

GUEST: JACK CIONE

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So, when you were born, you had a different name than the one you have now.

Yes. [CHUCKLE] Jackie Cioni. Real Italian. C-I-O-N-I.

Traditional Italian home, Catholic?

Oh, yes; Catholic, a little town right out of Chicago, where everyone was Catholic. I remember one time, I dated a Jewish girl. My family had a fit, because, they were very, very [CHUCKLE] strict. You were Italian, you went to the Italian church. You only associated with Italians. And in that little community, there was the Polish church, the Irish church, the Italian church, the Lithuanian church. [CHUCKLE]

And you stuck to your people at your --

-- own church.

Right.

Huh.

The families in those days kept to tradition.

And ... I'm fast-forwarding to what you did in later life. How did that go over with the traditional --

Well, I --

-- Catholics --

I left. [CHUCKLE]

[CHUCKLE]

I left my Italian community at a very young age. I had an uncle that belonged to the Al Capone gang in Chicago, and ... I loved his way of life. Expensive cars, and fancy clothes, and eating in fancy restaurants.

What did your family think about his lifestyle?

Oh, they didn't. That's when they disowned me. And I didn't speak to my father for years. At -- when I graduated high school, I left the Cioni family.

[CHUCKLE]

How old were you when you gravitated to your uncle?

Fourteen. I was a piano player. Boogie - woogie was real popular then. And so, he got me a job in a nightclub in Chicago, which --

Which was many miles away.

Eighty miles. It's right -- we were -- lived in the suburb, a small farm town.

So, you commuted?

And stayed with my uncle, and played the piano there. And of course, met all the Mafia gangs. At that time, one of the big ones they owned was Joe Louis. Which is very funny. Because I had that whole story in my book. I met Joe Louis when I was very young. And then he became world champion. In 1960, he was broke, 'cause all his wives took his money and all his friends. And he was working for Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas as a host. And so, a choreographer there wrote a show for him, starring Joe Louis and His Lovelies. And he called me and he said, I want to rehearse the show; can we use your nightclub, the Forbidden City? I said, Sure, bring 'em over. And it was Joe Louis and his chorus girls, and Freda Payne singer. And so, they rehearsed, and they opened the show at the Forbidden City.

This is the one in Honolulu that you started?

Yeah.

Not the Las Vegas one.

No; my nightclub. They were breaking it in and gonna take it to Caesar's Palace. So, when I saw Joe, we brought back old times, how I knew him and my uncle. I said, Joe, you can't do this show in Las Vegas, you're too big of a man to let these girls with red sequined boxing gloves punching him, and all that kinda stuff. I said, you're too big for that. The public will laugh at you. Well, he did the show here, and he got bad reviews. Some of the press liked him. I don't know whether you'd seen him then.

No, I didn't see it.

No. [CHUCKLE] Anyway, he didn't do the show in Vegas. He took my word, and he stopped it. And then, of course, he passed on. But that was the last time I had seen him.

What else appealed to you about your uncle from the Al Capone gang? Was it just the money? Just the access to --

-- His way of life. He had the big Packard with those white - wall tires on each side. [CHUCKLE]

And you were fourteen years old. I mean, you were just a kid.

Yes.

Playing at nightclubs --

I did, yeah.

-- 'til -- what time did you go to sleep?

Well, I changed my age. I was ... I was twenty then. Everybody thought ... 'cause I had a mustache at fourteen. I didn't look like a high school student. And I was making seventy - five dollars a week. That was good money in --

A lot of --

-- 19 -- [CHUCKLE] --

And how did you keep up with school when you were actually working in the city?

Yeah. Well, I didn't keep up with school. That was the sad part. I remember one day, a teacher said to me, Jackie Cioni, you're gonna be a bum. You're

gonna be a bum if you don't learn Algebra and English. And I said, Get out of my face, honey. I make seventy - five bucks a week; what are you making? Schoolteachers [INDISTINCT] made thirty - five dollars a week.

Ouch!

And so, I got expelled. They kicked me out of school. But the principal was building bleachers for the football team, and he needed a show to raise money for the bleachers. And so, I was working at this nightclub across the street from the Oriental Theater, and there was Les Brown and his orchestra, and they had a girl singer by the name of Doris Day. She had not made Sentimental Journey yet. They were recording it, but it had not been released. And so, I said, Doris, you've gotta come to my high school. She said --

High school?

I remember her saying, Your high school; are you in - I said, Yes, I'm in high school, and we're raising money; would you come and sing a song or two? And she did. She brought her trio with her, and we did the show, and we raised money. See, when they worked at the Oriental Theater, they used to do four and five shows a day. In those days, they showed the movie, and then they have a stage show.

Oh ...

And the movie and a stage show. So, in between shows, she would hang out at the bar where I was playing. So, she knew I played the piano.

So, at fourteen, you were very worldly wise.

Yes; I was making money and living a good life at fourteen. School was not part of my life, that's for sure.

So, you were just trying to get out --

Out.

-- and continue to make money.

And that's when my father disowned me; yeah.

Did he actually disown you?

Oh, yeah. He wanted nothing to do with my Uncle Mike and the way of life that I was living. So, I carried on and made my money, and did my thing.

How about your mom saying, What happened to my little boy?

Well, they moved to Arizona, because of health reasons. And I did help drive them to Arizona. They had a trailer, and they went to Tucson, Arizona. And we were all living in the trailer; my sister and I, and the two of them. Can you imagine, four people in a trailer with - oh, in the desert of Arizona in 1946? [CHUCKLE] It was horrible. So, I changed my name to Cione; C-I-O-N-E. I followed the Dione Quintriplets; they were popular then. They were in the paper all the time. First time somebody gave birth to five babies.

Mm.

And they were so cute, and everybody would say, Dionne. So, I thought, Why not Cione? So, I carried it on; Jack Cione.

And you stayed in Arizona?

No; I went to Hollywood. I had saved a lot of money playing the piano.

How much did you save?

Oh, I think I went to Hollywood with about a thousand dollars. And all my clothes, and I was gonna become a movie star. That's my second repotting. And so, when I got there, I stood in line for auditions. And I thought, This is a ridiculous way to make a living. I did one movie, Good News, with June Allyson and Peter Lawford.

What'd you do in the movie?

I was a dancer.

M-hm.

Yeah; I was a dancer. I didn't want to play the piano anymore. The piano, by the way, kept me out of the service, too. I was with the USO and - at the time my draft came up. Bob Hope picked our - I had a band called The Jolly Jacks, and he picked the band to go on tour with him. And I said, I'm being drafted, so he got me out of the draft. And I toured with the USO then.

That's how you spent the war?

That's how I spent the war; yeah.

Oh, amazing.

First time they came out here, by the way, was with Bob Hope's show. We played Pearl Harbor and ... Kaneohe and Schofield.

And after doing the USO tour, you stayed in Hollywood?

Straight back to Hollywood, trying to become a movie star. But it didn't work. But I met ... I met lots of movie stars there.

You sound like you were a real streetwise --

Yeah.

-- young man.

Yeah; I met Eleanor Powell and Dorothy Lamour. Oh, that was funny with Dorothy Lamour. They were filming the Road Show with Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, and, of course, I knew Bob Hope from working with him. And I said, Dorothy, I wrote to you when I was in high school, and you sent me a photograph, To Jackie Cioni, with all my love, Dottie Lamour. She said, You still have it? I said, Yes, I still have it. That was the end of that. But --

[CHUCKLE]

-- Dorothy used to come here every winter, and stay at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. And I had the nightclub in Waikiki called Le Boom Boom. And she used to come into the club. And so, one night, I said - she said, Do you still have that picture? I said, Yes, I do. So, I brought it, and she autographed it again, and we took a new picture. And I have that. Which I think is a wonderful story, because she used to come to the club every year and spend lots of time there, until she passed away.

Mm. All these relationships that stretch over --

A relationship --

-- [INDISTINCT] areas.

-- that I met when I was young --

M-hm.

-- and came back when I was... old. [CHUCKLE]

So, when you - so, you're in Hollywood and you're deciding, I don't want to be auditioning, what was the life plan then?

Oh, one more story which I think is very funny. In Hollywood, I used to get dressed up every night and go to Ciro's, Mocambo --

Uh-huh.

-- and Earl Carroll's - those were the big nightclubs, and sit at the bar thinking I was gonna be discovered. But one night, I sat at the bar, and Van Johnson and Peter Lawford were at the bar. And so, I start talking with the. We met, and his friend Keenan Wynn came in, and the maitre d' came over and said, Your table is ready. And I thought, Oh, wouldn't it be nice if they invited me. But the three of them just got up and left me sitting there. And I was very disappointed. But when I opened my Dunes Club here in Honolulu, I was buying acts, and I bought Van Johnson. [CHUCKLE] So, I brought him over here, and he worked at The Dunes. And I had brought that story up; I said, You know, you ... blew my mind when you didn't ask me to have dinner with you and ... the other two. And he remembered the story. [CHUCKLE]

Oh, he really did? Ah ...

But I thought --

So, you made an impression.

I thought it was funny that he'd end up working for me at The Dunes.

How many nights did you spend sitting there, waiting to be discovered?

Used to go every night.

For how long?

Oh ... mm, thirty, forty minutes in each bar.

For years?

Oh, no; for how long? No, I gave that up ... and the year was 19 ... 1948. And I moved back; I had no place to go. I spent all my money. I moved back to Phoenix with my mother and father. Which was not too happy. But I got a job then at Arthur Murray Dance Studio.

Because you could dance.

Yeah; 'cause I could dance. And I met my first wife.

Who was a dancer? Student?

Who was a dancer; yeah, she --

Teacher or student?

No, she was a teacher. And we both worked there at Arthur Murray's.

Doing ballroom dancing, and what other kind of dancing?

Oh, that was ballroom dancing. That's another story. [CHUCKLE] We went to New York and worked ... thought we were gonna work for Arthur Murray. But the studio in Phoenix blackballed us, and the studio in New York said, We don't have an opening right now, but we'll have something later.

Why did they blackball you?

Because we left the Phoenix studio.

Oh, I see.

And we were their best dance team they had. And so, they thought by blackballing us, we'd come back to Phoenix. So, instead, we got a job with the Fred Astaire Studio, and I worked for Fred Astaire. And I became—in the daytime, I'd go to audition for Broadway shows. And I auditioned for the Arthur Murray Show. [CHUCKLE] And I became Kathryn Murray's dance partner.

[CHUCKLE]

We'd rehearse in the daytime, and I'd teach dancing at Fred Astaire's at night. But that was so funny. [CHUCKLE]

And she knew that?

And - no, she --

Oh, she didn't.

-- didn't know that. [CHUCKLE] But the show ...

Mm.

We left New York because my wife became pregnant, and went to Phoenix, and I opened a dance studio. And they sued me. Because --

Non - compete.

-- I had a contract. Right. But I was underage when I signed the contract. [CHUCKLE] And my first wife said, I married a child. I said, Yes, you can be picked up for rape. [CHUCKLE]

[CHUCKLE] So, you got in trouble with your wife, but you got out of the lawsuit.

She didn't know I was so young. But, we got out of the lawsuit. And then, my studio just bloomed; we were big, big, big. I ended up with, fourteen studios all over the State of Arizona.

So, from an early age, you were good at earning money. But now, you're good at making money. How did that happen? What was that transition?

Oh, I had a good business sense. And ...

Where'd you get it?

It just came natural, I guess. I opened the one studio, and I was doing all the teaching. And pretty soon, we had too many students, and my wife was pregnant, having the baby. I had to hire teachers and more teachers, and more students, more teachers. And then, my sister got involved, and she was just sixteen at that time. And --

How old were you? Twenty-six? She's ten years --

Oh, I was --

-- younger?

Let's see; that was 1948 ... I must have been nineteen.

Nineteen?

Yeah. [CHUCKLE]

So, already, you're married and you've got all these --

Yeah.

-- dance studios?

Uh-huh. Well, the studios took ten years, but ... I stayed in Phoenix ten years. And we made all these studios, I got a divorce, she got the Tucson studio. I kept the Phoenix, Scottsdale, and all the rest of 'em. And then, I start selling them off to teachers who would run the studio and pay me a percentage of their gross. And so, I had all these studios.

Did you figure out that business model? 'Cause that's smart. That's ongoing revenue; right?

Yeah, it's ongoing revenue.

[CHUCKLE]

[CHUCKLE] And so, I did the same thing here in Honolulu with nightclubs.

So, how do you think you had the wherewithal to be so adult in your sophistication when you were a teenager? I mean, when you were doing an adult's job on the piano.

Yeah.

And then, you ...

I just --

-- [INDISTINCT] businesses.

I just liked to make money.

And you're marrying an adult.

I'm marrying an adult. Yes. It all fit together pretty good.

You didn't have to really think about it at all?

No; I wouldn't want to change a day of it. It was a wonderful life. I must say, the Lord was very good to me. I worked with the rough element. Nightclub business is not an easy business. But I stayed the straight line, and did it as a business. I don't drink; I never did drink. [CHUCKLE] And so, I always said people want to buy me a drink. I said, I'm in the business to sell this; I don't drink it.

So, throughout the time you operated nightclubs, and made a good living off alcohol, you never drank?

Never drank.

Not ever tempted? 'Cause a lot of people get in trouble; they don't think they're interested --

Oh, I'd have --

-- and then they're exposed --

-- a social drink --

-- to it.

-- you know, like a martini once in a while. But I was never a drinker.

What was your passion about running nightclubs?

Doing shows.

Mm.

And, directing shows, and producing shows. And so, that opened a whole new field for me.

Okay; let's back up. Because right now, we're still in Tucson, and you're ...
We're in Phoenix.

I'm sorry; Phoenix, and you're ... getting passive revenue from the individual sale of you --

Yes.

-- studios. And then, what happens?

Well, I did a first television show. Had a weekly live TV show, which got me into producing dance numbers. In fact, Wayne Newton was on my first show. He was ... twelve years old.

Could you tell he was gonna be a star?

Oh, yes. He had lots of talent. And he also worked for me at The Dunes here.

Oh!

[CHUCKLE] Later ... I started producing shows, and then I produced them in nightclubs. So, I had a show at the Guys and Dolls, which was on the south side of Phoenix, and I had a show on the north side of town called The Sundown. And then, I personally appeared at the Westward Ho Hotel in the fancy Contra Room. Was the equivalent to our Monarch Room here. And my sister and I became a dance team there ... so, I was into producing shows. And sent a show to Las Vegas at the El Rancho, and then I was into tap dancing and dancing and doing all of these shows.

And your talents as far as dancing and piano; they're all self-taught? Who taught you how to dance?

Yeah. No, I studied some tap.

Mm.

When I was in Los Angeles, I took tap.

Because you were a budding --

Yeah.

-- actor; right?

I was in a class with Vera-Ellen and Donald O'Connor. And Peggy Ryan.

Wow.

Do you remember Peggy?

Yes; she was married to Eddie Sherman.

Eddie Sherman; right. We were in the same dance class. And ... Vera-Ellen; we thought we were gonna team up as a team.

Wow. So, lots of people flowing through your life, lots of different ways to make a living.

Right. Can we stop a minute?

Sure.

Well, can we go back to your first wife? So, you—how old were you when you proposed to her?

I think I was about eighteen.

Eighteen; and how old was she?

Twenty-three.

And she didn't know you were a teenager.

No; 'cause I was twenty - I was twenty-four. 'Cause I changed my age.

Oh, I see.

So, Arthur Murray's thought I was twenty - four.

Was that ever a point of friction between you, that you hadn't told her how old you really were?

Not; not until we won the court case. [CHUCKLE]

[CHUCKLE]

'Cause I was only eighteen when I signed the contract.

Yeah. So, that turned out to be your saving grace --

Right.

-- actually.

M - hm.

Okay. So, here we - so now, you are - where are we now? You were selling your dance studios.

Yes; I told my dance studios. Well, while I was dancing in the Contra Room, that's where I met my second wife. She came in one night for dinner with ... a party of eight people. She had just moved to Phoenix; she was from Dallas, Texas. And ... I met them - after the show, we'd always go around and talk to the customers. So, I said, Hello, I hope I'll see you again.

Did you say that to everyone?

Well, to her. I shook her hand and said - I said, I hope you'll come back again. And ... three nights later, she came back again. This time, she brought her friend. He's the baseball player, Dizzy Dean and his wife, Pat Dean, which they were close friends from Texas. And so, after the show, they asked me to join them, and that's how we became friends. And in talking, I found out that she had a daughter that was eight years old, and my son was with me at that time and he was seven years old. And I said ... How about going to the State Fair, Sunday? Take our kids; wouldn't that be fun? She thought that was our first date. So, we took our kids to the fair, and from then on, it ... turned into a romance, and we got married.

What made her a keeper?

What made her, what?

What made her a keeper?

A keeper?

Fifty years; that's ... that's a keeper. [CHUCKLE]

I've been ma - yes, we're celebrating our fifty - eighth wedding anniversary.

Fifty-eighth?

Yes.

Wow!

[CHUCKLE] I'm an old man now. [CHUCKLE]

What made her the one?

Well, she was such a lady. My first wife was a dancer. And it was an entirely different type of personality. My first wife was in show business, and I was in show business, and ... my other wife was not in show biz. She used to manage Elizabeth Arden's main [INDISTINCT] in Scottsdale, Arizona. And I used to teach dancing there, too. That's where we had all the celebrities from Hollywood used to come there and try to rejuvenate. Like, Greer Garson, Rosalind Russell, Bette Davis. We even had Mamie Eisenhower. And they would all take down - the dance lessons from me. I personally there. So, it was --

And you liked the idea of being married to somebody who wasn't in the showbiz

--

Right.

-- **realm.**

Right. And then ... we just hit it off beautifully. And so, we got married, and we were on our honeymoon. We ... was gonna do the Orient. We did Japan and Hong Kong, and Australia. And we were at Fiji and the plane was going to Tahiti, and I said, I'm so hungry for a hamburger. In those days, the restaurants were not good, even in Tokyo and Hong Kong. And the plane was announced, All aboard for Honolulu. I said, Why don't we change our tickets and go to Honolulu?

For a hamburger?

[CHUCKLE] Well, to finish our honeymoon.

[CHUCKLE] I see.

And so - because we - we were - told everyone we were gonna be gone two months. And so ... we got on the plane to Honolulu, and we stayed in the Hawaiian Village Hotel for a while. And then we said, Why don't we ... get an apartment. So, we got an apartment, paid a month's rent. And while we were there, we said, Why don't we get a job. We liked it here so much. So, we both started looking for a job. Well, I couldn't find anything, but she found a job at the Biltmore Hotel. She was secretary to the manager; worked right in. And one night, we went to the Forbidden City, 'cause we had dinner across the street at the Fisherman's Wharf.

On Ala Moana Boulevard --

Oh, yeah.

And Forbidden City was --

Across the street.

Right - yeah, where Ward Warehouse is now.

Right. And we were in there, and there were six customers. And all these Japanese girls in the show. And so, the manager came over and talked to us; Chinese man. And I said, How can you pay the rent with six people in here? And the show was a god awful show.

What kind of show was it?

Kabuki dancing.

Mm.

Japa - in that period, there was the Oasis, the Ginbashi [PHONETIC], the Forbidden City, the Ginza. It was all Japanese hostesses. There were no Korean hostesses then. [CHUCKLE] And they would dance. And so ... I just told him how bad his show was, and he said ... Do you want to do a show for me? I said, Yeah, I'll do a show for you, I have nothing to do. He said, How much is it gonna cost? I said, I'll do a show for you for nothing. I just need something to do. Well, that gets into a very involved story because ... the lady who was his partner was the mistress of John Wayne, who had his boat parked across the street by the Fisherman's Wharf. [CHUCKLE]

So, how did that get involved?

Well, that got very involved because it's so funny. And meeting John Wayne, I told him, I don't know what we're gonna do with our son. And he said, I have the same problem. I said, I have a ranch in Arizona, five hundred acres, and I wanted my son to take it over. Pat said - or John said, Where is it? I said, It's right outside of Phoenix. He said, I'll take a look at it when I'm back in Hollywood. So, he had to get out of town. I did him a favor here. And ... he bought the ranch for his son, Pat.

He bought your ranch for his --

Yes.

--son, Pat.

[CHUCKLE] And the story; when I took the check to the bank, it was so funny. The cashier said, Is this John Wayne, the actor? I said, Yeah. And you're gonna cash it?

[CHUCKLE]

I said, Yes, I think so. [CHUCKLE]

Wow.

That was, I thought, very interesting. That's how I got in --

So, even in Honolulu, you're running into celebs.

Yes; yes. So ... I did a show at the Forbidden City. And I did two shows that made a lot of money. One was Black Bottoms, the first time --

Black Bottoms; could you explain?

Black Bottoms, an all Negro show.

Ah ... and what happened to the Japanese dancers? Uh-oh. Bye --

They were—

Sayonara.

-- his waitresses; yeah.

Okay.

And then, I did an ice show. First time we had an ice show at the Forbidden City. I called it Nudes on Ice.

So, you put in an ice skating rink?

Yeah; it was about twice the size of this table.

[CHUCKLE]

Portable. And two skater friends of mine from the mainland. I brought them over and said ... Come and skate; a paid vacation, two weeks. Airfare, hotel, meals. Oh, yeah, we'll do that. So, they came over. And I had the Japanese girls and ... and I used them as showgirls, and the girl skater would come out and skate. And then, they'd - the boy would come out and skate, and those Japanese girls. And I talked three of the Japanese girls into going topless.

Now, this is - you've just punched through an envelope, because you weren't doing this before; right?

No; no. [CHUCKLE]

You were doing regular --

Yes.

-- choreography and dancing --

Right.

-- and show tunes. All of a sudden, you're doing naked stuff?

I just had them open their kimonos to add a little more to the show.

And what were the skaters wearing?

Oh, they wore regular --

Regular --

-- ice skate - yeah, they were ... professional --

So --

-- skaters.

-- now, by opening the kimono, you've just --

But it was --

-- taken a step into a different --

Nudes on Ice; and it was such a sensation.

Wait. Nudes on Ice; so they weren't wearing regular skating clothes?

No. The skaters wore clothes, but the three girls that stood there [CHUCKLE] on the ice --

Oh; I see.

They were the nudes on ice. [CHUCKLE] That was my hook. Every show needs a hook, you know.

Yeah; because you're a marketer, too.

Yes. [CHUCKLE]

So, now you're really kinda dealing in a different kind of venue.

Right. And there were no nightclubs having any nudity. It was against the law.

And when did you - now, you already lied about your age, but now you're talking about breaking the law.

Well, there were no laws. Hawaiian dancers were topless ... in King Kalakaua --

Throughout history. [CHUCKLE]

Right. And so, what was the law? What was the - what was the big deal? So, the next show I did was complete nude show. I brought burlesque in. It wasn't nude; it was just topless. The girls then had to wear pasties and ...

M-hm.

-- silk bras. But it eventually evolved. And every time we would do that, they would come and arrest me. And --

You're saying this like this is, you know, just part of doing business. But I mean, you - and what was the charge? Was it lewdness, open lewdness?

Lewd and lascivious conduct.

How did you feel about that?

Well, they'd arrest me, and I'd say, Excuse me, can I go to the restroom? And I'd run in my office and I'd call the TV and the newspaper, and I'd stay there until they got to the club.

So, you're actually enjoying this.

Oh, loving it. And the next morning, it was in the papers and it was on TV.

Was that part of being a showman?

Yes. And business increased. People would see that. Oh, look, arrested, nude. We gotta go see that [CHUCKLE] at Forbidden City.

And how did your new wife think about this?

Well, [CHUCKLE] she didn't particularly like it. But it was making lots of money. And so, we opened that club, then we opened another one. I ended up with twelve bars here. And --

And how many arrests?

Oh, gosh; I was arrested so many times, but not once conviction.

Because as you said, the laws hadn't caught up with this business activity.

Right. We went topless, then we went bottomless, and then we went totally nude. And then, of course, my biggest hit of all was the naked waiters out at The Dunes. And that just happened by accident.

And not only - I mean, I think people who weren't aware of this era would be surprised to learn that not only were there naked waiters, but ... your customers were touching these guys.

Yes. [CHUCKLE]

And I mean, there was a lot of touching going on.

Yes; on the waiters. The females went wild. All these years, I was doing the shows for men. We used to have a businessman's lunch at The Dunes.

Back when three martinis were tax deductible; right?

Right. And it was all businessmen.

M-hm.

And the show was a striptease show. And these secretaries said, We're so tired of coming with our boss; why don't you put a naked man on stage for us? And I just happened to say, Well, why don't you get me a reservation for fifty ladies, and I'll have a naked man for you. That's how it started.

And how many - did you get a reservation for fifty?

Oh, gosh; they called about two weeks later. They said, We have your fifty; you're gonna have a naked man? And I said, Yes. Well, by the time the two weeks came, they had two hundred reservations. That filled up my room. [CHUCKLE] They kept out my men customers. The ladies took all the seats.

And did you have your naked waiter in line?

No.

No?

I didn't have any.

How do you hire a naked waiter?

In those days, this was now 1973 ... and there were no such a thing as Chippendales and men strippers. But I had a beach house in Haleiwa that I was renting to five surfers. And they were behind on their rent. So, I called them and said, You guys gotta pay the rent, or you've gotta come in and do me a favor. They said, What is it? I said, Well, you gotta come to The Dunes, Friday, and you've got to drop your pants on stage. Oh, hell, yeah; we'll do that.

[CHUCKLE]

And so --

And nothing said about, I need you to be good serving people.

No, no.

'Cause you will be a waiter now.

I had waitresses.

Oh; and were they topless?

All topless. Don't you remember? That was the --

I didn't know you combined them. Okay.

Well, this was new. I felt --

So, topless women, bottomless men.

Well, at that time, the topless waitresses were the draw for the male customers. And I thought this woman secretary was doing this for one night, one day, Friday afternoon. So, I got her the naked men. I didn't know it was gonna become so famous. Those women stayed all day. We had the biggest bar business I ever did that afternoon. They all drank, drank, and the surfers were enter --

Paraded.

Paraded, without their pants. And [CHUCKLE] the waitresses were mad, because the ladies at the table would say, Get away, I want a naked waiter, I don't want you. And they weren't making any tips, and the surfers were making all the money. So, when I saw that, I thought, Oh, this is a goldmine. So, in a week's time, I told the gals; I said, We're gonna have waiters every day.

Instead of waitresses?

Instead of waitresses.

Because the women were the ones who were paying more money.

Yes. And so --

As clients.

That's how it happened. And then, the publicity went ... outstanding.

Along with the publicity of, Wow, look what happened, you gotta go see this, I'm sure there was also this drumbeat from citizens saying, What is this guy doing, it's so vulgar, it's so lewd, it's just ...

All --

-- **horrendous on society.**

-- the churches ... all the churches. And there was a gal here, I'm sure you interviewed her. Her name was Jerri Mann [PHONETIC].

Oh, I don't remember. I'm sorry.

University of Hawaii. She wrote editorials to the paper every - every week. And she was down on it.

And fact is, you'd come from somewhere else, and brought this vulgar stuff to Hawaii; right?

Yes.

How did you ... justify that?

Well, we just continued it. I had the naked waiters in the daytime, and the strippers at nighttime. And ... soon opened another spot in Waikiki.

So, it didn't bother you, all the --

No.

-- **criticism.**

And we'd get arrested, and they had no charges. The Liquor Commission was then in charge. And they had vice squad in those days. The vice squad would come in and see it, and they'd say, Oh, what's this? Nothing. But the Liquor Commission would do all the complaining. But they lost every case.

Did you spend a fortune on legal bills?

No, I had a wonderful attorney. He --

Who was your attorney?

Myer Symonds. He's --

I recall his name.

-- dead now. But he loved this type of work, and he took every case and won it. And then the Liquor Commission start making the rules. They forbid the waiters to walk around on the floor, which the rule said, Hey, you have to be on a platform, eighteen inches off the floor to work nude. Meaning, you have to be on a stage. But I built a platform behind the salad bar.

[CHUCKLE]

Eighteen inches off the floor. [CHUCKLE] I put the nude waiters behind the salad bar.

You must have had law enforcement just ready to --

[CHUCKLE]

[CHUCKLE]

So, they couldn't do anything with that. It was eighteen inches off the floor. But they couldn't walk around on the floor.

So, among all of this - I just sense that your guiding force is money and showbiz.

But you weren't really into the flesh stuff of it all?

No.

Or the -

No.

Or the drinking, clearly.

No. And of course, with all the national publicity, we opened a waiter show in Waikiki, we opened a waiter show in Los Angeles, and one in San Francisco. And again, I sold them as a franchise. I let them use the name, and I helped them put the show together. So, we had four shows going at one time. And we made every national magazine. The London papers, the German papers; they sent reporters with their photographers to take their own pictures.

I would have thought, say, the women's lunch, that would have been kind of a ... you know, one-occasion affair for a lot of women.

That's what we thought.

But was it repeat business?

Five years.

And people keep coming back?

Oh ... unreal. Four hundred lunches, Monday through Friday.

And where was that lunch place located?

At The Dunes.

Which was, where?

Nimitz Highway.

Nimitz Highway.

Out by the airport, right next to The Plaza Hotel. It's torn down now; it's a car lot. But that was the biggest attraction we ever had. And I give all the credit to Sophie Tucker. You remember her?

I do remember Sophie Tucker.

Because when --

I'm sure everyone in Honolulu does.

When we bought The Dunes, we made it a fancy supper club, and we played Pearl Bailey, Van Johnson, Kay Starr ...

When you say you played them, you mean you played them --

They --

-- their audio?

They worked there.

Oh, they came in and performed there.

Yeah; that was the - the place to go for dinner and see.

So, that's a classy joint.

Very classy. But ... it was Sophie Tucker who told me when she worked there; Young man, there aren't fifty-two stars on the books to fill this room fifty-two weeks a year. You've gotta come up with a gimmick if you want to make money in the nightclub business. 'Cause all that time, I was playing these stars and paying them ten thousand dollars a week. Unheard of --

So, your gimmick was nudity.

Gimmick was nudity. And from then on, it just went. Girls in the cages, the first Twist Bar here in town, doing The Twist. First sex change, local boy from McKinley High School. Sandra and her Donkey. Oh!

Sandra and her Donkey? I think I missed that one.

[CHUCKLE] You missed that one. You never heard the story about Sandra?

No ...

Oh.

Do I want to hear it?

[CHUCKLE] We'll put it in, but you might want to cut it out.

[CHUCKLE]

That was a story. When people would go to Cuba or Mexico to see Senorita and her Donkey.

No; tell me about. What --

Oh, it was --

Why did they go see her?

Because she would perform a sexual act with the donkey. It was --

Oh.

-- quite famous in the 50s. Everybody; it was cocktail conversation. And so, I took a local stripper, Sandra, and I rented a donkey from Waimanalo. And we did the stage with the bales of hay and a barn. And Sandra danced Donkey Serenade, hung her clothes on the donkey, kissed the donkey, laid on the bale of hay. But nothing ever happened. When people would see that, they'd come out and say, Jack Cione, that's the dumbest show I ever saw. And I'd say, You should have been here last night; the donkey really went wild. They'd come back the next night to see. [CHUCKLE]

So, marketing was very much a part of what you did.

Marketing was my business; yeah. My partner counted the money and stayed in the office. I did the marketing and the frontend of all those clubs.

And you went to the police cell block.

I did the --

On behalf of the business.

Yeah. He said, When they arrest you, you're going, not me.

But you know, it's -- you - sounds like you grew up fast. At fourteen, you're playing in nightclubs. And now, it sounds like you're a kid in an adult business.

Well, I'm in the business that I learned when I was playing the piano in the bar business.

It's what people really want.

Yeah.

So, you got to know some of their baser desires.

Right.

And you mentioned there were unsavory people, kind of on the fringes who were involved.

And instead of paying ... Kay Starr or Redd Foxx ten thousand dollars a week --

You hired a donkey.

A hundred dollars a week for the donkey, and two hundred for the stripper, and packed the place every night. [CHUCKLE]

What are some of the things that happened as a business owner on the edges there that surprised you? Any surprises about running the business with authorities ... with businesspeople, with people you hired?

No. It was - it was - I had great employees.

What kind of competition did you start to face? Were there copycats?

No. I had twelve bars; there were no copycats.

Mm.

I had The French Quarters on Maunakea Street, The Show Bar on Hotel Street, The Dunes out by the airport, Casbah Lounge, the Forbidden City, Soul City --

Le Boom Boom.

Le Boom Boom at the International Marketplace. The Clouds Hotel, Little Dipper, the Money Room. I had all these strip shows going on. And I only had one club, and the manager of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel ... said, Can you come and do something with my show in the Monarch Room?

To pep it up?

Yeah. So, I went and redid their show. That played two years. And in that show, I did a Hawaiian show. Real Polynesian, which never knew anything about, but learned. It starred Ed Kenney, Beverly Noa, Marlene Sai.

Oh, that was big time.

Mottie Ing [PHONETIC].

M-hm.

Al Harrington was my ... knife da -- with a knife --

Fire dancer?

Fire dancer. And Jack Tahiti Thompson, who owns - they still own the business, was my Samoan slap dancer. Kimo Kahoano --

Kahoano.

He was ...

Your emcee?

No; one of the boy dancers. He was just a young kid.

Oh.

And so, that show played there to great reviews. It was called Her Little Island. And so, after that, I always wanted to do another Polynesian show, which I did at Le Boom Boom. When we bought Duke's, and Duke's was, a club that ... had Don Ho and ... Martin Denny and all those stars, and I bought it and put a review in there featuring Prince Hanalei.

[CHUCKLE]

The shock --

Not - not --

-- of Waikiki.

Yes. Now, he was famous. I remember he was known for being able to make tassels --

Tassels.

-- twirl in opposite directions.

Standing on his head, on fire. And when I put him in to headline that show, the tourists ...

And where were the tassels attached?

On his back side.

Yes.

And the tour company said, Oh, Jack, we're not gonna support that show. I said, Bring your customers. So, the first night, they loved it. It was such a hit that the so - show sold out every night. And in those days, we were doing two shows a night; a dinner show and a second show. Today, everybody does one show a night.

But you could sell out two.

Yes.

What happened to Prince Hanalei? He was the talk of the town.

He died. He passed on.

Young?

Yeah; very young. But he was a great act. And then, I made copies of - Follies Polynesia, it was called, at the Le Boom Boom. It stayed there. But I sent a second company to Las Vegas, and to Lake Tahoe, and to Hong Kong.

Were you working all the time? Sounds like --

All the time.

This is - you were working at night, you were doing business deals --

Yeah.

-- during the day.

And so, all of those shows, you see ... somebody else was running them, but they were all bringing income.

And what did this do to the powers that be in town, the ones who were supposed to make sure that, you know, citizens, you know, aren't bothered by an unsavory element? Did you run into trouble with - obviously, the police were on your case, but what about politicians?

No; no, the politicians agreed that this was something the town needed. Honolulu was ready for this.

Who said that?

Oh, I'm not gonna name their names, but the politicians were no problem. They could see that there was a need for this. We had military here, a large population of military. So, this is a tourist town. If you saw it in Las Vegas, why wouldn't you see it in Honolulu?

And what about as a nexus for organized crime? We had local organized crime in those days. This was the 60s, 70s, and by the 80s I think things were changing. But local organized crime who were getting kickbacks at other places. Did they get them from you?

Never bothered us; no. Never bothered us. I thought we were approached once, but when they found out that the ... money would be too hard to get, because it was run as a business. They preyed on mom and pop bars.

Under the table payments.

Yeah; where the owner of the bar would put the money from the cash register in his pocket, you see. But my businesses all had managers and we had to show the tally every night. And if you took money out of the register ... no, I never had any trouble with them.

They didn't say, You know, we'll provide --

You know --

-- security --

-- who I had trouble --

We'll provide security for you, Jack; just send a check over to me --

No.

-- every week.

I had my own Samoan security.

But it doesn't matter; they could have still billed you for security.

No; didn't do that ... the biggest shakedown I thought I had was at the Le Boom Boom Club. The bus drivers that would bring the tour groups into your club ... and they would bring fifty, a hundred, two hundred a night in those days. And so, I had ... one bus driver said ... You like the numbers I'm bringing you? I said, Yeah, it's fine. He says, You know, I can take them to the Al Harrington Show. I said, I know that. He said, But for a dollar a head, I'll keep bringing them here. I said, Where am I gonna get the dollar? He said, Out of your register. I said, I can't, it all goes to the books, I can't just go in there and take a hundred dollars out because you brought me a hundred customers. They were - then another one tried the same thing. They were the ones shaking me down.

And that didn't work?

And besides, the tour companies were charging twenty-five percent of the ticket for them.

M-hm.

Now, they're up to forty percent, I hear.

Oh ...

That's why there are no shows in Waikiki.

Because of all the feeders off the shows?

All feeding off the shows. Right.

Why did you stop doing shows?

Because of that.

What was the biggest cost factor that made you stop?

When they were asking thirty percent.

For delivery of --

Of --

-- customers?

Yeah; for a dinner and a show ticket. That mean I would have to raise my price. And it - and it's ridiculous.

M-hm. Can I ask you in general terms, how much money did you make from all of this? It sounds like --

[CHUCKLE]

-- you had this burgeoning empire.

Well, I'm living at Arcadia now, which is very expensive.

After having lived at Diamond Head in a house you owned.

Yes. [CHUCKLE] Well, we were in the house business. My wife and I used to buy old houses and decorate them, and sell them. That was her hobby. And I sort of participated in it, too. Arcadia is very expensive. Wonderful place to live, but very expensive.

I know there were eyebrows raised when you applied to live in Arcadia, because it's a very distinguished place with retired judges --

Right.

Retired attorneys, and ... did you - what was that like? What was that application process like for you?

When I first moved in, it was a shock, yes. I wasn't sure that it would last, but it did. And I started the Follies, and we did a little show there using the ... residents. It was called School Days, and we dressed them all up in their little kindergarten clothes and did silly jokes, kiddie jokes. And sang Sesame Street songs. [CHUCKLE] And so they all loved it, and the show grew. I'm doing one this year; this is the ninth year. We've lived there now ten years. And this is the ninth year of the Follies. We're calling it Mardi Gras Follies. I used to do Mardi Gras Follies at Pearl Harbor.

That's right; twenty years. It was a great show.

Twenty - twenty years, we did it out there as their fundraiser. And they made a lot of money on that show. And now, we're doing it here as a fundraiser, 'cause we don't sell tickets.

No skin showing?

No skin showing.

[CHUCKLE]

And we have a cast of thirty-five this year.

All from the Arcadia?

All senior ladies. We've got one in there is ninety-five years old.

Is she dancing?

She - she ... has trouble walking, but she wears the costume, and ...

Mm.

And we added some from Craigside. You know, Arcadia has another place called Craigside. So ... the casts are from both places.

Are you still enjoying the shows?

Oh, love - I love doing it. Yeah. It's a lot of work, though. You - they don't realize how much work it really is. But I have a good assistant, and I have good costume people, good light person. And so, I've got a crew now.

And so --

So, just to clarify, going back. Because the law are different now, and people are used to different rules in place. What ... when you had naked waiters, when you had strippers, are you talking about people wearing skin-tone tights, that kinda thing, or G-strings? What kind of nude waiters are you talking about?

No; my waiters took their clothes off. They worked in the nude. I had them wear butcher aprons; that was fun. So, they looked like a waiter. Tied the apron in the back, you know, the butcher apron. And when they come to the table, the ladies would lift up the apron, and the waiter would say, Uh-uh, that's gonna cost you money.

And how do you tip a naked waiter?

And then they'd teach them how to tip a naked waiter.

And how is that? How do you do that?

They'd take the five-dollar bill off the table, and roll it up ... hook it around, and lift up the apron and ...

And that was part of their entertainment.

That was part of the entertainment. That's why they'd stay all afternoon.

But it went - and so, that's a form of touching, but it went to full - on touching too; right?

No, that's about all they did to the waiters. They'd be ... strict about that.

The waiters would have to control --

Yeah.

-- the lady's action?

See, we did a show on stage, so that was basically what you came to see, is what you say, a naked waiter became a stage show. And when you came in, we charged you a cover charge, and we tied a yellow ribbon around your finger to show that you paid. And when our star would come out, he would dance to Tie a Yellow Ribbon Around That Old Oak Tree. And so, when he was totally nude, he would say, Okay, ladies, this is your chance; would you like to come up and tie your yellow ribbon around my oak tree? And they would line up, and it would take thirty, forty minutes for everybody to tie. That was the show. [CHUCKLE]

Wow. And you were taking it all the way to the bank.

All the way to the bank. Yes. [CHUCKLE]

What was happening in other cities around the world, or around America? Was the same kind of --

Yes; it was --

-- nudity going on?

It was all - right. It was a phase that ... I think the general public was ready for nudity. It no longer sells. Who's interested? You can see it on television, you have videos. We didn't have those in the 60s and 70s.

So, all of the laws that have to do with stage shows and ... contact with nudes, and nudity; those all developed right after you came on the scene and --

That's right.

-- probably because you came on the scene.

Right here in Honolulu; yes. If you looked at the Liquor Commission laws, if you were to open a bar and wanted to do nudity, they would give you these rules and regulations. The other thing, if you think about ... I remember in nineteen-thirty ... mm, six or seven, there was a movie called Gone With the Wind. And Scarlett O'Hara said, Rhett, what am I gonna do, what am I gonna do? And he said, Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn. Ah! That shocking. Do you remember that?

I do remember that.

Oh, my; that's all we talked about. He said, damn, in the movie.

So, very different context. But still, nudity, I mean, that was - you were a pariah.

Yeah. Well, so then it - it progresses, you know. There were several movies. Remember Deep Throat?

M-hm.

Big money. Blue Moon, and all these movies start coming out. Now, who cares? [CHUCKLE]

How did you know people would go for exactly the kind of entertainment that you were offering?

I didn't. It just happened by accident. When I put those surfers on the stage and they dropped their pants, I didn't know that that was gonna last five years. I thought it's a - a gimmick today, it'll be over tomorrow. But the ladies said, We want more, more, more.

And then, you were very good at packaging that and franchising --

Then I start --

-- it.

-- hiring waiters.

Mm.

You know, I remember ... you had to find beautiful bodies. And the secret was, the man had to like women. Because the women sense that. And so, I went to Los Angeles to Gold's Gym. And guess who was running Gold's Gym? Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Oh, I think he likes women.

Yes. And so, I talked to Arnold about holding an audition at the gym. And when I opened the show in Waikiki, I brought five ... musclemen from Arnold Schwarzenegger's gym. Arnold was gonna come over at the time, 'cause he was managing the gym. But he had an audition for a movie, and he didn't want to - and that's how he became famous. But he - he supplied me with my five waiters at the Merrie Monarch.

Did you personally inspect all the auditioning people? The topless women, the -

-

Y --

-- nude guys.

Well, in the Los Angeles show when we did it, we hired there, 'cause we didn't want to bring a cast from here. So, we ran an ad in the paper. Men wanted for a new musical, have to work nude, must be well endowed. And must be able to wait on tables. And so, I did the audition at the theater and we had three hundred men show up. And so, I explained to them what we were looking for. And I said, If you're not well endowed and if you don't enjoy the company of women, please don't come up on the stage and waste our time, 'cause that's what we're looking for. Well, these men would line up, twenty-five at a time, and drop their pants. And I thought, My gosh, they never been in a gym before, had never been in a shower with other men; they all thought they were super studs.

[CHUCKLE]

And so, [CHUCKLE] out of the three hundred, we hired eight.

That's a tough rejection --

A tough --

-- on a job interview.

-- rejection. Right. [CHUCKLE]

So, as you look back on that career - I mean, you were materially very successful, you resulted in change of law. But it's - and you're a very good showman. Everyone talks about how you're very good at choreographing and pacing. But it's kind of a weird thing to be known for, isn't it?

Yes; because if they don't know me, they think I'm just another nightclub freak that features nudity. But I did it strictly as a business. I raised my children, and I have five great - grandchildren, by the way. And I've always been a member of the church, even though they fought me tooth and nail. But I said, Can't make donations to the church if you don't let me make money. And ... I never drank. And sort - sort of lived just - it was a business to me. I was in it as a business.

You were asked once, you know, who's been influential in your life, and you - the first person you named is your uncle, who was a member of the Al Capone gang. And another you mention is a bishop, a pastor, a priest. It's a wide range there.

Yes. He was the pastor of the Waiialae Baptist Church.

Oh.

And I opened a show at the Monarch - Merrie Monarch Restaurant on Beachwalk and Kalakaua. That was Spencecliff restaurant. And that night, when I went to the club at six o'clock ... there were about fifty women in robes with a candle, and a man with a cross hanging on his back, standing at my front door, telling the customers not to go in, that this is a sinful show. And it was his church group. I couldn't believe that they would have the nerve to do that. But it was the most wonderful thing that ever happened.

Why?

It was opening night. The press covered it. We got worldwide press on it. This is a tourist town. It made papers in - Des Moines, Iowa [CHUCKLE] read about it.

So this is the pastor who was influential in your life?

Well, no.

Oh.

He did that, and ... later on, I saw him at a charity event, and I thanked him for doing that. I says it was that opening that I never thought of staging anything like that.

And he's ... he's thinking.

And he said ... Well, good. Anyway, we became friends. We'd have dinner together every now and then. And he started out with the idea to convert me. I said, You don't have to convert me. I am a religious man. I was born and raised Catholic, but I'm not Catholic now because I don't believe in what their beliefs are. But I believe in Christ, and I follow Christ. And so, we became friends. [CHUCKLE]

So, that was true all the way along? While you were doing nude shows, you were --

Yeah.

You were following --

Yeah.

-- Christ?

Yeah; but then he left. I think he moved to Texas.

M-hm. So - and you remain religious and --

I --

-- and a --

I still --

-- Christian?

I go to church now; yes. My wife hated to go to - we used to go to St. Andrews Cathedral. And she did volunteer work there. But I said, when we go to church on Sunday and we're sitting there, the people behind me, since I've had my picture in the paper so much, would say, There's Jack Cione, look at him. Wouldn't you know, he has lots of nerve to go to church. So, I st - felt guilty about it. So, I didn't go for a long time, until the last ten years now.

M-hm.

Since I'm out of the nightclub business. It's twenty years since I've been out it. And - but people still talk about it.

Mm.

It was like [CHUCKLE] a volcano eruption.

[CHUCKLE] It was kind of like that --

Yes.

-- [INDISTINCT] time in those days. In more recent years, you've continued to do shows, and you've had beneficiaries, charitable ...

Yes, I --

-- groups have received your --

Twenty - five years with Pearl Harbor. We did the Mardi Gras Follies, which was a charity fundraiser. I taught tap dancing at the Waikiki Community Center for ten years. And now, I'm at Arcadia, and our show raises money by selling ads in the program, and we have a boutique. And we give that money to Arcadia for the people who need help in staying there. They outlive - we have people that are a hundred and five years old.

Who've outlived their money.

Outlived their money; yes.

M-hm.

Takes a lot of money to live at Arcadia. [CHUCKLE]

How do you feel - I mean, you're in your mid-eighties now? You're eighty - six.

Seven.

Eighty-seven.

Coming up in March. [CHUCKLE]

What does it feel like? I mean, do you feel like the same guy?

No; I'm getting older.

How does it feel different?

[CHUCKLE] It feels different; believe me.

Physically, or are you're talking about in another way?

I have allergies I never had before. My voice is different; never had before. My knees are giving out; can't dance anymore. I can still direct a show, but ... yeah. You notice ... I still have my teeth. [CHUCKLE]

You mention that you father disowned you and was just - thought you would be a bum. Did you ever get close to him again?

Oh, yes. We became very good friends. He worked with me in my dance studios. And then, when I had all the nightclubs here, I moved he and my - him - my mother and him over here. And he changed his name to Andy Cione, which made me very proud that he did that. And yeah, we became very close and very good friends.

But it took ... decades.

Years; yeah. But yeah; in the nightclubs, he'd stay up 'til four o'clock in the morning and work the cashiers and ... have breakfast with me.

So now that you don't do the breadth of activities you used to do, how do you spend your time?

Right now, the next five months, we'll be working on the Follies.

Is that pretty much your fulltime volunteer --

I'm having --

-- gig?

-- another chill.

You talk - well, let's go back a little bit to ... when you were getting criticized in the press, you were getting arrested ... you has this ... this, Hey, I'm making

money on, this attitude. Did any part of you care that you were being criticized? People thought what you were doing was terrible for society.

[CHUCKLE]

And there should be laws about it, that you were escaping.

[CHUCKLE] I always remembered, Clark Gable saying that in *Gone With the Wind*, when he's told Scarlett, Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

You truly didn't give a damn?

I didn't give a damn what the press was saying, as long as the public was showing up and supporting it. If the public didn't support my clubs, I would have closed them. But all of the clubs were very successful, and we sold them, and new owners took over, but they all folded up one at a time. So, it was a period that the public was supporting this. I don't think it would happen now. If I would open a nudity now, I would be very skeptic. The young generation ... they're not obsessed with the nudity. It's people my age that were raised - and your age, that were raised that it's naughty, don't do that, musn't do this. And that's what you believed in.

And that's why Forbidden City was so attractive --

It --

-- to your customers.

Right. An - and it was a free stall for them to learn something new about life. Life is - for us, it's a banquet and most fools are not enjoying it.

So, you didn't ever go home and say, Oh, this really got - this guy I respect out there is criticizing me for what I do. No?

No; never did.

No hesitation, no --

I --

-- second thoughts?

I always had ... the public on my side. And I thought, as long as I have support from the public, then I must be doing something right.

But is it an accident that you weren't doing this near your hometown? Would you have done this in Chicago ...

Oh, Chicago; yes.

Even though your family was right around the corner over there?

Well ... part of my family would not have ... been in favor of it. My little down, Spring Valley, I would have never done it. Because the public there would not have accepted it.

But anywhere the public would accept it, you'd feel --

Yes.

-- fine about it.

Right. And I - I felt like it's - it's needed. And that's why today, I don't think it would go over. The young public is not interested. Who cares about ... Sally standing, or Sally Rand dropping her fan? Who cares?

Mm. You used the word repotting. What does that mean?

Repotting, sort of, I've taken that on as that's what I've done in my life. When I was a youngster, I played the piano, and then I went from that into dancing. So, that was my first repot. And then, on to Hollywood for another repot, and then to Arthur Murray's ballroom dancing, another repot. And then, family man, and then dance studios, and then divorce, and new wife, and a new business. All those years, I've repotted.

Always reinventing yourself.

Reinventing myself; right. And that's the name of my new book that I'm writing, and should be out this year. It's called Repotting Can Be Such a Bitch. It won't be on the Times Bestseller List, but my first book did sell fifty thousand copies, right here in Honolulu.

Well, it did have the word naked in the title. [CHUCKLE]

That's right. But you know, for a book to sell fifty thousand copies, that's a lot of copies.

That's true. When you say it can be a --

Why was repotting so hard? It seemed pretty easy, the way your life flowed.

Well, as you live it, you know, there were some ups and downs in it. It wasn't all gravy. I made money, I was broke, I made money, I was broke.

Because of when you sold or tried to sell businesses --

Yeah.

-- or when they didn't work out? So, you did know what it was like to ...

Right.

-- just go through a rough time.

And I know what it was like to be poor. Living in Spring Valley, I didn't have indoor plumbing in our house until I was in the eighth grade.

Wow; that must have been a stark contrast when you - then you were - then you were --

I know.

-- at your uncle's house with all the --

A contrast.

-- doo - dads.

And have you ever been in the Chicago area in January and February, and using an outhouse? [CHUCKLE]

How broke did you get?

That's broke. [CHUCKLE]

But what about when you were an adult? I mean, when you were --

Well --

What was the --

-- when I went --

-- brokest time?

When I went to Hollywood.

Oh.

'Cause I - all the money I made playing the piano ... I spent it all there.

Did you lose faith in yourself at any time?

No, but I didn't know what I was gonna do. You know --

So, it wasn't - repotting wasn't a no - brainer?

No; right. And at that time, I looked for a job, and ... got the job with Arthur Murray's. I would have taken any job.

So, isn't it interesting to see how that job led to this, led to that?

Yeah.

And if any link in the chain didn't happen, what would you have done?

Well, I don't know. Well, the Lord looked after me. [CHUCKLE] So, here I am.

Yeah.

And he's given me the chance now to do another show. And this will be the ninth one. I hope I can do the tenth anniversary show at Arcadia. [CHUCKLE]

This is my ninth one coming up.

And it's a lot of work, I know. It's - your mind - you have to really be able to multitask over a long period.

And it's more work, because I'm working with amateurs, people that have never been on the stage before. So, it's not only writing the show; it's teaching them.

I've heard you're patient, which kinda surprises me.

Yes; I'm very patient. You have to be, when you're working with seniors.

[CHUCKLE]

Mm. Thank you so much. This has been just a joy. Really appreciate your time.

You're welcome.

Yes; we sold fifty thousand of those.

That's terrific.

Can you imagine? That's the way it is.