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An
Oral History
Interview
with
Hanford Searl

1996

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Acknowledgments

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Hanford Searl
November 2, 1996



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Las Vegas Gay Archives
Oral History Project Interview
with
Hanford Searl

conducted by
Dennis McBride
November 2, 1996

This is Dennis McBride, and I'm spending the afternoon with Hanford Searl, Jr. We're at his home at 7200 Pirate's Cove Road, Building 27, [Apartment] no. 2096. Today is Saturday, November 2, 1996. We're going to be talking about a number of things: about his being gay, his being gay in Las Vegas and other places, religious issues. Also, some information about working at the [Las Vegas Review-Journal], and for Bob Brown at the Las Vegas Valley Times¹ But to start with, I just want to establish some background ...

Don't forget Billboard!

Oh, Billboard!²

Seventeen years. I'm exhausted!

And you're starting a second career with them, a second phase.

Incarnation, yeah.

Tell me first of all where you were born, when, and some of your family background.

OK. Born in Buffalo, New York, and that was March 2, 1947. It was my mother's second marriage, so I have a half brother, but there's a big age difference, like, probably, 15 years. So I pretty much was an only child. And grew up in the suburb of East Aurora, which is 16, 18 miles southeast of the city of Buffalo. It's pretty much a country suburb. It's middle class, upper middle class, mostly white, very few minorities. How I turned out as well as I did, I guess, you know, my parents raised me on the Golden Rule. That was pretty important. Grew up in the country, pretty much. Buffalo at that time maybe had a half a million people in the city, and the county had like a million. Our little suburb—we were in the *town*—so we had, like, maybe 5,000. The *village* of East Aurora had 12,000. I don't think that's changed too much. Bedroom community. *BO-RING!* [laughs] That's why there's a lot of drugs going on there now. There's nothing else to do.

You went all through school there, then?

Right through high school, yeah. My studies narrowed to commercial art and journalism.

Commercial art?

Yeah.

Graphic arts?

Yeah. Most of these water colors you'll see around the apartment are mine.

They're beautiful.

They're OK. [laughs] That one's kind of primitive. But I started up again in 1990.

From someone like me, who can't draw at all—the best I can do is take a photograph—I really admire people who can [draw and paint].

I usually take the ideas from photographs and cards. I did that one [motions to a painting hanging on the wall above the dining table] for my mom. Near Rochester, New York, it's known as the Alabama Swamps and the Canadian geese go through there every year. It looks like snow instead of water, so I've gotta work on my water techniques. But I think I got into art because I was an only child. I had friends in the neighborhood, but still You know. My parents encouraged me to go into the arts.

That's an interesting point to make, though, that you feel you were interested in art because you were an only child. What's the correlation?

I think because you don't have the brothers and sisters and craziness. I think you just *turn* to that, some kind of hobbies early on. Like I said, I did have a lot of friends in the neighborhood, but I just I don't know. I guess my grandmothers on both sides were artists, too, and Mom and Dad kind of encouraged me to do that, I think. And music. They gave me my first record player when I was *very* young, 5 or 6. And it was all, like, *Hungarian Rhapsody*, classical music. Which I didn't really care for!

It sounds like you had a richer interior life than you did an exterior one.

Yeah. Or they were about equal. I had good times with kids in the neighborhood, and then in the village later on. I guess they kind of were balanced out. [I] wasn't too isolated.

Now, you went on to college afterwards?

Yeah.

Where?

First year in New Mexico at Las Vegas. It was New Mexico Highlands University. And it was one of the schools [you'd go to when] you'd get out of

high school and not know really where you wanted to go. I wanted to go to Syracuse [University] but I wasn't ... my *grades* weren't good enough. My parents were both alumni. So Syracuse said, "Go somewhere, prove yourself, and transfer [back]." And they had college pools. I don't know if they still do that. Like in Philadelphia and Chicago you send your *résumé* and all that. And New Mexico was one of the ones that wrote to me. I must have had like 50 replies from the Midwest. I either was gonna go to Wisconsin or New Mexico, and I settled on [New Mexico Highlands]. And this was real stupid. I've always been a big UFO fan and I thought, Ah, ha! I might see flying saucers in New Mexico.³ [*laughs*] Great criteria, huh! And it seemed more colorful. I wanted to go real far away from home, not just back into snow in Wisconsin. And [New Mexico] had a fairly good liberal arts [program].

Why did you want to go so far way from home?

I think part of it was just I was ready to break out and do something new. My parents were both drinking at the time and I just wanted to get away from family. My dad's family was very difficult. I think that was part of it. I don't think the gay thing had anything to do with it. I pretty much had started very early on my being gay in my feelings. Probably at 6 or 7, and I settled down into a semi-relationship with my next-door neighbor, Gary Hager—who we'll talk about later, probably. He went on to become a very successful designer with Parish-Hadley Associates in New York. And his clients became Connie Chung, [the] CBS [news] anchor; Henry Kissinger; Governor [Nelson] Rockefeller. But he always stayed the same and I always loved him dearly. I always thought we'd get back together. You know, that first love But we were very close through high school and college, even though he went to Hobart, then to University of Paris. And I was going the other way, geographically.

After New Mexico Highlands University ...

Brigham Young [University].

What was it that ...

Got me there! I knew a Mormon girl at New Mexico. She'd do my wash and we kind of dated. It was just friendship, but oh, if I had to hold her hand, it was very difficult! Her family were from Gallup, New Mexico, they were Mormon, but they were *jack* Mormons.⁴ She drank and smoked. And that's really the first I ever heard of any Mormon thing. I knew about Brigham Young and the covered wagons and all that, coming out West. But her mom said to me, "You ought to look into going to BYU. They have a good liberal arts." And I was planning on Syracuse. Well, Syracuse loses my transcripts, *all* my records. They'd approved my art work, my portfolio was fine. So I was ticked off. My parents picked me up in the car and we drove through Utah. Looked at the campus, *and I was really blown away*. It was like a Hollywood movie set. You just go, "Oh!" The [Wasatch] Mountains, the new buildings. [I] went to the communications schools and ABC TV had donated all kinds of new equipment, so, you know, I said, "I'll come here and show these Mormons how to do it." [laughs]

Duh! Big mistake!

We went through Salt Lake City and it was weird. I kind of had some feelings of déjà vu, like I'd been there before. And we went through the visitors center, and it was very strange again. It was like, I've heard all this before. I don't know if I was just in an emotional state.

Or past life recall.

Yeah. I was thinking that, too. Or it was just so *impressive*. The city was so clean and beautiful, the people so friendly. You know, they got me goin' on campus, too, at BYU. The visitor's guide: "Oh, you'll love it here. It's a very nice school. 25,000 [students]." And they'd just won the NIT championship⁵ in basketball the year before, so I'd begun to hear about them through the media. And I was kind of a sports nut. I liked being a fan.

And went home, took all the transfer stuff from the visitors center at the campus and I thought, "Well, what the hell? Maybe I *will* go there." I wanted to get out of New Mexico. It was too small. And the poverty was depressing. And it was a very small school. I think it might have been two-year at that point. And a lot of us from the Northeast were not used to that kind of setting.

How long did you stay at New Mexico?

Just my freshman year. Most of us were scheming to get out of there the minute we set foot there! *[laughs]* Although I look back now and it was probably good to go to a smaller school.

They accepted me very quickly at BYU. My Presbyterian minister had to send a letter of recommendation because I wasn't a member [of the LDS church]. And I learned more about the Mormons that summer before I went because I went to the Hill Comorah Pageant. I didn't know [the Mormons] had started right there in Rochester.

Hill Comorah Pageant?

Hill Comorah Pageant, every year. It's like a Broadway production now with lasers. That's where Joseph Smith claims he found the golden plates and translated [them] into the *Book of Mormon*, so that really is the epicenter of Mormonism, so to speak. Then they were persecuted out of New York State into Ohio, then they went to Illinois, then finally—the Big Migration.⁶

What year was it that you transferred?

'66.

Did you learn about Mormonism on your own before you went?

No. Except [where] the Hill Comorah Pageant takes scenes out of the *Book of Mormon* and weaves it together to make it a pageant. Big production. I pretty much was naive. I had no idea what I was getting into. I also was thinking of going to William Penn University before New Mexico. If I'd gone there, I'd probably have become a Quaker! And I laugh—I say if I'd gone to Notre Dame I would have become Catholic. *[laughs]* I just was at that very impressionable stage. Thank God the Moonies⁷ didn't get me.

I went to BYU for 3 years before I joined [the LDS church].

Did you finish your degree before you joined?

No, I finished my degree after my mission. I went on my Mormon mission in '70. Then I came back in '72 and graduated in '73.

Where did you go on your mission?

Pacific Northwest. Seattle. I'd never been there and I just loved it up there. So beautiful, the country. But the mission had begun to sour me on the church, ironically. About halfway through I thought, "Oh, this is a church like any other church." Of course, before that, actually the year I joined, in '69, I had been hauled in on their annual spring witch hunts [for] being gay. I'm *obviously* gay, you know. I never could hide it.

I'd like to get into that witch hunt in more detail a little later on. But meanwhile, you graduated from BYU. And then did you come to Las Vegas?

Even before I graduated, the RJ [*Las Vegas Review-Journal*] had flown me down for an interview.

Oh, they had? So you specifically had aimed for Vegas as a job place?

Well, it was one of several. It was either them or New York Life Insurance. My dad was in insurance, and they [New York Life] wanted me in Salt Lake. I said, "Oh, now! It'd be like being on a Mormon mission again [and] I can't stand it." And at that time the RJ always highly went after BYU graduates. They usually hired 5 or 6 a year because they thought we were good little Mormon kids. We'd come down and wouldn't rock the boat. And I didn't know they were *very* Republican. I mean, I didn't even look into their politics. I just wanted to get a job. And they were very nice on the trip [down]. I always thought Las Vegas would be fun. We had driven through and seen Las Vegas on the way to BYU that first time. Mom and Dad and I stayed at the Tam O'Shanter⁸ on the Strip. It's still there! Walked up to the Sands⁹ and saw Sammy Davis, and I bought his book then.¹⁰ I've always been show business/entertainment-oriented. And went to Caesars [Palace Hotel], saw Ella Fitzgerald with Alan King. I couldn't believe I'd eventually be back here, but that's how it happens. All these little connections happening.

You were very impressed with Vegas then.

Oh, yeah! Showbiz. Liza [Minnelli] was here. You know, I looked and thought, "Who knows? Maybe someday."

Do you remember your job interview at the RJ?

Pretty much.

Who was it interviewed you?

I think it was Roy Vanett, and he's still there. He's still on the city desk. I don't remember it even being a formal interview. They would wine and dine us. I don't know if I was the only one or not, I'm trying to remember. I think I was by myself. They showed us around the plant—and it was relatively new then, so it was very impressive. The [*Las Vegas Sun*] was here, but they [the *RJ*] just pooh-poohed that as being Hank Greenspun, and he's eccentric.¹¹ I wasn't even political at all. I kind of was becoming involved because of the Vietnam War. On campus I was really kind of considered radical because I was Democratic in nature. We hadn't started the Democratic Club, but they wouldn't have put up with that there. But they were bombing Cambodia the year I graduated and they [BYU] were all cheering Nixon. I remember at our Communications banquet, some of us were sitting and we weren't clapping, and it's like everyone turned and looked at us because we were *sitting down!* There were some of us who were just kind of evolving and getting there.

But no, I don't think [the *RJ*] gave me] a formal interview. They looked at my work and said, "Do you want to come work for us?" And I said, "Sure."

As what?

Reporter, general assignment. That's usually what most of us were. And [some of us] got into an area of expertise. But I pretty much stayed in that area getting assignments, covering the police, car accidents, fires, running between burning buildings. I mean, the whole bit! Feature writing. And then I kept thinking I really want to do this entertainment writing. But, then, Forrest Duke¹² was their big entertainment columnist and he just had it wrapped up. Once in awhile they would hand me an interview to do, or go out to the Strip. But it was really *Billboard* [that gave me that chance]. I'd been [at the *RJ*] two and half years, and

by then I was very dissatisfied. I saw they were too conservative and they weren't giving me assignments I wanted. And they had let go maybe 10 to 12 reporters ahead of me. Fired.

Why?

Because their pay scale would get too high. They'd go back to BYU to get more freshmen out of school. I saw the handwriting on the wall. And then, of course, *Billboard* hired me. They hired a guy [from] the *Sun* first—Harold Hyman.. He was a police reporter. Well, after 3 months, *Billboard* fired him because, they said all his write-ups look[ed] like police reports! [laughs] I said, *Duh!* They said, "Do you still want to work for us?" I said, "Sure, I'd love to try." And I just had a ball doing their stuff. And the *RJ* didn't like that, either. They didn't like me having an outside thing.

What was it about the *RJ* that led you to note how conservative they were?

I don't know. Here again, I wasn't even watching the editorial page. I was just doing my thing and having fun with friends. I think my gay sensibilities started coming at this point. I attribute [that] to one of the old-time editors on the desk. Doug [Dubois] And I can't remember Doug's last name. His wife was a nurse at Sunrise Hospital. He was an alcoholic, so maybe that's why I kind of drifted towards him on the night shift and we'd talk. I think he knew I was having a difficult time coming to terms with being gay openly. And he'd sit and say, "Hanford, you've gotta be yourself. You don't want to stay at this paper." It was like he was speaking to me in generalities and I didn't know what he was saying. Meanwhile I was having an affair with the guy that worked in the Associated Press room there. [laughs] I thought everything was fine, but I was becoming very discontented. At the same time I was really not going to the Mormon church anymore here. The bishop was a Vietnam veteran and he was just very conservative. When he found out I was writing for *Billboard*, he said, "Well, you know we don't approve of this. You're out there associating with immoral people." Because they were in show business. I said, "Excuse me. You're an attorney, you represent the casinos, and they're controlled by the mob and they kill people. Hello!" I said, "At least the people I'm with entertain." I didn't even know if [the bishop] was trying to infer the gay thing or not.

Oh, everywhere. Never paid anything. In fact, that was the only requirement I
 Billboard Magazine *was based in Las Vegas?* "You pick up the tip." And you go

Los Angeles. But they had a full-time correspondent [in Las Vegas], never a
 bureau.

Just one person?

Just one person.

*At the time you were working at the RJ and for Billboard, were you their single
 correspondent?*

Yeah, I was the only one. See, *Billboard* was the bible of the business, but they
 really had not established anything here on a long-term basis. And they would
 always go to one of the papers to hire someone. They always liked you having
 an *in* already. Or a calling card. But I was with them ... let's, see. I was with the *RJ*
 in '73, left them in '76, so it was like from '76 to '79 here. And I really kind of
 gave them a real foot-hold here. They went on and wrote me letters of
 recommendation, said I was their best full-time correspondent anywhere in the
 country. I just enjoyed it! I would cover the Strip opening nights, I would cover
 the recording studios, I would do retail, things on the record stores. And that's
 what they said, "Do anything you want." The musicians local [labor union]. I just
 had a field day!

I didn't know there were recording studios in Las Vegas then.

Oh, yeah. Two or three. Las Vegas Recording Studio, I'm sure that was one.
 And it wasn't a big deal. They would do, like, promos for the shows, or the radio
 spots. I don't think many records were made here. If they were, they were like
 jazz. Like Mel Tormé, big bands. None of the pop stars would really do much
 here to my knowledge.

*Were you comped at the shows?*¹³

Oh, everywhere. Never paid anything. In fact, that was the only requirement I had when I asked friends to go with me. "You pick up the tip." And you go backstage. [laughs] And some people were really tightwads! I'd take them once or twice, they wouldn't pick up the tip, that was the last time! And if they really tipped well and were good friends, they'd usually go to the private parties with me. Might meet Julie Andrews. She made her debut here in the United States when I was here, at Caesars. It was really a magical time. There was still the dinner shows. The old-time entertainment directors. Of course, I had no idea it was the end of the Golden Era of Las Vegas. I just happened to get there. I was in the right place at the right time.

What did Billboard pay you, or how did they pay you?

Per inch. \$7 per inch. [laughs] Big-time money! So when I left the *RJ* I was struggling for a few months. I don't know how I got to the *Valley Times*. I think my friend, David Dearing, who was gay, he covered the Gaming Commission [meetings] and all that stuff. David's still alive.¹⁴ I heard he's back home in Tennessee. He became publicity director at the Sahara eventually.¹⁵ And I think David said, "Why don't you come see Bob Brown?" I knew the *Valley Times*. I saw David at City Commission meetings and County Commission [meetings]. He covered that boring stuff, wrote obits, you know, the whole thing. He said, "Come meet Bob." I thought it was a fun newsroom. It was small, and we could come and go. And then I began to understand the different political things between the papers.

Which were?

Like, the *RJ* was much more right-wing and Republican. Bob Brown ... I never understood if he *had* a point of view. [laughs]

A lot of people wondered that!

And I began to see the *Sun* was more liberal and Democratic-leaning. It was also during the Watergate era. Oh, I remember they broke into the safe at Hank Greenspun's office, and that was our connection to Watergate.¹⁶ There was a lot of weird stuff going on here. I think this one guy I got assigned to was like a CIA

operative, and he said, "Oh, I have to tell you about the JFK assassination." And this and that. I drove around with him a couple of nights and then he disappeared. And I said, "I don't want to *hear*, I don't want to *know*. Unless you can substantiate it. I won't be *killed*!" [laughs] It was a wild time.

But the *Valley Times*. Bob was never complaining or difficult or nasty. And the *RJ* people *were*. Their management sucked. They were nasty to everybody. David [Dearing] was fun. It's funny, that young sports reporter, I just called the obit in [to] for Al [Chapin]—Ed Koch—he's at the *Sun* now.¹⁷ I think he was that young, really attractive kid [at the *Valley Times*]. And I said, "Oh, Ed, are you still as cute as ever?" He said, "No, I got married because everybody thought I was gay!" [laughs] I said, "Too *bad*!" Because David and I used to kind of ogle. He said, "Oh, yeah, I felt those stares." I said, "*Good*." He said he's going bald now. I said, "Good, join the crowd!" [laughs] We don't care!

As I said, Rob Schlegel¹⁸ used to be production manager for the *Valley Times*.

See, he must have been in the back. I would go back there once in awhile with David. I don't remember any good-looking guys, so I don't [remember Rob]. [laughs] Isn't that terrible? [laughs]

So it's all blank!

Except for that cute little sports writer. And Jim Seagraves was there, and Jim was a nice guy, too.

He went on to be PR.

Yeah, he's at the Stardust.

How long were you, then, at the *Valley Times*?

I'd say maybe 2 years, '76 to '78 or '79. I had three columns a week and wrote features and broke a few stories. Paul Anka's nightclub, Jubilation, we got that in our paper before anybody else.¹⁹ I could see it was kind of advertising-driven there, too, like the *RJ*, but not as blatant as the *RJ*. The *RJ* had no desire to have any kind of editorial credibility, and I learned more [about] that when I was with

Bob [Brown]. And David [Dearing] was always breaking stories on gaming and stuff. It was like a small investigative newspaper. I think it kept me interested in journalism, along with *Billboard*. I think the *RJ* really could have killed my desire to write.

Billboard then invited me to LA to work for them in the bureau and I jumped at the chance. I said, "That's a dream come true, to work in LA." The main job was West Coast Editor [for] Radio and TV. Which, I don't know how I ever did that, but that was everything from California back to the Mississippi. And, of course, if that wasn't enough. Then they had me covering Motown, the label; Ariola Records; again, the musician's union down there, the local. I had to write headlines. Little by little, I was doing the job of 4 or 5 people. Oh, and reviewing records every week, 45s as well as LPs.²⁰ Concerts, reviewing concerts.

* * *

You mentioned briefly that you had begun to understand that you were gay quite early.

Right.

Tell me in a little more detail about that. How early and how did you at that early age recognize it?

We didn't know what the term was. I'd never heard the term *homosexual*. But you just start acting on your feelings. I think they're emotional as well as intellectual. And, of course, *affectional*. Physical. I think my first experience was with Gary [Hager]'s oldest [brother]. There were 4 boys in the family next door, and Tim and I played around a couple of times. I thought it was great, but, of course, he went on to girls. I got very jealous. I was a little spurned queen. *Hell hath no fury!* And I started bad-mouthing him all over town, saying, "No, he's a bad person." But I didn't say he was gay or homosexual. We didn't even know the term.

How old were you?

Oh, this is 6 or 7. And you don't do much then. It's just like playing doctor. My mom caught us upstairs the first time, so we went down to the creek the next time. And she handled it pretty well. I mean, you know, she said, "What are you kids doing?" And I think she downplayed it because she didn't want to make a big deal. And then when I knew he wasn't gonna continue on, I said, "Well, there's the *next* son, the next oldest." Tim was my age. Mike was like a year behind us. It turns out he's gay-slash-bisexual now. Tim got married 2 or 3 times. I think Mike has been married twice. And Gary and I would just laugh about that. And Gary was 4 years younger than me. I think we started out just being friends, and then I thought, "Oh, my gosh! I'm going to be involved with three out of the four!" *[laughs]*. I missed the one in between. Age-wise. *[laughs]* I think Gary and I grew very close because of my parents' drinking, and he felt he was gay, too. You would just fantasize about everybody in the school, especially the athletes. It became a very emotionally close friendship. His dad worked and was very stressed out. I wouldn't call him abusive, but he did discipline the two older sons. I could hear them screaming and yelling from our house, being spanked and stuff. I think finally he calmed down because Pat and Gary didn't get much of [that discipline]. I don't think Gary got any of it, but it traumatized him. It scared him. So I think, you know, it was a natural thing [between us] physically and everything else—emotionally, mentally. I was frankly stunned to find out the whole world wasn't gay. I said, "Why do guys want to do that with girls? Ooooooh!" I just thought that was unnatural. *[laughs]* And we were in the country. We didn't know gay bars.

You didn't know the terms?

No. *Nothing!*

And in a town as small as that ...

It was pretty prevalent. My mother would tell me later, especially as a teenager—and I think it's because she knew I was gay—but she would say, "For some reason there's a high incidence of homosexuality in our suburb." And I said, "Oh, it's gotta be the water. Or the dirt." *[laughs]* Who knows?

It doesn't sound like it was a particularly traumatic context for you to be gay in.

No. And, again, I was frankly surprised ... I don't even know when I first was told it was sinful or sick. It wasn't in the Presbyterian church. I remember they didn't talk much about it. But I think some of the stupid books your parents give you about teenage sex, you know. I would read that and I'd go, "Well, I don't feel sick. I don't feel perverted, deviant. What are all these words?" I just dismissed it. And then I did have a little guilt. When I had an affair with Michael in between Gary [and Tim], I thought, "Maybe there is something wrong with me. I'm not being loyal to Gary." I think it was more *that*, not being monogamous. And that must be how my parents raised me. And the Presbyterians. I remember [my parents] were gonna come back from a convention in New York and I was gonna talk to them. And then I thought, "Oh, that's stupid. I *like* this. [laughs] Those books have got to be stupid."

And there weren't a lot of fag jokes when I was in high school. Nothing was happening. The Gay Movement hadn't really started. I began to hear about gay bars through Gary. He started going to the bars, I think, when we were in college.

In Buffalo?

Yeah, and there were quite a few. Maybe 5 or 6. I wouldn't go 'cause I didn't drink. I was scared away from drinking because of what was happening at home. And I was very jealous because then [Gary] met someone. And ironically, David Savisco—he was from Iowa Falls, he was an ice skater; well, David's [in Las Vegas now]. He's got a leather business, he did all the shows here. [laughs] He's a sweet guy. I was so jealous. I haven't connected with [David] yet. I don't even know if he knows Gary died of AIDS in '91.

But it was those experiences of being jealous and being hurt. And we kept being friends, and we played around a few more times when he was at Hobart. That was a big step for me. I had joined the Mormon church, been through the temple, wore the garments—but I was still in love with Gary. And I said, you know, "These garments aren't going to stop me from loving someone." [laughs] They came off *real* quick! But I remember I had to stop and think about that. I said, "This is a conscious decision. It doesn't make sense. I *love* this person." And garments are not a shield from love. They were symbolic of your commitment to the Mormon church. But I did struggle with that. Of course, when I saw him,

you know I don't think I even took them to Hobart. I think I left 'em at home! [laughs] I was becoming inactive [in the church] even then. Even before my mission. I think the witch hunt at BYU had really upset me. Here I was joining, I'd just been baptized, and yet

This guy from Buffalo, New York had accused all of us and turned in 75 names. He was in my creative writing class as well as oratorio choir. He had self-hatred for himself, and he said, "Why can you accept yourself?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't really think [the church] teaches it's wrong." And they really didn't. It was kind of not the number one question. Now it is. They won't even teach you the missionary lessons unless you agree to be celibate.

In any context?

Oh, yeah. Definitely. But *especially* gay. That seems to be a separate thing there.

It was weird. They said, "You have to go up and see a General Authority before you commit to BYU the next fall."

I said, "Well, good, 'cause I have questions about [lack of] Blacks in the priesthood. I don't accept that, either." I mean, it was just certain things. And I'd been praying to meet a General Authority and I said, "Well, this is a strange way to have prayer answered, getting pulled into a witch hunt." [laughs] Weird!

So I went up there and I felt like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. I was very intimidated. Spencer Kimball was the head of the Council of the Twelve²¹ then. And he was one of the two apostles that dealt with homosexuality. It was the standard line. He was saying words to me, like he said, "Do you commit fellatio?" [pronounces it *fel-ah-tee-o*] I had no idea. I thought he was speaking in tongues. He was mis-pronouncng fellatio [pronounces it *correctly*]. And he says, "*Saw-do-mee*." And I thought, "What the hell's that?" I said, "I love someone in New York. I go home summers, and he is my lover. And it's really none of the church's business." So I was surprised he let me come back [to BYU]. Maybe, in a way, he shouldn't have. I said, "I signed the honor code. That covers BYU, not what I do in the summer." So almost it was like splitting hairs at that point. I said, "I don't drink on campus, I'm not involved with anybody, 'cause Gary's in New York and I'm going home to him in the summer time." I was very committed, you know. I *should* have been committed, mentally!

But the whole witch hunt—Fred MacMurray's son was involved in that, you know, the actor from *My Three Sons*. He was in one of the dorm complexes with

us. And again, that was that evolutionary process. I was meeting returned missionaries who were gay, they were going to gay bars in Salt Lake City. The Sun,²² which is one of the older ones there.

What was it specifically that instigated that witch hunt?

Don Attridge was his name from Buffalo. He turned us all in.

Who did he turn you in to?

University Standards. It was on-campus then. They're off-campus now. I've heard they're still doing aversion shock therapy,²³ but it's all off-campus. Which is unbelievable. I never got to that point. I think they'd bring you in for two or three interviews to feel you out on that. And they just knew they couldn't get anywhere with me. They never even brought up the term [aversion shock therapy]. But I didn't know they were doing that until a couple of years later, and then I was just really angry.

What's the job of University Standards?

It's like, if you're caught drinking or smoking, you were reported and you'd have to go in and talk to them and say, "What are you gonna do about it?" It wasn't like they were offering help. It was like a Gestapo.

Did they have moles on campus?

Oh, spies, oh, yeah. And the spies then were mainly making sure professors were teaching church doctrine in every area. That did get in the newspapers when I was there, even on campus. The *Daily Universe*—I wrote for them. It was very upsetting because it was mostly political, the Political Science Department. There were people that were liberal, and if [the spies] went in there and heard them teaching stuff that wasn't Republican-oriented They never said *Republican*, but you knew what was going on.

So there was this kind of underlying discontent [in me]. I know I've always been naive most of my life. I got most gullible in my high school yearbook that I worked on. Here I was going to be the big New Yorker go out to BYU and show

them how to runs things. [laughs] Well, let me tell you! [laughs] The Mormon Mafia term, that applies. That *was* the Reagan White House years later. Oh, boy.

What were the logistics of calling these 75 boys in?

You'd get a letter in the mail, "University Standards wants to see you." And, of course, you know that's not good. And I went down there and I was angry. I said, "I want to know who said this. I *am* homosexual, but I haven't done anything here on campus. I obey the Honor Code." And all that. Well, they will not tell you the name of your accuser.

I said, "Isn't this the United States of America? *Hello!*" And so they knew they had their hands full. I went back twice. And the guy that was there was just an asshole. He was, I think, a sado-masochistic person.

What did they ask you or accuse you of?

Well, they'd say, "What kind of sexual habits do you have?"

I said, "That's none of your business. What do you do with *your* life?" I said, "*Excuuuse* me! I'm going to Salt Lake City. I'm just going to see a General Authority." And that was really the last I heard of it. It was *big* news in the dorms. We were in Deseret Towers, the high-rises, right near the Provo temple. And there were a lot of gay guys in those dorms. But, you know, we didn't talk about it. Nothing ever went on that I knew. Later on they told me there were [sexual activities]. And I said, "Oh, *damn!*" [laughs] "Shit, I missed out again!"

Was it your choice? Could you say, "I want to see the General Authority," and then go? Or did you have to be invited?

You either went or you didn't come back the next semester. That was the terms. I said, "Fine." So I saw [Spencer] Kimball, and he apologized. He actually apologized to me. He said, "I'm sorry you were wrongly accused." And then it wasn't till, I think, a year or two later—and I was still going to school there—that I heard about aversion shock therapy. And then I started hearing about church leaders' kids being thrown out of their homes. One boy I knew committed suicide. And then I was getting very angry. And I'm surprised I did go on my mission, but I wanted to because of the Vietnam War. I said, "Let's be realistic

here. Let's try to avoid the war." And yet, I still wanted to kind of share the *good* things I'd gotten out of the Mormon church. But like I said, really halfway through my mission, that was it. I had had it.

Was homosexuality then as big an issue as it would be a few years later [in the church]?

I think each year it got worse because they didn't know how to deal with this. Kimball—I won't even be circumspect. He was proud, he told me, of excommunicating his nephew in Phoenix for being gay. I thought, at this point, this man, I can't even talk to him about it. But I said, "President Kimball, the bottom line is I was involved by the age of 6 or 7." You're supposedly not held accountable for your sins till you're 10 years old in the Mormon church.

He said, "Children are not sexual."

I said, "Well, that doesn't make sense, either, because children *are* sexual. And I just happen to be *homosexual*."

But he was pulling out all the tired scriptures from the Old Testament, and I said, "I don't think that applies to our day." And science was just starting to do the genetic stuff. I said, "I'm not going to be here and argue with you. I kind of respect your position, but I just have to agree to disagree with you."

And to give him a little credit—they still kind of believed in personal revelation then. That's how you join the church: you read the *Book of Mormon*, you pray about it. I thought I'd live with the Mormons for a few years before I joined, and I thought most of them were sincere. And they were not as right-wing as they are now. I mean, I never would have joined if it was [then] like it is today. It was just all these happening at once—being baptized, being accused of being gay, you know. And it was all just I mean, my grades suffered for it. I just wanted to get on with my schooling. Get on with my life.

What was it that persuaded you to join the Mormon church in the first place?

I had a very intense conversion. And I think they were after me. I mean, there's only 4% that go [to BYU] that aren't Mormon. So the minute they find out [you're in that 4%] in any of your classes It's almost like the *Stepford Wives*: people would cozy up to you. I don't now if they were being extra nice. I think most of the conversion thing came in the dormitories. I had met kids from

other parts of the country, mainly the Northeast and Chicago. And I met one Jewish boy who converted, who was fascinating to talk to.

And I was *looking* for something. I was looking for something to hold on to. Especially with what was happening at home. And Kimball made me mad once when he said, "We can keep you from coming back here and maybe you'll have to go back and live with your alcoholic parents."

I said, "Excuse me? They're my parents, regardless. I love them and I know it's not their fault." I hadn't even been to Alanon [Alcoholics Anonymous] yet and learned all this, but kind of through society and the media. So I really resented him trying to intimidate me that way. And I said, "Fine, send me home. If you don't want me coming back, fine. I have things to offer this church and this school." I was really involved with a lot of things down there. So, sometimes I *was* intimidated, other times I would stand my ground. And I think we just agreed to disagree. And we were friends for a few years. But the more I heard about the aversion shock therapy and stuff, I just would get ... , I said, "This is just not Christian. I can't believe you do that to people." I said, "Do you do that to straight people that are unhappy? Maybe they should be gay. Why don't you just show them straight porno and give them the treatment? Where does it say that in the bible or the *Book of Mormon*?"

Oh, that was another thing. There's really nothing about homosexuality in the *Book of Mormon*. Or the New Testament. See? I would get into some theological battles.

How would they respond to that?

They would just agree to disagree

It was funny. Behind closed doors, in those offices, I think they thought they could work with you. Kimball had a pamphlet out on repentance and homosexuality. But when they hit those pulpits, it was hellfire and damnation. And when I was investigating the church in those first three years at BYU, there were still a few liberal apostles like Hugh B. Brown.²⁴ And David O. McKay²⁵ was the head of the church. And he taught [that] love is the greatest gift. And love yourself, and love one another. It was none of this Don't Be Immoral crap. That really started to happen later.

Why later?

I took World Religions [class] my senior year, and I began to see all world religions were basically the same. So they never should teach that course at BYU! [laughs] Like, there was a messiah figure in most world religions, and a Mother Mary figure. I just began to think, you know, nobody really has all the answers. They think they do. And I thought most of the Mormon people were sincere and they lived their religion 7 days a week, and it wasn't the judgemental thing. The pendulum hadn't swung. I think a lot of religions, they all do that. If you look at their histories. And they urge people out that don't agree. When the Mormons were in Illinois, and they built the largest city—Chicago was a cow town, and here was Nauvoo with their second temple. And we heard there was a gay brothel located near the [second] temple, and some of the church authorities would use it. And, in fact, even going back to the first temple in Kirtland, Ohio, which is now owned by the Reorganized Church—the Nauvoo one is long gone. They torched the city. At Kirtland, we have records that Joseph Smith was sealed to other men, like in the marriage ceremony. Well, some of the church authorities knew we got word of that, and they said, "Well, it was just a friendship thing." *Uh, uh.* A lot of us think Joseph Smith might have been bisexual.²⁶

But it's just interesting. They were very tolerant of minorities. They wanted as many people to join as they could to build up the church. And they were so persecuted [themselves]. Well, when they excommunicated me in '83 in Buffalo, I had a *12-page statement* and I released it to the media and the whole bit. I said, "They have a selective memory, going from a persecuted minority to now persecuting their gay and lesbian children. And I said if there is going to be accountability, it's gonna be on their shoulders more than mine.

Was your excommunication a public affair?

I made it a public affair?

How?

I called all my friends in the news media. I said, "I'm not going quietly." And I felt it was good publicity for Affirmation.²⁷ We had started a chapter there, and I'm sure that's why they came after me then. I was becoming open and a problem.

I'd love to see my dossier in the mountains in Salt Lake.²⁸ I'm sure it's a big thick book! *[laughs]*

How did they ...

Start the excommunication?

My dad had died in January or February of 1983 of cirrhosis of the liver. Kind of like Al [Chapin]²⁹ just died. I was going to church there on and off. In fact, everyone blamed me for the Mormon church being built in a suburb next door to us. And the new Mormon bishop said, "Yeah, you can hold the service for your dad." And I said, "You better, because he put me through my mission and he never joined the church. So that's the least you can do."

And then he said, "One of the sisters says you're gay."

I said, "*Duh!* Call Kimball, 1-800-Salt Lake City."

I guess he called them. But then he asked me one night sitting in the car, "Have you acted on your feelings?"

I said, "Of course. I did years ago. I haven't stopped."

Well, that was all they had to hear again. But I'm sure it was Affirmation. It was like Sonia Johnson later on and the Equal Rights Amendment.³⁰ There was just no room for dissent. And I was questioning. You can't question.

How do they actually excommunicate you? Do they say, "Begone! Foul fiend!"?

[laughs] I wish they had. Or like in *Becket*, you know, take the candle and stamp it upside down. Would have been much more dramatic.

You get a letter, just like [University] Standards. "You've been called in to the bishop's office." You go for a bishop interview. He asked the same tired things: "Has anything changed?"

I said, "No. If anything, I really don't want to be a member anymore. The way you treat women and other minorities. No. Something's not right in Glocca Morra." So then it goes from the bishops in the ward to the stake president at the stake level. Which is like, I don't know, in the Catholic church the diocese. And *they* send you a letter and say, "We're going to hold an excommunication court. We request your presence." A lot of people don't go. I said, "Oh, gladly! I'll have a 12-page statement ready to read." I was ready with bells on. I couldn't wait. And I called the media at the same time and I said, "Hey. I think this needs to be

advertised because we're a lot of Mormon kids in that area struggling. Really, for their sakes, too, I've got to get the word out that there's a chapter [of Affirmation]." I thought they [gay Mormon kids] probably won't come because this'll scare them even more, but use the mainstream media, get the word out.

Then you go to the court—it's a kangaroo court, it's all decided before you get there. It's at the stake house—S-T-A-K-E [laughs]. I always thought that was kind of a strange name—stake through the heart. And my mom went, and some gay friends. I don't know if Gary was there or not. And the news media was there. Oh, they [the Mormon court] just hate publicity.

Is it open to the public?

No! Closed doors.

So I walk into a room, and there's like 24 men sitting there, 12 on one side, 12 on the other. One person speaks against you, reads the charges. Another one supposedly speaks *for* you, [but] it's like a token. It's *bullshit*, as Mother would say. They started the proceedings just talking about all this.

I said, "Whatever happened to opening prayer? Everything I've ever been to, on campus, off, in church, out, opening prayer."

"Oh, we did that before we came in."

I said, "Stop the damned proceedings now. I want an opening prayer right now. I get *that* much at least."

And then they proceeded. They said, "Do you have anything in your defense?"

I said, "Yes, here's a 12-page statement. I want to read it into the record." I don't know if they had a stenographer. I don't think they had any of that. It's not that formal. And then I just said at the end of it, "I'm sorry this has to happen, but the church is becoming more conservative and right-wing. And, in my opinion, less spiritual. And you're going to have to throw your children out of the church. I hope you're prepared to do that." And then I walked outside and read a statement to the media and gave them all my statement. And begrudgingly, some of the men [from the proceedings] came up later and shook my hand and said it took a lot of courage.

"Even though we disagree with you, we wish you well."

I was really surprised at some of that.

Was there a final statement of some kind, that you're no longer Mormon?

No. There was nothing dramatic. I was *hoping*. But you get a letter later and it says your name's removed from the church records. Then you never get the home teachers and all that ever again. *THANK GOD!* But the missionaries still go by your house. But then sometimes, you know, they'll X that out somewhere and say, "Don't stop at *that* house anymore." [laughs]

It's like something that has no sense of reality that a person agrees to accept. And it has nothing to do with real life or anything. It's like a big play, or a movie.

It's like a corporation. It's like AT & T.

And it's funny you should say that, in the temple, the temple ceremonies used to be just plays and you'd go from room to room, from the Pre-Existence Room to Today's World to The Next Life, and they would have characters at the front of the rooms acting it out. Now it's all movies. But it's just like, you know, "Where's reality, people?" I said, "My gay friends in the church are leading lives of self-destruction because they bought into what [you say]. You're brainwashing them to hate themselves. They're drinking themselves to death, they're doing drugs." That was before AIDS. We didn't know about AIDS then. It was just beginning to happen. And I said, "What would Jesus of Nazareth say to this? At least the one *I* knew and was raised on. I *was* a Presbyterian, so maybe that's part of this problem." I said, "I feel very sorry for you people. *Very* sorry. And I'm gonna miss some of this. I'm gonna miss the music and fellowship." And I still miss some of it.

You know, my grandmother warned me. She said, "Oh, they're a cult! You better not join them." And I can see how people can interpret [it that way] because [it] can be very insular. And *so* controlling.

Let me back up a little bit. You said you were raised as a Presbyterian, and I think you said that there is no specific dogma that really proscribes homosexuality in the Presbyterian religion?

Back then they didn't even talk about it. I think they would have if it was a big deal. Of course, now they're having the big battle over ordination and I'm getting very upset about that. Because they're almost getting to the point, you know, Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin. Except in my church in Buffalo, it was a

More Light congregation, which means we expect more light to be shed on the subject. I think there's about 70 of those in the country.

That's a specific term, More Light?

And it means they're openly accepting of gays and lesbians. They will put you in church positions—but they can't ordain you. Some More Light churches *have* ordained in defiance. But, you know, I'm *over* the whole issue. Straight people—go understand your sexuality. You don't even know what it means to be heterosexual. How *dare* you!

Do you remember much going to church as a child, the Presbyterian church, also knowing that you were gay—though maybe not knowing the semantics of it? What effect did the church have on you, spiritually, then?

I think as a child, even when I knew I was gay, the two issues didn't come together because they didn't talk about it in the church. I think more as a teenager it may have become an issue because of *society*, and [I was] going through confirmation class. But here, again, there were no questions about What are you doing sexually? Gay *or* straight. It's just that Presbyterians tend to be very philosophical and they would talk about your commitment to the teachings of, you know, Jesus of Nazareth, the whole bit, and love and compassion. And, in fact, we even worked with migrant workers one summer teaching them English. Very socially activist. *It was not an issue.* It was beginning [to become an issue] in society, but we never talked about it anywhere. And my minister—I give him a lot of credit. I think his name was Gibson Lewis. He was a very big man, he was Scottish, like a lot of Presbyterians, and he was like David O. McKay in the Mormon church. He talked about love and be kind to one another and serve others and help people who aren't as fortunate. And even people who are *more* fortunate might be messed up, too. I'm sure it was a liberal philosophy that was just instilled in me. And live the Golden Rule.

Given that, then, what was it that the Presbyterian religion lost for you, or that the Mormon religion overwhelmed?

I wrote a letter to Reverend Lewis because I thought I owed it to him to let him know why I was joining the Mormon church. I think basically I said I felt they had more answers than the Presbyterians, and I was looking for answers. And I think I had a fear of death, and the Mormons took that away because they were so sure there was life after life. The Presbyterians *hope* and believe there is, but the Mormons say, "We're *sure!*" And, you know, Christ has appeared in the temples, and this and that. And it was like a hands-on thing. And I think they live their religion more on a daily basis, and that impressed me. But then, of course, instead of everything being black and white, as [the Mormons] claim, the shades of gray were still there. Especially as they changed their position on being gay. And like I said, I was not politically savvy at all in life, and then I began to see politics *everywhere*. On the job, in a relationship, *everything* is political. Everything. I began to wise up and see that most religions are money and power and control, also.

Is this a realization you've come to fairly recently in your life?

No. Even before my mission I was seeing that. Again, I go back to that graduate class [in world religions] at BYU [*laughs*]. They should never have taught that! You learn about the Crusades and how they murdered people who weren't Christian, and just all these horrific things that were done in the name of God. And that questioning, if you're rational, never goes away. I mean, how can a loving God let that happen? Or how can people who say they represent God do that? I think it still happens today in other countries.

You started a thought, before we turned the recorder back on again, about the attraction of a religion like Mormonism for gay people.

It's so repressive. I've met a lot of gay people through Affirmation and Dignity³¹ here and in Buffalo who were drawn to Pentecostal and born-again. I think it's [because] they will take over your life, you don't have to deal with the issue [of being gay]. You can repress it or be a complete hypocrite like a lot of gay Mormons in this city do. And they even jokingly admit it: "Oh, I go out and suck cocks every night and then I go to priesthood Sunday morning!" *Hello!*

I don't think that's happening as much anymore, at least, I hope it isn't because of gay liberation and gay sensitivity and the pride. And like what *you're* doing.

You're giving us a sense of history because God knows we don't need to repeat [our mistakes]. [laughs] At least, I hope we don't repeat it!

That's what I find interesting. That a person, a gay person—not necessarily a gay person, but that's our subject—who comes from a background of social repression and religious repression, why would they try to find a niche in an institution that is so repressive? Why? In your opinion.

Well, it involves self-hatred or self-denial. I never had that. And I think a lot of straight people that go into these controlled religions have the same feelings. They're tired, they're worn out, they don't want to deal with stuff anymore, and I think you click things off in your mind. I think any religion that's pure should not have all the answers and you need to struggle daily with it and evolve and become a good person in whatever system or scheme that is. It's not easy to be a person of *any* faith, and yet being spiritual takes a lot more work than being religious. There's a big difference. Any fool can go to meetings and say, "I'm going to heaven because I do this, I do that." But going out there and working with drug abusers or homeless, acts of kindness, no conditions. You're not getting Brownie points in your church. Just in your heart and your mind you're doing what has to be done. Or *should* be.

I think because society is evolving better and liberating—women's liberation, gay liberation—people are thinking for themselves. Education. Information. And if you're rational If you study the bible, the New Testament—they didn't start writing the New Testament down until 400 years *after* Christ. So don't tell me *that's* word-for-word. And the Old Testament's the same way. I'm a journalist. You look at it writing-wise—if I don't write something down within a day or two of interviewing people, I would lose a lot.

So maybe that's why there are so many religions. Nobody has all the answers.

Given that then, why, if a gay person is disaffected or unhappy with Catholicism or Mormonism, why would they establish Affirmation or Dignity? Which is essentially the same thing.

I don't think it's the same thing. I think a lot of us look at those as Twelve-Step Programs.³² Although I think it's a dichotomy. I know Dignity went through this because the Catholic church got very sophisticated and started splitting

Dignity into those wanting to try working in the church and those [who were] militant and wanting to just scream and yell from the outside. I look at a lot of the gay religious groups—except MCC which is very religious. And Pentecostal—I can't relate to that tradition. I interviewed Troy Perry here in Vegas at the *RJ* before I ever knew I'd become such an activist.³³ But ideally, I think those groups should not be telling people how to live their lives. Like the Affirmation group here. We tell people, "You gotta make your decisions, you're gonna have to live with 'em. Don't be hasty." It's like P-FLAG.³⁴ We tell people you have to evolve and be ready. "But we're there for you."

And then some chapters may be real churchy and religious. They're not supposed to be.

Then they're not really substitutions for the [traditional institution]?

Oh, no. Hm, um. You don't take the sacrament. Dignity may do that. I think they're a little more churchy. I don't know any Mormon chapter [of Affirmation] that does that.

So Affirmation isn't like the Reformed Mormon Church for gay people?

Oh, no. It's a social coming together. They're supposed to tolerate everybody from, like, *me*, this excommunicated and very outspoken [person] to people that are still church organists and dealing with all kinds of issues.

Then a forum for commiseration more than anything?

I think it's the fellowship. And yet, that can be abused, too. I know people that just go and think, "I'm just gonna go and find someone to sleep with." And that happens in straight groups, too! *[laughs]*

How successful is Affirmation as an organization on the national level?

I just saw their national newsletter. I think there's about 20 or 30 groups. And there's even a few in foreign countries. And it can range from, like, here in Vegas we've been as small as 7 [members]. This is the second reincarnation of this

chapter.³⁵ They've been as high as 50 to 75 [members] here. And that's a pretty good size. Los Angeles is the biggest.

Describe an Affirmation meeting to me.

Well, the one we had last Thursday, we were all sitting at this table and just talking. They have a yearly conference and they were in Palm Springs. Usually one or two people will ... not *dominate* the conversation, but those that went [to Palm Springs] gave a report. And then we just talk about what's going on locally, how they can get more people to come out [to Affirmation meetings]. How they can publicize it more. And then we just talk about our experiences, how we all got to where we are, or where we hope to go. What we think about where we're living. You know. Some are in a relationship, some are out. Some have been hurt by them, some haven't been.

Does the Mormon church recognize Affirmation, at least that it exists?

No. They won't let you put anything up in the churches about it. In fact, here comes the spy mentality. Sometimes if they find out who goes to the meetings, then So you have to be very careful with the lists of people and stuff like that.

I know, for instance, when we started the Dignity chapter here we met in St. James the Apostle Catholic Church.³⁶

I think I went to those. Yeah.

But in the interim, in the years after that when I lost interest in it, then the Catholic Church decided Dignity's no longer allowed to meet in Catholic churches.

That's right. That happened in Buffalo. I think in Buffalo they do masses in homes and the priests [laughs] The gay priests. *That's* kind of an oxy-Mormon! [laughs]

You were involved with Dignity on some level, too?

Very much in Buffalo. I think of all the groups before we started Affirmation, I felt close to them. And that's probably, again, because there's a central figure [in] the church and there's a hierarchy, *patriarchy*—don't get me started on that! And yet, I admired a lot of the Dignity people because most of them had the monogamous background I did. And just, you know, going out and helping other people, trying to be good. Good folks.

Where does Affirmation meet here, in Las Vegas?

Different homes. They'll just meet in different homes. Or go to restaurants, like have socials, go out and do things together.

Now, are there women, lesbians, involved in Affirmation?

There are, but none here locally. I mean, off and on they come here. But, like LA, I think two women are head of the chapter there. And San Francisco tends to be a little more [gender-varied]. We tried to address that back in my chapter [in Buffalo]. We had one or two [women] from Rochester that would come to meetings. But I think that's just part of the gay community problem, too. I helped start a mixed choir in Buffalo because I wanted to bring us together. And it's like, New York City, they're very separate camps. I hope it's not like that in LA because I don't understand that mindset at all.

You said this is the second incarnation of Affirmation in Las Vegas. When was the first?

I think the chapter kind of fell apart the last year or two. And that was a leadership problem. This is what they've told me. The guy that was in charge before was not truthful and honest. He took money from the chapter. He also was doing drugs and partying. You know, you just can't do that and be a leader.

That's an old story in Las Vegas.

It can be anywhere, gay or straight, but I think gay is a little more intense. And it was just party party. [That] doesn't hold you together too long, I think.

Tell me what you personally are looking for in a religious context.

Right now? You know, I feel like I did when I left the Mormons. I feel like I'm in limbo. And I think most of it's like ... ; maybe it's a natural evolutionary thing again. I was active in the church choir back in Buffalo for 10 years and we toured Great Britain in '87. And yet, there were some closeted gays in the choir and that would kind of tick me off. And some of the active gay people left, even left our church, our *congregation*, because they didn't think [we] were doing enough. And the recent conference they had in Albuquerque, like I said, here they go again about ordaining gays or *not* ordaining gays. The national policy. And I'm just getting fed up with all this politics. It's BS. My mom, she was very critical of the Presbyterians on this issue. She was all for people living together before they got married. She said if they're not sexually compatible, gay *or* straight, that's crazy. "Why get married? Make the mistake I did." She made *two* mistakes, married *two* alcoholics.

I feel now I don't know. I think because of my relationship and friendship with Keith [Todtenhagen], that I want to devote more time to that, now. And it's very selfish. I want to make that work. And I think because of what I went through with Mom as a care-giver—I stopped having time for the church that much. I had to help her. Now I feel like I'm again working on my personal life. I told Keith I'm really beginning to feel like I almost want to look into Judaism. I said, "It'd probably be beneficial for our careers in LA!" [*laughs*] We went to that service down here for Joey Skilbred³⁷—he died when I first got here in May. And even back in Buffalo, a long-time lesbian activist there is Jewish, and she got married in the temple there. I really admire the Jewish people. I think there's a lot of strength there. They must be doing something right. And there's a liberal element I could even look into affiliating [with]. But I'm gonna have a hard time saying I don't believe in Jesus of Nazareth anymore. I don't know if they ask you to do that or not. I want to look into their *culture*.

I'm always going to need some kind of spiritual, religious thing in my life. I can't do without it. And I don't know if that means I've gotta get involved musically again, or into some kind of social thing where I help unfortunates. I've almost thought of going back into the ministry.

You were in the ministry?

[laughs] Well, I consider the Mormons like the ministry. A mission. I don't know if I want to do that much. I asked some people in the Presbyterian church who were openly gay and lesbian in the ministry, and they said, "Oh, my God, Hanford, you'd be hitting your head against a brick wall again." I did that once. I don't think I want to do that again.

So I don't know. Right now, I miss going to church on Sundays off and on. But I still have that spiritual thing in my life. I still pray. And when you lose friends like Al, I really need that [spiritual resource]. To have conversations, and just say, "I miss that person. I'm glad he was in my life and he was such a wonderful guy." And yet, sometimes I think being a gay activist, you're spiritual, too. I mean, I almost feel like I'm getting tired of being an activist. After 15 years now. I've marched in New York twice, I've marched in Washington. Started a gay paper in Buffalo. And now I feel like I'm ready to go on to whatever this next thing is.

Do you feel that a spiritual person needs a religion?

No. If you're strong enough and you've evolved far enough, I think you can stand on your own two feet. But I think you need to have people around you that can nurture that. Keith, even though he has a Mormon background, he was a child. A lot of the things I'm telling him now he's just *amazed* at. And yet, in his own way he is a very spiritual, loving person. I don't think you can do it alone. And yet I can be around all kinds of people and I'm way beyond [being] judgemental of anything anymore. You know, if people want to sleep around, that's their business. I don't have any feelings one way or another. Except when they come to me and say, "Oh, I've got such low self-esteem." Well, let's look at your *lifestyle*.

And I don't think being gay is a lifestyle. I think it's a *life*.

Do you think gay people in general are more acutely aware of the difference between religion and spirituality?

Oh, I think so, yeah.

How come? ... I'd drive around the Le Cafe parking lot going, "Oh, I can't go in ... I can't go in. I'm too scared! And I'll be rejected anyway." It was just too

Because they've been treated so badly by institutionalized religion. For centuries. And it's kind of like women and the vote and all that. How women were persecuted in the Middle Ages, burned at the stake for being witches. That was all political. I think you finally begin to wise up and you say, "I am who I am and I'm gonna feel good about myself, and I don't need institutionalized religion to validate me." And yet, I think that we need the fellowship, the commiserating. And maybe we do need a church, I don't know. I mean, MCC [sighs] I don't know. Maybe we *don't* need a church. But I think it's important, too I keep thinking, well, maybe we should stay in our churches and fight the battle and educate people and be a resource. But sometimes that gets old, too.

So maybe there's another step to evolve to. I don't know.

You think Las Vegas was a little bit different in that way, then? That it was more of a
Well, enough about religion.

Yeah! [laughs] ... was like me in high school. I might compare it to that. People ... I was gay, no one cared because they liked me, and I was a fun person to ... around. I think that when this * * * political and people see you want a ... of the pie, and some of the action, and it involves money. Well, there we go ... Then it's a threat.

You told me on the telephone that when you really came out as a gay person, you were in Las Vegas. Can you look back and remember feeling whether there was a particular attitude in Las Vegas toward gay people?

I think everyone pretty much stereotyped us: "Oh, it's mostly the show dancers. They're gay." Or, people knew there were gay bars and it was the *disco era*, so disco kind of brought all of us together in a party mood. I was always afraid to go in the bars until I really had *Billboard* [behind me] and I could go with Liberace³⁸ to Le Cafe³⁹, or I could go with I was gonna say Phyllis Diller, but Joan Rivers. Same thing! Or Rip Taylor. The misconceptions had finally come through [to me] from society that, you know, gay bars are probably where axe murderers went. And, you know, drug pushers. And it was all *true!* [laughs]

You bought into that? ... to accept me on my terms now. And I had to know they were doing that. ... tough. Almost everybody knew. I sent my dad a thing on ... Father's Day which was nasty and mean, but I was trying to get back at him.

Kinda. Yeah. I'd drive around the Le Cafe parking lot going, "Oh, I can't go in there alone. I'm too scared! And I'll be rejected anyhow." It was just too overwhelming.

Was Las Vegas more tolerant of the show element that was gay than they would be of ordinary people [who were gay]?

Oh, probably. Everyone knew gays were in the arts. And hairdressers. It was very stereotypical, but it was kind of live-and-let-live. I don't remember ever hearing about police raids or any of that stuff [in Las Vegas]. I kind of feel maybe in a lot of ways gay liberation might have forced the issue and brought some of that *on us*. But that was part of a natural process, too.

Do you think Las Vegas was a little bit different in that way, then? That it was more of a live-and-let-live?

I think so. It was like me in high school. I might compare it to that. People knew I was gay, no one cared because they liked me, and I was a fun person to be around. I think th[at] when things become political and people see you want a piece of the pie, and some of the action, and it involves money. Well, there we go again. Then it's a threat.

How did you come out? Some people come out ...

In a blaze of glory?

Yeah. And some don't.

As I said, the *Billboard* thing afforded me a slower [coming out] process, to kind of get there. And it was funny. It was like the Mormon thing—I sent *Books of Mormon* to everybody and a testimony. Well, when I came out I sent letters to everybody. It was a similar thing. It was like my 12-page statement. I said, "You know, here it is. I'm gay and you've probably known it." It was kind of like they had to accept me on my terms now. And I had to know they were doing that. And some family was tough. Almost everybody knew. I sent my dad a thing on Father's Day which was nasty and mean, but I was trying to get back at him.

Although he told me he'd known gay people at Syracuse [University] and he'd been hit on. And yet, he never said anything bad about gay people. It was very interesting. Mom only made a few comments once in awhile, but I think she just didn't know how to deal with it at that point.

What's your definition of community? And, in particular, gay community?

Oy! Yeah, that's a big issue with me now. Sometimes I feel there *is* a community, sometimes I don't. And I don't know if that's because we have kept ourselves so insular like the Mormons. There are parallels. Buffalo was dealing with this when I left, and I don't know if it's because Buffalo's going through economic hard times and the pieces of the pie are smaller there. Here in Vegas things are expanding, but it seems like the community's going through the same thing.

You use the term community, so you know enough about it to apply it here.

I think I'd define community—and this is my journalist's bias—as they have newspapers, they have publications, they have organizations. And I think there's a genuine caring for one another. I mean, there's gay bars. But I think we have a farther way to go in all gay communities [to becoming] sincerely a community. And not being so critical of each other and harsh. I don't know if that's because we're all just so witty and sarcastic. Or because we are a minority, you sometimes turn oppression on yourselves.

When you were here that first period, between '73 and '79, would you in any way be able to apply the term gay community to what was here?

No. Not by the definition I just gave you. There were show kids, there were the bars, there was the disco thing. I'm sure there were no newspapers.⁴⁰ I think Dignity was here, and that was very important for a lot of us. At least, for me. I wanted to go to Affirmation, but there was no chapter. I first went to Affirmation when I went to LA. I just don't remember anything here except for

Dignity. I went there, too, hoping to find a relationship. Like I said, I was having an affair with the guy at A[ssociated] P[ress] at the time. [laughs] I was kind of content in that area. But I was so busy with my career. We hadn't really gotten into that gay liberation stuff yet. We didn't *know* we should have a community or a paper.

Yet I will say the bars Le Cafe *was* a community. Marge [Jacques].⁴¹

Aside from Dignity, were there any other organizations or even informal social groups that you remember?

They must have been so closeted that we never heard. Like in Buffalo, there are very well-to-do [gay] doctors and lawyers and powerful people and they don't want to have anything to do with the "community." And that's too bad.

Once you had come out and decided, "I gotta do something about this," what did you do about it?

Well, just on a personal level, alone with the Mormon church, we had the Young Adult groups meeting in people's places. And the statements might have been small, but, like, I would have *After Dark*⁴² on my coffee table, or *Playgirl*.⁴³ I had hung Ken Duncan pictures of nude dancers on the wall. So they'd come and see all that and that was kind of part of it. At the *Valley Times*, I don't remember if we talked much about gay stuff there. I mean, David [Dearing] and I were pretty open and obvious. And David was a big partier. He just had a *notorious* reputation, but he was *so* much fun, though. We weren't real political. We were just so busy. When you go to two shows a night and review them [for *Billboard Magazine*], and you have deadlines. And then I was working with the *Valley Times*, too, and that just kept me going. I don't know if we just didn't think there was a need to be politically involved or have a community. There again, I think, it was like the whole country Stonewall happened when?⁴⁴

'69.

Was it? A lot of us didn't even hear about Stonewall. I don't think it was really just Las Vegas. Maybe it just took a long time for all this to filter down to all of us. I think LA had a few Gay Pride things when I was there with *Billboard*. And I

continued that [coming out] evolution even with *Billboard*. I'd go to the gay bars with my silver satin coat that said *Billboard* on it, the logo. And people said, "Oh, you're very brave." I said, "No, they know about me." I think that's one of the reasons they hired me, because so many gay people created disco and they [*Billboard*] thought they had a good *in*.

'Cause we all know each other!

Yeah! [*laughs*] Little network. That was a community if there ever was one. Somebody came in and he was the most obnoxious gay she or I ever met. You mentioned there were several bars [in Las Vegas]. You mentioned *Le Cafe* which is the great legendary one. Tell me about *Le Cafe*. I think he's still alive and in San Francisco. They were just cute shows. And they involved some sexuality, but it

It was at Paradise and Trop[icana Avenue]. I think that's where the new McCarran Airport sign is. I *weep* when I go by there! It was jammed. It was the most popular place, and I think because all the show kids went there and the stars. And Marge, she ran it, and it was a community. She cared about us. It was like the Never-Never Land boys.⁴⁵ We were the Lost Boys, and she was our mom. She was very protective.

Protective in what ways?

Just kind of motherly. I mean, we knew she was lesbian, but she didn't carry on. Whatever *that* means. But you felt comfortable there. You could come out there, you could either be in the closet or flamboyant, the drag queens. And now

I think Maxine's was open *waaaay* down on the other side of town.⁴⁶ That's really where more of the drag queens went. And the Red Barn⁴⁷ where all the ... *ooooh!* all the hot cowboys used to go! *Oooooh!* I think the Red Barn might have been farther down Trop. Some other people probably still know about where that would have been. I think those were the only three bars I went to, but *Le Cafe* was *the* place. *And you reviewed would go out with you afterwards? Or you with*

Do you remember any details about what it looked like inside?

Well, she put that state-of-the-art disco dance floor in it with the pulsating squares. It was almost like *Saturday Night Fever*⁴⁸! And fog machines and

strobes. She was always way ahead of everybody. And you'd walk in the entrance, and if you went to the left you went around the bar. It was almost a semi-circular bar. And there were step-down areas. And there were always a lot of tables and seating. The bar did not dominate. And there was a stage. And the shows were terrific.

What kind of shows?

Some drag shows. Sometimes she'd bring in porno stars from out of town. Jack somebody came in and he was the most obnoxious guy she or I ever met. All he did was talk about himself. And then the other fun show I remember was Patrick the All-American Male Stripper. I think he's still alive and in San Francisco. They were just cute shows. And they involved some sexuality, but it was just, you know, glitter and glamour. Like I said I went there with Joan Rivers and Liberace, Rip Taylor, and Paul Lynde⁴⁹. They were nasty drunks. If you got in there and Paul Lynde had been drinking and Rip Taylor, you got *awaaaay* from them! Especially if you were a critic like me.

"I didn't like the headline that was written."

"I don't write the headlines."

And then, of course, the local reviewers, Dick Maurice and Gary Greco, who since have both died of AIDS.⁵⁰ I don't know if you remember those names. They were always hanging out.

Oh, and there was the Gipsy.⁵¹ That's right, we did go to the Gipsy later on. And then there was one across from it called the Garage.⁵² I don't know what it became finally. The Gipsy was more of a ... *dive*. I never really liked it. And now it seems worse than ever. But I used to see Dick Maurice in there with Betty White's husband, who's now dead, what was his name? Allen Ludden.⁵³ Pickin' up young boys. And I was still shocked. [Even] by then I was still impressionable.

The stars whose shows you reviewed would go out with you afterwards? Or you with them?

All of them. Even the straight ones seemed to have a lot more fun in the gay bars than anywhere else. They'd all go. Shirley Maclaine. And then, of course, the annual Halloween Ball, the Beaux Arts Ball.⁵⁴ Mark Tan⁵⁵ was doing them back

then. I don't think there's a stigma now, or there was even a stigma then [for stars to be seen in the gay bars]. There might have been for the gay people that were closeted. They were the ones that probably had the stigma. We used to go to Paul Anka's club Jubilation over by the Aladdin, and half the people that went there were gay. I don't ever remember any homophobic stuff going on here. It was just really amazing. Maybe it was just we were so into the disco and the entertainment.

I don't think that gay bashing and that whole thing was ever a problem here.

I don't remember the police ever raiding the bars. Marge might say, "Oh, yeah there were real problems and Ralph Lamb⁵⁶ was a bastard."

I think the only raid that I'm aware of happened ...

Camp David?⁵⁷

Camp David and the Village Station,⁵⁸ which was a previous incarnation of the Gipsy. But that was 1980 and you were gone.

And it probably deserved to be raided. That is *such* a bad neighborhood. And poor Keith, he said [the Gipsy] charge[s] \$4 for shots. We went there one night and he said, "They're ripping off the gay community." We were thinking of starting a new gay disco here. Friends from New York were gonna come out here and do it, and I don't know what ever happened to that, either. I said, "You guys can come out here and really make a killing and help the community."

Was Le Cafe the first Vegas gay bar that you went into?

Oh, yeah. That was my first gay bar *ever*.

Ever?

Ever!

How long did it take you to finally make an entrance?

... you been to Maxine's?

It had to be '76 or '77. It was the Bicentennial year, and I wish I knew who walked in the door with me. Like I said, I was probably accompanying Joan [Rivers]. And you would sit with them at their table and watch the show, and it was just kind of an entrée into the whole thing [for me]. Meeting Marge, the owner, and then the regulars. I would always go with people, though. I never felt comfortable walking in alone. I think the sexual thing was very intimidating. It still was there. And I just would feel like [*groans*], "Ooooh! People are just going here to get picked up." And I've always been a self-conscious child. I think it goes back to [being a child and] I had a speech impediment with Ss, and sometimes that comes back, sometimes it doesn't. It could be all kinds of things. It was just fear of finally crossing that threshold. And even to this day I don't really like going alone. I'm just not a bar person. I don't go into straight bars alone. I mean, people are drinking and carrying on. If it has a restaurant, OK, then I feel a little more comfortable. But if I'm just going to walk in and sit down and have a drink with people, complete strangers It might be that whole [alcoholic] thing from my parents. I don't know.

You'd mentioned the Red Barn. Did you ever visit the Red Barn?

Quite a few times. It was more the Western-type bar. The show kids didn't go there very much. Le Cafe could be snooty off and on. I think it was. *Attitude time!* But it was kind of a fun attitude. There were people there that would put you down, but they would end up by themselves, even if they were gorgeous dancers. Who cared? But the Red Barn was more neighborhood and probably more the beer-drinking crowd. Not the hard liquor like Le Cafe, [or] the *wine-sippers*. The bartenders [at the Red Barn] were friendly and if I could have walked in [any bar] alone, I could have walked in there. Might have been the show business thing was a little intimidating at Le Cafe, too.

And, of course, Maxine's was considered the outlaw bar because it was so far away and it was the lesbians and the motorcycles and the drag queens. And that was before the drag queens were elevated to the *Birdcage*⁵⁹ status of today. Now, if there was any trouble or police raids, I think there might have been things going on out there because it was just so far out on the fringe. And there was that element of danger.

"Oh, no!" [laughs]

Had you been to Maxine's?

Just with a couple of friends that were doing a show or two. And that I had trouble with for awhile, and then I thought, "Oh, this is silly." Once you get to know a drag queen, then you could understand it. Then you think *you* might be a drag queen!

And there was a show that came to town from Paris and they were all transsexuals, and one of them became my roommate! [*laughs*]. You know, you just learn more about people and human nature. You just get over these misconceptions in your mind.

Tell me about the show from Paris and your roommate.

His name was George or *Jorgé*, and I'm trying to remember his last name. He ended up doing Diana Ross's outfits. He was very talented, beading and all that. And he was one of the best performers, and he was Cuban on top of all this. He was just schizo! Crazy. Just attitude for *days*. The show was spectacular. I was just awestruck.

This was a show on the Strip?

On the Strip, and I'm trying to remember what hotel. They almost all got stranded here because the show closed and they had nowhere to go, couldn't get back to Paris.

Was it advertised as a drag show?

Transsexual show. Oh, yeah.

In the '70s.

Yeah. This was late '70s, very ahead of its time. And the sets were fantastic. It was almost like *Victor Victoria*,⁶⁰ but even above that as an art form. And they were all just so beautiful and stunning. And I said, "Oh, my God, maybe I'm a transsexual, too!" [*laughs*] First I thought I might have been a drag queen, and I go, "Oh, no!" [*laughs*]

First a Mormon, then a transsexual ...!

[laughs] Do I want my penis cut off or not and really go femme the whole way? And then go, "Oh, no, I like that too much!"

Oh, it's just weird all the issues you start to deal with.

And most of those kids stayed here in Vegas. They never got back to Paris or didn't want to go back. Some went into the shows [on the Strip] as costume designers. Maybe even dancers.

You mentioned another bar called the Garage?

Right across from the Gipsy there was a small mall there, or whatever.

What clientele did that cater to?

They gave Le Cafe more a run for their money because it was more of a mixed crowd. The Gipsy just seemed a really tacky pick-up joint. Down and dirty. The Gipsy. I was involved with—Oh, my God, I hate to say this—with like a 20, 21-year-old [Scott Meriwether]. Keith is 27, so I haven't changed my style too much! [laughs] I would go in there with this gorgeous Italian/Hawaiian kid, and he was the bouncer at [some] teenage club. He even felt comfortable then and I think the whole gay thing was kind of really becoming to be accepted. But a lot of straights would go in there and have a good time, like Le Cafe, and I think that really kind of hurt some of Marge's business.

How about Gelo's.⁶¹ Next to Gipsy.

That's right, there were two gay bars there. We'd go back and forth between the two, and then across [the street to the Garage]. I don't think we spent a lot of time in Gelo's for some reason. The Garage was even more popular than the Gipsy.

There were another couple of bars downtown. 1610?⁶²

I went there once or twice, but it was like going to a speakeasy. It was like the one that's down on Charleston that we went to, what's the name of it? A guy got murdered in the parking lot behind it. That's a big scandal.

*The Backdoor?*⁶³

Backdoor, yeah. I felt comfortable there. But 1610 we went to once or twice, but it was downtown.

*How about Snick's?*⁶⁴

I vaguely remember it. I never went there.

How easy or how difficult was it to meet people with just the bars to go to?

For, like, relationships?

Yes.

I think I put it in my mind that I wouldn't go to a bar to meet someone for that reason. Of course, there I was at the *RJ* having an affair with the kid that worked as the tape-winder for AP. Here I go again—he was 18 or 19. I hope that was the legal age. I know I was very concerned about that! *[laughs]* But we were friends and he was at UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] doing theater lighting. In fact, he's doing that professionally now in Los Angeles. And he was from a Republican family here in town, and the father is, I think, a bigwig in the Republican party now in Palm Springs. I've always met people through my career or through whatever normal channels there are—not that bars are abnormal. But I thought, "Oh, my God, if I meet someone at the bar, A. They're gonna probably be a drunk." I don't want to do that, [I'd] been there with my parents and I was still going through it. And yet, I know people that have met at bars that have wonderful, stable relationships. So, there again, I had a misconception going into it.

Now, it's funny, Jason might have gone with me to the bars a few times, but he didn't want to go to bars.

What was his last name?

Mills.

And he was at UNLV, too, and he was doing his thing out there. I think he was involved with other people and then I got mad and I said, "Well, I don't want to see you anymore." I don't want to get one of those sexually-transmitted *diseases!* [laughs]

And then I met someone through [jazz musician] Page Cavanaugh, who was a jazz pianist here. Everyone knew Page was gay. I think he's still alive in LA. And he'd met a gorgeous guy by the same last name, Michael Cavanaugh. And that was really my first head-over-heels. And Michael became, like, [Page's] assistant. And Michael was going to leave Page and live with me, and I said, "Oh, I just can't deal with it. I can't give you what Page [can], the entrance into all the different things." Page knew all the stars like Cary Grant⁶⁵ and people like that. And we *all* knew Cary Grant was a big sister.

You know, Las Vegas as well as coming out was my first intense love thing since Gary [Hager]. So Michael and I were involved a little bit. He went on to somebody else. We always used to go to Le Cafe together, Michael and I. Like I said, Scott [Merriwether] would go to the Garage. But he considered himself more bisexual than gay. And I ended up living with his folks the last few months I lived here. They knew all about what was going on. They had a show business background and the dad was an air [traffic] controller at Nellis [Air Force Base]. There again, it was lust at first sight. He was a bouncer at the teenage club here. And he was just a sweet kid. We carried on for awhile, but I don't think he could handle being gay. He said I was the first person he was involved with. That sounds like Keith [Todtenhagen], too! [laughs] Although Keith was involved with one person in his neighborhood before.

Did you find, maybe not in the milieu you ran around in—but it's still a criticism of the community today—that it's very cliquish here? Was it then? Or were you even involved enough to know?

There were the show kids and some of them were cliquish. I mean, there were different groups in the show genre.

By groups, what do you mean?

Oh, the ones that were stuck up or that were secure enough to go back and forth between whatever groups. I still think this is kind of a small-minded town, and like *you've* said, closeted. It just seems like there needs to be another level. Like I told you, the Democratic Party is kind of waiting for someone to step forward and start a gay Democratic club. And the Chamber [of Commerce] is wondering why Rob [Schlegel] doesn't bring the [Bugle] in there, come in and be part of the different committees the Chamber has going. They have minority committees and this and that. Sometimes I think we ghetto-ize ourselves. I know there's cliques now, there must be. There are still cliques in my high school back in New York. [laughs] Some things never die!

Do you remember any places around town that were known as cruising spots in those days?

I remember people saying certain parks and truck stops,⁶⁶ but I never wanted to know. In fact, I was always judgemental of people that did that, but I've learned not to be now. Although, in my [gay] paper in Buffalo I was openly critical in editorials saying, you know, "This is giving all of us a bad name." And then finally, I think the straight community has been educated to know there's always going to be that element. But I think straight people do that, too. I get very annoyed with people. I say, "You got money, go to a motel." Unless, I think a lot of them do it just for the danger. It's a turn-on. And, unfortunately, it ended up in the death of that guy. He was a pit boss, I think at the Mirage, and he lived over next to my friend on Pinewood Avenue.⁶⁷ Stabbed to death. Sixteen stab wounds. Just recently. It happened after we got here in March. I used to live with Debbie and her husband on Pinewood Avenue, and she said, "Oh, my God, my neighbor was murdered. That gay murder." At the house on Pinewood Avenue. He'd picked this guy up at a truck stop and the guy, you know It was in the media. They caught the guy, the California Highway Patrol got him. And Debbie said, "Oh, we're all so stunned because he was so quiet and conservative."

And I said, "Obviously not in all of his life. He was going to truck stops picking up rough trade!"⁶⁸ [laughs]

*You were still here when Kenny Kerr came and started his show. Do you remember that?*⁶⁹

I know I must have seen Kenny. That was one of my first female impersonator shows. And Jim Bailey, of course. I saw Jim Bailey⁷⁰ at the Sahara.

Jim Bailey used to insist that he's not gay.

Oh, I know. [groans] Please! It's like Liberace. Gimme a break!

Kenny was a trailblazer. I give him all the credit, even though I've heard all the stuff that's going on now about being sued and not meeting payroll. He was there years before Frank Marino.⁷¹

Did Kenny go out and about much?

Oh, yeah, he'd go to the bars. But it's funny, I don't remember seeing him at the bars. I remember seeing drag queens from the community. But his was the first of its kind show here, ever. And it was packed. Sold out. It was just amazing. Maybe that was the beginning of gay liberation here, really. I give him a lot more credit than a lot of people care to give Kenny Kerr.

How open was Liberace in the community?

Oh, not at all, except for going to Le Cafe. Or coming to the Beaux Arts Ball. He told me, before his mother died, he said, "When she goes, I'm gonna come out."

And I said, "Well, you should for some kind of self-respect. Everyone knows, Lee."

He says, "Oh, I know."

But it was the management and that whole thing: "Oh, it'll ruin your career." Well, he'd made millions by then, anyhow. Then his mom died, and they just It was like the Elvis syndrome, you know. Mom and I saw him back in Buffalo back in '81 at a Theater-in-the-Round there. We went backstage and I said, "Oh, my God, he's got AIDS, Mother." It was before people were talking about it and he was just so gaunt. I went home and I just cried. I said, "That's no watermelon diet."

I think it was Dick Maurice who broke the story here, but not by name.⁷² But then that was years later, I think, 1985 or '86.

Yeah. I told Lee, I said, "You know, I know you come to Buffalo a lot, we have a big Polish community. Those little blue-haired women are going to love you. They don't care. What *is* it?" This was 1977, '78 before I left Las Vegas.

Did he strike you as someone who felt trapped by his image?

Oh, no. He loved it. He lived and breathed it night and day.

And it was such a gay image.

Oh, yeah! [laughs] He was the pioneer for people like Elton John and Alice Cooper. And we all knew that Scott Thorson was his lover.⁷³ I mean, that was obvious. Scott would drive the cars on and off the stage.

But nonetheless, as far as being true to his nature openly ...

No. He didn't want it in the news media. And it was too bad because everybody knew he and ... , oh, there was some football player back in Milwaukee he had had an affair with. And that was when his first manager said, "Lee, you've just got to stop. You have to be very discreet." And, of course, maybe *then*. I mean, that was the 50s. And then, of course, he was rumored to be involved with, they said, Rock Hudson.⁷⁴ But I thought it was Jim Nabors⁷⁵ and Rock Hudson, not Liberace and Rock Hudson.

Jim Bailey was a known Vegas personality, but in later years not. He kind of disappeared from the stage out here. But do you remember him in any detail? Did you have conversations with him?

Just backstage after the shows. I don't think I ever saw him at the bars, now I think about it. Probably because he was afraid to go, or he was told not to go by managers. I did see him in Buffalo in the mid-80s and it was sold out because we had promoted it so heavily in the gay community. I saw him and he looked good and I said, "Gee, Jim, how did you survive all the booze and pills?" Because Al [Chapin] was his manager at one time, you know, and he just drove Al crazy. Al wanted to kill him several times. Al would say, "He's a genius, but he's gonna

fuckin' drive me to an early grave!" He's good. He's *very* good. I'm sure I saw him at the Thunderbird [Hotel].

We were talking [earlier] about Chic Hecht.⁷⁶ Was he out and about much?

Well, we all knew he was gay. It never was in the media officially or anything like that. When I got back here and the Democratic Party and I were hanging out, I went to see President Clinton. I asked the gal at headquarters, I said, "What about Chic Hecht?" And she said, "Oh, no. He got quietly put out to pasture." She said it was too obvious. I said, "Well, I *thought* so."

And, like I said, the NOW [National Organization for Women] fundraiser with Grant Sawyer. I mean [sighs]

Now, that's an [aspect] of Grant Sawyer In fact, it made me rather angry. The University of Nevada Oral History Project did a long series of interviews with Grant and then he died, and they put them out in book form. No mention at all of his being gay, although it was common knowledge in the community and even outside the community.⁷⁷

Yeah.

Did you ever have any direct experience with Grant?

No. I'm sure I saw him at other functions, and I don't know if it's the *gaydar*⁷⁸ thing or what it is, or other people said, "Oh, yeah." He wasn't even governor [anymore]. There were some other VIPs there, and I would go, "How can these people who are in positions of power" And, again, I'll go back to when I dealt with the Mormons. I said, "We need role models for young gay people." It would [have made] me feel good, too, to know that someone is high up and they're there for us and they're not ashamed of themselves or hiding or running. It's still like that today, too.

I think so. Although I think there are more, at least, politicians, who are admittedly gay, so there are those role models that even I didn't have.

Right, right. Although I always say, like, Barney Frank⁷⁹—it's kind of a back-handed role model. I mean, you come out after you have sex with a *page*.

After you get busted!

And the same thing with his counterpart. His *sister* was a member of our church in Buffalo—Gerry Studs⁸⁰. And, granted, they've come a long way and they're doing a lot of good for us. And Gerry told me he knew that was not the right way to have to come out, but then, they were struggling with their own issues, too.

*Well, locally we have David Parks.*⁸¹

See, I don't know that name.

He's running for [the Nevada State] Assembly.

How about Lance Malone?⁸² *[laughs]*

What about Lance Malone?

Well, you watch those TV spots, there seems to be too many Ss. And now the bishop said he was excommunicated—did you see that in the [Las Vegas] Sun?

Uh-uh.

Oh, yeah. The bishop broke a confidence and said he was excommunicated. 'Cause I'm sure Paul Christensen's⁸³ people said, "We've gotta stop this guy." And now if you watch the *recent* TV ads of Paul Christensen, [they] say, "Oh, Lance Malone took \$150,000 from a millionaire, and then \$70,000 and he won't say where this other seventy thousand came from." And then the last line in the TV ad, "What *else* is Lance Malone hiding?" *[laughs]* People say, "Oh, he's married." I say, "Oh, *please!* Grow up, as Joan Rivers would say. Just get *real*." Well, I *hope* he's gay. *[laughs]*

He's very handsome!

Nice eyes. *back in Vegas...*

Oh, yeah, those eyes! And those lashes.

Those *bedroom* eyes!

* * *

Why did you leave Las Vegas?

It was career-wise. I mean, how many times can you see Wayne Newton⁸⁴ before you jump off Hoover Dam? 40, 50 times. I couldn't *stand* it. And, actually, I had left LA and come back here, like, for one more year. And the reason for leaving LA was also gay-related. I was doing [an] investigative piece on gays in disco, and the managing editor who had hired me came to me and said, "Oh, we think this would be *great!* And some people might come out of the closet." Well, David Geffen⁸⁵ was ready to, and a few others. And then the publisher calls me up to his office and [said], "Well, we're not *Psychology Today*."

I said, "Oh, *really?* We're not? Well, thanks for the lightning bolt."

And he said, "Well, we can't do this."

I said, "I know why we can't do it. It's because Bill Wardlow—the former head of charts, I think he's out completely now—[i]s doing young boys." And everybody in the music business knew it. They denied it but"

What's charts?

Oh, the head of the charts for *Billboard Magazine*. Very political, and I think even then everyone knew you'd [pay someone] off and you'd go right up the charts. They can't do it now. It's all computerized.

And I said, "Oh, I don't have *time* for this bullshit." By then I was really with Affirmation, I'd watched my first [gay pride] parade in West Hollywood. I said, "Really, I'm not happy here. I'm doing the work of 5 people, I'm not getting paid for that. My dad's sick—why don't I go back to Vegas for one more year, keep writing for you people, and then I'm going to go home to Buffalo."

So you were back in Vegas

One more year. Or maybe it was less than a year. I left [LA] in '80. I came back here in the spring time. I only stayed a few months. And then my dad really got quite sick and I had to go back faster than I wanted to. But I had had it. I went back to the *Valley Times* and it wasn't the same. It just seemed it had changed there. I think I just thought, you know, I was needed back home, so it was

Back to Buffalo.

Yeah. And I thought, "Oh, my God!" People said, "Your career'll be over." And yet *Billboard* said, "No, you can keep writing." There was no one covering Buffalo/Rochester. They had someone in Toronto. So I was lucky to use that still.

How long were you back [in Buffalo]?

'80, '81 till last May [1996].

When you first arrived back there in '80, '81, by this time you were out.

Oh, yeah. Big time.

Did you find that there was a community and a place for you as a gay man back there that hadn't been there when you left?

Oh, yeah! While I was gone the Mattachine Society⁸⁶ had been started. Then they evolved [into] other groups. When I got there there was a paper, but it was a rag. It was like a bar guide. And Dignity was going better than ever. And I would say, my God, Buffalo had 7 or 8, 9 bars by then. Political groups. I got affiliated with an organization called Gay Professionals and it was misleading. You didn't have to have a job and a career to be a member of it. But some positive people [in the group] were coming out and they were on the news media, very involved in business and politics. So I started going to their meetings. Then I slowly started getting into my activist mode and wasn't happy with that gay paper. I call it a gay paper loosely. And then we started our own.

Yeah, you're right. And it might be because it's a resort town. What's it like in
What was it called?

Volumé. It made no sense. It was going to be, "Be Gay. Read *Volumé!*" A marketing phrase. It was just myself and Bob Graber. His father was Speaker of the New York State Legislature. Bob is very involved in the Democratic Party, of course. His family has been for years. We wanted a professional paper. Not, you know, something with drag queen columns and illustrations of Santa with a hard-on on the cover. That other [paper] was just *trash!* And I really wanted to start giving the community [a] more legitimate voice politically, too. He [Bob Graber] broke a lot a lot of stories that the main stream media would pick up. It was just the right timing. There were politicians coming out supporting us, and Mario Cuomo,⁸⁷ and then we finally got rid of our homophobic mayor. It was exciting.

Well, I covered my first AIDS conference in '81 at Buffalo General Hospital. I
It seems light years ahead of what you left behind here.

Yeah, there wasn't anything here. But it's a bigger city, older, more established. I'm sure the events in New York City influenced Buffalo. Although you think LA's influence [on Vegas] would have gotten the gay community going here. But it might be that entertainment factor, that whole gaming thing. *I glad I was*
worried about stuff 20 years ago." I knew so many people getting herpes or
Well, there's a strange insularity in Las Vegas I don't understand. Someone asked me
this question in some interview and I said, "I can't think of a single social movement in
the last 30 years that swept the country that had much effect on Las Vegas."

The gay movement. I was never all that sexually adventurous.

Yeah. *in LA, friends were going to the bath there near Cedars Sinai [hospital].*

I remember the Black movement did have an effect here. It wasn't too lasting. They never became real disobedient here. *of Baths like in New York where Betty*

Nieder and Barry Manilow started."
[People] looked up from the blackjack tables long enough to say, "Oh, yeah." And then
back to the usual.

Did it compromise the forward momentum of the movement in Buffalo?

Yeah, you're right. And it might be because it's a resort town. What's it like in Miami, what's it like in other places like that.

You were back in Buffalo, then, for almost 16 years. During that period that you were being an activist ...

[Being] excommunicated! [laughs] Marching in parades.

The AIDS epidemic ...

Really started then.

How did that affect you as someone who was just beginning to blossom and come out?

Well, I covered my first AIDS conference in '81 at Buffalo General Hospital. I met an Episcopalian minister from New York who had AIDS. I'm sure he's dead by now. We didn't know what it was. It was just so strange. And yet I admired the man for being open about it. I remember going down and thinking, "Do I shake his hand or not?" I just had to shake the man's hand. In fact, I think I finally embraced him. I don't think we had any idea what was coming. None whatsoever. And yet, I always started to say to myself, "Boy, am I glad I was worried about stuff 20 years ago." I knew so many people getting herpes or gonorrhea or syphilis, and I thought, "Holy, cow. Now *this!*" It's just unbelievable.

I think that's what saved me. I came out at the end of the 70s when everything was open and anything goes. But I was never all that sexually adventurous.

And in LA, friends were going to the bath there near Cedars Sinai [hospital]. They tried to get me to go there one night and I said, "Oh, my God—I'd be so self-conscious." I'd probably break out laughing and I'd be thrown out the door in a towel! I said, "That's not the Continental Baths like in New York where Bette Midler and Barry Manilow started."

But, yeah. AIDS. It really seemed to come pretty fast and furious.

Did it compromise the forward momentum of the movement in Buffalo?

I think because it hit New York City so fast and so furious that we supposedly [thought] it wasn't going to affect Buffalo. But it did. It really did. I think it affected us moving ahead in Buffalo for awhile. And finally, I think, that's what made us a community, was AIDS. And I give the lesbians a lot of credit. They stepped forward [when] they saw their gay friend dying. And then other gay men said, "We've gotta do something." We had a community center, two or three different incarnations, during this and before that. But AIDS didn't really affect me personally till Gary [Hager] told me he was HIV+ in, like, the late 70s. And then I was really devastated. Although before him, my best friend at BYU had died. [pauses] That's right. Another convert to Mormonism from Virginia, Jay Lucas.

All the time I was covering it, you know, detached, as the gay news media—but then when it hits you personally ...

Even Gary and I would talk about this. There was a silver lining. I think once people got over the fear and ignorance of it, then the sympathy factor came in. I don't think people still say, you know, "Fag = AIDS." Some of society's way beyond that, now.

You came back to Las Vegas this time the middle of May [1996]. Why?

I had more friends and contacts here than I did in Los Angeles. Especially in the media. And then I was hoping to start a regional gay newspaper. Allan [Chapin] was going to be supportive of it. His business partner was going to be the primary financial backer.

Who was that?

Terry Gordon. And there were some other people. Pia Zadora,⁸⁸ my friend, and others said, you know, "Gee, we'll help you out." And the more I wrote up the proposal—I did a 30-page proposal to financial investors—I kept looking at it. And then I was going out with Keith and Al and Mark Tan and other people, and meeting people with AFAN⁸⁹—the younger guy that runs it, and he has an older lover. Can't remember his name. I'd meet people like them, or John Smith, who owns Flex,⁹⁰ and a couple of others. A lot of people were very enthusiastic about this and said, "We think there's a need here for a regional paper." I said I

don't want to compete with the *Bugle*. I said I don't really consider that a bonafide newspaper.

What do you consider a bonafide newspaper?

The *Washington Blade* in Washington, D. C. The *Advocate*—although they're so opinionated. Like, I know Judy Weider—I just interviewed her—the new editor-in-chief. She's trying to make it more newsy. I guess I'm just raised on newspapers in the Northeast and I'm used to newspapers being *newspapers*. Other gay papers I think I admire are the Boston newspaper—I can't remember the title. And the guy that started the *Blade* in Washington started our paper in Buffalo, the rag I told you about that we kinda replaced. And the *Bay Area Reporter*. I guess I'm just such a journalist I think you've gotta have newspaper columns, I think you have to write news style, you gotta have an editorial page. I'm talking purely format. And I think you've gotta train reporters to be reporters. Anyone can be a columnist. I mean, [at] the *Valley Times* we proved that! [laughs] It's a constructive criticism. I mean, I give Rob Schlegel all the credit in the world that there *is* a paper here now. But I think it's gotta go to the next step.

It's not a newspaper.

No. I call it a ... *publication*. Let's be kind! [laughs] It's fulfilling a need, but a lot of people are not happy with it in the gay "community."

For what reasons?

Political. They think it's too conservative. Too opinionated. And [the *Bugle*] claim[s] to be the voice of the community? I learned this in Buffalo: we are *not* a monolithic community. We're people of color, people with AIDS, people *without* AIDS. You know. The whole shebang. And I think it's just the nature of the business. [Rob Schlegel]'s got his pal, Kevin Kelly,⁹¹ and Lee Plotkin.⁹² [laughs] That's the way it is. It's never been an actual tabloid newspaper.

But you've given up your idea of a regional gay newspaper?

I just don't think I have it in me. I thought I did. I thought I had the time and energy to bring a small staff together. And I think going around and seeing other friends in the mainstream media, I thought, "What am I going to be doing here?" The only thing that really, I thought, would have been a great challenge was the Democratic Party thing, getting that going, and working with the Chamber [of Commerce]. That really kind of got my juices going. And Terry Gordon is very political. He has a great understanding of what's going on here. A year or two ago I applied at USC [University of Southern California] for screen writing school. I still have that pending. I just kind of feel like, if I stay here, is that [newspaper] enough for me to want to do? I'd still go the shows and do the shows. I was negotiating with *Billboard* to be a correspondent again. Nothing really happened with that. I don't know if they're ready for that again or if they wanna do it. And I thought, "Do I want to step back into that?" I've done that. I reviewed shows, I did all that. And yet, I thought it would be exciting to have a page of news from San Francisco, a correspondent there, one in LA, and kind of get that triangular [circulation range]. We tried to do that with *Volumé* in Buffalo, go between Toronto and Buffalo and Rochester. It happened on a small scale there. And yet, I thought, "I think I'm too tired [to do the same thing in Las Vegas]." I just don't think I have the time and energy. And I feel badly [because] people had come forward to say, "We'll work with you on it. It's a great idea." And others said, "Well, why don't you broaden it? Not just make it a gay regional paper. Why don't you get other minorities?" Like, we were talking to people here in the complex, the Mexican family below me. They knew I was gay and didn't care. *Hispanic* family, I mean. And then I talked to some Asians. And they all hate the *RJ*. I've been looking at their editorials [and] it's *scary*. I thought maybe when Don Reynolds⁹³ died that something would change! [laughs] I mean, there's such a *need* here. The *Sun's* still hanging on, but there's a need for something else here.

I wonder if I've given up too soon. It's not giving up. You know, I want to do this TV pilot for Fox. People are still pushing. They're saying, "Hanford, you gotta go for it." *Hanford on Hollywood*. Be in it. Make it like a gay *In Living Color*, entertainment/variety show. And there's people that are kind of in place there now in LA that could do it. So I'm thinking, "Well, why not do LA?" And they're all saying, "You know, if you can be a success here, go back to Vegas and appear there and do stuff." Some of the hotels expressed interest in doing the show from

here. Which kind of surprised me. They've always wanted a live show from Las Vegas.

*The last one they had was Lefty Rosenthal's show.*⁹⁴ [laughs]

Yeah. Boom-boom! [laughs] I haven't seen *Casino*⁹⁵ yet.

I'm just getting the overall feeling it would be just such a struggle. I don't know. I think I'm just trying to be realistic and say, "I want to plug into things that are there now. I want to get involved with the gay Democratic Club in LA. I want to get involved with the gay men's choir—or if they have a mixed choir." Maybe Affirmation, maybe not. I know I might go to West Hollywood Presbyterian Church because that's a More Light church. And I also have the other interests, you know, the movie stuff and the TV stuff. And Keith'll have a better job. He's got a good job lead there through some friends. And male modeling. I want him to try that.

Maybe you're just passing through Vegas, sizing it up for later.

Yeah. It made sense, it was practical [to do LA]. I feel like now we'll do that and then maybe come back [to Las Vegas].

What kind of differences—aside from about a million more people—have you noted in the gay community between the time you were here first in the 70s and now?

With the community specifically?

Yeah.

Oh, well, it's much more organized. The publications, the organizations. And [our] presence in the mainstream media. I mean, we never had articles in the *RJ* or the *Sun*. And what you're doing at UNLV. I don't think there were any gay groups at UNLV or anything like that. There's been a lot of progress. But like I've said, now someone's gotta step forward and take it to the next level.

What would be the next level?

Getting involved with the Democratic Party. I don't know if the Log Cabin people are sanctioned by the Republicans or trying to do stuff there.⁹⁶ [laughs] And I think there's fertile territory there with the Chamber of Commerce. It's kind of like what we were doing when I left Buffalo. It was all politics again. We were networking with the labor unions, the senior citizens, the Hispanics, the African-American community, to become more cohesive and be there for each other's needs. If one of them had a problem, that was *our* problem. And I don't think that's happened here yet. They gotta get goin'.

Do you have any theory on why Las Vegas should still be behind the times, gay-speaking?

Maybe it's just part of the natural evolutionary process of the community. Or, like we discussed, maybe because of the nature of the town, the gaming industry, the entertainment thing.

But I think it's *ripe*. It really is. It might shock the gay community to hear this locally, but I think the straight community's more ready than the gay community is for that next step. They're wondering where *is* the gay community? Why are they holding back? And I've just told people, "I don't know. Maybe some of the leaders still are kind of closeted."

Or don't want to let go of their ...

Fiefdoms. Yeah. We were doing that in Buffalo. There was some of that going on. I have a lot of hope with the younger gay community. They won't put up with this bullshit. [laughs] Whether it's us older gay ones that won't move along faster. I mean, we had kids in the *high* schools there. The gay youth group—I don't know if there's a gay youth group here. But they were *way* ahead of what we ever could have done on the [university] campuses and in the high schools, demanding things be different. And maybe [these younger ones] are gonna have to push aside the gay leaders that are just not moving fast enough. I would hope the gay leaders would be smarter than that and take [the young ones] under their wing and say, "Come on and learn from our mistakes."

First they have to admit they've made mistakes.

Yes! *[laughs]* Well they are *[admitting mistakes]* in Buffalo. Unfortunately there's a whole second *[AIDS]* epidemic among young gay men because they didn't want to get it just from us *old* gay men. Well, some of us old gay men never had it to begin with. Why let history repeat itself?

Well, I don't think your story in Las Vegas is done yet.

Uh, oh! Oh my God, I'm going to come back in a third reincarnation! [laughs]

But I appreciate your spending this time with me this afternoon, especially with all that's going on.

It's good. It's gotten my mind off things, too.

END

NOTES

1. For biographical information on *Valley Times* publisher Robert "Bob" Brown [November 25, 1930 - June 8, 1984], see "Publisher Brown Dies at 53" [*Las Vegas Sun*, June 9, 1984, 1A], and "Valley Times to Continue Despite Publisher's Death" [*Las Vegas Sun*, June 10, 1984, 10C]. For a history of the *Valley Times* newspaper, see "The *Valley Times*: A Personal History," by Michael S. Green, in *Change in the American West: Exploring the Human Dimension*, ed. by Stephen Tehudi [Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press/Nevada Humanities Committee, 1996], pp. 213-232.
2. *Billboard* is a music and entertainment publication established in 1897.
3. Mr. Searl here refers to the New Mexico's being a very active place for UFO sightings. According to popular literature, UFO sightings in New Mexico became a noticeable phenomenon after July 16, 1945 when the first atomic bomb was tested at White Sands, New Mexico. On July 8, 1947 a UFO purportedly crashed near Roswell, New Mexico and was retrieved by the United States Air Force.
4. "Jack Mormons" are members of the LDS church who do not strictly follow the organization's proscriptions and dogma.
5. National Intercollegiate Tournament.
6. In 1846-47 Brigham Young, successor to Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith, led a great migration of Mormons from Nauvoo, Illinois to the Great Salt Lake Valley in what became known as the state of Utah.
7. "Moonies" is the colloquial term for followers of the Korean Rev. Sun Myung Moon's cult, the Unification Church. Established between 1954 and 1958, the Unification Church is the American branch of Moon's Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity.
8. The Tam O'Shanter Motel, opened in 1959, stands at 3317 Las Vegas Boulevard South.
9. The famed Sands Hotel, opened in 1952, was closed and imploded in 1996 to make way for the Venetian, a new megaresort expected to open in 1999.
10. Sammy Davis, Jr.'s autobiography, *Yes I Can* [New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965].

11. Hank Greenspun, owner/publisher of the *Las Vegas Sun* [August 27, 1909 - July 22, 1989]. His autobiography, written with Alex Pelle, is titled, *Where I Stand: The Record of a Reckless Man* [New York, NY: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966]. For more information on Greenspun, see "Hank's Battle Over," in the *Las Vegas Sun*, July 23, 1989, 1A and 8A.
12. Forrest Duke [November 23, 1918 - April 13, 1988] came to Las Vegas in 1954 to work for Hank Greenspun as entertainment editor for the *Las Vegas Sun*. In 1958, Duke moved over to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* as entertainment editor, where he stayed until his retirement in 1986. See "Entertainment Writer Duke Dead at 69," in the *Las Vegas Sun*, April 14, 1988, 2B.
13. *Comp* is a Las Vegas colloquialism meaning complimentary: complimentary meals, rooms, shows, etc. Comps are given as favors or inducements to high rollers [those who gamble large sums of money], steady or special [i. e., celebrity] customers, and to others for various reasons as decided by casino officials.
14. David Dearing worked as publicity agent for a number of Las Vegas hotels in the 1970s and 80s. For a brief period in the 1990s he wrote feature stories for the *Las Vegas Bugle*, a local gay publication. Dearing died in Tennessee in 1996.
15. See "Sahara Executives," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 14, 1980, 5G.
16. In 1971 Richard Nixon's goon E. Howard Hunt raised the possibility that political agents could obtain damaging information on Democratic Presidential candidate Edmund Muskie, believed held in *Las Vegas Sun* publisher Hank Greenspun's office, by breaking in and robbing his safe. See *Las Vegas Sun*, April 28, 1973, 1:4-5, "Sun Publisher Target of Hunt".
17. Ed Koch worked for the *Valley Times* from 1978 until he joined the *Las Vegas Sun* in June 1984.
18. Rob Schlegel, publisher of the *Las Vegas Bugle* since 1985, is one of the Las Vegas gay community's most important leaders. He has helped found—or been an integral part of the development of—most of the community's principal organizations and activities. In recognition of his service to the community, Schlegel was presented an award at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center's Honorarium celebration on February 25, 1995.
19. Jubilation stood at 75 East Harmon Avenue.
20. LPs refer to "long-play" [i.e. 33-1/3 rpm] vinyl records.
21. The Council of the Twelve Apostles is the governing body of the Mormon church.

22. At the time of this interview, Salt Lake City's Sun Club bar is located at 700 West 200 Street South.
23. Aversion shock therapy is a form of reparative therapy which is used to change or prevent a given behavior. In this context, Hanford refers to aversion shock therapy as means to turn gay people into straight people.
24. Hugh B. Brown served as a counselor during the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, 1961-70.
25. David O. McKay [September 8, 1873 - January 18, 1970] succeeded George Albert Smith as 9th President of the Mormon Church in 1951. By Mormon standards, McKay was very liberal; he supported civil rights and was vocal with in his position on social issues.
26. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints claims to be the true successor of the original church founded by Joseph Smith [1805-1844]. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was founded by Joseph Smith at Fayette, New York on April 6, 1830. At a special conference on August 8, 1844, shortly after Smith's death, the majority of Mormons at Nauvoo, Illinois, to where the Mormons had fled from persecution in the East, voted to accept the church Council of Twelve Apostles headed by Brigham Young, who then led the Great Migration to the Salt Lake Valley in Utah. Groups who dissented the August 8 decision remained behind and were brought together under the leadership of Joseph Smith, Jr. as the Reorganized Church, with headquarters at Independence, Missouri.
27. Affirmation is an organization for gay Mormons.
28. Searl refers to church records kept in vaults at Salt Lake City, Utah.
29. This was show producer Elbert "Allan" Chapin [d. October 26, 1996], a close friend of Mr. Searl's. For more on Chapin, see "Longtime Show Producer Allan Chapin Dies at 55," *Las Vegas Sun*, November 1, 1996, 3B; and "Friends Fondly Remember Show Producer, Maitre D'," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, November 2, 1996, 5B.
30. Excommunicated Mormon feminist Sonia Johnson is the author of two books critical of the LDS Church and its policies: *From Housewife to Heretic* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981]; and *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation* [Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1987].
31. Dignity is an organization for gay Catholics.
32. "Twelve-Step Programs" refers to those organizations—such as Alcoholics Anonymous—which offer help in weaning addicted individuals from their addictions. These may be physical addictions, such as drugs and alcohol, or mental and emotional addictions and obsessive-compulsive behaviors.

33. The Rev. Troy Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church [MCC] in Los Angeles in October 1968. A branch of the church has existed in Las Vegas for nearly 20 years. An article in the *Vegas Gay Times* [March 1979, p. 3] notes that there had been a congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church [MCC] in Las Vegas some years before. The church was re-established in Las Vegas and held its first services on October 7, 1979 in St. Matthew's Episcopal Church at 4709 Nellis Boulevard. From 1979 and throughout the 1980s, the MCC was the focus of the gay community in Las Vegas, providing meeting space for various groups, housing the first gay library/bookstore [known first as Alternatives and then as the Las Vegas Community Bookstore] and the Las Vegas Gay Archives, and hosting seminars, study groups, lectures, and fund-raisers. The church has moved several times in its history and Ellen refers to its home at 510 Garces Street [1983-84]. At the time of this interview the MCC has offices at 1140 Almond Tree Lane, Suite 302, and since September 7, 1997 has conducted worship services in the Huntridge Theatre at 1208 East Charleston Boulevard. The Reverend Troy Perry officiated at the Metropolitan Community Church in Las Vegas on August 25, 26, and 27, 1995.
34. P-FLAG is the organization Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays. See "Parents & Friends of Gays" [*Nevada Gay Times*, March 1984, p. 12], and "Parents-FLAG to Hold First Meeting Friday, June 7" [*Las Vegas Bugle*, May 1991, p. 22].
35. For a history of Affirmation's activities in Las Vegas, see "Gay and Lesbian Mormons Form Local Support Group" [*Las Vegas Bugle*, June 1991, p. 22], and "Gay Mormons Organize" [*Las Vegas Bugle*, July/August 1996, p. 14].
36. For this first incarnation of Las Vegas's Dignity chapter, see an advertisement in the *Vegas Gay Times*, November 1979, p. 8; and untitled stories in the *Vegas Gay Times*, January 1980, p. 5, and February 1980, p. 3. Also refer to Dennis McBride journal entries from 1979 [November 4 and December 26], and 1980 [June 14, June 18, July 26, July 28, and August 12].
37. Female impersonator and performer Joey Skilbred died on May 17, 1996. See his obituary in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, May 19, 1996, p. 2B.
38. Famed pianist and entertainer Liberace was born as Wladziu [Walter] Valentino Liberace on May 16, 1919. His first Las Vegas performance was on April 21, 1955 at the grand opening of the Riviera Hotel. He became a Las Vegas institution thereafter, and one of its most popular performers. Rumors of his homosexuality were common throughout his public life, the last two years of which were marked by a sensational palimony suit that made public Liberace's HIV+ condition. Before his health became public knowledge, *Las Vegas Sun* entertainment columnist Dick Maurice [see note 50] broke the story in a small gossip item, "Wish We Could Name Names" [*Las Vegas Sun*, August 29, 1986, 1E]. Liberace died on February 4, 1987.

39. Le Cafe, one of Las Vegas's most famous gay bars, opened on August 18, 1954 as the Club Black Magic, a popular straight nightclub at 4817 Paradise Road. It became a gay bar in the 1960s when its name was changed to Le Cafe. Arson fires burned the club on August 8, 1978, and again on May 5, 1979. The bar was closed until October 20, 1983 when it re-opened in the old Rebel Steak House restaurant at 2710 East Desert Inn Road as Disco Le Cafe Bar and Restaurant. The business failed and closed its doors in April 1984.
40. Las Vegas's first gay magazine, the *Vegas Gay Times*, published from June 1978 through June 1981. It was revived in January 1983 as the *Nevada Gay Times*, and is now known as the *Las Vegas Bugle*.
41. Marge Jacques was the owner of Le Cafe [see note 39 above].
42. *After Dark: The Magazine of Entertainment* [published 1958-83] had an obvious gay perspective.
43. *Playgirl*, first published in June 1973, was a straight woman's alternative to *Playboy*. *Playgirl* featured nude male models and pinups, and was probably more popular among gay men than straight women.
44. On the night of June 27-28, 1969, gay men and lesbians fought back against a police raid of the Stonewall Inn bar on Christopher Street in New York's Greenwich Village. There followed three days of riots and protests, and within a month the National Gay Task Force, the National Gay Alliance, and the Gay Liberation Front had been founded. These riots mark the beginning of modern gay liberation and are remembered each year on June 28 with the Gay Pride celebrations.
45. This is a reference to Sir James Barrie's play, *Peter Pan* [1904].
46. Opened by Maxine Perron at 5110 East Charleston Boulevard as Max and Mary's in the late 1950s, Maxine's was Las Vegas's only lesbian bar. It was a legendary place, earning mention in the notorious Las Vegas exposé *The Green Felt Jungle* by Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris. When Perron sold the place in 1981, the name was changed to Maxie's, which it remained until closed in January 1989. The site now is occupied by Duffy's Tavern II. [See *The Green Felt Jungle* by Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris (New York: Pocket Books, July 1974), p. 97.]
47. The Red Barn was one of Las Vegas's most famous gay bars, catering principally—though not exclusively—to a leather crowd and rough trade. It opened at 1317 East Tropicana Avenue in 1971, then closed and demolished in the spring of 1988.
48. *Saturday Night Fever*, released in 1978, was a film about the disco dance culture of the 1970s. Starring John Travolta [*Grease*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Get Shorty*, *Phenomenon*], and with music by the Bee Gees, *Fever* was one of the highest-grossing films of the time and defined an era in American popular history.

49. Actor and comedian Paul Lynde [1926 - 1982], who starred in *Bye Bye Birdie* [1963] and a number of lesser films, found his greatest stardom in the 1960s and 70s as the center square on the TV game show *Hollywood Squares*, and as the practical-joking Uncle Arthur on the sitcom *Bewitched*. For more information on Lynde, see *Hollywood Gays*, by Boze Hadleigh [New York, NY: Barricade Books, 1996, pp. 67-110].
50. Dick Maurice, entertainment editor for the *Las Vegas Sun*, died of AIDS on November 9, 1989 [see "Sun Entertainment Editor Dick Maurice Dies," in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, November 10, 1989, 8C]. His lover and manager, Gary Greco, died on June 5, 1991 [see "Showbiz's Gary Greco Dies," in the *Las Vegas Sun*, June 6, 1991, 8A].
51. The Gipsy is Las Vegas's premier dance club, located at 4605 Paradise Road. A nightclub at this location known as Disco Fever opened ca. 1977. It was known as Studio 4 from November 22, 1978 until May 1979 then the name was changed back to Disco Fever. Disco Fever was called the Village Station from 1980 to 1981, and then became the Gipsy in 1981. The Gipsy has undergone a number of major remodelings and renovations, the latest of which was during April and May of 1997. The Gipsy held its grand re-opening on May 16, 1997.
52. The Garage stood at 4310 Paradise Road, a block north of the Gipsy [see note 51]. Known as the Prelude until November 1979, the Garage became a lesbian bar, Lipstick, in 1984, re-opened on November 1, 1985 as the Body Shop, and in September 1988 became the Upper Level.
53. Allen Ludden [November 5, 1919 - 1981] was a noted game show host and television personality. He's best remembered for hosting *Password* from 1961 through 1976, and for marrying popular television actress Betty White [b. January 17, 1924] at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas in the summer of 1963.
54. The Beaux Arts Ball is an annual Halloween celebration in Las Vegas attended principally by the gay community.
55. See "LV Writer Tan Dies at 60," in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal/Sun*, April 26, 1997, 2B.
56. Ralph Lamb served as Las Vegas's sheriff from 1962-80. The Lamb family is one of southern Nevada's most noted and most notorious. Ralph's brother, State Senator Floyd Lamb, served prison time for soliciting and accepting bribes while in office. Another brother, Larry, was acquitted of a murder charge in 1980, then convicted in 1985 on charges of cheating at gaming.
57. The Camp David bath house opened in Las Vegas at 2631 South Highland Drive in 1979. It was one of the most popular cruising spots for gay men, but fell victim to the hysteria of the early AIDS years. The place was raided on May 25, 1985, then closed on May 31, 1986. The Gay Academic Union of the

University of Nevada, Las Vegas held a "last fling" fundraiser for Aid for AIDS of Nevada [AFAN] on October 31, 1986 in the club, after which Camp David was dismantled. Two of the bath house's dressing room doors were used in an office remodeling at the Metropolitan Community Church.

58. For more on the secret police surveillance and raid of the Village Station nightclub, see "County Closes Disco" [*Vegas Gay Times*, December 1980, pp. 4-5].
59. *The Birdcage* was a Tony Award-winning play about a drag club, turned into a successful film starring Robin Williams in 1995. Both the play and the film were based on the successful French film, *La Cage aux Folles* [1978].
60. *Victora/Victoria* [1982] was a Blake Edwards musical comedy about gay life and female impersonation in 1930s Paris. Starring Edwards' wife, Julie Andrews, the 1982 American movie was based on the 1933 German film, *Viktor und Viktoria*. Victor/Victoria was among a wave of popular films concerning gay life and gay themes released in the late 1970s and early 1980s before losing momentum in the AIDS epidemic. Others from this time include *La Cage aux Folles* [1978], *Cruising* [1979], *Making Love* [1982], and *Personal Best* [1982].
61. Gelo's Lounge [4633 Paradise Road] started life as Kelly's Tavern, a straight cocktail lounge, in 1957. It went through a number of name changes during the next twenty years: the Valley Inn [1959]; the Rubaiyat Cocktail Lounge [1960]; Lido's Lounge [1962]; Gelo's Lido Lounge [about 1963]; Gelo's Lido Lounge and Chinese Restaurant [about 1968-69]. Gelo's became a gay bar in about October 1980 [the October 1983 *Nevada Gay Times* Calendar notes a party to celebrate the bar's 3rd anniversary]. Jerry, the bar's owner, in 1982 bought the Cantonese restaurant attached to Gelo's and expanded the bar. In 1989, Marlon Tenana bought the Gelo's shopping center and renovated it. Gelo's became Angles, and a women's bar attached to the back of Angles was known as Lace. Angles and Lace opened in June 1989, was briefly known as Angles-n-Curves, again as Angles-n-Lace, and since
62. 1610 was a small gay bar at 1610 East Charleston Boulevard which closed in about 1983.
63. The Backdoor Lounge at 1415 East Charleston Boulevard opened in November 1977. The murder to which Searl refers was the 1995 killing of Roger Jameson, a closeted Mormon father of 8. For more on the murder, see "Police Seek Information in Death of Airline Pilot" [*Las Vegas Bugle*, May/June 1995, p. 4].
64. Named for owner Ralph Vandersnick, Snick's Place opened at 1402 South Fourth Street in 1976.
65. For information on Cary Grant [January 18, 1904 - November 28, 1986] and his sexuality, see *Cary Grant: The Lonely Heart*, by Charles Higham and Roy

Mosely [New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989]; *Hollywood Babylon*, by Kenneth Anger [San Francisco, CA: Straight Arrow Books, 1975], p. 177; and *Hollywood Babylon II*, by Kenneth Anger [New York, NY: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1984], pp. 153-157; and *Hollywood Gays*, by Boze Hadleigh [New York, NY: Barricade Books, 1996], pp. 237-282, as well as the chapter on Randolph Scott, pp. 283-308.

66. One such truck stop is the Maverick Truck Stop at 3235 North Las Vegas Boulevard which has been a gay cruising spot since at least the 1960s.
67. This was Jack Robinson, murdered in front of his home at 6107 Pinewood Avenue on January 25, 1996. See "Mirage Pit Boss Slain In Front of His Home," *Las Vegas Sun*, January 25, 1996, 4A; "Foreigner Admits to Las Vegas Killing," *Las Vegas Sun*, January 26, 1996, 13A; and "Keeves Pleads Guilty to Murder," *Las Vegas Bugle*, May/June 1996, p. 6.
68. *Rough trade* refers to men picked up in bathrooms, truck stops, off the street, etc., who might be physically or hygienically unattractive. The term has connotations of dangerous pleasure, and is often used as a disparaging accusation.
69. Kenny Kerr's *Boylesque* first opened at the Silver Slipper Casino in 1977. His show has become a Las Vegas institution, moving several times to other hotels in the last 19 years. In November 1995, the show settled into the Debbie Reynolds Hotel at 305 Convention Center Drive, and is now known as the *Kenny Kerr Show*. Kenny himself is a great supporter of Las Vegas's gay community. Kerr was presented with a lifetime achievement award at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center's 4th Annual Honorarium in 1997.
70. Female impersonator Jim Bailey was one of the first professional female impersonators to work in Las Vegas. His performances in the 1960s and 70s were popular and often sold out.
71. International celebrity Frank Marino [b. November 20, 1963] is the star of the Riviera Hotel's *An Evening at La Cage* drag show. For biographical information, see *His Majesty, the Queen: An Autobiography* [Ocala, FL: MSW Publishing Company, 1997]. Marino also recorded a live CD, *Gay From Las Vegas*, in the spring of 1997.
72. See note 38.
73. Liberace and Scott Thorson were lovers from 1977 until 1982. On October 14 that year, Thorson signed a \$113 million palimony suit, but settled in 1984 for just \$95,000. For more on the Liberace/Thorson affair, see *Liberace*, by Ray Mungo [New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1995 (*Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians* series)]; and *Behind the Candelabra: My Life with Liberace*, by Scott Thorson, with Alex Thorleifson [New York, NY: Dutton, 1988].

74. Rock Hudson [1925-1985] was one of Hollywood's most enduring stars. Even though he won an Oscar nomination for his dramatic role in *Giant* [1956], he's most fondly remembered for his romantic comedies with Doris Day [*Pillow Talk* (1959); *Lover Come Back* (1961); *Send Me No Flowers* (1964)]. Hudson, closeted till the end, was the first major celebrity to die of AIDS.
75. Jim Nabors [b. June 12, 1932] is a singer and television star. He played Gomer Pyle on the old *Andy Griffith Show* in 1963-64, then starred in his own spin-off, *Gomer Pyle, USMC* [1964-69]. Hopelessly typecast as Gomer, Nabors' career never went much further.
76. Republican Chic Hecht [b. November 30, 1928], who is married and has two daughters, came to Las Vegas in 1946. He opened a popular women's clothing store on Fremont Street in 1953, then became deeply involved in Nevada politics. He served in the Nevada State Senate 1967-73, and in the U. S. Senate 1982-88. He had forged a friendship with Ronald Reagan as early as 1968; Reagan's successor as president, George Bush, selected Hecht to be the U. S. Ambassador to the Bahamas in 1989, an appointment that was not popular even within the Republican party. Hecht lost his post when Bill Clinton defeated George Bush in 1992.
77. Grant Sawyer [December 14, 1918 - February 19, 1996] served as Nevada's governor from 1958 through 1966. He established the Nevada Equal Rights Commission, built the framework for state regulation of gaming which today is known as the Nevada Gaming Commission, and co-founded Lionel, Sawyer & Collins, Nevada's largest law firm. His biography, *Hang Tough*, taken from transcripts of oral history interviews conducted by the University of Nevada Oral History Program, was published by the University of Nevada Press in 1993.
78. *Gaydar* is *gay radar*, the supposed intuitive ability of gay people to recognize each other as gay.
79. Barney Frank [b. March 31, 1940], has served as a congressman from Massachusetts since 1981. Outed in the 1980s, he is the author of *Speaking Frankly: What's Wrong With the Democrats and How to Fix It* [New York, NY: Times Books/Random House, 1992].
80. Gerry Studs [b. May 12, 1939], served as a Massachusetts congressman from 1973-1996. Like Barney Frank, Studs was outed in the 1980s.
81. While not the first openly gay candidate for public office in Nevada, David is the first to have *won*. He ran for the Nevada State Assembly, District 41 as a Democrat in 1996 and was elected by a large majority despite a last-minute homophobic smear campaign by his Republican opposition.
82. Lance Malone is a Las Vegas Metropolitan Policeman who defeated incumbent Paul Christensen for a seat on the Clark County Commission in November 1996.

83. Paul Christensen, after serving nearly 20 years on the Clark County Commission, was defeated in a bitter race in 1996 by Las Vegas policeman Lance Malone.
84. Wayne Newton, known as the Midnight Idol, is one of Las Vegas's perennial performers. Singing since the age of 6, he first performed in Las Vegas at the Fremont Hotel in 1959. He holds the record for number of Las Vegas performances as well as attendees. A brief foray into film was a failure, as was his attempt to import his Vegas act to Branson, Missouri, the "entertainment capital" of the Midwest. He won a libel suit against ABC for their claim of his ties with the mob, and went through a very public bankruptcy proceeding in the 1990s.
85. David Geffen [b. February 21, 1943] is an openly gay billionaire record, film, and Broadway producer, noted by some as the most powerful person in the entertainment industry. He's president of Geffen Records, head of the Geffen Film Company, and vice chairman of Warner Brothers Pictures. The films he's produced include *Lost in America* [1985], *Little Shop of Horrors* [1986], and *Beetlejuice* [1988]. He was co-producer of such Broadway hits as *Cats* [1982] and *Dreamgirls* [1983].
86. One of the earliest gay emancipation organizations in the United States, the Mattachine Society was first conceived in August 1948 by Henry Hay, then founded as a California corporation in April 1951. For a thorough history of the Mattachine Society, see an interview with Henry Hay in *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U. S. A.*, by Jonathan Katz [New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976, pp. 406 - 420].
87. Mario Cuomo [b. June 15, 1932] served as governor of New York from 1983 through 1994.
88. Pia Zadora [b. 1955] unsuccessfully promoted herself as a Bardot-like sexpot in the 1980s. Her marriage to millionaire Meshulam Riklis, one-time owner of Las Vegas's Riviera Hotel and a man many years her senior, was condemned by many, although it was a happy relationship and produced children. While Pia's starring films flopped [*Butterfly* (1981); *Lonely Lady* (1983)], she found great success as a nightclub singer.
89. AFAN [Aid for AIDS of Nevada], according to an article in the April 1984 issue of *Desert Gaze* [p. 6], was established on March 26, 1984 at the Metropolitan Community Church in Las Vegas by "a local gay individual diagnosed with having AIDS." The April 1984 issue of the *Nevada Gay Times* [p. 11] notes that AFAN was formed at MCC-Las Vegas by nine individuals representing MCC, Nevadans for Human Rights, the *Nevada Gay Times*, the Gay Switchboard, the Lesbian/Gay Academic Union at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the Community Action Committee [publisher of *Desert Gaze*], and the Buffalo leather bar. The article further states that AFAN's parent organization was Aid for AIDS, formed in Los Angeles in mid-1983,

and that the Las Vegas chapter was chaired by an individual associated with the Los Angeles organization.

90. Flex Lounge and its adjacent Cinfully Delicious Restaurant opened at 4347 West Charleston Boulevard on November 15, 1995. Cinfully Delicious reopened as the Flex Grill in March 1997.
91. Attorney Kevin Kelly is one of the Las Vegas gay community's most active and influential members. He was a member and officer of Nevadans for Human Rights, Nevada's first gay rights organization; a founding member of the Community Action Committee [1983; publisher of *Desert Gaze*]; associated with Nevadans for Constitutional Equality who were in large part responsible for the repeal of Nevada's sodomy statute on June 16, 1993; and a founder of the Log Cabin Club for gay Republicans [1993]. Kelly was the defense attorney for Philip Bruce Cline, the young gay man accused in 1981 of torching the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel and Casino. Kelly has been a contributing feature writer for the *Bohemian Bugle* [known now as the *Las Vegas Bugle*], and he was among the four community leaders honored by the Gay and Lesbian Community Center's first annual Honorarium on January 23, 1994. On December 31, 1996, Kelly opened a gay bar called Inferno.
92. Lee Plotkin is noted as the Las Vegas gay community's official spokesman, although many within the community challenge him on that count. Like Kevin Kelly [see note 91], Plotkin was among the four community members honored on January 23, 1994 at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center's first annual Honorarium. Plotkin has been associated with the Southern Nevada Association of Pride, Inc., which sponsors Las Vegas's annual Gay Pride Celebration; the Republican Log Cabin Club; and at the time of this interview is president of the Golden Rainbow organization which sponsors an annual Strip production in support of AIDS charities and other local gay causes. Plotkin's column, *Politically Speaking*, appeared in the *Las Vegas Bugle* from February 1994 through the March/April 1997 issue, after which he moved it to the local gay tabloid *Q-Tribe* as *Speaking Out* in May 1997.
93. Don Reynolds [September 23, 1906 - April 2, 1993] died aboard his yacht in the Ligurian Sea off the coast of Italy. Reynolds was founder of the Donrey Media Group which, at his death, owned 53 daily newspapers, 11 outdoor advertisement companies, 5 cable TV stations, and 1 commercial television station broadcasting in 20 states. He bought a majority interest in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* in 1949, and the remainder ownership in 1959. Reynolds also established the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, Inc. for charitable and educational activities. Even though he maintained publicly that he owned too many newspapers to worry about influencing their editorial content, Donrey papers were notorious for their ultra-conservative, even reactionary position on issues and personnel matters. The *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, largest of the Donrey chain, is no exception.
94. Gangster Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal came to Las Vegas in 1968 and, with his partner Tony "the Ant" Spilotro, virtually ran Las Vegas from the Stardust

Hotel for the Chicago Mob. He was nearly killed on October 4, 1982 when his car exploded in the parking lot of Tony Roma's restaurant on East Sahara Avenue. Rosenthal wrote a column for the *Las Vegas Sun* and for two years hosted *The Frank Rosenthal Show* televised from the Stardust Hotel at 11:00 p. m. Saturday nights beginning in April 1977. For the story of Lefty Rosenthal and Tony Spilotro, see *Casino*, by Nicholas Pileggi [New York: NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995].

95. Nicholas Pileggi's book, *Casino* [see note 94 above] was made into a film by Martin Scorsese, released in 1996, starring Robert DeNiro [as Rosenthal], Joe Pesci [as Spilotro], and Sharon Stone [as Rosenthal's wife, Geri].
96. The Log Cabin Club, a national organization for gay Republicans, was founded in Las Vegas in 1993.

* * *

- 10/25/80

BUFFALO PROMO GROUP

Meyers Helps Both Known & Unknown

By HANFORD SEARL

BUFFALO—Backing new artists, broadening advertising horizons and managing products in the economic market is the impetus of the Meyers Organization.

The independent record promotion group, also known as Record Promoters, has a membership of 150 and is looking to five-member units.

"It's the Buffalo area record industry that's the focus of our efforts," says Jerry Meyers.

Meyers reports a radio station in the Western New York area seeking a professional in the area of advertising and promotion, and the 10% unemployment rate here.

According to Meyers, new top selling LPs are now in production for the Buffalo area and the national market, down from April 1979.

Meyers reports each week radio stations in WFTZ-AM, FM, WKSW-AM, WPHG-FM, WGR-AM and WOLK-FM are buying new press. He advertises Carlin's Gary LeVine's hit single and LP, "Let Me Be Your Angel."

Underlining the firm's growth, credit has increased since 1971 with Buffalo stations. Meyers anticipates production efforts for Neil Dugan's and Steve Thompson's upcoming releases.

of the group's growth, it's desired to increase a 10% interest return the Buffalo area.

As the firm, the firm published a weekly record magazine called "The Buffalo Record" for the Buffalo area, Cleveland and other areas. The magazine is published weekly and is a year for being available to advertising and radio.

Radio stations and record stores are the main focus of the firm's efforts. The firm's staff includes David Cahn, Steve Meyer and Frank Meyer.

Operating 12-14 days a week in Buffalo, Meyers group has produced over 1000 records. The firm's staff is looking toward expansion for a new record label, as Carlin's continues to "Up The Mountain."

Other advertising jobs include radio spots for the new Buffalo area and a Buffalo station. The group has also worked on Carlin's and Dugan's, a full time basis in a Buffalo area.

Appendix

selected publications
by
Hanford Searl

- 10/25/80

BUFFALO PROMO GROUP

Meyers Helps Both Known & Unknown

By HANFORD SEARL

BUFFALO—Backing new artists, breaking superstars' records and managing/producing unknown acts in this economically-recovering market is the triple goal of the Jerry Meyers Organization.

The independent record promotion group, also known as Record Promotions & Marketing, Inc., boasts representation for all major labels and totals 50 years' experience among its five-member staff.

"It's our business to get records on radio stations, search out early sales patterns, work closely with retail outlets and pick the hits," says president Jerry Meyers.

Meyers reports a sales uptrend in this Western New York area, tagging a product lull as the real culprit for past low sales instead of the sluggish, national financial outlook and the 10% unemployment rate here.

According to Meyers, two top selling LPs can now be purchased for \$11.50 here despite cost increases the last two years and the traditional seasonal slowdown from April to July.

Meyers credits such area radio operations as WBEN-AM-FM, WKBW-AM, WPHD-FM, WGR-AM and WBLK-FM for breaking new artists like Atlantic/Cotillion's Stacy Lattisaw's hit single and LP, "Let Me Be Your Angel."

Underscoring the firm's proven, credible track record since 1971 with Buffalo stations, Meyers anticipates groundwork efforts for Neil Dia-

mond's and Bruce Springsteen's upcoming new releases.

"We know the major priorities of the record companies," admits Meyers. "We work their best product and the more obscure new material. If the record's great, it's destined to become a hit." Meyers reports the Buffalo market is predominantly conservative and leans towards a strong adult-contemporary/pop sound. It responds to most crossover superstars like Kenny Rogers, Diana Ross and Anne Murray.

Meyers reports a close association with major distributors and retailers in the Niagara Frontier region.

At one time, the firm published a weekly retail magazine entitled Report Card on product flow for Buffalo, Detroit, Cleveland and seven other Northeast city markets. It was discontinued after a year for being too time consuming and costly.

Radio stations and musical interests are divided among the firm's five staffers who include Jack Silverstein, Tom Stevens, David Cahn, Sheila Macoff and Franki Nastro.

Operating 12-14 daily hours in suburban Amherst, Meyers' group also primes unknown, promising talent. The most recent project was landing national exposure for a group named Cheeks on Capitol's soundtrack of "Up The Academy."

Other developing acts include former Buffalo native Arie Sigman, now a London resident, the group China from nearby Toronto and Fadele, a local jazz band on a label here.

25, 1980 BILLBOARD

Careful In Components

As stated many manufacturers...
 "We know the major priorities of the record companies," admits Meyers. "We work their best product and the more obscure new material. If the record's great, it's destined to become a hit." Meyers reports the Buffalo market is predominantly conservative and leans towards a strong adult-contemporary/pop sound. It responds to most crossover superstars like Kenny Rogers, Diana Ross and Anne Murray.

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HANFORD SEARL

ABC Publishing
Not Affected By
MCA Purchase

Jan. 19, 1980

SISTER SLEDGE

MGM Grand, Las Vegas

Proving its disco power and musical variety talents, Sister Sledge closed its debut as an opening act Jan. 2 at the Grand after a highly successful stint as headliners this summer at the Tropicana.

The four-sister group, led by the charisma and strong vocals of Joni, opened its thoroughly entertaining six-song set with "Lost In Music" taken from its first LP for Cotillion.

Effective lighting, fog and echo chamber enhancement highlighted this number, which was followed by Stevie Wonder's fast pop ballad "Al-ways" with each woman being spotlighted.

The sisters' impressions segment was next, featuring Kathy as Diana Ross, complete with wig and head movements singing "Baby Love," Debbie as Cher with a credible version of "Take Me Home" and Joni as Dolly Parton belting out "Here I Come Again."

An Andrews Sisters carbon found the group receiving a rousing response from the SRO Celebrity Room audience on "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy Of Company B."

Kim joined the other three for a dramatic handling of the ballad "Home" from "The Wiz." Disco hits "He's The Greatest Dancer" and the platinum seller "We Are Family" got the usually jaded showroom crowd on its feet.

Musical conductor Tim Tobias, also the group's synthesizer player, skillfully guided Sister Sledge's five-man rhythm section composed of Larry Dix on keys, bassist Bob Allen, drummer Phil Lightfoot, Dean Simon on sax and guitarist Gary Cook.

The Tom Moses Orchestra provided ample accompaniment as this high-energy group notched yet another impressive impact on a Strip audience with the hopes its limited 35-minute set will eventually be expanded to demonstrate its full potential.

HANFORD SEARL

Buyers More Careful In Picking Audio Components

LAS VEGAS—The slowed-down economy has caused more careful shopping for lower priced audio components, while the relative newness of autosound has allowed for wide open pioneering.

Those two major thoughts were respectively reached by Mike Jaret, president of Appletree Stereo in DeKalb, Ill., and Scott Summers, head of his own one-store outlet, Auto Radio Station, Madison, Wis.

Speaking at the CES Audio workshop, the two lecturers outlined their business operations, successful ad campaigns and effective sales ploys in guaranteeing customer satisfaction.

"There's no magic formulas when it comes to success, just the selling of the best selections at a good price," said Jaret. "The economy has caused the careful shopper to be even more so."

According to moderator Chuck Braley, an editor with Home Furnishing Daily, Jaret's 10-year-old business began as a \$2,000 investment and last year made more than \$6 million.

Jaret stressed the importance of offering packaged comprehensive components, factory-authorized service and performance certification before the product leaves the warehouse.

He blasted many manufacturers for poorly, inadequate reimbursement of warranties and was critical of slow parts servicing. He has more loaner units out, than ever before.

Meanwhile, Summers, originally a DJ and former car stereo chain employe, maintained the importance of image advertising and carrying a credible theme throughout.

"Autosound people are unique, the situation being that we are pioneers in an industry in which not a whole lot of ideas have been proven," said Summers.

He continued his talk about the importance of keying around instant installation of product and an autosound analysis guarantee to backup his firm's product satisfaction.

Summers revealed that car accessories such as air conditioning and other auto-related products, which is part of his business, was down because of slow new car sales but said autosound retail sales were his best ever in December.

He attributed that sales stability to a promotion tie-in with Disney's film "The Black Hole" in a free ticket giveaway and closely related radio jingle about autosound products filling a "black hole in that car dashboard." HANFORD SEARL

2/17/79

Music Production is in charge of producing... deals with other labels... broadcasting... ABC... music consultant for projects such as movies... independent...

Planning to... president... Diane... ABC's... importance of... That practice involves the handling of old, undiscovered and new material with some... in creating self...

Looking ahead to... reports... Henry... Peter... Disney... Helen... Robin... the Oak Ridge Boys... Young contemporary artists... Travolta, Sherry... and... Disney LPs on the charts...

ABC Publishing Not Affected By MCA Purchase

By HANFORD SEARL

LOS ANGELES—Despite the recent sale of ABC Records to MCA, it's business as usual at ABC Music Publishing which just recorded its best year in income and volume.

According to president Jay Morgenstern, no official directives have been issued by either ABC or MCA executives about the pending ownership of the publishing firm.

"Unfortunately at this point (Thursday) there has been no communication by either group," says Morgenstern. "We should hear something at the end of the 30-day waiting period."

Morgenstern, a 25-year veteran of the music industry, feels the uncertain condition of job security possibly affecting the 15 staff members at the 8201 Beverly Blvd. address will have little impact on their aggressive direction.

Sal Chiantia, head of MCA Music Publishing, says it is premature to speculate about the status of ABC Music Publishing and related developments until after the decision by the U.S. Justice Dept.

(Continued on page 98)

- 2/17/79

ABC Publishing Unaffected By MCA

• Continued from page 3

"I think it would be improper at this time to comment about anything dealing with MCA's proposed purchase of ABC," Chiantia says. "It might even be illegal to talk about it right now."

Claiming 1978 was the biggest year for profits and creative activity for the publishing group, the top executive listed income up 90% between 1976 and 1978.

The company is structured as follows: ABC/Dunhill Publishing, ABC Music Productions, American Broadcasting Music and ABC Circle Films with offices in L.A. and Nashville.

ABC Music Productions is in charge of producing artists and making deals with other labels, American Broadcasting Music covers the publishing of ABC Radio and tv while ABC Circle Films serves as a music consultant for projects such as movies of the week for the tv network.

Emphasizing the independent na-

ture of working with outside labels other than ABC Records, Morgenstern lists Atlantic, 20th Century-Fox and RCA among major companies utilized.

This year ABC Publishing is nominated for six Grammys, including best performance by a country duo artist, namely Helen Cornelius and Jim Ed Brown on RCA for "If The World Ran Out Of Love."

"We're not a record company's publishing firm," Morgenstern says. "We have not relied on one record company for business, since we also search out active, viable writers and performers in the market," Morgenstern continues.

Pointing to Rick Shoemaker, vice president of creative directions, and Diane Petty, vice president, located at ABC's Nashville office, Morgenstern underlines the importance of matchup.

That practice involves the matching of old, undiscovered and new material with name artists handled in casting staff meetings rather than

wide-range scatter shooting done by some publishers.

"Bottom Line," a Dennis Lambert/Brian Potter song was recently picked up by Johnny Mathis while some old Mamas & Pappas songs, namely "California Dreamin'" will be used in a film project by American International Pictures.

ABC Publishing scored on other major movie soundtracks including "Grease," "FM" and "The Last Waltz" with established songs. The Steely Dan, Jimmy Buffet and gospel catalogs and reactivated Grass Roots and Steppenwolf material have also been profitable.

Looking ahead to 1979, Morgenstern reports interest in writers Jimmy Mack, Peter McCane and Danny Moore while lining up the likes of Helen Reddy, Mathis, Roy Clark and the Oak Ridge Boys to record material.

Young contemporary artists like Travolta, Shaun Cassidy and Leif Garrett were big for us as were eight Presley LPs on the charts at the same time," concludes Morgenstern.

Hanford

Search

April 5 1978



Oscar Picks Carry On Sound Tradition

All-time box-office champion "Star Wars" copped the most (five). Director-Writer Woody Allen hit a two-run homer and British actress Vanessa Redgrave, a true-life "Julia," sent shock waves with her gutsy political statement.

And where else would you have seen all this, except with 300 million people and some 50 countries than at this year's Academy Awards -- Oscar's 50th Golden Anniversary on ABC-TV.

Redgrave, known for her outspoken opinions regarding the rights of the Palestinians in the troubled Mideast, socked it to the militant Jewish Defense League (JDL), linking them to the ugly fanaticisms of fascism, an ironic comparison. For like their rival PLO, they, too, are responsible for senseless violence and death.

WHAT MORE APPROPRIATE time for Ms. Redgrave to defend herself but at that occasion where the JDL had been waging hard pressure tactics to rob her of her deserved award in 20th Century Fox's "Julia."

Those sensible, industry-minded peers, fellow workers and members of the Los Angeles Jewish community were not swayed by propoganda, cheap rhetoric or threats -- an outright slap in the face to any and all hate groups.

Surprisingly, Jane Fonda, who brilliantly illuminated the character of Lillian Hellman of which "Julia" is about, lost Best Actress honors to a likewise stunned Diane Keaton. It literally was Fonda's most moving effort yet, although newcomer Keaton's animated "Annie Hall" contribution, coupled with her incredible "Looking For Mr. Goodbar" role, was a solid, one-two, knock-out punch.

Director George Lucas, who lost out to Woody Allen for "Hall," has to be proud of "Star Wars" hauling off bests for Sound, Art Direction, Costume Design, Original Music and Film Editing.

COLUMBIA PICTURES and Director Steven Spielberg have to be disappointed for "Close Encounters Of The Third Kind," which was nominated for eight Oscars, only winning Best Cinematography for Vilmos Zsigmond and a special sound effects honor. But then "Star Wars" was released first.

If you've seen United Artist's "Annie Hall," then you'll know what a genius-level comedic mind Wood Allen has, for he's certainly matured, mellowed and focused his perspective on life's hilarities, contrasts and idiosyncrasies. Not since Orson Wells has Hollywood had such a creative mind in paving the way for other comics-turned-directors like Joan Rivers, Mel Brooks and Gene Wilder.

By the way, "Annie Hall" took the biggy. Best Picture plus Allen running off with Best Director and Original Screenplay honors.

The other hotly contested Oscar, Best Actor, went to popular Richard Dreyfuss for his gifted, remarkable role in Neil Simon's hit movie, "The Goodbye Girl." There's no question about Dreyfuss's abilities, but it was a disappointment for Richard Burton missing his eighth nomination for "Equus."

JASON ROBARDS beating out "Equus" Peter Firth for Best Supporting Actor was the biggest shocker, since Robards' character of Dashiell Hammett was far less demanding than Firth's complicated, dramatic tortured youth.

The most interesting Oscar developments this year came with the awarding of three Academy Awards to films dealing with physically handicapped persons, Best Live-Action Short for "I'll Find A Way," Best Documentary Feature for "Who Are the Debolts? And where Did They Get Nineteen Kids?" and Best Documentary Short for "Gravity Is My Enemy."

The most emotional moments came during standing ovations for presenter Fred Astaire and receiver Margaret Booth, the latter the female forerunner of editors, who received a special honor for her accomplishments for such movies as "The Sunshine Boys" and "The Goodbye Girl."

WILLIAM HOLDEN paid an impromptu salute to co-presenter Barbara Stanwyck for helping him during their first film together, "Golden Boy," some 30 years ago; in fact, for keeping him on his first celluloid venture which led to bigger and better roles.

And former Best Screenplay winner Paddy Chayefsky, honored for his brilliant "Network" dialogue last year, childishly attacked Redgrave for her self-defense as JDL demonstrators burned her in effigy outside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion while brawling with PLO and Nazi pickets. It could only happen in Hollywood.

The Valley Times

"Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong." — Abraham Lincoln.

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Friday, May 12, 1978

Anka's Disco to Debut Saturday

By HANFORD SEARL
Times Columnist

Strip entertainer Paul Anka will christen his new, \$3.5-million disco-restaurant Jubilation Saturday-- billed as the plushest, most modern hotspot in this Show Biz Capital.

Under construction for a year, the 28,500 square foot, multi-level nightclub will open on a lush, wooded three and a half-acre site at 75 East Harmon Road adjacent to the Aladdin Hotel.

Special invited guests, Hollywood celebrities, VIP's, the press and out-of-town invitees will attend the first night

festivities when Jubilation opens its doors at 2:30 a.m. Sunday. The public opening is set for 5 p.m..

"There are six main areas in the club, three posh dining facilities, two open bars plus the dance floor stage," said Steve Lombardo Jr., vice president of the company. "We feel this is the most complete facility anywhere."

The spacious, linear brick edifice features a glass-enclosed atrium of Joshua trees, desert plants and various foliage. An art-deco motif is found throughout the club in brass, tin, velvet, brick, corduroy and glass effects.

Anka, who opened at Caesars Palace Thursday night, is a limited owner with his dad, Andy Anka of Toronto, Canada, who acts as the club's administrator and general manager.

Lombardo and three other Chicago-based contractors complete the ownership roster of Hot Spurs Of Nevada, Inc., which operated and runs the posh, airy facility.

The tall, easy-going Lombardo and his fellow owners manage Chicago's disco club. "The BBC" and restaurants "Hot Spurs" and "Sweetwaters," formerly Mr. Kelly's. This is their most ambitious project to date.

Burgundy-colored carpeting and grey-toned booths surround the lighted dancing area, which also features a floor-to-ceiling dual-sound speaker sound system for "live" entertainment in an enclosed wood cabinet.

Two JBL speakers are suspended over the wooden dance floor which showcases a specially designed glass mountain wall, created by Jim Bushness of Chicago. A lighted ceiling panel compliments the entire dance area.

The Quad-Altec amps are commandeered in the second-floor deejay control booth, found above and to the

right of the main dining-dance section. Two Panasonic SL-1800 Technic turntables and cassette deck are included in the system.

With two upper levels over looking the dance-dining area, backgammon tables can be found on one side and a private, VIP lounge on the other for invited guests and celebrities.

Based on a past Anka hit, "Jubilation," the new nitery spot took two years for planning and selecting the most appropriate location, Lombardo said.

Numerous marble statues are
(Please turn to page A-2)

Connection

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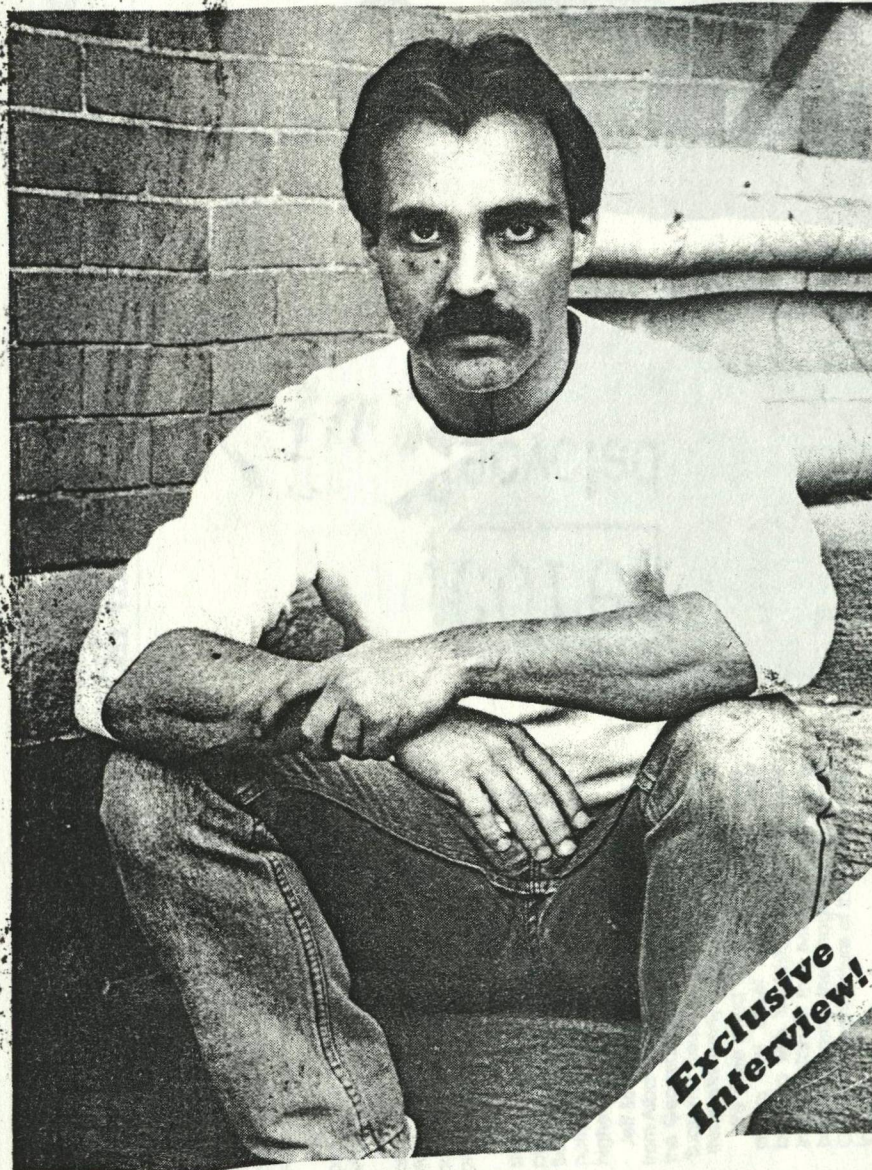
Volume 3 Number 1

Newsstand Price \$2

November 9-30, 1983

The People vs. Uplinger

The First National Test of a Gay Issue



by Hanford Searl Jr.

BUFFALO, N.Y.—A Buffalo native, Bob Uplinger stands five feet three inches tall, has brown eyes and hair, works out at a local athletic club and teaches troubled youth for a government agency. Uplinger, at 32, is a dedicated professional with an M.A. in Elementary Education and is highly-respected by his peers, both gay and straight in the community. He's helping to found Gay & Lesbian Youth here, participates in Gay Professionals and the Matchachine Society.

Openly gay to family and friends as well as co-workers, the personable Uplinger, on a hot summer night, August 8, 1981, stopped to casually chat with a handsome stranger who also was enjoying western New York's warm weather.

Denying that he was an undercover police officer, the young-looking man exchanged innocent pleasantries with Bob and was even introduced to some of his friends who also were walking home in predominantly gay Allentown. After they had walked about two blocks, Uplinger in a discreet fashion, invited his new acquaintance home. The stranger then identified himself as a police officer on Buffalo's Vice Squad and arrested Uplinger for "loitering for the purpose of deviate sex."

It's been two years since the incident and Bob Uplinger will soon be standing taller. His case will become a precedent-setting battle at the U.S. Supreme Court next January or February and will establish gay rights as a national, legal issue.

Story on page 12

Exclusive Interview!

News From:

- New York City
 - Long Island
 - Upstate New York
 - San Francisco
- Plus:
- Personals and Bar Guide

We're Not in Kansas Anymore, Toto

Reflections On the Supreme Court

by Hanford Searl Jr.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Stonewall 15 years later—A date with destiny for gays and the highest court in the land. Freedom of speech and assembly v.s. state control of public and private conduct.

Dorothy, the Scarecrow, Tin Man, Cowardly Lion and yes, Toto, too, cautiously walking into the hall of The Wizard of Oz.

Approaching the U.S. Supreme Court building Jan. 17, all of these mixed thoughts and impressions raced through our minds and hearts, namely Bob Uplinger's and this reporter/writer's.

After three years of trials in New York state since his arrest for "loitering for the purpose of deviate sex," Aug. 21, 1981, Buffalo, N.Y. native Bob Uplinger was finally having his day in court—the nation's highest.

Jeff Strash, Bob's close friend of 17 years from Albany, N.Y., accompanied us across the Georgia marble plaza in front of the Supreme Courts' main, west entrance on this partly-sunny winter morning.

We three stood there, gazing westward across First Street towards the Capitol building with the Washington monument in the distance, then turning our attention back towards the majestic, classical Corinthian architecture of the Court building.

As we climbed the 36 steps, we studied two, huge marble statues on each side of us—to the right, a male figure, the Guardian of Law and to the left, a female figure, the Contemplation of Justice.

Justice, herself, was holding tightly a statue of blind justice while her male counterpart held a tablet with the Latin version of law. We hoped these were good omens.

"Equal Justice Under Law" is incised on the pediment above the doors and 16 marble columns. A sculpture frieze depicting various symbols of law and some former justices, rested above that.

We walked through the two open bronze doors each weighs 6.5 tons with sculpted panels and up another, short flight of stairs past plaques dedicating the buildings' opening in 1935, architect David Lynn and the U.S. Supreme Court Bldg. Commission.



Robert Uplinger and his attorney, William Gardner

Then we three stood at the entrance of the vast, Great Hall, which features 10 suspended lights and double rows of monolithic marble columns on each side

rising to a red and blue coffered ceiling. Busts of all former Chief Justices are set alternately in niches along the sides.

We'd made it safely up the impressive,

grand entrance of the Supreme Court "the day before" Uplinger's actual court case in a casual, dry run of where-to-go, checking out the building's layout and historical ambience. We had arrived.

A security guard directed us to an elevator to reach the ground floor where the press offices are, a museum depicting the past decade of the court's history with large displays and 15-minute film on the workings of the court.

We walked around, viewing the museum artifacts, a statue of Chief Justice John Marshall lazing at the far end of the ground floor and two, marble spiral staircases which ascend five stories but are closed-to-public use.

After checking into the press office to secure my credentials, Bob, Jess and I chatted over lunch in the pleasant-but-spartan cafeteria/restaurant.

"Looking up at this building gives you the magnitude of this case and its national implications," said Uplinger. "It's all been worth it. Regardless of what the decision is, the point is an American gay citizen was addressed by the court as an equal and that it can be done again and should."

Although he never dreamed that the events of that warm, summer walk home would result in an appearance before the Supreme Court, Uplinger is not unhappy that it happened.

"Yes, this has changed my life in certain ways. I was not a mainstream, gay lib participant. I lived my life and assumed the benefits of gay rights. You can't make those assumptions anymore," reflected Uplinger.

A teacher of troubled youth, Uplinger supports the tradition of gay cruising in public as an alternative to socializing in gay bars, stressing the elements of casual conversation, being discreet and not touching anyone.

"I deserved what I got, I knew what I was doing in courting trouble. In my heart I knew I was right. I realized the possibility was there to be arrested but I wanted to exercise my freedom of speech in a reasonable way," Uplinger said.

The next day—Jan. 18—we all met again on the now snow-covered steps of the Supreme Court prior to the case being argued at 2 p.m. We separated, each going different directions. Bob with his attorney William H. Gardner, Jess into the public section of the audience and this reporter, into the press area left of the bench.

PHOTO JIM MARKS THE WASHINGTON BLADE

Monica Schwinn, 31, of Lebach, West Germany, was a member of the Maltese Aid Service and went to Vietnam to give medical help to persons on both sides of the conflict. During her imprisonment she watched three of her

only woman known to have emerged alive from North Vietnamese imprisonment. She was interviewed during a stopover here on her way home from rest and rehabilitation in Pennsylvania.

"The most difficult thing was having nothing to do as I lay on a wooden bench in a hut, alone for

"I dream of utilizing space in the best ways," she said, "and I was very happy in these dreams. But when I woke up, it was painful."

Miss Schwinn also said the North Vietnamese resented the

"An even worse time was when we were in a hospital but on the Ho Chi Minh trail. I had collapsed from the walking and the officer threw a bamboo broom at me and told me to sweep the hut. I think I made him lose face in front of the

Her ordeal began when she and four colleagues were taken prisoner Sunday morning, April 27, 1969, while on their way to a village near the Maltese hospital.

They were Marie-Luise Kerber of the Saarland, who died 11 days before her 20th birthday; Rika Kortmann, of Wilsun, and Georg Bartsch of Aschaffenburg. Bernhard Diehl, 26, of Worms, lived.

After a year in the south, she said, the two survivors were marched for 62 days up the Ho Chi

Miss Schwinn, who is five foot two inches, said she lost 50 pounds during her first three months of captivity. Now well rested, she intends to start a new job at a nursery in Germany.



MONICA SCHWINN ... watched them starve

SHOW HORSE INJURES 23

Hotel fire kills four

BATH, Maine (AP) — Fire swept a three-story wooden hotel that served as a boarding house for teen-aged students on Sunday, killing four persons and injuring seven, fire officials said.

Kenney said he did not know the cause of the fire but said "it must have been smoldering for some time" to envelop the building so rapidly.

Neighbors reported being awakened by cries for help about 4 a.m.

Susan Wright, 20, said she and her 18-year-old roommate Debbie Hughes were asleep in their first floor room when they heard somebody holler "fire."

"We got up. I went to the window and Debbie opened the door. When you looked down the hall all you could see were flames," she said.

The two fled through a rear door and into a parking lot where they saw a young hotel resident at a window. "She didn't dare jump or anything" and was one of those who died, Miss Wright said.

The first alarm was telephoned by an unidentified man from a telephone booth across the street from the hotel, authorities said.

The bodies of three males and a female were found in the ruins of the three-story wooden structure in the center of this shipbuilding city. Autopsies were to be performed later Sunday.

The names of the dead, reportedly burned beyond recognition, were not immediately available.

Seven persons suffered injuries ranging from burns to broken bones. They were in satisfactory condition at a hospital.

Fire Chief Norman C. Kenney said a search would be made for more bodies in the debris of the gutted Hotel Sedgwick but added "I am personally satisfied that there is no one else in there."

The once-prestigious 30-room hotel had become a boarding home for young people, many of them high school students, he said.

"Everybody moves out of home now when they turn 18, around here the Sedgwick was the place

to go," one resident said, adding many of the 25 permanent roomers were finishing their senior year at Morse High School about a block away.

Author Behrman dies

NEW YORK (AP) — Writer S.N. Behrman, author of more than 20 plays and of film scripts for some of Hollywood's leading stars, died Sunday at his apartment on Park Avenue. He was 80.

Behrman's plays included the book for "Fanny," with music by Joshua Logan, in 1954, and "No Time for Comedy," in 1939. His career as a playwright spanned

starring Greta Garbo; "Tale of Two Cities," starring Ronald Coleman, and "Me and the Colonel," starring Danny Kaye.

Behrman was also a contributor to the New Yorker magazine and author of several books including "Duveen," the celebrated biography of an art dealer.

Born in Worcester, Mass., June



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All 6 die in Alaska jet crash

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Wreckage from a missing jet cargo plane was found Sunday on a mountainside near Cold Bay, Alaska, the Rescue Coordination Center at Elmendorf Air Force Base reported.

A spokesman said all six persons aboard died in the crash.

Officials said the plane was spotted by a volunteer search aircraft at the 3,500-foot level on Mt. Dutton, 15 miles east of Cold Bay, at 2:35 p.m. EDT.

A body removal team was being sent to the area, a rescue center spokesman said.

The spokesman said the wreckage sighting was confirmed by a Coast Guard helicopter which set down near the crash site.

The World Airways DC3 jet was chartered by the Air Force to carry a load of aircraft tires, a Coast Guard spokesman said. It was en route from Travis Air Force Base, Calif., to Yokota, Japan, when it disappeared.

Beef freeze to be lifted starting today

Consumers prepared for another round of price increases with the lifting of the beef ceiling at midnight Sunday, but even the experts weren't sure what would happen at the supermarket on Monday.

"At the moment," said Forest Barter, meat merchandiser for the A&P in Boston, "it's anybody's guess."

Wade Parker, general manager of the Pacific Meat Co. in Portland, Ore., said, "The retail price (of beef) could go up as much as 10 cents a pound. The housewife's going to tell us. If she

buys, the beef will move right along and the price will go up. If she resists, it's going to stay down ..."

Consumer resistance to high prices of pork and poultry, freed from most controls in July, has been credited with bringing down the cost of things like bacon, eggs and chicken. An Associated Press marketbasket survey earlier this month found that retail prices declined between the middle of August and the beginning of September, although they averaged seven per cent higher than they were six months ago.

A spokesman for Armour & Co. agreed that a lot depends on the consumer. But he added: "It depends on farmers too. They may try to hold out or may decide they'd better sell ... What we're really saying is that we don't know what's going to happen."

Monday marks the first time in more than five months that beef prices will be free of government controls. It also marks the start of new food regulations that will allow producers, processors and retailers to pass on to the consumer increases in nonagricultural costs.

Weather, Index

Partly cloudy with a small chance of afternoon and evening thunderstorms with variable winds 15-25 mph and gusting at times.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------|
| High — near 90 | Today | Low — mid 60s |
| Sunrise — 6:19 | | Sunset — 6:34 |
| | Humidity 21 per cent | |
| | Yesterday | |
| High — 89 | 1 Day Ago | Low — 48 |

Nixon had Watergate tapes for 12 hours says assistant

NEW YORK (AP) — Time magazine says a Nixon aide has told Senate investigators that he delivered eight or 10 tapes of Watergate conversations to the President on June 4 and picked them up later "fully unwound."

Time said Stephen B. Bull, a special assistant to the president, told investigators for the Senate Watergate committee that Nixon held the tapes for 12 hours, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The magazine added that according to Bull's statement to the

a matter of fact, the only time I listened to the tapes, two certain tapes — I didn't listen to all of them, of course — was on June the fourth." The tapes are being sought by both the Ervin committee and by special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox.

The New York Times said Sunday that Bull had also told the investigators Nixon sought to have one of the tapes flown to California while John W. Dean III, former presidential counsel, was appearing before the Senate

Bull then was instructed, the Times said, to make arrangements for the tape to be played at the White House for J. Fred Buzhardt, a presidential counsel, so Buzhardt could brief the president on it by telephone.

The Times said the tape was that of an April 15 conversation between the President and Dean. In his testimony to the committee, Dean said that during that conversation he became suspicious that the talk was being

The remainder of the show was cancelled. The midnight performance of the "Lido" went on as scheduled minus the horses.

The extent of the injury to the horse was not known other than a minor leg strain. Hank Post, father of the rider who was unseated, is the trainer and owner of the animal. He was not available for comment.

Eddie Kreig, who is in charge of the dove sequence during the finale for the scene said very few accidents have happened in all the performances of animals in the highly popular show.

Herbert Tobman, a hotel executive called to the scene said, "We were very lucky. It could have been a serious accident." Tobman praised the discipline of the audience and the help of Mercy Ambulance.

Tobman said the show was in its tenth edition and in those years of entertaining thousands of visitors to the Strip area, only one other minor accident occurred when a girl slipped from a descending platform from the ceiling.

Gas stations close in Yuma protest

YUMA, Ariz. (AP)—The center of opposition to Phase-4 gasoline price ceilings shifted from Winslow to Yuma Sunday, where only six of 50 service stations

station reported long lines of customers, which one dealer said may have prompted the others to unlock their pumps Sunday.

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BUFFALO, NEW YORK

MARCH 1988

VOLUME' Exclusive

Skorka Charges Buffalo Police With Homophobia

Claims Anti-Gay Bias Behind Police Attack Outside Her Home

by Hanford Searl Jr.
Editor

BUFFALO — Buffalo School Board member JoAnne I. Skorka has charged the Buffalo Police Department (BPD) with anti-gay bias in last year's incident outside her home involving next-door neighbors and friends of her son, David.

See Related Editorial
"Buffalo Police Brutality"
(See page 2)

Skorka, 42, who was cleared of alleged criminal charges Jan. 25 by an Erie County grand jury, claimed five officers involved in the Nov. 22 scuffle beat her son, Frank Vacanti and Steven Stein after an alleged argument outside her home at 414 Breckenridge St.

"After the cops saw the Rumors t-shirt Steven was wearing, they started calling him names and harassing him. When my son objected, they turned on him as well," said Ms. Skorka. "They were calling them fags, queers and said they probably had AIDS."

Stein is still employed at Cafe Rumors as a bartender. Vacanti is a former employee of the popular gay bar/dance club. Sources report the two have been involved in a relationship and were arguing about money the night of the incident.

The grand jury had spotlighted the conduct of Officers Gerald Skinner and Salvador Juste based on a complaint by Ms. Skorka, who maintains police threatened her during the incident. The other officers in the case include Linda Martinez, Steven Malkowski and Barry Gawlick.



JoAnne I. Skorka

During the investigation, the grand jury also cleared all five officers of any wrongdoing, although Ms. Skorka is reportedly considering a civil lawsuit against the BPD. Her son, Vacanti and Stein were charged with misdemeanors.

"My teenage daughter still cries a lot because of this ugly experience," said Ms. Skorka. "Who do you go to now for help after you learn the police aren't

the ones you can turn to for assistance? It's frightening, I wouldn't want anyone else to go through what we have."

A report filed with County Judge Michael L. D'Amico listed both Skorka, 22 and Vacanti, 27, with obstructing governmental administration, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and harassment.

The grand jury also charged Stein, 29, with misdemeanor assault, misdemeanor possession of cocaine, obstructing governmental administration, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and harassment. Friends of Stein assert officers planted cocaine on him at police headquarters and that he is not known to be a drug user or seller.

Originally, Ms. Skorka also had

been charged with obstructing governmental administration and harassment. But on Dec. 2 prosecutors dropped all charges against her, her son, Vacanti and Stein in City Court as the grand jury began a review of the case.

Meanwhile, Michael Risman, Senior Deputy Corporation Counsel (SEL) for the City of Buffalo, dismissed a grassroots initiative by some citizens and members of the Common Council for an independent watchdog committee to investigate cases of police brutality or anti-gay bias on the BPD.

Risman questioned the motivations of attorney William H. Gardner, a noted civil rights lawyer for gay causes locally, who's representing Vacanti and Stein.

"Many of us know that Mr. Gardner has his own special agenda in these matters as does the local gay community," charged Risman. "There's absolutely no need for any outside group to monitor the police department's behavior. They have their own in-house investigative unit."

In light of several alleged police beatings in 1987, one involving an off-duty, black Erie County Deputy Sheriff, several Common Council members including President George Arthur have begun to consider the formation of a citizen-based board to investigate police brutality cases. In 1977, several officers were found guilty of beating to death 18-yr. old Richard Lone



Attorney William Gardner

Gardner Replies to Risman:

I have a very open agenda. I want the Buffalo Police to treat gay prisoners with respect. I do not want them to use words like "faggot" and "queer," subjecting them to verbal and psychological abuse.

I want officers to file charges against gay men without routinely resorting to perjury and to totally eliminate those rare instances where they actually beat up gay men. I would assume that the great majority of decent officers in the police department would like to see the same things that I would.

Attorney William Gardner

Westlake Moving - Becoming City's Largest Gay Nightclub

BUFFALO The Westlake, the city's newest, largest gay bar/dance club will open the March 7 at 153 Delaware Ave. near Niagara Square, reports owner John Petrina, consultant Dennis Kuczyk and advisor James Smith.

Formerly The Round Table restaurant, the three-floor brick Victorian building houses a 100-ft mahogany bar and 18 by 35 ft

dance floor. The new club, which also features an outdoors patio for warm months, was purchased for \$200,000.

"We began construction on the interior in mid-November and should be open in February," said Kuczyk, who also manages Club Denmar at 884 Main St. "We will continue the tradition of the old Westlake, it's openness to all in our community and a friendly

atmosphere with our staff."

The layout of the new club includes two entrance ways which lead into either the large dance floor area or the quiet bar section. A pool table and coat room also are found at the main entrance.

A stained-glass Westlake logo.

See "Westlake"
Continued on page 5



The New Westlake, a class act, at 153 Delaware Ave. gives Buffalo's gay community large bar/dance area and plenty of off-street parking.

Index

- 1610 [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s-80s], 42-43, 66n62.
- Advocate* [national gay publication], 55.
- AFAN. *See* Aid for AIDS of Nevada.
- Affirmation [gay Mormon group], 21, 27-31, 50, 57, 62n27, 63n35; lack of Las Vegas chapter [1970s], 35.
- After Dark* [magazine], 36, 64n42.
- Aid for AIDS of Nevada [AFAN], 54, 69n89.
- AIDS: conference in Buffalo, NY [1981], 53. *Also see* Aid for AIDS of Nevada.
- Anka, Paul: owner of Jubilation restaurant, 12, 39, 61n19.
- Attridge, Don: instigates gay witch hunt at Brigham Young University [1966-73], 17.
- Backdoor Lounge [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s-80s], 43, 66n63.
- Bailey, Jim, 46, 47-48, 67n70.
- Bay Area Reporter* [San Francisco gay publication], 55.
- Beaux Arts Ball, 38-39, 46, 65n54. *Also see* Tan, Berino "Mark."
- Billboard Magazine*, 1, 8-11, 13, 33, 36-37, 50-51, 56, 60n2.
- Birdcage* [film, 1995], 40, 66n59.
- Brigham Young University [BYU, Provo, UT], 4-6; gay witch hunts at [1966-73], 7, 15-20.
- Brown, Hugh B. [Mormon official], 20, 62n24.
- Brown, Robert "Bob," 1, 11, 12-13, 60n1.
- Buffalo, New York, 2; gay life [1960s-70s], 15; gay life [1980s-90s], 21, 26, 51-53.
- Bugle* [Las Vegas gay publication]. *See* *Las Vegas Bugle*.
- Camp David [Las Vegas gay bath house, 1980s], 39, 65n57.
- Casino* [book, 1995], 70n94, 71n95.
- Casino* [film, 1996], 57, 71n95.
- Catholic Church. *See* Dignity.
- Cavanaugh, Michael: Searl's relationship with, 44.
- Cavanaugh, Page, 44.
- Chapin, Elbert Allan "Al," 12, 22, 62n29; as Jim Bailey's manager, 47-48.
- Christensen, Paul, 49, 69n83.
- Chung, Connie, 4.
- churches. *See* religion.
- coming out: in Las Vegas [1970s], 33-34, 36-37, 39-40.
- Continental Baths [New York City gay bath house, 1970s], 53.
- Cooper, Alice [male rock star, 1970s], 47.
- Council of the Twelve [Mormon Church body], 16, 61n21.
- Cuomo, Mario, 52, 69n87.
- Davis, Sammy, Jr., 7, 60n10.
- Dearing, David, 11, 12, 36, 61n14-15.
- Dignity [gay Catholic group], 26, 27-28, 29-30, 36, 51, 62n31, 63n36.
- Diller, Phyllis, 33.
- drag and drag queens, 40-42. *Also see* Bailey, Jim. *Also see* Kerr, Kenny. *Also see* Marino, Frank.
- Dubois, Doug, 9.
- Duke, Forrest, 8, 61n12.
- Duncan, Ken [artist], 36.
- East Aurora, New York, 2; high incidence of homosexuality in, 14-15.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, 7.
- Flex Lounge [Las Vegas gay bar, 1990s], 54, 70n90.
- Frank, Barney, 49, 68n79.
- Garage [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s], 38, 42, 44, 65n52.
- Geffen, David, 50, 69n85.
- Gipsy [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s], 38, 39, 42, 65n51. *Also see* Village Station.
- Gordon, Terry, 56.
- Graber, Bob, 52.
- Grant, Cary, 44, 66n65.
- Greco, Gary, 38, 65n50. *Also see* Maurice, Dick.
- Greenspun, Hank, 8, 61n11; and Watergate, 11-12, 61n16.

- Hager, Gary: Searl's relationship with, 4, 13-16 *passim*, 23, 44, 54; relationship with David Savisco, 15.
- Hager, Mike, 14.
- Hager, Pat, 14.
- Hager, Tim, 14, 15.
- Hecht, Chic, 48, 68n76.
- Hill Comorah Pageant, 6, 60n6.
- homophobia: gay witch hunts at Brigham Young University [1966-73], 6-7, 15-20; at the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 7-13 *passim*; lack of in the Presbyterian Church [1950s-60s], 15; attraction of gay people to homophobic, controlling-type religions, 26-27; of traditional religions, 31-33; raiding the Camp David bath house in Las Vegas [1985], 39, 65n57; raiding the Village Station nightclub in Las Vegas [1980], 39, 66n58. *Also see* Mormons and Mormonism.
- homosexuality: gay witch hunts at Brigham Young University [1966-73], 7, 15-20; lack of mention in the *Book of Mormon* and the *New Testament*, 20; Searl's excommunication from the Mormon Church for being gay [1983], 21-24; and Presbyterians, 24-25; attraction of gay people to controlling-type religions, 26-27; and religions, 31-33; definition of community, 35-36; forming relationships in bars, 43; tendency to ghetto-ize, 45. *Also see* coming out.
- Hudson, Rock, 47, 68n74.
- Jacques, Marge: owner of Le Café, 36, 37-38, 39, 40, 42.
- John, Elton, 47.
- Johnson, Sonia, 22, 62n30.
- Jubilation [Las Vegas restaurant], 12, 39, 61n19.
- Kelly, Kevin, 55, 70n91.
- Kerr, Kenny, 45-46, 67n69.
- Kimball, Spencer [Mormon official], 16, 18-19, 22.
- King, Alan, 7.
- Kissinger, Henry, 4.
- Koch, Ed, 12, 61n17.
- [1990s], 54-59. *Also see* specific names of bars and nightclubs.
- Las Vegas Bugle* [gay publication], 45, 55.
- Las Vegas Review-Journal* [newspaper], 7-13 *passim*; conservatism of, 8, 9, 11, 56. *Also see* Reynolds, Don.
- Las Vegas Sun* [newspaper], 8, 56, 61n11; and Watergate, 11-12, 61n16. *Also see* Maurice, Dick.
- Las Vegas Valley Times* [newspaper], 1, 11-13, 36, 55, 60n1.
- Le Café [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s], 33, 34, 64n39; served as the gay community, 36, 37-38, 39-40, 42, 46. *Also see* Jacques, Marge.
- lesbians and lesbian issues. *See* Jacques, Marge. *See* Maxine's.
- Lewis, Gibson [Presbyterian official], 25.
- Liberace, Walter Valentino, 33, 38, 46-47, 47, 63n38, 67n73.
- Log Cabin Club [gay Republicans], 58, 71n96.
- Ludden Allen, 38, 65n53.
- Lynde, Paul, 38, 65n49.
- Maclaine, Shirley, 38.
- MacMurray, Fred: son involved in gay witch hunts at Brigham Young University [1966-73], 16.
- Malone, Lance, 49, 68n82.
- Manilow, Barry, 53.
- Marino, Frank, 46, 67n71.
- Mattachine Society, 51, 69n86.
- Maurice, Dick, 38, 46, 65n50. *Also see* Greco, Gary.
- Maverick Truck Stop [Las Vegas, NV], 67n66.
- Maxine's [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s], 37, 40, 41, 64n46.
- McBride, Dennis: researching Las Vegas gay history, 57.
- McKay, David O. [Mormon official], 20, 25, 62n25.
- Merriwether, Scott: Searl's relationship with, 42, 44.
- Metropolitan Community Church [MCC], 28, 63n33.
- Midler, Bette, 53.
- Mills, Jason, 43-33.
- Moon, Rev. Sun Myung. *See* Unification Church.
- Moonies. *See* Unification Church.
- Mormons and Mormonism: jack Mormons, 5, 60n4; Searl's mission experience, 6-7; homophobia of, 7, 15, 18; as preferred employees of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 7; disapprove of Searl writing for *Billboard Magazine*, 9; Searl's conversion to, 19-20;

- Searl's excommunication from [1983], 21-24; controlling nature of, 24; compared to Presbyterianism, 26. *Also see* Affirmation. *Also see* Brigham Young University. *Also see* Hill Comorah Pageant. *Also see* Johnson, Sonia. *Also see* Reorganized Church [of Latter-Day Saints].
- Nabors, Jim, 47, 68n75.
- Nauvoo, Illinois, 21, 62n26.
- New Mexico Highlands University [Las Vegas, NM], 3-4, 5-6.
- Newton, Wayne, 50, 69n84.
- Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays, 28, 63n34.
- Parks, David, 49, 68n81.
- Perry, Rev. Troy, 28, 63n33.
- P-FLAG. *See* Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays.
- Playgirl* [magazine, 36, 64n43.
- Plotkin, Lee, 55, 70n92.
- Presbyterian Church: lack of concern with homosexuality [1950s-60s], 15, 24-25; concern with homosexuality [1980s-90s], 24-25, 32; compared to Mormonism, 26; More Light congregations, 24-25, 57.
- Q-Tribe [Las Vegas gay publication], 70n92.
- Red Barn [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s], 37, 40, 64n47.
- religion: Searl's youthful susceptibility to, 6; Searl's Mormon mission experience, 6-7; Mormonism *vs* Presbyterianism, 26; venal nature of, 26; attraction of gay people to controlling-type religions, 26-27; religion *vs* spirituality, re: gay people, 31-33. *Also see* Affirmation. *Also see* Dignity. *Also see* homophobia. *Also see* Metropolitan Community Church. *Also see* Mormons and Mormonism. *Also see* Presbyterian Church. *Also see* Reorganized Church [of Latter-Day Saints]. *Also see* Unification Church.
- Reorganized Church [of Latter-Day Saints], 21, 62n26.
- Review-Journal* [newspaper]. *See* *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.
- Reynolds, Don, 56, 70n93. *Also see* *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.
- Rivers, Joan, 33, 38, 40, 49.
- Robinson, Jack: murder of [1996], 45, 67n67.
- Rockefeller, Nelson, 4.
- Rosenthal, Frank "Lefty," 57, 90n94.
- Sands Hotel and Casino [Las Vegas, NV], 7, 60n9.
- Saturday Night Fever* [film, 1978], 37, 64n48.
- Savisco, David: relationship with Gary Hager, 15.
- Sawyer, Grant, 48-49, 68n77.
- Schlegel, Rob, 12, 45, 55, 61n18.
- Seagraves, Jim, 12.
- Searl, Hanford: childhood, 2-3, 13-15; attending New Mexico Highlands University, 3-4, 5-6; relationship with Gary Hager, 4, 13-16 *passim*, 23, 44, 54; attending Brigham Young University [1966-73], 4-7; youthful susceptibility to religion, 6; Mormon mission experience, 6-7; target of BYU gay witch hunt [1966-73], 7, 15-20; working for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* [newspaper, 1973-76], 7-13; working for *Billboard Magazine* [1976-80], 8-11, 13, 33, 36-37, 50-51, 56; working for the *Las Vegas Valley Times* [1976-79], 11-13, 36, 55; realization that he was gay, 13-15; conversion to Mormonism, 19-20; on the Reorganized Church of Latter-Day Saints, 21; excommunication from the Mormon Church [1983], 21-24; on Presbyterians and homosexuality, 15, 24-25, 32; on Affirmation, 21, 27-31; on Dignity, 26-30 *passim*; on personal search for spirituality in religion, 31-33; on Keith Todtenhagen, 31, 32, 39, 42, 44, 54; on gay life in Las Vegas [1970s], 33-50; on coming out in Las Vegas [1970s], 33-35, 36-37, 39-40; definition of community [gay], 35-36; entering his first gay bar [Le Café in Las Vegas], 39-40; relationship with Scott Merriwether, 42, 44; relationship with Jason Mills, 43-44; relationship with Michael Cavanaugh, 44; leaving *Billboard Magazine* [1980], 50-51; return to Buffalo, New York, 50-54 *passim*; how Searl avoided AIDS, 53; return to Las Vegas and future plans [May 1996], 54-59.
- Skilbred, Joey, 31, 63n37.
- Smith, John, 54. *Also see* Flex Lounge.
- Smith, Joseph, 6, 21, 60n6, 62n26; bisexuality of, 21.
- Snick's Place [Las Vegas gay bar, 1970s-80s], 43, 66n64.
- Stonewall Riots [New York City, 1969], 36, 64n44.
- Studs, Gerry, 49, 68n80.

Sun Club [Salt Lake City, UT gay bar], 17, 62n22.

Tam O'Shanter [motel, Las Vegas, NV], 7, 60n8.

Tan, Berino "Mark," 38-39, 54, 65n55. *Also see* Beaux Arts Ball.

Taylor, Rip, 33, 38.

Thorson, Scott, 47, 67n73. *Also see* Liberace, Walter Valentino

Todtenhagen, Keith, 31, 32, 39, 42, 44, 54.

transsexuality: show on Las Vegas Strip [late 1970s], 41-42.

UFOs, 4, 60n3.

Unification Church, 6, 60n7.

University Standards [Brigham Young University moral oversight body], 17.

Valley Times [newspaper]. *See Las Vegas Valley Times.*

Vandersnick, Ralph, 66n64.

Vanett, Roy, 8.

Victor, Victoria [film, 1982], 41, 66n60.

Village Station [Las Vegas gay bar, 1980-81]: raid at [1980], 39, 66n58. *Also see* Gipsy.

Volume [Buffalo, NY gay publication], 52.

Washington Blade [Washington DC gay publication], 55.

witch hunts [gay]: at Brigham Young University [1966-73], 7, 15-20.

Zadora, Pia, 54, 69n88

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