

Interview with X Tape 1, Side 1
Interviewed by Elise Chenier
Transcribed by Jody Konarski

[00;00;00-00;03;26]

X: I wouldn't let anyone get ahead of me; I needed companionship.

Elise: Well what was different about companionship with women and companionship with men? I mean...

X: It's a lot different.

Elise: Well tell me.

X: Women treated you better than the men. I got a long with women a lot better.

Elise: In what way?

X: Every way. They took care of you. Well Kathy Stewart when I was with her like she said for my birthday, she said, "Al go outside, there's a little gift for you". I said, Oh Kathy I gotta go to work and I gotta get going and I'm late already. She said just go take a look and I went out and she had a beautiful, gorgeous pink Cadillac with ribbons on it and a mink coat in the front seat. So I couldn't say no; I just threw the coat on and drove to work and said thanks Kath see ya [laughter]. She had money; her father was a doctor and she dipped his little money bag once and a while. We had a couple of boys, her and I, and she got into the heroin so that was the end of her and I.

X1: You never thought she thought much of you, I figured she thought a lot of you.

X: Oh she did! She was great with me. I mean...

X1: See what happened is she wanted the boys.

X: Control.

X1: When she had the boys that was her life.

X: Uh huh.

X1: I think she wanted the children; maybe you were convenient. [laughter]

Elise: And pretty.

X: Oh, thank you very much. I was the prettiest boy that ever walked through Riverdale Park. That was a hundred years ago you know.

X1: You were quite handsome.

Elise: So are there any of these of you as a boy?

X: No. There's my father and mother. There's a story there, she's from Diana. Do you know where that is?

Elise: Yeah.

X: She's got dark, olive skin and jet black hair.

Elise: Kinky.

X: She was very kinky, I think she was. [laughter & music]

X1: Al's got a brother that looks...just a spitting image of her. He's got very tight, beautiful, curly hair, looks like the wind look. Al's not dark like she is.

Elise: Your dad looks kind of...

X: He's from Ireland.

Elise: Irish really?

X: She was the thirteenth girl, daughter in my mother's family [inaudible]. It was hard to figure out then you know being young, but then when I got working....up here is a sex change friend of mine. Up there is a lover of mine who was in Korea. And up there is one of my daughters.

Elise: Right.

[00;03;27-00;08;12]

X: Jody, Jake and one of my grand-daughters, and me, and she was a model, and there's Jet Jiles, another one of my sisters, and Little Beaver from Montreal. Did you know Beaver? [No.] He's a midget wrestler. He was a great friend of mine. We used to meet in different abbey's or just as he was leaving a town [inaudible]. There was a lot of work there.

Elise: Did you speak French?

X: Who me? A little bit.

Elise: Just what you needed to know.

X: And that's me here with that person there was not a sex change. This is her here after she got her sex change. She's sixty-two here.

Elise: In this picture? No way.

X: That was last October, sixty-two years of age. That's how old Michelle is.

Elise: That's unbelievable.

X: Well at fifteen thousand a shot for her face, she had six of them.

Elise: She had six of them?

X: Yeah.

Elise: Wow.

X: And she had that thing that Zsa Zsa Gabor had; she went and had that acid treatment. Michelle went and had that and I said don't do that, stick to what you're doing you know. She has the indentations, is that the right word? And they're permanent. See in the eyes there? And now she's like this. She's about two hundred and some pounds.

Elise: Really.

X: See what's happened I think George is the man part in a person comes out, don't you think? A sex change?

Elise: How do you mean?

X: Well she was a man and she got changed, she's over sixty and the figure's gone. She's just bloat like me. Look at the difference in her here. That's her there with me before she had anything done.

Elise: But she was much, much younger there too right?

X: Oh yeah she was twenty-two there.

Elise: Yeah, so....

X1: Well that's how it appears to me that she's aged. She looks like a sixty-two year old woman.

X: But it's the weight you see I always admired her you know like I had a bit of a burn for her years ago when she was twenty-two.

Elise: Uh huh.

X1: She's back on the street again. She's back hookin again.

X: We called her Cadillac Michelle. So like Betty Steiner who was a doctor at...what's the name of the institution? [inaudible] And I said Betty, do you realize how many women you've made? She said yes and the majority of them are hookers. You know. She had a horrible death eh? Betty. Did you know Betty Steiner?

Elise: I know of her but not....

X: Oh yeah, she died in her home. Parked that big Lincoln of hers and ah the fumes came up through her bedroom. She was ready to quit work and everything. She worked hard; a great lady. When am I getting you on the slab Brandy? Never. I said you don't have to worry about me turning tricks after; I turned many a tricks long before. I never hid nothing. That was my problem. Better to see me coming.

X2: How did you know Betty Steiner?

X: By the people I knew who went there. I had a couple of friends....well George and I put a couple of friends of ours in there for being sick.

X1: We had them committed.

Elise: Right.

X: I had this one party at one of my houses, and he got into the booze so bad, so bad.

X1: He turned out alright. He was in there three weeks. We went over to visit and he was already working in the kitchen; he was the cook. [laughter]

[00;08;13-00;15;26]

X1: And he took right over, took the place right over.

X: And I had the boss of the Strathcona, do you know where that is? The hotel across from the [inaudible]

Elise: Okay.

X: And he owned the hotel and he phoned me and he says Brandy you gotta get down here. I said what are you doing phoning me at four thirty? He says, Jimmy's here and he's got all the fires going in the hotel, and he's got orders sitting waiting to be put on tables and there's no waitresses. I said, what's wrong with that? He said he doesn't work here anymore. And that's the way he was.

X1: He forgot [laughter]. He was one of his drunks.

X: Yeah, and George...he said one time they're all going out the driveway, quick look at them carrying bodies. I said George go to my room will you, Jimmy said they're carrying bodies out the driveway. [He was insane] He said what? No. No. Then he said they were pushing a woman up through the third floor. And I'm with George and the police come and [inaudible] it's four in the morning. I said there's someone pushing some broad through the third floor window. You don't have three floors, you've only got two. It's time for me to quit. But he was a great guy, but he ended up he went to England.

X1: Managing a hotel. He ended up managing a hotel.

X: Yup. And I had trouble with him with fires. One day I heard him say, Maggie get out from under the bed. Maggie! And George said, where is he? I said he's under the bed. He was under the bed with a lighter saying Maggie c'mon get out from under the bed. He set the house on fire all the time. He had a thing with fire. He couldn't leave them alone.

Elise: Yeah.

X: But a hell of a chef, terrific. He could run the hotel until Roy [inaudible], he was gay, ran the hotel and said you gotta get him out of here, he doesn't work here anymore. But it was part of the life. I knew so many different people.

Elise: Who are the last two photographs here?

X: Here? That's Craig Russel.

Elise: Oh Craig Russel, wow.

X: Yup.

Elise: I guess you knew Craig. What a fantastic photograph.

X: He was terrific. This is the outfit he wore when he was there, when he was doing Judy Garland. But they use this for publicity a lot.

X1: How long was he in Germany, six years?

X: Quite a while yeah. They asked him to leave.

Elise: They asked him to leave?

X: He believed in walking the streets in the nude at night.

Elise: Oh.

X2: Why would he do that?

X: Because he was beautiful and he was Craig.

X2: You mean he was on drugs?

X: He was on drugs then. Definitely.

X1: Very heavy.

Elise: Well this leads me nicely to the question I wanted to ask you which is you know I wanted to talk to you about Guelph right? And I want to...the first thing I want to ask you is how you ended up at Guelph. What led to that?

X: Led to it? I was working at [inaudible] then.

Elise: Uh huh.

X: As a lady of the evening [laughter].

Elise: Can you tell me about it, because I really don't know anything about it.

X: You know Jack? [inaudible]

Elise: So you knew each other well before?

X: In the forties.

Elise: Well tell me about when you met. Working?

X: On the street. The streets of Paris [laughter]. Yes, it was great. Mmm.

Elise: So you worked the street and you worked the street as a woman?

X: Oh yeah.

Elise: Did most of the.....so you'll have to explain a little bit to me because I....at that time did the men know that they were picking up men?

X: No, no!

Elise: They didn't know?

X: No, my god you'd end up dead!

Elise: So you had to hide it, that you were...

X: Well yes. Or I always carried a pearl handle revolver, silver.

Elise: Did you know how to use it?

X: If I had to. No, we had a few rumbles you know some guys get pretty rough in the car. I wasn't always as big as I am now. I was smaller, oh yeah.

Elise: Right.

X: I can remember one time, I like cards, I love cards...and we'd stay after the last show after the club closed and play cards you know. And this one morning I was coming home and I drove, I left the Warwick and I got from Dundas and Jarvis to Shooter is it? Yeah Shooter and Jarvis and they just put a light up there. And I was waiting for the light to change and I had the top down on my car and a guy hollered out of the van he said, "I hate painted women." And you know when you work on this show and it starts at twelve noon, imagine the amount of make-up you've got on. You don't know where your eye, your mouth or your teeth are you got so much and I was painted. And he says I hate painted women and he flashed a butcher knife in front of me. I went through that red light and him after me. I had a hell of a time. I got out of the car on [inaudible] Street at [inaudible] and him after me. And I found out that he was a fellow who got out of Penitang. Oh yes, for killing three hookers. And they were all blonde. [I see] Oh lord! I hate painted women and he had this big meat cleaver. Well I ran into a few that were sick. Then I met him when they put me in the um...I don't mind saying, what the hell, when I was in Chuckles Farm. Do you know where that is?

Elise: No.

X: It was called...it was one thousand and one Queen Street. Do you know what that place is?

Elise: Yeah, Queen's Street Mental Health Center?

X: The who?

Elise: Queen's Street Mental Health Center.

X: She's putting it in a nice way, that lovely lady. Yeah I was in there and I met him in there!

Elise: You met John there?

X: No, this guy. Wing ding a ling.

Elise: Oh okay. [laughter]

X: My hair was way down to here.

Elise: Uh huh.

[00;15;27-00;20;36]

X: They um...I went for a haircut and they wouldn't cut my hair because when the judge says I don't know why you're dressed like this and all this stuff and carrying on you know; I just hit the wrong judge. He said you'll stay here for treatment and I was there for what three months or something. This guy I said get me the hell away from this ding a ling. And he used to say I like your yellor hair. Yeller! [laughter]. Lord! And I couldn't cut it even with a knife because they don't give you knives or forks [laughter]. You eat with spoons.

Elise: Okay, so you've lost me a little bit. How did you end up there?

X: And then I ended up in Guelph after that.

Elise: Okay, but you were in Queen's Street first. So how did you get to Queen's Street?

X: In the bun wagon.

Elise: So instead of sending you to prison they sent you there is that what you're saying?

X: Yes, for treatment!

Elise: Oh, so okay, rather than a prison term they sent you to Queen Street?

X: Uh huh.

Elise: Were you charged for soliciting or?

X: [inaudible] But you don't use that anymore. That was the word for hustler.

Elise: Well it was basically for anybody. Anybody who could provide no good account of what they were doing on the street. Kind of anybody they wanted to get off the street.

X: But then when they pinched me, they beat the shit out of me. There used to be a police station just a little west of Young Street; Belville Station I think it was called and it was mostly for women.

Elise: Yeah.

X: I knew all the hookers that were pinched in there; they had to go to court. I remember saying oh shit what the hell are you going to do? Do I say we'll have to take a smear. So I said well I'll take a smear. You can't take a smear, you're a man! [laughter] So then the matron like she come in and said what's all the rumble going on. I said can I pay my fine? Most of the girls are paying fines. She said you got to take a smear to make sure you don't have vd or something you know. [yeah] And that's how they did everything. It said vd-venereal disease. But um...I said well I'll go and she said you can't. I said why?

Elise: Huh.

X: So it ended up I went to Guelph for hustling.

X2: How did the prostitutes feel about you competing?

X: Oh great! I got along great with them. Absolutely fabulous! If there was a party or anything I mean I was there. I had no problem with any of the girls. I had no problem at all.

X1: Except for where you worked.

Elise: And how did that get determined? Like how would an area become your area?

X1: Well, I guess through seniority basically and how long you've been on the street. And it was like dog eat dog. The thing is you had to fight your way there too in many respects.

X: And you imagine Jean Barnet which I recognize in this picture you know I told you. He worked with us in a whore house. And that's the way it was. We worked in Hamilton. And the place we were working in, all the girls you would all sit around and you were all dressed. I mean like the money you made in there you all dressed the best to get the more customers. And then in those days you were asked the question, how do you want to go, straight or French? That was how they pronounced it. Straight was a straight lay and French was a blow job. And we all figured it was easier to go French because it was hard you know for them to have sex with us because some of those guys didn't know. We always worked in slips. Don't take anything off because those guys didn't know we were guys.

Elise: Right.

X: And when you work in a whore house you can't go around a town city like Hamilton and say hey those girls are guys. Some of those guys from the harvester they'd cut your throat. The Italian guys were great you know and they were hard working guys with five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten kids you know and they'd come in for a quick piece of tail and got to go home and account to their wife and kids.

[00;20;37-00;26;05]

X: But Jack, I got the biggest kick out of Jack because Jack was six foot six right. He was right? [laughter]

X2: Six foot three, six foot six.

X: I thought he was six foot six because when we put four inch heels on him he couldn't hit the ballet stand. That's not the ballet stand, that was the stage. And that was lattice work, is that what they call this stuff? Because here I am on lattice work and you see how tall I am compared to him and I had heels on. He'd put heels on and his head hit the electric lights. [laughter] It did! Do you want to see him closer?

Elise: Sure, yeah. So you got to Guelph, what year was that do you know?

X: Nineteen forty-seven. It's embedded in my brain and hard on the ass.

Elise: Do you remember who the superintendent was?

X: Which one?

Elise: Heeslip.

X: Was it Heeslip or Stewart?

Elise: Heeslip as far as I know.

X: How did you know that? And marble mouth, they called him marble mouth; his name was Stewart.

Elise: Stewart....who was he?

X: He was a heavy set like superintendent. Heeslip was there but also there was Sergeant Stewart. They called him marble mouth...bbbbllllbbbblllll when he talked you know?

Elise: Yeah.

X: You just had to get one of us in his office and he was all mouth, teeth, and worms. He didn't know whether to shit or go blind. He'd look at me and he'd get confused because he used to call me Gail. I was only about a hundred and nineteen, twenty pounds then and I was a pretty little boy and I'd say yes sir, no sir. Christ, I mean you gotta figure how old I was, I was scared shitless. They put me right next to the tower. The tower is here right when you come in. There's cells here and cells there. [Right] Over there was an alley and over this side was a, oh what the hell was it? It'll come to me. But the officers are right here and the cell blocks are opposite the officers. [okay] C two Beachwell....see I still got my memory; first cell, C two Beachwell was my cell.

Elise: But wasn't Gunsel's Alley for....

X: Today they call them [inaudible]. Dummy's you know they could grab them when they wanted them and rape them and stuff like that and have sex with them at the theatre night when everybody went to the theatres. They called it Gunsel's Alley because they weren't hip people, they weren't with it you

know.

Elise: Oh okay.

X: I was in Lover's Lane, I just got it.

Elise: Oh okay, I always thought that....okay, I know most prisons have something like Queen's Row, Fairies, or whatever...

X: I was in Lover's Lane.

Elise: Oh see I thought Gungel's Alley was the Lover's Lane of Guelph, but I was wrong..... there was a Lover's Lane for the fairies....and that Gungel's Alley was separate. Because you know what's interesting, there was a letter in nineteen forty-seven. A guy who was in the RCAF was charged with gross indecency right. So the judge in Ottawa wrote to Heeslip and said I heard that you take the homosexuals there; what do you do with them? And he said well we leave them alone but we keep a close eye on them and if they're practicing their disabilities is what he said...and they considered masturbation and also part of homosexuality...then we put them in Gungel's Alley. That's what he said, so that's what led me to believe that....but there was a separate Lover's Lane for the...

X: There's a lot of separate places there. And it was the same way come the Sunday night theatre. That's when everybody paid off, you know what I mean?

Elise: Paid off their debts?

X: Yes, this guy he wants to give you a fuck in the ass...I'm going to give it to you straight.

Elise: Yes, please do.

X: Or a blowjob...that's when it mostly all happened. Unless in the gang, like I got raped in the farm gang right out there in the barn. That's where that shit took place. Because the screws...that's the guards, they don't see nothing.

Elise: Right. I was going to ask you something....you know how the film [inaudible], there was that scene [a rape scene where the guards are not] where the guys are totally not doing anything. When you were there, that was the way it was?

X: Yes, yes! Who was there to help me with thirteen guys? And the guards uh...where was he? It was during our break, you get a break to go smoke up or whatever it is you know. You had to be careful in the barn and all that shit because of the hay. But that's where I got mine was right in there.

Elise: What was the problem with the hay? What do you mean you had to be careful of the hay?

X: Where that's where you get played in [laughter].

Elise: Oh okay.

X: Have you seen the movie [inaudible] with Matthew Broderick?

Elise: No I haven't.

X2: Does somebody want something to drink? Tea? Coffee?

Elise: I'll have some water please. So when you went did you have any idea of what prison was going to be like? Did you know anybody?

X: No, no! I was scared.

[00;26;07-00;30;42]

X: I knew a few guys who worked in drag on the street, but then when you walk in there and you walk through the dining room for your first meal, and after that you get your shower and the clothes they put on you, you get hey, check the new fish. There'd be a lineup and all these guys and I'll take this one, I'll take that one, I want this one, I want that one. You're a piece of meat. You couldn't fight them.

Elise: Is there any way you could pair yourself up with someone?

X: Yes, yes which we did.

Elise: How long did it take you to figure that out? How did that happen for you? Do you remember? Do you mind telling me about it?

X: Well you run scared for a while; you don't know what to do. Different guys approach you. I used to find cake and candy and tailor made cigarettes under my pillow and all kinds of stuff. That's the way it happens there. They're making their move. They'll buy you what you want. And these are the guys that'll do it for you. I can get this for you baby, and I can get that for you. They treat you just like a woman. Cuz they want you....a slice...they want a piece of ass is what they want.

Elise: So how did that work for you?

X: I was scared. They had me right in the first cell. The offices were there you know. If you're the least bit good looking, they watch you and they segregate you.

Elise: Other prisoners segregate you or the staff, the administration?

X: No the staff.

Elise: They segregate you so you won't be victimized [raped]. So Lover's Lane was where everyone was segregated. All the effeminate looking men were there. My understanding, and correct me if I'm wrong, but those people in segregation didn't get out as much, they didn't get as much exercise?

X: Oh no, no! You go on your job in the morning and there were many times I wasn't allowed to go to the show on Sunday's because you see they can't watch you when the lights are out and that's when a lot of guys make their moves. And that's when a lot of people pay up, you know what I mean? [yeah] If I unload on your bed with cake and tailor made cigarettes and candies and goodies...I want uh...you're going to pay. [right] So they wait until Sunday.

Elise: Right.

X3: Where?

X: Where do you pay?

X3: Yeah.

X: In the theatre.

X3: While the show's on?

X: While the show is on! You're doing your show and you could be passed around a dozen times and nothing is said. It's done right in the aisle, and it gets done also in the dormitory. I hit a dormitory once and I think I was in there for twenty minutes. They said Maloney's in a dormitory....the buzzer went, this, that....and they came after me, four guards, to get me the hell out of there. No way, cuz I seen guys when I was there...they put the blankets on the bed and both ends hit the floor and they carry on underneath the bed. The beds were high. They wouldn't let me in no dormitory. Oh god!

Elise: Yeah.

X: I seen a lot of guys get worked over. What you saw in that movie is exactly what happened. They wanted something, they took it.

Elise: Well I didn't see the movie until I'd been doing research on Canadian [inaudible] in prisons for a year, and when I saw the movie I couldn't believe how he was able to capture so many aspects of prison life so simply. He did it so well though. I mean you could see it and be a good writer and you could see it and be a bad writer. He did it so brilliantly in just one quick scene. Now, were you assigned to work in the laundry?

X: I worked in the farm gangs. They wouldn't let me...there's certain guards that want you and certain guards that don't want you. I was trouble because the guys wanted me and so was Jack; they knew Jack was gay you see. This is what they don't want. They don't want the responsibility of having to look after somebody. [right]

[00;30;43-00;35;21]

X: So they put me on the farm gang. And it was a snap because we worked inside the barn. I didn't have no trouble after a while because I started hanging out with the heavies, what you call the heavy guys, you know. But you had to pay. So um...that's where you get to the point where you [inaudible] you're saving your ass, you're not being spread around. And I've seen guys passed around like a piece of meat. Guys that could not help themselves you know? Truthfully.

Elise: Yeah, I believe you.

X: And people that killed themselves you know. And Killer Martin, he was a guard there and if there was a “go boy”, what they called a “go boy”, someone trying to take off out of there....usually they were newer boys, they wanted to go. They couldn't take it; they wanted to run. And there was no high fences and nothing like Kingston Penn. [no] Not in the ORG, and he killed a lot of young men.

Elise: Really?

X: Yes he did...with his rifle. But they hush hush about a lot of it. He was a “go boy”! He was told to stop and he didn't stop and Martin killed him. But why didn't he shoot his legs or shoot his arm? Why did he kill them? Because he got his kicks [inaudible].

Elise: I came across one document which was about a guard who...he took a liking to one of the new fish. He approached him in the kitchen I think and wanted to have sex with him and the new prisoner got away. But the guard had said to him I'm going to get a weekend pass for you to come to my house and do some work around my house. And he ran away because what happened was he went to his dorm captain and told him I'm terrified and I don't want this to happen, and the dorm captain laughed and said shut up. And so he took off because he was terrified of getting raped.

X: He became a “go boy”?

Elise: Yeah.

[shuffling, small talk]

Elise: So where I'm going with that I wanted to ask you did that happen a lot where guards were...

X: They never....they turned their face!

Elise: But did they...were they also though sexually exploiting some of the prisoners?

X: Some of them were.

Elise: What was your experience from what you saw? Was it very common or uncommon or...

X: I ignored everything. I was too scared. I was scared shitless. Because those guards, you ever hit that belt downstairs, you're finished. That was the belt, the strap, and it was leather.

Elise: Yeah, with holes in it.

X: Yeah. Did I talk to you before?

Elise: No. I read all about it. Pierre Burton in the fifties wrote a huge expose on the panel at Guelph and described it...it was horrible.

X: It was horrible! He had them tied their hands and tied down and everything. And the belt hitting the cheeks of their ass and the flesh coming off with it, and they threw salt.

Elise: They threw salt on you?

X: Yes! I'd rather play the game then hit the pain.

Elise: What did you have to do to get the paddle? How did you avoid that?

X: I just avoided it. I did my job, I did what I had to do. A lot of things you don't like to do but you did what you had to do. Well you could be in the theatre watching the theatre and you gotta give somebody a hand [inaudible] beside you and somebody from that end would be back over here, and they took turns you know. You had to go by the rules.

Elise: Right.

[00;35;22-00;43;30]

Elise: And who set the rules? The stronger...

X: The politicians.

Elise: Right.

X: The guys that went around with the wooden things writing this and writing that you know?

Elise: No I don't know, what do you mean?

X: Well, there's a little board you take and clip on and that saying you're going to this unit tonight or you're going to sleep in this dormitory, or you'll be working here next week or working there next week.

Elise: Right.

X: These are the guys, the politicians they called them; they were in the higher bracket, they weren't like the fish.

Elise: Oh so they were actually prisoners who had some authority.

X: Yes! Oh thank you. And they'd say you'll be in my bed tonight, you'll be under my bed waiting for me, or you'll be in trouble.

Elise: Now what if you had got yourself a boyfriend?

X: Yes, which we all did.

Elise: So did you still have to do what the politicians [yes]? And your boyfriend new that so didn't that bring him down?

X: It did if you did this. But you see, he protected you. [Right] It's like what Rocky said about protecting Jimmy. In jail it's all true; nobody will touch you as long as you're putting out for me. But there's a lot of stupid guys in there like I want you...okay. And I have a friend, or I got a cousin of mine or an uncle or an aunt and they want to have sex with you and you will have sex with these people. Yes, yes. A lot of stupid people. It was sad. Even I was librarian and I had a terrible time. Like this one guy was always after Jack London, you heard of Jack London's books? [uh huh] He said come over here and let me see what you got there. He grabbed me by the ass one day and ripped my ass right out of my jeans. And I didn't go close to his bars anymore. You go along you see in our cell blocks there. You have to do everything at a distance. And guys used to say...you know I had a guy next door to me say I had a good time watching you last night when you were laying on your bed. I masturbated four times. Pull your pyjamas down tonight for a change.

Elise: Right.

X: I want to see what you look like without your pyjamas and I'll make it up to you; I'll bring you what you want tomorrow. That's the way it was. [right] And these were young, attractive men...straight....they weren't gay. They jumped at whatever they could get. They were hungry for sex.

Elise: My perception of it seems to me that the way the prison administration saw it was that it was the effeminate men that were the problem. They were causing the problem because they were getting the straight, quote, unquote, sexually excited. You were being provocative in your behavior, you were being swish and girly....

X: You tried not to be when you found out where you were. The butch you tried to act it seemed to be...there's nothing worse than a feminine person to act butch because it just don't come out right. And me I was pigeon-toed and stepped on my own feet half the time you know. [laughter]It just don't work.

Elise: So you tried to act more butch?

X: Oh yeah.

Elise: What happened?

X: I'd trip, fall, and make a mistake or something. I was ah... I was with it. I got these guys that were heavy guys that could fight and take care. I wore better clothes and we could walk with our collars up and we even had slippers made out of leather, stuff like that.

Elise: How did you...

X: And jeans. Jeans were so important and what they called jo jo's. And they were made right there. And you got the best of clothes, or else you're fished. You could tell the difference between the fish anyway, because their clothes were all bleached out, ugly, and with holes in them and everything. But when we got in with the guys, we were the top dressed ones you could tell. Even the screws would say god you must have a sugar daddy, nice threads you're wearing you know. These were the guards you know. [right] But there was a few guards in there that were gay you know. They had to be careful too. But then they could be cruel. These are the guys that could hurt you. [right]

Elise: How's that?

X: Well they could pin you up on the machine and there's no way you could tell the sergeant that they were lying. His staff would never lie because they were super guys who were given the job from the government. We were just convicts.

Elise: Well sure.

X: It was sad.

X3: Were there a lot of anti-gay putdowns?

X: You didn't see everything Anton, we didn't see everything that went on. What we did see we kept to ourselves. Guys that were taken out and being beaten, or guys being raped, you don't see nothing. And when you're in a dormitory with thirty or forty guys what goes on in front of you, you don't see nothing. Next. And you're passed around like a piece of meat.

Elise: Uh huh. And that's the way it is with everybody, like even the masculine...you never see nothing, you never look anyone straight in the eye because it's seen as a challenge right?

X: That's right. Cuz that fellow that was raped, Smitty, he was straight you know.

Elise: hhhmm

X: But you see what happened to him. The length of time he was doing in there. He went after Mona. He wanted Mona sexually and that's what happened; he couldn't take it no more. And it already happened to him. He became Rocky's piece of ass.

Elise: Right. But isn't it...I kind of read it more like what happened to Smitty as the game was not so much about sex, but the game was about dominance and being dominant. One of the ways to show that you were on top and in control was to be able...if you could force someone into a sexual relationship then you got told that you were a man and you were in the driver's seat right?

X: Oh yeah! See some of them worked in the tailor shop and my bitch is in the tailor shop making me some new jeans tonight. I could dress you up and give you some new threads; I got a friend who's working in the shoe bar and I'll get

you some nice threads you know. But you're going to have to be nice to me.

Elise: Right.

X: It was cruel, it was very cruel. It was hard to believe, but it did go on. And there's no lies about what went on; it was the truth. I saw it!

Elise: Yeah. So how did you survive that?

X: Me? I got myself a sugar daddy.

Elise: Yeah. You think that's what got you through?

X: Of course, and I wasn't dumb. I did have the education of being on the street working. And the dudes I had were straight men, and I had to fool them; they did not know I was a guy. So if I could do it outside with straight guys, I gotta do it in there with straight guys. And there are guys who are bisexual and don't know what the hell they are. You saw that scene what they did to that guy. One after the other pumped his ass you know? [uh huh]

[00;43;31-00;49;32]

X: There was nothing he could do about it. [no] And Smitty knew it was going to happen to him if he didn't keep up his affair with Rocky.

Elise: So you said you managed to get yourself a sugar daddy, did it last a very long time?

X: As long as he was in.

Elise: After he left, what happened?

X: I got another one...fast. There was always somebody waiting.

Elise: Did he pass you on to somebody or did you get to pick?

X: You don't get to pick nothing.

Elise: Say four different guys want you, you don't get to pick?

X: You get to pick, you go after the heavies. One fellow I had was a boxer. And they used to bet their tailor made cigarettes and their desserts and bet all this on this one person. And I had...I can't say anything because these guys that were in there now have kids out on the street you know? [uh huh] I've met some of their daughters and some of their sons and all that shit you know...and they were great to me. And another thing to help with was during the Christmas shows and the Valentines shows and St. Patrick's shows and all that stuff. Oh good we got a show, and I was always feminine. And I could sing. We had a band.

X3: So what did you do in the shows?

X: I sang and I danced. Did you forget about me?

[small talk]

X3: Can I ask a question? How long were you in?

X: Which time?

X3: How many times were there?

X: I can't remember how many times. Once I cleared myself and got into the show part of the business I didn't go back.

X3: But before?

X: A few times.

X3: How long would the sentences be normally?

X: Not long. Three months, six months...I didn't do no year.

X3: And you didn't get higher sentences because you've been convicted before?

X: No.

X3: And the shows...how often were the shows? Was it a weekly thing?

X: It would depend...like on St. Patrick's Day we had a whole big deal...a whole big St. Patrick's thing coming up. [inaudible] I remember Sargent fox was there...you should put these names down otherwise I'll forget. And marble mouth was Sargent Stewart. And he was a fat man....he stayed right away from us, we scared the shit out of him. And Killer Martin was the guy that used to shoot the people.

X3: So you paid off doing the shows?

X: Yeah, you paid off physically.

X3: How often were the shows.

X: Only on Sunday's.

Elise: But that was...they had a movie every week, but the shows he's talking about were you know high school?

X: Christmastime.

Elise: And there was a Christmas fund which you paid out of. Every prisoner paid out of their salary.

X: Yup. And you got to have costumes and stuff to wear.

Elise: And really it was you guys who did the show right? It was the performers who were the ones who were really into doing the performances?

X: We did the shows. Some of these guys came from Storyville and they didn't know whether to shit or go blind. You know they didn't know nothing and we taught them quite a bit. The music and...we found out there was guys in there that could actually play a guitar, play a trombone, and could actually play a trumpet. We had the band. And the man's name who looked after the music, he was a trumpet player, his name was Bennet. Geez, I can still remember, George.

Elise: It's funny what you hang on to.

X: Yeah because it's part of your life...you're scared. And I was scared. I really was. And I didn't have no mother and father to run to me in jail. Well my father died

when he was only thirty-seven years old. And that was in nineteen forty-five, August the fifteenth. Which I got to phone about my father's memorial.

Elise: And you mom?

X: My mother? They were separated. They didn't get along at all. Mother had several husbands after my dad. And he died nineteen forty-five, you know. And he was going with a girl that I went to school with and I was very fond of her. They were engaged to be married September fifteenth and he died August fifteenth, a month away from his engagement to marry her. So, then I got into all the Guelph reformatory shit and the hustling and all that you know.

[00;49;33-00;54;08]

X: My dad never knew nothing about me. [No?] No. When you come from a strict Irish family like they were...geez...and no sisters....nine brothers. And they were in the air force, the army, the navy. And um..it's very different when you come from a strict family and they were strict.

Elise: Did you grow up in Toronto?

X: Yeah.

Elise: So when did you discover downtown? When did you discover other people like you and start dressing differently and being different?

X: I left home because my father was going with this girl I was crazy about at school. And he was still alive. I left home and met...there's a place called Bowl's Lunch. [inaudible] Queen and Bay, there was one there. And it was a place you could buy a coffee and a sandwich and you could sit there all night long. And there were places like the hotels you could always get in, they never asked your age. The Queen's Street Strip you know. Bowl's Lunch was a place you could meet anybody. You go in and have a coffee for ten cents and someone would say hey can I buy you a sandwich? Come up to my place for a beer.

Elise: Wasn't it the Queen and Bay one that was really gay?

X: Hell yes! Oh Queen and Bay. You had everything right there.

Elise: When did you discover that? How old were you?

X: Sixteen, fifteen.

Elise: And so addicted immediately?

X: Oh yeah!

Elise: A lot of the women that I talked to that used to hang out at the Continental, it's the same kind of story...as soon as they...and the Munev and the Union.

X: She hung out at the Continental, my first wife.

Elise: Really? Huh. Did you ever go to the Continental?

X: Yes.

Elise: They say that the only men who were there were the cross-dressing prostitutes. Gay men didn't really go there, but a lot of ones working the streets did.

X: We worked out of there. And mostly Orientals. All the girls that I knew then, the gay girls...fabulous. I often wonder if some of them are still around. Do you remember Pat Murphy?

X2: Yes.

X: Oh she was great... rough...oh could she go! You kids got trouble? Who's going to lay a hand on you? What butch man's gonna touch you? When she'd get going, she'd use her fist...Pat Murphy.

Elise: Was she also known as Father Murphy?

X: Yes.

Elise: I heard all about her. I don't think she's still living is she?

X: I don't think so.

Elise: I think she had cancer I think. But you knew her?

X: Oh very well. She wore glasses; she had bad eyesight. She could fight like a man. She was short and we always used to kid her about why how come you're gay, you're a woman that's a gay woman and look at the chest on you, that's not right is it? She said I tape the god damn stuff down but it doesn't do any good does it? She had a lot of women that went for her. And she worked. And Margerite was gorgeous, I remember her. And there was also a hang out for business girls. A lot of the girls had black men. A lot of the girls that worked out of there, out of the Continental...the hustling girls.

Elise: Right. Had black men as tricks or as boyfriends?

X: No, as pimps. They were great. Oh, they loved us...shit. Sit down I'll buy you a beer. My old lady's gone to work...she's gone to get a live one. They were great with us, they were fabulous. They never messed around with us you know.

Elise: Right.

[00;54;09-01;01;27]

X3: Why do you think you clicked?

X: Don't know. Maybe it was cuz they were fascinated with us. Everybody gave a little tap dance or [inaudible]. And of course the best tricks for the girls for Jack the barber. He had a shop across the road. He'd do the girls' hair. He'd get his rocks off my just standing there cutting their hair. And the girls, it was amazing, because whenever any of the gay girls came in wearing turbans we knew what happened.

Elise: What had happened?

X: They had just seen Jack the barber.

Elise: What exactly would he do?

X: He'd damn well cut your hair and get his rocks off cutting it.

Elise: But why were they wearing turbans?

X: Because he'd shave their heads. Oh that was a two hundred dollar deal.

X3: But he wasn't really a barber?

X: Oh he had a store, yes.

X3: But why would he get sexually excited if he does....

X: He just did with girls, not men. Only girls...and he loved lesbian women. You could always tell that all the business girls would go over and get their hair cut.

Elise: You said there was a place where all the business women hung out, separate from the Continental.

X: Well you're going to hit down onto Queen's Street and a lot of the gay girls...I found out that most of the gay girls, the butch part of their affair was hustlers. They did better business than the females. They did! You take Mildred, she was the same way. And she went with Chick, and Chick asked my daughter up there to call her dad when Mildred was living with her. That didn't work out. But I knew them all. Such a fast life. They were great friends. If you needed any help, they were there.

Elise: Would you say that you had solidarity or a connection with them more because you were gay or more because of the life you were leading? What was your connection with them?

X: We did the same as them. If they needed a buck and we had a buck we would give it to them. Straighten me out when you get on your feet, when you break ice you know what I mean? We got a long good with them. We got along better with them than the normal girls did. Because there was a lot of the straight hookers come in there and they did not get along with them. Their pimps didn't like them and the female part of the gay girls got into a fight with these other girls that were socializing with their better half you see. It's amazing how many chippy asses are around there. [laughter] You know, piece of stray meat.

Elise: It was a pretty wild place, pretty rough.

X: Oh Lord yes!!

Elise: How often would you end up in a place...at the Continental?

X: Six nights a week.

Elise: Oh really, so you were there quite often? Did you ever go George?

X2: Oh yes, for about seven years.

Elise: Was your impression the same?

X2: Pretty well. But this was after. Brandy was already entertaining and pretty much out of it. And then it actually started to go down...that's when the speed and the crack was just starting to show then.

Elise: Late sixties?

X2: No this was in the early seventies and mid-eighties.

Elise: Oh okay.

X2: It wasn't too long after that when it closed. When it closed, everything just scattered, but it was cross-dressing and lesbians and that was basically it.

Elise: Yeah.

X2: If that's what you were into that's where they'd pick you up. The men would come in, the tricks would come in and pick you up.

X: And it was so obvious too. A guy would walk in and sit down and say do you want a beer, do you want a beer? And the two girls would be sitting there and they'd say well do you want her or do you want me?

X2: A lot of older men, not so many young men.

X: And a lot of Oriental men.

X2: At that time it was the heart of Chinatown you see, before university and all them places.

X: Alice ran whore houses.

Elise: Who was?

X: Alice.

Elise: Alice who?

X: Alice LeDuke.

Elise: Who was she?

X: A madam.

Elise: That had a whore house down there?

X: On Center Avenue, Center Street? She owned a house too, and she ran a house there.

Elise: So I guess there would have been a lot of crossover between the whore houses and the Continental and the Union.

X: Of what?

Elise: You would've in those different places met people you knew.

X: Oh hell yes!!! We knew waiters...look at Carl and Carl still comes around and Carl was a waiter at the [inaudible], the Dancing Pig on Jarvis. And if you knew where the Redo was...the [inaudible] was right next door down the street, called the Dancing Pig.

X2: And on the other side there was the Bayhouse which was strictly gay. And then there was the Ford Hotel which was notorious, so I mean that whole circle. [yeah]There was a mail hustler who used to work out of the bus stop.

Elise: Oh really?

X: Yeah.

X2: It was the circle, Dundas and Bay.

Elise: You can read a lot about it in Flash and Justice Weekly, they have

[end of tape]

