



Oral History Interview of Tony DeBlase
by Jack Rinella

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JR: This is January 14, 1996, and I'm Jack Rinella, interviewing Tony DeBlase. Tony, would you spell your last name for me?

TD: D-E-capital B-L-A-S-E.

JR: Okay. And when were you born:

TD: April 3, 1942.

JR: Where?

TD: South Bend, Indiana

JR: When did you first self-identify as a gay man?

TD: Sometime in high school, I don't know. I realized that all I was fantasizing about was boys, at that point.

JR: And where'd you go to high school?

TD: LaFayette, Indiana.

JR: And college?

TD: Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

JR: And you got a degree?

TD: Went on to graduate degree, Oklahoma State University for a Ph.D. in Zoology.

JR: Okay. Was that right out of college, you went on for the Ph.D.?

TD: No, I spent a few years working for Earlham, as assistant of museums.

JR: And then did you eventually, you moved to Chicago?

TD: Yeah.

JR: When was that?

TD: I moved to Chicago in 1969.

JR: In '69, did you feel part of the gay community at that time? Were you out?

TD: No, in '69, I was married.

JR: Okay.

TD: I got married in '69. The woman had been my secretary while I was museum directory. She had polio as a child and was confined to a wheel chair. Told her I was gay. I loved her very much. We had several good years together.

JR: And when did you move to Chicago? Oh, you moved to Chicago in?

TD: Sixty-nine.

JR: Sixty-nine, okay. And you were still married at the time?

TD: I had just gotten married.

JR: Okay. What were you doing when you came to Chicago?: What brought you here?

TD: The most important thing was that I was writing my dissertation. I had been on an expedition to Iran with the Field Museum. All of my collections that I needed to work on dissertation were in the Field Museum. And among the numerous jobs I got offered, as an ABD, Alber Dissertation graduate out of Oklahoma State, was a one year teaching position at Roosevelt. I came and I took that because it was right across the park from the collection. And I needed to work. The end of one year, however, it was gone. And during that one year, the bottom had fallen out of the academic marketplace. And while I had seven job offers in '68, excuse me, '69, in 1970 there were no jobs to be had anywhere. So we went back to Oklahoma, where I did some teaching assistant and the college, while I finished up my dissertation.

JR: When did you-and how did you enter the gay community per se- When would that have been?

TD: Ah-my first experience with another man was while living in Chicago and before going off to Iran on expedition. You spend the nights at the Layson Y, drooling. And I did make contact there one evening and had my first fling. After coming back, answered an ad and met somebody in Oklahoma while I was in school, before I was married. Actually, came to Chicago, started an apartment and met a guy here that I again, answered an ad. Went to the Gold Coast for the first time ever. Got a little taste of what it was like and then went off and got married. And didn't do much for most of those years. Would occasionally go to the bars when my wife was out of town, that sort of thing, but didn't do much, didn't meet many people.

And finally, I got up the nerve to answer some ads that had leatherish things. Actually, the most important thing was I had started- was always writing because I was writing SM long before I did it. And Larry Townsend had published a lot of my stuff, long before I was doing it.

JR: Under what name?

TD: Under the name of Fledermaus.

JR: And how do you spell that?

TD: F-L-E-D-E-R-M-A-U-S. Its a German word for bat. What Larry said that he wanted to publish one of my stories, I had to figure out a pseudonym. Since I was doing my dissertation on bats, and the story was set in a German castle, it seemed like an appropriate name. Anyway, I had been writing. I don't remember whether he answered my ad or I answered his, but I hot a hold of Jerry L, who was, of course, interested in Meeting Fledermaus, since he has a fetish for all kind of porn writing. And went over to his house one evening. The first time I was every really in a real gay, and particularly a leather porn, if you will. And you know, spent a couple of hours looking through his collection and talking about porn and that kind of stuff. Low and behold, four or five members of Chicago Hellfire Club show up. And we're just lounging around, talking. I just sat there, fascinated, and didn't want to leave. And Jerry invited me back to a party he was having. And then met Tony P at that, and many other people.

JR: What year would this have been?

TD: Must have been '75, '76. I could find out by going digging through records, but I don't know exactly, mid '70s.

JR: Were you still married at this time?

TD: My wife died in '76, March of ?76. But I was-yeah, I was still married when this going on. What was I talking about?

JR: The party.

TD: Oh, met Tony P. And, as he still does, Tony was one of the main instigators of inviting me to the next party that Hellfire was throwing. That hooked me right there. I never went back after that.

JR: You what?

TD: I've stayed active in SM ever since then. And that was the real coming out.

JR: Did you join Hellfire?

TD: Not for a couple of years. I went to- went to a lot of the play parties they had before there were Infernos. Went to Inferno 5, which was the first Inferno. Went to 6, and it was just before 7-or just after 6 or after 7, I don't remember which, they decided essentially to have a rush party. And invited a lot of people who had been attending parties to come to a special play party with the intent of, you know, talking about possible membership. I'm on of the many people who did join at that time.

JR: That was the time when the Hellfire Club had a very low membership, if I remember correctly?

TD: Hmm-I'd say there were probably ten or twelve.

JR: Cause I've heard about that rush party. What were you doing for a living in '76?

TD: After a year back in Oklahoma, well, let me back up again. During that year I was teaching up here and doing research at the Field Museum, the Museum decided to they wanted somebody to be a weekend supervisor. They realized that Saturdays and Sundays were their highest attendance days of the year. And the highest ranking person in the building was a sergeant of the guards. So they wanted somebody in there on the weekend who would just be able to handle problems that might come up. And I had spent several years in museum administration before going off to grad school. And they offered me the job of doing weekend supervising. I did. And after, you know, I spent that year doing that with them, they seemed to like the job I did. And after going back to the graduate school for a year, to write-I still wasn't done with the dissertation and still couldn't find jobs, and they offered me a position as chief of security and visitor services. They've had in a security professional, who just couldn't understand how museums operated. And they decided that instead of going that way, they'd rather get somebody in who understood museums, and let them learn security. So came in as chief of security and visitor services, and was there for nine years.

JR: So really, your introduction to leather in Chicago was in '76 or thereabouts?

TD: Thereabout. Well, before that. Alice died in March of '76 and I had been involved in it on a catch-as-catch-can basis for a year or so before that.

JR: You know, in the early '70s, a lot was going on in Chicago, in terms of gay activity. I take it, you weren't really a part of it, though?

TD: No.

JR: Would you call yourself an active observer or were you so far closeted that was?

TD: No, I was definitely an active observer.

JR: How did you hear about Stonewall? Lets go back to '69-do you remember?

TD: I think on the radio. The radio, I think, there were these riots going on, I though, "Goody. Wonderful." And I was a subscriber to the Advocate from the beginning, got a log of news that way.

JR: Did you go to the Gold Coast very often in the '70s?

TD: Ah-before Alice died, I would go there infrequently. You know, a couple of times a year maybe. After she died, went there quite often. Actually, I had met Andrew at a New Year's Party, on New Year's of '76. So we met just before she died, just a couple of months before she died. And he and I became closer and closer over that year. We went to the Gold Coast occasionally, but we did things ourselves more often. And went to all the Hellfire parties together.

JR: I'm going to jump up to 1976 then. September of '76 was Inferno number 5. Could you tell me about it? Where was it, for instance?

TD: At an old church camp or girl scout camp, I never know exactly what it had been, called Camp Malibu, up very close to where Great America is, north of Chicago. I just asked Tony P last night how they decided to go from-you know, who decided, "let's go out in the country and the woods and play," instead of going over to someone's house to play. Cause that was really the only difference between it. And he said that he thinks it was probably he and Jerry, were the main ones behind getting that move made. But anyway, I-we, Andrew and I, had been to many of the Hellfire parties, both at the original clubhouse, out in Oak Park, and they were holding several parties at the Barracks Hotel, which was a sleazy joint across, almost across the street, from the Gold Coast. Actually, some of the parties there were some of my first exposure to real SM. Then we went out to-well, we went to Inferno, and it was Friday night at the bar. I think it was the Gold Coast, probably. It was before the days of Touche's. We went to the bar for the usually bar night. And then on Saturday night, everyone went out to Camp Malibu, and got your sheets and found a bunk and had dinner and then play party started. And Saturday morning, you got up-no?

JR: It was Sunday.

TD: It was Saturday night in the bar-Friday night at the bar, Saturday afternoon you went out to Camp Malibu, Saturday night play, and Sunday morning, you get up and have brunch and go home.

JR: About how many people were at it? Do you remember:

TD: A hundred maybe. That would be my guess. And it was open to anybody that wanted to come. It was before the days when it was by invitation only. In fact, there were posters distributed all over the place, advertising just like any other run. Five was that way, six was that way, by seven, I-I think I was a member by seven, I don't remember if it was seven or eight. I was definitely a member before eight. We had started having-the reputation of Inferno was growing at that point then. We started getting people in from other parts of the country to attend Inferno. And it was one of the main complaints was that "I spend all my money to get here, and it's only one night. Why don't we play Friday night, too? Why can't we go two nights?" And sounded reasonable to me and so I started arguing that point in the club. And many people were saying, "Oh my God, no. You'll kill yourself. There's no way people can keep that intensity up for two whole nights. It's too intense. What would they do all day and between the two nights? If they tried to keep up the same level of play activity, they'd be dead the second night. And you can't get them bored because if they all go off and scatter to bars and things, that won't work. They might not come back or they'll find some trick to go home with. Or they'll find some trick that they'll want to bring back the second night, and that creates a problem." So I told them, you don't worry about it. I will come up with things to keep them occupied with during the day and there'll be two nights of play. I'll come up with things to keep them occupied. And they took me by my word and said, "Okay." And that's when I designed the first sets of lectures and demos and contests to run during the day.

JR: What year would that have been?

TD: Whenever Inferno 8 was. I'd have to look at a time line. Let me figure it out?

JR: So what kinds of things did you do then during that free time during that Saturday?

TD: We had bondage contests. We had rubber demonstrations, talks. We had whipping demonstrations. I think we had an electro-torture demo. All sorts of things. I have the whole list somewhere. We had a few things. It didn't work. I tried the master-slave contest that year. And had a hell of a time getting people willing to do it. Because I had set it up so that masters and slaves entered as partners. And in those days, to get a top to enter a contest was like pulling teeth. They did not want to get out there and be judged. They did not want

anybody making critical evaluations of their performances. Bottoms were willing to do it, but not tops.

JR: In May of '77, there was a what was called the Orange Ball, held at the Aragon Theater to raise money for to support the gays in Florida against Anita Bryant. Were you part of any of the protests or Bryant when she came here to Chicago and what not?

TD: No. Again, I was an observer. I definitely was not a political activist in those days.

JR: Do you remember something called the Prairie Fire Run? Held in July of '78, Gurner, Illinois?

TD: Certainly do.

JR: Can you tell me about it?

TD: The Chicago Conference of Clubs had been formed for the express purpose of preventing conflicts in date utilization among organizations. In the Chicago Conference, each club had one vote in deciding what you would do. Work assignments were assigned on the size of the club. Chicago Hellfire Club was a different kind of club than the others. So we'd go to Chicago Conference Club events, or functions, meetings, and we would be usually be voting no to the proposal, whatever they wanted to do. But since we were the largest club in the organization, we always got stuck with doing the major work for it. Needless to say, Chicago Hellfire Club wasn't particularly happy with the Chicago Conference because of this. Prairie Fire was the straw that broke the camels back. We had been holding Inferno on the same date every year for several years. Chicago Conference decided that they were going to show an all-conference run and scheduled it for the same date as Inferno. As far as I knew, the purpose of the organization was to prevent scheduling conflicts. That's when Hellfire dropped out of Chicago Conference.

JR: But you went to the run anyway? No, you did not go.

TD: I went to Inferno the same weekend.

JR: Oh, it was in July that year?

TD: Prairie Fire was in July?

JR: My thing say July of '78.

TD: Maybe the first one was July and the second one-I didn't go because-actually, I didn't go to any club runs in those days because they weren't - I was interested in SM, not in motorcycles, not in going off into the woods and

fucking. I was interested in tying somebody up and using a whip or something. And I'd rather go to the ballet than go to one of those.

JR: What about the first IML contest in May of '79? Were you part of that?

TD: It was delightful. I was in the audience. I watched it. And it was neat to see so many people brought together for it, to see the guys strut their stuff. Fascinating. And to be doing it in a hotel ballroom, but still. Sheraton Hotel on North Michigan Avenue, I think that's where it was.

JR: In October, of '79, three men, Sudsbury, Ashe and Blaisdale [sp?], started MAFIA. Do you remember any of that happening?

TD: Yeah.

JR: Can you tell me about any of these three guys?

TD: Well, I knew Glen and Donovan [Ashe} very well. They-Sudsy and Donna would come to Inferno every year. It was along about Inferno 6 or 7 that we decided that fisting was really catching on at that point and it took a different kind of atmosphere for play than the dungeon did. And we split off and opened the first-it was the first time that we had a dungeon and another building. We had Casa Crisco, that became the fisting house. And actually, MAFIA, as soon as they were organized, took over running Casa Crisco from Inferno. I was never into fisting myself, so I was not active in the group. But I'm all aware of it.

JR: Did you go to the National March on Washington in '79?

TD: Not the one in '79.

JR: Well, in November of '79, you started publishing Dungeon Master. How did that happen?

TD: I was getting tired of things at the museum. I was also doing part-time teaching during this period, at Roosevelt, when I came back to Chicago. They had been happy the one year I had spent there and put me on as a part-time faculty member. And so I was teaching at Roosevelt as well. So I had several graduate students. One of my graduate students-well, many of my graduate students, of course, got teaching jobs-well, one of my best ones went off into teaching, she was a good friend. We stayed in contact for several years. I realized that after three years of teaching in Chicago Public Schools, she was making about twice I was making as chief of security, responsible for a multi-million dollar collection at the Field Museum. That got me a little pissed. And I had-it was obvious that I had reached a ceiling over there. I was having trouble getting salary increases or anything else. My job performance was fine. I had no problems with my supervisors and their reviews. But one of the assistant directors would just not approve anything for me. I later realized it was

because probably he realized I was gay. By this time, I wasn't hiding it anymore. Andrew was participating as my significant other at events, etc. So I think that was probably it. After talking to him, I decided that I'd just quite and become a freelance writer for awhile, and see how that works.

JR: Talking with your lover, you mean?

TD: Right. And so I did. And starting Dungeon Master was part of it.

JR: What was the first issue of Dungeon Master like? Where did you find the stuff that was written in it? Or did you write at all?

TD: I wrote it all. I wrote it all. The first several issues, I wrote virtually everything. It was only eight pages. But Donovan, Donovan Ashe, was a typesetter, and he, at this point, was publishing Chains of Brotherhood. And he liked the idea and helped me. He did the typesetting on it, and helped me with the layouts. He, in fact, helped get it printed. And he linked me up with Lazy Leo, who later became Leo Ravenswood, to do a lot of the artwork and the design work.

JR: What about distribution for the first issue or so? How'd you distribute it?

TD: I got Chicago Hellfire Club's permission to use the Inferno mailing list and sent out an announcement to them that it was available and subscriptions started coming in. And I went after people that I thought ought to advertise in it, and a few of them did. It took awhile, but we had to start it off with maybe a couple hundred subscribers. Kept going up. What inspired it was-I'm very much into cooking and I had subscribed to two different cooking newsletters. One was a little newsletter on French cooking, and one was a little newsletter on Chinese cooking. And again, they were just like eight page newsletters. But just packed with valuable information. And it must have been '79, or '78, I don't remember, Andrew and I took a trip out to the West Coast and we visited either friends of his or friends of mine in San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver. And each place I was meeting with somebody, but I learned something from. They had a technique, they had a toy, they had a toy, they had something that I found new and fascinating. And then we would go the next place and he'd never heard of what I learned down there and he had something else to show me. By the third time this happened, I said, "Why in the hell aren't we talking to each other? Why aren't we communicating with each other and sharing these things?" And I decided that if they ca do it with Chinese cooking, I ought to be able to do it for S & M.

JR: Were you doing any writing for Chicago publications other than Dungeon Master?

TD: No. I was writing for national publications. I was writing-for instance, I did the mammals entry for a major encyclopedia on Iran, and things like that. I did

the bats entry for a major encyclopedia on zoology, but I was not doing-well, I was also writing porn, of course.

JR: Yeah, that's what I meant. Where were you being published otherwise then? Where was the porn being published?

TD: Mainly by Larry Townsend.

JR: In his anthologies?

TD: In his anthologies, yeah. At this time, I eventually got published in Drummer, in [?], and a few other places. Mainly Larry Townsend.

JR: In 1981, the CDC announced that five men in Los Angeles were diagnosed with pneumonia. When did you first hear about AIDS?

TD: Well, I heard about it long before it was called AIDS. Let's see, '75 of '76 was Inferno 5, so '77 was Inferno 6, '78 was Inferno 7, and '79 would have been 8. Yeah, all right. Seventy-at Inferno 7, a man attended who was very much a gorgeous hunk from Houston, who we all grew to like very much, and was very ill at the time, and he had been through several exploratory surgeries and couldn't figure out what was wrong with him. His name was Mike Macadory [?]. It was later, I think that year, that we-it was later that first year that we got the first indication of [?]. The first they called it was Gay-Related Immunological Disease?

JR: Deficiency.

TD: G-R-I-D, anyway. Immunological Deficiency, was it? GRID, whatever the thing was. And nobody knew what was causing it, of course, at that time. There were all kinds of speculations, including poppers and everything else. And the club met, discussed it, talked about various things, and we started staking, what we considered, appropriate action at that point, as far as safe sex, banning poppers, etc. Mac was obviously suffering with it before anybody had even heard of the disease. And went on to develop Kaposi, and who knows what else he had. And his reaction was to found the first AIDS activist group in Houston.

JR: Were you ever involved in any raids in Chicago?

TD: Raids, per se, no. The closest I can come is Hellfire used to do its annual New Year's Day party at Touche's, where we would do demos and things. And one year, while we were there, the police came in, saying that they had a complaint, and arrested, I think only one person. It was a bottom in a demo that happened to have his genitals uncovered at the time. Unfortunately, it was a Hellfire associate who lives in Washington with a government job, and was very concerned about it. But Chuck's lawyers got him off and he had no problems.

JR: You mean Chuck Rodocker?

TD: Rodocker. They cited Chuck for not having an entertainment license.

JR: Is there anything that you think that you ought to bring up about you and leather and Chicago history?

TD: No, other than Hellfire Club, which was pretty much all consuming with me in Chicago, I didn't do a great deal. I did a lot with Hellfire Club. Well, there are a couple other things I did. Eventually, Dungeon Master was getting too big to survive in the office in the house, mainly because I was needing other employees. Neither Andrew or I like the idea of having other employees in and out of the house all day. And the one room just wasn't big enough, particularly when the mail order business, the [?] Company started taking off pretty well. So Andrew bought a building over on Clybourn and moved the business over there, so I was running a little shop and business office.

JR: When would that have been?

TD: That was, well, of course, we closed it when we moved in '86, so it probably was '84 to '86, '83 to '86, I don't remember exactly when we started. I would have to look it up.

JR: How often was the shop open?

TD: The shop was open, actually, whenever, we were there, which was most of the time, you know, regular business hours. While I had part of it set up as a come-in-and-browse-around shop, it was really more of a call-and-pick-up-your-order-from-the-catalog shop. But a lot of people came, year. I carried-it wasn't a leather shop per se, in that what I wanted to carry were the kinds of things that were strictly SM or related to it, but the kinds of things that you couldn't go out and expect to buy someplace else. Well, I did carry dildos and I did carry tit clamps and that sort of thing. I carried more of the-I was the first person to carry electrical toys. I was the first person where you could buy catheters and s[?] and all kinds of quirky things. And I put together a good bookstore of SM related stuff. Any one of which you could have found in some bookstore somewhere, but to have them all together on one shelf made it very handy, whether it was, you know, In the Belly of the Beast, or it was Torture in Brazil, a book of uniforms, or whatever it might be.

JR: How did you happened to acquire Drummer magazine?

TD: Well, let me mention one more thing before we get to that. When SMSMA was founded, and I helped a lot in talking to the people who were trying to organize and found it. Worked a lot with them when they were getting organized.

JR: You mean in New York?

TD: In New York. I liked that idea of what they were doing. I liked that idea of having a teaching club, a teaching organization. Teaching has always been very high priority for me. And after going in those days, I would go to New York two or three times a year, at least. And would give lectures for GMSMA, do demos and the Mine Shaft, or something or another. I was concerned, "I wish we had something like that in Chicago." So I decided to just go ahead and start it, I started it at SM University, which on alternate Tuesday nights, held classes at Touche's. Chuck offered us the space, we charged a nominal admission. As far as I know it, it was the first time in Chicago that there were any SM events open to anybody who appeared. We had several women who attended. And drawing mainly around Chicago Hellfire Club and its associates for my resources, I had a faculty who taught regular classes. We did semester programs. That went on again until I left in '86.

JR: Eighty-six.

TD: Eight-six. Yes.

JR: And how did it come about that you left in '86? Just let me pause for a minute? [tape stops and resumes] Now, on to Drummer.

TD: People were always somewhat dissatisfied with Drummer. And when Dungeon Master was becoming more and more popular, I was constantly getting people urging me to turn Dungeon Master into a real competitor for Drummer. And I didn't want to do that. I felt that Dungeon Master was filling its own niche. And that Drummer, no matter how much we disliked some aspects of it, was still doing a damned good job and needed to be supported. However, Andrew had pretty much decided that he wanted to retire early, and was not happy with the medical practice, how it was going in Chicago, and the way insurance companies were taking over so much of the decision-making of the doctors. And so he was getting disgusted and wanted to get out. We had always decided that we were going to end up in the Pacific Northwest somewhere, Seattle being our main destination. Then we heard that Drummer was on the market and I suggested that we purchase it, we take it over and go out to San Francisco. Unfortunately, he agreed with me and we did it. And we decided that it was such a big operation that we could not uproot it and ourselves at the same time. We either had to move it to Chicago, or we had to move to San Francisco. We couldn't uproot everything and move it all to Seattle. So we went to San Francisco. It was particularly poor timing on our parts. AIDS, of course, was decimating the population, which was a significant chunk out of the leather community. Censorship had just started again badly. The Meese Commission Report had just come out. SM was the most taboo thing that most people were considering. And while there was no formal censorship, there was informal censorship, in that the distributors that we counted on to buy and distribute the magazines, were intimidated by it. They didn't want the local DA, who was wanting to make a name, to come in and find this on their

shelves, or in their warehouses. And so they would cancel. We had a picture in the magazine that they didn't like, there went several hundred copies. Of course, you didn't find that out until after you paid to have those several hundred copies printed. We also discovered that one of the problem of the magazine business is all of your expenses you have are expected to be paid up on deliver or prior to delivery, whereas all of your income from major distributors comes 120 days after they've received shipment, have sold what they can, and returned the rest to you, and they pay only for those that they sold. Was not a happy environment. Not a good time. I enjoyed running the magazine, writing the magazine, putting the magazine together, but neither of us liked the business end at all. Finally, though, we were just starting to turn a profit and the earthquake hit. And Andrew had purchased the building we were in as an investment property. You cannot get earthquake insurance out there except on residences. So it was virtually a total loss. Had to walk away from it essentially, and just forfeit it back to the mortgage. Lost a great deal of money on that. The magazine got so disrupted, we lost several months of income there. And it was considerably more expense to produce, had more problems finding printers, so we ended up losing a great deal on it.

JR: I've run out of questions.

TD: While you were getting the pop, I was thinking of a couple of other Chicago related things I want to talk about. Now I'll have to remember what they were. Well, this is-I'm happy with the kind of influence I've had on people learning things. An example I use is a good friend of Andrew's that I knew well too, was telling us very enthusiastically one night about this guy he met in Chicago who did rope body harnesses. He would take the rope and weave it around the body until it made a pattern of a lot of diamonds and created a net on the body. I thought that sounded fascinating and I just started experimenting, creating my own kind of thing. One night at Inferno, it must have been Inferno 6, 7, maybe, we were getting dressed to go to the banquet, the dinner, and I was dressing Andrew in my version of a rope body harness. And we were running late, everybody had left the dorm, except for one guy who stood there watching[
end of side a]he came up and said, "Will you teach me how to do that?" Well, it was Gordon Hueter[?]. He's the one who did all the rope body harnesses with all the diamonds that I had been inspired to create this thing by. So he taught me his and I taught him mine. And Gordon used to exchange bondage tips frequently. But I publicized doing a rope body harness in Dungeon Master. And started selling body harness kits, just a length of rope and detailed photo instructions of how to do it. I'm delighted now to see body harnesses everywhere I go, people are using body harnesses. Before that, I had never seen one. The other interesting part of that was Patrick Hogan was my first employee at Sanmutopia Supply Company, well actually before Sandmutopia, Dungeon Master. And Patrick got very much interested in rope bondage, particularly. Learned a lot from me. Touche's one night was having a bondage night. I wasn't there, Patrick told me about it the next night. And Patrick was there, doing rope body harnesses, and teaching, and Glen Sudsbury, Sudsy, showed up wearing a body harness, and Patrick said, "Gee, that's neat. Who did that?"

He said, "Your grandfather." Patrick looked at him and said, "What?" "Yeah, your grandfather did this." Patrick was just totally puzzled and didn't know even how to respond. And he said, "Well, who taught you how to do that?" He said, "Tony." "Well, who taught Tony how to do that?" "Gordon did."

JR: How did it happen that you were part of the founding of the leather archives?

TD: Well, I had the background in history museums. I worked in? I mentioned that I was assistant director of museums for Earlham College during that period. The year I graduated, Eli Lili gave Earlham a 150 acre farm near Indianapolis, on which there was a historic restoration house, and a bunch of associated log cabins and things, that he and his wife had been playing with, you know, a rich man's toy, to remodel and refurnish over the years. He gave Earlham the property with the only stipulation that they maintain the little plot his restoration was on as a museum. And I was very much in to museums in those days. I worked, as a student, all through college in the college museum. So my main job was to take this thing and turn it into a real museum, instead of opening it for three garden clubs a month. To get it on a scale where the general public could come and visit and everything. And catalogue the collection, find out what was there. Get appraisals done. Restoration work, if necessary. Bring it up to real operating standards. And I spent three years doing that and I discovered that I loved it as much as I thought I would. Main reason for going to graduate school was I wanted to continue to do it and I knew I needed an advanced degree to be able to. Museums have always been a major love of mine. And I suppose as all of us get older, we think more and more about history. And with the gay movement where it is, the amount of gay history that's being written these days-when Chuck proposed the archives, I thought it was a fantastic idea and said, "So count me in."

JR: How'd you meet Chuck?

TD: Probably, the first time I met him was just going to the Gold Coast. Chuck was active-well, he was still a member of Second City in those days. I met Andrew at a Second City New Year's Eve party, at the Second City clubhouse. I don't know if I met Chuck there, but I imagine he was there.

JR: Where was the Second City clubhouse?

TD: It was on Belmont, at about Sheffield?

JR: Did they actually own a building, or was this a rented place?

TD: I think it was a lease. It was a storefront.

JR: Just a storefront.

TD: Yeah, and it was a nice space. Not as large-it was just the one floor. It was probably not as large as the current C of C clubhouse. And I don't know what they did there weren't throwing New Year's Eve parties because that's the only thing I was ever there for. I went two years in a row-no, I went three years in a row. Met Andrew at the second one. We both went back to celebrate our first anniversary. As far as I know, they were the only club in the city at that point with a clubhouse. I don't know how long they had it.

JR: I only have one last question. What's Andrew's last name?

TD: Charles. Andrew Lee Charles.

JR: Is he from Chicago?

TD: He's a native of Chicago.

JR: I think we'll stop there then. Anything else?

TD: One other story you may have not heard. I have a question for you about it if you do.

JR: Sure.

TD: Asking about Chuck. I was always aware of Chuck, naturally, everybody was in those days. I think probably the first time I really met Chuck was through Jerry Lepeck. And because I was a writer, I got an introduction to Dom. And Dom invited me over to their place, which was the Swedish engineer's hall, or whatever it was.

JR: On Wrightwood.

TD: On Wrightwood. Dom invited me up to see his work. And I remember sitting in Dom's bedroom, on the floor, he and I just sat there, going through his stacks and stacks of drawings. And Chuck came in that day and they were both extremely excited because Chuck came into the room to announce that they had just closed on the building that would eventually become Center Stage. It was whatever day they closed on that building, was the day I was there. I think that was the first time I really ever met Chuck. I started getting invited to the White Parties after that, and that sort of thing. But the-one of the most significant things about Chuck that I'm aware of, you've probably heard stories about Hellfire's problems with the Gang of Four and the attempt to take over the club. You got that?

JR: I don't have any details. That's as much as I know, what you just said.

TD: But that happened in late summer. And was still.

JR: What year?

TD: Inferno was still at Camp Malibu, so it was like 8 or 9, Inferno 8 or 9, something like that-Inferno 9 because of what was going on at the Camp Malibu. We were some concerned that Greg would try and cause trouble with the run, that, you know, he would make complaints to the police that would cause a problem with the run. It was the first year that we ever had security at the gate, that sort of thing, so we could be prepared. As far as I know, it was the only year Chuck ever attended Inferno. And he was there with his two boys. I don't know this as a fact, but I've always been told that he was there because he was concerned about problems with the police, and he was there so that if there was a problem with people, he could call his attorneys and get it taken care of. I don't know if that's true or not. But I think it's remarkable that's the only year he attended. So I'd love to know if that story's true.

JR: I don't know.

TD: If you could find out.

JR: I could easily find out.

TD: I could ask him, too.

JR: Well, thank you.