

**You're listening to Imaginary Worlds. I'm Eric Molinsky.**

**A couple years ago, I did a story for Studio 360 about vampires. When you see vampires on TV or in the movies, they're usually really fast, super strong. Sometimes they can fly, or hypnotize you. They're definitely dressed in the latest fashions, very sexy, lots of black. But I wanted to show that in the real world, being a vampire is not glamorous. They don't keep up with the times, it can be disorienting to live forever. They have so many vulnerabilities; they actually become kind of a burden on society. And if they're low on blood, they're pretty weak.**

**That's why New Haven, Connecticut created a safe house program in the '60s – which was copied by Oakland, Austin and a couple other cities. New Haven provided vampires with a regular supply of blood, in turn, the vampires agreed to live in safe houses, guarded by police. So as part of Studio 360's Halloween show in 2011, I visited one of the safe houses. Here's a little bit of that story.**

#### **CLIP FROM STUDIO 360**

**A lot has happened since I did that story. To catch up, I talked with Jonah Lipsky, The Director of Health for New Haven.**

JL: We had our funding de-accelerated; it was re-apportioned and prioritized elsewhere but it wasn't completely cut. We had enough to continue the administration of the program if not the actual physical plant part of the program.

**In other words, the recession took a big toll on the budget – and the safe house program was cut. The vampires were transferred to the care of living relatives or descendants. Getting the families on board was a tough sell.**

JL: It was a classic case of not in my backyard for the first several months. People didn't want people crawling up out of their backyard but we found homes for them and the populace generally became accustomed to it.

**(On tape) But the police are saying that the number of vampire murders has definitely gone up since this transition has happened. Does that concern –**

JL: Not proportionally, not proportionally. The entire city population has increased drastically and therefore the 2 to 6% homicide rate has increased proportionally but not

disproportionally. I mean you have more people living here whether they're living or dead, and you have a similar number of murders.

**(On tape) But there is a very sizable increase of vampires that are in jail.**

JL: Only because the number of people that are able to go to jail has increased. You have criminals that were dead and came back, and they're still criminals. The vampirism didn't make them criminals, they were criminals before they came back just as the bakers who died and were bitten and came back -- they're still bakers, it doesn't stop them baking bread or cookies or other things we like to eat, they just do their thing and in many unfortunate cases, or few I should say, it's criminals.

**So, talking to Jonah Lipsky was a little frustrating. I was heading up to Boston anyway to see my family, and I thought I'd stop in New Haven to see how this is working out. Some of the families that were having a tough didn't want any media coverage. But the last time I was there, I did meet these two amazing women, Trudy Manetti and Frances O'Connor.**

**Trudy and Frances went to high school and college together. And when they were about 27, 28, they were starting to drift. Trudy got bit when she was 26. But they stayed friends, which is very rare.**

**When the safe houses were dismantled, there were no living relatives or descendants who wanted to claim Trudy, so Frances took her in.**

**Okay, (sigh) 106.**

*Knock.*

FRANCES: Coming.

**Okay.**

FRANCES: Hi!

**How are you?**

FRANCES: Nice to see you again.

**I stopped by just after sunset. Trudy was waking up. Trudy has been taking drugs that are supposed to lesson her cravings. But they make her sleepy.**

FRANCES: Oh Trudy! Come on in honey!

**There she is.**

TRUDY: Hi.

**The apartment is small. Frances had to turn their walk-in closet into a bedroom.**

**I want to start by you guys each saying your name and I want you to say how old you are, which I don't usually ask but in your case its interesting.**

FRANCES: Yeah, okay, well my name is Frances O' Connor and I am 74 years old.

TRUDY: And I am Trudy Manetti and I am 73 ~~and a half~~.

**You'll hear, these two love to talk about the old days. But having Trudy home caused a rift in Frances's family. Her adult children won't bring the grandchildren over. And then there's her husband.**

FRANCES: It was very difficult for my husband. It still is very difficult for him.

**What's his name?**

FRANCES: Tom.

**Tom.**

TRUDY: He never liked me. Like when they got married they had an evening wedding that thought was so considerable so I could go, but I wasn't allowed to go to the wedding. He totally stopped it.

FRANCES: Well, he was worried, what he did was, let me explain what he did. He was afraid that she might come anyway and might crash the wedding so to prepare, what he made sure that everyone at wedding had a buddy like the buddy system you know when you're in grade school you have a buddy system when you go out on a trip.

**Sure.**

FRANCES: And before they went home every one had to check that their buddy was okay and was safe in the car.

TRUDY: I just wanted to see your dress.

FRANCES: Well, he was worried I understand.

TRUDY: Well the pictures were in black in white it just wasn't the same

**When it comes to the big question -- whether it's better to be frozen at a certain age -- or live through all the normal stages of life, Frances and Trudy each think they got the better end of the deal.**

TRUDY: What does it matter who's president and what laws are getting past because it's not going to affect me because I'm not ever going to get old, it doesn't matter to me whether there's Medicare or what's new one?

FRANCES: Obamacare.

TRUDY: Obamacare. It doesn't matter to me, I don't get sick, as long as I have blood, I'm not hungry. If things get polluted and dirty or whatever it doesn't matter to me, I don't really breathe air.

**And she's allowed to roam free at night.**

TRUDY: I just walk around. I see what's happening. If there's a midnight movie on the weekend, sometimes I go to that. I mean I don't talk to anybody I just watch the movie.

FRANCES: I thought you go out of with girlfriends.

TRUDY I mean sometimes one or two, we'll get together and talk about the safe house.

**Are you guys ever allowed into any clubs?**

TRUDY No. Well, you can sneak in if I want to take the time and put the make up on so I don't look so pale.

FRANCES: What do you do about ID? For drinks? Of course you don't drink but you got to have an ID to get into those places, although you look the right age. Maybe they don't ask you.

TRUDY They don't ask me.

FRANCES: Do you ever meet a man, a vamp, man, nice guy?

TRUDY Eh.

FRANCES: You're very attractive.

TRUDY Aw, but honestly Frances, most of them are drips.

**Why?**

TRUDY They're just not very interesting to talk to, and if you don't meet one who was turned about the same time as you, its completely different frame of reference, it's like talking to a wall.

FRANCES: Maybe you would.

**So this is a kind of a serious question, given that age is such a big issue here and she's going to be 18 forever, theoretically, do you think about what's going to happen after you're gone? What's going to happen to her? And do you think about what your life is going to be like after she's gone?**

FRANCES: Yeah, of course, I worry there's nobody going to take care of her. I don't know and I'm not going to be around to know, nobody is going to take care of her without me.

TRUDY: I'm going to try very hard not to get in trouble because I know Frances wouldn't like it.

**So like right now, you feel like you would never do anything to get in trouble because you would loose her respect but after she's gone you'll be thinking what would Frances would think?**

TRUDY: I hope so, Frances is very important to me and I'm really going to miss you and I wish you'd let me turn you 50 years ago.

FRANCES: Oh please, come on! Let's not talk about that again.

TRUDY: Because it's -- Frances is the only person left who remembers what I was like when I was still human, because sometimes I forget. And without her, I think that it becomes too easy to be a vampire. To think this is normal.

FRANCES: Because I'm a witness to her youth too.

TRUDY: Because you still think I'm a good person

FRANCES: Of course you are.

TRUDY: I want to remember I'm not normal, I'm different and I think Frances is the one who helps me remember that and when she's gone I'm not sure I'm going to remember that anymore.

**The whole debate about vampires comes down to the issue of free will. If they have free will, it's terrible they were locked up in the safe houses. If they don't have free will, it's scary to think they can be on their own.**

TRUDY: How much free will do people have? I mean let's be honest, what everyone worried about is vampire going to kill me? That what it comes down to, that's what's what everyone is scared of. I'm going to get bitten by a vampire. We're not human and so, for a human to sit there and say I'm important is this vampire is going to bite me and end my life? Do you like a cow or a chicken or a carrot feels that way about a person? **I'm sure no one listening wants to know that they've been compared to carrot or cow.**

TRUDY: Well that's for them to take personally if they want but do they feel guilty when they eat a cow or a carrot. Do they think that carrot or that cow had a life?

**Not like the life of human.**

TRUDY: How is it different?

**It's totally different.**

FRANCES: Oh honey!

TRUDY: You're saying that because you're human.

**If somebody --**

TRUDY: You should let me turn you!

FRANCES: Too late.

TRUDY: Whatever, I respect that.

FRANCES: Too late.

**But another vampires could see Frances that way, how would you feel?**

TRUDY: I would beat them up because that's not okay because Frances is important to me. I mean Frances, I love you I don't mean this the way it's going to sound so don't get

upset but if you had a pet dog and somebody attacked your dog, you'd probably would go after that person for attacking your dog.

FRANCES: Right.

TRUDY: It's just -- you are most important living being in the world to me but we're not the same.

FRANCES: I know.

**People say the vampire trend is passé. True Blood is off the air. Twilight -- yesterday's news. But the hot-blooded attraction to vampires is just too tempting. I think we see a little of ourselves in them, especially when we see people loose control and give in their worst urges. We wonder, could they have controlled themselves. Should we have controlled them? Someday, vampires will hot again in some other cultural format. In the mean time, the real vamps have plenty of time to wait.**

**That's it for today's show. Thanks for listening.**

TRUDY: So is there a way -- I mean I love doing radio, is this being recorded, we don't show up on film, so radio is the only way I can --

**Do you know what a podcast is?**

TRUDY: No.

~~**So the little box with a typewriter. Does she have a Blackberry? What did you get her?**~~

~~FRANCES: Yeah, she's got, yeah she's got an iPhone.~~

~~**Oh you do? Okay. Do you know what download is? From the Internet, you download the show to your phone.**~~

FRANCES: You remember, I usually do it for her.

~~**So you listen to it on your phone.**~~

TRUDY: But not like rock n' roll, just listening to people talking?

FRANCES: Yeah, you can have music or talking!

TRUDY: And this is talking. I mean listening I can see but listening to people talk -- maybe if you're old that's fun but okay.

**Thanks to Dan Truman, Jean Richards, Nicole Greevy -- who were not actors playing Jonah, Frances and Trudy. They just helped me get in touch with them. Special thanks Jonathan Mitchell and AIR, the Association of Independents in Radio.**

**You can like the show on Facebook or leave a comment on iTunes. I tweet at emolinsky. The show's website is suspension of disbelief dot net, where**

**you can hear the original story that I produced for Studio 360, which many people thought was real – because they believe anything they hear on public radio. Even on Halloween.**