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2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC
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6 Interview with Sarah Anne Davis
7 Date of Birth: Est 1923
8 By Interviewer: JoAnn Castillo
9 Date: 7/7/80
10 GLHS OHP 80-002, Lesbian ID
11
12 Tape 1 of 3, Side 1 = 1S1:000-099
13 JC: All right, this is July 7, 1980, and as I
14 understand it, the use of these tapes is for
15 educational and historical purposes and people named
16 herein the Narrator will annotate it and it will be
17 preserved.
18 SD: Yes, I agree with that and yeah, and there will be
19 a note as to who I am and, you know, who said this but
20 just for general purposes, I'd prefer anonymity.
21 JC: Okay, that's fine. Okay well, let's see, in the
22 general framework that I laid out before, it's hard
23 for me to figure out how to start, you know. I guess
24 I'll try a new tack. I have in my one, my great
25 experience, my one previous interview, I sort of

1 relationships were in the Navy with women.
2 JC: When was this when you were in the Navy?
3 SD: I was in the Navy in the Second World War from
4 1941 to '43. I was located in Florida and was trained
5 as an aviation machinist's mate, which is not a usual
6 women's task either. I was sent to school and I have a
7 lot of mechanical aptitude so I was slotted as a
8 mechanic and was a good one, and lived in the barracks
9 with lots of other women. And eventually related to
10 them. In the film, 'Word is Out,' Pat Bond talks about
11 the Army and the purge in the Army. And we had similar
12 investigations in the Navy, and I remember I was
13 interrogated and was scared to death and just lied
14 through my teeth and stopped running around with the
15 women I'd been running around with, and felt very
16 isolated. I don't know if they were interrogated too.
17 There was very obviously a clique in the Recreation
18 Department and the people played softball and played
19 basketball. I wasn't really in with them, and I felt
20 maybe I was pointed out by them as someone who was
21 doing those awful things.
22 JC: Never attention from men?
23 SD: Yeah, and I never talked with them about it so I
24 don't know what the reality of the situation was. I
25 know that I just withdrew from any contact with any

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1 started at the beginning, where you were born, your
2 parents. I think what I'd rather do at this time is
3 ask more if you could think about what were the
4 turning points in your life. What were important
5 turning points in your life and if you could talk
6 about that, as a way to start.
7 SD: Okay, I've been thinking about this for a long
8 time myself and it'll take a little while to get
9 plugged in so I may ramble. I think as far as my
10 sexuality goes, and factors determining that, as a
11 youngster, I always was a tomboy. I was well-
12 coordinated and I used to play football with the boys
13 and be very active and climb trees and do things that
14 little girls usually didn't do. I had an older sister
15 and then I had a brother ten years younger who wasn't
16 much of a playmate, so I was sort of the boy in the
17 family until my brother came along. Well, late turning
18 points, I can't think of any real early ones right
19 now. But I joined the Navy after high school and after
20 I started college, I joined the Navy and that's where
21 I first became as a homosexual. I'd had crushes and
22 girlfriends in high school but never any overt
23 relationship. I did date boys, I did go to dances with
24 boys and neck and pet and engage in lovemaking with
25 boys in my class. The first important love

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1 females that I was having at that time.
2 JC: You were in the Army for three years, I mean, the
3 Navy?
4 SD: Navy, please. Yeah, three years. Two years, eight
5 months and eight days, something like that. No, the
6 wartime it was for duration, you sign up for the
7 duration of the war, and the war had been over a while
8 and I finally decided, gee, what am I doing here? It's
9 too easy, you know, I had an easy job that I liked. I
10 was working on the admiral's staff at the time. I had
11 gone from a mechanic to a yeoman, a secretary, in the
12 Public Relations, which I liked very much. And I
13 thought well, you know, this is too easy. I had
14 medical care, dental care, room and board and a
15 uniform. What am I doing here? And so I got out and
16 came out to California and went to school.
17 JC: You went back to college?
18 SD: Yeah. I hadn't finished college when I enlisted; I
19 just had a year.
20 JC: But you were born and raised in the East?
21 SD: I was born in New York and my father died when I
22 was ten years old and my mother and sister and infant
23 brother and myself, moved to her home in Iowa with her
24 mother and her sister. And so I went to high school in
25 Iowa and then I went to college one year in Antioch in

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1 Yellow Springs, Ohio. And then I joined the Navy. I
2 didn't know what I wanted to do or be or what
3 particular studies interested me, so I thought one way
4 to escape all that was to join the Navy.
5 JC: Were they actively recruiting women at the time?
6 SD: Oh yeah, sure, the women were, civilian women were
7 ferrying aircraft. Women were going into the Army, the
8 Navy and the Marine Corps. And I always liked the
9 Navy. I always liked swimming and boats and so I chose
10 the Navy and enlisted, and then went home and told my
11 mother to sign the papers because I wasn't old enough.
12 I guess I wasn't 19 or 20, whatever it was, and she
13 signed them reluctantly and so I went into the Navy.
14 And I had a good time, I had a real good time in the
15 Navy. It was no hardship for me at all, marvelous.
16 JC: When was the interrogations? Was that near the
17 end?
18 SD: It was near the end, yeah. I started out, I went
19 to Hunter College for boot camp, went to Norman,
20 Oklahoma, for aviation machinist's mate school. And I
21 was assigned to Vero Beach, Florida. Then I went to
22 Jacksonville, Florida, and it was at Jacksonville,
23 Florida, that the interrogation was, after I'd been in
24 for a while, for a couple years.
25 JC: How did you choose California when you came out?

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1 What reason?
2 SD: I chose Stanford. I friend that I was with at the
3 time was going to Stanford and I thought well,
4 Stanford, that sounds find. I didn't have any
5 particular desire to go any place and Stanford sounded
6 marvelous so. What we did was we got a hop on a Navy
7 plane and came out here to Moffett Field and enrolled
8 at Stanford, and caught the same plane back to
9 Jacksonville. Then got out of the Navy and came out
10 here and went to school.
11 JC: So, did you live in Palo Alto?
12 SD: Yeah, they had a Veterans' Village there at the
13 time, which was a very nice arrangement. I lived there
14 and the roommates I had there, well, four of us
15 shared. We made a suite out of two rooms and the women
16 are still in this area. I see them, not often, but we
17 do relate. Two of them are married and the other one
18 isn't as far as I know.
19 JC: And how'd you end up in Los Angeles? How long did
20 you stay in the Bay Area?
21 SD: Oh, I went to Stanford and I went with a lover I
22 had from the Navy and she was living on the campus and
23 I was living in the Veterans' Village. And I got
24 involved with lots of other women and didn't want to
25 maintain the relationship with the woman that I had

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1 come to Stanford with. And I was very mixed about the
2 whole thing, and finally went to the school's shrink.
3 And it was interesting, at that time I was smoking. I
4 was terribly nervous about confronting this man with
5 my problem.
6 IS1:100-199
7 And I was smoking cigarettes by the dozens and walking
8 back and forth and was just very, very upset, and went
9 into the shrink's office and he was lying on the
10 couch and I sat on the chair. I thought well, this is
11 different. And he didn't offer me much support. He
12 just said well, you shouldn't be doing that anyway. So
13 I left Stanford and went to USC in Los Angeles. And a
14 woman, in fact one of my roommates at Stanford, had
15 lived down there and she went down there with me and
16 found me a place to live and introduced me to a few
17 people. And I enrolled in USC, and that's where I
18 first got acquainted with the gay community. Because
19 at Stanford, it was just relationships I had with
20 other people. There wasn't particularly a community.
21 It was just isolated individuals that I was relating
22 to and feeling terribly guilty about it. And upset
23 enough about it to want to do something about this.
24 There certainly was no community that I knew of at
25 that time at Stanford. I used to go to Alouette's and

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1 Ricky's and a couple places.
2 JC: Down there?
3 SD: Yeah, but they were college places and they
4 weren't, certainly weren't any meeting place for women
5 or for gay people. And I did a lot of drinking at that
6 time too.
7 JC: What did your family think about you doing all
8 this traveling around so far away from them?
9 SD: Oh, I never, you know, had a lot of young people.
10 Well, the last five or six years, I've been involved
11 more with young people in the San Francisco gay
12 community and more with community than I ever have in
13 my life. And these young people come back and say
14 well, I just told my mother that I'm gay. I thought,
15 wow, I never did that, you know, I never did. In fact
16 we don't talk about it in my family. I have a nephew
17 who's gay and my sister worries about him a lot. He
18 used to live here with me and he's a child of the '60s
19 whose had a lot of difficulty finding himself or
20 finding what he wants to do in the world. And has been
21 into dope and decreased mobility or, you know, his
22 ambition is very low. And he lives quite well and does
23 what he wants to do which is climb mountains in
24 Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He could find a worse place to
25 live. Anyway, we've never talked about his lifestyle

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1 or my lifestyle with my sister. And I never did with
 2 my mother. My mother's no longer living. I think she
 3 knew, I think she knew that my lifestyle was
 4 different, that I wasn't going to get married. My
 5 sister and brother got married and had kids, and I
 6 never did. I was sort of the star, you know, I went
 7 off to Europe or to Africa or here or there. And they
 8 stayed home and raised their babies and fought with
 9 their husband or wife or whatever. And the kids. So I
 10 was a special person. But one of my nieces just got
 11 married very recently and her brother who, of course,
 12 is my other nephew, his wife and I sat next to each
 13 other at one of the dinners and we had probably one of
 14 the most honest conversations I've ever had about
 15 myself and my relationship to the family. And she's -
 16 kids are much more open and honest than we ever were.
 17 You know, there was always a big facade and not
 18 talking about personal feelings or about your
 19 sexuality, particularly if it was different.
 20 JC: Yeah. Well, about the thinking in terms of the
 21 period and the war and after the war, that was a lot
 22 of social mobility, that there were a lot of people
 23 moving around and leaving home. And Alan has even
 24 dubbed it 'The Coming Out Experience of America,' in
 25 World War Two because so many people were displaced

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1 I was sitting in the barracks in Florida. And this one
 2 woman that I admired greatly, she was a little older
 3 than I and a beautiful body and was a tennis player
 4 and very articulate and very up and a lot of fun. And
 5 I just adored her. And we were sitting next to each
 6 other on the couch with our feet propped up on the
 7 table, and she started stroking my leg. And I thought,
 8 wow, what's all of this and I got just terribly
 9 excited about it. I might add, also, there was never a
 10 lot of physical affection or love in the family. In
 11 fact, as a youngster I think I remember the warmth of
 12 petting a horse more than any human closeness. And
 13 anyway, this woman, I just was instantly enchanted
 14 with this woman and had a lot of sexual attraction for
 15 her. And eventually we got in bed together and we
 16 never talked about it but we had this mad, mad love
 17 affair. And I just thought, well, this is the way it's
 18 going to be forever and it was after this that I was
 19 transferred - this was in Vero Beach - I was
 20 transferred to Jacksonville. And I still would call
 21 her or write to her or meet her frequently (phone
 22 rings, recorder turned off momentarily). Okay. So I'd
 23 been related to this woman in Vero Beach for a couple
 24 months anyway. Then I was transferred to Jacksonville
 25 Naval Air Station.

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1 and taken from home and there were a lot of one-sex
 2 institutions in the work places and the men and the
 3 women in the armed forces.
 4 SD: Yeah, that's a good analysis, 'cause it was for
 5 me. I think my mother was upset that I left home but
 6 she never complained and she never put any leash on
 7 me. She encouraged all of us to go to college and get
 8 an education and be self-reliant. I know she would
 9 have been happier if one of us had stayed there to
 10 take care of her, but we didn't and she lived to be 82
 11 and she was a tough old gal. And she never, well, she
 12 never approved of anything I did so it didn't make a
 13 lot of difference whether I was traveling to
 14 California or going into the Navy. She had a hard time
 15 approving of us. So I didn't feel any restraint. I
 16 felt I was able to do what I wanted to do and I,
 17 fortunately, had enough money to do what I wanted to
 18 do. So that made it a little easier too.
 19 JC: Oh, I'm sure. Now I'm wondering when you in the
 20 Navy and you said you had your first relationships at
 21 that time. Could you talk about that some and how that
 22 came to pass, what it felt like to talk to these women
 23 about it?
 24 SD: Well, the very first, probably the most important
 25 initial relationship that I ever had with a woman, was

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1 1S1:200-299
 2 And again used to meet her frequently and write to her
 3 daily. Then the interrogation came about and I was
 4 terrified. I thought our letters had been intercepted
 5 and that she'd be on the list also. So I didn't try to
 6 make contact with her (phone rings, recorder turned
 7 off momentarily). Okay.
 8 JC: Okay, so you were interrogated and you were afraid
 9 that your friend would be found out.
 10 SD: All right. So this just cut any relationship with
 11 anybody off and I was really devastated and scared.
 12 JC: Did you ever talk to anyone else about it or did
 13 you bear it alone?
 14 SD: No, I talked to this one woman about it and she
 15 said that she hadn't heard anything and she didn't
 16 think anything was going on as far as she knew. So we
 17 continued to see each other but not as often. And the
 18 other people that I'd been really friendly with, the
 19 relationships just were cut off completely.
 20 JC: Did you or she talk about the fact that what you
 21 were doing was not socially acceptable and how you
 22 felt about that or was that not a topic of
 23 conversation?
 24 SD: We didn't talk about it very much. She had said
 25 that she had never related to a woman before and we

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1 enjoyed each other tremendously. We didn't talk about
2 what we were doing, no, we just did it and felt good
3 about it. And then I think she felt some guilt; I
4 certainly did. She was, what, ten years older than I
5 anyway. After, let's see, on one leave I took her
6 home. I took her to visit. She was from New York and I
7 took her to visit friends of my family and this was a
8 very uncomfortable situation for our host and hostess.
9 I was just so enthralled with her that I wasn't too
10 worried about what anybody else was thinking, and she
11 was very uncomfortable in that situation. I expected
12 to go to her home and she wouldn't let me. Then after
13 the war, I met her in New York expecting again to
14 resume some sort of relationship and she just cut me
15 off.

16 JC: So she wasn't the one you went to Stanford with?
17 That was another friend.

18 SD: That was another friend. That was a roommate I had
19 in the Navy. It was with whom I was related sexually.

20 JC: And so in Stanford you had a group of friends that
21 you ran with, many of whom were like-minded.

22 SD: Yeah, it wasn't so much a group. I think, let's
23 see, there were three women that I was relating to and
24 I was feeling very nervous about this because they
25 were sort of clandestine affairs and I was pretty much

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1 of a hotshot and I didn't want them to find out what
2 was going on. And so this made me more nervous. There
3 wasn't, I mean, it wasn't a group because nobody knew
4 what was going on hopefully. You know, as far as a gay
5 group, no. The women I ran around with, well one of
6 them, wasn't gay at all and we just would go on
7 vacation together and swim and dance and have fun, but
8 it wasn't a sexual relationship.

9 JC: Were you seeing any men at this time as a cover?

10 SD: I was but I didn't particularly think of it as a
11 cover. I just, there were a couple men interested in
12 me and I thought, well, I have to do this too. And
13 they were real nice guys, and one of them wanted to
14 marry me and I didn't want to marry him. And the other
15 one wanted to have an affair with me and I didn't want
16 to do that either. Again, this wasn't anything I'd
17 thought about. I decided well, this is the way I'm
18 going to behave in this situation, whatever. Before
19 the war, when I was in Antioch, I was relating to a
20 guy and sleeping with him regularly. And not really
21 enjoying that very much. It wasn't a good relationship
22 at all and that's when I was drinking a lot also.

23 JC: Was it unusual for a woman to be sleeping with her
24 boyfriend at that time?

25 SD: Not at Antioch. As a matter of fact, it was called

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1 'the school of free love and communism.' at the time
2 that I was there. It was very loose. There were men
3 and women who related fairly openly. There weren't
4 mixed bars but there was a looser mode of behavior
5 between men and women. And I was running with a lot of
6 women there but I wasn't relating to them.

7 JC: So what was it like in L.A., when you moved to
8 L.A.?

9 SD: Well, I was trying to think about that. Somehow I
10 got acquainted with some women and I remember, let's
11 see, okay, I had to get a job or I felt I had to get a
12 job, so I went around and applied at different places
13 and got a job at a drive-in as a counter person. And a
14 woman used to come in every day and order breakfast
15 and have coffee and we'd chat and I didn't think
16 anything about it. Then I got fired because of what
17 the boss said was my relationship with this woman,
18 which was non-existent. And that sort of blew me away.
19 So I thought well, all right, if that's the way it is,
20 so I went to one of the gay clubs and asked for a job.
21 I don't remember which one it was right now. And the
22 owner was more interested in my sexual behavior than
23 anything else and I thought, well, I don't really want
24 to get into that either.

25 JC: The owner was a man or a woman?

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1 SD: A man.

2 JC: And were the clubs primarily mixed or men or?

3 SD: Well, let's see, there was one where Beverly Shaw
4 used to sing on La Brea. I can't think of the name of
5 that. That was mixed. The biggest one was the one
6 where I got really, found out what the gay life was
7 all about in Los Angeles. It was the Tropical Village
8 which was in Santa Monica, which no longer exists.
9 ISI:300-399

10 And I eventually got a job teaching swimming for the
11 City. Again, one of the women at the pool, I was at
12 the Eagle Rock Pool, which is a beautiful pool, one of
13 the young women got a crush on me and her parents
14 raised hell. And there was absolutely, you know, I was
15 not into seducing young women. And this upset me too.
16 I was what's this all about? And so I enrolled at USC
17 in the Art Department and I had found the Tropic
18 Village. I'm not quite sure how I found it. And this
19 place was the pits. It was jam packed full of mostly
20 gay women. And the women were doing a conga line all
21 around the place and I'd never seen anything like this
22 before. So I was picked up by a woman that I later
23 moved in with. And so I'd go to school in the daytime,
24 this very respectable university and attend classes
25 and do my work. And at night I'd go to the Tropic

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1 Village and hoot, holler and dance and have a good
2 time. And so I moved in with this woman and stayed
3 there for a couple years. And it was sort of a place
4 where call girls lived. And they were gay and their
5 partners may or may not have been call girls. The
6 woman I was with was not a call girl but she knew them
7 all. And that was sort of exciting and it was
8 certainly different. I'd never done anything like that
9 before. And it was, well sexually, my partner, I'd
10 never - again, that was completely a new experience.
11 And it kept me there for a long time. And then, oh, at
12 school I didn't relate to any of the women at the
13 college. I didn't relate to any of the women. We were
14 just friends. My sex life at the Tropic Village and at
15 the place where I lived in Hollywood with these
16 people, this group of people.
17 JC: Can we talk a little more about the Tropic
18 Village, what it looked like inside and that kind of
19 stuff? What the people looked like, how did the women
20 dress, were they role-defined at that time?
21 SD: The Tropic Village and the place where Beverly
22 Shaw sang were where the gay women hung out. And at
23 that time the women, the roles were butch and fem and
24 one of the women usually wore slacks and the other
25 woman wore a dress. And usually often the fem was

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1 JC: Juke box?
2 SD: Yes, juke box, yeah. And again, I met a young
3 woman there who was some relation to the owner.
4 1S1:400-425
5 She was looking for a place to live and I had a garage
6 apartment, and so she came and lived with me, and we
7 weren't sexual partners at all. And she was just
8 wonderful and I loved her and then she went off
9 somewhere. Another woman I met who, I think now is
10 dead, Bobo, who was a remarkable character. She kept
11 turning up here and there, very vivacious, very
12 energetic, very cultured woman. She's from a rich
13 family and became an incurable alcoholic and
14 eventually died. But I met her in that time.
15 JC: This is in the late '40s now, right?
16 SD: Yeah. Actually in the '50s. In '57 I came up here.
17 Okay, so after the war, I was at Stanford, then I was
18 at USC and then I came up here in '57.
19 JC: Why'd you leave L.A.?
20 SD: I finished school and I didn't like any of the
21 jobs I was offered.
22 JC: What kind of jobs?
23 SD: Well, I graduated as a physical therapist.
24 End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 3
25 1S2:000-099

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1 really dressed up, makeup, costume jewelry, heels, the
2 whole number. And the butch was really butch. In the
3 Tropic Village, it was more, I don't think it was as
4 much couples there. It was just, as I remember, women
5 were all in slacks and the roles weren't quite so
6 clearly defined. Maybe the hair styles would identify
7 a butch or a fem. I was never quite into this person
8 has to be a fem or I'm not going to dance with them.
9 And I never quite knew which I was, although I felt I
10 was more butchy than fem. But the woman that I ended
11 up with was more butchy than fem too. I remember once,
12 it wasn't at the Tropic Village, it was a different on
13 the beach, two women got in a fight over another
14 woman. And boy, they were real fisticuffs and they
15 were just bashing each other. This was a real shock to
16 me, and they seemed to be getting it on though,
17 Someone wanted to stop them and they said, naw, they
18 do this all the time. Nobody got terribly hurt but
19 they were sure punching each other. That was scary.
20 JC: Was there dancing at the Tropic Village?
21 SD: Yes, yes, women danced together. Then there were
22 group dances where the whole line would dance. It was
23 a dingy place, a dance floor and booths and a bar.
24 JC: Did they serve food?
25 SD: I don't remember food, I don't remember food.

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1 JC: And you were offered a job?
2 SD: Yeah, and I didn't like her and I wasn't strong
3 enough to say, look, I don't like you and I don't want
4 your job. And I wanted to come to Vallejo anyway to
5 work at the Kaiser Rehabilitation Center because they
6 were doing some innovative physical therapy techniques
7 and I wanted to learn those. So I came up there as a
8 student and then I stayed. And then I moved to San
9 Francisco from there.
10 JC: And you traveled alone?
11 SD: Yeah.
12 JC: Was that unusual for a woman to be traveling
13 alone?
14 SD: Well, it wasn't for me.
15 JC: I'm trying to think, Win did a lot of traveling
16 alone too.
17 SD: In fact even recently when I went back to the
18 Midwest to visit my sister, I went by myself. Well, my
19 sister, she's about sixty I guess, a little older than
20 I am. And her friends, I would be introduced to her
21 friends and she would say, 'Oh, Sarah just came from
22 California.' They'd say, 'Alone?' I'd say, 'Why yes.'
23 And so even now it's surprising for women to be
24 traveling alone.
25 JC: Yeah, I know when I traveled in Europe, it was

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1 very unusual and even when I went to Mexico, I was
2 traveling with a woman friend, and there were hardly
3 any women traveling alone together. We met maybe four
4 or five.
5 SD: Recently?
6 JC: Yeah, two years ago.
7 SD: Well, five or six years ago, I went to Mexico by
8 myself and I was in Puerto Vallarta and I was in the
9 call booths where people call the States. I met a lot
10 young people there. They said oh, come with us; we're
11 going over to Yucatan or something. I didn't go with
12 them; they seemed to be traveling together, a group of
13 them. Yeah, well I think my whole, most of my life,
14 I've been alone. And that's not been much fun. But,
15 although when I went to Africa, I was with the Peace
16 Corps and I went with a friend, and I think that
17 probably was a first, which was sort of nice. And
18 after I moved up to Vallejo, to the Rehab Center, I
19 met a woman at Marin. College of Marin, and we were
20 together for twelve years and we traveled all over the
21 world together, the two of us.
22 JC: How'd you meet her?
23 SD: Well, I was in a class, I was in a pottery class.
24 Let's see, I'd left Vallejo and I'd moved in with a
25 friend in Sausalito and I was taking a class in

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1 their kids. And we used to have big dinner parties and
2 entertain 15 or 16 people. And it wasn't a gay
3 community and we didn't go to gay clubs and we didn't
4 have gay girlfriends at first.
5 JC: At this time, did you read any lesbian novels, did
6 you have any particular thing, movie stars or whatever
7 that were, you know, your idols.
8 SD: Role models or anything? I remember reading 'The
9 Well of Loneliness' when I was in high school or when
10 I was much younger.
11 JC: How'd you get a hold of it?
12 SD: I don't know, I don't know, someone must have
13 given to me.
14 JC: Well, it really made a big splash, there was a lot
15 of publicity with that. The only reason I ask is that
16 because through the '50s and into the early '60s, a
17 huge number of lesbian paperback novels were printed.
18 SD: I was into Alan Watts. I wasn't into the gay
19 thing. I was never too concerned about finding gay
20 people or acknowledging my sexuality or being upfront
21 about my relationship. I felt everybody knew but we
22 didn't talk about it. And the women I sailed with, we
23 never talked about it. So it was, you know, again it
24 was a part of my life that I didn't expose or didn't
25 talk about or didn't enjoy with other people or share

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1 pottery at the College of Marin and this woman came in
2 and sat down next to me on the bench of the potter's
3 wheel and started talking to me and she had nice
4 sparkley blue eyes and she asked me out for lunch or
5 dinner or something. And I said well yeah, okay. So I
6 went to her house for dinner and I stayed for twelve
7 years.
8 JC: Oh, my word. A romantic deal. And you were working
9 at Vallejo still?
10 SD: No, I'd left Vallejo and I was working at St.
11 Joseph's hospital here in San Francisco.
12 JC: Were you living in The City?
13 SD: No, I was living in Sausalito and I'd commute
14 every day to the hospital.
15 JC: Well, talk to me some about the places you went,
16 what did you do for recreation?
17 SD: The two of us? Well, again, we were pretty much
18 two people in the world. We weren't part of the gay
19 community. We entertained a lot but it was a mixed
20 crowd. She had a professional job downtown here in San
21 Francisco and a lot of friends. And I, at that time,
22 I'd started sailing and I was in a group of women
23 sailors and all of the women had husbands except
24 myself and one other. And I became very good friends
25 with a couple of the women and their husbands and

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1 with other people. And let's see, during that 12-year
2 period, I went back to school at San Francisco State
3 and went in the Art Department. And there I met other
4 women and I've always been sought out; I've never been
5 a seeker. In fact when I first came to San Francisco,
6 this goes back to when I was working in Vallejo, when
7 I came up from Los Angeles, I had the name of one
8 person in San Francisco, and I phoned them. And I was
9 out at the Palace of the Legion of Honor which I love
10 that place. It's just very beautiful, and I was out
11 there and so I called this number and the woman said
12 Well, I'm just moving but come on over. So I went over
13 and she was just moving but her roommate wasn't. So,
14 again, I moved in with the roommate and this was my
15 weekend party place and I was drinking at the time; so
16 was the roommate. So we were sort of a drunken pair
17 but we enjoyed each other thoroughly and had a good
18 relationship. And I would go up to Vallejo and work
19 during the week and come down here and party all
20 weekend. And so that went on for a while. And after I
21 started working at the hospital, I started out as a
22 student in Vallejo and then I got a job at the
23 hospital. They sent me down to South San Francisco to
24 work for someone who was on vacation. So I was in the
25 Physical Therapy Department there working and the X-

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1 ray technician comes in and says, hey, let's go out
2 and have a drink. And I said oh, all right, and she
3 turned out to be one of the leaders of the gay
4 community here and so I just met everybody.
5 JC: This is when, it might be '58?
6 SD: This was, yeah, yeah, '57, '58. Well, drinking was
7 a large part of everything that was going on and I am
8 not a good drinker. I mean, I get drunk and pass out
9 and forget so I decided that that wasn't a good way to
10 live. So I withdrew from that, but that was one way I
11 met a lot of people and saw The City and found out
12 what was going on and where people went and what they
13 were doing.
14 JC: What was your impression of that group of people.
15 SD: Well, they were pretty fast for me. I guess I
16 wasn't able to keep with the booze and so I had to
17 withdraw and sort of revamp and decide. But it was
18 real fast and real colorful and people lived in
19 gorgeous places and had their own businesses. It was a
20 fast brief twirl.
21 JC: Were there clubs that you went to at times?
22 SD: There was some over in North Beach, I think, at
23 that time. We used to go to the Spaghetti Factory on
24 Sunday afternoons and then there were other clubs
25 where the Beatniks would meet and read their poetry.

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1 to stand outside of the Tropic Village and complain
2 about what a terrible place it was and try to get
3 people not to go in. But the cops never bothered the
4 place while I was there. I don't remember being
5 harassed by police; in fact I don't think I ever was
6 harassed by police. I believe I was harassed more by
7 other people who identified me as something that I
8 didn't understand.
9 JC: Like being fired from the cafe?
10 SD: Yeah.
11 JC: Okay, so this interlude with these people was
12 before you met your lover in Marin. So when you moved
13 in with her, you didn't keep contact with these other
14 clubs.
15 SD: No, we had our own little life on the hill and it
16 was not particularly involved with the gay crowd.
17 JC: Did you continue to work in San Francisco for
18 after twelve years?
19 SD: No, I was fired from my job at Vallejo for reasons
20 I'm not sure of, and I was fired from St. Joseph's. So
21 I thought, you know, I don't want to do this anymore.
22 So I went back to school to get a degree in art. When
23 I first went to USC, I was in the Art Department and
24 then I got a degree in Occupational Therapy, then
25 Physical Therapy. So I thought well, okay, let's go

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1 ISI:100-199
2 And there was a club on Alder Place, something, a
3 little alleyway, there was a club. And there was one
4 on Broadway, Tess's, Mona's, Mona's, yeah.
5 JC: Let's see what I have on this list. I don't know,
6 I haven't seen it. All right, if you don't have them
7 on. I just got contact lenses.
8 SD: Oh. Finocchio's, Ann's 440, I met Ann. And the
9 Paper Doll, I remember. Yes, I remember Miss Smith's
10 Tea Room.
11 JC: Did you used to go there?
12 SD: Mm hm.
13 JC: What was it like?
14 SD: It was a bar. It was in North Beach off of Grant
15 Avenue I think. And I can't tell you too much about
16 it. I do remember being there and the people that I
17 was with would always say more about Miss Smith's Tea
18 Room. 'Cause, you know, I was here usually just for
19 weekends. I just remember being there and Ann's 440.
20 And I knew of Finocchio's; I don't know if I went
21 there.
22 JC: Yeah, this was in San Francisco and I think these
23 two are also in Oakland. Were you aware of raids on
24 the bars?
25 SD: No. I never was involved, even in L.A. People used

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1 back and do the art scene again. So I met a lot of gay
2 people at San Francisco State at that time, and they
3 became friends and they used to come out to the house.
4 And actually that was a time when my lover and I began
5 having differences and began running around with other
6 people. She did; I didn't for some reason. I don't
7 know why. But she got interested in my classmates and
8 moved out with one of the classmates and this was
9 very, very, very difficult. And it led to our
10 separation. So gay people seemed to be more of a
11 threat than a support.
12 JC: Did you stay in Marin at that time?
13 SD: After we separated, I moved to Sausalito and a
14 friend that I had known from Los Angeles, an ex-lover
15 of hers was coming up to San Francisco so she and I
16 got involved with each other and we went off to Africa
17 in the Peace Corps. So I went from -
18 JC: When was this?
19 SD: This was in '71. And so we were together for five
20 years and then we split. And then I had the group of
21 young people move in my house and I wasn't relating to
22 anybody specifically. I wasn't relating with anybody
23 sexually. I was enjoying the young people. That's when
24 I first found out about women's music and I first
25 found out about, oh, lots of things. When I moved here

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1 to San Francisco, I got into the food co-ops and the
2 community garden and to the women's movement. And that
3 hasn't been too long ago. That's been within the past
4 seven years.

5 JC: What led you to join the Peace Corps?

6 SD: Well, again, I was telling my nieces and nephews,
7 why don't get off your rear-ends and go out and do
8 something in the world? And see what's going on. And
9 they were interested in doing that. I figured I was
10 the one that wanted to do it so I joined the Peace
11 Corps and it was a good way to get out of what I was
12 doing. With the relation broken up, things were a
13 little at loose ends and so I applied to join the
14 Peace Corps and my friend applied also, and we stated
15 that we wanted to be together. And I got an offer to
16 go to Korea. And she's a teacher so she got an offer
17 to go there also but we would have been 300 miles away
18 and so we said no, we don't want to go to Korea. The
19 next offer came from Swaziland and we were located
20 about 50 miles away, and so we went to Swaziland. And
21 eventually I ended up living in the same school
22 compound where she was, and I worked in the hospital
23 and she worked in the schools. And she was very active
24 politically. She really wanted to change the world.
25 And I wasn't that interested as long as life was

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1 print it. So the story was printed in the Swaziland
2 paper and were asked to leave the Peace Corps.

3 JC: Did it get printed anywhere else?

4 SD: I don't know if it got printed in New York or
5 London, I don't know. But I wasn't, as I say
6 initially, I didn't really want to get kicked out of
7 the Peace Corps, but then I thought, wow, this is
8 great, getting kicked out for circulating a peace
9 petition. This was the irony of the situation, sort of
10 tickled me. And it took them about eight months to get
11 us out because the Peace Corps doctor wasn't there and
12 we had to have tests and he was not going to be back
13 in the country. So that was okay. And during that
14 time, we became sort of honorary people in the
15 community. Gee, you women did that? You're really
16 brave. And Swaziland's very small and two American
17 women became very noticeable. It was a good - I'm glad
18 we did it now. But I was real scared about it
19 initially. And so coming back, we saw most of most of,
20 well, we saw all of the East Coast of Africa and went
21 to Turkey and Greece and had a marvelous trip coming
22 home. We came back to San Francisco.

23 JC: So this must have been, well, you said you moved
24 in here in '73, so it must be right before that time
25 and you bought the house?

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1 comfortable and going along, it was okay with me. So
2 my political consciousness was raised. And she was so
3 active that we were asked to leave the Peace Corps. We
4 had circulated a poster for a petition against our
5 U.S. involvement in Vietnam and we circulated it among
6 all the Peace Corps members and all the other European
7 volunteers. And everybody signed it and everybody was
8 very much against the war and thought, after all, we
9 are the Peace Corps and we have some involvement in
10 maintaining peace in the world. And then the director
11 said oh, and we were going to publish this in the New
12 York Times and the London Press and the Swaziland
13 Press. And the director said if you do that, you very
14 likely will be asked to leave the Peace Corps. And we
15 said okay, we don't think that you have the right to
16 tell us what we can do in this area. So he said well
17 you just go ahead and try it. So we circulated the
18 petition and we mailed it and we took it to the
19 Swaziland Times and we told the editor that the Peace
20 Corps director had objected to us bringing this
21 information to him.

22 1S2:200-299

23 And we asked him if he'd print it. He said, if it's
24 true, I'll print it. He said nobody tells me what to
25 put in this paper. He said if the story is true, I'll

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1 SD: Well, no, we had good fortune. One of the fellows
2 we met in the Peace Corps had an apartment here in San
3 Francisco and he was going away and he asked us to
4 apartment-sit for him. So we were there for four or
5 five months. And then we apartment-sat for somebody
6 else while I was looking for a house to buy. And then
7 our relationship was getting pretty rocky and I bought
8 this place and we lived here for, oh, maybe a year and
9 then my friend left, and she has her own house over in
10 Bernal Heights.

11 JC: So, how'd you meet these young folks you asked to
12 move in?

13 SD: Well, I was just moved in here and across the
14 fence there were three young men and they were working
15 around their house. Anyway, let's see, I want to get
16 this a little more straight. Lots of good things
17 happened to me after I moved into The City. One of
18 them was meeting my neighbors who turned out to be Zen
19 Buddhist monks. And when they were working in the back
20 of their house. I called over one day and said hey, do
21 you do any work for other people? And they said oh
22 yes, and I said well, I've got some work for you to do
23 if you want to do it. I had a leak here in the kitchen
24 and I was trying to find it. So they came over and
25 took off gutters and put on gutters and fixed this and

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1 that. And I said, when they were finished, I said well
2 how much do I owe you? They said oh nothing, we like
3 to help our neighbors. And I didn't believe this, so I
4 became very well acquainted with them and they
5 eventually opened a restaurant and I helped them. And
6 I met a whole lot of people through them. And at that
7 time also, one day someone opened the front door and
8 said hey, can we have the ordering here tonight? And I
9 said what do mean ordering? Well, we have a food
10 conspiracy and we want to order and we have to have a
11 place to order. I said okay. Well, the house was a
12 mess at that time, the walls weren't in and the floors
13 weren't in. And so at six o'clock just many people
14 just started coming in with their children and their
15 dogs and people with lists of groceries and they'd
16 write out their orders and leave them with some of the
17 people. And when the evening was over, the leaders of
18 the group said well, we've got fifteen hundred dollars
19 here in this paper sack. Joe will be over tomorrow to
20 pick it up. I thought oh, okay. How am I going to know
21 Joe? So, everybody's know Joe. So Joe came over and
22 picked it up. Anyway, this was all very new and
23 exciting, wonderful. At that time also I was doing
24 volunteer work for the American Friends Service
25 Committee and the group that I was involved with was

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1 two and two, and then myself. So it was fun. I used to
2 go out with them; we'd dance and we'd go to parties
3 and we would try to find a place in the country to
4 live. And they found a place in Sonoma and we'd go up
5 there and work on things and plant gardens. And it was
6 a lot of fun. And one of the women drank too much and
7 one day she called and she said -
8 1S2'300-399
9 Well, actually her attorney called and said that so-
10 and-so is in jail if you want to go and get her. So
11 the three of us trooped down to the county jail. That
12 was an experience that I'd never had before either.
13 Since then she's quit drinking. So it was a very
14 exciting, very interesting period of time. And then
15 one night we went up to Marin. There was a friend of
16 mine who was giving a party. And I went with two of
17 the women here. We'd thought we'd check out the Marin
18 scene. The party was given in a home, it wasn't in a
19 club. And that's where I met the woman who's living
20 here with me now.
21 JC: So that was what, about three or four years ago?
22 Are you still working?
23 SD: Yeah.
24 JC: Physical therapy?
25 SD: Yeah. I work part-time and I work with the

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1 doing outreach on women's issues as well as other
2 issues. And through that I got acquainted with people
3 in The City who were in the Garden Project. And
4 through that I met - well, the first woman who moved
5 in was Sue Reed who was head of the Garden Project.
6 She didn't have a place to live, so I said well, why
7 don't you come and live in my house until you find
8 something. So she moved and then she said can Ingrid
9 come too. I said oh yeah, Ingrid can come too. And
10 then another woman who had been house-sitting for me
11 said gee, I don't have a place to live either. So
12 anyway, I ended up with five people living here and it
13 was marvelous. It was really very, very exciting for
14 me. And it was also a time when all of them were in
15 the downward mobility phase. And when they all quit
16 their jobs and all went on relief, I said out, the
17 party's over. I didn't charge them much rent and I was
18 hoping it could be a family. But I couldn't deal with
19 it anymore so they all left and since then I have -
20 one's a chemist now and one's a musician and they
21 changed their direction to up. So that was exciting.
22 JC: How long have they lived here?
23 SD: Oh, a couple years.
24 JC: Were they all women?
25 SD: Oh, it was all women. Actually four were lovers,

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1 Visiting Nurses. I had worked there seventeen years
2 ago, after the volunteer with AFSC and the volunteer
3 with this and that, I thought well, it's time to go
4 back to work. And I thought well, the job I liked the
5 very best of any I'd had was with the Visiting Nurses,
6 so I went back there. And one of the women, who had
7 been there when I was there before, was running the
8 place. And so she hired me. I only wanted part-time;
9 it's hard work. And they said no, you've got to work
10 full-time. So I worked full-time for a year and asked
11 for part-time, and they gave it to me. So I do that, I
12 do home visits.
13 JC: in San Francisco?
14 SD: Yeah. My area is Haight, Fillmore, Pacific Heights
15 and Marina. It's really, I like it a lot.
16 JC: Sounds great. Do you have any questions for me?
17 Anything that we've missed?
18 SD: Well, it doesn't sound like I've given you a lot
19 of information about gay life in San Francisco,
20 firstly because I wasn't really part of it. I wasn't
21 part of the party group, or part of the bar group.
22 JC: But would you say that they were distinct groups,
23 that there were people who partied at home and people
24 who hung out at bars?
25 SD: Well, in the group that I met at San Francisco

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1 State, part of that group used to hang out at bars a
 2 lot. I just didn't like the bar scene. The dark, and I
 3 never -
 4 JC: A lot of drinking.
 5 SD: Yeah, and so I just didn't become part of that.
 6 And Ann, my partner, was just completely opposed, just
 7 didn't like bars, didn't like dancing. So, I don't
 8 know, I guess I fantasized that 'a' group, like
 9 Artemis, there's 'a' group there and again I met some
 10 of those women through the women that lived here. But
 11 I wouldn't say I'm part of that group. I think most
 12 people know who I am. I don't feel close to them. A
 13 few I know them very well.
 14 JC: Do you entertain now?
 15 SD: Yeah. Actually before the gang left here, we had a
 16 party here that one of the women who's a marvelous
 17 hostess. One of the women that was living here
 18 organized the party and it was an Aries party and we
 19 must have had 150 people here. That's the biggest
 20 party we've had here. I don't entertain like I used to
 21 in Marin. I don't like big groups because I don't feel
 22 you can talk to them, you can't handle big groups. So
 23 three or four people. Usually we have a couple people
 24 in the week for dinner, people who've we had dinner
 25 with.

1 And now, pow, it's all in the open and I think that's
 2 much better. I don't miss the game at all. It was fun
 3 when I was playing it at Stanford was to look at
 4 people.
 5 JC: But it took its toll.
 6 SD: Yeah, it's not healthy. I think the whole area of
 7 sexuality has opened up in the past twenty years.
 8 What's this? '80. The past thirty years. It's
 9 different and it's better in many ways despite the
 10 people who object to permissiveness, I think it's
 11 better. And despite people who don't like differences,
 12 won't acknowledge that things can be different than
 13 man-woman predisposition. That's part of the outlet,
 14 really.
 15 End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 3
 16 2S1:000-099
 17 JC: Well, there's one topic that I'd like to really
 18 bring out but I really don't know how to really broach
 19 it. But we have contact with a bunch of women in
 20 Buffalo who are doing similar research. I went to
 21 school in Buffalo. And many things that they - they
 22 have uncovered a lot of stuff. Now they've been
 23 focusing a lot on the bar community. But they've also
 24 seemed to see that things were changing. Well, they've
 25 raised the view of the mores within the gay community

1 JC: Is your crowd of friends still mixed?
 2 SD: No.
 3 JC: Almost all lesbians at this point?
 4 SD: Yeah.
 5 JC: What was the transition period with the '70s, when
 6 you were living here with a group of women?
 7 SD: Yeah. Well, when I was in the Peace Corps, we
 8 didn't mix much. My partner and I didn't - I think
 9 when I left Marin, that's when I left the straight
 10 crowd behind, mostly gay men and women, in fact
 11 exclusively. Maybe some of the nurses that I worked
 12 with. Again, sexuality isn't discussed so, you know,
 13 initially in the gay realm, it was sort of fun to try
 14 to figure out who was and who wasn't and if you could
 15 acquainted with some. And, you know, it was sort of a
 16 game. And in some circles now, people just don't talk
 17 about their sexuality. Certainly where I work now,
 18 it's not talked about and other places it's completely
 19 open and there's no question and if you want to know,
 20 you ask. And that's all there is to it. So this is
 21 different, a lot different than it used to be. And I
 22 think it's a lot healthier. I think Pat Bond talked
 23 about it in the movie how it was sort of furtive and
 24 secretive.
 25 1S2:400-425

1 as well as types of sexual activity that people
 2 engaged in. And a couple of things that they brought
 3 up to us, one of the women that was out here a couple
 4 months ago, one thing she mentioned is that when women
 5 went out on dates, they would often sleep together on
 6 the first date which seemed somewhat different, at
 7 least in our image of, say, the repressed and very
 8 careful '50s. Another thing that they discovered that
 9 oral sex, at least in Buffalo, became the thing to do
 10 to the point that if you didn't do it, you couldn't
 11 quite make it. And this apparently came to be sort of
 12 a new trend. Now they sort of felt that they some
 13 mores in the gay community that paralleled dominant
 14 mores and some that didn't like going to bed with
 15 someone on the first date was maybe not so common and
 16 yet the rise of oral sex was something that was also
 17 happening in the general culture. And I'm just
 18 wondering in your own experience if you could see
 19 anything like that that you care to discuss.
 20 SD: Let's see, yeah, when I was in L.A. which was the
 21 middle '50s, okay it wasn't unusual to go to bed when
 22 you went home with someone initially and that was when
 23 I was first introduced to oral sex and that was just
 24 the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me in
 25 my life. And that is, well, I haven't found that as

1 prevalent among my partners since then. In fact it's
2 not been this sex of choice among partners. And this
3 is distressing to me. But that's what has been my
4 experience.

5 JC: Did you find women, say, who would wear men's
6 clothing and men's pants?

7 SD: Oh yeah. In fact my partner in L.A. passed as a
8 man for a long time. After I was with her, she put on
9 a dress and got a job. Before that I'm not quite sure
10 how she survived but she did pass as a man. She ran
11 away from home within the circus and I met her in L.A.
12 at this Tropic Village and I was with her for, oh, a
13 year I suppose. And she had passed as a man, short
14 hair, the suits.

15 JC: Did you make love to her?

16 SD: Yeah, I'm sure I did, but I was more of a
17 recipient. I can't remember, I just remember being on
18 the receiving end.

19 JC: When you say that you were more butchy than you
20 were fem, what defined butch, what defined fem?

21 SD: Well, the manner, the attire. The fem was ultra-
22 fem with the big bosoms and the fancy hairdo and the
23 high heels and the tight dresses and the whole thing.
24 And the butch was just more masculine with the suits.
25 And I suppose there was a difference in the sexual

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1 to have a relationship. And the relationship, my 12-
2 year relationship, sexually wasn't very rewarding but
3 it was a good relationship in many other ways. Again,
4 we didn't talk about sex and had we, it would probably
5 would have changed a lot of things.

6 JC: How did the roles break down in other ways?

7 SD: Who does the housework?

8 JC: Yeah, that kind of thing.

9 SD: I've been on both sides I guess. I've been with
10 people who've done all the housework and I did the
11 carpentry. And I've been the one who stayed home and
12 did the dishes and cooked food and my partner was out
13 making a living, so to speak, bringing home the bacon.
14 I'd be at the bus depot to meet the bus and bring her
15 home. And I think we were both pretty much asexual. I
16 wouldn't say either one of us were a butch or a fem.
17 We were mostly sort of unidentifiable. She was an
18 extremely competent person. I mean, she could do
19 plumbing, build a house, write a book, do any number
20 of things. And I ended up doing most of the cooking
21 'cause I liked - although she was a good cook - I
22 liked to cook and I liked to eat well.

23 JC: Was there ever any conflict over this stuff?

24 SD: Not over that, no. No, it's never been a big issue
25 who's going to sweep the floor. It's never been a big

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1 relationship. I think because as a tomboy, I just
2 tended to be more butch. But I think that maybe
3 there's a lot of femininity in me that was visible to
4 some people. I think that I attracted people, women,
5 who liked my butchiness more than I liked my
6 butchiness. In fact one woman, as I say, I was more
7 pursued than pursuer. And it was usually feminine
8 women that liked the way I looked and would chase me
9 around. In fact, even in the Navy women would chase
10 me, and I didn't know what they were after. And, you
11 know, they'd push me in bed and throw things at me and
12 try to get my attention and try to get some response
13 from me. So that's what they saw in me, what they
14 wanted to explore and I wasn't quite sure what that
15 was all about until I got to Los Angeles and got to
16 bed with quite a few people and found out what the sex
17 roles were and what people did, so to speak, what
18 women did in bed. My first love affair in the Navy, we
19 just made love. Well, I can't even tell you. It just
20 was a very spontaneous, very free type of
21 relationship. And I, well, then it became a game for
22 me to sort of capture people. The women who were
23 attracted to me, I was more interested in playing the
24 game than relating, very seriously, to anybody. Well
25 then sex was sort of secondary. It was more important

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1 issue.

2 JC: It can be.

3 SD: Yeah, I'm sure it can. It never has really been in
4 my relationships. I tend to be sort of, you know, I'm
5 not the neatest person in the world. And one of my
6 partners used to ride me about that. Why don't you
7 pick up your clothes, why don't you do this? And it
8 used to bother me, you know, I do enough. I try to
9 pick up my clothes. But they weren't that bad. But
10 they really are, you know, I'd look in later and I
11 could be neater. But it hasn't been - I think the
12 thing, one relationship, my partner didn't want to do
13 things with me, you know, didn't want to socialize,
14 didn't want to go here, didn't want to go there. For
15 whatever reason, she felt insecure or she didn't want
16 to. And I couldn't deal with that. And I usually have
17 a car and I often ended up being chauffeur and got to
18 resent that. But I don't know, you know, the whole,
19 whatever you call it, sexual techniques, discussion,
20 is one that still bothers me. I'm shy in discussing
21 sex with a partner and just sort of let things happen
22 and they don't always happen the way I want them to.
23 But I don't talk about it still. Maybe some day I
24 will.

25 JC: I don't think it's unusual at all. It's always

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1 been a struggle for me too. Let me see, when you were
2 in the Navy and also at Stanford, you said you felt
3 quite a lot of guilt. And I don't think you feel
4 guilty right now.
5 SD: No, well I felt guilty because I wasn't fitting
6 into the sexual norm of get married, have babies,
7 although my mother pushed for me to get married. I
8 felt that that was what I was supposed to do. And
9 nobody ever encouraged any other type of behavior and
10 nobody ever endorsed it or nobody ever gave you
11 support for any other type of relationship. Yeah,
12 there was a lot of guilt.
13 JC: And what was the process? How did you get over
14 that? When did that begin to fall away?
15 SD: I think the women's movement has done that. I
16 think that all the literature now even about the
17 oppression of women, women's place in society, which
18 has been so shitty. I remember gosh the early - well
19 before we went to the Peace Corps, friends were giving
20 lectures on raising consciousness and women's
21 oppression. I thought I'm not oppressed, what's all
22 this nonsense about women's oppression? I was wrong
23 and I think that my consciousness socially as well as
24 politically was raised 90 degrees during that period
25 of time. And that's where I came from.

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1 (recorder turned off momentarily).
2 JC: I think I just came in again, okay, what have we
3 got here?
4 SD: Pat Ray, 826-8196, and she knows me as Sam.
5 JC: Okay, she knows you as Sam?
6 SD: Yeah, Roberta Bobba, have you ever heard of her?
7 JC: No, I haven't.
8 SD: Well, I think she runs the liquor store on Church
9 and Dubose somewhere. Let me see if she's in here. I
10 haven't seen her for years.
11 JC: Can I tell her you suggested her?
12 SD: Sure, if she remembers me. It don't make any
13 difference, but, you know, sure, of course, you can.
14 JC: B-O-B-B-A. Well, what I'd like to do is send
15 people first where they can think about it.
16 SD: Oh, I don't see Bobba. Pic might have a number for
17 her. She was leading the Gay Parade a couple years ago
18 and she was there with a loudspeaker and she's in some
19 lesbian mental health board of directors. And she owns
20 property, Bobba, I don't see her.
21 JC: Okay, well I have things right there.
22 2S1:200-299
23 SD: Actually, if you know Lynn, oh my god, Martin, the
24 two that wrote the first book. They should know.
25 JC: Oh yeah, okay, 'cause some of the women are going

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1 JC: And a lot possibly the women that were living here
2 with you?
3 SD: Oh yeah, I mean, yes, very much. Well, I hope that
4 you've gotten something out of this.
5 JC: I'm sure I have (recorder turned off momentarily).
6 SD: My mother called me Sam, and when I first came out
7 here, I was Sammy. And I think when I moved from
8 Marin, I became Sarah again, dropped the Sam.
9 JC: Did you use the name Sarah at work or did you go
10 by Sammy?
11 SD: I was Sammy all over the place, I was Sammy in
12 L. A. When I came up here, I was sort of both when I
13 first came up here and then I became Sarah because it
14 was just too complicated. I think when I went to San
15 Francisco State, I kind of think it still sort of
16 vague in my mind, but I was Sam, Sammy, for a long
17 time. When I was in high school, I was Sam. I used to
18 go to summer camp and the campers, one of the campers
19 called me Sammy 'cause Sarah just seemed out of place
20 in the summer camp. And the name stuck with me for
21 years and years and years. So Pic knows me as Sam.
22 And, okay, Pat Ray, she also knows me as Sarah. And I
23 have nieces and nephews and I was Auntie Sam for a
24 long time. Not Uncle Sam, Auntie Sam. Oh, hell, she's
25 in the phone book, let me get the phone book.

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1 to be contacting. Well, they have a date to talk with
2 Del and Phyllis.
3 SD: Del and Phyllis, yeah. Sally Gearhart, of course,
4 has moved. Oh and another one also is Min Inwood. Now,
5 she's led a real positive life.
6 JC: Yes, I think we wrote to her. I think Win
7 suggested that we get in touch with her and I believe
8 she told us she didn't want to talk to us.
9 SD: Oh, she did. Well, she went through a lot of phone
10 numbers, but she's been more of a closet case than
11 myself, and I guess she doesn't want to talk about it.
12
13 JC: Oh, that's great. We also have somebody that has
14 to follow up some woman who used to bar tend.
15 SD: (talks to dog) Flambe, come here, stop that now.
16 He wants some attention, not time yet. Your time
17 hasn't come (recorder turned off momentarily).
18 JC: July 12 (1980). Okay, so, what was it (inaudible)
19 that and why did you want me to come back?
20 SD: Okay, after you left on Sunday, I just felt so
21 blue and just very depressed and very sad. And I was
22 wondering why, and I was thinking there were a lot of
23 things that I didn't tell you that were really very up
24 and exciting. And to me, I seemed to focus on sort of
25 sad parts of my life. So I wanted to tell you about

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1 some of the good things.
 2 JC: I'm really glad.
 3 SD: Anyway, you asked about transitions and I didn't
 4 have any good answer at the time that we thought about
 5 it, about periods of my life that have been transition
 6 periods. Going over that, I think that the death of my
 7 father was a factor in my life. And that happened when
 8 I was ten years old.
 9 JC: So that was back (inaudible) or something?
 10 SD: And that had a lot to do with the way my life went
 11 after. But family-wise, we moved.
 12 JC: Did your life change a lot because of that?
 13 SD: Well, yes, it did. When he was alive, we lived in
 14 Massachusetts in a big house by the golf course and
 15 went to a private girls' school.
 16 JC: What school?
 17 SD: Choate. And after that we moved to a small town in
 18 the Middle West, Independence, Iowa, which was my
 19 mother's home and we moved in with her mother and her
 20 sister. So here we were being brought up by three
 21 very, very unhappy women. And there was my sister and
 22 myself and my brother, ten years younger. And that
 23 wasn't a very nurturing or a very happy place for a
 24 kid to be.
 25 JC: Can I ask what did you father do?

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1 JC: Was it a lot more rural than (inaudible)?
 2 SD: Oh yes, it was a town of about five thousand and
 3 it was a town for a farming community and the kids I
 4 went to school with were farm people. And it was just
 5 a dinky little town. It had been quite a sporting
 6 town. It had been a (inaudible) racetrack there so it
 7 had been a very active sporty social town.
 8 2S1:399:350
 9 But that had been, oh, a hundred years before I got
 10 there, 75 years before I got there. So there were
 11 remnants of grandeur, but the town itself was just a
 12 quiet peaceful comfortable little farming community.
 13 So I went through high school there and then left as
 14 soon as I was able, and joined the Navy and then
 15 joining the Navy was another real transition, cutting
 16 myself really away from the family that I didn't care
 17 much for anyway. And then the Navy was where, as I
 18 told you before, I had my first experience,
 19 homosexual, which was a good experience in most ways.
 20 Then for the other transition point, I had, in 1968, I
 21 told you about sailing, that I used to sail. In 1968,
 22 one of the women from the sailing group called and
 23 said hey, Sarah, you want to sail to Hawaii. I said
 24 well sure. She said well Ahwanee is going, and the
 25 Ahwanee is a 50-foot cement cutter. And she said I was

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1 SD: He was an executive for Greybar Electric. He was
 2 sort of (inaudible); we lived very well and had a
 3 house in Swampscot, Massachusetts, and were brought up
 4 as very nice young ladies, you know. It was an upper
 5 middle class existence.
 6 JC: And when you moved to Independence, he had
 7 insurance policies and stuff that you could -
 8 SD: He had enough money so that I've never had any
 9 problem with having whatever I wanted. So he left
 10 enough money to care for us. And my mother,
 11 grandmother and aunt were all very grand ladies and
 12 none of them worked. And my grandfather had been the
 13 mayor of the town, and my grandmother's house was the
 14 biggest house in town, beautiful, gorgeous place, that
 15 my grandfather had built for them. And so we moved in
 16 there but there was a lot of bitterness between my
 17 grandmother and mother, and between my aunt and
 18 mother, so this was not a happy place. So they were
 19 always crabbing about money and my father lost all
 20 their money and it was all my mother's fault because
 21 everything was so terrible. And this was the
 22 Depression and things were rough except they weren't
 23 rough for us. We always had whatever we wanted. So,
 24 that environment was not a very generous place where a
 25 ten-year-old would enjoy life in.

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1 supposed to go and we're leaving in three or four days
 2 and I'm freaking out. She says I can't leave my kids,
 3 I can't leave my husband. I don't want to go, I'm
 4 scared, she said. If you want to go, you can take my
 5 place. So, I thought, wow. I went over to Sausalito
 6 and looked at the boat and got all my fishermen and
 7 sailor friends to look at the boat, and found out that
 8 the daughter of one of my friends over there, had
 9 sailed on the Ahwanee around the world. And so I
 10 thought well, Marshal (inaudible) if his daughter, it
 11 was safe for her, it's certainly safe for me. So I
 12 decided to go. And I had an awful lot of anxiety about
 13 this.
 14 JC: Where were you living at the time?
 15 SD: In Mill Valley, I was living up on Lee Street in
 16 Mill Valley. And my friend didn't like sailing and
 17 didn't care at all about this whole adventure. So it
 18 was a point in my life where
 19 End of Side 1, Tape 2 of 3
 20 2S2:000-099
 21 SD: Okay, so I decided to go to Honolulu on the 50-
 22 foot cutter, Ahwanee, and the crew consisted of six
 23 women and two boys. And one of the women had been in
 24 the sailing group that I had mentioned before. She
 25 was, her husband had a boat and she wanted the

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1 experience of sailing, and he thought this would be a
 2 nice time for her to gain some experience. She is a
 3 person that I dearly love and one of the women that
 4 I've lost track of since the journey. I think because
 5 of her sense of humor, that the journey was
 6 worthwhile. 'Cause we had a terrible time. We had
 7 storms, the boat fell apart. We had disagreements. It
 8 was a memorable voyage and I'm very, very glad I did
 9 it, but it was not easy. You know, you think of
 10 sailing to Hawaii and the warm waters and enjoying the
 11 sunshine. We left Halloween night of 1968 and that's
 12 not a good time to go to Hawaii in the first place.
 13 But the couple that owned the boat, the woman wanted
 14 to make a trip by herself without her husband because
 15 he was always in charge and she was extremely
 16 competent and wanted the option to fail. Her father
 17 was critically ill in Honolulu so she wanted to sail
 18 the boat over and see him. So she got an all-women
 19 crew because she felt she could deal with women better
 20 than men if she was in a tight spot. So that happened.
 21 I don't think I told you, did I tell you about this?
 22 No, okay. Well, I knew this one woman that I'd sailed
 23 with and I would say, you know, she's a marvelous
 24 person and I love her dearly, but her sailing skills,
 25 she hadn't done as much sailing as I had, which wasn't

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1 myself. And it's been a good one, it's been a weird
 2 one.
 3 JC: That's pretty nice.
 4 SD: So those, I wanted to include those and just see
 5 myself as more sort of an adventurer and traveler,
 6 which I've been most of my life. I certainly haven't
 7 put much emphasis on career or gaining status in the
 8 business or professional world. I've traveled a lot; I
 9 love to travel. And, oh yeah, as I told you before we
 10 started, my trip to China I went by myself. I didn't
 11 go with anybody I knew and that was bad in some ways,
 12 but it was good in some ways. Oh, and then the other
 13 things I wanted to mention was that my relationships
 14 with women and the women I've met in my life,
 15 certainly has enriched my life because my family
 16 offered very little nourishment, support, and the
 17 women that I've had relationships with and that have
 18 loved me and that I have loved, have offered me a view
 19 of myself I didn't have before. And that's made my
 20 life a lot more interesting that that happened. Oh
 21 yeah, one other thing I just wanted to mention as I
 22 was going over - every once in a while I think, well,
 23 I really should do something. I should be a something,
 24 make an inventory of my skills and what I can say. I
 25 can take pictures, be a good therapist, I can do this.

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1 saying too much. But when I found out that I was the
 2 second most experienced person onboard, I got very,
 3 very nervous, but we were 600 miles out to sea by that
 4 time. And it was a good trip and it was very important
 5 to me in becoming an individual and self-reliant
 6 person that I did the trip and that it was successful.
 7 So that was a real high time.
 8 JC: Did you sail back or did you fly back?
 9 SD: No, I was not going to set foot on that ship again
 10 if I could help it. I flew back. The ship went on to
 11 the South Pacific and I flew back. I flew back
 12 Thanksgiving, as a matter of fact and was very glad to
 13 get here. And I think that my relationship was never
 14 the same after the trip. The relationship continued to
 15 disintegrate and eventually in the '70s I left her.
 16 But for my own personal growth and development and
 17 self-assurance and pleasure, the trip was incredible.
 18 It was an adventure that I loved very much, a good
 19 adventure.
 20 JC: That's great.
 21 SD: Yeah, it was good. And then after that, my
 22 adventure was with the Peace Corps and that was a
 23 political awakening. And then my next real transition
 24 was buying this house which formerly I'd had houses
 25 with other people and this was my first leap by

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1 And one thing I always think about is love-making. My
 2 gosh, that's what I enjoy doing more than anything.
 3 But I don't feel that's a marketable skill, but it is
 4 one thing that is most pleasurable for me. So that's
 5 what I wanted to add.
 6 JC: Okay. I didn't listen to all of the tapes
 7 although, at some point, I'll sit down and I'll index
 8 them and stuff and hopefully some day transcribe them.
 9 Partly what I want to do, also talk to you some about,
 10 I remember you said when you were talking about L.A.,
 11 you talked about learning how to play the game and
 12 about learning what women did together. And I wanted
 13 you to talk about what those games were. Because I
 14 mean, I can use my imagination but it might not be
 15 accurate.
 16 SD: Okay. I think it's how people meet each other, how
 17 you indicate that you're interested in somebody and
 18 how you indicate that you want more than a friendly
 19 relationship. One thing I did want to mention about
 20 L.A. that I didn't remember before, was that at the
 21 Tropic Village where we all hung out, there was an
 22 orchestra, a women's orchestra, on weekends I think it
 23 was and there was a drummer named Tommy in the
 24 orchestra. And I remember one night, they had a
 25 marriage ceremony for Tommy and her girlfriend. And

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1 Tommy was the male figure with the short hair and the
2 tuxedo and the girlfriend was the fem. And I think
3 before when we were talking, I'm not avoiding your
4 initial question, that the master, the dyke, the
5 butch, the butch, while being very independent and
6 very nonconforming, I think that's what the gay women
7 were, the lesbian were. They were independent women,
8 both the butch and the fem, that the butch is sort of
9 picked out as the strong one. But I don't think that's
10 necessarily true. I think that those roles were
11 adopted because it was easier, maybe, passing in
12 society, as that kind of a couple.

13 2S2:100-199

14 And I'm not even sure that the sex roles in bed were
15 with the butch and the fem. My guess would be that the
16 butch is more aggressive but I don't know that that's
17 true at all. But playing the game, I just think
18 probably it's the same as heterosexual game-playing.
19 It's picking up on clues, on flirtations, on gestures,
20 on communication that indicates look, I like you,
21 let's get to know each other better.

22 JC: Did you play an aggressive role do you think or
23 women still sort of shaking you down?

24 SD: Once, I said well, my relationships aren't going
25 very well. I've got to get myself a college educated

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1 women who likes to do the things I do, and doesn't
2 like all this drinking and all this running around to
3 these awful places. So I set my cap and went after one
4 of these, a woman of this description who was at this
5 school with me. And she was working in one of the
6 hospitals. And I used to hang out there and write love
7 poems, and I just really pursued her, and I got no
8 place. So that was that. One other time, even up here
9 when I was living in Mill Valley, I set my cap after
10 one of my co-workers and, again, pursued her all over
11 the place and sent flowers and really, I was crazy
12 about that woman. Nothing happened. So I haven't been
13 very successful in that role. I think mostly, well, I
14 think mostly women have been interested in me and I
15 just thought, gee, that's real nice.

16 JC: So they'd like come and sit down next to you at
17 the bar and start chatting with you and maybe buy you
18 a drink.

19 SD: Yeah, ask me to dance. Yeah, I sometimes get
20 freaked out by women who would be pursuing me because
21 they'd want a lot more than I was prepared to give and
22 I wasn't real interested in the heavy sex trip. And I
23 guess I came on like I was, and I remember once
24 incident in Los Angeles where this woman just was
25 merely anxious to have a sexual relationship with me

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1 and I didn't want that. I just wanted to be friendly
2 and chat and so I had a little trouble in getting out
3 of that one.

4 JC: And you were living with your lover at the time,
5 most of the time you were in L.A.?

6 SD: Oh, no, I lived alone a lot in L.A. I had this
7 relationship with this woman I met at The Tropic
8 Village. That was my first oral sex relationship. And
9 I lived there. I don't know what I told you before. I
10 don't think I lived there more than six or seven
11 months and then I got an apartment by myself. And I
12 lived by myself and people sort of came and went and I
13 didn't have any long-term steady relationships. I met
14 a lot of wonderful people and some I related to
15 sexually, and some I didn't. And then I met a woman
16 and bought a little house down there. And then that
17 relationship fell apart and I stayed down there in
18 this house by myself for another six or eight months.
19 And then I came up here.

20 JC: Were you still going to school the whole time you
21 were down there?

22 SD: Yes.

23 JC: So how long did you live in L.A.? I was trying to
24 figure it out and it seems like it was a pretty long
25 time to be going to school.

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1 SD: Well, I made quite a career out of going to
2 school. I think I was down there three years, maybe.
3 Let's see, '43, must have been ten years? I don't
4 know, I'd have to look that up.

5 JC: It seemed to me, I'm remembering that it was about
6 ten years.

7 SD: Yeah, maybe it was. I think I might even have
8 the - well, do you want me to look for it?

9 JC: Well, if it's not too much trouble. Let's see what
10 I can remember. You got out of the Navy in '43, then
11 you went to Stanford, and you were only there about a
12 year, huh? So maybe to '45, then you went to L.A. in
13 '45 and you said you moved up to San Francisco in '57
14 I think. So that means that you were twelve years in
15 L.A., not three (recorder turned off momentarily while
16 narrator searches for papers).

17 SD: In '52 I went to the University of Southern
18 California in L.A. Oh, I graduated, wait a minute.
19 Okay, I must have gone to - when did I get out of the
20 Navy.

21 JC: Forty-two. You said three years and a month; it
22 was probably late in '43.

23 SD: Forty-three, well in '52 I graduated from USC and
24 then I worked for four years for a doctor down there.
25 And then in '56 I came up here. Forty-seven I got out

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1 of the Navy; what do you have?
 2 JC: You said '43.
 3 SD: Well, I went '45 to '47; '45 to '47 I was in the
 4 Navy. So '47 to '52 in school. That's not too bad.
 5 Then in '52 I went to work for a doctor down there.
 6 Then I left in '57 and I came up here.
 7 JC: Well, I'm wondering if there are particular
 8 stories or experiences that are particularly fond to
 9 you that perhaps you haven't told me yet. It might
 10 give me some idea of, you know, and I guess a sense, I
 11 know I've asked you about how you made friends and it
 12 really seems like you made a lot of friends from work.
 13 Also you had some friend in the Navy who introduced
 14 you to some people in L.A. and then you got to know
 15 other people. So it seems like it was an informal
 16 network. It wasn't so much as joining clubs and
 17 things.
 18 SD: Yes. Well, when I was in school in Southern
 19 California, I was just very, very popular. I was the
 20 president of this and I was the vice president of that
 21 and I had a million friends, a million acquaintances.
 22 Most of them didn't know about what I did when I
 23 wasn't in school, so this was a facade really. When I
 24 first came up to Vallejo as a student, I got more mail
 25 than the hospital and I couldn't believe this, you

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1 you that were being expressed and that was just fine?
 2 SD: I think that I always felt really lonely because I
 3 wasn't able to really share myself with these
 4 different groups I was in. I enjoyed them, I had a
 5 good time and I was, you know, I felt that people
 6 liked me and liked having me around and I was popular.
 7 But it always seemed incomplete, you know, because I
 8 wasn't able to share. Oh, I had a fight with so-and-so
 9 today and gee, I feel awful and I never talked about
 10 that side of my personal relationship side of my life.
 11 It was all just very social, and weather and their
 12 kids or their husband, or what was happening in their
 13 lives. And I did enough interesting things so I mean,
 14 I traveled a lot with Mary and so I had a lot that I
 15 could talk about that wasn't really personal or
 16 important. So that I just didn't reveal a large part
 17 of myself. And I don't think I ever have in most
 18 social situations or in work situations.
 19 JC: Yeah, well I don't think it's really very safe. I
 20 mean, I'm doing alternate work but I sometimes
 21 question the wisdom of that.
 22 SD: So, I think meeting people, I worked, as I told
 23 once on the other tape, I worked as a volunteer for
 24 the American Friends Service Committee when I got back
 25 from the Peace Corps.

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1 know. Because now if I get a letter a month, I'm
 2 happy. But I had an awful lot of people who knew me
 3 and who liked me and who really didn't know me, you
 4 know, who just knew part of me. And I think at that
 5 time, I was nine-tenths politician and I was out there
 6 just being a spokesperson for whatever was going on,
 7 at school or wherever. And that was okay, except it
 8 was a very shallow type of support system. Let's see,
 9 well, when I was here, yeah, I met two people that I
 10 knew in L.A. Then I'd meet their friends and sort of
 11 become acquaintances in that way. And in Mill Valley,
 12 it was a pretty solitary relationship between the two
 13 of us. There was no gay network, but again, I knew
 14 people in town and I got acquainted because of the
 15 skills I had in sailing or swimming or whatever, and
 16 was asked to do things for different groups. So I got
 17 acquainted in the community that way, and I was on the
 18 city council in Mill Valley.
 19 JC: A whole other side of you.
 20 SD: Yeah, really, and it's been quite a schizophrenic
 21 life I guess because of these two separate groups of
 22 people that I had while I was functioning.
 23 JC: Do you think that at the time you were doing these
 24 things that you felt a strain between one half and the
 25 other, or did it, or was it just different parts of

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1 JC: What kind of work did you do for them?
 2 SD: Well, I worked on a project that was called 'The
 3 Traveling Bus.' And we did actually have a bus and
 4 we'd go around to different communities in California
 5 as well as Nevada and Utah, and talk about the AFSC
 6 programs and the women's program was one of the things
 7 as well as non-violence and peace and working for
 8 oppressed people, the Indians, one group that they do
 9 a lot of work with.
 10 JC: So did you travel and speak?
 11 SD: Yeah, I did, I loved it and because I was a war
 12 veteran, I had some credibility to audiences, you
 13 know, 'cause I had been in the service.
 14 2S2:300-345
 15 And people in Utah who had never heard of pacifists or
 16 of non-violence or of objecting to the draft, would
 17 get very angry when they'd hear us speak because we
 18 were unpatriotic, un-American. And many of them were
 19 just so grateful to hear that we don't have to accept
 20 this violent line of war behavior.
 21 JC: This was in the early '70s?
 22 SD: Yeah. And then the women's movement, women were
 23 just very interested and curious about what we were
 24 saying in the Utah area as well as in Northern
 25 California. And we started, or helped to start.

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1 community centers and women's studios groups. I loved
2 it; it was a lot of fun, lot of fun. And of the AFSC,
3 I was on the governing board because I was in charge
4 of this one committee eventually, and there was some
5 discussion about what should the position of the AFSC
6 be in regard to rape. And there was some replies to
7 that that just got a lot of response from the women in
8 the group who said that rape isn't a sexual act; it's
9 an act of violence, and they really were opposed to
10 the position that the AFSC was taking. And there was
11 also some remark about well, I suppose we'll be for
12 queers next. And this just made me very angry. So at
13 the next meeting I wrote a letter and read it saying
14 the queers you were talking about happen to be me and
15 I object to the tone of this conversation or this
16 discussion. And that blew them all away because they
17 had no idea that I was one of them. And that took a
18 lot of anxiety-producing activity on my part to get
19 myself together to do that. And that was a time when I
20 had the group living here at the house and felt a lot
21 of support. And everybody was telling their mother
22 that they were gay. You know, it was a time when women
23 were coming out and it was the only time I'd every
24 done that and it was a good group to do it in because
25 they're a pretty safe group to come out.

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1 opening the house to young people.
2 JC: Was she the first one that moved in?
3 SD: Yeah.
4 JC: Was she also young?
5 SD: Oh yeah. She was young and beautiful and
6 delightful and she became sort of a daughter figure
7 for me. We had a real close relationship and I loved
8 her dearly. And she was very much involved in the
9 women's movement and in community gardening and in
10 discovering herself. And she was the daughter of a
11 physician and her family had pretty much disowned her
12 because of her failure to get married or become a
13 professional woman or do what they wanted her to do.
14 And she was very (inaudible) but maintained the
15 lifestyle that she believed in and eventually was
16 reunited with her family. She was killed which was
17 another very sad part. She also was the person, she
18 wanted to get to the country and she finally found
19 land with a group or found land near Mendocino and
20 then wanted to organize a group to help pay for it and
21 to live on it. And she invited me to do that which I
22 did. And so she was the first one who moved in. And I
23 had met her, I was at a meeting of the farm at Potrero
24 and Army and I was with a friend. My friend knew her
25 better than I did. And I'd seen her and I really liked

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1 End of Side 2, Tape 2 of 3
2 3S1:000-099
3 SD: So okay, that was my period of coming out of the
4 closet with the AFSC which was a safe environment but
5 which still took a lot of courage, I feel, on my part
6 to do. Oh, then I was going to tell my friends in the
7 sailing group to make the same declaration.
8 JC: In the same period of time you were still doing
9 the sailing?
10 SD: Yeah.
11 JC: So you kept that up for a long time.
12 SD: Oh yeah. So I told one of my friends and she was
13 very accepting like, well, I knew it all the time sort
14 of response. And then the other friend I could not
15 tell. I thought boy, she really doesn't want to hear
16 that. And so I didn't tell her and I never have and
17 I'm glad I didn't because she doesn't. And so that's
18 the story of my coming out of the closet, which was
19 painful and very anxiety-producing for me, but
20 rewarding too in many ways.
21 JC: So you had living in this house five women?
22 SD: Four and myself.
23 JC: What were these women involved in?
24 SD: Okay, one of them was involved in the City Garden
25 Project and she was the one that really initiated my

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1 her but I didn't know her well. And so met her at the
2 farm and she always had difficulty finding a place to
3 live and she was forced out of a place where she was
4 living because it was condemned and she thought she
5 was going to get another place and wasn't able to. So
6 she was talking to me about it and she started to cry
7 and so I put my arms around her and I said, you know,
8 why don't you move in with me? And she said gee, could
9 I? And I said yeah, and so she moved in and then after
10 she was here, oh maybe a day, she said gee, can Ingrid
11 come too? And Ingrid was a musician and at that time
12 was not playing the piano and again was trying to find
13 out who she was and was working as a waitress and
14 taking poetry classes and was very concerned about
15 nutrition and exercise and living right and somehow
16 her life was not working out quite as she thought it
17 might. But she was involved in sort of self-discovery.
18 Then the other person was working as a ward clerk at
19 the hospital and she was a very intelligent, very
20 sharp, very up person and had a big drinking problem
21 at that time. And then she said gee, can Mary Sue move
22 in and I said yeah.
23 JC: And you also knew Mary Sue from the hospital?
24 SD: No, I didn't know Mary Sue at all.
25 JC: Oh, so it wasn't the hospital that you worked in?

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1 SD: No. No, I met the woman who was a ward clerk, I
2 was going away once and I needed someone to house sit.
3 And so I asked a friend if she knew of anybody. She
4 said oh yes, I know somebody that lives right around
5 the corner from you. So she came in, Barbara came in
6 and looked at the house and said I'm going to live
7 here some day. And six months later, she did. So they
8 were here for almost a year. And it was a time of
9 downward mobility, of self-discovery, of exploring the
10 women's movement, of exploring relationships and it
11 was a very exciting time for them and for me.
12 JC: What aspects of the women's movement did you get
13 exposed to or involved in?
14 SD: Mostly music, women's music. Well, let's see, Sue
15 moved up to Santa Rosa, near Santa Rosa, and we had a
16 group for women's spirituality, women's psychic
17 exploration. And we all went to that together. I
18 remember mostly the women's music and then, gosh, what
19 else? I can't think of anything else right offhand.
20 The Women's Building was still being talked about and
21 I used to go down to where they were on Brady Street
22 and see if there was something I could do. And it
23 never worked out. I was interested in printing at the
24 time. Well, I could learn how to use the offset press
25 and do printing. And we'd make appointments for me to

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1 recorder.
2 3S1:100-199
3 And she's very much into that now and much happier
4 than she was trying to organize women's groups.
5 JC: When was this (inaudible)?
6 SD: Four years ago she started SWOF and then I guess
7 that they may have lasted a year and a half. Then she
8 started SWIM.
9 JC: And these are not primarily gay women's groups?
10 SD: Oh, I think she wanted them to be. They didn't
11 turn out to be since they were open to all women but I
12 think the majority of women were gay, and they came
13 for various reasons.
14 JC: What were the couple of meetings like that you
15 attended? What went on at those meetings?
16 SD: Okay, the one I attended was at Artemus and it was
17 very noisy and we couldn't hear anything. And there
18 was discussion about what sort of program are we going
19 to have and what are going to do and why are we here
20 anyway? And Min was really interested in a loose
21 organization, she said, and in things coming up from
22 the group, and no one being in charge, and sort of
23 non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian system. But that
24 isn't the way she is. In fact, she likes order and she
25 likes things to be organized and planned and likes to

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1 learn this or learn that, then the appointments were
2 broken or someone didn't show up. And so it just sort
3 of fell through. And I didn't end up doing anything at
4 the Women's Building. I was working mostly with the
5 ASFC and with their programs. And, let's see, oh yeah,
6 baseball, we used to play baseball together. I can't
7 think of what else. But two of the women who are in
8 the Women's Chorus now, well Pam and Debbie who used
9 to live across the way and they'd be here quite a bit.
10 And I think they were fairly active in what was going
11 on in the women's movement.
12 JC: Were you in SWOF, Single Women Over Forty?
13 SD: No, my friend Min, was in it. I went to a couple
14 meetings but I didn't join. I knew it, of course, very
15 well. After that she organized SWIM.
16 JC: What did that stand for?
17 SD: Single Women In Metamorphoses or something or
18 other. Anyway, she was quite excited about SWOF she
19 gave to - she dropped out. I'm not sure what reason.
20 But SWOF went on and she did not. And then so she
21 organized SWIM and so I said okay, what's happened to
22 SWIM? She said SWIM sunk. So her efforts at organizing
23 stopped when she got back into music. She's a musician
24 and she now has a virginal or keyboard instrument, a
25 renaissance keyboard instrument. And she plays the

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1 know what's going to happen. So I think that was it,
2 the only meeting I attended for a long time. And she
3 finally got the room at Fort Mason and was having
4 meetings down there. And the one meeting that I went,
5 it was really, really, very, very good. It was a
6 beginning meeting of SWIM and people just went around
7 and talked about why they were there and what they
8 wanted and what their experiences had been. It was
9 good.
10 JC: What kind of reasons did women have for coming?
11 SD: Well, they were out of a relationship or they
12 found themselves to be widowed or they were in a
13 position where their life had changed and they were
14 looking for new directions, new relationships, new
15 things to do. And I was impressed by how open the
16 women were and how willing they were to share and they
17 weren't all gay women at that meeting.
18 JC: Were the gay women out?
19 SD: Oh yeah. But it wasn't a big deal, except some
20 women came to find a partner and it was a big deal for
21 them. Look, I'm gay and I'm looking for someone to
22 live with or be with. And so they were very open about
23 it.
24 JC: Have you ever had any exposure to (inaudible)?
25 SD: I was there once, yeah.

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1 JC: You were in a similar type thing?
 2 SD: Yeah.
 3 JC: I was there on the switchboard. I worked for about
 4 a year, probably in '78 (inaudible).
 5 SD: Pat Durham is a real fine woman and the meeting I
 6 went to for options was a support group meeting and it
 7 was just very fine. I have a lot of respect for her.
 8 She's a real good person.
 9 JC: (speaks very softly, unable to understand). As I
 10 mentioned last time I think, there's a group of women
 11 in Buffalo who are very (inaudible) about the gay
 12 community in Buffalo and so we have to (inaudible)
 13 some issues and questions they've brought up and
 14 (inaudible). Well, I don't know, you were talking
 15 about earlier about the games people played and
 16 looking for signs and - and were there particular
 17 signs, codes, words, where the dressing -
 18 SD: No, I think of the way I hear that the men dress
 19 with the keys on one side or the other and
 20 handkerchief knotted - I'm not aware of that - wasn't
 21 aware of that - with any of the places I went to. I
 22 wasn't aware of that kind of a signal being put out,
 23 if, in fact, it was.
 24 JC: What kinds of words did you use to refer to your
 25 lovers? Did you refer to people as lovers, partners or

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1 wasn't aware.
 2 JC: The bars that you went to in L.A. or even up here,
 3 were they predominantly white?
 4 SD: Yes.
 5 JC: Had you been aware of or had friends who were
 6 third world? Latino or black?
 7 SD: I haven't had any lovers. In fact, let's see, I
 8 have a very, very close friend who's Japanese and I'd
 9 say she's asexual. There were black women who hung
 10 around the clubs in L.A. There was an entertainer,
 11 Abby Dukes, Angie Dukes? Something Dukes. She's
 12 probably a recording artist now. I certainly wasn't
 13 involved with her but I knew who she was and she used
 14 to be around.
 15 SS1:200-299
 16 No, I haven't been personally involved with third
 17 world women. They haven't been around where I was.
 18 JC: So it has been pretty much segregated in a lot of
 19 ways. Were these bars also, do you think, segregated
 20 in terms of age or were they mixed?
 21 SD: I don't remember seeing too many older people in
 22 the bars in L.A. I don't know if I would have been
 23 aware of it. And up here, it seems to me that when I
 24 first was running around the bars, it was younger
 25 people. Again, I probably wouldn't have noticed if

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1 friends?
 2 SD: Well, always, you know, roommate or housemate or
 3 if you were talking to just anybody.
 4 JC: Just anybody or even and also within your gay
 5 friends?
 6 SD: No, I'm sure that I didn't say Meet so-and-so,
 7 this is my lover. But I remember two men came here to
 8 visit once and I had a mixed crowd and we were, I
 9 don't know what we were doing, having a meeting of
 10 some sort. And these two men walked in and one said,
 11 'I'd like you meet my lover so-and-so,' and this just
 12 blew me away, and it didn't seem to make a lot of
 13 difference to anybody. And they were, you know,
 14 completely charming and delightful people and nobody
 15 objected that they were lovers. But no, I didn't -
 16 JC: But I don't know if you remember at Lesbian
 17 Masquerade but one of the women talked about various
 18 signs, things like having a star tattooed underneath
 19 your wrist watch but I guess, bit I don't remember the
 20 periods of time taking the pins out of your hair, you
 21 let your hair down. That was a sign, you know, a pinky
 22 ring was a sign. I mean, these are different regional
 23 types of things. I was just wonder if you'd been aware
 24 of any of them.
 25 SD: I wasn't aware of any. They may have existed but I

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1 there were older people.
 2 JC: What kind of women are you attracted to? Can you
 3 type them, can you see similarities?
 4 SD: Oh my, I think I've been with quite a variety of
 5 women. Well, the first lover I had when I was in the
 6 Navy was just very athletic, very outdoor type person,
 7 and that appeals to me, you know. I like good-looking
 8 women, good-looking to me is one who is well-
 9 coordinated and sporty and outdoorsy, mountain
 10 climbing, whatever. I think I've always been attracted
 11 to sort of tomboy type women.
 12 JC: Do you think that, I mean, were there certain
 13 changes in the kinds of women that you attracted to
 14 that you could associate with changes in your life, or
 15 has that pretty much been kind of a constant.
 16 SD: I think initially when I just responded to women
 17 who were attracted to me, the women I met at Stanford
 18 who was helpful in getting me located in Los Angeles,
 19 was a very, very feminine, very intellectual type
 20 person. And other women that sort of picked me up in
 21 L.A. were like that. And those weren't necessarily
 22 women I chose. They just happened to come along and I
 23 happened to respond in their interest in me. I think
 24 the women that I choose are more tomboy type, more
 25 that type of person.

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1 JC: Have you primarily related to women who were peers
2 in terms of age as well?
3 SD: Well, when I went to the Peace Corps, the woman I
4 went with was a younger person.
5 JC: Five, ten, fifteen years younger?
6 SD: Well, probably seventeen. And that was real nice.
7 I'm certainly ensued, although that wasn't a sexual
8 relationship and I don't think it ever would have
9 been. I certainly was attracted to her and to the
10 young women that lived in the house. They were
11 beautiful women. They were all extremely attractive
12 and bright and fun and that was nice, you know. I
13 think I spend more time with younger women than women
14 my own age now. And I certainly did at that time. And
15 I still see that group socially and they're all
16 younger than I am, the whole group is younger than I
17 am. And I don't know, about the only person - let's
18 see, Joan is younger, just six years younger than I
19 am. Mid is probably my only contemporary that I see,
20 and I see her once in a while. We don't socialize a
21 lot but we're very good friends. Win I don't see at
22 all, and she's probably the same age, maybe a little
23 older, I don't know, I'm not sure. But I don't have a
24 lot of friends my age. The woman who was my lover in
25 Mill Valley is my age exactly. She's one month older

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1 it worries me a lot. Off and on it worries me a lot. I
2 think I'm paying more attention now to what's going to
3 happen to me in the next twenty years than I ever did
4 before. I never planned anything. I just sort of
5 rolled along with whatever was happening. But now I'm
6 really thinking, okay, how much more do I want to
7 work? What have I got for retirement and where am I
8 going to live and how am I going to live and what am I
9 going to do and who's going to be with me. And these
10 questions and I don't worry too much about it because
11 I know pretty much the options that are available.
12 There is housing available. There are places that if
13 you are completely alone that you can join and I think
14 I'm paying more attention now to developing a support
15 group that will be around if I'm sick and I need
16 someone to help me out. And so it is a concern and
17 it's something that I'm aware of and it's something
18 that I try to do something about to prepare for when
19 I'm eighty. I'm in good health and I don't worry too
20 much about my health. But there is this specter of
21 being old and lonely and by yourself when you get
22 older, and that's no fun. And that's true for
23 heterosexuals as well as homosexuals.
24 End of Side 1, Tape 3 of 3
25 3S2:000-099

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1 than I, and I don't see her much socially now. I see
2 her once in a while. But we don't - and she is now
3 with a woman probably 17 years younger than herself.
4 When we split up, we both went with younger women as
5 lovers. And she stayed with hers and I didn't. No, I
6 enjoy younger people, it's nice to be around young
7 people. And I don't know that I don't enjoy people my
8 own age. I just don't happen to be running with a
9 crowd my own age. In fact tomorrow I'm going off for
10 lunch with a very, very close friend of mine, and
11 she's probably fifteen years younger than I am. We've
12 been close friends for a long time. So I think that
13 most of the people that I have shared a lot of my life
14 with are younger than myself.

15 3S1:300-345

16 JC: Have you ever felt that growing old would be more
17 difficult for you because you were gay? I mean,
18 there's this stereotype of being old and gay and
19 lonely. And I don't know, was that a bad question?
20 SD: I think I've thought about that, sure, and I'm
21 thinking about it more now than I ever did before. I
22 guess I never thought I'd grow old when I was younger.
23 You know, you think you're going to be young and full
24 of vim and vigor forever. And recently I've thought
25 about it a lot, yeah, and it worries me some. In fact,

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1 SD: It's interesting that recently my luncheon
2 partners are 80-year-old women who are my patients and
3 most of them are alone, either because they're widows
4 or because they've never been married. And they're
5 delightful, interesting, charming, wonderful women.
6 And so they give me great hope. Most of them happen to
7 be rich too which helps. But they have their little
8 support groups. Two of them have been in a sorority
9 since they were in college, which was a long time ago.
10 And that's what has maintained them. This one who's
11 never married who lived with her parents and then
12 lived with her brother and now is by herself and she's
13 over eighty. And fortunately she has us to come in
14 when she's sick. And otherwise she gets along. She has
15 a church group that helps her out and she has her
16 sorority group that helps her out.
17 JC: So your support groups are in some ways the
18 friends that you've made. And it also sounds to me
19 like you're very open to joining other kinds of
20 support groups if the need comes. And you have the
21 hospital, that's a big help. Have you ever had
22 situations where you were strongly attracted to people
23 that were not available to you, I mean, if they were
24 straight or if they were involved or whatever?
25 SD: Yeah, I'm sure I have. Well, the two women I

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1 pursued so valiantly and was completely unsuccessful
 2 with, are examples. The two examples I can think of.
 3 JC: Do you have contact with your family now, your
 4 brother and sister?
 5 SD: Brother and sister, yeah.
 6 JC: Do they live around here?
 7 SD: No, they live in Iowa, they both live in Iowa. My
 8 sister's kids come out here and I've spent time with
 9 them. My brother's son was out here this past year and
 10 that was a very good visit. He had a good time; so did
 11 I. I hadn't known him at all for about nineteen years;
 12 we'd said about three words to each other.
 13 JC: So in a lot of ways, you're closer with the next
 14 generation of the family than you are with?
 15 SD: Yeah, I'm certainly more open with my sister's
 16 kids than I ever had been with her. We get along. I
 17 don't think we have much to share. I have a lot of
 18 respect for my sister but we don't have much to talk
 19 about.
 20 JC: I'm running out of questions which is very unusual
 21 for me. I think we've covered everything.
 22 SD: Okay, that's wonderful.
 23 JC: Yes, I really have enjoyed this a lot. I hope to
 24 see you again. I don't know if I'll make it to that
 25 weekend.

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1 that I bought the house from is gay and there are
 2 homeowners on the street who are gay. And one day I
 3 met a carpenter who was doing some work down the
 4 street and asked him if he would do some work for me.
 5 And he is a gay man and we've been friends for seven
 6 years, very close friends. And in fact I've talked
 7 with him this morning. So I have good friends in the
 8 gay male community.
 9 JC: And a lot primarily since you moved to San
 10 Francisco?
 11 SD: Yeah, I can't think of any gay males I knew in
 12 L.A.
 13 JC: They didn't go to the bars that you went to?
 14 SD: Well, if they did, I didn't pay a lot of attention
 15 to them. No, it's been since I've been here that I've
 16 met gay men and become really good friends with them.
 17 In fact even in Mill Valley I didn't know many. I knew
 18 straight men, straight fishermen that I was fond of
 19 and spent time with, but I didn't know a lot of gay
 20 men over there. Well, let's see, there's one nurse at
 21 the hospital but we weren't terribly close. I just
 22 knew who he was and we'd speak.
 23 JC: We have some of the books that we've been reading
 24 that were published in the '50s. There's a few of them
 25 that have depicted very close friendships between gay

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1 SD: Oh, you've got to!
 2 JC: I know I really want to but it's the last weekend
 3 of my vacation and I might end up -
 4 SD: Are you going to be up on the River?
 5 JC: I'm going to be up on the River just for the
 6 beginning. I don't have any plans for the rest of it
 7 yet so I have to find out if my girlfriend's going to
 8 be on vacation at that time or not. So I have a lot to
 9 do. I'd like to do something, go to Hawaii or
 10 something but I have a feeling I won't get to go.
 11 SD: Oh, you should go to Hawaii. This is a bad time to
 12 go (recorder turned off momentarily).
 13 JC: So the question was how have you related to gay
 14 men.
 15 SD: Gay men, okay. I've met a lot of gay men since
 16 I've been - okay. Start on the Peace Corps, the Peace
 17 Corps physician was gay and we sort of recognized each
 18 other immediately and became good friends and ran
 19 around together a lot in Swaziland. And then all of a
 20 sudden his white houseboy appears from the States and
 21 his lover, who came and stayed with him for about a
 22 year. And we were good friends and we spent a lot of
 23 time together. And when I came back to San Francisco,
 24 it was his lover's apartment that I moved into. And
 25 since I've been here in this neighborhood, the fellow

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1 men and women, but not a lot of them. A lot of the
 2 books are really terrible.
 3 SD: No, I must correct this. In Mill Valley I did know
 4 two gay men. They didn't live in Mill Valley, they
 5 were friends of my lover's and we were close to them
 6 in a business way 'cause we were publishing little
 7 books at the time, and one of them was an author and
 8 so we published his books.
 9 JC: How did you publish these books? You didn't have
 10 presses.
 11 SD: No, we took them to a printer, but Mary would
 12 write them and sometimes I would illustrate them or
 13 sometimes I'd write the forward or sometimes I'd do
 14 something and she would lay them out and take them to
 15 the printer and print them off. Then we sold them by
 16 mail order mostly and then I had some in some stores
 17 in San Rafael and Sausalito.
 18 JC: What kinds of subject matter?
 19 SD: Well, she's a geologist; it was mostly geological
 20 stuff. It was 'Diving and Digging for Gold,' and then
 21 'Virginia City.' The first book was about Virginia
 22 City and then 'Jade in California,' and 'Marin
 23 Indians.' She's now written books that published by
 24 big companies. She's continued to write and does
 25 mostly scientific type things. Anyway, the books we

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1 published for Ken were poetry books that he'd written
2 and illustrated. And, strangely enough, his lover of
3 that time now lives across the street here and he was
4 a patient of mine just last week. He had an accident
5 and was referred to the nurses. I had seen him but I
6 hadn't spent a lot of time with him. We've become a
7 little closer since his injury. I really like him a
8 lot more now than I did before. I didn't know him very
9 well. He's a nice guy. I think some women have very,
10 very close relationships with gay men, maybe straight
11 women more than gay women. I know of a few where their
12 dearest friends are gay men. I think because the men
13 are no threat and are fun and they're dependable.
14 3S2:100-142
15 And I haven't - well, probably I think Ben and I are
16 real close friends. I don't know that we depend upon
17 each other but we like each other a lot and spend time
18 together.
19 JC: Would you say that you were personally intimate
20 friends or that it was more of a friendship of shared
21 interests and things that you enjoyed doing together?
22 That might not be even anywhere near a valid
23 distinction.
24 SD: I think we can be honest with each other and that
25 we share a lot with each other, that we might not with

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1 at all unusual that - and I wonder if it was something
2 that would often happen and then I began to wonder,
3 gee, maybe I ought to talk to people about this
4 beforehand so that they don't really take it
5 seriously. Do you think it's connected with just the
6 whole process of sifting over?
7 SD: I think that looking at your life with this focus
8 all the sudden when you hadn't done it for a long
9 time, it brings up a lot of sadnesses that you haven't
10 thought about. You know, just sort of stored away in
11 the back of your mind and thought well, I'm not going
12 to worry about that anymore and all of a sudden -
13 JC: It comes up again.
14 SD: Oh, I don't know about warning people. I suppose
15 you might mention when you talk to people that some
16 people are very depressed after this. That might
17 happen.
18 JC: We'll wait and see. I'm going to follow up on some
19 of the names you gave me. I haven't written any
20 letters yet but I will.
21 SD: Yeah, Pic, I think, would be a good one.
22 End of Side 2, Tape 3 of 4
23 End of Interview,
24
25

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1 other people. And that we're sort of safe, we're real
2 safe for each other. Oh, I've had fantasies about Ben
3 and he says he's a repressed heterosexual, that's he
4 talked about getting married for the last seven years
5 and I'm sure he will for the next seventy years. But
6 he's someone I like very much. He's an extremely
7 attractive man. In fact this dog came from him. His
8 dog had five puppies and this is the pick of the
9 litter. I think he's sorry he gave him to me but I've
10 got him.

11 JC: (Talking to the dog), talking about you.

12 SD: In fact the dog freaks out when Ben comes over
13 now, just all over him and chews him on the ear and
14 jumps in his lap and he jumps up and down.

15 JC: Yeah, my sister's dog does that. That's crazy.

16 Well, do you have anything else? I keep turning it off
17 and then have a question and then turn it back on.

18 SD: Well, I really appreciate being part of the
19 project. I've enjoyed talking with you. It's been real
20 good sort of going over my life with this focus. So
21 it's been fun for me.

22 JC: Just something that occurred to me when you called
23 up and said you'd been depressed after. And I haven't
24 done very many interviews so I can't really make a
25 comparison. But it occurred to me that it didn't seem

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