

<p>1 _____ 2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC 3 973 Market Street, #400 4 San Francisco, CA 94103 5 Telephone (415) 777-5455, #1 6 Interview with Harvey Milk 7 Date of Birth: 5/22/30 8 By Interviewer: Geoff Mains, Northwest Gay 9 Review 10 Date: Est 1977 11 GLHS OHP 77-001, Miscellaneous 12 _____ 13 Tape 1 of 1, Side 1 = 1S1:000-099 14 1S1:000-099 15 Interviewer: Testing, one, two, three, testing. How do 16 you stop? Punch the little white button with the 17 square on it. (recorder turned off momentarily). 18 Northwest Gay Review, which serves Seattle, Portland 19 and Vancouver, BC. And I'm with the community 20 organization in Vancouver which handles the 21 publication in Vancouver. So we're interested in 22 talking to you, having an interview with you on 23 several points. First of all, your election as 24 supervisor, secondly on what you think of the future 25 of the gay community, and thirdly on this boycott</p>	<p>1 against Canada that you're talking about right now, 2 because it will affect a lot of people, you know, in 3 our own country and we're very interested in the 4 boycott. 5 HM: In the essence of time and methodology, I mean, 6 cut through to - the whole boycott is exactly what the 7 election was all about. Prior to election, Harvey Milk 8 and other people who are committed to the Board of 9 Supervisor hearings, committee hearings and police 10 commission hearings and everything else, and sometimes 11 they would listen to us, sometimes they wouldn't more 12 often than not. We couldn't get any money for the Gay 13 Day parade in this city, it's the biggest parade in 14 The City. All the other parades, some of them get up 15 to as much as twenty thousand dollars; we got nothing. 16 In fact basically and so much, we got not even the 17 crumbs to fight over with the whole community. If I 18 went ahead and called a press conference on any issue, 19 the press might come, may not come. And there's no 20 guarantee that anything will be covered or not or be 21 buried or what. Okay, Harvey Milk was elected, okay. 22 Now when Harvey Milk speaks out about a boycott about 23 Canada, all of a sudden Canadian stations all ask me. 24 Interviewer: You had a very strong reaction then from 25 the Canadian press?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p>
<p>1 HM: Forgetting about them at this moment, what I'm 2 trying to say is the power of elected office, 3 especially of a gay person, all the sudden the press 4 will listen to you, nations will listen to you. I have 5 to cut this interview short because I'm having a 6 hearing at my instigation on seeing if we can get the 7 U.S. government to ask South Africa to close their 8 consulate here in San Francisco. So here we're talking 9 about the South African government and we're not too 10 sure of the powers in the city streets. This is the 11 power of why a gay person, any elected official but 12 particularly a gay person, has incredible recognition. 13 This weekend I'm flying to Chicago, there's a gay 14 person who's running there, has a chance to win and so 15 I'm breaking my pledge, not pledge, but I've told 16 people I would not go out of state unless I felt it 17 was urgent. This is urgent. Whenever I say something, 18 the media pick up on it. We got funding for our 19 parade. Gay people are being hired in city programs, 20 the seeded jobs of the federal government. We couldn't 21 get any, very few gay people into it before. Now we're 22 getting lots. so what I'm saying is a gay person 23 elected makes a lot of difference, a powerful 24 difference. In a city of 675,000 people, San 25 Francisco, the most powerful person is the mayor, then</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p>	<p>1 the chief administrative officer who's like the city 2 manager, those are the two most powerful people. Then 3 next most powerful people in this city are the 4 supervisors. There are only ten people - there are 5 twelve people in this city - there are two people in 6 this city who have more power than me. There's only 7 ten others who have as much power. That's why it's 8 important for a gay person to be - to answer your 9 three questions - 10 Interviewer: Well, I just wanted to bring out a few 11 details on the election because Vancouver is very like 12 San Francisco. We have ten aldermen and a mayor 13 elected at large now and so 14 HM: Let me get into that, in the essence of time. 15 Interviewer: Okay, so if you could go into support 16 from the straight community - 17 HM: In the essence of time, I really, you know, I 18 would spend an hour with you but in the essence of 19 time, I'm going to cut short. Okay, I think it's 20 clear, I think it's vital first that I establish why 21 and the importance of being elected rather than how to 22 get elected or anything else. And so what I've been 23 dwelling on is the fact when a nation like Canada will 24 quote me, the radio stations in Canada will pick me up 25 and interview me long distance, when Washington is</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p>

1 watching what I do. When people running for statewide
 2 office here are quoting me to support them for their
 3 position, when the Chief of Police is at my beck and
 4 call, when the conservative elements of The City cut
 5 Catholic social services and threatening personal
 6 letters like that. When the Chamber of Commerce, which
 7 is notoriously anti-minority, invites me to be the
 8 guest speaker, then it shows the power and the
 9 incredible force that comes out of elected office.
 10 When a young boy from Richmond, Minnesota, calls me
 11 and his parents want to commit him because he's gay
 12 and I am his only hope. When I get letters from the
 13 Union of South Africa and Southwest Africa, then you
 14 know that it's very important. Okay, how do you get
 15 elected and how do you do it? You can't get elected
 16 just as a gay person unless the community is so big.
 17 In San Francisco we have eleven districts now. There
 18 was 160 some odd candidates only six of whom were
 19 incumbent from six different districts. Of the other
 20 candidates, the 150 some odd candidates, without any
 21 question, I was the most issue-oriented candidate
 22 around. I probably was more issue-oriented than some
 23 of the incumbents.
 24 Interviewer: In terms of housing (both speak).
 25 HM: Where do you stand, where do you stand. I'm not

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1 issues than to show that group, the teamsters in San
 2 Francisco, which are the antithesis of the national
 3 teamsters, who supported me. And the building and
 4 construction trade unions, the hard-hats, the
 5 plumbers, the electricians, these type people, the
 6 Archie Bunkers, they were supporting me.
 7 Interviewer: So you got a very large non-gay vote?
 8 HM: I got a very large union vote. The
 9 environmentalists (were) behind me almost a hundred
 10 percent except for some political ones who are the
 11 wheeler-dealer type people. But of all the candidates,
 12 I was the staunchest one against the airport
 13 expansion, I was the staunchest one against
 14 institution expansion, the staunchest person for the
 15 preservation of the neighborhood. Incredible
 16 environmentalist. Because of things like that, and I
 17 can list on and on, the largest political force, the
 18 Latino community, Mexican-American Political
 19 Association, MAPA, endorsed me. A Latino group
 20 endorsing a gay person. That's wild. It's incredible
 21 they were supporting me. I could go on, list after
 22 list after list. It comes in two waves. One, me being
 23 in their battles on their side. Two, a lot of people
 24 realizing that they may disagree with me on a
 25 particular issue but that I'm a fighter, that I will

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1 saying which way, but you have a stand on housing.
 2 Yes. What is it? Bang. Of the last five or six years,
 3 there have been in this city many battles,
 4 neighborhood battles, institution expansion, freeways,
 5 taxicab rate increases and so forth, union wages. In
 6 almost every one you found Harvey Milk taking a stand.
 7 Naturally every time you take a stand, you make an
 8 enemy. But you also make a friend. Over the past five
 9 or six years, I cannot think of any major issue I was
 10 not involved in, in The City. And in every issue in my
 11 district, I was there one way or the other, on one
 12 side or the other. Because of that, we had the
 13 following thing take place during the campaign. Let me
 14 just digress for a moment. The mayor of New York City
 15 has just introduced a gay rights ordinance or
 16 proclamation, no, it was a proclamation, where the
 17 police and fire fighters would have to hire gay
 18 people. The fire fighters in New York City are
 19 fighting this tooth and nail, against it, anti-gay. In
 20 San Francisco the fire fighters not only gave me the
 21 maximum amount of financial contributions, but on
 22 election day, they had men working, knocking on doors
 23 getting the vote out for me. And at my victory dinner,
 24 they were there, you know. How much clearer can I show
 25 the difference between being involved in community

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1 get up and I will speak out cleanly, clearly for an
 2 issue. And they know that when their issue comes up,
 3 if I agree I will fight with them and therefore they
 4 can support me, they can lobby me, they can explain
 5 their position and I'll fight. I've also proven over
 6 the years I was completely and politically
 7 independent, that I'm not a puppet of any of the
 8 higher bees who tap the lower people to protect
 9 themselves. I was out there, I've had a major battle
 10 with the mayor. In fact, we had really a to-do. He was
 11 terrified of me as far as where I'm going to be on the
 12 Board. And yet we made our peace because we have to
 13 work together. But that doesn't mean I am his puppet
 14 or go his way. I will defend him when I think so, I'll
 15 fight him when I think so.
 16 1S1:100-199
 17 I probably, of all the people, as far as the activists
 18 in The City, the most independent one there is me. So
 19 between being a faggot, issue-oriented and
 20 independent, my support was incredible. The major
 21 support funding came in, when you look at the
 22 craziness during the campaign, but the most liberal
 23 progressive paper is a weekly called the Bay Guardian,
 24 it's like a counter-culture paper. It's not an
 25 underground paper or hippie paper, big deal, it's

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1 counter-culture. And it's very independent. They
 2 supported me with an incredible, incredible
 3 endorsement. At the same time, the Chronicle, the most
 4 conservative paper, this is a paper that supported
 5 Nixon and Reagan, they supported me too. So I mean,
 6 that shows the dichotomy of the support, the wide
 7 spread. The final vote, it's interesting from an
 8 historical point of view even if it was boring to some
 9 people, in my district there are 98 precincts. I was
 10 first place in over sixty of them. I was second place
 11 in another 30-some-odd. So it was a wide spread
 12 support throughout the whole community, which means
 13 the poor black neighborhoods, and the affluent
 14 suburban type neighborhoods in my district, it was a
 15 very wide support. Against me were the candidates with
 16 an incredible amount of money and spending much more
 17 than I did. Against me were most of the political
 18 leaders. Against me was the organized Democratic
 19 Party. Against me were quite a few elected officials.
 20 And against me was the massive labor movement, the
 21 AFL-CIO, the wheeler-dealer cigar-smoking, all against
 22 me. Against me was the some of our quote "established
 23 gay leaders." They even put another major gay
 24 candidate up against me to split the vote hoping a
 25 third person would slip through. And to win

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1 overwhelmingly in the face of that means that the
 2 people, not the gay people, but the people in the
 3 district understood what I was about. And that's the
 4 only way gay people can get elected so that people
 5 come to them. That doesn't mean you walk away from a
 6 gay issue.
 7 Interviewer: Right. It points to a new role for the
 8 gay community in terms of supporting other communities
 9 and other groups and other issues.
 10 HM: We must reach out to them. It's like today's
 11 hearing in a few minutes, is if I, you know, a white
 12 person, is bringing legislation to close down, try to
 13 close down the South African consulate that's black. I
 14 was the one that led the battle for the Latino issue
 15 recently before the Board for the drug rehabilitation
 16 center for the Latino community. I am working very
 17 strongly with the Asian community. In fact, I led the
 18 battle to try to get an Asian appointed to the
 19 presidency of the Board, you know, it was a political
 20 battle who's going to be the next speaker. And I
 21 thought the Asian would be the best. I put the
 22 coalition, we lost six to five. But they all know that
 23 I did that, that I tried to get an Asian in there. All
 24 the other minorities know that I've reached out to
 25 them. I'm working within The City to put together a

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1 minority coalition. I'm working statewide on a
 2 minority coalition too. And it's important that we
 3 realize, not economically who are friends are, because
 4 a lot of the gay people, they think of their
 5 pocketbook. And my answer to that is what good is it
 6 having the best country, the most efficient country
 7 economically sound if you're in jail 'cause you're
 8 gay. So our natural allies, whether we like it or not,
 9 are the blacks, Latinos, Spanish, feminists and the
 10 rank and file union. Not the union leaders, but the
 11 rank and file union. And we must tie together because
 12 as soon as they realize who their common enemy is, and
 13 we realize who our enemy is, it's that common (both
 14 speak). And it's hard for the affluent gay person to
 15 understand that. And so that's my job is to put
 16 together those coalitions and tie those people
 17 together. And that's what I was doing during my
 18 campaign and you'd be surprised at the little Irish
 19 ladies who are supporting me.
 20 Interviewer: Could you have done it city-wide?
 21 HM: I think so. I came close last time. Two or three
 22 years ago when I ran at large, the six incumbents were
 23 re-elected, I was seventh. And I had very little money
 24 and there was a police and firemen's strike here which
 25 made the incumbents look good. And the two weakest

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1 incumbents got re-elected. If it wasn't for that fire
 2 and policemen's strike, I don't think they would, I
 3 think I would have been on, 'cause I was building up
 4 the police support. I think this town, city-wide,
 5 would demand that - But it takes years of work, it
 6 takes dedication, it's a lot of hours, you go to
 7 neighborhood meetings. I go to neighborhood meetings
 8 almost every night I go to meetings. 'Cause sitting on
 9 your ass is called ass-power. Going to meetings,
 10 sitting in there, knowing that you really are
 11 concerned, not to walk in and say hi and walk out.
 12 Take part in the battle, take part in the fight and
 13 not to walk away from the gay issues. Fight for that
 14 just as hard. I also, over the years, belonged to, as
 15 a volunteer on the board of directors of the Friends
 16 of the Public Library. I was a volunteer, board of
 17 directors of the Friends of the Deputies and Inmates
 18 to work to improve the jails. A board member of
 19 Mission Neighborhood Physical Development which is
 20 working with Latino youths. And neighborhood
 21 associations. I put together -
 22 Interviewer: And you're here reaching out into other
 23 communities and other issues.
 24 HM: Right. I put together a merchants' group, I put on
 25 a street fair in my area that was so successful that

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<p>1 other areas have asked me to help them to put on 2 street fairs. Other areas asked me to help them put 3 together the neighborhood associations. And it was 4 just committing myself nine days a week, 25 hours a 5 day. And that kind of commitment, you make friends. 6 And even if they disagree with you on "a" issue, they 7 know who you are. And if you don't do that, you're not 8 going to do it. And that's my whole thing is you've 9 got to reach out, you got to make the friends 'cause 10 there's more of them than us. 11 Interviewer: Right. Okay, getting back to the Canadian 12 thing. We've got a few minutes to talk about that. 13 What is the purpose of the boycott? 14 HM: Okay. When the "Body Politic" was, when the case 15 was going on, the Toronto police burst into their 16 office and stole their subscription list. That, in 17 essence, is what our CIA and FBI do, which we find 18 offensive. And that gives them blackmail, so they 19 blackmail potential gay people. It also, in essence, 20 is an economic sanction against the paper and puts the 21 paper out of business, in essence, because its 22 subscription list is gone. And my feeling is that 23 while like today I'm speaking out against South 24 Africa, I think we have to speak out wherever we are. 25 And when I see economic sanctions being taken against</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 13</p>	<p>1 the gay community, then I can play back economic 2 sanctions. At the same time, being a little bit of 3 Machiavelli here, knowing that Canada's going through 4 the internal strife of separatism, knowing that 5 Quebec, even though there is some oppression on gay 6 people in Quebec and Quebec City and in Montreal, the 7 Quebec government did pass a pro-gay rights bill. 8 Okay, by asking and calling on Americans, gay and 9 supporters, to not boycott Canada, but to boycott 10 English-speaking Canada and go to French-speaking 11 Canada. The entire Canadian government is not 12 suffering. They're still putting the dollar bill into 13 it. But what's happened is if the Quebec government is 14 seeing support from the gay community, maybe they'll 15 become more supportive of gay rights and say hey, 16 these gay people have given us money because we were 17 so much supportive, let's become more supportive, 18 let's show it back. At the same time if the Quebec 19 government is smart, they would say hey, this is 20 great. If we become very open about gay rights, then 21 gay people throughout Canada and Vancouver and so 22 forth and in Toronto and so forth, would start to say 23 that the Quebec government is good, let us vote for 24 separatism or let us lean toward separatism. That, at 25 the same time, tells the local government of Vancouver</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p>
<p>1 that if they want to go ahead and get back the gay 2 dollars, and they want the people within Vancouver to 3 support, not to support separatism, that the Trudeau 4 administration must speak out stronger. So it works on 5 several levels. It is playing the same game that they 6 played against the "Body Politic". In the United 7 States here, we've had in California especially and 8 specifically in San Francisco, a very successful 9 boycott against Coors Beer. It's taken four years. 10 1S1:200-299 11 Last year Coors lost ten million dollars in sales plus 12 they're now spending a fortune in advertising which 13 they never did before to recoup. We are economically 14 hurting their company. And every time a gay person 15 buys a bottle of Coors Beer, they are putting money 16 against themselves. That's a whole other story. We 17 know economic sanctions work. They work. If we can let 18 the Canadian government know that we are going to do 19 that, economic sanctions, then they make get the 20 message and not get very harsh at gay people. 21 Interviewer: But why Canada as a whole, why not 22 Ontario? 23 HM: Because what we want to do is we want the people 24 in Vancouver to go to Trudeau and say hey, wait a 25 minute, you know, we're suffering. We want the people</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p>	<p>1 in all English-speaking Canada to go to Trudeau - 2 Interviewer: It really was the Ontario government that 3 brought down that action. 4 HM: Right, but Trudeau supposedly speaks for Canada 5 and he is remaining silent on this issue. And the only 6 way to get him to speak out is to get people from 7 within Canada saying, hey, we are suffering. Say 8 something. It works. And, you know, people are hurt, 9 yes, economically hurt. But you realize how many 10 people will be hurt if nothing is said. And so by the 11 fact that the people in Vancouver keep quiet, that is 12 giving a green light, a sanction, to the government in 13 Toronto to pick on the gay people. 14 Interviewer: Yeah, well certainly most gay groups 15 across Canada are now supporting the "Body Politic" in 16 their fight in the National Gay Rights Coalition. But 17 one of the disturbing things about the thing is the 18 fact that the article, "Men Loving Boys," came to be 19 used by a lot of people in the common crafts against 20 the gay community saying, you know, promoting this 21 myth that we all know is a myth, about gay people and 22 young boys. 23 HM: Well, it's not really a myth. It does take place 24 (both speak) 25 Interviewer: But that is a minority.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p>

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<p>1 HM: But what must be pointed out, and this is the way 2 that Trudeau must be able to point it out, is the fact 3 that we do not judge all Italian people by the Mafia. 4 We do not judge all black people by the black 5 criminal. We do not judge all Irish people by the 6 Irish criminal. We do not judge all French people by 7 the French criminal. Why must we judge all gay people 8 by the gay criminal? We have gay criminals. We have 9 gay people offensive. We don't judge every single 10 person that drinks by the drunken driver. We don't 11 judge every heterosexual person by the rapist. Why, in 12 this one case all of a sudden we're condemning an 13 entire group of people because of the bad apples. I 14 want to hear Trudeau say that. He knows it. And if 15 he's going to go out and crack down on the gay people 16 because of one article, because of one child molester, 17 then he must do it - I'm being called to conference. 18 Interviewer: Okay. (recorder turned off. Then turned 19 on again in the Board of Supervisors' chambers). 20 Since the committee does not have an official quorum, 21 we are going to adjourn this meeting for the purposes 22 of taking any action today. We are, however, as a 23 subcommittee of the board of the committees, going to 24 take testimony today on those items on the agenda for 25 which there are people here who wish to give testimony</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p>	<p>1 today, we must understand that no action will be taken 2 by the committee today because of a lack of a quorum. 3 However, we are prepared to have, and we expect to 4 have the hearings today on those items which are 5 calendared. And, of course, the summary of testimony 6 taken by the clerk and by Supervisor (inaudible) and 7 myself will be the recommendations to the full 8 committee and we will, in a sense, defend those 9 recommendations to the committee itself. I'm going to 10 call, as the first item on the agenda, those four 11 items related to land value taxation and call a second 12 items on the agenda, those items related to the 13 closing of the South African Consulate. And I will 14 therefore recommend that anybody that's here for the 15 later items on the agenda might want to stay around 16 and we're certainly glad to have you listen to the 17 testimony but please remember to make up your own 18 schedule when (inaudible) is over. 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p>
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