In the early 1880s, Charles “Frenchy” Vosbaugh moved to the small mining town of Trinidad, Colorado with his wife, Emma. The couple ran a restaurant in town for several years before Emma disappeared and Frenchy spent two decades working as a cook on a remote sheep ranch. In 1904 he arrived at the Mt. San Rafael Hospital in Trinidad with pneumonia where the Sisters of Charity who ran the facility quickly discovered that Charles had been born Katherine and had been living as a man for sixty years.

After a brief, and unsuccessful, attempt to force Charles to dress as a woman, the Sisters made the remarkable decision to allow him to live the remaining two years of his life as a male orderly at Mt San Rafael where he was affectionately known as “Grandpa.”

Seventy years later the same Catholic hospital became world-renowned for Dr. Stanley Biber’s pioneering gender affirmation clinic, earning Trinidad the moniker “Sex Change Capital of the World.” The clinic thrived for thirty years, and when Dr. Biber retired, he was succeeded by Dr. Marci Bowers, the first transgender person to perform gender affirmation surgeries.

For 50 States: Colorado, Nick & Jake invited five transgender or gender non-conforming artists, writers, or activists from around the country to host potlucks and write eulogizing toasts to this unsung pioneer. Held simultaneously in Houston, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, New York, and Tahlequah, Oklahoma the parties were connected via video-conference to Trinidad where the artists hosted a gathering of community members, including a Franciscan nun who offered her own toast as a native Trinidadian and a friend of the Sisters of Charity, Dr. Biber, and Dr. Bowers.

These toasts and the video feeds from each city are presented here over footage from Trinidad and the surrounding mountains.

The toasts were written and offered by:

- Stalina Emmanuelle Villarreal (Houston, at Diverse Works in an installation by Shiela Pepe)
- Carden Crow with Shronn Shulke (Tahlequah, at Riverbend Floats)
- Billy Noble (Minneapolis)
- Jaden Fields & Gene Luzala (Los Angeles, at APAIT)
- Cecilia Gentili & Jess Barbagallo (New York)
- Sister Regina Marie Massarotti (Trinidad, at Mt San Rafael Hospital)

The potlucks were attended by friends and family of the hosts including:

OUR PARTNERS

Oklahoma State University: Gender and Women’s Studies, Department of History, School of Architecture, Department of Art, Graphic Design, and Art History, Oral History Project, Office of Multicultural Affairs, EQuAL, OSQ&A and GSSD.
Community: Tulsa Equality Center/OKEQ, Payne County PRIDE Fest, PFLAG Stillwater, Living Arts Kitchen, University of Central Oklahoma Melton Gallery, University of Central Oklahoma Women’s Research Center and BGLTQ+ Student Center, Herland Archive, Living Arts Tulsa and Tulsa Artist Fellows.

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