



All from the ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

A year later, Hal attends **Gerry Brissette's** Mattachine meeting at Berkeley, attends the two conventions, and nabs a seat as chapter secretary in the Bay Area. Mattachine chapters are starting in New York, Chicago, Boston, Denver, and elsewhere as Hal Call and the other assimilationist leaders of the organization take charge, ousting former communists like Harry Hay from the organization they created.

Hal Call and his friends in San Francisco hang out at bars like the **Black Cat**. **Hal:** "With hands, arms, and elbows on the bar at all times. We were always afraid a cop would come in and sweep the place out as they did on some occasions."

The chairman of the Mattachine, **Ken Burns**, is spending his time working with legal and PR advisors, flying back and forth from San Diego to San Francisco. He's busy trying to be present for his local chapter's meetings, running the council, writing reports and newsletters, and planning Mattachine-sponsored drag shows. Chairman Burns is taking meetings and calls constantly. Calls such as one from an angry father prepared to call his postal authority because his "very respectable boy" is getting Mattachine material in the mail. Burns is also dealing with **David Finn's** recent contact with the FBI. He's alerting all chapter leaders in the country to tell members not to speak with investigators, which raises more fear.

Within weeks of the conventions, the San Diego discussion group collapses. Harry Hay's design for the groups to be a place where homosexuals could lead "well-adjusted" lives suddenly seems to side with the medical opinion that they're sick, dealing with a handicap. When leaders begin to discourage talk of a conscious minority – an ethical homosexual culture – many discussion groups dry up and go away.

Also on the chairman's list of responsibilities for running the new Mattachine: hiring an attorney. Burns calls a heterosexual attorney named **David Ravin** recommended to him by **Reverend Wallace de Ortega Maxey**. David Ravin is excited to work for the Mattachine because he thinks some of their pamphlets are straight out of civil rights literature. He collects a retainer of \$50 per month and advises no one speak to the FBI without him present. He doesn't like their suggestion of a phone service for arrested homosexuals to get an attorney, though, and he suggests getting rid of the Mattachine's legal chapter altogether. If they want to integrate into society, he says, they should work *within* the law, not run a legal chapter working against the law. Ravin says if they're all being honest here, they'd admit that they just want cops to stop raiding the bars while they socialize with other homosexuals.

The **Legal Chapter's chairman** shouts, "*We should fight this!*"

Another **member** yells, "*We are being insulted by someone who knows nothing of the problems of the homosexual!*"

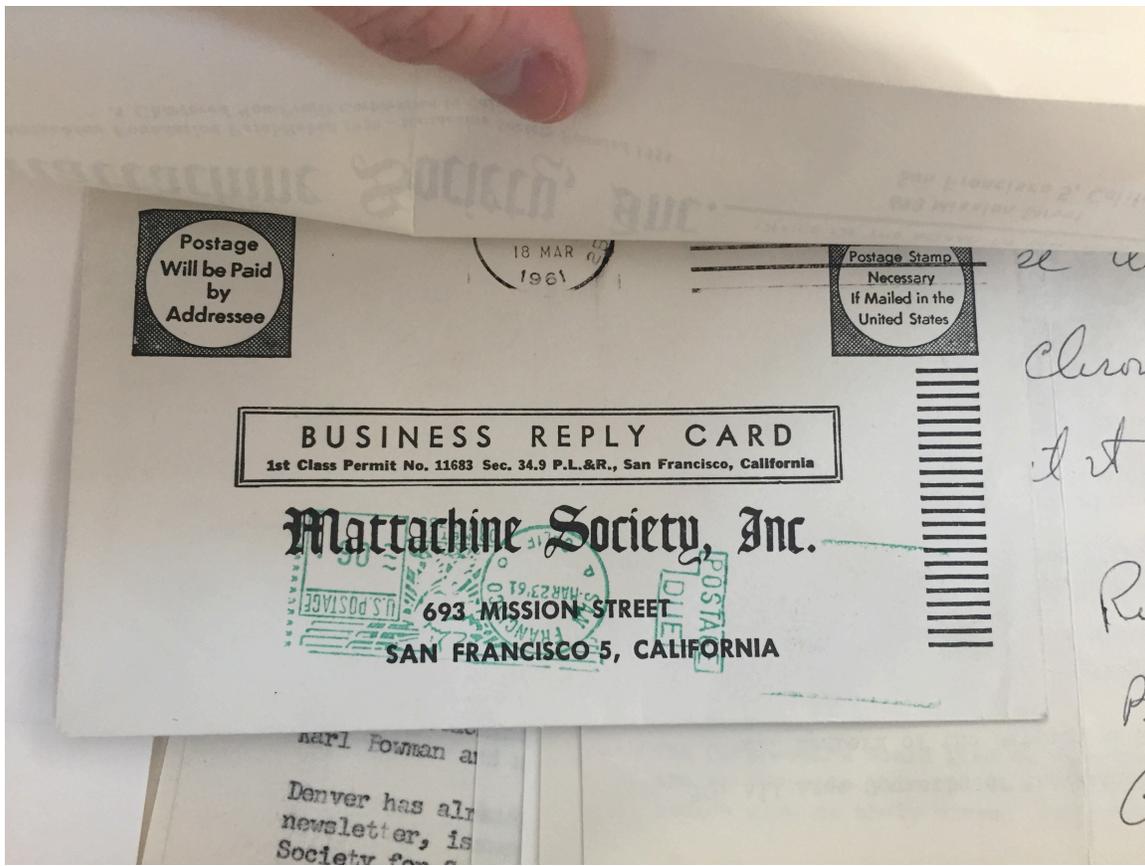
Marilyn hasn't experienced the bar raids. "*I still believe it is a situation created by yourselves...*"

Ken Burns adds, "*Consider what the outside society feels toward us at this time.*"

Pamphlets are quickly distributed to chapters:

"Homosexuals are not seeking to overthrow or destroy any of society's existing institutions, laws or mores, but to be assimilated as constructive, valuable, and responsible citizens."

Many members who agreed with the assimilationists before now wonder how homosexuals could assimilate into a society that doesn't legally allow them to exist as homosexuals.



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Every other Thursday night, the leadership gets together and inevitably ends up fighting. And between the meetings, they fight through long letters.

What events should they sponsor? What strategies for change? Should we have membership dues? What kind of people should we seek out to join the society? The busier Hal becomes as secretary, the further he and Jack grow apart in their third year together. Jack is depressed, drinking quite a bit, and is laid off from work. He helps Hal with his paperwork as they drift apart over it.

Hal has made good friends with David Finn in the Mattachine, though David has a much more brash way of making his points. David had shouted at Gerry Brissette in council meetings, cooperated with the FBI, and wrote that Gerry's idea of the Mattachine was "a great fellowship movement for unhappy, neurotic bar faggots." David Finn yelled at Gerry because he was worried about a former Foundation supporter trying to overhaul his power in the Bay area. He cooperated with the FBI for the obvious anticommunist reasons. But as for his opinion of what Mattachine stands for and who they should let in, he went on to write, "We only injure ourselves and can never be able to help the faggots who haven't two cents to their names, have such a limited vocabulary they can't understand me, and are hardly the sort of persons anyone would point out with pride."

Gerry Brissette sees David Finn and Hal Call as conformists, *“into this idea of getting money, let’s cut our hair, let’s get dressed up like straights.”*

Chairman Burns tries to keep the Bay cities together, writing to Gerry that anyone can work against the society, “but the organization should be bigger than any individual.”

There doesn’t seem to be anything that can make them agree. There’s no unifying message among homosexuals yet.

Hal: *“We weren’t attuned to protesting, carrying signs and placards, and appearing on courthouse steps. Back then we didn’t have gay flags and sex symbols and wouldn’t have dared hold hands walking down the street.”*

They don’t even know what they’re fighting *for* yet. Disputes over fees go unresolved for months, the council censors printed material, **Jack Spicer** – a Mattachine member and future poet of the San Francisco Renaissance – is livid about the lack of people of color represented in the meetings, the constitution’s rules remain incomplete so there’s no way to keep power in check, and supporters of the new council question whether they should still adhere to the council’s requests or let every chapter break off separately into the darkness.

Chairman **Ken Burns** will later recall, *“They had never worked within an organization. They had no idea of compromise or how to get things done in an organization aside from getting up and yelling! It was very frustrating. It was a mess. You couldn’t get two queens to agree on anything!”*

Gerry Brissette fights at a meeting for his group to be recognized, and Chairman Burns says Gerry’s East Bay group goes unrepresented because their charter is not registered until the council gets their \$5.

Amidst the fighting, **Martin Block** resigns from his seat as Publications Chairman. The publications seat is passed around. Until the San Francisco chapter expresses an interest. Hal Call’s chapter. So Chairman Burns gives Publications Chairman to Hal.

Of the many problems holding back the new Mattachine Society – the straight lawyer and the legal council, David Finn and the FBI, members questioning if homosexuality is sickness, how they should treat feminine gays, who they should let into meetings – all of these problems can be solved by answering one question:

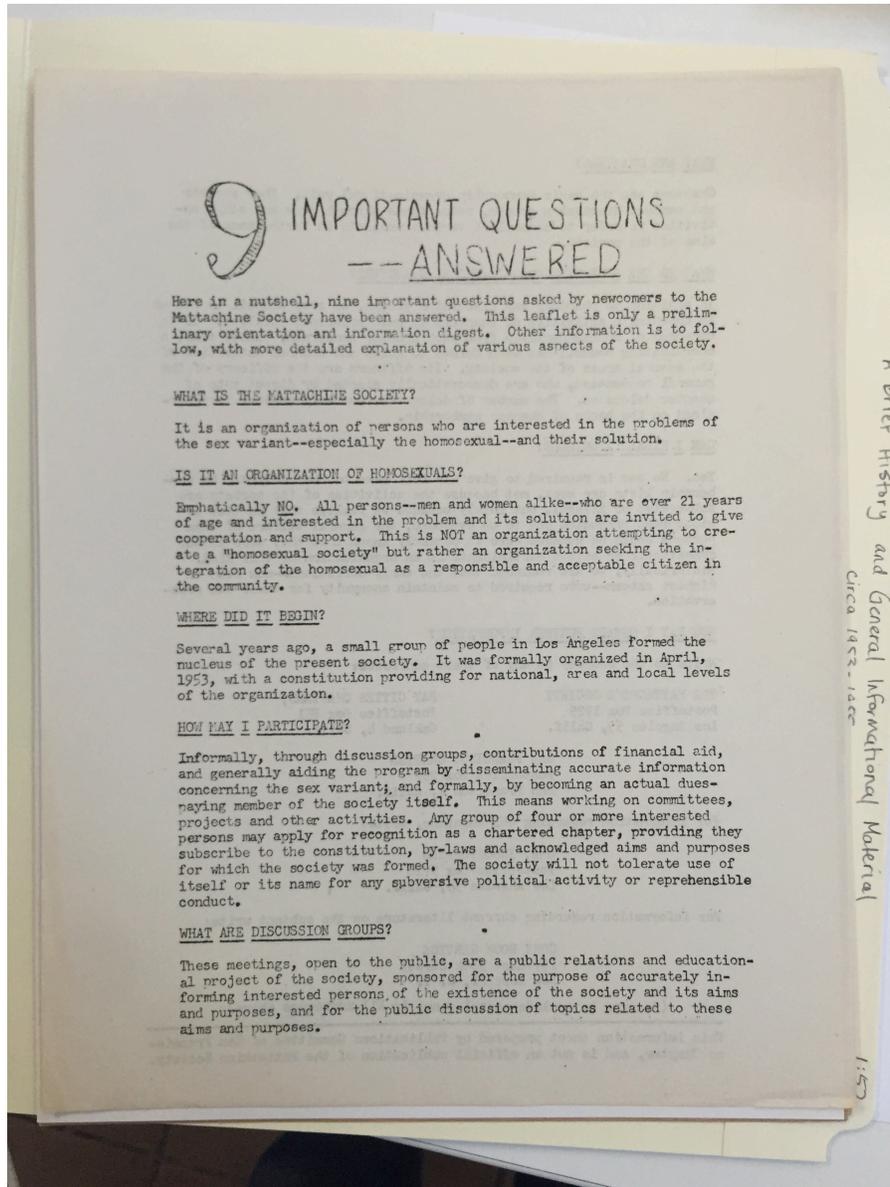
What are we fighting for?

If that’s the only question holding them back, then it seems to Hal Call that the best way to answer it and get everyone in sync is the written word.

Hal and David Finn get together to write two documents for the Mattachine, in order to help the society focus and move forward. The first is called ***Aims and Principles***, all about “education, integration, and social action.” They explain that they will educate the public on what a homosexual is, but homosexuals should also learn “a pattern of behavior that is acceptable to society in general and compatible with

recognized institutions." In short: No femmes. They also explain gay integration into general society, "instead of attempting to withdraw into an invert society of their own." They want to begin the process of protecting jobs.

The second document written by Hal and David is *Nine Important Questions—Answered*. This document explains that the Mattachine is "an organization of persons who are *interested* in the problems of the sex variant" and "emphatically" not an organization of homosexuals or one "attempting to create a 'homosexual society.'" Basically, we're not Harry Hay or the Foundation.



WHAT ARE CHAPTERS?

Chapters are the basic membership organizational unit. They sponsor and conduct discussion groups, raise funds through dues and other activities in order to accomplish various projects in furtherance of the aims of the society.

WHAT IS THE SOCIETY'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE?

In addition to chapters and discussion groups, an area council is set up to coordinate activities of chapters in each principal locality. It is composed of representatives from each chapter concerned. Above this, a coordinating council has been formed to guide and channel activities of the several areas of the society. Its officers are the officers of the general convention, who are democratically elected by direct vote of chapter delegates. The number of delegates from each chapter is determined on the basis of chapter membership.

CAN I REMAIN ANONYMOUS?

Yes. No one is required to give his full name to the society. No membership lists are kept, not because the activities of the society are subversive or illegal, but solely because we realize that in view of widespread prejudice yet to be overcome, the general welfare of some persons could be damaged were it commonly known that they were either sympathetic or active participants in an organization of this kind. Historically, we are reminded that the early Christians--now held in highest esteem--were required to maintain anonymity for their own preservation.

HOW MAY I OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION?

Write to the society at any of these addresses:

THE MATTACHINE SOCIETY
Postoffice Box 1925
Los Angeles 53, Calif.

BAY CITIES CHAPTERS,
Postoffice Box 851
Oakland 4, Calif.

SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER
Postoffice Box 259
San Francisco 1, Calif.

For information regarding ONE magazine, write:

ONE, INCORPORATED
Postoffice Box 5716
Los Angeles 55, Calif.

For information regarding current literature on the subject write:

CORY BOOK SERVICE
237 East 56th Street
New York 22, N. Y.

(Be sure to include postal zones in all addresses above)

This information sheet prepared by Publications Committee of San Francisco Chapter, and is not an official publication of the Mattachine Society.

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These are declared the official publications of the Mattachine Society and are quickly dispersed to all members. When Jim Kepner reads these he sees it as Hal and David doing "McCarthy's dirty work." He's not alone. People accuse the higher-ups of cooperating with law enforcement. Jim Kepner warns members, "Our enemies are all those who would try to force their own conformity on us." Unlike Magnus Hirschfeld, Karl Ulrichs, Henry Gerber, Harry Hay, and many others, it seems the new Mattachine wants to get rid of the idea that "the sex variant is unique, 'queer.'"

The new leadership begins to police queer behavior at their events, worrying about "swishing" at their picnics and voting down drag shows, calling them "detrimental" to the organization. Hal Call isn't quite in agreement with this, but the council writes that "anyone participating in this type of show would disqualify them as a member." It's a civil war on femininity in the male queer community.

Membership declines. Berkeley and Oakland, usually standing with Gerry Brissette's opinions, dwindle to about a dozen members. Hal and David's side of the Bay, San Francisco, has grown, though. At the next meeting on August 6th, Hal suggests that Gerry's East Bay separate and have its own council. Everyone just says fine. **David Finn** writes to Chairman Burns, *"This way, they made the split to be rid of us and can now 'rule' as they wish, but they have almost no subjects."*

Labor Day weekend, 1953.

Ken Burns comes to the Bay Area to meet with the council in Hal's apartment, where both sides fight over politics and organizing strategies. Chairman Burns is so fed up that he's ready to cut out the East Bay, and he feels the Bay is already doing it on its own. So it's done. The final culturalist chapter is cut off. Gerry Brissette and Jack Spicer fume out of the building to Gerry's car. Gerry is furious that this beacon of hope that he worked so hard to contact and to devote himself to now rejects him so wholeheartedly. Anyone who comes into the society with religious ideals or an artistic mentality seems to be shot down in favor of the politically slick.

Gerry: *"The very straight, Brooks Brothers type."*

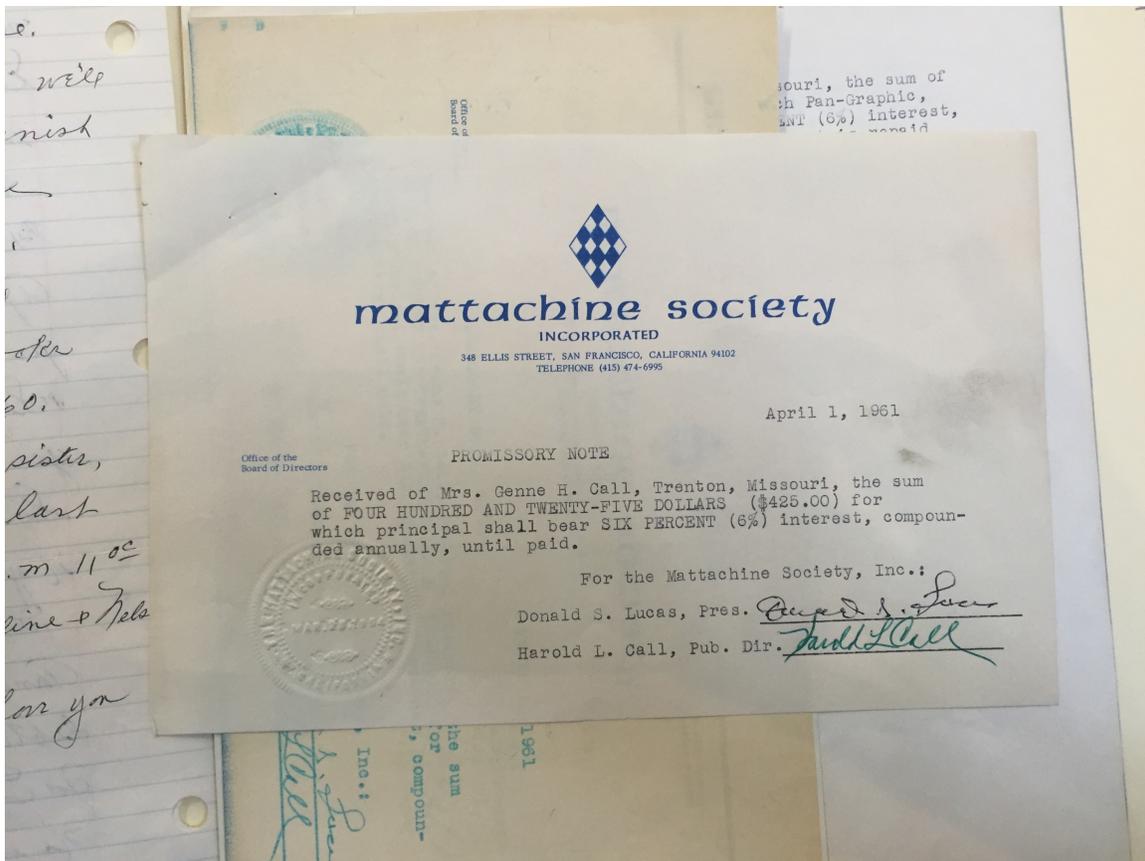
As they drive home across the Bay, **Jack Spicer** says, *"You can take your cup of Mattachine and shove it."* **Gerry** replies, *"We need you and the kind of person you are."*

Jack: *"I have other fish to fry. And you do, too, dearie. They are going to get nowhere."*

The following night, Gerry hosts a Berkeley and Oakland meeting to decide where to go from here. Everyone seems ready to work as one combined chapter and to allow Gerry to run it. But Jack was right. Gerry meets a man he feels is his "soul mate," and he instructs the group to find a new leader. **Gerry:** *"I have other things to do."*

And with that letter, Gerry Brissette is gone from the Mattachine Society once and for all. Jack Spicer will soon follow suit, and after he'll refuse to sign a loyalty oath for his employer at a university, he'll go to the east coast, and later publish his poetry book *After Lorca*. Other fish to fry, indeed.

Soon, new leaders emerge in the East Bay. **Jerry Mason** and transgender activist **Rene Lyle d'Arcy**, take the reigns, steering the group back to the assimilationists. They send all the necessary paperwork to the Mattachine Council, strategize against "red infiltration," and send in dues not only for their group, but enough for make up for any dues not paid by the East Bay in the past. The rules are clearly established and what Mattachine is fighting for is clear to everyone: assimilation for safety – but assimilation to a world that rejects queers. The documents published by Hal Call have brought the Mattachine together, albeit by weeding some of them out. But it's worth it, because he believes in what he wrote. He believes in the organization he works for. Now, finally, his calling for newspaper work might align with his identity. Hal finds himself in a new position of power in an organization now more unified than ever.



Hal's mother, Genne Call, ultimately became a huge supporter of Hal's work with the Mattachine Society.
From the ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

July 26, 1954

Ken

Pat

MEMO TO AREA COUNCIL CHAIRMEN:

Please advise the Board of Directors who is Area representative of the following Departments and responsible for the activities within your Area:

- Harold Call - Donald Lucas Public Relations Representative
- Harold Call - Publications Representative
- Fred Kidder Research Representative
- John J. MacArthur Legal Representative
- John J. MacArthur Legislative Representative

These persons will work in cooperation with the Department Directors within the scope of the policies as adopted by the Society and will report directly to their respective Director.

Ken Burns

KB/do

CC: Department Directors

Area Council Officers:

- Chairman - Don Lucas, Gamma, SF
- Secy - Bob Burk, Berkeley
- Treas - Chal Co.

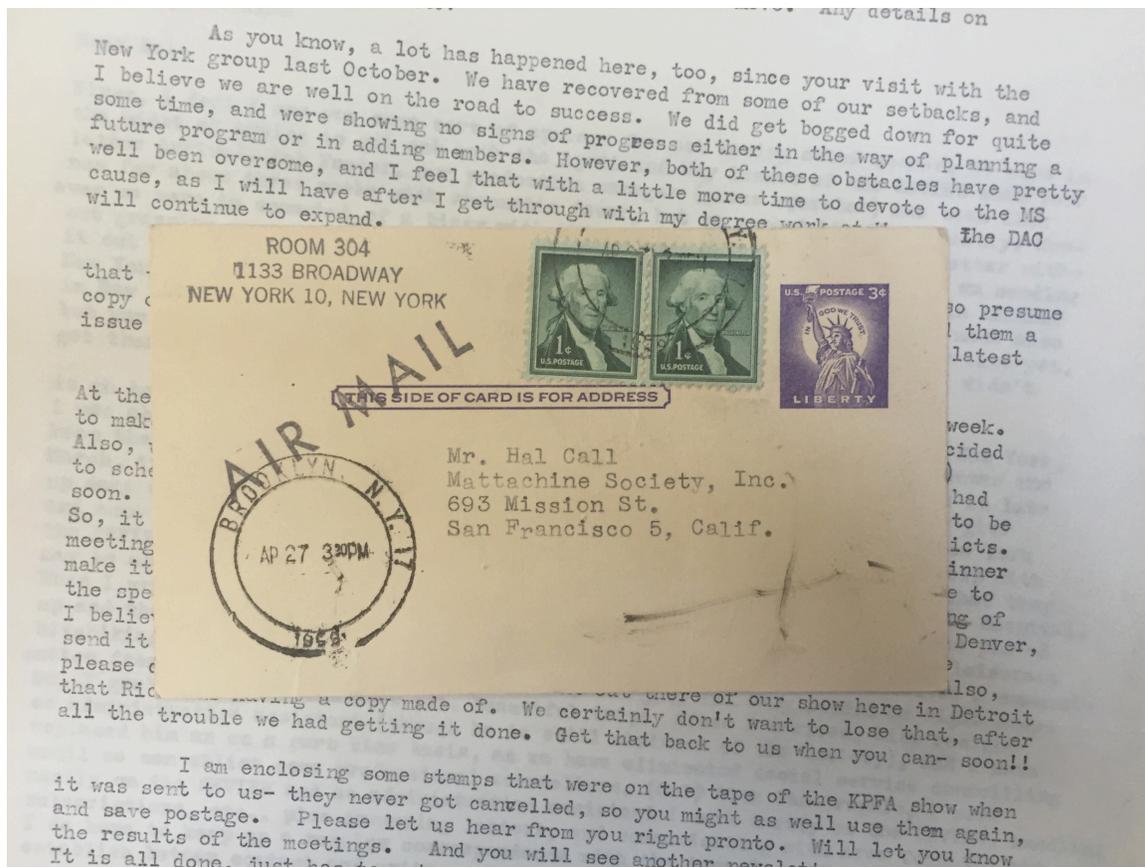
(San Francisco Bay Area)

Resident Agent - John Jacoby

Board of Directors Memoranda
1954 - 1960

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also a time for
to set a worthy

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A NOTE TO TEACHERS:

I talk during this series about how schools don't teach us gay history. If you learned anything about gay history in your school, you're one of the lucky few. This is changing because of programs like HISTORY UNERASED. Check out www.unerased.org. Not only is bullying still an issue, but nearly half of homeless youth are queer. 1 in 5 queer kids of color attempt suicide. Young queer kids are even more likely to drop out of school. This is why I'm talking about HISTORY UNERASED, not because this is a paid ad - it's not. This program is doing important work, and they're bringing educators in K-12 classrooms proper training and resources to include LGBTQ history and queer inquiry in Social Science classes, Fine Arts, and Health courses, among others. And language is always expanding for the queer community with new terms and complexities that educators want to understand and apply in their classrooms. For instance, how do I use the word "trans" properly? What does "nonbinary" mean? Teachers want to help students feel safe and understood by using the proper terminology, so the people at History Unerased are helping with that, too. If all kids in school learn about our history, then we can get rid of misperceptions about queer people and fix the real problems those misperceptions create: queer kids quitting school because they don't feel safe, homelessness, suicide. If you're an educator that wants to help your classroom be a safer space for your LGBTQ students, check out www.unerased.org for more information. You could save your student's life. You could improve the safety of your community. And you could teach your kids some fascinating history.