

# Remembering Angela Douglas

By Sandy Mesics © 2025

In my opinion Angela Douglas was batshit crazy, but as a disclaimer, I never met Angela face-to-face.

In 1973 I started publishing *Image* Magazine and was working to organize trans people and advance trans issues in Philadelphia. Angela Douglas got in touch with me, and she started sending me issues of *Moonshadow* and *Mirage*. I thought they were pretty good publications, and I enjoyed them, though my personal stance at the time was not quite as radical or militant as TAO's. Nevertheless, I gave TAO a free full-page ad to publicize their efforts.

After I published the first issue of *Image*, I met Jack O'Brien, who owned Neptune Productions at a party hosted by Sussie Collins. Of course, Neptune produced a slew of trans publications, and at the time, Sussie was leaving Neptune to concentrate on The United Transvestite Transsexual Society (UTTS). I subsequently went to work for Jack as a writer/photographer/editor. Jack would do business with any publisher of trans material: we regularly bought, traded, sold and distributed books and newsletters from Lee Brewster, with UTTS, the TAO, and my own *Image*. Jack's philosophy was "the more, the better;" everyone could make a little money, and everyone was a winner. In no time, Jack got totally frustrated with dealing with Angela, and she distrusted him as well, so there wasn't a lot of TAO news in any of the Neptune publications, as I recall. However, I was a softer touch and would work with almost anyone "for the cause."



Figure 1. Angela Douglas from *The Miami News*, Monday June 17, 1974, page 1

Angela asked me to send her reports of my organizing efforts in Philly, and before I knew it, I was the Philadelphia Director of the TAO. The interesting thing was that there really was no Philly TAO! I worked a bit with Tommi Avicelli and the Radical Queens, but otherwise, I was more focused on trying to put food on the table, working at Neptune and producing *Image* magazine. Apparently, Philadelphia TAO's lack of membership wasn't unusual: Trans activist Suzan Cooke, speaking about Angela, remarked in an interview with Susan Stryker that "As far as I know, TAO had one member – her."<sup>1</sup>

In a 1974 *Miami News* article, Douglas said that there were 25 TAO members in the Miami area. She later claimed that there were a thousand TAO members in five nations.<sup>2</sup> Trans musician Canary Conn related her experience with the TAO in Los Angeles: "The TAO advertised itself as 'a transsexual action organization' but turned out to be a gathering place for a bunch of drag queens who were mostly interested in running pink flags up poles and picketing college campuses as well as having sex with anyone who walked by, male or female. It was a fiasco."<sup>3</sup> Despite this, Angela named Conn as a TAO co-founder, likely because of her fame as a singer, or because of the success of her autobiography.

Whether there were 10 TAO members or 10,000, I just sent Angela regular reports of what was going on in Philly. To my chagrin, when my reports were published in Moonshadow, they had no resemblance to what I actually wrote. Angela would also send back long, rambling, almost incoherent missives that were almost impossible to decipher. Angela rewrote my reports to suit her own bizarre agenda. For instance, in the figure attached, Douglas said that I reported that the Pennsylvania Hospital gender identity program did not offer surgery, which in truth they did. Membership in the Philadelphia TAO was not growing, by any means, and my efforts were to get trans people included in the fledgling Philadelphia Gay Community Center on Kater Street, and later, South Street. I am very used to having my work edited but not rewritten to essentially be false. Storm clouds were brewing between Angela and me.



**Figure 2. Left: Angela in 1973. Right: Angela at Vanessa Mormules home, circa 1977. Author's collection.**

While my usual contact with Angela was by mail, I would occasionally have to accept collect phone calls from her, and listen to her rant and rave, while paying for the privilege. You know, in those pre- internet and pre- smart phone days, you paid by the minute for long distance phone calls. If someone called you collect, you paid for the call. So, needless to say, after a while, I stopped accepting her calls, which really ramped up her displeasure with me. I got a few calls from Angela from pay phones, and then they stopped, and I got official notice that I was dismissed from the TAO “for security reasons.” I think that happened in 1976 or so. Angela recounted this in her autobiography: “Sandy Mesics, a Philadelphia transsexual who was a TAO director for a while there, was kicked out of the TAO for suddenly popping up with the UTTS, and it had become clear she had been involved with us just to snoop us out a bit. She became an editor of Female Impersonator News and a continuing tirade against me personally was observed, most of it untrue.”<sup>4</sup>

To set the record straight, so to speak, I wasn't involved in the TAO just to snoop around. I never had access to any of the TAO's mailing lists or other documents, so I wasn't trying to poach her membership. As I said, I made contact with Sussie Collins and UTTS in 1973, and I naively thought I could support both organizations. Angela thought otherwise. As to a continuing tirade against her personally, I challenge anyone to show me proof that I did this. I never had nor do I still have any personal animosity toward her. Angela also related an anecdote about Female Impersonator News: “Female Impersonator News, by the way, had asked me after surgery if I would accept their ‘Female Impersonator of the Year’ award,

and I told them to stick it up their asses and would sue if they referred to me as a drag queen or female impersonator.” I do not believe FI News ever did a Female Impersonator of the Year award, at least not while I was actively editing the paper. Angela also claimed that she reported us to the Internal Revenue Service. “Female Impersonator News (Neptune Productions) was placed under the investigation as well and soon went out of business.”<sup>5</sup> Neptune Productions continued after I stopped working full-time for the publication in 1976. Jack O’Brien died in 1984, and this diminished Neptune’s output, but Betty Johnson continued the publications through the late 1980s, until she retired. So, Angela did not put us out of business.

While publishing *Image*, I was in correspondence with Julia Tonner, the England TAO Director in Walsall. By 1975, she had left TAO for similar reasons and remarked that “...TAO here in England is just about through.”<sup>6</sup> Angela reported that she disbanded the TAO in 1976<sup>7</sup>

Trans historian Susan Stryker remarked that Angela was “more of a gadfly and provocateur than a movement builder” and added that Angela was prone to “psychotic breaks” and “paranoid ravings.”<sup>8</sup> It was clear to myself and to many folks who knew Angela that she suffered from some form of mental illness: paranoia, occult experiences, conspiracies everywhere, forays into American Nazism, racism all exacerbated by drug abuse. Scholar AJ Lewis wrote, “As Douglas’s life progressed, later writings retain less discernable coherence, emphasize theories of conspiracy, and center feelings of anger, bitterness, and melancholy.”<sup>9</sup> Suzanne Cooke echoed my feelings about Douglas in an interview: “My take on her was that she was nuts. My further take on her was that as far as making radical noises, she was sort of the Holly Woodlawn of tranny politics. She was funny. She was offensive. She had some nasty cleanliness problems when it came to matters of her physical presentation, and I knew right away she was going to cause us problems with the feminists. I could see that coming a mile away, because there were so many humorless people, and she had this sense of humor where, if you didn’t share it, you were going to be in a conflict with her. She was – I don’t know how to put it in a polite – well, I just didn’t much care for her.”<sup>10</sup>

Angela maintained that the early gay liberation movement was under the control of Communists and Maoists. The Johns Hopkins gender identity clinic was set up by the CIA, and that the CIA was putting female hormones in the water given to Cuban and Haitian refugees in Miami.<sup>11</sup>

Despite Angela’s mental problems, there is no doubt that she packed about five lifetimes into one. If she even did a fraction of the things she recounted in her 1983 autobiography, she led a remarkable life. Angela was an army brat who moved with her parents from Florida to Japan. Her father was physically and emotionally abusive, and her mother was distant and emotionally detached. By her own account, her parents thought she was mentally ill, as did her first wife.<sup>12</sup>

THE PHILADELPHIA  
BRANCH OF THE TRANSEXUAL  
ACTION ORGANIZATION  
is now forming for pre  
and post-operative transsexuals.  
For information, contact  
Sandy Mesics at 561-4577.

PHILADELPHIA TAO: Sandy Mesics reports the Gay Alliance Counseling Center did not welcome a TAO effort to assist GACC transsexuals, but Moonshadows were left at the GACC office. Mesics also says a sex change program at the Pennsylvania Hospital is only a 2-year psychotherapy program at \$35 per session with no surgery. Membership of TAO Philadelphia is growing and the TAO is also working with a TSTV group there called Radicalqueens.

TRANSEXUAL ACTION ORGANIZATION

OFFICERS

President  
Angela K. Douglas  
Vice-President  
Barbara Rosello  
Defense Director  
Colette Goudie  
Miami Beach Director  
Crystal Gresham  
Philadelphia Director  
Sandy Mesics  
San Francisco Director  
Wendy Davidson  
European Director  
Staffordshire, England  
Julia Tonner  
London Director  
Angela Nicol

Noted TAO members include: Barbara Rosello, Crystal Gresham, Tara Carn, Cynthia Platt, Kimberly Elliott, Brenda Gottlieb, Carol Schneider, Michelle Callaghan, Angela Nicol, Julia Tonner, Sandy Mesics, Wendy Davidson, Vicky Williams, Joanna O., Suzun David. Rosello was the second TAO president. Mesics was a Philadelphia director dismissed for security reasons. Tonner developed TAO in the United Kingdom.

officers of the TAO

Angela Keyes Douglas	President/miami Beach director
Colette Goudie	vice-president/defense director
Sandy Mesics	philadelphia director
Leslie St. Clair	San Francisco director
Wendy Davidson	Los Angeles director
Julia Tonner	Staffordshire director

Figure 3. From the author's scrapbook.



**A SPANISH BALLAD** will be presented by A3C Douglas C. Czinki, 6th Weather Squadron.

**Figure 4. A young Doug Czinski. Take-off (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) · Fri, May 3, 1963 · Page 4**

and was working out of the offices of Dr. John Ronald Brown. The author questioned Mirage's authenticity: "... in my opinion, Mirage's credibility is rather low. Mirage, with the exception of Dr. Brown's column is an almost one-woman production." The author went on to report that Douglas had been turned down for surgery by the National Transexual Counseling Unit, which required a year of psychological evaluation prior to surgery. She further reported that "Angela Douglas has a well-established reputation for sowing seeds of dissention both in this town [San Francisco] and Miami. ... Angela has wrecked [sic] more havoc than a hurricane in the Miami [Gay Activist Alliance]." Of course, Douglas said the article was slanderous and demanded a retraction.<sup>13</sup>

She wrote occasional pieces for the Berkeley Barb. In one she reported her engagement to Tisha Goudie, a trans woman and TAO member. The pair worked together as sex workers in Berkeley: "... making a small fortune hooking with me in my apartment." Unfortunately, the relationship would not last.<sup>14</sup>

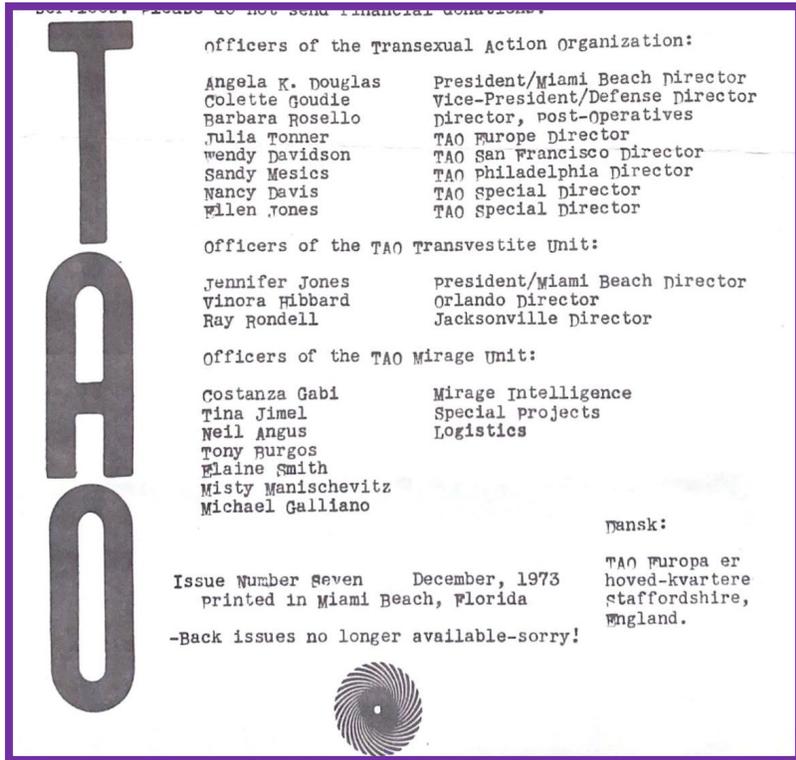
Angela joined the Air Force when she was 18, to get out of her parent's house in Japan. She stayed in the military for three years, leaving in 1964. After that, Angela's movements were peripatetic. She was in Los Angeles in the mid-sixties, went to Honolulu, then returned to Los Angeles in 1968. During her time in Los Angeles, she was heavily into the music scene, and even appeared briefly in the 1967 Peter Fonda film, "The Trip." In 1969, she started hormones and began living as a woman. Both in her autobiography and in a 1977 interview with Kay Brown, Douglas claimed to be visiting New York at the time of the Stonewall Riots and that she participated in the uprising, but this is likely an aggrandizement of her story.

She moved to Miami in 1972, then to Berkeley California in 1974, back to Miami for a couple of years, and then back to Berkeley in 1976.

According to an article in the Berkeley Barb, "Angela K. Douglas

is back in town. This time her gig is promotional, but then when isn't it?" Douglas was promoting Mirage

According to Kay Brown, in 1977 she witnessed Angela writing a “very tongue-in-cheek” letter to Sister magazine accusing lesbian separatists of being transphobic. The letter went on to say that trans women were superior to cisgender women and would eventually replace them. This letter was quoted by Janice Raymond, which added ammunition that ultimately resulted in the anti-trans book, *The Transsexual Empire*. Later, Angela would double down, saying, “The 1997 letter as for women becoming obsolete is valid, not whimsical or tongue in cheek.”<sup>15</sup>



In 1977, Angela had gender reassignment surgery done by John Ronald Brown, and in 1978, I ran across a glossy magazine called “Sex Change: The Real Life Story of Angela Douglas,” that had a photoshoot of the preoperative as well as the now-postoperative Angela Douglas. The results looked horrible. I was aghast and almost physically ill from seeing what happened to her. No one deserved that, not even a batshit crazy trans activist. Interestingly, Angela maintained that Brown was one of the finest gender surgeons in the U.S., and it wasn’t until later in life that she felt that he had mutilated her. In the late 1970s, unhappy with her surgery, “I had completely unsuccessful surgery by John Ronald Brown,”<sup>16</sup>

Postoperatively she did sex work in Hawaii in 1979-1980 but after several arrests she moved to Los Angeles and subsequently to Berkeley in 1981. Angela often ran afoul of the law, and, by her own account, had been jailed in Miami, Los Angeles, Venice, and Olympia Washington.<sup>17</sup>

In 1982, Douglas resumed living as a man. Ironically, in 1982, I moved to Miami and spent a fair amount of time on the 21<sup>st</sup> Street gay beach on Miami Beach. I always wondered if I would run into Angela there, but that never happened. It would have been an interesting meeting. By 1986, Angela, now Doug, moved to Sneads in North Florida and lived in impoverished conditions until he won a net amount of \$186,000 in the Florida lottery in 1991. But he blew through the winnings in a short time and ended up back in Sneads. Angela died impoverished in 2007. Her friend and landlord at the time remarked that “She was indeed one of the most tortured souls I've ever known.”<sup>18</sup>

RIP Angela Keyes Douglas, Angela Lynn Douglas, Doug Delain, and Douglas Czinki. You all were one of a kind.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Suzan Cooke interview with Susan Stryker. [https://docs.glbthistory.org/oh/Cooke\\_SuzanCooke1-10-1998\\_web.pdf](https://docs.glbthistory.org/oh/Cooke_SuzanCooke1-10-1998_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Kay Brown Up to TransHistory Homepage. Learning from the past, living for today, preparing for tomorrow. 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Conn, Canary. Canary: The Story of a Transsexual. Los Angeles, Nash Publishing. 1974. Page 202.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas, Angela Lynn. Triple Jeopardy: The Autobiography of Angela Lynn Douglas. Self-published. 1983. Page 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 64

<sup>6</sup> Image Magazine no. 2 p. 4, 1973.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas, op. cit., p. 53

<sup>8</sup> Stryker, Susan. Transgender History. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press. 2008. P. 88.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, Abram J. "I Am 64 and Paul McCartney Doesn't Care" in Radical History Review. Issue 120 (Fall 2014) p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Cooke, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas, op. cit., p. 26, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas, op. cit. p. 6, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Berkeley Barb, Jul. 12-18, 1974, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. Dec. 17-23, 1976, p. 2. Douglas, op. cit. p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, op. cit.,

<sup>16</sup> Brown, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, Ben. "Angela Keyes Douglas" In Drag vol. 3 no. 10. 1973. P. 28-30.

<sup>18</sup> Winner, <https://zagria.blogspot.com/2007/06/angela-douglas-1943-2007-musician.html#obituary>)