

Sasha Cagen (& Michael)

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Sasha Cagen is a writer, coach and community builder and the founder of the Quirkyalone movement. She is the author of the books, *Quirkyalone: A Manifesto for Uncompromising Romantics* and *To-Do List: From Buying Milk to Finding a Soul Mate, What Our Lists Reveal About Us*. She writes a blog on the *Huffington Post* and has appeared on CNN, the BBC and NPR.

Sasha attended Frank's performance, *The Uncomfortable Zones of Fun* in December 2011 and published a long review of the performance on her *Huffington Post* blog. Frank invited Sasha to be a guest on the Shaman's Den after reading her review.

Linda: ... and then Frank always says they complain ... (Frank sounds) And they say you know I can't get connected with people, and they blame it on their disability. And Frank says, hey, turn the letter board around, make it easier for people to talk with you. (Frank sounds)

Michael: Cool.

Frank: Reach out. But they want to blame the ...

Linda: Disability for all of their problems.

Michael: It hasn't stopped you. (laughs)

Frank: How did you get started ...

Linda: In your work? How did you get started in your work?

Sasha: I started writing ... oh, is there more?

Linda: I think so ...

Frank: Or in your ...

Linda: In your play? (Sasha laughs)

Frank: Life ... ?

Linda: Or how did you get started in your life?

Sasha: (giggles) ... Hmmm, now I don't know how to answer ... (giggles) How did I get started in my life ... maybe I should answer that one ... that seems interesting.

Frank: Yes.

Sasha: Well you know, it's funny, I was talking to my mother a few months ago about some early ... some childhood things and she said to me ... she was kind of questioning my interpretation of my childhood or something ... and she said, well, you were just always this kid who like always wanted to go and explore and meet people and when you were two and

people would come over, when they were leaving you would be sad and want to go with them and see what was going on. So it was actually really interesting to hear that. (Frank sounds) And I think that's true. That I am just very curious.

Frank: Like me.

Sasha: Yeah, probably.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: You want to hear more? Tell us more!

Sasha: (giggle) ... Wasn't that enough? (laughing)

Frank: I am not CNN.

Linda: He's not CNN (laughter) ... You can give longer answers.

Sasha: I know ... I've got my talking points ummm, ummmm, so then how did I get started in my life ... well, I went to nursery school, made some friends, then I went to kindergarten and um ... Yeah, I think that I just always had a ... I grew up in Rhode Island which is a very quirky interesting state ... I think it really kind of shaped me but at the same time I really wanted to leave it.

Frank: And you made a career out of "quirky".

Sasha: Yeah, I think so (laughter) and I am getting more explicit about it ... I think I am going to become more explicit about that 'cause I have been kind of not totally owning it.

Frank: How?

Sasha: I don't know yet, but I think it's going to be like the centerpieces, because I really am really interested in individuality and acceptance and celebration of individuality and I think that underlies all of my work ... and I'm actually working with a coach now to help me see that ... because there are certain parts I haven't ... I haven't made it coherent yet, but that is the center of it all.

Frank: What is quirky?

Sasha: Um ... it is unintentional difference. So it is basically being yourself in a way that is not ... it's not like trying to be quirky. For an example, I think quirky is hip right now and there was a Saturday Night Live sketch that was like Zooey Deschanel and other quirky characters in pop culture that have this kind of hip aesthetic and that's not quirky at all. Like that's totally commercial and predictable. So quirky is ... the example that I used in that *Quirkyalone* book was like it's a cowlick ... it's like your hair sticking up ... and it's uncontrollable ... you work with it, you don't hide it. You go with it.

Frank: And play with it.

Sasha: Yeah, right, if you can. Like first you have to accept it and be good with it. That's the first step. And then yeah, play with it ... it's more fun.

Frank: Why would not you accept it?



Frank Moore and Sasha Cagen (video capture)

Sasha: Why would you not accept it? Because it's not acceptable. It's not how you are supposed to look, behave or be. Or because it takes courage to accept your quirkiness.

Frank: But, if you are quirky, you don't have a choice. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Um ... Well, you do have a choice. I mean you can camouflage it and blend in ... if you are self-identified quirky then you have made the choice to embrace your quirkiness. But everyone is potentially quirky ... I mean we all are, right? So that really is the difference between quirky people and non-quirky people ... the non-quirky people are hiding it.

Frank: Art and science are full of ...

Linda: Quirky people. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Yeah, that is true. Yeah. (Frank sounds)

Frank: I just read ...

Linda: Which one are you thinking of, the science one? (Linda to Mikee) What's the name of that book we just finished reading about the science dude?

Mikee: Feynman, Richard Feynman.

Linda: Richard Feynman, it was a biography of him.

Mikee: Autobiography.

Frank: How he is quirky. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Michael's read it.

Michael: I read it ... he is amazing. When he was studying physics, instead of reading the books, he did every experiment in history to understand on his own terms, so that by the time he became a scientist, he couldn't ... no one actually understood the ideas he had because he started all of them from scratch. He's really funny too. He is an awesome guy.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: He can pick locks.

Linda: Oh, pick locks? There was that whole thing where he got into picking locks.

Michael: For the challenge? (Frank sounds)

Linda: It was really safes. He knew how to pick most of the safes in the building that he was in at one point ... he kind of prided himself in that.

Michael: I should learn that skill ...

Frank: And the Manhat ...

Mikee: Manhattan project ...

Linda: Oh, the Manhattan Project, that was the organization where he picked all of the locks.

Michael: Oh, that is a great place to do it ... (laughs) Well, you know if you are going to go, go big, I guess. He was a more original thinker than almost anyone else around him and I never understood if it was just who he was or if that is what he learned to be. I keep reading those books, because I never get tired of them.

Frank: What was it called?

Linda: The actual book? Do you remember the title of the book, Mikee? He'll look it up.

Frank: You Must Be Kidding.

Linda: Oh, that was the name of it.

Michael: Yeah, *You Must Be Kidding, Mr. Feynman*. (all laugh) Good choice. Do you read a lot of physics books?

Linda: We read a lot of books. Frank has read a lot of physics books over the years.

Sasha: Do you all read books together?

Linda: Frank gets the talking books from the Library of Congress, it is a free service, so he can pick the books online, then we download them and put them on a little stick and they send us the machine to listen to them on. We always have two books going. We have one we read during the day and one we read late at night when we are getting ready for bed. It's really fun. We do a lot of reading.

Frank: After ten years at least of not reading.

Linda: Right, any books at all. (Frank sounds)

Linda: Well, it is because we started the radio station and we had that on all of the time, so we just stopped reading. Before that we had books going all of the time. And then we started again about a year and a half ago or so.

Michael: Have you read *Quirkyalone*?

Linda: No, we haven't read Sasha's book. Is it on talking book?

Sasha: I don't know. Anything is possible.

Frank: So, how did you discover the power of being quirky?

Sasha: Ha! That is a good question. (Frank sounds)

Frank: I am not Anderson Cooper.

Sasha: (laughing) Absolutely not. Totally different way of length and speed and, yeah ... he is much more combative. (laughing) Um, the power of quirky. I feel like I am still discovering the power of quirky. How did I discover the power of being quirky? (Frank sounds) It's like weird to say "power" and "quirky" together because they are not words that you would normally associate with each other because quirky is so sort of soft ... (Frank sounds)

Frank: The force of quirky.

Sasha: The force of quirky? Well, in a sense it's like being a writer and having an individual vision and like something that, um ... it comes down to wanting to offer something new, which in itself is probably going to be quirky at this point, because almost everything has been done or written about, so in that sense ... and I think that the internet ... I've been thinking about this quite a lot ... the internet makes it even more important to be quirky, or just to be different, because it's just a complete inundation of stuff, right? So it's having a distinctive point of view that people really want to read is the only thing that will make it important. And the power of quirky ... I feel like it should be something that's personal, the power of quirky, and ... I am trying to think about a moment in my life that I really felt that. 'Cause like *quirkyalone*, it's like "quirky" and "alone" that is a very ... it's about being quirky, but it's about a very particular experience of being alone in a social setting where you're supposed to be with a date. Right, so that whole book is about that project. So there are moments like that that I could identify. "Quirky" ... it is such a good question. I want to give you a good answer ... that is why I have to let it come to me. Yeah ...

Frank: On the surface it appears that you and I are opposites.

Sasha: (laughs) In what sense?

Frank: I am about tribal and community and melting ...

Sasha: Ummmm.

Frank: And your book is titled ...

Sasha: *Quirkyalone*. Yeah. Well, yes, on the surface that could seem true and then there's a bunch of layers under that ... 'cause there's the *Quirkyalone* movement, right? So there is a

tribal component. But, I personally only organize one gathering a year, that's Quirkyalone Day, when people come together. And I could organize a lot more, it's just that I never really wanted to. And quirkyalone, it's like, the point of that word is to give people a reference point to collect and to feel more normal, in a sense, and to have a sense of community. But it's very conceptual. And people have met their best friends through Quirkyalone, especially through the online forums there are people who have met each other and they travel to hang out with each other and they like become really close. Umm, so there is that. But you're right, that it's not about melting. And I'm thinking about doing a book in the future that would be *Quirkytogether*, which is like the natural follow up. That's been like ten years in coming, right? And it would be very much concerned with like how do you melt but still be yourself. Or like melt, but not melt?

Frank: Ask ...

Linda: Him? Michael? Ask Michael that question.

Sasha: How do you melt, but not melt? (laughs)

Frank: That is quantum physics.

(Michael laughs)

Michael: Yeah, seem to be in both states at the same time. I don't know, I mean, that's ... you know better than I do.

Sasha: Why?

Michael: I love the concept ... I mean, I don't know it, I don't know it in your experience ... I'd love to know how those things merged.

Sasha: Melting but not melting?

Michael: Yeah.

Sasha: (sighs) I mean, that's the jumping off point for the whole book, so I'm giving myself like a whole research experience to understand it better. So, it's like, when I think about this topic, like I ... people have been asking me to do this for years, right ... 'cause it's like really natural, and I didn't feel ready to do it. Almost 'cause I wanted to have the perfect experience of it before I felt ready, but I haven't, and I've gotten to this point where like OK I think, the way for me to understand this is to take this on in my life and in writing and talking to people and ...

Frank: Is there such a thing as a perfect experience?

Sasha: Yeah, exactly that's probably the block.

Frank: Of anything ...

(all laugh)

Sasha: Yeah, exactly, (laughs) right, which would be a classic quirkyalone mistake, yeah.

(all laughing)

Frank: Really, that is what both of us are rebelling against.

Sasha: Ummm ... yeah, you're right ... yeah ... no, absolutely ... that's quirky.

Frank: The couple ...

Linda: The couple, the date.

(all laugh)

Frank: The "mister right".

Michael: (giggles) What do you replace it with?

Frank: (making sounds throughout this) I replace it with tribe and intimacy. And I think you replace it with the person is all fulfilled in his self.

(silence)

Sasha: I'm considering ... (laughs) (Frank sounds) umm ... (silence) I don't have the philosophy that all man or any man or woman is an island, so no, in that respect, no, and there's a significant part of my writing that's about friendship in that book, so it's the idea of significant others, instead of just having one partner, that you have many people in your life that are very close ... and it's not a formal tribe, but you know, it could be, depending on how ... whether all those friends are in one circle. So there can be a quasi-tribal nature, but I don't think, most people don't have tribes, it just doesn't work that way for most people.

Michael: 49ers?

Sasha: Have a tribe?

Frank: And now it's more ...

Linda: ... common ... we're finding it's more ... is that what you mean, it's more common?

Frank: That is very recent historically.

Linda: Historically? It's very recent historically that people didn't exist in a tribal reality, tribal situation? (Frank sounds)

Michael: Sports, I still don't understand sports ... I can't think of a more tribal thing that I've ever seen in my entire life ... because people ... you're thinking different tribes ... but everyone finds that thing, that has a flag, has something that represents them and they identify with it. It can be almost anything. But is that the kind of tribal or

Linda: (to Frank) That is not what you're talking about ...

Frank: People used to live in groups. Big families.

Sasha: Uh huh. Yeah, it's a very lonely society that we have, the way our society is structured, it's very individualistic to the extreme. For example, like being a mother is like a real uphill battle in our culture. I remember reading an essay by a woman who was Indian. She wanted to go and be back with the Indian family because she would get more support and she would be able to work and not be totally consumed all the time with taking care of her child.

Frank: We ...

Linda: (Frank sounds throughout this) We raised two boys, and there were five to six people that were the adults and then the two kids and it was a very sane way to raise kids, because the kids were discouraged to identify more with the biological parent. I mean, you know, it was OK, everybody knew, it wasn't like a secret or anything, but they ... we all raised them and they had to deal with all of us responsibly. So, we held them responsible and it was a ... it seemed like a very sane way to do it. There wasn't all of that craziness that happens ... I hear people talking about that, I think, oh, we never went through that ... we never went through that ... and I realize it was because there was like five or six of us, so it was all very integrated.

Frank: They could not play ...

Linda: Play us against each other ... the way sometimes, if you have two parents ... that didn't work.

(laughter) (Frank sounds)

Sasha: So it was two kids, and five adults, and you all cohabited ... Wow!

Linda: Yeah, the five adults were the parents, they thought of us all as parents.

Sasha: Was it mom 1, mom 2 ... or what were the names?

Linda: No, we all called each other by our real names, sure, yeah. But when they had like Mother's Day projects, they'd make something for all three moms, or dads for all three dads, but they didn't call us mom or dad, we all called each other by our regular names.

Sasha: Uh huh, wow, how old are the kids now?

Linda: They were born in 1975, so however old that makes them ...

Sasha: Yeah, it's about my age, yeah ...

Linda: Oh!

(all laugh)

Frank: (Frank sounds) But the couple is not ... it don't work.

Linda: The couple don't work. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: You're definitive? You think absolutely a couple doesn't work.

Frank: As a concept.

Linda: It doesn't work.

Frank: It isolates. And what is wrong with you that you are not married? (Frank sounds)

Linda: What's wrong with you that you're not married? (Frank sounds)

(silence)

Sasha: Uh huh ... so, is that a question?

Linda: No, I think he is saying that ... almost like it is an under-implication. It's like, the couple is supposed to work, that is supposed to be the model ... that is the thing that you are going for (though most people aren't doing it) ... and if you're not, then what's wrong with you ... it is like there is something lacking with you.

Sasha: Right, yeah, that is still basically the dominant idea ... it's changing though. A friend of mine is a sociologist at NYU and he just released a book called *Going Solo*. It's gotten a ton of attention and it is about the phenomenon of people living alone. And a lot of the book contradicts the stereotypes of what it is to either live alone or be single and basically finds that people who live alone are more involved with their community and likely to volunteer and basically be involved with others. Exactly what you said ... they're more forced to get out there than when you're in a couple and you live together, it can be more isolating or hermitic, but it doesn't have to be ... I mean not all couples are like that.

Frank: No. One is ... it is not the number ...

Linda: ... two people, if it's one person, two people ... however many people ... That's not the issue? (Frank sounds)

Frank: If you are enough ...

Linda: If you are enough, then it doesn't matter what the number is, if you are enough.

Sasha: Alone, you mean, or as one person?

Frank: Or 2 people, or 3 people ...

(sounds of understanding from all)

Frank: But they push that you are not enough. That your mate is not enough.

Sasha: Uh huh. So no one is enough.

(Frank sounds affirmation)

Frank: Exactly.

Linda: Yeah, no one is enough.

(sounds of understanding)

Sasha: Right.

Frank: So, you keep looking ...

Sasha: Uh huh. Yeah, I think the like "what is enough" thing is a fundamental question always, just for people. And another thing I do is I coach people, a life coach, and I find when I coach people it is often a core issue that comes up is this issue of "what is enough?" Whether it is talking about work or relationships or anything ... it is like this core dissatisfaction of "what is enough?" So it permeates. Whether you're single, whether you're with someone, any situation. (Frank sounds) Which I'm sure is particular to our culture. It is so strong in people.

Frank: How about when you get old?

Sasha: Hmm. Who me?

Frank: People.

Sasha: People?

Frank: People. How about that?

Sasha: In terms of community and being single or being with a partner or family and all of that ...

Frank: All of those things ...

Sasha: Yeah, it's a huge issue. In fact, my friend Eric, who wrote that book, wrote about me and my family because I had an issue like that come up. Actually, the conversation comes full circle because I have this aunt who is like the definition of quirkiness ... no one could be more quirky than she is. Like, the most beautiful amazing spirit, actress ... she was a casting director in Hollywood, but really an actress at the core. She would have been here doing this interview ... she was like very counter-cultural. And she had a partner for 25 years, but they broke up, he wasn't there for her when she had another health crisis. And then she got brain cancer. So basically ... she had a ton of friends, she had a tribe, but it was more of a casual tribe, which is what most people have ... most people don't live together in a tribe. And in the end, the tribe couldn't cut it, for meeting her needs. Because the needs for someone who is in that situation are totally consuming. So my sister and I were commuting to L.A. to take care of her, which was not sustainable. And then she went and lived with my family in Rhode Island. But when it came up for me, it was quite scary ... what if I am ... she also didn't have any children ... like what if I'm at that age or at any age and get ill and don't have kids ... or a partner ... or even a partner ... like when you're in that situation you realize it is a tribe ... it is way more than one person can handle, way more ... so I think it's a big question ... for not only people who are single, or people who are in relationships, like the whole country, because people are living longer, but yet they need a lot of help to live and that situation they may be in.

Frank: For Betty ...

Linda: Betty is our neighbor. We might have even mentioned her at the performance, she is in her mid-80s ... she's a church-going lady. And when we first moved into this neighborhood in 1995, she was that much younger, and she was the one that just welcomed us. She used to knock on the door with cookies. She lived with Joe, they never had been married, but they had been together for decades. So, we got very close, in a neighborly way. She knew all about what we did. Even though she went to church every Sunday, she had no problem with the nudity, the eroticism, the art ... she just loved our spirit. (Frank sounds throughout)

Frank: They ...

Linda: We would video the performances and they would watch it. They would say, do we get the tape? (all laugh) Then the two of them would sit there and watch the performance tape, and they loved it! So, when Joe got sick with cancer, we just ended up being the ones. They didn't have any kids together, and so we were the ones that were with her for Joe being sick, 'cause she couldn't really take care of him, 'cause she was old herself. So, we were there and once Joe passed away, we just stayed. She lives on the corner in a little corner apartment. We

have a house down the street that we built for Frank's students, so there's Corey, Alexi and Erika live there. Alexi makes everybody dinner. Betty is included in that. Erika goes down and has dinner with Betty every night and they watch her cable TV.

Sasha: So sweet. (Frank sounds)

Linda: And Erika bathes her and takes care of all of that. Corey and Alexi are also very actively involved. We're all involved. We're the ones who get her to the doctors, we take care of everything, the less she is able to do herself.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: Yeah, we often think, somebody like Betty, at this point, would be in a nursing home, if she wasn't involved in this kind of a tribal situation. And there is no money involved in any of it. You know, she pays for her own food and she pays any expenses that are part of hers, but she is not paying us to do anything. It is just what we are doing.

Sasha: Right.

Linda: And, we think about that. If it wasn't ... what would somebody like that do in that situation. It is such a serious quality of life disparity. She is happy. She is having fun. We decorate her house for Christmas. We decorate her house for Halloween ... it is all in fun.

Sasha: Yeah ...

Linda: And it wouldn't be that way ...

Sasha: Yeah, it's really beautiful that you have that kind of community-based street where people know each other, and that you ...

Linda: Well, it's really just us ... (all laugh) ... it is not the street.

Sasha: You happen to live on the same street.

Linda: We created this.

Sasha: You created it.

Linda: Yeah. We created this. Betty started it and we responded to it and ... (Frank sounds)

Sasha: And initially it was her openness and welcoming and ...

Linda: Absolutely.

Sasha: The general feeling I get when I think about this question and hear people's stories when you are outside of a traditional family structure, it is about how much you've given to others, how much will come back to you when you're in that place of need. It's not like you could calculate about it, I'm sure she wasn't thinking, well, let me embrace this weird tribe of sex whatever ... to you know ...

Linda: No ...

Sasha: It's that spirit ...

Frank: But, it is obvious it is because she had always been open to people.



Frank Moore, Sasha Cagen and Michael (video capture)

Sasha: Uh huh. Yeah, and there's a lot of rewards to reaching out to people. You know, it can be so easy to stay within your own comfort zone, in your own bubble, but you get a lot of rewards from reaching out.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: Hence the title ...

Linda: Oh, of the performance series: *The Uncomfortable Zones of Fun*.

(all laugh)

Sasha: Because you get more by making yourself uncomfortable?

(Frank sounds)

Linda: I think you had said something like there are rewards, but you have to push yourself, or something like that ...

Sasha: Yeah, absolutely ...

Linda: So Frank is just saying like it's not like it is the easiest path or the most comfortable path, but there are more rewards ... by pushing ...

Sasha: I agree. That's why I'm here today ... because I think, yeah, this is a little edgy for me, but that's the way I live my life then, if you say no to interesting things then interesting things

won't happen.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: Yes.

Frank: People don't get that.

Linda: The relationship of how that works.

Sasha: Yeah, I know. It seems really natural to me. But, I think that people don't get that, it's true.

Frank: In physics, there is no dividing line.

(all laugh)

Michael: Between matter and energy or between comfortable and uncomfortable (giggles)?

(all laugh)

Frank: Etc. ... And between two objects.

Michael: Yeah, it's funny, we're always looking for the grand unified theory of everything in our personal life, in the real world, but, I don't know, do you think a lot of our dissatisfaction is the separation, I think, not just between people, but in ourselves, between how we really feel and how we act ... all of those things, so ... Yeah, it's actually a really good metaphor when you think about it. I don't know how to bring them together ... ummmm, I haven't figured out physics, but ...

Frank: Because each needs the other to be what it is?

Linda: You're not sure how to put it. That's the thing of there's no dividing line ... as if there's like this and this ... there is no dividing line because this needs this to be, so there really isn't a division between the two because they need each other to exist and yet we experience things as divided.

Sasha: HmMMM.

Michael: Like you said we almost need them to be quirky, to have the difference, so we notice it, right, and we feel the need to be different then ...

Sasha: HmMMMM.

Michael: But how deep is that, I don't know?

Sasha: HmMMMM. I mean, I guess you're talking about a binary opposition in a way not being real.

Frank: Yes.

Linda: And then you can apply that to anything, I think that is what Frank is saying.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: It's a mind fuck ... like, when I think about ... I'm just thinking of things in my head

... because I constantly have that, you know ... like ... this way of thinking about it, that way of thinking about it ... I'm always doing that.

Frank: I wrote a book ...

Linda: Oh, *Cherotic Magic*, right, about all of that sort of thing. About energy and how all of that works and how it applies to relationships and how it applies to how life works ... this happens if you do this and

Sasha: So what's the bottom-line advice?

(all laugh)

Linda: Sum up the book ... (laughs)

Sasha: Tell me how to run my life!

Frank: Be responsible.

Linda: Be responsible.

Sasha: In what way?

Linda: In every way. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: But you could be responsible and still be gripped by binary opposition.

Frank: I am not. (all laugh)

Sasha: Doesn't it mean to allow for every possibility? Or what does it really mean? Or not choose? Not decide what's real, or what's right or wrong?

Linda: Well, there's a couple of things ... Frank is definitely someone I would say allows for all possibilities ... more than anybody I've ever met. He sees possibilities where I don't even notice them until he points them out. He is very aware of possibilities, but in terms of responsibility, Frank, I would say that I've never seen Frank behave as if something happened to him.

Sasha: Oh, personal responsibility ...

Linda: Right! Not in that kind of EST way.

Frank: Not being a victim ...

Linda: But in a real way. Of like taking ... having a certain way of approaching everything that happens as if it matters. (Frank sounds) Because Frank lives as if everything matters a lot, and yet, there's a certain kind of "this" (gestures) about that.

Sasha: Right, that's the play part, the mattering and it's play. Right. Have you read the book *The Infinite Game*?

(Frank sounds)

Linda: I don't recognize that ...

Sasha: You should read it. It's about life as a game. In a way it's like the sort of philosophy in the book is very ... anti-binary, like mind fuck kind of way. Just the way it's written and it's

very expensive mentally. I think it probably sums up the way you guys operate in some way.

Frank: Do you want to ask me any questions?

Sasha: Yeah, well I'm very curious about the community you have, including the raising of children and like who is in it and how did it get started, what are the principles ... like the whole shebang.

Frank: Ask questions ...

Linda: Specific questions.

Sasha: OK. When did this community begin?

(Frank giggle sounds)

Linda: Well, I would say there's a couple of things. When there's that and there's this, right ...

Frank: I have lived communally since ... the early '70s.

Sasha: Hmmmm ... where did you find each other?

Linda: Frank and I?

Sasha: And the community.

Linda: Oh, the whole bunch? (Frank sounds)

Frank: Which time?

(all laugh)

Linda: Try to narrow it down ...

Sasha: The first time.

Frank: Like maybe Louise ...

Linda: ... would be the beginning of that story. Louise ... when Frank was in college in San Bernardino, and living at home ... there was a woman that was older than the college-aged people ... the hippy woman ... that had some land with a pool ... and the hip college students hung out at her place. So, Frank hung out there, and made an impression on Louise ... and at one point ... well she would say stuff like ...

Frank: I kept trying to move out ...

Linda: He kept trying ... Frank saw that if he didn't get out of his home with his parents during his college years, it would be much harder when he was finished college, because this was a place where he had access to people. So he had tried unsuccessfully a couple of times to move out.

Frank: San Bernardino ...

Linda: ... was not a happening place, so it wasn't that easy to get something going.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So one time at Louise's she made some comment about that she was moving to Santa Fe, and Frank said, boy, I wish I could go to Santa Fe. And she said, well just come with me. And that was pretty much it, so he said OK. She said it would take her a couple weeks to settle with the house. But he just wanted to go, so he hitchhiked to Santa Fe, thinking that she'd be right behind him, with no money ... he didn't tell anybody. Because he knew if he told his parents they would try to stop him.

Sasha: And were you in a wheelchair then?

Linda: He's been like this since birth. He was born with cerebral palsy.

Sasha: So you hitchhiked in a wheelchair?

Linda: Yeah.

Sasha: Wow.

Linda: But he knew ... this was it, you know, he really had nothing to lose.

Sasha: Well this is the kind of responsibility you were talking about.

Frank: Really, one of my ...

Linda: Oh, was that the one that Steve ... oh, ok, this is not the hitchhike part, this is where Steve ... he got somebody to drive him there, right ... and he hitchhiked later.

Frank: And ...

Linda: Right ... dropped you off, right ... at a crash pad in Santa Fe. So Steve drove him to Santa Fe and dropped him off and then went back to San Bernardino. Frank didn't have any money or anything. So, he's at this crash pad where he has to depend on other people to get him on the toilet, to get him up, to feed him, to dress him ...

Sasha: Yeah, that's what I'm wondering about. Like were you afraid that there wouldn't be people to meet your needs?

Frank: No. I trust.

Sasha: Trust, yeah.

Michael: Do you ever get afraid of anything after doing that? What else could be there ...

Frank: Exactly. (all laugh)

Sasha: Right.

Michael: It's all downhill from here. That's a great way to do it.

Sasha: Yeah.

Frank: I met the guy who ran the place in San Bernardino ...

Linda: When you were in San Bernardino, you met the guy who ran the crash pad.

Frank: But he was not the one every day ...

Linda: He wasn't the everyday guy. So, once you got there it wasn't like he was there, but you didn't know that, I guess ... did you know that? ... And you went anyway.

Michael: Did Louise come?

Linda: It took her months.

Sasha: Wow.

Linda: Two months? Yeah.

Sasha: Huh, so you were hanging out at the crash pad for two months waiting for her. And took the chance ...

Frank: And visiting communes ... in New Mexico.

Sasha: During that two months?

(Frank sounds)

Linda: Uh huh.

Sasha: (laughs)

Frank: Then ...

Linda: ... Louise came. And you lived in a communal situation there. Louise had kids from various relationships and then she had other people that were friends so they all lived together and took care of each other and ... you were there for like nine months? Almost a year ... something like that. And the way you tell the story is that he could have just stayed there and been comfortable, but he felt like it wasn't the way to go ... that he had to push himself. And he met a couple that were driving through Santa Fe on their way back to a community that they lived in in Massachusetts.

Sasha: Huh. So it wasn't enough to stay there.

Frank: Not ...

Linda: ... on their way back ... on their way there? They were somehow associated with it ... and they told you about it ... and based on that meeting you decided to move to that community.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: In Massachusetts.

Linda: Yes.

Frank: So I hitchhiked.

Linda: That's when he hitchhiked.

Sasha: Wow. How long did you have to wait typically for a ride?

Frank: No, I put a sign up ...

Linda: And you found somebody ...

Frank: In a record store.

Linda: That you needed a ride. And somebody said they'd give you a ride to Massachusetts.

Sasha: Oh, all the way ... one ride.

Linda: But they just dropped him off. So there he is just getting dropped at this place. And the couple that he had met weren't there. So nobody even knew who Frank was, or that he was coming, or anything.

Frank: And they freaked out.

(all laugh)

Frank: But I had nowhere to go so they had to deal with me.

Sasha: Uh huh. It was a couple or ... a family or ... ?

Linda: It was hundreds of people, it was a commune

Sasha: Oh, it was a commune. What town?

Linda: Frank, I never can remember ...

Frank: Warwick.

Frank: Northfield.

Sasha: In Western Mass.?

Linda: Yes, is that right, in Western Mass.? Yes.

Sasha: Huh, yeah, there would be more hippies in Western Mass.

Linda: So what happened was the leader of the community ... he was an ex-Hell's Angel guy, very charismatic ... came out and looked at Frank and told them that to take care of Frank is to be in his good graces. So he gave them the word ... (Frank sounds)

Michael: So you guys never met ... ?

Linda: No, no, he just looked at Frank ... (all laugh)

Frank: I was him, so ...

Linda: Oh, that's what he said to them, "Frank is me."

Sasha: Hmm, no separation.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: And so you moved in and you lived there for a year?

(Frank sounds)

Frank: They were a cult.

Linda: Well, they were into channeling and so everything was about what you channeled, and Frank's feeling was that people weren't paying attention to each other, they were only paying attention to the channel, but they weren't really relating to each other, and so he would tell them that, but nobody listened.

Frank: They talked about past lives.

Linda: It was all about that sort of thing.

Sasha: Well, it is interesting, because I looked at your Wikipedia page and I noticed that they said, "has been edited by members of Frank Moore's sex cult", right? So I'm sure that ... I'm just guessing that if it's on Wikipedia, that that gets said about your group. So, I am wondering, number one, what do you say in response? And number two, what's your definition of a cult, versus a community ... how do you think about that yourself and respond to people?

Frank: Hey, the USA ...

Linda: The United States ...

Frank: Was founded by cults. (Frank laughs)

Sasha: Which ones ... with the religions, you mean ...?

Frank: A lot of cults ... (Frank sounds)

Linda: Well, I think there was a point, maybe in the '70s around the Jim Jones time, where that came up more often with the press. Where we would run up against that, where people would want to do stories on what we were doing, as a cult. But, we really don't run into that anymore.

Sasha: I was surprised when I read that because ... I don't know, it was surprising to me, and it was actually in the style of Wikipedia that I hadn't seen before. Because it wasn't even italicized, it was just in the text.

Linda: I don't even know what that is. We don't know what that is. This is the first time it has even come up in twenty years, you know, it just doesn't come up anymore. Because most of the people ... we've been doing stuff for so many decades, there's like bulk, so it seems kind of "surfacy".

Sasha: Uh huh.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: So you were there for almost a year, or about a year ... oh, so what happened was that nobody paid any attention to Frank telling them that they should focus on being on the earth and not past lives and spirit guides, and nobody paid any attention, so he channeled a spirit that told them the same thing.

(all laugh)

Linda: And then they all listened! They would sit around and wait for the spirit to come through to tell them how they should relate to each other.

Frank: Flexible.

(all laugh)

Linda: Whatever you needed to do.

Sasha: And how did you communicate it?

Frank: I ty ...

Linda: He would type it.

Sasha: OK, so the channeling came through typing ... would someone else type it then? Or, how did it work?

Linda: No, Frank typed it. He has a pointer ... that's how he uses the computer ... He has a stick ...

Sasha: Oh, great, that is a separate question ... I am really curious about all the prolificness and how it works.

Linda: The laser is recent, within the last several years. That's what Frank used through most of his life.

Sasha: To type ... ?

Linda: And to use on the board here, he used to ...

Sasha: So, it's like boing, boing, boing ...

Linda: Just push, yeah, and then on the computer he uses that ... when he used a typewriter he would use that.

Sasha: So, when you write, you are actually writing yourself with no intermediary.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: Yeah, it's just him.

Sasha: It's cool.

Frank: I paint ...

Linda: He also paints ...

Sasha: Oh, painting that way. That part I did not get ... now I understand.

Linda: He wears a hard hat and a paint brush, so those paintings are all ... (gesturing) that's Frank ... the one right behind you on the easel, they're all paintings he did ... and when he paints with that, he can only get this part of the canvas (gesturing), so he has to paint sideways and upside down to fill the canvas, so ... yeah.

Frank: Since high school ...



Frank Moore and Sasha Cagen (video capture)

Linda: That's when he started with the pointer? (Frank sounds) And the painting.

Sasha: Well, so this part's so ... I still kind of wonder at the whole history but I just have to say even if we come back to it, this part is so interesting to me, because you have so many obstacles to being creative that people can't even imagine and then people complain, oh I can't write or I can't make the time, and that part is just amazing to me, and I just wonder what is the impulse that says, I must do this?

(Frank sounds)

Frank: No choice.

Sasha: No choice, uh huh.

Frank: Like when I got my pointer, I wrote a piece about world government ... one-world socialism.

Linda: One-world socialism was the paper he wrote ... the first thing he did when he got the pointer.

(all laugh)

Frank: They wanted to t ...

Linda: ... take the pointer back?

(all laugh)

Frank: And I wrote a ...

Linda: Political column? ... This was all in high school ... and at one point he debated a G.I. that was in Vietnam in the local paper ... was it in your high school paper?

(Frank sounds)

Linda: And it was a very controversial thing to do because it was before there was much support to the anti-war movement, and ... Frank got a lot of pressure about being ... that he should be the perfect cripple ... you know, he's the guy ... the smart kid ... and it was the first class of integrating disabled with regular, non-disabled kids.

Sasha: Hmmmm.

Linda: And he was doing stuff like that.

Sasha: To not be a radical person, but be more ...

Linda: Yes.

Frank: I was ruining ...

Linda: They said that Frank was ruining it for those that would follow him.

Sasha: Hmmmm.

Linda: And he would reply, I thought the idea was to free ... was that the way you put it? (Frank sounds) To free the people.

Sasha: To be who you are.

Linda: Yes.

Sasha: Yeah, that's beautiful.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: So what, the community? So he met someone at the community, Debbie, and they ended up moving out of the community eventually, after a year, total.

Frank: After I danced ...

Linda: Oh, danced, at Carnegie Hall ... they had a band, the community had a band, and the lead guy, Michael, was the singer in the band, and Frank danced at Carnegie Hall when they played Carnegie Hall. Which was another thing that the people in the community ... (in a whisper) "You want to have Frank up on the stage dancing?" But Michael was, "Oh yes I do."

Sasha: The people from the community in Massachusetts had a band that performed at Carnegie Hall. And then how did you dance? What did it look like? Can you show us?

(laughter)

Frank: I am a dancer.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Frank: Look at Sunday ...

Linda: Oh, Sunday's performance, right, you can look at the performance that we did on Sunday, last Sunday, it's up on Vimeo, Frank's channel on Vimeo, and you can see him dance and sing.

Sasha: OK.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: B ...

Linda: It's the Bob Madigan Memorial Hootenanny and Séance.

Frank: Big ...

Linda: It was a big band. Yes, I don't even know how many ... 15, 20 ... something like that ... people in his band.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: And Saturday ...

Linda: Saturday, a week ago Saturday, Frank did a live concert via Skype, performance playing the piano here. And he sang and played chimes and played the piano ... it was a solo thing. And it was ... the woman who set it up was in Montreal, and so the audience was all in Montreal and they watched on Skype.

Sasha: Wow. And how does the singing work?

(lots of Frank sounds) (lots of laughter)

(lots of laughter and Frank sounds)

Sasha: There you go ... now I understand.

Michael: So is there anything worth being afraid of? I can't imagine you have stage fright. (laughs)

Linda: No.

Frank: Never.

(Michael laughs)

Linda: I don't know ... that story ... so, you moved out of ... they moved from the community.

Frank: Ma ...

Linda: They got married.

Frank: I don't believe in marriage, but ...

Linda: You guys did it at that point, I guess for various reasons ... (Frank sounds)

Linda: And then, I don't know, you moved ... they tried to do a couple things ... they tried living in California at some point, in this area, and going to school, and had all sorts of obstacles ... that was in the early '70s.

Frank: For two weeks.

Linda: They couldn't even get a place that would let them stay there. People were so put off by Frank ... so they ended up moving ... did you end up moving back to New Mexico at that point?

(Frank sounds and nods yes)

Linda: Because Frank knew Louise and knew people there, so they went back there, and lived in Albuquerque at some point and met Jo and Ray (Frank sounds), somewhere along there, separately, two ... Jo is a female and Ray is a male. They weren't together, but in the end the four of them were ... joined forces ...

Frank: I went to University of ...

Linda: New Mexico, right.

Frank: To get money.

Linda: Because as a student he can get money to live.

Frank: But I was looking for something to work with that people ...

Linda: People? No. That would bring ... you were looking for a way to work with people.
(Frank sounds)

Linda: Frank had read a lot, because growing up, he wasn't always able to go to school, his father was in the military, so they lived all over the world. So, sometimes they were in countries that couldn't accommodate him so he would homeschool ... he read a lot a lot a lot. So, he had a lot of stuff as he calls in his back brain, just like, cookin', you know. What I know, is the one book, *Environmental Theatre* by Schechner, Richard Schechner, who is a teacher at NYU, or was. That kind of gave Frank some ideas because this theater group of Schechner's created ... they had theater without a stage, so that ... much the same way like what you came to ... where people were involved in the action, and what Frank noticed is that they inadvertently created community through their performances, but they weren't equipped to deal with that, because it wasn't a mindful thing, it wasn't what they wanted, and they were a little uncomfortable. And he thought, what if you applied all of that in a mindful way, **to** create community.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So, as he says, he ripped off Schechner's exercises. Of course, Schechner shows up at one of the first performances in New York. At some point they moved to New York City and, he kind of experimented with this form.

Frank: I started a drop-in workshop. (Frank sounds)

Linda: And there were things ... I think you had said something like the lack of commitment

was an issue. You wanted something where people were more committed to it, than the drop-in thing.

Sasha: So, it is so interesting to me. I feel like the structure of this interview is that the story keeps going, but I'm going to interject with reflections.

Linda: Uh huh. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Because I feel like I have done similar things in my life, but I haven't done it with a single purpose that this is my life. It's like I created community from a weird thing that we all do together, quirky alone, or something like that. But I didn't have the idea that that was my career, because I always was also practical ... well, I have to earn money, right? So, I am just wondering, where does that come from to just say like, this is what I do, experimental stuff, and then ... like, are you concerned about money and survival?

(Frank sounds)

Frank: Money always comes.

(Michael laughs)

Sasha: Uh huh.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: I don't think it was about the art so much. For Frank I think it was always about people. So, he was just looking for a way to be with people in a community way, and that book gave him the idea of using art, and that particular form of art. It wasn't about the art, so much about form, it was ... it seemed like something he could use.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Frank: Intimacy.

Linda: He was looking for intimacy.

Sasha: Uh huh. So instead of looking for "the one", or something like that, this was the pursuit. Because people are looking for intimacy but they think they are looking for one person.

Linda: I think that the dissatisfaction with the level at which people interact, just generally, you know, like he would feel like he wanted to be deeper with people, and there wasn't any structure ...

Sasha: Structure ...

Linda: Structure in place, so he thought, I'm just going to create a structure.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: I'm going to create something where I can be with people the way I want to be with them. And then he followed where that evolved.

Frank: And people ...

Linda: Yeah, you know, that's the thing, Frank has always found that people are **there** when you approach them in that way ... it's like he never like ... he always has these high ... he addresses people as if they are going to be "right there" ... he never talks down to people.

Sasha: Right.

Linda: And like, over and over again, I see, they always are. You know, they always are. You think, oh my God, I can't believe he's saying that to that person, and then they'll be right there with him.

Sasha: Right.

Linda: So that was his experience. He would create these things, and people were always there.

Sasha: So it's like seeking the highest in people by just talking to them at the highest level.

Linda: By being that way yourself.

Sasha: Yeah.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: Demanding. (Frank sounds) Not ...

Linda: Right, yeah, well like when I met Frank ... the workshop ... that was one of the exercises, "demanding". We would do a weekly workshop.

Sasha: What's demanding?

Linda: Well, it would be like where ... the idea was, to have relationships that work, you have to not "settle". (Frank sounds) You have to demand what you need, and be willing to be what the other person needs you to be. To be willing to be demanded of. (Frank sounds) So he's saying it's not like this kind of thing. (bangs hand on table with hard stare) ... It's a more vulnerable, soft way.

Sasha: Uh huh.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: So, yeah, he used that in the workshops and then created a life from that.

Frank: And people even moved from Santa Fe ...

Linda: When you moved to New York, to be ... where Frank would be.

Sasha: Be part of this.

Linda: Yeah, yeah.

Sasha: Well, that was kind of another question I had was that on a very gross level there's like ... what's so compelling about you that people are willing to take off their clothes at one of these performances? Or, like on a bigger level, what's so compelling about you that people would move to New York to be part of this? So like, what is that?

Linda: Well, for me (laughing) 'cause I don't know, really ... I met Frank when I was working in a travel agency. I was a travel agent and he wheeled in and I thought, "Oh God, I hope this guy doesn't come up to me." He's in his motor chair clunking along. I had never talked to anybody that looked like Frank. Of course, he came right up to me. And he was asking about an airline ticket, and I was at the counter and I had to lean like this. (motions) And he could look down my shirt, and I never wore a bra. And he says, after we do the transaction, "You'd be great in this play I'm doing." And I go, "Oh, really?" (gesturing) (all laugh) There was no play. (laughing) But he was willing to create a play. But you know, the thing I think for me that was so compelling ... 'cause I quit my job weeks later to hang out with Frank ... but I think it was because ... like he would ... well there were two things. One was when I started talking to him, all of the surface stuff dropped away and I just saw the person that he was. So then that was a non-issue, immediately. And then the other thing was, just ... like he would show up to bring me out to lunch, during my work day, and stuff like that. (all laugh) I think what I got was a level of commitment and acceptance. I wasn't used to being around somebody that I felt really "got me", who really "saw me" in a way that didn't really quite ...

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: And that felt really good. It felt good. So I think perhaps that's what it is.

Sasha: Really seeing people.

Linda: Yeah. Seeing people and wanting to connect in a real genuine way.

Sasha: Right. To be part of them.

Linda: Whatever they kind of think, it seems that people respond to that.

Sasha: Yeah, that's what people want.

Linda: Yeah.

Frank: The workshop was not ...

Linda: ... really happening. I had been living here for a year and he had just moved to Berkeley not that long before. He was trying to get this workshop thing going and he had managed to get a free space in this seminary to do this workshop, and he needed people, but he couldn't get something going.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So that was the project that we did. I had come out here to study this "growth" thing, Fischer-Hoffman Process from Pennsylvania. I was a Fischer-Hoffman therapist. (Frank sounds) So he said, let's ... 'cause that was like what was happening. So he said what about if we rework this to have it fit more with what Frank's thing was. So that was our project. We reworked it and put posters up for that, to try and get this workshop thing going. (Frank sounds) We got one guy who answered the poster. He was a psychic teacher. And we had this office, so we sat in this office for a couple of hours talking to this guy to try to get him to sign up for this workshop. And in the end, he says, you know, Frank, I don't know about the workshop, but would you be willing to meet with me every week and I would pay you just to sit and talk like we did now.

(Frank laughs)

Linda: Frank being flexible said, sure! And that started a five, six year or more run of Frank doing relationship counseling. Because he went and told all of his students about his new guru. And they all wanted to meet with Frank. So Frank was ... people were paying him ... he was at this office eight, ten hours a day, two-hour sessions, getting paid to do relationship counseling. He ended up having several workshops at one time. Because people would eventually sign up to be in the workshop. He said, you know, if he wanted to be rich, he could have kept doing that.

Sasha: Right.

Linda: And made loads of money, but ... (Frank sounds)

Frank: Boring ...

Linda: It got boring.

Sasha: Right.

(Michael and Sasha laughing ...)

Sasha: Michael and I have talked about that before.

Frank: People have the same problems ...

Michael: Yeah.

Linda: But everybody thinks they're unique. And they don't like to be told they're not.

Sasha: Right, yeah.

Michael: Are they real problems, or not even real problems.

(all laugh)

Frank: I gave them what would work, but when it started working ... (Frank sounds)

Linda: They freaked out.

(laughing)

Frank: But ...

Sasha: Like, what started working?

Linda: Like, their lives ... their relationships.

Sasha: So they didn't want them to work.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: So it seemed.

Frank: But do you have that happen with you?

Linda: When you're working with people?

Sasha: Ummmm, yeah, it's a very interesting reflection. I'm new in my practice. I just started this year. So I don't have enough experience to say, but I can imagine ... I don't have a hard time believing it. Because people are afraid of success. Are afraid of having what they say they want. We're all accustomed to being how we are!

(Frank sounds)

Frank: They are fine during the shit phase.

(laughing)

Frank: But ... (Frank sounds)

Linda: When it all starts coming together and working, that's when they would freak out.

Sasha: And what do you mean by "freak out"?

(Frank sounds)

Linda: Well, usually they would undermine the relationship.

Sasha: Oh, they would sabotage ...

Linda: Yeah. Because it was right there. They could have just done ...

Sasha: Again, like they can't enjoy.

Linda: Yes.

Frank: Because then they would be responsible. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Hmmmm, as opposed to placing the responsibility on the other person ...

Linda: Yeah, blaming, or whatever for what happens to them.

Sasha: Yeah, right. That seems to be the path in most spiritual coaching. All of that whole world is like a path toward full responsibility for your experience. Like, that seems to be, in a way, what it all boils down to.

Linda: Yeah. (Frank sounds) So we started doing plays. We did that show *The Outrageous Beauty Revue*, which was, kind of like a "hit".

Frank: The people who took my workshop. (Frank sounds)

Linda: Oh, started moving in ... yeah, so, what happened is that the people that ... we had a few workshops going ... things evolved. It's like, OK, so and so needs a job, so and so has a construction company. So Frank said to the guy who has the construction company, if you hire "bimbo girl", who's never picked up a hammer, you'll have somebody who's committed to you. She won't know what she's doing, but you can train her. So, that was an act of trust on his part. But, he ended up hiring all these people ... the people that needed jobs were people that were unskilled with this particular type of work. He became a millionaire, using that model of hiring people that he could trust and rely on.

Frank: I am ...



Frank Moore and Sasha Cagen (video capture)

Linda: Frank's good at making money for other people.

(everyone laughs)

Linda: We always have enough ... but ...

Sasha: Who was the guy?

Linda: He was one of the people that was in Frank's workshop. He was in the workshop, him and his wife. He was just starting up his construction company. It was a radical idea for him to hire these people.

Sasha: Uh huh, right, yeah!

Linda: They were all in their twenties ... they had never picked up a hammer and had no interest in that, but they needed work, so, OK. So, people started working for each other. There were clothes companies that we started. Successful. You know, just out of people playing, just being together. People started moving in with each other. You know, why don't we all get a house together? Why don't we rent a house together? So we ended up with several, I don't know, three or four houses of people. (Frank sounds)

Frank: So, at sessions ...

Linda: Frank would start bunching the sessions up. (Frank sounds) So instead of each person having a session, it would be everybody that lived together.

Sasha: In one of the relationship counseling things ...

Linda: In the house.

Sasha: Right.

Frank: I made ...

Linda: Oh, money? Right, because each person would still pay their amount of money, but they'd all be coming together.

Sasha: Yeah, well I think that groups are much more interesting than one on one, anyway. That's sort of one of my observations.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: I don't really like the therapist/client or coach/client relationship. I like the group atmosphere where people get to be seen by a variety of people, and I think that that can be powerful.

Linda: Yes.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: The shows ...

Linda: We did a bunch of stuff. We did plays. We did all sorts of thing, all sorts of things.

Sasha: Plus art with these people too, so it was like ... these are the same group of people ...

Linda: Yeah, Frank would come up with a play idea and it's not like anybody was an "actor". But we did one play that happened in a strip joint. It was about the dynamic of the three dancers in this club. And he based it on the lowest dive. 'Cause he was aware of the places on Broadway. So what he did, he had these three women that he cast in it, he got them jobs at this diveyest place on Broadway in San Francisco. And we would be there. They would do their set and then he would coach them. Because they were supposed to be their character. And he didn't have a script necessarily. He had a treatment. And they had to be their characters and interact with the audience, who were the people that came into this bar. So that's the kind of thing we did. But that led us to discovering the Mabuhay Gardens which was right on that same street. Because it got very boring sitting at these strip clubs, hour after hour after hour. (Frank sounds) We'd walk the streets looking for something to do and there was this punk club, so we went in there. And you know Frank in his usual way, saw the guy that was producing the shows there and went up to him and said can I do something here.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: He had hit this playwright up for a play. This guy had a hit play in San Francisco, it was a big deal. And he lived in Berkeley. And Frank was always cruising the streets. And he went up to this guy and said I'd like to direct one of your plays. And this guy was kind of like, (changes voice and gestures) "OK, Frank, I'll give you a play." Very condescending, you know. And if you want me to change any of the stuff, we'll talk about it. (Frank sounds) Frank was, no, I'll just do it the way it's written. It was about a pre-Christian Irish queen and her

concubine. It was called *MEB*. So Frank goes into this club, the punk club, and he says to this guy, Dirk, can I do this play here? So, you know, Dirk, on the other hand, didn't see a crip, he saw Frank. He goes, what do you got? So Frank tells him about this play and he says, sure. So we did this play for two weeks at the Mabuhay, after we finished the play about the strippers. Which then, nobody came to the play ... it was an early show ...

Sasha: The play about the strippers ... it was like an unofficial thing? Did the manager of the strip club know that it was happening?

Linda: Well, the play itself happened in Frank's theater. This was just rehearsal. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Oh, I see.

Linda: Their job at this club was them learning their part. So, he got them the job. You know, you're going to learn how to be this stripper, by being a stripper.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So then we actually did the play at the storefront we had. And we fixed the place up like the dive. People would come in and we did the actual play at our storefront.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: So we ended up getting the Mabuhay Gardens, and we did this play (*MEB*), and nobody came. It was the early show. Dirk had this ... this is where all the punks played at 11 o'clock ... and he had this vision of this kind of Toulouse-Lautrec environment and we would be the artsy fartsy early show.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: He just loved it. He loved the play, even though nobody was there.

Sasha: The owner of the Mabuhay?

Linda: He was the producer, Dirk, yeah.

Sasha: Oh, OK, yeah.

Linda: He loved it! And he said, keep it going. But we couldn't ... because Frank had dredged these people ... none of them thought of themselves as actors, and all had other things they were doing. But he said anything you ever want to do, you have a place. One of the people in the workshop, Diane, was a construction worker, but, who, liked the arts. She said to Frank, if I took a leave from work, could we do a project together? I'll come up with a few hundred dollars we can use to put it on. So he said, I always wanted to do a take-off on a beauty contest, but where instead of being "beauty", it would be "outrageous" ... who was the most outrageous. So, we arranged it with Dirk, and it was a one-time thing. We got contestants. Frank went around the Bay Area and got hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dollars of prizes. It was unbelievable. He would come home with these gift certificates for these fancy restaurants, boutiques, hair salons ... (Frank sounds) record stores. But we couldn't find contestants that were outrageous. You know, not to what we wanted. So, eventually, he planted some of the people from the workshops as contestants, who were not eligible to win. But, he told the real contestants that he had plants, and he said, but you don't know who the

plants are, so you have to be more outrageous than all the other contestants ...

Sasha: And what kind of outrageous ... looking or acting or ...

Linda: Breaking taboos, breaking ...

Sasha: An action that would be outrageous.

Linda: Yeah, edgy, you know, uncomfortable, pushing, pushing boundaries, real. Like a real outrageous, not just a fancy costume. But like, pushing through something.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So, we did this show but it was packed. There were hundreds of people there. We had never done anything for more than like five people.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: And there were like rows of reporters. It was the second page of *The Examiner*. It was just like ...

Sasha: And this was in the '80s?

Linda: 1978, 1979 ... something like that.

Linda: So Dirk comes backstage during the show and says, announce that it's a weekly event.
(all laugh)

Linda: And Frank, being flexible, says OK. Even though we were midway through rehearsal on another play. He had rewritten *Lysistrata*, to bring it back to its original bawdiness. We never did that. So we did *The Outrageous Beauty Revue* for three and a half years, once or twice a week for that whole time. And that evolved into not getting contestants, but us ...

Sasha: Being outrageous.

Linda: We were the acts.

Sasha: So the lesson is to be flexible. That sounds like that's a big theme.

Linda: That's right.

Sasha: Just kind of following something.

Linda: Frank always says, he follows.

Sasha: I find that in my own life too. Things happen that you have no idea will be the things that pitch it.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: Yeah.

Frank: I need to not get in the way. (Frank sounds)

Sasha: Uh huh.

Frank: About everything we do. I did not plan to do that ... everything we have done, I did not plan to do.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Frank: Talk about lists.

(Sasha laughing)

Sasha: Perfect segue. Well, the whole planning thing is big, and lists and not having lists. I'm actually writing something now about ... I spent the year traveling in South America in 2010 and it was very much about exploring that idea of being unplanned. Because my life had been very planned, and very obsessive with lists and just sort of having goals and sticking to them, and almost being kind of mechanical ...

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: ... in getting things done. Which is very much the way of life, especially in this country.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: So I was really interested in following the idea of an unplanned life. And what happens. And lists ... lists are what you want them to be. They can be ... you can be a slave to your lists, and feel like you have to follow that plan. But lists are also a jumping off point for desire and creativity. And it's a total openness to ... the root of lists is to lust.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: The Middle English root is "to lust". So, it's about what do I want, ultimately. Like a way that you can trace the root of listing. So it's like, I actually went through a big journey in my listing of being very practical, to I only write things down I think I can do ...

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: ... to like writing just down everything, and appreciating that mystical part of lists that is like everything and anything, and you never know.

Frank: Then forgetting your ...

Linda: And then forgetting your list.

Sasha: Forgetting your list, yeah ...

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: Yeah, there can be that. Like, in a weird way you can write a list of so many things that seem impossible and forget about it and then go back six months or a year later and realize you did it all, and so ...

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: In some way, that might not be obvious, but you did it all.

Frank: It is like praying.

Sasha: Yeah, it's a prayer. It is, it's totally like a prayer. I have that line in something I wrote about lists, that it's a secular version of prayer.

(Frank sounds)

Frank: But you need to forget ...

Linda: ... once you pray for it/list it, then you need to forget it?

Sasha: Yeah, in some way, to not be too attached to it. But it's in your consciousness in some way. It's like rumbling ...

(Frank sounds)

Frank: Back brain.

Sasha: Umm, yeah, it could be like the back brain. Yeah. (pause) Yeah. There's like a superstition or something of like you don't want to be too attached to it. Like, oh, I have to have this. But it does feel like ... and I think that much more so writing versus typing. Like I think for Frank, there is no distinction. But I think like for me, when I handwrite, it has more of a mystical feel to it.

Frank: I don't do lists.

Linda: Right.

Sasha: You're not a lister?

Linda: He's not a lister.

Frank: That kind of list.

Linda: He would do lists of his all-time favorite rock 'n roll songs, and those kinds of lists. (Frank sounds) But not the kind of "to do" lists.

Sasha: Or things you want?

(Frank sounds)

Linda: Right, he doesn't do that.

Frank: Because that frames it. (Frank sounds) Opportunity.

Linda: It frames opportunity?

Sasha: Ummmm. You prefer that the opportunity is so vast and open without a list to frame it?

Frank: Yes.

Sasha: But it seems like writing the list is like setting the compass so that something can happen. How do you set the start point then?

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: What's the articulation?

Frank: Live!

(all laugh)

Sasha: No, you have to write it down first!

(all continue to laugh)

Sasha: You can't just live! No, it doesn't work that way! (laughing)

Frank: Although, when I did the four ...

Linda: Oh, the 48-hour ... right, that's right. Yeah ... (Frank sounds)

Linda: ... I guess it was in the late '70s Frank did this thing called the 48-hour process. And, he would tell somebody that if they stuck with him for 48 hours ... well, first he would have them make a list of what they want. But he said, not like a new car or something like that, but what you really want in your life.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: There would be a \$500 fee, and at the time that was a pretty good amount of money. And for 48 hours ... he said if you follow me for 48 hours, I'll put you in a position to have the things on your list.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Frank: But, first ...

Linda: You went through the list with them. They'd write the list and then Frank would have a session where he went through the list with them, to really boil it down ...

Sasha: I've done something extremely similar with the people in my coaching program/study group, because one of the people is very into experience design and play. And you have to read this book, *Finite and Infinite Games*. It's all based on these principles. We would do something similar where we would do a 15-minute session to determine what kind of experience they wanted to have, and then they would leave the room for half an hour and we would create it for them. So, it wasn't a 48-hour thing but the principle was exactly the same.

Linda: Yeah.

Frank: It did work.

Sasha: So people ... what kind of things did they want?

(Frank sounds)

Frank: Every ...

Linda: Yeah, everybody was different and they all were ... wow, I don't know. (Frank sounds) There's so many ... Joe, Joe is an easy ...

(Frank sounds)

Linda: The one guy, he was into being enlightened. He wanted to be enlightened. To have that



Sasha Cagen (video capture)

kind of experience in his life. (Frank sounds) That's the thing that came to my mind ... he had a certain picture of himself as this very spiritual, enlightened kind of guy.

(Sasha laughs ... Frank sounds)

Linda: So what Frank would do is he would use the money ... he'd hire people, he'd plant people in the environment ... because we'd leave ... we had this storefront we used, but we'd leave the environment and go to restaurants, go to the movies, just do various things ...

Sasha: Yeah, similar. Our stuff had things like that too.

Linda: He would have people planted at different places ...

Sasha: Uh huh. So you would hire people, not just involve them as players ...

Linda: Yeah, 'cause we had this money ...

Sasha: So the money wasn't a fee, it was to facilitate the experience.

Linda: Yeah, it was a fee.

Sasha: It was a fee, and there was a budget.

Linda: And Frank used it, part of it ... was to hire people, so he had more possibilities.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Frank: I am never about money ...

Linda: Yeah.

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So in the case of Joe, for the first eight hours or something ... we sat in the studio here and read ... was it *Steppenwolf*, or *Siddhartha*? (Frank sounds) *Siddhartha*. So Frank ... did Joe read it aloud or you have somebody read it? (Frank sounds) It was Joe reading it. Frank would keep interrupting him and drawing what was happening in the book into Joe's life (Frank sounds) so that his life was woven into this book. (Frank sounds) So by the end of these eight hours Joe was like ... he was completely blissed out ... this is it. You know, "I'm there" ... "This is what I wanted!"

(laughter)

Linda: Frank said great, let's go get something to eat. So, we go to the Jewish deli around the corner. It was filled with people. We get our food. And we're all sitting there eating and Frank takes longer to eat, so Joe was finished eating. So he said, why don't you just pick somebody that's here in the restaurant and go introduce yourself and sit with them while I finish eating. (Frank sounds) So, Frank knew the kind of person Joe would pick, so he hired this woman, and he told her how to dress (Sasha laughs) and he told her how to act, and Joe went right over to her.

(all laugh)

Linda: And sat down. So, then, when we're done Frank says, OK, now we're going, so he says goodbye to the woman and we are walking back and Joe just starts putting her down. Oh, he said, I was trying to explain to her what was going on, she just wasn't getting it. (Sasha laughs) As if like, her consciousness is so low, you know, she just couldn't conceive ... (Frank laughing) So, we go back to the space and I think you sent him into another room to meditate on what had happened. (Frank sounds) And while he was gone, Frank already arranged all of this, her name was Deborah, that after so much time had passed after we left, she was to show up at the door. So, she shows up while he's back meditating and ... we had this box, the size of a double bed that was padded with foam and had a lid and air holes. So, Frank and Deborah got in the box naked and put the lid on it. And then are directions to bring Joe back out. Was the lid open or closed? (Frank sounds) Closed. And he had to guess who you were in the box with?

Frank: And meditate ...

Linda: He had to meditate on the box, (Frank sounds) on who you were in the box with. So, at some point, we open the lid up, and Frank says to Joe, how did I do this? How did I get her to be in the box with me? (Frank sounds)

Frank: We were ...

Linda: Yeah, they were playing erotically. Deborah and he were playing erotically. Frank had made up that word eroplay, which you might have read in your research ...

Sasha: Uh huh.

Linda: So they were eroplaying, so, that's what Joe was looking at ... Frank and Deborah playing ... Frank says, so how did I do it? How did I get her to be here? (Frank sounds)

Linda: You picked her! (Frank sounds) Joe was like, "Well, you must have hired everybody in that restaurant."

Sasha: Mmmm.

Linda: "And then the one that I picked would get paid extra to come over here." So, Frank says, OK ...

Frank: I cracked up.

Linda: Yeah, Frank just started laughing. (laughter) So, at some point, we'd tell him, right? (Frank sounds) We'd tell him what happened ... Frank knew who he would pick and told her how to dress and act, and we paid her, and nobody else in the restaurant was involved in this in any way. "Do you believe that?" He said, "No it's impossible. It's impossible that you could have predicted who I would pick."

Sasha: HmMMM.

Frank: I ...

Linda: ... cracked up again! (all laugh)

Linda: So eventually Frank said, OK, sure, I hired everybody ... if that is the thing that he would accept.

(Frank sounds)

Linda: And I think that's an example of ... where he did get what he wanted, but it was also kind of put in a position ...

Frank: We pushed.

Sasha: Uh huh, right, yeah.

(Frank sounds)

Sasha: You know, I really have to go to the bathroom.

Linda: Yeah, well, it's ... so how long have we been ... we're already kind of at the end ... this plays on our cable TV show and that's a certain length, so that's what we base the length of this on. (Frank sounds) So, should we wrap it up? (Frank sounds) Yeah. Tell everybody who you are.

Sasha: OK, my name is Sasha Cagen and I'm the author of *Quirkyalone* and *To-Do List*, and I'm a writer and a coach.

Linda: And your website.

Sasha: sashacagen.com, quirkyalone.net ... Google me, yeah.

Frank: Read ...

Linda: Sasha reviewed one of Frank's performances ...

Sasha: Yeah, it all began because I came to this show in December and wrote a blog post about it, and you guys saw it.

Linda: Yes.

Sasha: Yeah, it was very cool for me, I'll just say, because I felt like coming to your show was like returning to my roots in some way. Like, as I said, I have a history of doing this kind of stuff, but I also have my practical side. Like, I think it's kind of interesting that you guys developed all of this in the '70s, right, but I'm of a different generation so I've had ... I started with the riot grrrl, everything ... when I was 19, doing zines, going to punk shows, all of that. But then there's like, riot grrrl grows up and you have to ... well, you don't have to ... well, I have done conventional things too. I make money and have a "career" (quote unquote) but, there's a part of me that, the biggest part of me like so appreciates this kind of stuff that is totally authentic and real and free of fear, you know, 'cause I think that's where the juice is. So coming to that show was a nice touching in or tapping into that again because people who want to follow that path really need nourishment, or just to remember that it exists. (Frank sounds)

Linda: Yes. (Frank sounds) OK ...

Frank: Go ...

Linda: Go pee.

Sasha: Otherwise, you're going to have a problem here.