



American LGBTQ+ liberation from day 1 to Stonewall.

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Season 2, Episode 10: “The Hose & Heels Club”

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For this episode, begin with posts starting September 20, 2020. (Click above.)

The original Mattachine Society jester logo is courtesy of ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

This transcript includes text from real homophile-era publications, letters, organizational documents, et cetera. These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.

“We spend vast amounts of our time and emotional energy in learning how not to be natural and in eluding the trap of our own nature and it therefore becomes very difficult to know exactly what is meant when we speak of the unnatural... A cat torturing a mouse to death is not described as inhuman for we assume that it is being perfectly natural.”

—James Baldwin, “Preservation of Innocence”

HOST: Police surround the two-story home, half a mile from the White House. Inside, they hear folk songs, men dancing and singing together. The host has planned a cakewalk for the guests, many of them coachmen, cooks, messengers, and butlers. Many of them in women’s clothing. The police bust through the doors. The men scatter, running out the back door or jumping from the second-floor windows onto neighboring rooftops. Glass shatters as one man falls through a skylight. The police grab any one they can, until they’re confronted by the Queen. Reportedly in a “gorgeous dress of cream-colored satin,” **William Dorsey Swann** confronts the police lieutenant and his officers and tells them, “You is no gentlemen.” The police attack Swann, ripping his gown to tatters.

As Swann and 12 other Black men are taken outside, half naked, on their way to the jail, hundreds of passersby gather on the street. The *Washington Post* will report tomorrow morning, **April 13, 1888**, “Negro Dive Raided. Thirteen Black Men Dressed as Women Surprised at Supper and Arrested.” One psychiatrist writes that they are a “lecherous gang of sexual perverts.” Swann is charged for “being a suspicious character.” Police have been breaking up the Queen Swann’s ballroom for years, and this won’t be the last time. Just over a year before, **January 14, 1887**, the *Washington Critic* reported “Six colored men, dressed in elegant female attire, were arraigned in the dock at the Police Court this morning on a charge of being suspicious persons.... They nearly all had on low neck and short sleeve silk dresses, several of them with trains,” as well as “corsets, bustles, long hose and slippers, and everything that goes to make a female’s dress complete.” Many D.C. newspapers of the late 19th century report on Black men wearing silks, cashmere, and fascinators on their way to drag balls. This 1887 party in particular was hosted in the home of Pierce Lafayette, the intimate companion of William Dorsey Swann.

What makes William Dorsey Swann exceptional is not only his persistence, but that he is the first known person to call himself a “queen of drag.” And he proudly hosts these gatherings, undeterred, because he finally is free enough to do so. Swann was born into slavery, owned by a woman on her plantation in Maryland. Swann was liberated by Union soldiers in 1862. Pierce Lafayette, Swann’s companion in D.C., was a slave in Georgia owned by Alexander H. Stephens, VP of the Confederate States of America. Pierce Lafayette was in a relationship with Felix Hall at the time, who was also a male slave, who VP Stephens referred to in a letter as Lafayette’s “negro Mistress.” Swann

historian Channing Gerard Joseph found this letter, and notes that it is the first known documentation of a same-sex romance between two enslaved men.

The original queen, William Dorsey Swann, continues to host her drag balls for years, even after he's convicted in 1896 and sentenced to 10 months in jail for "keeping a disorderly house." When he gets out, Swann refuses to remain labeled a criminal and demands a pardon from President Cleveland. No queer person has ever been known to demand so much justice. Swann never received his pardon, but his mark was made and his drag balls became legendary. Not long after, Washington newspapers examine the terminology of these gatherings, using phrases like "sashay across the floor" and "strike a pose," and using familial terms. The papers report that older participants who mentor their chosen drag family are mothers. Honored leaders are queens.

After the 13 men were arrested in the famous 1888 raid at William Dorsey Swann's ball, the *National Republican* reported, "It is safe to assert that the number living as do those who were taken into custody last night must be exceedingly small." But of course they're wrong — the community continues to grow. Harlem's Hamilton Lodge becomes known for hosting very similar gatherings. Swann's two younger brothers take over the balls in their own drag after the Queen retires in the 20th century. Young Daniel J. Swann brings costumes for others at the Washington balls for 50 years, until his death in 1954.

William Dorsey Swann started a trend for good trouble. Queer people right here in his home of Washington, D.C. will soon pick up where the Queen left off.

Act 1

AUDIO: crowd still cheering for Sarria

JOSÉ SARRIA: That's why I, José Sarria of the Black Cat, the Nightingale of Montgomery Street, declare my candidacy for Supervisor!

HOST: The starring drag queen at the Black Cat announces his candidacy for Supervisor in San Francisco, and word spreads of his arrest for public sex in a hotel bathroom. But most people don't think it's really a big deal. After all, he's an openly gay man and a drag queen. He's the first openly gay man to run for public office in the country, and if he wins, he'll be the first Latino to hold a seat as a San Francisco Supervisor. As he explained in the previous episode, **José Sarria** knows his queer community alone has the power to elect him – he wants to prove it. He wants to show the mayor and the police that gays have the right to run for public office and effect change in their neighborhoods. Working a job in a club that was once operating at a time when San Francisco made its money from sex and race tourism, this queer drag queen of color is going to prove that he can both perform for the people in the club and represent them.

He stops at the bank with a shopping bag full of his tips from performing last night. He's in "male" clothing during the day – he has to be, legally – but when he arrives at the Black Cat Café, José transforms. He's Madame Butterfly in his campy recreation of the opera. He's belting out torch songs rewritten with gay vernacular and sung in his high tenor. He rewrites *Carmen*, putting on another gay parody of an opera, set in modern San Francisco. As Sarria dances through the Black Cat audience, slinking between the tables in his heels, he is Carmen, cruising through Union Square as she sings. The audience cheers for Carmen, managing her escape from the SFPD vice squad.

JOSÉ SARRIA: There's nothing wrong with being gay—the crime is getting caught!

AUDIO: audience laughs

JOSÉ SARRIA: Yes, it's all fun, all games here at the Black Cat, until they come knocking down the door again. But I intend to change that.

AUDIO: audience claps

JOSÉ SARRIA: I walked by that new courthouse today and saw the sign: "Equality Before the Law." Let's take that – "Equality Before the Law" – let's take that and shove it right down their throat. They read the laws in two different ways and make gays second-rate citizens, but I've never been a second-rate citizen!

AUDIO: audience cheers

JOSÉ SARRIA: I've learned a lot about the law, I've learned that in order to run for an office you must have a party endorse you, Democrats or Republicans. You must choose one. Neither one wanted me. I've always been a democrat, so I think I earned the right to threaten to sue the democrats to allow me onto the ballot.

AUDIO: audience laughs

JOSÉ SARRIA: They still won't endorse me, but I'm on the ballot for Supervisor. You know, just to get on, I needed 35 signatures. So I had to blackmail 35 people.

AUDIO: audience laughs

JOSÉ SARRIA: Now getting people registered to vote, that's even harder sometimes. We're running all over this city, in the bars, in the bathhouses, in the glory holes, poking our heads through, "Did you register to vote yet?"

AUDIO: audience laughs

JOSÉ SARRIA: If we stick together, vote together, unite as a minority, we will not just protect the Black Cat, we will protect our entire community.

AUDIO: piano beginning “God Save Us Nelly Queens”

JOSÉ SARRIA: One more time! Take the hands of the people beside you. *God save us nelly queens, God save us nelly queens...*

AUDIO: everyone singing

JOSÉ SARRIA: Let’s go! Outside! Sing out, follow me! Across the street to the jail, sing to our sisters arrested in the raids earlier tonight, to our brothers handcuffed in the park.

AUDIO: singing louder

JOSÉ SARRIA: United we stand, divided they catch us one by one!

AUDIO: *God save us queens!*

HOST: But it’s not enough to sing to them. José wants to do more. He and his friend Guy Strait – not a pseudonym this time – they get together to begin the first gay newspaper in San Francisco: *The League for Civil Education News. The LCE News*, or *Elsie*, is biweekly, reporting tips like methods to avoid entrapment and diagrams of T-rooms downtown and how police go about surprising men inside. José and Guy report descriptions of cops who entrap people, under headlines like,

JOSÉ SARRIA: “Have You Seen This Man?”

HOST: and

JOSÉ SARRIA: “How to Spot a Cop.”

HOST: While covering the Halloween drag balls and organizing his community through *Elsie* in the Black Cat, José encourages men who were arrested to go to a jury trial and plead not guilty, like Dale Jennings did in the beginning of the Mattachine Foundation. People listen. Court dockets in San Francisco become so full of homosexuals demanding jury trials that judges begin to demand prosecutors bring some real evidence along before booking a trial. And rather than letting his Black Cat co-workers get arrested for “intent to deceive” by wearing drag, José makes every waiter a sign to wear cut out in the shape of a black cat that says, “I’m a boy!” See, officer, I’m not trying to deceive anyone.

Guy Strait gets ad revenue for the little paper, which is one of the earliest examples of LGBT commerce – look at San Francisco now.

As Elsie starts to gain some clout, their League for Civil Education holds a meeting between gay bar owners, homophile organizations, and police officers. Bulletins are typed on single sheet of paper and dispersed through the bars:

JOSÉ SARRIA: “Cooperation with the police is possible and necessary.”

HOST: They discuss improving the relationship between gays and the police department. The cops are polite and seem interested in the issues, but they deny entrapping anyone or discriminating against gay bars. Elsie sends a letter to Chief Cahill. He doesn't respond. So fine, they tried to meet them in a professional manner. He'll regret not responding. Elsie begins a push for voter registration. Politicians start turning up at the Black Cat to see who this starving artist is, who is bold enough to run, openly homosexual. They watch José command the audience and stuff his bra full of cash from the homosexual community.

Take a fifteen-minute walk out of the Black Cat down Montgomery Street, where another letter requesting the 1960 Mattachine Society convention transcript waits in the Pan-Graphic Press mailbox. Hal Call mails the transcript off to the member requesting it, who reads it, and promptly cancels their membership. They see this organization is full of drama. *Mattachine Review* circulation takes a dip, which will continue to decline for the rest of the publication. The Society's debt reaches \$5,000. The New York chapter writes, questioning what Hal Call is doing with their membership dues.

March 15, 1961.

AUDIO: typewriter

HAL CALL: Letter to All Area Councils from the Board of Directors. We are beginning the process of getting the Society out of the 'branch office' business in order for cities to truly become autonomous working units and not be hindered in their work to a Corporation, which in many cases is thousands of miles away. The Society's income and its membership have been decreasing at an alarming rate. There are definite signs that ennui has settled upon the memberships of the area councils.

HOST: That letter from the board, which is basically controlled by Hal Call, goes on to make some pretty specific demands. “The Board of Directors orders that all properties and funds of the Mattachine Society, Inc. in the possession of the several area councils shall be forwarded at once to the Society's national office in San Francisco. Because of corporation and trademark laws no use of the name 'Mattachine' may be employed by any but the Mattachine Society, Inc., a California corporation. Cooperation will be assured by the Society to any other groups working in our field. Because the past progress of the Society speaks for itself, it is also urged by the

Board of Directions that all those who wish to maintain membership in the Society continue to subscribe to the publications of the Society, and in general continue to support the work of the Society, for the benefit of all.” But mostly for the benefit of Hal Call.

A vote is called. The only two members on the Board of Directors not to vote in favor of dissolving the Mattachine Society as a national organization: Curtis Dewees and Tony Segura of New York.

MATTACHINO 2: There was no schism here,

HOST: the Board president says,

MATTACHINO 2: It was simply seen that it is better to stay together in *spirit* than in *name*.

HOST: The national Mattachine Society dissolves. They revoke all local charters. Each chapter is set adrift on its own. Detroit, Denver, Boston, Chicago, New York, and San Francisco all go independent. Philadelphia’s chapter becomes the Janus Society and starts a magazine called *Drum* to cover both serious homophile issues and print physique photos. Philadelphia is pretty successful. Al deDion in New York calls Mattachine leaders all over the country, asking them to reject the Board’s decision.

AUDIO: typewriter

HAL CALL: Mr. deDion, we were trying to ride a horse with two heads and no body. But with the distance and poor communications, limited finances, and barely surviving without the support of volunteer workers, a national organization is outright impossible. Members who have attended both of our chapter meetings on either coast have reported a wide difference in implementation of the Mattachine idea. How much better, we think, is it when you and those who agree with your policies form your own independent group. It’s as the rumors about the New York chapter’s intentions suggested: a sort of confederation—depending upon how and to what extent the former individual area councils wish to do so. Leadership coming from both sides of the nation creates conflicts which You and I must admit were impossible to resolve. Now, the need for any capricious and devious effort to whack away at the central core of Mattachine is over.

HOST: Tony Segura, of New York, is living in Richmond with his lover when he receives word of the national Mattachine Society’s dissolution. He angrily writes to New York:

TONY SEGURA: This, of course, is only a way of making official what has existed sub rosa for several years: The Mattachine Society, Inc. is but the name of what might better be called Harold L. Call Enterprises. Do not submit to demands for Mattachine property to be returned to San Francisco, and do not turn over the Mattachine name, which we have earned.

HOST: Jim Kepner writes privately to New Yorkers:

JIM KEPNER: Hal's exclusive claim on the Mattachine name was untenable, because the Mattachine, as organized in Los Angeles in 1953, had repudiated (by Hal Call's motion) any connection 'with previous groups of that name.'

HOST: Lewis Christie, a New Yorker in San Francisco, reads Tony's letter and responds:

LEWIS CHRISTIE: This seems to be the step forward that we all wanted. It will depend upon the foresight, ability, maturity, integrity, and independence of the Area Councils involved.

TONY SEGURA: Your letter sounds as if written by a man in the moon. Have you been away from New York that long? The owners of the Mattachine Society in San Francisco have been trying to live off the Mattachine Society.

LEWIS CHRISTIE: Hal Call is, indeed, a monster and everything that you say about him is the absolute truth. I have tried for the past two years to explain him to myself, but I have found him completely inexplicable. Yet I am of the firm opinion that he is, perhaps, the one ingredient that is most lacking in New York. I have seen him work, and I have observed his courage in action many times, and I have seen him suffer at our petty conventions. I certainly do not agree with everything he does...but on the other hand I have seen him succeed when most of us would have failed miserably, and I feel that it is to the advantage of us all to trust him more than we have. At any rate, you people in New York will be free of him now and never again will you have to think of yourselves as deprived by "Hal Call, Inc." I hope you do something constructive.

HOST: Chicago's chairman writes to the Board:

JOHN ROGES: With dissension from other area councils, petty jealousy, etc. this can be the only answer.

HOST: Boston has just rented a new Mattachine office space:

MATTACHINO: It may very well be a good thing. There would then be an East Coast Mattachine.

HOST: Upon hearing of this idea, a collective East Coast organization, Hal writes to friends at *ONE Magazine*:

HAL CALL: So Al deDion will get his 'federation' after all. Let him have his headache.

HOST: New York gathers to vote. They officially sever ties with the Mattachine Society and reincorporate as The Mattachine Society of New York. MSNY carries on. Other local groups begin to dwindle.

JOHN ROGES: Most members only attend meetings when there is nothing better to do.

HOST: Chicago collapses. Boston follows. Denver becomes a group called The Neighbors, and then dissolves, too. Elver Barker stops sending his monthly \$5 donation, and instead forwards it to MSNY, in support of the New Yorkers' stand to keep the *Mattachine* name. As every city carries on without the national organization to support them, every city, in turn, no longer has to support the national organization. Membership dues stop coming in to San Francisco. *Mattachine Review* subscriptions fall as cities begin looking into their own competing magazines.

AUDIO: knocking on door

HOST: Don Lucas answers his apartment door. Hal stands there crying. He's had another fight with Jack, he can't pay *Mattachine's* rent, and his magazine is going under.

Act 2

HOST: Chevalier Publications is beginning to thrive. Virginia Prince's *Transvestia* magazine is so successful that they begin to print another monthly newsletter called *Femme Mirror*, and also a frequently printed Clipsheet scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photos of cross-dressers and trans women. After a year, Virginia has quite a following. She decides it's time to start an in-person discussion group. A meeting room in a small Hollywood church is arranged and Virginia sends out invitations to local subscribers. A dozen or so people show up, seemingly men, each with two paper bags. They open the first one, and put out their snacks and refreshments for the group. Virginia then asks everyone to sit, and she explains her idea for the group.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: I am aware of everyone's reluctance to acknowledge to any other man that you are a transvestite, since you have no way of knowing that he is too.

HOST: She instructs them all to open their second paper bag together. They each remove hose and a pair of heels from their bag. Everyone puts on their stockings and shoes at the same time so as not to incriminate each other.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: The first meeting of the Hose and Heels Club is formally open.

HOST: After a long discussion, they decide their next meeting will be in full dress. A member volunteers his house as their meeting place.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: I put one or two in each room and then scurried from room to room, zipping up dresses, fastening bras, combing wigs, advising on makeup and generally encouraging the participants. Many of them were extremely shy about going downstairs to face their sisters and I had to explain that this wasn't a Miss America contest and nobody had to be beautiful, only be herself.

HOST: Once they gather and calm down, everyone begins chatting like they've known each other for years. Meetings soon begin to take place monthly, and then every two weeks.

AUDIO: typewriter

VIRGINIA PRINCE: Many suffered from a sense of being alone, of worrying whether they were gay or not or whether they were psychopathic because of their desires. Society programs you to think in terms of the stereotype of masculinity and femininity. So while it was of some help to have a magazine for such people, and it was nice to have a local group where feelings and opinions could be aired, it still wasn't enough.

AUDIO: typewriter

LESBIAN: Every cover-to-cover reading of *The Ladder* leaves me with a nagging in my brain that all is not right with the endeavors of the DOB. Now, to my satisfaction, I have put the finger on the cause of my disquiet. I prefer to see the problem of the Lesbian as an aspect of the larger problem of society today: Conformity—the neglect of the individualistic impulse that alone leads to creativity and the ultimate enrichment of culture. What at one time to most of us seemed a curse is perhaps a blessing to all. Perhaps instead of pleading, 'Please, world, accept us—we're really very nice and not a bit different,' we should say, 'Look, world, we understand the agony of losing what each of you finds best in yourself and we can help you to be unafraid of your uniqueness!' –R.L., California

HOST: The FBI continues to follow the Daughters of Bilitis as they open new chapters. In Phoenix, the FBI field office receives a file from headquarters labeled "police training." Inside, Los Angeles agents report information on—

AUDIO: typewriter

FBI AGENT: a female operative of DOB who held business meeting at her home the first Wednesday of each month.

HOST: They report on two more women in the DOB, one of which is connected to the University of California and attends monthly DOB and Mattachine meetings.

At the ONE, Incorporated Midwinter Institute in Los Angeles, ONE's director presents what they are calling a Homosexual Bill of Rights, listing in detail all of the laws homosexuals should be fighting to change. The DOB leaders find it ridiculous, some of them even threaten to withdraw from Bilitis if this "Bill of Rights" isn't dropped. Fighting laws means fighting conformity. The push against conformity is difficult for a group that can't even wear pants at their own convention without police suspicion.

Daughters of Bilitis President Jaye Bell reports:

JAYE BELL: Perhaps some may feel we are advocating conformity. We are, when it comes to common courtesy to those who are yet so uneducated that homosexuals strike as much fear in them as do child molesters, dope addicts, the mentally ill, etc. This is outward conformity, the same outward conformity demanded of numerous groups of people who are in positions foreign to the public at large. For instance, the ex-convict, the alcoholic, or the conscientious objector... To do other than conform outwardly would hurt them personally and be of no avail until the public is better informed.

AUDIO: San Francisco Tenderloin

HOST: Hal's mother, Genne Call, arrives in San Francisco. She's there to give Hal \$425, a loan to cover the *Mattachine's* office rent. Mrs. Call arrives alone, without Hal's stepfather or stepbrothers.

GENNE CALL: Where's Jack?

HAL CALL: Palo Alto.

GENNE CALL: What on earth is he doing there?

HAL CALL: He's on a trip—

DON LUCAS: He's in the veteran's hospital getting sober.

HAL CALL: Don.

DON LUCAS: You would tell her eventually.

GENNE CALL: How is he, Harold?

HAL CALL: I don't know.

DON LUCAS: He doesn't write.

GENNE CALL: Jack doesn't write?

DON LUCAS: Jack writes. Hal doesn't respond.

GENNE CALL: Oh.

DON LUCAS: I visited him. He's well.

GENNE CALL: As well as he can be.

HAL CALL: What do you mean by that?

GENNE CALL: I don't know, I'm just glad he's well. I'll be sure to pray for him.

HAL CALL: Then he'll be home by tomorrow.

DON LUCAS: Hal.

GENNE CALL: A little prayer doesn't hurt anyone, Harold. You can smear the churches in your sex magazine, but—

HAL CALL: The prayers I denounce in my publication are pleas for God to strike down every homosexual where he stands. If you read the *Review*—

GENNE CALL: I read every page of the *Mattachine Review*, Harold, or I'd hear about it from you. I have written a rather large check to support your hobby, which I might have sent to your brother's church instead.

HOST: No matter how Hal Call presents his identity as professional, his parents still see the maladjusted boy. The sick, the rejected, the homosexual and transgender people of the early 1960s have spent their lives wearing the masks of conformity in order to receive love and approval from their families. The queer people of 1961 look to the words written by Hal Call, Del Martin, Virginia Prince, civil rights leaders, and the many others now boldly speaking up. For some readers, their naturally rebellious instincts begin to reveal their true selves. Some begin to display their sexuality proudly, scandalously. Genne Call knows her son is no innocent, God-fearing virgin. If people decide to come out and speak up, they can't hide that they are sexual beings. They are defined as sexual beings. Many people are: birth control is becoming more popular, divorce rates are rising, Illinois has become the first state to legalize sodomy, all while trans and gay publications are passed between friends, a younger, more sexually open generation begins to accept themselves. They see that perhaps society considers queer people maladjusted because society has long considered anyone blatantly sexual as maladjusted. Still, the activists seek to change society's view of them, but they can't always win the approval of the people they love most. Hal privately continues to record his thousands of sexual contacts over the years in his diaries. He never says a single passionate sentence about any of these men. Unconditional love is foreign to Hal Call. But he always responds to letters from the person whose love he wants most:

AUDIO: writing

HAL CALL: Others may have my company, Mother, but it is you that have my heart.

AUDIO: typewriter

HOST: One veteran writes to another.

FRANK KAMENY: In World War II, I willingly fought the Germans, with bullets, in order to preserve and secure my rights, freedoms, and liberties, and those of my fellow citizens. In 1961, it has, ironically, become necessary for me to fight my own government, with words, in order to achieve some of the very same rights, freedoms, and liberties for which I placed my life in jeopardy in 1945. This letter is part of that fight. The winds of change are blowing. A wise and foresighted government will start NOW to take *constructive* action... You have said: 'Ask not what can your country do for you, but what can you do for your country.' I know what I can best do for my country, but my country's government, for no sane reason, will not let me do it.

HOST: Two days after the official collapse of the national Mattachine Society, Frank Kameny's petition to the Supreme Court is denied. Frank remains unemployed most that time, and writes to anyone who might help him. President Kennedy never responds to this letter. In June 1961, Frank writes to the new Civil Service Commission Chairman John Macy, Jr.:

FRANK KAMENY: Dear Mr. Macy:

I am writing in regard to remarks which you made in public speeches on or about May 10, and June 1, 1961.

In the first speech, you stated that manpower shortages could best be met by policies that do not ignore the abilities of minority groups; that you could think of no better way to meet the expected manpower shortage of the 1960's than by non-discriminatory personnel policies. You have reinforced this in other public utterances. I could not agree more fully. However I should like to point out that, in regard to one minority at least, your own Civil Service Commission practices discrimination of the most vicious and virulent sort; that it is not assuring equal opportunity for entry and advancement without regard to non-quality measures; that it is insisting upon the strictest of conformity; that it is acting with no slightest regard for the individual worth and dignity of the men and women serving.

The minority group to which I refer is our nation's homosexuals—a minority in no slightest way different, as such, from other minority groups, such as the Negroes and the Jews.

There is not one single argument which can be advanced against the employment of homosexuals which does not have its parallel in the invalid arguments of segregationists, anti-Semites, and the like, against the objects of their prejudices and hatreds, and which arguments are not, therefore, equally invalid, degrading, and disgraceful to what considers itself to be a civilized country.

HOST: John Macy, Jr. replies within a week:

JOHN MACY JR: The Civil Service Regulations include the following as a disqualification for employment in the Federal service: 'Criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct.' The Commission's policy, based on impartial consideration of most cases involving all aspects of human behavior, is that homosexuals or sexual perverts are not suitable for federal employment. On considering the representatives in your letter of June 5, 1961, I find no basis for changing this policy.

INTERLUDE

KID: You fuckin' fag!

HOST: It's **Rey Rivera's** 10th birthday. **July 2, 1961.**

GRANDMOTHER: They're calling you 'pato.'

HOST: Rivera's grandmother is distraught over the way kids treat her feminine grandson. Rey is so distraught about the pain her grandmother deals with that she swallows all of her pills. When she starts to feel them, she panics, tells her aunt, and they rush to the hospital. Rey feels like she's the only faggot in the world – Rey's later words. She lives. When Rey and her grandmother take the train to Coney Island, a group of drag queens steps on board at 42nd Street.

PASSENGER: [whispering] Look at the maricónes!

HOST: Rey is looking. Her grandmother is, too. And the more Rey is also teased, too, she knows she'll have to leave her grandmother. The teasing is tearing her apart. Rey Rivera runs away to Times Square. She goes there to make money to support herself. Rivera puts on a little mascara and walks the streets.

QUEEN: We got to move it! We got to move it!

REY/SYLVIA: Why?

QUEEN: The camarónes are coming! They're coming to get us!

HOST: Plainclothes cops.

REY/SYLVIA: Okay, I'll walk, I'll walk!

HOST: The cops corner Rey and the other queens in a hallway by a theatre. A paddywagon pulls up.

AUDIO: siren

HOST: Rey Rivera, who will change her name to **Sylvia**, like so many young queer people, she pushes up against conformity. She won't be the boy she's told to be. Conformity is pushed onto every American person by the government's hand. Remember the Sumerian myth about Enki and Nimmah? They're the government. The seemingly broken little creature they made with no genitals? The queer human whose purpose, like all their little creatures, has got to have some form of serving the king or they're useless. Conform that creature or it's worthless to the government. In Washington D.C., Mrs. Nichols waits in the military school cafeteria as boys join their parents for lunch. Her son is upstairs unpacking and putting on his uniform for the first time. It's time for some discipline in Jack's life. He's shown little interest in school and he'd prefer to study his own subversive subjects. Jack called every embassy in Washington, D.C. to ask for information about the country they represent. Soon, the Nichols's mailbox was full of beautiful magazines describing every country in the world. Jack's father, Jack Nichols, Sr., was quick to get a phone call from his boss, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, asking why Jack Jr. is getting mail from the Soviet Union. Jack Sr. was furious. The more his dad got angry, and the more Jack learned about the world outside of American conformity, the more rebellious Jack Jr. became. He learned Russian phrases and declared himself Moslem. He refused to say the Lord's Prayer or the Pledge of Allegiance. So he was enrolled in a private school, where he made friends with an Iranian family. So his parents then transferred him to a military school. While Mrs. Nichols waits for him to return to the cafeteria for his first meal in military school, she's informed that Jack Jr. has gone AWOL. They find him. He's hitchhiked all the way back to the Iranian family in Washington, who he missed. His mother drives him home, where he lays in bed upset.

MRS. NICHOLS: Why do you keep doing this? Why did you run?

JACK NICHOLS: There is a reason why I shouldn't go back to the military academy. It's an all-boys' school, and lately I've been finding myself attracted to members of my own sex.

AUDIO: Mrs. Nichols exhaling. A beat.

MRS. NICHOLS: Go to sleep. Let's talk in the morning.

HOST: Jack has no interest in surviving the exaggeration of male culture in that military school. Unhealthy masculinity is actually what he'll later write a book about. His mother decides to take him to a doctor, who, fortunately, is somewhat enlightened and tells her Jack doesn't need testosterone shots, but maybe this is just a phase. The Nichols move away from the influence of Jack's Iranian friends. And it totally changes him. Just kidding. In Pennsylvania, Jack reads the Quran and other religious texts, he fools around with the neighbor boy, and continues to refuse to say the pledge of allegiance in school.

MR. SNOW: Do not make me take the necessary steps to make you say the pledge to our nation.

JACK NICHOLS: [taunting] What sort of steps?

MR. SNOW: That's for me to know and you to find out. But you won't like them, I can assure you of that.

JACK NICHOLS: I hate being forced.

MR. SNOW: You'll hate it more if you don't obey.

JACK NICHOLS: [small laugh, then] A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.

HOST: Jack goes home, writes his mother a note, and runs away to Washington, D.C. This continues, with his FBI agent dad sending police to search the highways for him when he runs away. His uncle tries the so-called "hooker cure." Jack attempts suicide. He's only 14 when he reads Donald Webster Cory's *The Homosexual in America*, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and Radcliffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. He shares them with friends. They read passages of them to each other over the phone. One day, Jack looks up to his friend Ted at the top of his family's staircase and says,

JACK NICHOLS: I know you're gay!

TED: I'll have none of your perversity!

HOST: To escape Ted's father throwing bricks at him, they're off exploring gay bars together. Jack spends his days reading in the Library of Congress, and nights at parties around D.C. And the years go by. He's 23.

AUDIO: house party, Judy records

HOST: And he overhears someone talking about one of his favorite books.

FRANK KAMENY: [distant] ...Donald Webster Cory, his book *The Homosexual in America*, it's made an excellent case for our rights. The imbalanced the standards held by the Civil Service Commission...

HOST: Jack Nichols gets off the couch and looks for the person speaking. Approaching a circle of people chatting, Jack says,

JACK NICHOLS: I've read *The Homosexual in America*.

HOST: The man steps back to make room for Jack in the circle.

FRANK KAMENY: And what did you think of it?

JACK NICHOLS: I think every gay person should read it. But I've never met anyone discussing it in public.

FRANK KAMENY: You seem rather young to have read it.

JACK NICHOLS: I read it seven years ago. Jack Nichols, by the way.

FRANK KAMENY: Frank Kameny. Give me your phone number, perhaps we can discuss Cory's book sometime. I'd give you my number but I don't have a phone right now because I haven't been able to afford one since beginning this struggle to get the government to reinstate me.

HOST: A few days later, Jack goes to Frank's messy apartment on Columbia Road. Like so many others inspired by Donald Webster Cory's book, Frank and Jack decide to start a grassroots organization for homosexuals. They immediately check to see if *ONE* or *The Mattachine Review* are available in DC. Press is the best way to spread the word about their goals. The closest group, the Mattachine Society of New York, is eager to share contacts on the East Coast. Al deDion and Curtis Dewees send them a mailing list immediately. Perhaps with an ally in D.C., the MSNY can gain some strength over San Francisco. But Frank has no intention of being their flunky.

Act 3

HOST: **August 1, 1961.** Al and Curtis arrive from New York at the Hay-Adams Hotel in D.C., just one block from the White House. They confirm their reserved 8 PM meeting room and an order of 16 cups of coffee, and the MSNY leaders are sent down the hall to room 120. The concierge then picks up the phone and dials.

CONCIERGE: Hello, I'm calling from the Hay-Adams to confirm the arrival of Mr. deDion and Mr. Dewees in Room 120. Thank *you*, sir.

HOST: Deputy Chief of Police Roy Blick hangs up his phone and dials for the FBI Washington Field Office. As head of the Morals Division, it's his job to alert the Bureau. Deputy Chief Blick has already encountered pushback from homosexuals demanding justice. Just like everywhere else, dancing is not allowed in Washington, D.C. gay bars. Just a couple years ago, after a raid on private club in a rented house, Blick received a letter from a homosexual saying he'd vote against police funding unless the cops justify this raid. Yes, this homosexual said DEFUND THE POLICE! So Blick picks up the phone and calls the guy, asks him to come to his office. He's not gonna take his. Blick has been on force for 30 years. He organized the sex squad in the 1940s that became the Morals Division — the group of police who hunt and entrap homosexuals in the parks. The homosexual entered his office to see the intimidating one-eyed officer. Blick lost the other eye when a tear gas shell exploded his his face during a raid. Deputy Chief Blick asks the guy where lives, where he works. The homosexual says — these raids are a waste of police funds and dancing should not be illegal. Blick brushes him off and the homosexual leaves. The outspoken letter-writing persistent homosexual? Of course, was Frank Kameny.

FRANK KAMENY: Pleasure to finally meet you, Al. Curtis.

AL DEDION: Likewise, Frank. We would like—

FRANK KAMENY: What a nice turnout. Let's all have a seat around the table and begin. We have coffee on the way any time now, right?

HOST: 16 people take their seats to discuss the founding of the first homosexual rights group in D.C. Outside the open door to Room 120, a man in a suit casually walks by. A minute or so later, he passes by again. And again.

AUDIO: typewriter

FBI AGENT: I observed about 16 well-dressed men in discussion,

HOST: The agent will write in his report. The concierge enters the meeting room and pours the coffees.

CONCIERGE: They were drawing up bylaws,

HOST: they tell the FBI agent.

CONCIERGE: Something about resolutions. They seemed well behaved, sir.

FRANK KAMENY: There are a quarter of a million homosexuals in this area alone—

MATTACHINO: Mr. Kameny, may I have a word with you?

HOST: A potential member stands in the meeting and gestures toward the open door.

FRANK KAMENY: Uh. Yes, of course. Al, Curtis, how about you take everyone's name and phone number?

HOST: Frank heads for the door, following the recruit. He glances at the other guests sipping coffee, one man with a gun holster on his hip. In the hall, the agent lingers a few doors down.

MATTACHINO: Mr. Kameny, I recognize one of the men in there at the table.

FRANK KAMENY: Who?

HOST: They point discreetly.

MATTACHINO: Do you know that that's Sergeant Louis Fouchette?

FRANK KAMENY: Sent by the Morals Squad, no doubt.

MATTACHINO: I once saw him in the park making an arrest. The police must be undercover on your mailing list—

FRANK KAMENY: Of course.

HOST: Frank and the new member walk back into the meeting and sit down.

FRANK KAMENY: We've yet to choose a name for our group. Do we have any suggestions?

AL DEDION: We would be in favor of your using the Mattachine name, Mr. Kameny. It would lend a bit of established respectability—

FRANK KAMENY: We are an independent group, Mr. deDion, though I appreciate your support.

JACK NICHOLS: I agree with Mr. deDion, Frank. We could get started right away under the Mattachine name. Many people already know of the organization, and their chapters now operate independently of one another.

FRANK KAMENY: I wouldn't want to be tied down by another person's agenda.

HOST: Frank scans the room of potential members and the undercover officer.

FRANK KAMENY: This organization will be radical, unwavering in our pursuit for justice. We will not be intimidated.

AL DEDION: You will be free to act as you wish—

FRANK KAMENY: Good. We'll be called the Mattachine Society of Washington.

AUDIO: light applause, a chair scoots out

HOST: Frank stands.

FRANK KAMENY: I understand there's a representative of the Metropolitan Police Department here. Could he please identify himself and tell us why he's here?

AUDIO: a beat

FRANK KAMENY: It is illegal for an officer to go unidentified when asked for credentials. Go on.

HOST: Frank stares at the man with the gun holster until he stands, seemingly embarrassed.

OFFICER FOUCHETTE: No, I have nothing to say. Chief Blick and the Morals Division are on the New York Mattachine's mailing list and he received an invitation. He sent me to take notes and I must say I'm impressed by your organization.

FRANK KAMENY: Officer Fouchette, if the local police would like to request a meeting with the Mattachine Society of Washington you may contact me at the address provided to you this afternoon.

HOST: The officer storms to the door.

FRANK KAMENY: You may tell any federal agents just the same.

AUDIO: door slams

HOST: Back at the Bureau, agents update the Security Index. A message from the Los Angeles Special Agent in Charge arrives for Director Hoover requesting to recruit a former communist as an informant for the FBI. This person left the Communist Party on their own and has no family inside the party. An agent flits their fingers over the hundreds of files in the Security Index until they find the person requested: Harry Hay. No new information. He no longer even fits the 5-year active time frame required to be included as a communist in the Index.

DIRECTOR HOOVER: Recruit him.

693 ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Floor?

AUDIO: elevator rising, doors opening

693 ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Third floor.

HOST: FBI agents enter the Pan-Graphic Press and Mattachine offices at 693 Mission St in San Francisco. You might recall, from season 1, Hal has had his run-ins with the FBI along with his Mattachine recruit, David Finn.

FBI AGENT: Mr. Call?

HOST: He welcomes the agents into his office and agrees share any relevant information about other homophile activists that the Bureau might need, and also puts them on his *Mattachine Review* subscription list. The agents ask him about Guy Strait and José Sarria's League for Civil Education, Elsie. Hal says it's a front. Hal Call then agrees to help the agents find any homosexuals they're looking for, whether or not they're members of his Society.

South of the Bay, in Los Angeles, Hoover's request to recruit former communist Harry Hay is carried out.

Harry Hay narrowly escaped charges on teaching for the Communist Party, and was exiled from the Mattachine just before the Bureau could have connected him to it (back in season 1). His gay organization was taken from him out of fear of the FBI. He lives quietly, occasionally writing for ONE, Incorporated's publications. Now, nearly a decade later, **August 4, 1961**. Two agents arrive at Harry's door on Westwood Boulevard in Los Angeles.

FBI AGENT 2: Mr. Hay, we'd like to discuss security matters with—

HARRY HAY: I have nothing to say and do not wish to talk to the FBI. This interview is over.

AUDIO: door closes

HOST: Harry Hay is finally removed from the FBI's Security Index. After more than a decade, the Bureau lets Harry go, and he can finally let go of the Bureau and the worry that his red history will take down the organization he started—if it doesn't take itself down first. Harry writes privately to his friend Gene:

AUDIO: writing

HARRY HAY: I pity Hal Call with all my heart and grieve with him and his SF board that the lion they once had by the tail has been, by a combination of ruthless opportunism and overreaching artlessness, reduced to that of a paper tiger.

HOST: Hal Call will not be pleased when he hears word that another man is now using the Mattachine name in Washington, D.C.

MUSIC: *GYPSY* "Overture"

HOST: **August 14, 1961.** 3:00 AM at the Tay-Bush Inn in San Francisco. Ethel Merman exits the café as dozens of people dance around the jukebox. She's on tour with *Gypsy* and after a few hours of drinks with gay friends, she's headed back to her hotel.

The party goes on without her in this small space where gay people gather after the bars close. Fifteen minutes after Ethel leaves—

AUDIO: music stops

HOST: Floodlights blast through the Tay-Bush doors.

AUDIO: a second a silence. You can hear a pin drop.

HOST: Suddenly, everyone bolts.

MUSIC: quick, building anxiety

COPS: Nobody move! Hands up!

HOST: Out the back door, down the alleys. Out the windows, the front door, any exit that can be found. Fourteen cops take the place.

COPS: Get over here!

AUDIO: handcuffs closing

HOST: Seven patrol wagons pull up as bar patrons are lined up to be searched. Officers pick out anyone associated with political clout, and any prominent people in general and allow them to leave. They barely missed Ethel Merman. More than one hundred are arrested in the largest gay bar raid in San Francisco history. They're put in the paddy wagons and sent to the jail. Hal Call's home phone rings, waking him up. Dozens of people need legal assistance. He rushes to the station as the *San Francisco Chronicle* and other papers rush to press.

AUDIO: typewriter

REPORTER: In the biggest action of its kind in the history of the department, police raided a small restaurant at Bush and Taylor streets early yesterday and jailed 101 suspected sex deviates, reminiscent of the old speakeasy days of prohibition.

HOST: Three months from Election Day, the city takes on José Sarria's community again. This time, the community is prepared to fight back. Next week in episode 11, "The Rejected, the Elected."