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This is an interview with Sharon Lord conducted by Timothy Vale on November 28 2018, at Sharon's home here in Houston. The topic of today's interview is Sharon's life and participation in the Diana Foundation, Houston's oldest LGBT organization with whom she was a member of how are you doing today, Sharon?



00:17

Oh, I'm doing great. Great. And thank you.



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So I figured, you know, why don't we just get right into it? How did you? How did you get to know the Diana's?



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And well, I got to know the Diana's through several of my friends. At one time, we were all working as interior designers. And that's how I met him. And one of beautiful works, he was telling me about an early performance in 1967, that he was invited. And it was a Diana, that he said back then they called it the A team, or the a group. So anyway, he went to it 1967 He couldn't remember too much about it, except that it was held at Billy Moody's Center, which was the Village Theatre in Western University. Then in 1971, David Stone bale word and Peter Forbes introduced me into the Diana. And so we went. And it was a formal affair, Tuxedos. It was held at the old plantation, which is now gone. But it was in the vicinity of Randles, at Shepherd in Westheimer. And it was on a basis of first come first serve. Well, we didn't want to stand in line that late because we were all dressed, go to be dressed up. So we had our good friend Ron Wales stand in line for us. So we would be able to get good seats when we got there. Well, we did arrive, and we were third in line. So we entered the old plantation. And lo and behold, there it is. We were sitting at picnic tables. Oh, but it was fun. And I was introduced to Ava Gardner, who was Tom Osborne. And he was the main show. And that was his drag name. Everybody had a camp or dragged name. And my friend Peter Forbes was onstage and there were four of them. And they were singing commercials. They were dressed in tails and top hats,

trim in hot pink cumberbund and bow ties. And it was Peter Forbes who was rose French. Joe Gibson was known as Althea Tom Garrity was birdie. And Charles Temple was Dodo. And as they sang the commercials, my friend said he could only remember one that was for Continental Airlines. And all he could remember was the ending of it, we will grease our tails for you. And then they threw out KY tubes to the audience. And everybody laughed and had a good time. So that was my exposure to the dye in a show. The next was a different type. And it was in 1973. And I was invited by David Stone, he happened to be the chairman on one of the food committees. And it was called the dog days of summer country supper. And usually, there were only 100 people that can go. That was the amount of seating capacity. And it was always held at Charles Hiebert home on Mason Street. So there were about oh, maybe 10 of us fried chicken committee. So we fried chicken all day long. So anyway, we had so much fun, and everybody was assigned different foods, and you had your camp name. And at this time, mine was loud mouth lowered. I guess they knew me from other places that I like to talk and have a good time. So anyway, that was an And discontinued from 1969 until 1986. After that, it became one of the Diana's big fundraisers. And it was called the country dinner and dance. And we went from the VFW hall in Montrose, to several bars on West timer. We also had our hay day at the Polo Club for about three years. And then now we are at NEON boots. That's where we've been for the last four or five years. And it's our fundraiser, and that's what we're known for the country cookout. Now, I would like to tell you about the early days as to when the diners were actually born. And it takes place at David Moncrief home in Montrose, and it was 1953 when Finn tail Cadillacs cruise the streets of Houston, soldiers were coming back from Korea. And everybody liked it. From Here to Eternity, was a shoo in for the best movie at the Oscars in Hollywood. It was then when a small group of friends gathered to watch the presentation on a then new medium, which was television. And they decided to spice up the evening and give their own awards for their local performances. And hence, the Diana awards were born. These awards and the accompanying shows have grown each year to their present status as the longest continuing gay roast in the nation. lol LA has its Oscars. New York has its Tony's but Diana is ours alone in Houston.



07:45

Now I'm looking for more things to tell you.



07:51

Absolutely take your time.



07:54

Well, you can cut that out. Okay. It is. It has been a privilege for me to be in the thymus. And in order to join at the time, you had to be a worker you had to work three years on any committee are n attend the events. And just a few that we that I worked on with a lot of other people. One was the wardrobe. And that was for the Dinah shows that included Abel the star, and all of the show girls that we did sequins. We did GAMP. We did fringe feathers. We even did glued mirrors on costumes. We also attended a recording studio, that we would sing for the background of all the cast that was on stage to make them Oh, while they were trying to dance and sing well. We gave them more volume on the stage. A lot of us worked on the pet committee of our Diamond

Dogs and cuddly cats and on animals, everything and these were listed in the program. And if you had an animal, you paid to have it listed. So we made money that way. A lot of us were in the shows that were produced. And I was honored to give and present 11 Guyana awards for the shows and these people were Are characters. Some of them did the craziest things you just can't imagine. And they got an award. And I'm going to read their names. They deserve to be in this. The first one I gave was Phyllis Randall Frey. Britt Shockley. Bob hands look. Am J Evans, Bob DeMille. Older. Charles Katherine McGuire. right price, Mark Brown, Bob Braddock, Cassandra McCory. And the last one was Michael McPherson. And that was at the Hilton Houston Post Oak hotel. The first award was at the good old tower viedo. In return after I gave presented all these awards, in return, I got four awards. And they're all over there from the years that was 1995 to 1980 to 2004. And the last one was 2009. So and the most the proudest I am, is of the Golden bow award. The Golden Bow Bow award is a Lifetime Achievement Award. And there were other Diana's that also received this. It was a lot of hard work, but it was fun, and we enjoyed it. And I received this in 2012. Back then, in the early days of the Diana's, I'm saying in the 70s, part of the 60s. Diana had several events that were Diana's, and everything was by invitation only. We were a small group. Montrose was our cocoon. And it was a great, great group talent. And so anyway, one of our parties was to go to the frost ranch Pool Party, which was out near Fulshear. And we take out bathing suits, and we had plenty of food, and certainly plenty of libation. And we stayed out there and swam and camped and just had a delightful day. And but it was not a fundraiser. It was just a good time party. Then in 1986 We went to the Shamrock hotel before it was destroyed. I think it might. This is it. And Jerry Atwood played the piano, and we swam in the pool. And we stayed out all day. And it was a delightful big pool. And we tried to jump off or dive off of the diving board. But late that afternoon, a shower came and we had to we didn't want to go home. So the kindness of the Shamrock. Let us go into their emerald ballroom. And we moved the piano in there and Jerry Atwood, and everybody danced the evening away. And finally we decided maybe it was time to go home. And when I left there, I wore a hula skirt. And I had about three strands of the skirt left. But oh what a great time we had. Then the next one was the country dinner and dance which is a fundraiser and the Diana award show which is a fundraiser and this was one of our shows and the costumes as you can see, and the guys with the high kicks and we had a Glenn Hunsaker was our choreographer And he taught everybody how to dance, and shuffle, ball change and tap. And at that time, I had just started trying to learn how to tap. And oh my goodness, I thought, oh, I can tap with both feet. And this was a show Oh, this was the first show at the word them. And we we just thought we have really come a long way from the tower theater that we absolutely love. But now we were at the mercy of them. Now we had a private event in Montrose. And, and just to tell you about when you got an invitation, you really thought you were special. And if you didn't get one, your feelings, I'm sure were hurt, you know, but it was a special time. One was the academy ball. And it was usually held around Halloween. And people came in exotic costumes. They were presented prizes. And everybody, they loved it. Of course, I think adults love to dress up in costumes or drag.



16:35

Then they had the leather and lace event. But one of the bass that was held every year was given by Bill bridges. And it was called the volleyball, the volleyball games. And it was the dikes against the guys playing volleyball and usually the dikes one but they let us the guys win every once in a while. We had a volleyball queen, we had cheerleaders, we had marchers. In fact, we everybody had display a pair of old boots white. And and we were the marchers and we have regular little costumes. And then we had the cheerleaders. And the cheerleaders wrote their own cheerleading. And they would pass out and everybody would do a cheerleader Yale, you

know, and that was very good. And that was Bill bridges. And he was Diane, a member who was instrumental in our lighting at the Diana shows, and also the sound. And everybody loved Bill bridges, because if you were on stage and a presenter, he would have a soft pink light on you. And it made you look so pretty simple. We like that. We also are at one of the parties. It was a beautiful Hello Halloween party that was given by three witches. And three of them had their birthday in October the 30th. So they decided they would give a Halloween party by invitation only. And we were very creative back there with costumes. And, and at that time, there was a register at the door and someone would check you in. If you had been invited to the party. And the three witches were Vernon frost, Peter forbs, and Buddy Shurtleff. And at that time, Cecil Durham, Dr. Cecil Durham came in an elaborate butterfly costume. And this was given at the West Moreland home in Montrose. And it had a fabulous staircase, and Cecil decided that he could fly he was a butterfly and he could fly. And he decided to fly down that staircase. Well, he did and he broke his collarbone. And so we called an ambulance. And he went to the hospital emergency in his butterfly costume. And needless to say, he got an award for that. The other would, an app this costume party by the three witches. They presented a prize for one of the best or funniest costumes. And our friend, Ron Wales received the costume received the present and it was a goose, a real goose. And it was because he was a dirty old flasher and he would flash his coat. And so he won the prize. Oh my God, so many fun things that happened. But this house was instrumental. It had a swimming pool. And the movie Terms of Endearment were filmed at this swimming pool. And if you recall, it was Shirley MacLaine and Jack Nicholson. The other rooms that were filmed was a home in River Oaks. But the Westmoreland house was represented in Hollywood with the swimming pool.



21:32

After all of this, with the Diane was a friend of mine came up to me and he said, Sharon, he said you need to join the Diana's. So I finally said, Well, you know, I've been working for about 10 years, I guess, I should join. So I joined in 1985. And it's been a fun trip all the way. Our shows, we're like a workforce. Everything was calculated. Everybody knew what committees they were on. And after work, we would start on our committees and work until about 10 o'clock. Retire, go home, and get dressed when the next day and go to work. Of course, we had the officers, the Board of Directors, the program committee, publicity, we even had a t shirt committee. Everybody got a t shirt, the cast everybody that worked. A theater coordinator of photographer, which was usually Ogden Robinson, invitations and tables, their show coordinators, and that was Charles temple and Peter Forbes. And every night they would go around to all the committees. Find out are we on schedule? If we're not, where do you need help? We had the decoration, the stage manager, the wardrobe. And I was on the wardrobe. And as I told you, we glued everything that sparkled on anything that made it beautiful. We had the pattern committee, the we had four sewing machines that we thought went night and day. And sometimes after our dear star Ava had retired, we had a wonderful gal that came in that was beautiful, she was talented, she can dance and she could sing. And that was Mary Hooper. And she came to us in the early 80s and was on our show for maybe six or seven years. We had lighting and sound which was build bridges. And we had a set committee and that was run by Harry Guyton and he gave everybody a hammer and a hard hat. And you have no idea how many queens you got a hammer and saw and paint and they made the sets for the stage. They delivered them, set them up, got them going. It was a fantastic crew. Then we had the door prizes. But most of all, we had a writing committee and it was always supposed to be so anonymous. But I know who the writing committee was. And I got it from the horse's mouth



25:15

and I'm going to tell you who the writing committee was. This is in the golden days of the Diana's. It was Charles Hiebert, Bob Fields was known as Phoebe, Rick Beale.



25:36

Dec Holloman, Doug Thomas, Rex Watson, Bob King, Linda Malay, Nan make tear, and sometimes Tim Weaver. Okay, I would like to tell you a little about some of the characters we had in the show. And one was Larry Scott, he was black. And he was a great cut up had a fantastic sense of humor. And everybody liked to camp and have a good time and the Dyna show was so big and fantastic that Las Vegas called Charles Hebron, and ask if they could buy some of our shows. And at that time, Mark Dros, the police were not our friends. They were writing the gay bars. They were taking people to jail. They were taking license plates down. And we could not afford to be known if we were the gay community. They could lose their jobs. So in reference to Las Vegas, Charles Hiebert said no, that they were not for sale, because no one wanted to be identified, because they could lose their jobs, though this was a hard time for the gay world. But it has changed now. And it is so much better. And it seems like really, nobody really cares if you are gay. The last thing that I'd like to mention is the 1988. award show. This particular one is dedicated to Charles Hiebert, because he was killed July the seventh



28:22

18 Excuse me. 1987. So this is our program for 1988. And I want to read just there is a picture of him coming out.



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This evening's performance is lovingly dedicated to memory of the world's oldest living teenager, Miss Angela lensbury. So after Charles's untimely death, Harry Guyton was the president became president. And he guided us through the hard times. And we continued on with the Dianna show all the years, as well as the country cookout. And so we still continue and it's a great thing and we loved it and it was a lot of fun and I'm still kicking. I'm still alive and I'm still going to be working. Thank you. I would like to tell you about this invitation. A private invitation only look at the size of it. These were put in the mail. That's how We've received them. And it is a take off on the old tower theater, the marquee. And it was given by four guys, Peter Forbes, Charles Campbell, Jim Roy, and Rex Watson. And also, Tom Garrity. And this is the size now the one with the motorcycle is probably Fannie farmer who owned Mary's, and he had a dog that rode on the back of the bicycle. But look at these invitations. We don't get anything like that anymore. This was fabulous. Well, one year, Fanny farmer and his dog were invited to the Dianna show, which was held at the Sheridan. And when I passed the table, there sat the dog in the chair, with his paws, on the table sitting there like he was going to be crowned king of something with a rhinestone collar. And not only that, he did receive an award for any farmer and his dog received an award. And Benny was very good to us, we always. Now we went to Mary several times. But of course, back then, when we started, when AIDS hit Houston and started taking our friends. We lost quite a few Diana's. But the thing about Mary's in the back, there are so many so many scattered ashes. A lot of people didn't want to go home

or be buried in a family plot. So ashes were scattered in the back parking lot. And that's where they are to this very day. Of course, the back parking lot now is has cement over it, and it is a parking lot. So that's just one of the things that went on. And so my friend told me, he said, If you go to Mary's Don't you dare Park in that parking lot, you park somewhere else? And I said, Of course I will. Right. So that's another little story that is part of Montrose. I would like to talk about the time the late 70s, early 80s, when the AIDS virus hit Houston. Nobody really knew what it was the doctors didn't know. And we lost quite a few of our Diana members. And it was such a grievous time for all of us, because we would go to a memorial or we would go to a funeral and see people that would be dead the next week. And it was every week. We went to something to say goodbye to our friends. And at that time, we lost quite a few members and it was it was a hard time to regroup and and try to receive more members but but Harry Gaiden happened to be the president then after Charles Haber. And he got into us through this. And somehow we managed to keep on going. And the Diana award show was given at the word them for the next two years under Harry's guidance, but it was a time that it was it was a time that we cried



34:56

and said goodbye Oh