



American LGBTQ+ liberation from the beginning to Stonewall.
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Season 3, Episode 6: “The Sip-in & the Social Prophet”
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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 These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.

AUDIO: Recorded 1966 interview of Barbara Gittings, Kay Tobin, & Ernestine Eckstein discussing the homophile movement. [transcript is abridged, listen to episode for full audio]

KAY TOBIN: To start with a stock question, how did you hear of the Daughters of Bilitis?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I don't know how I'd lived in such a vacuum but I'd simply never heard about DOB before, or for that matter about Mattachine.

HOST: On a winter day in New York City early 1966, the editor of *The Ladder*, Barbara Gittings, and her photojournalist lover Kay "Tobin" Lahusen, meet with the New York **Daughters of Bilitis Vice President Ernestine Eckstein**. A Black woman, having marched in the largely white picket lines in D.C. and Philadelphia last year, the editors are interested in Ernestine's story for the magazine.

KAY LAHUSEN: And then you moved to New York how long ago?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I moved to New York in May of '63, almost three years ago. I sort of went through that soul-searching bit of deciding if I were, where I stood, and then next on the agenda was to find a way of being in the movement, kind of. Because I always assumed there was a movement or there should be.

KAY LAHUSEN: Really? You mean you decided you were a lesbian and then you decided, well, there must be a movement?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: That is about the way it was. Yeah.

BARBARA GITTINGS: When you think about your uniqueness, how did it, how did it affect you?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Well, I used to think, now, what's wrong with me? You know? But I thought maybe... You see, I've always been under the impression, I think, that there was nothing unusual about people reacting to other people regardless of sex. I've never thought of it in terms of homosexuality, but I've always felt that love, you know, sort of transcends any kind of label like, you know, black, white, men, women, this sort of thing.

HOST: Ernestine is from South Bend, Indiana. She studied journalism, government, and Russian at Indiana University, where photos show she was often the only person of color in a group. She was an officer in the NAACP chapter, and she worked on the student

newspaper. Now, in New York, she's a social worker and a member of CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: That was a definite influence.

KAY LAHUSEN: So many never dreamed...

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Really? Well, you know, I have a lot of faith in New York.

KAY LAHUSEN: Oh good, so do I! [laughter]

BARBARA GITTINGS: Well then you came to New York and you did...

KAY LAHUSEN: Were all these faggots running around a big shock to you?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: No, no. As a matter of fact, I had a friend in college who had come to New York earlier. He was my best friend. I never knew why. It was never a sexual relationship. Never even a romantic one. He was a homosexual, and I didn't know it until I came here.

KAY LAHUSEN: Did he know it?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Oh, he knew it.

KAY LAHUSEN: But he didn't tell you.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: And he didn't tell me, you know. So we had a very good relationship going, you know. We could do everything together, you know, really communicate and just the best of friends but never any romance. And I liked it this way, you know. So did he, and I never understood why. But I never thought, I never questioned why either. And I came to New York and he was one of the first persons I looked up, and he says, "Ernestine, you know I'm gay?" And I thought, Oh, you're happy, so what? You know. I didn't even know the term "gay." And he explained it to me and all of a sudden, you know, all of a sudden things began to click. And at this time, I was sort of emotionally involved with my roommate anyway. I thought, am I sexually, you know...? It dawned on me that maybe I was sexually attracted to the girl and not just emotionally attracted. So it was like this. It's very funny. It really is.

KAY LAHUSEN: He told you they were all around and you could hardly believe it?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Yeah. He sort of introduced me to the homosexual community. Cuz he's a real queen. I mean here. He was a little bit different here in New York than he was in Indiana.

KAY LAHUSEN: I'll bet.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: He was. You know, he's a nice-looking guy. He sort of swishes around, you know, and looks at all the boys on the street. A real... Way out.

AUDIO: winter winds fading out, cars passing, Julius' bar door closes

HOST: Down the street, on 10th and Waverly, a young man, newly arrived in New York City, enters a bar called **Julius'**. It's just a block off Greenwich Avenue, where guys tend to cruise. Danny Garvin is 17. It's clearly his first time at this bar, he doesn't even know Julius' is a gay bar when he sits down to chat with a couple of guys. And it quickly becomes very obvious to him that he's in a gay bar. An older, feminine man approaches their group.

FEMME MAN: I bet you three are servicemen. I can tell fortunes. Let me see your palms.

HOST: He pretends to study their palms.

FEMME MAN: Well, I'm going to tell you, one of you is homosexual, but I'm not going to tell you which one. I'm going to give all three of you my phone number, and the one that is homosexual will know to call me!

AUDIO: laughter

HOST: Danny decides this Greenwich Village bar, Julius', is the bar for him.

Act 1

AUDIO: typewriter

TIME REPORTER: "The Homosexual in America"

HOST: *Time* magazine, **January 21, 1966.**

TIME REPORTER: Today in the U.S., there are ‘mixed’ bars where all homosexuals, male and female, are persona grata; ‘cuff-linky’ bars that cater to the college and junior-executive type; ‘swish’ bars for effeminate and ‘hair fairies’ with the careful coiffures; ‘TV’ bars, which cater not to television fans but to transvestites; ‘leather’ bars for the tough-gay types with their fondness for chains and belts; San Francisco’s new ‘Topless Boys’ discotheques, featuring bare-chested entertainers. San Francisco and Los Angeles are rivals for the distinction of being the capital of the gay world; the nod probably goes to San Francisco...

HOST: *Time* magazine’s map of the queer world presents a community of people who are not new, they’ve existed...forever. But it does explore a new boldness in these people. A younger generation is filling the bars, standing on a solid foundation built for them over the past 20 years or so. They’re more confident in their queerness. The New Left is rising, empowered by social revolution, expressed in counterculture. Bras and draft cards will soon be thrown to the fire. Men are growing their hair, women are wearing blue jeans. The ‘50s are long gone. The thought of the people in these bars being the future of our country terrifies many of *Time* magazine’s readers. Fortunately for them, *Time* will ease their worries by reminding their audience that homosexuality can be cured, and that frequenting these queer bars is a, quote—

“pathetic little second-rate substitute for reality, a pitiable flight from life. As such it deserves fairness, compassion, understanding and, when possible, treatment. But it deserves no encouragement, no glamorization, no rationalization, no fake status as minority martyrdom, no sophistry about simple differences in taste—and, above all, no pretense that it is anything but a pernicious sickness.”

TIME REPORTER: Philadelphia’s Dr. Samuel Hadden reported last year that he had achieved twelve conversions out of 32 male homosexuals in group therapy.

HOST: Furious, Kay Tobin writes a piece for *The Ladder* in the February ’66 issue, since none of the mainstream press will denounce it.

KAY LAHUSEN: “A Rebuke for TIME’s Pernicious Prejudice”

AUDIO: 1966 Gittings, Tobin, & Eckstein discuss *Time* issue and “pernicious sickness” message

HOST: Some psychiatrists, believing there is a cure for queerness, are practicing shock treatment on their patients. Some are trying aversion/conversion therapy, all of which is incredibly traumatic for the patient. These doctors are encouraged by well-known psychiatrists **Irving Bieber and Charles Socarides**. They believe that homosexuality is caused by upbringing: a dominant mother and absent father, or some other kind of

“wrong” upbringing. Bieber’s book, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study*, is quickly refuted in a series of articles by a doctor writing for *The Ladder*:

DR. FLUCKIGER: RESEARCH Through a Glass, Darkly

HOST: The doctor points out that Bieber’s entire study lacks the use of the scientific method.

DR. FLUCKIGER: ...the heterosexual’s place in society is not usually determined by what he does in the privacy of his bedroom...

BARBARA GITTINGS: I have had heterosexual friends argue with me that heterosexual love is by its very nature more fulfilling than homosexual love. What would you say to this?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: **I regard homosexuality or homosexual love personally as a higher form of love than heterosexual love.** No, seriously, very seriously, It is much more beneficial to me and much more—I communicate much more easily, sexually and every other way, with a woman than I do with a man. Therefore, to me, a woman that I am dating and I reach a closer kind of unity than a man and I ever could. And for this reason, to me is the higher form of love.

BARBARA GITTINGS: But you’re saying this is for your own experience, not that you think homosexual love in itself as an entity is better than heterosexual love.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I’m saying potentially it is. I’ll say it does not so far as I know, it does not generally reach this level, from what I’ve seen... I think there is a tendency to mimic heterosexual relationships—‘the family.’ I think it’s a good thing not to be tied down to the family, you get to explore yourself more.

HOST: Barbara Gittings, Kay Tobin, and Frank Kameny pack their bags into a car together. With the press and doctors discussing homosexuals so frequently as sick people, actions like the pickets have begun to seem pointless to the Washington Mattachinos—just a bunch of sick queers carrying signs. As their relatively secret spaces, the bars, become known in mainstream media, they become targeted more frequently by government officials, the press, and run-of-the-mill homophobes.

In February 1966, fourteen of the homophile organizations’ leaders meet in Kansas City for the National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations. They chose Kansas City because it’s inconvenient for everyone, no home field advantage.

AUDIO: 1966 Gittings, Tobin, & Eckstein discuss the conference and invite Ernestine.

HOST: Barbara, Kay, and Frank arrive together. Mattachine of Washington pushes for an official statement against the theory that they're all sick. They want the statement signed off on by this mass gathering of 40 gay organizational leaders, but the group tables the idea, noting their official position:

AUDIO: typewriter

“Professional opinion is in complete disagreement as to the cause and nature of homosexuality.” These gay leaders discuss many other topics though, including the idea of forming just one major homophile organization together. Del and Phyllis are against that idea, as when this happens, men tend to take over the conversation and push women out. Some folks here are literally calling Frank Kameny the “homophile Caesar.” Another leader fears that if they don’t centralize, the movement will be taken over by the “fringe elements, beatniks, and other professional non-conformists,” he says. They compromise, and come to an agreement to form a unified group of organizations, like the East Coast’s ECHO group, but called the **North American Conference of Homophile Organizations, or NACHO** — *Nay-co*. Phyllis Lyon from DOB suggests they plan a picket on Armed Forces Day to protest the exclusion of homosexuals from the military. Some folks in NACHO see this push for military acceptance as antiquated, and assimilationist. (Agreed.) But being perceived by the general public as patriots could help their cause.

During the meeting, Jack Nichols passes a large postcard around the conference room, asking homophile leaders from all over the country to sign it, in an effort to show Lige he’s thinking about him back home and not just focused on “movement this, movement that.” Lige is not impressed. They break up. Lige needs time away from Jack, who is still calling Lige “Bobby,” his homophile pseudonym. Jack still has issues with being emotionally intimate. Bitter with Lige, Jack starts dating a guy named Julio who barely speaks any English. It’s very clear to Lige that Jack has no intention of facing real intimacy. He’s not making an effort to learn Spanish.

Frank writes to Bob Martin, his romantic interest, a Columbia student and new activist. Frank tells Bob about the big homophile meeting. He writes that they were given the red carpet treatment at the Indiana University on their drive back home. Frank and Barbara were invited as special guests at the **Kinsey Institute**. Afterward, they hit the local bar. The gay patrons in this Indiana town are fascinated by Frank’s buttons on his jacket, given to him by Randy Wicker. One is a lavender equal sign, the other says “Equality for Homosexuals.” Frank gives it to the bartender to display on the wall.

AUDIO: bar crowd fades into typing

RAE KAMENY: Now that I can no longer hope that my guesses are wrong, I am weighed down with an awful sense of guilt—guilt as being in some way responsible in the first place and guilt for not having had the courage to bring it up long ago, when perhaps something could have been done... Knowing your situation, someone might have pointed out the risks of taking a job with the government. You say that in your field virtually all jobs require a security clearance. How did you lose it in the first place?

AUDIO: typewriter

FRANK KAMENY: Dear Mother, You say that you wish that I had discussed this with you earlier, when something might have been done. This overlooks two important facts.

1. Nothing could have been done at ANY time—regardless of the misguided information which might have been given to you by some psychiatrist.
2. You completely omit consideration of whether I would have wanted ‘something to be done.’

Now this is NOT the tragedy which folklore makes of it, and which folklore you have accepted, hook, line, and sinker. My life, through this, has been fascinating, exciting, varied, stimulating, interesting, full (in every good sense) in a way that it would and could never otherwise have been. I have good and close friends everywhere, in greater number than I think you can imagine. I would not change for all the money in the world. You need have no sense of guilt. I don’t think that you made me as I am in this context. I see nothing to blame you about if you did—you also made me a human and sensitive person; one with a brilliant and trained mind; one with an extraordinary personality (in every good sense), and many other things....

If some of these characterizations of myself seem to you not to be the Franklin you know—remember, also, that I have been telling you, for almost 30 years, that you have never seen the real me. Again, you need feel neither guilt nor grief. If you DID make me as I am—I thank you for it....

With much love,
Franklin

AUDIO: Julius’

HOST: Back in New York, Danny returns to his favorite gay bar, Julius’. He orders a beer and turns around to lean back against the bar and see who comes in. He takes a sip. There’s a tap on his shoulder.

BARTENDER: Turn around and face the bar, please.

DANNY GARVIN: Really? Why?

HOST: Danny looks down the bar. All the patrons are facing the bar.

BARTENDER: Cops come in and see people looking at the door and they know they're cruising. We'll get shut down on solicitation charges.

DANNY GARVIN: What do cops think straight people are in bars for?

HOST: After meeting with Dick Leitsch in the Mattachine offices, the *Post* runs their series of articles on vice cops entrapping gay men, but the abuse of power doesn't stop. The new mayor, Lindsay, orders for a crackdown on Times Square. He wants police to rid the area of—

MAYOR LINDSAY: —honky tonks, promenading perverts...homosexuals and prostitutes.

HOST: The cops take on this mission and then they bring it to Greenwich Village. Chief **Inspector Sanford Garelick** leads a campaign against drugs, congestion, and homosexuals down MacDougal Street. He orders police to seal off 14 blocks where young people typically gather on a Friday night. Fed up, about 1,500 young folks sit down in the street, clapping and chanting,

VILLAGERS: Up with the Village and down with the police!

HOST: Humiliated after half an hour, the Inspector Garelick opens the blockades and allows cars back onto the street. Residents and the press mock the cops for days to come. The mayor's administration holds a meeting at **Judson Memorial Church** in the Village to discuss what needs to be done about neighborhood congestion. Present for the meeting are Chief Inspector Sanford Garelick, Police Commissioner Howard Leary, and human rights commissioner William Booth. Inside the church, Villagers shout at the officials in chaotic anger.

VILLAGERS: [shouting]

HOST: Then, from the back of the chapel,

RANDY WICKER: I'm from a minority group in the community that is rarely heard from. I represent the **Homosexual League of New York**—

HOST: Randy Wicker.

RANDY WICKER: Why aren't private nonracketeer businessmen allowed the legal right to run restaurants for homosexuals just as they run restaurants for heterosexuals?

SANFORD GARELICK: We have to enforce the law on licensed premises. You say repression; I say enforcement.

RANDY WICKER: Are sexual deviates supposed not to eat? And what about those plainclothesmen, whose psychology even the homosexual doesn't understand, who come into places dressed in tight pants to lure people into illicit acts?

SANFORD GARELICK: Entrapment is a violation of our rules and a violation of our procedure.

RANDY WICKER: Plainclothes officers solicit homosexuals in the bars daily.

SANFORD GARELICK: That is unlikely.

HOST: The NYCLU executive director (Aryeh Neier) stands and hustles up to the podium.

NEIER: Officer Garelick is showing a certain naiveté by denying what this young man is saying. It's alarming to think that the Chief Inspector doesn't know that a large number of police spend their duty hours dressed in tight pants, sneakers, and polo sweaters to bring about solicitations.

HOST: The audience stands and cheers, yelling "Bravo!" Dick Leitsch sits back in his pew, watching his well-placed Mattachinos throughout the church meeting stand up and confront the Chief. His plan is working.

AUDIO: cheering fading out

KAY LAHUSEN: Do you think more should come out and join the picket lines?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Well, one thing I would like to see is a kind of respect for self-development among all homosexuals so that they can, they can date in public, for instance, you know, openly. So they can react as other people do to situations publicly, you know. Not become professional homosexuals, but feel a kind of freedom within themselves—I think it's a personal thing. I don't think this is part of the movement. I think this is a personal thing.

BARBARA GITTINGS: But do you think it's possible in the present climate of opinion for homosexuals who have self-confidence in themselves to do this openly?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I think it takes a lot of courage, and I think a lot of people who do it will suffer because of it. But I think any movement needs a certain number of courageous martyrs. There's no getting around it. That's really the only thing that can be done, you have to come out and be strong enough to accept whatever consequences come. I think.

BARBARA GITTINGS: So really you're suggesting that more and more homosexuals declare themselves and act in the ways that they want to, that they would act if the restrictions were removed and the prejudice were removed.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Exactly, I do.

BARBARA GITTINGS: And you think this will help to abate the prejudice in itself?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I do.

AUDIO: phone ringing

HOST: When Dick Leitsch gets home, the night after the town hall at Judson Memorial, an Episcopal priest calls. A heterosexual, calling because he's just been arrested by a plainclothes officer, just a few blocks from that church meeting, at a gay bar called Julius'. Leitsch immediately begins calling all the papers before they go to press with tomorrow's headlines.

April 2, 1966. *The New York Times*:

REPORTER: Garelik Urges Public to Report Trappings of Homosexuals

HOST: Though this headline makes Inspector Garelick look like the hero, the article right next to it tells the story of the heterosexual priest's arrest at Julius'. Back in the Mattachine offices, Dick Leitsch strategizes their next move. The public is becoming much more aware that gay people exist, that they have their own bars, and that police come in to arrest gays and shut down those bars. How do we stop police from being allowed to arrest gay people, at least inside bars? The Mattachine hires an attorney to dig through the New York Alcohol Beverage Control laws. The attorney reports back:

AUDIO: typewriter

HOST: “Contrary to the contention of many bar operators, there is no provision in New York which flatly prohibits homosexuals from gathering in bars and there is no provision which flatly prohibits bars from serving homosexuals.” But the attorney adds that it does say bars can’t become “disorderly.” The lawmakers interpret “disorderly” however they want. Perhaps as a place full of homosexuals—because homos are probably all on the brink of sodomy in there! So if the bar is full of gays, it can be closed on this vague notion of disorder. If you heard season 2, this is a tale as old as time.

The Mattachine determines that they need to get the State Liquor Authority to define “disorderly.” Get it on the record. The best way to get the state to act on this is to force them to look at it.

Music fades.

KAY LAHUSEN: Are there any ways in which you think our own movement could emulate the Negro or other movements that it’s not doing right now?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I don’t find in the homophile movement enough stress on courtroom action. That is, I can’t envision at this point President Johnson coming out in favor of a bill for homosexual rights to work in government today. I can’t even envision there being any kind of bill comparable to the 1954 education bill. I would like to see more test cases in court so the thing can be brought out in the open. I think the more we have of this, I think we have very little of it now as far as I know.

BARBARA GITTINGS: But what about charges from the heterosexuals that this makes it a procuring agency for homosexuals?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: **I think we have to decide how far we can go for caring about what heterosexuals think.** You know. We want acceptance and we want our rights as citizens and as people, but this doesn’t mean that all of our activity and all of our goals are defined by other people’s filthy minds.

Act 2

AUDIO: Greenwich Village winds

HOST: **April 21, 1966.** Reporters gather outside a Ukrainian-American Village restaurant. Like many establishments in large cities, this restaurant has a hand-written sign saying “If You Are Gay, Please Go Away.” A press release sent yesterday by the Mattachine Society of New York told every paper in the city that a demonstration will be held today in this restaurant at noon. It’s now noon, and no homosexuals have made themselves known.

One of the reporters goes inside and checks with the manager to see what he thinks about the expected demonstration. He had no idea it was coming. He asks the reporter — and his customers — to leave, and he closes up shop for the day.

AUDIO: door locks

HOST: Ten minutes late, Dick Leitsch and John Timmons arrive representing the Mattachine Society.

LUCY KOMISAR, VILLAGE VOICE: Kentucky-born Dick Leitsch, 21, president of the society, explains that Mattachine refers to the masked Italian court jesters of the 16th century who were the only people allowed to speak the truth to the king. He's conservatively dressed in a well-cut gray suit with narrow blue stripes and a light blue shirt. With a black attaché case in hand, he is the picture of a Madison Avenue executive.

HOST: Dick's friend John insisted on also inviting Craig Rodwell, even though Craig quit the Mattachine because they didn't support his progressive ideas — such as a storefront combination bookstore and counseling service for the community. (Put a pin in that.) And of course, because he wants the support of another radical, Craig Rodwell invited Randy Wicker, PR queen. Dick Leitsch is already annoyed that Randy stood up at the church event saying he represented his own Homosexual League of New York, rather than saying the Mattachine, for which he is secretary. By the time the four of them arrive to the restaurant demonstration, the reporters are standing in front of the closed business wondering if they should stick around.

DICK LEITSCH: Let's try the bar across the street, the Dom.

HOST: Also closed.

RANDY WICKER: It's about a 10-minute walk to Howard Johnson's on Sixth and 8th. Let's try there.

HOST: It doesn't matter exactly where they go, as long as they announce that they're homosexuals and they are refused service.

Modeled on the **Civil Rights movement's sit-ins**, once the four activists are refused a drink, they plan to file a complaint against the State Liquor Authority for forcing bars to follow a vague policy — a policy that goes against a specific minority group's constitutional rights to free assembly and equal accommodation. And the Mattachinos brought reporters and photographers to get it all on camera for the papers, including the *New York Times*. They've gotta get this right today.

MUSIC: 1960s diner

HOST: **Howard Johnson's** is a good spot to make it happen because street queens who need a decent meal often go there to, as they say, "eat and tip"...out the door. A dine and dash. This restaurant is likely to shut the homosexuals down, it's not unheard of. At the table, the men order drinks and Dick Leitsch reads a statement to the waitress:

DICK LEITSCH: We are homosexuals. We believe that a place of public accommodation has an obligation to serve an orderly person, and that we are entitled to service so long as we are orderly.

HOST: The manager cracks up.

EMILE VARELA: Ha! Bring over some bourbon for these nicely dressed men. Why shouldn't they be served a drink? They look like perfect gentlemen to me.

HOST: The Mattachinos down their drinks, pay, and look for a new location.

EMILE VARELA: It's pretty ridiculous that anybody should determine what anybody's sex life is. I think there's plenty of lawmakers whose sex life I could challenge—and they drink too.

RANDY WICKER: We agree. Thank you, sir.

CRAIG RODWELL: How about the Waikiki on Sixth?

MUSIC: The Waikiki

DICK LEITSCH: We are homosexuals. We believe that a place of public accommodation has an obligation to serve an—

WAITER: How do I know you're homosexuals? Give these guys a drink on us!

JOHN TIMMONS: I'm starting to feel drunk. We better get this done already.

CRAIG RODWELL: I guess we give up.

HOST: A reporter leans in.

NYT REPORTER: You can't give up! You gotta make your point.

HOST: At this point, the reporters probably want to get their story.

DICK LEITSCH: Well, even a priest was arrested at Julius' last week. They definitely won't serve us.

RANDY WICKER: It's not far.

CRAIG RODWELL: They threw me out just for wearing a button that said "Equality for Homosexuals."

MUSIC: Julius'

HOST: The four men enter Julius', reporters following behind them. It's fairly busy and the bartender, in a tie and a light cardigan, turns to them.

DICK LEITSCH: We are homosexuals and we would like a drink. We believe that a place of public accommodation has an obligation—

BARTENDER: Just have a seat and face the bar.

HOST: He points at the sign: "Patrons Must Face the Bar While Drinking"

DICK LEITSCH: We are homosexuals and we would like a drink—

BARTENDER: I don't know what you're trying to prove, but a man was arrested by a plainclothes cop here last night, so our license is in hot water as it is. Face the bar and drink.

RANDY WICKER: It's a closet queen bar, Dick. They don't want the press.

DICK LEITSCH [to bartender]: Excuse me. Can I have a word?

HOST: Dick takes the bartender aside.

DICK LEITSCH: Refusing us service might actually help you out with your license issue. I represent the Mattachine Society of New York. If you don't serve us, you'll be following the law, and the Mattachine will get your bar legal assistance when we fight the State Liquor Authority.

HOST: Dick returns to the bar with the activists and the bartender takes his place behind the counter and pours the men a drink.

AUDIO: pouring a drink

DICK LEITSCH: We are homosexuals.

HOST: The bartender puts his hand over the glass.

BARTENDER: I can't serve you.

AUDIO: camera flash

REPORTER: Why can't you?

BARTENDER: [smug] I think it's the law.

DICK LEITSCH: The Mattachine Society of New York will be filing a complaint with the State Liquor Authority.

AUDIO: 1966 Gittings, Tobin, & Eckstein discuss the slow pace of the movements for their rights as minorities.

BARBARA GITTINGS: What do you think of this, this attitude on the part of homosexuals who are impatient to have their rights now and not simply wait for the slow process of change?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Well, speaking for a moment of the other minority, the Negro minority. I feel, I find it very difficult to wait as a Negro. I think, though, in the homophile movement, you have a different kind of situation. I don't think you have any choice but to wait. That is, I think we cannot be as radical as homosexuals as we can, as we could, and as we do, as Negroes. Because the Negro cause is already widely accepted, you know. You know, the right of a man to vote and to work and to go to school regardless of color. The homosexual cause is not yet accepted, and I think this has to come first. The acceptance. Then you can push as far and as often and as hard as you like.

MUSIC: News

NYT REPORTER: 3 Deviates Invite Exclusion by Bars

HOST: The next day, the *New York Times* tells the story of **the “Sip-in.”** Two weeks later, the *Village Voice* prints their story along with Fred McDarrah’s famous photograph of the bartender’s hand over the glass during the Sip-in at Julius’ — which you can see on my Instagram @queerserial or at queerserial.com/s3e6. A few days after the event, the State Liquor Authority tells the press they—

CHAIRMAN HOSTETTER: —would take no action against bartenders or liquor licensees who refuse to serve drinks to homosexuals.

REPORTER: What about the complaint from the Mattachine Society stating that the State is denying homosexuals their constitutional right to assembly?

CHAIRMAN HOSTETTER: We would take no action on such a complaint. This might be a matter for the Commission on Human Rights.

HOST: Human Rights Commissioner William Booth, who was at that Village church meeting, tells the *Times*,

COMMISSIONER BOOTH: We have jurisdiction over discrimination based on sex. Denial of bar service to a homosexual solely for that reason would come within those bounds.

HOST: The State Liquor Authority is attempting to slip out of the Sip-in’s trap, by having the city say it’s only legal for the city to investigate discrimination based on sex. If a bar refuses to serve gays, there’s nothing the city can do about it. (The same argument will one day be made for wedding cakes.) So the State Liquor Authority decides to clarify their bigotry a little more: Gays can gather and be served, the state says, but the bar must not become “disorderly.” Again, vague. They say, “disorderly” means gays can’t touch, kiss, or dance—like heterosexuals do in their bars. The Sip-in brings widespread attention to the issue, but the State continues to wiggle their way out of responsibility.

April 26, 1966:

NYT REPORTER: S.L.A. Won’t Act Against Bars Refusing Service to Deviates

HOST: It’s the sort of ‘two steps forward, one step back’ type of activism that many homophiles are becoming impatient with. Like the New York State Liquor Authority not taking any action against the bars refusing to serve queers. The Sip-In has highlighted the problem, made it a huge point of conversation, but it hasn’t solved the problem. That said, it’s better than doing nothing. At the Daughters of the Bilitis, their own founders, Del and Phyllis, are still frustrated with the organization’s frequent discouragement of actions like sip-ins and pickets.

AUDIO: typewriter

DEL MARTIN: I have carefully considered my actions and my decisions in participating in the Bilitis Council. The time is now—and I am committed. There is no time to wait for the machinery of DOB to gear itself into action.

HOST: In May, homophile organizations across the nation, from Philly to LA, ready their Armed Forces Day signs to protest the exclusion of gays from the military. On **May 21, 1966**, Washington's Mattachine marches from the White House to the Pentagon. 300 San Franciscan homophiles say the "Pledge of Allegiance" outside their Federal Building (yikes), while Los Angeles puts on the first gay motorcade for their protest—13 cars with signs. Don Slater of LA writes to Frank that their city will not enforce the uptight dress code, that the general public will have to accept that homosexuals are "both the bizarre and the ordinary."

The next month, **June '66**, DOB co-founder Del Martin writes to current president Shirley Willer and her partner Marion Glass in June:

DEL MARTIN: DOB here offered little support to the Council on Religion and the Homosexual's Candidates Night or to the Protest Day. As a consequence, Phyllis and I find ourselves moving in a direction that no longer encompasses DOB, and we have become more involved with CRH and Citizens Alert. This is an era of change, and both of these organizations represent action and change. We wish to be helpful to you, but cannot see our way clear to continued involvement with the S.F. chapter. We would prefer to remain inactive members.

KAY LAHUSEN: Are you thought of as a radical among lesbians?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Well. That's really a very hard question to answer. I personally consider myself, um, very average and normal in every sense the word. Not radical, but just simply... This to me is the way to be. Now, I think compared to other lesbians, my ideas are farther to the left than theirs are. Most lesbians that I know endorse picketing but would not themselves picket... Picketing, I regard it as very, almost a conservative activity now. Sit-ins, you know, and that kind of thing are the thing. And all of this is the educational process of calling attention to the unjustness of the situation, which is the same thing the Negro did.

KAY LAHUSEN: Then we're back again to the professional persons who say, "Don't picket," which is a form of political action, but educate in these sort of namby-pamby ways, I suppose you would say.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Yeah, that to me is a difference in definition of education.

BARBARA GITTINGS: You define the picketing as a form of education?

KAY LAHUSEN: I define it that way, too.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Definitely, there is no question about that.

KAY LAHUSEN: Would you like to see some picketing pictures? I think this one is very good of you.

BARBARA GITTINGS: If you would agree to a front cover...

HOST: Ernestine does agree to be on the cover of *The Ladder*, a bold move in 1966. They discuss how to safely publish her image.

BARBARA GITTINGS: Well, listen, Ernestine, I have a feeling there might be a way of taking a picture of you for the cover that would not imply that your features are being concealed, but that nonetheless would have this effect. Kay has an example, look.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Any way you can do it.

KAY LAHUSEN: There are several ways. You can blur somebody going along on a motor scooter or... if you have a motor scooter.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: As long, as long as my supervisor in the office could not look at this and say, "Now, Ernestine, I recognize your eyes in that," you know. Really, I'm willing to try anything.

KAY LAHUSEN: Picture of a girl like this that's a half face that we're going to be using sometime soon.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

HOST: They finish up the interview with one final, big question.

KAY LAHUSEN: When you said you thought the leaders should concentrate less on the personal problems of the membership, what did you mean as opposed to that? That they should concentrate on helping the minority as opposed to the individual?

ERNESTINE: There are certain broad problems we have across the board, and we should concentrate on those, anything that can affect us all—like the transvestites.

KAY LAHUSEN: I'm surprised you threw that in, the transvestites. You mean that we should think about their right to dress as they please without discrimination or...?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: You see, I feel that the homophile movement is only part of a much larger movement of the erasure of labels. And I think the right of a person to dress as he chooses must necessarily follow when we expand our own philosophy of bringing about change for the homosexual. When we get to that point, if we ever do, it will mean that people can dress as they like.

KAY LAHUSEN: They have two organizations of their own and they're really a vast, vast number of people just don't realize how many heterosexual men would like to let go and be feminine in this way.

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Yeah, well I'm not saying it's exclusively a homosexual problem, but I am saying it's a problem of sexual identity. You know. And so far as society's concerned, the two are lumped together. And therefore, once we solve ours, I see no reason why we cannot begin to expand into other areas. And this one is so closely allied to our own.

BARBARA GITTINGS: You think you'll still be around when that time comes?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: Uh no, I don't think it'll be in my lifetime, no, no. Just projecting.

ERNESTINE, BARBARA, KAY: [laughter]

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I'm being a social prophet but it's the goal I think to work for.

AUDIO: camera flashes

HOST: Back inside the Daughters of Bilitis, many members are increasingly frustrated with the editors of their magazine. Barbara Gittings is allowing more men to write for *The Ladder*, like Frank Kameny. Some readers want the writing to focus solely on women's issues, not gay issues in general, and multiple-page letters from readers are sent to the DOB board complaining. Barbara and Kay are also dedicating so much time to picketing and other demonstrations that some *Ladder* issues aren't being put together on time. Barbara and Kay will be let go from *The Ladder* and will turn to focus solely on the radical work with Frank Kameny in Washington.

The day after the Armed Forces Day protest, Kameny packs for a trip to New York to speak at a rally for Ernestine Eckstein's DOB chapter. He wants to speak about militant actions. Frank predicts that if government agencies don't start listening to actions like the Sip-in, there may soon be—

FRANK KAMENY: —popular demonstrations by the homosexual community at large, which will be far less responsible, controlled, and orderly.

KAY LAHUSEN: Ernestine, do you believe in any forms of **civil disobedience** for the homophile movement at this time?

ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN: I think our movement is not ready for any forms of civil disobedience. I think this would solidify resistance to our cause. This situation will change eventually. But not now.

HOST: Meanwhile, Randy Wicker slowly departs from the Mattachine Society of New York as he makes profits selling gay buttons. He opens a radical button shop called **Underground Uplift Unlimited**. His political buttons are always a hit at parties. They say things like “Fornication Is Fun” and “Batman Loves Robin.” He sells thousands. People want to stand out against conformity. Similarly, Craig Rodwell works on Fire Island to save up for his dream of a gay storefront—a bookstore for the gay community.

Bars in other states begin to get in touch with Mattachine of New York to fight their own state's laws. With Mattachine's help on the case, the New Jersey Supreme Court rules that “well-behaved homosexuals” can't be denied service, writing, “In our culture, homosexuals are indeed unfortunates...their status does not make them criminals or outlaws.” While New York State still refuses to make bar owners serve openly gay citizens, letters flood Mayor Lindsay's office. Around this time, an off-duty transit officer shoots and kills two gay men cruising the waterfront one night, and the officer is not indicted by the grand jury. Homosexuals can clearly see that their city will not willingly protect them.

AUDIO: typewriter

BARBARA GITTINGS: Homosexuals in New York City may no longer have to fear being entrapped by plainclothesmen, if the police department keeps its recent promise to end the practice of entrapment,

HOST: *The Ladder* very optimistically reports in **June 1966**.

A few months after the Sip-in, Barbara and Kay's interview with Ernestine Eckstein in *The Ladder* hits the stands. It's eight pages long, running right before their story on Dick

Leitsch and entrapment. The issue features Ernestine on the cover. She's wearing her fur-collar coat and smiling in profile. Of course, you can see this right now on Instagram @queerserial or at queerserial.com/s3e6. By now, June of '66, Ernestine is no longer Vice President of the Bilitis New York chapter. Perhaps she stepped down because the group is so conservative, as she touched on in the interview. When she invited Frank Kameny to speak for the chapter, they overruled and she had to disinvite Frank. Soon, Ernestine will quit the Daughters all together and move across the country to the Bay Area to join the **Black Women Organized for Action**. There are tough fights she's much more willing to wage than the slow-moving homophiles. Ernestine needs to take action. She feels the temperature rising. Everyone does.

In two months, another battle in San Francisco will send the police running into the streets of the Tenderloin... No city is safe. As queers become more open, the crackdowns become more intense.

AUDIO: typewriter

BARBARA GITTINGS: Months ago, the *New York Post* ran a 5-part series of articles about the Vice Squad, highlighting the tactics police use to lure citizens into making illegal solicitations so that the officers can then arrest them to meet vice-squad quotas... Still entrapment continued—and so did the disavowals by police officials.

HOST: Under pressure, Mayor Lindsay invites representatives from the Village to a private meeting about the city's clean-up attempts. Dick Leitsch brings up entrapment. The mayor denounces police entrapping homosexuals and orders a directive for plainclothes officers not to entice homosexuals into illicit overtures. If arrests are to be made, a civilian witness should be present, he says.

AUDIO: typewriter

BARBARA GITTINGS: But it remains to be seen whether the New York police are only making public-relations noises for the moment and whether entrapment will be resumed.

MUSIC: "The Skull"

HOST: The police now technically can't entrap homosexuals or use entrapment arrests to shut down a gay bar. But, ah, a tale as old as time: Police are told they can't do something, so they find a way around the rule. As the Mattachine continues to report several cases of officers blackmailing, shaking down, and beating gay citizens, it's clear to the city that being queer is still grounds for other types of police action. It's basically *still illegal* to be gay.

And when there's something illegal that a lot of people want to do, establishments are quickly thrown together by the Mafia... And the spaces they create are not at all safe.

NYT REPORTER: **Nationwide Ring Preying on Prominent Deviates.** Eminent educators, including at least two deans of Eastern universities, prominent theatrical personalities and officers of the armed services all homosexual have been the victims of an extortion ring that has operated throughout the nation for nearly 10 years...

HOST: Next week, episode 7, "Street Power."

Season 3, Episode 6-A: "Nationwide Ring Preying on Prominent Deviates"

Mini-episode released May 22, 2021

AUDIO: typewriter

NYT REPORTER: *New York Times*. **March 3, 1966.** Eminent educators, including at least two deans of Eastern universities, prominent theatrical personalities and officers of the armed services—all homosexual—have been the victims of an extortion ring that has operated throughout the nation for nearly 10 years.

MUSIC: "The Skull"

So brazen is the operation that in one instance two gang members, posing as New York city detectives, walked into the Pentagon and walked out with a high officer in the armed services. The man, whom they shook down for several thousand dollars, committed suicide that night before he was scheduled to testify before a New York County grand jury. This was learned yesterday from the police and sources in the District Attorney's office. It was also learned that more than a thousand victims had paid millions of dollars in extortion, with some individuals paying more than \$20,000 to ring members posing as policemen. Only a small number of persons have been willing to sign complaints. District Attorney Frank S. Hogan announced last Feb. 17 the indictment of 17 defendants on charges of extortion from homosexuals and reported that nine were in custody. At the time, he said the victims who had made complaints had given \$15,529 to the gang.

It came to light yesterday, however, that the report on the extent of the ring's operation had only touched the surface. With about 25 members, the ring worked with what are called decoys, or "chickens," and phony policemen. The decoy would lure the victim to a hotel room, usually from a midtown bar, and get him into a compromising situation. Then one of two things would follow.

A bogus policeman would break in and threaten the victim with arrest and disclosure unless he paid off or the decoy would assault the victim and steal his money and credentials. The credentials would then be sent to bogus policemen who would shake down the victim at a later date. Mr. Hogan has said that the police in cities in various parts of the country had been asked to apprehend several of the men who had been indicted. To illustrate the scope of the operation, he explained that a New York businessman who had been beaten up in Chicago and had had his identification stolen there was greeted some time after in New York by two bogus policemen who had his credentials. They said they were Chicago police and shook him down for \$2,000. The "police members" carried fake shields and, in many cases, also had official police forms. It was reported that the police forms had been obtained from a New York patrolman who is no longer in the department.

In one case, the extortionists put a leading New York narcotics seller in a compromising situation. That seller, now serving a Federal prison term, had \$11,000 stolen from his apartment as well as \$100,000 worth of heroin that the gang members threw into a sewer. One victim was a musician who has made numerous appearances on television; one currently is a partner in a well-known night-spot and another is a leading motion-picture actor. Others included accountants; heads of business firms; an assistant principal of an Eastern school who is now living in the Midwest; a director of an art gallery; a trustee of a university who has since resigned; a number of professors and a much-admired television personality. Some of the victims came from Canada and Mexico. When efforts were made to get the television personality to testify before the grand jury, he declined with the comment: "I can afford to lose the money. I hope they die of cancer."

The gang preyed on others besides homosexuals. It was said that bogus detectives carried out innumerable raids on policy banks, particularly in Harlem, and took hundreds of dollars from the bankers. Some of the policy racketeers who lost money to the thieves had reportedly testified before the grand jury.

Over the years, it was explained, a number of the ring members have been convicted of various offenses, have served time in jail and have returned to the ring. One source close to the inquiry said that it definitely was a single ring in which all the members were acquainted with each other, rather than isolated independent operations. Sources in both the District Attorney's office and the Police Department confirmed a report that a number of other arrests were expected shortly.

HOST: The extortionists hit nearly a thousand gay men and take a total of \$2 million. More victims are reported in the news: the head of the American Medical Association, two army generals, Admiral William Church of the New York Naval Yards, a *Republican* member of Congress from New Jersey (no surprise), a Princeton professor, a British producer, and two well-known American singers. They escort that congressman out of his

Capitol Hill office to fly him home to get \$50,000. They pull a surgeon out of the operating room. They even track down a nuclear scientist on the West Coast at his job, and when the scientist's boss walks in, he panics and says these are his detective friends from New York they'd like a tour of this highly secure nuclear plant – which they get. That scientist is invited to New York to testify against those bogus officers, but he refuses to even believe the officers were fake because New York police already have a reputation for blackmailing homosexuals. The stories continue to pile up.

AUDIO: typewriters

REPORTER 2: 17 Indicted in Hush-Money Shakedown (Herald Tribune, 1966)

NYT REPORTER: Nine Seized Here in Extortion Ring” (NYT, February 18, 1966)

REPORTER 3: 3 Indicted Here as Sex Extorters (NYT, June 1, 1966)

REPORTER 4: Grab City Cop as Sex-Blackmail Kingpin (Chicago Sun-Times, June 25, 1966)

NYT REPORTER: Detective Accused as a Top Extorter (NYT, July 1, 1966)

REPORTER 5: Blackmailer of Deviates Gets 5 Years (New York Post, August 16, 1966)

REPORTER 6: Gets 5 Years in Extortion of Homosexuals (Daily News, 1966)

NYT REPORTER: Blackmailer Gets Five-Year Sentence in Homosexual Case (NYT, August 17, 1966)

REPORTER 6: Gets 5 Yrs. in Extortion of Homos (Daily News, August 17, 1966)

REPORTER 4: Lands at JFK, FBI Is There (Daily News, September 18, 1966)

NYT REPORTER: Blackmail Paid by Congressman (NYT, August 17, 1967)

REPORTER 2: 2 Found Guilty in Chicago in Extortion of Homosexual (NYT, December 9, 1967)

REPORTER 5: More Indictments Due in Blackmail Case (New York Post, September 28, 1966)

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