

Queer Newark Oral History Project
Interviewee: Marc "Sir Dane" Sedane
Interviewer: Beryl Satter
Date: August 7, 2015
Location: Sedane's apartment, East Orange, NJ

Beryl Satter: ok now it's recording, and I'm going to record it on this one as well. And then we'll get started

Marc Sedane: I'm going to see if I close the windows

BS: It's probably ok, whatever you feel like. I don't think we need to worry about it. Ok so there, we've got two recorders going. And I think we're good.

So, now I'm just (inaudible). Alright, so, it's wonderful to be sitting with you

MS: Thank you for being here. Thank you

BS: And I think we should talk generally about your life a little bit

MS: Ok

BS: before we get to the big part here with the performing and the stars

MS: Ok

BS: and Al Murphy and Zanzibar and all that, could you just start with your date and place of birth?

MS: I was born originally in Savannah, Georgia. We won't say the year

BS: you won't?

MS: no, we won't say the year.

BS: (laughs)

MS: um, and um I grew up uh in the Pentecostal environment. Uh raised by my mother and my grandmother

BS: oh

MS: and that's where it all started in the Pentecostal church I think. I don't remember when it started, it just happened

BS: were you living still in Georgia? I mean, were you there your whole childhood?

MS: oh yes, I was there until- in fact, I was trying to get out of Savannah in such a hurry, while my senior class was marching down the aisle, I was on the train coming to New York.

BS: (laughs) you mean right after high school?

MS: right after high school, I wanted to get out, I just wanted to breathe and I, you know, had visited New York and I've seen so much and I knew people that would travel and come back and I was just be so exciting so I wanted to escape. And I did. (laughs)

BS: well, so how did you know about New York?

MS: just by my reading and what I saw on TV and, like I said, I had family members that were originally from Savannah that moved, relocated to New York so their kids would come home every Sunday and it was just, you know, word of mouth and the way they dressed and the way they spoke. You know it was totally different from what was going on in Savannah and I wanted to be different

BS: well could you tell me approximately what year you graduated high school? (2:28)

MS: I came out of high school (laughs)

BS: Sorry (laughs)

MS: then you're going to figure things out! (laughs)

BS: I'm bad with math

MS: that's so sweet. Um, I came out in the 60s.

BS: you mean you moved to New York in the 60s more or less

MS: I moved to New York in... ok, I'm trying to come up with my year I graduated... ok, so around '75 I was in New York. (2:51) I moved to New York in the 70s... (laughs)

BS: right, that makes sense

MS: yeah

BS: and that was your first stop from Savannah

MS: yes, yes. You know, I had friends in Jamaica who I stayed with for a minute...but I wanted to get in to the city so I moved to the Bronx. And that's when I started going out. Outside of the church.

BS: so, all that time 'til then, through high school, were you in a- I mean I don't know how big a town Savannah is, but you were very church-oriented?

MS: church-oriented but I was a participant in all the musical and art activities during high school.

BS: and was the high school secular, regular high school?

MS: no

BS: it was a religious high school?

MS: no, it - secular, secular,

BS: I'm sorry, yeah

MS: yes, yes. You know and I was in all the plays and the chorus and...so what was happening in church, I was intrigued 'bout the outside realm of music because at that time my Pentecostal Church was very strict

BS: which one was it? Was there-

MS: the United House of Prayer

BS: oh! I've heard of that

MS: yes, Bishop C.M. Grace

BS: right

MS: was the founder. In fact, I just went to see the James Brown movie and they have a part of Bishop Grace in the movie. Yeah

BS: Daddy Grace, no?

MS: yeah, Daddy Grace.

BS: I've read a bio of him

MS: Yeah, yeah

BS: He was pretty...flamboyant?

MS: oh yeah, yeah

BS: did you ever meet him?

MS: oh yeah I grew up, he passed away when I was twelve.

BS: and so you knew him?

MS: oh yeah, yeah.

BS: wow

MS: Yeah, I knew of him. I grew up under him.

BS: Did he come to your church? (4:37)

MS: Oh Savannah, Georgia was one of the many churches, you know he has churches all over the country, you know. Georgia, Augusta, Charlotte, Virginia, you know there're, churches everywhere. So Savannah-in fact, Savannah was the first church built on the east coast.

BS: for Daddy Grace?

MS: Yeah (5:02)

BS: So he came sometimes, as he sort of...

MS: Yes, as a bishop he traveled around.

BS: Wow I didn't know that.

MS: And I- that's where the musical thing, you know, I think I was just called one night on the program to sing and that was the beginning of...the desire.

BS: Oh, so you hadn't sung before?

MS: Yeah, but I'm saying in, you know, that was the first time in church. I don't know I was maybe 9 or 10 years old.

BS: Right

MS: So...that was the first platform. (laughs)

BS: Wow, yeah. That's really interesting. I want to ask you a little bit about your grandmother and your mother.

MS: Right.

BS: 'Cause they're the ones who raised you. So

MS: Right.

BS: They're both from Savannah?

MS: Yes, my grandmother was Hawkeye Indian born in Hawkinsville, Georgia. And um...my mother was born in Savannah.

BS: What kind of Indian?

MS: Hawkeye.

BS: Yeah?

MS: And... I grew up with my grandmother my mother.

BS: Where was your grandfather?

MS: Um, I didn't know my grandfather. He passed away. But I was told that that's where I got my musical gift from.

BS: Huh.

MS: Because he was a deacon in the church and loved to sing. I do remember that.

BS: Was he deacon in House of-

MS: in the House of Prayer, yes, he was a deacon in the House of Prayer.

BS: So you were like third generation-

MS: Yes

BS: House of Prayer.

MS: Yes.

BS: And did they ever tell you the story of how they got into it? (6:39)

MS: No, my grandmother just said that she was walking the street one night and passed a tent

BS: Ho-

MS: Where he was preaching.

BS: Wow.

MS: and um, she stood outside and she listened and she watched the people, and then she made it her business to be there at the beginning of it.

BS: Daddy Grace was preaching then?

MS: Yes. Beginning of the service the next night, and she said her life was changed by his message.

BS: Huh. What was she before that, was she a...regular Christian...kind of?

MS: Yes. I- you know

BS: Um...a different-

MS: She just read her bible (7:56)

BS: Right, right.

MS: Yeah. There was no denomination.

BS: Got it. And then she joined- because it was-

MS: Yes

BS: I mean, I actually have studied religion a little bit so I -

MS: Yes

BS: I know about him...and that's really interesting. So

MS: Indeed (laughs)

BS: And what does she do, is she-

MS: She was a domestic.

BS: She was a domestic?

MS: Yes.

BS: And um, from there?

MS: Yes, in Savannah.

BS: And does she have any stories for you that influenced you?

MS: No, it was just that she really was disappointed at my mother getting pregnant with me at the age of fifteen.

BS: Oh.

MS: And they had a very strange relationship. You know, and I was in the middle, but

BS: (laughs)

MS: I was my grandmother's favorite. She raised- and then I had a sister the next year

BS: Uh huh

MS: Out of wedlock, so my grandmother was really...and my mother really had, you know. Tension all the time.

BS: Uh, between her and her mother?

MS: Yes.

BS: Huh.

MS: But my mother...was attached to my sister and my grandmother was attached to me.

BS: Yeah. So that worked out sort of (laughs).

MS: Yes.

BS: Um...sorry, I have allergies, I'm just sniffing a little bit.

MS: Oh I'm sorry.

BS: Um...so she was the one who doted on you?

MS: Yeah, yeah.

BS: And did you- I just wondering I guess about, when you're a kid, did you...so you felt close to her,

MS: Oh v-

BS: So that puts you a generation up, you know what I mean?

MS: Yeah, she was my heart. My grandmother was, and when my mother finally married my sister's father, I stayed with my grandmother.

BS: Ah (9:13) yeah.

MS: Yeah, I wasn't-that was my sister's father, and so they should be together and I stayed with my mama- that's what-

BS: What year was that? I mean, how old were you?

MS: Oh...I was a teenager when my mother married.

BS: Uh huh

MS: Yeah...

BS: And then she moved out, and you stayed-

MS: Yes.

BS: And how did your-so one way I guess your grandmother influenced you was- and your mother, I guess they were all- your mother too was raised in the church?

MS: Yes.

BS: Same church?

MS: She was participant, yes.

BS: Yeah, and... United House of Prayer, and then...so that was one thing they really passed on to you was-

MS: Yes

BS: That spirituality.

MS: Yes, yes.

BS: And anything else your grandmother- is, who's the one who- well, either of them, that you felt as a child influenced you?

MS: Well, my grandmother, when she found out that I was gay, was one of, she was *the* main supporter.

BS: Hmmm.

MS: Of not judging me.

BS: Wow.

MS: And letting me know that she still loved me, whereas my dad, my stepfather, and my mother and my stepmother, they were all *judgmental*. And, you know, disliked the idea of me being gay.

BS: And how old were you when they found out? (10:47)

MS: Maybe about thirteen.

BS: Wow. They all heard- that was when, not when you knew, but when the rest of them knew (laughs).

MS: No, how it happened was during the summer months I would - because of the courts, my mother went after my father to take care of me. So...because he was a serviceman, so you know, he had to take care of his child. So I, in the summer time I spent the three months of summer with my father. (11:19) And the remainder of the school period with my mom and my grandmother.

BS: And your father was in the military?

MS: Yes. But by then he was home. So he was married again. Remarried. So...some issues happened while I was spending time there. And my father found out about it.

BS: While you were there in the summer?

MS: During the summer.

BS: You mean you, sort of, were messing around...

MS: Yes, and somebody told my brother.

BS: Oh...you do have a brother too then?

MS: Yeah I had a stepbrother.

BS: Stepbrother

MS: Yes.

BS: Younger or older?

MS: Older. And when he came back from camp the guy told, then my brother told my father. So that's how it happened and I got a whupping, and, you know, I was called all kind of names by my stepmother. And then they made me sit out and on the stoop so everybody could see me, cause it was...known, 'cause I ran away (laughs).

BS: You ran away from them?

MS: When my brother told me he was gonna tell my father I knew I was getting whupping, I ran like two blocks, under a car.

BS: Sh-you were thirteen!

MS: And they found me, you know,

BS: Was this dur-

MS: They had a- my brother's friends and people in the community were looking for me. It was so embarrassing when somebody saw me under the car, and they pulled me from under the car and I got a whupping, and it was known all in the neighborhood.

BS: Right...

MS: You know, because it's a small town in that section of black community, you know. Yeah, so

BS: This was also in Savannah, just a different house but the same town.

MS: Yes.

BS: So that's how everybody found out?

MS: Yeah, somebody-

BS: All from something at camp.

MS: And then by the time I went back to my mother for school, it was known in the church, because you know everybody knew everybody. (13:30)

BS: Right, how big was the black community of Savannah do you think?

MS: Oh my god, I could- I wouldn't even...I don't know, go on the internet, it'll tell you (laughs).

BS: (laughs) I'll look it up, sure, sure.

MS: Yes. Because it's an historical city but it's...it has a lot of history to do with slavery and

BS: sure

MS: the Underground Railroad. So it has a great history...great history.

BS: So let's see, so you were probably going into...eighth grade?

MS: Yes, yes, eighth or ninth grade.

BS: Yeah.

MS: By the time I got to junior high, it was known that I was, well back then they called it a sissy (laughs).

BS: Uh huh. How about the other boy? (13:56)

MS: Um well he- it was two of my brother's friends. So I don't know whatever happened to them.

BS: That you were sort of caught with?

MS: Yeah, no they went and told.

BS: Two of your brother's friends told?

MS: Yeah, they told.

BS: But they saw you with another boy, is that what happened?

MS: No, when

BS: They just...

MS: My brother came home, they just told him.

BS: Oh wow, that was it? You didn't even do anything...

MS: No, we...we had sex.

BS: You and who? The-

MS: Two of the boys.

BS: Two of your brother's friends? (14:25)

MS: Friends.

BS: But, so they had no problem, only you?

MS: They went and told him, and that's how

BS: That's crazy. So, were they older than you?

MS: Yes, they were my brother's age, you know. Had to be five, six, I mean they were teenagers, you know like sixteen, seventeen years old.

BS: Right. But, you know, that's funny because they're the ones who are having sex with you.

MS: Yeah.

BS: And you'd think that that would also make them sissies.

MS: Yeah.

BS: But it didn't, it only made you.

MS: It didn't. Yeah.

BS: They were, like, fine.

MS: Yeah.

BS: But you weren't.

MS: Yeah. I used to- my parents, my grandmother, mother, because of the Indian roots, they used to keep my hair in braids.

BS: Wow.

MS: Big plats, and they used to-everybody used to say I was a pretty boy.

BS: Mmm.

MS: My grandmother used to take the brown octagon soap and make sure that my knees were not dark. (laughs)

BS: (laughs)

MS: And my elbows were not dark. You know, and that's all I heard through life, that I was a pretty boy. So you know a lot of the tendencies, I guess, I don't know. (15:26)

BS: And you're wearing braids.

MS: Yes.

BS: How long?

MS: Uh, to the shoulder.

BS: Uh huh? Do you have any picture...of you as a child?

MS: No, my-they all were destroyed in a fire...and then the next set of pictures they have is when I'm -my hair is cut.

BS: Mmm...how old were you when they cut it?

MS: About seven.

BS: Oh so it was really, you were a little boy when you had the braids.

MS: Yes, oh yes, yes.

BS: Uh, but that was about being Native American. Um, was your father also in the church? (15:58)

MS: No. No. He knew people, that's how he met my mother, through his friends.

BS: Uh huh.

MS: From the church.

BS: So he had friends in the church but he wasn't in it?

MS: He wasn't a member. And my grandmother, his mother lived a block away. So I would, when I - as I grew up and knew my grandmother was, I was able to go see my grandmother, spend time with her, weekends.

BS: But it was really the-your mother's mother that was your main -raised

MS: Yeah, that's who raised me.

BS: But that- you know that's interesting because it's about like how they s-, how communities saw outsidersness. You know, it was okay to have sex with a boy, but it depended what role you played.

MS: Right. Well they were- She wanted to kill my father. Because I didn't know the stor-

BS: She- yeah?

MS: My grandmother. I didn't know the story 'til years later that I asked, you know, what happened? That they didn't get ma- he said it was your grandmother, because your mother was young, and I was a few years older, you know, it was against the church, and she couldn't stand me, so she never allowed my mother and him to have a relationship.

BS: Oh, your father said it was your grandmother who stopped him from being with your mother?

MS: Yes.

BS: Hmm. yeah, (laughs). I guess she meant well, you know?

MS: Well that's how it was back then.

BS: Right.

MS: You know?

BS: Yeah.

MS: So many people have, I have a niece who was born in the nineties, and you know she went through the same thing. (17:37)

BS: With the family being hosti-

MS: With her father, she didn't have a relationship with her father, because the mother didn't like him, and...it was, you know, that's how it was done.

BS: Right, but you did have a relationship with your father because of the summers with him?

MS: Yes, I just had a-a very cruel stepmother.

BS: Ah. (17:55)

MS: You know, until I got to be an adult and she got older and changed but she was very, very cruel.

BS: Just to you?

MS: Yes. 'Cause my stepbrother was her son.

BS: Right.

MS: You know, I grew up and-

BS: And it was, he's the one whose friends told on you?

MS: Yes.

BS: So that might've had something to do with the family dynamics of...

MS: Yeah.

BS: You know?

MS: Well she didn't want me in my father's life, you know, that's when I said my mother had to fight to make sure that financially he had a responsibility. And to spend time with me. My mother made sure that it happened. (18:34)

BS: Yeah.

MS: So my stepmother couldn't do too much about it, so a lot of the time she took it out on me.

BS: Ugh, man. So you were continuing to go to their place through high school in the summers?

MS: Yes, and then when I got in junior high school, I was going to school while living with them. They-it switched up because of the school districting, and the school that my mother wanted me to go to, I had to be living with my father.

BS: (19:10) So you were separated from your grandmother?

MS: Yes, and my mother lived ten blocks away

BS: So was a-

MS: From my dad, maybe.

BS: And did your mom live with your grandmother all this time?

MS: No.

BS: That was separate?

MS: By- she was married then.

BS: Oh that's right.

MS: She was married then.

BS: So you- after you were sort of labeled a sissy, and your grandmother was the most supportive, but you weren't living with her by then, you

MS: No.

BS: Were away from her?

MS: Right and that was very...hard for me. You know, very hard for me. They did allow me to go to my church like on Tuesdays and Thursday nights, and then, you know, my brother would pick me up or my dad would pick me up. (20:00) Or, if my mother went to church she would bring me home. I would ride with her to church and she would bring me home to my dad's.

BS: How many nights a week did your mother and grandmother go to church?

MS: Well my grandmother went every night.

BS: Yes. (laughs)

MS: (laughs) And I, when, as I grew up I went many nights with my grandmother. And of course all day Sunday. And then by the time I was a teenager, I had major parts in the youth service.

BS: Hmmm, what-do you remember, was it called something?

MS: Five o'clock service.

BS: It was called the five o'clock service?

MS: That was the youth service. But I always sang in any service.

BS: (laughs) Was the music good in that church?

MS: Oh my God, it was the best- that's the roots of gospel. The upright piano, the tambourines, and in my church, we had a brass section, horns. And a bass drum, and guitars, and the best voices in the choirs and in the world. It was heaven. I grew-I loved it.

BS: Huh. So because it's a lot, you know, and going

MS: Yeah

BS: Every night is a lot, and

MS: Yeah

BS: So you went quite a bit?

MS: And Sunday school.

BS: *And* Sunday school?

MS: Yeah.

BS: So it was your life.

MS: It was my life.

BS: It was encompassing?

MS: Yes.

BS: 'Cause you're still going to school during the day?

MS: Yes.

BS: So it's like

MS: And I'm participating in school so what's happening in church is boiling over to my creativity. And that's why the teachers that were in charge of certain groups like drama and music, and the chorus, they wanted me to be involved.

BS: At school?

MS: At school.

BS: Because they saw how good you were?

MS: Right. (21:47)

BS: But, and that- how good you were, was in part from all the practice?

MS: Yes.

BS: you got from

MS: yes

BS: being in

MS: yes

BS: At the United House of Prayer?

MS: Yeah. Because you were not in just one group, you know. You sang with the-the youth choir, then I had my own little group of about four or five of us, you know I'm singing. And in-

BS: What was that- what was that small one?

MS: The small-we were called the Heavenly Angels. (laughs)

BS: (laughs) That's great!

MS: You know and as I became older and when the bishop that I grew up under became the bishop, and I was a teenager, I started reaching out into the adult part of the music department.

BS: At church?

MS: At church, and one of my music teachers...who was a great master at music studying at some of the greatest schools, Mr. Smalls, came to my church to start a spiritual choir, not a gospel choir, to sing spirituals.

BS: Huh.

MS: And one night, he was teaching parts and I was singing the different parts and he was like, "Marcus, get up here boy." Now he knew me from school.

BS: Uh huh.

MS: So he said, "Direct this! I'm showing you what to do, show them what to do." And I started directing, in my church because of Mr. Smalls.

BS: Huh. How old were you then?

MS: Seventeen.

BS: Huh.

MS: Sixteen, seventeen. And from that moment on I was in charge of the youth choirs and when I moved to New York my church was on 125th and 8th, across from the Apollo Theater.

BS: It was the same United House of Prayer?

MS: Yes.

BS: Uh huh.

MS: And I became the minister music of the Holy Crossings and I had over two hundred voices.

BS: Huh. You were like, right out of high school when that happened?

MS: Yes.

BS: You were eighteen years old?

MS: Yes, I got on the train!

BS: (laughs)

MS: (laughs) To escape. (laughs)

BS: By yourself?

MS: Yes.

BS: But you had-

MS: Took all my clothes, nobody wanted me to leave...

BS: Hah, you went anyway.

MS: But I wanted to get to school so I, you know, I got into Fashion Institute of Technology.

BS: Uh huh. You were interested in fashion as well as music?

MS: Yeah, that's my life, clothes and fashion, and music (24:28)

BS: Uh huh. Were you-so you, your job was choir director-

MS: Yes.

BS: And they paid you f-

MS: Minister of music.

BS: Wow, minister of music. Um, and you're eighteen and you're all by yourself and you figured out how to get into FIT?

MS: Yeah.

BS: You applied and just got in?

MS: Yeah.

BS: That's impressive.

MS: Yeah.

BS: I mean, 'cause you were on your own.

MS: Well I mean that- that was my goal.

BS: Oh that's why you moved to New York?

MS: Although I didn't complete, because the church...ah- this has got to be in part of my book. We're gonna have to keep this, see I've got to get this.

BS: Yeah, once we-

MS: Because we're going to- yeah, you're going to help me with my book.

BS: (laughs)

MS: Um, the church- the magnitude of my faith, and my desire to work in the church, under these bishops, because it was so much joy, and I got so much gratification out of doing it, that I gave up my life, and my goals, which was to be a fashion designer.

BS: Ah.

MS: Because I had so many different jobs and things I had to do within the United House of Prayer that I didn't have the time.

BS: And that's when you were eighteen?

MS: Yeah.

BS: Already and

MS: Yes.

BS: In New York, you were still deeply involved with that

MS: Oh yes.

BS: Um,

MS: Especially after I came up and the minister who was like a doctor, father, Minister Green asked me to

BS: in New York

MS: Yeah, here in New York. He asked me to get this choir together that had been established by our bishop, W. McCollough.

BS: That was the one in New York or in south- Savannah?

MS: No, now Bishop Grace had passed away.

BS: Right, right.

MS: So Bishop McCollough

BS: He's the new head.

MS: was the new Bishop.

BS: Right.

MS: Overall, over everything.

BS: Yeah, that's what I've heard of him, that's right.

MS: Yeah, so that's the bishop that I really grew up under.

BS: Okay.

MS: And he had started this choir, and then years later, it died down. So when I came up he asked me to start this choir over.

BS: McCollough did.

MS: Yes. Ella Green asked me to, so it was a challenge to reinstate this choir that the bishop-you know, it was a favor. It would look good for me (laughs) to do this and so, then we had to be the top because I was a very hard taskmaster at being the best.

BS: The best choir.

MS: Yes

BS: Of all the United-

MS: Of all the churches. (27:07)

BS: Yeah, is- was that-

MS: It was competition, then we had choir competitions.

BS: Uh huh, between not just House of Prayer, but all the churches were-

MS: No, all the House of Prayer is doing the convocation.

BS: Hmm.

MS: Whatever choirs came to New York, they were in competition with my choir.

BS: I got it.

MS: When my choir went to Philadelphia, whatever choir came to Philadelphia was in competition with Philadelphia's choir.

BS: Wow.

MS: When you went to DC, all the choirs were in competition with DC's choir.

BS: Right. mmm

MS: And we used to beat.

BS: Hah!

MS: With one song I rearranged, which was called "On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand."

BS: Mmm.

MS: I rearranged it.

BS: Wow. Um...wow. So, I mean it's interesting because it sounds like, all right, so you go back to school, but here in the church they're calling you a sissy, you know, means that you're gay.

MS: Right.

BS: But you carry on in the church anyway, I- there's-

MS: Well, the church was so filled of gay people

BS: (laughs)

MS: that when I- and especially in New York. I mean, we had gay people down South, but when I came to New York and I saw all the gay people in New York and DC, in Philly, and people that I had known in- in the years that they traveled to Savannah, so a lot of them I was familiar with. So I was just glad to be around these- popular, Northern people that were gay and that became my family.

BS: Huh...s-

MS: In all different cities,

BS: Uh huh.

MS: We were all family.

BS: Wow.

MS: When we came together, we all stayed in the same hotel. You know, we all drove together, or we all took the bus together. And we were all choir directors, drum majors, singers in the choir, you know. We were all artistic people.

BS: Sure. Um, men and women?

MS: Men and women.

BS: Uh huh.

MS: We had lesbian friends, we had gay friends, we had bisexual friends. You know they were back there - now it's called on the down low but back there it was just sneakin'.

BS: They called it sneaking? (laughs)

MS: Yeah.

BS: Were they married, a lot of them?

MS: Yes.

BS: But how did- did their spouses know?

MS: No, we had some people that had open relationships with a male and a female and the female knowing that he messed with dudes.

BS: Right.

MS: You know, I was very close to a family, and they had children, you know, but they stayed together 'til he passed away.

BS: Right, so sometimes and then some people were single, I assume?

MS: Yes, most of 'em, most of us were single.

BS: Uh huh.

MS: (laughs)

BS: But you all knew each other and found each other and, how- was that just sort of, did you like-

MS: It was just the chemistry of all the artistic people. You know, from the piano player to the organist to the people that were in charge of the musical, classical bands to the people from the shout bands

BS: Uh huh

MS: To the choirs, like I said, you know, it was just s-

BS: So, being labeled a sissy and having everyone in church knows, didn't really-

MS: No, by,

BS: Cause a problem - or did it? Like it caused-

MS: Well, the sissy part was really in the adolescent years. As you grew up, you know, you were a fag.

BS: Right.

MS: And then the word came about "gay."

BS: Right. So you went through all those phases, kind of

MS: Yes

BS: In the church?

MS: Yes.

BS: And outside the church?

MS: Yes.

BS: Both.

MS: Yes.

BS: But how did people treat you, I mean you said you- there was cruelty from your father and stepmother, and...

MS: Stepfather.

BS: Stepfather.

MS: Right.

BS: And a little-and your mother

MS: Well, you know in

BS: But-

MS: School you got teased.

BS: Uh huh.

MS: You know, and you were called names. But I was so- I was nominated for the best dressed.

BS: Hah! (laughs)

MS: I was um voted most talented

BS: Mmm.

MS: Of my senior class. (31:34)

BS: Wow.

MS: Um,

BS: So, yeah.

MS: I had people that liked me and those that didn't. I'll never forget my mother was picking me up from school and these guys were calling me faggot. He's gay! But they didn't know that that was my mother, so when I was coming up they would call me my name. So my mother said, and that was the first time I ever found out how my mother would speak up for me. Because she didn't like the idea of me being gay. And she told the guys, "don't be calling him that, if he is that, he's my son." And that blew me *away*. And on the way home she was like, "do they call you

that all the time?" So I said, "Sometimes." But I never- because prior to that, I just knew that they hated me being the person that I was.

BS: Well how did they show that. I mean how did they let you know they didn't like it?

MS: Oh my parents?

BS: Yeah.

MS: Oh by their words and their actions and, you know, it's a disgrace and, you weren't born that way, and it's a shame, and you're in the church and The Lord is going to get you. And see that's another thing. The agony of being in the church and being torn by salvation and then them telling you that you're going to burn and go to hell because you're that way. And you're wondering why, if I love it so much, and I'm participating in it so much, and I didn't put this upon myself, how am- how's He going to punish me?

BS: Mmm. (34:03)

MS: So it was rough.

BS: So yeah you're deeply torn because this is the thing you love the most.

MS: Yes.

BS: And they're telling you that you can't be both places

MS: Can't

BS: Basically. But you totally were experiencing, "I sure can, because everyone here is gay also."

MS: Yes.

BS: That's really...(laughs) so a lot of the people, because while you were getting that at home and there, and they were like just pressuring you because of your behavior and your clothes and

MS: Right.

BS: You didn't show interest in girls. I mean, were you- how open were you with-

MS: Well I did have sex- let me tell you, this is the thing that blew me aw-the very first experiment with sex was with, you know, girls. The close streets we lived close by and we played games, and this young lady's father had like a old car lot, used cars, old, where he was just using them for parts, and we used to play house, and that was my first experience with sex.

BS: How old were you about?

MS: Oh my God.

BS: (laughs)

MS: Seven or eight.

BS: (laughs)

MS: Yeah.

BS: But your parents didn't know about that.

MS: No. no.

BS: Um, but what - but by the time, I mean, that they were pressuring you, it was because they thought- I mean it was like an open thing.

MS: Yeah.

BS: To some extent that that's

MS: Yeah.

BS: who you were and that's how it was and they didn't like-

MS: Well everybody knew that my mother had a gay son.

BS: Oh wow.

MS: Everybody knew that my father had a gay son, you know.

BS: How 'bout your sister, was she supportive?

MS: My sister...Back then if somebody said something to me, yeah she would go off.

BS: (laughs) She'd protect you?

MS: Yeah.

BS: She was younger?

MS: Yeah she was two years younger. We don't have a relationship now but back then, yeah, she was, she would fight.

BS: Did you ever have to fight?

MS: Yes.

BS: So like, just you'd fight to protect yourself

MS: Yeah

BS: Kinda thing?

MS: And I fought to play games cause of, you know, there were times they wouldn't want me to play baseball, you know all the guys especially from my church. When we'd- you know, I had to push to do that and at first it was embarrassing cause I couldn't (laughs) but I kept

BS: (laughs)

MS: Pushing until I learned to do things that boys did, because I didn't want to be labeled. I wanted to be able to do whatever I wanted to do.

BS: Yeah so that must've won you some respect.

MS: Oh yeah.

BS: Cause-

MS: And then I fought back. I didn't win all the time, but I fought.

BS: Right. So did that make it bearable basically, I mean, it was-

MS: Well, by that time of high school, I was gay and there were gay spots in Savannah.

BS: Oh yeah?

MS: And we would- or in Atlanta. And I had a dear cousin who just left last weekend from Savannah and we used to go make our clothes, and go to the clubs on the nights that we didn't go to church. And some nights we did go to church we would jump my grandmother's fence in the backyard and sneak out after she went to bed. (laughs)

BS: (laughs) So it's this complete club-church, that's exactly what we're talking about.

MS: Yes!

BS: You know?

MS: it was, you know, and by that time I was into what the church called "worldly music."

BS: (laughs) So let's see, you're now- it's about like the sixties?

MS: Yes.

BS: In the middle of the sixties, like what kind of music did you like?

MS: Um, I heard, Aretha Franklin, "Respect," you know. Al Green was a favorite, little Stevie Wonder, and it was *little* Stevie Wonder,

BS: Right.

MS: “Fingertips,” you know. And then when it came to gospel it was Reverend James Cleveland. You know? Mahalia Jackson, The Caravans, so (laughs) I was just sucking it all in. And then I joined the RCA club where they used to- you get like 12 albums for

BS: Right.

MS: About 12 cents or a dollar, something like that,

BS: Right.

MS: And I was into the Barbara Streisand and Ramsey Lewis, and Chicalski[?], [Tchaikovsky?] um...

BS: Everything.

MS: I just loved to hear it all.

BS: It's- yeah you're lucky. A lot of people joined those clubs and, you know, ended up being sent more than they could afford, but if you kept on it you were good...

MS: Yeah

BS: Those mail order record clubs.

MS: Yes the record clubs, yes it was.

BS: Yeah, I remember those.

MS: Ooh this is my history.

BS: (laughs)

MS: Yeah.

BS: So, but it sounds so really rich, you know, because you're deep in music, like how many nights a week at the church in high school?

MS: In high school, ok, we always had, even if I didn't stay, I had to go to eight o'clock prayer service.

BS: AM?

MS: no, PM.

BS: (at the same time as Marc) PM. Every night?

MS: Every night.

BS: In high school?

MS: That's from, and that's from eight o'clock to eight thirty.

BS: Ok.

MS: And then the church service starts after that. So, I would go to eight o'clock prayer, and some nights you know, go back home with my mother, my grandmother would stay. (40:01) Then there was Tuesday night, which was pastor's night. That's when it took up the pastor offering. That was the night that they had a musical program in honor of the pastor. So that as I grew older I started singing on that program. Then the next night I may not have gone out but Thursday night was young people's night and we were in charge of the entire service from eight o'clock to the end.

BS: And when is the end?

MS: About eleven o'clock at night.

BS: That's a lot.

MS: Yeah. Because it's a sanctified church so there's a lot of shouting and praising in God and singing and the band playing, so it's very spiritual. You know, especially after the offering is out of the way. Then you have to have the minister preach and that's more shouting and

BS: Right.

MS: Praising, you know.

BS: Right. So like when your grandmother, she'd be there 8-11 every night.

MS: Yeah.

BS: And you were there 8-11 at least Thursday night.

MS: The nights, and then all day Sunday from Sunday school to 11 o'clock service. And then we would go home, and then my grandmother, mother would stay home. And then my sister and I and everybody in the neighborhood would go back for youth service at 5 o'clock.

BS: So let's see. Be something like, let's give the hours, it would be something like, nine to 12 or something?

MS: Nine to 11 o'clock service.

BS: AM.

MS: by the 11 service starts from 11 to like...2.

BS: And then a-

MS: And then they had another service, a 3 o'clock service, but I didn't attend that. And then the youth service was from 5 to 7. And then 8 o'clock service started.

BS: (laughs) Wow. And- but there's so much music in all this.

MS: Yes.

BS: That it's just music, music, music.

MS: And it's different choirs and different for certain nights, you know what I'm saying.

BS: Yeah. Sounds amazing, you know, for somebody like you who

MS: Yeah.

BS: Uh so that was the- so, in a way the, the joy of it and the music of it and the spirituality of it are not, you can't separate them.

MS: It's no way.

BS: Yeah.

MS: From my creation of who I was to be, when it came to music and the arts, you know, I was put in the right place, born at the right place, through the right vessels, to become whoever I'm supposed to be.

BS: (laughs)

MS: And whatever purpose I was supposed to serve I do believe that I have a purpose, with my gifts and my life's journey. Because of all the blessings, and all the- now I'm seeing all the history. (43:01) You know, I'm in the last two years, people are calling me an icon and a legend, and I rebolt that and I say, you know, I'm still growing, I'm still striving. But as of late as I see where I am in life and I'm- always wanted is finally visual. And I feel it spiritually, whatever I went through and whatever I did, it was for moments like this.

BS: Mmm. Wow. It's ama- already just the idea of this so many gay people in the United House of Prayer both in Savannah- so, that's what I wanted to ask. So when you started to be aware of a gay scene in Savannah?

MS: Mmhmm.

BS: So you were in high school at that point?

MS: Yes.

BS: And you- like, how did you hear about it and how did you get to it?

MS: Just other gay people. You know, or my cousin.

BS: Was that-

MS: Marvin. (laughs)

BS: Was your cousin Marvin gay?

MS: Oh yes! (44:13)

BS: Uh huh.

MS: That was my- one of- that's why I said, we used to get in our houses, perspective houses, and buy fabric and had all the fashion, whatever the fashion was out, we made our garments so we wouldn't have to spend money. And we matched our shoes,

BS: (laughs)

MS: And our hats, with fabric to go out to the clubs.

BS: That's fabulous. And you were like in high school now?

MS: Yes.

BS: Is he your age?

MS: Yes.

BS: Same age

MS: Yes.

BS: Did he have to go through the same things about "sissy boy" stuff?

MS: Yes. Yeah.

BS: So the two of you

MS: Yeah.

BS: And he was whose, your father or mother's side?

MS: On my mother's side.

BS: He's your mother's...

MS: Sister

BS: Son.

MS: Yeah.

BS: But you had him.

MS: Oh yeah, we had each other, we had each other.

BS: That's great.

MS: And see he wasn't always in the church, so when he joined the church, it was me. It was always us. Together. (45:54)

BS: It was so s-

MS: Yeah.

BS: And he was musical also?

MS: No. He just sang.

BS: (laughs) Ok.

MS: But he wasn't, no. But we traveled together, you know what I'm saying, we did, we did everything together.

BS: That's (inaudible)

MS: Along with our other friends.

BS: So, in high school, both in the church and in high school, did you have a little gay kinda group of friends that were-

MS: Oh of course.

BS: Yeah.

MS: Yeah I mean, everybody knew- the kid-by that time, you know, we were still getting called names and stuff but there were girls that didn't care, they just liked being with gay kids. There were dudes that just respected it, you know, and didn't deal with it. And there were the undercover ones that was having the gay kids under the bleachers. (46:04)

BS: Right.

MS: You know

BS: Right.

MS: in the shower room, going on camping trips, you know, so they were still, but they were undercover.

BS: Yeah, so there were some that were, having sex with you guys but

MS: Right.

BS: Separ- but never owning it.

MS: No.

BS: And then they were u-

MS: Still going with girls.

BS: Right. And then there was another group that just was like, we're just who we are.

MS: As long as you didn't bother them, you know.

BS: Right. Because you know, this was like, what, if it's the sixties I'm not sure of your dates but it's before, you know, the big gay movement.

MS: Oh no, oh no it was way before, yeah.

BS: Mmhhh, but nevertheless, there's this way of living that's

MS: Yes.

BS: Pretty cohesive

MS: Yeah.

BS: In terms of community and sup- you know, supporting

MS: yeah

BS: Each other, and people having this understanding and

MS: Oh yeah

BS: Yeah.

MS: Yeah.

BS: And they call you fags, that

MS: Right.

BS: Was the word,

MS: Yeah

BS: But it just sort of like, but everyone's interacting

MS: And then you had to be careful in the street because everybody that even didn't go to the House of Prayer knew my mother- somebody went to school with my mother, you know. There are so many people that didn't go to the House of Prayer, and you know they were all out in Savannah's "walk of life." (47:21)

MS: So you know you had to still carry yourself a certain way so you wouldn't say, "Oh I saw Jewel's son, or that boy from the House of Prayer being a sissy." You know, you could only do that in the clubs.

BS: (laughs) Right, which is the whole idea of the club as a sanctuary,

MS: Sanctuary.

BS: That it's a place. So what were these clubs like in the mid-60s say in

MS: Hot pants and

BS: This is in... which place?

MS: Savannah.

BS: In Savannah there was a place called hot pants?

MS: No I'm saying, that's what we wore back then.

BS: Oh! Right.

MS: Hot pants, and boots, and afros.

BS: God, I'd love to see some pictures.

MS: You know

BS: Do you have any pictures of that?

MS: I think I have, I have to.... dig. Yeah

BS: It would be *really*

MS: I'll have to dig.

BS: Great to see pictures of, you know, gay teenagers in that period in the South.

MS: Yeah.

BS: You know?

MS: I think I have to dig.

BS: Ok, you take a look.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

BS: Um, so you were in these hot pants and boots and

MS: Yeah, and that- you know, those were the clubs we would go to late at night after church mainly on a Friday night, we didn't go to too much during the week. During the week they might have had like drag shows or something like that.

BS: At these clubs in the- s-

MS: In Savannah, yeah. In the South

BS: Right.

MS: And we would go, you know, to see that, and a lot of the boys would go around, because a lot of the girls would go, a lot of- it was, some of the boys were straight boys but on certain nights they were gay. So that's how you got a lot of so-called straight men, because they wanted to mess around.

BS: Right. right. Um, and do you remember the names of any of the clubs? (48:47)

MS: Well me and Marvin were just talking about it. Oh my God. I'll have to call you.

BS: (laughs) Ok.

MS: Wait a minute, let me try something. Oh my God. We were just talking about it! The clubss... I lived in Atlanta for a while, so that gay life was really (49:28)

BS: so like when you were, because you said you went straight from high school, when they were walking down the aisle to graduate you were on the train north

MS: yes, I lived in Atlanta prior to coming

BS: to oh, this is why I'm sniffing, I'm allergic

MS: oh. [to cat] OUT! OUT!

BS: (laughs)

MS: she was locked up in the bedroom.

BS: (laughs) cause I'm good with dogs but I'm allergic to cats

MS: ok

BS: now that I know why, I'm sorry, not a big deal.

MS: I hope he's not in church [referring to cousin Marvin]

BS: (laughs) so you're still part of United House of Prayer?

MS: oh yeah.

BS: are you?

MS: no.

BS: ok

MS: because there's a new bishop and you know he's really strict and so people like me there, the singing outside of the gospel realm. (00:53) I'm gonna get the names of some clubs and just give it to you so you can have it

BS: ok, sure

MS: because he's prob- what's tonight, Thursday night?

BS: yes

MS: yeah he's at church

BS: ok, alright. We'll get it later. You know, there's rumors that

MS: Call me when you get in; I need to get some information from you. God bless you. (beep) I hate his service

BS: (laughs)

MS: (beep) urgent. (beep)

BS: (laughs)

MS: I hate all of this

BS: yeah, it's a pain.

MS: all I have to do is just (beep) I know, okay, sorry about that.

BS: it's alright. I was just saying there's, you know, some people think Daddy Grace was gay, I mean he was really flamboyant

MS: yes

BS: and he had all the clothes and his style was

MS: right

BS: pretty wild

MS: right

BS: you know?

MS: right

BS: did that-

MS: well the church was a very...um, well-dressed, colorful church, you know, from the uniforms, to the group of people, women, called the queens so they wore gowns and tiaras and long gloves, you know

BS: wow

MS: choir members wore fabulous colored robes

BS: oh really?

MS: you know

BS: pictures, any pictures of that?

MS: yeah I have pictures of

BS: the choir-

MS: my last choir that I was over

BS: that would be nice to see

MS: yeah (2:38)

BS: and that's all the gay influence

MS: oh yeah, yeah

BS: you know because that's like, I read a bio of Daddy Grace that just wrote that out completely, but I remember, I was thinking, I was like, why is she not talking about this, you know

MS: yeah

BS: and when you look at this thing you're wearing,

MS: right

BS: that's totally intense, flamboyant, wild uh outfit there, and that might have had some connection to the kind of things people wore in the church

MS: right and one of the main colors of the church was red, and

BS: ah!

MS: that's my favorite color, red and white. But as you see, you know, red is my favorite color

BS: huh. Yeah-

MS: and I know where that came from, that came from the church because the alter- (claps)
OUT! Savannah [the cat]! The altar that the bishop sat on was always carpeted and red.

BS: Hmm. Yeah so it affected you musically, aesthetically, like every way

MS: creatively, because you know they used to decorate the church every time the bishop would come for the convocation. (3:46) So, in our old church, which was once a barn, I was told, that they converted into the church, it was shaped like a barn, they would take crepe paper of red, white, and blue, and fold it, cut it, and fold it up, and then take it apart, and they would make designs in the ceilings

BS: wow

MS: of the red, the white, and the blue, and when you were standing under it- it would be just unbelievable, and when the wind would come in the church all the crepe paper would move, you know. So we used to be there leading up to the convocation, the whole congregation, they would have church and they cut it short. Then they'll start, everybody in the art department will start doing certain jobs, then you pass it on to the next person to the next person. Then you pass it on to the next person. Then you have the guys on the ladder you pass it up to them, and they do the draping. So we-I was a part of all of that, you know, and in school,

BS: so it was like an art assembly line

MS: yeah! That's what it was

BS: ok, go ahead, I'm sorry

MS: and in school, you know, I was one of the first males in Chatham County's homemaking department

BS: hmm

MS: and after that year

BS: what was that? (5:06)

MS: homemaking was primarily for young girls to learn how to cook, sew, and you know do the housework.

BS: right. And you wanted to do it

MS: and I broke it.

BS: you broke in

MS: I broke in (5:21)

BS: it's so cool. 'Cause you wanted to learn

MS: yes

BS: mainly the sewing

MS: the sewing, and cooking

BS: and cooking?

MS: yeah, 'cause I loved to cook

BS: That's another creative outlet

MS: yes

BS: So they let you do it?

MS: yeah. Yeah, I had one other guy come in afterwards, and then after the fashion show, and all I made was a tie, and a matching handkerchief to go in the jacket. And after that, guys started coming in

BS: (laughs) that's amazing

MS: yeah

BS: (laughs) that was in high school?

MS: in high school in Savannah, yeah

BS: sounds like high school was...ok, you know, because

MS: yeah

BS: you were really busy, I mean

MS: oh yeah

BS: you were doing a lot

MS: I was in all, you know, like I said I was in the homemaking department, I was in the art department, I was in the chorus, I was in the drama department (6:14)

BS: and you're by now, in high school, you're living with your father

MS: between my father and my grandmother (6:26) because by then I chose where I wanted to be

BS: oh. Uh huh. What was your father doing by now 'cause you said he was not in the service

MS: he was working at a shipping company, steel company, was very popular, I can't think of its name right now but everybody and their mother worked at this company

BS: hmm

MS: and especially people that came over from war

BS: I wonder what it was (6:55)

MS: yeah I'll get the name. I'll add that to your list

BS: yeah that's really interesting. So, was the neighborhood and the school, I don't know, was it a prosperous kind of thing or was it- (at the same time as MS) it sounds like they had a lot-

MS: well I grew up in the section of town, west side, that were houses that were up off the ground, wooden houses, you know. We had to take baths in tin tubs. You know, in my early years, until my mother married my sister's father that I started finding out about the modern life, with tubs and hot running water and, you know, things

BS: that was when you were like sixteen

MS: yes, in high school. (7:45) This might be Marvin. (phone ringing) Yup. (laughs)

BS: okay

MS: What's up? You called this morning? But you didn't leave a message. I didn't hear it, look. I told you about the interview that I'm having with the college professor. She's here now. We're talking about Savannah. Right quick, give me some of the names of the clubs that we used to hang out in. What is it? ...Piper's?

BS: Piper's

MS: right. Club One.

BS: hmm

MS: way out there, out in the west side out there where- ...the Hide Away. (59:17)

BS: (laughs)

MS: What was it? Yes, Sam Bowers. That was the after-hours spot. Yeah. All right boo, and what, oh alright let me ask you this, what was the big plant out there in West Savannah that my dad and everybody worked at? Union Camp.

BS: okay

MS: and what was that, steel or what? What was it? No, no, no, I mean, what was the plant, what were they making? ...Paper! That's right. International paper company, that's what it was. All right, darling. Well you know you're in my history honey, so your name has come up. And I already told her about how we used to make the outfits and jump the fence after church. So when I do my book, this is gonna be included in my book. Yep. Alright baby so I'll call you later. Good. The what? Okay. All right, I'll look for it. Okay. I'll call you back, call you back. And what about the shoes- I'll call you back. (beep) I'm sorry about that

BS: I'm just gonna set up one more recorder

MS: okay

BS: because just in case there's any kind of problem with any of the other batteries, this way I'll have like three recorders (10:39)

MS: okay

BS: because I don't want to lose anything

MS: (laughs)

BS: so I think it's a good idea. So just press record

MS: yeah this is gonna help me in my memoirs, yeah

BS: oh yeah, it will help

MS: yeah

BS: alright now we've got three. Okay. So, that's so interesting. So I was asking about the neighborhood and because-

MS: well, once I moved, my dad was always in a progressive area (11:03) 'cause he had a very, very good job and it was an area where they were building modern houses, so a lot of the people that were able to buy bought these houses within the community. And so you know I had to be between my mom and my dad's house. And then when I became a certain age, I didn't want to live with my dad anymore. (11:33) So I moved in with my mom and my stepdad when they

bought their second home, which was brand new. And I had my own room, my sister had her room, and they had their own room. When I was with my dad, my brother and I shared a room

BS: mmhmm. But it sounds like you moved to the dad's place because the school was better there.

MS: yes

BS: like they want to be, because-

MS: well by that time my mom had bought their first house in that area too

BS: oh the same area so then you didn't need to worry

MS: yeah

BS: because I'm just impressed with the school district

MS: yeah

BS: honestly, I mean, you think 'bout, I mean, today's schools don't have all that stuff

MS: No. No

BS: and in your day, they did

MS: yeah

BS: so was it a segregated school?

MS: no

BS: was it integrated?

MS: at first it was segregated, by the time I got to high school it wasn't (12:19)

BS: by high school

MS: yes

BS: was there any trouble around that?

MS: Yes, there was a lot of, you know, fighting and-

BS: among the kids

MS: kids and parents not wanting their white kids to come to a predominately African American, you know, black school. But they had to be bussed over, you know. And eventually it was over.

BS: they just got used to it?

MS: yes, yes

BS: Yeah, so like the whole Civil Rights stuff in the South-

MS: yes, I was in the middle of that

BS: you were?

MS: in the very beginning. You know, I never forget, I tell the story, my mom, that's when blacks were only able to ride in the back of the bus. And I remember going downtown and we were getting off, my mom and I was getting off the bus going shopping and she got off first. And as I was getting off the bus, the bus driver closed the door on me, and everybody went off, all the black people went off. You know and a few of the white people. And I'll never forget how, you know, the people reacted to that bus driver.

BS: They were furious with him, they

MS: yes

BS: weren't going to let him act that way

MS: yes, yeah

BS: do you think he did it on purpose?

MS: yes, everybody did. Yes. 'Cause it was during the-the Civil Rights movement, yeah

BS: right. Wow. And then he gave in, he then stopped and opened it?

MS: of course, yeah

BS: yeah

MS: yeah

BS: yeah, so there was anger because people were like not taking this at this point

MS: right. At that point

BS: yeah

MS: that's right.

BS: they were done with that. Wow so you were sort of seeing the waves of change

MS: yes

BS: were kind of catching up

MS: yes

BS: right where you were

MS: yes

BS: so the school was, by high school, integrated. It was, sounds like again it had drama, it had music, it had art, it had a

MS: everything

BS: home. How many kids in the high school? How many in the high school?

MS: um oh I couldn't even tell you. Um in high school A. E. Beach High,

BS: what was it called? A. E. Beach?

MS: Alfred Ely Beach High.

BS: okay

MS: It was known as A. E. Beach High. I mean, ugh thousands, because we had a humongous- all the high schools had marching bands (14:40)

MS: so we had humongous marching band, you know, we had one of the baddest choirs, and I was the president, I forgot! And this is the crossroads of the church and my art: I join the dance club, reluctantly.

BS: (laughs)

MS: but I love to dance. (15:01) And my dance director, Mr. Johnson, saw something in me, and started pulling me out and teaching me. And I'll never forget, there was a jubilee that all the high schools were participating in, dance, music, and poetry and my dance instructor was told that we had to be in the competition. So he got me to do the creation of the show, which was called "A Sinner's Plea."

BS: "A Sinner's Plea" (laughs)

MS: and it was dancing about being in the church and loving the church.

BS: wow. Wow

MS: and yet you turn around and you're participating outside of the church in dance

BS: So you danced about the thing that you were wor-

MS: I was dealing with. And then you come before god, and you are asking for the sinner's plea. (16:25) And I was the main character. But I had an understudy because the bishop came to church the night of the jamboree, and I could not miss participating, directing the choir in the church. And at the end of the church I'm coming outside, my dance company came with the trophy. We won anyway, without me.

BS: but y-

MS: my choreography, my show, they brought it to the church that night for me to see.

BS: wow

MS: yeah.

BS: that's amazing.

MS: oh my God so-

BS: talk about how you're pulling this stuff together. You know what I mean? In terms of the just like you, it's been the theme, it's the spirituality and art completely informing each other every step of the way. (17:21) Really interesting, yeah it's really powerful. I have to get you over to Newark at some point, but it's so-I mean we can talk about your childhood for a long time. I don't want to keep you up all night, but I do want to ask you about- you ok?

MS: I see it all comes to, sometimes I wonder why I go through what I go through with my career, over these years. And you know, I'm glad I stuck in there and held on to my faith, because all of these things that I'm telling you are things that have gotten me through to this point in my life and I'm seeing how they all were connected from way back.

BS: all from the start. Yeah, they came from one

MS: yeah

BS: seed. It's f-

MS: well, how I got to Newark, is that I moved to New York, and I finally wind up in the Bronx. (phones ringing) That's my son. I'll call you when I get through, I'm being interviewed by a professor from Rutgers, so I'll call you later (19:00) I moved to Newark because New York was, when I moved from Jamaica I moved to the Bronx, and I wanted to buy clothes so rent was very high. So I moved from the Bronx to Newark. (19:29) By that time, I was singing outside of the church

BS: Would you-

MS: [to the cat and dogs] OUT! OUT! OUT! OUT! EVERYBODY, OUT! OUT!

BS: what year was it approximately?

MS: okay my first record came out in '80, so we're talking about, '78, 79

BS: that's when you moved to Newark? (20:00)

MS: I had already been in New York.

BS: oh I mean Newark

MS: to Newark

BS: yeah

MS: one of my friends by that time, I had started singing with a band outside of the church called Tungsten Steele and-

BS: do they have any recordings?

MS: no, we had no recordings

BS: okay

MS: I think I have a couple pictures

(Unidentified noise)

MS: (claps) [to cats] LEAVE HER ALONE! So by the time that, what happened was my church nephew was playing outside the church

BS: what do you mean your church nephew?

MS: his mother was like my adopted sister

BS: okay

MS: in the church (20:50) and-

BS: was she a lesbian? or-

MS: she was in the church. She was an usher in the church

BS: she was an usher, okay, I'm sorry.

MS: and she had, you know, quite a few children, and one of them took up music

BS: okay got it

MS: and he kept coming to church telling me that I should sing R&B, and I was tempted. And finally he told me, he said you should come to one of my rehearsals with my band

BS: (laughs)

MS: and I came to a band's rehearsal, and they asked me to sing. And I had one song that I knew outside the church and it was- oh my God it was on the tip of my tongue. "The Way We Were"

BS: ha! Barbara Streisand

MS: Barbara Streisand (laughs)

BS: (laughs)

MS: and I sang it and they R&Bed it up.

BS: oh wow

MS: and they said, you wanna go with us to Canada? So the next week I was in the UHAUL truck going to Canada

BS: what-

MS: with one song

BS: that's amazing

MS: no, no, no! It wasn't Canada, it was.... a coal mining town in Pennsylvania. I'll have to get the name of the town. It was my first show outside of the church. It was a coal mining town and different bands came in for the weekend in something like a VFW

BS: Like a VFW, a hall?

MS: club, hall, hall

BS: yeah

MS: And we got there, and then we were staying with people of the city. (22:43) And women of the city. That liked the band- see, by the time I got- the band had already been there several times. So I was gonna be the featured soloist, but by the time I got there they had been staying with different women, and I stayed with this young lady and we had sex (laughs)

BS: mhmm (laughs)

MS: because she liked me

BS: right

MS: so her sister was already liking one of the members of the band, that we called each other brothers, he was a trombone player. So he came to tell me that the sister liked me, so that I was going to stay with them. So I was in one bedroom with one of the girls and he was in another bedroom with the other sister. So he was saying he was proud of me because he heard I did it (laughs)

BS: (laughs)

MS: so everybody in the band was patting me on my shoulder

BS: (laughs)

MS: and I was playing this part

BS: uh huh

MS: of being very...cool with it and masculine, and caught myself enjoying it, but by the end of the weekend I wasn't

BS: you were like, get me out of here

MS: yeah

BS: how old were you by then?

MS: 19-20.

BS: what was the name of the church nephew who-who pulled you into the-

MS: he was the bass player, and, oh my God...his name is Tony. His mother's name was Bootsie (laughs)

BS: so he too was a church-

MS: yeah, he

BS: in out- out of the church was

MS: grew- he grew up in it, but

BS: right

MS: he didn't participate

BS: not as much as you did

MS: no (24:38)

BS: right. That's wild. So you were with them for a few years and then, by the late-

MS: well, what happened is, I worked with the group Tungsten Steele and I was the lead vocalist, so they build up my song list. You know, I was doing Earth Wind and Fire with them, I was doing um...oh, he's on the tip of my tongue, he was one of my favorite- I did Teddy Pendergrass, I did Peabo Bryson, Johnny Guitar Watson, I did uh BB King, Stormy Monday, Etta James,

BS: great stuff. So yeah so you started with Barbara Streisand though which is really

MS: yeah

BS: cool

MS: by the time I got to the band, I was doing all R&B, or, you know, Natalie Cole, people like that. Pattie Labelle, Linda Bluebells

BS: and you were doing that, and then it was around then that you moved to Newark

MS: I was with the Tungsten Steele, (26:04) and then the owner of the club that caused me to be known was in Newark, NJ on Halstead and Washington. It was called, Sparky J's

BS: That was in Newark, and you mean Halsey?

MS: Halsey and Washington St, downtown.

BS: It was called Sparky-

MS: Sparky J's. It was originally a jazz club, one of the first jazz clubs, and across the street was the Key Club

BS: uh huh

MS: and my band was one of the first R&B bands. He saw my band, a friend of Sparky J's that frequents him in Newark heard about my band in New York

BS: okay, Sparky J's is the name of the person, it's his club and it's his-

MS: and it was called Sparky J's

BS: alright, so a friend of Sparky J's

MS: J's

BS: J

MS: Not James, now J,

BS: got it

MS: the letter

BS: alright, Sparky J's- a friend of Sparky J's heard about you in New York

MS: saw the band in New York, and then Sparky came over and saw us. (27:24) Then he hired the band and we had a regular night, which was Thursday nights, and some Sunday matinees

BS: uh huh, so there was- this is in the mid-70s?

MS: the mid-late-seventies cause my first record came out in eighties. And people like Sissy Houston, Whitney's mother, she used to frequent

BS: and this is all in Newark

MS: this is in Newark

BS: uh huh. Sissy Houston came

MS: on the corner of Halsey and Washington... So then by that time I was doing people like Stephanie Mills

BS: you were performing with her

MS: performing, with the band and-

BS: here? Or both places?

MS: all over, wherever we played

BS: right, you were traveling-

MS: I was still with Tungsten Steele. And so they the owner start using, on his flyers and marquis, "Mark Sedane and Tungsten Steele"

BS: Sparky does

MS: yes. (28:37) And in the local *Stuff* magazine, which was an entertainment magazine, it was *the* popular magazine that went to all the supermarkets and in all the clubs

BS: What was it called?

MS: *Stuff* Magazine

BS: *Stuff*. S-T-U-F-F?

MS: yes. And they always had on the front cover the beauty of the week. (laughs) And it would be a bar maid from one of the clubs, so they would have your picture in there, and when you're

coming to what club. (29:12) So, the guys in the band got angry, because they didn't want that, they just wanted

BS: Tungsten Steele

MS: Tungsten Steele.

BS: right

MS: so then they started not playing all of my songs, they would start making mistakes while I was singing

BS: oh

MS: wouldn't play them properly, so sometimes it was- it got to be so bad, I would just walk off. So Sparky saw what was going on, so he got us a gig at one of the colleges, I can't remember. And it was during graduation, so we were the band. (30:00) That night, the guy in charge of the finances and the books, he bought everyone a new mic, with the exception of me. And the show that we had planned, if I was supposed to sing four songs, I only sang two songs. So we had a break. And being that Sparky booked the gig, he had to be there to collect the money. So, after the first gig, and sure as Sparky came, I told him that I was done. I was not doing the second half. So then the guy in charge told me I wasn't getting paid for the second half, and I said, "I don't care, just give me my money for the first half." And Sparky took me back to Jersey, you know, to Newark, and on the way he said, "you know what you should do?" He said, "that band is nothing without you. You should create your own band." (31:03) And he said, "I'll put it in the paper, I'll put the word out." And in a few days, this conga player who had admired me and wanted to play with me, I'll never forget, Clifford Brown, he came by with his van and told me he would help me put a band together, and he took me to all the night spots whenever a band was playing. And all the way to Trenton, and I confronted certain people, and asked them to play with me, and they said yes, and that's how Marc Sedane became a solo artist

BS: hmmm! So this-

MS: And then Sparky fired the band, Tungsten Steele, and gave *me* Thursday nights. (laughs)

BS: (laughs) wow! So that was the end of them

MS: yeah, yeah.

BS: so Sparky J was really important

MS: yes, he was my mentor. He was the person that gave me the push to get out on my own. And then gave me the venue. And after years of being there, that was the venue that James Mtume saw me, (32:23) who was the producer of Phyllis Hyman and Stephanie Mills and Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway. "The Closer I Get to You," that's Mtume Production. So Mtume went to

the post office on a Thursday night during Thanksgiving, I don't remember the year, in the seventies, and he made a wrong turn, and saw the marquis and it said "Marc Sedane." And he parked his car and came in. And when he came in I was ending the show...set, singing "What Cha Gonna Do With My Lovin'"

BS: (laughs)

MS: by Mtume and Lucas and performed by Stephanie. So, we were ending the song, he got about two or three bars, and then the owner came down and said, "James Mtume is here and he wants to meet you." (33:26) So he came down, he said, "you know I've been hearing about you from one of my background singers, Darlette MacDonnell," who became famous from singing background behind Sting. She also worked with me too, with Marc Sedane

BS: What was her name? Darlene?

MS: Darlette

BS: Darlette, I'm sorry

MS: MacDonnell

BS: okay

MS: yeah, she went to Europe and never came back. She was working with Sting. So, when Mtume came downstairs, he was like, I'm gonna sit in on your second set. He said, I wanna really hear you. So I was really excited and I told the guys, you know, we got him so let's open up with "What Cha Gonna Do With My Lovin' (34:17) and then go into some other things." So, I had rearranged it a little bit. And when we finished the first song, he got up, and he left, and he left his card with the bartender. And the rest is history as far as the recording, because after I spoke with him and we decided that we would work together, I was signed to his production company and my first album came out on Warner Brothers Records

BS: so cool

MS: in 1980.

BS: wow

MS: *One Way Love Affair*.

BS: that was 1980

MS: yeah

BS: well, so, Sparky J's club in Newark was totally central to this whole development

MS: well, it has, prior to the R&B coming in, he had people like Lonnie Liston Smith, Wes Montgomery, these were all Jazz-

BS: is he still around?

MS: artists

BS: is he still around? Sparky J?

MS: oh no, he passed away many years ago

BS: yeah, but see- I hadn't heard his name, but there's a woman who writes about jazz clubs in Newark, I have to check-

MS: yes

BS: her book,

MS: yes

BS: Barbara Kukla, and see what she says about Sparky J

MS: oh, it'll tell you. It'll tell you so much history

BS: yeah. So, does that- part of why you came to Newark, because you were playing here one night a week? Or, two nights a week, like Thursday and Sunday?

MS: well,

BS: or, did you- were you already here and then you-

MS: I was still in Newark, what happened was, that one of the young ladies that became close (36:00) with Marc Sedane, that went to New Hope Baptist Church, they were the group of people that started coming-they were frequent visitors of Sparky J's because of the talent that he brought through the city. The jazz artists as well as the R&B, and so then they started coming on a regular basis telling people about this little boy that can really sing. So they started telling more people and more people from the church, from-and that's how Sissy Houston first discovered me. And at that time, after Mtume got with me, I was still working at Sparky's, a young man from-the same young man that was a friend of Sparky's, told the owner of McHale's, which was at 96th and Columbus, about this young dude that he should bring over to New York. So, McHale, Mike McHale came over to Newark (37:12) during one of my performances at Sparky J's and offered me a night in New York at his club, which was McHale's at 96th, which catered to Al Jarreau, Phyllis Hyman, the jazz group, Stuff, James Baldwin, who I had the pleasure of meeting and talking to.

BS: wow!

MS: who was- who took my breath away. His brother was the head bartender

BS: huh!

MS: at McHale's

BS: that's amazing! So cool.

MS: So whenever he was in New York, he came to McHale's

BS: huh!

MS: to where he knew there was entertainment and that's where his brother was.

BS: huh

MS: so I got encouraging words, and he told me that the States would never understand me and that my gayness, that I should let loose because I was holding it in

BS: wow! How did he know you were gay?

MS: his brother told him to come down and check out this guy named Marc Sedane

BS: okay, so, like so-

MS: because that-he knew that I was gay, I guess, you know

BS: right, right

MS: and he wanted to-him to hear my talent

BS: So I mean, how was- I mean, there's so many things I wanted to ask you. As a performer, people who knew you, knew you were gay

MS: well I mean there was never-

BS: did you ever-

MS: a *sign*, you know, I never- I guess it was just me, my being, my personality, my dress, you know?

BS: yeah, people just read it. They just read it.

MS: I wore boots and... you know; I had sprayed them silver

BS: (laughs)

MS: you know what I'm saying like I'd wore matching head bands and big belts and... you know

BS: yeah

MS: I was just- whatever I saw on TV which was the Patti Labelles and all of that stuff, you know, and I was sewing so I simulated it (39:23) into my- I was very flamboyant, so it had to be known

BS: right

MS: you know

BS: that's so amazing that that led you to having James Baldwin tell you to let it out, you know?

MS: yes. Yes.

BS: did you think about what he said? Did that kinda-

MS: yes, but, I just, because he was very flamboyant

BS: James Baldwin was?

MS: yes. He was very - what we consider cunt. You know, with his "hand"... and the "cigarette" and "dahling" and, you know, not really giving a shit. After I started reading his works, you know, he left the states because he wanted to be able to be free as a black gay man. And he and Langston Hughes were my idols. I didn't really know about Langston Hughes until I came to New York, (40:25) and to find out that *he* was gay...you know. He was another idol. So I wanted to come here to be in the midst of so much and I had found a jewel, I found myself, and I wanted to be...a part of all this. I gotta go into boxes

BS: yeah that's ok, we-we'll find these things

MS: oh yeah I'll give it to you

BS: um, and did you start hanging out with Al Murphy around now, or how were those...

MS: when I first came to Jersey, then I discovered the club life, and I was first introduced to Albert at a club on Halstead street it was upstairs um...Le Joc's.

BS: (laughs) yeah

MS: And by that time I was living in Jersey, and I wasn't really participating with the church that much, because by then, you know, I had music out and I wasn't doing the church and people weren't doing me. So I just started going out, I can't say any one individual took me out, I just knew of Murphy's, that was the first place that I was introduced to, and um...(inaudible)...during that time I was going to Murphy's because it was all dancing, and they had a DJ and the drinks were strong and cheap and they played all kinds of music and then in the years came by, there were gospel artists that did gospel music, but the DJs re-mixed them and turned them into club

BS: wow

MS: so I was familiar-

BS: the DJs at Murphy's did this

MS: no, I'm just saying DJs as a whole, and they

BS: oh, ok

MS: played this stuff. So you got your gospel, you know what I'm saying? (42:50) You were surrounded by people just being themselves. All kinds of gay people, and gay women.

BS: What clubs were these?

MS: hmm?

BS: where was that happening?

MS: Murphy's

BS: At Murphy's then, right. 'Cause you s-

MS: I have some- you want some chips, because I've been

BS: you go ahead, take- I-

MS: you sure?

BS: I had dinner before I came over

MS: okay. You sure? Next time I'm a cook, you come up

BS: (laughs) okay

MS: yeah that was during the Murphy days and

BS: what years?

MS: 80s

BS: 1980s, and you were-

MS: '81

BS: that's when you were putting out your records

MS: yes. So I was known, you know, and then I had a car, because I bought me a brand new car with my first piece of money. (43:40) And I was living in East Orange at that time at 111 South

Harrison St. That was my first major, huge apartment. I always loved space, so I had three bedrooms two baths, huge kitchen pantry, dining room, living room, and the rent was only \$450

BS: (laughs)

MS: (laughs)

BS: okay, well it's not these days...

MS: and I'm talking about *huge*, I had one half of a building.

BS: (laughs) wow. So let's see, I read about Al Murphy from Gary's book, Gary Jardim, and he says it was in the 70s that Le Joc was going

MS: yes

BS: and he describes- it sounds amazing 1:35:35

MS: yes.

BS: did you-

MS: I think of one time when he had a mannequin dressed in sequins and plumes of feathers coming out and it just was at the entrance. Albert's artistic flare was just so ahead of its time, and so appropriate because he was breaking barriers that you would only see in New York or magazines. (45:01) You know, he was doing fashion shows, back in the day. Albert Murphy created fashion shows and hair dos and processes and satin suits and pointed toes, all that stuff these children doing now, was done way before now. It's nothing new.

BS: (laughs)

MS: Nothing new.

BS: Do you have-

MS: Nothing

BS: any photos-

MS: I have-

BS: of anything?

MS: to call around. But I have some of Albert.

BS: If you have photos of him or of the fashions-

MS: right. Well you know, I have the book, Blue, have you-

BS: Yeah, we have that

MS: okay.

BS: yeah, I've read that carefully

MS: yeah. But I have a picture of him, me, and no, not Albert, Albert was deceased. And I have a picture of myself, Shelton Hayes, who was my mentor-one of my mentors, (46:01) Angelo Ellerbee, and Larry Patterson, who was one of the main DJs of our time

BS: right. So yeah, I mean what we'd probably- when we get you on stage, we'd want to talk, ask you to describe the fashion, and-

MS: oh yeah

BS: just that scene here because people have forgotten. They've just forgotten

MS: And I used to model back then

BS: Ah! Any pictures?

MS: yes.

BS: You've gotta dig up pictures because the more we could *show*

MS: yes. Oh I've got one that I really, I just couldn't believe how I used to carry on

BS: (laughs) Well, we want to see it - it would be great, we could scan stuff and give it right back

MS: oh yes, no problem

BS: So then we'll just have the scans, you have the originals but we-

MS: right

BS: just would love to be able to show that stuff

MS: yeah, as I'm talking...yeah. Albert and I became friends, I'll never forget...I had always heard about Zanzibar and how strict it was about getting in

BS: hmm, what was the strictness?

MS: Albert would pick you

BS: (laughs)

MS: there would be lines and lines of people, and if you weren't dressed appropriately, um, in your wildest or, the straight boys with bodies and looks, I mean you had to be a certain- you just

couldn't be...*anybody*. There were kids that would come in and try to get in and would have to wait four or five years before

BS: (laughs)

MS: they were old enough because Albert would say, "You're not old enough. Get out the line." And so, the night that I went with a friend, can't remember who took me, was very nerve-racking, but-

BS: (laughs)

MS: he knew who I was, and while we were lo-

BS: Al knew.

MS: Al knew. So while we were in the line, he said, "Ah! It's about time you come see me."

BS: (laughs)

MS: and he said, "Let them in." (48:03)

BS: (laughs)

MS: so I had like four people with me, he said, "Let them all in." And he said, "Don't you leave before you speak to me tonight."

BS: huh...

MS: and when I went in there, and experienced Zanzibar, with the lights, the music, the people, the drugs, the sex, straight, bi, gay, curious,

BS: (laughs)

MS: young, old, black, white, Latino, strippers, artists, Chaka Khans, Lolita Holloways of the world...

BS: she came?

MS: ah, I have a picture on my computer somebody just sent me: me singing happy birthday to Lolita Holloway at Zanzibar with male strippers

BS: (laughs)

MS: So I'll burn all that stuff for you on CD

BS: Oh great! I mean, seems pretty queer with male strippers, you know, but I guess it was for everybody

MS: well, Albert had themes. (49:18) If he did a jungle theme, he had male or female dancers dressed in jungle- you know, leopards and skins and he would have people in corners beating congas. And then one night we had the party and he had live leopards in a cage. In the lobby

BS: that's amazing. It's amazing.

MS: and it would be, you'd go out at 12 o'clock because you'd be there 'til the sun come up. And then I moved across the street to the Pavilion Apartments, which was a part of the Colonnade complex on Broad Street, so I *lived* in Zanzibar, and I didn't have to pay because I was VIP

BS: (laughs) And you performed there?

MS: I performed

BS: Obviously

MS: In fact, that was Albert's party for me at Zanzibar after my first album, *One Way Love Affair*.

BS: wow...

MS: and they made a big cake, and on the cake, they made a record, (50:38) and on it, it had "Marc Sedane, One Way Love Affair, Much Success." And they presented that to me out after the show

BS: wow. That's amazing.

MS: and then-

BS: And this is all going up to the early 80s?

MS: 80s, yes

BS: and then, did AIDS then kind of hit, and...

MS: well AIDS hit around the '80s, '79 and '80 because the first person that I became aware of, that I knew, was- and somebody just sent pictures today, my goddaughter who's like my daughter. It's Thursday night and it's Thursday Throwback. My goddaughter, who's like my daughter, she lives in Virginia, she has posted pictures today. Each Thursday she's posted pictures, she was taking pictures when she was fifteen! Because she just posted one of Keith Barrel, who was a major artist back in the day. He was the first person that we became aware of affected by AIDS. And his mother was the Vice President of Operation Push, with Reverend Jesse Jackson

BS: huh. In Chicago?

MS: Her name was... Oh my God, and she was a minister also. I'll have to call around. Just make a note of that. But Keith Barrell, yeah he was the first one. And when he got really sick he moved to Chicago where his mother- 'cause that was his home, but he lived in New York. And he passed away out there. But that was the beginning. (52:27) And... of course, years later we lost Albert

BS: yeah...

MS: and that was... But prior to that I was living in the A Building, he was living in the C Building, or something like that. And he was my mentor. I got into interior decorating through him, 'cause I always wanted my apartment to look like his apartment 'cause his apartment looked like something out of a magazine. They called him, "Mommy Dearest"

BS: who did?

MS: Everybody from the movie, *Mommy Dearest*, because

BS: right

MS: of the way he kept his apartment.

BS: (laughs) wow.

MS: And we exchanged everything. He would call me and say, "Open your door, I'm sending something over to you." It would be something that he's bought hot from somebody. I'll never forget this grandfather clock

BS: (laughs)

MS: and he had already paid for it. And then he called back and he said, "I not only sent you the clock, I sent you the boy with the clock."

BS: (laughs)

MS: So I had the boy that came with the clock

BS: (laughs) What more could you ask?

MS: Ahh! Those were the days, he was like, "Albert told me to spend some time with you." And I was like, "Fabulous!"

BS: (laughs) Yeah it sounds like there was just a good group of people who were talented and loved each other

MS: And we always, you know, like Albert would always have a dinner party. That's what I got into, having dinner parties. And, you know, winding up getting so high that Albert said, "well," go get into my bed, you know, and this is- and I was right across in the next building, but we

always had after parties after the mass of people would leave, then all the, what I term, I use for my people that are very close to me now, "the intimates." (54:37) Those would be your personal, really deep friends that you're connected with, that you trust to see you high.

BS: (laughs)

MS: Trust to see you bring up

BS: right

MS: after you've drank too much

BS: right

MS: Trust to have them take your clothes off and put you to bed

BS: uh-huh

MS: you know?

BS: yeah

MS: that's the type of- ooh! You're making me think of *things*! Oh my gosh!

BS: (laughs)

MS: Oh my gosh! And then when the epidemic came through, then we had so many of our family dying in the very early, early stages before it became "the virus," it was just plain AIDS. And the education of how you contracted it and the education within the medical field was very early. (55:43) And to see some of our young black gay people of fashion and art, such as, you know, tight top designers, Will Smith, the designer, and so many others. We who have survived to 2014 with or without "the virus," with or without AIDS, are fortunate. Because we all were, in the gay term, "yard dogs." (56:31) You know, we were with this person and that person and trying to be popular and trying to have the fiercest guy or the fiercest girl. The element of family and the element of relationship were very heavy prior to the AIDS epidemic

BS: what do you mean, very heavy?

MS: hmm?

BS: What do you mean the family relationship was-

MS: because after AIDS people didn't want to trust anybody, they didn't know who they slept with, people were scared,

BS: so you s-

MS: and AIDS broke a lot of the automatic lifestyles that we were used and accustomed to

BS: okay. So AIDS *broke* family and relationships

MS: yes.

BS: right.

MS: broke random sex, although, you know, it was rampant, but it stopped some people

BS: right (57:36)

MS: So our lives changed. And rapidly because we lost so many, at such a fast pace

BS: Is that why- 'cause you stopped recording in the mid-80s, you sort of-

MS: no, I stopped because the records were dead. The Mtume Production was not what people were expecting from me, seeing me live because my show was so intense. Mtume was a funk master, although he was in the school of learning by coming up as a jazz musician playing with Miles Davis. (58:23) That's how he and Reggie Lucas met, Reggie playing in Miles Davis's band, and so did Mtume. And they started collaborating, they became a team and started working with people like Phyllis Hyman and Donnie Hathaway, Stephanie Mills, Marc Sedane.

BS: So did you know people like, did your scene overlap with the ballroom scene, or with, James Credle's scene, which d-

MS: You mean the balls?

BS: The balls, yeah

MS: No. I was really heavy into my career then, and I didn't- I went to a couple balls in New York and maybe a few over here, but that was not my scene.

BS: right

MS: My scene was music and fashion.

BS: right. (59:31)

MS: and you know, artists that did art shows and designers that did fashion shows. That was the group of people that we gravitated to because then they came and supported me.

BS: Right. Oh it's just interesting because they're these, you know, very heavy gay worlds,

MS: yeah

BS: in Newark but there's

MS: yeah

BS: a bunch of different ones

MS: well, even in my time, in my days in the 80s, you know, one of the premier drag queens was Patty Pendarvis, and she did drags in Murphy's. And, you know, her group of drag queens, like they had on Sunday afternoons after drag became popular and allowed to come in the gay clubs, the *black* gay clubs, and some of the white clubs. The white club scene was different because that started from West Orange on up. And then you would sometimes frequent them. But, not too many blacks came down to Newark. (1:00:38)

MS: but-

BS: you mean-

MS: when-

BS: not too many-

MS: *whites*

BS: whites came down to N-

MS: came down to Newark

BS: right.

MS: and then when Club America opened, which was a part of Miles Berger's corporation, they did MC's for shows, Patty performed

BS: how do you spell her last name?

MS: Pendarviss

BS: P-E-N-D-A-R-V-I-...S? (1:52:02)

MS: yes. S, S

BS: is that correct

BS: PendarviS

MS: PendarVIS

BS: Yeah, she was a key person

MS: yeah-

BS: she's-

MS: And I have a picture of her somewhere around here

BS: Yeah it'd be great to see that

MS: yeah. So you know a lot of the gay guys that hung in the Murphy's days and- Albert Murphy days and the club Murphy's days and Zanzibar days, they didn't like the drag thing. On drag nights they wouldn't come out. It was just those of us that accepted everything

BS: right

MS: And enjoyed seeing them portray, you know, recording artists and dress up in drag and were good at it.

BS: Yeah. Yeah, it makes sense, 'cause it's your world that they're putting on-

MS: yes. (1:52:27)

BS: yeah. So, but you said when you looked at the pictures that you do- you knew- you know James Credle?

MS: yes

BS: and how did you know him?

MS: just from the community

BS: okay. But it was-

MS: just from the Community

BS: right, right. Now, I ask because I just know different people know different people and I am kind of wondering-

MS: you see; a lot of people know of Marc Sedane that I don't know

BS: right

MS: and vice versa

BS: right. Got it.

MS: and then a lot of us know each other by face and may not know by name.

BS: right. You know, the thing that, this, this art- like the idea of these like huge, major performers coming to Newark and performing here and the back and forth between-

MS: you see that was during the Bobby White and Paris drag queen days, and they were like the primadonnas; they did drag back in the sixties and fifties

BS: so, Bobby White, and who was the other one?

MS: Paris. That was the only one by Paris

BS: ah huh

MS: they were international. They did drag queens for- They came out of like a black college and Bobby White looks half white because his parents were half white and had long pretty hair. So, and he was gay and he dressed as a man and, but he made his living by doing drag shows, to the point that he started doing it for church, tea club committees

BS: unbelievable (laughs)

MS: yes. Outside the church

BS: that's amazing

MS: and, then he had his own club. So I would go to- you know visit him

BS: what was his club called?

MS: I have to find out... The Dollhouse!

BS: oh, of course, the Dollhouse.

MS: (at the same time) the Dollhouse.

BS: we've heard about it so many times

MS: yes. And I will never forget that a straight promoter, who still yet a friend of mine today, who has been in my life musically since the 90s, and who helped me get out there after all the records died, by doing a remake of *Over and Over*

BS: oh yeah

MS: by Sylvester

BS: wow.

MS: who was also a dear friend of mine

BS: oh wow

MS: and that person was Ace Mungin (1:54:57)

BS: oh right

MS: from Ace Beat Records. He, when the records were dead he was always encouraging me and he booked me for a hundred dollars to come to the Dollhouse and rented a limousine to pick me up from East Orange to take me to the club

BS: wow

MS: in Newark

BS: wow

MS: and I've- and it was the drag queens and the gay children, everybody mixed

BS: mmm. Do you know what year that was?

MS: that had to be... like '85, '86,

BS: ah huh. That's so wonderful.

MS: in a little space up on Halsey and Williams that they turned into a club

BS: on Halsey and Williams (1:55:49)

MS: yeah. Right upstairs over Sparky J's

BS: it was right above Sparky J's?

MS: but it was before Sparky J's

BS: ah huh

MS: I don't know what it was before Sparky J's

BS: it's amazing

MS: yeah

BS: we have a timeline we've been making of all the gay clubs in Newark and where they were and stuff and I should- I gotta send to you so could correct it and say: "Oh no, no; too late, too early." You know, because we are just piecing together form thing we read and little bits here and there.

MS: (at the same time) Okay. Yes. Right. Right. Right

BS: but certainly I've heard a lot about Dollhouse but, that sounds like kinda of, you know, a bit of utopia, you know? Where everybody is together-

MS: well, the Dollhouse was- when they would take crepe paper, and colored drapes, and black lights, and Christmas lights, and just *drink*

BS: (laughs)

MS: and hang stuff and make it dark; you know what I'm saying?

BS: mhmm.

MS: yeah

BS: sounds like the church

MS: yeah

BS: you know?

MS: (at the same time) Yeah

BS: where they would do the draping

MS: yeah. Yeah

BS: it's amazing. (1:56:53) So yeah, there was all this from it- that – so we'll ask you to talk about the creative world then, you know because I think that is one of the least known things

MS: yes

BS: and, how it affected the style of sound and singing (1:57:00)

MS: right

BS: of sound

MS: well that, aside from- because I am putting together a show from November to help boost the election but it's also going to be titled, "Art, Music, and Fashion."

BS: oh, wow. Where is that going to be?

MS: well we are working on the space now

BS: alright. Here in Newark though probably

MS: oh yes. And I am going to get a couple of artists to show their work, couple of artists to show their jewelry, and then were gonna have a hour of fashion from different artists, maybe two pieces from, you know, a designer and the final part of the show is going to be me live

BS: oh wow

MS: with my band

BS: well that's amazing; so you gotta keep a- we could put out stuff- if you have any kind of thing ready for that we could have it all flyer'd out (inaudible)(1:58:00)

MS: okay, when is it- when is your dates you're working towards with them

BS: I think its October 16th, let me look

MS: oh that's a good time

BS: it's a- so, yeah, so that'll be a month

MS: that's great time

BS: that's great timing, yeah.

MS: because we are going to do a listening party just before Halloween

BS: right. That's perfect. It's October... I'm sorry, I just don't want to give you the wrong date. (At the same time as Marc) Well I'll send you the official invitation stuff

MS: okay all the dates

BS: I just wasn't sure if you were- It is the 16th

MS: okay

BS: yeah, that's perfect. Then November it leads us right in

MS: (at the same time) Oh, everything is working for good

BS: yeah, yeah, yes. (inaudible) I should go because it's ten

MS: okay

BS: but, I have more questions, but we will do this again

MS: okay

BS: this is the first sit down because we focused a lot on the early life

MS: right

BS: but, there was so much there, especially when we were saying, about religion-

MS: (at the same time) that's gonna lead up to

BS: and art, and beauty, and fashion, and aesthetics-

MS: right

BS: and music-

MS: right

BS: and queerness, actually

MS: yes

BS: all happening, but when we ask you, you know- we'll have Gary like I said and probably a women moderator to ask. And we want some women there

MS: of course (1:59:00)

BS: you know, find out the different scenes that were happening and how people felt.

MS: yeah, yeah

BS: we'll probably pressure you a little bit to identify your generation if you not your age

MS: okay, because there was so many people, you know what I'm saying, you have to talk about the lesbians in the gay clubs

BS: ah huh

MS: you know, how it was just a family because at one time the lesbians didn't come where the boys were

BS: right

MS: you know, and then as time progressed and there was the Garage in New York, then the girls started progressing and coming, then some of the guys didn't like that, but eventually it just happened because it was time, it was progress

BS: (at the same time): Right, right

MS: and then they became brothers and sisters of the Gay community

BS: right

MS: through the Murphy, Al Murphy's, and through the club Murphy's, through Le Joc's, and Zanzibar

BS: right

MS: you know, people became family

BS: right, yeah, that's... And the one people know about the most is Murphy's but, we're bringing the whole story of all them

MS: right

BS: I think that Bernard-

MS: because I've gotta find out- what's the name – I gotta call my aunt, well he's a gay man, but he's from way back there; when I first started coming to Newark, I was scared. There was a gay ba- there was a straight bar that turned gay on certain nights on Market Street and that's where the older gay queens used to be and I use to go running to hear the stories

BS: oh, did you

MS: so I've gotta find out the name of that place

BS: and if you remember of the stories, share them

MS: oh, it was mostly about boys, you know, also you gotta talk about people in the gay community being murdered

BS: right

MS: you know, because of their lifestyle being taken advantage of, so, we had a lot of that going on as well

BS: yeah

MS: because it was a rough- gay life back there was not really acceptable

BS: (at the same time) right

MS: as it is today and you see how people in our day still getting murdered because of their lifestyle but, back there it was rampant. And you'd be in Murphy's saying did you hear about so and so? Oh, they found him in house strangled

BS: oh God

MS: and after being dead for four days...

BS: shhh

MS: you know, this one got shot having his car hijacked or this one was getting high on crack and got stabbed up and, you know, left to die. So, it was so much that drew us together in Newark, all the funerals and people I had to sing over because of the virus

BS: yeah. That's something that we'll ask you about too, is given, you know, what young kids today, what they don't know, and what you'd like them to know; and what you think they should know about your generation and what you would think might be a gift that you can give to the younger generation

MS: well the first thing that they gotta realize is that what we didn't- when we didn't even have a name on it when it was first diagnosed as just AIDS, the first thing they were saying was, get yourself checked; precaution. And after you find out if you are not infected -- safe sex but, there were so many of us that if somebody told us that they loved us, that people dropped their guards (2:02:28)

BS: oh, then you dropped your guard

MS: so then when they story came out, that made more people angrier and sad because they trusted that person

BS: and then they'd get infected

MS: right

BS: yeah, yeah, that's sad and that's something that, even today, kids need to-

MS: and there was so many people that just gave up because at that time there was no cure

BS: right

MS: or, not even a thought of a cure. It was just that it was a death sentence. So some people related to drugs that got infected by doing drugs. So if I'm not gonna live, I'm going to go out this way

BS: right

MS: it was so sad

BS: right

MS: and to watch people in the community, when you know they were sick and you would see them in the clubs, and some people were like: "well, you know he got it, you know she got it." And some people wouldn't even socialize with them or hug them. And some people just went on, and just- and then there was people like Albert Murphy. I will never forget once when I went to see him, and I went to hug him and he was like, "no, don't hug me, don't hug me." And that bothered me so.

BS: 'cause you don't get it from hugging

MS: but they didn't know

BS: they didn't know

MS: and I'll never forget, I went to the hospital and he was almost comatose, so I went to see him, and he was just there. And I talked to him, told him how much I loved him and was just saying Lord is there some kind of cure that he can come back

BS: a lot of hard memories, you know, to-

MS: yeah

BS: but, saving all these memories for future generations keeps them all alive, you know

MS: yeah

BS: keeps the people alive, keeps AI alive

MS: and in fact, if you are not doing anything on the 20th, I ca- Ima call you and give you the name of the book. They did a book on Zanzibar

BS: I heard about it

MS: and I'm in it

BS: ahh

MS: and I didn't know but so many people kept saying yeah. So, yesterday I got a call, from the photographer and a-

BS: Vincent, no?

MS: huh?

BS: Vincent

MS: yes, I guess

BS: Bryant

MS: yes

BS: yup

MS: so, they're having the signing on the 20th at the Robert Treat and they wanted me to be part. So I checked my calendar and I am going to participate

BS: and I would like to but, I'm going to be in a Michigan of all places

MS: okay, but they're gonna take pushes, trust me

BS: and were going to have him, hopefully, do more. Another signing maybe in October

MS: okay

BS: because we want to keep pushing because it's all from the same community

MS: great

BS: you know. But that August 20th there's a signing, no?

MS: yes

BS: maybe somebody who isn't- one of my colleagues could come

MS: right, could come. That would be nice

BS: yeah, we should. At Robert Treat?

MS: yes

BS: you know what time?

MS: five o'clock it starts

BS: okay, 5 PM. Cool. That's great. Yea it's- what I'm really excited about is pictures, if you might have that we could show because

MS: okay

BS: so much of this is about art, you know? And- so we can play the music but, to show also what looked like

MS: yes

BS: pictures of friends, pictures of how they're dressing and-

MS: I'll see if I can get pictures from Daryl

BS: you know, Daryl will be there too

MS: because he was in the fashion era with Albert; they were the best of friends. So he was in all that. Jamie McDonald. Oh, I got people. If I don't have certain things, I know who to ask

BS: great

MS: Yeah

BS: and how do you feel about having Gary Jardim asking you all the questions? Should be fun; he knows a lot

MS: yeah

BS: smart guy (2:06:40)

MS: it's going to be fun

BS: yeah, it's going to be fun

MS: yeah

BS: yeah

MS: that's what I'm gonna trya- We're going to have serious moments but, it's going to be fun. The culture that I came into from Georgia. You know; the first time I walked the streets of the village, you know from Georgia

BS: (laughs)

MS: you know; it was like I'm here. You know; My first gay club on West 4th Street – Bon Appetite.

BS: (laughs)

MS: you know, seeing people being real gay people. You know, people kissing and grinding on each other and

BS: but weren't they doing that in Atlanta and Savannah?

MS: well, you see, I didn't gro- I was only in Atlanta for short period of time, and I just went to the clubs – the black, black clubs. When I hit New York it was mixed. You know. And then when I came to Newark it was the black clubs

BS: so the ones you mention in Savannah were all black queer clubs

MS: yes, yes

BS: so that's interesting. They were segregated gay- The gay world was segregated

MS: yes

BS: in Savannah but, it was more mixed in New York

MS: once I came North

BS: and then in Newark again it's sort of all black

MS: yes

BS: that's cause the shi-

MS: until- and then I started hanging out in New York at the clubs and then my major club that I was introduced to, that I became a VIP in, was the Paradise Garage. And became very dear friends with the master himself Larry Levan who mixed my records, two of my records.

BS: yeah, wow. There's a lot here

MS: that's, that's Larry up at the top

BS: the very top?

MS: mixing. That's in the Garage booth

BS: which of your records did he mix?

MS: he mixed *Sit Up* and *One Minute for Love*

BS: okay... Yeah, that's great. So, wow. Well like I said, you know, any of this stuff you can go into more

MS: right

BS: but, I think it's good for now. I don't want to tire you out

MS: right

BS: and save you a chance to tells us more, you know

MS: (at the same time) yes

BS: in front of other people, which will be, you know, great. Because, like I said, I don't think people have any sense

MS: well, the young people today they're not as close as we were. That's the major factor that we all- when the conversation come up about the kids of today, whether they are straight or gay. We were unified, we worked with each other, we supported each other. There wasn't a jealousy, or even when that jealousy came about was when they started the balls and the houses. When the- years after the house was established, that's when the jealousy came, because when it first started there wasn't jealousy. So it spread into the clubs and into individuals

BS: by clubs, you don't mean like Zanzibar. You mean-

MS: yes

BS: (at the same time) Oh you mean-

MS: all clubs

BS: all the clubs

MS: because these people frequent these clubs and the shade started coming, by the dancing and the voguing. So that was everywhere. And the straight- the hidden children didn't want to be around these flamboyant gay kids so, that's where the underground came in, you know sooo

BS: it's interesting. So there's all kind of division

MS: oh yes, yes

BS: so, I mean, we're going to have, you know; well you said you knew Ber- Bernie? He's going to speak too, Bernie McAllister. So he's part of that scene more, so, you all be there to talk about the little differences

MS: right

BS: and big differences

MS: right

BS: that were going on 'cause is- ya'll a lot 'em is more or less the same generation. And I think the young people I know of, like the teens and twenties kids, they're good with each other. Some of it's like-

MS: well, I think New York the mentality is totally different than the kids in Jersey

BS: right

MS: you know, that's one thing the- we need to emerge the younger generation with the senior generation

BS: yes

MS: or the legend- the people that are legends in their own right. The lesbian women that started dressing like men way back in the day, you know. The transsexuals that started dressing like females way back in the day. The down-low boys. And I've always tried to figure out because I never did drag and I never- you know I don't know what they call me, you know?

BS: (laughs)

MS: that should be interesting

BS: right

MS: to find out what I would be called. You know, I'm not straight. People say by the way I carry myself, by the way I dress, that they can tell that there's a difference. So, when they find out that I'm into the music or the arts or hear me talking they can say I'm gay. You know, but, I still have women that are attracted to me that don't know unless it comes up and I'm saying how in the world they don't know

BS: (laughs)

MS: but I carry myself a certain way. It's not faggoty. I loosen up if I'm in certain a setting. Professionally there's a certain setting and there's another setting that I am in, that I will allow myself to be a certain way just because I know people are watching. Not changing me but, there're certain things I will not say or do, around certain people

BS: right

MS: for respect of them saying oh I- see my thing is, I don't like people to say, "I like him because he's gay but he's straight up with you, he's real.

BS: right

MS: because I don't want them afraid of all gay people. 'Because all gay people are not alike

BS: right, right. I think most people are- they live their life that way

MS: yeah

BS: you know

MS: it's much open now and broad-minded now, but back then we had a lot to deal with

BS: right

MS: acceptance. But the pioneers like Albert, and Daryl, and Bird

BS: maybe we can have her be one of the moderators

MS: oh, that would be- because Bird loves to talk

BS: well she- she'd have to help. She'd have to encourage other people to talk

MS: right

BS: do you think she'd be good at that? Or would she wanna just do her own thing

MS: takeover you mean?

BS: yeah (laughs)

MS: no, I'll tell her- Let me call her tomorrow

BS: well, we'll see because we have to- we have to figure out

MS: okay, before I say anything you let me know.

BS: mmhmm

MS: because I will let her now

BS: mmhmm

MS: it has to be this way

BS: (laughs) do you think she would do a good job if she was asked to be a moderator?

MS: (at the same time) oh yeah

BS: 'cause the thing is that there is different scenes; since we have to balance out- like I think Gary knows a lot about your scene

MS: right

BS: so probably that other moderator-

MS: well, she's more of the dance scene. She did Newark but, she was more of the New York scene. So I don't know, I don't know

BS: and we'll interview her

MS: yeah

BS: but

MS: she'd be great person to interview; I'll put it like that

BS: yeah we're definitely going to interview her

MS: yeah

BS: yeah her name, she's the one that gave us your name and everything

MS: yeah, yeah

BS: it was so nice, I just ran into Michelle Gantly she- and that was purely random (2:15:13)

MS: well that's my- see everything is on the computer now. Next time you come a little earlier. Or I'll start burning stuff off. Michelle has been in my life since- she- after she called me, the second day that she called, and she asked if I'd spoke to her and I said, "yes," and she said, "oh great." And so she said something, I was like, you remember that? She was like wait a minute, and she started throwing stuff at me

BS: that's how it is

MS: and I was like I completely forgot about this spot she was talking about.

BS: (at the same time, laughs)

MS: and I was like, oh my God

BS: we got- she, she- when I asked- when I told her I wanted her interview her too, she was- she said she wasn't feeling well, so I'm sorry about that, but she's like- she didn't want to talk right away, but maybe we'll get her later

MS: oh yeah, I think If I tell her that I love doing this, and then that she should be interviewed she'll do it

BS: okay, she'll know it

MS: she'll do it

BS: okay

MS: yeah, she'll do it

BS: Okay

MS: 'cause she brought out some stuff out of the box that I was like, "wow"

BS: yeah that's how it is. People know the things you forget; they give you part of your life back by telling you about it

MS: oh my God, I remember my goddaughter just posted more pictures of me from the past. And there's a picture of me, it's now a church, it used to be a theater on Elizabeth Avenue- I'll get the name of the church and I'll try to find out what it was called

BS: mmhmm

MS: but I was very popular in Jersey then and they had a show and I was the headliner and she caught a picture- this picture she sent today. And I'm like, "Oh my God, I remember this night," and I used to design my outfits and make them myself, so I have pictures of me in outfits that I made

BS: well that's what we want to see some of the- like I said, some of the fashion because you were a designer too, as well as a musician

MS: this is wild

BS: (laughs) I mean, this picture is so great, right here. Like I said...

MS: and then, one of the members of my band, that lives in the Bronx, sent me a old newspaper copy of an entertainment magazine from the Bronx, where I made the outfits for the entire band and it's old picture. That's on the computer too

BS: (laughs) that's cool because with the kinda people who were coming around who were so prominent, if they were picking up some of the fashion that you guys were making, then that was

spreading around the country and even internationally; and that's kinda what I think people need to know that there's centers of creativity that

MS: are we still on?

BS: oh yeah, we are. Should I turn it off?

MS: just for one minute (2:18:12)

BS: alright, I'll turn it off

MS: (inaudible) some people and so when I started doing the club scene they became (inaudible) they became- we became friends so they started calling us the three musketeers. We would just dress everywhere we went, every affair we would go to. We would call up and say what we doing, we would go to each other's houses. When the contact lenses came in, the colored contact lenses, one of our friends started with his and then the others started, and I was the last. And this is how we went to a dinner party; and this is John, this is- he's deceased, and that's Jim, and we went to a dinner party and that was during LaBelle day.

BS: (laughs)

MS: I bought a wig, cut it off, and then wore the wig, and wrapped it

BS: it's fabulous

MS: and I had tights and boots on under there

BS: it's fabulous. This is a great beautiful photo

MS: I'm just starting to- I'm gonna have it framed and put it up; I've had this since the 80s, the 90s

BS: yeah, well we- maybe we can scan it first

MS: okay, sure

BS: you know 'cause that's amazing; and yeah, you tell us the year and you identify the people

MS: yeah

BS: and away we go

MS: (laughs)

BS: (laughs) it's gorgeous

MS: and I never put it up

BS: well it's time

MS: but now I just-

BS: someone has to come here and just photograph your apartment

MS: oh my God

BS: you know, 'cause you- all these pictures are pretty amazing. Really

MS: and this is my- come in here. This is- every year I have my birthday, which we call the life celebration dinner and we remember those who have passed on. And this year we remembered my- she was the president of my first fan club, she passed on. So an artist did this for me for my birthday, this is a collage of me and Phyllis Hyman because he knew I was a Phyllis Hyman fanatic and that we were friends; and this is just pictures of different versions of who I am. That's a picture that I did years ago; that's Phyllis Hyman, what else

BS: and on top? Is that-

MS: that's Sylvester

BS: Sylvester (inaudible)

MS: I had that enlarged

BS: yeah because he wore that-

MS: yeah

BS: that headdress

MS: (inaudible) in fact, I talked to him a week before he passed

BS: wow. You know there's big piles (inaudible) (dog barking)

MS: yeah (inaudible) in a show in New York that we had tickets for

BS: about Sylvester

MS: oh yeah it's a limited run from September 5th to October

BS: oh really I gotta get tickets (inaudible)

MS: yeah look in the internet

BS: because I love Sylvester

MS: it's a musical. It's called Sylvester and they this aunt, this guy who used to be in *Pippin*- they trained him and two women doing (inaudible) of fun. Sheryl Lee Ralph is one of the producers.

BS: wow.

MS: the actress Sheryl Lee Ralph. And this is my grandma. That's who helped raise me (inaudible) that's my mother when she was a little girl, that's my grandfather. And that's my mom when she was young; that's my father when he was in the service, and that's *his* father

BS: your grandmother has a style of herself

MS: osh-

BS: she's wearing that hat (5:30 left)

MS: (at the same time) yes. And I had a fire. And I had some stuff that was cherished that burned. 'Til this day that I had of my grandmother that, I don't have it, she was very (stylish).

BS: yeah, you can see it

MS: yeah

BS: that's a beautiful photo. What year that was

MS: oh my God. My mother- it'd have to be in the 30s

BS: (inaudible) it's a gorgeous photo. Yeah, it's beautiful. And your mom is all dressed up in her go-go boots

MS: yeah, yeah

BS: little tassels

MS: that was probably the House of Prayer

BS: that's probably

MS: she was a majorette for the House Prayer

BS: ohhh

MS: that was the majorette uniform

BS: that is too interesting

MS: (laughs)

BS: you know what I'm saying; you know?

MS: yup

BS: it's just all connected like that

MS: that was House of Prayer

BS: wow. Very, very, very interesting

MS: (at the same time) yeah

BS: alright, well I think we're getting where this came from

MS: yeah

BS: this ah- it's fabulous. Well. Alright. I should get a cab

MS: okay

BS: so I could

MS: call Green and I'm going to go down with you to make sure

BS: it's amazing. It's all great. And ah- (at the same time as Marc) wha, wha-

MS: this is for you

BS: oh! It's a picture

MS: yes. It's just a re-

BS: wha- it's an extra one, you have?

MS: yeah. You can just, we can- you know, crop it

BS: what was happening there

MS: it was just this photoshoot, and I wanted all black

BS: it's beautiful

MS: I just my- I just wanted this to be seen

BS: yea, it's very beautiful. What-

MS: and in fact, that's one of the shirts I designed and made. I wore the shirt

BS: oh it's beautiful; and the shiny shoes, of course

MS: yeah

BS: coming out of the mist. Do you remember what year?

MS: umm... I'll let you know before it's over

BS: okay

MS: in the 80s

BS: yeah

MS: in the 80s (singing). I have a box. So I'm going to go through this box like

BS: you got- I am sure you got everything

MS: (at the same time) I like have four shoeboxes

BS: yeah

MS: of the actual pictures, so, I'm going to go through them

BS: well we have to figure out, ultimately ah-

MS: what I'll do is- if you guys have a person that can scan them, if not I'll catch up with my graphic artist who- like this is new for his- the front of it (inaudible) uses a programming for his home going

BS: right

MS: so I had my graphic artist blow it up for me

BS: right, right

MS: so he enlarges a lot of my pictures for me

BS: right

MS: so I'll get him to do it, 'cause they'll put it on CD

BS: oh, that'll be great

MS: you know, and you guys can use it. This is- well this was- we had just partied in Newark. This is a group of my friends. I have to figure out what's (inaudible)

BS: look one of them is wearing that blue outfit there

MS: well he was a designer. He had a shop down on Halsey Street. His family- grandfather is in the hall of fame of the- Black Negro Hall of Fame of New Jersey. He lives on James Street, a fabulous, fabulous brownstone. Course that's me. He was- That's German, he was a photographer and a friend. She used to work for the PAC and a crazy person (2:24:50)

BS: (laughs)

MS: and that's me back in Georgia. That's one of my high school coaches.

BS: ohhh we have to show this. That is adorable

MS: (laughs)

BS: wooo (laughs). That's really great. Still wearing the same kinda glasses

MS: yes. Oh, this is recent. That's when I was in Paris. I mean, in France about two years ago at a restaurant, they took us out.

BS: nice

MS: I've got plenty of pictures

BS: I bet. I mean, 'cause it's all- it's a recording of a world that-

MS: and like that's why I said, you know, somebody kept saying you for the past three years, and maybe longer, but, recently the past three years I've been getting over and over, you got to do your memoir

BS: (at the same time) Your stories, yeah

MS: you have to do your story. And I'll be like, but now as I'm getting older and I am seeing how people really think of me. 'Cause I told Michelle, I was like- she was like, "baby you know you're an icon." I was like, "no I'm not." She's like, "do you know how long you've been around, you know what you've been doing, I remember this and I remember that." I was like- she said, "you have earned it." And everybody I talk to that I say, you know, don't say that, they say you have earned it

BS: yeah. That's nice

MS: you know

BS: yeah. Good for her, good for her. She had a nice energy

MS: yeah

BS: you know, I only met her a sec- like just real fast but, you know, I just liked her energy right away. She had that wonderful grandson. She's looking after her grandson and-

MS: yeah because she was talking to me when he was coming out and she wanted him to talk to me

BS: yeah that's right. She told me

MS: you know

BS: yeah

MS: and- so we've been close- from my birth in Newark. Sh- that's all I remember her

BS: always there

MS: just popped up and then I would see her everywhere

BS: well you make sure she comes to this thing when we do it

MS: oh Tuesday. I mean, I mean

BS: ahh, I mean that Thursday night

MS: Thursday night. Oh yeah

BS: in October. Yeah. And we'll be, you know, giving more information

MS: yeah. Let me call the cab and get my numbers

BS: alright so

MS: and then I can walk my babies

BS: yup. And then I'll go home and walk mine

MS: (laughs) and-