. And she was a buxom lady, filled it out quite nicely. And this particular sergeant, I was unaware of this until the

next day. When I found out about it the next day, I told the chief that if I'd have know that he done that, I'd have put him down on the deck right then. He didn't even know whether she was woman or a man--though he'd have had to worked awfully hard to consider her as a man. Though some people could do quite well, actually." EB says that his wife was jealous and resentful of gay men in drag, because the gowns were so elaborate, representing hundreds of hours of labor, tens of thousands of sequins, that they were far more expensive than she could afford as a policeman's wife.]

[end side 1]

SS: I have some stuff that I want to show you that I've pulled out of a file, then I want to go back and ask you some of the questions that I prepared. This is the article I found that actually had the most information about you personally, from the Chronicle, dated March 6, 1967. It says "Strange San Francisco Problem: The Transsexual Cases." It talks about Mark Forrester being a Central City anti-poverty organizer, and about a meeting at the Olympic Hotel . . .

EB: [Some inconsequential material omitted] Mark was a genius. He'd look at a pimp, and say, "This guy is an entrepreneur. If we could teach him to take that entrepreneurship and channel it into business, he'd make a fortune!" He was really fascinating. [Reading the article] Oh--Bill Popham! He was the manager of the Olympic Hotel. [Continuing to read] Christine Jorgensen! I met her once.

SS: I was going to ask you about that--whether you'd met Jorgensen, Harry Benjamin, Reed Erickson. You've been talking about that some, but maybe I could get you to talk about that more in a minute.

EB: You know who was fascinating? Harry Benjamin. I said to him once, "Harry, you deal with all these people. Is there any one who was sorry after their surgery and wanted to go back?" He said, "Yeah, I had one person, a woman. But it wasn't for the reason you'd think. As a man she had had this job, and made that much money. As a woman she couldn't touch that kind of salary." That's an area I hadn't ever thought of.

SS: Here's something that I came across in the Advocate, back in 1968 when it was still just the LA Advocate, just a little thing that we've already talked about some. It mentions CATS. This calls it "one of the homophile organizations of San Francisco."

EB: Well, they can list it as such, but . . . [shrugs].

[Continues to read Advocate article. Talks about a researcher coming out from Kinsey Institute, working with CRH and others at Glide. Suggests that Blackstone is himself gay and just won't admit it. EB says he's not, and the researcher says "Methinks you doth protest too much." EB says "Well, OK. I am gay, but I'm gay for girls! Or as my wife prefers for me to say, gay for "girl." Says the Kinsey folks weren't too interested in

transsexuals, just homosexuals. SS tells him some about how Kinsey actually helped build networks between transsexuals who had come in contact with the sexological profession, that Kinsey had actually introduced Benjamin to his first transsexual client, a mtf woman who lived in San Francisco in the late 1940s.]

EB: Well, there was one much earlier than that. They didn't realize until after she died that she was a transsexual. Her name I believe was Mammy Pleasant. This was back during the Gold Rush days. Mammy I think ran a boarding house. I'm not sure but that--oh, he did that great series in the Chronicle, then it was a book, and then they made it into a movie on TV. It was about this apartment house, all the people that lived in there.

SS: Oh--Armistead Maupin, Tales of the City.

EB: Right. I've got his video now. I don't think I ever met him, but I can see my people in his people, if you know what I mean.

[SS tells story about asking Armistead Maupin about the basis of his transsexual character, Anna Madrigal, which is recorded elsewhere. Not related to Mammy Pleasant. EB has heard of Mammy Pleasant only by word of mouth. Knows of no written documentation, and can suggest only looking in the SF History Room at the main library.]

EB: Of course, we go back to the days of the Roman Emperors. One of the Popes was a transsexual. It's not something new, but like everything sexual, it becomes more and more understood as time goes on.

SS: Here's some more stuff I've xeroxed from back in the days. It's impossible to read [referring to an article from a 1971 feminist newspaper called "Mother"] but this article mentions Laura Cummings. Do you remember her?

EB: Yeah, Laura Cummings, I sure do.

SS: Do you know if she's still around?

EB: I don't know where she was, if she was a professor at San Francisco State, or what.

SS: It says here that she worked as a transsexual consellor at Fort Help.

EB: Yeah, that was Doctor Joel Fort. You familiar with that?

SS: Not really, it was one of the other things I had made a note to ask you about. I've seen the name of the place all over, but don't know anything about it. I mean, I can guess--

EB: See, Dr. Joel Fort was originally with the Center for Special Problems. He got into a dispute with one of the top doctors at the Department of Public Health, so he got canned. Then he went on to open Fort Help.

SS: So this says Laura Cummings was a counsellor there.

EB: I disagreed with her on stuff. I don't remember what it was now, but I didn't always agree with her. Doesn't mean she wasn't right, just that we didn't agree!

SS: And you think she was also a professor someplace, maybe SF State?

EB: I'm not sure. I'm trying to remember. There's a professor out there at State, a lesbian woman, oh—just a big, strong, beautiful creature. Sally . . . Sally. . . . oh, what is it?

SS: Gearhart.

EB: Sally Gearhart! She'd know.

[EB suddenly begins to tell story about knowing nothing about homosexuality, and being a naive young man just out of the navy, and new to SF. Some guy on the Embarcadero tried to pick him up. He then went on to talk about how he and a male friend would hang out with each other down at the penny arcades down on Market Street and try to pick up the women who worked there. Once this friend met up with another man, and the two of them went back to the friend's apartment, inviting EB to join them later for drinks. He did, and they all got drunk. EB passed out. Next morning, the three of them were all in the same Murphy bed. EB's pants were misbuttoned. The two other guys were sleeping arm in arm. EB got out of there before the other two woke up. Later asked a mutual acquaintance if the friend was "a queer." "Like a three dollar bill," he said. So I was glad I went to sleep. I never knowed what happened!" EB says this may be his sole homosexual experience, but he honestly doesn't remember.]

SS: OK, so Sally Gearhart might know if Laura Cummings was a professor at SF State?

EB: Yeah. I took lots of courses to help me understand what it was I was dealing with. "Sex, Drugs, and Society," "Legal Control of Sexual Activity," and other courses like that. [Tells story of how a woman professor of his, neither Laura Cummings nor Sally Gearhart, struggled to retain control of the classroom during the student strikes of the late 1960s, how he came to her assistance.] I learned a lot of things about sexuality from these various courses and seminars I was able to go to. I learned to talk a lot more intelligently about it to other people. You'll find a whole section of the books over there behind you are about sexuality. Most of them are from courses that I took.

SS: OK, so I'll just ask Sally about Laura Cummings. I think I'm going to be seeing her next week. Do you know anything about the other person mentioned in this article.

There's no last name, it just says Jo, a 50 year old female transsexual--so that's a female to male--who holds a management position in industry and to keep it he must dress as a woman when he goes to work. You don't know anything about him?

EB: Doesn't ring any bells.

SS: [taking out some more xeroxes, with pictures of Leslie St. Clair] So here's Leslie St. Clair.

EB: Hey! Oh, Boy! Leslie! You know, Leslie's a hooker.

SS: Still?

EB: [Nods yes] She specializes in Japanese men.

SS: Is she still around?

EB: I think she's back. She called me, oh, gosh, I guess it's been a couple of years now. She had gone to Japan for a while, but she's back. She's a beautiful gal.

SS: So you wouldn't know how to get a hold of her?

EB: No.

SS: Is her name still Leslie St. Clair?

EB: Last I heard it was Jan Maxwell. She and Jan Maxwell were Love/Hate. Sisters. You know? Jan might be able to tell you something different about her. Now, Jan is a gal who has some really serious psychological problems. She stabbed her father. She got involved in some pretty tough action. When she was living off of Mission, she got in a dispute with some guy and went after him with a two-by-four. I used to tell her, "For God's sake--calm down!"

SS: Now something that this article says--it's an article from an old magazine called Drag. Lee Brewster put it out in New York. It says that COG was founded mostly by male to female transsexuals who were working as street prostitutes in the Tenderloin, and that they organized it and then came to you at the police department to--

EB: [shaking head, no] Because I had to fight with them to get them to take my title, COG. I thought it up. So they didn't come to me as COG, they came to me as--well, you mentioned the name earlier.

SS: The National Gender-Sexual Identification Council.

EB: Yeah. I don't know anything—do you know anything?—about where Reed Erickson is today.

SS: He's dead. He had quite a lot of trouble with the law, as I understand it, and with drugs, and he was sort of on the run. Down in Mexico.

EB: Well, he went back and forth to Mexico. His family manufactured folding chairs, and he did very well. He had his own private plane, and he paid my way to go down to Florida, and various things, the office, paid my ladies' salaries. [Tells of finding out while booking that flight to Florida that he could actually book a flight from SF to Miami cheaper if he lay over in Jamaica for a night—so he claims he saved the Erickson Educational Foundation money by taking a one-day vacation in Jamaica.]

SS: I want to hear more stories about people who--

EB: I have a sad story that doesn't have an ending yet. [Tells of a lesbian woman who was gotten drunk, perhaps raped, and gotten pregnant, most likely by the beat cop in her neighborhood. The baby was given up for adoption, and the woman died a short while later. EB helped with the funeral arrangements. Years later the baby, now a young woman, got in touch with EB, was looking for information about her parents. She knew something about her mother, nothing about her father. EB looked into it to see if the former beat cop might actually be the father. He'd died, but EB managed to uncover lots of seamy stories about the man that he never told the daughter, since paternity was never likely to be established.] It's the kind of thing that, my job, it didn't call for me to do that. I didn't have a directive to do that. But I think of myself as an attempted practicing Christian. I'm not a religious right. I'm Prysbyterian. But I feel I have certain responsibilities to my God and my Church, and that I should do things. So I do things.

SS: On these things [handing over xeroxes], do you recognize any of these people other than Leslie?

EB: I don't recognize anybody there. I remember probably one of the most beautiful women I ever saw was a transsexual Phillipino boy. Just incredibly beautiful. I'm not sure that she didn't work as a hooker. An awful lot of my folks did. They had to make a living somehow. I'm not a moralist. I'm not going to say, "Well, if that's the only way you've got to make a living why don't you just go ahead and shoot yourself?" But God, what a beautiful looking woman that little Phillipino boy was. I don't remember his name, but he was sure a beautiful woman.

SS: This is something that doesn't exist any more, but it was called the "COIT-illion." Do you remember it at all?

EB: Well, actually, I just remember the COIT was kind of a drag version of the deb ball. There were a lot of people who participated. [Tells stories about the older gay balls. How drag had changed from elaborate gowns to other types of costumes, including but not limited to feminine apparel. That drag gradually fell out of fashion. Told of being at California Hall again. Said one of the "most fascinating things" he'd ever witnessed was the sight of beautifully gowned and coiffed drag queens hiking up their dresses to take a piss in the men's room at the big gay balls. Told of how one of the SIR balls was scheduled to be held at the Palace of Fine Arts, but then the man who'd paid out of pocket for the restoration of the building found out, and started screaming to the mayor about how "no faggots are gonna use MY palace of fine arts for their perversion!"]

SS: Let me show you some more pictures of people from those days.

EB: I keep looking for pictures of Jan Maxwell.

SS: Did you know this person--Linda Lee? Or Kim Christy?

EB: Her name seems familiar. Linda Lee I don't remember.

[SS describes "Linda Lee's San Francisco Scene" column in Lee Brewster's Drag magazine]. Did you ever come across a woman named Angela Douglas, or Wendy Davis?

EB: That first name, Angela Douglas, sounds familiar, but I can't tie it together with a person.

SS: She was down in LA in the late 1960s, was actually involved in both gay lib and early feminism. She came in and out of the Bay Area, mostly in Berkeley, but she wound up in Florida.

EB: When we had the gay balls here, we'd have a lot of Hollywood people come up. I can't remember this guy's name, but he'd wear this flashy cape, swish it around,--

SS: Did you ever meet Bunny Breckenridge? [Shakes head, no] He was a San Francisco-born millionaire, sort of a wannabe producer, who always claimed he was going to change sex, but never did. Ran around with the transvestite movie director Ed Wood.

EB: A lot of people wanted surgery, up until the point when the guy was actually there with the knife, then they weren't so sure. Louise Ergestrasse Durkin I believe went to Mexico for castration, but never had phase two of her surgery. So she's betwixt and between. And Anne--little Anne--she worked it out so that she had enough money to do it and everything else and she just couldn't go through her fear of the pain that was going to be associated with it. She had the money set aside. I helped her with her bank

account. I don't know what became of her. I have an ashtray out there in the kitchen she made in a class where they were helping people with emotional disturbances by having them do things with their hands. I have that ashtray. Her parents owned a house out in Sea Cliff. I've often wondered what, after her parents died--she was funny. She would never let her parents know what her situation was. She would leave home in overalls, and switch to a dress when she got downtown. She would have a room a lot of times in one of the hotels where the transsexuals were--there was a couple of hotels in the Tenderloin particularly.

SS: Remember their names?

EB: If you said their names I would. There was a gal who was a landlady. She had one in the Potrero District, way out on Third Street. She also had one over just to the west of the City Hall, in one of the hotels over there. Most of her roomers were transsexuals. I was glad to have those kind of places, because the girls were safer there. More safety in numbers. I had one transsexual who was a hooker. I guy took her out to McClaren Park, and she offered her services. He wanted more, and she said no, he grabbed her, knocked her wig off. Then when he realized that he was dealing with a boy, he chased her all over the park with a tire wrench. So it was kind of a dangerous business. I had another who was, well, who was very close to being killed. We had in the gay community a number of murders by people who we knew eventually were gay themselves, but were closeted. They would strike out at anybody else, because they hated themselves so much that they would kill others. More than one homicide that way. At least I was able to pin down who some of these people associated with, and help the homicide investigators that way. Question!

SS: Question? Let me think. Let me see what's left on my list of questions. We've talked about a lot. And I see that the tape is about to run out so let's take a break here.

[end side 2]

TAPE TWO

SS: Among the organized homophile communities, and also in the bar subcultures, what kind of relationships did you see between the homophile groups and the bar patrons, and what we would now call the transgender population, or drag--how many people who came out of a drag scene, or were butches, went on to transition as transsexuals? Did you see that at all? Was there much of a connection between the transsexual people you dealt with and the organized homophile community?

EB: Well actually, the gay and lesbian community were not particularly friendly to these folks, because they felt them to be a danger, and they didn't really support them that much. And the Tavern Guild, they wanted to make sure that their bars would be open. They weren't necessarily that concerned about not doing things in their bars, but

they wanted the bars in such way as to not get busted, so if a transsexual constituted a threat to the bar, the bar just threw them out. There wasn't a lot of cooperation. I felt this was kind of sad, because here was a situation where one group of sexual variants was opposing another group of sexual variants, when they should be supporting one another. So I not only had to deal with the quote "straight community," but I had to deal with the gay community as well. I don't think the lesbian community was nearly as unkind as the gay community was. I had a lot of fun working with the lesbian community. [Some reminiscences about D.O.B.]

SS: So in your memory the lesbian community had an easier time with transsexuals than gay men did?

EB: Yeah, and also I don't think lesbians hated gay men as much as gays hated women. There was much more antagonism, animosity from the men towards the women than from the women towards the men, at least that I could ever see.

SS: Do you know of any female-to-male transsexuals who came out of the lesbian community?

EB: I had a couple—of course, well, this was the most unique couple. The wife was a lesbian, and the husband was a transsexual. And they were able to survive as a team, although they had problems. But I had so little contact with the female to males. I think women may be more—I don't know if it's the genes, we know that transsexuality is not an acquired habit. It comes, well we're born with it, you know, but I don't know if that more women are not born with the need to switch than men are. I really don't know. I don't know what the factors between life and genes are to put people in that position. But I do know I had very very few female to male.

SS: About that one couple—do you know about what year that was? Was this female to male person some one who just lived as a man, or had they had surgery, or been on hormones....?

EB: Oh, no, he hadn't gone through surgery yet. He was in the process of trying to get into the program down there. They came up to my office. As a matter of fact, ultimately, at one time, the poverty program, the Central City poverty program, was upstairs above Rochester's Big and Tall Shop, at 3rd and Mission. Directly across the corner from where the Mattachine Society had been located when I first got in contact with the gay community. So it was a very small circle. So anyway, they came to my office. I had kind of a sad—well, a lot of them had kind of a sad situation—but I had a male to female that came in for counselling, and she was probably 60 or 65, and came from Utah, and had children back there. And so, the children were very distressed with father, who wanted to become mother. They felt he should probably be put in a mental institution or something like that. I talked to them on the phone, to try to get them to understand what their father was going through. They were good Mormons, and very

distressed about everything. Unfortunately people who think they are good Catholics, good Mormons, good Baptists in my book aren't, if they can't show any flexibility, any love, for somebody who has a different lifestyle.

SS: OK, so you knew a couple of people who were female to male who came out of a butch/femme couple--

EB: Yeah.

SS: --but did you know anybody who was, oh, shall we say one of the Jose Sarrias of the world, somebody who did drag, or was involved in the Imperial Court System, who became a male to female transsexual?

EB: No, I don't. I never would have--I always just thought of Jose as a gay man who had a hell of a lot of fun being the Empress. And others who followed him in that role. Drag was fun, not a necessity. There's a lot of difference between the two.

SS: Yeah, I just wondered if you ever saw anybody who started out in one place and wound up in some other.

EB: I don't recall people I worked with who I knew at a point--well I knew one person who was an early boyfriend of Louise Ergestrasse, but then decided that he was a transsexual, and I don't know what became of her after that. In a sense I saw her come out of being a boyfriend of a transsexual to being a transsexual in her own right.

SS: Do you know the person's name?

EB: No.

SS: Well, anyway, what I'm trying to get at is where the overlaps between the gay and transsexual, lesbian and transsexual were.

EB: Yeah. Usually by the time people got to me, they had already talked to someone, and had a sense of where they were, and came to me to get where they wanted to be. So consequently, I didn't have that many people that I, you know, I started out with here as a gay man, and went with to there as a transsexual woman. There's something to me that's important--and that's I don't care what an individual's genitalia is. If you say to me "I'm a woman," you're a woman. I'm not going to hike up your skirt and see what's there. If you say you're a woman, you're a woman. If you say you're a man, you're a man. And I can live with that. I think that helped me with people, the fact that I didn't have to question why were they a woman--they were just a woman. What the hell, you know?

SS: Right. So—the fact that the Committee on Religion and the Homosexual, and COG and all that, that they both operated out of Glide, there wasn't much of a connection other than—

EB: The CRH was big, big, committee. This was ministers and lay people who worked with gays, and they were aware of transsexuals, but their direction was much like mine, to make society willing to accept people.

SS: So the work that you were doing as a community relations officer—and I know you were also involved with CRH—it just that CRH and COG were both sort of just in your jurisdiction, your area of expertise, and there wasn't any real connection between the two, other than you?

EB: Yeah, I don't ever remember having CRH people say "Gee what can we do for these [transsexual] folks?" I think they were more concerned about gays and lesbians. Not that they didn't have a concern for transsexuals, or transvestites, but they just thought this [homosexuality] was a far bigger problem. "We'd rather deal with this problem over here. If you want to work with that problem over there, go ahead, OK."

SS: So Glide was just the center of a lot of activist ministry and both of these things just happened to be going on there? That's how the two thing—homosexual and transsexual—just happened to be going on at the same place?

EB: Yeah. Glide was a place where, if you were a little doubtful about the way the world looked at you, Glide had a place for you. Cecil didn't particularly work with the gays and lesbians except as part of the Tenderloin Community. Have you met Cecil?

SS: Actually, I haven't, though of course I know about his work.

EB: He's a great hugger. He'll hug everybody as they're coming out of church.

SS: OK, that takes care of the whole first section of questions I had. What, well, you've sort of told me this already too, but what were some of the activities you were involved with at COG, and later with NTCU. Basically, what was your job? What did you actually do?

EB: Good. OK. Basically, my job was give people a chance to bring their story, to bring their problems, and seek a solution to their problems, like the situation with the Captian about the bathrooms. And just, well, there were so many things . . .

SS: It's almost like you were a social worker, or a case worker.

EB: Actually, you know, most policemen resent being referred to as social workers. But in my book, an effective policeman is a social worker, 'cause he's working with society.

His concern is to see that people manage to live together—or it should be—and this kind of a person who's idea is "Oh, let's lock 'em all up," that's not a good policeman. That's a policeman just using a storage system. And a storage system has its problems. Personally I voted no on this proposition to build more and better jails. My feeling is, take that money and spend it straightening out parents, helping kids get jobs, things of that nature. I'm what I call an economic conservative and a people liberal.

SS: Well, that's good. That's pretty much the way I feel about it. I just remembered another question I had in here if can find it, let me run it by you...

EB: Well, while your looking, how long have you been involved in this research? What got a nice girl like you interested in this in the first place?

SS: I did my Ph. D. in History at Berkeley, finished up in 1992. What I was really interested in was the history of identities and communities, and how people formed a sense of personal identity—how identity situates people socially, then how identity-based communities take shape. I actually did my dissertation on the Mormons as an historical example of how new identity-based social formations come into being. [Discussion of doctoral work, then shifting into how these processes played out in gay/lesbian history, and current work in transgender studies. SS comes out to EB as transsexual.]

[Break in recording conversation. When discussion resumes, we are talking about Dr. Donald Laub at the Stanford Gender Dysphoria Clinic.]

EB: —involved with dealing with the transsexuals, and doing the surgery and all. But he's also part of this team of doctors and goes down into Mexico, and takes these deformed kids and operates. You know, I teased him one time. I said, "What are you dealing with these people for?" Knowing that I have the same sort of problem answering that very question.

SS: What did he say?

EB: He gave a kind of equivocating answer, you know "It's there to be done," that sort of thing. I can't tell you why, you know, I did these things. It was just there to be done. You know, why do you climb mountains? Because they're there.

SS: So, you were just the community relations officer in this neighborhood, and this was a social issue in that neighborhood, and you just . . .

EB: Yeah.

SS: Do you know how long a transsexual population had been in the Tenderloin? How people who were living in genders they weren't assigned to at birth came to be

concentrated there? When or how did the Tenderloin become a neighborhood where that was more common?

EB: Well, I think what happened was that, like I said, so many of these people, the only way they could make a decent living was hooking. Where do hookers come from? They come from the Tenderloin. I think what happened there, people just gravitated there. They had met somebody, and that somebody was living there, at one those flea-bag hotels in the Tenderloin, and so they went there, because they was a compatible person. I just figured that transsexuals in the Tenderloin was like topsy--it just grewed. There was back-up, there was supporters. I've never been able to say, well, in 1967 there were no transsexuals in the Tenderloin, and in 1977 there were 3,000. You know, I never had a time or a number. As a matter of fact, I never knew how many I had talked to, literally hundreds. And here again is a funny thing, I've said this before several times, even though I talked with hundreds of people, there were so few female to male. I never got anybody to give me an answer to why that was. Because other places I would read about doctors who would deal with both, and they would say "I've got about as many this way as that way." Why did I only find male to females, and not female to males? I don't know. Don't know why that was.

SS: Maybe they were just making a living a different way, or living in different parts of the city.

EB: One of the things that happens there, it's like if you have two gay men, you know that they're gay men. Two lesbian women, you don't know that they're lesbians because they blend. The gay man does not blend like the lesbian woman does. I might have been surrounded by males that I didn't realize had come through this phase. All I can say is that what I saw is what I dealt with.

SS: So, do you remember names of any people involved with the different groups, COG, and NTCU, other than people we've already mentioned? I have a few names written down here to see if it jogs your memory.

EB: Hit me with the first one.

SS: These are the only names I've found--

EB: Jan Maxwell of course, and Leslie.

SS: --Jan Maxwell, Leslie St. Clair, Louise Ergestrasse, Laura Cummings we talked about. Angela Douglas, Robert Martin, Wendy Davis . . .

EB: How is that you have Robert Martin's name? Do you have reason to believe that he's the one who committed suicide?

SS: No, I don't. Hm, I can't seem to find it, I must have left it on my desk at home and picked up everything else, but I have a copy of an old COG newsletter, and that had his name and Terry or Kerry Peoples--

EB: Oh yeah! Terry Peoples.

SS: Terry? OK, I had seen it spelled both ways, but Terry? OK. But she and Robert Martin were the ones who had done that particular newsletter, and they had talked about going to UC Davis and doing a presentation at the college there, and something about being on a talk show, a morning TV talk show.

EB: Oh--you know, Robert Martin. There is a guy--now this is a female to male--and he was a teacher at a college over in the East Bay. Was that Robert Martin?

SS: That was Steve Dain--

EB: Steve Dain, yeah, that's right!

SS: --Yeah, he was a high school teacher in Emeryville. He's a chiropractor now.

EB: He was a contractor for a while.

SS: Oh, he was? I didn't know that. I've only met him just once.

EB: And his wife was a professional tennis player.

SS: Oh really? I didn't know that.

EB: Well, they split up. See, now what happened with me, when I left the police force, when I retired from the department in 1975, then I went over to the College of Marin, and I taught the course "Community Relations and the Administration of Justice." And what I would do was that I would teach about lifestyles. My feeling was, "I cannot tell you what it was like to be a black man. I cannot tell you what it was like to be an American Ind--a Native American. I cannot tell you what it is like to be Chinese. I cannot tell you what it is like to be a transsexual, gay man, or lesbian woman. I understand the problem, but I cannot stand in their shoes. You know the saying, you have to walk a mile in their moccasins to understand where they are? So what I did for my class at the College of Marin was to bring in all these people to talk about their lifestyles. Steve Dain would come over, and he would talk about what his life was like going from female to male. Others would about going the other way. My speaker on Chinese was a fellow by the name of Fred Lau.

SS: Oh, and he's Chief of Police now in San Francisco.

EB: Right, he's Chief of Police.

[Some more discussion of diversity education in EB's college classes, which he taught for about three years.]

SS: What did you notice about social contacts among transsexual people? Did folks tend to kind of club together?

EB: Yeah. It was a situation where it was "huddle for protection." You have the same problem I do, and therefore you understand my problem, and I have more in common with you than I do with him, who doesn't have the slightest idea what my problem is. You know.

SS: So did people come in to the groups, like to COG or the NTCU, you know, were there meetings, or support groups, and people would show up, and meet other people there, and form friendships?

EB: Yeah.

SS: So it worked to help build a sense of community?

EB: And we helped people understand how it was they had to live. For example, if you wanted to buy clothes, and you were a six-foot guy and you wanted to buy clothes, which stores wouldn't hassle you, which stores wouldn't worry when you went back in the compartment and tried on a dress? What thrift shops had bigger women's clothes? Things like that, that we could tell people. One of the things that I set up for the Center for Special Problems, I brought in a woman to teach my gals about make-up--how does this guy who never made up in his life, now how do you teach her to use make-up appropriately, so you don't look grotesque, you know? That was the kind of thing I thought was important.

SS: Practical things.

EB: Yeah. How to live life, you know?

SS: Was there a really high turn-over in the groups? Did people come in, deal with their transitions, process for a while, and then move off?

EB: Oh, well, no. Well, did I mention Anne? Anne Magnusson? Have you come across that name anywhere? I have no idea where she is today. But, no, most of my gals, when they would start, we'd retain contact. I was thinking about when you were talking about doing your paper for your doctorate, and remember I mentioned this gal whose class had tried to take over the class [during the SF State Student Strike], she had done her paper, her doctoral paper, on pick-up bars. I thought that was fascinating.

SS: I know there's now the Motherlode, and there had been the Black Rose before that, but were there particular pick-up bars, transgender bars like that in the 60s and 70s?

EB: Well, there were gay bars, lesbian bars. Usually the transsexuals if they went to a bar, which they often did, would go to a gay bar. But there were very specific--did you see "Last Call at Maud's"?

SS: Uh-huh.

EB: Well, my picture's in there.

SS: Oh, I didn't recall that.

EB: Well, that wasn't why I asked you. But, hah! I've never forgotten this. [Tells story about stopping off at Maud's with a (male) fellow officer for a drink after work one night, and the other officer didn't realize it was a lesbian bar. Couldn't figure out why the place was full of women but he couldn't get any of them to talk to him. Eventually realized what was up, got really uncomfortable, and left.]

End Side Three

[Following up on the anecdote about drinking in a lesbian bar, EB has been asked a question about whether or not he socialized much with the clients and communities he worked with, or whether he kept business and private life separate. He replied that he had friendships with several people he'd first met through his job.]

EB: Well, let's see. Louise and Jerry. Last time Louise and Jerry came to my house--well, Jerry is a weird little guy. He's dirty. I mean, he doesn't keep clean. He was living over in San Rafael at the time, and he and Louise came over, and they sat down on the sofa, and I took one look at him and said, "Jerry, sit on the floor. Don't louse up my furniture." But Jerry Durkin, when they were building that hotel that's right in the middle of the Tenderloin--part of it was already there--and both Jerry and Louise had their own church, they were their own church.

SS: Remember what that was called?

EB: Nope. I'm much better at identifying names when I hear them than I am at pulling them out. But, the hotel wasn't even finished yet, and Jerry at three o'clock in the morning went in there, in the basement of this tower, and the police caught him there, and said what are you doing here, and he said "Blessing the tower." And there was another time--Jerry has a speech impediment. I got a call about one or two o'clock in the morning. And this voice says, "This is so and so from Mission Station, and we've got this fella here, and he's apparently suffering from amnesia, and doesn't know who he is

or where he belongs, but we were looking through his address book and he has your address and phone number," and I said "OK, put him on the phone." This voice comes on, "Heh-wo-oh?" I said, "Good God! It's Jerry Durkin!" So I got the cop back on the phone and told him who it was.

SS: Before you got involved with working with transsexuals, was there a serious problem with police harrasment of transsexuals? Were vagrancy laws or impersonation laws used against them?

EB: Um, yeah. Basically, there was cross-dressing laws, which was used if you wanted to get somebody, you know? A lot of the gals got--maybe not arrested, but certainly hassled. Eventually we got rid of the law.

SS: When was that?

EB: Ahh, God, I don't know, early 70's I suppose. Anyhow, I've never forgotten, I used to go to high school classes, talk to them about sexuality, and before we got rid of so many of the alleged "sexual offenses" I would go into a high school class, and say "Alright, let me tell you something right off from the beginning. Unless the sexual activity you participate in is the missionary position, then you are in violation of the law. Now that we've identified that I'm in a room full of criminals, let's go ahead and talk about sex. You had to make people realize that what people do sexually, everybody does. There are certain things a lesbian can't do physically without a dildo. Other than that, what can you think of? Well, like what's his name--the guy who wrote the book we talked about earlier, from Indiana?

SS: Kinsey.

EB: Kinsey. He said--well, I don't know if he said this but I've always credited him with it. Now how did that go? The only sexual act that is illegal is impossible. In other words, there's nothing that anybody can't do, and does that make it illegal? I never felt that it did.

SS: So, the anti-cross-dressing laws were still on the books, and they would be used when somebody wanted to make an arrest. OK--how did incarceration work? Was there a separate holding facility?

EB: They had at the city prison what they called a "Queens' Tank," where they would put radical--well, maybe radical is not the right word--obviously swishy, nellie--homosexuals in the Queens' Tank, and they would put transsexuals or cross-dressing individuals in the Queens' Tank. Now the police department said that the purpose of doing that was to protect them. And there's a degree of truth to that. If they'd put them in the main tank they probably would have been raped. So in a sense that was for their protection, but on the other hand, it was a discriminatory kind of decision. It was like

when Jan Maxwell went to San Bruno. I was scared to death that she'd be killed before she ever was transferred over to the women's side.

SS: Do you know of any particular problems that went on there in regards to the Queens' Tank? Were you able to change the way the police department dealt with transsexual people?

EB: In a limited sense. There were two things involved there. One is change, and the other is education. Now let me tell you about something that was really fun—

SS: If we could stay with that question for just a moment, what kinds of education were you able to do?

EB: OK, very good. Let me tell you about something that happened. You know that the Society for Individual Rights had that big place on 6th Street, and they had all kinds of things there. Used to have plays there, used to have reviews, used to have meetings, used to publish their paper out of there. They were a big component of the Central City community. Well, we had a recruit class coming through the Academy. So I set up a day-long program there for all of our recruits. And then we had gays, lesbians, transsexuals, and transvestites. And everybody got there in the morning, and they all had coffee and sweet rolls. OK, then throughout the morning, various people, lesbians, transsexuals, transvestites, gays, would talk to these young policemen about their lifestyles. Then at noon we had spaghetti, french bread, and [in a stage whisper] a glass of wine—you know you're not supposed to drink on duty, but I got'em all a glass of red wine anyhow--then we all sat down and ate lunch together. After lunch we broke up into small groups, and people would just talk so they could be more understanding. Years and years later, I would still meet policemen who would come up to me and say, "You remember when we had that luncheon down at that gay place....?" That's teaching. That's teaching where you're participating. Participation in my book is at least half of teaching. I could talk to you all day, but if you can't respond to me, and clear up your own questions—of course, in my teaching my saying was there are no stupid questions, just the question that everybody else wants to ask but won't, so go ahead and ask your stupid question.

SS: Have you met Stephan Thorne? Do you know him at all? [Shakes head no]. He's a female to male police officer who transitioned on the job a few years ago.

EB: Oh! Yeah! Sergeant, isn't he?

SS: Right.

EB: I'm aware of him, but no, I don't know him. I was going to show you while you were here--did I tell you about the movie we made for training? I was going to show it to you today. [Some discussion of logistics of showing SS the video].

SS: I have a question about driver's licenses—like, where they switched over in the early 70s, where they routinized how you went about changing gender through the DMV? Did you have anything to do with that, with causing that to happen?

EB: No. You know who got me going on that? The chief of all that was this gal from Southern California. Oh....

SS: Virginia Prince?

EB: Yeah, Virginia Prince. She was the pioneer of all that, as far as I know of. She worked with the DMV. She told me things that I could tell my people about getting their drivers' licenses when they went to the DMV. Because the DMV softened their position about it.

SS: I was asking because I'd seen a newspaper article, I guess it was around 1974 or 1975, that the Department of Motor Vehicles had had so many requests for sex changes on driver's licenses that they'd had to develop a special bureaucratic form for it. I just wondered if you had been involved in the process of making that change happen.

EB: No, only in the sense of telling people that you can, if go to the DMV and they say, "Oh, I can't do that," well that you can do that and it's being done. In that sense they could go to DMV and say look, you can do this.

SS: You've already said you don't don't know how large the transsexual population was in San Francisco, but—

EB: No, because every once in a while I would run into some one who wasn't living in the Tenderloin at all, but living out in the Sunset, or living in the Mission, because they were successful enough on their own to be able to not have to be in this ghetto. You don't have to live in the ghetto if you can escape the ghetto. I would run into people every once in a while and—

SS: Now, was there a lot of connection between the ones you're calling the ghettoized transsexuals, and people who were more successful, or was there not a lot of cross-class connections?

EB: No. No there wasn't. It's very much like a black who's successful doesn't want to have anything to do with these poor niggers. That kind of a situation. That's the way people I found who had made it out didn't want to come back to talk to these people, and say "This is what I did. I got out." I saw a lot of casting off of people who weren't as acceptable.

SS: So you did see a number of people who were transsexuals, mostly male to females, who were integrated into the general society?

EB: Uh huh. They're working. They're in general society. No one's ever outed them. They're safe. And they don't have to wear a scarf to cover up their adam's apple.

SS: So here's a question you've sort of partially answered too, but how did you start educating yourself about transsexuality? What literature did you read? Who did you talk to?

EB: Well the first book I read was Harry Benjamin's.

SS: Right. Like you said. See, I've got typed out here "Did you personally know Harry Benjamin or any of the other so-called medical experts?" What I'd like to hear are some stories about how you met them what they were like, that sort of thing. But also if there were any discrepancies you noticed between what they were putting out there in their books, and what you were seeing at the street level. The people that you dealt with, did they pretty much agree with what the experts were saying, or whether they disagreed with them, or . . . OK. First. How did you educate yourself?

EB: I met Harry Benjamin through Louise Durkin.

SS: And how had she met him?

EB: Well, she was a patient of his. And first I met him through his book that she brought me, his book. She said he comes to San Francisco every summer, and so then I met Harry, and we would go out to lunch and talk. We got along fine. I believe that his wife was still alive at the time, but she wouldn't come out to California with him. They had an apartment there in New York City and that's where she would stay. But then through reading his book, talking with him, and then I began to find out what other people like Doctor Money and Doctor Green--I had occasion to meet them once or twice. I didn't deal with them like I dealt with Harry. I'd see them at a seminar, or something like that. You know Doctor Green and Doctor Money put out a book together. I always called it the "Green Money Book". But so then whatever course I thought would deal with this, I would take that course. I took a lot of fun courses. [Tells about taking a continuing education course with Synanon].

SS: So tell me more about Harry Benjamin. What was he like? How did he work with his clients?

EB: Well, Harry had gotten a certain amount of fame from goat glands. He would help people, ah--

SS: Well, he was a gerontologist, and would--

EB: --ah, well get some goat glands into their system. It was supposed to help them with their sex life, and stuff like that.

SS: And live longer. I always wondered if he used it himself. He live to a ripe old age, you know.

EB: [Laughing] Yes, he was certainly a hearty old man. But that's how he first kind of got public attention. Then he did work with Christine Jorgensen, I guess before she ever went over for her surgery. Did you ever see the Christine Jorgensen Story?

SS: Uh hum.

EB: Terrible movie! He told me about working with her, and working with others. Like I said, we used to have lunch together whenever we could, and talk about people, so I could understand what they was going through. Now see, he didn't do the surgery--

SS: Right, he was the endocrinologist.

EB: --but he would just kind of bring them to that point. If you didn't have the money, he would help you anyhow. He was not in the business of dealing with these people just to make a buck off them. If you had it, he took it. If you didn't have it, he took you anyhow. I felt he was a real gentleman.

SS: Did he have a lot of transsexual clients in San Francisco?

EB: Uh huh.

SS: But he didn't deal just with transsexuals, right? He took all kinds of endocrinological patients?

EB: No, most of the people he took here in San Francisco ultimately turned out to be transsexuals. At least that's the feeling I got from getting together with him.

SS: Do you know if there's any place where there would be a record of what it was he was doing here? I don't know if his papers have been kept in New York. Do you know of anything that might be here?

EB: Only papers that he might have published.

SS: Any correspondence? Did he give lectures? Make presentations to any groups you know of?

EB: Well, down at Stanford. They knew him down there. As a matter of fact, when I spoke to this seminar at Stanford one time, I was the only non-medical person there. And who did I there but Abigail Van Buren!

SS: Ah ha! So you were one of two non-medical people there.

EB: Well, she wasn't there to speak so much as to listen. She was quite a lady.

SS: So were there any discrepancies you noticed between what the medical people were saying in their publications, and what you saw on the street level?

EB: No. You gotta realize that this was all a learning experience for me. How could I tell a doctor, how could I tell a psychiatrist, "You don't know what the hell you're doing?" When I don't know what the hell they're doing, you know? I was there to learn, not to teach—to hear, not to argue. The only guy I ever really fought with much was the psychiatrist from Stanford. You undoubtedly have his name, but I don't right at the moment. I have a terrible memory. My wife says I'm lazy. Because when I need a name I say, well, you know, the guy that did this—she says who that was. I say yeah! So I rely on her. She knows the names of people she's never met in her life.

SS: Well, your wife should be here for this interview. I wasn't thinking so much that'd you disagree with the medical experts personally, but that you'd just hear them say things at meetings and think, "Well, that's not what I see on a day to day basis. It's more like this."

EB: Well, you know there was this guy down in Florida, this psychologist. I disagreed with him. But he came around to my way of thinking more. He thought that COG was a bunch of crap. Just bull. Eventually he realized that these were legitimate people with legitimate problems. They weren't psychotics making these things up. These were people that had to live this way. Eventually he came around.

SS: What was the attitude of the transsexual people you dealt with to the medical service providers--was it like "These people are my saviors, they're the experts, they're telling me what going on in my life." Or was there tension, was there—

EB: Yeah. There was tension. There was tension because [spoken in a childish sing-song voice] "They won't give me what I want. I want hormones. They won't give me hormones. I want surgery. They won't give me surgery. They want me to be psychoanalyzed." They didn't do what the doctors wanted them to do. Part of my job was to make them realize that what the doctor was doing was what they needed. They don't tell the doctor what to do. The doctor tells them how they get to where they want to go. That was part of my role with the medical profession.

SS: So you saw yourself as cooperating with the medical service providers?

EB: Yes. Coordinating more than cooperating. My role was "these people" [gestures with one hand], "these people" [gestures with other hand], "these people" [brings hands together]. That was my role.

SS: Do you think there was something like a transsexual community in San Francisco, like the gay and lesbian community? Or was it just some people who happened to know one another?

EB: Well, what is a community? We speak of the gay community, but we're speaking of people who are so different from one another. I know very very right wing Republican gays, and I know some, well, not Communist, but damn left wing gays, and they're all part of the gay community. Transsexuals were more selfish about their concerns than the other sexual variant communities, because they could see just one thing--that conclusion, that new body that would bring the body in line with the mind. [They would say] "To hell with you people if you are not prepared to participate in making me be what I am supposed to be. To hell with you." I didn't see that in the gay and lesbian community. I saw people who said, "I'm not hurting anybody. Can't you love me as a person? That wasn't what the transsexual community was saying. They were saying "Me, me, me." Like I said, probably the most selfish group of people I ever dealt with. Not that I couldn't understand their selfishness. I don't mean it in that sense. They were--and as far as I know, still are--because of their concern to make their thing happen. Again, a gay man doesn't have to be converted into anything. He's a gay man. Unless he wants to try to not be a gay man--which I think is impossible--what's he got? He lives life as happily as he can. A lesbian woman--what does she want? Peace and happiness. That's different from a transsexual woman.

SS: So there wasn't a lot of cohesion, there wasn't a community sense among transsexuals?

EB: There was a community of protection.

[End Side Four.]

TAPE THREE

[SS has asked EB a question about how the nature of the gay drag subculture had changed from the 60s to the 90s, and how mtf transsexuals fit into that changing scene].

EB: Drag was part of the protest. In other words, you didn't come in costume, because you were saying "Look at me, I'm different." You were shouting "Look at me! I'm different!" That was what drag did. On the other hand, I was out on Halloween on patrol, basically to protect people. I would see a couple of young guys out in nun's costumes. I would say, "Hey man. You're in San Francisco. Half the cops are Irish

Catholics. They are going to lean all over you. Get another costume. Get off the streets. Cause if they're going to hassle anybody tonight, it's going to be you." I thought it was important to let people know that drag wasn't a problem, but drag of a nature that made policemen aggressive toward you, um—

SS: That was the problem?

EB: Uh-huh.

SS: When I look at drag publications from the 60s and 70, you see a lot of attention to, well, it's an odd mix of things from the standpoint of the present. You see a lot of attention to theatrical drag, female impersonators. Then you'd see stuff about gay liberation, you'd see stuff about heterosexuals transvestites, and then you'd see stuff about transsexuals. And it was all kind of thrown into one category that was called "drag." All of this kind of material would be in a so-called "drag" publication.

EB: I know a lot of transsexuals resented being called drag queens, because [they'd say] "This is not me. I'm not one of those faggots. I'm a woman, you know, so let me be a woman. Let them dress however they want to dress, but they're not me." I saw a lot of that. But like I said, I saw drag change from these elaborate, expensive costumes into much more generalized costumes. You'd have a situation where you'd have a court. You'd have the king, and the queen, and the princesses, and the knights, and everything like this. You'd have a bunch of people come in these different costumes. It was a scene. It was not a person, it was a scene. And that's the way that I watched drag change. Now what drag is today, I don't know. I haven't been connected with it for a while.

SS: You were talking some earlier about the balls. I've seen some stuff, like for example what SIR was doing, and the California Hall event. But these kinds of balls, even before then, were kind of traditional events, there'd be at least one big one every year, one around Mardi Gras, maybe one around Halloween. . . .

EB: You know what the gay term for Halloween is?

SS: No, what?

EB: Bitch's Christmas.

SS: Hmm, I hadn't heard that.

EB: Beause the whole idea was that you can be anybody you want on Halloween. It's like Christmas.

SS: Did you as a police officer see other balls, back in the 50s, or in the 40s when you were here just out of the Navy?

EB: I was aware of them. In the 50s it was the Beaux Arts Ball. But I don't think that everybody who came to the Beaux Art Ball was necessarily gay. It may have just been an artistic license kind of thing. I know a lady who did not get elected Supervisor, she'd throw balls.

SS: Yeah, the Hookers' Ball. So she didn't get elected yesterday? I haven't seen a paper today. [Reference to the nearly-successful run for SF Board of Supervisors by prostitution-rights activist Margo St. James].

EB: She ended up the—six got elected, and I think she ended up 7th.

SS: Oh, that's too bad. Did you meet, when you were working in the 60s and 70s, transsexuals who had transitioned in the 40s and 50s?

EB: Oh, I met a few who had just made it, you know? But I would liken them to...well, suppose you were a very light skinned black person. Suppose you got to the point where when you said to somebody, "I'm not black, I'm white," and they accepted that, then you didn't go back to talk to black people, because you didn't want these people who now recognized you as white, you didn't want them to know that you were black. And that's the way a very, very substantial percentage of successfully operated transsexuals felt. Because they weren't transsexuals any more. They were now women. They were now men. They were not transsexuals. They did not want to go back. And I could understand that. I needed them as role models, as acceptable people, but the didn't want to come back. I had very few that did.

SS: Did you develop--well, you've already answered this somewhat, but I'm just making sure I get in all my prepared questions--did you develop friendships with, or socialize with, transsexual people other than in the context of your job?

EB: Oh yeah! Let me tell you about one of the funniest things that ever happened. I had this one gal, a transsexual, and she went through a lot of different things. Eventually she went back to being a male. She lived in a vacant lot in the Mission District. Slept in a cardboard box, or something like that. And she married a guy who was a transporter of explosives--dynamite, and stuff like that. And she thoroughly convinced him that she had cancer of the uterus, and couldn't have sex. Fascinating gal. Quite attractive. She wanted to cook a special meal for my wife and I. And so I said OK, come over to the house, I'll get whatever you need. She wanted to make a soufflé. Well, I bought all these groceries--could of bought a soufflé for about a third of what all the stuff she wanted cost. She made the soufflé, and it fell anyhow. She was very distressed, because she was going to give my wife and me this gourmet meal, and it just didn't pan out. But it was just like her life. Her life didn't pan out. And I wouldn't at be suprised if I found out that somewhere down the pike she hadn't committed suicide. Nothing ever seemed to work quite right for her. Partly because she tried things that couldn't work for her. Like

marrying this guy. Good Lord, eventually your husband is going to say to you, let's go to the doctor and see what we can do for you. I haven't seen her in years. Guess I should say I haven't seen him in years. That's where we left off at.

SS: How were services for transgendered people integrated into other city social services? How were—well, like for example, I know people went to the Center for Special Problems. And some people went to Fort Help. And then there was this place I've heard of called Helping Hands, that I don't know anything about. It was on Turk Street in the early 70s. So I know there were some places--

EB: Well churches have—for example, there's a place on, not Polk, but a parallel street, that's a kind of half-way house for young people coming off the street [Larkin Street Youth Project]. And that has been backed by ol' Prysbyterian First Church. So there have been situations where churches—and of course Glide Memorial. Glide's worked with everybody under the sun. I don't know how many millions of people Glide has fed now. But we found that churches would try—if they could understand—would try to help.

SS: Like with employment agencies, say, if you were a police officer trying to help a transsexual find a job, where would you go? Would you have to send them to a transsexual counsellor at the Center for Special Problems, or could they just go down to the employment agency? If they had a substance abuse problem, where would they go? If they were homeless, where would they go? How would you go about trying to place transsexuals with various social service providers?

EB: Well you developed, you had to develop, and then the department itself later developed, all of these sources, the department itself later put out a book, so that policemen, if some one needed shelter, they could say "go there," treatment, "go there." Doctor? "Go there." Prior to that, I had to develop my own places where I could send people. [Tells story of helping a poor couple get married, go on a honeymoon. No relevant transgender content.]

SS: What kind of resistance did you encounter when trying to help transsexuals find legitimate work, or integrate into mainstream society?

EB: Substantial. People'd say, "Why are you bringing us these freaks?" You know, "These are freaks. These are people with problems."

SS: Can you give an example?

EB: Well, like I mentioned, this fella that wanted to come back to work for the Safeway Drugstore as a woman. Then I had to clear up with management to let this happen, and with the union, and with the women at the store, to accept this. That's the kind of obstacles we dealt with. Macy's has this big, huge warehouse--don't know if they still

have it, but they did—out on Potrero. And I had people who were working in that warehouse, and they wanted to cross-dress to work. There again, I had to go to the union to get the women to agree that there was no problem with this person using their bathroom. Bathrooms is always a complicated problem.

SS: OK, next question. Did you ever meet any of the transsexual "celebrities" of the day? Christine Jorgensen you've mention. How did you meet her?

EB: Through Harry Benjamin. Matter of fact. I saw the original screening, at one of these tiny theaters—San Francisco used to be quite a center for the various studios. They would have their film distribution places out of San Francisco, and very often they would screen, advance screen, a picture up here. I saw the Christine Jorgensen Story that way, and she was there.

SS: What was she like?

EB: A person. I dunno. She was friendly. She was interested in what I was doing. We talked about it some. There were probably a hundred people, something like that there. Talking about screenings, Last Call at Maud's, my wife and I went to opening night. But what we did, we didn't go to the charity part of it where you paid a hundred dollars to get in, we went to the second movie where you paid two dollars for your ticket or something like that. Anyway, I went, and why, who did I meet at the door but Phyllis and Del, and a young minister you've by the name of Chuck Hoolis. Herb Donaldson. Herb's a very old friend of mine. I think of them as celebrities. They're our local celebrities. Of course I used to work with and argue with Harvey Milk all the time. His camera store there at the Castro, I'd go in and talk with him.

SS: Mentioning people from that time—Ted McIlvenna, did you ever...?

EB: Oh, yes!

SS: I know he'd been with the CRH and then went over to the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality. Did he ever have much to do, dealing with transsexuals?

EB: No, not really with transsexuals. Of course what they [the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality] did at Glide was show movies. They'd bring in teachers and people like that, show them movies, sexy movies. I was talking to my wife about this just the other night. We had this movie down there, this wasn't the official name of it, but they called it "Arm Pit." She almost choked. "What do mean they called it "Arm Pit?" I said "Well, this gal had her arm up, and they shot the movie of the sexual activity under her arm someways." But Ted used to have this one room there in the basement of Glide, and they had all these big huge pillows, there was no chairs, you just came in and laid on these big pillows and watched these sexual movies. I often

wondered how many of the school teachers who were there—cause I watched them too—I often wondered how many of the school teachers and people like that were titillated, and what kind of impact that had.

SS: Probably a few at least. You know, talking about this room at Glide, it's just what the Institute still looks like now. Have you been over there?

EB: On Powell?

SS: No, Franklin I think? Anyway, parallel to Van Ness a block or two away, up by the big Holiday Inn.

EB: Well, it was for a while Powell Street. I think a place that had been part of the San Francisco State University Extension. After they left Glide they went there. [Tells anecdote about one of his best friends, Saul Weiner, a sex crimes investigator, who had no respect for Ted McIlvenna, would always set him up to look stupid when he was testifying in some obscenity case. Talked some about sex crimes, pornographic movies. No content pertinent to transgender issues].

SS: Tell me more about Reed Erickson. What was he like as a person? And can you tell me more about the work of the Erickson Educational Foundation? It seems like such an incredibly important organization.

EB: It certainly was that, in terms of my being able to provide help to people. I met Reed I guess three or four times when he would come out to San Francisco. I think he lived in New Orleans. I think that was where the factory was.

SS: Yeah, Baton Rouge was the address on all the Foundation literature I've seen.

EB: Yeah, OK. But he was very friendly. I know that apparently in his surgery that they had developed for him an artificial penis, and I don't know how successful it was. I met his wife. She was a very nice lady. And I never heard whether they had a satisfactory sex life or not, or whether he was involved with something similar to a dildo, or just what happened there.

SS: Do you know who did his surgery, or when it was done?

EB: No, I don't. It was done, it would have to have been in the late 1960s. I don't think he went to Mexico, though a number of people did.

SS: Was it the 60s, or the 50s? Because I know that when Benjamin started writing on transsexualism after meeting Jorgensen, around 1953 and 54, he was being supported eventually by the Erickson Foundation, though when exactly that started I don't know, funding a lot of his research, supporting publication of his book in 1966, helping set up

the Gender Clinic at Hopkins. He was such a central phenomena. Was Reed Erickson involved with all this prior to his transition, or during and after?

EB: Well, I never had any contact with him before I met Harry Benjamin. So I don't know the numbers. I don't know how I first got in contact with Zelda Suplee. I think somebody sent Zelda to see me, to see if I could speak to groups on behalf of the foundation. Then eventually we reached an agreement that they would fund my center, the Transsexual Counseling Unit. Reed paid for salary for the two gals who were there. Paid the rent. Me, I was basically—I didn't get paid anything from the foundation. My concern was that the foundation have money to take care of the needs that I had in the community that I couldn't afford, and that the department wasn't about to pay for. So, I don't really know when I first met him. But I did meet him. He was here in San Francisco. We went to dinner. Then we talked about Florida, and I went to Florida and Jamaica. I dunno.

SS: It seems like he was the big behind-the-scenes mover and shaker. That he was the payroll, the money man, behind Benjamin, behind Money, behind Laub—

EB: He certainly put money into a lot of things. Now Zelda—she was a crackerjack. She was about as round as she was tall. Just as jolly as could be. I remember once when we were in Florida, she and I went out to have a drink in a stripper bar.

SS: Were there other transsexual "celebrities" from the time that you met and could talk about? Roberta Cowell—she wrote a book—or Rene Richards, Mario Martino, anybody?

EB: Well, outside of our most famous transsexual of all, Christine--[Shakes head no].

SS: Do you know if people who were transsexual here in San Francisco were in contact with people in other cities, other individuals or other transgender organizations?

EB: There was no great network.

SS: Because I know that in New York, for example, there was a female to male group called the Labyrinth Foundation. That was in the late 1960s.

EB: I didn't ever have any contact particularly with any other group in any other city. Not that I didn't ever get word that one might exist. But there just wasn't the networking.

SS: One of the other questions I had--It seems to me like 1966, 67, 68 was a period when there was a big shift in the way transsexuals were dealt with. That's right when you were coming on board with these issues. Did it feel to you at the time like you were in the midst of a sea change? Were you aware of a big shift?

EB: Yeah. Because actually what happened when I started working with them, there was nobody out there at all who was doing anything, except some of them would know a doctor who would give them the hormones. But there was no programs. Center for Special Problems wasn't dealing with them. Welfare Department wasn't dealing with them. They were just out there. One of the things I tried to do was to bring together as many agencies as I could find, like the Salvation Army, whoever might have an answer to a problem, to try to get them on board. I think that was successful.

SS: So the kind of grass roots work you were doing was to hook people up with basic social services. To make some headway. I don't quite know what I'm driving at here. It just seems to me that before 1966 to 68, when people were trying to change sex, they did so more or less according to an underground oral tradition. They'd hear something. Finally maybe they'd find a doctor who'd do what they wanted.

EB: Well, I had heard of Christine Jorgensen before I ever met Harry Benjamin. Then after I met Harry Benjamin I began to know more of her story, and I eventually met her.

SS: So you heard about her through all the publicity back in the 1950s?

EB: Yeah.

[End of Side 5]

[SS continues questioning EB about first hearing of Christine Jorgensen, what he thought of her at the time, and what his initial thoughts on transsexualism were.]

EB: I think to me at that point, I thought "Why would anybody want to do that?" You'd be amazed at doctors, who, when you talked about surgery, would cross their legs. They were just--protecting, you know? I never really thought about it. Then I heard about Christine Jorgensen and thought "Why the hell would anybody want to do something like that?" I didn't at that point, I didn't know anything about the drive this brought about--or the drive that brought this about. But I sure found out!

SS: Do you remember thinking of Jorgensen at the time as "That's a man who's had this operation and is still a man," or did you think "this is somebody who's successfully, really and truly, changed sex?"

EB: I don't know that I ever really went that deep into it. You know "OK, this is something that's happened. Why the hell did he do that?" I don't even know if I said to myself, "Is he happy now?" It wasn't that much of a thing to me. I wasn't involved with it at the time. If I had been involved, I would have been a great deal more concerned, as I was when my people would go for all their surgery, or would go down to Mexico and do a two phase surgery, or whatever.

SS: I look back at the historical documents that record Jorgensen's change of sex, and there's such media attention to it--it was one of the biggest stories, it was constantly in the press of the time, and afterwards she never really left the public eye.

EB: I don't know where she is now.

SS: Oh, she died, back in the late 80s.

EB: Of what?

SS: Throat cancer, I believe. She was living down in Southern California. She'd been doing supper theater sorts of work, also lecturing, perhaps living off the proceeds of her books and movie. I don't exactly know.

EB: Oh, cancer. That's terrible. I never have forgotten that red bordello.

SS: Did you--you didn't have anything to do with other transsexual services or organizations in other cities, did you? The Hopkins Clinic in Baltimore, the ONE Institute in Los Angeles?

EB: Yes and no. For example, when I went to Little Rock, Arkansas, Zelda Suplee and I met with the medical people that were working in this area, and talked to them about what was happening in this area, and what the Erickson Foundation could do for them.

SS: What year would this be?

EB: 71, 72, something like that.

SS: So you were talking about these issues at national meetings of various groups?

[Nods yes.]

SS: I have a colleague who's working at the Kinsey Institute right now, and when I told her I was going to interview you, she told me that she ran across a copy of a speech that Elliot Blackstone had done, that was in some papers associated with the ONE Institute for Homophile Studies down in LA.

EB: That was probably the one I gave at Stanford.

SS: The people that you dealt with at the NTCU, did they come from all over? Did people come to San Francisco to be transsexuals in transition?

EB: Yeah. Because, you know, if you were in Indiana, you knew that maybe there was something done about sex at the university, but you didn't know that there was

anything about helping you personally. But you'd heard from some gay magazine or something that things were happening in San Francisco. So you'd go out and check it out.

SS: Were most of the people you dealt with young, in their teens and twenties, or were they older, what was most common?

EB: A total range, like I told you. One fella was 65. On the other hand, I was real careful about dealing with people that were under 18. [Tells story about working with a young "gay kid" who he thought was an emancipated minor, but turned out was runaway. Kind of being in hot water about that. Bending the rules every now and then to do what he thought was in the best interest of young people—like putting them on a plane home rather than turning them over to the Juvenile Authority].

SS: Did you ever meet people who identified themselves as transsexual, but also thought of themselves as intersexed? Who thought they were physically hermaphroditic? Because I know some transsexual people now who think of themselves that way, and it was also a way some transgender people thought of themselves in the 30s, 40s, 50s—

EB: Well, there are true hermaphrodites out there. I don't think I ever had one. Well, maybe one once that I just talked to, but never really went any further with. But if the transsexual was a rare breed of cat, the hermaphrodite is much more rare. I may have had just that one person I was in contact with.

SS: The reason I was asking that question, well, besides just curiosity, was to start getting at how the transsexual people you knew explained their own transsexualism. Did they think of it—well, there were lots of possible stories. Did they think of it as a medical condition? As something they were born with? Was it a psychological condition?

EB: Basically, most of them that I've ever talked to picked up on this concept—you'll see it in Harry Benjamin, and pretty much any place else that talks about transsexualism—which is "a woman trapped in the body of a man," or "a man trapped in the body of a woman." I don't think there was anybody I talked to that didn't think that was their situation. That's how they started. When they realized this about themselves, that's when they started asking, "What does it take for me to match?" I have no idea of how many suicides there might have been out there. With the exception of this one kid that went out the window. And I don't think but that maybe that wasn't a suicide. I think maybe it was a stupid drunken action that ultimately cost the person who was hanging from a window ledge on the outside of a hotel, to let go. I don't know if it was suicide, or what. The other people in the room wasn't of much help.

SS: Did you see any big shift in how transsexuals thought of themselves, or were able act--well, did you see any upsurge of political activism among transsexuals that was associated with gay lib, or the feminist movement? Did you see transsexuals participating in those movements, using a different language or a different framework for talking about themselves?

EB: I never saw a transsexual carrying a sign that said "Give me surgery or whatever." I never saw that much political response from anybody. And I think of this probably--again, like I've said, unfortunately, of all the sexual variants that I've ever dealt with, this was probably the most selfish group. Unless they thought there was something to gain by being politically active, there was other things that they were going to concentrate their time and effort on.

SS: Do you recall any episodes--well, you've said that you didn't see much overlap between the gay and lesbian and transsexual communities, but I know that there were a few times, especially after the beginning of the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements in the 1970s, that there were a few people who thought of themselves as both transsexual and gay or lesbian--

EB: Yeah--

SS: --and that there was some overlap, and that there was also some controversy and conflict.

EB: I had one individual who wanted surgery male to female so that she could be a lesbian. But just that one, out of many. I found that situation kind of unusual.

SS: Well, you know, that's my situation.

EB: Huh. Yeah.

SS: There was a big controversy, I guess this was around 1971, where a person who was a male-to-female transsexual who identified as lesbian, was active with DOB, was actually the vice-president of the San Francisco chapter of DOB, and was a writer for Sisters newsletter--

EB: Oh, Right! And didn't that person get thrown out of DOB?

SS: Yeah, around 1971. I wondered, did you see any more stuff like that, along with the shift to a new style of sexual politics?

EB: You know, I remembered, when you mentioned that situation coming up, I thought here again is a kind of situation where, well, "Damn it--you're a lesbian. Can't you have

compassion on a transsexual who's a lesbian?" And the answer was "No, we couldn't." I found that aggravating.

SS: But you don't remember that happening more often, or any other episodes like that?

EB: No, just that one--that was unusual to me. That wasn't you, though, was it?

SS: No. I was a kid then. That was Beth Elliot, who still lives here.

EB: But, oh, there was great division in the lesbian community about this. Great division. Some people saying this is not a real lesbian.

SS: Since you worked with both communities, did you hear things from the lesbian community about transsexuals, or from the gay men's community, did people express opinions to you that they perhaps wouldn't express directly to a transsexual?

EB: Yeah, the men felt about transsexuals like they felt about women. "They're in the world. We've got to exist with them. But otherwise, keep 'em away from us." I think the women were much more forgiving, much more accepting.

SS: Did you see that attitude change then?

EB: No, like I said, there was that one hassle, but, again, I don't know how much of that was a power struggle situation, and how much of that was "She's not really a lesbian." I don't know if there was some power play involved in it.

SS: I'm asking because it seems that when I look at the historical material, there's, before the late 60s, the people who were talking about transsexualism were medical people--surgeons, psychologists, endocrinologist--and the discussion was like "This is a legitimate medical concern. We're helping people who have this identifiable problem." And they'd be talking with others who were saying "Oh no, these people are crazy, they're immoral, they're criminal--whatever." That discussion shifted, it seems to me, after the social movements of the late 1960s. You had people who were interested in identity politics, who were involved in arguments that pointed to transsexuality in some new way--"This is a mistake they're making about the way that gender works," or "These are confused people, politically naive or reactionary people, these are men who are pretending to be women for some kind of ulterior motive." Did you see that?

EB: I never saw it considered as a political thing. I know gay men who said "These are crazy people." I never remember hearing lesbian women say "These are crazy people." On the other hand, I didn't see them reaching out, either.

SS: There was a book about transsexuals that came out about this time, that you might have seen, called *Transsexual Empire*, by Janice Raymond--

EB: No, I don't recall that one.

SS: --and she was a lesbian feminist, who wrote this diatribe about how male to females were trying to infiltrate the women's movement, trying to exercise patriarchal privilege-

EB: That's what they were saying about Beth Elliot.

SS: Right. This was a whole book written from that particular mind frame.

EB: Well, let me ask you a question. You've heard me say over and over again that transsexuals are selfish. Do you disagree with me on that?

SS: I think that may have been more true in the past than it is now. Now it's a very politicized community. I've been involved with it for about 5 or 6 years.

EB: Now, remember that I've been out 21 years. But my work did not end then. I consider sitting down with you and talking about it as still being part of my work. The movie that I participated in making [for training purposes at the SF Police Academy] was done after I retired. I didn't think it ended when I retired. It just changed.

SS: And my next question just happens to be "What happened to your job after you retired? How did your activities on transsexual matters change? Did you continue to do this kind of work after you retired? What kind of changes in police work have you noticed related to transsexualism?"

EB: Yes, as a matter of fact, you may have noticed in the paper just in the last day or so, there's a lesbian police officer who's going to do a training--and here it is again, training. You can't reinvent the wheel. The wheel was invented a long time ago. You can introduce a new shape or size of wheel, but you don't, can't, invent the wheel again. And that's what the department is trying to do today, which is to reinvent the wheel. This woman the department is using up front here . . . um. Hm. [Goes on to tell story about how he helped negotiate with gays officers demanding domestic partner benefits at the Credit Union where he worked, being patient and eventually overcoming anti-gay resistance and securing DP benefits.]

SS: OK, I want to start wrapping things up and tying up a few loose ends. I have a list of names here, and just want to run them past you to see if they ring any bells. Wendy Davidson?

EB: The name stikes a chord, but doesn't ring a bell.

SS: Wendy Kohler?

EB: Wendy Kohler—who was she?

SS: Um, these are just names on a list to me, mostly from COG documents and drag publications from the 60s and 70s, of people who were in San Francisco then.

EB: Yeah. Well, I know that name, but I can't remember anything. What's another?

SS: Catherine Ricks?

EB: Catherine Ricks—yeah, I sure remember her name, but I can't put her together as a person.

SS: Patricia Harris?

EB: Pat Harris—that's the one that cooked the meal for me, to the best of my knowledge. Where did you see her name?

SS: Just in some of the papers I've shown you today, and talked to you about, and that my friend at the Kinsey Institute sent me. So--Terry Peoples?

EB: Oh yeah, Terry. She used to work for me.

SS: Any stories there?

EB: Nothing extraordinary. I think she worked as a hooker for a while. One thing I remember, she was out riding around with her boyfriend, and got into a heated argument with him and stepped out of the car at about 20 or 30 miles an hour. Got all beat to hell, bouncing off the pavement. She was a good kid. She worked also through the Erickson Foundation.

SS: Any idea what ever happened with her?

EB: No, I don't. Don't know if she ever got her surgery, or what ever became of her.

SS: OK, here's another--Carol Lynn Schneider?

EB: Again, I know that name but, I can't put her together as a person.

SS: Kim Christy?

EB: That was that pretty girl you showed me.

SS: Oh, yeah, right here. But you don't remember anything more?

EB: No.

SS: OK. Well, do you ever hear anything, or have any opinions about, the transgender movement now?

EB: I've had so little knowledge of it lately. I don't know how much of a structure there is, how much of an organization there is between people. I don't know if people are doing anything that they weren't doing before. You know, how many people are reaching back to help people up? I don't know how many people are still living in the Tenderloin. I don't know how many people are still hooking for a living. I know that my dear friend up there in Guerneville is just as confused as ever. She's really paranoid. She's on speed, although she swears she's getting off it, Jan Maxwell. Much confusion in her life. She called me, I guess it was a year or so ago, about several people, said if anything ever happened to her, look at these people. So I kept these people's names for about a year, but nothing ever happened. She's a gun collector. She got caught up with . . . um, well, they took all her guns away. I tried to work out some deal where they would turn the guns over to me, and then if they ever wanted her to have any of the guns back I could give them. But they decided they didn't want to do that.

SS: Do you remember the Janus Information Facility?

EB: Just heard the name of it.

SS: What I know of it, it was here in San Francisco, supposedly took over some of the work of the Erickson Educational Foundation, it was in the 70s, and was run by Paul Walker, who was a clinical psychologist--well, at least he had a psychotherapy practice. He was one of the people who was a founder of HBGDA.

EB: I recall that name. I just wonder if he's they guy that I was talking about that I had the disagreement with who came around in his thinking. Was he ever in Florida?

SS: I don't know. I think he was trained at Hopkins, but I know he practiced out here. He worked with John DeCecco at San Francisco State, and that thing that John runs, the Center for Research and Education on Sexuality.

EB: I went to some program out there, for something, at one time.

SS: The Janus Facility was around by the late 70s, it was being run by Walker, and he claims it took over the educational arm of the Erickson Foundation. All of the initial literature passed out by Janus was stuff the Erickson Foundation had developed. They also had peer counselling and outreach. Somebody I've actually done some research on, named Lou Sullivan--did you know him? [Shakes head no]. He was the first female to male counselor at Janus.

EB: You asked me a question a while ago, and we never got back into it, which was who followed me?"

S: Yeah?

[end of side six]

TAPE FOUR

[EB is talking about his replacement as a community relations officer. He suggested to the department that his successor should be straight, because if the community relations officer was gay or lesbian, they'd be open to accusations of playing favorites within the community, or catering to a particular political cause. This advice wasn't followed, and a gay officer was given the position. At the Pride Parade that year, a man stepped out of the parade and gave this officer a big kiss on the mouth, which caused the officer considerable distress. EB claims he "went off his rocker" and left his job, but that "he came to his senses as soon as he got his disability pension."]

SS: The Harry Benjamin Association, the people who came up with the Standards of Care that are still enforced for transsexual people, Paul Walker was I think the principal author for those, and he was here in San Francisco. That was all going in in the late 1970s. Were you pretty much out of the loop by then, or--?

EB: Yeah, after 1975--see, I retired in April of 1975--and I didn't have direct contact after that. I did things like, oh, Senator Marks was running for office, and the gay community was supporting him. I went to a Tavern Guild auction and was auctioned off as a slave to do any work within reason. So that was a kind of contact I still had. Most of my contact, though, has been more through church. We're in the Presbyterians Church. [Talks some about doing gay/lesbian ally work around ordination of queer ministers at the most recent annual General Meeting.]

SS: Did you happen to see, I forget which denomination she was in, but there was a transsexual who had been ordained as a man, and had transitioned subsequently, and wanted her name changed in the church rolls?

EB: No, that didn't come up at the meeting.

SS: Yeah, this has been just in the last few days, it was in Time magazine, and I've seen some stuff on-line about it--on the Internet. Erin Swinson, in South Carolina. She was formerly dean of students or something like that at Emory's Theology school in Atlanta. Anyway, when she wanted to change her name on her church's membership rolls, um, all "heck" broke loose.

EB: [laughing] Well, that's not the word I would have used, but OK.

SS: Anyway, just recently her denomination recognized her as belonging to her post-transitional sex, and said she's still a minister in good standing, and all that.

EB: See, one of the things that they're concerned about, is for example, fidelity. Fidelity is a very hard thing to maintain.

SS: One other thing I've brought with me today, I'd never heard of this, but one of my research assistants found this for me. It says "Plea in Castration is Insanity." It's from an old Advocate magazine. [Reading and paraphrasing:] Two men charged with castrating a teenager pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. Rudy Brink, 18, and William B. Johns, age 35, entered the plea blah blah blah. Johns, who shared a San Francisco apartment with Brink and two others "had worked in the past as a counsellor in a program for transsexuals in that city." I wondered, hm—who is this person Johns? I thought, "My God, you've got these two men, very different ages, who castrate this 16 year old. I wondered what the story was behind the story, you know?"

EB: What this reminds me of, you know, is Leopold and Loeb.

SS: Um hm. What I was wondering was, is this boy just somebody they abducted, or was this person maybe transsexual and they were trying to help her out somehow and things got out of hand—

EB: Yeah, well, I'm not aware of this particular story.

SS: It happened in 1974, so I thought I'd just run it by you, see if you knew anything.

EB: Don't know anything about it a-tall. Not even the names.

SS: Well, just thought I'd ask, since that one guy worked as a transsexual counsellor.

EB: What have you heard in your history, m'dear, about the Reverend Raymond Broshears?

SS: I've just heard stories that he had a penchant for transsexuals. I've looked through his papers, we have them at the GLHS, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of papers surviving. From everything I gather, he was—oh, shall we say a little emotionally unstable [EB laughs, nods] and he managed to lose or destroy, in various bouts of paranoia, most everything he produced. I think we have most of what's survived down at the GLHS archives. I haven't seen anything in there about any involvement with transsexuals. But Bill Walker, he's one of the founders of the GLHS, he's said to me that Broshears consorted with trannies, and I should check out that angle.

EB: Ray Broshears was a totally, totally, weird person. For years I worked with him--I preached in his church--I always swore he was a CIA spy. I couldn't think of any other reason for some of his activities. He would, for example, when I was working with the poverty program, and had my office in the Central City Poverty Program, I was probably one of his best friends. He was not one of my best friends, but I was one of his best friends. I helped him sponsor Christmas spaghetti feeds for members of his flock. Basically little old ladies. Worked with him over and over again to keep him out of trouble. He went to the poverty program and told them I was stealing paper and pencils--which was so ridiculous, because I wasn't, but he didn't have anybody who protected him more than me, and here he was attacking me.

SS: So what was his transsexual connection?

EB: I never saw him have any transsexual connection. He did know, remember I said I knew that Louise Durkin had had a boyfriend who became a transsexual? Ray knew that person. I can't remember her name. There were so many fascinating people. I wish I could pull their names out of the air.

[Break in taping. EB talks about working with Debra Chasnoff to get copy of It's Elementary to take to Pysbeterian General Meeting. Next, SS is reading the names of organizations that gave EB a plaque or an award at his retirement dinner. These are all mounted on the wall of the spare room in his home.]

SS: SIR. Police Community Relations Executive Board. The Pavarello Award from the Franciscan Order of California. SF Police Communiy Relations Unit. "We love you Sergeant Blackstone, the gay's cop. Seldom has one man done so much for so many people, the Helping Hands Center, Reverend Ray Broshears." So, OK, Ray Broshears had the Helping Hands Center. I didn't realize that connection. There were transsexual support services there. "The illumination of many years of undaunted service to the gay community of San Francisco--the Coits." What's that, the Coit family?

EB: No, the COITS, the organization, remember the COITillion you were asking me about earlier?

SS: Oh, right. Duh. Can you tell me any more about them? I don't know anything about them.

EB: No, that's somebody I haven't had any subsequent contact with.

SS: Tavern Guild. The Emperor of San Francisco--so that's from the Imperial Court System? [EB nods yes]. The Pride Foundation. Another SIR award. A framed Life magazine cover, 1971.

EB: Remember Life magazine used to put out a double issue, the Year in Pictures...?

SS: Yes, --oh, there you are. What a shirt!

EB: And what a tie!

SS: So there's picture of Elliot Blackstone in the Life Magazine "Year in Pictures" issue in 1971, December 31, 1971 issue. [Now reading a program:] Elliot Blackstone Testimonial Dinner--

EB: That's where most of these things came from.

SS: --at the PSA Hotel, San Francisco, Market at 8th. April 21 1975. Perry George. Ray Broshears. Don Cavallo. Bob Ross. Mary Jane Scherr from the Board of Supes. Chuck Dimon. Peter Switzer and the Softball League, George Moscone presenting something honorary from the state, Larry Littlejohn from the Pride Foundation. Somebody from the Community Relations Unit. Leslie St. Clair from NTCU. Jose Sarria. Richard Gernsbach from the Tavern Guild. Doug DeYoung and Bill Plath from SIR. Bob Kramer from Cable Car Court Awards. Here's an award that just says "Officer Elliot Blackstone, Many Thanks, The Transsexual Community of San Francisco." Who in particular gave you that, do you remember?

EB: My girls.

SS: Was that what Leslie St. Clair gave you at the retirement dinner?

EB: Yeah, probably.

SS: OK. Here's a resolution from Milton Marks, another from the Assembly by Leo McCarthy and Willie Brown.

EB: Here's one. Read this.

SS: "Elliot Blackstone, Father, Gay/Police Softball Game." It's a pink baseball.

EB: I threw out the first ball in that series.

SS: That's great. Here's a poster, a wanted poster with Elliot Blackstone's picture on it, that says, "Wanted: People to Attend Elliot Blackstone's Retirement Dinner. Tickets available at the Helping Hands Center, the PSA Hotel, The Kok Pit and at The Mint.

[Watching the police academy training film, we see the name Paul Thurston in the credits. Blackstone says this is the person who he had given the old EEF surgery film to. SS had met Paul Thurston through Frameline. Subsequent checking revealed that the EEF film is now in the Frameline Archives. VHS copies have been made.]

[Remainder of tape records the audio portion of the SFPD academy training film. All gay and lesbian related material; no transgender content.]