

LGBTQ Oral History Project
Detroit, MI

Mary Sappington

Interviewed by
Colleen Cirocco
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Detroit, MI

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Kim Schroeder, Instructor
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Brief Biography

Mary Sappington was born in 1949 in Missouri and moved to Michigan with her family at a young age. After high school, she began a career as a hairdresser. She began Metra Magazine with her late husband in 1979. Metra is a LGBTQ nightlife magazine that is still in circulation in the Detroit and Chicago area. Her role with the magazine led to organizing Metra picnics, which were large annual gatherings of the LGBTQ community.

Interviewer

Colleen Cirocco

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Original Format

Interview recorded on a portable Tascam recorder DR-07MKII as a .wav file for the preservation copy and converted to a .mp3 file for the access copy.

Transcription

CC: This is Colleen Cirocco, it's December 8, 2018 and I'm sitting down with Mary Sappington from Metra Magazine and we are going to an oral history interview. Mary did you want to just start by introducing yourself, talking about when you were born and where?

MS: Sure. I was born in 1949 in Cedar City, Missouri and my mother and my father were there of course and my brother. And then we moved to Michigan when I was around five.

CC: Did you move around a lot as a child?

MS: No, we didn't, that's where I was born, in Missouri. But my mother she had a gay brother that was a hairdresser and her name was----she always talked fondly of my uncle which I never met.

CC: Oh you never met him?

MS: I never met him. He was a hairdresser but he had to move out of Cedar City Missouri, or Jefferson City, just because, you know, at that time, he was openly gay and so moved, he liked San Francisco, my mom always said. But we just never got to meet him so I always wish that I had met him.

CC: So he moved from Missouri to San Francisco?

MS: No he did, yeah he did.

CC: Right, he did. Oh okay, do you know around what time?

MS: Did he move there?

CC: Yeah.

MS: I think before I was born.

CC: Oh okay, so that's why you never met.

MS: Yeah, I never met him, and I just never, my mom was from twelve kids. So they

were everywhere. (both laugh)

CC: So what did your parents do?

MS: My mom was a hairdresser, my dad owned a dairy there, but _then he passed away when I was around three, and then my mom met my dad in the army and then he brought us here. And he was the most the most wonderful step-dad ever. People used to say they had step-dads and I would go, “What do mean your step dads bad, mine—“ he was just wonderful.

CC: Oh that’s great. So you moved, where in Michigan did you—

MS: Detroit.

CC: To Detroit, oh great. Do you remember where exactly?

MS: Oh what’s the name of that street. Garland. And then my dad’s job was with Chrysler, and so then we moved to Southgate and then to Sterling Heights.

CC: Is that where you lived when you were doing high school?

2:37

MS: Right, and I went to Utica High. And then that’s where I started doing hair, that’s where I went to beauty school. And when I started doing hair, then I bought a shop and advertised in the gay paper because going out, by the time I was twenty, twenty-one years old I just knew gay men and we just had a good time. We would go out and then I advertised in the gay paper when I had my beauty shop was in Romeo Michigan and they folded. It was like a newspaper and they folded and then I got together with a bunch of friends of mine and my first husband and he could put together a magazine, so we did it. It was sort of just like, there was no paper so let’s do it, and we did it in the basement of the beauty shop, Main Street, Romeo MI. But people never knew we were doing it. So we did it there and it was hard getting printers because we never had a porno magazine but as soon as they saw mostly two men even touching each other or doing anything like that, they were like “We don’t do that.”

CC: And that was in the early seventies?

MS: It was ’79 was when we, yeah ’79. So you just had a hard time, even though, like you and I discussed before, I’m straight, but I never felt like I was straight because I was doing something that a gay person would do and they’re not looking at me like, “Oh, it’s a straight woman,” they don’t care. So we had a hard time with that, and then Henry, which was my first husband, he opened up a print shop for a little while. That was hard to do too, you know, and that was in Hazel Park, MI. And now it’s different, it’s a lot different than it was back then. One time we went to pick up the magazines and the people in the back were looking at us like, “Oh, the creatures” and so we were laughing because at that point they were looking at my husband and his brother, of course they thought they were partners, I’m sure. We didn’t tell them any different, and he said that the printer said he would do it but he had problems with his workers.

CC: So it was really a joint effort from the start with you and your husband and some friends?

MS: Right. Some friends and some gay friends that helped out because we, if you look, there were forty some bars in Michigan and organizations in there. So we got it together because everything, money talks. We very inexpensive at the time, but that’s who started it, who helped us out.

CC: So in the early days what types of things were you printing? Was it sort of for

CC: So in the early days what types of things were you printing? Was it, sort of for people to find events, or was it articles?

6:02 MS: Articles. We didn't even know what we were doing, you know what I mean, and if you look through it you can see. We did some things, of course, in the eighties is when the AIDS hit, the AIDS problem hit, and we didn't know what that was, you know what I mean, and we were researching it and it seemed like why is it only on the west coast and the east coast, New York and California, it's like, then of course it came to everywhere else. So we wrote a lot about that that we didn't know.

CC: About AIDs you mean?

MS: Yeah, about AIDS, like, why is it here, what is happening. And then a lot of AIDS fundraisers and things like that.

CC: That you guys put on? Fundraisers?

MS: Well we put on fundraisers but we helped other people because they can advertise in the magazine. But that was a time when people had plastic cups out, people were afraid to kiss people, it was that kind of a thing, and you had to do your research to think, why are we doing this? And then of course people caught on, you know. But now it's way different, it's a lot better. The research.

CC: Do you still have advertisements for things related to AIDs?

MS: Yeah, people do. I mean it's as bad, people before would say like, it's an AIDs fundraiser, AIDs what? Who are you giving it? Because there were a lot of people that took advantage of it and were rip-offs, even in our communities there were rip-offs but we would find out which organization are you going to give it to and then they would do it and then we would send someone from that organization to work the door or do whatever it was. So that was back in the eighties, all the way through, gosh, whenever it finally got some medicine to stop it.

CC: Did you know anyone personally that—

MS: Oh, a bunch of them, it makes me sad you know. Todd's was a bar there that was first person that I knew that got AIDs. And I thought, Well, you're going to be okay. That's what you're thinking in your head and he had it just for a little while and then you get complications with it. Imagine not having any medicine whatsoever. I mean I don't know what they took then, but it wasn't like your cocktails now and everything. And he was just a super guy and that was the first person I knew, and then I knew so many more, I don't even, you know when I look through these old magazines that I brought here I see the ones that I thought, "Oh yeah, what about him, and him." Because the older you get, like I'm 69 now, so there's people that die just naturally from whatever but I lost too many people and so did everyone else in the gay community that, you being young, to have that many people that died, you know? It was bad.

CC: So was the magazine at all, like, paying tribute to these people during the time?

MS: The people that died?

CC: Yeah.

MS: Yeah we tried to do that, you know we had that, the quilt, you know the quilt that everybody made the panel for people that died. That's just so sad, I mean we're talking people that are really young, and it didn't take any time for them to die. And you're

trying to impress on people to play safe and all that kind of stuff and a lot of people just, “Oh that’s crazy,” you know.

CC: Did it feel like it just kind of came out of nowhere, in the eighties —

MS: Pretty much.

CC: --Because in the seventies, what was the difference really.

MS: Yeah, it didn’t come out of nowhere, but sort of it did now that we think of it now. If something like that came up now we’re all afraid of everything, but yeah it did, it just came out. Because you’re having people all around you that died, that really puts a big imprint in your mind you know.

10:12

CC: So when you started the paper did you expect to be sort of a leadership voice in this community?

MS: No.

CC: And who was the audience that you were thinking to reach out to.

MS: Jeeze, we just found every gay, lesbian establishment that there was and tried to figure out how we could spread our magazine. I mean that was the whole thing. I never thought we were going to be doing it for forty years. I mean it was, like I said, friends of mine that helped me put it together, they’re off somewhere else doing their thing, and then I was doing hair for a long time and in Romeo, Michigan and then moved closer over to Detroit to come back into the community. But mostly we tried to help anybody that advertised with us, which we still do that. If they advertise with us you try to have as establishment get off the ground and to do well. Because like I said, people they don’t understand that whatever you do in life, if you have a bar or a magazine or whatever you have, you have to have money to run it. But I always felt that we tried to help people get their establishment, not just take their money and say okay bye, and do it that way.

CC: Do you feel like there were more establishments back in that time? Or how has that changed?

MS: Oh, that’s changed a lot. Now what we’re looking to do in 2019, we have a webpage, but we need to focus more on that, because that’s obviously going to be the up and coming instead of print. But it was just, all the people that I think of that we used to deal with, they’re not here anymore. And not all of them passed from AIDS, but from old age and whatever else, cancer. But we always were wishing that people could go to straight places and be accepted. And now that really has come about, you know, so that, and the internet where you didn’t need just a gay place. But I really liked those places better.

CC: Like what kind of places, do you know any specifically?

MS: You mean places that now welcome people?

CC: Yeah.

MS: Oh gosh, I don’t know because I don’t go to them. (both laugh) But I know they’re out there. You know when they say “alternative” meaning that you’re welcome here or whatever. But slowly bars just couldn’t make it, because they were going to those places, or meeting people online where before—

CC: You had to go somewhere—

CC: You had to go somewhere—

MS: To meet somebody that's gay you had to go someplace that people were—

CC: Congregating.

MS: Yeah. And right now, to tell you the truth, Colleen, I don't know any gay bars that are just lesbians. Do you know any?

CC: I don't know any.

MS: If you know any let me know.

CC: I could let you know, my sister is actually gay so I could ask her, she doesn't go out that much. (laughs)

MS: I mean there's bars that at the time too, it would be women's bars and men's bars and then leather bars, and there would be different kind of gay bars out within the whole thing. And someone asked me that the other day, and they said, "Where do the women hang out now?" and I said, "Where the men hang out!" (both laugh) But at the time, it was really bad because we were discriminating each other in the bars. I mean if a man came to the door people were discouraged about letting him in. "He's gay, he's gay! Let him in." That sort of thing. Or women too. Or they just wouldn't be nice to them. You could go to a place but you don't want to sit there and people be like, you know, not—

CC: Bad vibes.

14:22

MS: Yeah, bad vibes. Then we did the picnics, the Metra picnics.

CC: Oh yeah! Tell me about those. (both laugh)

MS: Those were, I went to the Detroit Bar Guild and it was called the Detroit Bath Towel organization and somebody told me about it when I was going out to different bars. And I went to it and it was in Warsaw Park and it was really fun, dancing, and drag queens, and the whole shot. And so they only did it, when I found out about it, they only did it one year and they didn't do it anymore because it was too much trouble trying to get a place that's private. And that, again, we were talking about the printer, that you let you know that it's a gay and lesbian event well then if the price was \$1500 all the sudden it was \$3000. So that didn't work too good. That's why eventually we ended up buying Salt River Park, because I sold my beauty shop and then we just had that park so that nobody could stop us.

CC: So you bought the park?

MS: Yeah, I bought the park.

CC: So what city is that in?

MS: That was on, I just sold it like a year ago. But it was like twenty years we did it, the picnics there, we did it at Warsaw Park, we did it at State Fair, we did it at Transylvania Park which is no longer here anymore, and then we did it in Hell, Michigan and that was a camp ground. But we tried to find, every place that we found we wanted it to be very, like we could be in control there, because people would say "Why don't you just go to Stony Creek and just rent a little place?" but if you're getting, at one time at the picnics we did two thousand people that would come. Yeah and it was nice, but you had to be in control and your security had to make sure that people on the outside weren't going to hurt our people in the inside. I mean that was the whole thing, it wasn't too much of—the

people that were inside were fine, it was just that if somebody comes in and tries to get any of the lesbians, or stir up trouble.

CC: So were the picnics just for lesbians or was it for the whole community?

MS: The whole community.

CC: And would you have one a year or were multiple throughout the summers?

MS: Yeah we did it thirty eight years and the first few years, we used to do it around the Fourth of July and then around Labor Day. And then after a while I would say after ten years of doing both of them, the second picnic just flubbed out because it's too many. And so then we just did the one in the Fourth of July, mostly when we were doing it at Salt River Park. But we did that in the beginning just so we could have more money for the magazine. Because, like I was telling you, that we tried to be as inexpensive as we could and pay the people that worked for you. That's what the Metra Gay News, that's the one I advertised in way back when, the guy that closed that said, "Make sure that if somebody's distributing for you, or if they're doing the_ writing for you, try to pay them!" And I said, "Well, why wouldn't you?" "Because you're not going to be able to charge so much" for ads and stuff. The picnics were fun. The people, they always tell you the "in the bushes stories." (both laugh)

CC: What do you mean by that?

MS: You now, because I let everybody do what they wanted to do, but some people come up with "Did you go to the bushes, did you go to the bushes?" That kind of thing, I didn't. It was so fun out doing the dancing and the different DJs wanted to play the picnic and that's how we would advertise that. And thank god for Nicky Stevens and Tempest and all those people helped to get people to perform, so it was fun.

CC: That really sounds fun. Was there a heyday of that or did it keep going really strong the whole time?

MS: It went pretty strong maybe like, it would have been like 38 years, maybe the last five years it was starting to be that I was going to have to, I mean I always paid for it even if it rained or whatever, because it was getting really down. Because people didn't need a place that they—you know the bars were going down too and they just didn't need a place like that anymore. Nowadays you can still get people that wouldn't like it, but you could lay on a blanket with your girlfriend, boyfriend whatever and nobody bothered you. And people really liked that, a lot of people people met their significant other there and now they can be their husband or wife but just because they were open. And I had some people that for security they would be there, they would go, "Oh that guy's holding that guy's hand," and I would go, "You know it's a gay picnic right?" (both laugh)

And so I kept really good track of that because Tony Rome and myself we had a couple of Boblo boat things that we did for fundraisers. At first, the first one that we did, the security was on that boat they were trying to stop people from kissing up on the deck and whatever. And I'm not talking, I know you can do bad stuff, but this was just kissing. So we went to the person that was in charge and said "We told you that this was going to be strictly a gay and lesbian picnic, so why is this guy doing this?" so they got rid of him. So you had to watch all of that stuff. Which I think now, it's so much better that you can do things now, but there's still going to be people who, if you just, a group of everybody.

20:50

CC: Do you think that Motor City Pride is like a big event that use people for that type of expression or getting people together?

MS: Yeah, they get them together and there doesn't seem to be any problems with that and

MS: yean, they get 'em together and there doesn't seem to be any problems with that and it's right in Motor City and that's good but you still have to, if you were in charge of it, you'd have to make sure that people aren't picking on anybody.

CC: Oh yeah that's always going to be there unfortunately.

MS: I don't think it's *always* going to be there.

CC: I think things are changing, absolutely.

MS: Definitely changing, yeah definitely. I mean for you to think about having a Motor City Pride way back when, I mean they were afraid of it in Ferndale just in that little part that we did. But I mean everything is changed just because people are more educated. And the ones that aren't educated, most of them died. (both laugh) Unfortunately, I mean I hate to say it that way.

CC: It's a new generation.

MS: You say it better than me.

CC: And I think that there's, in the media too, it's a lot more accepted, like just one example is "Ru Paul's Drag Race" is a huge show, it's winning the Emmy's, it's very popular, it's in our vocabularies all the time. And Hollywood movies it seems like every year there's more that feature same sex relationships.

MS: And they bring the movies out that it's not so concentrated on someone kissing. I mean they can kiss, and I notice that when I'm with some straight people sometimes that when it's on the screen, especially men. Straight men with lesbians kissing, they kind of like that, (laughs) I mean I'm telling you the truth. But with, guys, (disgusted noise), "See they like each other," they're not having sex when they're on the screen. It really has become a lot better.

CC: More normalized. I agree. It's like, you can have a movie about two men and it's not about the fact they're gay but it's about their relationship and they're just people and they go through the same relationship issues as straight people and it's not like (gasps) "They're gay!"

MS: Yeah, they're gay and they're just going to walk and down the street holding hands.

CC: It's like we can go past that a little bit more, it's more humanized.

MS: Right. Because, like my mom used to say, people used to say that people chose to be gay. My mother said, "Why in the world anybody chose to be gay and then their family throw them out, everybody doesn't like them, they get beat up. I think I'm just going to choose that lifecycle because the bars are so fun." I mean really.

CC: Like, did you choose to be straight? I don't remember that moment.

MS: Yeah. That's exactly true. I say that to a lot of people, I say, so, if somebody tried to get you to be gay, if it's a straight person, you couldn't do that. I really believe that from, in mostly gay men that I've met, I haven't hung out with that many lesbians myself, but they would start saying stuff like, when they start thinking about being gay, or thinking that they *are* gay is like, falling in love with a male teacher or their friend or something like that, and people don't understand that that's when that happens because it's a natural thing. To me it's just natural.

CC: It's just growing up. So I think attitudes are changing a bit and people are

understanding that it's not a choice, it's just kind of the way you are. But yeah I think it's really cool that you worked on this magazine without necessarily being gay yourself because I don't think you need to be, you know, to support them.

MS: No, it was a project and whenever I ran into straight people that had gay bars, and they would find out, if they found out somehow that I was straight they would say, "Well what do they like to do like this, and what do they—" and I would say "Why do you keep saying they?" You know? Because—

CC: And like you're a representative of everybody.

MS: Right, I'm the representative. "Is that guy gay? Is that woman gay?" And I go like, what do I have to have my radar, my gay-dar? (both laugh) But some people at the end of the all the bars closing, a lot of the bars closing, they would try to open up, have like a Tuesday night where it's going to be GLBT night and you're only going to accept people on that night, why? Because your bar is dead that night, so they can come on in.

CC: But it's only still just one night.

MS: Right, only one night. But my husband said before to somebody, "Well, what if somebody comes in a Friday night?" "Well, they'd better watch out." "Oh really? Well we'll come on a Tuesday." I mean if it was that easy to just say, oh come on over. You can go through all the bars and pubs and stuff and say, Oh, this one's not doing good, let's have a gay night there, or a lesbian night, or a GLBT night there. It doesn't work like that. You have to like to go to the place. I've seen people that have tried to have a night like that and then they go, the bartender is not good them, and you can tell that the bartender doesn't like me because I'm gay or lesbian.

CC: And then you don't go back.

MS: You don't go back. And the way that works.

26:46

CC: So you were building up your network of bars that you included in the magazine were you also going to these bars, did you like going out and being in the nightlife?

MS: Yeah, I was younger then. (both laugh) When I had a hard time walking over there to the building. Yeah I liked going there, and you have to go there to meet them.

CC: Build relationships.

MS: Yep, build relationships, and different egos, and we took pictures. I would take pictures or one time I'd even distribute it, you know the magazine, which was a big job. To put them in the place and do all that kind of stuff. I was mostly, I would say, I could tell you every bar owner, who owned it, what they did, we wouldn't want to put it on tape right now.

CC: Oh no, we don't have to. (both laugh) One question I have is that I know it's Detroit based but I also saw that it's in Chicago too?

MS: Chicago. At one time we had, we still do go to Chicago, we distribute there through UPS but we did Chicago, we did Indiana, we did Ohio, we were trying to be like a Midwest. And we did it, but that takes a lot of time and effort and I couldn't get any sales reps, or I would try to get people at those places, so Chicago they have four or five papers there now, papers and entertainment magazines, so there's people that live there, so you just gotta say "I can't compete with that," you know. But we did, we had a lot of, Kenny's (??) the one that went with me to all the places, all around to all the places. We saw we're

(??) the one that went with me to all the places, all around to all the places. we say we're seeking out every gay and lesbian establishment in the Midwest. Or you'd be going someplace and you'd say where is this address and they'd go, "Oh you don't want to go there, that's a gay place," and we'd go, "Yeah! That's the one we want to go to." (laughs)

CC: So how many people work on the magazine?

MS: Oh, now I only have maybe five or six employees.

CC: At the most how much do you think it was?

MS: It depends, for writers and photographers and all that kind of stuff. Because now just the little bit that we have I don't need that many people but I always have people that want to do something with it, they do covers and photographers that do that, so that's kind of fun.

CC: Do you work with other publications in Detroit like "Between the Lines"?

MS: Well I work with Jan Stevenson, but she does her thing and we do our thing.

CC: Jan Stevenson is the "Between the Lines" person?

MS: Yeah, "Between the Lines." She's really very good, very nice lady. And she's, that's our newspaper. And there's people that try to come out and be a newspaper and I had I want to say five, six, seven entertainment magazines that tried to come out and they just did one thing wrong or the other or whatever, so we outstood all of them.

30:10

CC: That's good. You're consistent. Do you actually want to take a look at one of the old magazines?

MS: Yeah, sure.

CC: Maybe you can walk me through it. (shuffling through box) Alright, so what are we looking at.

MS: This is Rod Stewart's.

CC: This is December 1, 1980. Got a big picture of Rod Stewart, black and white, newsprint.

MS: And this is Andy Warhol, he had a magazine and he always talked about having your whole front cover being the art of it.

CC: Did you guys do an interview with him?

MS: Yeah, we did. Yeah, Michael Snow, he lives in Chicago now, and he was the one that did an interview with him.

CC: What year was that one coming out?

MS: I think it was around the same time that one was. Let me look here. There's Menjos that's having their 45th anniversary this weekend.

CC: Oh, wow. So they stuck around, Menjo's.

MS: Yep, Menjo's and Gigi's too. Oh, it was this one. August 13, 1981.

CC: So that's the one with the Andy Warhol interview. Really cool.

MS: See you have so much more space that you can put different things in, where with our small one that we have now, it's not just enough space. But we paid hardly anything for printing this.

CC: Because of the newsprint is cheaper?

MS: Right. But you have just as many issues printed itself.

CC: So there's a lot text in here, it looks like a lot of writing.

MS: And writers, like Jan Stevenson has, I think she comes out once a week now, and people don't understand all the work she has to do to do that. Just trying to find out—talk about something that was hard to do, with the map.

CC: So this is a map of all the places you could go in Detroit.

MS: In Detroit, yeah.

CC: Wow, that's a lot.

MS: A directory. Because we did Detroit, then we did Mt Clemens, Ann Arbor, Flint, Grand Rapids.

CC: Of specific events for that time period?

MS: Well, you would call these people and they would want you to send you them the magazines too and they would advertise in them.

CC: So it's a mutually beneficial relationship. (both laugh)

MS: And then you'd try to get this darn map to work, but I used to always say, if somebody wasn't from Detroit they wouldn't know where the heck we're talking about.

CC: It's a little general, but if you do know you can probably figure it out.

MS: MapQuest is much better than just giving somebody the zip code. And Canada.

CC: Oh, okay. International.

MS: Because Canada was right there, and that's where they had all the stripper boys—

CC: Do you have one of the newer ones too in there?

MS: This was just this year.

CC: Oh okay, so it's a lot smaller but it's full color, glossy print and the same idea, a lot of ads but the directory and the events.

MS: Yeah we don't have the directory in there, no we have it in our website.

CC: Oh, Ru Paul.

MS: Oh yeah, we were just talking about him. (both laugh) Yeah, it's slicker, but if you're going to go slicker and you want enough magazines to pass out to every body then you can't go bigger.

can't go larger.

CC: And you've got movies, movie reviews. Oh, and I did notice this on the website, can you tell me about the "Friends of Dorothy" and I think there was another section, the "Out Flashin?"

MS: Yeah, those were pictures. But "Friends of Dorothy" is more like our calendar, so whoever advertises we have a person that writes that and then this is more like a calendar rather than just to say that Nectarine Ballroom, see they don't even call it that anymore.

CC: Oh, that's the original name of Necto is Nectarine Ballroom? No way.

MS: That's a nice bar.

CC: I've been there.

MS: People don't like it because they're only open on their, they call it "Pride Fridays." That's a big bar, I really commend them that they do that, and yeah straight people come in there on the other nights well you can't have the bar open the other six nights of the week because there's not that many gay people so it's great that he does that.

CC: And then these are just pictures of people out and about.

MS: Yep. You always try to go after your advertiser. But yeah "Friends of Dorothy" is more like a calendar.

CC: And is that referring to a person or is that a "Wizard of Oz" reference.

MS: Yeah it's a "Wizard of Oz." "Friends of Dorothy" that's what we picked upon that a long time ago because they said that that's what Judy Garland that people in the community even before my time they would say, "Are you a friend of Dorothy?" you know so that people would know you were gay.

CC: Interesting. Code.

MS: It was cool code.

36:28 CC: So what do you think is the biggest difference between the newer ones and the older ones.

MS: Jeeze, we've just evolved, I'm going to bring you all the ones that led up to this part. These were just, it was more to write about, to write about and to see. They weren't as pretty though that's all. That's the only difference, and this I wish we could go larger and larger and larger, but what you have to know is that people aren't advertising in print so much anymore. I think we still have a good amount but we're going to try to do the website and do different people that would advertise with us. We do hair shops and all that kind of stuff.

CC: Do you feel like you have embraced the digital switch of or things or it's a big adjustment?

MS: It's a big adjustment. Because the people that you're dealing with some of them don't know what I'm talking about. You know, I mean, you have to do that. I'm not saying we're not doing this because you have people with the regular newspapers nowadays there's oldies like my husband who likes to have the paper in his hand and not go online, but kids. I just ran into somebody that said their nephew doesn't even know

how to mail a letter, doesn't know where the stamp goes, you know that's—

CC: Yikes.

MS: I know, it's like, come on people.

CC: Or how to write a check or those little things.

MS: When they pay their bills they're always just online, online, online. Which I'm not putting that that down it just is a different situation all together and that's what a lot of the club owners were telling me is that people meet each other online, so what they meet each other online and say go to The Hayloft or something or meet me there. Rather than just a trick.

CC: It's definitely different. I know that for my gay friends it's all their apps and they see how close in proximity they are to each other and they just meet up in person and I think it takes out that middle space of going to the bar.

MS: Where do they, I'm going to ask you, what do they do, I mean like, do they meet at a house or do they meet some place that's—

CC: I mean I don't think they always just go to a house, you will go to—

MS: Rest stops—

CC: No, like you could go to restaurants or bars but it wouldn't necessarily be a gay bar because the stigma is going away now. So, I mean, I don't know personally.

MS: No, I get you, it's just that there aren't that many gay bars. I would have thought before you'd say, what did they used to do before, just chat rooms and things like that and then they could go to the nearest place that's a gay bar.

CC: It's probably similar, I don't know from experience though.

MS: Yeah, what is that place that they meet each other at now. I forget, somebody told me the other day. They don't meet there, they just find them online.

CC: Well, one of the apps, Grindr.

MS: Grindr, yeah, that's the one. Women don't do that too much.

40:31 CC: I couldn't say. (both laugh) I don't know, I really don't know. Are there any other things you don't think we covered, or any other stories you have just of the magazine? I know you mentioned having some reverse discrimination against you just because people are confused—

MS: Oh, as far as in the gay community? Not so much now, but before it was like competition for, "Well, she's straight, why is she doing the magazine?" It was just the people who were doing the magazine who were trying to compete against me. Because, in the beginning, first couple years, it wasn't even mentioned. And then we had from an actual publisher said, "Well would you rather put your money in a gay pocket or a straight pocket?" And then it was like well, look at his magazine look at my magazine look at what I do for you. Okay, then they would take us and they're not here anymore. Yeah, but, it doesn't happen too much, or like I said, one time I had some people that said to me "Why don't you just come right out and say you're gay?" that are gay people and I go, "Uh, because I'm not? Do I have to be? Why don't you just come out and say you're

straight?'"

CC: Because you know there's nothing wrong with it, so you would if you were.

SM: So I said, "What am I going to lose my job?" Cause I've always been self employed but that's just a silly person that would say that kind of stuff. It would be like, "Why would you pick being gay?" It would be like me saying that. They'd be like, "Oh, we know you're gay."

CC: For all you're doing for the community, it's, like, that's such a great thing, I don't know why anyone would be weird about it.

SM: Because there's ignorance. Everywhere. You know what I mean.

CC: Yeah, I do. So, as far as where you see the magazine going in the future or what your involvement will be, what do you think about that?

SM: Well, the magazine itself we're going to sit down and revamp you know because we try to do that every year and like I said try to get it to be more online. That way we can plug different organizations, different things. But I don't know, I didn't know what I was going from here to here.

CC: So as you go you figure it out?

SM: Figure it out, right.

CC: Do you have anything that you're most proud of in the time that you've been doing this?

SM: I think, I really liked the fact that we did have picnics. The picnics were fun. They were fun for people, they could go and have fun themselves, I always liked that because, I have people that tell me, "Why don't we have a picnic here and there," not unless you could do it the way I'd want it to be done. But we don't have to do it anymore. I mean I'm glad of that too. And just the longevity of being here I think people think I know more than I do. (both laugh)

43:44 CC: Lets see if there's anything else I wanted to ask you. I don't want to get too political, but do you think in this current climate things are getting more difficult for gay people, you know, having the current president that we do. Do you get a general sense of that from people you know?

SM: Well, they don't like him I know that. They don't like him, that's for darn sure, but I don't think there's not going to be anybody that's going to put anybody back from what it used to be. That's not going to happen. I think if people don't like what the man's doing, or if it was a woman in here, you have to stand up for yourself, and just don't let him do it. Just don't let him do it. Because there's things I see sometimes that within the political stuff that just makes me sick. But there's things that I think it's just because that just because they have to be, I'm an independent, if I like somebody and I see that they're going to do stuff good, I'll vote for them for this or that for the whole, all the people. But some people when they say things that "This president or this group is going to do this and this and that" I look it up because a lot of people are just lying. Do you know what I'm saying? They're saying "Oh, they're going to take away this and they're going to do this. And they're not going to have abortions anymore" and, where did you see that? That's crazy. If that is true, let's work on it. I don't think Trump or anybody is going to ever put us back to where it was before. Never.

CC: Come too far.

MS: Yeah, way too far. And I just can't believe that people in that community, Pence maybe, because he doesn't know what he's doing at all, but I just think that we just have to go after whoever would want us to go back.

CC: Do you think there's a lot of advocacy from the younger group to do that?

MS: To do that? I think so. And it should, and if not we should get in behind them and put my big ten shoe up their fanny and do it but don't make it up. Don't make it up that, "He's going to do this and he's going to do that." I see that stuff on Facebook but I say, "Wait a minute." I don't say it right out to people but I go on, I just give them a message and say "Where did you see that? Because if that's really true we need to do something about that." "Well, my friend." No, no, your friend—

CC: Where's the sources?

MS: Right, where's the sources?

CC: Where's the receipts?

MS: Right and sometimes when you get the sources, that was wrong, because if you want to hate somebody so bad that you're going to make up stuff then that's no good.

CC: Absolutely.

MS: Yeah, I don't see any problems though. When Reagan was in office I had people tell me that pretty soon that we were going to have to go and sign up for the army and he was going to get rid of abortion. That was a long time ago and I don't see any of that happening.

CC: It comes up again and again. It's a cycle.

MS: Right.

47:31

CC: I did have another question, as far as the trans community goes, was that a very visible group in the seventies within all of what you've seen?

MS: No.

CC: I think in general, even within a marginalized community, it's less visible. I think nowadays it's getting a little bit more but it's almost like people still don't understand, really.

MS: You know, what it is, I know a lot of, I think we have to sit down sometime and figure out what are cross-dressers, what are drag queens, what are professional performers, you know that kind of stuff because everybody when they see a man in a dress, it's not the same. Or they think they all want to be trans, they all want to get the operation.

CC: Some it's a form of expression, but some it's like that's your real identity, the way you feel.

MS: I know a lot of drag queens that do this for a profession and they don't feel like having their wieners cut off or getting boobs, that's a different story. But if somebody did wake up they and, to me it feels like, the people I've known who have had the surgeries, they actually feel like they're, they could go be, if I was, it would be like I could really be

a man and I really *need* to be a man, then that's a different story than just. Because there's actually straight guys, and that's the transsexual, that just like to wear women's clothes but they like to go out with women, good luck for them, they have a hard time. It's really a hard time.

CC: Yeah, it's a huge spectrum of how you can be.

MS: Right, because I've had photographers that took pictures for us before, who worked at GM, and this man he called me when we were at 9 Mile and Woodward our office there and I had ran an ad for a photographers call and this guy calls and he was a, is it transvestite, is that what it is?

CC: Well, for what?

MS: A guy that likes women still but he just likes to dress up in women's clothes.

CC: Maybe, that could be.

MS: That's what I'm saying, we should really—

CC: The language is very, and it always changes too.

MS: What is, GLBTQ, what is the Q?

CC: For anyone listening to this in the future, we're trying our best but the language is always changing, we have the best intentions.

MS: Anyway, this guy, he was a big wig at GM, and he said he takes wonderful pictures, and I said, "Come on." "But I like to wear women's clothes," and I said, "Okay, I don't. (both laugh) I don't have a dress." He came there and he just to have pantyhose on and garter belts and all that kind of stuff, but he took wonderful pictures. And he was married and his wife knew that he did that, and he had to stop taking pictures for Metra because his wife got jealous because if I'm calling him, this wasn't pay phones, so I'm calling him at his land phone, and she didn't like it that a woman was calling. I said, I'll just say Terry, that wasn't his real name, I said, "Terry, I'll talk to her, I mean no offense against you, but I have no desire to go after your body." That was the problem, poor guy if he got a woman that liked him, and married him, and then she got jealous if somebody's calling it's like, it's no problem, you know. But that's just different facets. And he seemed to come towards the gay community because you can go to a gay bar and be dressed as a woman and do a shitty job at it and people won't make fun of you. I mean this man had beautiful dresses and everything, shoes and everything, and he said to me "Do I look like a woman?" and I said, "Don't ask me anything you don't want me tell you the truth." Because he looked awful, you know his wig was all the way this way.

CC: He was trying. (laughs)

MS: He was trying, he wasn't trying to make a profession of it, he just wanted to know. I said, you know, we have all of these professional drag queens, go to them, they'll help you out.

CC: Yeah, they would know. There's plenty of them in here. Well, I was just curious, because I know that trans people are in this community but you rarely kind of hear their stories, so I didn't know if you had any people in your life that you were close with or anything like that.

MS: Not real close, but I've known a lot of them, not a lot, that got the whole operation. You're hearing more about it now, I'm sure it was before, but before there was even trans people that would almost get operated on and then try to go. like. say if it was a guy that

people that would almost get operated on and then try to go, like, say there was a guy that was dressing up like a woman, or not dressed like, but wants to go be a woman, a lot of them got killed. Because if you go with a straight guy and all the sudden he realizes that you have a biggest penis than him or whatever, so that was bad, but now that it's open and people are talking about it more, I think people don't have to go out and just pick up somebody.

CC: Still a lot of violence though.

MS: Not as much as there was before, I mean not just from them but from anybody. I think that the gay community are fighting back too, they're not just going to be walking down the street and somebody saying, "Oh, you faggot, you queer." You know, all that kind of stuff, they'd say "Oh, what are you talking about?" And they don't want to fight back, but you gotta kind of fight back. And they'd say, "Oh, that guy's not as easy of a target as I thought he was." And I'm talking about just regular, not guys dressed like girls or girls dressed up like men, just regular people. In Chicago, you know because you have a lot of bars right on one street, people used to go there all the time and do that. I'm not saying they don't anymore but I know it's a lot less than before.

CC: Well that's good.

MS: Well this was nice, talking to you.

CC: Yeah, absolutely! Did you have any last thoughts or anything else you wanted to say?

MS: No, I just, if I have any more thoughts can I call you and—

CC: Well, I don't know if I can do that, but you can still tell me and I might be able to write a little note at the end.

MS: Yeah, because you have to do a story, not a story, a paper.

CC: Well I'm going to type up the whole thing and then have it available. Well, thank you Mary, this has been a nice interview and you've provided a lot of good stories and insights so I appreciate it.

MS: I'm so happy to have a place that we can bring the magazine and they'll store it over here.

CC: Yes, absolutely.

MS: And I'm sure I have boxes of before we used to have to actually print out the photos...

CC: Oh, like photo albums?

MS: No, not an album. It's like the, when you had film, I'm sure I've got some stuff there, like in Washington and things like that, I can't even tell you who the people are, but just pictures of that kind of stuff that they might want.

CC: Oh cool, yeah, well we'll keep talking about that.

MS: Picnics and all that, and I have, the big, thick things, that you take movies of, VHS. But it's nice to have some place that will preserve it.

CC: They're trying to build up their collection about Detroit especially, so that will be

great and we can keep talking about that.

MS: Right, good.

CC: Cool, I'm going to shut off the tape now.

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Transcript of interview conducted December 8, 2018 with:
Mary Sappington, Detroit, MI
By: Colleen Cirocco