

Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon
Interviewed By: Nan Boyd
12-2-92
Transcribed by: Genevieve Maxwell

NB: Hello? Alright, today's December 2nd, 1992. This is Nan Boyd and today I'm interviewing Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon in their home in San Francisco. It's about 10:20 in the morning and uh...

DM: And it's raining!

NB: And we're happy about it...even if we're wet. O.K., I usually have a list of questions about...I have them with me today and the way that I've started every interview is just to ask people about when they arrived in San Francisco and try and maintain a focus on the city of San Francisco and speak from that, that place.

DM: I'm a native San Franciscan.

NB: O.K.

PL: So she didn't know a thing about gender. (Laughs)

DM: Well I think that in my early childhood that I figured out that it was better to be a boy or a man. They have much more privilege and so on...so I think that had a lot to do with, like I had to have a cowboy outfit and things like that. When the girls played house I always played the father or the husband or whatever.

NB: Mmm Hmm.

PL: She always got her finger caught in the gun. (Laughs)

DM: You always have to tell that. So I think I was aware, I don't know what age about, the differences in the roles of women and men. And I didn't particularly like the role of women.

NB: And did you grow up in the city itself?

DM: Yeah. I think that when I was about 10 or 12 or right in there sometime, it was the first time I had read anything about transsexuals. It was in the newspaper about you could change sex. So I had a long time I had a fantasy about changing into a boy.

NB: Mmm Hmm. How did that manifest itself? Did you talk to people about it?

DM: No. (Laughs) Just that was private...

PL: Private fantasy.

DM: ...little fantasy. I never talked to anybody about it.

NB: Do you remember what year that was?

DM: Well I was born in 1921.

NB: So in the thirties...

DM: So yeah, early thirties. Or maybe earlier, I don't know...yeah, early thirties.

NB: What part of the city did you grow up in?

DM: Hmmm?

NB: What part of the city?

DM: Out in the Richmond.

NB: Mmm Hmm. You went to public schools and...?

DM: Yes I went to Cabrillo Grammar School which is on 25th Ave. where we lived, we lived on 25th Avenue. Went to Presidio Jr. High School. And to Lowell, and then later when George Washington High School was built I went to George Washington. And I was in the first graduating class of George Washington High School in 1937.

NB: Wow.

PL: And she was the salutatorian.

NB: That's exciting. Do you remember what you talked about in your salutatory address?

DM: No. (Laughs). No.

NB: Do you uh, can you just tell me about what the city was like, how you remembered it, did you...I mean just any impressions that you have. I'm really interested.

DM: Well I used to spend a lot of time in my childhood down at Golden Gate Park, which wasn't far from where we lived. And then later when we lived on Point Lobos, when I was a teenager I used to go down to the beach and to Fly Shackers(?) and Land's End and around there. Um, I didn't go downtown a lot. You know, mainly around the neighborhood where I lived.

NB: Mmm Hmm. So you were an adolescent, or in your early twenties, during the war years? In San Francisco...that would be right, right? That would put you twenty years old in 1941.

DM: Well I got married in 1940.

NB: Did you stay in the city?

DM: Not after I got pregnant and we needed to get a larger place. And finally wound up with um, in Hillsdale. We bought a house for 45 hundred dollars. Two bedroom house...(laughs).

NB: On Hillsdale Blvd.?

DM: Yeah, right there at Bay Meadows.

NB: I was gonna ask you about the war years but...did you miss those because you were living down the peninsula?

DM: Yeah, well...not, you don't miss the lack of products and food stamps or whatever they called...

PL: Food Stamps.

DM: Food Stamps and all that.

PL: Like ration stamps.

DM: Yeah, yeah rationing stamps. And my husband was working as a civilian up at Fort Mason. And then after we got divorced he got into the army.

NB: Mmm Hmm.

PL: Was that after? I didn't realize that.

DM: Well we were married as long as he was a civilian. Well he got drafted, that's it, after we got divorced.

PL: Oh yeah, mmm hmm.

NB: Did you come up to the city and participate in nightlife in the city during the war at all, or?

DM: A little.

HB: Mmm Hmm. What was that like, where did you go? Did you have fun?

PL: We went to a lot of the big bands.

DM: Yeah, but I...

PL: Was that before the war?

DM: I think that was before the war. Well, my family lived in the city and I went to visit them. But I didn't go into a lot of the nightlife in the city at that period, till...(speaking unclear). Um, it wasn't that free.

NB: Did you do any contribution to the war effort? On the home front. Did you feel...?

DM: No, but mother and my aunt did! They were both welders over at the...

PL: Marine ship yards.

DM: Marine ship yards.

NB: Really? Wow.

PL: You did...good. You took the place of men at Bay Meadows! (laughs) So that people could continue to bet on the horse races and stuff! You did good. (laughs).

NB: Contributed to the morale.

DM: Well anyhow, Bay Meadows was still open and it was right next door and I needed a job. And they, finally they hired women. Before that they never did. And we got permits to work, we couldn't join the union. And when the war was over, all the guys came back and they dumped all the women.

NB: When did you move to the city, Phyllis?

PL: Oh, um, well it depends on what you mean by moved.

NB: Well, what was your first experience with the city of San Francisco?

PL: I guess it was...when was it? I was here when I was a baby. During the depression, or just before the depression. Mother was here with me and dad was doing something else, somewhere else.

NB: Mmm Hmm.

PL: And I don't remember any of that except what I was told... I was adorable. Just to prove it.

NB: I don't doubt it! (laughs).

PL: And then...I was born in Tulsa. So I can't claim the city, or even California. But I moved out of Tulsa when I was 6 months old.

NB: And what year was that?

PL: 1924.

NB: And your family moved to San Francisco?

PL: I don't know where they moved. I've been meaning to ask my sister. I think they moved to California, I'm not sure they moved to San Francisco. They may have come here and then dad may have gone on...and I've gotten a little bit confused about that. Since we're trying to do our autobiographies. And...but I haven't had a chance to really talk to her about it. Anyway, but we did get out here and so on. And somewhere along the line dad went off to um...No wait, alright, that would have been in '24, '25 something like that. Somewhere along the line we ended up in Seattle, for a while. And my sister was born there in 1931. So there's this gap there where I don't remember where I was and what was going on. But daddy was up in Alaska for a while. Uh, anyhow so 1931 and...

DM: Her father was a traveling salesman.

PL: Yeah, for the United States Chipsom (?) Company.

NB: Chipsom?

PL: Yeah, Chipsom. Yeah, U.S. Chipsom. And um, when the crash came mother and dad were wiped out as were everybody else was I guess. Because they had bought a lot of stocks and stuff on margin like everybody did...whatever it was, it all went. And uh, so eventually then we moved down to Riverside to stay with my father's parents. And he went off to Chicago to see if he couldn't figure out some way to make money. Oh, cause he'd been, I guess he'd been fired by U.S. Chipsom when all of this happened. Or let go, probably. So there we were in Southern California. So we were in Riverside and we also lived, I remember with just mother and Trish and myself, in Los Angeles for awhile.

DM: She got around.

PL: When I was in grammar school and Trish was too young for school. So I don't know how long we lived down there. And then eventually we moved back to the bay area. And we lived in Berkeley and we lived in Oakland. But not in San Francisco, ever.

NB: Mmm hmm. So this was when you were in grammar school or high school?

PL: Grammar school and what they call middle school, or jr. high school. I went to jr. high school in Oakland and grammar school in Berkeley...(CHAIR IS SQUEAKING)...Oh honey I can't! (laughs). And so uh, when it was time for me to go to high school, they up and moved to Sacramento. Then I returned to Berkeley. To the University of California! And that's where I spent the war, was over at UC Berkeley.

NB: O.K. So, do you think that...I mean I think that part of what I want to get at and why I'm going through all this is just to get you to speak about the meaning of San Francisco as a city, as

people imagine it. You know I think it's different for people who grow up here and sort of have this...I think you're not as conscious of its meaning cause you're in the middle of it...I...

PL: Well, I don't know about that...I think there wasn't any other place where we'd wanna live.

DM: The uh, well let's see, when I was in, I guess jr. high. And there was the whole thing about Harry Bridges and the general strike. And my folks anticipated that. And got my sister and I out of the city, up in a ranch in Mendocino, when all this was going on. So we missed all that.

PL: All of the excitement! (laughs).

DM: Of course, we were very much aware of the unions. And this is a union town, and all that tradition.

NB: What did your folks do? What did your dad do?

DM: He was...the auditor...he was the auditor of the um, Alexander Hamilton Hotel, the Clift Hotel and then later the St. Francis Hotel. And uh, when he was auditor of and assistant manager of the Alexander Hamilton on O'Farrell. And the manager went out of town or something, he would bring the family down for the weekend. And they, their rooms, were sort of like mini apartments. We had a refrigerator there then we had a little patio. So my folks would have one and my sister and I would have one. This was always a big adventure for us. To do that.

NB: To be sort of...near the downtown area.

DM: Yeah, cause mostly we were out in the Richmond.

PL: The only thing I can remember about early San Francisco really. My early days, I mean. Was going to the Black Cat with mother and dad.

NB: Oh you did?

PL: And that was before it was primarily gay and before I knew anything about gay.

DM: Yeah, it was an arty, bohemian...

PL: It was a bohemian place. And they used to sort of hang out at the Black Cat and they'd hang out at the Iron Pot and stuff like that. So I guess one time when they came down to visit me I was at Cal or something we did that. I do remember doing that. And uh, really not a whole lot more I remember. I remember going to the Tonga Room. Is that in the Fairmont?

DM: Yeah, Fairmont.

PL: But it wasn't the Tonga Room then, it was the Officer's Club. So my roommate and I went with some officers, air force guys. One of whom she eventually married.

NB: This is when you were in college too then?

PL: Yeah.

NB: You know I was watching that...did you those KRON specials on San Francisco in the 20's and San Francisco in the 30's...

DM: We saw some of them. Yeah.

NB: This is kinda what I'm trying to get you to speak to. Like how was San Francisco special in some of your older memories? Because I'm working towards talking about San Francisco in the 50's and how um, maybe it changed in the 50's, or especially around gay life.

PL: It seems (speaking unclear)...at least I'm way ahead of where I ever became conscious of gay life. You know it took me a long time!

NB: Hmm Mmm, but a lot of people remember the city as a bohemian city or a place where there was...or like a union town...or some characterizations of the city that could be seen as kind of a precedent for maybe what happened in San Francisco in the 50's and 60's and then in the 70's. You know that it was uh, a lot of people say that it was a wide-open town, a lot of stuff happened here that couldn't happen in other cities. And that people who lived in other parts of the country had this perception of San Francisco as a place where you went to find yourself, or to be someone new, or to try on new things...

PL: That's always been the *mythology* it seems to me of San Francisco. It's a jumping off place. You move across the continent and you get here and there's no place else to go. And presumably that's why so many people jump off the Golden Gate Bridge and so on and so forth. It's always been I guess a wild and wooly western town. But its also been in between, you know way before our times and some, real prissy too.

DM: Yeah, politically it was really conservative.

PL: Well and it was very racist! And...

DM: The first liberal mayor we ever had was Moscone. But then I think a lot of the mayors in my early days as I remember um, were often...

PL: Shelley?

DM: No, no, no. Earlier. Before Christopher...Rossi. Someone they had that they would be out in parades in they'd be all dressed in tuxedos and the top hat and the white carnation.

PL: That was Sonny Jim(?) right?

DM: Well and I think Rossi followed that too. And that mayors seemed more ceremonial in that time.

PL: Well I think that there was a lot of...it was in the 1930's, wasn't it 1932? That our charter got changed to putting in all these checks and balances-that's why we have such a god-awful structure now. Because there was so much...

DM: Graft.

PL: Graft and corruption and so on. That people were stealing the city blind. And, you know, everybody was in on it. The mayor and the supervisors and all that kind of stuff. So then they divided up everything in the charter...which is never been able to be re-done since! Which is one of the reasons we have, now, a lot of independent fiefdoms. Because there are the checks and balances so nobody can do...sort of...rip off the whole. But a lot of people can rip off a little bits and pieces of it.

DM: Well, you know, the other thing is they can always pass the buck.

PL: Well that's true too. Cause it's the mayor's problem, or it's the supervisor's problem.

DM: And uh, they're limited in what they can do, and so they can always pass the buck to somebody else. And there's been many attempts to revise the charter and it has to go before the voters. Well you send a whole charter out to them-they're not gonna read all that. And what you don't understand, you're not gonna vote for. So it really needs to be done piece-meal, which has not been attempted.

PL: Well, there have been some changes made.

DM: Yeah but, you have to go through all of the process each time. So you have all these little amendments that have gone through that it's just crazy. The structure is a real problem.

PL: And everybody now wants to change the structure cause it's costing so much.

NB: Mmm hmmm...but it's based in this history of...

PL: But we've got a planning commission department, and we've got a housing department and a building department or somethin'...all of which could be combined into one department and save millions of dollars! Anyhow I just, you know, I just remember San Francisco as being gorgeous and wonderful and exciting. And, but not, wandering around too much. Now I remember I was really fascinated with the idea of strip teasers. There used to be a lot of strip joints down in the Tenderloin, I guess. And the guy I was going with at the time was not about to take me, he wouldn't take me. So I decided that was really ridiculous. So I got one of my girlfriends to go with me. We got all dressed up and went down. Went in...freaked out the people at the strip joint, because what were these two women coming in here for? And anyhow they were very solicitous and very sweet and nothing could ever have happened to us-they were watching us like hawks! (laughs). And so we got to see it-and it was very interesting. And that was that.

NB: Do you think that...what's the role...do you think that there was a role that the mafia played in San Francisco city politics?

PL: Uh Huh...never. Not even with Alioto I don't think. He might have seen like a mafia person but...I don't think so. So it was never, mostly the gay bars have been gay owned.

NB: Yeah, that's true and that's what makes San Francisco special, I think.

PL: We didn't even know anything about all this mafia stuff until I guess we went back to New York and we thought what do you mean you can't do this and you can't do...

NB: Yeah, yeah.

PL: Not that there weren't...

DM: We couldn't do a lot of things because of the alcohol beverage control-not because of the mafia.

NB: Yeah, it's our own version of the mafia. (laughs).

DM: Yeah, right! (laughs)

PL: But, you know, so that we wouldn't jeopardize anybody's liquor license. That was the problem.

NB: Do you think...I've been toying with the idea of the difference between a gay capital and a gay Mecca. And San Francisco it seems has grown to be a gay Mecca...a lot of people move here because...or make their pilgrimage here...and sort of perceive San Francisco as this place to visit or move to. And I think maybe in the 40's or 50's it was more of a gay capitol-a place where there was a vibrant subculture-but people didn't necessarily move here.

DM: I didn't think it was so vibrant.

NB: Yeah, well tell me what you think.

DM: In the 40's and 50's. Well, certainly it wasn't all that well known. There were these bars out in North Beach. Mona's, Chi Chi (?)...

PL: Paper Doll...

DM: That was the 40's yeah- 50's. But it wasn't like we had a community like we later developed. It was sort of like, there was a place to go for entertainment and there was a certain ambiance, but not the sense of community that we have developed.

NB: Well, what is a community? How would you define that?

DM: Well...how do you define that?

PL: Well, see I don't know. I vary from saying, from talking about the gay community or the lesbian community, to saying I don't know if we have one. And if we have one, we've got ten! I mean there's all these different communities, that make up the community-now. But I don't think the idea of a community ever occurred to me ever.

NB: So it was more like a group of friends that did things together? But not a community. Like a community is somehow larger and supposes institutions, or?

DM: Well let's say that when Phyllis and I got together in...

PL: In 1953.

DM: In 1953, and we went to North Beach. And we didn't know any other lesbians, but we'd heard about these places, so we went to them. And there were just people who knew each other, little cliques and so on...

PL: At least that's how it appeared to us.

DM: And we did not know how to mix with them. We felt like tourists.

PL: We were too shy to go over and say, "HI! We're from...we just moved here from Seattle! What's goin on?!" Right? (laughs)

NB: Could you characterize that as a community? The group that you sort of entered into and perceived to...

PL: Well, it was more like a clique. It was more like, if you went into a restaurant now and you saw one big table full of people and they were having, you know, dinner together or something. You figure somebody's birthday or somebody's having...you know these are all people who know each other and you don't or can't or wouldn't or whatever, go over and interrupt that.

NB: Yeah. I don't really know how to talk about the 50's. I don't know how to use this word community.

PL: It depends on..well see, I don't...well, have you *talked* to people from the 50's who *think* there was a community?

NB: Mmm hmmm.

PL: Really?

NB: Mmm hmmm, mmm hmmm.

DM: Well what was their...?

PL: Well are they men or women?

NB: Women who were involved in the bar scene. And then also communities that existed around closeted communities of say, like, schoolteachers.

DM: Well, yeah...um...

PL: And our use of _____ (speaking unclear).

DM: And I see community as a much broader than just a group of people who know each other.

NB: That there can be somehow...

DM: So my sense of community is much broader.

NB: Does it necessarily involve an institution that can bring people together from different cliques?

PL: I think that helps.

NB: Yeah, I think so too.

DM: It certainly helps.

PL: I guess what I was saying about Scott's Pit (?) Because when Kate Alman took that over, or when she and Scott were together and so on. That became a focal point, for, in a sense, the community. Or a certain part of the community.

DM: But she called us that one time and says, will we come and speak? And we said are you crazy?

PL: You want us to *speak* at a bar!

DM: So anyhow, she talked us into it. And out of that, then (speaking unclear) she brought different groups to come and talk about.

PL: Cat Parker (?) read her poetry...

DM: And then they got into the poetry readings. And then they did that, we went to the poetry readings couldn't get in the front door. So she came out and led us around the back so we come in through the back way. It was packed! Now who ever thought there would be a packed bar for a poetry reading? So that...so all the build up she had been working towards, the sense of community, brought all...let that happen.

NB: Yeah, yeah...Pat Bond (?) has a um, a little thing that she wrote and I guess performed called "the only bar in town" or something I don't know if you saw it or if she ever performed it.

But she talks about a sense a community and the bars as a site of community in the 50's. And I know it's a small group of women, but...

DM: But she's a very different type of lesbian. Of course...

NB: Well, no...

DM: No I'm just talking about being new to the bars. She would be right there, you know, leading the group! We just didn't happen to run into her at the time. (laughs)

PL: No there was nothing shy about Ms. Bond! What I was gonna say was, that feeling for us, of bars being a place of community and so on, or a least where you had friends-people knew you, you knew them-you felt really at ease. And then came, probably in the 60's...

DM: Well when we got to know more people, it helped!

PL: Well, yeah right!

DM: So that, again. Well, you know, at that time, everywhere, when somebody...we did meet a lesbian through a couple of gay men who lived around the corner from us. Incidentally we were on Castro Street at the time. And um, so then she called up one time and said would we be interested in a lesbian club that they were going to form. A social club. And we jumped at the chance. Here's was our chance to meet other lesbians. And that's how Daughters of Bilitis came into existence, as a very secret, social, lesbian social club.

NB: Do you remember who that person was? This was a person who, the gay male friends around the corner knew?

DM: Yes, we know who she was. We're talking about who the friend was that called...do we name her?

PL: Well, I don't...I've been saying that for a while, not with that, not her last name...you know but just Nani (?).

DM: O.K., her name was Nani.

NB: Does she not want to be known?

PL: Well, we don't know, we've lost track of everybody who was involved in the early days of D of B. So, we don't know!

DM: Right, well when the Daughters of Bilitis started there were 8 of us. And there were 4 blue collar workers and 4, you know, white collar workers.

PL: It's sibling rivalry! (laughs).

DM: And the thing was that it split when we decided it was more to what we wanted to see happen then just social, you know, parties. And so on.

NB: Was that right out...?

DM: And the split was, the blue collar workers, they wanted really to stay under cover. They did not want to be involved in anything more or just... And Nani-who called us-she really went in for more...

PL: Ceremony and stuff.

DM: Ceremonial...um...

PL: Investiture ceremonies...like a lodge, kind of.

DM: Sororities...or something.

NB: Was she one of the blue collar?

DM: Yeah, and that was her gig.

PL: She started several other organizations actually... Rituals and stuff like that...(speaking muffled).

DM: And the Filipino woman, who's idea was it, the club...she just wanted to have parties and dance. You couldn't dance in the bars...

NB: Do you know who she was?

DM: Yeah.

NB: You remember her name but you're not giving her name out.

PL: Her name was Rose.

DM: Yeah.

NB: Could you get in touch with her if you needed to?

DM: No, I don't think so, we've lost track of her.

NB: You don't know if she's still alive or not?

DM: Don't know...

PL: We heard from her, god, 10 years ago.

DM: No, it was 20 years ago.

PL: 20 years ago. When the book came out. And that's the last time.

NB: Was she still in the city?

DM: Yeah.

NB: So she might still be in the city?

DM: Possibly. Last I heard she was up in the Russian River area.

NB: Well, do you think it would be useful to investigate and try and figure out if she's still around, or?

DM: I don't think she would care to be.

NB: Really you don't?

DM: No. She was strictly in the closet and was going to stay there. I mean, I don't think that she would...I doubt it...you know in our age group most people were in the closet. And there's a lot of them, even though they're a lot older and retired and everything else, they're still remaining in the closet. That was their life.

NB: It might be interesting just to ask her what she wants, if she wants...

DM: Well, I don't know how to get in touch with her.

NB: It's a long time ago. Alright, um...

DM: The thing about our training in the 50's is you don't blow anybody's cover. And that's really ingrained in us. We had to live through that. Where you didn't acknowledge somebody's presence unless they gave you a cue that it was o.k. cause they had other people with them.

NB: Do you remember what the cue was like?

PL: Well, they'd speak to you. In other words if you saw a lesbian across the street with some people that you didn't know, you weren't gonna say "HI SALLY!" Or anything, unless she saw you and said, "hi, Phyllis, I'd like you to meet blah blah," or something.

NB: So if you both were with people who the other person didn't know, even if it was maybe o.k. with both of you, you wouldn't be able to let each other know...cause neither of you could approach each other first.

PL: Yeah, I guess...I, I don't know if that ever happened, I hadn't thought about that!

NB: A double bind! (laughs)

PL: Yeah, right, right! But, it was, just a very scary time. People were deeply in the closets.

NB: When you, when...

PL: So you didn't ask, you didn't meet some, somebody didn't come to the D.O.B. and you said oh hi, now where do you work and, you know, what's your last name and give me your address and phone number and da da da da...you were very careful.

NB: When you, when the eight of you first got together, it was, was it eight of you, right? Had any of you read that, um, that Lisa Bend journal visa versa...versa visa?

PL: Vis Versa.

NB: Vis Versa.

PL: No ,huh uh.

NB: So none of you had read that or had any familiarity with other attempts to form...

DM: No...

PL: We didn't know about Mattachine and about one's in L.A.

NB: Really? You hadn't, none of you had heard about Mattachine?

DM: No.

NB: Huh. And uh, when you first incorporated, or, not incorporated, but I guess maybe printed the first issue of "The Ladder" you had become familiar with Mattachine? Right?

DM and PL: Yeah.

PL: I forgot now we heard. Is that when we got started. How did we hear about them?

DM: I don't know but we did go to one film. We started about September '55. In January of '56 we went to the One...

PL: One _____ Institute (unclear). I wonder how we heard about "One"? That must have been...(unclear)...we hear about them first.

DM: So we had to have found out about Mattachine, I don't know how.

PL: I don't either.

NB: And the first “Ladder” publication was...

DM: In fifty...

PL: October, 1956.

DM: Yeah.

NB: So it was pretty, quick.

DM: And...

PL: It was a year, it was a year.

DM: Because it was a publication, that, a book, that “One” put out about gay organizations.

NB: Oh yeah, “Homosexuals Today.” In ’56.

PL: Yeah, right.

DM: That’s how we met them, in time to get into it.

NB: Yeah, they do talk about D.O.B.

PL: Yeah, right. Just by the skin of our feet.

NB: Yeah it’s like a little, end, “and we’ve just heard of this new organization...” I just read that the other day. Yeah...

DM: And I don’t know how-I don’t remember how we met Mattachine. At that time we must have met..._____?

PL: Unless, well though, we met Blanche Baker through Mattachine didn’t we?

DM: Yeah.

PL: Ken _____?

DM: Yeah, we met him too.

PL: We met him through Mattachine, yeah. I don’t know, I don’t have a clue. But we did, and then we ended up using a corner of their office, as our office.

NB: Uh huh. Do you think you were really influenced by what Mattachine was doing? Because...how was the organization different before you met Mattachine and after? Because the,

you know, the aims and the goals and principles, or the aims of the organization as you print it, you know, in “the Ladder” and um, some of Mattachine’s aims and principles are really similar. Using a similar language and sort of similar ideological foundations for the meaning of the organization and its purposes. They’re very different too at the same time, but they’re obviously informing each other.

DM: Well I’m sure there was some influence from Mattachine. We did go to their public discussions and we...

PL: The main difference was we, we were aware we were an organization for lesbians. Actually for all women, but primarily for lesbians. Whereas Mattachine was an organization that was interested in the homosexual condition. (Laughs) Stuff like that.

NB: So you feel like D.O.B. was much more...

PL: Open! If you...(laughs)...

NB: Open about the sexuality aspect of the community.

DM: Well, for example, we had our first national convention in 1960 at the Wickam (?) Hotel.

PL: At the top...

DM: The top floor. And Phyllis was doing the P.R. and she was saying “this is the first...you know, lesbian...”

PL: National lesbian convention. Which it was.

DM: And ____ ____ (?) He really called us on it and said that...

PL: Of Mattachine.

DM: ...that there’s a distinction, you know, their organization said, oh, they were interested in the subject and so on, but they were not called gay organizations or anything. So Jennie Bell (?) who was a...

PL: Oh I have said, he didn’t know it...that any of the Mattachine members could come, because of this outrageous stance that we had taken.

DM: So Jennie Bell who was the chapter president at the time, wrote him a letter and said that if the members of Mattachine, which were 99% male, dressed properly and conducted themselves with decorum that she was sure they wouldn’t be taken for lesbians. (laughs)

NB: So they would be safe.

PL: So we still had, we still had the largest gathering that had been held in the country, to our knowledge anyhow, at that time, without anybody from, or without hardly anybody from Mattachine.

NB: Well I think you know, another difference that I noticed was that Mattachine in their aims and principles says that their interest is the education of the public and their second interest was the education of the variant. And D.O.B. had that reversed, in the first principle is the education of the variant. So it seemed like D.O.B. was more interested in the lesbian herself, rather than her, then maybe her integration, or public acceptance of the lesbian second. Which I felt like was more, more radical in some ways.

DM: Well, the whole thing was that everybody was scared shitless. So we had to deal with all their fears. And so we had discussion of each, we had lawyers and psychiatrists and different professional people who came and talked and tried to get over that they were o.k. and...

PL: They weren't sick.

DM: And that you uh...

PL: You're not guilty of something.

DM: What your rights, what your rights were. Cause a lot of them when they got caught up in a raid, they all, they would plead guilty. Well what were they pleading guilty to? They were pleading guilty to being homosexual- which was not against the law. It was not what they were accusing them of. And so our best lesson, was after we got an attorney, for some women who got caught up in the bar raid, was that the attorney said just plead no contending. You're there. So when they questioned the officers about what these women did, they didn't have any notion at all. They just dragged them all out. So the cases got dismissed. So a lot of it was just fear and not knowing what the law really was and so on. But a lot of them would do would plead guilty to some silly thing, disturbing the peace or something, and pay a fine and get out of it. But we learned how to get them freed altogether. And you know, so we learned a lot about the law, and we learned a lot about...and we found, what do you call them, more liberal therapists, and so on, you know those that would support us. And we had, we did this, we did need validation. And we did need to built self-esteem in these women who were scared shitless. And, well, we weren't exactly real brave, but we sort of got, into the role of leadership and I guess in the process of having to do it you get over your own fears and then you help others get over theirs. But people say, well why weren't you out there picketing and doing all this stuff in the 50's? Well hell, you can't have a movement until you've got your self-esteem...

PL: Some people to move! (laughs)

DM: Yeah! And people who have some sense of self worth. To fight for.

NB: Yeah, yeah. I think a lot of historians, or the few historians that are writing on gay and lesbian history, position D.O.B. and Mattachine as...have talked about D.O.B. and Mattachine as assimilationist organizations. And used that term...what do you think about that, or how you...?

DM: I don't give a damn what they call it.

PL: (Laughs)

DM: All I know...I'm so sick of all these pigeonholes they put people in. What we were trying to do at that time was survive. And what we were trying to do was build a sense of community among those of us who could. That gave us self-esteem, that gave us a sense of our own individual power and then our power as a group. I don't care what you call it, but that was what we were trying to do. And when we had what we called gab and _____ (?), which were discussions and so on, they were really consciousness raising groups, but we didn't have that language.

NB: Sure.

DM: And, so there...you have to build some sense of community within your group before you can do anything else.

PL: I think about the...a lot of to-do came out about the clothes, clothing restrictions or whatever. (loud squeaking)

DM: The cats are quiet, your squeaking is not. Um...what were you going to say?

PL: Arggh, I don't know!

NB: About the clothing restrictions.

PL and DM: Oh Yeah.

PL: Ah, cause I think we had a rule at some point where it said "nobody should wear men's clothing." That came about because we had some members who were wearing men's clothing and looking very butch. And that upset some of the others who were sure that if they were seen next to them they would be targeted...

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

NB: Okay.

PL: So we passed this rule and everybody was happy and nothing ever happened again. I mean people wore men's clothing and nobody said anything. And, nobody was ever called on the carpet because of it or anything else.

DM: It was just to appease the group at the time. But I do, I recall though we went to a brunch or something and I had gotten this new suit, that had pants, and a vest...

PL: God it was great!

DM: and a jacket and I just loved it.

PL: Striped and it had a skirt and jacket and vest and pants.

DM: Yeah, the whole works. And um, later we...

NB: They were making those for women at that time?

DM and PL: Yeah.

NB: Wow.

DM: And later we heard that there'd been all this to-do about, "what was Dell wearing these men's clothes!?" (laughs)

PL: The other part of it was, was that...

DM: Wait a minute, there was a department store called "Bonds," it had a women's section.

NB: That had pantsuits.

DM: Yeah, yeah.

NB: That's probably the after-affect of Rosie the Riveter. I think that's when women started wearing, or...

PL: Pants...

NB: Pantsuits started becoming available.

DM: Yeah, because, before the war, if you went downtown and you were a woman you were to wear hat and gloves and the whole works, you know. And the war changed that, then you could start wearing whatever you want. But before that, it was real...prissy.

NB: Mmm hmm.

PL: Anyhow, and then I think the other part of that clothing, was that, what Sammy said at some point, which was "lesbians ought to be able to wear and be comfortable any kind of clothing from an evening gown to, you know whatever..."

DM: Whatever the occasion called for.

PL: Whatever the occasion called for. And in order, and that whole thing, was to keep from being excluded because you wouldn't or didn't feel comfortable in, or couldn't, or whatever wear those kinds of clothes that at that time were called for.

NB: So it's like D.O.B. was mediating two sets of restrictions. You know, like a mainstream society that said "women shouldn't dress in men's clothes," and a lesbian society that lesbians had to dress in men's clothes. You know, so on the one hand you could say "lesbians should be able to wear anything and be acceptable, accepted as lesbians, and on the other hand you were sort of mediating mainstream expectations of propriety.

PL: Well cause you didn't for the most part, you know nobody wore jean pants to work.

DM: No, heavens no.

PL: Nobody I knew. Well if you saw anybody, I mean there was, I was working temporary when we first got together-(unclear) in '53 or so. And I can't remember what company it was, but there was a woman with very short hair and a Pendleton jacket, or shirt, I don't know exactly which. I had determined that Pendleton jackets meant lesbian. That was it. And she wore pants and she ran the cafeteria.

DM: And she was workin in the cafeteria. Yeah.

NB: Or the elevator, or cab-driver.

PL: I told Dell, I said, "I bet she's a lesbian." And so I would have these weird conversations with her where I would say, "Gee I had a gay time last night!" (laughs) Nothing ever happened, nothing ever happened. To this day I do not know.

NB: So, did you go out much and feel like you needed to sort of dress the lesbian part, for the bar scene, or out in public?

DM: I think we probably...

PL: We got into pants as often as possible.

DM: Yeah, we got into pants as often as possible...it was okay in the gay bars.

PL: It wasn't always o.k. though...

DM: Oh no, the men wanted the women, lesbians...

PL: Lesbians to dress up.

DM: Talk about gender, yeah. They would want, if women came into their bars, then they should be wearing skirts.

NB: Like what bars?

DM: The gay men's bars.

NB: You don't remember the names of any of them that...you had to dress appropriately for?

DM: Well I remember...

PL: Well we didn't go to a lot of them because of that.

DM: I remember Charlotte Coleman (?) and her bars that she opened. What was the one on Haight Street? The Golden Cast?

PL: The Golden Cast.

DM: When she first opened lesbians were required to dress in skirts and so on. Till the guys got used to them and then it was o.k. Then she opened The Mint, same thing. Because where you make the money is on the gay men. Lesbians don't go to bars as often.

NB: So she didn't want to scare away the gay men with the butchy lesbians?

DM: Yeah!

NB: What about like, some of the older gay male bars? Weren't there some kinda "hoity-toity" one's too, in the North Beach area? The fuzzy sweater set...or whatever.

DM: I don't know.

PL: That may have been the "*wind*," but we didn't cater to those. The bars that we went to that were mixed or were male, primarily, were more like "Bill Plass" (?), by the Oak Room.

NB: Did he have a dress code for women?

PL: No...

DM: And the Opera Club was....(mumbled)...

PL: Yeah the Opera Club was one we...

DM: We went there a lot. We went to a lot of them that served dinner.

NB: Did you go to the Paper Doll a lot?

DM: Yeah we went to the Paper Doll.

NB: Did you have to dress in skirts for the Paper Doll?

DM: No, no.

PL: Cause up in North Beach early on lesbians were part of the floor show. They wanted you to look like a queer, not...

NB: Tourist trade.

DM: Yeah I remember Mona's when they had a charge to get in, and the lesbians could get in for free cause you were part of the floor show. And they had, you know, it was a nice club with um, um...

PL: Female impersonators.

DM: No, male impersonators.

PL: I mean male impersonators! (laughs)

DM: It was a woman impersonating a man. So yeah, male impersonators.

NB: So Mona's charged to get in, but not the butch dressed lesbians cause they were tourist attractions. That's so interesting. Did I tell you that I interviewed her?

DM: Mona?

NB: Yeah!

PL: Oh really?

DM: Really?

NB: Yeah, she's alive and doing well. She lives in San Rafael. I went and talked to her. Ricky Striker and I went up to visit and spend a day with her. And I asked her if she, if she had charged a cover charge, and she said no. But you remember that. But then...

DM: Are you sure it was Mona, or was it another entertainer, another...the one who had that place out in Russian River.

PL: I've been trying to think of her name, but I can't...

DM: Cause I don't think that would be Mona.

NB: That charged to get in?

DM: No, Mona's was a...

PL: I don't remember there being a Mona. I can't remember a Mona.

NB: Oh yeah! She was...

PL: That's interesting.

NB: Yeah, she was really...

DM: Yeah, but Mona's did charge a cover charge. Your sure it's Mona, and not another person.

NB: Right, yeah, it was Mona! I mean it was Mona who I talked to who opened Mona's. But she wasn't always the proprietor. She sold her name to several places.

DM: Well, I know she sold her name. And then later, later... who was the woman that took over that place?

NB: Ann's 440? Ann D?

DM: Yeah, Ann's 440, yeah.

NB: Yeah, it would make sense maybe after Mona got out of it but her name was still associated with the place that they...

DM: Well there was Ann's 440 and then across the street there was a...

NB: Mona's Candlelight.

DM: Mona's Candlelight.

NB: Uh huh.

DM: Mona's Candlelight I particularly remember as, the way we described it, going into a bar and knowing anybody. I remember that was a bar that we felt very uncomfortable with.

NB: Because it was cliquey?

DM: Yeah.

PL: We felt so out of it.

DM: Yeah.

PL: Out of it.

DM: We were a little...

PL: Out! Out!

NB: But you were soon to be very *in*. (laughs)

PL: But we didn't know that.

DM: We certainly have met lesbians since.

NB: Yeah.

DM: Around the world too.

NB: Did you, when, in the early formation of D.O.B. were you aware of the Civil Right's Movement happening in the south? And some of the political struggles around that? Because a lot of people, look to what John Emilio (?) has done in his book and sort of set up an analysis that to a certain extent mirrors some of the struggles that were going on around political, the formation of political movements in the south. So it's easy to kinda make that glide between the Gay Liberation movement and the Civil Rights Movement.

DM: There was a lot of lesbians who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and who...

PL: And a lot of gay men, but they were most, 99% of them I'm sure were not out.

DM: Yeah, they were in the closet.

PL: They were in the closet.

NB: But what about the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the homophile movement.

DM: Well it certainly had an influence on getting out in the streets. And we got out in the streets long before, um, Stonewall.

NB: Stonewall, yeah.

DM: We did by the mid 60's. In fact in 1966 we had our first national demonstration around the armed services issue...which is rather prominent now. (laughs) And I know that we demonstrated out in front of the federal building.

NB: Here in San Francisco.

DM: And down in Los Angeles they had a...

PL: Caravan...or something or other...

DM: Of colors, you know driving around with the banners and so on. And then there was something going on in New York, Washington D.C., someplace in the Midwest. The thing is though, that while D.O.B. was represented in a lot of these things, it wasn't...it was mostly Phyllis and me. And I think exactly east there was, you know Barbara Gettings (?) and uh...

PL: Shirley Willer. (?)

DM: Shirley Willer. (?) And the one who was in Virginia...

PL: Julie Lee!?

DM: No, no, no, no.

PL: Virginia?

DM: Who um...well, I can't think of her name. But anyhow, just a few of us, we really...the D.O.B. name was used. As a sponsor, along with the others. And I remember when, with the founding of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, which happened in '64, that some of the D.O.B. (?) said to us, "you can't get all involved in that, what about DOB?"

PL: Cleo said that.

DM: Yeah Cleo, Cleo Bonner, who was the national president at that time. And we said "look, we've been trying to reach the church for all these years, here's our opportunity. Do you think we're gonna say sorry, we don't have time for you." So, but she did, she and um...

PL: Debbie?

DM: Debbie and you and I and Billy. Five of us did go to the retreat.

PL: That started the _____ (?) The beginning of the _____(?)

NB: Oh yeah, someone mentioned that to me.

DM: Yeah and there were 15 lesbians and gays and 15 clergy.

PL: Men.

DM: Yeah men. And they, they thought they could get away with just Phyllis and me representing the lesbians. So we screamed and hollered until we got 3 more of us, there.

PL: So we had the only third world people. Cleo and W were both black. And W was blind, so that gave her one more niche to pick.

DM: Yeah, and then Cleo was very upset, you know, about us getting too involved. But we went with it.

NB: And she went with you.

DM: No, no she stayed with DOB.

PL: Afterwards, well we stayed with DOB too. I mean we also figured that there was no rule that said you had to stay with that organization just because you'd been involved in starting it. And that if it wasn't strong enough to stand by its own without you, then there was something wrong.

DM: Well I think it was, maybe it was about '68 when I dropped out.

PL: And I took a little longer.

DM: Yeah, you took a little longer. But part of, you know, our feeling or our interest in DOB when we started moving out was dealing with the fact that we were considered to be illegal, immoral and sick. And one of the things we got involved in was acting as guinea pigs for researchers on lesbians. Back east, back east... Frank Cameron and Washington Mattachine and some of our and Barbara Gittings who was a follower of him, were just protesting us getting all involved in this, because we should just say "we're not sick!" They said, "so you can say..."

PL: Just say no!

DM: And they say, "you are too!" So where are we? So we figured we had to do something that could influence their thinking, and where they came from. Well, by 1968, Florence, (mumbled) Jaffe (?) decided that we ought to try to figure out if we're making any progress. So she decided we ought to have a questionnaire that went to therapists. Psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers and find out where they were. And figured that you couldn't get them to answer a questionnaire from the Daughters of Bilitis. So she approached, Joel Fort and Claude Steiner with the Center for Special Problems.

PL: I wonder if that has survived.

NB: Joe Fort, like...

PL: Joel. Doctor. Dr. Joel.

NB: And the other person was?

DM: Claude Steiner.

PL: PhD. Fort's an MD, yes, Steiner's a PhD.

DM: And so the three of them put this questionnaire together. And the results were unbelievable. They were so positive. We should be in the armed services, we shouldn't be discriminated against. We're not sick...and all this kind of...

PL: We can be teachers. We can be...

DM: We can be teachers. The whole thing. So, it was so positive that nobody wanted to take that paper and print it. Finally, after...

PL: Took about 3 years.

DM: Took about 3 years and we got it into Psychology Reports or something?

PL: Something like that, some mysterious journal in Montana or something like that.

DM: I don't know where it was from.

PL: Yeah, Joel Fort is an interesting person, who started the Center for Special Problems. He was their first director, back in the 60's. And he announced, this is part of the city's public health department, that he would not be dealing with homosexuals as if they were sick. Which is the first time I know anybody ever got up and said they weren't gonna do that because everybody thought we were.

NB: And you think that DOB's activities, in confrontation with the medical establishment, on its own terms, contributed to this change too?

PL: Sure, eventually it did. I don't know whether...Do you think it contributed to Joel's or he was just ahead of his time? I always thought.

DM: Well, but I mean, most of the, when, it was in what '73 that the American Psychiatric Association...

PL: Took us out of the sick...

DM: Took us out of the sickness category.

PL: Boded us well, as I always say.

DM: Well, not really they had all the little providers.

NB: That's right, the gender dysphoria.

DM: Yeah, NGTF took a lot of credit on that. But what happened was in '69 I guess it was, when the A.P.A. met out here in San Francisco and they had a session on aversion therapy and they were confronted by gay liberation and women's liberation. And they got all excited, terrible and a bunch of them walked out. Some stayed behind and talked to the people. And one of them was Kent Robinson and he arranged them for the next meeting which was going to be in Washington D.C. for us to have a workshop. First workshop which we could conduct. Cause you had to have a member of the A.P.A sponsor you and you had to have them...and that led to some real fun in D.C. (laughs)

PL: Led by Frank Hemony (!) (laughs)

DM: And from here, I went and so did Larry Lilljohn and Barbara Gidding (!) there. There's somebody else from ____ (!) who I didn't know. And of course ____ (!). And we just had a ball. The stuff that they raised, for instance, the opening session where you have the diplomats and the precession and they have all this to-do. They had they main speaker was gonna be...

PL: Great attorney general...Ramsey Clark.

DM: Ramsey Clark. And so on. So the fact that we were having the workshop we got to go inside, instead of outside. But somebody saw to it that the door was unlocked from the outside. So here come these gay liberation people that do their number on them. And protested, you know, some of the stuff that they had in the program. So I remember when all these psychiatrists around me were so indignant and upset and I said. And I stood up and I said "let them speak!" And they looked at me like, you're crazy, why should we!? And of course, Cameny (?) was doing his number. So he finally got hold of whatever they had to speak, their message, and he got the mic somehow...I guess they got them out, but he got to deliver them...their statement. And then, they were, the psychiatrist who'd done the awful things, written these awful books Beaver (?).

PL: Well and let me just say something before you switch to Beaver (?). Was that, then Ramsey Clark came along, and Ramsey Clark spoke to inclusion, to not discriminating against people. And all of these things that we'd, the gays had been trying to say also, and he got a standing ovation! (laughs)

DM: It shows how dumb these people are!

PL: Cause they didn't connect!

DM: They said the same thing! They didn't connect.

NB: So was he talking about race?

DM: He was talking about people.

PL: People.

DM: You know race and lesbians and gays and all the people that they are inclined to...

PL: I don't know why, this is not squeaking anymore than it always squeaks!

DM: Well, if you sat still, it wouldn't squeak. (laughs) anyhow.

PL: You're gonna get it, if you don't shut up.

DM: Yeah, there was that. Then Robinson called us together and said that Beaver was worried about, that we would bust up his meeting and so on.

PL: He was gonna deliver a paper or something.

DM: He was gonna deliver his paper.

NB: As he should have been...Sorry.

DM: And so on and would Kent, sort of, be a moderator for him...and so on. So Kent said, "I'll have to speak to my people." (laughs) He would talk to him. And we said all we want is the chance to answer or ask him a question or something like that, you know. Well, he does this number about gay men and that they have no ambition, they don't get up in the economic structure into the executive branches and so on. They just stopped and so on. That's one thing that he said that stuck with me. So, when...

NB: That was the sign of pathology.

DM: That was one point he made that I wanted to answer, so I got a chance to answer it, and I said well I've known gay men who haven't gone up in the business world, have been from, because they didn't have a wife and they didn't have children and they weren't tied down with so many debts that they couldn't leave them.

NB: The company.

DM: Company. That they were stuck. And I...and so on. And then his answer to me was, I don't know anything about lesbians, I'm... my research is all about gay men. That was his answer to me when I was talking about the gay men that were stuck because of this. I mean this...(laughs)

PL: And he was hysterical practically.

DM: And, you know, you figured you've been led to think that psychiatrists are sophisticated and learned and so on, but there are two occasions where they're just crazy. Anyhow...

PL: Well that's what we used to think.

DM: Yes, I know.

PL: We don't think that now.

DM: No, we've learned. But this is how we learned, by attending their meetings. Anyway, when we went to look at the exhibits that they had, and we found this one that was on the aversion therapy, where you could get a little shock to stop smoking, to stop drinking, to stop being a lesbian or gay, or whatever. So, we...Ed Caminy (?) was very verbal and he really...

PL: And loud!

DM: And loud. And read 'em out about this, and so on and scared the guy to death. And said, "well we'll do something about this," and we all stomped off while the guy is screaming "they're threatening me, they're threatening me!"

PL: (laughs)

NB: What year was this?

DM: This was in 1970...

PL: I think so.

DM: Or maybe it's '71.

PL: I think it's '71 because it seems to me you spent you 50th birthday there.

DM: Yeah, I did. So that was '71. And the meeting I said was '69, it was '70. Anyhow so, there was a meeting with the people who set up the...

PL: The nomenclature committee.

DM: No, that's a different one. The committee that had to do with the booth...

PL: Oh oh oh oh, sorry. Sorry sorry.

DM: So by the next morning we come back and they had put adhesive tape over the lesbian and gay part, and that was out of their aversion therapy. In the meantime there was a meeting set up with a member of the nomenclature committee...about...I didn't go to that one, because I went to another event that was going on, anyhow some of us met with him about getting us out of the...

PL: D.S.M.

DM: DSM. Diagnostic...

PL: Standard Manual. Of psychiatric something...

DM: So that was the beginning of that. And then of course, when we left D.C., then we left it up to Caminy (?) who was theirs. But there was a lot of groundwork that came in before the National...

PL: NGTF moved in...

DM: Yeah, moved into the area.

PL: Which is outlined in that book, I think, about it.

DM: Anyhow, it was a very memorable weekend.

NB: Uh huh, that felt like a big victory, huh?

PL: Well, wasn't that the weekend also that you were gonna go see Phil Burton?

DM: Oh yeah, that was the weekend too, that...

PL: You and Mary.

DM: No, the bunch of us. I made, got an appointment through Phil's office here. Phil Burton was our congressman at the time. And we had sought to see someone from the EEOC and asked for his office to make an appointment for us. Instead, when we got there, instead, he had made an appointment for us to see the legal council of the Civil Service Commission. And that laid the ground, that meeting laid the groundwork for changing the regulations around lesbians and gays in employment with the federal government. And what he said to us was that it would probably, could be done, could be done quietly, and just by changing the regulations. But as time that they...we were there in '71, it was '75 when they finally changed the regulations and it was made public.

PL: It was very quiet.

DM: Yeah, it was very quiet. And then we did see the EEOC too, while we were there. And I think that we just went over there, without an appointment.

PL: Yeah I don't remember who was...

DM: But so a lot happened that week that we were there.

NB: It sounds like though what I hearing say is that, your agitation from the inside, especially, kind of, emanating from this initial conversation that you were capable of having a conversation in San Francisco, at the 1970 meeting in San Francisco, enabled all this agitation from the inside which turned out to be very effective.

DM: Well it works both ways. So that, well, at the time in San Francisco when we made a breakthrough with the family service agency...gay liberation was outside, and they were...

PL: _____ (?) was screaming cocksuckers!...

NB: Unite! (laughs)

DM: No it wasn't _____ (?) it was that one that one that we heard of recently, that used the word for KGO.

PL: A real short one.

DM: Seems to me that he was the leader of that group. Anyway, they had their horns and stuff and making all this racket. So, some of us went inside, to talk to the board. And there was Rick Stokes, Sally Gerhart, myself, and I think there's somebody else. Anyhow, so they were so relieved to talk to people that would just talk to them, you know, after all that...

PL: Instead of yelling.

DM: You know, they really got shook up by that.

NB: But they might not have been so relieved if people hadn't yelled at them first.

DM: Yeah, yeah. So then they had found some people who were reasonable that you could talk to. And we walked away with Rick Stokes and Sally Gerhart on the board. And, you know, our claim was that gays have families too and that we should be able to be in the Family Services Agency.

NB: Did you, before the '70's did you find that it was more comfortable, or possible to work with men, than after say, the liberation, maybe the women's liberation movement, or just even in the gay liberation movement. Because your comment about cocksuckers...did, do you think that that was divisive in some way between men and women?

DM: Well, sure it was. But there...the whole attitude was still, you know I don't know how they figure that all gay men are sissies and so on...they are *male*, a very male party. And so, talk about macho! We had to deal with that all the time. And as far as back in the 50's, while One and Mattachine kept saying "we're co-ed, and you're the segregated group," they saw women mostly in terms of, well, One not so much, but...

PL: Mattachine definitely. Well, Hal Call (?) saw women right, I mean he just looked right past.

NB: He's not particularly friendly towards women. I interviewed him, and he was not very friendly to me! (laughs)

DM: Yeah well, he's a, well I remember one time there was some kind of an event where he was mentioning all the lesbian, gay publications. And he mentioned all of them, and Phyllis was down there saying "the Ladder, the Ladder!" and he couldn't hear her. He had printed it at one time.

PL: Well, I finally screamed louder, and he said "oh, yes, and the Ladder!"

DM: Well and then there was, there was a time when Larry Littlejohn was president of SIRS, Society for Individual Rights. And...

NB: Was SIR more integrated with men and women?

DM: Well they said they were too.

PL: They had some women members, but I don't think mostly they went to things. And a lot of them were the bar women...like Ricky and Charlotte and Peggy.

DM: Yeah, I don't think they were that involved. Anyhow, what he did was finally put out a questionnaire to the members about...women...

NB: Littlejohn?

DM: Yeah, about women in SIR. And the answer surprised him, that, well it was o.k. to have some women join, but they wouldn't want to serve on a committee with them. And of course...

PL: They should have their own committees. Separately.

DM: And one of the things was, that they had to serve on a committee with me, during that 1966 demonstration around the armed services.

NB: You were their formative experience, and they weren't sure how they felt about it! (laughs)

PL: They never wanna do that again! (laughs)

DM: I didn't take a back seat. So, anyhow, there just was that, I mean, sure there were men and women who had some, who were personal friends and so on, but generally speaking, I mean...And then came along the, also started in 1966, was NACHO, or nachos, National...

PL: No, North American Homophile Organizations, N.A.C.H.S.? N.A...North American?

NB: Conferent...well, no...I know the organization you're talking about.

DM: Yeah well anyhow...

DM and PL: Conference of Homophile Organizations.

DM: Anyhow so...

PL: '66 was a busy year.

DM: Yeah, so the DOB was involved.

NB: Who initiated that? Was that New York initiated?

PL: The whole origin...I've forgotten how it came about. The idea was to come together to exchange information. To talk about how we could work together and...

DM: Help each other.

PL: What we had done in such and such a way that might be helpful to somebody else to do it.

NB: Just like networking rather than...

PL: Yeah, right. And very definitely it was not to start a new organization, which of course is exactly what happened. But that was not what any of us went...

DM: Well but they had a different agenda then we do.

PL: Yes, I know.

DM: Anyhow, then...

PL: An agenda which spewed forth billions and billions of words in purple ditto ink from Hartford, Connecticut. (laughs)

NB: Who was in Hartford, Connecticut?

DM: Oh, I've forgotten his name.

PL: Oh god, what was his name...he's still there I think.

DM: Um, anyhow, they met out here in...I've forgotten the exact year.

PL: '68? No? When did we have...it was when a DOB convention, and we had one in '66.

DM: No, I'm not talking about '66 now, I'm talking about later after we were in NOW and we were having a women's day, August 26th thing in um...

DM and PL: Union Square.

PL: That must have been '68, '69...'67? Coulda been '67.

NB: Yeah, this, there was a conflict, you're getting at.

DM: Yeah, well anyhow. By that time we had 3 lesbian organizations.

NB: Which were?

DM: Nova, DOB, and...Gay Women's Liberation...probably.

PL: Yeah, probably.

DM: Yeah, and so we had been up to Union Square, you know, we were all hip on women's movement and so on....and so we, NACHO was down at SIR having a meeting and we tromped in there and got raising a little hell. I think they had one woman from New York, or some place. Which, (mumbled) don't pay attention to lesbians in doing their numbers.

PL: Mikael was with us. Mikael?

DM: No, it was the other one...starts with an L.

PL: Sure? Leonard, Lionel, you're sure it wasn't Mikael?

DM: I don't know. I don't know.

PL: I know which one you mean. I picture Mikael.

DM: Anyhow, gay liberation was backing us up, but he was just mouthing the words and so anyhow, how they might go along with something. So that night, there was this banquet, this big dinner...and...

PL: Big *unity* dinner!

DM: Big unity dinner. And Willy Brown was a speaker and he talked about unity with all the minorities including lesbians and gays and so on...and women and the whole bit. How important it was. And the president of SIR, wound up the evening...

PL: The president of SIR at that point was Tom Maurer. Presbyterian minister, Methodist? Was he Methodist? Anyhow, from Minneapolis who had...

NB: How do you spell his last name?

PL: Maurer. He's dead now.

DM: All I know is that he was a Rev.

PL: And he had come out here to work with the Kinsey institute on their second go-round. So he kind of coordinated stuff and so on. And he had become the president of SIR. And there had been several women up at the head table. There was Mrs. Brown, Willy's wife and Lois Flynn and her ____ (?) Lois had given a report on some research she had done, or something like that, previously. So Tom stands up and he's drunk as a skunk, as usual. For one thing, and starts calling people up. He's making these flowery speech about how wonderful everybody is and how we're all gonna come together and we're all gonna do all this and so on. So on after another he calls these guys up to the head table. And as they come they sorta push Mrs. Brown outta the way, and Lois and her friend out of the way. And so on, and not once did he call any single, solitary woman up to the stage.

DM: Which burned us. (laughs)

PL: Dell is sort of...Dell is somewhat incendiary.

DM: So I wrote my infamous (laughs) thing on "if that's all there is," which is sort of like a take off of Robin Morgan's...what was hers called?

PL: I don't know I keep getting them confused. "If that's all there is?"

DM: I think was mine. And hers was when she took leave of all the left males. And um Postscript (?) published it...

NB: No I think I just Xeroxed that a couple of weeks ago out of what was, what has become BAR. Yeah?

PL: BAR?

NB: Is that right?

DM: No...

NB: Well that old gay newspaper that was around at that time. What was it called?

PL: Err uh...

DM: That got published in...

PL: Citizen's News?

NB: No...maybe it was uh...I don't know I'm sorry.

PL: Guy Straights?

NB: No it wasn't the Guy Straight Press, its....

PL: The Gayzette?

NB: No it was a gay newspaper...

DM: All I know, all I know it was printed in was the Methodist magazine that went out of business after it...Motive (?).

PL: I just recently re-typed it from something, because it was wrong. Whatever it's been printed in, and we were gonna give somebody a copy of it. Wasn't that back, or was that something else?

DM: I don't know. It was first published for Philadelphia in a women's thing.

PL: What happened first of all was, if you will recall, I took it into Glide, I was working at Glide at that time and I showed it to Herb Allen, a closeted gay minister. Who was heading the regional young adult project. And he read it and said "whoa, let's get it out." So the Xeroxed, or mimeographed or whatever in those days, a whole bunch of copies and we mailed them out to any number of people, all over the place. And that was the first wave of it.

DM: And that was printed by Know, KNOW inc.

PL: Oh that's right yeah. They did a lot of that...

DM: And then it was in Motive.

NB: This must be something different then, that I was thinking of.

PL: Cause it would have never have been...I can't think of another gay paper.

DM: Anyhow when it was...

PL: Unless it was the Advocate.

DM: No, I can't think of anything right now. Gay Males wouldn't have printed it.

PL: As it was, we had Bill Plath would not speak to us for years and years and years.

DM: Yeah, he said, you should have done it and then torn it up of something. You should have never printed it.

NB: This tape is about to end.

DM: But anyhow, there was a lot of gender...

PL: Dysphoria! (laughs) I said it! (laughs)

DM: And still is.

PL: I think that you know maybe San Francisco gay men learned early on to start calling us women instead of girls. It took though...at the time they were saying women they were also doing things like, "hey do you know we have a board of directors for the blah blah blah and its all men and we need a lesbian. Cold you come or could you get someone for us?"

DM: That was typical.

PL: That was typical. I mean, at the last minute somebody would point it out or somebody would say "aie,wait!"

DM: Well and it wasn't until about 1980 that organizations started changing their names to Gay and Lesbian.

PL: And had the fights over that. And you still...and now people say well "now that we're all so together, can't we just go back to being the gay parade and so on? We were so together right?"

NB: But it was, it wasn't any different in the 50's, it just wasn't as...people weren't giving it as much energy, to talk about gender difference.

PL: Yeah well I think if you read the Ladder you will discover that despite the sexist language, that there's a lot of feminist content. That we didn't know feminist, that we didn't know we should be women instead of girls. And all those kind of things. But we damn well knew that we should be getting paid the same amount.

DM: And then we the guys started saying, “well, we’ve always said that and we can’t change it.” We said well we have, we’ve had to change our language, you can too.

NB: Did anybody take notes at the gab and javas? Or do you have any record of what went on there, cause that’s...that’s fascinating.

DM: No.

PL: They were lead, or facilitated I guess you would say nowadays. And we had topics.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE B

TAPE 2

DM: We always do.

PL: I guess it doesn’t really matter.

NB: Yeah, if we could go back to the 50’s that would be really useful to me.

PL: Okay, alright, alright.

NB: And just step into the...I think there were two points that were made. One about, sort of working from the inside, around the medical establishment. And then the second one...

DM: Well that was really the 60’s. But in the 50’s we did our own questionnaires and research of our readers. And that, hoping that that might...you see most of the research had almost nothing about gay men, that that might interest some people. And, it did. And that how we started in the 60’s with the research and being involved. But in the 50’s when we broke away from Mattachine and went out on our own.

NB: When was that?

DM: In ’58. We got...

NB: When you left their...occupying the corner of their office.

PL: Yeah right.

DM: In ’58 we got a place across the street from Macy’s on O’Farrell St. That’s where the O’Farrell, Ellis and O’Farrell garage is. There was also a building there, upstairs. And I went to try to rent the offices for us and so that was Daughters of Bilitis and everyone wanted to know what kind of organization it was. And I said it was an organization that dealt with the sociological problems of women. Single women. Single women. And she said oh that sounds wonderful, I have a friend who’d be really interested. (laughs) We never met her friend.

PL: Oh what a tangled web we weave!

DM: We never met her friend but obviously the janitorial service assumed what kind of an organization we were. But in 1959, was when, you want to talk about that...?

PL: The mayoral race?

DM: Yeah, but the point was that during that mayoral race, we were checked out by the police. With a manager who said that we were just fine, that we just mind our own business and did our own work, and so on...gave us a good report. But 1959 was a big year for San Francisco lesbians and gays.

PL: Because of the election. Well it just goes to show, well where was I just reading, "well you know how silly boys are!" We went to Mattachine's convention in Denver in '59. And at that time we were honoring members of Mattachine and we had been going to all their conventions really.

DM: Trying to set up a chapter for DOB when we were in town.

PL: And also keeping an eye on what they were doing.

NB: Where did you all get the money to travel and do all this organizing?

DM: What we did was we spent our vacations going to these damn conventions and stuff.

PL: And when Dell went off, like to the APA and all that, I stayed home and worked right, so we had a salary coming in. Anyhow, in the process of the Mattachine convention, they had this new member named Bill something or other. So they had gotten a new member and Hal was just so excited because this new member apparently had money. And sure enough, when they got to Denver this new member said that "really that ought to have a standard type of steno-typist to take the minutes of the meeting and may I do it all?" He'd pay for it and so on, no problem. So they got a steno-typist doing their thing and they come up with the idea that they have been requested by the police, by the San Francisco police department to pass a resolution honoring mayor Christopher and chief...whatever his name was, the police chief, for their great way of handling the lesbian and gay community. It wasn't a lesbian and gay community but anyhow. Because they had been so wonderful towards us.

DM: Which was not true.

PL: And Dell and I said, "What do you mean they've been so wonderful towards us?"

DM: And furthermore this was election year. Something's got to be up here, there's something wrong with this picture.

NB: And Hal didn't notice? That this was?

DM: They were just impressed with his money.

PL: And so I remember Don Lucas saying to me, we just have to do this. And I thought “you’re crazy, you’re crazy.” Well they adjourned for lunch, and when we came back from lunch we discovered there had been a fast change in the constitution and that whereas as honorary members we would have been able to vote in the morning, they had made this swift change in the constitution so that no longer could honorary members vote. I mean we were only two and everybody else was...they didn’t need to do that you know, god. So we couldn’t vote. So they voted to do this! So by the time we got home from Denver there was all this to do around the fact that this new member of Mattachine, turns out he had a long history of doing dirty tricks and stuff like that. But he had been working for Russell Wolden, who was the assessor...there’s something about the assessor’s office that kind of weird.

NB: Problematic.

PL: And so he had decided to run against Christopher, who was a lousy mayor, and none of us wanted to vote for Christopher. And a lot of us didn’t, in spite of everything. But in the gay community, such as it was, was in favor of Wolden! Cause we heard that maybe he had a gay son, or that maybe he was gay himself- somebody, the son or he, had been seen in drag and all this kind of stuff. So, we’re gonna vote for Wolden. Well then he does this whole thing, and the whole thing is that “See, these queers have given this commendation to the mayor for how wonderful he’s been and he’s harboring the national headquarters of these two organizations in San Francisco!” So the fight was on. None of the daily papers would take it. The story. And finally the Progress, which was the alternative paper before it folded and the Independent came along, took the story. So we were a little afraid about what DOB members were going to think about all of this carrying on and so on.

NB: So this really brought your organization kinda out.

PL: Yeah, right. Which we hadn’t been exactly hiding, but nobody was interested in us, until then. And we were only mentioned once in the whole thing, and after that mostly they paid attention to Mattachine.

DM: But there was the flyer that came at the...

PL: Came at the tail end just before the election.

DM: Which Bill whatever his name put out, “And you parents, you think its just males, but you gotta watch out for your daughters, because of the Daughters of Bilitis.” And so on, and that was a flyer that was circulated in the neighborhood.

NB: Did you all save one of those?

DM: I have no idea...

PL: I’m sure we did.

DM: I have no idea.

NB: You probably did, whether or not you could find it...

DM: Yeah, so that...(mumbled)...but anyhow. These jerks! Cause this guy has some money. Didn't even, we kept pointing out, this is election year, there's something phony about this, you know that...

PL: Boys are so silly!

DM: You know that the police and Christopher don't like us.

PL: We've never done anything!

DM: We didn't know exactly what it was but we knew it had to do with the election.

PL: We knew it wasn't kosher.

DM: And we knew it wasn't gonna be helpful to us.

PL: So anyhow, he ended up...oh, well I said so anyhow we called a meeting of DOB and everybody said that they were fine and they thought we should get an additional copy of The Ladder out, explaining everything that was happening, but maybe we should take the mailing list out of the office, and put it somewhere safe. So we had a little ___ under his station wagon, so we put in the back of that and put a blanket over it. Ran around like that for the next month or so. It was probably safer in the...

DM: Office.

PL: Office.

NB: So did you ever, besides that one...you said that you felt that you were checked out by the police, city police, during that election, the Wolden/Christopher affair...but did you, were there any other instances with McCarthy-era politicking, or...?

DM: Well not...we were, we weren't so well known in the 50's, back then. In 1960, when we had our first national convention, then the police arrived at...as we were about to sit down for luncheon. And it was the homosexual detail of the vice squad that showed up.

PL: Who knew nothing, whatsoever, nothing.

DM: And they wanted to know...and their biggest question was, do you advocate wearing the clothes of the opposite sex?

NB: Why do you think that was their biggest concern?

DM: At this point, at this point though, everybody was dressed up. It was our first public event. So I think...

PL: There was no woman in pants in the place.

DM: So I said, look around you, does it look like it?

NB: Yeah, but why would that...I've been thinking about this, cause I read your comments about this in the article in "Our Right To Live" or whatever that book is, and was that because, I mean in what ways were lesbians illegal? You know maybe that was...

DM: We always heard the story that you had to wear at least 3 items of clothing of your own sex. And it does seem that the police were concerned about this cross-dressing. That was a big thing. I guess that's the way that they could identify us, you know, and that's how we could identify ourselves. Part of the reason for dressing butchy was to let you know "Here I am," you know "I want to meet some of you." You know we didn't have any ways of finding each other. It was very difficult, so they pegged onto that.

NB: Yeah, because there's also some discourse, especially in the Mattachine review, about "our plight is just so much worse than that of the lesbian..."

PL: Oh there was always that! Because they kept getting busted for cock-sucking! In public, right? (laughs)

NB: So maybe that, this was the, you know, Achilles' heel of lesbians, was cross-dressing behaviors.

DM: Well that's about all that the cops could figure out about us.

NB: Yeah, cause lesbians weren't arrested for...

PL: Well we weren't arrested for public sex because basically we didn't do public sex. In spite of all the stories I've heard about women who'd been raped by other women in bathrooms and stuff like that, it never happened to me.

DM: Never happened to anybody that we'd known.

PL: Ever ran across.

NB: And in bars, when lesbians were arrested in bars, it was for, vagrancy?

PL: Well it depended. The _____ (?) case was visiting a house of ill-repute.

NB: Oh yeah, yeah...

PL: Or it was disturbing the peace, or it was...in some cases, what was the “Mary’s____,” the remark was “this butch said to an undercover woman cop-you’re a cute little butch” or something like that. I mean, big deal. I mean, big horrendous deal! They were just mostly doing that to harass.

NB: What was your relationship like with the bar community, besides when you first initially were in “Aunt’s 440” and didn’t feel comfortable there, but did you develop a relationship with bar dykes and...see my assumption is that the kind of women who went to DOB functions weren’t necessarily the kind of women who went to bars. Or was there cross...

PL: There was cross-fertilization.

DM: Well, Charlotte Coleman had a bar called...

PL: The Frank.

DM: The Frank. In the 50’s. And we got acquainted with...

PL: It was a beer and wine...

DM: Yeah, we got acquainted with her. And at our ’60 convention she closed down one night so we could have a party at her place.

PL: And in those days you had to go to the A.B.C. and get permission to close down for a private party.

NB: Oh really?

DM and PL: Yeah.

NB: Like a temporary cabaret license.

DM: And so I guess...

PL: Ricky is determined that we are anti-bars, but we are not. Except for now, cause their music is so loud you can’t stand it.

NB: Mmm hmm.

PL: You hear that in the bars all the time.

DM: I know but what we followed Charlotte

PL: More than we did Ricky, that’s true.

DM: Yeah, we didn't know Ricky, we knew Charlotte, and Charlotte did a lot of things to help DOB. Like if we were having a party and we need liquor or, she'd help get food or whatever...she was helpful in those ways and...

PL: And she gave money.

DM: And she gave money, and we went when she opened The Golden Cast-we followed her along there and we followed her to The Mint. I mean she was our...

PL: We followed her down to the sharks! (laughs) And we tried to get her to start a women's bar and restaurant. And she said if we paid for it she'd do it, but it would never make it...and I'm sure she was right.

DM: So it just so happened that we got more involved with Charlotte's places, than...

PL: Than with Ricky.

NB: To go back to our very first conversation about what community is. It seems like, you know, we could develop some theory about community as involving institutions. I like that idea.

DM: Involving?

NB: Institutions. Like DOB as an institution and even seeing "The Front" as an institution so that people could circulate in public, whether or not they were perceived as lesbian in public.

DM: Yeah, yeah. Well we remember having a brunch down at The Front. We had invited some of our heterosexual friends and they...

PL: Women.

DM: And they were hugging and kissing and Charlotte is having a fit and we said "well they're straight" and she said, "Well A.B.C. wouldn't know that!" (laughs)

PL: We finally said knock it off!

DM: They could get us in trouble.

NB: Why do you think Ricky thinks that you're anti-bar? Or anti-bar dykes?

DM: Because there was some reference in, and certainly in The Ladder and so on, that DOB was started as an alternative to gay bars.

PL: Which is true.

DM: Which was true.

PL: That was Rose's idea.

DM: Because they could get raided, you know and there were a lot of...

PL: And besides people were looking at you like you and staring like you were a freak and you know...all kinds of stuff.

DM: And so there was that, you know, privatization that came along.

NB: So you see DOB as a privatization?

DM: Well at that point, it was an alternative to gay bars, getting away from the cops coming into the bars and being able to dance. Which was in you own private-in the privacy of your own home. Or various members' homes.

NB: That's really interesting. Because then it evolved into a much more public institution.

DM: Well then later, when she was saying we're anti-bars, we were the one's who got attorneys to get the lesbians off and also tell them what their rights were and so on-not to run in there and plead guilty right away.

NB: Were there women in DOB who had been arrested and needed those services? Or, what was your...

PL: Well they were in "The Kelly's" thing.

NB: There were DOB in "The Kelly's..."

PL: Yeah, right. And they called us and they said "Ahhh, help!" This one woman said, "I want to be a teacher!" You know, so we figured we better go find an attorney, right?

DM: So, and then, what was that bar out in Irving Street?

PL: Hazel ? Oh oh oh oh god, Finn Alley!

DM: Finn Alley.

PL: Now there was so hilarious. Here we had, and this, this one member of DOB who used to go out there with her, or we'd go out there and she'd be there and so on and so forth. Well anyhow, cause they had go-go girls on the bar. That was a *wild* place, right there on Irving Street.

DM: She doesn't remember that. They were not there all the time.

PL: No I know they weren't there, but she was absolutely *entranced*. She was like, like, just ugh!

NB: This was in the 60's?

PL: Yeah. And we kept saying, this place is gonna get raided any day now. I remember talking to the school teacher, in the middle of this bar, and go-go dancers were on, or maybe they weren't, but the place was just *packed* with lesbians. And we're standing behind the bar, or a passageway next to the bar, and she says "oh I couldn't possibly join DOB, somebody might find out I was a lesbian!" (laughs) And I say well what do you think now? But anyhow, but that was...

NB: Yeah, so there's that interesting switch, cause initially bars would be more of a public space and DOB would be more of a private space, but then it switched to DOB was more of a public acclamation of lesbianism and in the bars, people could perceive themselves as still in a private space.

DM: Well I hadn't thought of that angle, but that's right. And I remember that some of our members would go to bars and they wouldn't tell anybody they belonged to DOB.

PL: Well cause there was also these stray stories; that we were all pinko commies, for one thing. And another one was that you had to be a couple. And then there was that we had orgies. When did we have an orgy?

NB: (laughs) Did I miss that?

PL: Damn it! So yeah, there was a lot of that. And so yeah, some of the members were ashamed, or afraid or insecure about being a member.

NB: For these other reasons, not because of this tension between bar culture and...

PL: No. I don't know...how do you think...unless they thought that because...

DM: They thought they might be ridiculed for belonging to DOB, I think.

NB: Cause DOB wasn't cool or hip or something?

PL: You can't find what story you'd heard of.

NB: But is, is that what you're implying or...

PL: Yeah, I think part of it was that. That they were afraid that people would think there was something wrong with them that they belonged to DOB. That if you were a real dyke you just went to the bars maybe? No, who needed this old club, thing?

NB: A lot of people that I've talked to have said how much they knew, well I'm sure you've heard this all the time, people had heard of DOB but were afraid to join. You know, knew it was out there, that was important to them, but they could never have brought themselves to...

PL: Well we had, there's one person, Natalie Landau, who's with "mama bears?"

NB: No, I don't know.

PL: You don't know? Well, anyway, she spent, I don't know how many hours, typing *The Ladder* every month. Cause she was an excellent typer and so on, but it was years before she ever joined DOB.

DM: Did she ever?

PL: I thought she finally did. I'm not that real positive of that actually. A lot of people would...they'd either come to the parties, without joining, or they would come down and work and do stuff, but they wouldn't join.

NB: So were they afraid of being on a membership list?

DM and PL: Oh yeah.

PL: That was one of our first...

DM: Membership lists, there were subscription lists.

PL: *Your name is safe*, we said. We had this 1960, what, 50...well anyhow, this Supreme Court ruling that said you couldn't...

NB: Yeah, for what it's worth.

PL: Yeah, right. Right, we didn't tell people that, but...

DM: Well another thing we did in the 50's with the second issue of *The Ladder*, we sent it out to every woman attorney in the phone book.

PL: In the Yellow Pages! (laughs) I can't believe we did that. That's on a par with me calling up everybody I knew at work and telling 'em Dell was a lesbian the first day I found out.

NB: Wait what's that's story? Then we can return to the other one.

PL: (laughs) Well it was just that Dell and another woman that we worked with and that I had gone to the press club in Seattle with, had a few drinks...they didn't have public bars in Washington at that point. And I don't know how the conversation ever got around to homosexuality, it wasn't something that any of us, as far as I know were fluent in- I wasn't. And anyhow, well that came up and Dell said well I am one. Then I was so excited! (laughs) Cause I'd never met one before!

DM: Talk about outing, see...back in the 50's...outing was...

PL: I didn't really call everybody at work. I called my close friends.

NB: Because you were excited about it?

PL: Because I was so excited about it, I thought it was the greatest piece of news I'd ever heard. Certainly something that made life much more interesting all of a sudden! And, it resulted however in my losing one friend. Whose husband said, as long as I was gonna have anything to do with *that* woman, I couldn't have anything to do with Iris. So...but that was the only problem. Didn't effect anything else, as far as we could tell. Anyhow, so then here's this idea, I had forgotten whose brilliant idea it was that we should send, you know, to all the women attorneys in the Yellow pages. Which means we were sending it to their offices. Albeit in a plain brown wrapper. So we sat there and we stacked 'em and wrote addresses and sent 'em all out. I can just imagine, the effect on the lesbian lawyers especially, when they opened it up and got this little magazine! (laughs) At the office.

DM: And we got calls, and letters...

PL: Letters...and "take me off your mailing list, or I'll..."

DM: Report you to the...

PL: Authorities or whatever and so on.

DM: Did you get any _____ with this thing...?

PL: Yeah, Juliette Lohan (?) called, Juliette and Morris Lohan called.

DM: And he was...they were the attorneys for The Black Cat.

PL: And all the different times that...

DM: They were the one's who got the Supreme Court, Supreme Court of California decision that homosexuals had a right to congregate in places...

PL: That served liquor.

DM: So, we got acquainted with them, and then...

NB: They had already been actively engaged, I think wasn't that a '51 rule.

DM: Yeah, yeah.

PL: But we had not, somehow or other, run across them.

DM: And then when the Mary's First and Last Chance Bar over in _____ (?) came about, then they wrote an _____ (?) brief, and they quoted from The Ladder, in certain things that we had

covered to help their case. And we were so excited about that, you know. And they, well and they won their case.

PL: Yeah.

DM: Yeah. And, you know, it's all this stupid stuff. However, what did they call it, there was in the decision, that any public display of sexuality could have been brought. But mostly this was nonsense stuff. So, at the convention then, we had had Lowenthal debating the guy from the Alcohol Beverage Control around gay bars. Which, there had just been a scandall about Gayola (?) payments and stuff.

NB: Oh yeah, so this is around '61, '62.

DM: '59, no...

PL: '60, it was prior to the sixties, cause this is, we're talking about the convention, in '60.

DM: So it was probably early '60, cause we were about May or June or something. Anyhow, it was at, so...after in that ____ (?), very explosive. And so afterwards we had a little skit, which was mimed really, people had signs...where it was supposed to be in a gay bar and the decision had said that any public display of sexuality...

PL: Was against the law.

DM: Was against the law. So we had a pregnant woman come in and certainly display...

PL: Police dragged her away! She was very pregnant.

DM: And then we had somebody who'd say, "it's the law!" Who would come in...and then there was a newlyweds...

PL: Glowing and cooing.

DM: Yeah, and so on...and that was a public display and out they went. And so on and anyhow, we had it like that and then in the end there was a bartender and this one guy left. And, I forgot...

PL: I've forgotten what the...but anyhow, they both got wisked away.

DM: Some public gay display, or something. But anyhow, you could really play around with that whole idea of any public display of sexuality. So that brought, that skit came just at the right time, cause it had been so explosive.

PL: Cause the first thing was, not Leonard Bernstein I wanna say...

DM: No, no.

PL: He's a judge now. But anyhow. First thing he did was just to hit the microphone, "I don't need this!" he screamed. And he wouldn't either.

NB: What the...?

PL and DM: The A.B.C. guy.

PL: That was his first move in the debate.

DM: And he was not...amused by the skit. (laughs) Everybody else just thought it was hilarious.

NB: But he had agreed to come to the debate. That's interesting.

DM: Yeah.

PL: It was an interesting convention cause it was our first one. We had great difficulty finding women to speak on panels. We had no problems getting men, but somehow or other, women seemed to think that they would be turned into lesbians if they came. So what did we have? We had what'shername from ____ Reporter...and Trisha!

DM: Bernice Engells...

PL: Yeah, Bernice Engells. She said she was so _____ (?)

DM: Well she'd been doing research.

PL: I know. And my sister who at that point had her bachelor's degree, right?

DM: Yeah, in anthropology.

[End of Tape Two, Side One]

PL: Anyhow, I was thinking of something else, before we got side-tracked...in terms of...

DM: We get side-tracked as in, something will come along that will remind us of something, somewhere else. In time and space.

PL: You got it.

NB: Do you think that in the 1950's in San Francisco more resources became available for lesbians and gay men. Like if I was gonna make that general statement?

PL: The only thing that I can think of that might have been there in the '50's is 33 Hunt Street, I don't know...the beauty center.

DM: I thought that was in the '60's.

PL: Well, you know, I mean there still is one, but I don't know whether it was there because it was helpful or not. But in terms of resources, outside of Mattachine and DOB.

DM: The bars.

NB: Where there more bars in the '50's than in the '40's do you think? Was there more...

PL: There's always been many many more gay bars, gay male bars, than lesbian bars. Of which we have practically none at this moment.

NB: Right.

PL: But, that's why I never understood why gay men so often insisted they had to come into our bars. (laughs) They had their own bars! When Katie was trying to keep men out of ____ (?) and they weren't telling them they couldn't come, they were trying to reason with them. Some of them were threatening to sue. You know, cause it is illegal, if you're a public place, you have to be open to everyone.

DM: Like they had all these places to go to. Women had so little. It just seemed...

PL: So anyway can you think of any great resources there were in San Francisco in the '50's?

DM: No.

PL: Mostly in the '60's things began to change. That's when we finally got some attention from City Hall. We're talking the mid-60's really. Glide was there, that was pushing gays...

DM: Well we got into that more in the mid-60's. Mid-60's was when things started breaking out.

PL: That's when SIR started.

DM: CRH started.

PL: CRH started.

DM: I think it was about '62 that...

PL: Tavern Guild?

DM: Tavern Guilds started. And that made a difference. And they were doing their own policing and one of the things I guess we talked about before, about touching at the front, we remember being at the Golden Cast and it was real crowded and we were with Debbie, who was blind, and I had my hand on her shoulder and was steering her through the crowd and the waitress came over and said "take your hands off her!" And I said "but she's blind." And she said "that doesn't

make any difference. The A.B.C. isn't!" So they were really watching to see that...what would happen though, down at The Black Cat and some of the gay men's bars was...

PL: Entrapment.

DM: Was entrapment.

PL: And then they would sit inside and cozy up to the guy and then when they'd go outside and then he'd say well why don't we go to my place or something, and then they'd bust him right there. And the people in the bar wouldn't even know it. So they get him outside and then take him off so that the bartender didn't have a chance to say anything or do anything.

NB: Did that ever happen to lesbians? Did you ever hear of a lesbian being entrapped by the...?

PL: Well only in the situation like the Mary's First and Last Chance.

NB: Because it was an undercover woman?

PL: And down at Hazel's too, in Sharps Park (?). They had undercover women too. We missed that one by...was that a day, or a week?

DM: We missed that one by a day, I think.

PL: Yeah, our next door neighbor at that time, Bill, said "hey there's this wild new bar down in Sharps Park, you better get there before it gets raided." And our attorney used to say "oh great, yeah..." Anyway so we went down one night, Friday night I guess, or Sunday, raided on Saturday.

NB: But that was a place where both men and women were?

PL: Yeah, there was dancing and stuff.

NB: Was it sort of equal? Equal proportions?

PL: We were only there once.

NB: So what can we know.

PL: Yeah.

NB: I talked to this man who was there when it was raided.

DM: Oh really?

NB: Yeah, he and his three friends.

PL: Yeah, they took a lot of people away.

NB: Yeah, I talked to someone who was at the Tayt-Bush when it was raided.

DM: At which?

NB: The Tay-Bush. That was I think the last big raid in San Francisco.

DM: I think it was, yeah. That was in mid-60's.

NB: Yeah, right around...you're right, a lot was happening in the 60's then. That's, you know if I'm thinking about change over time, you know, if that's the end point, I'm trying to sort of trace up to that.

PL: In '66 we had, didn't we have the 10 days in August?

DM: Yeah.

PL: Which was the DOB convention and the NACHO convention and some other stuff...

DM: And SIR.

PL: And SIR. Yeah, a lot of stuff going on. That was when Joel Fort and Evelyn Wooker (?) put out a statement about gays and lesbians not being sick or whatever and so on. We...CRH got a booth up at the Sacramento State Fair and then they rescinded it and then we went to court, but they wouldn't give it back to us. So then we stood up in front of the gates, up at Sacramento and handed out the thing that we had published, that was this tabloid kind of thing that said "every tenth man..."

DM: Every tenth person is a homosexual.

PL: Is a homosexual. A lot more press and stuff than if we had gotten a booth.

DM: Yeah, they could have given us a booth way over in a corner and nobody probably would have seen it, and we were right there at the gate.

PL: What were some other things that happened in '66?

NB: Is that when SIR opened its community center?

DM: That was the... '66 was, February we met, first NACHO and me, then we had armed services day demonstration. Then we had DOB's convention and SIR and NACHO. Then we had the state fair. That was a busy year, and we were working at that time.

PL: That's the first time that we meet Barbara Grier.

NB: What were your jobs all of these years?

DM: I was working as a bookkeeper.

PL: And I was working at an export/import company down in the financial district. And I ended up being their traffic manager, which meant taking care of all their shipping and stuff like that. And neither of us liked our jobs very much, but they were the kind you didn't really agonize over.

NB: They weren't too terribly draining.

PL: At home, yeah, right. So we kept in touch with each other because we wanted to make sure that both of us didn't quit at the same time. And eventually, when did I quit, I quit in...you quit in 1989. '69.

DM: Well, there's been some other jobs that we've had in between.

PL: Well, I know, but I mean from 9-5. You quit working from 9-5 in 1989. '69. However at that point I was working at Glide. And that was kind of a dream job.

NB: It was a 9-5 job?

PL: I don't know exactly. It was most amazing. It was really different than it is now. There were 4 ministers that had been brought together to run Glide Urban Center, which was a part of Glide Foundation and basically had been doing-they started Glide Urban Center because they were amassing so much money in the Lizzie Glide trust that IRA said that if you don't spend it, we're gonna tax it. So they started the Foundation and then they started Glide Urban Center. And Lewis Durham was the director and he hired Cecil William and Ted McIlvanna and Donald Coomb and it was a most fortuitous blend of very different people. It was just really amazing. And over, what, those years from '64 to '68 or '60 something we did some absolutely wonderful things. And then things changed and so on.

DM: Well you had to do all that community stuff and help people get there act together start organization and then spin them off.

PL: Huckleberry House, Baker Places.

DM: CRH. and Citizen's Alert.

PL: Citizen's Alert, right.

NB: Citizen's Alert is one I'm interested in too.

DM: Hmm?

NB: Citizen's Alert sounds really interesting to me, or what I know about it, because of its multi-racial aspect.

DM: Well, we can give you a little more history on that.

NB: O.K.

DM: It started out, as an idea of the board of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual to be the homophile alert system, because a lot of gay guys were getting beat up and told to retire and whatever.

PL: Especially by a certain officer named Chris Sullivan out of Northern Station, no out of Park Station.

DM: Anyway, then Watts happened and we decided this isn't just our problem. So we wanted to branch it out and make it a citizen's alert and get in all the different civil rights organizations and the different communities like the Hispanics and the Asians and Blacks and so on who we knew would be affected by police arrests and police brutality. So, we got together...oh, so then, switching it over to Citizen's Alert, I remember we talked to Nancy...who was caught in the...

PL: Nancy May?

DM: Nancy May. She was with SIR, and we wanted SIR and all the gay groups to be involved. And she said well, we'd have to work it some way so that Bill Beardemphl who was the president of SIR thought it was his idea. There's again the gender thing.

PL: Well that was also Bill.

DM: Yeah, and so on, because he was very much about the homophile alert system thing. And so any how, I guess she worked that part out for us. Then we got, I remember Bill started going through old books and getting names of all these different types of groups that should be involved. And addresses and phone numbers and so on. And then we thought about well gee wiz, here we are...would they respond to getting this from lesbians and gays?

PL: We said that they wouldn't.

DM: And we decided that...

PL: And we were right!

DM: That the whole idea of it was too important to jeopardize that. So we went to Cecil William and said, will you convene this for us? We said _____ (speaking unclear). So sure enough Renee Brith (?), "who's idea was this, what is, who's behind all this?"

PL: Oh any number of people, cause I was manning the phones, with people yelling at me. And I kept getting all these phone calls and everybody wanted to know who was putting these on. And I kept saying, this coalition of groups! (laughs) And Cecil Williams is convening it. (laughs).

DM: And when Cecil was asked that by Renee Bruce at the meeting he said “concerned citizens.” So the thing did get going, I don’t think Renee Brith ever was part of it.

PL: It took them a long time to come around. It took the Jewish community a long time to come around.

DM: Anyhow, eventually they found out that we were gays and so on-didn’t make any difference by that time cause we knew each other, we’d been working together and it was to all of our benefit. And most of the complaints, you know, from people who were victims were Black and Hispanic and lesbians and gays. So, people that we met and coalesced with at that time, we still have a bond with them, those...

PL: Which came in very handy when Donna Hitchens was running for Superior Court judge, cause we called all the Black people that we knew, and it certainly helped that her opponent was a mormon...but a lot of them would just take our word for it.

DM: Well, they’d say we don’t know her, but I guess she’s...

PL: She’s wonderful...and I say, alright if you think so. He’s a mormon, huh, okay. And Cecil says “that’s all I need to know, okay!” (laughs) TO CAT: No you can’t get up under her shirt.

NB: Is that what she wants?

DM and PL: Yeah.

NB: Oh, how about that.(laughs)

DM: So anyhow, that was a beginning of, I think, a very good coalition. And that was back in mid-sixties. And then in the 70’s everybody got so involved with “gay gay gay” and that whole thing and with CHR we’d done a lot of educational work with church people going in and speaking to groups and so on, and every thing turned more into a different kind of activism.

PL: It was more litigation and less education.

DM: Well and then there’s the whole political trip and getting involved. But the groundwork for the politics started in the 60’s too, cause the very first candidate’s night was held by Glide church under the auspices of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual.

NB: Really? I thought it was SIR.

PL: Well, I know...they took it after that/

DM: But it first started with CRH.

PL: I remember cause I was at Glide then and Don Coomb was worried all day long because Jack Morrison who was an incumbent supervisor had said he would come to the candidate's thing. He was the only one, the only incumbent that was gonna come. And Tom just couldn't believe it wasn't going to affect him adversely and he just kept worrying and worrying. And you know as a matter of fact, what happened was there was this nasty thing, "Morrison speaks to homosexuals!" in the Examiner...but he did get re-elected.

NB: So that sort of set the stage for a possibility.

PL: Anyhow the other thing that was so exciting on candidate's nights was we had, like 200 people come out for these things. And, you know, the CRH one cause we had it in Sanctuary and it's just this...

DM: Very full.

PL: Huge hall was pretty full of people. And then when, after SIR took over, there was still lots of people. As time went on, they've changed the whole process now.

DM: Yeah, they're closing down.

PL: It used to be...I remember sitting at one of the candidate's nights, and it was after the first gay rights law here had been past in '69? Was it?

NB: Was it municipal?

PL: No, '72. That was the first one though, the one that Diane engineered. And at the election after that, if there was one super...incumbent supervisor that was up for election that said that he or she had...

DM: Co-sponsored.

PL: ...sponsored the gay rights bill. There were 4 or 5 of them that said that. I was just hysterical. They didn't say co-sponsored.

DM: Well yeah.

PL: And I had bought you.

DM: Well they voted for it. Which they wouldn't have without Diane Feinstein.

NB: Yeah, she was an important figure, huh?

DM: Yeah...cause the guys...

PL:...she's even more important now.

NB: Yeah.

DM: The guys kept leading us on, "oh yeah, yeah..."

PL: Yeah, I'm all for you. Yeah right.

DM: Oh yeah, well we'll do it. And she just said...

PL: "Do you have enough votes?"

DM: No, she said, she went to the attorneys office and said write me up a ____ (?) And then so when...

PL: She worried about whether or not we had enough votes.

DM: Then when we wanted to...it couldn't get out of committee, but a supervisor could bring it out of committee. And so, we wanted her to do that and she said, "are you sure you have enough votes?" And we weren't sure at all but there were some of them who were wanting to run for other offices and we wanted to know where they were.

PL: Before the election.

DM: Before the election. And so we ____ get her to do it. And what we only had...what was it?

PL: Was it Coppin and Barbegelata that were?

DM: Barbegelata was on that, wasn't he? I don't know, but anyhow. It got passed and that was not just sexual orientation but...

PL: sex.

DM: Sex...

PL: And or gender, as the case may be.

NB: Well, I don't know...we probably should...I don't know how much time we have. Probably about 10 minutes. But I wanted to make sure that I got a chance to ask you, just if there was anything that you would do differently, or as we reminisce and sort of can see how things have progressed...is there anything that...I don't know.

DM: I think that you just learn by doing so that we just had to go through that process to learn.

PL: That came up just the other day didn't it?

DM: Yeah, somebody else asked us that.

PL: Probably, but you didn't know then.

DM: Cause we started out pretty dumb, you know! (laughs)

PL: We sort of scabbled all the way through.

DM: And we just sort of went with the flow as things changed.

PL: And we kept involved.

DM: Yeah, kept involved because...

PL: It was easy when there were only three organizations. It was easy to keep track of what was happening. It's a lot more difficult now.

DM: Well, so much has happened, just in doing the update to our book in the last 20 years. It's just amazing what happens from the time the book first came out in '72 to '92. My god! In spite of the...in spite of all the right-wing and all the things they're trying to do to us and all the violence and everything-we're still making progress. It's amazing. And whoever thought we would ever become part of the whole agenda for the national election and the national president. And win.

NB: It is pretty amazing.

DM: It is. Cause I don't know what, what...

NB: What we won. (laughs)

DM: Yeah, I don't know what Clinton is going to do what all...everybody has picked on the armed services right off the bat. Obviously that wasn't the first thing he was gonna do when he took office.

PL: Well, Collins the other day said, while he's still against lifting the ban, *however*, he did not think it would lead to mass resignations. And half of the service is leaving! It's just been so insane, the way they've carried on with this stuff-people saying, "I'm so afraid!" Afraid that a lesbian or a gay man's gonna come in and just go (makes a noise).

DM: Well, they had the whole problem when Blacks first got in, the women first got in and now...

PL: So somebody said, okay, you should have a gay brigade. Put all of them in one unit, and it will solve all the problems, really. It was a letter to the editor...it will take care of all the problems.

DM: Well that's what they did with the Blacks to start with.

NB: They'd have to have cross-sex restrooms, or something. (laughs)

PL: Ah...shoot.

NB: And showers.

DM: Well when we got women on the board of supervisors there was only one bathroom for the men, you had to go clear around the other side of city hall for the women's restroom.

PL: And Diane decided she was gonna...

DM: Liberate it.

PL: Liberate it. And she went in and she got herself locked in. (laughs) Except for now she's liberating the senate, right? Because these senators don't...two women senators have been using the spouses,' the wife's...there's apparently a restroom for the wives of the senators. And so up till now they have been using that. But I guess they decided that since there was gonna be six of them, that they better have their own, so they're building a new restroom. I said, Lynn came in and I said write Diane a note and say hey see what you've done, you did it again, you got another toilet! (laughs)

NB: Well, I can't think of anything else to ask you. Is there anything else that you wanna say or...I don't know, what's your experience been like being interviewed a bizillion times?

DM: Well I guess each time we think of different things that we forgot before. There's so much that happened and it...it was fun.

PL: Yes. Right.

DM: We had a lot of fun doing all this stuff. It wasn't just a drag or anything. And we hear a lot about burn out and so on, but we just found that it was fun and there was a challenge.

PL: Excitement. Nice people. Good stuff...

NB: Did you enjoy the secrecy...like a secret society. People have said that they really enjoyed that.

PL: Yeah, I've heard that too. Well, not really, cause we weren't ever all quite that secret.

DM: Well, and the other thing is that even back in the 50's, before we knew each other, we were both involved in politics, in democratic politics.

PL: And in unions.

DM: Yeah.

PL: I was, anyhow.

DM: Yeah, yeah.

PL: Two disasters, well not disasters, failures at trying to organize women. Well, not just women, but they were not helpful.

DM: Union.

PL: It was a newspaper guild. Once I lost by one vote. That was up in Chico. And up in Seattle, the thing that stymied it was the husbands of the women, who were themselves union members, the men were, but they didn't see any reason why their wives should belong to a union. Well, they did, they paid dues, but what was it gonna get if they paid dues.

DM: Well and in those days too, the women's pay was much lower than men, as it still is. And we were, you know, on a trade publication, we were getting titles rather than pay. You know, it was very interesting. So that was the reason we were trying for the union.

PL: It was one of those places where, after I'd been hired I was talking to the woman who everyone said was the backbone of the organization...she'd been there forever, she was incredible, she was wonderful, blah, blah, blah...and so on. And the place would fall apart without her. And I mentioned something about my small salary and it turned out I was making more than she was.

NB: So your activism must have informed your capacity to pull this off, the formation and to sustain DOB. Cause it didn't just come outta nowhere.

DM: (laughs) Well, what about that job you had with the doctor's association...the...

PL: Eee gad, not known about that, that's not on my resume.

DM: Didn't last very long.

PL: When I first moved down here from Seattle I had been looking for a job as a writer, editor, whatever and so on. And collecting unemployment insurance from Washington while I was looking. And finally there was this...the California Medical Association, I think that's what it's called.

DM: Yeah.

PL: C.M.A.? Had an opening for the editor for their magazine that they put out once a month. And they had an office that was a little house that was on top of a building at 3rd and Market. Or was it 3rd and Market? First and Market? Somewhere down there, you know. There was this darling little bungalow on top of this building. And it had its own kitchen and _____, and so on.

So, anyhow, I guess they decide to hire me and I said o.k. and that was fine and then the next thing I'm finding out from the woman who had been there before is that, "I make Mr. Whatshisname's lunch at noon and if he has any guests, then you make lunch for all of them," and all this kind of stuff. And I'm saying "I do what!?"

PL: So you lasted a long time there...(laughs)

PL: I did not last there very long. I did not make anybody's lunch! And we agreed that I was not, that this was not the right spot.

DM: Well they certainly didn't tell you about that part of the job.

NB: Unbelievable, some of these things.

DM: Yeah.

NB: That women, you know, all women go through, or have gone through. It's just unbelievable.

PL: Although a friend of ours statement...she was working for a drugstore chain, or something up in the north...Pacific Northwest. Many years ago, and apparently somebody on the staff figured out that she was a lesbian and told the boss, "Well Sammy's a lesbian, and we need to get rid of her." So what the boss did was to fire the woman that turned Sammy in. And told her that he knew that and that's what makes...

[End of tape two]