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 2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC
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 6 Interview with Otto Bremerman
 7 Date of Birth: Nov. 14, 1930
 8 By Everett Erlandson, 3 Tapes
 9 Interviewed on 8/12/94
 10 GLHD OHP 94-31, Uncles Project
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 12 EE: This is August 12, 1994, and we're doing an Oral
 13 History interview with Otto Bremerman. What we
 14 usually do is, if you'll just tell me a little bit
 15 about your parents and your people and where you came
 16 from. Some of the questions there you have in the
 17 guidelines, if they're religious or, or if they were
 18 not, if they were uptight about homosexuality or if
 19 they were pretty easy about things. So that's usually
 20 where we start.
 21 OB: Okay, ah, well I was born November 14, 1930, and
 22 I was born in Rock Springs, Wyoming, and I never lived
 23 there. I only stayed there long enough to get out of
 24 the hospital, I guess. And ah I grew up mainly in
 25 Cape Girardeau, Missouri, on the Mississippi River,

1 somebody had told me this way back when we were kids,
 2 and it didn't make sense to me, and it makes a lot of
 3 sense now. But I never did connect all these feelings
 4 in a way that ah, that I knew what gay life was.
 5 EE: Did you connect it with the words queer and
 6 faggot?
 7 OB: Ah, in that people who who prefer men to women
 8 were queers and faggots. The sex part didn't even
 9 enter into my mind at that point.
 10 EE: Did your parents ever say don't do these things,
 11 or stay away from this park or that park?
 12 OB: No, they came from a German family; it was never
 13 discussed. We never discussed sex. I never had the
 14 birds and the bees talk with my Dad, and ah, and
 15 those things were just never discussed. I guess the
 16 closest thing that I came to having any kind of rules
 17 or regulations along that line were the, was the
 18 little section in the Scout Handbook that told you
 19 about about wet dreams, really. But, and I never felt
 20 any guilt about this. I was careful, growing up in
 21 the Midwest. I was careful to keep my thoughts to
 22 myself and not talk about my preferences. And, of
 23 course, in those days, ah, it was not fashionable to
 24 come out, even when I was grown, it was not
 25 fashionable to come out. So. So, I graduated from

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1 ah, between there and Houston, Texas. is primarily my
 2 growing up. My parents were middle class German and
 3 English, and ah, I grew up an Episcopalian from the
 4 Midwest. Ah, I recognized early on that I liked ah,
 5 men better than women, but ah, I guess I was in
 6 denial; it was not the thing; I recognized it was not
 7 the thing to do. So I did date in high school, ah,
 8 and did all the things that I was supposed to do, but
 9 I did have sex with a lot of of my peers during high
 10 school.
 11 EE: Did you have any sex before high school, or was
 12 there any childhood play or?
 13 OB: Yes, I was in the Boy Scouts and I guess it
 14 started from age 12 on that I played around and did
 15 that sort of thing. Ah, I never put a name to it. In
 16 the Midwest, you knew queer and you knew faggot, but
 17 you didn't know homosexual and you didn't know what
 18 all this meant and, as a matter of fact, one of my
 19 young friends who seemed to know about this sort of
 20 thing than I did, insisted he was going to go to San
 21 Francisco one day and get married to a man. And I
 22 couldn't understand that; I just, that didn't make
 23 sense to me at all - why would a man marry a man? And
 24 ah ah, I passed conversation by it, put it out of my
 25 mind for years and years, and then I remembered that

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1 high school in 1949 and I went to college in town
 2 where I grew up, Cape Girardeau, at Southeast Missouri
 3 State College. I was there for a year and a half, and
 4 there was a gay scene there and I was just about to
 5 get involved with it, but there were other things in
 6 my life going on. I was a member of of the Naval
 7 Reserve ah ah, Korea was going on, and our reserve
 8 unit was supposed to be called and I was letting my
 9 grades slip and I was kind of on the fence what to do.
 10 And I also knew that I was getting stronger and
 11 stronger urges to to become a lot more sexually active
 12 than I was. So I, and I knew I couldn't do it there,
 13 so I joined the regular Navy. And I went in on a
 14 four year hitch and ah, I still felt I was straight.
 15 Then when I got out of the Navy, I was going to go
 16 back home, find a girl and get married and the picket
 17 fence and kids and all that sort of thing. Ah - I was
 18 stationed, after boot camp I was stationed in Hawaii,
 19 that's where I met Jim incidentally. But ah, ah, I
 20 left Hawaii to go back to San Diego for a six weeks
 21 school, personnel school. And I was in San Diego in
 22 off street areas looking for little quiet bars to to
 23 ah, to meet a girl. And I happened into a gay bar
 24 called the Bluejacket's Club, and of course I
 25 immediately realized I was home, and this was my first

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1 real indoctrination into the gay life.
 2 EE: What do you mean?
 3 MO Well, I just felt very comfortable in this gay
 4 bar. The men were very affectionate with each other,
 5 having a great time, they did a lot of drinking, I did
 6 a lot of drinking, and I just felt very comfortable
 7 there, and I just knew that this must be home for me.
 8 EE: Well, I'd like to, to back up a little bit. I
 9 mean, you said you had sex in high school. Ah, two
 10 questions: 1) Was it just with your peers or did you
 11 have sex with adults out side of school?
 12 OB: Okay, for the most part, it was my peers.
 13 However, I worked in a drug store in a hotel and ah,
 14 two different older men encouraged me to, after I got
 15 off work, to go with them, and so I had a little sex
 16 that way. I ah, one was quite a bit older and that
 17 was not a very good situation for me. The other one
 18 was fine for a while and then I got nervous about this
 19 and -
 20 EE: It was an ongoing thing?
 21 OB: Yeah, it was more than once; it was three or
 22 four times. And then I decided that maybe I was taken
 23 - being taken advantage of, and I got very upset about
 24 it. I wouldn't see the guy anymore.
 25 EE: What did you (inaudible)

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1 15. So I had not, the war was over about the time I
 2 went to work, and so this happened the next year
 3 probably. Yeah, with the older fellow.
 4 EE: And this was, this was ah, did you see this as
 5 being different than what you were doing with your,
 6 with your high school friends?
 7 OB: Yeah, yeah I did. I, I - it was not a good
 8 thing for me. Not a good experience. I don't know
 9 why - the guy was not all - as I look back at it, I
 10 don't think he was all that pushy or or whatever, but
 11 it, it didn't work for me. It, it frightened me.
 12 EE: With your high school friends did you, was it
 13 sex in between you - did you ever talk about it or was
 14 it made you scared; never, never talked about it? Was
 15 it an ongoing thing, or was it just once in a while?
 16 OB: Ah, actually I was very, I was the aggressive
 17 one. I was, I was the seducer and did all the
 18 seduction part, and it was whenever I had the chance,
 19 whenever we spent the night somewhere. Ah, I was in
 20 the band and when the band went somewhere and spent
 21 the night where we'd be two or three in a room, or
 22 something like that, I would get the conversation
 23 around and we'd all get horny and, and jack each other
 24 off and that sort of thing. Ah, on a number of
 25 occasions, I would talk people to go, into going up to

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1 OB: I don't know and I, I can't answer that because
 2 this is how I felt and I didn't know too much about
 3 what was going on, but I did know that ah, that I was,
 4 I was being led along, and I'm sure just what it was
 5 that turned me off, but something turned me off, and I
 6 actually threatened the guy to expose him if he didn't
 7 leave me alone.
 8 EE: How old were you then?
 9 OB: I guess I was 15, 14, 15, maybe 16.
 10 EE: Then, and that was -
 11 OB: I had to be 16; I had to be 16 to work, and I
 12 was working in the drug store, so, and I was 16 at
 13 least.
 14 EE: Right after the war?
 15 OB: Ah yeah, it would have been over by this time.
 16 Maybe not, - I graduated high school and I was 19 and
 17 war ended probably the middle of the time I was in
 18 high school. Maybe my, oh my junior year, so I was
 19 probably - I was 16 but the war wasn't over 'til I was
 20 18 probably. And by the time I had, I had ah ah -
 21 maybe the war was over - I'd have to, I'd have to get
 22 my numbers out now and figure out when was the war
 23 over.
 24 EE: 1945.
 25 OB: 1945, okay '45, and I was born in '30 - I was

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1 the high school Lovers Lane sort of thing - we called
 2 in Cape Rock; it was up on a high hill overlooking the
 3 river. And ah, and I would I would get 'em involved
 4 in in mutual masturbation actually, but if they would
 5 masturbate me, I would still masturbate them.
 6 EE: Was it the same group of people that did, or
 7 just, or was it -
 8 OB: It was the kids I went to high school with.
 9 EE: And you weren't worried (inaudible) found out or
 10 was it a secret from everybody?
 11 OB: No, because if they told, then they'd have to
 12 admit they were part of it. So for the most part, I
 13 felt pretty, pretty secure about - this was the only
 14 time this ever happened is with them, you know. It
 15 didn't happen with anybody else. But ah, ah, so I
 16 didn't have - I did have some expression from these
 17 same people that they didn't want to be around me
 18 again, on occasion. But ah, by the same token, at the
 19 same time I was going out with women and, or dating
 20 the girls, and so there was not a lot of talk about my
 21 being a faggot or a queer. Faggot was not used too
 22 much; it was mainly queer is what was used then.
 23 EE: And you knew what that that -
 24 OB: Well, it just meant that I would have sex with
 25 boys instead of girls.

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1 EE: Were you having sex with the girls that you were
 2 going with?
 3 OB: No (laughs). I tried once or twice and it
 4 didn't work out. It just didn't - either the girl
 5 didn't want to, or I couldn't, so.
 6 EE: I understand. So when you graduated from high
 7 school, you were in the Naval Reserve, were you trying
 8 to get out of town to see a wider world, or or what
 9 prompted you to go into that?
 10 OB: Okay, after graduation from high school, I went
 11 to college there in town for a year and a half. And
 12 ah, as I said, this Korean thing was was looming and
 13 we had our, our naval reserve unit was activated, but
 14 was not called in yet.
 15 EE: When did you join the naval reserve?
 16 OB: In high school; I had been in the naval reserve
 17 maybe three years before I - instead of ROTC, I went
 18 into the naval reserve in high school.
 19 EE: So as a way to get a better job and some
 20 training?
 21 OB: Well, for me? No, it was to get out of town
 22 (laughs). I wanted to - I knew from the word git-go
 23 that I had to complete college. I wasn't ready to do
 24 it at that time, and to join the Navy and get away
 25 from my home, my people, to get on my own, ah, for

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1 four years. Then I did have to go back to go to
 2 college, and that comes later; I'll tell you about
 3 that later. But, but ah, yeah, I actually joined the
 4 Navy to, to stop all of this thing that was going on
 5 with college and my grades and my - my life in a
 6 small town and to get out on my own and find out what
 7 it was that I was looking for.
 8 EE: So you were looking for something or did you -
 9 OB: Well, I knew that there was something out there
 10 that I wanted, but I wasn't sure what it was.
 11 EE: I mean, I hear a lot of men say that the Navy
 12 was a way, or the Army, armed forces was a way to -
 13 OB: Yeah, it's also an easy way to cut the strings
 14 that tie you to the family.
 15 EE: What were your relations like with your family,
 16 were they -

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 2 OB: Family relations were good, ah, but they were,
 3 they were very, we didn't talk about feelings, we
 4 didn't talk about ah, love, we didn't talk about sex.
 5 Very strict German Protestant type, ah -
 6 EE: Were they at all worried about you, that you
 7 were somehow odd or different?
 8 OB: They never talked to me about it if they were.
 9 EE: Did ya, I mean, I know from my own family the
 10 non-verbals that go on, you know, sometimes they can -
 11 if you're not going to talk about sex, they can
 12 certainly get the message that whatever you're doing
 13 isn't right, without saying a word - just making
 14 things uncomfortable or, I mean, I don't know if you
 15 had any -
 16 OB: I didn't have that feeling, no. Ah, I got the
 17 feeling of a lot of encouragement for whatever I
 18 wanted to do. Just to, this'll speed it ahead a
 19 little bit, ah, we - . As far as my relations with my
 20 family, when they retired and moved out to San
 21 Francisco, Dick and I had been living together ten
 22 years, maybe, by that time, five years by that time,
 23 ah, we had a one-bedroom apartment with one bed and
 24 they knew we both slept in that bed, but nobody ever
 25 asked anything or said anything. And ah, I decided if

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1 they asked me, I'll tell them, but I wasn't going to
 2 educate them if they didn't want to know. And that
 3 lasted 'til the day they died. Ah -
 4 EE: Did they ever ask you if you're getting married,
 5 or if you're seeing any, any girl or?
 6 OB: All, early on when I was quite younger they
 7 kept, they kept saying well you're going to met a girl
 8 next week, you're going to meet a girl next month.
 9 This, that and the other thing - get married and have
 10 kids, 'cause they wanted to be grandparents.
 11 EE: Do you, do you have brothers and sisters?
 12 OB: I have one sister.
 13 EE: Is she older or young?
 14 OB: She's younger and ah, she was married twice,
 15 and ah, no children. And, but, let me get back to my
 16 train of thought, or I'm going to lose it here. But
 17 with my folks, ah, they never did, ah, they never did
 18 ask or maybe they just didn't really want to know, but
 19 I'm sure they must have known, I mean, there's no way
 20 they couldn't have known. We did not hide it; we did
 21 not flaunt it. We did not have ah, our male
 22 magazines out where they might see them when they came
 23 over. We had them; we kept them put away is what I'm
 24 saying. On the other hand, they knew that we slept in
 25 one bed. I guess the closest thing that I can

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1 remember is a friend of mine, the fellow that
2 introduced us as a matter of fact, his mother and my
3 mother were together, and my mother was saying
4 something to her, which she later, later relayed to
5 him, ah, that she wished that I would get married so
6 she could have grandchildren. And ah, she said to my
7 mother, Oh they'll never get married as long as
8 they're together, meaning Dick and I. And Mom says I
9 guess you're right, and that's as much as I know of
10 it, they ah, they would acknowledge.
11 EE: How did they, how did they treat Dick?
12 OB: Very nicely, very nicely, just like another son,
13 as a matter of fact. Ah, we had, we had, we're lucky
14 that way. Both of our families had been that way.
15 I'd been very well received by his family. His
16 brothers and sisters all know we're gay. His dad and
17 his mother have been told, but they don't, they don't
18 acknowledge it. His dad, half the time, acknowledges.
19 Once we were driving, we had just arrived back in
20 Bath, New York, where Dick grew up, and his dad and
21 mother picked us up at the airport, and ah, while his
22 mother was still on her way to the car, his dad said
23 well, we got two rooms ready for you when we get back
24 to the house. And Dick says well you know we sleep
25 together, don't you? And, ah, his dad was very

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1 EE: Yeah, yeah. Well do you remember, I mean,
2 especially some of the first times, kind of how you
3 said it, what you said. 'Cause coming out seems to be
4 a kind of contemporary term - I'm wondering if it -
5 'cause I don't know is those who were -
6 OB: No, what we would - we didn't say we're gay.
7 What we said is you know, we are a couple, or you know
8 we are partners in every sense.
9 EE: And was there any other, was there any confusion
10 as to what you were saying?
11 OB: No, ah, some red faces, but no confusion. I
12 think all of them wanted to ask what we did in bed,
13 but they didn't dare (laughs)
14 EE: Yeah, they want to know but they don't at the
15 same time. Yeah well, we left off, well let me think,
16 you'd just graduated from high school, ah. You're in
17 college and you're seeing this girl and what, what was
18 that like and why did you want to be part of that?
19 OB: Ah, well, I, I was still trying to protect my
20 image in the town. A lot of the gay life in the
21 college was people that came from other towns, other
22 small towns to this small school. But ah, I, I was
23 beginning to learn about things like certain
24 professors who were gay, who were queer, and ah, I
25 also began to learn that one professor put on, what

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1 defensive, he says I know you sleep together, but I
2 didn't ask you that. I said he have two rooms
3 together and as long as you're at Mother's house,
4 you're going to sleep in separate rooms (laughs).
5 EE: Did You/
6 OB: Ah, well, part of the night (laughs). But, ah,
7 we ah we ah, but that was, that was one of their
8 rules. At, at our house we always slept - we never
9 slept in separate, in the same bed. At any rate, is
10 there something more you want to ask about family
11 life, early family?
12 EE: No for now. If we think, if either one of us
13 thinks of anything later on, we can always, you know.
14 OB: Ah, the younger people in my family all know
15 that we're - I mean, we've come out to them. Ah, my,
16 I don't have that much of an extensive family. I have
17 a lot of cousins; all the cousins have been told, but
18 ah -
19 EE: When did you tell them?
20 OB: Whenever they showed up for a visit. San
21 Francisco is a place everybody visits. And of course
22 they always come over and need showing around, and ah
23 ah, generally at that point - 'course we've lived
24 together for 36 years, and so, it's pretty - you know,
25 you don't hide it for 36 years.

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1 they call (inaudible) Follies in which the male chorus
2 line was all in drag and ah.
3 In those days you didn't call it drag, but in,
4 dressed up as women, sort of thing. And ah, ah, so I
5 was beginning to learn that these things were going on
6 and over the Christmas holidays, when most of the
7 students left, the gay students who didn't have family
8 to go to all stayed in the barracks - barracks?
9 dormitories. And wild parties went on. And I was
10 privy one year to the Christmas wild parties. But
11 then I got nervous about the fact that this was my
12 town and everybody knew me.
13 EE: How big was the town?
14 OB: Twenty-two thousand, but everybody knew me.
15 EE: When you say wild parties, was this more like an
16 orgy or was it more of a -
17 OB: No, it was more, it was more like a party. Ah,
18 there were orgy times, sexual, in the middle of the
19 night, sort of, five or six guys in a room, sort of
20 thing. But the party went on for like two weeks, you
21 sort of drifted in and out, that sort of thing.
22 EE: Outside of that, what, where were the gay
23 people, queer people meeting?
24 OB: Well ah, working, I found out later or I
25 realized later, I didn't realize at the time, but

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1 working in the hotel there was was perfect for meeting
 2 - otherwise, it was ah Greyhound bus station. You
 3 could always run into somebody interesting at the tea
 4 room in the Greyhound bus station, and that was about
 5 it. Oh ah, baseball diamond at the fairgrounds, ah,
 6 particularly after dark. If you walked through the
 7 fairgrounds and stopped at the dugout there, you
 8 usually met somebody. So there, there were certain
 9 places, but I was only getting to barely know about
 10 these things when I left town.
 11 EE: Well, do you remember how you found out about
 12 them?
 13 OB: Mostly when I came back. When I came back from
 14 on leave ah, I at that point had a little more
 15 experience and I knew where to look. So, so that's,
 16 that's where I found out about these things later.
 17 EE: Well, in college with these gay professors, did
 18 you, tell me, consider yourself?
 19 OB: No, I didn't consider myself part of this tribe
 20 for lack of a better term. Ah, and I, and it
 21 frightened me a little bit because I didn't know what
 22 it was.
 23 EE: Were you frightened by your own feelings, I mean
 24 -
 25 OB: No, because I, I, how do we say this? Ah, I

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1 first got there did you notice anyone else who was -
 2 OB: Yeah there were some, quite a few flaming queens
 3 in my my boot camp, and most or 'em ah, or a lot of
 4 'em were kicked out before, before the end of the
 5 boot camp period. They just disappeared. They were
 6 there one day and gone the next. - you never knew.
 7 Everybody suspected that they got caught and got
 8 shipped out, but they didn't know what happened to
 9 them.
 10 EE: Were you worried about getting caught?
 11 OB: Yeah, but of course, remember, this is second
 12 nature to me, I grew up in the midwest where you
 13 didn't act gay and if you were - or queer or
 14 whatever -
 15 EE: A flaming queer. I'm from Minnesota myself so I
 16 know the midwest.
 17 OB: Yeah. And so you, I mean you played the butch
 18 game. So, it was not difficult to to use that that
 19 sort of thing. And having had three years of
 20 experience in the reserve, naval reserve and having
 21 had a couple of ah, two-week cruises under my belt, I
 22 was already exposed to what it would be like in the
 23 Navy and then on shipboard, which a lot of the people
 24 in the boot camp hadn't, hadn't experienced yet. So,
 25 so I had some knowledge, which I would gladly share

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1 denied anything that frightened me. I just said, oh
 2 well this is fine now, but I'll get over this, I'll
 3 get over this, or whatever.
 4 EE: It's just sex; it's not, I'm not that way.
 5 Well, what ah, when you joined the Navy, ah, you had
 6 to drop out of college and you left town, where, where
 7 did that all start?
 8 OB: Well, I signed up in Cape Girardeau and they
 9 sent me to San Diego for boot camp.
 10 EE: Is this the first time you'd traveled outside of
 11 -
 12 OB: No no, I had, I had even as a kid, I'd gone to
 13 scout camps across the country. I hitchhiked to
 14 California one time, over a summer at the time. But
 15 ah, I had, no, I had no, I had been doing a lot of
 16 traveling so that was not a problem. Went down to San
 17 Diego and went through boot camp. I wish I had known
 18 then what I know now (laughs) because I missed a lot
 19 of opportunities, but I was too afraid. I knew that
 20 that if I, as we said in those days, if I dropped any
 21 pins or let my hair down, I would ah, I'd be kicked
 22 out. So I was very careful not to let my sexual
 23 preferences or any preferences be known. I was just a
 24 dumb kind from Missouri.
 25 EE: And did anyone, were there, I mean, when you

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1 with anybody that would listen, and they started
 2 calling me the old professor. I remember, I was the
 3 old professor in boot camp, so ah. But at any rate,
 4 nothing really happened in boot camp in of a sexual
 5 nature, that I can remember.
 6 Nothing ever happened in boot camp, I never got
 7 involved with anybody or anything like that. I went
 8 on leave; I went back to Missouri for two weeks and
 9 came back out and shipped to Hawaii.
 10 EE: This, this was during the Korean War, 1951?
 11 OB: Yeah, yeah. And ah, and I spent three and a
 12 half years in Hawaii, ah. I was, I still felt like,
 13 when I got out of the Navy, I still was going to, to
 14 go home and get married and have kids and blah blah
 15 blah blah. And it'd be all over, but I was willing to
 16 experiment with these things. Well, I got very
 17 active, very aggressive, ah, in cruising and having
 18 sexual liaisons. I spent practically every weekend at
 19 the YMCA, the Navy YMCA in Honolulu. And ah, ah most
 20 any night you'd see the line in front of my door, you
 21 know, that sort of thing. So I, I was, I was, I still
 22 was very aggressive all the way through the Navy, even
 23 though I was trying to stay - I knew I just couldn't
 24 get dishonorably discharged - I just knew that. I
 25 couldn't go back home if ever that happened. I'd have

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1 to disappear in some, some -
 2 EE: It must have required an awful lot of balancing
 3 to, I mean ah, people lined up outside your door and
 4 they -
 5 OB: I'd done that all the way through high school.
 6 I mean you just go - and you'll find out when I left
 7 the Navy, I went into a business that I was doing it
 8 all the way through my business life. 'Cause I was a
 9 surety bond man. I guaranteed contractors who would
 10 build buildings and highways and bridges and what not,
 11 and I went out drinking and hobnobbing with these
 12 contractors, the the big guys, the owners. And ah,
 13 here's this little queen with these big burly
 14 contractors and I was holding my own with them and
 15 what not. Ah, I don't know how many of them knew;
 16 nobody ever approached me though with it. And I
 17 really didn't care, to tell you the truth, by that
 18 time. But ah, ah, so I've never been uncomfortable in
 19 a straight situation. As a matter of fact, I guess
 20 the reverse is true. When I first got out of the
 21 Navy, I never went to gay bars. I was, I was more or
 22 less a trade queen and I'd pick up sailors on Market
 23 Street. Ah, so I was not into gay bars at that time.
 24 It was shortly thereafter that I met Dick; he had
 25 about five years together and then I, we started going

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1 heard about San Diego and the gay bars there. But on,
 2 by the same token, I was still thinking that I was
 3 straight and I would probably marry a girl, and I
 4 probably should be sleeping with one now and then.
 5 And ah ah, so that actually when I got back to San
 6 Diego, the first week or two I was spending my
 7 evenings trying to find a little out of the way bar
 8 where girls were that I could get to know. And that's
 9 when I found my first gay bar actually. So I knew
 10 there were gay bars, but I didn't know where they
 11 were, but I had found one.
 12 EE: Now this was during the training period?
 13 OB: This was during the school, this personnel
 14 school thing. And, some 6-foot corpsman at that bar
 15 decided we should go back to the YMCA which was a
 16 block and a half away where he had a room, and spend
 17 the night. And we went back and he carried me over
 18 the threshold and then is when I decided that I didn't
 19 want women after all. From then on I knew I was going
 20 to be gay, for ever and ever (laughs) and forget it
 21 so, and that really was the pivotal point in my
 22 thinking because at that point I realized that now I
 23 have to, I have to make my life different than I had
 24 planned. I won't go back to Missouri and finish
 25 school and become a chemical engineer. The steps

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1 to bars, because we joined SIR and got involved in all
 2 that.
 3 EE: Well, I really do what to talk about your Dick
 4 and SIR, but I want to finish up on (inaudible) before
 5 we go a little more about that. What, what did you do
 6 in the - what was your job there?
 7 OB: Okay, I was, I was stationed with ah CicPac
 8 Fleet, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, and ah I
 9 started out in the flag office, the captain, the
 10 admiral's office as a yeoman. Why they put me there
 11 I'll never know, 'cause I didn't know how to type. I
 12 had gone through school as a pre college type, pre
 13 engineering actually, I was going to go into chemical
 14 engineering, and ah ah, so I never took any business
 15 courses at all. So they put me in, in a in a ah
 16 typing pool ah office, where I had to teach myself to
 17 type first before I could do my, do my thing. And ah
 18 ah, and I did, I taught myself to type ah, with one
 19 of these self help manuals that you learn from. So I
 20 was in the flag office until, ah, they wanted, wanted
 21 me to transfer in to the personnel office and I, and
 22 they said they'd send me back to the, to the States
 23 for a 6-weeks school, personnel school, and that was
 24 great, I thought, because I could get back and I could
 25 really find out what gay life was about, 'cause I'd

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1 there would have been Southeast Missouri for two
 2 years, then to University of Missouri in St Louis and
 3 engineering. And ah, so I'd have to change all that.
 4 But the change didn't actually come yet for a while.
 5 I did, however, before I went back from this training
 6 session to Pearl Harbor, I went over to Berkeley and
 7 found ah ah, they have a great school over there. And
 8 I had already decided when I got out of the Navy, I
 9 was going to go to school in Berkeley and work in San
 10 Francisco. So then I have to change to Business
 11 because there's no engineers in San Francisco, at
 12 least in my thinking there was no engineers.
 13 EE: Well, the, the night with the 6-foot corpsman,
 14 that realization that you weren't going to go back and
 15 get married, was that a good feeling, was that a
 16 liberating thing, or was it a -
 17 OB: Yeah, it was real great and - I was, I was a
 18 real starry eyed person for a long time. I mean, I
 19 would sit in class next day and I would draw this
 20 great mountain with me underneath it, and the great
 21 mountain, of course, was the 6-foot corpsman. And
 22 here was my life standing out here, and it was just
 23 great. I just felt real good. Ah, the 6-foot
 24 corpsman didn't last, didn't last a week. But I felt
 25 great and then I decided, I don't care if that didn't

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1 last or not; it doesn't have to last. I enjoyed that
 2 and I want more of it. And when I got back to, to
 3 Hawaii from this, that's when I, I really began
 4 looking around and seeking out the gay people that
 5 were in my barracks. And the lesbian WAVES that I had
 6 sort of shunned before because I didn't want to get
 7 too involved with them.
 8 EE: Just to be seen with them?
 9 OB: Yeah, to be seen with them. And now it was
 10 okay, I felt very good about it.
 11 EE: Then you saw the lesbian WAVES as what was going
 12 on in the Navy?
 13 OB: Threats, yeah yeah, a threat really because I
 14 couldn't understand them, and I couldn't understand
 15 what they could see in each other and, but now I kind
 16 of recognize well I guess if I can see all this thrill
 17 I had with this guy, which is the first time I felt
 18 anything like attraction like that, before in high
 19 school and so forth, it was just another conquest or
 20 it was something to do, but it was not really sex, you
 21 know what I mean?
 22 EE: I think, I mean, it kind of gets back to
 23 leaving town and trying to find what you're looking
 24 for and know what it is. It seems like this is (both
 25 speak at once).

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1 I would go from CicPac to an attach job, then back to
 2 CicPac to an attach job, and I'd
 3 never go out of the, out of the hierarchy of the, the
 4 Navy. But I said no way. If I get through four
 5 years, honey, I'm going to get out on the street and
 6 I'm going to play. I kept my, kept my emotions under
 7 control for a while until I - and not very well, as a
 8 matter of fact, but I did. 'Cause I took a lot of
 9 chances.
 10 EE: So what, you took a 6-week training period, then
 11 you got back into the, and then you said you started
 12 looking for other gay people in your barracks.
 13 OB: Yeah, and started relating with them and
 14 figuring out what we were and who we were and so forth
 15 and so on.
 16 EE: Well, could you tell me a little bit of how, how
 17 that works because you knew they were there before but
 18 you didn't, you didn't really hang around with them
 19 all the time?
 20 OB: No, I didn't, and most of the friends I had I
 21 had made before I came out to myself, and so most of
 22 my friends were straight friends and I knew that there
 23 were all these other people there. And they were
 24 interrelating and I'd shipped a couple of them off - I
 25 was the personnel man, and when they got caught doing

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1 OB: Yeah, this is it, this was it (laughs). And
 2 suddenly that, and so - from then on I, I set my
 3 sights on on that sort of thing and having a - all
 4 this - by the same token, I had to finish my tour of
 5 duty.
 6 EE: Well, were you, were you afraid of being, or in
 7 any danger of being shipped overseas. I mean, was
 8 this - this war, I mean, to me that just seems real
 9 terrifying at being in the armed services -
 10 OB: Once they stationed me at Pearl Harbor, I knew I
 11 could stay there for the whole time. Ah, nobody's
 12 going to ship me out of there unless I ask to get out
 13 of there, and I did, ah, at the very end. But I
 14 didn't ask to get out to go to war; I asked to get
 15 out to come back to the States. So I had the last six
 16 months back in San Diego at the big gunnery school.
 17 EE: What was your rank?
 18 OB: When I, at the end? I was a personnel man
 19 second class.
 20 EE: I don't exactly how it works.
 21 OB: Allright, it goes seaman third class, second
 22 class, first class, chief. And I was second class,
 23 and they said if I would ship over for another four
 24 years, they'd make me first class and make me one of
 25 the admiral's yeomen, admiral's attendants. And then

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1 things on the base or something, I'd written up their
 2 discharge, had written up their confessions, and had
 3 'em signed, did all that bullshit, and the point that
 4 I came by, the thing that I would try to do is tell
 5 anybody, if I had a chance to talk to them before they
 6 signed any papers and talk to the officers, I'd tell
 7 'em keep your mouth shut; don't sign anything, no
 8 matter with. If they would threaten you with sending
 9 you to the brig for six months or a year or two years
 10 in the brig - and I knew that wasn't going to happen.
 11 I didn't know it before, but I did know it after I
 12 began to find out who I was - I began to find out what
 13 was going on.
 14 EE: Well that must be kind of scary, I mean, kind of
 15 gross, just ah, I mean if you're reading these
 16 confessions. I mean, did you place yourself, like
 17 this could be me.
 18 OB: This could be me, yeah.
 19 EE: Did you, I mean, also at the same time reading
 20 those confessions, did you learn anything about, like
 21 gay world or wherever you went?
 22 OB: No, because those people are so afraid, they
 23 just, they don't want to tell, to say much. All they
 24 said was things like this person approached in so and
 25 so park, and, or came up to the car when I was parked

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1 across the street from the barracks and asked me to
2 roll down the window and when he was talking, put his
3 hand on my leg, and blah blah blah blah blah.
4 And then it went from there; and then we got caught,
5 you know. So didn't relate any feelings. This was,
6 let's see, the facts.
7 EE: Well, did you, I mean, did you learn about the
8 parks then or or, about where people, where people met
9 or did you see any patterns coming up out of these
10 things.
11 OB: Not from those confessions, but I, I was
12 learning this as I just went along. For instance, the
13 base there - although I was stationed on the sub-base;
14 it's quite a big base, and all along the piers there
15 are the tea rooms or actually for the workers during
16 the day, that work on the docks. But those were
17 filled to over brimming with sailors at night. I
18 mean, they were in and out and in and out and in and
19 out, and ah, all you had to do is be attentive at one
20 of the stalls for very long and pretty soon there was
21 a tryst right there. And, and I learned these things
22 just by happenstance. There wasn't any confession or
23 anything. These are the things you, you start
24 learning right away you realize hey I'm gay, and I
25 want to do these things. I want to suck cock, you

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1 something new for me to realize. I mean, did the
2 people who weren't engaged in the sexual activity,
3 like the straight people, I don't know if you had a
4 name for them then, but what did they think of all
5 this? Did they just ignore it or did they not notice
6 it or - ?
7 OB: Oh, they would have to go out of their way to
8 notice it because who would bother to go into a dark
9 john on the dock when their barracks was across the
10 street. And they got, they got a john over there in
11 their barracks. It's all light and nice and, home
12 (laughs).
13 EE: Well, was there a lot of talk about, you know,
14 kidding about fags or being -
15 OB: Oh, that, yeah, there's always, but ah, but the
16 people that talked never knew what was going on, and
17 you had to be, you had to be gay to know what was
18 going on, because ah, or you had to fall into it as a
19 straight person. If a straight person walked in to a
20 john or a person walked into a john and didn't start
21 looking around and so forth, you immediately zipped up
22 and paraded out because you knew there was a straight
23 person there. It was not a gay person coming to
24 cruise.
25 EE: Did you use the term straight?

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1 know, and so you go where you can, even though those
2 were the dangerous things. A lot of guys said well
3 I'll never do anything on the base or with any of the
4 people that I knew mainly. And those guys had it much
5 easier as far as, as getting caught. They would
6 probably not get caught. What would happen is, if one
7 got caught, they would make
8 them say well who do you know and get a list of
9 names, and then they would go after them that way.
10 EE: So, were you having sex with the (inaudible)?
11 OB: Yeah, on the base. And I was going to the YMCA
12 at night and that sort of thing.
13 EE: I mean, where were you living, or your sleeping
14 quarters were on the base and (inaudible) so you
15 couldn't really go anywhere -
16 OB: I couldn't do anything in the barracks because,
17 well that's not true. 'Cause one or two times I did,
18 but I was drunk. You weren't supposed to 'cause it
19 was too easy to get caught.
20 EE: (inaudible) very closeted and just not go out
21 and did anything and, it's like, to hear these kind of
22 things. It's just, it's kind of -
23 OB: Oh no, we were closeted, but there was a lot of
24 sex. There always has been, there always will be.
25 EE: Yeah, yeah, I guess that's just something new,

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1 OB: Yeah, we used the term straight. And gay,
2 but gay then was not as widely known as it is now.
3 Everybody says gay now; maybe homosexual. But in
4 those days, gay was, the term before was in the
5 life. You were in the life. But that was even
6 before my time.
7 EE: Mostly during this time, I would imagine
8 McCarthy is becoming a little bit well known.
9 OB: Yes, unfortunately, and that's why when we
10 joined SIR, we used different names.
11 EE: So when you were in the Navy -
12 OB: When I was in the Navy, I just used the Otto to
13 get away from Adolph.
14 EE: Did you notice, I mean did, what McCarthy was
15 doing. Did you also know about what he was also doing
16 to homosexuals?
17 OB: No, no. As a matter of fact, Navy people are
18 the last to know about what's going on politically
19 back in the States. Ah, at the time, I don't even,
20 even think Hawaii was a state - it's hard to
21 remember - it wasn't a state at that time. And so we
22 were pretty far removed from politics as such. About
23 the only thing you saw was what you read in the paper.
24 And McCarthy was never dunned in the papers, because
25 the papers were afraid of him. Not until, not until

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1 (inaudible) they were going after his ass (laughs).
 2 EE: Yeah, then things had changed suddenly. Well,
 3 what were your political feelings during this time?
 4 Or were you -
 5 OB: I really, I was not politically ah ah, other
 6 than the fact that I considered myself a Republican at
 7 the time of all things, because I was going into
 8 business. I decided that instead of engineering, I
 9 would go into business. And my family were
 10 Republican, so I decided the Republicans. But ah, ah,
 11 and at that point, I don't think the Democrats were
 12 quote liberal unquote.
 13 EE: Well, I mean, about, did you have any qualms
 14 about if America should have been in that war or
 15 anything like that?
 16 OB: No, no. I figured if the government says we're
 17 supposed to be there, we're supposed to be there. We
 18 didn't question the government until Vietnam.
 19 EE: Yeah, I was just wondering about that, I mean,
 20 and also about how you felt about communism.
 21 OB: Communism, we were, we were all taught to, to
 22 fear communism. That's all I felt about communism.
 23 Matter of fact, in theory, I thought it might work,
 24 you know, it'd be great if we could get everybody to
 25 divvy up all the stuff and everybody'd be equal. But

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1 bridges were burned.
 2 EE: (inaudible)
 3 OB: Not really. Well, there's only one or two I've
 4 wondered about now ah over the years. And I've never
 5 gone back to a reunion - maybe the next time they have
 6 a reunion which'll be quite a long time away I guess,
 7 or will be so many years past, I must go back just to
 8 see what happened to people. But ah, all the family I
 9 had in Cape Girardeau have now moved out, so I really
 10 have no contacts back there. I'm sure some of these
 11 people I went to high school with are still living
 12 there, as big fish in a little pond, sort of like is
 13 what they're doing. But I left because I wanted to
 14 live my life the way I would enjoy my life - I
 15 couldn't do that back there.
 16 EE: Did you have any sort of conflicts about that,
 17 or was it just like the hell with that, I'm going to
 18 the party?
 19 OB: Yeah, I had a conflict. I, I, you know, I could
 20 have easily fitted in as a big er ah, big fish in a
 21 little pond type, but ah I couldn't fit in that way
 22 unless I could live my life the way I wanted to. And
 23 ah, you can't do that; you can't do that across the
 24 Bay. If you get to Walnut Creek, you can't do that
 25 (laughs). It's only San Francisco and several other

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1 it never worked that way in Russia, it never worked
 2 that way here (laughs).
 3 EE: So, you're in the Navy and this is going on ah.
 4 Was it evolution within the Navy, I mean, it's like
 5 you start off after the training and you come back and
 6 you start looking for other gay people. Ah, you
 7 obviously found some. Did you make friends or create
 8 any sort of family?
 9 OB: Yeah, ah. My closest friend is Jim; we've known
 10 each other all those many years (laughs) and ah ah and
 11 the fellow that introduced me to Dick ah, he didn't
 12 know Dick then, was also stationed there.
 13 EE: And his name?
 14 OB: Jack Garner. He, he ah was stationed in my
 15 barracks. And later on he was going to Cal when I was
 16 going to Cal, and when I graduated from Cal and moved
 17 over here, he'd met Dick then and they introduced us.
 18 I'll get to that when we get there.
 19 EE: And so, by the time you left the Navy, did you
 20 have a (inaudible) circle of friends and support
 21 outside the Navy too, or, I mean, not support.
 22 OB: No, not outside the Navy. All my friends were
 23 Navy friends, because everything I left back home I
 24 was not going to - and I never did go back home to my
 25 friends back home. When I left them, that, those

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1 small, er, large cosmopolitan places that you can do
 2 that sort of thing.
 3 EE: And so, when ah, you left, maybe you asked to
 4 leave, you asked to leave early, you said, or asked to
 5 be shipped to the States?
 6 OB: No, no no. I asked to be shipped back to the
 7 States, because I'd been three and a half years,
 8 almost three and a half year on Pearl Harbor, ah, on
 9 Hawaii. And I wanted to get back and get things
 10 started for my going to school and so forth and so
 11 on.
 12 OB: And I also, be this time, I had worn out all my
 13 curiosity about Hawaii. So I ah -
 14 EE: Was the war won by then too?
 15 OB: It was, it was winding down, very closely.
 16 During the Operation Big Switch, I went on temporary
 17 duty ah, and went to Yokohama, Ikuska, Ikuska, Japan,
 18 and ah, did an evaluation of the Navy's part of the
 19 war. Ah, and this was before I left, had left Pearl
 20 Harbor - came back to - . The last I spent in San
 21 Diego at the fleet gunnery school and ah, so it was
 22 the end of the war. The war was over by that time,
 23 'cause the Operation Big Switch was the trading of
 24 prisoners between Korea and the U.S. and so forth.
 25 And ah, all that evaluation stuff was conclusive as

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1 of, at the end of the war essentially. Then, then I
2 was shipped back to San Diego and I spent six months
3 there and got out, I guess out in November. I got out
4 a few months earlier than my discharge because they
5 were letting everybody out at that time. My regular -
6 I joined say in January and I got out in November, so
7 I, it's only ah two months, I guess, short of four
8 years. And ah, I had enrolled in Berkeley while I was
9 at the gunnery school. I'd, I'd done all the footwork
10 I needed to do to, to ah, to change my life from the
11 Midwest to the West (laughs). And I was to start at
12 the spring quarter, so I went back to Missouri and, as
13 a matter of fact, I went back to work at the, at the
14 hotel where I, in the pharmacy, in the drug store at
15 the hotel where I worked before I went in the Navy,
16 over the Christmas holidays to help out. And also to
17 earn a little money, a little more money for my, for
18 my school trip. And I packed up four suitcases and
19 typewriter, and that was my whole life, put it on a
20 train and came back to Berkeley to go to school. The
21 train, because my dad worked at railroad and sent me a
22 pass, had done a number of trips by train and ah, when
23 I was stateside.

24 EE: Yeah, which railroad?

25 OB: He worked for Union Station in St Louis. He

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1 looked at us (laughs) and I could, I could just see
2 the South (laughs) rise, and I said, it's okay Dad,
3 this is, this is San Francisco. We were, actually
4 Cape Girardeau is ten miles north of the Mason-Dixon
5 line. It's very, you know, it was separate bathrooms,
6 separate water fountains (inaudible) whole bit. And
7 as a matter of fact, this story is just aside, we had,
8 we had our high school when I was working at the drug
9 store, our high school had a basketball game with an
10 Illinois high school who had black players, ah team
11 players, and they were staying at the hotel. And they
12 all came in to get ice cream after the game or what
13 not. And my boss, I went over to take their order and
14 I came back and my boss came out of the the
15 prescription booth and said, you can't serve them
16 here, they can have it to go. And three were white
17 and two were black. And so I went back and I
18 addressed the black people and I was very
19 uncomfortable about doing this and I said, you know, I
20 can make your order to go, and they all decided they
21 didn't want it. Phfew! I don't blame them.

22 EE: Yeah, well was that hard to get used to, I mean,
23 was the Navy integrated?

24 OB: The Navy was integrated, yeah. And and, for me
25 it was not a problem, it was not a problem for me

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1 was at the Union Station, so he had access to passes
2 to all the trains that came in to Union Station, yeah.
3 EE: One of friends, his dad worked at Southern
4 Pacific, I guess. He got into World War II, and he
5 was, you know, he'd travel everywhere, because his dad
6 had these passes.

7 OB: I even got, I even got ah ah Pullman
8 accommodations, deals like that. I don't know if Dad
9 had to pay extra for those, ah, how it worked but, but
10 he would send me passes. My dad retired from the
11 railroad. My - they moved out here then after I tried
12 to get away from all that (laughs). And they lived
13 out here when he died. They ah, they were here for
14 quite a long time, so they knew, there was no question
15 in their mind, you know, of our relationship, my
16 lover's relationship and mine. But it was never, it
17 was never brought to conversation.

18 EE: Well, didn't San Francisco itself have a kind of
19 aura of, of strange or exotic, I mean especially and
20 if you come from Missouri, I would wonder -

21 OB: For Me?

22 EE: For you and for them.

23 OB: For them? The strangest thing that ever
24 happened with them was when we went to a restaurant
25 and black people sat down next to us, and my dad

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1 then. I just never grew up with this, this black and
2 white thing. I do have a problem, but that wasn't it.
3 My problem was, was black ah, men and white women, as
4 a couple. That bothered me. But black and white guys
5 doesn't bother me. And I've I've been with black men
6 and that doesn't bother me.

7 EE: Yeah, I mean black men, it's one of those
8 things, almost have a larger stereotype (inaudible)
9 to inspire fear and kind of kept going, even to this
10 day (inaudible) Huntsville, Alabama, got burned out
11 because of that -

12 OB: But my folks never got - 'course they were never
13 - they were exposed to - all my friends were gay and
14 whenever I had, had my friends over, I had my parents
15 over. And they were exposed to Jim and Jack and Bob
16 and all these other people that ran in and out of my
17 life and Dick's life. And ah, they got along famously
18 with them' they didn't have a problem. They, once in
19 a while would (inaudible) some of the women I had
20 around because they were pretty - they were
21 (inaudible) but, but but ah for the most part, no,
22 they didn't have a problem with adjustment, and I
23 didn't at all.

24 EE: Well, I think that also that, I mean, just as
25 you're getting out of the Navy and moving to Berkeley

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1 to go to school, during the civil rights, is coming
 2 up, isn't it?
 3 OB: Yeah, the first freedom march we went on was not
 4 the gay march, it was the black freedom march.
 5 EE: You were involved in that?
 6 OB: Yeah, Dick and I marched in that in San
 7 Francisco. The one, the big big big one, we marched
 8 in. And the first freedom march I, I - it was very
 9 interesting, I remember Dick was not with me; I don't
 10 know why, but ah, first gay parade I was in, I wore a
 11 big floppy picture hat, a felt picture hat, with big
 12 grand plume out of it, and dark glasses, and I was
 13 stridently joining the parade and I would slip out and
 14 I run around to a street parallel and then I'd get
 15 back in the parade and go for a couple blocks, and
 16 then I'd run out. I don't know what I was thinking
 17 about, but I wanted to be in it, but I didn't want to
 18 be seen; that was it. I guess that was it. And I
 19 don't know why Dick wasn't there. And it's just, I
 20 can't remember, I've tried and tried and scratched my
 21 head to remember what that was all about and I
 22 couldn't remember that.
 23 EE: Hmm, that's horrible. I mean, the other march
 24 you were talking about, the great great big freedom
 25 march; I don't know anything about that; that was -

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1 you're going into business now, you're pretty much
 2 (inaudible) with yourself but (inaudible) kept up with
 3 your friends in the Navy. They moved to San Francisco
 4 also.
 5 OB: Ah, alright, some did. And I did not keep up
 6 with those that, I didn't, I didn't continue a
 7 correspondence with people I hadn't ah, that didn't
 8 happen to come out to go to school in Berkeley. And,
 9 except with Jim. Jim didn't come out here to go to
 10 school in Berkeley. He went back to Chicago where he
 11 lived; and I did keep up with him in that whenever I
 12 went back to Missouri to visit my folks, I would get
 13 a pass and go up to Chicago and spend a day or two
 14 with Jim. And then, one year he came out here for
 15 vacation and stayed with me and decided he wanted to
 16 be out here too, and ah, then he packed up, said I
 17 would come back to my house, and he spent the first
 18 month or two 'til he got, got set up at my, at my
 19 apartment. And ah, then he got a job and then he got
 20 his own apartment ah, went on from there. And then we
 21 ah, essentially, we knew each other, but we were not
 22 in the same circles for a long long time, while he was
 23 going to school and doing this and that to get into
 24 his teaching profession, until suddenly he bought the
 25 house across the street from us, not knowing that we

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1 OB: That was, it was ah, it was when everybody
 2 across the country marched with black people.
 3 EE: This was 1954?
 4 OB: Yes it was, '54 it was very early.. No it was
 5 later than that, had to be later than that. Ah, it
 6 was in the '60s, had to be early '60s.
 7 EE: I suppose '63 was, I think, the March on
 8 Washington, Martin Luther King March on Washington.
 9 OB: Yeah, might have been '62 or 3.
 10 EE: And did you, did you at this time or earlier -
 11 OB: Relate gay to black?
 12 EE: Yeah.
 13 OB: Not really, not really. Ah a lot of the, the
 14 so-called politicians, the, the gay politicians were
 15 trying to do this, trying to make a connection. But
 16 most of us in the rank and file didn't really feel the
 17 connection. We felt that black people were more
 18 oppressed 'cause they were so easily ah, visible. And
 19 so ah, we didn't make the connection, ah even though
 20 they tried to portray that. And I, I suspect black
 21 people finally decided that it wasn't working either,
 22 you know, that we weren't, that that was not a selling
 23 point for them either.
 24 EE: Yeah. Well, to get back to ah, you were in the
 25 Navy and (inaudible). You changed your whole life,

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1 lived across the street. He bought it from another
 2 school teacher friend of his and ah, and suddenly
 3 we're pushed back together again as, as neighbors, but
 4 ah, aside from Dick, he's the long, and Jack and Bob,
 5 he's the longest, and he still is the longest person
 6 that I've know in my life as a friend. Jack would
 7 have been second; I met Jim first, Jack second. And
 8 Jack introduced us, Dick and I.
 9 EE: And Jack was your (inaudible).
 10 OB: Navy, yeah, all, all four of us were stationed
 11 in the same place.
 12 EE: So when you got to Berkeley, this was the first
 13 time you lived outside of your hometown as a civilian
 14 then?
 15 OB: Yeah, I went - originally I, I had signed up for
 16 Oxford Hall. Oxford Hall is a cooperative hall where
 17 you work for five hours a week or something and, and
 18 pay a small amount, ah, for room and board. And it
 19 was too much like the Navy. And the kids, they were,
 20 the young, a lot of younger people out of high school,
 21 and they were running in the halls and nothing was -
 22 it was not good conducive study for me, and I was
 23 trying to get through school. I was already four
 24 years late I figured, going through the Navy, four
 25 years, so I was trying to get through school, and I

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1 was taking extra credits every semester, to get it all
2 done in the shortest period of time. And ah, my
3 roommate at Oxford Hall was a straight man who was an
4 accounting major and I found in the paper a, an
5 advertisement for a job for two students for a part-
6 time night work, and what it turned out to be was a
7 funeral parlor where there had to be two students,
8 'cause one of us had to answer the phone every night.
9 So one of us had to be there every night, so my
10 roommate and I moved out of Oxford Hall and moved into
11 the funeral parlor and did that that job (inaudible)
12 So ah, I had a couple years with a straight man; now
13 he knew I was gay; I told him I was gay. And ah, ah,
14 we had sex a couple of times, as a matter of fact, but
15 again, I was the aggressor in that.
16 EE: Oh. When, when you were living in Oxford Hall,
17 were you going to San Francisco and being wild in the
18 streets or what was your -
19 OB: Yeah, on weekends, on weekends, yeah, I'd take
20 the. That, in those days I'd take the F Train; that's
21 when they had the train running on the lower deck of
22 the bridge. They had electric trains.
23 EE: Oh yeah, just sort of, I mean, I know I took the
24 J car over here but I never heard of an F car so -
25 OB: No, an F Train.

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1 perhaps why I didn't do a lot of barring, bar stuff
2 when I was first over in San Francisco. I stayed away
3 from the bars because the police raided the bars
4 periodically quite often. And if ah you happened to
5 be wearing perfume or if you happened to be the nelly
6 type, you would be hauled away to jail and your name
7 and occupation would appear in the newspaper the next
8 day. And so, I stayed pretty much away from gay bars.
9 EE: Was there any danger of being beaten up or -
10 OB: Yeah, if you, if you made any kind of remark or
11 lifted your eyebrow in the wrong way (laughs). So -
12 by the police.
13 EE: Okay, I'm thinking (inaudible) of sailors
14 outside the bars - this is more lesbian bars but I
15 don't know if it's true of gay bars too.
16 OB: No, as a matter of fact ah, I was, I was pretty
17 much a trade queen and I was picking up sailors and,
18 I'd been, I got hit on the head once, ah, in what, two
19 or three years I was doing this. I got hit on the
20 head once. Other than that, ah, a couple of Marines
21 turned me in because they were afraid, each of the
22 other, would turn themselves in if they didn't. And
23 so I got into some trouble there and spent the night
24 in jail. But ah, ah other than that - there was
25 less worry about gay bashing in those days than we

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1 EE: F Train.
2 OB: It went from Berkeley to San Francisco, the Key
3 System Terminal; it was the Key System; it was an
4 electric train. The A Train went to Oakland; the F
5 Train went to Berkeley. And there was no lower deck
6 of the bridge; that was all ah, train tracks.
7 EE: Well, where did you go in San Francisco?
8 OB: Allright ah, there were only six bars at that
9 time. The most famous one would be the Black Cat,
10 and then there was the Beige Room which had a drag
11 show. Finnochio's wasn't gay; it was a tourist place;
12 it had a drag show. Ah, there was Kino's, the Silver
13 Rail, there was one other one; it's now, it's now a
14 restaurant called The Boulevard, it's a very trendy
15 restaurant (other people enter the room). Turn it off
16 and -
17 OB: Down on the Embarcadero, Embarcadero and
18 Mission.
19 EE: See you know (inaudible) I've heard of the Black
20 Cat, but not of the other ones.
21 OB: Well, remember in those days bars came, went in
22 and out of business in a hurry, like six months was a
23 long time for a bar except for the Black Cat. And so
24 ah, ah; and also in those days, you took your life
25 into your hands when you went into a bar. And that's

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1 have today. There's a lot more worry about getting
2 ah, bashed by Chicano hoods today than, than we had.
3 EE: Do you think that's because more people know
4 about gay people now, or is there -
5 OB: I don't know. I've never given it much
6 consideration other than the fact that, that now it
7 seems to me that there should be less of hate crime,
8 and all that sort of thing.
9 EE: Yeah. Well, as you mentioned earlier and also
10 just now about being a trade queen, what do you, what
11 does that mean?
12 OB: Ah, that means I prefer to pick up straight
13 men. Or as straight as they they came, I picked up
14 whoever I could pick up. But hopefully it would be
15 straight. Ah, I think it, I think it was because
16 there would be no ah, emotional commitment.
17 EE: Yes - - so were you constantly avoiding it for
18 the emotional side of it?
19 OB: I - perhaps, perhaps I was. I'm not, I can't
20 get into, I don't know that. You know, I haven't done
21 that kind of analysis on myself, so I don't really
22 know. Probably that you're right and, good guess
23 anyway, -
24 EE: But also, I mean, what did, what did gay men,
25 well -

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1 OB: Ah, I have quite a few friends - we had parties,
2 though I didn't have sex with them.
3 EE: Were they sexually attractive to you?
4 OB: Occasionally, and , and if they were I would,
5 you know, if I could. But I didn't get emotionally
6 involved until I'm (inaudible) and then we start a
7 whole new life story in my life.
8 EE: Yeah, it seems ah quite a change. But ah, so
9 how do you go about (inaudible) how that would work?
10 OB: Well, remember I had only been out of the Navy,
11 what, four years, three years, actually three years
12 and (inaudible) talk their language and it was not
13 difficult to, to
14 1S2:400-499
15 start up a conversation with a sailor - in those days
16 all the, all the service wore uniforms; they didn't
17 wear civilian clothes when they were in town and so
18 you could spot them, you know, in their uniform, so I
19 could start a conversation, and ah, I lived, at 249
20 Eddy, right in the Tenderloin, but in those days it
21 was the safest place in town. Never worried about
22 going home at 4 o'clock in the morning ah, walking up
23 Eddy Street, just a block and a half off of Powell.
24 That just was was, perfectly safe, beautifully safe,
25 and I wouldn't go up there in the daytime now alone.

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1 time, if they knew that that was the situation.
2 OB: Well, usually, usually they had an idea that
3 once you got 'em upstairs that something was going to
4 happen.
5 EE: Well, that's interesting; I never, I never -
6 OB: You never met a trade queen in your coverage,
7 your
8 EE: Well, I guess I have; I guess the terms are
9 different now. (Inaudible) I guess I got too caught
10 up in the difference between straight and gay and
11 that, you know.
12 OB: Well, we also, we also had the, we also had the
13 saying that Today's trade is next week's competition,
14 so, so I don't know. You know, you think they're
15 straight today, but they may not be; they may be just
16 what I was back in Cape Girardeau, on the edge and
17 perhaps coming out later.
18 EE: Well, anyway, this is getting us a little bit
19 past Berkeley. Ah, while you were going to school,
20 you didn't have any place to go until you moved into
21 the funeral parlor. Did you just come to The City
22 and, and have sex in little places here, or did you go
23 home with people, or did you not do anything..
24 OB: Ah, ah, when I was in Berkeley, ah, when I got
25 out generally on weekends, I would come to The City

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1 But, but they used to kid me that I could be watching
2 television, get back, go downstairs, pick up a trick,
3 get back to my room , and see the end of a show, and
4 only miss a commercial. And that was about it,
5 because most of the sailors or soldiers or marines
6 would stop in the little arcades there on Market
7 Street they're just a pal - and, and you could, you
8 could stop one of 'em and start chatting and Oh, I
9 got some beer; come on up. And then from then you
10 decided whether or not this one's going to work out.
11 If it wasn't, then you'd say Oh I've got some place I
12 got to go; I'll see you out, and take them to the
13 street.
14 EE: What determined if they were going to work or
15 not? I mean, just -
16 OB: Well, they're not if they cross their legs
17 (laughs). When they got down to the apartment, if
18 they crossed their legs, generally they weren't going
19 to let you do it. If they spread their legs, they
20 would.
21 EE: So they, they knew what was going on?
22 OB: Well, they could guess pretty quickly.
23 EE: I suppose you can't really - well I don't know;
24 I mean I don't know what the social mores (inaudible)
25 you know. Often got picked up (inaudible) at that

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1 and go home with somebody.
2 EE: And that was different than -
3 OB: Than when I moved to The City, and then I had my
4 own place. Then I was strictly working the street.
5 EE: Okay so, I mean that, yeah, I can see that
6 because you know what's going on. You made a choice
7 to - Okay. So, life in a funeral parlor, that always
8 kind of unusual; was that a strange thing for you?
9 OB: Well, it was in the beginning unless you knew,
10 get involved in it. What we got out of this, we got a
11 room, bedroom, we had a kitchen and bathroom, and a
12 daily paper. And ah, all we had to do is answer the
13 phone at night. We didn't do anything except answer
14 the phone, and then they had a case, we would answer
15 the door. We dressed in a suit and answered the door,
16 because in Berkeley they kept the door locked; you
17 rang the bell. When you came to see a dead person
18 laid out, you rang the bell, and we'd come out of the
19 office and answer the door. If there were a lot of
20 people coming, you just stood at the door greeting
21 them as they came in . And that was all we had to do;
22 we didn't have to do any of the other work. But our
23 apartment was behind the selection room. The
24 selection room is the room that has all the empty
25 caskets that people choose which one Uncle Joe will be

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1 buried in. And so ah, you went through this room with
2 all the empty caskets, and went through a curtain
3 door, and that was our apartment back there. And I
4 had some straight friends (inaudible) or not straight
5 friends; Navy friends, he was gay, come in to visit
6 one time. And my roommate who was straight, answered
7 the door, and the Navy friend was being very nelly
8 about,
9 1S2:500-599
10 about being in a funeral parlor and what not. Well,
11 all, my straight friend decided he didn't really
12 (inaudible) - he wasn't going to turn the lights on as
13 they went through the selection room to get back to
14 our apartment. So here this guy out of the sun and
15 into this dark room with all of these open caskets
16 feeling his way back to our apartment (laughs). My
17 straight roommate was going (knock knock) Is that you
18 coffin? (knock knock). And ah - No, that worked out
19 very nicely. We had a good relationship; we stayed in
20 touch, this straight guy roommate, and I by one call a
21 year. He married, he didn't have any kids. He since
22 has died; he died of some, some problem he had, but,
23 but we were - We were very comfortable, him knowing I
24 was gay, I knowing he was straight, and we didn't have
25 a conflict with that - he liked to get his dick sucked

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1 really tell; I was not really into it.
2 EE: Well, the years you were at Berkeley. '54 to
3 '58.
4 OB: Not '58, I moved here in '56. I don't think I
5 even put that down here. Ah, I moved to San Francisco
6 in '56. Berkeley, February '55 through September '56.
7
8 EE: Oh, just a short time there, okay.
9 OB: I did the best I could to get out of there; all
10 I needed was to finish up, get a degree and that, that
11 satisfied my family.
12 EE: Well, I was just thinking that ah, with this
13 sort of thing, you know, free speech had something to
14 do with McCarthyism, but McCarthy was already, kind of
15 like, gone by then - Julius and Ethel Rosenberg -
16 OB: Anyway, I moved, yeah, I moved to San Francisco
17 in '56; I met Dick in '58.
18 EE: Okay, so, during this time, ah, well I guess, I
19 didn't realize, I didn't realize (inaudible) more like
20 shorter version, four years, 'cause you'd already
21 had - Ah, I'm just trying to, you know, the idea of
22 of, the whole larger issue, large political issues
23 influenced you and how it hurt your being gay,
24 influenced how you saw things.
25 OB: Oh, nothing, zilch, zero. Ah, in those days,

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1 once in a while so.
2 EE: Some men do. So, ah, at Berkeley during this
3 time, ah (inaudible) was Berkeley like really
4 political then? I mean, was there protests or ah -
5 OB: Yes, ah, free speech, free speech. Time. That
6 was actually a little after my, my time. I guess, I
7 guess when I was actually in school was the lethargic
8 time; there was not much going on politically. But it
9 was the beginning of the free speech and ah, what was
10 his name. This is what Dick was referring to - I draw
11 a blank when I think of names but there - Mario Savio,
12 Mario Savio and the singer Joan Baez. She was there,
13 she was on campus, she was doing singing, singing some
14 songs. Ah, Mario Savio was the leader of the Free
15 Speech Movement. And this is before the big battle
16 over - I was out of school then - they had the big
17 battle and they called the troops in. They called out
18 the National Guard; they had riots over there. They
19 called out the National Guard and the whole bit; they
20 had 'em lined up over there at Berkeley.
21 EE: This is later on in the '60s.
22 OB: Yeah, that was later in the '60s. That was,
23 that was Vietnam, yeah, that was Vietnam. But Mario
24 Savio was before that; he was, he was in the Free
25 Speech Movement. And what that was all about I can't

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1 you only told very close people that you were gay and
2 only then if they were also gay. And, and generally
3 you could tell; you knew who was gay and who wasn't,
4 more so then than today. Today a lot of people act
5 gay and they're not gay at all.
6 EE: Well, I know, I mean, coming from the Midwest I
7 know that. It's like it's very hard to tell, you
8 know, who's who's where here. It's very different,
9 very different.
10 OB: But ah, in those days, everybody was straight
11 unless they told you they were gay.
12 EE: Yeah, well - I'm trying to think of - well, I
13 can't unless I get 'em. Let's see, you got your
14 degree and, and then you left Berkeley and you came
15 over to San Francisco?
16 OB: Yeah, I ah, I got a job with an insurance
17 company and ah, so I moved to San Francisco. Then I
18 had two years doing the Market Street scene and
19 working my job. And then this, when I was introduced
20 to Dick.
21 EE: I just had a - what I was going to think of
22 before - during this time, I mean, along with like
23 civil rights coming up (inaudible), were you aware
24 that that you were being discriminated against or shit
25 on because you were gay? Did you realize that that

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1 was wrong or that there was something that could be
2 done about that, or was it just the way things were?
3 OB: No, we accepted it; that's the way things were.
4 And ah, it wasn't until another few years that until
5 we became involved with, with SIR that we began to
6 realize that maybe we had some rights as well.
7 EE: Okay. Tell me about meeting Dick
8 OB: I'm sorry? Oh, meeting Dick. Okay, ah, it was
9 a July the 4th weekend in '58. Ah, he and Jack and
10 Bob - Jack is the guy that was at Pearl Harbor with
11 Jim and I - he and Jack and Bob - and Jack and Bob had
12 met in Berkeley and partnered a year or two before we
13 were introduced - had gone to ahhhh, the beach over in
14 Marin.
15 EE: Black Sands, Black Sands?
16 OB: No, no, the one everybody goes to over in Marin
17 County; it's ah - they camped, they camped out over
18 there.
19 EE: I've been to that beach but I can't think of the
20 name of it.
21 OB: Yeah, yeah, ahhh, Stinson! Stinson Beach. And
22 ah, so, Dick had some kind of meeting on Saturday
23 afternoon here in San Francisco, and they all three
24 wanted to shower, so they, see instead of going to
25 Berkeley, they came to San Francisco to my apartment.

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1 discrimination against gays. Even in San Francisco,
2 we had a hard time finding a place that would rent to
3 two men. I could've rented, or he could've rented,
4 but they didn't want to rent to two men.
5 EE: Was that because of the (inaudible) or was there
6 some other reason?
7 OB: I think it was because of ah they thought we
8 were gay and they didn't want two men. So we finally
9 got hold of a Realtor who was gay, and he got us a
10 place, with gay people. And we said alright if we
11 ever get into business, we're going to just rent to
12 gays. Fuck them.
13 EE: Ah, when you said you just had to throw in your
14 lot, you know, with Dick, what does that mean,
15 especially -
16 OB: We didn't, we didn't think of it as a long term
17 arrangement, necessarily. We didn't think of it as a
18 quote unquote Marriage. We thought of it, ah, as
19 as just living together for convenience purposes
20 because we were, currently we were spending one
21 weekend in Berkeley, one weekend here, and we were
22 spending money in both places for housing. We could
23 live in one place half as cheap and, and ah, we had an
24 ah, ah emotional attachment certainly, but we didn't
25 think of it as a marriage sort of thing. Did you want

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1 They called me up and said we're coming over to take
2 showers. So they did that - they came over and
3 showered at my apartment. And ah, ah, introduced me
4 to Dick. He went to his meeting, and while he was at
5 his meeting, ah, Jack and Bob says why don't you come
6 with us, spend the rest of the 4th of July weekend,
7 we're camping out and such and such. So I dug around
8 and found my sleeping bag and what not, and went off
9 to the beach with them. Of course, I said, well, new
10 blood here. So I proceeded to put the make on Dick,
11 but he wasn't making that day, and so ah, that whetted
12 my appetite I guess. So then the next weekend, I put
13 a bottle of scotch under my arm, and I got on the F
14 Train and I went to Berkeley where he lived. Well,
15 I'd called and talked to him a couple times during the
16 week. And so we started courting back and forth, a
17 weekend in Berkeley, a weekend in San Francisco. And
18 ah, then a month later, in August, August 4th
19 actually, we ah ah decided to throw in our lots
20 together. And he said, okay, but you're going to have
21 to move because too many sailors come by that
22 apartment. And so he moved over with me to that
23 apartment, and
24 then we moved out to a new apartment. And that's
25 probably the first time I felt the tough part of, of

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1 to smoke?
2 EE: No, no, that's fine.
3 OB: I noticed you were, had cigarettes.
4 EE: Oh, I do, but I don't like to smoke inside.
5 OB: Well okay. You're welcome if you decide that
6 you want to - drag an ashtray over there.
7 EE: Rare and generous thing nowadays, you know. But
8 I'm, I'm just wondering, that's kind of what I'm most
9 curious about is I - how did you characterize that, I
10 mean it's like, I mean, how did you, how did you -
11 OB: Okay, we characterized it is we were both
12 interested in a long-term relationship, and that we
13 felt that as long as the relationship was growing and
14 productive for both of us, that we would like to stay
15 together. And that if at any point we didn't feel
16 this way, we should ah ah, split! And it was not,
17 neither one of us felt, you know like we were getting
18 married sort of thing. Later on, some years, quite,
19 quite a few years later on, we did have a recommitment
20 ceremony on a cruise that we went on, but an MCC
21 minister, but it was a group thing; it was not an
22 individual thing. But it was something that we
23 enjoyed doing. And our relationship today is one more
24 of, of ah, an emotional loving relationship than,
25 that, you might - we still don't call it a marriage.

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1 We don't try to emulate heterosexual marriages as
2 such. But certainly we are, we've outlasted most
3 everybody else we know that have had heterosexual
4 marriages.
5 EE: Yeah. That ah, that is interesting (pause -
6 inaudible) myself here now. One thing I wanted to ask
7 about, prior to this, was about. Did you know other
8 gay men who were in couples, and and -
9 OB: Well Jack and Bob were a couple as long as we've
10 known. Ah, and Jim has been but that happened after
11 Dick and I. Ah, he's been coupled two or three times,
12 three times. Ah, so we've known others. Now, we've
13 just - trying this - matter of fact San Francisco
14 Couples; we haven't become very active with them, but
15 we thought we would try and see what - if we could
16 expand our social circle a little bit. Ah, but ah,
17 ah, as far as ah couples, most of the people in this
18 neighborhood that we know are couples. The fellows
19 next door have lived there ten or fifteen years, are
20 couples or a couple, and, two doors down from them,
21 another group a couple, and ah. We haven't lived in
22 like Castro. Dick would like to live in the Castro;
23 I, I wouldn't care for it, ah. I look at the Castro
24 as a ghetto rather than a neighbor - well, the
25 neighborhood that I want to be in is one where there

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1 too well. And we didn't try that again for a while.
2 And then we decided that, or at least I thought we had
3 decided that it was going to be monogamous, and I
4 later found out that maybe Dick didn't feel that way
5 or think that way and then ah, then we almost had a
6 split. And then we decided yes, it should be
7 monogamous because by this time AIDS had reared its
8 ugly head and we didn't want to be involved in, in
9 that in our relationship. And so, it's been
10 monogamous for the last number of years. But ah, it's
11 been on and off.
12 EE: Was that was that ah (inaudible) early on when
13 it first came up, was that, was that something like,
14 you know, look at and then decide?
15 OB: No, no, as a matter of fact, that probably
16 should have been talked about more than it was because
17 we sort of felt our way along on that - would this be
18 alright to do or not. And ah, and it, I don't know,
19 we didn't talk about it a lot; we just did it.
20 EE: You know, that's that's what I'm trying to find
21 out, so the very big question is like How do you, how
22 do you decide what what, you know, when it comes down
23 to, you don't want to place limits on it but when it
24 comes down to what what you actually do, what are,
25 what is going on here? Where do you look for for

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1 are couples, there are singles, and and it's not -
2 EE: It's not like State Fair all the time; I know
3 what you mean.
4 OB: They are - come over here and sit down.
5 EE: (inaudible) Looking for affection there. Also
6 did you know of any (inaudible) like real life
7 historical figures or or ah, any other kind of
8 guideline that you'd have for (inaudible) I mean I
9 think of, like Edward Carpenter - his lover is - do
10 you know any of these people or do they have any
11 bearing on -
12 OB: No, it had no bearing on what we were doing.
13 And we were, we enjoyed each other; we just wanted to
14 live together and as long as as it was a productive
15 relationship, we were going to do it that way. And we
16 didn't have any any goals to to make it last five
17 years or ten years or anything like that. We just
18 thought it would nice to have a long term
19 relationship, but we didn't set any limits on what was
20 long term.
21 EE: Was it, was it ah, monogamous?
22 OB: Off and on. Well ah, we started out pretty much
23 monogamous, and then we decided that we would ah ah,
24 well we brought home a third party from a , from a
25 Tavern Guild picnic once. And that didn't work out

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1 answers for that? Is this what you decided?
2 OB: Yeah, yeah. We don't, we've always felt like we
3 should make up our own (inaudible); we don't have to
4 do what everybody else is doing. Ah, where our
5 problem, if there were a problem, it would be because
6 we didn't understand what (inaudible) left for us.
7 And come to a meeting of the minds that way. What
8 other people did or didn't do was not a, was not a
9 guide for us.
10 EE: Well, was it , was it hard to learn how to talk
11 to each other?
12 OB: We're still working at that. Yeah, yeah.
13 That's a hard situation. And we still have power
14 battles. But ah. And I don't think that goes away; I
15 think that stays forever, because that's the epitome
16 or the essence of male being. And you have two males
17 together, and you're going to have a power battle
18 right along. Certain things fell into place, when.
19 Like we started out, it was more like a roommate
20 situation I suppose. Because we kept track of, like
21 here's the rent, you pay your half, you pay your half.
22 Here's ah PG&E, you pay your half, you pay your half.
23 We kept all these careful records. And one day we
24 decided this was bullshit; all this work is not
25 productive for us and I was doing mostly the house

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1 stuff and he was doing the car stuff, and so we worked
2 it out that way. I paid everything for the house; he
3 paid everything for the car and we forgot the - Now
4 we have arrived at a point where it's all in one pot.
5 It's not really. We each have our own, our own
6 checking account, our own savings account, but all the
7 big money is in one pot and we just figure we're
8 taking out of the pot.
9 EE: I was going to just say that you've blended your
10 finances and have taken a big step which shows some
11 kind of commitment that you're going to stick around
12 for a while anyways.
13 OB: Yeah, well, ah, that doesn't happen right away.
14 That takes a lot of years before you get to that
15 point. But where that started really happening is
16 when we started buying property. We bought a six-unit
17 building, and then we bought a second six-unit
18 building. The reason we did this - we bought the
19 first one because we wanted, we wanted to start
20 working on something, something we didn't have to work
21 all our lives, that's retirement. And then I changed
22 jobs and I got some money from my old - he changed
23 jobs because Shell - he worked for Shell ah
24 Development - moved back to Houston, and so he changed
25 and went to Hewlett-Packard. And he got money from

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1 OB: Your trust won't do that. Trusts will not evade
2 taxes; your inheritance tax will be there. It will
3 help, on the first one it will help. But the second
4 one gets caught. Whoever gets the stuff after the
5 second one.
6 EE: Well, I don't think we care that much about
7 that.
8 OB: Then a trust would help then. The ah, but
9 really what it does, a trust escapes probate. So,
10 outsiders or close relatives can't come in and try to
11 claim -
12 EE: What's not theirs.
13 OB: Yeah, what you didn't want them to have in the
14 first place. So, I guess Raymond Burr is the big
15 thing. For some reason, he's got all these high
16 powered attorneys; he didn't set up a trust. and his
17 lover of 30 something years now, is being aced out by
18 a favorite niece who says you're not a Burr, you'll
19 never be a Burr, but I'm a Burr, I'm the favorite
20 niece and I should get the whole thing. And so she's
21 contesting the will. They're going to probably have
22 to pay her off and she'll get a big chunk. She
23 shouldn't have -
24 EE: Anyway, to get back to the early days in the
25 relationship. You said that you you met (inaudible)..

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1 Shell - we we had this money, we bought a second six
2 units. Then we sold those two and we bought 15 units
3 and ah. When you do this sort of thing, pretty soon
4 you find out that that all the big stuff is in both
5 your names. So ah ah, then from there you decide
6 well, since that's in our names, all our big savings,
7 the stock market stuff, the annuities, this that and
8 the other thing, should be in both our names. Then we
9 got involved with a lawyer and set up a trust is what
10 we did. To get away from wills, because we had the
11 legal problems with parents, with families. Ah, I
12 want, when I die, everything to go to him, but I might
13 have a cousin or two, or maybe my sister might come up
14 and say, oh but I, I'm next of kin. And so we've set
15 up trusts to, to carry on, so even if you're gone, he
16 steps in as trustee and so forth and so on. And
17 there's no will to contest then; there's nothing to
18 contest.
19 EE: I know my friends ah, they've been together
20 since the '50s also and they're trying to, since the
21 late '70s now, they're trying to decide how to handle
22 an inheritance tax (inaudible) have to pay all those
23 inheritance tax. Now they're trying to figure out a
24 way around that, you know. They have been very
25 successful.

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1 What was your, the early years like, I mean, did you
2 have to join SIR or -
3 OB: No, we, the first maybe (inaudible) ah we got
4 together in '58, and so we didn't get into about '65,
5 so we had, we had about seven years of ah really just
6 the two of us doing our thing. And ah, it was a great
7 time. We really were very, that was a long, that was
8 quite a nice nice thing. But then indeed along about
9 '58, we had decided that our our social life was not
10 going anywhere. All we knew was Jim, Jack and Bob -
11 you know, one or two. And so we should try to expand
12 our social life and we joined SIR for that purpose -
13 to meet other people. Now we're at this point again,
14 interestingly enough, we just joined the San Francisco
15 Couples, just to meet other people, to try to expand
16 our circle of friends. Maybe we should join GLOE, I
17 don't know, because we're getting that age. But we
18 thought, we don't think that way. We think let's
19 let's get involved with younger people and and so
20 we're going the same thing again. But again, he
21 joined for social and not for political reasons. It
22 happened we got involved in the politics end of it,
23 but that was, that was late.
24 EE: Well, how did you hear about this SIR?
25 OB: Jack and Bob told us about it. And suggested

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1 that we might be interested. And, as a matter of fact
2 after we joined, they dropped out because they thought
3 it was too social, and not enough political. But, but
4 we stayed in, we stayed involved, because we did want
5 the social part of it and we did want to meet a lot of
6 people at the time. And that's that's how we got
7 involved in that.

8 EE: To back up just a bit, I mean, ah, before this
9 time you say that you just, you know, Jim and Jack and
10 Bob and a few other people, were you, were you
11 accepted readily as a couple. Was there any problem
12 among other gay people with that? Did people say,
13 well you should, you know, be single or what are you
14 doing?

15 OB: No, that was perfectly acceptable. Yeah. And,
16 as a matter of fact, a number of our straight friends
17 began to recognize us as a couple, although we didn't
18 come out as such. But if, if I were invited by one of
19 my, my straight friends to a dinner or something, they
20 always invited Dick. And when we reciprocated, I
21 invited so and so and his wife and Dick would have to
22 be there, you know. So, so ah, so we didn't ah, come
23 out until Dick did right before he retired, maybe a
24 year or two before he retired, he came out at work, to
25 the people he worked with. But I never did formally

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1 doesn't have the money, the capacity, the experience
2 to do it, the sure company, the bonding company will
3 come in and pay to get it done by somebody else. So
4 that was my job. And ah, and that's a very very
5 rigid, again very rigid conservative type ah situation
6 that I was in. In fact, for a number of years, you
7 couldn't wear a colored shirt; you had to wear a white
8 shirt. I didn't get my ear pierced until I retired.
9 And then I said I won't go back because I'll get my
10 ear pierced and they won't let me back and that's when
11 I got my ear pierced. But during this time while I
12 was moving up the ladder and my company's ah - I was
13 also doing drag in my - or drag, not in entertainment,
14 but drag on Halloween functions, 'cause these were in
15 the days when all the people would rent buses and get
16 on the bus in drag and you'd go from bar to bar to bar
17 on Halloween night. And I don't know if you, I doubt
18 you just know about those things.

19 EE: A little bit about the importance of Halloween.

20 That was the night that, that the police let us for a
21 while and people could like go out in buses to drag -

22 OB: This was before Castro, before they had the
23 Castro district. This was back in the days when there
24 were these bars around town - gay bars.

25 EE: North Beach and Polk Street.

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1 come out to anybody. I, if they asked me I told
2 them; if they didn't ask me, I let them decide what
3 they wanted to decide and I really didn't care what
4 they thought (laughs).

5 EE: Well I guess that's something (inaudible) I mean
6 after you got out of college, what were you doing
7 career wise?

8 OB: I went into the insurance business and ah, I,
9 I, I joined a, a training program where I was supposed
10 to go to each department ah for six or eight months
11 and ah, ah learn the overall thing and go into
12 management. But I had, I had studied personnel in
13 Berkeley, and my idea was to go to each department and
14 learn the personnel requirements, then leave that
15 company and go to another insurance company and go
16 into the personnel department knowing all this
17 knowledge, information that I had gained from this
18 this training program of this other company. The
19 first department they put me into was the surety/bond
20 department; that's ah a department that guarantees
21 contractors will build these things, and it's not
22 insurance at all. It could be connected to banking,
23 but banking didn't want it at the time, or something.
24 It's a credit part of it and you just, you make the
25 guarantee that if the contractor doesn't do it, he

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1 OB: Well, Polk Street was certainly part of it.
2 There were three bars on Polk Street and then then in
3 North Beach there was ah, the Paper Doll and the
4 Copper Lantern and maybe one other one. And ah, but
5 you would hire a bus and you'd all get on the bus
6 from, from one place, from a bar, say. If we hung out
7 at the Opera Club, so you'd go down there in costume,
8 get on this bus, and then they'd make the rounds of
9 all these bars. They'd usher you in and give you
10 drink and you'd get on stage and show off your
11 costume, get back on your bus and go to the next bar.
12 And so I did that for three years, as a matter of
13 fact, '70, '71 and '72. And that was, that was right
14 before Harvey Milk's time. Harvey Milk actually
15 started, I guess his first run was about '73. And it
16 was also a time when cops were, were getting pretty
17 upset with the gays moving into the Castro. And the
18 gays were moving into the Castro in droves. And ah
19 ah, the cops, mainly Irish, the Castro was Irish, an
20 Irish neighborhood.

21 Ah, the cops came down on the Castro pretty heavily.
22 And we weren't going to bars there. We were going to
23 bars, we were going to ah - Bill Plath had a bar
24 called the, the ah Opera Club, which was over on
25 Octavia where there, it's now been replaced by some

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1 kind of ah ah housing unit over there, lower income
2 housing units. But we hung out there because we had
3 met him through SIR. He was involved in SIR and ah,
4 then he closed that when they started building the -
5 tearing down the Western Addition, and he opened up at
6 the Orpheum Circus which was next to the Orpheum
7 Theater downtown, right on Market Street. And we went
8 there; we would go there for dinner, we would stay
9 until they closed. During the time when Hongisto was
10 running for sheriff,

11 EE: What year would that be?

12 OB: He was, I should be able to tell you that, maybe
13 I won't. I should be able to tell you. I know, I
14 know we backed him when we bought Potrero, and we
15 bought Potrero, that's when we sold it. When did we
16 buy it? We bought Potrero in '71 and we had a big
17 sign for Hongisto on that building, so it would have
18 been '71 or '72, ah. He ran; that was the first - I
19 bet it was '73 and the reason I say that is that was
20 the first time ah, that that Diane Feinstein ran for
21 mayor and she ran against, against Alioto and lost.
22 She lost in the last two weeks when she came out
23 against pornography. She would have won it, she would
24 have kept the gay vote, except in two weeks before,
25 she came the big thing about get all these, close down

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1 departments. I had one of only six or eight jobs of
2 that nature, and so it's - it was a - So I was in
3 drag all the time (laughs). Straight drag, I was, I
4 was pretending to be straight all the time.

5 EE: I was going to say, were there any questions at
6 work about where your wife is or ?

7 OB: No no. No, they never knew that I was, that I
8 was doing Halloween drags at Halloween time. Also, we
9 went to private parties at New Years Eve and usually
10 your, during that period of time, 3 or 4 years, I was
11 in drag. After that, I lost my figure, I always say.

12 My chin dropped (laughs). So but ah, there was about
13 three years where I really did some flaming stuff with
14 drag and that sort of thing. But again, this was not
15 ah, something I needed to do; it was like being a drag
16 queen. This was something I enjoyed doing at that
17 time and I wouldn't do it today; it's too much work.

18 But you, know, but I - so it, it has nothing to do
19 with psychological or all that bullshit. It was just
20 a lot of fun to do at that point in my life. And I,
21 and I had a ball doing it. I don't regret it. At any
22 rate, I stayed with the insurance business until I
23 left, until we got to the point where I could retire
24 from insurance.

25 EE: What year was that?

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1 all these ah, movie houses, and ah ah, and all the
2 pornography. And the gays left in droves, and Alioto
3 won. We went to, that night, we went to Hongisto's ah
4 celebration. Went from that to some assemblyman who
5 also won who was, who was for gay rights. And we went
6 to Feinstein who lost, and watch her cry and said I
7 will be back and great tears coming down her eyes.
8 Yeah, that was, that was quite a big night. At any
9 rate, where were we?

10 EE: Well, we were skipping around a little. We were
11 talking about your, your job.

12 OB: Okay, job. I was in a very very conservative
13 situation at there could be no hint, particularly in
14 the stuff I was into. And, ah, a big part of my job
15 was entertaining contractors, so I did a lot of that.
16 What happened, my first stop was the Bond Department
17 and I liked it, I liked that kind of work and I asked
18 to stay on there. They needed a bond man at the time
19 and they wanted me as a trainee 'cause I had what
20 seemed like they wanted. And ah, so I stayed, and I
21 stayed there until I left the insurance business. I
22 stayed in that field; I didn't stay with that company,
23 but I stayed in that field until I left the insurance
24 business. And ultimately I became manager of the bond
25 department. They're only six or eight in town of bond

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1 OB: Ahh, that's been about ten years ago, about '84,
2 about '83 actually.

3 EE: Okay, I'd like to, to, with Dick during this
4 time, I mean, just before you met and during your
5 early years with him. What was he doing?

6 OB: Okay, he was working for Shell Development in
7 the, in Research. Shell closed up; they were in
8 Emeryville, just across the Bridge, they closed up and
9 went to Texas. by that time, we'd bought our first 6-
10 unit building, and he didn't want to go to Texas. And
11 so he quit, and he took the money he got from his
12 retirement or whatever, and that's when we bought our
13 second 6-unit building on Sixteenth Street across from
14 Mission Dolores Church there. And then he went to
15 work for Hewlett-Packard down in Palo Alto.

16 EE: This was what year?

17 OB: Well, we bought Potrero in '71, so ah, I guess
18 he, I guess it was ah ah, it was about '70 or '71.

19 EE: It probably was a good time to go to Hewlett-
20 Packard.

21 OB: I guess so, yeah. And he worked for them until
22 he retired. So ah -

23 EE: When you started up with SIR in 1975, can you
24 tell a little bit about the first meeting that you
25 went to, or what your impression of SIR was, or what -

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1 OB: Yeah, the - I guess the first meeting we went to
2 - they were getting ready for a Candidates' Night and
3 ah, they were inviting politicians and what not, and
4 we actually, we thought that was kind of exciting.
5 What a lot of people at SIR talked about at that time
6 was that SIR was an alternative to the bar scene. In
7 those days, the only social life, gay social life,
8 were the bars. You only either went to the bars,
9 private parties or nothing. So, since a lot of people
10 didn't like to go to bars because they were afraid
11 they'd get caught in a raid, ah, it was nothing - like
12 SIR was the first place to go to socialize. And there
13 were two other organizations, one earlier, the
14 Mattachine Society. This is really twelve people. It
15 was three: Hal Call and two other people; I can't
16 remember their names. But at the most it was twelve
17 people. And then there was the Daughters of Bilitis,
18 Phyllis and Del.
19 EE: Did you know them?
20 OB: Yeah, we knew them, and we've known them for
21 years, never very - not socially. We don't hang out
22 with them or anything like that, but we've known them
23 for years. They've been to everything we go to.
24 EE: That's sort of interesting about the Mattachine
25 Society because they all, I mean, I've taken Gay

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1 EE: So, what, what was like the first meeting you
2 went to? Do you remember, I mean, was it, it was
3 probably at someone's house? Or -
4 OB: Yeah, it was at somebody's house. We went to
5 SIR before the Center opened. They had a SIR Center,
6 if you know about that - okay. Ah, soon after we
7 started going to SIR, we went to people's houses and
8 garages and what have you, and I think even a church
9 once, for meetings. They found an old union hall at
10 6th and Mission, and they rented the hall and painted
11 it up, fixed it up, and it became the SIR Center, the
12 Society for Individual Rights Center. And ah, we used
13 that extensively until it closed, until SIR fell
14 apart.
15 And we had offices there, we had this big meeting
16 hall, we did stage productions with all kinds of plays
17 and and. We did dancing on Saturday night s after
18 after a big thing that Rick Stokes was involved in.
19 Rick Stokes did a, did a ah a suit against the police,
20 ah. No, this is before then and I don't know if Rick
21 was involved with that - it was Evander Smith who was
22 involved in that. There was a Halloween thing that ah
23 CRH had, Christian, Christian, CRH, Christian Religion
24 and the Homosexual, or something like that. And they
25 had a big Halloween dance, and cops arrested -

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1 History classes at the University, and like, you know,
2 that was, historically that was a very powerful
3 organization. It's like well - -
4 OB: No no no no. SIR was the biggest ah,
5 Mattachine. Mattachine was very small.
6 EE: Was there a difference in what they were trying
7 to do? Was Mattachine more political or was it also -
8 OB: I'm not sure because I, I was not involved with
9 Mattachine. I just knew of them, ah. SIR tried to be
10 political, but it tried to be social as well. It
11 tried to provide hiking ah groups, bowling, got the
12 bowling leagues started which is currently still going
13 on today. Gay bowling leagues started from SIR
14 back - the Bowl then was across the street downtown ah
15 ah, on Eddy Street, Downtown Bowl was where the SIR
16 people would bowl then. Ah, I don't even know if
17 Downtown Bowl is still there.. As a matter of fact, I
18 haven't been in the Tenderloin in years. Couples
19 meets at Japantown Bowl is where Couples, San
20 Francisco Couples meets.
21 EE: Well, I found an old issue of the Vector and
22 they talk about up on end of Haight Street too, the
23 bowling alley there.
24 OB: Oh yeah, yeah, that was the second one. That's
25 the one that ran for years after SIR closed.

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1 EE: Was this a pro thing or an anti gay thing?
2 OB: This was a pro thing. And cops arrested two
3 ministers, three attorneys and a straight woman. And
4 they threw a big ah, suit against the police, but that
5 was in '63 I'm sure.
6 EE: I think I remember hearing of that. Okay, yeah,
7 they had the spotlights on the, on the hall and all
8 these people were (both talk at once) got to set what
9 police brutality was actually about.
10 OB: Yeah, yeah, right, and and ah, so there was this
11 huge suit. Well, while this suit was on, SIR decided
12 we're going to hold dances at our SIR Center on
13 Saturday night and we're doing to charge admission.
14 And we were the first dance floor to open same partner
15 dancing, ah, in San Francisco. Although funny enough,
16 a couple years before I was back in Rochester, New
17 York, and they had a bar where they were dancing, gay
18 bar where they were same partner dancing, same sex
19 partner dancing. And ah, SIR had the first San
20 Francisco. And that actually started the ball rolling
21 so that that now people can dance in a number of bars.
22 But in those days you couldn't, you couldn't dance in
23 a bar. And ah, SIR, did serve - we had a catered bar,
24 one of the Tavern Guild bars would cater every dance
25 and we had -

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1 EE: I'd like to talk about the Tavern Guild also,
2 but in those meetings when you first started going,
3 was it ah, was it a social meeting or did you sit and
4 listen to a speech and to a talk or plotting things -
5 OB: No, yeah, mostly plotting things. What to we
6 want to do and how do we want to do it? And a lot of
7 people tried to use SIR for their own interests and
8 did, and successfully did. For instance, the
9 politicians all decided we should give a Candidates
10 Night and the Candidates Night became a big thing in
11 SIR. And all the candidates soon appeared in droves.
12 And ah, then they decided no, ah, this is getting
13 too - because gays are Republicans and they are
14 Democrats. So it got to be too much of a faction
15 inside SIR, so they said let's not do this. After the
16 Candidates Night, if you want to do something more, if
17 you want to ah, to ah, to ah promote one candidate or
18 the other, you're going to have to do it through some
19 other means. Well, then that's when the politicians set
20 up their gay democratic clubs and their republican,
21 the Log Cabin, the republican, demo er, republican
22 club. And ah, so ah, but SIR still had a Candidates'
23 Night but they just wouldn't, they wouldn't endorse.
24 EE: And besides politics, who else?
25 OB: Ah, well all the people who wanted to give

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1 wanted to start their own thing, their hiking, the
2 swimming, the bowling, but, and some did very
3 successful with those things. But for the most part,
4 what they tried to do is push their, their own agenda,
5 as a group to the outside, and it didn't work out that
6 well. Ah, maybe it did and I don't realize it because
7 the resistance was a lot greater than it is today.
8 EE: Well, I think the resistance isn't as great
9 today because the -
10 OB: Yeah, they may have been more successful than I
11 feel they should have been because at the time it
12 seemed like we didn't get anywhere. We kept going two
13 paces back, or forward. and one back, so we never got
14 anywhere.
15 EE: Could you give me an example of that in terms of
16 what they were trying to do that didn't work, 'cause
17 it seemed pretty successful you got candidate types
18 would come in to court a gay group, you know, seems
19 like there's a lot going on.
20 OB: Ah, I, I guess the biggest example is that we're
21 still fighting gays in the military. Ah, the very
22 first Candidates Night, ah John Molinari was not a
23 supervisor at that time. John Molinari stood, came to
24 the Candidates Night to speak for some Sacramento
25 candidate who couldn't make it that night, quote

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1 shows, plays and musicals, and that sort of thing, a
2 big drag queen contingent that wanted to be on stage,
3 show their their their stuff. They used is a lot for
4 that. There were two or three productions every year,
5 big fund raisers for SIR, raised a lot of money and
6 very professional stuff. Ah, there were a couple
7 stabs at religion, but they didn't work out too well
8 because most gays don't - I can't say that, I can't
9 say most gays because I think the ah, CRH means
10 Council for Religion and Homosexuals.
11 That's what it is, but the ah, most gays are, or a
12 lot of gays are religious. They, they drove to ah to
13 ah ah what is Community Church, Metropolitan Community
14 Church, they go to that Catholic Church that's, that's
15 in the Castro that a lot of them like, so ah, and the
16 Episcopal Church, Trinity, Trinity Church has a gay
17 minister, Cromey, Cromey, Reverend Cromey. (both talk
18 at once). Okay, but so, a lot of their- I can't say
19 that they're not - but Church didn't go over. They
20 had a few, Reverend Broshears, Ray Broshears, Reverend
21 Ray, used to call him the flying nun, tried to get a
22 church group going in SIR and he ended up in LA
23 starting the Metropolitan Community Church, is where
24 he ended up. But it didn't work in SIR. So, but
25 there were, there are a number of groups like that who

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1 unquote. And he was raw out of I don't know where,
2 but he was new new new in politics, and the first
3 question they asked him back in those days, and this
4 is back in '75, they asked him well what are you going
5 to do about, or what is your your candidate in
6 Sacramento going to do about gays in the military?
7 EE: In terms of dishonorable discharges or -
8 OB: Yeah, saving, gahhh, having them serve honorably
9 instead of kicking them out. And ah, Molinari said he
10 didn't know what this was all about and he didn't know
11 much about gay life, but he'd find out. And he did.
12 EE: Okay, that's good, that's good. But it seems
13 kind of strange to go to a gay group and not know what
14 the hell's going on.
15 OB: Yeah, the next time he appeared before SIR, he
16 had all the answers. He knew everything they wanted
17 to nigh, know, that needed to know, this, and and he
18 went on to become president of the Board of
19 Supervisors at one point in his career. He didn't
20 make it to Mayor, he got knocked out of that so. But
21 he would have been, he would have been a friend to
22 court had he become mayor.
23 EE: Was it, so, I mean, was it, was it the same kind
24 of debate as what it is now, I mean, was it trying to
25 get the military to change their policy, or was it is

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1 just -
 2 OB: Just getting it, getting it recognized that
 3 there are gays in the military who are existing there
 4 and happen to make, make it through four years. I
 5 made it through four years, you know.
 6 They they, ah at at, I think at this Candidates
 7 thing, they said well everybody who got an honorable
 8 discharge from the service please stand up, and half
 9 the group stood up, you know. So there was
 10 demonstration to this neophyte that indeed gays did
 11 exist in the military and made it through - we didn't
 12 all get discharged like they said. But that's just
 13 one example, you asked for an example. That's one
 14 where we still haven't got anywhere; we're still
 15 working on it today. The president says
 16 EE: What kind of things did you think about?
 17 OB: Okay. To go back to what was going on in town at
 18 this time, the few gay bars there were were paying the
 19 police to stay open, no the ABC actually, the
 20 Alcoholic Beverage Control people, and the police not
 21 to raid. The police were doing a lot of entrapment;
 22 they would come in plain clothes and go into the john
 23 in gay bars and if you looked cross-eyed at them, they
 24 immediately arrested you and took you away and your
 25 name and address would appear in the paper the next

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1 ah ah, there were a lot of, in attendance, there were
 2 a lot of ministers who were trying to reach out to the
 3 gay community. There were attorneys, both straight
 4 and gay, who were present. And the police were out
 5 in massive force, and were lined up along the street
 6 and had spotlights on the people and taking pictures
 7 of everybody that entered into the building. And then
 8 they came in, they marched in and ah, they were asked
 9 to leave and they didn't; they came right on in. And
 10 the, they arrested some people there at the door. Who
 11 they happened to arrest were three attorneys, three
 12 clergymen and two attorneys and a straight woman. And
 13 ah, it was either Rick Stokes or Evander Smith, both
 14 were attorneys, who brought suit against the police
 15 department for \$7 million at the time. And the scare
 16 of that suit, because the people who were, were
 17 straights and were attorneys and were ministers and
 18 this straight woman.
 19 EE: They couldn't be blackmailed or intimidated.
 20 OB: No, ah. So ah, they had the police quite
 21 frightened, The City frightened, about what might come
 22 of this suit and how much they might owe in this. And
 23 it was at this time that SIR was developing, which was
 24 ah different, a different thing for different people.
 25 For us it was a, it was a social outlet outside of gay

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1 day.
 2 EE: What, what kind of things did they arrest you
 3 for, I mean, what -
 4 OB: For soliciting. And ah, so a lot of them,
 5 myself included, I just didn't go to gay bars very
 6 often and if I did, I didn't go in the john because ah
 7 that's where it would all start. And also if you wore
 8 cologne or looked the least bit effeminate, you were a
 9 target because they would make you as being a faggot
 10 and they would haul you off to jail. And of course,
 11 on the way, they'd make you confess to most anything
 12 they wanted from you. Otherwise you might get beaten
 13 up. So ah, in those days it was kind of tough. Gay
 14 bars stayed open by virtue of the money they paid like
 15 colleges. So it wasn't surprising to the gay
 16 community when the Tavern Guild had this, this
 17 Halloween Ball, and it was put on for I think CRH,
 18 Council of Religion and the Homosexual, were the
 19 sponsoring people at the time. But actually below
 20 that the Tavern Guild, which was the guild of gay bar
 21 owners - they're the ones that put the money behind it
 22 so that they could rent the hall and do these, that
 23 and the other thing. And they rented this California
 24 Hall at the corner of Polk and Turk Street across from
 25 the Embassy Hotel. And ah, it was a drag ball. But

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1 bars. Gay bars were the only social outlet in town
 2 for gay people at the time. And ah, so we joined SIR
 3 looking to expand our, our social, our circle of
 4 social friends. And ah, as luck would have it, we
 5 hired a hall for a meeting hall. It was a former
 6 union hall for the culinary workers, at 6th and Market
 7 Street, and we started Saturday night dancing, dances
 8 on Saturday night, and the police knew what was going
 9 on and they were afraid to touch us. The ABC wanted
 10 to shut us down because we had a catered bar; our bar
 11 was catered by a member of the Tavern Guild, a
 12 different one every week. So they couldn't hone in on
 13 one license, one bar's license. We had a different
 14 bar each week catered the bar. So we actually were
 15 within the law on the ABC end of it. We had a big
 16 heavy hammer hanging over the head. The police
 17 department, they didn't dare raid us as long as
 18 everything was quiet. And ah we did our best with
 19 that. And that went on for quite some time until
 20 finally, ah, it became commonplace - if you wanted to
 21 dance, you went to SIR on Saturday night. We made a
 22 lot of money that way, paid for the rental of the
 23 hall, that sort of thing. And the other things
 24 happened up there. We had, we had musicals, we had ah
 25 Candidates Nights. We had hiking, swimming, boating,

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1 the whole gamut of things that people get involved
 2 with. (inaudible). And it lasted 'til 'til it fell
 3 apart in '71 or '72. So it lasted five or six years.
 4 And like everything else because of the licentiousness
 5 of gay people as well as incohesion, and the fact that
 6 several people were using SIR for their own personal
 7 gains, rather than - they were ripping off SIR for
 8 some money. We were, it was necessary to close -
 9 EE: Are you talking about people stealing petty cash
 10 or people trying to -
 11 OB: No, ah both things. People were using SIR to
 12 gain, to push themselves politically. I ah, Jim
 13 Foster or - who actually started then the Gay
 14 Democratic Club, the Alice B. Toklas. He was the
 15 first one to start a gay democratic club. Ah, there
 16 are two now in town: Alice B. Toklas and Harvey Milk
 17 Democratic Clubs. And the Republican club is the Log
 18 Cabin Club, but ah. At any rate, it was, it was after
 19 ah SIR, or toward the end of SIR that Dick and I got
 20 involved in Halloween drag.
 21 And Halloween in those days meant that you would get
 22 in costume, you would hire a bus and you would get on
 23 the bus and you'd go from bar to bar to bar and show
 24 yourself off, various costumes. And I guess we did it
 25 three years running. The first year was the biggest

1 year we did. We did ah ah Queen Elizabeth and Sir
 2 Walter Raleigh, and I I was Queen Elizabeth and Dick
 3 was Sir Walter Raleigh. And I was wearing a
 4 farthingale I'd made myself and it was so huge that we
 5 couldn't get into a bus. We had to, we had to hire a
 6 lift gate truck, and ah, we left from the Opera Club
 7 which was a gay bar owned by Bill Plath, and Bill
 8 Plath and his friend ah - Bill went as Queen Victoria,
 9 and his costume was done by the Opera House, the San
 10 Francisco Opera people. He was, he was part of the
 11 opera circle doing dressing for the stars, that sort
 12 of thing, as well as owning this gay bar. And so we
 13 had, we had Queen Elizabeth, Queen Victoria and Mary
 14 Queen of Scots, was the three big queens on the bus.
 15 But we all - the other people from that bar who came
 16 to the party in drag. The party was at the Franciscan
 17 Hotel which is - I can't remember the name now, it's
 18 changed the name; it's right at Market and Eighth I
 19 think it is.
 20 EE: Ramada Inn? The Ramada Inn is at 8th and Market
 21 now.
 22 OB: Ramada, that may be now. Ramada, I keep
 23 thinking of the one on Powell Street, the Ramada
 24 Renaissance. Ah, at any rate, the hotel's still
 25 there, but it's changed a lot. But we ah, we had we

1 had quite a big ballroom on the second floor, I
 2 remember. It was a lot of fun, unloading in front of
 3 the hotel, going in.
 4 EE: Were you ever hassled, I mean, like getting on
 5 and off the bus while you were on the street. I mean,
 6 was there any -
 7 OB: No, during Halloween, particularly - Up until
 8 recently, now the Castro in the last couple of years
 9 has been pretty good, but three or four years ago,
 10 there were considerable hassles in the Castro over
 11 Halloween and, and people hurt and stabbed and what
 12 not. But the last few years, they have, they've had
 13 better police protection and they police themselves
 14 better. So ah ah, although there are still instances.
 15 Back in the days when I was doing it - it was too knew
 16 I guess, ah, the homophobes didn't come out in droves,
 17 the gay bashers. (inaudible) It was, it was still a
 18 spectacular thing to behold in a, in a large hotel.
 19 One year, the year after we did ah ah Elizabeth, it
 20 was the year that I did movie stars, and I went as
 21 Theta Beda, ah Theta, Theta Berra doing Salome. And
 22 ah, Dick went as Valentino. Ah, then the next year we
 23 didn't do any of that - we went as as different
 24 colored kings, and there were six of us, and there was
 25 the Merry Monarchs that we did. But ah, the ah,

1 Halloween's still a big thing - it's it's centered in
 2 the Castro now. However, you can find that they have
 3 balls, ah, down at the Gift Center and the different,
 4 the different ah - what do they came 'em, the
 5 Decorators' Center down around China Basin, down
 6 there, Townsend - 8th and Townsend. Yeah. They have
 7 large balls down there still at Halloween. But ah,
 8 the big show is still in the Castro now.
 9 EE: Yeah, I went down there this last year. It was
 10 the only time that I felt unsafe as a gay person in
 11 San Francisco was Halloween at the Castro. That was
 12 like too many drunken straight people were running
 13 there - that was scary. Well, was there any problem
 14 within SIR about doing drag shows, I mean, 'cause I
 15 know, seems like -
 16 OB: Yeah, we had, we had people who thought there
 17 was too much attention being done with drag, and drag
 18 shows particularly, and they wanted to be more
 19 politically militant and march for gay rights, and so
 20 forth. And the drag shows just wanted to make money
 21 and have a good time. So ah, we had we had ah, we had
 22 battles over this sort of thing. We tried, what we
 23 tried to do was have both, let both factions do their
 24 thing and ah ah, then we get involved with Vietnam and
 25 all this thing about whether or gays should even

1 participate in Vietnam. And I remember that several
 2 people made a big ceremonial thing at a big gay
 3 meeting at SIR, by burning their SIR cards, like with
 4 burned your draft card, you know, saying you're
 5 supporting our service people going off to Vietnam and
 6 we don't think you should do that. And ah, so you had
 7 all sides of every issue as part of SIR.
 8 EE: Well that that, is there, 'cause I mean, was
 9 there any debate over whether or not you should
 10 disclose your homosexuality in order to get out of or
 11 to keep yourself out of the military?
 12 OB: No, and certainly the term outing was not, was
 13 not part of our thoughts. Nobody
 14 would consider outing somebody else in those days.
 15 And ah, nobody, everybody felt it was an individual
 16 choice whether or not you should go to the draft board
 17 and and tell 'em you're gay when you signed up for the
 18 draft. As a matter of fact, I had a good friend in
 19 Cal when I was going to school - this was before SIR -
 20 who indeed when it came time to sign up for the draft
 21 ah, went down to the draft board, and I went along for
 22 moral support for him. He was going to come out to
 23 the draft board and let them decide what they wanted
 24 to do with him.
 25 And ah ah, their first thought was that they

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1 rights are withdrawn from you forever, and ah, and
 2 there were other sanctions; I don't remember just what
 3 they were now. But the Other than Honorable
 4 Discharge, you were just a second rate citizen
 5 (laughs) but you could still vote. The only effect
 6 that it had that I knew about on most people, they
 7 couldn't - Other than Honorable, you couldn't get
 8 loans for school; you couldn't get the GI Bill. You
 9 had to be Honorably Discharged to get the GI Bill to
 10 go to school on. Ah, also, ah, Other than Honorable,
 11 you couldn't serve in any other service, any other
 12 military service. The ah - and some people said that
 13 their parents were notified when they got the Other
 14 than Honorable Discharge, which meant that, that
 15 either they were mentally or sexually unacceptable for
 16 service. I didn't, I didn't know, both Dick and I got
 17 honorable discharges after our service term, and so I
 18 don't know really if that was true or if that was just
 19 rumor.
 20 EE: Yeah, it probably was true. It seems -
 21 OB: I doubt, I doubt it, yeah. But it could be. At
 22 any rate, ah, I guess it was after, after those years
 23 in Halloween drag that ah Dick and I kind of got busy
 24 doing all the things you have to do to, to ah, build
 25 your future. We were going up in rank in our

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1 wouldn't, they wouldn't believe him. But after about
 2 an hour's interview with a psychiatrist, they decided
 3 that indeed he probably was gay and was not worthy of
 4 the military.
 5 EE: What, what effect does that have? I mean, I've
 6 never even tried to join the military. I mean, if
 7 you're not allowed in to the military, is that the
 8 same as getting a dishonorable discharge, it means a
 9 mark put on your official records some place to make
 10 it hard to get -
 11 OB: Well, what happens when you when you go to the
 12 draft board and tell them you're gay, they give you a
 13 a letter, it's not 4-F, but it's like 4-F, or it
 14 might not be 3-E or something, which states that
 15 you're not, you're not ah ah fit for military service.
 16 4-F is you're not physically fit for military service.
 17 EE: So you might be little more on the moral -
 18 OB: Yeah, on the fact that that ah for the good
 19 service, they refuse you admittance; they don't want
 20 you serving, so ah. After you get in, if you're
 21 caught, then you were normally were given a - it
 22 wasn't a dishonorable discharge - it was a, it was a
 23 ah Other than Honorable Discharge.
 24 EE: What's the difference?
 25 OB: Well, the Dishonorable Discharge, your voting

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1 ah, jobs, and we bought our first apartment building,
 2 which was a 6-unit building across from the San
 3 Francisco General Hospital. And we started getting
 4 busy doing those things; building our future so to
 5 speak. And ah -
 6 EE: Did you take care of the building yourself, do
 7 maintenance work and the painting?
 8 OB: Yeah, ah, when we first started in, we, we did
 9 all the work ourselves. We had my mom and dad manage
 10 the first six units. Then I left my company that I'd
 11 been with eleven years, and I got a certain amount of
 12 money from my retirement from the old company. And
 13 Dick was working for Shell Research in Emeryville and
 14 they moved to Houston, they closed up Emeryville and
 15 moved, moved back to Houston. And he didn't want to
 16 go back to Houston, so he quit and went to work for
 17 Hewlett-Packard, and he got some money. We put that
 18 money into a second 6 units across the street from
 19 Mission Dolores on 16th Street, 16th and Dolores. And
 20 ah, ah, so we had, we had two buildings going now.
 21 And ultimately we sold those two, and bought the two
 22 units that that we still have. But during all this
 23 time, we were busy doing our, our day to day work and
 24 running these apartment houses and getting this stuff
 25 organized. So we more or less got away from gay

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1 organizations entirely and stayed within our, in our
2 own circle. And then I got to drinking very heavy and
3 ah, about ten years ago I went through a rehab
4 program. And I haven't had a drink since, but at the
5 same time at the end of that, I also quit work as far
6 as the insurance business was concerned. And ah, ah,
7 so now we've, we've stayed, we're living on on
8 apartment houses (inaudible).
9 EE: Well, ah, this is hard to say, I've I've been
10 through a rehab center and halfway house myself, so I
11 know what that's like. Would you like to say more
12 about what was going on when your drinking started
13 getting heavy? Was there anything that precipitated
14 that or was it just a gradual ongoing process that
15 came to a head then?
16 OB: Well, actually, the fact is I'm an alcoholic, so
17 I can't drink. That's, whatever else goes on, that's
18 the basis of it. But ah, yeah, I was doing a lot of
19 entertaining in the insurance business and ah,
20 entertaining contractors and what not and doing a lot
21 of heavy drinking with them. And that sort of went,
22 brought me over the edge to, and ah, so when I, when I
23 went through the rehab center, ah, I, I decided not to
24 go back to insurance, and that's all I did. So
25 that's, that's why I didn't go back, back to work.

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1 yeah maybe I needed to, to look into ah, ah rehab
2 programs. And I was also thinking at the same time, I
3 got at least another six months' drinking because
4 it'll take me that long to search out all the rehab
5 programs. But ah, Dick was one step ahead of me; he
6 already had the rehab program at St Mary's picked out
7 because he could be part of that as a significant
8 other family member. St Mary's Hospital here in San
9 Francisco on Stanyan. And so ah, I went the 30-day
10 program up there. And he was part of that; they come
11 one day a week.
12 EE: What year was this?
13 OB: Ten years ago it would have been '54. June '84,
14 June 1st is my sobriety date, so. But I did manage
15 one more party before that because we had, we had ah
16 tickets to the opening to La Cage A Faux the first
17 time it was in San Francisco, and we knew that all the
18 drag queens would be arriving in limousines and so
19 forth, and it was a big party, and so I refused to, to
20 go into the program until after ah, that was a
21 Saturday night, til after that performance, and I was
22 at that party. And I told the party, the person that
23 indoctrinated me into the program that I would be
24 there on Monday morning at 10 o'clock, and so Monday
25 morning at 10 o'clock I was at the hospital, and that

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1 But that ah, the ah, (pause) Oh, I did, I did go
2 through a rehab center that, that ah, Dick had found.
3 Ah actually, he had joined ALANON about a year before
4 I got into a rehab center, and that's - I don't know
5 if you're familiar with that. That's an organization
6 for people who live with alcoholics and. And so, ah,
7 at the time that he started, he tried to talk to me
8 about my drinking a couple times, and I wouldn't hear
9 of it because that's not the way people do when
10 they're drinking, you know. I don't have the problem,
11 you've got the problem.
12 EE: If you'd just leave me alone there would be no
13 problem.
14 OB: Yeah, and so ah, so ah, he went into ALANON for
15 about a year and the first meeting, as a matter of
16 fact, I ever went to, I went to one of his ALANON
17 meetings with him to see what was going on - it was
18 deadly dull - of course I was drinking at the time
19 too, but, that was an awful meeting and I, I told him
20 so. But ah, he was able later to talk to me about my
21 drinking as a result of what he'd learned at ALANON.
22 And ah, he said something that really really hit, hit
23 me. He said I don't care if you retire early, but I
24 don't want you to retire to the bottle, into a bottle.
25 And ah ah, that really hit me, so I suggested that

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1 started my life as a sober person.
2 EE: It must have been a scary moment though, walking
3 in there.
4 OB: Yeah, I was scared because I didn't think I was
5 an alcoholic and how was I going to be able to
6 convince these people I belonged there. They were all
7 drunks and I wasn't, and I knew if they ever find out
8 that I wasn't, they were going to kick me out of
9 there. And that was the scary part (laughs). That's
10 the same denial I guess I had when I was growing up
11 gay - this is something I'll try for now but one day
12 I'll get married and it'll be alright.
13 EE: My real self will emerge, right. Well, so
14 that's really cool, I mean, that, that Dick was there
15 for you and willing to not only stay with you during
16 the drinking, but actually take a part in well,
17 helping himself, but also also providing support for
18 you. (inaudible) Was that ever, was there ever talk
19 of your drinking that he, that he, either sober up or
20 I'll leave you?
21 OB: No, that might have happened except that we both
22 drank quite a lot. But I was the alcoholic; he could
23 quit. And, as a matter of fact, when he started the
24 ALANON, he was, he had some other problems that he'll
25 talk to you about it, he'll talk to you then. I won't

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1 go into, he was with a counselor, a psychiatrist, and,
2 it was the psychiatrist who suggested that maybe he
3 should join ALANON because of my drinking, that that
4 would help him, and that's where, how this all got,
5 actually got to that point. But ah -
6 EE: Did you find at any point in this - did you feel
7 excluded or somehow on the outside of things because
8 you're gay; because this is your, your lover here and
9 not your, your wife in the, in the meeting? Was that
10 a real problem?
11 OB: No, by this time, ah well, two things - the
12 attitude and the, and the rehab was very ah embracing
13 for straight and gay. And we were told, or I was told
14 when I went into the program that I couldn't have any
15 secrets, that my sickness would be as bad as my
16 darkest secret. And so, from the beginning, I was
17 upfront with the fact that, that Dick was my lover and
18 that we lived together and so forth. And there were
19 two other gay people in the program at the same time.
20 And they were not going to let me get by with the fact
21 that because they saw Dick bring me up there and
22 woefully leave by himself, so so they knew all about
23 it before I even got my bag unpacked. But, it was it
24 was, it was really no secret, it was never tried, we
25 never tried to keep it a secret. And when I

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1 do have a book in which we were, about that, in which
2 we were part of, but ah -
3 EE: Well, how did that feel? How did that feel?
4 OB: That felt pretty good. We felt almost legal.
5 You're not; but you feel almost legal. And what you
6 do is you tell City Hall that you will be responsible
7 for this other person financially and what not, and
8 you sign these papers saying you will be, and pay your
9 fee and you get a little, a little partnership thing.
10 Ah, as a matter of fact, again if you're interested,
11 EE: Yeah, I'd love to see that. - 1991?
12 OB: 1991, yeah (pause). Here's the things it does
13 for you and about you. Ah, you have commitments, your
14 basic responsibility is to make sure that your partner
15 has basic food and shelter. This means that if he or
16 she doesn't have food or can't afford his or her part
17 of the cost of the place where you live, you must pay
18 for these things.. If your partner can't get food or
19 shelter for herself, she or he can make you get them.
20 She or he could get a court order. If someone else
21 gives your partner food for credit, for example, they
22 can get you to pay. The same goes for your partner's
23 part of the cost of the place where you live. And
24 also it tells you how you can terminate this. If you
25 go down and sign up a letter saying I'm terminating

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1 introduced him, I introduced him as my significant
2 other because that's what they called 'em up there.
3 And that was, that was very acceptable to everybody
4 and Dick went into the ALANON meetings with ah
5 husbands and wives and the people that in, and the
6 straight people that were in my thing. And he'd talk
7 about his lover. So ah, it was very upfront. We
8 didn't have a problem with that. As a matter of fact,
9 I guess it's because it's San Francisco, we've had
10 very little problem. I guess only, the only thing was
11 getting our first apartment as a couple. Ah, maybe
12 getting the loan for our house that we bought, this
13 one. Because we both had to qualify individually for
14 the loan at that time. It's not that way anymore.
15 They treat you like a (inaudible) now. But at the
16 time we qualified for this loan, we each had to
17 individually qualify for the total loan.
18 EE: Yeah, and now marriage makes it, the legal bond
19 of marriage makes it a lot tougher.
20 OB: We did, however, the February the 14th, the
21 first day that it was permitted, go down and sign up
22 for Domestic Partners.
23 EE: What year was that?
24 OB: I'd have to get the book out now to look it up -
25 five years ago, probably four or five years ago. We

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1 it. You have to do it that way.
2 EE: Does this have then legal ah -
3 OB: No, it has no legal status at all. But they,
4 but they put those those things on you, put those
5 commitments on you so that - to make you realize that
6 that you should be (inaudible).
7 EE: Well there is no, I mean, it sets up at least a
8 basic for what, for what this does mean outside of
9 the symbolic.
10 OB: We have never, we have never tried to to emulate
11 a heterosexual marriage. We have done this, however.
12 On a cruise that we took with RSVP, we joined in a
13 recommitment ceremony when we recommitted ourselves to
14 each other as far as our love is concerned for each
15 other. Ah, which was done by a minister for the MCC,
16 Metropolitan Community Church. Ah, neither Dick nor I
17 are religious; we're spiritual people in that we
18 believe in a higher power, but we're not religious in
19 that we believe in any formal religion.
20 EE: So who who was it that that, I mean, you signed
21 this paper, but was there a
22 ceremony in front of a -
23 OB: No, no ceremony; just sign up and they give you
24 the little certificate. But we did this, we did this
25 because it's the closest thing so far to announcing

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1 the fact that we are partners. Now we have, we have a
2 partnership agreement for our business. We have, we
3 did have wills, we still do have wills, but we have
4 our trust that we set up, our living trust that we set
5 up, to legally try to keep our estates out of the
6 hands of our relatives when we die. Because it's our
7 intention that the survivor gets all, and ah ah,
8 that's not always so easy, apparently. And our good
9 friend Raymond Burr has found that his favorite niece
10 is now ouster, or now trying to oust his lover of 34
11 years from from Burr's estate. So, we we try to do
12 all the things that gay people do. We've set up our,
13 our, our living wills, our ah, powers of attorney for
14 health purposes, and all these different things that
15 you try to do ahead of time so that doctors and
16 hospitals can't keep us apart. And he tried to do
17 that - ah, it's not so much in this city I think as in
18 other cities.

19 EE: Well, it varies; it depends on the doctor. I've
20 read some things in the newspaper
21 that there's a problem with that in California, in
22 some places in San Francisco, so it's you know.

23 OB: Could very well be, but we're set up as far as
24 as our our medical power of attorney is to each other,
25 so that I can make decisions to pull the plug on him

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1 talked about that, we've, we've dealt with that.
2 EE: Well I was wondering ah, to back up a little bit
3 also, but is that decision at all influenced by the
4 effect of AIDS and what you've seen and how and -
5 OB: Ah, I'm sure it is. I'm sure it has been. Ah,
6 we've been, I guess because of the fact that we've had
7 a more or less monogamous relationship for umpteen
8 years that ah, that we're ah, that we're safe from the
9 plague. But I've had my, my best friend Jim's lover
10 die after seven years with AIDS. Ah, we've had twelve
11 tenants die of AIDS. We rent to people with AIDS.
12 Ah, it's it's part of our philosophy, we're part of
13 the community, we want to be available for people who
14 need housing and we do provide housing.
15 We don't provide it to ah, to the extent that we give
16 it away, I mean, they pay the rent as well. But we do
17 provide a place that that we don't permit any tenants,
18 other tenants, to to ah ah react badly with them. And
19 so our, our building is very AIDS sensitive and ah,
20 and we, we do provide, provide accommodations. And I
21 knowingly have rented to them, not just happenstance,
22 Some have gotten AIDS after they've been there a few
23 years. But ah, I've knowingly rented to three
24 different ones.

25 EE: When did, when did you first hear of AIDS, what

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1 and vice versa.

2 EE: Well, I mean, this is kind of a ah an unrelated
3 , the whole, perhaps - I mean, how, have you thought
4 about that, and what was due, and what you will do in
5 the case of, of someone being, you know, incapacitated
6 and on a machine, I mean, do you -

7 OB: Yeah, we, we thought that quite a bit and
8 discussed it between us. And we know exactly what
9 we're going to do if there's, there's not going to be
10 the kind of life that we're rea - reasonable life,
11 then we're going to pull the plug. And, but it will
12 be with a lot of, of advice. We'll be talking to the
13 doctors, we'll be talking to a friend of ours who is a
14 second choice in case both of us are incapacitated,
15 say in an accident or something, ah, who is ah - he's
16 not a doctor, but he's very medically ah astute person
17 who can determine from the doctors through their
18 medical jargon what we, what our position actually is.
19 And I would be talking with him in the event I was to
20 make the decision. And I would be relying a lot on
21 his - he's not a medical doctor, but he can, he knows
22 medical terms to a point where he can, he can tell you
23 if the doctor is saying yes he's going to be a
24 vegetable all his life and say it in medical terms so
25 you don't know what he's saying. So yeah, we've

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1 ah -

2 OB: Ah, well we heard about the gay cancer about the
3 time that, that New York did, what was it, it's been,
4 it's been '81, '82; yeah '81. Ah, and everybody said
5 it was a gay cancer or it was this or it was that.

6 And like everybody else, it scared us; we weren't
7 sure, we wasn't sure just what this was all about, ah.
8 And it was, it was a while really before we actually
9 saw, or it came into our lives. And ah, ah, but over
10 the, the last ten years, we've seen a lot of it. Ah,
11 we haven't, we haven't become active again in hospice
12 or, or any of the organizations. Like we've supported
13 financially, we've supported ah Open Hand and so
14 forth, but we don't , we haven't, we haven't done
15 that. But we have provided, like I say, ah,
16 apartments for, for AIDS patients.

17 EE: Do you remember the first person you knew who
18 got sick and died from AIDS?

19 OB: First - I guess the first person was a tenant
20 we had for a long time - suddenly got sick and ah, ah,
21 and he didn't last very long; he went very fast. But
22 it was also before AZT I guess. Ah, and before there
23 was a lot of treatment. I guess he died of, of PCP,
24 pneumonia. And ah, so, so that was not, that was not
25 as, as ah an impact on me as much as a later tenant

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1 who ah, lasted for 3 or 4 years before he died.
 2 EE: And started getting sick?
 3 OB: Yeah, and it seemed like that that had a much
 4 stronger impact because we saw the, the withering away
 5 and the, ah, the effects of it more closely. The
 6 first tenant went so fast - he had, ah, he'd lost some
 7 weight but that's about it; he didn't have the drawn
 8 look that most AIDS patients that live a while had,
 9 so. But ah, ah, the toughest one was, was our friend
 10 Rex, Jim's lover, because he was so close and,
 11 although, he didn't last a long time, mainly because
 12 he didn't want to. He wanted, he quit eating, he
 13 decided he'd do it that way. He ah, he was the
 14 toughest. Partly because of that, because I kept
 15 wanting him to fight to the end, and he'd given up.
 16 And at one point, he kind of went out of his mind and
 17 they took him to the hospital and I felt so relieved
 18 because I knew when he was in the hospital that they
 19 were rehydrating him and pumping fluids and food into
 20 him, so I knew that, that he was going to get back
 21 some strength.
 22
 23 EE: Has that changed your, your view of, of like
 24 euthanasia and suicide? You know, it's been an issue
 25 of my life that all the sudden maybe fighting at the

1 end isn't the best way to go. Ah, I was wondering if
 2 that -
 3 OB: Ah, I think that's a personal thing, that the
 4 end of it, that the individual going through it, not
 5 me looking at it, and I don't think I should have any
 6 judgment about him doing that. I wouldn't do that,
 7 but if he feels comfortable doing that, or if that's
 8 what he wants, then he should be allowed to do that.
 9 Ah, actually it's not something, as far as euthanasia
 10 goes, if he'd had the opportunity, if he could have
 11 had Doctor Kavorkian to administer the thing, it would
 12 have been a lot easier for him than what he actually
 13 went through. He actually suffered a lot more than
 14 that. Ah, his death was not, was not pretty and ah,
 15 you know, I 'm not for euthanasia; I'm not against
 16 it. I think it's a personal thing and it's up to the
 17 person going through it and I don't think I should be
 18 a judge of that - am I answering the question?
 19 EE: Ah, yeah, yeah, I mean, is that, is that, that
 20 awareness comes from experience of AIDS, or is that -
 21 OB: I think it's less directly the experience of
 22 Rex's death.
 23 EE: Yeah, I just, I noticed in my own life that also
 24 all the norms that I grew up with, you know, that,
 25 that awesome, they're uncertain and there's no,

1 there's no answer anymore, but, you know, we say it's
 2 a matter of what a person needs and wants. Ah, I just
 3 find that -
 4 OB: Do you have a friend that's going through that?
 5
 6 EE: Yeah, yeah.
 7 OB: Try not to judge. It's his life; let him do it
 8 what he wants to do it, and, all you you can do is
 9 support it, be there for him and say well, I stand
 10 behind you whatever you decide. Ah, I don't know,
 11 it's it's too difficult for me to imagine what it
 12 would be like, so I couldn't; I, I just couldn't ah
 13 speak any further than what I've said. I shouldn't be
 14 the judge. It's his decision and I don't think it's
 15 wrong; I think it's right for him.
 16 EE: Yeah, yeah, I guess, I guess that's that's the
 17 realization that I left with, is that there's a lot of
 18 different (inaudible) different rights and wrongs now,
 19 so anyways. Ah, I have a few (inaudible) right now.
 20 I was wondering too about a little bit further back,
 21 ah, actually, like at the end of SIR, you joined in
 22 '65 and you were doing drag for a few years. About
 23 the time Stonewall happened in New York, did you hear
 24 anything about that?
 25 OB: Stonewall happened ah at the beginning of SIR, I

1 believe, I'm sure it was. Ah, seemed to me like
 2 Stonewall happened at the beginning of SIR. And yes,
 3 I ah, ah, you know, we supported Stonewall at the
 4 beginning - we've learned a lot more about it than we
 5 knew about it at the time it was going on - because
 6 we've seen the television remakes and the whole thing,
 7 and so forth and so on, and ah, I don't know that that
 8 was - They, they point to that as the beginning of gay
 9 rights, but I don't think it was. It was, perhaps, in
 10 New York, but I, like the Halloween ah ah drag ball of
 11 '63 was the beginning of gay rights in San Francisco.
 12 SIR started right after that and ah, so I, I, I don't,
 13 I relate Stonewall to the Halloween Ball and I think
 14 it's all part and parcel of the same thing. Ah, I
 15 don't have anything really to say about the
 16 individuals involved in Stonewall, because I didn't
 17 know personally any of those people. One or two of
 18 them did drift out to San Francisco and I'm sure they
 19 were out here, but they came out later and they came
 20 out during the time of Castro, of the Castro building
 21 up and becoming a gay center, and the fights with the,
 22 with the Irish Catholics in the Castro that didn't
 23 want to give up their neighborhood or didn't really
 24 appreciate the gays moving into their neighborhood -
 25 they wanted to keep it the way that it was.

1 EE: Well, was that, was that like a well known, I
2 mean, how was word spread of that within the gay
3 community. I mean, was it just, just known that the
4 Castro was becoming the next gay neighborhood or, I
5 mean, how, because I've watched a little bit of how
6 the gay scene went from like North Beach and then Polk
7 Street and like, fairly recently, like in the early
8 '70s it seems, ended up in Castro.
9 OB: Ah, I don't know, it almost started on Union
10 Street, and I guess Union went to ah, ah fashionable
11 too soon. Because a gay neighborhood has to be
12 somewhat below the middle line of The City. Yeah, it
13 really has to be ah somewhat so you can build up and
14 become ah, change it from, from ah, a lower middle,
15 middle class neighborhood to an upper middle class
16 neighborhood, is essentially what they've done. And I
17 don't know how, how they chose to congregate in the
18 Castro, but two or three businesses got started and
19 then they, they ah organized a little neighborhood
20 business group, like the Haight-Ashbury organized the
21 Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Group for businesses in
22 the Haight-Ashbury. Tried to run the drug people out
23 of town - well they couldn't, but they did a lot, they
24 did a lot. But the little neighborhood group in the
25 Castro were all gay people and Harvey Milk was part of

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1 We were not what you would call the ACT-UP group. We
2 were, we were part of SIR, we were part of the ah ah
3 early political beginnings of of gay liberation, but
4 we were not people who would march ah with banners and
5 whatnot down the street and and in your face types.
6 EE: And Harvey Milk was more -
7 OB: He was more in your face type.
8 EE: Okay. (inaudible) I was not, I was not aware of
9 what what who was who else was around with Harvey
10 Milk, because in the history books, or in the things
11 that I've read, I guess Harvey Milk and that's it. So
12 it's interesting to hear that, ah, there was -
13 OB: Yeah, ah, they both ran for supervisor, Rick
14 Stokes and Harvey Milk. Neither one made it. The
15 first guy that ran for supervisor that was gay was
16 Jose Serria - you've probably heard of him (laughs).
17 EE: Yeah, the Black Cat. What year was that again?
18 OB: Oh, that was way back - let me see if I can, if
19 I have my notes - I doubt it - that was way way back
20 (dog barks) I don't have. (to someone aside) Do you
21 remember when Jose ran for supervisor?
22 Other person: No, but it's in the books (dog barks)
23 OB: Yeah, somewhere in the history books. At any
24 rate that was before our time actually. I remember
25 before I met Dick, before I was out of the Navy, when

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1 it, and Harvey Milk ah ah ah gained his political base
2 there and had more to do with ah, with the Castro
3 becoming the gay Mecca or the gay center than anybody
4 else.
5 Dick and I were on the other side; we were, we were
6 the more respectable gay people and so our leanings
7 were towards Rick Stokes, Harvey's ah ah opposition at
8 times. And Harvey Milk was a rebellious young upstart
9 from New York and Rick Stokes was more the attorney
10 who had been involved with with SIR, had been involved
11 with the Halloween Ball of '63, and so we supported
12 Stokes. Ah, not that we disliked or or put down - as
13 a matter of fact, we never understood because we never
14 got to know him very much. And ah, we didn't, we
15 didn't live in the Castro, although our last building
16 was close to the Castro. But we didn't, we never
17 lived in the Castro. We got, we never got to know
18 Harvey Milk other than ah a few political Candidates
19 Nights or something like that. But we did use Rick
20 Stokes to draw up wills and that sort of thing - he
21 was our attorney.

22 EE: Could you, could you say a little bit more about
23 what you meant by respectable gays?

24 OB: Oh, well, we were the conservatives - rather
25 than respectable I should use the word conservative.

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1 I was still in the Navy, going to the Black Cat and
2 seeing Jose and his operas that he put on, Sunday
3 afternoons and so forth. And it was, in those days,
4 and that would have been like in '54 that he was
5 running for supervisor. And of course he didn't get
6 any kind of support at all; there was no organization,
7 gay or straight or anything, that supported him.
8 EE: Well, I guess he did get like 6,000 votes. It
9 seems astronomical to me considering what you say.
10 OB: Yeah, Yeah, but it would take a few more than
11 that to become supervisor, but ah. But he was
12 actually the first out gay person that that ran for
13 supervisor. Milk was the first one elected.
14 EE: Did you remember about ah hearing about his
15 murder?
16 OB: Oh yeah yeah. As a matter of fact I was at
17 lunch and ah it came over, it came over the television
18 in the bar and everybody could - and this was a
19 straight bar - everybody was floored because Moscone
20 was killed, the mayor. And then, by virtue of the
21 fact that a supervisor was killed by the name of Milk,
22 well, I knew who Milk was - whether everybody else in
23 bar knew or not. I walked out of there in a daze - I
24 couldn't believe it. Ah, that was a pretty wild time
25 for us. Then they, then they got White, but really

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1 the wild time was when they sentenced White -
 2 everybody went down to City Hall for the White Night
 3 when they had the riots at City Hall.
 4 EE: Were you part of that or -
 5 OB: No, we were respectable gays (laughs)
 6 EE: What was your reaction to that then, I mean -
 7 OB: Our reaction was they should have burned the
 8 City Hall down.
 9 EE: Even a respectable gay felt that way, yeah.
 10 Well, do you think that that night changed the face
 11 of political interaction between gay groups and City
 12 Hall? I mean did that have any kind of effect other
 13 than just venting the anger and anguish over Milk's
 14 killing?
 15 OB: No, I, I don't really think it did. It may have
 16 - I'm not ah, I am not an insider at City Hall so I
 17 can't answer your question with any knowledge, but my
 18 outside guess is that it didn't, that indeed it ah
 19 everybody looked on it as they were angry and they had
 20 a right to be angry. I think the thing that's more
 21 telling on City Hall is ah the Candlelight Marches for
 22 the AIDS victims every year. I think the Freedom Day
 23 Parades are more telling on City Hall. Back in the
 24 first one or two, you couldn't get a candidate to ride
 25 - Hongisto maybe would ride the Freedom Day Parades.

1 there were tables for everybody, and there was a big
 2 round table that like, like two of us would sit at -
 3 it was a family table they called it. And you'd come
 4 sit down for dinner and there'd be other people and
 5 Hongisto and his ah ah office staff were on
 6 (inaudible) have dinner there; we would chat and
 7 have, talk about gay issues and and ah, and he was
 8 very interested in getting part of the, part of his
 9 campaign coalition between gays and Chinese and the
 10 Mexicans. And he was trying to get this coalition
 11 together to, to become sheriff. And so he was there
 12 almost every night and we got to be good friends.
 13 When Dick and I had our 25th Anniversary party, we had
 14 it at the Fickle Fox, we invited Dick Hongisto, who
 15 was supervisor at the time, and his wife. His wife
 16 was pregnant, and they came to our, to our 25th
 17 anniversary and ah ah. We supported him up until this
 18 last fiasco. But here's what I wanted to tell you.
 19 Every time he got to be somebody, I, I guess power
 20 triggered something in his head like booze triggers in
 21 my head for for for more more more now because it was
 22 just going crazy. Ah, he got to be Sheriff - first
 23 thing he had trouble with with his girlfriend and
 24 marijuana, the jail and this, that and the other
 25 thing. And then he got booted out the Sheriff, and

1 Now you can't get the candidates to stay away - I mean
 2 they come from the East Bay over here to ride
 3 (laughs). They come down from Sacramento, you know,
 4 out of Washington, Pelosi and Feinstein, they were all
 5 in the parade (laughs).
 6 EE: Well ah, more about Hongisto, before we go on
 7 with this, but what is due him? I mean, 'cause like
 8 I really tell about old issues of the Vector and his
 9 name is there - he's like one of the first liaisons
 10 between gay community and the police departments, and
 11 then just before I got here, I guess, he tried to
 12 confiscate all the Bay Times newspaper and just like
 13 bounced on everything. And I'm wondering what he
 14 meant, means to the gay community?
 15 OB: Well ah, we were there at the beginning, as a
 16 matter of fact, when he first ran for Sheriff, ah,
 17 (inaudible, checking notes) Hongisto, Hongisto, 'cause
 18 it's about the same
 19 time we bought we bought ah Potrero, yeah, ah - we
 20 bought Potrero in ah 1972, and we put up a big big big
 21 big huge sign for Hongisto for Sheriff. And we were
 22 having dinner almost nightly at - Bill Plath had had
 23 closed the Opera Club and opened the Orpheum Circus at
 24 the Orpheum Theater and it was a gay bar that he
 25 opened there. And he served dinners at night, and

1 then he went back east and he went I think Cincinnati
 2 and did some things there, and then he got booted out
 3 of there and then he became of ah ah head of the penal
 4 institution of New York or something. Then he came
 5 back here and he ran for supervisor a couple times
 6 (inaudible) but then he tried to run for mayor, didn't
 7 make it, and we supported him through all these
 8 campaigns, financially, we sent him \$500 or \$1,000 ah.
 9 Then he got to be Police Chief; and he hadn't been
 10 Police Chief for six months and he blew it - I mean he
 11 went kapoo! And at that point, we decided that surely
 12 he'd mentally had popped, and we can't support him
 13 anymore. We haven't, we've talked to him, ah, we ran
 14 into him up at Diamond Heights Super Market and he
 15 said well he was up there on business because he's
 16 running a ah ah security business in the Diamond
 17 Heights Super Market was part of his Safeway up there,
 18 as part of his thing, and so, but as far as supporting
 19 him for politics anymore, I think he's washed up. But
 20 he was the first, the first police person to be a
 21 friend to the gay community and was a liaison between
 22 the mayor and the police department and the gay
 23 community for a long time. And when he became
 24 Sheriff, he appointed gay deputies, gay men as
 25 deputies to the Sheriff's Department, and later (ahem)

1 they got appointed to the police department by virtue
2 of the fact that they were also Sheriff's Department.
3 EE: So he did have ah, like a lasting impact that
4 lasted positively. God, what a confusing story - I
5 mean it seems very San Francisco in a way but it's
6 still, it's still very strange to read of his earlier
7 support and of his later, his later fall.
8 OB: Yeah, well, I think it was, I think it was a
9 power struggle in his mind or something - I don't know
10 - but I think he'd lost it, and I think, I think he
11 was not rational,
12 EE: But it wasn't, it was more power struggle less
13 than an attempt to, to simply crush or silence the gay
14 community.
15 OB: Yeah, yeah. I think he just said oh I, you
16 know, they shouldn't be talking about me that way
17 because I've been their friend all this time, and I've
18 I've got to do something. And he, maybe maybe he was
19 being set up, I don't know. Maybe the underlings said
20 We'll get him, we'll just ah ah pick these things up
21 and get his name really in - but I don't think so. I,
22 I think he probably is involved and because, that was
23 his, that was his pattern. It happened before and so
24 ah, and that's at least how I see it (laughs).
25 EE: Mm. You also mentioned Bill Plath and I guess

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1 retract that because I have been to gay bars
2 occasionally. Ah, just to see what was going on and
3 to eat dinner, because I've been to the Line-Up a
4 couple of times for dinner. We go there often. The
5 Line Up. The Line Up is on Harrison and 8th, or
6 Harrison and 7th. It's a Mexican restaurant (pause).
7 There are two other, two other restaurants owned by
8 the same people and they all have the same menu. Ah,
9 Dick! What's the Mexican restaurant, the Line Up and
10 what are the other two? Leticia's - yeah Leticia's,
11 they're all connected. They're all owned by the
12 same, have the same menu. The Line Up is the one on
13 Harrison; Leticia's is on Market Street, and then they
14 have another one that's up on Fillmore I think, or up
15 in Divisadero area I think. But ah, so I have been to
16 gay bars, but I don't frequent them, I don't hang out.
17 I go in and have dinner and that's it.
18 EE: Well, for Bill Plath, was he a radical then?
19 Was he -
20 OB: No, he would be a very conservative, yeah.
21 EE: Businessman, yeah. What ever happened to him?
22 I mean, is the Tavern Guild gone too?
23 OB: I don't know, I never hear of the Tavern Guild
24 anymore. Ah, the Bay Area Reporter was the original
25 bar rag as we called it, it was the original

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1 his name comes up with his workings with the Tavern
2 Guild. Could you tell me more about what he was
3 trying to do with the Tavern Guild.
4 OB: Well, what the Tavern Guild tried to do is they
5 tried to to ah organize all the gay bar owners to
6 fight the corruption by the police department, trying
7 to collect bribes from 'em, and all they wanted to do
8 was stay in business without having to pay the police
9 department to stay out of their establishment. And
10 they also had to fight the ABC who didn't want ah ah
11 gay bars per se.
12 EE: So the ABC would like take licenses.
13 OB: Yeah, they were the Alcoholic Beverage Control
14 were the ones that issued licenses and ah, they they
15 were responsible if, if ah underage people were in the
16 bar and so forth and so on. Ah, but the gay bars in
17 San Francisco were much stricter than the ones in New
18 York State. The New York State drinking age was 18
19 and gay bars would let 'em in at 16. And here you
20 didn't get in unless you were 21 or unless you looked
21 21 and had a fake ID card. I don't, I don't that even
22 today they're serving underage people in the gay bars.
23 I don't, I don't go, I haven't been to a bar in ten
24 years, or a gay bar in ten years. I've been to gay
25 restaurants, but not to - I have to

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1 newspaper from the Tavern Guild. The Bay Area
2 Reporter and Ross whatever his last name is, the
3 publisher, is still around. Ah, whether or not Bill
4 Plath's still alive I can't tell you, I really can't
5 say. Ah, the ah, he's not in the bar business. The
6 last I heard, he was still with the opera company and
7 he was a dresser for the stars - he would dress one of
8 the male stars ah ah, every night so that they always
9 looked the same. And always had the right costume for
10 the next act - that's what a dresser is. Backstage at
11 the opera, and ah. I'd like to show you his picture,
12 as a matter of fact.
13 EE: 'Cause it seems that, I mean like, unlike
14 Mattachine or even SIR, that Tavern Guild had specific
15 political aims to try and stop the police harassment.
16 It seemed like they were the ones who, like, had to go
17 and fight the police then.
18 OB: Well, maybe I can't show you his picture - I was
19 sure I had it here.
20 EE: Is that Queen Elizabeth there?
21 OB: That's Queen Elizabeth - Queen Elizabeth showing
22 off purple shoes (pause). There's Dick as Sir Walter
23 Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots
24 and her ah -
25 EE: And where did you get this costume from?

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1 OB: I made it.
 2 EE: My god, how did you learn how to do this?
 3 OB: I just got a sewing machine and set it here; I
 4 got a - this is ah, this is the costume for Theta
 5 Berra as Salome, or Salome.
 6 EE: The dance of the seven veils. (pause) so you
 7 shaved and everything for this.
 8 OB: Oh yeah. This is a New Year's Eve party; this
 9 is at Bill Plath's house, as a matter of fact, and I
 10 was done as Carmen there (pause). This was the last
 11 one; this is where we were the Merry Monarchs; we were
 12 all done as different colored kings. This was the red
 13 king, getting ready, a red beard.
 14 EE: Cool! So it must, they must have been a great
 15 fun party in and by itself, just putting these these
 16 OB: Oh, the costumes on (pause)
 17 EE: So were you very campy then before you started
 18 doing drag or was this -
 19 OB: Well, I'm not sure what you mean by that.
 20 EE: I'm not sure what I mean by that either, I
 21 guess, I don't know. I just mean, doing drag or
 22 (inaudible) for a night would make you - you'd have to
 23 have some kind of inner qualities to pull that off.
 24 OB: Yeah, a lot of booze.
 25 EE: That would help, that would help, yes.

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1 EE: And this was taken in this room here?
 2 OB: Yeah, when we had different, the different
 3 drapes up. Oh, here's Dick as Luigi. Luigi wore
 4 this sort of hood in the comics. See you never saw
 5 her hair and and ah an apron, and a black skirt, and
 6 sort of a sweater thing. That that was the two of us
 7 for that; we got Second Place, as a matter of fact, as
 8 the comics. Those were kind of old comics; you
 9 wouldn't remember them too far back. Those were in
 10 the days of Little Orphan Annie, and I doubt, I doubt
 11 you saw much Little Orphan Annie. At any rate, let's
 12 dump that - this is taking away from our, our
 13 discussion.
 14 EE: Oh no, no, not at all. This is about
 15 remembering so this is, this is -
 16 OB: We have actually, we had about three years of
 17 drag and then it got to be too much of a chore, it's a
 18 real chore to do it unless you're into it and I was
 19 not into it other than the fun of doing it during that
 20 time.
 21 EE: Those costumes were so elaborate, I mean, that
 22 must have been hours and hours of work.
 23 OB: It was a lot of work. I wore out a sewing
 24 machine doing it. The ah, and expensive ah - the
 25 Queen Elizabeth thing was about \$800 when I finished.

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1 OB: Ah, this is Jim at an earlier date and myself.
 2 EE: Hmm, that hardly looks like him. Hardly looks
 3 like you either but
 4 OB: Well, I don't have a picture of Bill Plath after
 5 all. I thought I had him as Queen Elizabeth. There's
 6 my lover at an earlier time. Here he was as The Sheik
 7 when I was doing Theta Berra.
 8 EE: Was there any reason for the gender divisions in
 9 your costumes, I mean, Dick does not want to do drag,
 10 or or, was it something you had to fight for, or
 11 OB: He did drag one time. No, no, he was not much
 12 into that; he let me have the drag part. But he go as
 13 Luigi - we did ah Snuffy Smith and Luigi at one, at
 14 one thing where he came as com. as comic characters
 15 from the comics.
 16 EE: Okay, I'm not familiar with those those comics.
 17 OB: Oh, those are all old, Snuffy Smith - where he
 18 had a bulb, a big bulbous nose. And Luigi was his
 19 wife, - I would put these in order - yeah, that's
 20 Luigi.
 21 EE: Well, this does, this does help a lot to us to
 22 visualize.
 23 OB: How we all were in those days? (pause) At any
 24 rate, there's Snuffy Smith when I, when I was
 25 baldheaded. He wore essentially a

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1
 2 EE: So did this, did this give you a different
 3 impression of what it was like to be a woman. I mean,
 4 did you look at women differently after this
 5 experience?
 6 OB: No, no, no. I didn't think of it that way. I
 7 thought of it as, as an actor putting on a costume and
 8 not, not as a transformation of sex or gender. I had
 9 no, no gender questions; I, I am male, I wanted to be
 10 male, I don't want to be female.
 11 EE: Well yes, I've, I've read comments of some men,
 12 especially of men who don't do drag very often, who
 13 said Well after all, spending the night in high heels,
 14 I can understand why women, you know, don't want to
 15 wear 'em anymore, and things like that.
 16 OB: Yeah well, I can relate that way. Ah -
 17 particularly working Merry Widow, which I thought was
 18 the most restrictive thing, and that was the
 19 (inaudible) but you did a lot of stuff like tape bags
 20 of rice under your - to build up some cleavage and ah,
 21 it's it's weird, but you do all kinds of things.
 22 EE: Wow. Well, that's interesting. And so, well,
 23 this wasn't a thing with the people you hung out with
 24 either? I mean, going in drag?
 25 OB: No, ah, we would do it, we would do it ah, on

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1 Halloween and New Years Eve and the rest of the year
2 we weren't involved. We didn't do that. A lot of
3 people - we'd go to a lot of drag shows, so a lot of -
4 and the days I was going to the bars, a lot of the
5 bars had drag shows, little acts that they'd do in
6 drag. Ah, now, they're deadly dull to me because I
7 don't, I'm not drinking anymore. At that time they
8 were wild; I could have a good time with it but I
9 don't - they're pretty blas now.
10 EE: Well, do you think just changing times make it -
11 well I don't know if if you got -
12 OB: I think there are two things: I think I've
13 gotten older and so I have a different perspective,
14 and I think that the fact that I'm sober and not
15 drinking gives me a much different perspective to it.
16 EE: Well, I was wondering if if back in the late
17 '60s, '69 and those pictures if that was ah, if part
18 of the thrill was because it was so much more risqu
19 than it would be now, when you can like see people
20 riding the bus any day of the week, you know, dressed
21 in drag if that would be part of no longer
22 interesting, that just that things have got so easy
23 and open now that it's lost its thrill.
24 OB: I do remember this that in those days we would
25 like come here to dress. We would all get in the car

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1 known in the gay community. Ah, they've been active
2 for years doing these things. But the Daughters of
3 Bilitis were not a big organization in those days
4 either, they were Del Martin and Lyon, Phyllis,
5 Phyllis Lyon, and that was it. SIR was the biggest
6 organization at the time, the Tavern Guild was the gay
7 bar owners. Now there's the Golden Gate Business
8 Association which is the gay business owners. They're
9 still active, ah, there's the gay American Legion Post
10 that's in San Francisco. The fellow I was just on the
11 phone with just called to remind Dick that there's a
12 meeting this week - he just joined - and that fellow,
13 his name's Perry Wood - ah, and he's one of the
14 officers at the gay American Legion Post - was a
15 member of SIR, was never an office at SIR, but I
16 recognize his name when Dick the letter acknowledging
17 his membership and I asked Dick if it was the same
18 Perry Wood, and he wasn't sure, so when he called, I
19 asked him on - I had the address for Perry Wood. He
20 said yes that's my house. And I said then you're the
21 Perry Wood from SIR, and sure enough it was. Ah,
22 Alexander Hamilton Post is its name, it's the
23 Alexander Hamilton Post of the American Legion, gay
24 American Legion.
25 EE: Do you run into many people from from SIR?

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1 before the garage door would open. The garage door
2 would go open and we'd race out; the garage door would
3 go closed behind us, like the Green Hornet, I don't
4 know if you remember that one? And we would race out
5 of the neighborhood before the neighbors could see us
6 in drag. And then we'd appear at whatever function we
7 were going to. But ah ah, and usually we would start
8 from a gay bar somewhere and have the bus meet us
9 there or the truck. All climb aboard there and go to
10 the place that was having the dance or what not. Ah,
11 we were rather closeted until we were at the function,
12 and then, of course, you couldn't recognize us very
13 well in drag, unless you'd seen us before in drag.
14 EE: Okay, (inaudible) talking about the Tavern
15 Guild. I'm wondering about some of the other groups
16 that were around, ah, if you had anything to do with
17 Daughters of Bilitis or Mattachine Society?
18 OB: Mattachine Society wasn't much of a society, I
19 think less than twelve people, and ah, Hal Call, I
20 guess, and somebody else were involved. And it
21 really, it really wasn't, it was ah, there wasn't much
22 to it in those days. Ah, Daughters of Bilitis was
23 started by Lyons and Del Martin - Martin and Lyons are
24 still around; they're running a women's health center
25 and doing a very good job of it. And they're well

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1 OB: Most of them are in obituaries, unfortunately.
2 Most of the big name people, the Larry Littlejohn, Jim
3 Foster, ah, I've got his name; I remember the drag
4 name was Madame Sotto Voce, ah, meaning Soft Voice -
5 he did a lot of singing around, and he was
6 instrumental at the beginning of the Gay Men's Chorus.
7 All those people are dead of AIDS now, and I see them
8 in the BAR Obituaries, and I still see them
9 occasionally, but not so often now.
10 During the first five years, I saw a lot of people
11 going that way. But it was our, our generation that
12 were the wildest promiscuous generation and had it not
13 been that Dick and I were more or less monogamous
14 during those years, we would have been part of that
15 parade that went through, but we lucked out; we really
16 did.
17 EE: Well, that kind of leads into another question I
18 have about ah, about getting older. How do you feel
19 about that?
20 OB: Oh, the way everybody else feels; I'd like to
21 slow it down somewhat. And often times I think well I
22 wish I was back where I was before when I could do a
23 lot of things, and I still feel like I can do those
24 things. I feel like I can go out and clean my garden
25 out in one afternoon, which I used to do in the four

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1 hours - I'd have the garden completely weeded and
2 cleaned out; now it takes me three days to do it, and
3 I'm still hurting. So ah, but I think like I can
4 still do those things. I think like I can go, ah,
5 myself and paint one of my vacant apartments and have
6 it done in two days ready to rent. And ah, the
7 matter of fact is that I haven't done that in years
8 and I do try to do it, it really, I'm laid up for a
9 while because I'm sore. So I don't do it anymore; I
10 hire it done. But I think like I can still do those
11 things. But as far as, as my sexual life, I guess the
12 best way to express that is I'm not as good as I once
13 was, but I'm as good once as I ever was. So, that's
14 the way I express that.

15 EE: Now what, do you - what are your plans for the
16 future and what do you see in the years ahead?

17 OB: Oh, we're going to do as much traveling as we
18 can because from my family history, I know that
19 arthritis is going to set in. I've already felt the
20 problems with that. And so before I get to the point
21 where I can't travel, I'm going to do as much
22 traveling as I can.

23 EE: Where do you want to go?

24 OB: Well, we plan trips all the time. We're going
25 on RSVP cruises, we go on Atlantis deals to Mexico and

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1 and then the Mediterranean. And ah, we, we had some
2 interesting experiences, never any bad ones, ah. The
3 first cruise to

4 OB: There's a lot of drinking and what not, but ah,
5 I found out that they have AA meetings on both ships.

6 EE: Well, that's cool; that must have been a recent
7 development.

8 OB: No, they're in the, they're in the daily paper
9 that comes out and they say Friends of Bill W will
10 meet at such and such and such and such a place, and

11 so ah. At, on the very first cruise, we were
12 celebrating our 34th anniversary I guess it was. On
13 the very first cruise we announced at dinner at the

14 table that the reason we were taking this cruise was
15 to celebrate our 34th anniversary. And so, everything
16 was laid out right there. They knew who we were and

17 why we were there (laughs) and we didn't have any
18 problem at all. We had ah, we had one time on a
19 Princess cruise, we had two sisters who were older,

20 change tables on us - we were at a table of eight -
21 and those two changed tables because everybody else

22 were couples at our table, including us, and they
23 decided they could maybe have better fields to plow at
24 another table.

25 EE: Yeah. Were you accepted as a couple at this

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1 we been, we been - we started out with with, Carthage
2 (spelling?) until we found out that that there were
3 gay cruises, so we switched over. We only go to gay
4 cruises 'cause they're the most fun. And we've been
5 on, ah, two or three RSVP cruises. We've been on, ah
6 ah, the Sea Spirit, which is their own little ship.

7 We have booked, for November, we'll be going to Club
8 RSVP, which is Puerto Vallarta - they've rented out a,
9 a resort - it'll be an all gay resort there. And next
10 February we're booked on a cruise out of New Orleans

11 for RSVP that'll land us at New Orleans for the Mardi
12 Gras. And we have, we have booked separately gay bed
13 and breakfast accommodations there for the Mardi Gras,

14 so we'll be there for that. And then in June the Sea
15 Spirit, which is the little ship that RSVP owns, will
16 be going to Alaska, and we're going to do that on a,

17 on a cruise set aside for couples. And we feel very
18 comfortable with this - most of the people there,
19 we're not the oldest and we're not the youngest by

20 far. But ah, ah we're inside that that group, and we
21 feel very comfortable with that and we enjoy it. Ah,
22 we think it's good value as far as money goes, much

23 better value than the Princess Cruises. We started
24 out with them and we did three different Princess
25 cruises. Ah, Alaska first, and then the Caribbean,

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1 table or on these cruises?

2 OB: Well, we announced it when we were celebrating
3 an anniversary, they had to accept us as a couple,
4 yeah. At one cruise, we decided to have the bed made

5 up into a double instead of two singles and after we
6 convinced the cabin boy who spoke better I guess
7 Spanish than he did English, that this is what we

8 wanted, it was perfectly okay (laughs). On the RSVP
9 cruises, of course, it was really - there's no problem
10 at all.

11 EE: Yeah, there's no single beds there.

12 OB: There are single beds yeah, because that's the
13 way most folks are, but ah, ah, they do have cabins
14 with double beds; you book those ahead of time.

15 EE: Well really, when you talk about the, the AA
16 groups on the ships, you go to AA meetings to this
17 day?

18 OB: Ah, yeah, I don't go to as many as I used to,
19 but I still go to at least one a week.

20 EE: Is this a gay AA group or -

21 OB: Yeah, yeah, I go to Trinity Church, to a gay AA
22 group. If I were, as a matter of fact, if I were ah,
23 into religion, Trinity Church would be a good, a good
24 church to go to. I was Episcopalian in my early youth
25 and ah, ah that is an Episcopal church which caters to

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1 gay or bra, or tries to bring in the gay ah community
2 as part of their congregation. And the Reverend
3 Crummy there is gay.
4 EE: Well, you know, see, I don't keep up with
5 religion at all, so I don't even know, know these
6 things so.
7 OB: Yeah, it's not a gay church, but it does have an
8 outreach to gay people. And they do support the gay
9 people, and the Reverend Crummy does perform
10 marriages. These are not widely known about, but they
11 do perform marriages there or have in the past. He
12 may not tomorrow, but he has in the past, I'll put it
13 that way. We've never gone into that sort of thing.
14 We did go to a recommitment ceremony on one of the
15 cruises and become part of that, but we did it not as
16 a marriage ceremony, but as a commitment to each
17 other, a recommitment to each other for our, our
18 partnership.
19 EE: Ah, I just have, I'm running out of specific
20 topics, but I do have, have some general questions if
21 you'll have an answer for them, but ah, what does the
22 term gay community mean to you?
23 OB: The gay community are those people in my town
24 who are gay and actively participating in gay life.
25 It does not include those people who are so closeted

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1 we'll go somewhere, we took one of them to, when the
2 other one was out of town, we took one of them to the
3 Gay Men's Chorus when they were doing their number a
4 while back - that sort of thing. We just don't have
5 an ongoing relationship - I don't have any close
6 lesbian friends, not that I wouldn't want to - I just
7 have never developed a relationship with them. I
8 have, I do rent to them. I have currently ah a
9 lesbian couple that I've rented to recently, and I
10 just lost a lesbian couple that moved recently. And
11 so far so good, you know, as far as that goes.
12 EE: (inaudible) like Queer Nation or ACT-UP and
13 how, and their tactics are used?
14 OB: Alright, I don't agree with 'em, but I don't
15 knock 'em either. They're doing something, ah. I,
16 how am I going to put this, my, yeah, I wouldn't join
17 them, particularly when they ah, when they went to the
18 Catholic cathedral in New York and disrupted the
19 service there. Ah, I would join them if they were
20 marching on, on the White House screaming we need more
21 funds for AIDS patients.
22 Ah, so you know, overall I think they're doing
23 something; I can't agree with all their actions, and
24 so I'd have to be selective about my participation.
25 I, I don't see myself as joining them.

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1 that they refuse to acknowledge their own gayness or
2 gayness of others.
3 EE: And do you feel, you feel part of it?
4 OB: I feel part of the gay community, yes, very
5 definitely so. And that's why we will rent to people
6 with AIDS and so forth; we don't have a problem with
7 that. They have to meet certain criteria just like
8 anybody else, but other than that ah, I have no
9 problem with the fact that they have AIDS.
10 EE: What is your relation with lesbian women, I
11 mean, do you have -
12 OB: Ah, we have had a couple of apartments that
13 we've rented to lesbian women, and I guess Dick's
14 niece is lesbian and, ah, that's the closest
15 relationship we have. We don't, we have a few friends
16 that are lesbian, but other than those very definite
17 close friends, we don't have a relationship with them.
18 Ah Dick maybe more in ALANON because there are more
19 women in ALANON and there are lesbian women in ALANON.
20 Ah, Jim's former wife is a lesbian. He, they married
21 sort of conveniently. And she and her girlfriend are
22 friends of ours through Jim, so they're people we've
23 known a long time. But those are the only, and we
24 don't, we don't, we don't socialize a lot; once in a
25 while we'll do something special, maybe twice a year

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1 EE: Okay. And, I guess ah, my final question would
2 be ah now that you are, you're 64 now, ah, when you
3 walk down the street, like the Castro, do you feel
4 you're regarded differently because of your age or is
5 that part -
6 OB: No, but it would if I were out on the make, if I
7 were out to try to pick someone up. I'm sure it
8 would. But since I'm there, if I'm on the Castro I'm
9 usually with Dick. We're together. I don't, I don't,
10 we don't get, or at least I don't get a feeling of
11 being looked down upon or a feeling of being an old
12 auntie. Ah, but then I'm not there to pick up
13 anybody. I'm sure if I went to the Midnight Sun and
14 tried to arrange a tryst at the bar, it would be a
15 completely different situation. I remember when I
16 was young, I was not favorably impressed by older men.
17 This is one of the, one of the virtues of of being
18 together for a long time. And so you don't get the
19 wrong impression, it's not easy. Dick and I have lots
20 of problems and it's power struggles very often
21 between two males, both of which want their way right
22 now. And so, don't get the impression that you don't
23 have all that that power struggle. That's part of it;
24 we do. Ah.
25 EE: Well, I mean, I think I'm very impressed by your

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1 relationship simply because my own experience with
 2 Ned, you know, it's like there's too much trouble, a
 3 little more trouble than they're worth, you know. So,
 4 it's a, it'd be impossible, I think, for me to give
 5 enough to, to, to sustain a relationship. That, that
 6 seems a very remarkable feat.
 7 OB: I've said to Dick that if anything happened,
 8 that if we split, I would never go into another
 9 relationship. I'd just live a single life. Maybe I
 10 would, maybe I wouldn't find somebody else. My
 11 original thought was I wouldn't get married until I
 12 was thirty and I got married at 28, and I use that
 13 term lightly. I just use it as when we partnered.
 14 EE: Other than having to go through the whole -
 15 OB: Yeah,
 16 EE: Yeah, I understand, I understand. Is there
 17 anything that, anything else that you'd like to say
 18 that we haven't covered?
 19 OB: Not that I can think of, ah. I think, I think
 20 maybe just as a general rule, that I've tried to, or
 21 we've, Dick and I've tried to work by as far as being
 22 a couple is that my thought has been as long as we're
 23 in a productive relationship that's going forward and
 24 not being destructive, that I would continue in the
 25 relationship and at such time as, as I felt that, that

1 it was no longer productive, I would probably
 2 terminate the relationship. And so far, no, we have
 3 our problems, but beyond that we still go forward and
 4 have got a productive relationship between us, and
 5 that's the main thing.
 6 EE: Are you glad you're gay?
 7 OB: I'm not sure; I've never been any other way.
 8 Ah, there are certain advantages. Things I do miss, I
 9 miss not leaving, ah children, not having children and
 10 not having that part of life. Ah, if, if I were just
 11 starting out, if I were your age, and, I would
 12 consider adoption to fulfill that area of my life that
 13 I missed. In the days when we could've done that, it
 14 was not to be considered. But I understand today it
 15 is. That more and more gay parents are, are adopting.
 16 And I would love to adopt an older boy who knows he's
 17 gay and raise him as a son and provide for him and so
 18 forth and so on.
 19 EE: And provide him a safe and supportive and loving
 20 home.
 21 OB: Yeah.
 22 EE: That would be cool.
 23 OB: Yeah, I, it's too late now for us; we're too
 24 old. We've reached that point where we're not
 25 interested in, in giving that much of ourselves to a

1 young person.
 2 EE: Anything else?
 3 OB: No, not really.
 4 EE: Okay,
 5 END OF TAPE 3, END OF INTERVIEW
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